

May 5, 2022

Provost Program Proposal Review Committee,

I am writing this cover letter to express my strong support for the 12-credit Certificate in Public Health Program. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic there was a staffing shortage in the public-health workforce. The McKinsey Health Institute reported a 15% reduction over the last decade (<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/building-the-us-public-health-workforce-of-the-future>). It will be necessary to have multiple strategies to rectify this deficit. The Certificate in Public Health will contribute by improving the foundational knowledge and skills of current public health workers who do not have a terminal degree or who have little prior training in public health. The certificate is composed of the same four courses required of first-year students in our MPH program, covering the basic content of the fundamental disciplines of public health: Biostatistics, Epidemiology, Health Management, and Health Promotion. These courses address all 34 foundational competencies required by the school's accrediting body, the Council for Education in Public Health (CEPH).

As noted in the Certificate of Public Health Proposal, the 2018 CDC Action Plan promotes access to public health training that incorporates crosscutting competencies with the goal of building a stronger public health workforce. The certificate program is one that should be attractive to potential public health employees as well as public health departments that wish to invest in their current employees. One of the major reasons cited in the McKinsey Health Institute Report as a reason for public health employees leaving their jobs is the lack of opportunity for advancement. This certificate program will help fill this need and additionally provide an avenue for employees who wish to seek an MPH degree.

Moreover, while the proposed SPHIS program is intended primarily for public health professionals employed in the Louisville metroplex, it may also appeal to students enrolled in the UofL School of Medicine. Proximity to SPHIS, combined with the ability to apply the 12 credits earned toward completion of the SPHIS MPH program (currently in-person only) will significantly increase the appeal of this program to these students. In addition, SPHIS is also working with the Law School (Interim Dean Lars Smith, Associate Dean JoAnne Sweeny) to integrate the Certificate in Public Health into their JD program, and two options are currently under discussion. A final decision on how best to integrate these options and the details on a tuition-sharing model will be finalized when the new Law School Dean, Melanie B. Jacobs, arrives. Taken together, enrollment in the MPH program is expected to increase as some certificate graduates may choose to continue to complete the full MPH program.

I have committed the funding to four part-time lecturers to teach the online sections of each of the four courses for two years, by which time the program will be self-sustaining via tuition

revenue. The four faculty members who will serve as course directors for the Certificate Classes are the same faculty who teach the in-person sections of these courses and will oversee the part-time lecturers assigned to teach the online certificate courses.

I believe it is evident that a background in the foundational components of public health enhances both professional qualifications, as well as public health delivery and strongly support this new certificate. This represents a very low cost expansion of existing competency based curricula that has recently successfully been recognized by our accrediting body via our reaccreditation process just last year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig H Blakely", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Craig H Blakely, PhD, MPH
Dean

cc: BE Guinn, MPH Program Director
KB Baumgartner, Associate Dean for Faculty & Academic Affairs
CW Reynolds, Director of Faculty & Academic Affairs