Doctor of Public Health

The Doctor of Public Health (Dr.P.H.) program at Georgia Southern University is committed to producing public health practitioners who possess the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to contribute to an effective public health workforce. The Dr.P.H. prepares professionals for broad-based practice in public health, through the integration of a community-based practice core and advanced courses in four concentration areas: Biostatistics, Community Health Behavior and Education, Epidemiology, and Public Health Leadership. The program serves both the full-time student preparing for a career in public health, as well as currently employed public health professionals seeking an advanced education to augment their existing skills and backgrounds.

Purpose

The Dr.P.H. is the terminal professional degree for those who intend to pursue or advance their professional practice career in public health. The Dr.P.H. program aims to train students for advanced science-based practice and practice-oriented research. Public health practice involves the strategic, organized and interdisciplinary application of knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to perform essential public health services necessary to improve the population’s health.

Those who earn this degree are expected to occupy leadership positions in public health and related areas. Additionally, individuals earning this degree will be positioned to exert significant influence on the development of policies and programs aimed at improving the health of populations in the region. It is anticipated that such positions will represent considerable diversity with respect to international, national, state or local levels; and in the public or private sector. In addition, those who earn the Dr.P.H. degree may also seek teaching and research positions at colleges and universities.

The Dr.P.H. is conferred in recognition of the candidate’s command of a comprehensive body of knowledge in public health, their ability to initiate, organize and pursue the investigation of significant problems in public health, and their capacity to formulate policies, strategies, and/or programs on the basis of the knowledge generated. The Dr.P.H. leads to a career in administration, teaching, or public health practice, where advanced analytical and conceptual capabilities are required.

The Dr.P.H. program expands the competencies included in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) program for all matriculating students, with increased emphasis on advanced skills in evidenced-based problem-solving. Students who have not completed one or more of the M.P.H. core public health courses must complete these courses as part of their doctoral program. In addition, those students are required to complete a minimum of 60 credits for the doctoral degree. Students with a master’s degree other than in public health may be required to take health or health-related courses in addition to the 60 minimum credits.

The Dr.P.H. program offers students the opportunity to specialize their training in four program concentration areas (Specific concentration competencies for each area are provided in the following sections.):

- Biostatistics
- Community Health Behavior and Education
- Epidemiology
- Public Health Leadership (Partially Online)

Dr.P.H. Competencies

At the completion of the Dr.P.H. program all students will be able to:

Cross-Cutting Competencies

- Apply evidence-based practice, generation of practice-based evidence, and leadership positions that apply and synthesize translational and implementation science findings in governmental, non-profit, and private-sector settings as well as teaching, research, and service in academic roles at the undergraduate or graduate level.
- Demonstrate the ability to generate products that discover, apply, and synthesize evidence from a broad range of disciplines and health-related data sources, in order to advance programs, policies, or systems addressing population health. Learning products may be created in a range of formats.
- Demonstrate leadership in increasingly interdisciplinary, interprofessional, and crossectoral roles and settings.
- Develop innovative, current, and proactive approaches to adapt to the ever-changing public health systems and health care landscape.
- Explain a core, interdisciplinary orientation toward evidence-based public health practice, leadership, policy analysis and development, evaluation methods, and translational and implementation research to generate practice-based evidence.
- Demonstrate an ability to work in a global context, recognizing the relationships among domestic and global issues.

Biostatistics Concentration Competencies

- Design a public health and biomedical investigation in terms of the experimental design, data to be collected that reflect research objectives, number of subjects needed, and specification of appropriate methods for analysis.
- Analyze public health and biomedical data using appropriate statistical software such as SAS, R and S-plus.
- Interpret analytic methods used in the public health and biomedical journals, as well as critique published reports of public health and biomedical experiments as to the validity of the inferential conclusions.
- Develop new biostatistical methods and new ideas for applying existing biostatistical methods to applications in public health and biomedical sciences.
- Develop written and oral reports to communicate effectively with research investigators the pivotal aspects of a study, including: design, study objectives, data analysis methodology, results and conclusions.
- Create a collaborative environment for working on written and oral reports.

Community Health Behavior and Education Concentration Competencies

- Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.
- Communicate and interact with people across diverse disciplines, communities and cultures for development of programs, policies, and research.
- Develop collaborative partnerships with communities, policy makers, and other relevant groups.
- Engage communities in creating evidence-based, culturally competent programs.
- Understand community-based participatory intervention and research projects.
- Design action plans for enhancing community and population-based health.
- Assess cultural, environmental, and social justice influences on the health of communities.
- Implement culturally and linguistically appropriate programs, services, and research.
Epidemiology Concentration Competencies

- Design a public health and epidemiological investigation in terms of experimental design, data to be collected that reflect the research objectives, and specification of appropriate methods of analysis.
- Analyze public health and epidemiological data using appropriate statistical software such as SAS and R.
- Develop new epidemiological methods and new ideas for applying existing epidemiological methods to applications in public health and the epidemiological sciences.
- Develop written and oral reports to communicate effectively with research investigators the pivotal aspects of a study, including: design, study objectives, data analysis methodology, results, and conclusions.
- Create a collaborative environment for working on written and oral reports.
- Employ basic ethical and legal principles pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of epidemiological measures.

Public Health Leadership Concentration Competencies

- Evaluate the economic, professional, social and legislative influences as well as values and ethical dilemmas in public health that are inherent in efforts to control cost, while assuring access and quality of services, safety and preparedness, for the public.
- Analyze the trends in planning, resource allocation, and financing and their effects on consumers, providers, and payers in public health; evaluate the main components and issues of the organization, financing and delivery of public health systems in the US.
- Evaluate the application and role of policy and management on the conduct of public health research and practice through the application of qualitative and quantitative research methods for public health problem solving; evaluate grants, proposals or cooperative agreements for funding from external sources.
- Assess the ability to manage programs within budget constraints through analysis of budget preparation with justification and evaluation as related to public health initiatives; apply prevention effectiveness models to prevention strategies through cost effectiveness, cost-benefit, and cost-utility analysis.
- Analyze leadership skills for building partnerships in public health; analyze health policy and management effectiveness using appropriate channels and technologies.
- Evaluate the process for strategic planning and marketing for public health through the analysis of quality, cost benefit, and performance improvement concepts and develop a plan to implement a policy or program, including goals, outcomes and process objectives, staffing plans, budget and implementation steps.
- Analyze the policy development, assessment, and evaluation process for improving the health status of populations including urban rural differences wise applying population and individual ethical considerations in relation to benefit, cost and burden of public health programs. Use this knowledge to advocate for programs and resources that advance the health of the population.
- Analyze information from various sources to resource and program decision making and evaluate how “systems thinking” can contribute to solving public health organizational issues and problems while being mindful of the principles of health equity for public health problem solving.

The Curriculum

The Dr.P.H. program requires a minimum of 60 credits and is offered on both a full- and part-time basis. The overall curriculum model includes:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Core</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Required Concentration Specific Courses</td>
<td>24-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>12-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctoral Public Health Field Practicum</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Credit Hours</td>
<td>60</td>
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The Dr.P.H. Public Health Sciences Core provides a grounding in the scientific basis of public health, public health professionalism and ethics, and translational research. Advanced specialty coursework develops the skills and knowledge upon which to build or enhance a career in public health. Selective courses are available in four core areas of concentration: Biostatistics, Community Health Behavior and Education, Epidemiology, and Public Health Leadership.

The Preceptorship

The Preceptorship is an important practical experience in a public health related setting. Dr.P.H. students will complete a 300 hour preceptorship under the joint direction of a qualified public health professional and a public health faculty member.

The Candidacy Examination

All Dr.P.H. students are required to complete and pass a concentration-specific candidacy examination. Students failing the concentration exam are allowed only one retake. In the event any Dr.P.H. student fails the concentration retake exam, the student will be immediately excluded from the program and all registered courses for the upcoming semester will be administratively cancelled.

The Dissertation

All doctoral candidates are required to prepare, complete and successfully defend a dissertation.

Admission Requirements

Admission into the graduate program is competitive and based upon academic background, performance on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), professional experience, interest in the field, a history of service, a personal statement, and letters of recommendation. All applicants must apply through the Schools of Public Health Application Service (SOPHAS).

Degree Admission Requirements

Regular

To complete an application to the Dr.P.H. program, applicants must submit the following:

- Completion of an application in SOPHAS.
- Official transcript(s) from a regionally accredited college or university showing courses completed, grades earned, dates, and degree(s) awarded. Transcript(s) should show completion of at least one (1) graduate-level course in each of the following five (5) areas:
  - biostatistics
  - epidemiology
  - health behavior/health education
  - health management/policy
  - environmental health sciences
- Courses must have been completed in the last five (5) years, and each must have been passed with a grade of “B” or better. Applicants who have not completed these courses, but whose applications show exceptional potential for success in the Dr.P.H. program, may be admitted to the Dr.P.H. program, but will be required to complete the courses (as presented in the JPHCOPH M.P.H. core course requirements) with grades of “B” or better before progressing to
the Public Health Core and Concentration Courses of the Dr.P.H. program. If the applicant has completed a Master’s degree in a field other than public health, professional public health work experience in one or more of the five core areas may be substituted for the corresponding M.P.H. level courses at the discretion of the College. Requests for this waiver must be submitted in writing:

- Three (3) letters of recommendation. Two must be from graduate faculty members and the third from a work supervisor;
- Official scores from the GRE (General Test) taken in the last five (5) years. An original copy of the test score, sent by the testing agency to the Office of Graduate Admissions, is required before any action is taken on an application. A copy of the score provided to the student and subsequently forwarded is not acceptable. The requirement for completion of a standardized test will be waived for those applicants who hold a doctoral degree from a regionally accredited college or university;
- All international applicants, including resident and non-resident aliens, whose native language is not English and who do not have an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited U.S. college or university, are required to submit official TOEFL scores taken within the year immediately proceeding the requested semester of admission. A minimum total score of 83, and minimum scores of 20 for each of the skills evaluated by the TOEFL: Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing. An original copy of the test score, sent by the testing agency to the Office of Admissions is required before any action is taken on an application. The copy of the score provided to the student and subsequently forwarded is not acceptable;
- Personal statement/letter of interest emphasizing reasons for pursuing Dr.P.H. (700-1000 words);
- Current curriculum vitae or resume;

1 Applicants may be required to take prerequisite coursework prior to taking program concentration courses. Conditions of admission will be presented in the letter of acceptance to each student.

Non-degree Admission Requirements

An applicant may be admitted to the COGS as non-degree students to earn credit in Public Health graduate courses without working toward a Dr.P.H. Interested applicants should consult the Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies for the types of Non-Degree admission as well as the requirements for admission in this category.

Grades

Dr.P.H. level degree seeking students are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 to remain in good academic standing and to be eligible to graduate. In the event the cumulative GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on academic probation. Students have nine (9) credits to elevate the cumulative GPA to at least 3.0 or will be excluded from the program. Also, students earning grades of “D” or below will be excluded from the program.

Transfer Credit Hours

Students may request that up to, but no more than, six (6) graduate credits be applied toward the 60 credits required for the Dr.P.H. Transfer credit must also satisfy the same requirements as courses taught for doctoral training within the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (e.g., minimum grade of “B”), be consistent with the student’s approved program of study, and have been received from a regionally accredited college or university. Thesis and dissertation credit cannot be transferred. The student must provide documentation in support of equivalence, such as a course syllabus, transcript, term paper, and/or instructor testimony. Equivalence is determined by the JPHCOPH faculty responsible for teaching the specific class. Credit reductions do not influence the residency and enrollment requirements or comprehensive examination procedures.