

Committee Report for the Graduate School Abbreviated Review for the

School of Public Health and Community Medicine
Master of Public Health (MPH) Program

University of Washington

May 15, 2007

Committee Charge

Our charge was to assess the academic and educational quality of the MPH program offered by the School of Public Health and Community Medicine (SPHCM), provide the SPHCM faculty with constructive suggestions for strengthening the MPH program, and make a recommendation to The Graduate School regarding the continuation of the MPH program. The MPH program was last reviewed by The Graduate School in 1993-1994. Because the SPHCM recently and successfully completed a comprehensive accreditation review that included the MPH, the current review was more limited in scope than the typical 10-year review.

Summary of the Process

The Committee had the following members

- H. Asuman Kiyak, Professor, Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery (Dentistry); Director, Institute on Aging
- Sandra Adams Motzer, Associate Professor, Biobehavioral Nursing and Health Systems; Vice Associate Dean for Academic Services, School of Nursing

The Committee was provided with the following list of materials:

- Review Committee Materials from the 1994 review
- MPH Self-Study and Accreditation Summary Documents from 2006
- Self-Study Report for Accreditation, February 2006
- Appendices to the Self-Study Report for Accreditation, 2006

The Committee met with the Graduate School Associate Dean Thomas W. Gething; SPHCM Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Frederick A. Connell; and the Graduate School Academic Program Specialist David Canfield-Budde on March 6, 2007. The purposes of this meeting were to clarify the directive to the Committee and review possible questions to be addressed during the review. Specific meetings with key groups and individuals were identified and requested: Graduate Program Directors; Graduate Program Advisors; current MPH students; UW MPH graduates; Extended MPH degree Program representatives; Mark Oberle, Associate Dean for Public Health Practice; representative interdisciplinary program directors; Christine Edgar, Director of Student Services; and community stakeholders, such as employers of UW MPH graduates. The Graduate School was to arrange the meetings, as requested.

The Committee met on March 13, 2007 with **Graduate Program Directors**:

- Coleen Huebner, Health Services (HS)/MCH (Maternal and Child Health) Program
- Bill Lafferty, HS/Health Policy
- Steve Gloyd, HS/International Health
- Bill Dowling, Professor and Chair, HS/Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS)
- Bud Nicola, HS/Community-Oriented Public Health Practice (COPHP)
- Bill Daniell, Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences (EOHS)
- Davis Yanez, Biostatistics
- Steve Schwartz, Epidemiology

On that same day, the Committee met with the **Graduate Program Advisors** for all departments, including advisors from the Extended Degree Program (EDP) MPH and two interdisciplinary programs:

- Kitty Andert, HS
- Carmen Velasquez, HS/MCH
- Rory Murphy, EOHS
- Renee Albert, Biostatistics
- Kate O'Brien, Epidemiology
- Gail Greenwood, EDP MPH
- Carey Purnell, Nutritional Sciences (Interdisciplinary)
- Kevin Schuda, Public Health Genetics (Interdisciplinary)

Due to the short lead time and scheduling conflicts, The Graduate School was unable to schedule any in-person meetings with current students, graduates, and employers. Committee members attempted to contact a variety of stakeholders by telephone. Telephone discussions were held with one current employer of UW MPH graduates as well two MPH graduates and one current MPH student. In response to The Graduate School e-mail invitation to meet with the Committee, seven current and two former MPH students provided their opinions via e-mail. These students were deemed representative of most of the core areas and degree tracks by the Committee.

The **Onsite Review** was held on March 30, 2007, with meetings scheduled with key representatives of the SPHCM: Thomas Wickizer and Gail Greenwood of the EDP MPH; Marke Oberle, Associate Dean for Public Health Practice; Melissa Austin, Director of the Institute for Public Health Genetics; Adam Drownowski, Director of the Nutritional Sciences Program; Christine Edgar, Director of Student Services; and Emily White, Associate Dean for Research. The **Exit Interview** included Elizabeth Feetham, Associate Dean, the Graduate School; Ana Mari Cauce, Executive Vice Provost, Office of the Provost; Emily White, Associate Dean for Research, SPHCM; Frederick Connell, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, SPHCM; and David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School. At this review session, the Committee presented very positive feedback of the academic and educational quality of the MPH program, concurring with SPHCM's self-study report and making similar recommendations for improvement.

The **Review Committee Debriefing Session** was held immediately following the Exit Interview. The Committee made an unqualified recommendation to Dr. Feetham and Dr. Cauce that this outstanding MPH Program should continue.

FINDINGS

Present Strengths of the Program:

- The MPH Program has outstanding faculty who do exceptional research, teaching, and service.
- There is a wide range of MPH specialty tracks and concurrent degree programs available to students, with excellent courses, research opportunities, and clinical practicum experiences.
- Despite needing to generate much of their own salaries via research and training grants,

both faculty and student mentorship is strong. Students praise the education they have received in SPHCM courses.

- SPHCM faculty members have created productive interprofessional relationships, resulting in collaboration across the State, Nation, and world to other public health programs, expanding student opportunities.
- SPHCM has had great success in achieving a global health mission—COPHP and the new Global Health Department have emerged from this expanded international scope and will enhance opportunities for MPH students.
- All MPH students are exposed to core content across many departments in SPHCM, contributing to the breadth of their knowledge and skills.
- There is a thesis or rigorous final product required of all MPH students, which allows graduates to have a strong appreciation of research methods in public health.
- Significant efforts are being made to recruit students and faculty from underrepresented minorities.
- Attempts are being made to assist MPH graduates with job placement. The graduates are competitive but the positions are limited.
- The EDP MPH program has had long-standing success in offering an alternative route to an MPH for working adults.
- The EDP MPH has a significant proportion of underrepresented minority students.
- A clinical public health practicum is required, with statewide placement opportunities in public health practice settings, including rural, underserved, and/or tribal areas. These placements also enhance job opportunities for graduates. These practicum experiences are appreciated by students for providing an applied, practice-oriented experience. However, the balance between such practicum and research experiences is not always clear to students.

History Relevant to the Present Status.

The SPHCM is one of 37 accredited Schools of Public Health, and is ranked amongst the highest in the U.S. It was first accredited in 1970, and was most recently accredited (by the Council on Education for Public Health) in 2006, which resulted in a seven-year approval term.

The School is large. Approximately 200 full-time equivalent (FTE) SPHCM faculty members are employed, of whom 86% are externally funded, and 780 students are enrolled in SPHCM degree programs. There are long-existing, chronic, and widespread financial resource issues for the MPH Program. Despite these resource issues, faculty members are extremely productive and MPH graduates are highly successful.

The Committee concurred with the 2006 self-evaluation report that identified 10 areas of strengths and four areas of weakness. We noted that SPHCM is striving to maintain their strengths and improve on weaknesses.

Areas of Concern:

- The principal focus in the MPH program is educational but nearly all faculty members are in non-tenured positions, supported primarily by research grants.
- Complexity of the MPH program (across multiple departments and several interdisciplinary tracks) contributes to confusion about MPH degree options. This confusion sometimes results in mismatches between student and faculty expectations.
- Meeting diversity goals for faculty, staff, and students remains a challenge.

- SPHCM space is spread over several wings in the Health Sciences building. Another 50% of SPHCM space is off campus. Thus, it is difficult for MPH faculty and students to have easy communication with each other.
- Classroom space is also an issue, with few “medium” sized classrooms (for 20-30 students) available in Health Sciences.
- MPH students in concurrent degree programs or in more than one track report that program planning is often program-specific and inadequate.
- There is a lack of guaranteed MPH student funding (except through EOHS)

Recommendations for Improvement:

- Interdisciplinary programs need more core support for teaching. In an effort to increase such support, SPHCM administration should work with University administration to develop funding strategies, including return of indirect costs, to its two interdisciplinary programs, Nutritional Science and Public Health Genetics. This would provide much-needed core support for these academically successful programs.
- Continue work on the SPHCM MPH website to reduce confusion about degree options and tracks.
- Develop clear program planning guidelines for all students, but especially for students enrolled in concurrent degree programs or dual track programs, delineating any courses accepted by both programs/tracks to meet a requirement, or courses that can be waived by one of the programs/tracks.
- Provide regular advising to MPH students regarding the focus of each program and track, not just at orientation but throughout the student’s career in the MPH program.
- Encourage the EDP MPH to make use of existing technology that can enhance the distance learning experience for its students.
- Consider offering more summer quarter courses to meet student needs.
- Continue efforts to strengthen ties with public health employers and the public health community in this state and region.
- Enhance practicum opportunities for students interested in international health. SPHCM’s excellent reputation in global health stems primarily from its research success, but practicum opportunities for MPH students have not kept pace with its research advances in international/global health.
- Enhance funding to support underrepresented minority recruitment of students and faculty, including outreach efforts to recruit MPH students among these populations.
- Increase student financial support via TA and RA positions in all departments, beyond EOHS where student aid is almost universal.
- Continue to emphasize health disparities, cultural competence, and health literacy as threads throughout the MPH curriculum.
- Improve methods for longitudinal tracking of MPH graduates.