Mission Statement
To lead the nation in the education of occupational and environmental illnesses and injury, especially among rural and agricultural populations, through interdisciplinary education of graduate students.

OEH offers an MS and PhD degree. OEH students are associated with six focus areas: occupational epidemiology, occupational injury, ergonomics, toxicology, industrial hygiene, and agricultural safety and health. The latter two areas constitute recognized subtracks, and OEH serves as the home to the Graduate College Human Toxicology Program. Through this diverse offering of focus areas, and related courses, OEH serves the College of Public Health as one of five departments need by the College for full accreditation. OEH also serves the university by providing education at the interface between health, occupations and the environment, that compliments the mission of other colleges such as Medicine and Engineering.

Admission Processes and Criteria

- **Student demand and recruitment**
  Based on applications submitted between the years of 2004 and 2008, we have selected 67% of Master’s applicants and 50% of PhD applicants. Of the applicants we selected, approximately 57% enrolled in our Masters program and 50% enrolled in our PhD programs (median values). Our students are recruited from a variety of backgrounds and somewhat depending on the program area they enter. For example, students with an emphasis in toxicology will have a biology/chemistry background whereas our industrial hygiene students may have undergraduate degrees in mathematical or general science areas.

- **Criteria for selection**
  We select applicants for admission based on undergraduate GPA and GRE test scores as well as the strength of recommendations and a personal statement. Our acceptance criteria include having an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or greater and a combined quantitative and verbal GRE score of 1050 for our Masters program and 1100 for our PhD program. We encourage undergraduate applicants to obtain an MS before proceeding to a PhD. Some leeway on acceptance is given based on excellent recommendations and/or prior experience in a program area. Students in our program have higher GRE scores (verbal and quantitative = 1194 for 04-07) compared to the College of Public Health (1177) and Health Sciences (1118) at the University of Iowa, as well as national scores in the health and medical sciences (997).

- **Success in enrolling the highest quality students admitted**
  As a gage of success in enrolling the most highly qualified students; between 2004 and 2008 we retained 8 of the top 10 PhD candidates based on combined GRE scores. This high yield attests to our success in enrolling the highest quality candidates.

- **Success in enrolling a diverse student cohort**
  Our department’s strategic plan strives to maintain a student body containing at least 10% minority students. Since 2004, we have exceeded this 10% minority rate 3 out of the 5 years; our department had its highest minority rate of 19% during the 2006-2007 school year.
• **Financial aid commitments made to incoming and continuing graduate students**
  Total external funds awarded to OEH in FY09 were $12,255,318. Of this amount, $1.6M is devoted per year to student support and related staff and faculty salary support as part of an Educational Research Center (ERC) funded by NIOSH that currently provides tuition and stipend support for 36 students across campus and 22 OEH students. Funds for students also come from two other Centers of Excellence with annual budgets of $1M, as well as a number of R01-style grants. This level of funding allows us to maintain a commitment to fund master’s students at the level of a 25% GRA appointment for at least 2 years, and PhD students at the 50% GRA level for at least 3 years (note that this formula considers a PhD student to be post-MS, i.e. someone who already has 2 years of graduate education.)

**Program Outcomes**

• **Degree completion and time-to-degree**
  Between 2003 and 2008, 13 students earned their PhD in our program taking an average of 5.7 years to complete. This is slightly lower than the UI norm of 5.9 years. A total of 15 students were enrolled in our PhD during the Fall 2008 semester. Also, data provided by the taskforce shows OEH has a high PhD completion rate of 90% – the highest completion rate when compared to other programs in the College of Public Health and third highest out of all graduate programs at the University of Iowa.

• **Graduate student fellowships, awards, honors, and/or publications**
  OEH had a total of six student fellowships between 2004-2008; three T. Anne Clearly International, one Ballard Seashore, and two Presidential fellowships. We do not specifically track all awards, honors and publications obtained by our students. However, grant funds are often available to send students to conferences during which our students have received awards. The American Industrial Hygiene Association has tuition funds that are yearly provided to one of our students. Furthermore, our Masters and PhD thesis/dissertation policy is to include one or three journal manuscripts, respectively, into the body of the thesis/dissertation. We therefore have a high success rate of publishing student-generated research.

• **Graduate student placements**
  A majority of our doctoral graduates either teach at universities/colleges or work for the government.

**Program Characteristics**

• **Program Size**
  OEH (all areas) has had 50 applicants apply for our masters program and 34 for our PhD program between the years of 2004-2008. The OEH strategic plan includes a goal of 2 students per faculty member (18 FTE), one each of MS and PhD, for a total of 36 per year. Over 2004-2008 we have had an average enrollment of 10.6 Masters and 15.6 PhD students = 26. We therefore have had an enrollment under that of the strategic plan goal. However, our enrollment is also constrained by the availability of funds to support students relative to our funding objectives mentioned above. Given that we can only generate funds for one TA per academic year (via a distance education course) and none are provided by the Graduate College, OEH has to rely on external grants for student support. Our recurring level of 25-30 MS and PhD students annually has been consistent with our student-support goals and is therefore a better indication of an optimal student enrollment size. It should also be noted that the department is currently home to an additional 17 MPH students. They typically do not receive funding but represent additional advising effort.

  The Industrial Hygiene (IH) program within OEH offers an MS and PhD as a subtrack in IH. This program provides students with the training needed to compete for positions within the
industrial hygiene profession. Experienced industrial hygienists may then achieve certification (CIH). There are currently 8 MS and 7 PhD students in this program. All students receive financial support through the ERC and related pilot grants.

The Agricultural Safety and Health (ASH) program within OEH offers an MS and PhD as a subtrack in ASH. This program provides training to students wishing to specialize in the occupational safety and health needs of workers in the agricultural sector. This subtrack was created in 2006 and is the only one of its kind in the country. Students take courses specific to ASH topics but also choose electives specific to one of the other OEH focus areas in order to obtain proficiency in that area as well. This new program currently has 2 PhD students. All students receive financial support through the ERC and related pilot grants.

- **Comparison with Other Similar Programs**
  Departments like OEH are not ranked nationally. The UI College of Public Health is accredited by the CEPH, Council on Education for Public Health. This accreditation includes an evaluation of the strengths of OEH relative to similar departments in other schools of public health. By virtue of maintaining CEPH accreditation, OEH can be considered at least comparable to similar departments in the country. A review of peer institutions also demonstrates that our course offerings and admission requirements are similar. Likewise, the Industrial Hygiene subtrack is one of a select group of such programs nationally that is accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET).

- **Strengths and Weaknesses**
  The graduate degree programs of OEH offer students an education in the health-related issues associated with environmental and occupational factors. Graduates from these degrees primarily obtain employment in academic and governmental institutions, with some, primarily IH, students also receiving employment in industry. The degree requirements for an MS and PhD in OEH constitute a number of required courses but are also flexible to allow a student to branch into any one of our focus areas. The strength of having a wide-ranging course offering by OEH can also be a weakness in that the focus areas, other than the two subtracks, may not cover material in each area with sufficient depth.

- **Opportunities for potential growth/improve graduate program excellence**
  OEH has been growing since the inception of the CPH in 2001 from 11 faculty to 18. This growth has allowed the department to expand its course offerings to alleviate the weakness mentioned above. A search is currently being conducted to hire an expert in water quality as it affects human health to expand our ability to offer additional courses in that area. Furthermore, based on a commitment to obtaining excellent faculty in IH, that program is now one of the premier graduate-level IH programs in the country with a student enrollment that continues to grow each year.

- **Other factors that you wish the Task Force to consider in its deliberations?**
  OEH is a graduate-level-only department that must maintain its degree offerings as part of its commitment to, and function within, the University of Iowa. These degrees are also essential to maintaining the accreditation of the CPH.

**Conclusions**

The MS and PhD offered by OEH represent engaging, inter-disciplinary, and flexible degrees that have maintained an ever increasing student enrollment since the inception of the CPH. We plan to allow this increase to continue as the department faculty either expand or develop additional funds for student support. Through our various focus areas, we will continue to satisfy a need to train educators, government officials, and industry safety experts who are equipped to meet the needs of the nations occupational and environmental health concerns.