

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION REPORT
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Action Requested: Receive the accreditation report from the College of Public Health at the University of Iowa.

Executive Summary: The College of Public Health offers two professional degrees; two academic degrees in five areas of specialization; and eight joint degrees. All of the programs (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the criteria defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. In June 2011, the College of Public Health was informed that it was accredited for the maximum period of seven years with an interim report due in Spring 2013 addressing public health content in academic degrees. Twenty-one (81%) of the criteria were met; one criterion (4%) was partially met; and four (15%) were met with commentary.

This report addresses the Board's Strategic Plan priority to provide "educational excellence and impact."

Background:

- ◇ **Description.** The mission of the College of Public Health is to promote health and prevent injury and illness through commitment to education and training, excellence in research, innovation in policy development, and devotion to public health practice. The College offers the following programs:

Professional Degrees

- ⇒ **Master of Public Health (MPH)** has subtracks in the five core areas of public health (biostatistics, community and behavioral health, epidemiology, health management and policy, and occupational and environmental health) and in two additional areas – health communication and ergonomics. All MPH students are required to take 18 semester hours of core courses and a practicum, which is the culminating experience of the program. Students typically complete the 42-59 semester hour program in two years and graduate with a fundamental understanding of public health theory and practice and are prepared to function in their chosen specialty.
- ⇒ **Master of Health Administration (MHA)** provides graduates with a comprehensive understanding of patient-centered health care and the skills needed to navigate complex administrative and management systems. MHA students must complete 60 semester hours of graduate credit which typically takes 21 months of full-time study. Students become familiar with the social, political, economic, and financial environments of health care organizations and develop skills in areas relating to their individual career objectives.

Academic Degrees

- ⇒ **Master of Science** has eight areas of specialization – biostatistics; community and behavioral health; health communication; epidemiology; clinical investigation; occupational and environmental health; industrial hygiene; and agricultural safety and health.

- ⇒ **Ph.D.** has five areas of specialization – biostatistics; community and behavioral health; epidemiology; health services and policy; and occupational and environmental health. Ph.D. subtracks are also available in health communication, industrial hygiene, and agricultural safety and health.

Joint Degrees

- ⇒ **MPH/DVM** focuses on an understanding of the intersection of human and animal health.
 - ⇒ **MPH/JD** provides special expertise in public health and legal issues and policies.
 - ⇒ **MPH/MD** combines principles of medicine and public health to improve the health of populations.
 - ⇒ **MHA/PharmD** provides an understanding of public health as it relates to pharmacy practice.
 - ⇒ **MHA/JD** provides an in-depth exposure to and training in both health care management and law.
 - ⇒ **MHA/MBA** provides the traditional strengths of health management and policy with greater exposure to advanced management techniques.
 - ⇒ **MHA/MS or MA/Urban and Regional Planning** strengthens students' credentials as health planners and expands their job options to include administrative positions in the health field and health planning.
 - ⇒ **MS(OEH)/Urban and Regional Planning** combines principles of occupational and environmental health with those of health planning.
- ◇ Purpose of Accreditation. An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met national standards for its development and evaluation. To employers, graduate schools, and licensure, certification, and registration boards, graduation from an accredited program signifies adequate preparation for entry into the profession. In fact, many of these groups require graduation from an accredited program as a minimum qualification.
 - ◇ Accrediting Agency. The accrediting body is the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). It is the only independent agency recognized to accredit graduate schools of public health. Both the professional and academic degree programs offered by the College of Public Health were reviewed during the accreditation process. CEPH criteria for accreditation deal with both process and outcomes.
 - ◇ Review Process. The self-study prepared by the College of Public Health contained the responses to the criteria required by the accrediting body – School of Public Health (mission, evaluation and planning, institutional environment, organization and administration, governance, and resources); Instructional Programs (Master of Public Health degree, program length, public health core knowledge, practical skills, culminating experience, required competencies, assessment procedures, academic degrees, doctoral degrees, joint degrees, and distance education); creation, application and advancement of knowledge (research, service, and workforce development); and faculty, staff and students (faculty qualifications, faculty policies and procedures, faculty and staff diversity, student recruitment and admissions, student diversity, and advising and career counseling).

- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In October 2010, the visiting team identified strengths and weaknesses. Twenty-one (81%) of the criteria were met; one criterion (4%) was partially met; and four (15%) were met with commentary.

The initial report identified two criteria that were partially met; one was changed to met with commentary after the institution submitted a response. There were five criteria that were initially identified as met with commentary; two were determined to have met the criteria after the institution submitted a response.

- ◇ Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.

- ⇒ “Faculty are multidisciplinary with excellent qualifications and relevant backgrounds to support the College’s degree programs.
- ⇒ Faculty is highly productive in research and the College has a vigorous research environment that is competitive at the highest level.
- ⇒ Approximately 75% of the College’s resources come from external research grants and contracts. Faculty FTE external funding is at a high level and has been increasing at a steady pace during the past three years.
- ⇒ There is continued involvement of the MHA alumni which provides current and former students with networking opportunities across the world.
- ⇒ Academic program coordinators do an exceptional job to keep in touch with graduates.”

- ◇ Criteria Partially Met. (Changes implemented or planned by the College are identified in italics.)

- ⇒ Academic degrees. The concern related to the lack of a college-wide structure to assure exposure to a broad introduction to public health outside of the student’s academic discipline. Although students are required to take coursework outside of their primary area of interest, there is no assurance that it will be broad in scope or outside of the student’s home department. Several opportunities exist for students to understand how their specializations contribute to public health goals beyond their disciplines; however, attendance is not required. The site visitors found no apparent public health knowledge base that was uniform across the degree programs; they expected a rationale to be provided for how the public health content supports the goals of the degree programs.

A one semester hour course that addresses the competency areas in public health is under development and will be ready for all MS and Ph.D. students to complete beginning in Fall 2012. The interim report to the CEPH Board that is due in Spring 2013 will describe the status and success of this course in addressing the concern.

- ◇ Criteria Met with Commentary. (Changes implemented or planned by the College are identified in italics.)

- ⇒ Required competencies. The first area of concern pertained to the absence of competencies for the MPH for Practicing Veterinarians. The site visitors were unable to find any evidence that the curriculum had been developed based on competencies. The second concern involved inconsistencies across the College regarding how competencies were used to guide the development of educational programs. The third area of concern related to competency mapping in joint degrees.

Competencies and the courses through which they are met for the MPH for Practicing Veterinarians were identified in the College's response to the accrediting agency. The Curriculum Committee developed a collegiate-wide process to ensure that competency development is consistent across the College. Implementation began in Fall 2011. The competencies and courses through which they are met for the MPH joint degree programs were identified and listed in the College's response.

- ⇒ Faculty Policies and Procedures. There is a perceived lack of a well-structured faculty mentoring program for the untenured faculty; the site visit team suggested a more formalized approach to mentoring.

The Faculty Council together with the Associate Dean for Research and Academic Affairs was asked to develop a policy on faculty mentoring. The plan was approved in April 2011 and will be implemented by December 2011. The text of the plan was included in the College's response to the initial accreditation report.

- ⇒ Student Recruitment and Admissions. There is a lack of an institutionalized process for student recruitment and low enrollment of students in the MPH in Biostatistics. There is high enrollment in the MS degree program in biostatistics; however, that does not satisfy the accreditation criteria that requires the College to offer the MPH or equivalent professional master's degree program in biostatistics. Ensuring this degree program is viable is crucial to maintaining accreditation compliance.

An institutionalized process for student recruitment has been developed by the College and was described in the response to the initial accreditation report. The low enrollment in the MPH Program in Biostatistics was examined and two courses were identified as a deterrent to enrollment at the MPH level. The department is revising the current MPH program curricula to appeal to a broader range of individuals. The program will be revised in AY 2011-12 and a marketing plan will be implemented in AY 2012-13. Increased enrollment is expected to be evident in AY 2013-14.

- ⇒ Student Diversity. The comment relates to the recruitment of a diverse cohort of students. The self-study noted that the majority of effort on student diversity recruitment is focused in the Department of Biostatistics which takes a strong commitment from faculty. Other programs are devoting time at their monthly meetings to discuss best practices that will work for them.

The Diversity Committee was tasked to gather information on current and planned student diversity activities to ensure student diversity efforts include all departments and programs in the College. The Committee is also working with each department to ensure that strategies and objectives related to recruitment and mentorship of students with a diverse background are included in the strategic plan of every department in the College.

- ◆ Accreditation Status. In June 2011, the Council on Education for Public Health awarded accreditation to the College of Public Health and its programs at the University of Iowa for the maximum period of seven years to 2018. An interim report is due in Spring 2013 addressing public health content in academic degrees.