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Chapman University College Unveils Online Education Initiatives with Introduction of Health Risk and Crisis Communication Master's Degree and Certification

World-Renowned Faculty to Teach New Online Program Designed to Prepare Communicators for Health Crises and Disaster Response

Orange, Calif. – Jan. 13, 2009 – Chapman University College will introduce a new Master of Science Degree and graduate certificate program in Health Risk and Crisis Communication (HRCC) as the school's first completely online degree offering in the spring semester which commences Jan. 23, 2009.

The HRCC program, which can be completed in 18 months, is designed to help adult learners and working professionals locally, nationally and across the globe learn to lead effective strategic communications campaigns and provide valuable information to the public, media and other critical stakeholders.

"Chapman University College's new Health Risk and Crisis Communications program will benefit those ranging from professionals who interact with patients and their families on everyday medical issues to emergency responders who react to natural or man-made disasters," said Gary Brahm, chancellor of Chapman University College. "Whether communicating during a crisis or explaining a prognosis or medical procedure to a patient, it's critical that those tasked with communicating critical information understand the importance of their role in delivering information. Offering this degree online will allow a more geographically dispersed student body direct access to this important education program so they are equipped to react to complex communications challenges."

The program will prepare students for leadership roles in health and related fields such as healthcare, pharmacy, nutrition and wellness, government and public policy by

focusing on communications which take place through consumer-provider interaction, the media, health campaigns, international perspectives, mental health, gerontology, oncology and public health.

“While health risk and crisis communications is often associated with disasters and health epidemics, communication is an important everyday function for doctors, nurses and other medical professionals,” said Lisa Sparks, PhD and HRCC program developer. “Everyday, people from diverse backgrounds interact with medical professionals about complex health care issues that are difficult to understand. By educating health personnel to communicate in a style which can be easily understood by their audience, we can help reduce miscommunication, which will result in improved health outcomes, better emergency preparedness and response, and a reduction in medical malpractice.”

The program is being led by Sparks, who is a professor and presidential research fellow of health and risk communication at Chapman University in Orange, and director of graduate students of the Master of Science in health communication in the Schmid College of Science. She has authored and edited more than 10 books in the areas of communication, health and aging with the distinct focus on cancer communication science and has published more than 100 research articles and scholarly book chapters.

Other key HRCC faculty include Melinda Villagran, PhD, and Gary Kreps, PhD. Villagran is an associate professor at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. and affiliate faculty member with GMU’s Center for Risk and Health Communication and the Center for Excellence in Climate Change Communication Research. Kreps is chair of the department of communications at GMU and directs the Center for Health and Risk Communication.

For more information on the Health Risk and Crisis Communication Master of Science and graduate certificate program, visit <http://www.chapman.edu/cuc/healthcomm>. For more information on other Chapman University College degree programs, visit <http://www.chapman.edu/cuc/>.

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About Chapman University College

[Chapman University College](http://www.chapman.edu/cuc/) (CUC) is a nonprofit higher education institution which has been serving the unique needs of adult learners for 50 years. CUC offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, graduate certificates, teaching credentials and extended education programs at campuses throughout California and Washington. Over 6,000 students per session enjoy convenient class times, exceptional faculty, and unparalleled student service.

CUC is one of seven colleges within [Chapman University](http://www.chapman.edu/). Founded in 1861, Chapman is one of California’s oldest, most prestigious private universities and home to over 4,000 undergraduate students and 1,500 graduate students at its beautiful home campus in

Orange, California. *U.S. News and World Report* ranks Chapman a Top School in *America's Best Colleges 2008*. Chapman University is accredited by and a member of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

Find more information on Chapman University College at www.chapman.edu/cuc.