



UNC CHARLOTTE

Office of Academic Affairs

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October 21, 2015

Dr. Jeffrey Leak
Faculty President
UNC Charlotte

Dear Jeff,

In accordance with the procedure concerning degree name changes, I am forwarding a request from the College of Health and Human Services to change the Master of Science in Public Health degree to a Master of Public Health degree.

The justification for the change is attached. In accordance with the procedure (<http://provost.uncc.edu/policies/degree-name-changes>) I ask that you consult with the Graduate Council as appropriate and that the name changes be considered for faculty approval at the next Faculty Executive Committee and Faculty Council meetings.

Sincerely,

Joan F. Lorden
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Attachment

cc: Nancy Fey-Yensan, Dean, College of Health and Human Services





UNC CHARLOTTE

College of Health and Human Services
9201 University City Boulevard
Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Department of Public Health Sciences
(704) 687-8742

October 6, 2015

Dr. Joan F. Lorden
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
UNC Charlotte
Charlotte, NC 28223

Dear Provost Lorden,

The Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of North Carolina Charlotte is seeking approval to rename our Master of Science in Public Health (**MSPH**) degree (CIP 51.2201) to the Master of Public Health (**MPH**) degree (CIP 51.2201) as of August 15, 2016. This name change would affect all currently enrolled MSPH students, as of that date, and these students would then enroll in and graduate with an MPH degree.

The existing curriculum and our commitment to preparing public health practitioner scholars would not change. Students would continue to complete 36-39 credit hours of classroom instruction (21 credits of core courses, 9 credits of concentration specific courses and 6-9 credits of electives); a 3 credit field experience or internship; and a capstone experience (either a 3 credit project or 6 credit thesis) for 45 credits total. All students would continue to take the required research classes that ground our students in research methods and which makes our emphasis on training practitioners/scholars unique.

In the field of public health education, the MPH is the primary professional degree that undergoes accreditation by the Council of Education on Public Health (**CEPH**). All CEPH education standards are based on the MPH. Students seeking to obtain graduate level training in public health look for universities offering the MPH. Indeed, the MPH is the professional degree offered by the 56 universities with CEPH-accredited school of public health status and the over 100 universities with CEPH-accredited programs of public health. As of this date, we are the only CEPH-accredited school or graduate program of public health that does not offer an MPH degree.

CEPH considers the MSPH and MPH as equivalent professional degrees and the majority of students seeking a master's degree in public health enroll in an MPH program; approximately 2% to 20% of master's students enroll in an MSPH degree program.

As the primary professional degree, the MPH is traditionally a practice-oriented degree. CEPH has long denoted 5 core areas required of any public health professional master's degree: biostatistics, epidemiology, social/behavioral determinants of health, environmental determinants of health, and public health administration. Our original intent in using the MSPH nomenclature was to reflect our expanded core curriculum, which included additional research course work that employers indicated, was desired in a master's prepared public health workforce. CEPH is broadening the core MPH curriculum to revise its presentation of core content to include other domains such as evidence-based practice, evaluation, and research. Thus, our reason for calling ourselves an MSPH will no longer exist.

As the MPH is the primary professional degree, we increasingly are finding that our offering of an MSPH is a source of confusion, rather than of distinction, among potential students and employers, especially those coming from clinical backgrounds. When potential applicants ask about the difference, we are able to describe the differences and similarities in a positive way. But we have no idea how many potential students do not ask for clarification and simply do not apply. We believe that our pool of applicants is reduced by not offering the more recognized MPH degree. Thus, the name of our degree may restrict our applicant pool to those students who are local to our area and have little choice as to whether they obtain an MSPH or MPH.

Another benefit is the potential for more dual degrees as an MPH program. For example, an emerging trend is for inter-professional education such as an MPH-MSW dual degree. Further, physicians interested in obtaining a public health credential look for an MPH degree.

Given the increasing competition from other schools and programs within our state, the surrounding area and online institutions, it behooves us to pursue a timely solution. And, given the current economic climate, requesting additional resources to establish a second degree that is little different from the existing degree is inadvisable.

We also have considered the consequences to our CEPH accreditation. While a name change would constitute a "substantive change" in CEPH parlance and require official notification to CEPH, this change should not affect our existing accreditation as we are not planning any major changes to the curriculum or to the mission and vision of our public health program. More importantly, the name change to MPH would be considered a positive as it brings us into alignment with all of the other CEPH-accredited graduate programs and schools of public health.

We have consulted our faculty members and our MSPH students, particularly those first year students who would still be enrolled at the proposed time of the degree change. Department faculty members are in favor of this change to an MPH. The students are neutral to positive about the change. A few students expressed concern about losing the science (aka "research") connotation of the MSPH. However, the same research courses will be required for the MPH and students will still have the option to complete a thesis.

To summarize, we believe this request to rename our MSPH to an MPH is a net positive for the University and the UNC system. Having the more recognizable MPH designation will contribute to the competitiveness of our program among potential students and align our program with other peer programs and institutions. We are proposing a cost-effective solution with few negative consequences for the institution or our students.

Please feel free to contact either of us if you have any questions. Dr. Sell can be reached at 704/687-5682 or ssell@uncc.edu and Dr. Warren-Findlow can be reached at 704/687-7908 or jwarren1@uncc.edu.



Susan Sell, Ph.D.
Interim Chair, Public Health Sciences
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Jan Warren-Findlow, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
MSPH Graduate Program Director