BACKGROUND AND REQUEST

Kent State University
Master of Public Health

Recommendation

Kent State University's Master of Public Health degree meets the Chancellor's standards for graduate degree programs. The Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study (RACGS) voted to endorse the program after reviewing the concerns of some RACGS members that the proposed degree duplicates existing graduate programs in the state.

Request: Kent State University seeks approval to offer a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree.

Program Background and Purpose: In the fall of 2009, Kent State University established a College of Public Health "to develop and promote sustainable public health solutions, in collaboration with community organizations, through education, research and service for populations served by Kent State University campuses and beyond". Kent State University sought and received the Chancellor's approval to offer a Bachelor of Science in Public Health, beginning fall 2010.

The College of Public Health is planning to seek accreditation from the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). Approval for the proposed MPH degree program is a necessary step toward gaining that accreditation for the college. Kent State University's proposal to offer an MPH degree in with specializations in five core public health areas is specifically designed to align with CEPH accreditation requirements. Kent State University will also need to gain approval for a PhD in Public Health as another necessary step toward becoming a CEPH-accredited College of Public Health.

Curriculum: Students in the proposed MPH program will choose one of five specializations—biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health, social and behavioral sciences, and health policy management—and will complete a minimum of 45 semester credit hours. The MPH is organized in four curricular domains: core courses that all MPH students must take (18 credit hours in prevention, biostatistics, environmental health, epidemiology and public health administration); required courses in the specialization area (15 credit hours); elective courses in the specialization area (6 credit hours); and credits related to the practicum and culminating experience (6 credit hours). Students are required to spend a semester at a practicum site and must devote a minimum of 300 contact hours to the completion of a practicum project. Tenure-track faculty members will be assigned to each graduate student to provide academic advising and career counseling.

Enrollments: Kent State University estimates an initial enrollment of 10 to 15 students across the five MPH specialization areas. By its fifth year, Kent State University anticipates that the MPH program will grow to 50 students.

Faculty, Facilities and Resources: Start-up funding of five million dollars has been pledged by the Kent State University administration to support the establishment of the new College of Public Health and its academic programs. The college currently has 17 tenure-track faculty members and is actively recruiting additional tenure-track faculty members. Kent State University has identified initial space sufficient to house the college in three existing buildings. Efforts are underway to secure funding to construct a new building for the College of Public Health, but funding for the construction of the new building is separate from the five million dollars in pledged start-up funds. The College of Public Health will designate resources for the development of a dedicated labs and computers, but immediate student needs can be met utilizing currently available labs and computer classrooms. The College of Public Health has allocated an annual budget of $40,000 (along with existing resources) to meet the needs of library resources for the college.

Evidence of Need: The United Health Foundation projects that by the year 2020 the public health workforce shortages for the state of Ohio will be in excess of 10,000 workers. The foundation also indicates that Ohio is one of 14 states with the highest projected public health workforce shortage. The public health capacity from all the current Ohio programs is not expected to meet the workforce needs, given current graduation rates. In response to the increasing demand for public health professionals, Kent State University has been proactive in initiating its Bachelor of Science in Public Health and its Master of Public Health programs to meet the needs of local, state, national and international organizations.

Current Ohio MPH programs are offered at Case Western Reserve University, The Ohio State University, University of Cincinnati, Wright State University, the Consortium of Eastern Ohio (CEOMPH) and the Northwest Ohio Consortium. The closest programs to Kent State University are the CEOMPH and Case Western Reserve University programs. Both the CEOMPH and the Case Western Reserve University graduate programs report that they are at or near capacity. The nearest Ohio program with enrollment potential for specialized public health degree students is 136 miles from the Kent campus and 200 miles from the Ashtabula campus, and it is unlikely that local students can relocate or commute the distance of 136 miles. Moreover, Kent State University's plans to build a CEPH-accredited College of Public Health should bring a substantial additional pool of applicants to Ohio.

End of Comment Period: March 24, 2010
No Comment Received, Recommend Approval

APPROVED

Eric D. Fingerhut, Chancellor — Date 5/10/10

mlc