The Peace Corps established the Master’s International (MI) Program in 1987 to meet two needs: the increasing demand from overseas for Peace Corps Volunteers with high levels of education and technical expertise; and the desire of universities to provide meaningful international experiences for their students. The University at Albany’s School of Public Health (SPH) is pleased to offer Master of Public Health (MPH) students an opportunity to participate in the Master’s International Program. This paper was prepared to provide an overview of the Program including guidance for those entering the Program about requirements, what to expect, timing considerations, and the benefits of participation.

What is the Peace Corps Master’s International Program?
The MI program allows graduate students who are U.S. citizens an opportunity to combine their academic program with a two-year Peace Corps tour of duty. Students in the UAlbany School of Public Health complete two to three semesters of academic work on campus (or in combination with internet-based coursework) then serve in the Peace Corps for twenty-seven months before returning to campus to complete requirements for the MPH degree (usually another one to two semesters). This is a joint program which involves both the SPH and the Peace Corps. The School establishes the academic requirements for the degree to be earned by the student and the Peace Corps will place the student overseas in an assignment that closely matches the student’s area of study. The student’s Peace Corps experience related to public health will serve as fulfillment of the MPH internship requirement and up to nine (9) credit hours of internship will be waived upon completion of the student’s Peace Corps tour of duty. Students returning to campus following the Peace Corps experience will be asked to serve as informal mentors or advisors regarding the Peace Corps experience for those just entering the MI Program.

Benefits of Participating in the MI Program:
In addition to the substantial savings involved related to the waived internship requirement, MI students at the UAlbany School of Public Health will participate in a special seminar series designed to prepare them for service in the Peace Corps and a successful international experience. Peace Corps Volunteers receive many educational, career, and financial benefits too including: language, cross-cultural, and technical training; transportation to and from the country of service; medical and dental care; twenty-four vacation days per year; deferment of certain government education loans; a readjustment allowance of $7,425 upon completion of service which can be used to
defray tuition costs; and career counseling and job search benefits specific to returned Peace Corps Volunteers (including non-competitive eligibility for selected federal government jobs in agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other federal health and human service agencies).

**Application Procedures:**

Participating in the MI Program requires two applications: one for admittance to the UAlbany School of Public Health’s Master of Public Health (MPH) Program (for more information, see the School’s website: www.albany.edu/sph) and one to the Peace Corps (www.peacecorps.gov/onlineapply). While these applications may be submitted simultaneously, many students wait until they are accepted and admitted to the MPH Program before submitting the Peace Corps application. However, upon acceptance into the MPH Program, it is important for MI candidates to submit their Peace Corps application as soon as possible and admitted MPH students should be sure to include information on his/her participation in the UAlbany School of Public Health MI Program.

It is important to note that there are several steps involved in the Peace Corps ‘application to invitation process’ which can take from six to twelve months to complete and is dependent on a number of factors including turnaround time for reference checks, the medical evaluation, determination of applicant suitability for assignments, and the availability of assignments. However, after receiving the invitation, most depart for their country assignment within two to three months.

The Peace Corps application process: the first step is to complete the PC application form which includes two essays, three references, an employment history, resume, community and volunteer activities, and educational background. Candidates also need to submit college transcripts, information on outstanding student loans and other financial obligations, and a completed Health Status Review.

Step two is the interview. Once the application is received, an interview with a recruiter is arranged to discuss the candidate’s skills and interests, flexibility, social and cultural awareness, motivation, and commitment to the Peace Corps. A successful interview leads to a nomination. Once nominated, the candidate will undergo medical, dental, and eye exams as well as a legal review. Applicants who are medically qualified and legally cleared for Peace Corps service are then evaluated by a PC placement officer and matched to openings resulting in a written invitation for a specific country with a detailed job description, a welcome package with details about the country to be served, and the date of departure. The invitations are usually sent out two to three months (but at least six weeks) in advance of the program starting date. The final step, if the candidate accepts the invitation, is preparation for departure which includes a training period in the U.S. and then further training in the assigned country.
The Academic Program:

During this often lengthy Peace Corps application process, MI candidates will be busy taking courses toward the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree. While there is no single “one size fits all” schedule for MI candidates to fulfill their MPH requirements, they will generally complete at least two full semesters of MPH coursework before beginning the Peace Corps tour of duty. They will need at least three full semesters of coursework and many MI candidates will need to take courses during one additional (fourth) semester, depending on course requirements and course offerings.

It is suggested that MPH/MI students select from the following concentration areas: epidemiology; health policy and management; environmental health; or social behavior/community health. These are the areas most likely to meet the internship requirements for the MPH degree by students serving in Peace Corps assignments.

Guidelines for MI internship requirements and internship waivers are under review and will be issued soon.

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