

IUPUI GAC Reviewer Form

Reviewer:

School:

Department:

Email:

Date Reviewed: Jan. 15, 2009

Documents Reviewed: Proposal for a doctor of philosophy program in epidemiology on the Indianapolis campus

Summary of Proposal:

The proposal is for a doctor of philosophy program in epidemiology in the Department of Public Health, IUSM, on the Indianapolis campus. The department currently offers a M.P.H. degree in epidemiology. A case is made that there is a shortage of epidemiologist in the state of Indiana and nationwide as well as a shortage of faculty required to train future epidemiologists. The program expects to accept 5 to 10 new part-time students each year. Students will take a combination of required and elective course work for a total of 90 credit hours including mentored research dissertation hours. Students with an M.P.H. degree may transfer up to 18 credit hours. The curriculum consists of existing courses as well as numerous to be developed courses. Currently the department employs two full time faculty with an additional three faculty members to be hired by this summer. These new faculty resources are needed to launch the program.

1. Are the goals clear and achievable?

The intent and focus of the program are clearly stated. However, as of now the goals are not attainable due to lack of faculty and potentially other resources.

2. Is the program academically sound?

It will be once it can be implemented. However, 6 of 12 required courses (including the Research Seminar and Dissertation Research) and 9 of 19 elective courses do not exist at this point. What is the timeline for developing these new courses?

3. Are faculty resources available to offer this certificate without undercutting other key missions of the unit?

Not at this point in time. The viability of the program appears to depend on adjunct faculty with full appointments in other departments. Three new faculty members are to be hired in the department of Public Health by this summer. This additional faculty resource will be vital. What is the current status of the search and screen process? No mention was made in the proposal regarding the rank of the faculty members to be hired. It will be important that

at least two of the new faculty be at the senior level with active, externally funded research programs.

The proposal needs to indicate how the new courses are to be staffed. Are they to be taught by the new faculty to be hired or by the adjunct faculty?

With respect to the adjunct faculty: How many of them are currently teaching the existing courses? How many have agreed to teach the new courses that need to be developed? And how many are currently engaged in externally funded research and have expressed interest in mentoring a doctoral candidate in epidemiology? Considering the high number of Ph.D. candidates to be enrolled in this program, it is unclear whether there will be sufficient faculty with endorsement to chair dissertation committees.

4. Is there overlap, either real or potential, with any other unit that could harm the program or be exploited to help the program?

No.

5. My recommendation, comments/concerns regarding this proposal...

A) The case for a Ph.D. program in Epidemiology is well stated although it would be helpful to draw a clearer distinction between the general need for epidemiologists (without a doctoral degree) in Indiana and the rest of the country vs. the need for Ph.D.s in this field to, for the most part, fill academic positions and provide the necessary education and training.

B) Resources appear to be rather limited. No financial support for this program at the university and/or school level is mentioned. It is unclear whether the listed state funds have already been appropriated.

Also, this new PhD program will require the development of numerous new courses. However, there is no mention whether sufficient room capacity is available.

C) The program appears to impose a considerable additional burden on the adjunct faculty members. Since there is additional expectation to teach courses and mentor doctoral students, the question arises whether faculty will be compensated/rewarded.

D) It appears that the program envisions the enrollment of part-time students only. It is unrealistic to expect part-time students to complete the program in 3-4 years. More likely program completion will take twice as long. Furthermore, even with the anticipated five full time faculty members in the department, the stated program capacity of more than 20 students by Year 4 appears to be overambitious.

To support anticipated enrollment numbers it would be helpful if actual figures could be provided. For example, it is stated that the Department of Public Health continually receives inquiries about a doctoral program (p. 14). How many inquiries are received annually? Also, how many of these individuals decided to enroll in online doctoral programs or alternate health-related programs (p. 14)? With regard to the survey that the department conducted in September 2008, how many of the respondents who expressed interest in a doctoral program have enrolled in such program online or continued with a different doctoral program?

E) What are the credentials for the primary dissertation advisers (other than being regular faculty members of the department and full members of the Graduate Faculty)?

F) Program Evaluation: When and how often will assessment be performed and what are the actual benchmarks?

RECOMMENDATION: For all the reasons stated above it is recommended that the proposal be tabled until additional faculty has been hired and needed resources have been secured. Furthermore, the program should aim at a much smaller student cohort in its first years. In the meantime, it may be feasible to increase the number of students in the M.P.H. program considering that in health state agencies the shortfall of graduates at this level is 48% compared to 16% at the doctoral level (CSTE, 2006).