Healthy People 2020 and Education For Health
Successful Practices in Undergraduate Public Health Programs

Westminster College
Salt Lake City, UT
Baccalaureate in Public Health Program, School of Nursing and Health Sciences
Undergraduate Bachelor of Science (BS) and Minor in Public Health
http://www.westminstercollege.edu/publichealth
Han S. Kim, PhD
Director, Baccalaureate in Public Health Program
(801) 832-2176
hkim@westminstercollege.edu

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT
Westminster College of Salt Lake City, Utah, is a private, urban, four-year independent college dedicated to student learning. The College is a community of learners with a long and honored tradition of caring deeply about students and their education. The College offers liberal arts and professional education in courses of study for undergraduate, selected graduate, and other innovative degree and non-degree programs. Students are challenged to experiment with ideas, raise questions, critically examine alternatives, and make informed decisions. The College encourages students to accept responsibility for their learning, to discover and pursue their passions, and to promote more equitable and sustainable communities.

The College’s program offerings are organized and administered through four schools: the School of Arts and Sciences; the Bill and Vieve Gore School of Business; the School of Education; and the School of Nursing and Health Sciences. Students choose majors in schools that will best assist them in achieving their academic goals and career interests. Students are offered a choice of 42 undergraduate programs and majors, as well as graduate degrees in public health, nursing, business administration, technology management, education, professional communication, and psychology. All baccalaureate majors have a solid experience in courses offered through the School of Arts and Sciences.

Westminster College has approximately 2,455 full-time and part-time students representing 29 states and 24 foreign countries in the college’s daytime, evening, and weekend classes. Seventy-six percent are undergraduate students and 24% are graduate students. Approximately 87% of undergraduate students attend full-time (12 hours per semester or more), and 13% attend school part-time. About two-thirds of the graduate students attend part-time. Approximately 93% of undergraduate students receive some form of financial assistance with an average financial aid award for full-time undergraduates of over $14,000.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
The Undergraduate Baccalaureate in Public Health Program was initially proposed to the College during Fall Semester of 2009. The College had previously created a Certificate and Master of Public Health Program two years prior to this point. The rationale for a new undergraduate major at Westminster College was threefold.

First, there is an increasing need to expand the public health workforce. Both nationally and locally, there is an increasing demand for trained public health practitioners. Second, there is a movement within the public health profession to expand the training opportunities for public health practitioners beyond the current Master of Public Health (MPH) degree. Presently, the entry-level degree for public health remains the MPH. However, there is a growing movement within public health to expand public health education to the undergraduate levels and beyond. Third, a small liberal arts college is an ideal teaching environment for the multidisciplinary nature of public health. A public health degree has the potential to create academic synergies between all the schools at Westminster College. A liberal arts environment can truly enhance an undergraduate public health program by expanding traditional public health education into the humanities, and creating public health practitioners that have superior creativity, flexibility, perspective and values. Conversely, a public health program can enhance a
Healthy People 2020 and Education For Health
Successful Practices in Undergraduate Public Health Programs

liberal arts environment through its holistic nature, acting as an integrative program incorporating disciplines from all programs and schools.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Undergraduate Baccalaureate in Public Health Program is housed within the School of Nursing and Health Sciences at Westminster College. The administrative leader of the School is the Dean. There are two divisions within the School, Nursing and Health Sciences. The MPH Program and the Baccalaureate in Public Health Program are both part of the Division of Health Sciences. The Division of Nursing consists of undergraduate and graduate clinical nursing programs. The MPH Program and the Baccalaureate Program both have directors that administer each program. Furthermore, the Director of the Baccalaureate Program is also the assistant director for the MPH program.

There is significant collaboration between the MPH and Baccalaureate programs. First, all faculty members within the Baccalaureate program (with the exception of a few adjunct faculty) also teach in the MPH program. Second, several electives are offered as split graduate/undergraduate courses. This has several advantages. We can increase the number and variety of elective courses, which is sometimes difficult in a small program. In addition, the interaction between older, more experienced graduate students and undergraduate students can be very positive for the overall learning experience. Finally, our student activities committee (named p-hat, for Public Health Activities Team) includes both graduate and undergraduate students. This promotes interaction between students and facilitates mentoring of undergraduate students by graduate students.

The Program is housed within the School of Nursing and Health Sciences because the school is focused on health careers and health coursework. No other School offers any health-related coursework. Being housed in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences allows cross-collaboration on coursework between the Nursing and Public Health faculties, with cross- and team-teaching of courses. Furthermore, the Program is housed within the Division of Health Sciences because of the non-clinical nature of the curriculum. The Division of Nursing is a clinical division, and houses all of the nursing programs.

Although the Program is housed in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, there is extensive collaboration between the Program and other Schools and Departments. Because public health is so multidisciplinary, there are several required courses from the School of Arts and Sciences (in social sciences, language, math, humanities, physical sciences, and English). There are also suggested electives from the School of Business and the School of Education. Furthermore, there is cross-instruction between Public Health faculty and faculties of other Schools. Public Health faculty in particular has taught coursework related to health in other departments and Schools, including the School of Nursing, School of Education, and the Honors Program.

Outside of Westminster College, the Public Health Program has extensive ties to local and state public health agencies around Utah, as well as several nonprofit institutions in the Salt Lake City area. These agencies include the Utah Department of Health, Utah Department of Environmental Sciences and Health, Salt Lake Valley Health Department, Davis County Health Department, Utah County Health Department, Summit County Health Department, and Tooele County Health Department. Nonprofit organizations with ties to the Program include Utahns Against Hunger, the Utah Food Bank, and the Susan Komen Race for the Cure.

Because of the existing MPH Program, no new full time faculty members were hired for the Program. However, several adjunct faculty members were recruited to support the increase in courses taught. Training of new faculty members was consistent with Westminster College philosophy; Westminster College has extensive professional development, and because it is primarily a teaching institution, the focus of the professional development is enhancing student learning. Professional development for faculty include such topics as increasing student involvement in class, use of technology in pedagogy, service learning, project-based learning, coaching and mentoring, and team-teaching.
Healthy People 2020 and Education For Health
Successful Practices in Undergraduate Public Health Programs

CURRICULUM

The mission of the Public Health Program at Westminster College is to prepare those interested in a career in public health or health sciences with the proper tools necessary to promote health and prevent illness in Utah, the Intermountain West, the United States and the world. The program is grounded in the belief that effective public health practitioners are properly trained in the core competencies of public health, which include analytic and assessment skills, policy development and program planning skills, communication skills, cultural competency skills, community dimensions of practice skills, basic public health science skills, financial planning and management skills, and leadership and systems thinking skills. We accomplish this while embracing the core values of Westminster College: impassioned teaching and active learning, respect for diverse people and perspectives, collaboration and teamwork, personal and social responsibility, college-wide excellence and high ethical standards.

The graduate of the Public Health Program will be prepared to:

1. Apply critical thinking skills to recognize the public health problems of vulnerable populations on a social and community scale.
2. Describe multidisciplinary and ecological public health issues and concerns.
3. Describe the biological basis of health and disease from a population viewpoint.
4. Understand the role of health promotion and health prevention in public health.
5. Recognize the role of quantitative methods in addressing Public Health issues.
6. Utilize health policy and health administration to positively affect public health.
7. Understand the role of the environment on health.
8. Apply cultural competencies to public health problems.
9. Utilize knowledge in global health issues and global consciousness to address health issues worldwide.

The undergraduate degree in public health can be completed in four years. A total of 70 - 76 credits are required for completion of this academic major. Requirements include coursework in the humanities, life sciences, behavioral and physical sciences, foreign languages, and public health.

The following public health coursework is required for completion of the BS in Public Health

- PUBH 101 – Introduction to Public Health
- PUBH 110 – Health Professions and Organizations
- PUBH 210 – Infectious and Chronic Diseases
- PUBH 250 – Global Health
- PUBH 305 – Epidemiology
- PUBH 310 – Social and Behavioral Factors in Public Health
- PUBH 320 – Environmental Health
- PUBH 490 – Capstone Public Health Research Project

Students are required to complete 16 hours of public health or other approved electives. Public health electives currently offered are listed below:

- PUBH 300A – Introduction to SAS Programming
- PUBH 300B – Emergency Preparedness in Public Health
- PUBH 300C – Program Planning & Evaluation
- PUBH 300D – Public Health Nutrition
- PUBH 300E – Concepts of Global Citizenship: Service Learning in Thailand

The academic minor requires 22 credits to complete. Requirements include 14 credits of Public Health coursework and 8 credits of approved electives. The following public health coursework is required:

- PUBH 101 – Introduction to Public Health
- PUBH 210 – Infectious and Chronic Diseases
- PUBH 250 – Global Health
Healthy People 2020 and Education For Health
Successful Practices in Undergraduate Public Health Programs

PUBH 305 – Epidemiology
The capstone course (PUBH 490) is a culmination of the public health degree. It provides students an opportunity to synthesize all previous course work and practical experience to generate an evidence-based public health research project. Students, with the guidance of a faculty mentor, choose a research topic, and by attending periodic workshops and lectures and by submitting intermediate assignments during the duration of the research project, generate a submission-quality research paper and present the results in a seminar. Faculty mentors provide guidance along each step, and lectures and workshops provide information on topics such as statistical analysis, scientific writing, literature search, data management, IRB submissions, and presentation skills. The course culminates in a presentation of the research project by the student at a seminar, and potentially submission of a publication-quality research paper.

Although there is no formal preceptorship course, several students have been placed in unpaid internships throughout the public health community in Utah. This is optional, although most students do participate. Placement sites have included the Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake Valley Health Department, Summit County Health Department, Davis County Health Department, and several non-profit health organizations in Salt Lake City. Because there is no formal course framework, the duration and expectations for the internships vary widely according to the placement site. There is discussion in the Program to formalize a preceptorship course to meet the demand and to standardize the duration, expectation and quality of the experience.

STUDENTS
The program consists of three full time faculty members and two adjunct faculty members. There are approximately 24 students who have declared public health as their major, with an additional 10-15 in lower level coursework that have not yet declared a major. The program was initially designed to accommodate only 15-20 students. Therefore the demand for the program is already higher than anticipated. We underestimated the degree of interest among undergraduate students for the major.

100 and 200 level coursework is open to any students interested in public health. We are currently considering applying to have two of our courses, Introduction to Public Health and Global Health, listed as liberal education requirements, which would allow students to enroll in these courses to fulfill liberal education requirements. However, because of the high demand for courses among just public health majors, we are postponing this until additional faculty can be added to the Program.

300 and 400 level coursework typically requires prerequisites, and priority is given to public health majors (due to the excess demand).

LESSONS LEARNED
The Program is in its second year, and by most measures, it has wildly exceeded our goals. Student interest and demand is extremely high, and we anticipate that students will soon choose Westminster College because of our nonclinical health course offerings. In order to assure a positive beginning, we achieved several goals prior to submitting the proposal to the rest of the faculty.

First, we had a faculty champion who felt very strongly about a public health major, who was committed to seeing it through. This faculty champion was able to sell the program to the administration, which gave us great institutional support. It became an institutional priority for the College to initiate the new major.

Second, we spoke one-on-one to all faculty and staff who might be impacted by the new major. This included faculty who teach courses outside of the public health major but are impacted because we require these courses for the major, faculty whose majors may lose students to the public health major, and to science faculty, who were curious as to the rigor of a public health major, particularly in the area of the physical sciences. This allowed us to address any concerns faculty had and not be surprised during the faculty meeting when we presented the
Healthy People 2020 and Education For Health
Successful Practices in Undergraduate Public Health Programs

full proposal. It also identified faculty allies in other schools and programs who would openly support the new major.

Finally, we spoke with our board and the public health community about the need for a baccalaureate in public health, and about potential collaborative agreements specifically with the baccalaureate program (we have several agreements with the MPH Program). Support was very high in the public health community. Furthermore, because we are the first baccalaureate in public health in the State of Utah, we were able to increase the level of excitement even further among the public health community.

In implementing the program, we were able to take advantage of the excitement among the non-public health faculty to collaborate on coursework and student activities. For example, we have a course in service learning and public health to ruin Thailand, which we offer in conjunction with the School of Education. This has been a highly successful course, and has become the model for global service-learning courses in the College. We are also collaborating with the Humanities Department to offer literature courses that focus on health and death. Public Health faculty members are now members of the Honors Department, and teach a course called “Science, Power and Diversity”, which focuses on public health and health disparities. One of the rationales for this program was that a liberal arts college was ideal environment in which to offer a major as multidisciplinary as public health. A main goal of the program was to create synergies between departments. We have succeeded wildly in this regard. We have shown that the liberal arts environment offers a very different public health experience that goes far beyond mere vocational training, and fulfills the original goals of a liberal arts education. It is a win-win situation for both public health and the liberal arts tradition.

There were challenges during both the implementation and the maintenance of the program. Our main challenge is a product of success, and that is the increasing student interest in public health. We were correct in predicting that a number of students were interested in health, but not clinical health. This has created large classes and waiting lists that are threatening to overwhelm the faculty. We are currently negotiating with the administration for additional faculty support, but this is something that is best anticipated before implementation.

Another challenge that we encountered was integrating the baccalaureate program with the MPH program. We assume that incoming MPH students have little or no formal public health training. However, baccalaureate students do have extensive training in epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, global health, etc., and therefore some of the graduate coursework may be repetitive. A solution to this is to create a BS/MPH program, which is being considered in our long-term plan. This program would graduate students with both a BS in public health and an MPH in five years instead of the typical six years. This would allow us to minimize the potential repetition in coursework as well as attract motivated undergraduate students who are dedicated to a career in public health.

Beyond the BS/MPH program, our future plans include incorporating the new AAC&U/ASPH Undergraduate Public Health Competencies into our curriculum, exploring project-based pedagogies similar to the efforts at Harvard University, as well as explore service-learning pedagogies similar to Tulane University’s undergraduate program. Finally, because of the popularity of global health, we are also exploring adding more coursework in global health beyond our global health course and our service-learning trip. This would include experiential courses that incorporate coursework on campus and service learning abroad.