

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

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

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to establish a new Master of Science Program in Health Policy in the Graduate College.

Executive Summary: The proposed program will provide training in health policy analysis. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to “provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of proposed program.** The mission of the proposed program is to provide students with content knowledge and methodological skills pertaining to the practice of health policy analysis. Students will acquire a range of skills that allow them to analyze and empirically evaluate policy content, formation, implementation, and outcomes. The program is designed to prepare individuals for careers in government relations, policy analysis, and health services research in a variety of public and private settings.
 - ⇒ Students will become familiar with relevant databases and other sources of information about health policies through classroom and extra-curricular experiences.
 - ⇒ Students will learn how to analyze policies in terms of content and be able to compare and contrast competing and conflicting policies across federal, state, and local jurisdictions and the three institutional branches. This includes assessing the positions of organizations most relevant to the policy.
 - ⇒ Students will become familiar with the theories and processes most relevant to agenda setting and policy development through classroom and extra-curricular experiences.
 - ⇒ Students will become familiar with the theories and processes most relevant to health policy implementation through classroom and extra-curricular experiences.
 - ⇒ Students will apply and test theories of policy formation when considering how to advance or defend a specific health policy agenda.
 - ⇒ Students will evaluate the success or failure of a policy implementation process tied to a specific set of outcomes such as improved individual health, population access, or cost.
 - ⇒ Students will articulate the multiple perspectives of a health policy issue upon completing coursework that includes health economics, epidemiology, environmental health, health promotion and disease prevention, and public health law.
 - ⇒ Students will be able to discuss the policy process for improving the health status of select populations.

- ⇒ Students will reflect “systems thinking” to resolve public health policy problems.
- ⇒ Students will demonstrate leadership skills most relevant to the practice of public health policy.
- ◇ Need for proposed program. The continued expansion of the health care system and the evolving challenges to ensure access to high quality, cost effective health services leads to the need for individuals with rigorous training in health policy analysis. This need will continue to increase into the foreseeable future.
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. The proposed program supports the University's strategic priority to provide better futures for Iowans. It serves to expand the university's public leadership and contributions to economic and cultural vitality and to the health and quality of life of the people of Iowa.
- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at SUI. The Department of Health Management and Policy does not have any master's degree programs and it is anticipated that the proposed program will be a potential feeder for the Ph.D. Program in Health Service and Policy.
- ◇ Unique features. The College of Public Health is home to the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) which provides unbiased analysis and information on the challenges, needs, and opportunities facing rural America. RUPRI's objective is to spur public dialogue and help policymakers understand the rural impacts of public policies and programs. RUPRI's reach is national and international and is one of the world's preeminent sources of expertise and perspective on policies affecting rural areas and people. RUPRI's activities encompass research, policy analysis and engagement, dissemination and outreach, and decision support tools. Students will benefit significantly from direct involvement in these activities.
- ◇ Duplication. There are Master of Hospital Administration (MHA) and Master of Public Health (MPH) programs throughout the state. The proposed program shares certain core courses with the MHA and MPH degree programs. However, the proposed program is designed to target a distinct student population. Specifically, it is designed as a terminal professional degree for those individuals who are currently practicing, or intend to practice, in a public health career. The MPH Program in Policy is designed to prepare students to become leaders in the field of public health. By contrast, the proposed program is designed to prepare individuals for careers in government relations, policy analysis, and health services research in a variety of public and private settings. It is also designed to prepare students for further study at the doctoral level. The Department of Health Management and Policy is the only department in the College of Public Health that does not have a Master of Science (MS) degree. All other departments have MS and MPH degrees.
- ◇ Student demand. The department reviewed its ten-year track record of graduating more than a dozen students with MPH, MHA and Ph.D. degrees who also completed coursework, internships and fellowships in health policy, and have since secured employment in health policy-related positions. Information obtained from interviewing some of these individuals provided further evidence of the need to establish a distinct Master of Science program in health policy emphasizing qualitative and quantitative research skills.

- ◇ Workforce need/demand. Demands for analytical talent to inform policy development in health care delivery, finance and organization are expected to grow as the nation's delivery system undergoes fundamental change during the foreseeable future. Policy makers and organizations that support the health care enterprise will require analysts trained in both policy development and rigorous evaluation methods because decisions will need to be evidence-based and policies will require evaluation that can quickly reject or improve new approaches.
- ◇ Resources. The groundwork for a strong and distinct degree offering within the College of Public Health has been established. The need for this degree program can be met by the growing number of faculty who are offering courses, research and service opportunities in health policy. The RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis conducts original research in the topical areas of access to health care services, Medicare policies, development of rural delivery systems (including effects of national policy), and public health. The mission of the Center is to provide timely analysis to federal and state health policy makers, based on the best available research. The research of the RUPRI Center has included studies of Medicare managed care (currently Medicare Advantage plan enrollment), the Medicare prescription drug program, characteristics of the uninsured population in rural areas, classification of rural areas as unlikely to generate financial support for health care providers, and patterns of admission to hospitals for conditions treatable in an outpatient environment. Specific objectives for the Center's work include: conducting original research and independent policy analysis that provides policy makers and others with a more complete understanding of the implications of health policy initiatives, and disseminating policy analysis that assures policy makers will consider the needs of rural health care delivery systems in the design and implementation of health policy. With the arrival of the RUPRI director to the College of Public Health's faculty, the overarching RUPRI has now located at the University of Iowa. RUPRI is one of the world's preeminent sources of expertise and perspective on policies impacting rural places and people.
- ◇ Cost. Existing faculty are teaching the core courses for the proposed program and are serving as advisors and thesis reviewers. Existing student services will support the proposed program. An annual budget allocation from department sources, including the University Foundation accounts, will be dedicated to student support. The allocation will be used as determined by the Quality Improvement Committee for the program to include a combination of graduate student assistantships, scholarships, support for student educational opportunities, and administrative support if the program meets growth targets. However, the specific costs and revenue sources were not identified in this program proposal.
- ◇ Projected enrollment. Enrollment is expected to increase over time, with a minimum number of two students entering during the first year of operation and growing to a minimum of five students entering during the fifth year of operation.
- ◇ Potential for accreditation. The College of Public Health is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). As an academic program offered by the Department of Health Management and Policy in the College of Public Health, the proposed program will fall also under the CEPH accreditation criteria.

- ◇ Date of implementation. Creation of the proposed program will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the University's General Catalog. The anticipated implementation date is Spring 2015.