

DATE: July 28, 2011

SUBJECT: University of Memphis. Establish a New Academic Degree Program (Ph.D.) in Epidemiology

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Approval

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Epidemiology is the basic foundation of any public health offering. It represents the core discipline around which the other components of public health are built, as epidemiology is concerned with the theoretical background, the research methodology, and the experimental tools that are necessary for the practice of public health. The proposed Ph.D. in Epidemiology program aims to improve the health and well-being of local and regional communities through the University's active involvement with Memphis area public health agencies and practitioners. The program will serve the Memphis area, Tennessee, and the Mid-South region. The Epidemiology program is designed for individuals who intend to teach and conduct research by applying scientific theories and methods and to advocate and promote health policies and interventions. Graduates will be prepared with specialized skills to address problems that are of critical importance to urban areas, such as health disparities and behavioral and environmental influences on population health.

PROPOSED START-UP DATE: Fall 2011

1.1.20A MISSION: The program as proposed is in accord with the provisions of the University of Memphis mission that the University provide programming in health related fields for the urban population and the region it serves.

1.1.20B CURRICULUM: The post-master's program will require completion of 63 semester hours (including courses in the major, a research methods core, and dissertation). Five new courses will be developed. This program requires students to take courses across disciplines, and the curriculum has been developed in cooperation with multiple departments both within and outside of the School of Public Health, including: Biology, Environmental Health, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Health Services & Systems Research, Nursing, and Psychology.

1.1.20C ACADEMIC STANDARDS: A master's degree with an average GPA of at least a 3.0 is required for admission along with competitive scores on the GRE taken within the past five years. Applicants already holding a doctoral degree or its professional equivalent may be exempted from the GRE requirement or substitute other professional school standardized test scores. International applicants attending the University on a visa who are not native English speakers and not graduates of the University of Memphis must submit acceptable scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language. Three letters of recommendation are required (at least one letter must be from a former

professor or instructor familiar with the applicant’s academic background or experience in public health issues). Also required is a personal statement from the applicant indicating present interests and career goals, including how the Ph.D. in Epidemiology will prepare the candidate to achieve these goals. Admissions decisions are made on the overall quality of the applicant’s scholarship and academic standing. Program retention, graduation, and residency requirements are consistent with those of the Graduate School.

Projected Program Enrollment and Productivity:

Year	New Full-Time Headcount	New Part-Time Headcount	Total Headcount	FTE	Graduates
1	3	1	4	3.5	
2	2	0	6	5.5	
3	2	1	9	9.0	1
4	2	1	11	9.5	3
5	3	2	13	10.5	5

Enrollment and productivity projections are based on current demand and available resources to support the program. National evidence supports the need for additional public health educational programs. In the last decade, applications to accredited Schools of Public Health have increased by 76 percent. The University of Memphis School of Public Health has received inquiries from area health professionals about the availability of a doctoral program in epidemiology; many of these master’s prepared professionals have expressed their interest in applying for admission. The first year enrollment projection anticipates that a number of these individuals will enroll. By year 5, a steady process of recruitment and enrollment of 3-4 full-time and 2-3 part-time students is anticipated. The enrollment estimates assume that 25 percent or more of the total enrollments in the School’s programs are students moving from other U of M graduate programs. It is assumed that 75 percent of total enrollments will be in-state students or individuals from border counties within the Metropolitan Statistical Area.

1.1.20D FACULTY: The Ph.D. in Epidemiology is a multidisciplinary program involving faculty and faculty affiliates holding academic degrees in several disciplines including epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental health, social and behavioral sciences, and medicine. Two additional full-time, tenure-track epidemiology faculty will be hired. Counting the new hires, the program will be supported by six full-time core faculty, part-time teaching from the dean of the School, and effort from part-time affiliate faculty. The external evaluators judged the faculty configuration to be adequate to support the program.

1.1.20E LIBRARY RESOURCES: External evaluators for the proposed program have determined that, with the designated \$15,000 for library enhancement, library resources related to epidemiology are adequate to support the program.

1.1.20F ADMINISTRATION/ORGANIZATION: The proposed program will be housed in the School of Public Health. A Director of Graduate Studies within the School will oversee and coordinate the program relative to policy compliance for admissions, curriculum issues, and graduation requirements. A Coordinator of the Epidemiology Doctoral Program will be charged with working collaboratively with the dean, the graduate director, other academic units, and community partners to implement and administer the program.

1.1.20G SUPPORT RESOURCES: The program is designed to draw on local resources and capabilities, including St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center, the Memphis/Shelby County Health Department, The Urban Child Institute, and Methodist University Hospital.

1.1.20H FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT: External evaluators have judged that, with \$2,000 budgeted for equipment enhancement, facilities and equipment are adequate for program implementation.

1.1.20I NEED AND DEMAND: There is an acute shortage of public health professionals nationally, in the Mid-South, and in Memphis/Shelby County. The need is particularly acute for epidemiologists, as epidemiological research is the first step to address the many health issues of the region. Epidemiology is the tool to characterize health problems, determine their pattern and distribution, and measure their magnitude and effect on the well-being of the population. The public health workforce is expected to take on greater responsibilities to address emerging problems such as pandemic influenza, bioterrorism, and the growing epidemics of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. The United Health Foundation finds Tennessee to be one of the least healthy states in the U.S., and the Tennessee County Health Rankings show that Shelby County is in the bottom quartile for state health outcomes (derived from measures of mortality, low birth weight, and general health status). Therefore, health challenges are extreme in the region served by the University of Memphis.

1.1.20J NO UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION: The proposed program will not duplicate existing access to doctoral epidemiology programs at state institutions. Within public higher education, East Tennessee State University offers a doctorate in public health (DrPH) with a concentration in epidemiology which emphasizes rural public health. The University of Tennessee at Memphis offers a master's degree in epidemiology, a complement to the proposed University of Memphis doctorate. Vanderbilt University has recently established a Ph.D. program in epidemiology.

1.1.20K COOPERATING INSTITUTIONS: The program will collaborate with local resources and capabilities, including the University of Memphis Health Sciences Center, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the Memphis/Shelby County Health Department, The Urban Child Institute, and Methodist University Hospital.

1.1.20L DIVERSITY AND ACCESS: A primary goal of the program is to recruit, retain, mentor, and graduate a highly qualified and diverse body of students.

1.1.20M ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION: Program outcomes have been declared that are in accord with accreditation criteria of the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the national accreditation body for this degree. Council on Education for Public Health accreditation will be sought after the program is established in keeping with CEPH guidelines.

1.1.20O EXTERNAL JUDGMENT: Two external consultants in the field conducted a proposal evaluation and site visit. Dr. James Hebert, Director of the Statewide Health Prevention & Control Program and Health Sciences Distinguished Professor from the University of South Carolina Arnold School of Public Health, and Dr. Steven Belle, of the University of Pittsburg Graduate School of Public Health, endorsed the approval of the program, stating: “The proposed program has the potential to offer aspects unique in Schools of Public Health in the United States. The population of this region [Memphis and the Mid-South] has a public health need and faces substantial disparities in health promotion, disease prevention, and care. Having an educational partner with translational research, including policy-making, as a goal, demonstrated strong community presence, and existing favorable community relationships should make this program a positive force in the community.”

1.1.20P COST/BENEFIT: The proposed doctoral program will be funded through campus reallocations, funding for the establishment of the School of Public Health, and additional tuition revenues generated by increased Master of Public Health enrollments. Additional support comes from currently awarded federal and private gifts. A private gift fund of \$50,000 per year has been provided for two years to the School of Public Health from the Ayers Fund at the University of Memphis. The School has received \$2.5 million from the Assisi Foundation, \$1.3 million from the Plough Foundation, and \$100,000 from Baptist Hospital.

1.1.30 POST APPROVAL MONITORING: An annual performance review of the proposed program will be conducted for the first five years following approval. The review will be based on benchmarks established in the approved program proposal. At the end of this period, campus, governing board, and Commission staff will perform a summative evaluation. The benchmarks include, but are not limited to, enrollment and graduation, program cost, progress toward accreditation, library acquisitions, student performance, and others set by the institution and agreed upon by governing board and Commission staff. As a result of this evaluation, if benchmarks are not met during the monitoring period, the Commission may recommend that the governing board terminate the program. The Commission may choose to extend the period, if additional time is needed and requested by the governing board.