The Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) educational degree program at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University prepares professionals for broad-based practice in public health, through the integration of core competencies in the five areas of knowledge basic to public health (biostatistics, environmental health, epidemiology, health services administration, and social and behavioral sciences) with specialized knowledge and expertise in one of these areas. The program serves both the full-time student preparing for a career in public health, as well as currently employed health professionals seeking an advanced education to augment their existing skills and background.

Purpose

The purpose of the M.P.H. is to prepare graduate level public health practitioners capable of applying practice-based skills to promote the concepts of the field.

A comprehensive public health education program should provide skills enabling students to assess the magnitude and potential impact of the multiple problems facing populations, as well as recognize existing community capacities or resources. In conjunction with assessment skills, students enrolled in a public health program should understand the role of community empowerment, community mobilization, networks, and partnerships in the development of comprehensive public health policies designed to impact the priority areas identified in the assessment phase. Lastly, student skill sets in a public health program should focus on the task of assuring a presence of services and infrastructure necessary to address problems identified in the assessment phase, as well as enforce policies developed in response to the assessment. Specific skill sets related to the core functions of public health practice are as follows:

• Monitor health status to identify community health problems;
• Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community;
• Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues;
• Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems;
• Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts;
• Recognize the importance of the enforcement of laws and regulations necessary to protect health and ensure safety;
• Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable;
• Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services; and
• Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

The M.P.H. program is committed to producing public health practitioners that possess the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to produce an effective public health workforce.

M.P.H. Core Competencies

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

Introductory Core Competencies

• Define public health and articulate the elements in the public health approach to ensuring the health of our public;
• Explain the historical developments of the field;
• Explain the core public health functions;
• Explain how the core public health functions are operationalized at the global, national, state and local levels;
• Describe the public health infrastructure within the United States and beyond (global);
• Define the five core knowledge areas of public health: biostatistics, environmental health sciences, epidemiology, health policy and management, and social and behavioral sciences;
• Explain how state and local governmental public health agencies ensure availability of the ten essential services;
• Describe the history and current status of the interactions between medicine and public health;
• Explain the status of the public health workforce and efforts to expand and ensure the quality and diversity of this workforce;
• Articulate the current issues within the field.

Biostatistics Core Competencies

• Describe the roles biostatistics serves in the discipline of public health, with particular emphasis on rural health;
• Describe basic concepts of probability, random variation and commonly used statistical probability distributions;
• Differentiate between biased and unbiased public health studies based on design and sampling specifications;
• Distinguish among the different measurement scales and the implications for selection of statistical methods to be used based on these distinctions;
• Apply descriptive and inferential methodologies according to the type of study design for answering a particular research question;
• Apply appropriate methodological alternatives to commonly used statistical methods when assumptions are not met;
• Demonstrate the use of numerical and graphical descriptive techniques commonly used to summarize public health and biomedical data;
• Apply common statistical methods such as conducting significance tests and calculating confidence intervals for inference;
• Apply basic informatics techniques with vital statistics and public health records in the description of public health characteristics and in public health research and evaluation;
• Demonstrate the use of a statistical software package to enter, clean, manage, and analyze public health and biomedical data;
• Interpret results of statistical analyses found in public health and biomedical studies, including those obtained from output using a statistical software package;
• Develop written and oral presentations that effectively communicate statistical results to both public health professionals and educated lay audiences;
• Create a collaborative environment for working on written and oral reports and developing critical thinking skills;
• Recognize appropriate situations for consulting a biostatistician for his/her assistance and expertise with the design and analysis of a study and interpretation of study results.

Environmental Health Core Competencies

• Describe the discipline of environmental health and its relation to the other core areas of public health;
• Relate the direct and indirect effects of significant environmental and occupational agents pertaining to human and ecological effects both regional and global;
• Describe physiologic and psychosocial factors that can affect susceptibility and health outcomes as a result of exposure to environmental hazards including genetic predispositions;
• Describe the impact of federal and state regulatory statutes and guidelines along with the authorities that control environmental health issues;
• Specify approaches for assessing, preventing and controlling environmental hazards that pose risks to human health and safety;
• Explain the general mechanisms of toxicity along with the response to exposure and the methods of assessing, managing and communicating risk;
• Define environmental justice and identify environmental justice issues within both rural and urban communities;
• Demonstrate the capacity to respond to environmental justice concerns;
• Describe how biological, chemical and physical agents affect human health;
• Identify 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.

Epidemiology Core Competencies
• Describe a public health problem in terms of magnitude, person, and time in rural and urban settings;
• Analyze data from epidemiologic investigations, studies, and surveillance, with special emphasis on the identification of health disparities and promotion of health equity;
• Apply principles of causation to make causal inference from epidemiologic data;
• Apply the principles and limitations of public health screening programs;
• Explain the importance of epidemiology for informing scientific, ethical, economic and political discussion of health issues;
• Apply basic ethical and legal principles pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of epidemiologic data;
• Explain the basic terminology and definitions of epidemiology;
• Identify the role of laboratory resources in epidemiologic activities;
• Explain how determinants of health affect public health practice;
• Communicate epidemiologic information to lay and professional audiences;
• Evaluate the strengths and limitations of epidemiologic research findings;
• Explain the different uses of basic study designs and selection of variables used in public health.

Health Policy and Management Core Competencies
• Define the main components and issues of the organization, financing and delivery of public health systems in the United States;
• Describe 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;
• Define the methods of ensuring community health safety and preparedness;
• Compare the policy development, assessment, and evaluation process for improving the health status of populations;
• Describe the principles of program development, management, budget preparation with justification and evaluation as related for public health initiatives;
• Define principles of strategic planning, quality improvement, and marketing in public health practice;
• Define quality, cost benefit and performance improvement concepts to address organizational performance issues in public health;
• Define how “systems thinking” can contribute to solving public health organizational problems;
• Demonstrate health policy and management effectiveness using appropriate channels and technologies;
• Compare leadership skills for building partnerships in public health;
• Define trends in planning, resources allocation, and financing and their effects on consumers, providers, and payers in public health;
• Compare the economic, professional, social and legislative influences on public health systems in the US;
• Define population and individual ethical considerations in relation to benefit, cost and burden of public health programs;
• Compare the potential impacts of policy and management on the conduct of public health research and practice.

Social and Behavioral Sciences Core Competencies
• Explain philosophical foundations and assumptions of research applied to community health problems;
• Describe social and behavioral determinants of health equity at all ecological levels (individual through policy);
• Describe social and behavioral determinants of health equity in rural and urban settings locally, nationally, and globally;
• Explain health communication and advocacy skills;
• Describe theory-based social and behavioral interventions at multiple ecological levels;
• Compare qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods to address community health issues through intervention, evaluation and research;
• Describe Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) principles and approaches when working on collaborative projects.
• Explain how ethical principles are applied to community-based research and practice;
• Describe the impact of power and privilege on health inequity at local, national, and global levels;
• Demonstrate skills to support cultural competence and cultural humility when working with diverse communities;
• Explain the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating evidence-based community public health interventions;
• Demonstrate the ability to conduct reviews of scientific literature related to public health issues.

The Curriculum
The M.P.H. is an applied professional/graduate degree designed for highly motivated students who have a substantial interest in public health. Unique sequencing of courses, community-based program activities, and field/ laboratory research provide students with multiple opportunities to develop the public health competencies.

The M.P.H. program requires a minimum of 45 credits and is offered on both a full-and part-time basis. The overall curriculum model includes:

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<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Public Health Core</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practicum in Public Health</td>
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Public Health Capstone Research Project 3

Total Credit Hours 45

The M.P.H. core course requirements provide a broad overview of the disciplines of public health and the basic principles of public health practice. Specialty coursework develops the skills and knowledge upon which to build or enhance a career in public health. Selective courses are available in each of the five core areas of concentration: Epidemiology, Environmental Health Sciences, Biostatistics, Health Services Administration, and Social and Behavioral Sciences/Community Health Education.

In addition, all students are required to take an introduction to public health. An important practical experience in a public health venue is a field practicum in a community, a public health facility, a government agency, or related setting. The culminating experience is a capstone research project that requires the student to present (both orally and in written format) a data-based project that integrates their specialization with public health practice.

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

- Completion of an application in SOPHAS.
- Completion of a Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution
- Minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA of 2.75/4.0 scale
- Official scores on the Graduate Record Examination
- TOEFL scores are required for international applicants
- A resume that includes the following:
  a. educational experiences,
  b. professional goals and objectives,
  c. work history,
  d. professional experiences, memberships and/or participation in professional organizations,
  e. experiences in public health programs
- Three letters of reference
- Statement of Purpose (500-1000 words) that conveys the applicant's reasons for pursuing graduate study in public health and how admission into the program relates to the applicant’s professional aspirations

Provisional

Applicants may be admitted provisionally, based upon an evaluation of their application materials. Provisional admission is for applicants who do not satisfy requirements for regular admission, or those who require prerequisite coursework prior to entering a particular program of study.

Non-Degree Admission Requirements

An applicant may be admitted to the COGS as a non-degree student to earn credit hour in Public Health graduate courses without working toward the M.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.

Advisement: M.P.H.

Graduate students are advised by the Coordinator of Student Services and mentored by a faculty member from the Student's concentration areas.

Grades

M.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. 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 45 credits required for the M.P.H. Transfer credit must also satisfy the same requirements as courses taught for masters 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 credits 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 hour reductions do not influence the residency and enrollment requirements or comprehensive examination procedures.

Course Time Limit

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

Experiential Learning Opportunities

All M.P.H. students are required to complete a public health practicum and complete a capstone research project. The practicum permits the student to receive practical experience in a selected public health-related setting. The practicum requires 300 hours of service. The Capstone Research Project requires the completion of an independent research project and an oral defense of the design, methods, analysis, and interpretation of the data.