The National Taiwan University College of Public Health and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Public Health were announced on Thursday, April 2, as joint winners of the 2020 ASPPH Harrison C. Spencer Award for Outstanding Community Service. The award is presented annually and honors an Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) member school or program with a long-standing, major institutional commitment to engage with communities to improve public health. This is the first time in the history of the award that there have been two awardees. The award is named in honor of the late Harrison C. Spencer, MD, MPH, DTM&H, CPH, the former President of ASPPH, who died in 2016 after heading the Association for 16 years.

In announcing the award, Dr. Sandro Galea, chair of the ASPPH Board of Directors said, “Our heartiest congratulations to the National Taiwan University and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) Colleges of Public Health for their superlative engagement with their communities. Both schools are making a huge difference in promoting the health of their communities and in creating cultures of wellness.”

Dr. Laura Magana, president of ASPPH, said, “Our congratulations to deans Chang-Chuan Chan, ScD and Ali S. Khan, MD, MPH, and their colleagues for being this year’s recipients of the Harrison Spencer Award, the Association’s only institutional award. The specific programs championed by the schools are very different, but both institutions are heavily engaged in both learning from and serving their communities. Their initiatives are science-based, developed in conjunction with community and policy leaders, and address needs identified by community and health leaders. Both schools are making a huge difference in their communities.” The working relationships established through these initiatives have proven vital for containment efforts during this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as evidenced by a low number of confirmed cases in these two communities.

The National Taiwan University College of Public Health is being recognized for their exceptional commitment to serving communities in Taiwan. Key initiatives are operationally aligned with the county and national public health agencies and the national health insurance program and exhibit a high level of collaboration and service integration. The Changhua County Integrated Public Health Service (CIPHS) integrates primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention embracing environmental and occupational health science, social behavior science, epidemiology and biostatistics, preventive medicine, and health care policy and management. Public health services and continuous medical care offered by the CIPHS program are delivered in the community through various innovative health promotion and preventive service initiatives. A second featured initiative focuses on reducing the high rate of gastric cancer on the island of
Matsu. The island has traditionally been poorly served, and medical accessibility, health resources and transportation are limited in the community. The Matsu community-based gastric cancer screening and integrated prevention program has resulted in a steep decline in gastric cancer rates on the island and is seen as a model program in Taiwan.

The University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Public Health is being recognized for their deep and sustained commitment to the city of Omaha and the State of Nebraska. The primary community engagement and service arm of the College is the Center for Reducing Health Disparities. Collectively, the College’s community engagements are addressing disparities in health outcomes among Nebraskans through consistent community engagement, partnerships and advocacy; by promoting translational research that is reducing disparities in health status and health care at the local, state, national, and global levels; and, advancing UNMC’s education initiatives in health disparities.

UNMC has strengthened partnerships with the clinical enterprise and with the state and local department of public health, in part through the creative use of community health needs assessment activities, including assessments of specific underserved populations.

Previous awardees of the Harrison Spencer Award are the Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The Harrison Spencer Award recipients will each receive an award plaque and a $5,000 cash prize (intended to be distributed by the awardee to one or more community partners). The awardees were to have been recognized at the ASPPH Annual Meeting, which was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, they will be recognized by their colleagues at a future ASPPH event.

-----

The Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) is a 501c3 membership organization located in Washington, DC. The Association’s mission is to strengthen the capacity of members by advancing leadership, excellence, and collaboration for academic public health. The Association currently has 128 members, including 64 schools and 64 programs of public health in the US, Canada, Mexico, Taiwan, Lebanon, China and Grenada.