

# FRESNO STATE

College of Health and Human Services

August 9, 2013

Mollie Mulvanity, MPH  
Deputy Director  
Council on Education for Public Health  
1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 220  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Mulvanity:

I would like to express my appreciation for the comprehensive assessment of our site visit team. Their concerns and comments have been taken seriously by our MPH program faculty, Department Chair, and College administration. In addition, their recognition of our strengths is a motivator for continuous growth and improvement.

As noted in our response, the MPH program faculty convened a one-day retreat, on April 12, 2013, to begin the process of addressing the concerns identified by the site visit team. Attached is our response to the draft report with information that we would like to supply to the Council as they review our self-study and the team's report. Please let me know if you have any further questions regarding the MPH Program at California State University, Fresno.

Respectfully,



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THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Master of Public Health Program  
California State University, Fresno**

**Response to CEPH Site Visit Team's Draft Report**

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) conducted an accreditation site visit of the MPH program at California State University, California (Fresno State) on March 20 – 21, 2013. During the Exit Interview, the site visit team presented their preliminary findings to the MPH program faculty, accreditation team, and college administration. These findings were reiterated and documented in the site team's draft report. We appreciate the thoroughness and insightful critique presented by the site visit team in their review of our MPH program.

The preliminary findings identified strengths and weaknesses in the MPH program at Fresno State. On April 12, 2013, the MPH program faculty convened a one-day "retreat" to review the report, identify the areas where we are doing well, and to begin addressing the weaknesses identified by the site visit team. This retreat consisted of MPH program full-time faculty, student members of the accreditation team, and the department chair. The focus of this retreat was to review criteria that were met with commentary and partially met.

As noted in our self-study and by the site visit team, the MPH program's current probationary status was related to our past inability to demonstrate compliance with personnel and other resources adequate to fulfill our state mission and goals, and its instructional, research, and services. It is clear that we have demonstrated that the faculty requirements (i.e., three full-time faculty members who dedicate at least 50% effort to the MPH program) have been met. We currently offer one concentration in health promotion and have dedicated four full-time faculty members to the program (50% of their WTUs to the MPH program which is equivalent to 100% of program time). In addition, the MPH program now has a separate budget that clearly demonstrates an adequate level of financial resources to fulfill our stated mission and goals. Since the accreditation site visit, we have new administration that includes a new university president, an interim provost, and an interim dean. Administrative and financial support has been committed to the MPH program to ensure the necessary resources to deliver a high quality program.

A significant strength of our MPH program is the diversity of students admitted. Overall, our students reflect the diversity of our service area, including 40.3% Hispanic, 17.5% African American/Black, 14% Asian, 15.8% White, 10.5% Other/Unknown. Cultural competence and understanding of diverse cultures continues to be strength of our MPH program and faculty. This does, however, pose challenges in meeting the complex needs of first generation students. Our faculty is dedicated to assisting these students to achieve the program goals, objectives, and competencies.

An additional strength of our MPH program is the dedicated full-time faculty members. Teaching is the primary responsibility of faculty at Fresno State. The full-time faculty members are engaged in research and services activities that are integrated into their class content. In addition, the faculty involve students in research and service activities through class assignments (i.e., service learning), practicum, and culminating experiences.

## **Criterion 1: The Public Health Program**

**Criterion 1.1 Mission.** The site visit team noted “the lack of consistency of the stated mission across the locations in which it is published” (p. 3). The site visit team further noted that the program mission “should support the accomplishment of the department mission while maintaining a focus on what graduate students in the program can expect to know and be able to do by the end of their studies” (p. 3). The MPH program faculty reviewed and refined the mission statement in relation to the department mission and expectations for graduate students. To date, the MPH program director has begun to integrate this new mission statement across the locations in which it is published. The MPH program orientation handbook was revised to include the new mission statement, as well as the MPH program website. MPH program faculty has begun the process of incorporating this mission statement into course syllabi, a process that will be completed by the Fall 2013 semester. The revised program mission will be incorporated into program materials (i.e., program brochure, announcements, application materials, etc.) that are being updated.

In addition, the site visit team cited “the lack of alignment of some objectives with the goal statements which they are proposed to help accomplishment” (p. 4). The site visit team provided specific examples of this lack of alignment and the lack of student effort in this area. The MPH program faculty has begun the process of reviewing our objectives in relation to the program mission and goal statements. In addition, during the MPH faculty retreat we reviewed a core group of professional competencies from the “Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals” enacted by The Council of Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice. Furthermore, we acknowledge the need to identify specific activities that support our goals, objectives, and professional competencies and how they will be measured. The MPH program director and faculty intend to meet throughout the Fall 2013 semester to further address this critical area.

**Criterion 1.2 Evaluation and Planning.** The site visit team raised concern about the program’s planning and evaluation measures. As noted by the team, “the program does not appear to collect and analyze data on many of the identified measures” (p. 5). While the MPH program has attempted to collect data for planning and evaluation purposes, it is clear that this criterion reflects weaknesses in our current practices. To date, the MPH program director, full-time faculty, and department chair have begun to identify specific mechanisms to collect actual performance data to measure program goals, objectives, and competencies. The College of Health and Human Services has a designated assessment coordinator, as well as the Department of Public Health. These two resources will be incorporated into the MPH program evaluation and planning processes to ensure a coordinated effort at the department and college level. Technical assistance will be obtained from these two resources in the design of the assessment methods. It is anticipated that the development of data collection systems and data analysis will be further incorporated into the MPH program graduate Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (SOAP). In addition, the MPH program full-time faculty has begun the process of reviewing our existing planning and evaluation practices to address the site visit team’s concerns. The faculty has begun to review current survey methods for our Alumni and Employer Surveys including the move to an electronic data collection system that may increase the response rates from previous attempts. It is clear that previous data collection strategies have yielded very small sample sizes and have not provided sufficient data for program planning needs. We are reviewing potential alternatives to a mailed survey to increase the response rates for these evaluation measures. During the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters the MPH program director, department chair, and full-time MPH faculty plan to align our program goals, objectives, and competencies with planning and evaluation measures.

**Criterion 2.6 Required Competencies.** The site visit team noted the program’s “inability to clearly articulate and consistently use a set of competencies to guide curriculum development.” They indicated that the MPH

program's competencies were ambiguous and inconsistent "both within the self-study itself and between the self-study and the on-site interviews" (p. 18). The team further indicated that our MPH students were unfamiliar with the term "competencies." Furthermore, the site visit team indicated "that there was an incomplete and/or inaccurate map between coursework and competencies" (p. 19). This issue was a concern among the MPH full-time faculty and the MPH program director. At the April 12<sup>th</sup> retreat, MPH program faculty and students began the process to review our existing competencies and the integration of this term into the MPH program materials, coursework, and syllabi. For example, the MPH program orientation handbook now introduces the term "competencies and identifies the program's "Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals" (based on The Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice). We are in the process of linking our competencies with specific courses to develop a map of our coursework (e.g., a table that lists the "competencies" on the y-axis and the required courses, core and concentration, on the x-axis). At that point, we will incorporate them into the specific course syllabi. The competencies will be posted in program materials (i.e., course syllabi, MPH Blackboard site, program brochures, webpage, etc.) when we have developed a map of our coursework. During the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters, the MPH full-time faculty will meet to review all core and concentration courses to determine the primary (P) and reinforcing (R) courses that specifically address each competency.

The site visit team raised concern about the use of the 10 Essential Services (unaltered) as competency statements. It is apparent that the self-study did not clearly articulate that our competencies were based on the "Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals" as developed by The Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice. The MPH program director and full-time MPH program faculty plan to review all core and concentration curriculum to ensure that our competencies are clearly articulated in program documents, including our website, course syllabi, application documents, and other student documents.

**Criterion 2.7 Assessment Procedures.** The site visit team reported that Criterion 2.7 was partially met. The first concern that was raised was the lack of a clear link between the design and assessment of the culminating experience and the program's competencies. It is apparent that the MPH program needs to clearly articulate our competencies with the culminating experience to strengthen its rigor and consistency. During the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semester, the MPH program director and full-time MPH faculty plan to review course syllabi, rubrics, and materials to explicitly link our competencies with the culminating experience to assess students' competencies. In addition, our college has a liaison from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to capture data such as retention and graduation rates. The utilization of this resource will help us create stronger data for accreditation and student outcomes assessment processes. Planning meetings will be scheduled with this resource to strengthen the quality of our assessment data.

The site visit team further identified the issue of our program's graduation rates. The MPH program director, department chair, and full-time faculty acknowledge the need for a formal policy that clearly articulates the issues of students who leave the program without a planned leave of absence. We realize that this has impacted our ability to accurately determine our graduation rates. To date, the issue of a policy to address this "revolving door" has been an on-going point of discussion. We recognize that many of our students are first-generation with complicated circumstances. As a result, we acknowledge the need for a balance in flexibility with these concerns and the university's policy on completion of degree. The MPH program director plans to introduce a proposed policy to address this issue for faculty vote during the Fall 2013 semester. The adopted policy will be forwarded to the University Graduate Committee for formal approval. In addition, the university's policies on graduate timelines have been applied to returning students who now must re-apply to the program under the same requirements of a first-time admissions applicant. The adopted policy will be incorporated into the MPH program orientation manual, as well as posted on the program's Blackboard website.

In addition, the site visit team noted the program’s lack of data from employers on graduates’ competencies. We acknowledge that the site visit team’s observations accurately reflect the lack of meaningful data that has been available from our employers. Again, this point was taken seriously by the MPH program director and department chair on alternative strategies to improve data collection outcomes. We plan to strategize this issue with our MPH Advisory Board to identify a more productive approach to engage our employers in the assessment of our graduates’ competencies.

**Criterion 4.4 Advising and Career Counseling.** The site visit team noted the “lack of quantitative data related to student satisfaction with advising and career counseling.” After a review of our Exit Survey, it is apparent that we needed to include questions to specifically assess this issue. To date, questions to assess student satisfaction with advising and career counseling were included in the MPH program Exit Survey in Spring 2013. However, the number of students completing the survey (e.g., graduating) was small, therefore the ability to generalize these findings was limited. In addition, the MPH program will explore the potential of a more formal process of career counseling. For instance, during the 2013-2014 academic year, a workshop will be developed with MPH students specifically centered on career counseling and professional development. In addition, the MPH full-time faculty will have periodic meetings to establish a process evaluation methodology to obtain continuous student feedback on advising satisfaction and career counseling needs.

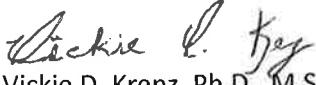
The following table provides an estimated timeframe for the completion of the strategies we will put in place in response to the site visit team’s concerns:

Strategy	Completed By:
1) Planning meetings with MPH program full-time faculty:	
• Revise program goals, objectives, and alignment of competencies	Fall 2013
• Revise our matrix for classes and specific competencies achieved in each class, as well as rubrics to assess their completion.	Fall 2013
• Revise and strengthen competencies with culminating experiences –Review suggestions provided by the Advisory Board on the competencies expected by employers	Fall 2013
2) Coordination meetings with college and department assessment coordinators and Office of Institutional Effectiveness to strengthen assessment methods	Fall 2013
3) Planning of professional workshops for MPH students (i.e., career development, Fulbright opportunities, doctoral programs, etc.)	Fall 2013
4) Revision of existing assessments and methods for Alumni and Employers Surveys to maximize response rates	Fall 2013
5) Pilot process evaluation measures and methods with students for advising satisfaction and career counseling needs.	Spring 2014
• Revise measures and methods as needed	Spring 2014
• Collect advising satisfaction and career counseling needs data	Spring 2014
6) Development of a minimum of 2 workshops for MPH students, including career development and Fulbright and doctoral opportunities.	Spring 2014
7) Collect survey data for Alumni and Employers Surveys	Spring 2014

We would like to acknowledge the thorough review and findings of our site visit team. We respect the concerns raised and have already begun the process to address the weaknesses identified by the site visit team. To date,

the MPH program is in the process of transitioning leadership from Dr. Vickie Krenz to Dr. Helda Pinzon-Perez. During this time, Dr. Krenz has been working with Dr. Pinzon-Perez to address the concerns raised by our site visit team. Dr. Krenz will continue to serve as a full-time MPH program faculty member, as Dr. Pinzon-Perez assumes leadership for the program. Dr. Krenz and Dr. Pinzon-Perez will continue to work closely in addressing issues related to accreditation and program improvement.

Respectfully,



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Past MPH Program Director



Helda Pinzon-Perez, Ph.D., MCHES  
MPH Program Director