

# Mulcahy Addresses Needs of Refugees

**D**r. Ellyn Mulcahy, assistant professor, science, will give two presentations in October as the first of four 2008-2009

JCCC College Scholars, a new program designed to showcase faculty research. All JCCC College Scholar presentations are free and open to the public. Mulcahy's presentations are:

She also cites the need to be sensitive when addressing subjects like prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, birth control and pregnancy, subjects taboo for unmarried Somali Bantu women.

Both presentations are targeted generally to the community, faculty, staff and students who are interested in other cultures and specifically to health care professionals and students who plan to work in community health centers, hospitals or social service agencies. While Mulcahy's area of study is Somali Bantu refugees, she says skills to work with one group can be applied to others.

"You can apply the same level of concern and respect for differences in culture with other refugee groups," Mulcahy said.

Mulcahy, a native of Ireland, received her bachelor of science degree in microbiology with honors from the University College Cork, Ireland, and her doctorate in microbiology from Creighton University, Omaha.

She has lived in Kansas City for five years, during which time she completed postdoctoral research at the University of Kansas Medical Center on prion diseases and HIV neuroinvasion and a master's of public health degree with honors writing her thesis on the *Development and Evaluation of a Health Educational Intervention for Somali Bantu Women Refugees*. When choosing her MPH topic, Mulcahy was interested in women facing health care disparities. She connected with Jewish Vocational Services, Kansas City, Mo., which initiated Practical Orientation for Women Refugees to serve Somali Bantus relocated by the United Nations to Kansas City from refugee camps in Kenya, and served as its health educator from 2005-2007.

She has continued her studies on ways to educate non-literate female Somali refugees about maternal health and relevant chronic diseases. She has published numerous publications on prion proteins and HIV and has articles in review on health education for Somali Bantu women refugees.

For more information, about the JCCC College Scholars program, call 913-469-8500, ext. 2512.



Dr. Ellyn Mulcahy has been at JCCC since 2005, where she teaches microbiology, cell and molecular biology and is helping to implement several grants in bioscience.

■ *Refugees in Kansas; Who Are They? Why Are They Here? What Help Do They Need?* at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 8, in the M.R. and Evelyn Hudson Auditorium, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art

■ *Health Education for Somali Bantu Women Refugees in Kansas City* from 11 a.m.-noon Thursday, Oct. 9, in the Craig Community Auditorium, General Education Building

During the evening presentation, Mulcahy will discuss Kansas City's hidden population – major and minor refugee groups –

and principles for cultural awareness, sensitivity and appropriateness when addressing refugees' unique needs, especially health needs. The audience will be asked to reflect on their own cultural heritage and how this may influence interaction with people of other cultural groups.

The daytime presentation will look at culturally competent health training for Somali Bantu women refugees living in Kansas City to improve health awareness and outcomes for refugee mothers and their families.

"Somali Bantu refugee women have experienced many difficulties common to other refugee women including low literacy, trauma, decreased physical activity and dietary changes," Mulcahy said.