University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Request to Plan a Doctor of Public Health in Community Health Education

Introduction

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro requests approval to plan a Doctor of Public Health in Community Health Education (CIP: 51.2207).

Program Description

The institution provided the following description of the program:

In 1998 the Public Health Practice Program Office (PHPPO) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (hereafter: CDC) rededicated itself to strengthening the public health workforce through Schools of Public Health and CDC training programs. Subsequently, events on and following September 11, 2001 demonstrated that, while progress had been made, the need to improve the public health infrastructure in the United States was still a vastly unrealized goal. Since that time, the CDC has increased activity in its workforce development initiative in conjunction with the American Public Health Association and the Institute of Medicine (IOM). The IOM appointed two task forces to study and make recommendations for (1) Assuring the Health of the Public in the 21st Century and (2) Educating Public Health Professionals for the 21st Century. On November 4th, 2002, the IOM released the second task force's report, *Who Will Keep the Public Healthy: Educating Public Health Professionals for the 21st Century*. The report called for the expansion of public health education in universities and public health agencies. It also called for linking undergraduate and graduate public health education programs to practitioners in the field. The report clearly stated the need to prepare more practitioners and researchers to improve the quality and quantity of the workforce.

To help meet the public health needs of the State and the nation, UNCG is proposing to create a new Doctor of Public Health degree. The proposed DrPH in the Department of Public Health Education (hereafter PHE) will be an innovative program designed to prepare individuals either for careers in academic institutions, where they will educate undergraduate and graduate students for participation in the public health education workforce, or for leadership positions in public health agencies. Based on a participatory research model developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and workforce preparation guidelines developed by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), the program will have three main educational objectives. First, students will master the theories, core functions, and processes that underlie research and professional practice. Second, students will develop expertise in community-based participatory research and evaluation regarding public health programs and policies. Third, students will learn to identify research-practice gaps in the public health system and acquire the skills necessary to study and facilitate the translation of research to practice.

Graduates of the program will have the training and skills to effectively apply health

education research methodologies and public health theories toward solving health problems in communities, and to train others for careers in public health practice. Furthermore, the students' educational experiences will enhance their capacities to foster a greater degree of productive research collaboration between public health organizations and academic institutions.

While some of the above objectives are found in many public health programs, the essence of this program is different. Few current programs in the U.S. include any research focusing on the translation of research to practice. Likewise, few programs require students to apply their skills and knowledge with public health professionals and organizations as a fundamental part of their educational and research experiences.

The specific elements of the program will include the required public health core courses in epidemiology, social science theory applied to public health, biostatistics, health policy and administration, and environmental health. Students will follow this with specialized course work, including dissertation research, in one of three interest areas: prevention research, practice, or surveillance and evaluation. Finally, students will do a collaborative field experience with a local, state, or national public health agency. This experience will provide them with a command of community-based research and/or evaluation methods and a grounding in the challenges of identifying research-practice gaps and translating research to practice.

Program Review

The review process for requests to plan is designed to determine if the proposal is developed to the stage appropriate for taking to the Graduate Council and if so what are the issues that may need further attention. Proposals to plan doctoral programs are reviewed internally. The concerns from the reviewers were summarized in a letter to the Chancellor prior to the presentation to the Graduate Council. That summary follows:

The proposal relies on the CDC's call for expansion of public health education and their research model that would more closely link research and practice. The reviewers thought more attention should be given to the need for more doctoral-level graduates. As one pointed out, the experience in NC is that local health agencies don't hire at the doctoral level except for MDs. And it would be helpful to have examples of other programs that have adopted the CDC's research model as the framework for doctoral education, including any evidence of its success. It would be very helpful to have more attention on the needs the proposed program is expected to meet, with due attention to what can be met with master's-level work in contrast with doctoral-level work.

The resource issue needs more attention, as indicated in the consultants' report, both in terms of the overall programs available on the campus to support this proposed program and what the cost for the program will be.

There was also concern that collaboration with the institutions mentioned, NCA&TSU, Wake Forest University, and UNC CH, needs to be explored in considerably more detail,

since this area would appear one where collaboration and coordination could make the program less costly to deliver.

In a related matter, the planning process does not identify collaboration or consultation with other in-state academic public health programs as part of the process.

Graduate Council
The Graduate Council had, as a basis for its consideration, the proposal to plan the program, the summary letter to the Chancellor, and a presentation to the Council by representatives of the program. In addition to the issues raised previously, the following concern was expressed by Council members: Is it realistic to expect that local health agencies will hire people with doctorates (except for medical doctors)?

Response
One of the main goals of this program is to close the gap between research and practice in the field of community health education with in the broad area of public health. Representatives from UNCG identified the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Kellogg Foundations as all calling for the training of researchers who can bridge the research-practice gap. This will contribute to meeting the growing demand for evidence-based practice in the public health field. The representatives presented evidence of the many organizations and agencies that recruit doctoral-trained health care workers in this field, as well as plans to involve other universities in grant proposals.

Recommendation by the Graduate Council
After consideration of the issues raised by previous reviewers and Council members, the Graduate Council voted, without dissent, to recommend approval for the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to plan a Doctor of Public Health in Community Health Education.

Recommendation
The Office of the President recommends that the Board of Governors approve the request from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to plan a Doctor of Public Health in Community Health Education.

Approved to be Recommended for Planning to the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs

Gretchen M Bataille

Senior Vice President Gretchen M. Bataille **November 3, 2003**