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 advanced courses in public health sciences (biostatistics, environmental health, epidemiology, health services administration, and social and behavioral sciences), a community-based practice core and advanced courses in three concentration areas: Biostatistics, Public Health Leadership, Community Health Behavior and Education. 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. Concentrations in Epidemiology and Environmental Health Sciences will be added as the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health achieves accreditation by the Council of Education for Public Health – CEPH.

The Dr.P.H. degree is the terminal professional degree conferred in recognition of an individual’s command of a comprehensive body of knowledge in the field of public health and related disciplines, and of the proven ability to initiate, organize, and pursue the investigation of significant problems in public health practice.

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.

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 proposed 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.

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 based 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 three program concentration areas (Specific concentration competencies for each area are provided in the following sections.):

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

Dr.P.H. Core Competencies

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

Biostatistics Core Competencies

• Construct a public health and biomedical research question for which a survey or an experiment is to address.
• Demonstrate skills for translating public health practice objectives to the appropriate biostatistical framework for analysis.
• Defend reasons for selecting various biostatistical methods of analysis of survey and experimental data from readings and case studies.
• Summarize data to present effective tabular and graphical displays of data obtained from large health surveys, vital statistics, and other public health and biomedical data sources.
• Interpret effectively descriptive data from public health and biomedical studies.
• Interpret inferential methods such as confidence intervals and significance tests results for answering public health research questions.
• Explain commonly used aspects of sampling methodology including simple random, stratified, and cluster sampling as well as telephone and internet sampling.
• Define strategies for design-based and model-based analysis of sample survey data.
• Design a questionnaire for measuring objectives of a public health and biomedical research question.
• Explain commonly used methods for handling non-response and missing data found in public health and biomedical surveys.
• Illustrate sufficient substantive knowledge of advanced biostatistical methods such as multiple regression, logistic regression, survival analysis, factor analysis, and repeated measures in order to interact with a biostatistician in a meaningful way.
• Prepare written and oral presentations of individual and collaborative public health practice-based projects using biostatistical methods of analysis.
• Interrelate effectively among biostatisticians and professionals in other areas of public health in order to plan, conduct, interpret, and communicate biostatistical analyses in a meaningful way.

Epidemiology Core Competencies

• Evaluate the existence of public health problems in rural and urban settings, both locally and internationally.
• Analyze data from epidemiologic investigations, studies, and surveillance, with special emphasis on the identification of health disparities and promotion of health equity.
• Evaluate causal inferences from epidemiologic data.
• Evaluate the validity and reliability of public health screening programs.
• Evaluate the importance of epidemiology for informing scientific, ethical, economic and political discussion of health issues.
• Synthesize principles of good ethical and legal practice pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of data.
• Apply current knowledge of disease etiology for use in guiding public health practice.
• Evaluate the effects of determinants of health on public health practice.
• Design investigations of acute and chronic health conditions or other adverse outcomes using languages and approaches tailored to the targeted population or community.
• Evaluate public health programs at the global, national, regional, state, local, or tribal level.
• Recommend use of laboratory resources to support epidemiologic activities.
• Apply principles of informatics, including data collection, processing, and analysis, in support of public health practice.
• Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences.
• Evaluate the strengths and limitations of epidemiologic research findings.
• Recommend evidence-based interventions and control measures in response to epidemiologic findings.

Environmental Health Core Competencies

• Describe the disciplines of environmental and occupational health and their relation to the other core areas of public health.
• Describe the direct and indirect effects of significant environmental and occupational agents pertaining to human and ecological effects both regionally and globally.
• Correlate the physiologic and psychosocial factors with susceptibility and health outcomes as a result of exposure to environmental hazards including genetic predispositions.
• Discuss the historical perspectives and legislative frameworks, guidelines and authorities for federal, state and local regulations that control environmental and occupational health issues and the applicability of each.
• Apply approaches for assessing, preventing and controlling environmental hazards that pose risks to human health and safety.
• Differentiate the mechanisms of toxicity along with the response to exposure and the methods of assessing, managing and communicating risk.
• Identify the presence of environmental justice issues within both rural and urban communities.
• Outline approaches for response to environmental justice concerns.
• Compare and contrast biological, chemical and physical agents and their affects on human health.
• Communicate the ethical, social and legal issues implied by biological systems within public health.
• Demonstrate effective written and oral skills to communicate risk to practitioners, clients, policy-makers, interest groups and the media.
• Evaluate the strengths and limitations of environmental health source material in order to compile relevant and appropriate information when needed.
• Describe the cultural, social, economic and behavioral factors that affect health problems influenced by environmental hazard exposure.

Health Policy and Management Core Competencies

• Describe the main components and issues of the organization, financing and delivery of public health systems in the United States.
• Apply the legal, values and ethical dilemmas in public health that are inherent in efforts to control cost, while assuring access and quality of services for the public.
• Apply the methods of ensuring community health safety and preparedness.
• Apply the policy development, assessment, and evaluation process for improving the health status of populations.
• Apply the principles of program development, management, budget preparation with justification and evaluation as related to public health initiatives.
• Analyze principles of strategic planning, quality improvement, and marketing in public health practice.
• Compare quality, cost benefit and performance improvement concepts to address organizational performance issues in public health.
• Explain how “systems thinking” can contribute to the solving public health organizational problems.
• Demonstrate health policy and management effectiveness using appropriate channels and technologies.
• Demonstrate leadership skills for building partnerships in public health.
• Compare trends in planning, resources allocation, and financing and their effects on consumers, providers, and payers in public health.
• Analyze the economic, professional, social and legislative influences on public health systems in the United States.
• Compare population and individual ethical considerations in relation to benefit, cost and burden of public health programs.
• Demonstrate the application and role of policy and management on the conduct of public health research and practice.
• Assess the ability to manage programs within budget constraints.
• Develop grants, proposals or cooperative agreements for funding from external sources.
• Compare prevention effectiveness models to prevention strategies through cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit, and cost-utility analysis.
• Apply ethical decision-making and conduct in all aspects of public health practice.
• Advocate for programs and resources that advance the health of the population.
• Define a plan to implement a policy or program, including goals, outcomes and process objectives, staffing plan, budget and implementation steps.

Social and Behavioral Sciences Core Competencies

• Synthesize theories, concepts, and models from social and behavioral science disciplines (e. g. anthropology, sociology, psychology, health education) that are used in public health research and practice.
• Assess philosophical foundations and assumptions of research applied to community health problems.
• Analyze social and behavioral determinants of health equity at all ecological levels (individual through policy).
• Analyze social and behavioral determinants of health equity in rural and urban settings locally, nationally, and globally.
• Synthesize health communication approaches including social marketing, media advocacy, and new communication technology.
• Explain the concept of Public Health Preparedness.
• Compare U. S. Public Health and Global Public Health priorities and concerns.
• Apply legislative advocacy skills that influence health policy.
• Describe theory-based social and behavioral interventions at multiple ecological levels.
• Discuss Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) principles and approaches when working on collaborative projects.
• Discuss qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods and their use in evidence-based community health intervention, evaluation, and research.
• Utilize qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods to address community health problems.
• Describe ethical principles critical to community-based research and practice.
• Assess the impact of power and privilege on health inequity at local, national, and global levels.
• Explain cultural competence and cultural humility for working with diverse communities.
• Analyze the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating an evidence-based community public health intervention.
• Develop transdisciplinary relationships to respond to public health problems.
• Explain program development and evaluation plans that include logic models, missions, goals, and objectives. Explain the functional interrelationships of the five core areas of Public Health.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Description</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Science Core</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Courses in Concentration</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Public Health Field Practicum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Credit Hours</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Dr.P.H. Public Health Sciences Core provides advanced courses in the core disciplines of public health (Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy and Management, Social Behavior Sciences). All Dr.P.H. students will take courses in community-based research and grant writing. Advanced specialty coursework develops the skills and knowledge upon which to build or enhance a career in public health. Selective courses are available in three core areas of concentration: Biostatistics, Public Health Leadership and Community Health Behavior and Education.

The Preceptorship

The Preceptorship is an important practical experience, a field practicum, 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 candidacy examination. This examination will consist of two sections covering the public health core and the students’ concentration area. All Dr.P.H. students are eligible to take the Public Health Core Exam after the completion of the following courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUBH 8130</td>
<td>Advanced Topics in Biostatistics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBH 8132</td>
<td>Environmental and Occupational Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBH 8133</td>
<td>Epidemiologic Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBH 8134</td>
<td>Health Economics, Policy and the Political Process</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBH 8136</td>
<td>Theoretical Perspectives of the Social and Behavioral Sciences in Public Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBH 9130</td>
<td>Sampling Methodology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the event students fail the core exam, only one retake is allowed.

Community Health and Public Health Leadership students are required to take and successfully complete Public Health Doctoral Seminar (PUBH 9630). However, successful completion of the public health core examination is required before these students can register for Public Health Doctoral Seminar (PUBH 9630). Public Health Doctoral Seminar (PUBH 9630) is designed to prepare Community Health and Public Health Leadership students for the completion of the dissertation phase of the Dr.P.H. For Public Health Leadership and Community Health students, successful completion of Public Health Doctoral Seminar (PUBH 9630) will satisfy public health competence in this particular discipline, so no concentration examination is required. These students will advance to candidacy upon successful completion of the core examination and successful completion of Public Health Doctoral Seminar (PUBH 9630).

Biostatistics students are not required to take Public Health Doctoral Seminar (PUBH 9630). These students must take their concentration exam within one semester of the completion of the biostatistics coursework. Biostatistics students who do not pass the concentration exam are only allowed one retake of the concentration examination. Students will advance to candidacy upon successful completion of the core and concentration sections of their examination.

In the event any Dr.P.H. student fails the core or 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 Practice 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;

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 consonant 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 Division Director. Credit reductions do not influence the residency and enrollment requirements or comprehensive examination procedures.

Course Time Limit
All requirements for the Dr.P.H. must be completed within seven academic years from the date of the first enrollment for study following admission to the doctoral program. For transfer students, the seven-year time limit commences with the semester during which transfer credit was earned.

Faculty Advisor
Graduate students are advised by the Coordinator of Student Services and mentored by a faculty member from the Student’s concentration area.