

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
**October 30, 2013**  
**Amended May 28, 2014**

**VISION**

The College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) is the “health college” of George Mason University. It is where health research meets health practice and service delivery. By integrating our educational programs, our clinical and community-based research, and our community engagement efforts, CHHS strives to provide a rigorous and innovative learning experience for our students, to be a major provider of the health care workforce in northern Virginia, and to produce new knowledge to address critical health and social issues in policy and practice, while both faculty and students are actively engaged in improving the health and well-being of people both locally and globally.

**MISSION**

CHHS has a threefold mission:

- To use our knowledge and skills to educate students, both undergraduate and graduate, so they are qualified to become health and human services professionals;
- To discover new knowledge through research, and;
- To provide direct health and social services for community residents.

**GOALS**

From this mission, we derive corresponding goals:

- Contribute to the national health and human services workforce by increasing the number of highly qualified health professionals we graduate each year by 70 percent within 10 years.
- Through a tripling of our research expenditures over the next 10 years, contribute to an understanding of how to improve the quality, accessibility, and cost of health care in our society.
- Through direct clinical practice and community health interventions, we will produce a direct, positive effect on the health of persons who live and work in the northern Virginia community.

The following section describes five major initiatives, either planned or already underway, that translate our mission and broad goals into discrete objectives for serving our four major constituencies: students, faculty/staff, our community, and the world. Although our vision is ambitious and contains significant challenges, CHHS is confident we can overcome those challenges and accomplish our goals. Reaching each of these will require the concerted efforts of our faculty, staff, students, and community partners.

## INITIATIVES

### 1. Academic Programs

- *Strengthen Existing Programs*

We continue to receive recognition and full accreditation of our academic programs. While two of our departments are less than two years old and have five or fewer faculty, all our programs are thriving. New, highly qualified faculty have been hired, student enrollment has doubled in the last seven years, and the potential for growth is considerable. Moreover, health care is one of the top 10 workforce needs in the northern Virginia region, so CHHS is strategically positioned to play a major role in supplying the needed health care and human services professionals. To do this, we must expand and strengthen programs within existing departments. These efforts will include:

1. Supplement our existing MPH degree (Master of Public Health) with an on-line pathway.
2. Support growth of the doctoral program in Rehabilitation Science and strengthen the PhD program in Nursing by recruiting additional tenure-track faculty with a strong research agenda who also are capable of mentoring student research.
3. Strengthen and prepare for growth of the doctoral program in nursing practice (DNP) by recruiting additional term clinical faculty.
4. Strengthen and prepare for anticipated growth of the master's program in nutrition by recruiting additional tenure-track faculty and faculty who have both the Ph.D. and the Registered Dietician (RD) designation.

- *Create New Programs within Existing Departments*

1. New PhD in Health Services Research within the Department of Health Administration and Policy. This is a core degree in the field of public health and is expected to be very popular. The proposal for this degree is complete, has received approval from the CHHS Curriculum Committee, and the university Graduate Council, and the Board of Visitors and is now under consideration at SCHEV.
2. Develop a new Ph.D. program in Social Work. This degree has been long desired and planned by the department and the college and should be an attractive additional degree option for the region's thousands of social workers.
3. Develop a joint master's degree program (Master of Health Administration and Master of Business Administration) between our Department of Health Administration and Policy and the School of Management. This proposal is under development and expected to go forward this year.
4. Develop a new B.S. degree in Rehabilitation Science to attract students to this growing field and feed our doctoral program.
5. Develop a new B.S. in Nutrition to meet growing student demand and provide a natural pathway to the new master's program.

- ***Create New Departments***

As proposed in our last strategic plan, we aim to create two new departments within the next five years: a Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and a Department of Environmental and Occupational Health. Each of these would be spun off by our current Department of Global and Community Health, building on specific faculty already here but adding new faculty as appropriate. These departments will be necessary building blocks for a new school of public health.

- ***Create a School of Public Health***

We have made considerable progress toward developing Virginia's first School of Public Health that will be merged within CHHS to become the *College of Public Health and Human Services*. The Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH), the accrediting body for educational programs in public health, has set forth requirements for a school of public health: 1) offering graduate degree programs

in Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Environmental Health, Behavioral Sciences, and Health Administration; and 2) offering at least three doctoral programs in public health. Since CEPH already has accredited our Master of Public Health (MPH) degree (which serves as the Behavioral Sciences program), and the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) has accredited our Master of Health Administration degree, and our first doctoral program (Health Services Research) is nearing approval, we are well on our way to meeting CEPH standards.

Our next steps will be the creation of the two new departments (mentioned above)—Epidemiology and Biostatistics and Environmental and Occupational Health—along with doctoral programs in epidemiology and behavioral sciences.

Our public health faculty in the Departments of Global and Community Health, Health Administration and Policy, and Nutrition and Food Studies will contribute to meeting CEPH faculty requirements for a school of public health. In addition, we plan to offer joint graduate degree programs that combine public health with both nursing and social work. The result will be a stronger college that is capable of contributing multidisciplinary trained health practitioners and researchers able to meet the changing health care workforce needs of the region.

## 2. **Improving Knowledge Delivery and the Student Experience**

- ***Improve Access through Distance Education***

Our college has been a leader in converting courses and programs into distance learning format. Our degree-completion program in nursing, where students with a registered nursing license (RN) can enter and earn their BSN degree, is now completely on-line, as are the core course requirements for the master's degree in nursing. Every department offers one or more of its required undergraduate or graduate courses on-line.

We plan to add an on-line pathway for our very popular MPH degree within the next two years to expand access to more students in the southern part of Virginia and those out-of-state or in other countries.

- ***Improve Global Access through INTO-GMU Partnership***

CHHS is very interested in participating in the new INTO-GMU Partnership to recruit more international students to our programs. While we already attract a

large number of ethnic U.S. residents (second-generation Americans or U.S. residents) and have a high percentage of nursing students from other countries, we see considerable value in attracting more international students to our other programs.

We are considering offering INTO access to our undergraduate programs in community health, health administration (especially the health informatics concentration), and social work. Graduate programs might include the master of public health, master of health informatics, and master of nutrition.

- ***Improve Quality of Instruction through Better Faculty Evaluation***

We plan to revise faculty evaluations to include metrics on innovative course design, use of on-line technology, and experiential learning.

- ***Strengthen Experiential Learning through Internships and Practicums***

CHHS is committed to promoting an innovative learning experience for students inside and outside the classroom. Most of our programs require a cumulative learning experience including clinical internships, community placements, and community and global capstone experiences. The majority of our departments provide state-of-the-art laboratory learning experiences to students, e.g., Nursing's Patient Simulation Laboratory, Rehabilitation Science's Functional Performance Laboratory, and the Health Informatics Learning Laboratory (HILL) in the Department of Health Administration and Policy. Given the strong student outcomes we see from these experience-based learning, we plan to expand opportunities for more students to benefit.

- ***Improve Student Retention and Shorten Time-to-Degree***

We routinely send letters from the Dean to all our students who achieve Dean's List status and recognize outstanding academic achievement at every college convocation. In addition, we also are quite concerned about students whose academic performance is not up to par. We have designated one academic advisor in our Office of Student Affairs to monitor and advise every student who, for either academic or non-academic reasons, shows evidence of struggling with their course work. Our goal is to forestall further academic distress and prevent dropout. In addition, we fully cooperate with the university Office of Student Academic Affairs, Advising, and Retention in their efforts to improve retention of students.

Because our Ph.D. students have significant difficulty in completing their degrees within a reasonable time period, we plan to improve student advisement and revise and clarify the requirements for the dissertation proposal and research to streamline and shorten the overall process.

- ***Support Graduate and Undergraduate Student Involvement in Research***

We have created a Dean's Student Travel Fund to support a portion of the travel expenses for CHHS students, either graduate or undergraduate, who are presenting or co-presenting research papers at national conferences. Providing college financial support for such activities will generate student interest in research, and attendance at a national conference will expand scientific horizons and strengthen commitment to research. While these awards currently are competitive and limited to two per year, we plan to raise additional funds for this purpose to expand the number of students who can benefit from attending research conferences to ten per year.

We view students' involvement with faculty research as beneficial to both students and faculty, and we will work to increase the number of students engaged in such collaborations by making co-authoring and co-presenting with students an explicit criterion of faculty merit, promotion, and post-tenure evaluation.

### **3. Community Health**

- ***Expand Community Health Partnership Clinics***

The School of Nursing recently developed two community health clinics, one in Prince William County and the other in Fairfax County, to deliver acute and preventive health care to populations in need. These part-time clinics offer practice opportunities for faculty and hands-on educational opportunities for students. We will seek to develop additional partnerships throughout the region.

- ***Create Immigrant and Migrant Health Programs***

Immigrant and migrant health and health disparities are significant public health issues. Three CHHS departments (Nursing, Social Work, Nutrition & Food Studies) have faculty engaged in health research and or service with immigrant and migrant populations in Virginia and West Virginia. We will expand our work with migrant and immigrant communities through formal ties to

such groups and county departments of health in the form of collaborative research partnerships, curriculum development, and student field placement.

In addition, preparing students in cultural aspects of these issues and how to address them would be an innovative and unique educational goal for CHHS. Therefore, we plan to strengthen the exposure to multiple cultures in specific courses and research projects related to immigrant and migrant health.

- ***Add New Associate Dean for Community Engagement***

We plan to create a new position within the college for an Associate Dean for Community Engagement to direct and develop both educational (e.g., academic outreach) and service (community health clinics) opportunities for community residents, health and social service providers, and local governments. This position will be charged to increase communications both ways between our programs and the broad community as a necessary process for increasing community support of CHHS.

- ***Create Community Health Institute***

The proposed new building for the College of Health and Human Services (Academic VII/Research III) is Mason's investment in achieving the University's strategic goals related to the H component of the STEM-H initiative. One wing of that building is planned as a Community Health Institute (CHI), an active clinic to address the university's health, well-being, and community engagement goals. The CHI will bring together in a practice setting faculty from different departments, which also will facilitate research collaboration and multidisciplinary training of our students. The Community Health Institute will provide researchers and practitioners experience in research translation and implementation of evidence-based clinical practice, and students will learn best practices in treatment, coordination of care, and management of health services. CHI will be the point of entry for community residents to receive basic health care services, and it will promote individual and community wellness. CHI is central to our vision of the college as a comprehensive, multidisciplinary educational and research setting for the next generation of health care professionals.

Specifically, CHHS will:

1. Develop a financial business plan for health service delivery that generates revenue for both Mason and the college

2. Design transformative learning experiences for students tied to clinical practice and multidisciplinary research activities
3. Develop a program to translate clinical and health services research into best practices in clinical practice
4. Engage university and community stakeholders in the formation of an advisory board for CHI

#### 4. **Research of Consequence**

The discovery of new knowledge through research is a key element of our mission. Although the College of Health and Human Services is only ten years old, we have made remarkable strides in developing our research base in that time. Currently, our annual research expenditures are about \$4 million, and new grants in FY13 amounted to \$9.4 million. To enhance our research capacity, we are investing heavily in both new tenure-track faculty and research infrastructure in the form of the Human Performance Laboratory for Rehabilitation Science, the Health Informatics Learning Laboratory in Health Administration and Policy, and the nutrition kitchen. But our research capacity and our ambition clearly are far greater.

Accordingly, our goal is to triple the amount of externally funded research from \$4 to \$12 million in annual research expenditures. To achieve this goal, CHHS will encourage and support faculty to develop externally funded research by:

- Providing half-time internal support for research faculty to develop focused research programs;
- Creating enhanced financial incentives for faculty through the formula for distributing funds from indirect cost recovery;
- Offering mentoring, proposal development support, and reviews and feedback on research proposals and manuscripts through the office of the Associate Dean for Research;
- Recognizing clinical and service faculty for their contributions through faculty practice activities in the community; and
- Creating standards for quality and productivity in research practice by requiring tenure/tenure track faculty to generate 25% of base salary through external funding, which would generate over \$700,000 per year, and implementing annual evaluation of research productivity.

#### 5. **Diversity and Globalization of the College**

Our current global reach through teaching, research and service is fairly extensive, extending to Africa, Europe, South and Central America, Australia, and Asia. In addition, we have led the development of several MOUs with universities outside the U.S. However, one of our goals is to improve CHHS's global presence. A greater proportion of our students should participate in global health and human service activities and develop cultural competence, especially in the context of research and service delivery. To accomplish this goal, CHHS will:

- Encourage faculty research and practice in other countries; and
- Expand opportunities for students to study and work globally.
- Develop additional courses focused on cultural competence;
- Celebrate ethnic and national diversity of students and faculty through featured articles on the college website and regular cultural events for students and faculty;
- Participate in the INTO-GMU initiative to recruit more international students;
- Strengthen and expand the master's program in Global Health

## **CONCLUSION**

With the creation of a School of Public Health, the College of Health and Human Services will expand to become the *College of Public Health and Human Services*. By offering cross-school and -college joint-degree programs, and adding other new health-related degree programs, our enrollment will show considerable growth beyond what is anticipated for current degree programs. Moreover, the construction of Academic VII/Research III as the College's new home will become the very cornerstone of our plan and will create a powerful integrative force for the College. By providing a functional and supportive home for all our faculty, programs, labs, and students, the new building, including the Community Health Institute, will allow and foster growth, innovative multidisciplinary educational models, and a close coordination of faculty research and practice and student learning.