

**DATE:** November 15, 2017

**SUBJECT:** New Academic Program  
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Chronic Disease Prevention & Control, Master of Public Health  
(CIP 51.2299—Public Health, Other)

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:** Approval

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**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga proposes a Master of Public Health (MPH) in Chronic Disease Prevention and Control designed to train students as public health practitioners and scientists. This professional program will assist public and private agencies with program development and evaluation as it relates to chronic disease prevention and control through physical activity and healthy eating. The program integrates a biological, behavioral, and ecological perspective to understand how healthy eating and physical activity can prevent and manage chronic diseases at the community, national, and global levels. The traditional ground delivery program is designed for part-time and full-time enrollment of working professionals.

**INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNING BOARD APPROVAL**

The proposed Chronic Disease Prevention and Control MPH program was approved by the UT Board of Trustees on November 3, 2017.

**PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

Fall 2018

**RELEVANCE TO INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND STRATEGIC PLAN**

The program aligns with UTC's institutional mission as "an engaged, metropolitan university." The city of Chattanooga, as well as this entire region, is an area in the midst of transformation with a strong economic and community base and an in-depth urban core. UTC values the community partnerships and connections and as such is committed to supporting the community through programs that make an impact, such as this public health master's degree. This program is an area of strength for UTC and will be offered through the College of Health, Education and Professional Studies.

**CURRICULUM**

The Master of Public Health (MPH) will consist of 43 credit hours, more than the minimum as required by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the MPH accrediting body. The MPH is intentionally designed to include CEPH criteria throughout course implementation and practical experience to prepare for

accreditation in the immediate future. The areas of knowledge basic to public health for CEPH include: Biostatistics, Epidemiology, Environmental Health Sciences, Health Services Administration, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Interpretation. These focus areas are included in multiple courses across the curriculum.

UT Chattanooga intends to seek accreditation from Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) beginning in summer 2018 with accreditation anticipated in fall 2020.

**PROGRAM PRODUCTIVITY**

Faculty in the Department of Health and Human Performance will offer the coursework year-round to students. Students will be admitted to the proposed MPH program using rolling admissions, i.e., they will be admitted every semester.

Beginning in August 2018, UTC projects to enroll 20 students in the inaugural class. Based on CEPH accreditation guidelines, institutions should aim for graduation rates threshold of 70 percent. Programs should strive for graduation rates of 85 percent or higher within five years of matriculation.

	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>
<b>Enrollment</b>	20	38	56	56	56
<b>Graduates</b>	--	--	18	18	18

**PROGRAM DUPLICATION**

During the feasibility assessment process, Kronley & Associates contacted other public health programs in the region regarding potential program duplication. East Tennessee State University’s School of Public Health and the University of Tennessee Knoxville’s Department of Public Health were queried about the potential UTC duplication of the proposed MPH program. Both universities stated that they did not see any redundancy or duplication of the proposed MPH program with their respective graduate programs.

Indeed, the emphasis of the proposed MPH in Chronic Disease Prevention and Control is not only unique to Tennessee, but is also unique in the United States. Currently there exist a limited number of programs with the same public health focus at the University of Texas Austin, Colorado State University, George Washington University, and University of South Carolina.

**EXTERNAL JUDGEMENT**

On September 28, 2017 an external review was conducted by Dr. Olivia Affuso, Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, supported the approval of the proposed MPH program with minor modifications. UTC provided a revised proposal to THEC staff addressing all recommendations.

**STUDENT DEMAND**

In February 2016, UTC contracted with Kronley & Associates to assess the need for a MPH program within the Chattanooga region. The needs assessment consisted of focus groups, individual telephone interviews, and surveys of UTC faculty, students and staff as well as

key leaders in public health, health care, business and industry, potential employers and non-profits in the region. In addition to the students from UTC, there are numerous other institutions in the area which would be excellent sources for potential students including students from other health related fields including medicine, physical therapy, nutrition and nursing. The recommendation of the consultant firm was to pursue further planning for the proposed MPH program.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM GRADUATES**

In 2016, the American Association of Schools of Public Health released *Framing the Future: A Master of Public Health Degree for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. A central element of this report was the findings of the Association's Blue Ribbon Employer Advisory Board about the role of public health. The board concluded that public health is increasingly important to the nation and that there will be an increase in jobs that require an MPH. The report identified 24 "critical areas of public health" that will draw attention and resources in the near future, and non-communicable diseases were identified as a critical area.

Employment opportunities located in the region were identified in the needs assessment. Categories of employers included local health departments (with emphasis on those in rural counties), three large Chattanooga hospitals, the state health department, public schools, various non-profit organizations, private, family, and company-sponsored foundations, and clinics. Additionally, the Department of Health and Health Performance at UTC is very engaged with community-based programs. These community partners will serve as unique opportunities for practicum and internship opportunities for students to gain public health experience.

### **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO DELIVER THE PROGRAM**

UTC has the institutional capacity with its institutional and community emphasis on health, its faculty, facilities and resources to effectively deliver the proposed program.

### **ASSESSMENT AND POST-APPROVAL MONITORING**

An annual performance review of the proposed program will be conducted for the first five years following program approval. The review will be based on benchmarks established in the approved proposal. At the end of this period, the campus, institutional 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, and other metrics set by the institution and agreed upon by governing board and Commission staff. If benchmarks are not met during the monitoring period, the Commission may recommend that the institutional governing board terminate the program. If additional time is needed and requested by the institutional governing board, the Commission may choose to extend the monitoring period.