University at Albany School of Public Health

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MPH)

HEGIS code: 1214
Program code: 90104

Proposal for addition of new tracks in the MPH degree

MPH Mission

The mission of the University at Albany’s MPH degree program is to prepare students for responsible professional positions in public health practice in governmental agencies, community-based organizations, the health care industry, and other settings. Students acquire practical skills while gaining a broad-based understanding of the scientific, political, social, cultural, ethical, organizational, and economic contexts within which health-related issues occur and are addressed. The University at Albany’s School of Public Health, because of its strong partnership with the New York State Department of Health, and its relationships with local health departments, community-based organizations and the local healthcare industry, is uniquely positioned to offer training in public health practice. This training combines a strong academic background in the core disciplines of public health with multiple opportunities to gain work experience in public health practice.

In addition to training students in the competencies established by the Association of Schools of Public Health, the University at Albany’s MPH degree program aims to:

- Create ethically responsible decision makers
- Emphasize applied training and academically grounded practice experiences
- Train a diverse student body consistent with our location in a public institution of higher learning
- Expose students to learning from a blend of faculty who are leaders in public health practice and scholarship

Background

A primary goal of the University at Albany School of Public Health is to educate the current and future public health workforce. Nationwide and in New York State, there is a significant shortage of well-trained public health professionals with skills needed to assess the health of communities, to mobilize community partnerships, and to develop and implement appropriate policies and programs addressing public health needs.

The Master of Public Health (MPH) degree provides broad-based preparation for professional practice in the field of public health. It includes coursework in all of the
core public health disciplines: epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy & management, behavioral science, and environmental health. In addition, a hallmark of the UAAlbany MPH program since its creation two decades ago has been hands-on internship experiences, thanks to our unique partnership with the New York State Department of Health.

Graduates of the UAAlbany MPH program serve in significant positions in state and local health departments in New York and other states, at the national level in the US Department of Health and Human Services, in private sector organizations such as the American Cancer Society that play key roles in advancing the public’s health, in health care institutions, and in a variety of global health settings.

Because of changes in the educational marketplace, in the School’s accreditation requirements, and in the skills needed in today’s public health workforce, the School has conducted a comprehensive review of the MPH degree and is proposing creation of new tracks in the program, designed to meet the needs of specific target audiences: preventive medicine residents, practicing public health and health care professionals, and students preparing for Peace Corps service.

Addressing a Need

National and statewide studies have demonstrated significant gaps in the public health workforce, both its size and the educational background of its members. These new tracks contribute directly to our mission of strengthening the public health workforce. The Preventive Medicine track will help prepare physicians for leadership careers in public health as part of the New York State Preventive Medicine Residency, a program jointly sponsored by the School of Public Health and the New York State Department of Health. The Public Health Practice track provides a flexible curriculum to meet the needs of current public health practitioners. Many of the courses in that track are offered online, increasing access for students who work full-time and/or who are located at a distance from the Albany area. Over time, we plan to increase the number of distance learning courses offered in that track.

Accreditation

The UAAlbany School of Public Health is one of only 47 schools in the country accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health. As an accredited school, we are required to provide our students with didactic and hands-on learning experiences that will help them develop basic competencies in the core fields listed above as well as in cross-cutting areas such as public health biology, ethics, and systems thinking. The MPH must include at least 42 credit hours of instruction.

In addition to school-wide accreditation, the New York State Preventive Medicine Residency – an interdisciplinary program preparing physicians for leadership careers in public health – is accredited by the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical
Education, which imposes additional requirements addressed in the new Preventive Medicine track within the MPH.

Resources

The proposed addition of new tracks in the MPH program is largely resource neutral. Both new tracks consist of courses that are already offered in the school. Many are currently offered online for students in our two certificate programs. To increase accessibility of that track, over time we plan to convert additional existing in-class courses to an on-line format. Funds are available through the School’s Public Health Leaders of Tomorrow program to provide extra-service pay for regular or adjunct faculty to do those conversions.

**Table 1. Summary of Proposed MPH Program Changes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Change</th>
<th>Rationale for Change</th>
<th>Resource Implications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Add</em> track in Preventive Medicine</td>
<td>Physicians preparing for leadership roles in public health and general preventive medicine need upper level coursework in both analytic and programmatic aspects of public health.</td>
<td>Resource neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Add</em> track in Public Health Practice</td>
<td>A flexible track in public health practice will make a UAlbany MPH more relevant for current full-time public health staff, contributing to our core goal to strengthen the public health workforce in NYS. This track will also be more relevant for students in the Peace Corps Masters International Program. Increasing on-line offerings in this track will make it more widely accessible to students who are not based in Albany.</td>
<td>Resource additive (to the extent that online courses are added)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Impact on combined/dual degree programs**

The School of Public Health sponsors an MD/MPH program, in collaboration with the Albany Medical College, and it has proposed an MPH/MSW program in collaboration with the University at Albany School of Social Welfare (proposal currently under final review at the State Education Department). Students enrolled in the combined/dual degrees will not be eligible to join the new MPH tracks; the addition of these new options to the MPH curriculum will have no impact on the combined/dual degrees.
New Interdisciplinary MPH Tracks

The MPH is inherently an interdisciplinary degree, but all of the existing tracks within
the program have a discipline-specific component, providing students with an
introduction to aspects of a field that go well beyond the core level. Two target
audiences for the MPH degree – preventive medicine residents and practicing public
health/healthcare professionals – already have in-depth knowledge in a field, acquired
through schooling and/or previous experience. Preventive medicine residents are
physicians preparing for leadership careers in public health. To be most effective in their
future roles, they benefit from upper-level coursework in epidemiology, behavioral
science, and health policy & management, not just in a single field. Practicing public
health/healthcare professionals may also benefit from being able to take upper-level
courses in a wide spectrum of public health areas, both to fill gaps in the public health
competencies they have acquired on the job and to address specific educational needs
related to the work they are doing or related to public health leadership development. A
third special audience – students pursuing their MPH in the Peace Corps Masters
International Program – needs targeted coursework in several disciplines (e.g. program
planning and evaluation, HIV/AIDS) to prepare them to be of most value as Peace Corps
volunteers. For all these students, a more cross-disciplinary MPH degree may be
preferable to the existing tracks.

To meet the needs of these exceptional student populations, we are proposing two new
tracks in the MPH program: a Preventive Medicine track and a Public Health Practice
track. Both of these tracks will have additional admission requirements beyond those for
the standard MPH degree. Each track is described in detail below.

Preventive Medicine Track

The UAlbany School of Public Health and the New York State Department of Health
jointly sponsor a preventive medicine residency program accredited by the Accreditation
Council on Graduate Medical Education that prepares physicians for leadership careers in
public health. The two-year program consists of an academic year, during which
residents complete coursework for the MPH degree and a practicum year, during which
residents get hands-on experience in state and county health departments and in private-
sector health agencies. In order to complete all coursework in one year, residents transfer
in 9 credits from medical school courses.

Prerequisites Beyond Standard MPH Admission Requirements

The Preventive Medicine track is open to physicians enrolled in the NYSDOH Preventive
Medicine Residency Program. Physicians enrolled in the program are graduates of
accredited medical schools who have completed at least one year of postgraduate clinical
training and are licensed to practice medicine in New York State. Other physicians with
equivalent previous training or students enrolled in the Albany Medical
College/University at Albany MD/MPH program may select this track with permission of
the preventive medicine residency director.
Course Requirements (42 course credits and 9 internship credits)

Core Courses – 21 credits (including 3 transferred in)
- EPI 501 Principles and Methods of Epidemiology I
- STA 552 Principles of Statistical Inference I
- HPM 500 Health Care Organization, Delivery, and Financing
- EHS 590 Introduction to Environmental Health
- HPM 525 Social and Behavioral Aspects of Public Health
- BMS 505 Biological Basis of Public Health (generally transferred in)
- SPH 680 MPH First Year Seminar (2 credits)
- SPH xxx MPH Capstone Seminar (1 credit)

Track Requirements – 6 credits
- HPM 503 Principles of Public Health
One of the following quantitative/analytic courses:
- STA 553 Principles of Statistical Inference II
- EPI 502 Principles and Methods of Epidemiology II
- EPI 514 Computer Programming for Data Mgmt & Analysis in PH
- HPM 511 Economic Analysis
- HPM 520 Fundamentals of Research Design
- HPM 647 Program Evaluation

Electives – 15 credits (including 6 transferred in)
- 3 graduate level courses selected with approval of the faculty advisor
- 2 courses transferred in from medical school

Internships – 9 credits
All residents complete 12 months of intensive practicum rotations during the second year of the program. Most use those practicum rotations to earn MPH internship credit, but those with significant past experience in public health or preventive medicine may waive up to 9 credits of MPH internships, enabling them to complete their MPH degree early in their practicum year. All residents complete 12 months of practicum rotations even if their MPH is completed early.

Public Health Practice Track

The need for well-trained public health professionals has never been greater, as the field of public health is increasingly called upon to address a wide range of issues impacting the public’s health. Many individuals working in state and local public health agencies and in related parts of the healthcare sector, even in high-level positions, have no formal education in public health. To improve the capability of the health workforce, this School is committed to making public health education as directly relevant and as widely accessible as possible to those working in the field.
The new MPH track in Public Health Practice is designed to achieve both goals by increasing the flexibility of course selection to match the student’s particular needs and by offering as many courses as possible online or in other distance-learning formats to minimize the amount of time a student needs to spend in the Albany area to earn their MPH. The School currently offers online courses in all of the core disciplines of public health, enabling students to finish much of the coursework toward an MPH online. All our online courses are held to the same high standards of rigor and quality as the in-class sections of the courses, in keeping with the requirements of the Council on Education for Public Health, the School’s accrediting body.

The focus of the Public Health Practice track will be on the practical application of the principles, methods and concepts required to carry out public health’s goal of protecting and improving the health of communities. We have several target audiences for this track: practicing public health workers in state and local health departments, the healthcare workforce, and students in the Peace Corps Masters International Program, in which participants earn a master’s degree in a field relevant to Peace Corps service, earning internship credits toward the degree through service as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Prerequisites Beyond Standard MPH Admission Requirements

The Public Health Practice track will be open to individuals with at least three years of experience in public health practice or a closely related field, e.g. infection control or health care administration, OR to individuals pursuing their MPH at UAlbany as part of the Peace Corps Masters International Program.

Course Requirements (42 course credits and 9 internship credits)

Core Courses – 21 credits

- EPI 500/501 [Basic] Principles and Methods of Epidemiology
- EPI 551/552 [Basic] Principles of Statistical Inference
- HPM 500 Health Care Organization, Delivery, and Financing
- EHS 590 Introduction to Environmental Health
- HPM 525 Social and Behavioral Aspects of Public Health
- BMS 505 Biological Basis of Public Health
- SPH 680 MPH First Year Seminar (2 credits)
- SPH xxx MPH Capstone Seminar (1 credit)

Track Requirements – 3 credits

- EPI 503 Principles of Public Health

Electives – 18 credits

- 6 graduate level courses selected with approval of the faculty advisor

Internships – 9 credits

- Students in this track who are experienced public health professionals may apply to waive internship credits based on past experience in public health. Except in
extraordinary circumstances, students will waive no more than 6 internship credits. Internship credits not waived can generally be earned through appropriately mentored projects at their current practice site. Students in this track who are part of the Peace Corps Masters International Program earn their internship credits through health projects carried out during their 27 months of Peace Corps service.
APPENDIX 1

PLANS OF STUDY FOR NEW TRACKS

- Preventive Medicine
- Public Health Practice
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
PLAN OF STUDY FOR MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREE

Name of Resident: __________________________________________________________

Area of Concentration: **PREVENTIVE MEDICINE**

Name of MPH / PMR Advisor: ________________________________________________

**CORE COURSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<th>YEAR TAKEN</th>
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18 TOTAL

**REQUIRED COURSES FOR AREA OF CONCENTRATION**

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1.______ Quantitative/Analytic Course (list of options on back) ________ 3 ______ __________ |

6 TOTAL

**ELECTIVE COURSES RELEVANT TO AREA OF INTEREST** (list of suggested electives on back)

<table>
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<tr>
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**COURSES TRANSFERRED IN:**

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18 TOTAL

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1 Transfer credit and course waivers must be accompanied by an approved petition showing that a comparable graduate course was completed at another institution.
INTERNISHIPS (may be waived on the basis of past public health experience and/or practicum rotations)²

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Course</th>
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<th>Credits</th>
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9 TOTAL

² For waiver credit, submit a waiver petition including a full description of previous public health experience to the Internship Subcommittee for approval.

List of Quantitative/Analytic Courses – Choose 1

EPI 502 Principles and Methods of Epidemiology II
EPI 514 Computer Programming for Data Management and Analysis in Public Health
EPI 553 Principles of Statistical Inference II
HPM 511 Economic Analysis
HPM 520 Fundamentals of Research Design
HPM 647 Program Evaluation

List of Suggested Electives

BMS 505 Biological Basis of Public Health
HPM 501 Policy Analysis
HPM 627 Public Health Education
SPH 569 Public Health Leadership
SPH 589 Emergency Preparedness: The Public Health Perspective

Topical epidemiology courses, e.g. cancer, AIDS, infectious disease, or reproductive epi
Additional quantitative/analytic courses from list above

_______________________________________________________           _______________
Student Signature         Date

_______________________________________________________           _______________
Advisor’s Signature         Date
# PLAN OF STUDY FOR MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREE

Name of Student: ______________________________________________________________

Area of Concentration: **MPH IN PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE**

Name of MPH Advisor: __________________________________________________

## CORE COURSES

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<tr>
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<td>EPI 501</td>
<td>Principles and Methods of Epidemiology I</td>
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18 TOTAL

## REQUIRED COURSE FOR AREA OF CONCENTRATION

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3 TOTAL

## ELECTIVE COURSES RELEVANT TO AREA OF INTEREST (list of suggested electives on back)

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<th>Course</th>
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18 TOTAL

## INTERNSHIPS (may be waived on the basis of past public health experience) – 9 CREDITS

For waiver credit, submit a waiver petition including a full description of previous public health experience to the Internship Subcommittee for approval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Description</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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9 TOTAL
List of Suggested Electives

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPI 514</td>
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<td>EPI 553</td>
<td>Principles of Statistical Inference II</td>
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<td>Infectious Disease Epidemiology</td>
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______________________________________________________           _________________
| Student Signature         | Date |

_______________________________________________________ ________________
| Advisor's Signature       | Date |