

Kinesiology

A department in the School of Public Health and Health Sciences offering the B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. in Kinesiology.

■ The Review Process

Kinesiology is a department in the School of Public Health and Health Sciences, which is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). CEPH places primary emphasis on core public health programs but also reviews related health sciences programs within the school, which include Kinesiology. The results of the CEPH review are reported separately. In addition to CEPH review, programs in Kinesiology undergo a separate AQAD review, the results of which are reported here. Reviewers were:

Karl Newell (Pennsylvania State University)
Russell Pate (University of South Carolina)
Charlotte Tate (University of Illinois Chicago)

■ Main Issues

The team found Kinesiology to be “recognized internationally as a quality program,” and ranked sixth nationally by the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education. The graduate program was described as “cutting edge in quality, coherence and relevance,” and the “broad and integrative perspective of the students” was “striking.” Research productivity was found to be “excellent,” with “publications in a good mix of disciplinary and interdisciplinary journals.” The strong undergraduate program produces students who are “impressively prepared to enter the workforce or to pursue further study,” and the department provides “essential” service instruction for the General Education program and students in other majors.

The team assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the department and made a number of recommendations:

- **Strengths.** In addition to the strengths cited above, the team found the faculty to be “comprised of well trained, highly committed and productive scholars,” and reported being “impressed with the ‘can-do’ and positive attitude of the faculty in such a constrained resource environment.” Faculty are “excellent and nationally very competitive” in the areas of biomechanics/motor control and exercise physiology. The team endorsed the department’s choice to focus its efforts in these two areas and in the emerging area of physical activity and health. The department’s “tradition of excellence” and its current leadership were also identified as strengths.
- **Weaknesses.** The team identified several weaknesses requiring attention. First, the department is “housed in space that is antiquated and marginally large enough to accommodate current activities. ... Addressing these needs appears to be critical to maintenance of the department’s excellent reputation.” Faculty growth cannot be accommodated within existing space, which represents a “major deficiency” of the unit.

Second, the department uses research overhead funds to support its routine operating costs, when “those funds would be much better spent on investments in research infrastructure and teaching/clinical faculty.” Third, the team found the department to be “understaffed, particularly in the area of student support services.” Finally, the team noted that the department’s “affiliation with an accredited school of public health is potentially a great resource, but it is one that has not been fully exploited.”

- **Recommendations.** In line with the assessment of strengths and weaknesses, the team recommended urgent attention to the department’s physical facilities and increased resource allocations for operating support and support and technical staff. In addition, the team recommended that “faculty should be expanded in areas that link directly to the resources available in the School’s public health units.” In terms of the curriculum, the team encouraged the expansion of offerings related to the physical activity and health area. In doing so, however, the team warned that the department should not “dilute the scientific rigor of its programs in order to expand its enrollment and diversify its offerings.”

■ Student Outcomes Assessment

The Kinesiology department reviews course evaluation data and data from the exit survey of seniors to evaluate its undergraduate program and identify areas for programmatic improvement. This evidence has prompted improvements that support undergraduate education, including revamping of the undergraduate advising system.

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

The department expressed satisfaction with the team’s “generally very favorable” review. The department noted that an additional faculty member has already been hired in the physical activity and health area, and that another search may produce further growth. The department also reported allocation of resources from the School to add one support staff position. The department described a “two-step plan” to advance excellence, building on the team’s recommendations. The first step is to seek resources from the central administration to improve facilities, support staff, and general operations. The second step is to build the physical activity and health area. This would include an emphasis on health/fitness activities, to respond to high student demand related to certification programs and training and workforce development. Resources for a full-time non-tenure-track instructor in this area would also be sought from the University. The department noted that while there was some support for increasing integration of Kinesiology into Public Health, care must be taken to “remain an independent academic discipline.”