EAM Program Celebration

October 4, 2019

Director's Address

I would like to acknowledge the help and input of all the current EAM staff for their hard work on putting this gathering together, and special kudos to Maggie Minett and Lily Sanderson for their hard work on making all the arrangements for our celebration.

Ethel Austin Martin graduated from SDSU 103 years ago and almost 35 years ago she endowed this program at SDSU! One of the individuals who worked with Dr. Martin on the development of this program and who was responsible for my hiring is Carol Peterson. Carol was my supervisor until 2010 and provided me with encouragement and freedom to develop the program into what it is today. I sincerely believe that I would not have chosen to come to SDSU had it not been for Carol. The EAM endowed chair position has been in existence at SDSU for the last 22 years.

During this time we, MEANING ALL OF US, have been busy.

Over the last 22 years the EAM Program has employed 50 full-time staff for 258 person-years, 88 part-time staff for 123 person-years, 76 undergraduate students and has provided partial support for 33 SDSU faculty. The program has received $5.4 million in support from the endowment and almost $20 million in grants and contracts. There have been 140 peer-reviewed journal articles and 22 book chapters, and the program has sponsored 60 national and international renown speakers to SDSU. That is a lot of work – and far more than one person is needed to accomplish this.

None of this could have been accomplished without the support and dedication of the many, many folks that have been part of the EAM program. You truly put the EAM in 'tEAM'. There are two people who have been part of EAM for about as long as I have.

Everyone here knows that Teresa had a few rough years battling leukemia and surviving a bone marrow transplant. She retired several years ago and then graciously came back to work when we were in dire need of her help. She has been, and always will be, an EAMer even when she retires again this next summer. The other EAM "lifer" is Tianna. EAM was fortunate that her brother hated his first day on the job and sent Tianna as a replacement paper cutter when she was just a freshman – that was 21 years ago. I think everyone knows how important Tianna is to the EAM Program. She definitely has been a major contributor to the success of this program.

There are also folks who have been important in the management of the EAM Program. They include members of the EAM Finance Control, SDSU Foundation, and the EAM Nutrition Committee. These individuals provide input into the program and make sure we have the resources we need get the job done.

EAMers have worked on small projects and large projects. I think of EAM in terms of eras based on the large projects that we completed.

First – between 1997 and 2004 there was the SD Children's Bone Health Study – a randomized exercise and calcium supplementation trial of over 200 preschool children in eastern South Dakota who were recruited over a 2-year period and exercised daily for another year by EAM staff to determine how calcium intake & exercise influence bone development.

The second era, beginning in 2000, was the SD Rural Bone Health Study – a longitudinal study of about 1200 individuals plus an additional 700 Hutterites. That's close to 2,000 individuals who were followed prospectively for up to 15 years to determine the influence of lifestyle and genetics on bone, body composition and cholesterol. Some of the people her today talked with these 1,200 individuals QUARTERLY to obtain diet & activity records for the first 3 years of the study – that's close to 5,000 interviews/year and 5,000 diet records to enter and analyze.

The third period from 2005 to 2012 – the National Children's Study. This was the largest study in terms of grant support and numbers of individuals hired. The many trials and tribulations of the National Children's Study has been the source of many articles, both in the lay and scientific literature. Books are even being written on the politics behind the NCS and its failure. The NCS may have been stopped, but it was not because we failed at the job. Of the seven national Vanguard Centers, South Dakota consistently out-performed all other centers in terms of enrollment and follow-up of participants. We were awesome!

The fourth and current period beginning in 2013 is the PRAMS era. The PRAMS is a population-based survey and is one of the many projects we have been working on as part of the maternal child health epi research support we have been providing to the South Dakota Department of Health. During this time, we also worked with several Tribes with the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen Health Board and worked on a relatively large project with Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate.

Today you will hear from some of the people who have worked on these projects.

One of the purposes of the endowment was to advance knowledge in the science of human nutrition through an interdisciplinary approach. Dr. Martin felt so strongly about this that one of the requirements of the endowed chair was that it not be within a college or department in order to ensure that interdisciplinary collaboration occurred across the campus.

This requirement was remarkable and was one of the main reasons this position at SDSU interested me. In 1997 I left my position as Professor of Pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center to come to SDSU to work on the development of this program that Ethel had envisioned decades earlier.

I think Ethel would be proud of the EAM Program. Over the last 22 years we have worked with many, many departments within SDSU, institutions within the country and collaborators around the world.

We have worked on nutritional projects in collaboration with individuals from over 15 countries and many, many institutions across the United States.

At SDSU, we have developed projects with Dairy Sciences on testing the effectiveness of vitamin D fortified process cheese on increasing vitamin D status in older adults to investigating the effects of low phosphate diets on bone development in pigs with the Department of Animal Sciences.

We worked with the College of Nursing on health surveys with the Hutterite communities and with the Department of Rural Sociology on listing of households. We have collaborated with the College of Engineering on the effects of vibration on children's bones, on environmental sampling protocols for the National Children's Study, and statistical modeling of bone growth. I do believe that many of these interdisciplinary projects would not have occurred if the program was located within a college or department.

In the future, the EAM Program will work hard on fulfilling Ethel Austin Martin's dream of an interdisciplinary program that works across colleges, across the state and region, and across countries to promote human health.

Thank you again for making the EAM a success!

-Bonny Specker