

REVIEW FOR ACCREDITATION
OF THE
PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM
AT
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

SITE VISIT DATES:
October 25-26, 2010

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), the recognized accrediting body for public health schools and programs, regarding the New Mexico State University (NMSU) MPH Program. The report assesses the program's compliance with the *Accreditation Criteria for Public Health Programs, amended June 2005*. This accreditation review included the conduct of a self-study process by program constituents, the preparation of a document describing the program and its features in relation to the criteria for accreditation and a visit in October 2010 by a team of external peer reviewers. During the visit, the team had an opportunity to interview school and university officials, administrators, teaching faculty, students, alumni and community representatives, and to verify information in the self-study document by reviewing materials provided on site in a resource file. The team was afforded full cooperation in its efforts to assess the program and verify the self-study document.

NMSU is a comprehensive, land-grant, NASA space grant, Hispanic-serving institution of higher learning and is classified as a Research University—High Research Activity by the Carnegie Foundation. NMSU was founded in 1888 as an agricultural college and preparatory school. Today it offers 87 bachelors, 51 masters and 21 doctoral degree programs. Of the university's approximately 30,000 students, approximately 40% represent minority populations. NMSU includes five campuses, a satellite learning center in Albuquerque, cooperative extension offices and research and science centers throughout the state.

The MPH program is located in the Department of Health Science in the College of Health and Social Services. The department has existed since 1979, as it grew out of an existing Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. Two department heads served continuously for ten years each, providing continuity while the department's undergraduate degree program changed from one focused on preparing school health educators to one designed to train entry-level health educators to work in community settings. The department initiated an MPH program in 1996.

The program was initially accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health in 2000, and its most recent full accreditation review was in 2003. The Council required interim reporting on one criterion, and the Council accepted that interim report in 2005. In 2008, the program notified the Council of its plans to enroll a cohort of online students, and the Council requested an interim report for 2010 documenting adequate resources for the increased student enrollment. The Council accepted the interim report but indicated that a more thorough review of program resources would be conducted as part of the planned fall 2010 site visit.

The program has been in a significant period of transition since 2006: there have been several interim department heads and, in the past two years, several interim college deans. This transition has posed

significant challenges for the program in terms of continuity of decision making and evaluation and planning, among other areas. The report that follows documents the program's current performance against the accreditation criteria. NMSU hired a permanent college dean in July 2009, and a permanent department head will assume responsibilities on January 1, 2011. Both of these individuals participated in the site visit documented in this report.

Characteristics of a Public Health Program

To be considered eligible for accreditation review by CEPH, a public health program shall demonstrate the following characteristics:

- a. The program shall be a part of an institution of higher education that is accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the US Department of Education.
- b. The program and its faculty shall have the same rights, privileges and status as other professional preparation programs that are components of its parent institution.
- c. The program shall function as a collaboration of disciplines, addressing the health of populations and the community through instruction, research, and service. Using an ecological perspective, the public health program should provide a special learning environment that supports interdisciplinary communication, promotes a broad intellectual framework for problem-solving, and fosters the development of professional public health concepts and values.
- d. The public health program shall maintain an organizational culture that embraces the vision, goals and values common to public health. The program shall maintain this organizational culture through leadership, institutional rewards, and dedication of resources in order to infuse public health values and goals into all aspects of the program's activities.
- e. The program shall have faculty and other human, physical, financial and learning resources to provide both breadth and depth of educational opportunity in the areas of knowledge basic to public health. As a minimum, the program shall offer the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree.
- f. The program shall plan, develop and evaluate its instructional, research and service activities in ways that assure sensitivity to the perceptions and needs of its students and that combines educational excellence with applicability to the world of public health practice.

These characteristics are evident in the public health program at NMSU. The program is located in a regionally-accredited university, and the program's position, privileges and status are identical to those of other NMSU professional degree programs. The curriculum offers an ecological perspective, and required courses include service-learning and problem-solving scenarios that foster the development of public health values. The program's environment is rich in interdisciplinary expertise and collaboration as well as in collaboration with local communities and public health practitioners. The program's unique focus on border health issues is reflected in its coursework and in faculty's research and service projects—such work demonstrates the infusion of public health values in all aspects of the program's activities.

The program offers a single MPH in community health to two distinct groups of students: one on the NMSU campus and one online. The degrees are identical in content and competencies. The program has continuously delivered a competency-based curriculum to students, and students and alumni

appreciate the quality of instruction and advisement they have received from individual faculty members. Nonetheless, during recent leadership transitions, attention to programmatic evaluation and planning has diminished or disappeared, as faculty have focused on the core functions of delivering the educational program and responding to immediate student needs.

1.0 THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM.

1.1 Mission.

The program shall have a clearly formulated and publicly stated mission with supporting goals and objectives. The program shall foster the development of professional public health values, concepts and ethical practice.

This criterion is met with commentary. The mission of the NMSU MPH program is as follows:

To provide academic, professional, and service excellence in preparing community health education professionals who will demonstrate competent leadership, innovation, and technical expertise at local, state, national and international levels, with particular emphasis on border and rural health problems in communities along the US/Mexico border.

The mission accurately captures the program's purpose. Discussions during the site visit confirmed the importance of and dedication to border and rural health in the program's instructional, research and service activities. The program's values support the mission and appear to be truly held by the faculty and staff. The mission is publicized on the department website and in the student handbook. The program has one goal each for instruction, research and service; all goals reflect the mission. Each goal has two objectives.

The first area of commentary relates to the objectives. As formulated, most are not measurable, though the program does define target outcomes that correspond to each one. Many are process measures and do not capture all aspects of the goal statements. For example, the research objectives have no measures that demonstrate the quality of the research, as delineated in the goal statement.

The other area of commentary is that there is no systematic process for ongoing review of the mission, goals and objectives themselves. The program used the self-study process to develop and monitor the mission and goals. According to the self-study document, multiple processes fed into the review, including evaluation tools and internal and external stakeholders' advice. Site visitors could not verify the nature of this process, since agendas and minutes of most meetings were not available. Site visitors could confirm that the External Advisory Committee met once, but the minutes from this meeting indicate no discussion of the mission, goals or objectives.

1.2 Evaluation and Planning.

The program shall have an explicit process for evaluating and monitoring its overall efforts against its mission, goals and objectives; for assessing the program's effectiveness in serving its various constituencies; and for planning to achieve its mission in the future.

This criterion is not met. The program does not have a systematic process for data collection, nor has it identified tools and processes for analysis and application of information to drive program improvement.

Administrators, faculty and students all have roles in the components of a planning and evaluation process that currently exist, but there is very little systematic program planning and evaluation. The most established ongoing feedback is the annual faculty evaluation, conducted by the department head. It incorporates results from student course evaluations, research productivity and service participation. This process stems from required university procedures and has not been used for systematic program evaluation.

Tracking acquisition of public health competencies by students has been another major area of focus and activity that faculty associate with "evaluation," but this report will discuss assessment of student competence in Criterion 2.7.

The other evaluation activity that the program has completed since the last self-study is an exit survey of graduating students in spring 2010. This was the first time the survey had been administered in recent years. The results were shared with faculty members, but there is currently not a process for applying the results to program improvement.

The program's administrative turnover in the past three years has meant that few formal review processes have been applied to program improvement. During the site visit, the site visit team affirmed the lack of programmatic data collection. As they produced the self-study document in the past year, faculty did define specific outcome targets and were able to pull together results for many measures for the past three years by retrospectively analyzing data. For each year, the measures reached or exceeded the established targets; this brings into question the utility of the objectives and measures as tools for quality improvement. Reliance on process measures rather than truly measurable outcomes exacerbates this situation.

The program used the self-study process to perform a qualitative and quantitative assessment of its performance. The self-study contains various "outcome measures" in addition to the targets associated with the defined objectives. For example, in Criterion 4.5, the program measures success in recruiting a diverse student body (this is not a component articulated in the mission, goals and objectives as defined in Criterion 1.1) and presents data to gauge its performance. Site visitors learned that such measures

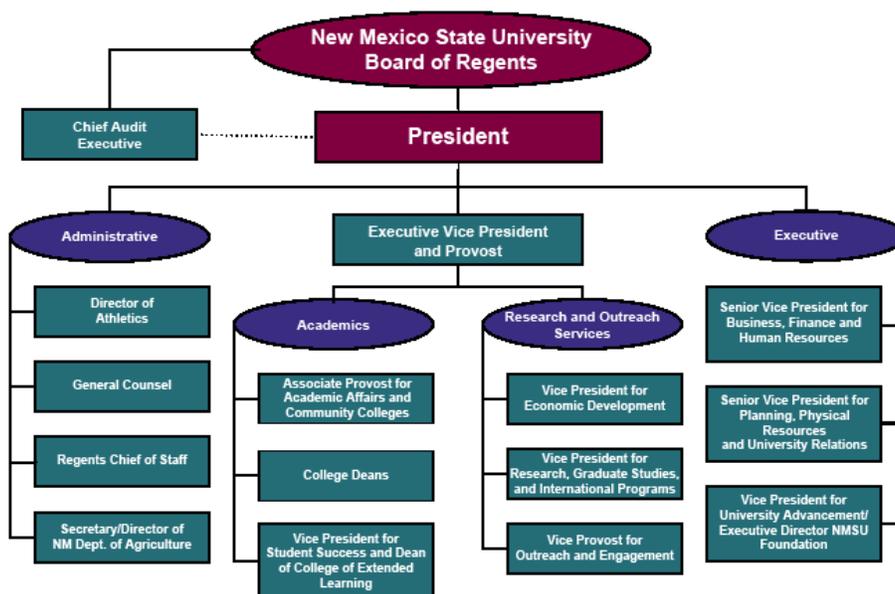
were identified by the faculty member assigned to write each particular self-study section and later agreed upon by the faculty as a whole. While this process was effective in producing a final self-study that gave reviewers some data and some sense of the program’s aims, there are no procedures to continue the definition, data collection and analysis that the faculty were able to pull together to produce the final self-study.

1.3 Institutional Environment.

The program shall be an integral part of an accredited institution of higher education.

This criterion is met. NMSU is the state’s land grant institution and offers 87 bachelors, 51 masters and 21 doctoral degree programs. The university’s 1215 faculty and 3360 staff serve approximately 18,500 students. The university is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The university’s accreditation was renewed in 2008 and reaccreditation review will occur in 2018.

Figure 1. New Mexico State University Organizational Structure

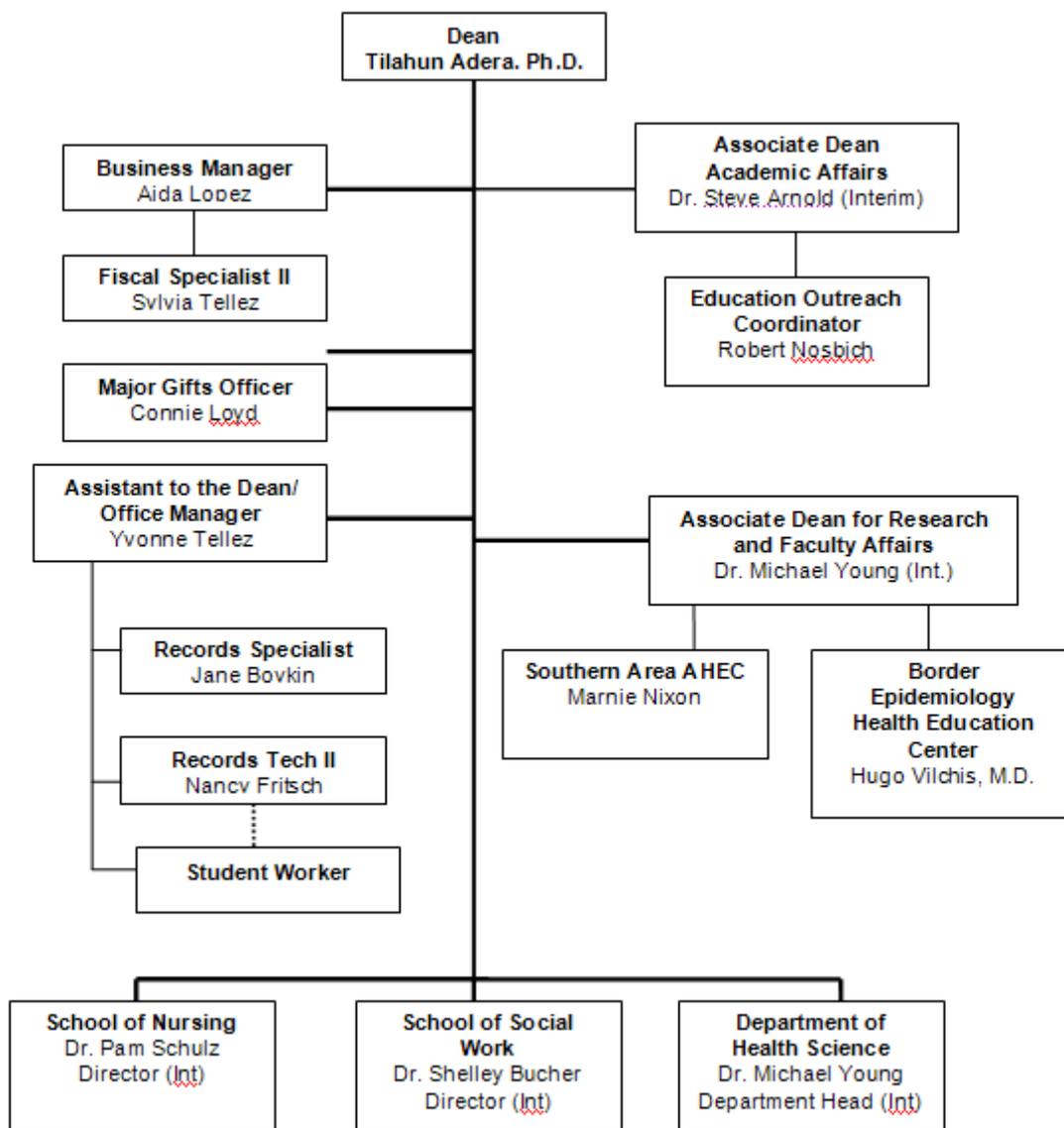


Revised: September 16, 2009

Figure 1 presents the university’s organization. The accredited graduate programs of the university are contained in the following six colleges: College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, College of Art and Sciences, College of Business, College of Education, College of Engineering and College of Health and Social Services. The MPH program is administered by the Department of Health

Science within the College of Health and Social Services. Figure 2 presents the college's organizational structures. Other academic units within this college include: the School of Nursing, School of Social Work, Southern Area Health Education Center (SoAHEC), Border Epidemiology and Environmental Health Center (BEC) and the Southwest Institute for Health Disparities.

Figure 2. NMSU College of Health and Social Services Organizational Structure



Leadership over the past two years for the College of Health and Social Services and over the last four years for the Department of Health Science has been transitory in nature. However, actions to produce stability at both levels were recently undertaken; a permanent dean for the college was hired in 2009 and a new permanent department head will assume responsibility January 1, 2011. The current acting department head will return to his position as the college's assistant dean for research.

Currently, the department head has authority with respect to all financial matters of the program, faculty evaluation, personnel searches and hires and matters of curriculum change, on which he is advised by the departmental Curriculum Committee.

The Department of Health Science operates with a single budget system (undergraduate and MPH programs combined). All budget requests are reviewed by the dean's office and combined with requests from the other units in the college to prepare the overall college request for the vice president for business and finance. Under the current system NMSU's upper administration takes the budget requests to the state legislature in Santa Fe for review and negotiation.

1.4 Organization and Administration.

The program shall provide an organizational setting conducive to teaching and learning, research and service. The organizational setting shall facilitate interdisciplinary communication, cooperation and collaboration. The organizational structure shall effectively support the work of the program's constituents.

This criterion is met. The academic department head has supervisory authority over all employees within the department and is responsible for all of the department's academic and fiscal affairs. The department head reports to and is evaluated by the college dean. Other departmental positions (faculty and staff) with responsibilities relevant to the MPH program are as follows:

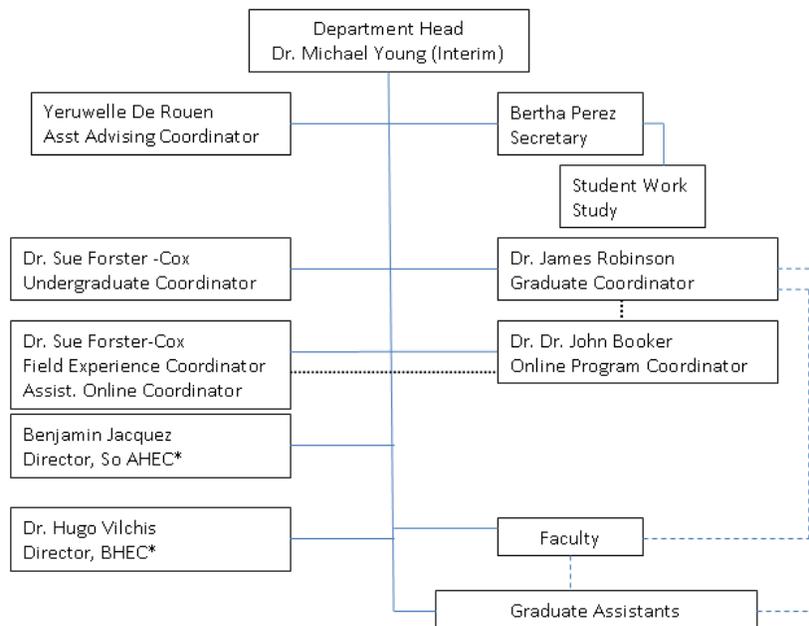
- academic advising coordinator (currently vacant; primarily serves undergraduate students)
- graduate coordinator
- online coordinator (currently vacant)
- assistant online coordinator
- field experience coordinator (serves both MPH and undergraduate students)

Figure 3 presents the department's organization and illustrates the close links between the accredited MPH program and the undergraduate community health program, which is not a component of the unit of accreditation.

The MPH is offered in both online and on-campus formats, and the online program's daily administration operates out of NMSU's Albuquerque campus, which houses most of the university's distance-learning facilities. Two faculty are designated administrative responsibility for the online MPH: the online coordinator and assistant online coordinator. These individuals report to the graduate coordinator, who also acts as the coordinator for the on-campus MPH. It is difficult to assess the current functioning of this organizational structure, as the online coordinator position is vacant as of fall 2010, but both the acting department head and incoming department head indicated support for a structure that vests the graduate coordinator with primary authority for the MPH program as a whole. The organizational structure is

intended to distribute administrative and operational matters, particularly given the geographic distance between the two campuses and the distinct nature of the two student populations.

Figure 3. NMSU Department of Health Science Organizational Structure



*To the Dean's Office, Spring 2009

Interdisciplinary collaboration and communication are abundant in the MPH program. Collaboration is especially visible within the college, and research and service efforts often coordinate with university entities outside the department and with external stakeholders outside the university.

Ethics and ethical dealings are addressed in the NMSU policy manual, specifically in Chapter 3. Policies and procedures for discrimination-based and non-discrimination-based grievances are delineated in the NMSU policy manual.

1.5 Governance.

The program administration and faculty shall have clearly defined rights and responsibilities concerning program governance and academic policies. Students shall, where appropriate, have participatory roles in conduct of program evaluation procedures, policy-setting and decision-making.

This criterion is partially met. The Department of Health Science does not have a constitution, nor does it have a set of bylaws. Instead the policies and procedures that govern the department head, faculty and students' rights and responsibilities are found in the NMSU Procedures Manual and Graduate Catalog.

The MPH program governance structure is faculty-driven in that most of the department's administrative decisions are made by the faculty as a committee of the whole, though final administrative decisions are made by the department head. The department head ratifies all policy statements and assigns department committee members at the beginning of the academic year.

Much of the governance activity that affects the program operates at the departmental level and involves committees that also serve the undergraduate degree in community health. The major governance bodies for the program include the following standing committees:

The Promotion and Tenure Committee (departmental) provides written feedback to each tenure-track faculty member on annual progress toward promotion and tenure. It also provides written assessment on each tenured associate professor's annual evaluation and progress toward promotion. Finally, it reviews all promotion and tenure dossiers. The current membership is all tenure-line faculty members.

The Curriculum Committee (departmental) reviews and acts on curriculum proposals and attends to other curriculum related matters and policy. The committee contains four faculty members and three ex officio members (graduate coordinator, undergraduate coordinator and a student).

The Outcomes Assessment Committee (departmental) coordinates preparation of the department's annual outcomes assessment report. Members include the graduate coordinator, undergraduate coordinator, four faculty members and a student.

The Internal MPH Advisory Committee includes four faculty members and a student position. This is intended as a strategic and decision making body for the MPH program (as distinct from the undergraduate program), but it has been largely dormant.

Currently, admission of students is determined by two separate committees based on the modality through which prospective students intend to complete the program. One committee, comprised of the online program coordinator, the assistant coordinator and several other faculty members, review applications for the on-line program. The second committee, which reviews applicants for on-campus students, is comprised of volunteer faculty members and is chaired by the graduate coordinator.

The MPH program uses the policies and procedures related to degree completion of the NMSU graduate school. Recently the graduate school implemented the Student Academic Requirements (STAR) program. This program notifies students if they are lacking a particular course for the completion of a program of study. Once all courses in the program of study have been satisfied, the student's degree is certified.

The MPH program also has one ad hoc committee the Department Search Committee. This committee develops vacancy announcements as needed, produces a list of places where vacancy announcements may be posted, attends Human Resources search committee training, and participates in application review and recommends finalists for interview. The committee is open to all tenure-line faculty members.

The first area of concern relates not to the governance system's structure or definition but to its operations. Committees have not held meetings on a consistent basis over the past three years, with some committees not operating for a year at a time. Though the current academic year has seen a revitalization of committee activity, minutes are sparse and inconsistent. Faculty and administrators who met with site visitors acknowledged the gaps in both actual meetings and in documentation of meetings. The program must ensure that its governance structure is active and functioning in order to ensure that faculty have appropriate roles in programmatic decision making.

The program has a formal student organization, the MPH Student Organization (MPHSO). The organization is open to all graduate students in the MPH program and performs a number of public health education events on campus and in the community each year. The program has a second student organization, Eta Sigma Gamma, a health science honorary, which carries out service activities on campus and is open to undergraduate and graduate students. Site visitors met with two student officers from MPHSO and also discussed the group's activities with the faculty advisor. The MPHSO has been involved in coordinating Public Health Week activities; sponsoring a health/wellness fair; fundraising for Relay for Life and the Susan J. Komen Race for the Cure; and cooperation with other groups for fundraising that benefits local community organizations.

The other area of concern, however, relates to student participation in governance. A lack of student involvement in departmental and programmatic governance was most evident in 2008 and 2009: no students were appointed to the three standing committees that include student membership. The self-study indicates that this was "due to changes in leadership." Program leaders have begun renewed efforts to involve students in governance at the time of the site visit. Two MPH students had attended and actively participated in a recent Curriculum Committee meeting. Students are not, however, routinely appointed to committees, nor is their participation entrenched in the program's operations.

Online students are particularly disengaged from participation in program governance. Online students who met with site visitors felt that they had a ready outlet for feedback in the assistant online coordinator, but neither the MPHSA nor the existing programmatic governance structure has found effective mechanisms to allow online students to participate. Current MPHSA officers indicated that no online students had paid dues to officially join the organization. Though online students often live some distance from campus, and many work full-time and have other responsibilities, opportunities to participate in student organizations and programmatic decision making are important to ensure that all students have evaluative and professional development opportunities to accompany their graduate education.

1.6 Resources.

The program shall have resources adequate to fulfill its stated mission and goals, and its instructional, research and service objectives.

This criterion is met with commentary. The department head discusses resource needs (travel support, computer upgrades, office equipment, staffing needs) with faculty and creates a prioritized budget request that is submitted to the college dean. The college dean submits the college budget request to the NMSU administration, and the university presents a consolidated request to the New Mexico State Higher Education Department. The state legislature conducts budget hearings with all state agencies and ultimately designates funding to the university. The university allocates the state funding to the colleges and the college dean allocates funding to the departments based on strategic goals and prioritized initiatives. Due to reduced legislative support, NMSU instituted a local tuition increase in the 2010-2011 academic year.

The department's revenue from tuition and fees and state appropriations has almost doubled in four years (2006 to 2009). Grants and contracts decreased from 2006 to 2007 and 2008, but have again increased reflecting \$1,800,310 for 2009. The department budget is depicted in Table 1.

The health science faculty salaries have increased each year (2006 to 2009), and the 2009 budget reflects \$300,000 for staff salaries, the highest amount allocated in the review period.

The department currently employs 10 full-time faculty members who contribute 4.75 full-time equivalent (FTE) hours to the MPH curriculum. Seven departmental faculty dedicate .50 FTE or greater to the MPH program, exceeding the required faculty resources as outlined in the criteria. In addition to full-time faculty, the department uses two adjunct instructors who teach at a level equal to .50 FTE. This faculty complement serves 83 students, who take courses equal to 52 FTE, for a resulting student-faculty ratio of 9:1. The department is seeking to fill one to three faculty vacancies and a staff advisor position.

Table 1. Department of Health Science Budget				
SOURCE OF FUNDS	Year 1 - 2006	Year 2 - 2007	Year 3 - 2008	Year 4 - 2009
Tuition & Fees	\$ 2,925	\$ 0	\$ 8,323	\$ 18,354
State Appropriation (I&G)	\$ 1,207,301	\$ 1,321,290	\$ 2,083,279	\$ 2,267,643
Total Fees and I&G	\$1,210,226	\$ 1,321,290	\$2,091,602	\$2,285,997
Grants/Contracts	\$ 1,928,950	\$ 1,102,209	\$ 1,129,466	\$ 1,800,310
Indirect Cost Recovery	\$ 26,457	\$ 63,009	\$ 47,953	\$ 10,257
Total Grants and IDC	\$1,955,407	\$1,165,218	\$1,177,419	\$1,810,567
EXPENDITURES				
Faculty Salaries & Benefits	\$ 949,438	\$ 1,094,402	\$ 1,497,808	\$ 1,565,326
Staff Salaries & Benefits	\$ 161,077	\$ 64,624	\$ 259,586	\$ 300,783
Operations	\$ 34,832	\$ 29,638	\$ 49,527	\$ 45,780
Travel	\$ 8,566	\$ 12,459	\$ 10,391	\$ 12,526
Student Support	\$ 51,092	\$ 37,199	\$ 106,765	\$ 134,711
Grant/Contract Expenditures	\$ 1,703,827	\$ 980,307	\$ 934,427	\$ 1,693,924

The program delivers on-campus classes in the seven-year-old College of Health and Human Services (HHS) building on the NMSU campus. All of department faculty offices are located on the third floor, and administrative offices are located on the first floor. The college's other two departments, nursing and social work, are housed on the first and second floors, respectively. Two 45-seat classrooms and a 10-seat conference room are available for MPH classes. The college provides a computer laboratory for training purposes on the second floor. A 2010 addition holds 125-seat auditorium, and reception and staff areas on the first floor. The second floor addition will house the Southwest Institute for Health Disparities Research.

Faculty members enjoy their own window office, computer station, work counter, printer, phone, filing cabinet, book shelves and guest seating. Graduate assistants are given shared office space, multiple computer workstations and a telephone line. The third floor includes a student lounge, small meeting area, computer workstations and storage space. The department office on the first floor houses the department head, secretary and advising coordinator, as well as a break room, conference area, storage, additional computer workstation, copier/scanner and printer.

The HHS building is fitted with wireless internet connectivity and each classroom is equipped with a computer set up, projector and motorized projection screen, document viewer, DVD player, laser pointer/Power Point advance remote and two 20-foot white boards. The NMSU Zuhl Library offers hardcopy books and journals, an e-journal database and an interlibrary loan network. The department is interconnected with its own listserv.

The program identifies several outcome measures to determine the adequacy of resources, including funding support for graduate assistants, sponsored project support for graduate assistants, expenditures per FTE student, extramural funding per FTE faculty, the percent of the budget made up of extramural funding, computer replacement and library resources. Funding for graduate assistants has increased annually from \$37,200 in 2007 to \$134,700 in 2009. Project support for graduate assistants decreased from 2007 to 2009 (\$30,000 to \$22,500). Expenditures per FTE student increased from \$28,300 in 2008 (68 FTE students) to \$32,200 in 2009 (64 FTE students). Extramural funding increased from \$281,200 in 2008, to \$477,800 in 2009 and expanding extramural funding as part of the budget from 36% to 44%.

The commentary relates to the department's stability in resources, an issue related to the State's economy and resulting allocations, and to the department's approach to budgeting, which combines both the undergraduate and graduate programs, revenues and expenses. In response to site visitor requests, the program did provide an "MPH budget" on site, but the "budget" consisted of two line items (faculty salary & benefits, operating expenses), which showed each of these lines from the departmental budget pro-rated based on faculty's teaching load in the MPH program. In practice, the level of resources contributed to or from either program is unknown, and this leads to poor data and an inability to make data-driven decisions regarding the graduate program, though the program does appear to have adequate resources to operate its educational programs.

2.0 INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS.

2.1 Master of Public Health Degree.

The program shall offer instructional programs reflecting its stated mission and goals, leading to the Master of Public Health (MPH) or equivalent professional masters degree. The program may offer a generalist MPH degree or an MPH with areas of specialization. The program, depending upon how it defines the unit of accreditation, may offer other degrees, professional and academic, if consistent with its mission and resources.

This criterion is met. Table 2 presents the program's degree offerings. The New Mexico State University Master of Public Health program offers one professional degree in public health with two delivery methods. The MPH degree in community health education is designed to prepare public health professionals in the breadth of public health practice while also including in-depth preparation in community health education. The program offers the MPH in both on-campus and distance-based formats. Students must choose a modality at the time of enrollment: the program manages class size, advising responsibilities and other resource concerns by actively controlling the enrollment in each modality. This distinction also allows the program to address the needs of student populations that, for the most part, differ in important ways (part-time versus full-time enrollment, for example). Table 2 presents the program's degree offerings.

The program offers one joint degree, an MPH and Master of Social Work (MSW) degree granted from School of Social Work.

Table 2. Degrees Offered		
	Academic	Professional
Masters Degrees		
Community Health Education		MPH*
Dual/Joint Degrees		
School of Social Work		MPH/MSW

*offered in fully distance-based and on-campus formats

The curriculum includes 18 credits of required core coursework (courses in the five core areas of public health knowledge, plus an introduction to public health course); 15 credits of prescribed community health education courses; a three-credit course in “cultural foundations” that students choose from a list of courses that includes American Indian Health, Hispanic Health Issues, Rural Health Issues and US-Mexico Border Health Issues; a one-credit graduate seminar; a three-credit field experience; and a thesis or masters project. Students who select the masters project also choose three elective courses from the department’s graduate offerings or other appropriate NMSU graduate courses.

2.2 Program Length.

An MPH degree program or equivalent professional masters degree must be at least 42 semester credit units in length.

This criterion is met. The MPH in community health education exceeds the 42 semester credit hour minimum in length. Students have the choice of completing two options to meet the MPH degree requirements: the thesis option, which requires a total of 44-46 credit hours, or the non-thesis option, which requires 49 credit hours.

Over the last three years no MPH degrees were awarded for less than 42 semester credit hours. The minimum class meeting time is 750 minutes per credit hour per semester.

2.3 Public Health Core Knowledge.

All professional degree students must demonstrate an understanding of the public health core knowledge.

This criterion is met with commentary. All students must take courses in the five core areas of public health knowledge, including Community and Psychosocial Aspects of Public Health (MPH 510), Biostatistical Applications in Public Health (MPH 520), Epidemiological Approaches to Disease Control and Prevention (MPH 530), Public Health Service Design and Operation (MPH 540) and Environmental Public Health Issues (MPH 550). No waivers are granted. A sixth required course is MPH 500, Introduction to Public Health, which may be substituted by another course for students with undergraduate public health degrees or significant public health experience. Site visitors’ review of core

course syllabi indicates that the courses cover the topics in appropriate breadth and depth to comply with this criterion.

The commentary relates to the program's coverage of epidemiology and health administration. The single core course in epidemiology is the program's only offering in this area and the only opportunity for introduction of epidemiology competencies. Community members, including a recent alumna, noted that the program could be strengthened by additional introduction and reinforcement of epidemiology topics. Greater competence in epidemiology would benefit the work of the program and its community partners in identifying and addressing border health issues and health disparities. Community members also raised the potential need for enhancements to students' preparation in health services administration. Stakeholders noted that students completing the program tend to be well-versed in program development and evaluation but lack some leadership and management competencies that are also important in administering public health programs.

2.4 Practical Skills.

All professional degree students must develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to the students' areas of specialization.

This criterion is met. All students are required to complete a field experience in which they apply classroom learning to real-world public health work and experience. A minimum of 160 hours of field work is required for both on-campus and online students, regardless of full-time employment status. No waivers are permitted. The program has a designated field experience coordinator who works with students and preceptors to ensure that sites are appropriate, mentors meet qualifications and goals are appropriately stated and met.

Students select their field experience sites. The program maintains a list of possible sites, but students are not limited to this list. Students are encouraged to select sites that provide opportunities in their area of interest. Field experience sites in the last two years include the following: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Portage Boys and Girls Club, Rio Grande Medical Group and the New Mexico Department of Health.

Student preparation for the field experience is rigorous. In conjunction with the field experience coordinator, each student identifies goals and skills that he or she seeks to gain. The preceptors and field experience coordinator monitor progress toward accomplishing the goals.

Both students and preceptors submit mid-term reports to evaluate the student's experience to date, and students keep a daily log of activities, which they submit at the end of the experience. The field experience coordinator visits many sites and communicates with more distant sites via Skype. Students

deliver an oral presentation at the conclusion of the field experience, and preceptors, faculty and students attend the presentations.

Students and preceptors who met with the site visit team expressed a high level of satisfaction with the field experience. Students believed that it helped them establish community contacts and opened doors for future employment opportunities. Preceptors believed that students made valuable contributions to their programs and agencies. The written evaluations from preceptors that site visitors reviewed onsite supported these impressions.

2.5 Culminating Experience.

All professional degree programs identified in the instructional matrix shall assure that each student demonstrates skills and integration of knowledge through a culminating experience.

This criterion is partially met. The program requires that all students complete either a thesis or a non-thesis option for their culminating experience. Most students choose the non-thesis option.

Students pursuing the thesis option undertake a significant research project approved by a thesis committee that consists of at least two MPH faculty and one faculty member from outside the department. The thesis consists of four to six credit hours. The student handbook clearly outlines the details for the thesis process. The thesis advisor takes an active role in helping students create the thesis premise and methodology, maneuver the IRB process, conduct the research and write the final document. As part of the course requirements for MPH 579, Research and Resources, students develop a research proposal and may develop chapters one, two and three of their thesis. Students defend the thesis to their committees. Students who seek additional curricular support for thesis production skills may take additional methodology or writing courses sponsored by the counseling, education and psychology programs. From 2007 to 2010, eight of the 54 MPH graduates (15%) completed the thesis option.

Students pursuing the non-thesis option are required to complete nine credits of additional electives, and they complete a comprehensive final examination in their final semester. The handbook guides students through the process, including identifying two MPH faculty and one faculty member from outside the health science department to serve as a final examination committee. The committee creates the final examination by posing questions for the student to answer. In a period of 10 days, students respond in writing to two to four questions, publicly defend their responses and answer any additional questions posed in an oral examination. The committee then votes on the student's performance. From 2007 to 2010, 46 of the 54 MPH graduates (85%) completed the non-thesis option.

The concern relates to the lack of standardization in culminating experience options, which hinders the program's ability to verify that the culminating experience (thesis or non-thesis) integrates skills and knowledge from across the curriculum. The need for greater standardization is most visible in 1) the

number, topics and scope of comprehensive examination questions; and 2) the absence of defined evaluation standards for both thesis and non-thesis students. The department's Curriculum Committee has discussed these problems and has approved a plan addressing some of these deficiencies, including standardizing categories of questions for the non-thesis option comprehensive exam and instituting page limits for student responses. The Curriculum Committee's next steps include reviewing and revising policies and procedures for the culminating experience for faculty review in January 2011. The program appears to lack a vision that connects the culminating experience to the student's ability to integrate skills and knowledge in the competency areas. There has also been no discernable discussion regarding student evaluation of the culminating experience, process and value, thereby limiting the program's ability to collect data and continuously improve its process and the student experience.

2.6 Required Competencies.

For each degree program and area of specialization within each program identified in the instructional matrix, there shall be clearly stated competencies that guide the development of educational programs.

This criterion is met with commentary. In 2002 the entire MPH faculty made the decision to adopt the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (NCHEC) competencies without alteration. The faculty has revisited and verified its decision to use NCHEC competencies to define both core and concentration-area coursework, adding the Advanced 1 competencies in 2009. The self-study documents a curriculum map that identifies the courses in which each competency is addressed, rating the coverage as introduction, reinforcement or application.

The competencies are included in the MPH Student Handbook (first time fall 2010), given to all students and presented during the MPH new student orientation and are posted on the department website. Students who met with site visitors were extremely familiar with the competencies and could readily speak about how competencies are covered and reinforced in coursework.

Though the program has not undertaken changes to the competencies since its inception (other than incorporation of advanced competencies following NCHEC's Competency Update Project), it plans to make updates or changes to the competencies based on information gained from the following sources: the NCHEC Job Analysis 2010; feedback from the MPH External Advisory Committee and from field experience preceptors; data from the planned alumni survey; and faculty experiences serving on professional committees and attending conferences.

The commentary relates, first, to the program's self-identified need to reassess and validate its competency map. The competency mapping process relied largely on faculty's self-reported depth of coverage of competencies. While the Curriculum Committee has played a limited role in validating faculty self-assessments by ensuring that all competencies are addressed at least once in the curriculum, the

faculty has not yet undertaken peer review processes to validate faculty's self-reported depth of coverage.

Additional commentary relates to the need for the program to more consistently present competencies on syllabi. All syllabi reviewed by site visitors presented learning objectives, but only a small percentage listed competencies or made explicit the link between the identified learning objectives and the programmatic competencies. Students who met with site visitors were quick to praise those syllabi that listed competencies and appreciated attempts to regularly remind them of their cumulative building of knowledge and skills.

2.7 Assessment Procedures.

There shall be procedures for assessing and documenting the extent to which each student has demonstrated competence in the required areas of performance.

This criterion is partially met. Faculty have mapped competencies to all courses, so student performance in the series of required courses provides one opportunity to measure competency attainment. Students are required to maintain a "B" or above grade in the MPH core courses. Faculty conduct an annual session during which they meet as a group to review each MPH student's transcript—the intention is both to identify students who may not be progressing with adequate grades for graduation and to discuss other challenges that faculty have identified (eg, areas of professional development that are lacking) during their interactions with students in required classes. The graduate school serves as an additional check on student grades, as the graduate school automatically places all students with a GPA below 3.0 on academic probation, and students may be dismissed after two semesters on academic probation.

In addition to grades and assessment in course-level activities, the practice experience is linked to programmatic competencies, and students and preceptors rate students' attainment of identified competencies. The comprehensive exam warrants attention, based on the lack of consistency in quality and breadth of question sets, as discussed in Criterion 2.5. Nonetheless, the comprehensive exam is intended to be based on a competency framework.

The self-study shows graduation rates for MPH students for the time period 2003-2009. The MPH program allows students seven years to complete the degree whether online or on-campus, but the program prefers to track graduation rates at two- or three-year intervals. Despite requests by preliminary self-study reviewers and site visit team members, the program was unable to present graduation data for more than one cohort of students based on maximum time to graduation (seven years). The one cohort (students entering in 2003), shows a graduation rate of 79%, and, indeed, the three cohorts that follow (students entering in 2004, 2005 and 2006) show graduation rates above the 80% threshold, even though the latter three cohorts have not reached the maximum time to graduation. The three cohorts have graduation rates of 94%, 82% and 83%. Thus, the program appears to meet this criterion's expectations

for graduation rates. The self-study also presents summaries of data on graduate employment for the last three academic years. The majority of graduates are employed in government and university/research settings or are furthering their education.

The self-study indicates that MPH students are encouraged to sit for the CHES examination. From 2006 to 2010, eighteen students took the exam and seventeen passed. Site visitors discussed the fairly low CHES participation rates with faculty and administrators. The program is built around NCHCEC competencies and aims to train community health educators; faculty have discussed instituting requirements or, at least, incentives to encourage students to take the CHES exam. They attribute the low level of interest to 1) financial barriers (the cost of the examination and maintenance of the credential) and 2) students' tendency to take professional positions that may not require CHES certification.

The concern relates to the lack of student outcome data other than graduation rates and data on recent graduates' employment venues. The program has not conducted alumni surveys to ascertain whether alumni feel that they were adequately prepared for careers in public health practice, though the program developed such a survey in 2010 and received IRB approval to conduct the survey weeks before the site visit. The program has not conducted focus groups or other qualitative data collection methods; information on alumni assessment of competence has not been collected or analyzed in any way. Similarly, the program has no processes to collect data from employers on student outcomes and has no history of collecting and analyzing such data.

The program recently instituted a pre- and post-test model for student self-assessment of competencies, but the development and implementation of this model was new at the time of the site visit. The self-study was not able to document any data from the self-assessments, though the on-site resource file contained recently-compiled data from the pilot administration of the pre-test.

During the self-study, the program identified a deficiency in its tracking and record-keeping—the program had no outcome data at all on four students who graduated at some point since the last accreditation review. While this, standing on its own, might not constitute a deficiency, it is one indicator of the lack of systematic processes for assessing student outcomes. Faculty have continuously and successfully produced competency-based courses and a competency-based practicum on an individual basis, but the program has no data and/or systems to track student attainment of competencies other than tracking student progress through the academic milestones of courses and practicum.

2.8 Academic Degrees.

If the program also offers curricula for academic degrees, students pursuing them shall obtain a broad introduction to public health, as well as an understanding about how their discipline-based specialization contributes to achieving the goals of public health.

This criterion is not applicable.

2.9 Doctoral Degrees.

The program may offer doctoral degree programs, if consistent with its mission and resources.

This criterion is not applicable.

2.10 Joint Degrees.

If the program offers joint degree programs, the required curriculum for the professional public health degree shall be equivalent to that required for a separate public health degree.

This criterion is met. The program offers a joint degree of a Master of Public Health and Master of Social Work (MSW) degree granted from the School of Social Work. Students typically complete the joint degree in three years which include summer session.

Six students have graduated from the joint degree program, and seven are currently enrolled.

Since the inception of the program the majority of students have been on-campus attending the main campus in Las Cruces. However, beginning in fall 2009, the first group of students is completing their MPH on-line and the MSW, face-to-face, at the Albuquerque Center.

The joint degree program requires that students meet the admission requirements for both degree programs. Students have one identified faculty member in the Health Science Department and one faculty member in the Social Work School that serve as advisors for them. Communication and information exchange is available 24/7 via a non-academic Blackboard site.

Students are required to complete a total of 88 credit hours in the joint degree, compared to 109 credit hours (49 credits for the MPH and 60 for the MSW) if completed separately. Students must complete a practicum experience for both degrees, and these have been conducted independently, due to the need to satisfy the specific training requirements of each degree's practice experience. The self-study notes that complementary fieldwork experiences could be considered, depending on the agency and qualifications of preceptors, which would need to meet both MPH and MSW criteria.

The self-study clearly outlines the "shared" coursework that allows students to more efficiently complete the two degrees. Nine of the 60 required social work credits are satisfied with required MPH coursework. Faculty have identified several required MSW courses that meet specific MPH competencies and are

appropriate to serve as the nine elective credits for the MPH program (non-thesis option). These include MSW 500: Social Problems and Social Welfare Policy and MSW 509: Sociocultural Concepts and Populations of the Southwest. Finally, the joint degree plan of study substitutes MSW 510 and 511: Human Behavior and the Social Environment I and II (six credits) for the three-credit MPH core course in the social and behavioral sciences (MPH 501). Site visitors discussed this substitution with faculty, since the core social and behavioral sciences class is clearly an important foundation for the MPH degree. Faculty verified the competency analysis presented in the self-study, which documents the ways in which the two-course series in social work covers the relevant material. Another faculty member, who teaches the MPH program planning course, noted that his class requires that students are familiar with and can apply behavior change theories. He noted that joint degree students have done well in his class and are readily familiar with common public health social and behavioral science models and theories.

2.11 Distance Education or Executive Degree Programs.

If the program offers degree programs using formats or methods other than students attending regular on-site course sessions spread over a standard term, these degree programs must a) be consistent with the mission of the program and within the program's established areas of expertise; b) be guided by clearly articulated student learning outcomes that are rigorously evaluated; c) be subject to the same quality control processes that other degree programs in the university are; and d) provide planned and evaluated learning experiences that take into consideration and are responsive to the characteristics and needs of adult learners. If the program offers distance education or executive degree programs, it must provide needed support for these programs, including administrative, travel, communication, and student services. The program must have an ongoing program to evaluate the academic effectiveness of the format, to assess teaching and learning methodologies and to systematically use this information to stimulate program improvements.

This criterion is met. The program offers its MPH concentration in community health education in a fully online format. The department administers the online program at the NMSU Albuquerque Center. Each faculty member has an office and access to all of the resources available including facilities and staff support. The MPH online coordinator resigned in August 2010, and the department hopes to fill the position by the end of the spring 2011 semester.

The online MPH program shares a common curriculum, faculty and class schedule with the on-campus program. All faculty teach both on campus and online, coordinating course content, syllabi and student requirements among multiple instructors so that students have equivalent experiences between online and on-campus courses. Faculty members develop and deliver courses using the NMSU learning management system, Blackboard. NMSU has offered online courses since the late 1990s, and one MPH faculty member has been teaching online since the late 1990s.

Students must apply and be admitted to the online program. The program established a list of clear and appropriate student characteristics for applicants to the online program, including work experience, employer support for the educational undertaking and rationale for taking the online program instead of

taking the campus-based curriculum. Online MPH students adhere to the same academic policies and procedures governing the on-campus students.

The program requires that all online students attend a student orientation program held at the main campus in August. The orientation introduces students to the program, department and college and provides lectures regarding how to succeed as an online student.

Students evaluate courses at the end of the course through Survey Monkey. The program also surveys online MPH students once each academic year to solicit their feedback regarding their experiences. The department head reviews course evaluations, and online teaching is reviewed during the annual faculty performance evaluation.

The program expects that online MPH students will enroll in six credits per semester including summers, although some students take more or fewer credits. The online coordinator monitors online MPH student progress annually and works with the on-campus staff to ensure that online students are accurately tracked. The current interim online coordinator advises all online students, oversees all graduate student field experiences, oversees online students culminating experiences, shares information with students via a listserv and is active and visible in the public health community. Students reported that they felt supported in their academic endeavors, connected to the program and knowledgeable about program expectations due to the efforts of the interim online coordinator.

The online program began as a pilot with five students in 2007 and officially began admitting cohorts in 2008. The program has admitted 61 students to the online program, and five have graduated. Six are no longer active. Currently, 50 students are taking courses in the online program. Students who met with site visitors enthusiastically voiced support of their online learning experiences, citing the challenging curriculum and helpful and approachable faculty and advisors.

NMSU provides an expansive list of resources for faculty and students to succeed in online teaching and learning, including training and support through the Center for Learning and Professional Development for both students and faculty and training and resources through the College of Extended Learning (CEL). The CEL offers a graduate certificate in online teaching and learning after completing five, three-credit courses, and full-time faculty may enroll in up to six credits per semester for free. The interim online program coordinator is currently completing her certificate. CEL provides support through expert faculty and staff stationed at the Albuquerque center and through funding for office operations, travel and student support.

Online MPH students access the NMSU library and bookstore via the internet. Library representatives also present to the online students during the mandatory MPH student orientation. The most recent online MPH student survey identified some discontent with the online resources made available through the library, citing limited choices and access difficulties. This survey is compiled by the online coordinator and shared with faculty.

3.0 CREATION, APPLICATION AND ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE.

3.1 Research.

The program shall pursue an active research program, consistent with its mission, through which its faculty and students contribute to the knowledge base of the public health disciplines, including research directed at improving the practice of public health.

This criterion is met with commentary. The department's research goals are clearly stated, and research plays a central role in the university, college and department. Faculty research areas emphasize border and international health, community health education, nutrition and wellness, substance abuse, violence and sexuality issues. Faculty set their own research agendas and partner with various clinics, agencies and health departments.

The current dean encourages research and supports research efforts through reduced workload (assigned at the department level) and internal mini-grants of \$5000. The dean's goal is for the college to be the research powerhouse of the Southwest region. The department targets publications by faculty (15 in 2009-2010), presentations (44 in 2009-2010) and grants (12 in 2008) as key indicators of research productivity.

The Border Epidemiological Center (BEC) and the Southern New Mexico Area Health Education Center (SoAHEC) have recently moved from being under the auspices of the Health Sciences Department to being housed centrally in the college, directly reporting to the dean. This means the revenue and expenses related to the centers will change and be tracked at the college level, creating the appearance of a significant drop in research revenue associated with the department and, potentially, the MPH program. The dean intends that this move will encourage and facilitate greater interdisciplinary research between all departments within the college.

In 2008, MPH faculty managed 13 research projects. Between 2006 and 2009, MPH faculty published 36 articles in national peer reviewed journals and 11 articles in regional journals. One faculty member published a textbook. During the same time frame, MPH faculty presented 139 papers at national and international conferences and 34 papers at regional/local conferences. This indicates an active research program.

The department's Promotion and Tenure Committee provides an annual review of individual tenured and tenure-track faculty members, including commentary concerning each faculty member's progress in research and scholarly activity.

NMSU recognizes research as essential and supports research activity as part of its institutional responsibility. NMSU policies guide research and promote academic inquiry, assure protection of human subjects, and protect academic freedom.

NMSU's research department supports faculty research through competitive seed grants up to \$50,000 for one year and graduate assistantship support for students up to \$20,000 for one year. The research vice-dean seeks to make faculty aware of funding and collaboration opportunities. Department faculty representatives serve on the university's Council of Research Deans and college representatives serve on the University Research Council.

The department conducts community-based research addressing regional needs in line with its mission, and faculty associated with the MPH program are the primary research producers. During the site visit, community members praised the department's community contributions and expressed interest in strengthening relationships for future research opportunities. Community members are eager to expand partnerships with the health sciences department and benefit from usable data and applied research.

Faculty research provides opportunities for students to participate in community-based research, evaluation research and epidemiological data collection. The program partners with the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center to provide research-based internship opportunities for students. Students who complete the thesis undertake their own original research project intended to solve a public health problem or address public health issues including palliative care, health literacy, obesity, human papilloma virus, cervical cancer, breast cancer, radon exposure, colorectal cancer and health risk behaviors. Student research and student contribution were recognized through 12 presentations in 2009.

The commentary relates to the abrupt drop in non-center-related, funded research by MPH faculty at the end of 2009. At the time of the site visit, there was no active funded research by core MPH faculty. In addition, the department was unable to provide the site review team with a list of 2010 research activities in which the MPH faculty is engaged, whether funded or not funded.

3.2 Service.

The program shall pursue active service activities, consistent with its mission, through which faculty and students contribute to the advancement of public health practice.

This criterion is met. The university, department and program value service. Faculty service is part of the annual evaluation process and is required by both university and departmental promotion and tenure policies.

As noted in Criterion 3.1, during the self-study period, the department housed two centers that organized both research activities and significant service activities. SoAHEC is a regional health training center with programs for youth, health professionals and communities. The BEC focuses applied research on reducing health disparities in the region. The centers have provided opportunities to engage MPH students and faculty and will continue to do so, despite the administrative decision to move the centers to the college level.

The list of faculty (non-center) service is extensive and includes academic, professional and community service. Much of the faculty service is devoted to issues arising from the program's proximity to the Mexican border.

In the self-study, the major reference to student service was through the field experience. Program leaders acknowledged during the site visit that the program is still working to define student service. However, the site visit team learned that the MPH student organization carries out regular service activities, and students who met with site visitors clearly seemed to possess the program's service values. Opportunities for online students to participate in service are, however, not well-defined.

3.3 Workforce Development.

The program shall engage in activities that support the professional development of the public health workforce.

This criterion is partially met. The department is approved by NCHEC to provide Category 1 CHES credits. Post-graduate courses are provided through SoAHEC and BEC and at conferences of Paso del Norte SOPHE and the New Mexico Public Health Association, for which the department serves as the CHES credit provider. Faculty and students serve as course instructors at some of these events. The program also collaborates with the University of New Mexico and the New Mexico Department of Health on workforce development activities.

The only information about workforce development presented in the self-study document outlined the courses that the department has certified for CHES Category 1 credit. During the site visit, the team heard more about faculty and student participation in Paso del Norte SOPHE. Many faculty members have held and currently hold leadership roles in this organization. While these roles are primarily related to service, Paso del Norte SOPHE also provides educational offerings for health educators, and faculty and students both produce and participate in the offerings.

Neither the self-study document nor onsite discussions clearly depicted how the program assesses workforce needs. Despite the impressively long list of Category 1 CHES offerings, the self-study listed zero participants for 16 of the courses on the list. This suggests that the program's workforce development offerings may not meet the needs of the region's public health workforce.

4.0 FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS.

4.1 Faculty Qualifications.

The program shall have a clearly defined faculty which, by virtue of its distribution, multidisciplinary nature, educational preparation, research and teaching competence, and practice experience, is able to fully support the program's mission, goals and objectives.

This criterion is met. The full-time faculty members have extensive training and expertise in public health and community health education. They are qualified to support the department's professional MPH curriculum, research and service activities.

The self-study documents 11 faculty. Since the self-study was submitted, one faculty member has resigned. The department has received approval to replace this vacancy and also to hire for one additional position.

The faculty complement includes seven tenured, three tenure-track, and one non-tenure track faculty (the recently vacated position) who support the MPH program. The existing 10 faculty contribute at 4.75 FTE. All faculty are expected to contribute to the teaching, research and service activities of the department as well as the program.

Among the 10 faculty, four are full professors, four are associate professors and two are assistant professors. Five of the faculty hold CHES certifications. All hold doctoral degrees. Two hold MPH degrees. Four hold masters degrees in a discipline emphasizing health, health behavior or health sciences. Two hold masters degrees in education.

Five adjunct, part-time and secondary appointment faculty also contribute to the teaching and research activities of the department. These faculty are drawn from across NMSU (eg, SoAHEC, BEC, and College of Business), government agencies (eg, Las Cruces Health Department) and industry (epidemiology consulting).

NMSU's MPH program integrates practice in its classroom teaching through the faculty's experiences, including past practice and current research and service. Faculty are leaders in local, regional and national associations. Faculty incorporate border health experts in their classes by having guest

speakers. Faculty capture guest lecturers' presentation on video or audio and have incorporated those experts in their online teaching.

The department lists four outcome measures by which it evaluates the qualifications of its faculty. One is the proportion of faculty with appropriate credentials (100% met). Another is the proportion of faculty with CHES or professional licensure. The goal is 50%, and it is met with 55%. The department expects all tenure-track and tenure-eligible faculty to progress toward tenure (100% met). The fourth goal outlines the department's expectations that all faculty receive satisfactory scores on their annual performance evaluation (100% met). The annual performance evaluation reviews the faculty's personal goals and contributions in the areas of teaching, service and research. The site visit team learned that the annual performance reviews are considered in-depth by the department's Promotions and Tenure Committee at the time of promotion.

4.2 Faculty Policies and Procedures.

The program shall have well-defined policies and procedures to recruit, appoint and promote qualified faculty, to evaluate competence and performance of faculty, and to support the professional development and advancement of faculty.

This criterion is met. Policies and procedures that govern faculty recruitment, appointment, retention and promotion are published in the NMSU's University Policies Manual (available online). Faculty appointments are made to the College of Health and Social Services, and there are college-level guidelines that operationalize the university's policies for promotion, tenure, recruitment, appointment, retention and promotion. All faculty members who teach in the MPH program are expected to adhere to the guidelines.

The department, college and university encourage faculty development. The annual performance evaluation process includes a meeting between individual faculty members and the department head where formative performance goals are developed, and the faculty member is then evaluated on his or her progress toward those goals. There is a formal mentor named for assistant and associate professors to help faculty grow in their faculty roles.

The university provost's office offers promotion and tenure workshops for faculty. NMSU offers the ADVANCE Program, a mentoring program pairing faculty members with selected mentors to accomplish research-based goals. The NMSU Teaching Academy offers workshops, seminars and educational development on a variety of topics pertaining to teaching, assessment, student learning, service learning, cultural competency, writing and grant-proposal efforts. The NMSU Information and Communication Technology Department offers seminars and workshops related to developing and managing web-based courses and individual consulting.

Each faculty member submits an annual performance review that includes an allocation of effort agreed upon by the faculty and the department head; a narrative of accomplishments over the past calendar year; and supporting materials. The Promotion and Tenure (P&T) Committee also evaluates untenured faculty and those below the rank of professor, and the committee presents its findings to the department head. Faculty receive a full dossier assessment by the committee after the first three years, which contains commentary on their progress toward tenure. Faculty evaluations include assessment of teaching/advising, scholarly activity/research and service. Faculty reported that while completing the annual dossier was a large undertaking, having the completed annual portfolio made the pathway to promotion and tenure an easier undertaking because the work had been collected annually. The P&T Committee makes recommendations to the department head. The department head forwards candidate recommendations to the dean and the college's P&T Committee. Once approved by that committee, the college dean forwards the recommendation to the executive vice president and provost. The provost returns a continuous employment contract to the dean, and the contract is routed to the candidate via the department head. Policies require candidates to be informed of evaluation and recommendation decisions and provide candidates the opportunity to contest decisions.

There is a process for post-tenure review which includes an annual faculty performance evaluation.

The program provides funds for conference travel and memberships.

Students evaluate each course through an electronic evaluation. The electronic evaluation system, through which students participate in a Survey Monkey questionnaire via an emailed link, is a two-year old system. The department realizes that this system has not had a favorable response rate, and faculty members are currently considering possible modifications. Support staff downloads the evaluation results and send paper copies to both the instructors and the department head. Course evaluations are considered as part of the annual performance evaluation of faculty members.

4.3 Faculty and Staff Diversity.

The program shall recruit, retain and promote a diverse faculty and staff, and shall offer equitable opportunities to qualified individuals regardless of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or national origin.

This criterion is met with commentary. The primary faculty are 50% male, 50% female, 10% Hispanic, 10% Asian or Pacific Islander and 20% Native American or Alaska Native. Secondary faculty are 80% male and 20% female, 40% Hispanic. The staff are 100% female and 50% Hispanic.

NMSU is recognized as a Hispanic-serving institution, and the program's proximity to the Mexican border and regional Native American populations influence its mission and activities. The department, college and university have appropriate policies concerning commitment to equitable opportunities and

nondiscrimination. These are fully implemented in all personnel practices, including searches for new faculty and staff. The policies state that equitable opportunities are available to qualified individuals regardless of age, sex, race, disability, religion or national origin.

The commentary relates to the institutional systems and strategies that directly address how policies are implemented. In light of recent events that received national media attention, in which MPH faculty members have made accusations of racial and gender discrimination, the program is encouraged to proactively and transparently evaluate itself regarding its ability to provide equitable opportunities in practice. It is concerning that the self-study document did not mention the turmoil the program experienced during the review period, nor was there discussion regarding the recent events' influence on systems with administration during the site-visit interviews. This causes the site-visit team to question the depth of self-evaluation that has occurred on this particular subject.

4.4 Student Recruitment and Admissions.

The program shall have student recruitment and admissions policies and procedures designed to locate and select qualified individuals capable of taking advantage of the program's various learning activities, which will enable each of them to develop competence for a career in public health.

This criterion is met with commentary. Prospective students who contact the program receive a mailed packet including a brochure, application information and fact sheet about the program. The program's website is revised at the instigation of the graduate coordinator and department head. Currently, the website provides information, links and a downloadable application form. The department's new leader will assume the position in January 2011 and intends to revise the website to make it more user-friendly for interested students.

The college recruiter organizes and attends career and college fairs at high schools, community colleges, NMSU (undergraduate students), other colleges and professional conferences. Faculty proactively recruit students through professional relationships. Students locate the program through web searches and the CEPH website. Students from the department's bachelors degree program in community health are somewhat discouraged to apply because of the similarities in educational focus and approaches. BCH graduates are encouraged to pursue continued education elsewhere to expand their knowledge. Other NMSU undergraduate students are encouraged to apply to the MPH program.

The department is a Returning Peace Corps Fellows program directly linked with the Peace Corps. Many students attending the site visit discussions were fellows. The department values the Peace Corps Fellows and finds they bring maturity, intelligence and experience to the program.

Students must first apply and be accepted to the NMSU Graduate School. The requirements for admission include an overall 3.0GPA or a 3.0 in the last 60 hours of undergraduate work. Once admitted to the Graduate School, students apply to either the on-campus or online MPH program. Applications are reviewed in the spring, and students begin courses in the fall semester. The program caps enrollment for each program (on-campus and online) at 20-23 students to manage class sizes and student-to-faculty ratios. All students are required to come to campus and attend a mandatory MPH student orientation.

Students admitted to the MPH program must have completed six semester credits in social and behavioral sciences, three semester credits in statistical methods, four semester credits in biology or a related field and three semester credits in a public health foundations course (or agree to complete the MPH 500 course within their first year); submit GRE scores (at 850 or above); submit an essay and personal statement; list all paid or volunteer work; and provide three letters of recommendation. The program evaluates applications using a standardized rubric.

The program had 35 students apply to the on-campus program in 2009-2010, admitting 17 and enrolling eight. The online program had 35 students apply, admitting 26 and enrolling 18. The program notes that the online program is increasingly popular, and they are seeing growth in student interest and student numbers. The online program serves a need for working public health professionals who otherwise would not have the opportunity to pursue graduate education. Students, both on-campus and online, reported great satisfaction with the program's process and noted that they have, in turn, actively recruited and referred colleagues to the program.

In its assessment of the low number of on-campus enrollees compared to the number of students who were extended an offer to begin the program, the department relayed that decisions on graduate assistantships had been delayed; faculty understood that the program was less competitive because it could not confirm assistantships in the same timeframe as other universities could, so this resulted in a loss of enrollments. The department will make assistantship offers earlier in 2011 in hopes of securing the on-campus candidates to whom they extend admission offers.

The commentary relates to the program's insistence (stated both in the self-study and in on-site meetings) that they do not have formal recruiting policies, despite the fact that they have procedures, a paid college recruiter (who works on MPH as well as undergraduate recruiting) and increasing inquiries. The high turnover in leadership and frequent use of interim directors indicates that this program would benefit from written policies in order to assist in the administration of the MPH program and clarify operations relating to recruitment and admissions.

4.5 Student Diversity.

Stated application, admission, and degree-granting requirements and regulations shall be applied equitably to individual applicants and students regardless of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or national origin.

This criterion is met. The college, department and program are committed to eliminating health disparities, especially those relating to the US-Mexico border region, and consider recruitment and education of health professionals from representative minority populations an important component of achieving this goal. The program has a goal of graduating the same proportion of minority students as the proportion of New Mexico residents earning baccalaureate degrees.

The college, department and program have a wide variety of programs aimed at recruiting minority students and eliminating health disparities. One approach has been outreach to high school and undergraduate students to expose them to and interest them in health professions. Unfortunately, funding cuts have limited the outreach programs, but the new college dean supports the “pipeline” approach to attracting minority students. A college recruiter provides outreach to community colleges, high schools and other venues, with special attention to working with minority students.

One goal of the online MPH was to make the program more accessible to Native Americans, most of whom reside in the northern part of the state. To date, this has been successful, though it was heavily reliant on established relationships of the initial online coordinator (who recently left the program). One online student from the Indian Health Service (IHS) who met with site visitors seemed confident that Native American and IHS interest in the program would continue through word of mouth and through current students’ relationships with others.

Quantitative data show diversity among applicants, accepted students and enrollees. In the past three years, the program has enrolled seven African American students, 36 Caucasian students, 19 Hispanic students, one Asian student and eight Native American students. The proportion of Hispanic students is considerably lower than their proportion in the state population and among baccalaureate graduates, and the program’s identified issue with this group appears to be recruitment. Most Hispanic students who apply are accepted and ultimately enroll in the program.

The principal discussion of student diversity in the self-study document focused on race and ethnicity. Faculty were unaware of any issues arising for students from other populations, emphasized the program’s expectation of respect for all and said that acknowledgement of diverse populations and health disparities is a component of several required courses’ curricula.

4.6 Advising and Career Counseling.

There shall be available a clearly explained and accessible academic advising system for students, as well as readily available career and placement advice.

This criterion is met with commentary. Each student is assigned a full-time faculty member as an academic advisor in the letter of acceptance to the program. The online program coordinator (or, currently, the assistant coordinator) serves as the advisor for all online students. Frequent meetings with the advisor, as well as the graduate program coordinator, are encouraged but not required. Students must submit a “plan of study,” outlining his or her planned coursework, within the completion of 12 hours of coursework; the assigned advisor may suggest another faculty member who better fits the student’s needs, after reviewing the plan of study. The student’s role in advisor selection is not articulated in the self-study document, but students who met with site visitors did not believe that there were any problems with advisor assignment or transfer between advisors.

The entire faculty typically meets once a year to assess students’ progress and identify students who are experiencing academic difficulty. Identified students receive a letter outlining required corrective actions. Because of leadership and other transitions, this meeting did not occur in the 2009-2010 academic year.

The program has several opportunities for the development of professional skills, including the field experience and teaching and research assistantships. Advising on postgraduate career opportunities is conducted informally via information on the listserv, on which agencies may announce job openings.

The first step in the grievance process always involves an individual seeking appropriate remedies through specific channel and protocol within the university office or department. Any student in the department of health science having a grievance must bring the complaint to the individual responsible for difficulty first. If a resolution is not possible, the student can bring the grievance to the academic department head. If a resolution is still not found, the student may take the grievance to the appropriate office on campus. Any complaint found to be discrimination-based goes to the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE). Procedure requires a report to the OIE even if the issue is resolved within the academic unit. In the past three years, the department has had one student grievance. This grievance was addressed through OIE and the student’s complaint was dismissed. Students are advised to handle grievances at the lowest level possible, and the MPHSA works closely with the graduate coordinator to resolve some issues. The self-study document indicates, however, that student concerns and grievances have been rare and are not formally tallied.

In 2009, the program implemented an exit survey with graduating students. The survey identified some student concerns about advising in terms of advisor assignments as well as the direction given to students. Career counseling has not been formally assessed.

The first area of commentary relates to feedback provided in the 2009 exit survey. Several students expressed dissatisfaction with advising. This contrasted with what the team heard from students and alumni during on-site meetings. During the visit, students and alumni expressed consistent satisfaction with the accessibility, availability and openness of faculty. The survey feedback (from a small sample) indicated a need for more individualized attention, especially with respect to progress through the program. One possible interpretation is that some students need a more structured approach to advising than recommendations for meetings once a semester.

Another area of commentary is that the program may benefit from a more individualized approach to career counseling. In addition to announcing job openings, the program could establish a more formal system that directs students to career opportunities based on individual interests and competencies. While the students interviewed by site visitors did not raise the issue of career counseling spontaneously, they did acknowledge that a more formal approach might be helpful, when questioned.

The final commentary is that, though grievances are rare, it would be helpful for the program to more closely monitor student grievances and concerns. This would provide another tool for the program's overall quality monitoring and improvement processes.

Agenda

COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT

New Mexico State University Public Health Program

October 25-26, 2010

Monday, October 25, 2010

- 8:30 am Review of Resource File and Request for Additional Documentation
- 9:30 am Break
- 9:45 am Meeting with Program, Department and College Administration
Tilahun Adera
Michael Young
James Robinson
Sue Forster-Cox
Mark Kittleson
- 11:15 am Break
- 11:30 am Meeting with Public Health Teaching Faculty
Jeff Brandon
Chuck Kozel
Rebecca Palacios
Satya Rao
Susan Wilson
- 12:45 pm Break
- 1:00 pm Lunch with Students (online students by phone conference)
Gabe Gose
Aisha Kudura
Jessica Rodriguez
Bianca Zamora
Janet Ann McAndrews
Stacie Powell
Richard Skaggs
- 2:15 pm Break
- 2:30 pm Meeting with Public Health Faculty
Jeff Brandon
Chuck Kozel
Rebecca Palacios
Satya Rao
Susan Wilson
James Robinson
Sue Forster-Cox
- 3:30 pm Break
- 3:45 pm Meeting with Alumni, Community Representatives and Preceptors
Liz Gutierrez
Katie Redd
Michael Kelly
Jill McDonald
Lori McKee
Paul Dulan
Hector Valacaza

4:45 pm Executive Session/Resource File Review

6:00 pm Adjourn

Tuesday, October 26, 2010

9:00 am Meeting with University Officials/Academic Leaders
Wendy Wilkins
Pam Schulz
Shelley Bucher
Linda Lacey
Vimal Chaitanya

9:45 am Executive Session

1:00 pm Exit Interview