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Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate  
Faculty Representative to the Regents  
University of California  
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor  
Oakland, California 94607-5200

October 26, 2023

**KATHERINE S. NEWMAN  
PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

**Re: Approval of Master of Public Health (MPH) at UC Riverside**

Dear Katherine:

In accordance with the *Universitywide Review Processes For Academic Programs, Units, and Research Units* (the “Compendium”), and on the recommendation of CCGA, the Academic Council has approved UC Riverside’s proposal to establish a Master of Public Health (MPH).

Because this is a new degree title, and the Assembly of the Academic Senate is not meeting within 30 days of CCGA’s approval, Council must approve the program per Senate Bylaw 125.B.7.

I am enclosing CCGA’s report on its review of the new program, and respectfully request that your office complete the process of obtaining the President’s approval.

Sincerely,

James Steintrager, Chair  
Academic Council

Cc: Academic Council  
Institutional Research and Academic Planning Analyst Procello  
UC Riverside Senate Executive Director Cortez  
Executive Director Lin

**COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE AFFAIRS (CCGA)**

Dean J. Tantillo, Chair  
[deanjtantillo@ucdavis.edu](mailto:deanjtantillo@ucdavis.edu)

**ACADEMIC SENATE**

University of California  
1111 Franklin Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, California 94607-5200

October 5, 2023

**ACADEMIC SENATE CHAIR JAMES STEINTRAGER**

Dear Chair Steintrager,

At its October 4 meeting, CCGA discussed a proposal from the Riverside campus for a Master of Public Health with PDST. The proposal was approved 11-0-1.

The proposed program will include training in the core areas of public health, which include biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral health, environmental health, and health policy and management. It will also provide both didactic and applied training in essential public health methods, including needs assessment and program evaluation. Reflecting a growing recognition of the tools needed for effective public health practice, the program will cultivate students' skills in interdisciplinary teamwork, coordination, management, and leadership. The program will also increase the readiness and skills of students to work with underserved communities and patients and target the root causes of health disparities (e.g., food deserts, poor healthcare access) using innovative community-based public health strategies. The proposed 66-unit interdisciplinary program can be completed in two years.

The public health needs of Inland Southern California are pronounced. Based on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 2020 County Health Rankings, of California's 58 counties, Riverside County ranks 26th in health outcomes and 35th in health factors. San Bernardino ranks 40th in health outcomes and 41st in health factors. While these statistics are concerning, they mask pockets of extreme public health need such as the eastern Coachella Valley, while failing to accurately convey the pronounced disparities in health by race, Hispanic ethnicity, and location affecting the region.

Two faculty agreed to review the proposal: one from a UC campus, and one from an external university. Both reviewers are experts in areas relevant to Public Health. While they stated support for the program in general and agreed with the demonstrated need, the reviewers expressed some concern about the rigor of the program and whether students, especially from underrepresented backgrounds, would be sufficiently trained for subsequent careers. These concerns were relayed back to the campus, which provided a thorough response and a revised and strengthened proposal (attached).

The Lead Reviewer's report, detailing the initial areas of concern, the communication with the proposers, and the improvements made to the proposal, is attached for your information.

CCGA's approval is the last stop of the Academic Senate side of the Systemwide review and approval process except when the new degree title must be approved by the Senate. I submit this proposal for your review; please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions regarding it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'J. Tantillo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dean J. Tantillo  
CCGA Chair

c: Steven Cheung, Academic Senate Vice Chair  
CCGA Members  
Monica Lin, Academic Senate Executive Director  
Michael LaBriola, Academic Senate Assistant Director  
Chris Procello, Academic Planning and Research Analyst  
Lidia Kos, UCR Dean of Graduate Studies  
Cherysa Cortez, UCR Senate Executive Director  
Sarah Miller, UCR Senate Assistant Director



COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE AFFAIRS (CCGA)  
Andrei Goga, MD, PhD  
Professor, Dept. of Cell & Tissue Biology, UCSF (Lead Reviewer)  
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ACADEMIC SENATE  
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October 4th, 2023

**DEAN J. TANTILLO, CCGA CHAIR**

**RE:** Review for the UC Riverside Master of Public Health (UCR MPH)

**Summary**

This document provides the review of the UCR MPH as prepared by the lead reviewer with input from reviewers with specialized knowledge in the field of MPH programs. This document also incorporates responses from the UCR MPH proposers addressing the reviewer comments and concerns provided by the lead reviewer and the CCGA.

This document also summarizes the discussion and recommendation of the CCGA. A vote by the CCGA committee was held on October 4th, 2023. The CCGA committee voted unanimously in favor of approval of the UCR MPH proposal. The key findings and recommendations:

- (1) Reviewers raised some concerns about the content and rigor of the UCR MPH program. Including, some concern were raised about whether graduates of the program would be prepared for jobs in the public health space. Minor concerns were also raised about the cost of the program and whether the language requirement would be sufficient or effective in preparing students.
- (2) The comments were transmitted to the UCR MPH proposers in early July 2023 and the CCGA lead reviewer received a detailed point-by-point response and revised proposal on September 28th, 2023.
- (3) The UCR MPH proposers provided a detailed response addressing the chief concerns of the two expert reviewers. Key points are summarized below. Overall, the lead reviewer felt that the UCR MPH proposers have considered the reviewer comments and addressed them directly and completely.
- (4) The lead reviewer supported approval and presented the responses and revisions to the full CCGA committee.

Detailed information regarding the reviewer comments and how the UCR MPH proposers responded are presented below.

## Background

The UC Riverside Campus submitted a proposal to the UCR academic senate in October 2022 and submitted to the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) for the establishment of a new Master Program in Public Health in 2023. The proposal which was endorsed by the UCR Academic Senate. The proposal represents a proposal modified after initial internal review.

The UCR MPH proposes a new multidisciplinary MPH program at the UCR Campus; the program is consistent with the campus goal of doubling master's program enrollment.

The goals of the proposal as outlined include complementing:

- Existing School of Medicine (SOM) and campus educational and research programs, which will help fulfill its mission of training the next generation of health professionals
- Campus-wide faculty expertise in key public health issues.
- Recent campus-wide expansions in research, training, and service in the health of communities and populations. These include the UCR Center for Health Disparities Research, the Center for Healthy Communities, and the Center for Social Innovation.
- Program will focus on recruiting and training from the Inland Southern California for public health practice and training for health professionals.

The overall goal is a 2 year (66 units of courses) to provide rigorous training in the core public health disciplines. Goal to enroll first class in Fall 2024.

The overarching goals of the program is to address local and national demand in public health and prepare students for successful and impactful careers in public health. Furthermore, the goal is to have a program "closely aligned with UCR's educational mission to foster educational success for underrepresented and first-generation college students, and social mission to improve the health and well-being of the population of Inland Southern California and beyond."

Administrative home will be provided by the SMPPH department within the SOM. Goal to hire two additional faculty by fall 2023;

The program seeks to differentiate itself other California MPH programs by: (1) tailoring of the proposed UCR program to serve the unmet public health needs of Inland Southern California, and (2) building on the distinct strengths of UCR in such areas as health disparities, community-engaged research, public policy, and environmental health.

The master's program would include a Capstone project as either a critical analysis project or a thesis (research focused).

Yearly costs would be about \$23K in-state tuition / \$35k out-of state tuition.

***Diversity, Equity and Inclusion aspects of the proposal:*** The UCR MPH proposal includes attempts to incorporate aspects of DEI as envisioned. 1) Hiring for the SMPPH department within the SOM will follow best practices for increasing diversity. 2) Goal to recruit a diverse student body; they cite " U.S. News & World Report rated the School of Medicine 6th in the country with respect to recruitment and retention of a diverse student body." 3) Curriculum will contribute to understanding of DEI, " by offering courses related to these

topics (e.g., Social Determinants of Health, Racial Inequality in Politics and Policy, Methods in Health Disparities Research, Advanced Methods in Health Disparities Research), as well as integrating considerations of diversity, equity, and inclusion across the curriculum (i.e., we plan to require that each core course will include a focus on these issues). "

**Reviewers:**

The UCR\_MPH proposal was reviewed by two faculty with expertise in areas relevant to Master of Public Health:

Maria Glymour (Reviewer #1)  
Professor  
Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics,  
UCSF

Marietta Orłowski, Ph.D. (Reviewer #2)  
A Professor and Chair  
Dept. of Population and Public Health Sciences  
Wright State University School of Medicine

**Reviewers' summary overview and general comments on formation of the UCR MPH Program:**

**Reviewer #1** " The proposed MPH program at UCR addresses a need for public health training, especially in inland California. Public health is a growing field, and the major public health challenges of the globe, country, California, and specifically inland California call for a well-trained workforce to tackle these challenges. A strong MPH program at UCR would therefore be of great value to the state and a valuable addition to the UC system. The program also aims to prepare some students to pursue doctoral training in public health. Given UCR's placement and potential to recruit students from underrepresented groups into training, this is also a potentially important contribution. " There was some concern noted about the rigor of the program and whether students, especially from underrepresented backgrounds will be sufficiently trained for subsequent careers. "An MPH program at UCR could be extremely valuable, and UCR has the faculty and resources to deliver it, but in the current vision that promise is not fulfilled. The curriculum is anemic, without clearly defined options for talented students to pursue more demanding coursework. This concern is exacerbated by the program's otherwise laudable goal of pursuing students from underrepresented backgrounds and first-generation college students, who will not be well- positioned to hold the program accountable for delivering a high-quality curriculum. " " The existing coursework on technical content is intended to be extremely introductory and high-level, with too little time for students to achieve much mastery. "

**Reviewer #2:** " Overall, the proposed program reflects the academic standards for a graduate program in public health and is positioned for future accreditation. The proposal reflects research on the existing organizational resources, competing educational programs, and regional community needs. I expect the program to recruit learners successfully and enhance the local public health workforce. "

## Key Review Criteria of the Proposal:

- Quality and academic rigor of the program:

**Reviewer #1:** The reviewer was concerned about the rigor and breadth of topics within the program. Examples of the concerns and comments are noted here:

" The proposed curriculum is light on technical content and emphasizes skills which – although valuable – are unlikely to be sufficient in and of themselves to secure a desirable position meeting contemporary needs of public health. There are many gaps in the proposed curriculum:

- Data for community health surveillance, which would seem closely aligned with the larger vision of the program, are not clearly delineated and nowhere in the curriculum are students offered support learning about the existence of such data sources, how to access and analyze them, or limitations and strengths of alternative data sources. Will students encounter CHIS, ACS, or vital statistical data?
- A key task for MPH level public health workers is data visualization, and the opportunities in terms of both data availability and tools for visualization are growing rapidly. This is a key skill for work in planning, surveillance, and community engagement. It is not clearly articulated in the proposed coursework.
- There is limited coursework in statistical programming. In response to previous review comments, the proposal has removed any specific mention of any particular software language. This leaves concern that the students will be learning SPSS, MiniTab or data management in Excel. Contemporary training should include an introduction to R, Stata, or SAS and some depth in at least one of these languages.
- Advanced coursework necessary for strong, foundational statistical methods is not planned and will not clearly be available to students."
- Neither intermediate nor advanced coursework on epidemiologic methods is planned and will not clearly be available to students.
- There appears to be more coursework on learning Spanish for public health than on epidemiology or biostatistics, although the audience and rationale for this is very unclear. Is a 3-quarter sequence of this course going to be sufficient to prepare people who are not already fluent in Spanish to be effective in Spanish-language community- engaged public health? Hopefully this program will enroll a large number of Latino students already fluent in Spanish. Is a 3-quarter sequence necessary or useful for these students? Such a sequence might be appealing to students because of the apparent emphasis on a high-priority community with notable public health needs, but is the sequence going to give students the skills they need to be effective in meeting those needs?
- Likewise rigorous training on qualitative methods or mixed methods is not discussed. This may be available in some of the participating departments, but students will not know to pursue this without structured guidance from the curriculum plan. In general, the MPH students may ultimately find it difficult to take advantage of courses in the other departments unless these courses are clearly laid out with specific agreements about tuition/fee sharing across departments.
- There is no clear attention to the potential to locate paid internships for students or how students may balance paid employment and school enrollment."

**Reviewer #2:** Felt there was significant rigor for the proposed program, stating: " the MPH program proposal reflects academic rigor and a realistic plan for program implementation and student success." They did comment that they would recommend additional options for the Capstone project to consider " a third capstone option, a research project completed in a capstone-designated course. A majority of your students will be interested in a research-type project. The process, rigor, and independent timeline of a thesis can delay and decrease student completion, though. We have improved student success and completion by including a capstone (a research project using secondary data sets) in select rigorous classes. This model also creates a learning community around the project, which improves student learning."

"Scope of MPH Core Classes: The eight required core courses reflect a strong foundation of required courses that appear (at a high level) to be aligned with the learner competencies expected by the Council on Education for Public Health. I was pleased to see the Environmental Health Science course, as it is no longer universally required in MPH programs. Still, given the climate health in California, it seems regionally essential."

- Adequacy of the size and expertise of faculty to administer the program:

The proposed program has a commitment of 7.0 FTE ladder rank faculty from SMPPH for dedicated teaching in the program, plus two new faculty, to be hired by the end of calendar year 2023.

**Reviewer #1:** "The faculty includes several stellar epidemiologists and biostatisticians, but the curricular role of these individuals is in many cases unclear. Many faculty appear not to have training in quantitative fields (e.g., cultural anthropology). These faculty have valuable roles to play in an interdepartmental public health program, but that needs to be built on an outstanding foundation of core methodologic skills"

**Reviewer #2:** Felt that faculty support was good noting, " Interdisciplinary Approach: The program proposal describes a strategy that draws upon faculty and centers from different departments at UCR. This approach will appeal to students from a broad scope of interests and multiplies the content expertise available to students. Despite drawing from a broad scope, the effort is purposeful to build a focus on community health and intervention implementation."

- Adequacy of the facilities and budgets:

The intent is for the program to be self-sufficient in funding. In addition to faculty noted above there is a plan for a Program Coordinator (1 FTE) and Administrative Specialist (0.25 FTE) which seems reasonable. The School of Medicine has committed to providing the space needed to implement the program, including classroom and administrative space.

This aspect was not specifically addressed by the reviewers, however it was mentioned by one of the reviewers that the cost of the program is substantial and that it is not clear that students will be rigorously prepared to take on positions in public health with the 2 year program. There was some concern that financial aid availability for the program would not be sufficient given the goal to attract learners from a URM pool.

- Applicant pool and placement prospects for the graduates:

Public health jobs are anticipated to increase in the coming years per surveys cited in the proposal and are expected to increase in California beyond national averages. It is noted that individuals with an MPH degree are



sought for various positions including: "health educator, public health educator, health promotion specialist, health education coordinator, community health educator, and epidemiologist." (p. 18)

**Reviewer #1:** Was concerned that the cost of the program ~ \$45k over 2 years would add substantial debt to students and that it " It is thus essential that the program deliver skills graduates can use to secure desirable jobs, in particular jobs alumni would not otherwise be able to access." As noted above, without additional changes to the qualitative, quantitative and computational aspects of the program that trainees would not be able to access these desired jobs once completing the program.

**Reviewer #2:** Felt the enrollment projections were realistic: " The enrollment projections of 15 students in year one, with a 10% increase in the subsequent years, are practical, given the presence of existing local and online programs."

### **Request for Comments and Revisions:**

The CCGA discussed the UCR MPH program proposal. Given some of the concerns raised, principally by Reviewer #1, the comments were transmitted to the UCR MPH proposer for comments in early July 2023. They provided detailed responses and addressed issues raised by the reviewers.

### **Key points from the response:**

1. Since the CCGA letter providing the review and critiques from two reviewers, the UCR Curriculum Committee met in July 2023. This resulted in the following changes which have addressed the key issues raised by the reviewers:
2. Decided to choose a focus of the program on *Community Health and Equity*; felt this was the most relevant for the target population of students.
3. Added two classes to the core curriculum to address additional quantitative and qualitative methods.
4. Reviewed rigor of the program both against the accreditation body requirements, and other national or UC MPH programs, and also worked with their largest employer Riverside County Department of Public Health to ensure MPH training would meet their requirements for hiring students..
5. They also clarified on capstone projects as well as the goals of the Spanish Language elective (to provide professional communication skills for native / heritage speakers).
6. Commented on the costs which are comparable to San Bernardino State, but < 50% of private offerings in the Inland Empire.
7. Discussed potential paid internships via Riverside County Department of Public Health and other employers; potential philanthropy and scholarship approaches.
8. Full proposal indicates that they are on track for developing the program including successful recruitment of two new faculty (Fall 2022).

The UCR MPH proposers have taken a comprehensive approach to rethink the program, the rigor of the curriculum and make changes as needed. The lead reviewer feels they have adequately responded to all of the reviewer comments.

Sincerely,

Andrei Goga, MD, PhD  
Lead Reviewer  
Professor, University of California, San Francisco