

Contact: Rachel Boon

**REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA: MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN HEALTH SERVICES AND POLICY RESEARCH**

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa for a Master of Science in Health Services and Policy Research in the College of Public Health.

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

Description of proposed program. The proposed Master of Science (MS) in Health Services and Policy Research will be offered by the Department of Health Management and Policy (HMP) in the University of Iowa (UI) College of Public Health. The proposed program is designed to provide students with content knowledge and methodological skills pertaining to the practice of health services research. Evaluating the organization, delivery and outcomes of health services and impacts of health policies on health services use and health outcomes is intrinsically interdisciplinary. As such, students will acquire both theoretical knowledge of U.S. health policy, health economics, and the organization and delivery of health services as well as a range of analytic skills that will allow them to design and execute health services research studies.

The proposed program includes a minimum of 30 semester hours of coursework in health services research design, statistical methods, health policy, health economics, and the organization and delivery of health care services. Additionally, students will be required to complete a final research project. Students will also have the opportunity to work with faculty mentors on research projects and participate in co-curricular learning opportunities that focus on health services research such as seminars, journal clubs and conferences. The proposed MS will be a pathway to the PhD in Health Services and Policy.

Academic objectives. The proposed program will prepare graduates for research careers in a variety of applied settings including academia, think tanks, government agencies, private sector organizations and other settings where health services research skills are sought. The program is also designed to provide clinicians with the skills needed to work as health services researchers in a wide variety of settings. Given the program's strong emphasis on research design, evaluation and quantitative methods, it is also a pathway for students who desire to prepare themselves to be competitive applicants for doctoral studies in health services research, health policy, health economics, and other closely related fields at the UI or other leading institutions. Finally, the program is designed in a way that allows students in the department's PhD in Health Services and Policy program to earn the MS degree as they complete coursework and exam requirements for the PhD program ("en passant").

Upon completing a MS in Health Services and Policy Research, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the organization, financing, and delivery of U.S. health services
2. Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity
3. Analyze the behavior of healthcare market stakeholders using the principles of health economics
4. Select the appropriate study design and statistical models for health services research questions and outcomes
5. Use statistical computing programs to analyze quantitative data
6. Conduct a study using health services research methods

Relationship to existing programs at the institution. Within the Department of Health Management and Policy, two programs that are closely allied with the proposed program are the Master of Public Health (MPH) in Policy degree and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Health Services and Policy. The proposed MS degree program has been intentionally designed as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, these existing programs. As noted above, students in the PhD program will earn the MS degree as part of fulfilling doctoral training requirements. Required courses for the MS degree are part of the course work required for PhD students. While the proposed MS degree shares certain core courses with the MPH in Policy, the MPH is a professional degree primarily for individuals who are currently practicing or intend to practice in the field of public health. By contrast, the MS degree is primarily designed to prepare individuals for careers in health services research in various public and private settings or for doctoral level training in this field.

The UI College of Pharmacy offers a subprogram in Health Services Research as part of its MS and PhD programs. While this subprogram shares some of the same attributes as the proposed MS in Health Services and Policy Research, there are distinct differences in outcomes between the two programs that are discipline specific.

Relationship to existing programs at other colleges and universities. No university in the state of Iowa offers a MS in Health Services and Policy Research.

Resources to establish a high-quality program. The principal strength of this proposed program is the linkage to a nationally ranked PhD program (PhD in Health Services and Policy) drawing on the same core courses and benefitting from the same research faculty. The Department of Health Management and Policy is well-prepared to offer the proposed program. There are currently nine departmental faculty who are available to provide the coursework, mentor students on research projects, and provide advising. Current facilities are also adequate. No reallocations from other programs or areas of the college or university are needed to offer the proposed program.

Student demand. Enrollment in the proposed program is expected to increase over time, with a minimum number of two students entering during the first year and growing to a minimum of five students entering during the fifth year of operation, with a target range of 10 to 15 students. As noted above, doctoral students in HMP will earn the MS degree as part of fulfilling PhD program requirements.

Workforce need/demand. With the continued expansion of the health care system and the perennially evolving public policies and challenges of ensuring access to high-quality, cost-effective health services, the need for individuals with rigorous training in health services research will continue to increase into the foreseeable future. The proposed MS degree program will provide opportunities for graduate students to enter career pathways that are exciting, important, and in high demand. Healthcare organizations are recognizing the need for high-level research to develop and support decisions regarding programming for services to meet new objectives in population health. Similarly, government agencies are increasingly funding evaluation research to test effectiveness of new programs that incorporate approaches to public health unfamiliar to medical organizations.

Funding and Cost. The Department of Health Management and Policy will utilize current resources to cover the costs of the proposed program. As noted above, there are sufficient departmental faculty to provide the coursework and no new courses need to be developed for the

proposed program. Current faculty will also mentor students on research projects and provide advising.

Projected student enrollment.

	Y1	Y 2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Undergraduate	2	3	3	5	5

Accreditation. The University of Iowa College of Public Health is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). Since the proposed MS in Health Services and Policy Research will be an academic degree offered by the Department of Health Management and Policy in the UI College of Public Health, it will fall under the CEPH accreditation criteria.

Date of implementation. August 2022

Letter of Support



July 12, 2022

To the Board of Regents:

The Council of Provosts discussed the University of Iowa proposal for a Master of Science in Health Services and Policy Research and reviewed associated documentation. There is sufficient evidence for the need and value for this program. The plan indicates due diligence and the Council of Provosts appreciates the collaboration between the deans and departments involved at ISU and UNI. Based on the evidence and documentation, this program is likely to benefit the state of Iowa.

The Council of Provosts is supportive of the program and wishes the University of Iowa the best in its implementation.

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7/12/2022

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