



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* NORTH CAROLINA  
*at* CHAPEL HILL

# Academia

Presented by:  
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"Careers for Epidemiologists"  
American College of Epidemiology Workshop  
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# Introductions

## ■ Vic

- Associate Professor, Department of Epidemiology
- Has taught introductory epidemiology since 1980
- Director, UNC Minority Health Project

## ■ Ahinee

- Doctoral Student, Department of Epidemiology
- Prior to entering PhD program served as Biostatistician (7 years)



# Vic's background

- Harvard College, 1961-63
- First National City Bank, NY - programmer-analyst
- BS, Econ., Columbia Univ School of General Studies
- MSc, Econ., London School of Economics
- Part-time programmer-analyst, UNC at Chapel Hill
- MSPH, Health Education, UNC School of Public Health
- Transcendental Meditation teacher training course
- PhD, Epidemiology, UNC School of Public Health
- Postdoctoral fellowship, UNC Epidemiology and Health Services Research Center



# What does an academic researcher do?

- Design, conduct, present, publish research – principal investigator, co-investigator
- Generate funding
- Teach courses and give guest lectures
- Advise/mentor students
- Serve on and chair dissertation committees
- Departmental and university committees
- External service: manuscript and proposal review, consultation, committees, ...



# What must an academic researcher do well?

- Maintain strong scientific and quantitative training, epidemiological methods, and expertise in one or more areas
- Write (and speak) very well
- Be entrepreneurial
- Manage effectively – research projects, staff, students
- Collaborate with colleagues, outside partners
- Achieve and maintain balance



# Benefits and drawbacks

## Benefits

- Intellectual stimulation
- Collegiality
- Satisfaction from helping others
- Appreciation / respect
- Idealism
- Intellectual freedom
- Day-to-day autonomy

## Drawbacks

- Challenge
- Overcommitment
- Ideals vs. reality, soft money
- Constant evaluation
- Faculty are also employees



# Ahinee's background

- Academic Career

- ◆ Entered PhD in Epidemiology Program in the Fall of 2006
  - ❖ Completed Interdisciplinary Certificate in Health Disparities
- ◆ MS, Biostatistics UNC- Chapel Hill (2001)
- ◆ BS, Mathematics Spelman College (1998)
  - ❖ Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa

- Professional Career

- ◆ Worked as a Biostatistician
  - ❖ UNC Lineberger Cancer Center
  - ❖ Institute of Health, Social, and Community Research at Shaw University
- ◆ Researched various topics surrounding minority health and health disparities

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# Experiences as a PhD student

- Reasons for entering PhD program:

- ◆ Acquire additional research skills

- ❖ Study Design
    - ❖ Epidemiologic Methods
    - ❖ Grant writing

- Current Experiences

- Opportunities to engage with faculty on various research projects
  - Flexible schedule
  - Engage in collaborative work with fellow students
  - Demands self-discipline and motivation
  - Continue to utilize statistics skills and expand on research skills
  - Future plans?





# Career goal

*Engage in interdisciplinary research to inform policy changes that will eliminate health disparities, advance social justice, and promote health and opportunity for all*

“Epidemiology is fundamentally engaged in the broader quest for social justice and equality.”  
(John C. Cassel, M.D., first permanent chairperson, UNC Department of Epidemiology)



# Some resources

- AAAS: <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/>
- Job search:  
<http://scjobs.sciencemag.org/JobSeekerX/SearchJobsForm.asp>
- [www.epimonitor.net](http://www.epimonitor.net)
- <http://acepidemiology.org/announce/jobs.asp>  
(some of the links may be defunct). One good one is the Emory University School of Public Health job database



# Questions?

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