In Memoriam
Margaret "Peg" Ensminger

The Prevention Science community mourns the loss of Dr. Margaret "Peg" Ensminger. Peg passed away peacefully on February 11, 2023 after a long illness. Peg was a long-time member of the Society of Prevention Research, a SPR Fellow, and a member of the Board of Directors. We share a letter from Dr. Rajiv N. Rimal, Professor & Chair, Department of Health, Behavior and Society Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

February 13, 2023

Dear HBS Colleagues,

It is with a heavy heart I share with you the news that Dr. Margaret "Peg" Ensminger, Professor Emeritus in our Department, beloved friend, colleague, and mentor, passed away this weekend.

Peg had a profound impact on our Department, School, and the broader public health community. She leaves behind a deep and meaningful legacy of strength, kindness, and service, and she will be greatly missed.

Peg was a visionary scholar, whose illustrious career linked sociological theory and public health practice. Adopting a life course perspective, she documented how community structures and access to resources could determine wide-ranging social and health outcomes, from academic achievement to social isolation to early mortality. Her famous Woodlawn Project – established in 1966 and still operating to this day – has tracked the same cohort from age 6 through adulthood. Its findings have provided a rich body of work in our understanding of family, poverty, vulnerability, and social structures – issues that touch on all our work in the department. As a prolific writer, Peg shared her work broadly, authoring and co-authoring some 125 papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Her outstanding contributions earned her recognition from preeminent funders and health organizations across the U.S. Peg's work received funding from numerous institutions in the federal government, including the CDC, NIDA, NIMH, NICHD, NIAAA, and HRSA, in addition to foundations and

state health departments. She was awarded Fellow status in the College of Problems of Drug Dependence and elected to membership in Delta Omega Public Health Honorary Society. She was also the recipient of the 1978 Patricia Lyn Baker Award for best paper in Social Science and Policy by the University of Chicago.

However, Peg wasn't just known for her excellence and dedication as a scholar, but for her wisdom and generosity as a mentor and colleague. Many members of the HBS community share memories of Peg's grace and integrity. How she treated everyone she encountered with dignity and respect, regardless of roles or titles. How she could connect with anyone, simultaneously balancing expertise, approachability, and humility. How, even after her retirement, she inquired eagerly about updates from her mentees, colleagues, and friends in HBS.

Peg had a transformational impact on the HBS community. She was with our Department from our earliest days, having joined HBS as a Professor when our Department was founded in 2005. During those formative years, Peg played a critical role in laying the foundation to ensure HBS would be able to thrive for decades to come, including developing the Department's governance structure, which continues to this day.

Throughout her time with the Department, Peg stepped up to lead the HBS community at pivotal moments. She served as an Associate Chair and then as Interim Chair after Dr. David Holtgrave – the Department's founding chair – departed in 2019. Her leadership provided the HBS community with steadiness and continuity during an uncertain time—ensuring we could continue to advance our collective mission.

Peg balanced her scholarly and leadership duties with an unwavering commitment to mentorship. She chaired HBS's Appointments and Promotions Committee for nearly a decade, offering guidance and encouragement to junior faculty. Peg had played a similar role during her many years as a member of the HPM faculty. And her commitment to mentorship never stopped. When Peg retired from HBS in 2021, her CV listed a roster of over 100 students whom she had mentored over the years. Her dedication helped countless former students go on to achieve remarkable careers. Many are now professors, program officers, and leaders in universities, foundations, public health agencies, and nongovernmental organizations around the world—including right here at the Bloomberg School. Indeed, the mentorship Peg provided will remain one of her everlasting contributions to the larger field of public health.

But Peg's legacy extends far beyond the HBS community. She spent four decades as a member of the Bloomberg School faculty. She started her career with our School (then the School of Hygiene and Public Health) in 1983, as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education. She then served as a faculty member in the Department of Health Policy and Management. As President of the Bloomberg School's Faculty Senate from 1999 to 2003, she cultivated broad and varied connections with colleagues across the School. Peg also held joint appointments in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in the School of Medicine and in the Department of Sociology in the College of Arts and Sciences in Homewood.

Our hearts are with Peg's family, friends, and loved ones at this difficult time.

Peg and her husband established the Margaret Ensminger and Sheppard Kellam Educational Fund to support students in our Department and in the Department of Mental Health. The vision is for the

endowed fund to contribute to student scholarships, equally distributed in both departments in perpetuity. If you wish to contribute to this fund to honor Peg, please visit the school's site here (choose "other" and write in the name of the fund).

A collective thank-you to Peg for leaving such an indelible mark in the lives of so many of us.

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