take a bow!

Carole Ann Kenner (above), dean of the School of Nursing, in February 2010 received the Stan and Mavis Graven Award for Leadership, which honors outstanding contributions to enhancing environmental or developmental care for high-risk infants and their families. Widely recognized as “the mother of neonatal nursing,” Kenner was nominated by her peers for the annual award because of her many achievements in the field of neonatal intensive care. She joined the Northeastern faculty in January.

Phyllis Strauss, Matthews Distinguished Professor of Biology, has received a 2009–2010 Fulbright Scholarship to research DNA repair in mice, work that she is undertaking at Banaras Hindu University, in India. The research follows up on similar work Strauss has done with zebra fish, in which she analyzed the role of a cell protein during an embryo’s early stages. Now she’s hoping to discover whether her findings with fish hold true with mice. Eventually, her research may help doctors predict which human embryos are likely to be most successful before they’re implanted in women during in-vitro fertilization.

Getting the data on health disparities

The way Dolores Acevedo-Garcia sees it, racial and ethnic minorities living in the United States face hurdles that limit their opportunities—problems like poverty, subpar health care, and segregated neighborhoods, to name just a few.

She knows this because the evidence is right there, in the data.

Acevedo-Garcia, associate professor of health sciences and associate director of the Institute on Urban Health Research, is the creator of a database on racial and ethnic equality in U.S. metropolitan areas, called DiversityData.

Begun when Acevedo-Garcia taught at the Harvard School of Public Health and funded with a $2 million grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, DiversityData tracks statistics that can profoundly affect quality of life. It includes such information as which racial or ethnic groups are most likely to pay high-interest-rate loans for their homes, which groups show the highest rates of giving birth to low-weight or preterm babies, and which groups’ children suffer the highest exposure to neighborhood poverty and unemployment.

Acevedo-Garcia wants this collection of data to make a difference in people’s lives. She came to Northeastern last fall in part because of the university’s focus on translational research, which addresses real-world concerns.

Her goal, she says, is to have DiversityData be a “comprehensive and useful data-driven tool for people working toward improving the lives of vulnerable children.”

Growing up in Mexico City, Acevedo-Garcia was keenly aware of the disparities in health and living standards among her hometown’s inner-city residents. Years later, while studying at Princeton University, she saw the same disparities there, too.

“I have a clear memory of all the people working in the dorms and kitchens at Princeton, and practically all were African American,” says Acevedo-Garcia. “And yet it was very rare to find an African American student attending classes there. After that, I was always aware of how opportunities differ for so many reasons, including geographic, racial, and socioeconomic reasons.”

Acevedo-Garcia is involved in urban and equity initiatives in the Boston area as a member of the advisory committee for the city’s Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.

ONE WORLD CAMPAIGN COMES CALLING