

Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA: EXECUTIVE MASTER OF HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (ONLINE)

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa for an Executive Master of Health Administration (online) in the College of Public Health.

The Council of Provosts and Board office support approval of this program.

Description of proposed program. The Executive Master of Health Administration (EMHA) requires 45 semester hours and typically is achieved within two years. Students admitted to the EMHA have practice-related experience in healthcare, thus are not required to take the foundational health care organization course, professional development seminar, or practice-related electives taken by the students who are new to the field of health care. This proposal is to offer an online EMHA program with separate course offerings from the EMHA, but provided using synchronous delivery of content for those students who would be better served with an online experience.

Due to its close relationship with University of Iowa Health Care and strong alumni base, the EMHA at the University of Iowa gives students access to faculty and alumni across the full spectrum of healthcare and prepares graduates for complex administrative positions.

Academic objectives. The online EMHA objectives are to:

- provide working professionals with advanced knowledge and skills in health care leadership;
- position experienced professionals to become effective health care administrators; and,
- meet the need for leadership in transforming health care financing and delivery in dynamic environments.

Need for program. Interest in face-to-face programs like the EMHA that are geared toward working professionals has declined since the pandemic. During conversations with prospective students, they state that the greater flexibility offered by online degree programs would be more attractive to working professional students. Additionally, a labor market analysis was conducted and is discussed below.

Relationship to existing programs at the institution. The proposal to offer an online EMHA does not conflict with or duplicate any programs at the University of Iowa. It extends the reach of the EMHA program beyond the current physical sites, thus enabling individuals who cannot take in-person courses or prefer an online delivery modality to earn an EMHA from Iowa.

Relationship to existing programs at other colleges and universities. There are no similar program at the University of Northern Iowa. Iowa State University offers a Master of Healthcare Analytics and Operations which focuses on healthcare data analysis skills, whereas the University of Iowa EMHA curriculum focuses on skills necessary to assess and administer complex healthcare operations. Despite the significant differences in the programs, the discussion with ISU did prove valuable for cross-pollination of Iowa and ISU faculty expertise, practice and understanding.

Des Moines University has an asynchronous online Master of Health Administration (MHA) program. The DMU program director appreciated that this is a non-identical program and supports the proposal. A cross referral was agreed to by both institutions. When DMU encounters a mid-

career practitioner looking for an online synchronous program, DMU is prepared to suggest the Iowa program. Likewise, for early-career practitioners seeking an online asynchronous program, Iowa is prepared to suggest the program at DMU.

Resources to establish a high-quality program. The online EMHA program has committed to pursuing professional development and consultation with UI Distance and Online Education to convert their in-person curriculum into an engaging and effective online program. Online courses will be developed by faculty in conjunction with instructional designers who specialize in best practices for the online learner. The Department of Health Management and Policy will assign, and reassign if needed, primary faculty to teach and co-teach the online EMHA courses along with adjunct faculty who are leaders in the field of healthcare and bring significant practice experience which enriches the learning experience for students.

Student demand. Through recruitment conversations with students, as well as benchmarking discussions with MHA programs at peer institutions, we have seen an increased interest in online graduate education. Students, particularly those that are working professionals, are seeking the flexibility and convenience that online programs offer. Additionally, UI has found the following statistics that provide a striking picture of the increased interest in online education:

- A survey by Best Colleges found that 42% of prospective graduate students prefer online programs over traditional programs, citing factors such as convenience, flexibility and cost.
- The Commission for the Advancement of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) reports that among accredited healthcare management programs, 17% offered hybrid or online learning before the pandemic, and 40% were expected to offer it post-pandemic (2022).
- Upon review of the 62 CAHME-accredited online or hybrid healthcare management programs nationally, it was notable that among the top-ranked programs, University of Iowa is one of only two without an online component, putting UI at a competitive disadvantage.
- While the intention of the program is to recruit nationally, there is evidence that online programs serve the immediate geography in the state of Iowa: “among students who took distance education courses exclusively in 2021, some 47 percent (608,500 students) were enrolled at institutions located in the same state in which they resided and 48 percent (622,500 students) were enrolled at institutions in a different state” (NCES, 2022).

Workforce need/demand. There is a strong need for new healthcare leaders in the US. Factors such as an aging population, increasing demand for healthcare services, and a shortage of qualified professionals in the industry keep demand high. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for effective healthcare leadership, with many healthcare organizations struggling to manage the crisis and respond to rapidly changing circumstances.

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment of medical and health services managers, which includes healthcare leaders, will grow 32% from 2019 to 2029, much faster than the average for all occupations.
- According to a report by the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), 61% of healthcare executives are planning to retire within the next five years, creating a need for new leaders to take their place. ACHE also notes that there is a shortage of healthcare leaders with the necessary skills and qualifications to meet the needs of the industry, particularly in areas such as population health management and healthcare data analytics.

Funding and Cost. The program has evaluated the marketplace’s tuition and will set a tuition structure that will be highly competitive with other CAHME-accredited online program offerings, while providing sufficient revenue to support the program.

Projected student enrollment.

	Y1	Y 2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Graduate	8	12	15	25	25

Accreditation. The online EMHA will undergo an accreditation review by CAHME at the same time as the EMHA and MHA programs. The next review is scheduled for 2026.

Date of implementation. August 2024.