

## Public Health and Health Sciences

A School offering the B.S., M.A. and Ph.D. in Communication Disorders; the Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.); the B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. in Kinesiology; the B.S. and M.S. in Nutrition; the B.S. in Public Health Sciences; the M.S. and Ph.D. in Public Health; and the Master of Public Health (M.P.H.).

### ■ The Review Process

The School of Public Health and Health Sciences is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), which places primary emphasis on core public health programs but also reviews related health sciences programs within the school. In addition, Communication Disorders programs are accredited separately and on a different schedule by the Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; programs in Kinesiology also undergo a separate AQAD review; and programs in Nutrition also undergo a separate AQAD review, and the B.S. in Nutrition is also accredited separately and on a separate schedule by the American Dietetic Association (ADA). The results of the CEPH review of the School as a whole are reported here. CEPH reviewers were:

Sylvia E. Furner, chair (University of Illinois Chicago)  
Barbara Arrington (University of New Hampshire)  
M. Elaine Auld (Society for Public Health Education)  
Donna J. Petersen (University of South Florida)

### ■ Main Issues

The School of Public Health and Health Sciences (SPHHS) had had its accreditation for a full seven-year term renewed in 2001. In 2004, as a result of a “substantive change” (consolidation of the departments of Biostatistics and Epidemiology [Bio/Epi], Community Health Studies [CHS] and Environmental Health Sciences [EHS] into a single department of Public Health with three divisions) CEPH undertook an early accreditation review. That review resulted in SPHHS being placed on probation, and asked to address “concerns about the organizational structure and the adequacy of faculty resources” in a full accreditation review within two years. That review occurred in May 2007.

The team made a number of specific findings and recommendations:

- **Organizational structure.** The 2004 review was triggered by the consolidation of three departments into one, which raised questions as to the parity of the three subunits within the new Department of Public Health (Epi/Bio, CHS, and EHS) with the other health sciences units that remained freestanding departments in the School. The 2007 team found that “relatively recent developments have addressed past organizational concerns in function, though not fully in structure. ... The public health disciplines, though housed in divisions rather than departments, have regained privilege and status, particularly with regard to faculty appointment, promotion and tenure, equivalent to those held prior to the 2004 reorganization.” The 2007 reviewers note, “the school offers abundant opportunities for interdisciplinary work. The school’s mission, vision and guiding statements clearly indicate alliance with public health values, and the school offers all degree options required for accreditation, plus a number of other degrees.”

- **Faculty resources.** The 2004 review had raised significant concerns regarding the sufficiency of faculty resources in the public health disciplines following an extended period of budget cuts and faculty attrition. CEPH standards require five full-time faculty in each of five core public health disciplines, and CEPH found that this standard had not fully been met in 2004. The 2007 review noted that SPHHS has “experienced rapid growth in new faculty,” and that “each of the five core public health disciplines has at least five full-time faculty.” In addition, reviewers noted, “With the growth in faculty, the school has also maintained a focus on integrating public health practice into the curriculum, including expanded use of guest lecturers and faculty with practice experience and expansion of service and workforce development activities.”

In addition to these topics, which had been raised in the abbreviated 2004 review, the team identified several areas in which CEPH standards were found to be “partially met,” and for which an institutional response was requested. These areas were 1) “deficiencies ... in coverage of the topics of planning, administration, management and policy analysis of health and public health programs” in the core course PH 620; 2) “the school’s insufficiently developed capacity to use the practice and culminating experiences to assess competencies;” 3) the level of coverage of epidemiological content for students in the B.S. and M.S. programs in Nutrition, Ph.D. in Communication Disorders, and M.S. and Ph.D. in Kinesiology; and 4) the absence of “one centralized, coordinated infrastructure responsible for workforce development.” With respect to the other 22 criteria examined, SPHHS was found to be meeting the CEPH standards.

## ■ Student Outcomes Assessment

SPHHS establishes competencies for each undergraduate and graduate area of concentration. Competencies are mapped to courses, and students’ achievement of competencies is tracked at the level of the individual instructor within the context of courses. The department intervenes in cases where students fail to maintain good academic standing. The program uses indirect assessment measures, including course evaluations and exit interviews, for program evaluation and planning.

The CEPH team identified better use of practica and the culminating experience to assess student competencies (see above). In response, SPHHS is taking steps to 1) develop concentration-specific competencies for the practicum (the required practical experience component of each program), and redesign practicum evaluation procedures so as to emphasize assessment of those competencies; and 2) “develop a more unified and systematic method for assessing outcomes for the capstone course using a faculty-developed, discipline-informed, scoring rubric.”

During AY2008-2009 all undergraduate programs will be engaged in a comprehensive review of the status of their student learning assessment plans, identifying both the assessment components already implemented and the targets for the coming year.

## ■ Response to the Review

In August, 2007 SPHHS submitted the required response to the CEPH team report, outlining the steps taken to address the four areas identified for improvement. In October, 2007 CEPH voted to extend SPHHS’s accreditation for a full seven-year term. CEPH requested that interim reports be filed in fall 2008 and fall 2009 detailing progress on improvement plans outlined by the School.