TO: Tih-Fen Ting, Chair, Campus Senate  
FROM: James Hall for the Graduate Council  
(Sharon LaFollette, Chair)  
DATE: May 11, 2011  
RE: PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM REVIEW

The Graduate Council (GC) discussed the Public Health Program Review documents at its meetings on April 4 and May 2 and continued discussions on BlackBoard during this period. GC met with the chair of the Public Health program on May 2. The program was well prepared for that meeting and addressed questions raised by the GC.

GC applauds the efforts of the Public Health Department’s faculty and the department chair in successfully reinvigorating the program since the last program review. These efforts are highlighted in Dean Wassenberg’s memo noting the major revision of curriculum, the well-planned pursuit of accreditation and peak efficiency of instructional resources. We believe the projected activities noted in the program review will continue this success.

The Public Health Department prepares students to become productive members of the public health community to help accomplish the Healthy People vision of healthy people in healthy communities at the local, state, national, and international levels. The Public Health Department offers two professional master of public health degrees (general Master of Public Health (MPH) and the Master of Public Health with Environmental Health Concentration (MPH-EH)), two joint professional degrees and five graduate-level certificates.

The department is currently preparing for accreditation of both degrees by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) and the reaccreditation of the MPH-EH concentration by the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC).

The department offers two joint degrees initiated in Fall 2003. The joint degree between MPH and MPA (Public Administration) is designed for students interested in public health administration. The MPH and HMS (Human Services) joint degree is designed for students interested in a strong public health focus combined with social services positions. Students must be accepted separately by each program to be eligible for joint degree status, and all admission requirements for each program apply for joint degree students. These degrees are available both on campus and online.
The Department also offers five competency-based graduate certificates: risk assessment, emergency preparedness and homeland security, epidemiology, environmental health, and community health education. These will all be offered online by Fall 2011.

After careful consideration of both the review documents and the information shared during our meeting with the Public Health department chair, GC would like to emphasize the following points:

1. The Public Health program review provides a clearly articulated rationale for the design of the MS degree and emphasizes what the Department identifies as its unique features. The review illustrates that the Public Health faculty members are active teacher/scholars who are connected with practitioners and focused on the needs of their students, especially related to certification requirements.

2. The Public Health Department has made great strides since their last 2001 program review in improving the curriculum. In 2006-2007, the department effectively deployed a strategic planning process to prioritize and focus curriculum development, pursue accreditation and reaccreditation, establish an undergraduate minor and additional graduate certificates, and enable both on campus and online delivery of almost the entire program. They have made steady progress to accomplish these priorities.

3. The Public Health Department has also taken steps to improve retention and graduation rates with formalized educational plans and employing technology to manage student records. They are in the process of mapping of curriculum-based competencies to course learning objectives to assess student achievement. The Department has also established an External Advisory Committee with 11 practitioners to formally assess the curriculum.

4. GC notes that, given the growth of the program, the EHAC and CEPH accreditation efforts, and the amount of undergraduate and graduate courses, the four tenured and tenure-track Public Health faculty carry a relatively heavy teaching and advising load. With continued growth, sufficient resources are critical. GC recommends the following:

   - The two identified new faculty hires are a requirement for accreditation. Additional faculty resources may be necessary if program enrollments continue to grow, especially given the program expansion to online.
   - GC recommends a Public Health Department-dedicated secretary and online coordinator support staff position be considered, rather than sharing these resources with other programs.
   - GC recommends formal budgeting for resources to achieve and maintain the accreditations which are critical for the success of the program. The budget should identify necessary accreditation-specific resources such as required travel, dues, and participation in professional organizations.
   - GC recommends that the Public Health Department develop a process to closely track course enrollments and Public Health graduates, specifically for the two degree options and five certificates. This will assist in planning for resources and course scheduling.
5. With the expansion of online course availability and student base, GC recommends that the Public Health Department closely monitor enrollments in on campus and online courses to properly align faculty resources and to assess curriculum. They should also review trends of enrollments in future strategic planning efforts.