The School has received $175,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and $50,000 from the Thomas J. Long Foundation to support the Advanced Health Leadership Forum (AHLF), a joint program of UC Berkeley and the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain. The purpose of the forum is to enhance the quality of health care leadership globally, bringing together 25 senior health care leaders from developing and developed countries and from a mix of occupations with expert faculty and distinguished guest speakers. The foundation support will help AHLF overcome its greatest obstacle, which is the inability of many applicants from Africa and other developing countries to attend the forum.

“The presence of developing countries and their interaction with participants from the more developed countries is essential to our vision of shared learning and raising awareness across countries of the global health challenges, successful approaches, and how they can be applied in very different settings,” said Dean Stephen Shortell, Ph.D., M.P.H. “Support from these two foundations will enable us to increase participation of leaders from developing countries.”

The Advanced Health Leadership Forum program focuses on key health policy, management, and implementation issues facing all countries. Now in its third cycle, the program includes a seven-day session in Barcelona in July 2006, followed by a second seven-day session in San Francisco in January 2007. Participants will complete a work-related project with a faculty mentor between the two sessions and share their results with each other.

In addition to leadership training, issues addressed will include how to design and implement payment programs, how to design public-private health insurance and delivery partnerships, designing benefit packages, implementing approaches for improving quality of care, assessing new technologies, regulating and pricing pharmaceuticals, and preparing for infectious disease outbreaks.

Faculty directors Richard M. Scheffler, Ph.D., from UC Berkeley and Pere Ibern, Ph.D., from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra will customize the curriculum based on participant interest and input. They note that increasing the participation from developing countries will also help reshape the curriculum and benefit faculty and participants from developed countries. “The interactions will heighten understanding of global challenges such as creating infrastructure, eradicating diseases, and the role of public-private partnerships. And all parties will learn from the innovative solutions that are being adapted in developing countries,” said Scheffler.
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At the Spring Alumni Brunch and Silent Auction, Public Health Alumni Association board member Lucinda Baze, M.P.H. ’94, admires an autographed Oakland Raiders football, while fellow board member P. Robert Beatty, Ph.D. ‘94, looks on.

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William Harrison, M.P.H. ’06, (left) and Eduard Flores, B.A. ’06, (center), chairs of the 2006 Class Gift Committee, present a check to Dean Stephen Shortell.

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Public Health Alumni Association past board president John Eastman, Ph.D., M.P.H ’80, and his wife Marlene (front) and associate dean Jeffrey Oxendine and his son Jake check out auction items at the Spring Alumni Brunch and Silent Auction.

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2005–2006 School of Public Health scholarship recipients gathered at the Women’s Faculty Club to meet their sponsors at the annual Scholarship Tea.
Karl E. Peace, Ph.D., a scientist who has made it his mission to create opportunities for promising researchers, recently created the Jiann-Ping Hsu and Karl E. Peace Endowed Chair in Biostatistics at the School of Public Health. The chair supports the teaching and research activity of a nationally recognized scholar in biostatistics.

Born into an uneducated, share-cropping family in Baker County, Georgia, Peace was the first in his family to graduate from high school. He paid for his college education with a scholarship and $500 borrowed from a businessman, while working part-time jobs to support his siblings and his mother, who had been diagnosed with cancer. After receiving his Ph.D. in biostatistics from the Medical College of Virginia, Peace accepted an entry-level position in the pharmaceutical industry and rose to become vice president of worldwide technical operations at an international pharmaceutical company. He left to start his own company, Biopharmaceutical Research Consultants, Inc., which provides scientific and technical services to the pharmaceutical industry. Peace has contributed to the development and approval of many important drugs, including treatments for Alzheimer’s, cardiovascular, infectious and ulcer diseases, and panic disorders. He is the Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Cancer Scholar, senior research scientist, and founding director of the Karl E. Peace Center for Biostatistics in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University.

Peace’s late wife, Jiann-Ping Hsu, Ph.D. ’77, was born in mainland China and received her bachelor’s degree from National Taiwan University. She earned her master’s degree from Columbia and went on to receive her Ph.D. in biostatistics at UC Berkeley. Hsu worked to bring her family to the United States and supported her parents and four sisters, enabling them to receive a college education. She served with the Food and Drug Administration and on review panels for the National Institute on Drug Abuse clinical trial grant applications.

During her career, Hsu held research positions at leading pharmaceutical firms. She helped grow Biopharmaceutical Research Consultants, Inc. with her husband and became president of the company when Peace stepped down. She received many professional awards and was a nationally recognized biostatistician. Just prior to Hsu’s death in 2004, Peace endowed the Jiann-Ping Hsu School of Public Health at Southern Georgia University—the first school of public health in the USG System—to commemorate her zeal for excellence, consideration of others, intelligence, and kindness.

Biostatistics professor Mark van der Laan, Ph.D., has been named the new chair’s first recipient. His research includes statistical methods in genomics, survival analysis, and multiple testing. Applications for his work have included using multiple testing methods to discover drug-resistant mutations in HIV and to determine which pollutants have significant effects on asthma in children. Van der Laan teaches master’s and doctoral students in the biostatistics program.

Van der Laan has received many honors for his advances in the field of biostatistics, including NIH grants for two projects; the President’s Award presented by the Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies; the van Dantzig Award presented by the Dutch Statistical Association; and the Lefkopoulou Distinguished Lectureship at the Harvard School of Public Health. “Mark van der Laan’s accomplishments at such a relatively young age are truly exceptional. I am, and I’m sure my wife would have been, delighted by the choice of Mark as the first holder of the Jiann-Ping Hsu/Karl E. Peace Chair in Biostatistics at UCB,” says Peace.

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At the Scholarship Tea, Lawrence W. Green, Dr.P.H. ’68 (right), meets Michelle Lesar, M.P.H. ’03 (center), recipient of the Lawrence W. Green Scholarship, and her mother, Florence Lesar, also a Cal alumna.

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Brilliant Recognized for Innovative Solutions to World Problems

When a leading search engine company decides to give more than a billion dollars towards solving global problems such as poverty, who does it tap to spearhead the effort? Larry Brilliant, M.D., M.P.H., a leader in global public health efforts and a successful Internet entrepreneur, was the logical choice to become the first executive director of Google.org, the philanthropic arm of Google. In February, Google announced that Brilliant would head its newly founded charitable institution, the mission of which is to utilize technology and resources to address significant problems around the world. The nonprofit focuses on global poverty, health, the environment, and energy. Google has pledged at least a billion dollars to the organization.

Brilliant was also recognized this year with the TED Prize, an award created by the renowned TED (an acronym for technology, entertainment, and design) Conference. The TED Prize recognizes individuals who have shown that they can positively impact life on earth. The award invites recipients to develop one wish to change the world and then provides $100,000 towards fulfilling the wish. The honorees present their wishes at the TED Conference, a meeting attended by influential thought leaders from the business and the nonprofit sectors. Brilliant’s plan was for the establishment of a global early-detection and response system that would alert the international public health community about threats such as pandemics.

An epidemiologist by training, Brilliant has been leading efforts to change the world for many years. In the 1970s he helped manage the World Health Organization’s highly successful campaign against smallpox in India. The campaign vaccinated more than 2 million people and essentially eradicated the disease from the continent. After returning to the United States, he cofounded the Seva Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to curing blindness in Asia and Africa through sustainable solutions. He also cofounded one of the first Internet companies and was an architect of the Well, one of the first online communities. He is a member of the School’s Policy Advisory Council and the recipient of the School’s 2004 International Public Health Hero Award.
Alternative Minimum Tax:  
The New Nightmare for the Middle Class

It has been said repeatedly that the alternative minimum tax (AMT) only applies to high-income individuals. This is no longer true. When AMT legislation was first passed in 1969, Congress failed to tie inflation to income brackets. For example, exemptions for a married couple back then were $40,000. Adjusting for inflation would make that number $82,000 today. Alas, it is only $58,000.

In 2005, only 1.8 percent of married couples with a couple of children and an adjusted gross income between $75,000–$100,000 were subject to AMT. But in 2006, with the same facts, more than 73 percent of married couples will be ensnared by AMT rules. Fortunately, Congress passed legislation in mid-May to create an AMT “patch”—raising the exemptions so that millions of middle-income families could avoid paying higher taxes in 2006. The exemptions rose by $4,550 to $65,500 for married couples and by $2,250 to $42,500 for singles/head of household. If this patch had not passed, the exemption amounts would have reverted back to $45,000 and $2,250 to $42,500 for singles/head of household. If this patch had not passed, the exemption amounts would have reverted back to $45,000 and $2,250 to $42,500 for singles/head of household.

Under the regular tax system, you have gross income, which then is reduced by such deductions as state and property taxes paid, exemptions like child credits, business expenses, etc. But when you go to calculate your AMT taxes, many of the usual deductions and exemptions (referred to by the IRS as preferential items) are phased out (starts at $75,000 for singles and $150,000 for married filing jointly); that is how you end up paying more in taxes.

What kind of tax planning should you do this early in 2006? One strategy would be to identify a deduction that would not be considered a preferential item, then utilize it fully. This would be a very good year to consider making major gifts or capital gifts to charity (like the School of Public Health at UC Berkeley). Use those deductions to reduce your AMT exposure, maybe to the point of getting back to the regular tax system. Otherwise, those extra tax dollars will end up in the U.S. Treasury instead of the School of Public Health funds for supporting programming and scholarships.

Remember, by law, everyone who files taxes is obligated to figure out whether they have to pay AMT. (Line 44 on the 1040 will lead you to a worksheet and form 6251.) So if your total deductions (from itemized deductions like local, state, property and mortgage interest, and multiple child exemptions) come close to the current exemptions for your marital status, you should consult with your financial adviser and start planning now to compensate, as the Congressional patch will not solve this AMT problem for you in 2007 and beyond.

— Rick Zurow is a major gift officer and philanthropic adviser at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health.