

SPECIAL REPORT

of the

**ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL, ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL,
GRADUATE COUNCIL AND PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL**

concerning

**THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF
BIostatistics AND EPIDEMIOLOGY, COMMUNITY HEALTH STUDIES AND
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES
TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

Presented at the
630th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
April 22, 2004

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ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

The Academic Matters Council has reviewed the proposed Consolidation of the Departments of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Community Health Studies and Environmental Health Sciences to the Department of Public Health. Our review was done with two primary criteria in mind: (1) potential impact on the viability and quality of existing academic programs, and (2) possible consequences for the future competitiveness and vitality of programs and scholarship in areas affected by the consolidation.

In reviewing the rationale and structure of the consolidations related to the new Department, the Council believes that existing academic programs will not be adversely affected. It would appear that this consolidation might offer opportunities to strengthen existing programs through increasing the critical mass of faculty in the new Department and possibly stimulating new interdisciplinary options for students.

At its meeting on April 7, 2004, the Academic Matters Council voted to approve the creation of the new Department of Public Health.

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL REPORT

New Department of Public Health
from the existing Departments of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Community Health Studies,
and Environmental Health Studies

The Decision

In response to the request of the Rules Committee that the APC consider Provost Seymour's proposal to form a new Department of Public Health from the existing departments of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Community Health Studies, and Environmental Health Studies, the APC voted 7 - 0 to approve the proposal.

The Rationale

In response to invitations issued to all faculty in the affected departments, one faculty member attended the April 5, 2004 meeting of the APC. He indicated his support for the consolidation, and that this support was shared by the great majority of faculty in the three consolidating departments.

No negative impact on academic programs involved in the proposed consolidation is apparent. Although there had been some concern on the part of some faculty that consolidating the departments might be a step backwards from departments to divisions, there was also a realistic sense that one or more programs might be lost altogether if the consolidation did not occur. There were also some concerns about how the consolidation might affect accreditation, but reassurances are now in place that there will be no detrimental effects so far as accreditation is concerned. There is the expectation that limited resources will work better under the new structure, new multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches to research are likely, and freeing up some of the faculty administrative roles will permit the development of new courses.

GRADUATE COUNCIL REPORT

At its meeting on March 11, the Graduate Council discussed all four consolidation proposals in the Provost's January 7, 2004, memo to Ernest May. The following action was taken on Proposal #4:

Proposal #4 - Consolidation of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Community Health Studies, and Environmental Health Sciences into a new Department of Public Health

After discussion and input from Council members in one of the affected departments, the Council concluded the consolidation would have no impact on graduate programs from a student perspective, and might stimulate more interdisciplinary courses and research. Therefore, a motion was passed unanimously to "approve Proposal #4."

PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL REPORT

April 2, 2004

New Department of Public Health by consolidating Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Community Health Studies, and Environmental Health Sciences

Professor Phil Nasca and Interim Dean Eileen Breslin presented the background and rationale for the formation of a Department of Public Health from the existing departments of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Community Health Studies, and Environmental Health Sciences. They discussed the benefits of the new configuration, and the gains to be realized in resources, morale, and cooperation. Benefits of the new combination of programs include an enhanced clarity of identity, stepping up of the School's ability to obtain external sources of support, five core area accreditation, and creative collaboration among colleagues.

Recent faculty departures have severely depleted the departments. The proposed consolidation would sustain critical mass and promote an interdisciplinary approach among faculty in teaching and research. The committee was assured that governance and operational concerns would receive attention and resources from the university and would be smoothly managed.

The consolidation will directly affect approximately 175 graduate and 1,000 Gen Ed students. The potential advantages of the consolidation to the students will be an increase in the number of elective courses now being offered. The consolidation is expected to foster trans-disciplinary teaching of new and existing courses. Because public health research and practice usually brings together a number of disciplines to address a specific public health problem, it is of prime importance that students gain a sense of these collaborative approaches as part of their academic experience.

No funds are requested in connection with the proposed realignment. The committee was assured that the integrity of the undergraduate and graduate teaching mission would be maintained. This consolidation brings together programs that were divided into separate departments some years ago in the hope that each would grow substantially. From budget and program management perspectives, the "re-consolidation" of these programs appears to be very sensible and to require no additional resources.

The Program & Budget Council voted unanimously to approve the creation of the new Department of Public Health.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the Consolidation of the Departments of Biostatistics and
38-04 Epidemiology, Community Health Studies and Environmental Health Sciences to the
Department of Public Health, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 04-034.