April 12, 2006

Dianne D. Horgan, PhD
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Tucson, AZ 85721

Dear Dr. Horgan:

The Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health (MEZCOPH) is proposing three new doctoral programs to meet our newly revised accreditation criteria. The planning documents for a PhD degree in Health Promotion Sciences, a PhD in Biostatistics, and a DrPH are attached. This letter describes the background for our requests and provides additional information about these degree programs.

MEZCOPH is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). CEPH issued new accreditation criteria in June of 2005. One new criterion is that all accredited schools must have additional doctoral programs with students admitted as of Fall 2007 (criterion 2.10 attached). MEZCOPH currently has one doctoral program--Epidemiology. We began discussions with Jacqueline Mok in fall 2005 and were pursuing simultaneous planning and implementation for the new degree programs (due to the short timeline). We therefore spent the fall and early spring semesters designing curriculum and preparing the planning/implementation paperwork. Earlier this month, we learned that we could not combine the two processes and were asked to submit the streamlined planning documentation. This documentation is attached.

It is important to understand that these accreditation criteria demand that we have separate and distinct doctoral programs, not just a single program with separate areas of emphasis. Dean Swanson is a member of the Board of Councilors for our accrediting body and she participated in the development of these new criteria. This is an advantage for MEZCOPH, as she knows exactly what is required by these new criteria. Our only existing PhD, Epidemiology, is the study of the transmission of diseases within populations and as such is considered one of the "basic sciences" of Public Health. It is a research-oriented degree. The PhD in Health Promotion Sciences will focus upon a fundamental component of public health - how can health promotion programs be designed so that individuals are motivated to improve and maintain their health? By definition, this doctorate encompasses many of the social and behavioral science disciplines found within our college and every accredited college of public health. That is a major difference from epidemiology, which focuses primarily on one discipline--epidemiology. The PhD in Biostatistics is more quantitatively oriented and includes topics such as genomics and translational research that are broader than the Epidemiology PhD. The DrPH is a professional degree and is oriented towards leadership in public health practice with a strong
emphasis upon public health administration and policy. Each of these new degrees will ADD relevant coursework and will not subtract from the coursework available in Epidemiology.

Another question that has arisen is why we are not proposing a PhD in Public Health with majors. Table 1 (attached) shows the PhD programs that are offered by other accredited schools of public health. As can be seen, others are largely disciplined based rather than a more generic PhD in Public Health. Our experience suggests that nationwide graduates are more marketable when their PhD is in a specific focus area. Furthermore, it is quite clear to Dean Swanson that a single degree with areas of emphasis will not meet our new accreditation criteria.

Others may question why we are proposing a Biostatistics PhD when the Statistics GIDP has recently been approved. Many Research I universities house both a Statistics PhD and a Biostatistics PhD. They are distinct because the coursework is more theoretical in the first degree and more applied in the second. Table 2 (attached) shows the accredited schools of public health that offer Biostatistics PhD programs in addition to a Statistics PhD program (typically housed elsewhere on campus). In fact, there is more demand nationwide for Biostatistics PhD graduates than Statistics PhD graduates as evidenced by the higher salaries paid to biostatisticians. Demand far exceeds supply for Biostatistics PhDs as evidenced by a starting salary for assistant professors of $79,342 (American Statistical Association Fall 2004 Salary Report of Academic Biostatistics Departments). Biostatisticians hired by the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries command higher salaries, frequently starting at $100,000. PhDs in Biostatistics also are housed in some medical schools. Public Health is a better home for biostatistics, because it is considered the other "basic science" of Public Health. A letter of support from Dr. Bruce Walsh, the Statistics GIDP Chair, is attached.

The Arizona public health community is most excited about MEZCOPH’s decision to pursue a DrPH program. The DrPH differs from a PhD in Public Health in that it is more oriented towards public health practice, leadership and policy rather than research. The goal of the DrPH degree is to allow practicing public health professionals to pursue the most advanced coursework and practice degree, focused upon public health policy, leadership and program design and evaluation. Recruitment for this degree will be limited to those students who have an MPH or other public health oriented master’s degree and at least two years of public health experience. The DrPH students will produce a dissertation as the culminating experience of their academic work. Table 3 (attached) shows the accredited schools of public health that offer a DrPH degree. As an example, attached is the DrPH curriculum from the University of Illinois at Chicago (Table 4).

The permanent state dollars provided to MEZCOPH in 2005 have made it possible for us to transfer 20 faculty members from non tenure-eligible to tenure-eligible lines. They joined the 11 existing tenured or tenure-eligible faculty. These faculty members will provide the major contributions to these new degree programs. Some faculty members may choose to be involved in the appropriate research oriented degree (Epidemiology PhD, Health Promotion Sciences PhD, Biostatistics PhD) and the DrPH.
Finally, the establishment of these programs will allow MEZCOPH to progress in our development as an accredited college of public health by offering a richer array of degree programs that will enhance our competitiveness for the best students. Furthermore, these degrees will enable us to meet needs across the UA campus for experts in biostatistics, as well as to meet the needs across Arizona for higher-level training in a wider range of areas in public health. Equally important, these new programs will enable us to be more competitive in recruiting new faculty members as they will have access to doctoral students in their disciplines. MEZCOPH is the only accredited college of public health in a 12 state region that extends from the U.S./Mexico border to the U.S./Canada border.

We are excited about these proposed degree programs and their potential to improve the health of Arizonans and others in the Southwest. We will be pleased to answer any additional questions throughout the planning approval process.

Sincerely,

G. Marie Swanson, PhD, MPH  
Dean and Professor  
Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health

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