Welcome to the Epi Bio Portal, a monthly newsletter from the Division of Biostatistics and Epidemiology. Our goal is to provide a forum where students, faculty, staff, and alumni have the opportunity to learn more about each other’s work and interests. We invite everyone to share your news and pictures. Our production deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication. Please email your submissions to epibioportal@gmail.com.

MESSAGE TO NEW STUDENTS:

“I am happy to welcome you to UMass Amherst and the Division of BioEpi! Our Division includes students from an impressive range of professional and academic backgrounds, and we are eager to learn from you as you learn from us. We, the faculty, are here to support your transition and help you make the most of your graduate studies, so please know that you can call on any of us to assist you. We are looking forward to an exciting and productive year.”

DR. ELIZABETH BERTONE-JOHNSON
BIOEPI DIVISION DIRECTOR

“As the new Interim Chairperson in the Department of Public Health, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Division of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, and to the 2009-2010 academic year. At this time in our country’s history, health care and public health are pressing issues. The discipline of public health provides a focus on measures of health status in diverse populations. Improved access to the health care system and attention to prevention can improve health outcomes. Epidemiology and biostatistics provide the foundation for guiding many of these improvements. In addition, these two academic disciplines are at the core of research aimed at discovering the cause of diseases, and developing their cure. Your studies, research projects, and eventual publications can make a real difference in this effort. I am happy you have decided to join our talented faculty and throw your heart into this work!”

DR. EDWARD STANEK
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH CHAIR

JOIN US ONLINE @
http://people.umass.edu/beportal
The website has been updated and we now have a blog! Please check the blog often for the latest news!
FACULTY UPDATES: This past Spring, DR. CHASAN-TABER, Associate Professor (Epi), was a Visiting Scholar at the Medical Research Council (MRC) Epidemiology Unit in Cambridge (UK). The unit is part of the Institute of Metabolic Science and the Institute of Public Health at the University of Cambridge, where research teams work with a number of large population based cohorts (i.e. the EPIC-Norfolk Study, part of the largest study of diet and health, involving over half a million people in 10 countries. Doctoral and post-doc students are encouraged to apply to the unit*.

DR. WHITCOMB, Assistant Professor (Epi), has been working on research involving methodological developments in perinatal epidemiology (Whitcomb et al., Paediatr Perinat Epi 2009; 23(5):394-402), markers of inflammation and other factors influencing ovarian function in reproductive aged women (Gaskins et al., J Clin Nut 2009, in press), and the role of cytokines in pregnancy outcomes (Whitcomb et al., J Womens Health (Larchmt 2009; 18(1): 73-78). On May 31st, the Whitcomb family welcomed their son, Samuel. Congratulations! Dr. Whitcomb will be in paternal leave during the Fall. // DR. PULEO has been named the new Associate Dean of Research for SPHHS. She encourages students to stop by her office to share ideas or ask about grant writing and research opportunities*.

STUDENT AND ALUMNI UPDATES:

May '09 Epi PhD graduates Sofija Zagarins and Renée Turzanski Fortner and Epi MS graduate Valerie Hastings presented their research this summer at the Society of Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology (SPER) and the Society for Epidemiologic Research (SER) Annual Meetings in Anaheim, California*.

Second year Epi MS student Brooke Nichols traveled to South Africa to present at the International AIDS Society (IAS) conference in South Africa and has completed her summer internship in Namibia. // Third year Epi PhD student Biki Takashima was awarded a fellowship in Clinical Epidemiology and Multilevel Causal Modeling by the University of North Carolina and the University of Ulm. She successfully completed her training in Germany in August.*

Alumni Spotlight

SOFIJA ZAGARINS, PhD (Epi ’09) graduated this past May and is transitioning into a full-time role as Senior Clinical Research Coordinator for the Behavioral Medicine Research Department at Baystate Medical Center, where she has been working part-time for the past four years. She will be starting a new project on diabetes case management in Hispanics. She is also writing a grant to start an exercise intervention trial for bariatric patients. In her free time, she has recently hiked the Appalachian Trail through Connecticut, and in a couple of weeks she will complete the Vermont portion with her sister.