To: All Northern California Media

FROM: CHC Director Cindy Wolff

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SUBJECT: CSU, Chico’s CNAP is Now the Center for Healthy Communities (CHC)

What’s in a name?

Both accomplishment and aspiration, to take as an example the Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) at California State University, Chico.

Known for many years as the Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion or CNAP, the Center has evolved into an immensely successful campus-based research and community services program. In 2010, for example, it received a $7.4 million, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Public Health to fund its health education outreach. The Center for Healthy Communities now provides programs and services in 19 Northern California counties.

For all their successes, the Center’s staff gradually recognized that not all programs fit neatly into the categories of “nutrition” and “physical activity,” though staying active and eating healthful food definitely support both individual and community health.

According to Dr. Cindy Wolff, the Center’s founder, the desire to expand the Center’s focus—to emphasize the importance of community transformation as well as changing individual and family lifestyles—led to the new name, which became official in January.

A registered dietitian and nutrition professor at Chico State as well as the Center’s Executive Director, Wolff notes that this broader emphasis is expressed in the Center’s new tagline: “The CHC helps create healthy, connected, and empowered communities.”

Stephanie Bianco, the CHC’s Assistant Director, points out that this expanded focus is already apparent.

“We are still implementing services and conducting research,” says Bianco, an associate professor in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science and a registered dietitian. “But we’re increasingly interested in policy change for effective and lasting solutions.”

Central CHC activities now prioritize fresh, locally produced food, for example, an emphasis that also supports local and regional economies.

“We’re going full force in many different directions,” Bianco points out. “We’re not just supporting healthy families. We also provide worksite wellness services and counseling for weight management, nutrition education, medical nutrition therapy, and lactation success. We prepare and serve fresh food for seniors.”
One thing that has not changed, however, is the Center’s commitment to recruiting and training students from Chico State as both interns and employees, to help deepen their educational experience while providing services to area communities, “definitely a win-win-win.”

Dr. Keiko Goto, Assistant Director of Research and Evaluation at the Center for Healthy Communities, sees a connection between her work mentoring and teaching students and the emergence of compelling new research topics.

“In one graduate-level international nutrition class, a student asked about the link between preserving traditional food culture and supporting sustainable food systems. I did not have a clear answer for her, so it made me think. This is a new, important research area.”

Much of Goto’s research into traditional food cultures reinforces the Center’s educational work. Mindful eating, eating together, and preparing fresh food, for example, are food traditions that are now considered potentially beneficial for weight management in this country.

For more information about the Center for Healthy Communities, its programs and services, and its staff, visit the website: www.csuchico.edu/cht.

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