

THE FIELD

Public health is the science and art of protecting and improving the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention, as described by the Association of Schools of Public Health. Professionals in the field perform a wide range of public health services. They assist individuals by linking them with health services, particularly in areas where health care is otherwise unavailable. They also assist communities by monitoring health status and mobilizing community partnerships to identify and investigate health problems and hazards. Many are educators informing and empowering people about health issues. Others work on a broader level, developing policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts and evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services. Lastly, public health professionals work to maintain integrity of our community health efforts by enforcing laws and regulations that protect our health and safety and by ensuring a competent public and personal healthcare workforce.

There is no minor available in public health sciences.

THE MAJOR

The public health sciences major prepares students for entry-level public health positions and for graduate programs, including medical, physician assistant, and nursing school. The major consists of four components: 1) mathematics or statistics course, 2) foundation courses (provide theoretical grounding for later coursework), 3) public health core courses and electives, and 4) courses chosen in an area of focus related to public health. The required public health courses are designed to introduce students to the five recognized public health core competencies: community health education, health policy and management, environmental health sciences, epidemiology, and biostatistics.

Students must complete a math course (Math 121 or higher) or a statistics course (Psych 240, Res-Econ 212, Statistics 111, or Statistics 240). For the foundation requirement, students complete at least nine credits in the natural sciences. Courses include biology, biochemistry, chemistry, environmental science, kinesiology, microbiology, nutrition, or physics. Students must also complete nine credits in the social sciences. Courses may be selected from a range of departments including anthropology, economics, education, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, and women, gender, sexuality studies. Students need to take the seven required core public health courses and three additional public health electives. Required public health courses include PUBHLTH 129: Health Care for All; PUBHLTH 301: Principles of Community Health Education; SPHHS 150: Great Challenges in Public Health and Health Sciences; PUBHLTH 203: Introduction to Environmental Health Sciences; PUBHLTH 323: Public Health Communications; PUBHLTH 224: Epidemiology in Public Health; PUBHLTH 223: Introduction to Biostatistics; and PUBHLTH 494CI: Public Health Capstone Course (IE). To fulfill the focus area requirement, students take a total of 12 credits from courses of their choice that are related to the study of public health.

INTERNSHIPS

Public health majors are strongly encouraged to participate in internships as they provide insight into solving public health issues. Students receive academic credit for completing internships. Through internships, students receive real-world experience and professional connections.

INDEPENDENT STUDIES

Independent studies are for students who conduct research with a faculty member in the department or serve as an undergraduate course assistant. Through independent studies, students receive academic credit and mentorship from their supervisors.

HONORS

Many public health majors are in the Commonwealth Honors College program (CHC). These students have the option of pursuing a departmental honors (DH) track within the program. DH is an advanced scholarship track of CHC. Please contact the public health departmental honors director with any questions.

STUDY ABROAD

Studying abroad can greatly enhance a student's learning experience. Majors are encouraged to contact the International Programs Office to find a program that best supports their academic and career goals (413-545-2710, umass.edu/ipo).

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The public health sciences major prepares students for entry-level positions within the public health field; research positions; graduate studies; and medical, nursing, and physician assistant school. The interdisciplinary curriculum was designed to be flexible in order to prepare students for the many diverse opportunities present in the health and medical fields.

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH SCIENCES

The School of Public Health and Health Sciences encompasses four undergraduate majors—communication disorders, human nutrition, kinesiology, and public health sciences—all of which focus on enhancing the health and well-being of the public. Students examine nutrition and speech pathology, muscle physiology and mechanics, as well as fitness and wellness. The curriculum provides grounding in the sciences of the human body and then takes an interdisciplinary approach to apply that knowledge to the health needs of our communities. Graduates work as researchers, consultants, administrators, therapists, trainers, community health workers, fitness trainers, and other careers related to improving the public's health. Many students pursue graduate work in exercise psychology and biomechanics, speech pathology, audiology, preventive medicine, physical therapy, and other fields.

Office: 103 Arnold House

Phone: 413-545-2732

Website: umass.edu/sphhs/public_health