

**Board of Regents, University System of Georgia
Administrative Committee on Public Health**

Meeting – August 4, 2005
Room 7059, 270 Washington Street, NW, Atlanta, Georgia

Summary of Proceedings

Committee Members and Attendees

Armstrong Atlanta State University (AASU)

Dr. Edward Thompson, Vice-President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Barry Eckert, Dean, College of Health Professions

Dr. Sandy Streater, Chair, Department of Health Sciences

Fort Valley State University (FVSU)

Dr. Seyoum Gelaye, Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Extended Education Outreach

Gregory Sills, Chief of Staff

Georgia State University (Georgia State)

Dr. Ronald Henry, Provost

Dr. Michael Eriksen, Director, Institute of Public Health

Georgia Southern University (Georgia Southern)

Dr. Linda Bleicken, Interim Provost

Dr. Charles Hardy, Dean, College of Graduate Studies

Dr. Fred Whitt, Dean, College of Health and Human Sciences

Medical College of Georgia (MCG)

Dr. Barry Goldstein, Provost

University of Georgia (UGA)

Dr. Phil Williams, Interim Dean, College of Public Health

University System of Georgia

Dr. Frank Butler, Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs,

Committee Chair

Valerie Hepburn, Consultant

Courtney Jones, Graduate Research Assistant

Dr. Butler convened the meeting at 10:10am. Committee members and attendees introduced themselves.

Dr. Butler reviewed the charge of the Board of Regents in adopting the strategic plan for public health education, research and services on January 13, 2004. The Board's action established the Administrative Committee on Public Health to "*serve as the strategic planning advisory body for public health programs across the System and foster intercollegiate and interdisciplinary cooperation, assistance and growth, ensuring planning and cooperation so that all six public health programs in the System will prosper in their respective areas of emphasis and responsibilities.*" The University System of Georgia (USG) has the goal of promoting quality

public health education and research while maximizing efficiencies and system cooperation. The Committee is comprised of the chief academic officers of each institution. Members are encouraged to include program, college or other graduate faculty leadership as appropriate.

Each of the institutions presented an overview of their graduate public health programs and discussed the progress reports which had been previously submitted to the USG. The institutional progress reports are attached to this summary and incorporated by reference herein. Specialized aspects of each program and institutional research agenda were highlighted. Following are key points from the discussions:

AASU: The program, which is CEPH accredited, specializes in **health promotion and community education**. AASU has the only web-based MPH in the state; it was launched in collaboration with CDC and the program had its first graduates in spring 2005. Given demand, AASU is interested in expanding its classroom and web-based programs.

FVSU: The program specializes in **environmental health**. Though small, the lab-based program serves an important role in middle Georgia and the agribusiness sector.

Georgia Southern: The university is committed to achieving accredited school status, although faculty recognize the significant resources required. The program currently offers degrees in **community health education, biostatistics and health service administration**. Current research activities include obesity interventions, support for oncology clinical trials and programs in rural health. An increased number of students have been recruited for fall 2005, and new faculty are being hired. Georgia Southern is interested in web-based course expansion. The university is developing proposals for new doctoral degrees.

Georgia State: The program focuses on urban health issues, with specialty tracks in **prevention sciences, health promotion and behavior and health policy and management**. Applications and enrollment have been higher than expected; new faculty have been hired. The institution has developed a credible research portfolio in its areas of specialization. Georgia State is involved with the Georgia Cancer Coalition, in tobacco control and cancer prevention research and policy development. The program has been approved as an applicant for CEPH accreditation.

MCG: The program specializes in **informatics** and may soon include their existing biostatistics graduate programs in the public health portfolio. Interest in the program has been higher than expected; a number of medical residents are enrolling. New faculty have been hired. Much of the program will be delivered as web-based curriculum. MCG expects a significant focus on research, and new faculty will be expected over time to externally fund approximately 50% of salary costs.

UGA: The university has combined existing **environmental health sciences, health promotion and gerontology** programs to form the core of the new College of Public Health. Additionally, UGA has redirected existing faculty in pharmacology and has hired other new faculty. UGA has committed to hire 15 new faculty members over the next five years, with the expectation of receiving school accreditation within 3 to 5 years. After transitioning students enrolled in previously existing programs to the MPH, the first 8 students are graduating in summer 2005. UGA plans to begin joint MPH/DVM and MPH/PharmD degrees in the near future. UGA

presently awards doctoral degrees in environmental health sciences and health promotion; a new public health doctoral program is planned.

The program overview highlighted several common themes:

- recruitment of new faculty is challenging and requires significant investment
- development of a credible research portfolio is particularly important for program development, student education and faculty advancement
- accreditation is a priority for all of the programs

As director of the state's only accredited public MPH program and a trained site surveyor, Dr. Streater was asked to present an overview of the CEPH accreditation process and new guidelines. Copies of the CEPH guidelines, issued June 2005, were provided in the meeting materials. Dr. Bleicken shared material from the CEPH website. Key points emphasized by Dr. Streater and confirmed by the Committee were:

- CEPH accreditation is important for the institution and the students.
- The new accreditation criteria requires at least 42 credit hours for the MPH.
- The accreditation guidelines require at least 3 full-time, qualified faculty for each specialty track in any MPH program.
- To achieve school or college status, the accreditation guidelines now require at least 3 doctoral degree programs supported by at least 5 full-time faculty per doctoral track.
- CEPH allows for multi-institutional program accreditation; however, the process is extremely complex and appears to offer limited benefits.

The group had considerable discussion about the importance of accreditation and whether there was value for the system in requiring accreditation within a specified time. It was agreed that the issued needed more consideration at a future meeting.

Dr. Williams reflected that UGA had secured tuition differential for its graduate public health programs, and it may be appropriate for the system to adopt a policy of tuition differential for all graduate public health programs. While acknowledging that public health programs could be more costly, the group was uncertain whether they had the data necessary to move to an overarching tuition differential particularly in the face of policymakers' concerns about rising tuition costs.

Dr. Butler noted the lack of MPH program availability in Southwest Georgia. Some members of the group shared stories of success and challenge in recruiting and placing students in the region. It was agreed that statewide program access and practicum placements were important for the institutions and the system. Web-based delivery is one method to expand program access. The group discussed the potential merits of a shared pool of web-based courses while acknowledging resource limitations and possible pitfalls with accreditation.

Dr. Butler announced that USG planned to undertake a health professions education and workforce study in the coming months. MCG President Dr. Dan Rahn has agreed to chair the group. The study should assist the USG and the institutions with a better understanding of health workforce

supply and demand and academic program needs. The institutions with health professions and public health programs will be invited to participate. More information will be forthcoming.

Several of the group members had participated in the Georgia Public Health Education Summit on the previous day. Ms. Hepburn gave an overview of the Summit's development and its goal to bring together the public health education-practice communities. The Summit participants will meet again on the evening of September 14, 2005, in conjunction with the Georgia Public Health Association meeting. The focus of the next meeting will be refinement of the education-practice vision and development of an integrated practicum and service learning placement strategy for public health academic programs throughout the state. All USG public health programs are invited to participate. Drs. Williams, Eckert, Eriksen and Butler pointed to the value of the Summit and acknowledged the significant need to improve Georgia's health status and efficacy of programs and services. It was agreed that the Summit underscored the magnitude of work to be done and the importance of contributions from all of the public and private public health academic programs.

The Committee expressed an interest in meeting with officials from CEPH, to discuss system wide accreditation issues and specific points about web-based curriculum and degree offerings. Since most of the programs will be represented at the American Public Health Association meeting, the group agreed to attempt to schedule a meeting with the CEPH executive director during the meeting. Ms. Hepburn will investigate and report back to the group.

In closing, the Committee agreed to several action steps in advance of the next meeting:

- USG will collect an inventory of the current web-based public health courses offered by the institutions
- USG will commission Advanced Learning Technologies to undertake a preliminary analysis of the technical feasibility and programmatic desirability of offering some or all of the MPH through a web-based academic consortium.
- USG will collect an overview of current MPH faculty research interests to share with the Committee, to encourage cross-institutional research efforts.

The USG will continue to communicate about Committee activities through the chief academic officer of each institution. At the next meeting of the Committee, agenda items will include system research opportunities, international study programs and follow-up discussions on accreditation and web-based learning.

The meeting adjourned at 12:45pm.