Mailman’s Start Right Initiative Boosts Harlem’s Immunization Rates

Immunization rates within the African-American community in Harlem have surpassed the national average for all African-American children and equaled the national average, according to a study released recently by Columbia’s Mailman School of Public Health. The results are attributed to a highly successful community-based immunization program known as Start Right, launched in 2002 in the Harlem and Washington Heights/Inwood neighborhoods of New York City.

The Start Right Coalition grew out of the Northern Manhattan Community Voices Collaborative—now part of the Center for Community Health Partnerships—as a response to the community’s desire to take action against its lagging childhood immunization rates. The coalition has its base in the Heilbrunn Department of Population and Family Health, whose mission is to address the reproductive, adolescent and child health conditions that confront communities throughout the world, in both settled communities and communities that have been displaced as a result of political or environmental emergencies.

The coalition was conceived, planned and implemented by 23 member groups whose goal is integrating immunization promotion activities into the ongoing social service programs of community service organizations.

According to the study, 2,433 children under the age of 5 were enrolled in the Start Right program in 2003, a fourth of those eligible in the community and substantially higher than the number enrolled in 2002. Among 19 to 35-month-olds, the coverage rate was 90 percent, significantly more than the national rates of 75 percent for the total population. 48 percent for African-Americans, and 75 percent for Latinos. In the New York City network outside of Washington Heights/Inwood, children had the highest rates, 90 percent, surpassing those elsewhere.

Jean Howard Named Vice Provost for Diversity Initiatives

As a central part of ongoing efforts to promote a diverse and intellectually vibrant University community, President Lee C. Bollinger has appointed Jean E. Howard, William E. Ransford Professor of English, to the newly created position of Vice Provost for Diversity Initiatives.

Howard will lead the University’s efforts to increase substantially the representation of traditionally underrepresented groups on the faculty and in the senior administration. She intends to form quickly a Presidential Advisory Committee on diversity initiatives that will be widely representative. This group will assist her in establishing priorities, developing an action plan and creating smaller task forces to deal with particular issues. ‘No one can do this job alone,’ she said. ‘It requires the coordinated efforts of a lot of people.’ She will work collaboratively with deans and faculty across Arts and Sciences and the professional schools.

Howard stresses that initiatives have to be tailored to fit the particular circumstances of different parts of the University. ‘The problems may not be quite the same in the sciences and the Law School, for example,’ she said. ‘Moreover, hiring has to be linked to curricular and programmatic change.’

She explains that the University needs to focus not only on diversity of people, but on the sociology of knowledge.

As Vice Provost, Howard also will promote scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding the particular challenges of diversity in the global context of the 21st century. ‘Part of the work we face is to keep rethinking what we mean by diversity and how best to achieve it. One of the wonderful things about undertaking this work at a university like Columbia is that we can draw on the best ideas of a distinguished faculty to give the project intellectual integrity and to root it in our best ethical traditions.’

‘In making this appointment, Columbia reaffirms its commitment to promoting intellectual excellence, recognizing that this goal can be realized only if the University, in all of its aspects, reflects the diversity of American society and the complex world in which we live,’ said President Bollinger.

Howard, a distinguished scholar of early modern literature and continued on page 11

Global Heads of State and Foreign Ministers Address Columbia Community

In another example of Columbia’s leading role as a venue for discussion on contemporary global issues, the University welcomes a diverse group of world leaders from across the globe from Sept. 20 through this Wednesday. Presidents of Bolivia, Romania, Latvia, Mozambique and Azerbaijan convened at the University to participate in the second annual World Leaders Forum last week and foreign ministers from Colombia and Thailand are slated to address the community over the next few days.

The annual weeklong series of lectures, symposia and panel discussions, is timed to coincide with the fall sitting of the U.N. General Assembly in New York City. Each year, the events are developed in conjunction with the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the Earth Institute.

‘We are privileged to bring together a distinguished group of world leaders during the week of the U.N. General Assembly. Our visiting dignitaries this year hail from five continents and represent a range of cultures, economies and political systems,’ said Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia, in announcing the forum on Sept. 16. ‘We look forward to hearing their thoughts on the way the world is evolving and to engaging continued on page 11