

Forward, Together



When I was asked to serve as interim dean of Columbia Mailman School this past May, I was honored and humbled. Over the past 17 years, the exceptional leadership of Dean Emeritus Linda P. Fried, MD, MPH, took our School to new heights. Now we face a critical juncture. It is a deeply unsettled moment for public health and higher education, yet I have always been buoyed by the certainty that our greatest strength is our community, and that collaboration comes as second nature to those of us in public health. Over these past months, everything I have done has been in partnership with you—our amazing students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends. And every day I see new examples of how we’re weathering this storm and building a better future together.

The cover story of this edition of *Columbia Public Health* spotlights our students and alumni, giving voice to their insights on topics including the unique value of public health (“The Face of the Future, page 10). As they observe, the progress we have achieved on monumental challenges like HIV/AIDS should give us confidence in our ability to innovate and make a difference going forward. We can also take comfort in the knowledge that health is a bedrock value that transcends geography and ideology.

Throughout this magazine, you will see our School at the forefront of research innovation and impact. Our scientists are harnessing AI to uncover ways to improve outcomes on complex diseases like Alzheimer’s (“AI Comes of Age,” page 18). Many researchers are taking a life-course approach, for example, through studies examining three critical junctures in women’s health: menstruation, maternity, and menopause (“Prioritizing Women’s Health,” page 28). And in the face of the worsening climate crisis, they are developing solutions to protect communities worldwide (“The Heat is On,” page 22).

I hope you will join me in finding inspiration in all the creative and consequential work happening at our School.

Wishing you good health,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen J. Sikkema". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathleen J. Sikkema, PhD

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