MISSION

The Master of Public Health (MPH) degree is internationally recognized as the primary professional practice degree in public health. Public health is an interdisciplinary field made up of a wide range of professionals including physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, social workers, environmental scientists, health educators, biostatisticians, epidemiologists, health services administrators, and many others. The shared goal of preventing disease and injury, and promoting and protecting health for entire populations unites the various professional groups.

The mission of the MPH program is to provide state-of-the-art, practice-based education for the current and future public health workforce, and produce graduates who make significant contributions to the public’s health and are recognized as leaders in public health practice at the community, state, national and international levels. This mission contributes to the core instructional, research and outreach missions of the university through the overarching goals of 1) delivering an excellent curriculum based on the MPH core (discipline-specific) and cross-cutting competencies as identified by the ASPH Education Committee, 2) continuing to attract, enroll, retain, and graduate excellent students, 3) providing a variety of meaningful opportunities for student engagement in public health practice activities, 4) producing graduates who make significant contributions to public health practice at the community, state, national and international levels, and 5) developing an organizational and administrative structure that supports program advancement and excellence. In addition, the MPH program adopts several core values of the College and the University including the values of community, integrity, learning, quality, responsibility, social justice, and civic engagement. Student practice takes place in communities and benefits communities, across populations and the world.

ADMISSION PROCESSES AND CRITERIA

Students are admitted to the MPH program in fall, spring and summer. Applications require review by 1) a faculty committee, 2) the department head or a delegate (for subtracks), and 3) the MPH program director. There are many factors considered in applicant selection, including but not limited to undergrad GPA, GRE, MCAT, PCAT, or LSAT scores, relevant public health experience, student goals, and letters of recommendation. Typically, admitted students score well above the other UI health science colleges and national averages on standardized exams (UI Graduate College Data).

Student demand for the MPH program has steadily increased from 26 applications in 1999-2000 to 211 this past year. In addition, the MPH Program has seen steady admission selectivity and yield rates of approximately 60%. These rates exceed many of our peer institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year (summer, fall, spring)</th>
<th>Total Apps</th>
<th>Admitted</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Total Enrolled</th>
<th>Selectivity</th>
<th>Yield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial scholarships are provided to select groups of incoming and enrolled MPH students. Incoming students are eligible for Opportunity Awards. Admitted students are either nominated by their departments or self-identify. Selection criteria include GPA, GRE, public health experience and diversity. These awards enhance recruitment. Enrolled students are nominated by faculty for MPH Tuition Scholarships. Award selection is based on academic progress and noteworthy activities in the MPH program such as volunteerism and leadership. Typically, awards cover the equivalent of one semester of full-time resident tuition. In addition, the MPH Program provides students with travel scholarships to attend professional meetings and complete practicum projects. All scholarships are supported by the MPH tuition set-aside and tuition supplement that comes directly from MPH student
tuition and fees. Occasionally, students are employed as graduate assistants on faculty grants within or outside the college, but these positions are often reserved for MS and PhD students.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

289 students have earned the MPH degree since the program’s inception in 1999. Time-to-degree varies and is based on part or full time status and matriculation in combined degree programs. 94% percent of students graduate within 6 years of initial enrollment. The vast majority (90%) of the MPH graduates are successful in finding employment in a public health field, or going on to fellowships, doctoral or professional degree programs. Public health graduates find employment in many sectors including county and state health departments, hospitals, universities, private companies, federal agencies, non-governmental agencies and international organizations. Positions held by recent MPH graduates include Disease Intervention Specialist, Kansas Department of Health & Environment; State Veterinarian and Director, Zoonotic and Environmental Epidemiology Division, Indiana State Department of Health; Research Field Coordinator, Planned Parenthood of Greater Iowa; Fellow, CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service; and Visiting Scientist, USDA Agricultural Research Service.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

The MPH program draws from a broad array of undergrad majors including Biology, Psychology, Anthropology, Health Promotion, and International Health. Forty-two percent of our students originate from the state of Iowa, and the University of Iowa is the largest feeder school (29% of applications) to the MPH program. The MPH program maintains a diverse student body. In spring 2009, 14.4% were students of color compared with the UI racial/ethnic minority of 9.3%. Four percent were international.

The MPH program includes 17 subtracks, focus areas, professional and combined degree options serving students with a wide array of undergraduate, graduate and professional majors from the arts and the sciences, to business, law, nursing, medicine, pharmacy and veterinary medicine. The MPH program prepares students for practice by instructing them in the five core disciplines of public health and exposing them to practice settings where these disciplines are applied. Students receive training that enables them to safeguard the health of communities, promote healthy lifestyles, provide health education, shape public policy, lead health agencies, and engage in strategic assessment and surveillance. Within the various concentrations, the MPH program addresses many important health issues and allows students to pursue an area of interest in depth. All MPH students complete a 200-hour capstone practicum project in a public health setting.

The MPH program is an essential component of all accredited schools and colleges of public health. According to the Council on Education for Public Health (2005), “The school shall offer instructional programs reflecting its stated mission and goals, leading to the Master of Public Health (MPH) or equivalent professional master’s degree in at least the five areas of knowledge basic to public health. The five areas of knowledge considered basic to public health include biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health sciences, health services administration, and the social and behavioral sciences. A school of public health must provide depth of training in each of these areas, sufficient for a student to pursue a professional degree, concentration, specialty, or major, depending upon the terminology used by the institution.”

All College of Public Health faculty teach, advise, and mentor the MPH students. Thus, students have access to and receive courses from 73 primary faculty, 69 secondary faculty and 74 adjunct faculty representing a broad spectrum of public health fields and areas of expertise. While MPH programs are not specifically ranked, the College of Public Health is ranked 11th among other public universities and 18th among all public and private institutions by US News and World Reports (2008).
MPH Program 2009

CHALLENGES: The MPH is a new degree program in a new college. The primary challenge at this point is to systematically grow the program in response to increasing demand while at the same time discerning essential and vital areas of focus. The lack of an academic home as well as recent fiscal constraints has forced us to limit total enrollment due to lack of classroom and student gathering space. Demands on public health faculty to offset at least 50% of salary through grant support has also limited development of new courses or enrollment expansion of existing courses. Finally, as we enter our 11th year as a college, the time has come to reexamine our structure and areas of emphasis to better align concentrations with faculty expertise and student interest. Thus, we have begun discussions regarding the number of combined degrees, subtracks and focus areas within the program to look at feasibly and sustainability given faculty size, student services and financial support. We are also examining fee structures regarding our professional combined programs since nearly 50% of our students fall into this category. The current UI tuition and fee system does not allow easy tracking of students in combined programs leading to a tuition supplement deficit for our program. In addition, the MPH program is ineligible for UI SIF funding.

OPPORTUNITIES: The MPH program is well-positioned to flourish under the leadership of a new dean, in a ranked college with a growing reputation nationally and internationally. Surveys of current students indicate that they chose the UI MPH program because of the excellent reputation of the program, the learning environment, the fit with personal interests, the fact that the program is accredited, comparatively low tuition and fees, the location, previous positive experience in the college and the availability of combined programs. The new building will allow growth and an improved environment for interaction among students, faculty, staff, and community partners. There is tremendous opportunity to expand the pipeline of applicants through increasing accessibility of the MPH for practicing professionals (doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, etc.), exploring additional combined degrees (a degree with UI’s Urban and Regional Planning program is in process), and creating a 3+2 program with select undergraduate majors at UI and other colleges.

CONCLUSIONS

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS: The University of Iowa, College of Public Health is one of a handful of schools located in a rural environment with an emphasis on rural health. It is one of two MPH programs in Iowa and the only program in Iowa located within a college of public health. In addition, the proximity of the program to a major medical center with the full complement of health professional schools, the state hygienic lab, and a ranked veterinary program are advantageous in student recruitment and placement. Compared with peer institutions, this program has a very strong primary faculty to student ratio of 1:2. Additionally, research faculty teach core courses, and advise and mentor MPH students.

OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE: Our vision is that the MPH degree in the College of Public Health will be nationally recognized as a premiere educational program that is challenging, stimulating, flexible and responsive to the current and future needs of public health practice. The MPH program is dedicated to developing skilled public health professionals who will be cognizant of the political, economic, social and ethical dimensions of public health and will be equipped to assist in shaping health policy and practice. Demand for our program continues to rise as the public becomes more aware of the need for workers who focus on population health in areas critical to health across the globe such as disease detection and surveillance, immunization, food security, worker protection, biosecurity, and the intersection of human and animal health.

The future for MPH graduates is bright. The need for public health practitioners is strong throughout the country and the world. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that employment for public health and human services workers will grow by 24% through 2016, much faster than average when compared to all occupations. Opportunities in rural areas, which often have difficulty attracting skilled experts in this fields, will be especially plentiful [Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008].