REVIEW FOR ACCREDITATION
OF THE
PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM
AT
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

SITE VISIT DATES:
December 10-11, 2012

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) regarding the Program of Public Health at George Mason University (Mason). The report assesses the program’s compliance with the Accreditation Criteria for Programs of Public Health, amended June 2005. This accreditation review included the conduct of a self-study process by program constituents, the preparation of a document describing the program and its features in relation to the criteria for accreditation and a visit in December 2012 by a team of external peer reviewers. During the visit, the team had an opportunity to interview program and university officials, administrators, teaching faculty, students, alumni and community representatives and to verify information in the self-study document by reviewing materials provided on site in a resource file. The team was afforded full cooperation in its efforts to assess the program and verify the self-study document.

Named after American revolutionary George Mason, the university was founded as a branch of the University of Virginia in 1957 and became an independent institution in 1972. Mason’s main campus is in Fairfax, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, DC. The university enrolls more than 33,000 students, making it the largest university by head count in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The majority of students are from Virginia; however, all 50 states and Washington, DC, as well as 130 countries are represented in the student body. While degree-seeking undergraduates between the ages of 18 and 24 years make up the largest student group, degree-seeking graduate students account for nearly one-third of the student population.

The university includes 11 colleges and schools. Within the College of Health and Human Services are five departments: health administration and policy, global and community health, social work, nutrition and food sciences and rehabilitation science. The MPH program is located in the Department of Global and Community Health.

The MPH program enrolled its first cohort of students in 2009-2010. For the first two years, the program offered four concentrations: community health, epidemiology, global health and public health administration. In fall 2010, the public health administration concentration was suspended and the global health and community health concentrations were combined. This is the program’s first review for CEPH accreditation.
To be considered eligible for accreditation review by CEPH, a public health program shall demonstrate the following characteristics:

a. The program shall be a part of an institution of higher education that is accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the US Department of Education.

b. The program and its faculty shall have the same rights, privileges and status as other professional preparation programs that are components of its parent institution.

c. The program shall function as a collaboration of disciplines, addressing the health of populations and the community through instruction, research, and service. Using an ecological perspective, the public health program should provide a special learning environment that supports interdisciplinary communication, promotes a broad intellectual framework for problem-solving, and fosters the development of professional public health concepts and values.

d. The public health program shall maintain an organizational culture that embraces the vision, goals and values common to public health. The program shall maintain this organizational culture through leadership, institutional rewards, and dedication of resources in order to infuse public health values and goals into all aspects of the program's activities.

e. The program shall have faculty and other human, physical, financial and learning resources to provide both breadth and depth of educational opportunity in the areas of knowledge basic to public health. As a minimum, the program shall offer the Master of Public Health (MPH) degree.

f. The program shall plan, develop and evaluate its instructional, research and service activities in ways that assure sensitivity to the perceptions and needs of its students and that combines educational excellence with applicability to the world of public health practice.

These characteristics are evident in the public health program at Mason. The program is located in a regionally accredited university, and the program and its faculty have the same rights, privileges and status as other Mason programs. The program supports interdisciplinary collaboration and cooperation through research partnerships, cross-listed courses and student involvement in college- and university-wide committees. The faculty’s training and experience provides a broad complement of disciplines that contribute to the health ecology framework of the program. The program approaches public health from a global perspective, and it provides students with the skills needed to work in a variety of settings and to understand health systems across the world. The program has appropriate resources to offer the MPH degree in two concentration areas, and it has developed administrative and governance structures that ensure that program instruction and other activities continue their relevance to the world of public health practice.
1.0 THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM.

1.1 Mission.

The program shall have a clearly formulated and publicly stated mission with supporting goals and objectives. The program shall foster the development of professional public health values, concepts and ethical practice.

This criterion is met. The program has a clearly formulated and publicly stated mission with supporting goals and objectives. The mission statement aligns with the missions of the department and college and is as follows:

To prepare professional public health practitioners to address contemporary public health challenges of local, national, and global communities.

In 2009-2010, the MPH faculty developed the mission, vision, goals and objectives. These elements were further revised in fall 2011 based on feedback collected as part of the CEPH self-study process. The final draft was developed by the Global and Community Health Program Committee and was reviewed by the department’s Advisory Board, which includes representatives from local, national and international governmental and industry partners, and the Graduate Student Advisory Council. The current mission statement was finalized in spring 2012.

The program has 11 goal statements that relate to the functions of teaching/instruction, research, service, resources and diversity. A number of objectives relate to each goal. The goals and objectives reflect a commitment to high-quality instruction; collaborative research that advances public health; service by students and faculty to the profession and to local, national and international communities; maintaining adequate resources; and creating an environment that is supportive of a diverse faculty and student body.

The program is guided by seven core values (community, diversity, innovation, justice, professionalism, science and sustainability). These values were developed at the same time as the mission and are reflected in the program’s mission, goals and objectives.

The mission, vision, and core values are available on the program’s website, in the Graduate Student Handbook and in orientation materials.

1.2 Evaluation and Planning.

The program shall have an explicit process for evaluating and monitoring its overall efforts against its mission, goals and objectives; for assessing the program's effectiveness in serving its various constituencies; and for planning to achieve its mission in the future.

This criterion is partially met. The program’s evaluation and planning efforts began with the development of the mission, vision, goals and objectives in 2009-2010. A new graduate programs director joined the
faculty in fall 2010 and initiated a review of the program. This review identified deficiencies in the ability to respond to several CEPH criteria, non-measurable objectives and a lack of specified data sources. Following this review, MPH faculty began revising the system to make improvements. Faculty finalized a draft of the new evaluation system in fall 2011 and presented it to the department chair and department Advisory Committee. The Graduate Student Advisory Council reviewed the plans in spring 2012.

The evaluation plan includes specific activities that will occur over nine months during a fall and spring semester every four years. During this review, the program will 1) analyze data for each measurable objective; 2) assess how well objectives were met and the continued relevance of the objectives; 3) create plans for meeting relevant, unmet objectives and revise objectives that are no longer relevant; 4) present revisions to the full faculty and other stakeholders for feedback; and 5) publish revisions and begin implementation of plans to meet objectives. The program plans to complete the next review in 2015-2016.

A program faculty member from the epidemiology concentration is responsible for collecting data from students, alumni and employers through the web-based SurveyMonkey tool and managing the system so that it can reviewed by appropriate individuals and committees. Surveys of employers and practicum site supervisors have been developed but had not been deployed by the time of the site visit.

Despite the lack of a comprehensive evaluation and planning process, the program has used feedback from CEPH and student focus groups to make changes. The focus group findings indicated that while students were generally satisfied with the MPH program overall, students had concerns regarding communication, advising, course availability, the practicum and orientation to the program. The program responded by 1) enhancing its website, 2) updating the Graduate Student Handbook, 3) revising the advisement system so that students and faculty are matched by concentration, 4) designing a web-based scheduler appointment for students to easily schedule advising sessions, and 5) creating a zero-credit course during which students secure a practicum placement and receive guidance on preparing and completing the practicum.

Program faculty, the graduate programs director, the department chair, the Office of Research and Program Evaluation, the Office of Academic Affairs and the previous and current dean were involved in the development of the self-study. Program faculty wrote a majority of the self-study and the graduate programs director was responsible for its overall development and completion. The graduate programs director left the university at the end of the spring semester in 2012, and an acting director was appointed to complete the accreditation review process.
Students who met with site visitors confirmed that they received frequent e-mails from the program requesting information to be included in the self-study. These students were very aware of the self-study and the accreditation review and were pleased with the program’s communication about it. Community partners indicated that they were informed about the self-study and received a copy of the final report. The site visit team could not validate the involvement of the department’s Advisory Board because the team did not meet with any board members.

The first concern relates to the incompleteness of the systems and processes for regular, systematic collection of information to monitor and evaluate the program’s progress against the stated goals and objectives. The program has not yet set outcome measures for some of the criteria, and some outcome measures are not appropriate for the criteria in which they are included. Specific instances are noted in subsequent sections of this report.

The second concern relates to the lack of data from employers and site supervisors. The program plans to begin collecting data from these stakeholders in early 2013.

The third concern relates to the lack of an established timeline for reviewing data that must be considered more frequently than as part of the four-year cycle, such as data from alumni, employers and site supervisors.

1.3 Institutional Environment.

The program shall be an integral part of an accredited institution of higher education.

This criterion is met. Mason is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools through 2016. In additional to the regional accreditor, the university also responds to specialized and professional accreditors in areas such as teacher education, athletic training, nursing, social work, health systems management, art history, psychology, chemistry, law, business, accounting and engineering. The university includes more than 33,000 students and about 1,300 full-time instructional and research faculty.

The MPH program is housed within the Department of Global and Community Health in the College of Health and Human Services. The program director reports to the department chair, who reports to the dean of the college. The dean reports to the provost and executive vice president of academic affairs, who reports to the president of the university.

The Board of Visitors is responsible for university governance. Board members are appointed by the governor of Virginia to serve fixed terms of four years. The rector is a member of the board who is elected by the other board members to serve as the chair. The Board of Visitors exercises its authority principally in policy making and oversight. The board appoints the president of the university, who is
responsible for carrying out the policies of the board and providing leadership to the university’s faculty, staff and students. The provost is the chief academic officer and is responsible for all educational matters. The provost is appointed by the president and serves as the liaison to the Faculty Senate for university administration. Deans and academic institute directors function in a dual capacity: they represent the organizational unit and faculties in their charge and serve as members of the central administration. They are appointed by the president and report to the provost.

Individual academic units participate in decision making about academic matters, matters of faculty status and organizational and institutional change. Each unit is primarily responsible for unit reorganization, the design of programs, development and alteration of the curriculum, standards for admission to programs and requirements in the major. Individual units lead efforts related to recruitment and initial appointment of new faculty; the reappointment, promotion, tenure and post-tenure review of members; and, in the case of departments, the selection of the department chair.

Colleges and schools have primary responsibility for allocating an instructional budget to each department for faculty salaries as well as goods and services to support the department’s academic programs and other activities. Department chairs are responsible for administering the budget and communicating budget matters between the faculty and the dean.

The Board of Visitors has full authority over faculty personnel matters, including faculty appointments. Individual academic units establish a faculty search committee to conduct the initial review and evaluation of qualifications. This committee makes recommendations regarding potential finalists, which are forwarded to the administrator of the unit (eg, director, dean). This administrator must secure the concurrence of the unit’s faculty, relevant dean or director, the provost and the Office of Equity and Diversity Services before extending an offer of appointment.

Peer faculty are largely responsible for recommendations on faculty status (eg, initial appointment, renewal, promotion, conferral of tenure, termination). Recommendations originate through faculty action, are reviewed by senior academic administrators and are presented to the Board of Visitors for final approval.

Department chairs and faculty members in a department determine the processes and procedures of governance they will employ. All departments must a) operate in a democratic manner; b) adopt bylaws or standing rules; c) meet often enough to ensure good communication and the timely conduct of business; d) hold meetings that follow an agenda; and e) take meeting minutes that are distributed to and approved by the faculty.
1.4 Organization and Administration.

The program shall provide an organizational setting conducive to teaching and learning, research and service. The organizational setting shall facilitate interdisciplinary communication, cooperation and collaboration. The organizational structure shall effectively support the work of the program’s constituents.

This criterion is met. The program’s organizational setting is conducive to teaching and learning, research and service. The MPH program is housed in the Department of Global and Community Health within the College of Health and Human Services. In addition to the MPH program, the department also houses bachelor of science degrees in community health, the master of science degree in global health and graduate certificates in four areas: biostatistics, epidemiology, global health and public health.

The MPH program is led by the graduate programs director, who reports to the department chair. The Graduate Programs Committee and the dean of the college also hold management and leadership responsibilities for the program. The graduate programs director oversees all degrees (ie, MPH and MS) as well as the certificates offered through the department. The director is responsible for coordinating daily operations and maintaining educational quality of the graduate-level offerings. The Graduate Programs Committee provides oversight for the standards, policies and procedures of the graduate programs and certificates and approves curriculum development decisions and academic policies. The department chair represents the department to the university administration, coordinates the department’s academic programs and plans and administers the department’s budget. The dean is responsible for establishing college priorities, creating and administering the budget, leading fundraising activities and meeting educational and research goals.

The program engages in a variety of projects and activities that support interdisciplinary collaboration and cooperation. Departmental courses are co-listed within the college, which brings public health, nursing and social work students together, for example. In addition, program faculty engage in research and service projects with faculty from other departments and colleges as well as community organizations. Many other departments on campus are involved in projects that have close ties to public health, such as biotechnology, health communication and aging studies.

The program adheres to the university’s policies related to fair and ethical dealings. The university catalog addresses the commitment to providing equal employment opportunities and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination. Mason follows all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations. The college’s graduate student handbook includes policies related to the university’s honor code, equal opportunity and non-discrimination and the abuse of drugs and alcohol.
1.5 Governance.

The program administration and faculty shall have clearly defined rights and responsibilities concerning program governance and academic policies. Students shall, where appropriate, have participatory roles in conduct of program evaluation procedures, policy-setting and decision-making.

This criterion is met. The program’s administration and faculty have clearly defined rights and responsibilities concerning program governance and academic policies. The policies and procedures that denote the rights and obligations of administrators, faculty and students in governance of the program are included in the department’s bylaws. The Graduate Programs Committee oversees matters of curriculum, program requirements and general program development. Program-level academic standards are approved by the Graduate Programs Committee, then by the college’s Curriculum Committee and finally by the Graduate Council for the university.

Membership on the Graduate Programs Committee is open to all full-time, permanent faculty members in the department. Faculty members may volunteer to participate by notifying the graduate programs director in writing by the first day of class for a given term. Seven faculty members served on the committee in fall 2011, and six served in spring 2012. The committee typically meets every two weeks; however, during the last year, the committee met weekly. Nearly all faculty in the department are affiliated with the MPH program, which assures program representation on the committee.

Within the department, the chair has primary responsibility for allocating resources across programs, initiatives and faculty. The chair works with the graduate programs director to assess the needs of the program. Faculty matters, including recruitment, retention, promotion and tenure, start at the department level and proceed through a series of approvals through the college to the university level. The college governs research and service expectations for tenure and tenure-track faculty. These policies are described in the college’s Manual for Promotion and Tenure. The Promotion and Tenure Review Committee reviews the department’s candidates for promotion and/or tenure, makes recommendations to the department chair and the dean and supports the department’s activities related to promotion and tenure. All tenured faculty in the department are de facto members of the Promotion and Tenure Review Committee with the exception of the dean, associate and assistant deans, department chairs and any faculty members who are candidates for promotion during the relevant year. At the time of the site visit, the committee included five members.

Student recruitment, admission and awarding of degrees are developed and enforced jointly by the Graduate Programs Committee and the Office of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Affairs maintains the program’s website and all admissions files for the college. This office manages student files, notifies applicants of admissions decisions, performs graduation audits and manages an orientation for graduate
students in the college. The Graduate Programs Committee makes admissions decisions for the MPH program.

The department chair has the authority to establish ad hoc committees, as needed. No ad hoc committees existed at the time of the site visit.

The university’s faculty handbook discusses faculty service to the university, community and profession. Program faculty members participate in university governance through the Faculty Senate, the Planning Committee for the provost’s Global Problem-Solving Conference and the Presidential Task Force. Program faculty members also serve on college committees related to curriculum, faculty matters, promotion and tenure, as well as the Faculty Council.

The Graduate Student Advisory Council was established in spring 2012 to formalize the role of students in program governance. Members are elected from the graduate student body of the department and represent the MPH and MS degrees as well as the graduate certificate programs. Nine students are serving on the council in AY 2012-2013. The council works in tandem with the Graduate Programs Committee and provides feedback through the graduate programs director. Students who met with site visitors said that all faculty members have been responsive to their input, and they have seen changes implemented as a result. In its short time in existence, the council has designed a mid-term evaluation form for adjunct faculty that has been well received and has provided useful feedback.

1.6 Resources.

The program shall have resources adequate to fulfill its stated mission and goals, and its instructional, research and service objectives.

This criterion is met. The program has sufficient resources to fulfill its mission, goals and objectives related to instruction, research and service. The MPH budget is a portion of the department’s budget, which is allocated by the college. It contains funds for office supplies, office equipment, subscriptions, membership fees and faculty salaries. Resources for faculty recruitment are funded by the dean’s office. Funds are also generated by a per-course tuition premium fee instituted in 2010-2011 that provides support for departmental graduate research and teaching assistants. Only a small proportion of the total funds are supported by discretionary funds through research grants and contracts. In addition to the state budget, the program is funded by a foundation that receives donations from alumni and friends of the department. These funds are used for student scholarships and operational expenses. Table 1 shows the department’s budget, of which 73% is dedicated to the MPH program, for the last four fiscal years.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Funds</th>
<th>FY 2009</th>
<th>FY 2010</th>
<th>FY 2011</th>
<th>FY 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Funds</td>
<td>$1,607,491</td>
<td>$1,924,013</td>
<td>$1,965,156</td>
<td>$1,652,305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants/Contracts</td>
<td>$19,550</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$79,084</td>
<td>$65,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Cost Recovery</td>
<td>$7,965</td>
<td>$15,764</td>
<td>$7,592</td>
<td>$4,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,635,006</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,964,777</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,051,832</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,721,822</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Salaries &amp; Benefits</td>
<td>$1,372,960</td>
<td>$1,683,526</td>
<td>$1,715,412</td>
<td>$1,444,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Salaries &amp; Benefits</td>
<td>$96,288</td>
<td>$104,408</td>
<td>$126,480</td>
<td>$61,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>$27,859</td>
<td>$92,701</td>
<td>$51,882</td>
<td>$26,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>$23,530</td>
<td>$21,747</td>
<td>$42,496</td>
<td>$15,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Support</td>
<td>$33,189</td>
<td>$11,766</td>
<td>$15,175</td>
<td>$30,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,553,826</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,914,148</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,951,445</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,579,177</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The program has three primary faculty members in the epidemiology concentration and five primary faculty members in the global and community health concentration. Two and four secondary faculty members, respectively, contribute to the two concentrations. In 2012-2013, the program had 35 students (24.3 FTE) in the epidemiology concentration and 74 students (43.0 FTE) in the global and community health concentration. The student-faculty ratios (SFR) for the program are 8.1:1 for epidemiology and 8.6:1 in global and community health based on the primary faculty FTE. When the total faculty FTE is considered, the SFR is 7.2:1 for each concentration.

Administration of the program is overseen by the department manager, graduate programs director, department chair and, when active, the deputy department chair. At the time of the site visit, all administrative positions noted, with the exception of the department manager, were filled by individuals stepping into “acting” roles temporarily. The department also employs a student-wage employee to assist the department manager with the day-to-day operations of the department. The graduate programs director is a faculty member with 50% to 75% of time assigned to administration of the graduate programs in the department. The department chair serves as a representative of the MPH faculty to the university administration.

The program has adequate office space and classrooms for its faculty, staff and students. Technology-based classrooms are available as well as the college’s Technology and Simulation Lab. Two computer labs are available on the main campus, and lab consultants assist students with computer-related issues. The university has a comprehensive library that serves as a networked research system. Of the 595 electronic databases available to all students, faculty and staff, specific databases for the MPH program include Medline, PubMed, ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Source, PsycINFO, BI-Inform, EconLit, ISI Web of Knowledge, MD Consult and Access Medicine.
The rich Washington, DC, environment serves as a valuable resource for opportunities through local health departments, community health agencies and for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Many of these organizations serve as program partners for research and field placement sites. The program has collaborative and service relationships domestically and internationally.

2.0 INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS.

2.1 Master of Public Health Degree.

The program shall offer instructional programs reflecting its stated mission and goals, leading to the Master of Public Health (MPH) or equivalent professional master’s degree. The program may offer a generalist MPH degree or an MPH with areas of specialization. The program, depending upon how it defines the unit of accreditation, may offer other degrees, professional and academic, if consistent with its mission and resources.

This criterion is met. The program offers the MPH degree in two concentration areas: epidemiology and global and community health, as shown in Table 2. In addition to the required core courses, practicum and culminating experience, all students must complete courses in global health and project management. Students in the epidemiology concentration must take courses in infectious disease epidemiology, chronic disease epidemiology, advanced quantitative analysis, research methods, exposures and one elective. Students in the global and community health concentration must take courses in health behavior theory, program planning and evaluation, behavioral research methods, global health and two electives.

Faculty advisors help students to pick appropriate graduate-level electives that will support their educational and career goals. The student handbook includes a list of approved electives, and program faculty who met with site visitors said that more electives are being developed to further enhance the curriculum for students.

Table 2. Degrees Offered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master’s Degrees</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global and Community Health</td>
<td>MPH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>MPH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Program Length.

An MPH degree program or equivalent professional masters degree must be at least 42 semester credit units in length.

This criterion is met. Students must complete 42 semester-credit hours to earn an MPH degree. The university defines one credit hour as equal to 50 minutes of contact time per week for 15 weeks. Full-time
students typically complete the degree in four semesters, plus one summer of study. Part-time students typically complete the degree in six semesters, plus two summers of study. No waivers of credit are permitted for MPH courses, and no degrees have been awarded to students for fewer than 42 credit hours.

2.3 Public Health Core Knowledge.

All professional degree students must demonstrate an understanding of the public health core knowledge.

This criterion is met. All MPH students, regardless of concentration, are required to take the same five courses in the public health core knowledge areas. Table 3 presents the required core courses for MPH students. On-site review of course syllabi showed that the courses include an appropriate breadth and depth of knowledge in each area. Faculty use lectures, multimedia presentations, class and small-group discussions, individual writing assignments, presentations and group projects to engage students. Waivers of required core courses are not permitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Knowledge Area</th>
<th>Course Number &amp; Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biostatistics</td>
<td>GCH 601 – Introduction to Biostatistics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>GCH 712 – Introduction to Epidemiology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Health Sciences</td>
<td>GCH 560 – Environmental Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>GCH 600 – Health Promotion Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services Administration</td>
<td>GCH 645 – US and Global Public Health Systems</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Practical Skills.

All professional degree students must develop skills in basic public health concepts and demonstrate the application of these concepts through a practice experience that is relevant to the students’ areas of specialization.

This criterion is met. Students are required to complete a practice experience that demonstrates the application of skills and concepts learned through the curriculum. Practicum policies and procedures are described in the program’s Graduate Practicum Guidebook. In addition, students learn about the requirements at new student orientation. All students are required to enroll in the zero-credit Practicum Seminar (GCH 780) and the three-credit Practicum in Public Health (GCH 790). During the seminar course, students locate a practicum and plan the experience. Students in this course meet six to eight times during the semester to discuss professionalism, resume writing and practicum requirements. Students select their practicum site in consultation with the course instructor.

To pass the practicum seminar, students must complete and submit a practicum packet that includes an information sheet that documents the details of the placement; a job description that includes expected activities and duties; and three objectives approved by the course instructor and site supervisor. The
seminar is graded on a pass/fail basis and may be repeated without penalty. Students cannot register for the practicum course until all requirements of the seminar have been successfully completed. In addition, students must have completed 21 semester hours toward the MPH degree before they can begin the practicum.

During the practicum course, students spend all of their time in the field. Students must log a minimum of 200 contact hours on a timesheet that is approved by the site supervisor. Site supervisors must be full-time employees of the public health agency or organization where the practicum is being completed, and they must be involved in work that allows for the addition of an intern, as determined by the course instructor. At the end of the term, students must submit the signed timesheet, a journal with weekly entries chronicling the experience and an evaluation of the experience and the site supervisor.

At the conclusion of the experience, students have two additional deliverables: a final report and a poster. The report must describe the objectives of the experience, summarize the work completed and critically reflect on the experience. The reflection should address how the objectives were met, how the placement related to the MPH coursework and what lessons contributed to professional development. The poster session held at the end of each semester gives students an opportunity to present their work to the faculty, other students and the community. No waivers of the practicum requirement have been granted during the last three years.

The MPH program has established relationships with health departments and other public health organizations in the region. Program leaders told site visitors that they are working to identify additional relationships for practicum opportunities. In the self-study, the program identified 107 local, regional, national and international public health agencies and organizations at which MPH students completed practica from 2010 to 2012.

Agency representatives and site supervisors who met with the site visit team noted that they highly valued the students who completed their practica with them. They said that Mason MPH students took initiative and were enthusiastic about their work and about public health. These representatives cited students’ prior work experience and maturity as strengths.

2.5 Culminating Experience.

All professional degree programs identified in the instructional matrix shall assure that each student demonstrates skills and integration of knowledge through a culminating experience.

This criterion is met. The culminating experience requires students to integrate skills and knowledge gained through previous coursework and other learning experiences. Students enroll in a zero-credit course during one of their last two semesters in the program. The course instructor selects up to three
articles about a current public health problem from academic journals and/or the popular press, in consultation with the Graduate Programs Committee. Early in the semester, students choose one issue related to the problem presented and address it in an individual paper. Time is then allotted during one class meeting for students to work in groups to discuss the problem in greater depth and consider possible solutions. Following this discussion, students use the rest of the semester to conduct research on the topic. Students are expected to integrate knowledge from the coursework and the practicum to further develop their perspective on the issue. Each student writes a final report that recommends one possible solution to the problem. The final report must include background information about the problem, an analysis of the problem and a proposed solution; all sections must be supported by high-quality sources.

The course instructor grades the paper based on demonstrated mastery of the 10 core competency areas. For each competency area, the instructor scores the paper on a five-point scale; students must pass at least 70% of the core competency areas to pass the course. Students who do not earn a passing grade have their paper reviewed by two additional faculty members: the instructor slated to teach the culminating experience course in the next term and the graduate programs director. Students must receive a passing score of 70% from both readers to pass. Students who do not earn the necessary passing score have one opportunity to revise the paper and resubmit it during the same term. Students who fail to earn a passing grade on the revised paper receive a grade of NC (no credit) and must repeat the entire course. Students who are unable to pass the course during the second attempt are dismissed from the program.

The culminating experience was implemented in spring 2012. Despite the limited number of students who have completed the culminating experience so far, on-site review of student work showed it to be a rigorous component of the curriculum.

2.6 Required Competencies.

For each degree program and area of specialization within each program identified in the instructional matrix, there shall be clearly stated competencies that guide the development of educational programs.

This criterion is met. The program has identified a set of core public health competencies required of all MPH students and sets of competencies for the two concentration areas. Students are expected to achieve these competencies through their course of study in the program.

The MPH faculty developed the core competencies based on the Association of Schools of Public Health’s (ASPH) MPH Core Competency Model (version 2.3) and the preliminary competencies generated from ASPH’s Global Health Competencies Workgroup. The core competencies are divided into 10 domains: the five core knowledge areas plus communication; cultural understanding; critical thinking
and analysis; leadership and professionalism; and scientific knowledge. Each domain has between one and nine competencies. For each core course, faculty used a three-level system (ie, introductory, intermediate, advanced) to rate the depth to which each competency is addressed. The self-study provides a matrix of the competency domains and the rating of each in the core courses; on-site review of course syllabi showed that specific competencies along with associated learning objectives are listed on individual syllabi. The program has developed a syllabus template, and all courses beginning in fall 2012 use the template.

Competencies for each specialty area were developed by faculty with expertise in that area. Faculty also used training and certification resources specific to each concentration as the sets were developed. The 13 competencies for the global and community health concentration were developed in accordance with the Responsibilities and Competencies for Health Education Specialists identified by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC). The 10 competencies for the epidemiology concentration were based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) guidelines for an entry-level epidemiologist.

The self-study provides matrices for both sets of concentration-specific competencies and ratings for the level of coverage in each required course for the concentration. The matrices show that the three required courses for epidemiology students all cover the concentration’s competencies at an intermediate or advanced level; however, the courses for global and community health students have more variation in their level of coverage, and some competencies are not addressed or are addressed at an introductory level in one to two of the three required courses. Site visitors discussed with faculty the apparent differences in the depth of coverage between the two concentrations, and faculty explained that more of the global and community health concentrations are also covered in the core courses. While this level of competency mapping is not provided, review of course syllabi led site visitors to agree that this is a reasonable explanation.

The Graduate Programs Committee plans to review the core and concentration-specific competencies annually to assess the need for updates. This review will include input from program alumni, the Advisory Board and the Graduate Student Advisory Council. The program’s involvement with the Commonwealth Public Health Training Center, further discussed in Criterion 3.3, will also provide valuable information to this review process.

2.7 Assessment Procedures.

There shall be procedures for assessing and documenting the extent to which each student has demonstrated competence in the required areas of performance.

This criterion is partially met. Students’ demonstration of competence is primarily assessed through course assignments, course grades, the culminating experience and performance during the practicum.
Students are expected to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and they must earn a grade of “C” or higher in all core and concentration courses.

Students are expected to self-reflect on their achievement of learning objectives during the practicum experience. The course instructor also critically assesses this achievement based on a comparison of the practicum packet developed at the beginning of the experience and student deliverables completed at the end. A site supervisor survey has been developed and asks questions about students’ ability to demonstrate competencies during the placement. This survey will be administered in early 2013.

The first point of concern relates to competency assessment in the culminating experience. A program faculty member recently developed a grading rubric that is used to assess student attainment of the program’s core competencies. However, grading of the culminating experience does not consider the attainment of concentration-specific competencies. On-site discussions with faculty revealed that the program has considered this level of assessment but has not yet taken steps to incorporate it into the evaluation of the culminating experience. By definition, a culminating experience should demonstrate an integration of knowledge and skills from across the entire curriculum.

MPH students have six years to complete the degree and graduate. Given this timeframe, the first cohort of students from 2009-2010 have until 2015-2016 to reach the maximum allowable time to graduate. At the time of the site visit, 86 of 178 students who entered in 2009-2010 had graduated, and 65 were still enrolled, which leaves the program on track to reach the graduation thresholds set by CEPH. For the 2010-2011 cohort, two of 23 had graduated, and 21 were still enrolled. One student had withdrawn from the 2011-2012 cohort, and 31 students were continuing.

The second point of concern relates to the program’s inability to provide any information related to job placement rates or the destination of graduates. The program developed an alumni survey in fall 2011 and sent it to all program graduates in spring 2012. At the time of the site visit, the program had received seven responses, and results were still being collected. On-site review showed that the survey is administered to all graduates of the department, and the seven responses included four MS graduates, one certificate graduate and three MPH graduates. The combined results do not allow the program to track trends, such as satisfaction with aspects of the program and job placement.

The program has developed employer and site supervisor surveys and plans to administer them early in 2013. The program will have similar challenges reporting the data if the surveys are sent to employers and site supervisors of all graduate-level students (ie, MS, MPH, certificate). Anecdotal information from site supervisors and employers who met with the site visit team indicated that MPH students and program graduates are enthusiastic, motivated and goal-directed.
As discussed in Criterion 1.2, the program’s outcome measures related to student assessment could be strengthened as the program continues to develop and mature. The program has identified measures such as faculty members’ teaching ratings, whether students would recommend the program to others and student satisfaction with their practicum experience and site supervisor. While these measures may be more relevant to other criteria, greater emphasis on the attainment of the program’s core and concentration-specific competencies would make the response to this criterion stronger.

2.8 Academic Degrees.

If the program also offers curricula for academic degrees, students pursuing them shall obtain a broad introduction to public health, as well as an understanding about how their discipline-based specialization contributes to achieving the goals of public health.

This criterion is not applicable.

2.9 Doctoral Degrees.

The program may offer doctoral degree programs, if consistent with its mission and resources.

This criterion is not applicable.

2.10 Joint Degrees.

If the program offers joint degree programs, the required curriculum for the professional public health degree shall be equivalent to that required for a separate public health degree.

This criterion is not applicable.

2.11 Distance Education or Executive Degree Programs.

If the program offers degree programs using formats or methods other than students attending regular on-site course sessions spread over a standard term, these programs must a) be consistent with the mission of the program and within the program’s established areas of expertise; b) be guided by clearly articulated student learning outcomes that are rigorously evaluated; c) be subject to the same quality control processes that other degree programs in the university are; and d) provide planned and evaluated learning experiences that take into consideration and are responsive to the characteristics and needs of adult learners. If the program offers distance education or executive degree programs, it must provide needed support for these programs, including administrative, travel, communication, and student services. The program must have an ongoing program to evaluate the academic effectiveness of the format, to assess teaching and learning methodologies and to systematically use this information to stimulate program improvements.

This criterion is not applicable.
3.0 CREATION, APPLICATION AND ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE.

3.1 Research.

The program shall pursue an active research program, consistent with its mission, through which its faculty and students contribute to the knowledge base of the public health disciplines, including research directed at improving the practice of public health.

This criterion is met with commentary. The program’s research activities are consistent with its mission, and faculty and students contribute to the public health knowledge base through a variety of means. The MPH program works closely with the university to identify and facilitate collaborative research opportunities that support the science and practice of public health.

All tenured and tenure-track faculty in the MPH program are expected to engage in research and scholarly activities. The policies of the university and the college detail expectations for faculty of all ranks. The program coordinates its grant and contract activities through the Office of Research Development, the Office of Sponsored Programs and the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance. The Office of Research Development helps faculty, staff, and students identify and seek funding opportunities. This office manages the internal selection process for limited submission grant opportunities; coordinates institutional activities to identify funding information from external entities; provides seminars and workshops; supports cooperative and collaborative research activities across the university; and offers individualized consulting sessions on the identification and appropriateness of funding sources and strategies for interacting with funding agencies. The Office of Sponsored Programs administers the pre- and post-award for all externally sponsored projects. This office assists with budget development for proposals; review and submission of proposals; review, negotiation, and execution of all contracts; and generation of budgets for awarded contracts. The Office of Sponsored Programs also coordinates changes to accounts, communication with sponsors, project closeout, and communication to the Mason research community about new and revised state and federal laws that affect research administration. The Office of Research Development promotes ethical and responsible conduct of research. This office provides policies and trainings, identifies compliance risks, monitors and investigates instances of noncompliance, and supports the implementation of research compliance programs. MPH faculty have access to the resources of these offices at all stages of their efforts to conduct scholarly activity.

In addition to university services, the college’s Office of Research and Program Evaluation is intended to strengthen the research infrastructure of the college. This office arranges internal and external reviews of journal manuscripts and funding proposals; supports the preparation of proposals; develops research seminars, symposia, and presentations; disseminates research activities; and maintains a database of faculty publications, presentations, grants, and contracts.
Program faculty receive internal and external funding for research. In the last three years, the university has awarded funding to measure access to radio health communications in Guatemala, study obesity in relation to complex diet and geographical life history factors and create an LGBTQ photovoice for the university. External funding has supported projects related to the health benefits of soy in HIV-positive pregnant women, the evaluation of a family life education teacher training program and secondary trauma among staff of the International Criminal Court Office of the Prosecutor.

MPH faculty and students are involved in research activities in collaboration with health agencies and community-based organizations. For example, two faculty members collaborate with the Fairfax County Health Department and the Northern Virginia HIV/AIDS Clergy Council on an HIV stigma reduction project. The self-study describes other examples that involve a Fairfax community health coalition, the use of college athletes to conduct facilitated skill-building exercises to reduce sexual risk taking in middle school youth and an HIV prevention program among Latino MSM and transgender individuals.

Students are encouraged to participate in research as graduate assistants, volunteers and students in an independent study course. Student research develops from individual faculty projects and the program’s strong network with public health agencies, hospitals, government and non-profit agencies throughout the Northern Virginia/Washington, DC metropolitan area. Each year, the department awards a limited number of graduate assistantships to incoming and current students. These awards are based on student achievement and interest in faculty research. In addition to the research activities previously described, of which many include student participation, students have also been involved in projects related to behavioral epidemiology, the HPV vaccination, media and nutrition information, global climate change and health care access in Sierra Leone and South Africa. In AY 2011-2012, the department introduced student research grants, which support independent student research projects. Two students have received funding so far.

The commentary relates to the limited amount of external funds that the program has successfully received. Department, college and university leaders all acknowledged that less reliance on internal, university funds is needed. The dean and associate dean of research and evaluation discussed with site visitors their commitment to increasing the success rate of proposals submitted by the MPH program. Given that the dean had only been at the university for six months at the time of the site visit, he said that building the research productivity of all entities within his college is a major priority going forward.
3.2 Service.

The program shall pursue active service activities, consistent with its mission, through which faculty and students contribute to the advancement of public health practice.

This criterion is met. Program faculty acknowledged that service is critical to achieving the program’s mission, goals and objectives, and it is a natural part of working in the field of public health. Discussions with faculty revealed involvement in the areas of technical assistance, committee membership, editorial and funding reviews and seminars and workshops.

Faculty are engaged in service activities with organizations and agencies such as the American College of Epidemiology, the American Public Health Association, the Fairfax County Health Department, Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax County Medical Reserves and the US Department of Education. Faculty are actively involved in serving as reviewers for a wide variety of journals such as the American Journal of Public Health, Annals of Epidemiology, Health Promotion International, Journal of Cancer Epidemiology, Journal of School Health and the Lancet.

The associate dean of academic affairs told site visitors that service is highly valued in the college, and cited the college’s associate dean of outreach, who connects faculty members and community organizations, as an example of the college’s commitment. In addition, the site visit team learned that the college had recently rewritten the guidelines for promotion and tenure to emphasize that public health faculty members are encouraged to engage in service.

Students are involved in a variety of service activities, several of which involve working alongside faculty members. Students participate in service activities through organizations such as the Global Health Students Beyond Borders and the Graduate Student Advisory Council, which both independently create a service agenda each year. MPH students have been involved in a student-run service trip to Haiti in response to the 2010 earthquake. The program has also revised its annual student awards system to include a service and leadership category.

The program has established eight objectives by which it monitors its service efforts. As discussed in other sections, some of these objectives are more appropriate in other criteria. For example, two objectives relate specifically to students’ role in program governance (Criterion 1.5) and two relate to workforce development efforts (Criterion 3.3). The measures that best relate to CEPH’s expectations for this criterion include faculty involvement in technical assistance consultations and service on editorial boards and external committees. Data for the last three years show fluctuations in the percent of faculty involved but are generally close to the targets set by the program.
3.3 Workforce Development.

The program shall engage in activities that support the professional development of the public health workforce.

This criterion is partially met. The program’s workforce development strategy consists of a three-part approach that includes continuing education, public health symposia and a workforce “pipeline” collaborative. The program has offered graduate certificates since its inception in 2009-2010. Certificates can be earned in three areas: biostatistics, epidemiology and global health. A fourth certificate in public health has been approved by the university and will begin accepting students in fall 2013. The certificates are targeted to individuals in the workforce, and admission requirements include at least two years of full-time employment as well as current employment in a health-related field. In the last three years, seven, six and 14 students have enrolled in the biostatistics, epidemiology and global health certificates, respectively, as their primary program.

The program’s symposia were formalized in 2011-2012 and include lectures, workshops and other technical assistance to the local workforce and community. These seminars are held every other week on campus and feature public health experts from Mason and other organizations and universities who share analyses and potential solutions to public health problems. Faculty told site visitors that seminar topics are selected with input from the faculty about current topics that would be of interest to the faculty and students. The program has not tracked the number of public health practitioners who have attended these seminars.

The MPH program is a member of the Commonwealth Public Health Training Center, which, along with other MPH programs in Virginia, is working to systematically collect data on the needs of the workforce and devise a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to meet the public health workforce needs in the state. This initiative pursues five goals: 1) increase visibility about the importance of public health careers, and market career paths into public health; 2) target future members of the public health workforce, starting at the K-12 level; 3) educate career counselors about the existence and benefits of careers in public health; 4) increase interactions with partners, especially those in the community-based, non-profit sector; and 5) include public health content in the curriculum of K-12, community college, undergraduate and certificate students.

The university infrastructure is also able to offer continuing education opportunities to the existing workforce. Standalone courses can be offered face-to-face and in distance learning settings through the Office of Continuing and Professional Education. In addition, the college’s Office of Academic Outreach develops relationships with community organizations to solicit workforce needs and to advertise the college’s programs. No public health offerings through the university or college were active at the time of
the site visit; however, the program has submitted a list of potential topics to the Office of Academic Outreach for consideration.

The concern relates to the limited involvement of community and public health professionals in the choice of workforce development offerings. Thus far, topics have been faculty-driven rather than workforce-driven. The program is poised to expand its workforce activities through the systematic identification of the training needs of the public health workforce in the region, which is being conducted by the Commonwealth Public Health Training Center. On-site meetings with community partners identified several opportunities including teaching public health to educators in public schools and offering on-site epidemiology training to health department employees. Site visitors learned that the latter example is offered in an online format, but the health department representative who met with the site visit team said it would be more valuable in person. The program must solidify its outreach to ensure the implementation of a collaborative plan for educating the workforce, rather than a plan that is driven solely by faculty expertise.

4.0 FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS.

4.1 Faculty Qualifications.

The program shall have a clearly defined faculty which, by virtue of its distribution, multidisciplinary nature, educational preparation, research and teaching competence, and practice experience, is able to fully support the program’s mission, goals and objectives.

This criterion is met. The faculty complement has extensive training and expertise in diverse disciplines and is qualified to support the two concentrations currently offered. All full-time faculty members hold doctoral-level degrees in public health or related areas and teach courses consistent with their training. Of the eight primary faculty members, five hold at least one public health degree from a CEPH-accredited school or program. Other disciplines include psychometrics, medicine and sociology.

Program faculty maintain connections to local and international public health practice and integrate these connections and experiences into their research, service and teaching. Experienced public health practitioners serve as guest lecturers, teach courses as adjunct faculty members and speak at seminars. Faculty members gain greater perspective on the field of practice by serving on boards and committees; attending public health conferences sponsored by public health agencies, non-profits, and professional organizations; serving as reviewers, editors and advisors for academic journals and grant funding agencies; and implementing research projects that involve community-based organizations and other academic institutions.

The four adjunct faculty members all hold doctoral degrees in public health. Their areas of expertise include health education and environmental health, international health, research methods and ethics. On-site meetings confirmed that these part-time faculty members bring a great deal of experience and
real-life examples to the program. Students repeatedly mentioned how valuable these adjunct faculty members’ perspectives and connections to the field are to them.

The program has developed 10 objectives by which it judges the qualifications of its faculty complement. While measures addressing student satisfaction with the practicum, student-faculty ratios and the headcount of primary faculty would be more appropriate in other criteria, the remaining measures relate to faculty teaching scores, the involvement of affiliate faculty from across the university and the use of public health practitioners as adjunct faculty. Data for the last three years show that primary faculty members far exceed the 3.5 (out of 5.0) overall rating of their teaching and courses, and the program has exceeded its target of engaging at least three adjunct faculty members each year. The program has set a target to engage at least five affiliate faculty members from other departments on campus; it has only engaged one, two and one, respectively, over the last three years. Program leaders said they would evaluate the appropriateness of these targets as part of the evaluation and planning process described in Criterion 1.2.

4.2 Faculty Policies and Procedures.

The program shall have well-defined policies and procedures to recruit, appoint and promote qualified faculty, to evaluate competence and performance of faculty, and to support the professional development and advancement of faculty.

This criterion is met. Guidelines for faculty appointments, evaluation, tenure and promotion are clearly described in the faculty handbook. Program faculty who met with site visitors said the policies and procedures are well communicated, and they feel that they have a good understanding of the processes. The department encourages and supports the development of faculty in the areas of teaching and academic scholarship. Junior faculty members may consult with senior faculty mentors and seek assistance and support from the university’s Center for Teaching Excellence to advance their professional development.

The program’s promotion, tenure and review process is under the auspices of the department, where recommendations of faculty status (such as initial appointment, renewal, promotion, the conferral of tenure and termination) are the responsibility of tenured faculty. Successful promotions to the associate and full professor levels are dependent on scholarly research, service and teaching.

Faculty members are evaluated annually by local unit administrators and/or by committees of peers who report to the deans and directors or to the provost. This evaluation is based on the quality of faculty members’ overall performance and in the context of their goals and assignments. The outcome of the evaluation is shared with the faculty member in writing, and there is an opportunity for discussion and feedback. Adjunct faculty members are evaluated at the end of each academic term by department
administrators or course coordinators. The evaluation is based on student course evaluations, self-evaluations by the instructor and reviews completed by the designated evaluator for the department.

Students provide feedback about teaching effectiveness through course evaluations developed by the university. Student course evaluations are mandatory and include questions about course content, the course’s relevance to the MPH program, teaching techniques used, strengths and weaknesses of the course and instructor and suggestions for improvement. The department chair reviews all student evaluations and contacts instructors who receive overall ratings below 3.0 out of 5.0. Such instructors must provide the chair with a written proposal of how to correct the identified deficiencies for the following term.

**4.3 Faculty and Staff Diversity.**

The program shall recruit, retain and promote a diverse faculty and staff, and shall offer equitable opportunities to qualified individuals regardless of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or national origin.

This criterion is met. The program has a diverse faculty complement in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, age, religion and national origin. The eight primary faculty members include five males and three females, one Hispanic/Latino, one Asian/Pacific Islander, two individuals from outside of the US and four Caucasians. The program does not include any African American primary or secondary faculty members. The one staff member is a Hispanic male.

The program follows the university policies related to diversity and recruitment and retention efforts intended to attract and retain a diverse faculty and staff. The university’s non-discrimination policy is on the Mason website, and the Office for Equity and Diversity Services is responsible for Mason’s equal opportunity/affirmative action policies and procedures. These procedures are implemented in personnel practices including searches for faculty and staff. Training related to matters of diversity is required for all members of search committees.

The university’s Human Resources and Payroll Office is responsible for managing and administering the faculty and staff recruitment process. While human resources advertises positions, the college solicits input from the search committee and selects the publications in which advertisements are placed. As part of a recent faculty search in the department, advertisements were included in minority-focused venues.

The program has a goal to attract and retain a diverse faculty and staff. To this end, the program has set four objectives: 1) include equal opportunity and non-discrimination statements in the faculty handbook; 2) include equal opportunity and non-discrimination statements in job postings; 3) feature faculty research and practice in minority health on the department website; and 4) include job postings in at least two minority-focused publications. The program has met the first three objectives consistently over the last
three years. Regarding the fourth objective, the program has posted job openings in one minority-focused publication in each of the last three years.

Site visitors discussed with program leaders the use of process-oriented, dichotomous objectives and their limited usefulness in assessing trends over time. Program leaders indicated that all objectives would be reviewed as part of the program’s overall evaluation and planning process.

The college dean told site visitors that he plans to focus on increasing faculty diversity with a more active approach than has been done in the past. He provided examples such as recruiting at conferences at which minority professionals attend and working with historically black universities. Additionally, there is a university-wide interest in increasing diversity among faculty and staff. Program faculty told site visitors that in addition to the most obvious types of diversity, they appreciated their colleagues’ diversity of backgrounds and professional experiences. Students validated this sentiment by noting that they were pleased with the diversity of experiences, backgrounds and interests among the faculty.

4.4 Student Recruitment and Admissions.

The program shall have student recruitment and admissions policies and procedures designed to locate and select qualified individuals capable of taking advantage of the program’s various learning activities, which will enable each of them to develop competence for a career in public health.

This criterion is met. The program has policies and procedures that are effective to recruit and admit qualified students. The program seeks applicants with a broad range of interests, educational backgrounds and work experiences and participates in recruitment efforts through representation at graduate and professional career fairs nationwide, as well as Mason-sponsored fairs for high school and undergraduate students; the program’s website; program information sheets; booths at professional meetings and conferences; advertisements in public health journals and the university newspaper; faculty networks; and alumni referrals.

The college’s Office of Student Affairs receives and coordinates all components of the application package. This office communicates with the applicant as elements are received and notifies applicants of missing elements via an online notification system. The Office of Student Affairs forwards complete application files to the program for review. The Graduate Programs Committee selects faculty reviewers from among the full-time program faculty. Generally, two to three faculty members per concentration area review applications for each admission cycle. Each reviewer completes an MPH applicant rater sheet, which records the reviewer’s rating scores for the essay, relevant work history and academic coursework. The graduate programs director combines these ratings with scores based on GRE, GPA and letters of recommendation in a weighted calculation that produces a final admissions score for each applicant. The graduate programs director ranks each applicant by concentration in order of score. The Graduate
Programs Committee makes the final decision about who should be offered admission, placed on the waitlist or denied admission.

The program considers several criteria during the admissions process:

- Bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution
- Strength of the undergraduate record
- GRE score
- Goal statement
- Three letters of recommendation
- Professional and volunteer experience in public health
- Evidence of the ability to write and conduct research at the graduate level
- Some background in statistics, biology or the social sciences preferred

No minimum GPA or GRE scores are required for admission. However, previous applicants who gained admission had an average of GPA of 3.0 and combined GRE scores of 1100. Students are admitted once a year for entrance in the fall. Applications and all supporting documentation must be submitted by January 1 to receive full consideration for the following fall. Applications received between January 2 and March are considered on a space-available basis.

The program has not yet identified any outcome measures by which it may evaluate its success in enrolling a qualified student body. The self-study states that objectives will be developed and added to the program’s formal program evaluation system in 2013. Additional discussion of the need for appropriate outcome measures is provided in Criterion 1.2.

4.5 Student Diversity.

Stated application, admission, and degree-granting requirements and regulations shall be applied equitably to individual applicants and students regardless of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or national origin.

This criterion is met. As stated in the self-study, the university’s equal opportunity and nondiscrimination policy and the college’s diversity plan apply to all MPH students. The diversity plan has three goals that focus on recruitment, retention and advancement of underrepresented groups of students in addition to faculty and staff. The university policy is described on the Diversity at Mason website and on the college’s website. The university provides several resources to support diversity among its student body. These resources include a formal diversity vision, the Office of Equity and Diversity Services, a minority studies program, faculty development resources on diversity and student life resources on diversity.

MPH student new and continuing enrollment for 2011-2012 included eight (7.5%) Hispanic American, 17 (16%) African American, 16 (15%) Asian American, 16 (15%) unknown/other, three (2.8%) non-resident alien and 41 (44%) White American students.
Similar to the program’s objectives related to faculty and staff diversity, the program has set student diversity objectives related to including equal opportunity and nondiscrimination statements in the student handbook and listing student diversity resources on the program’s website. The program aims to host at least one presentation on minority health each year, and this objective was met for the first time in 2011-2012. The program also seeks to have 80% of students rate the program as “inclusive” or “very inclusive” on the exit survey; this question was added to the survey in fall 2012 and no data were available at the time of the site visit.

The self-study describes the advantages of the university’s proximity to Washington, DC, and identifies this as a contributor to student diversity. In addition, the program attracts a more diverse student body by offering courses in the evening and allowing students to attend on either a full- or part-time basis. Mason also has an Office of International Programs and Services that works to recruit international students for all programs of study.

In interviews with students, faculty and administrators, all groups commented that Mason is recognized as one of the most multicultural universities in the United States. Students noted that their peers are diverse in experience, background, age and culture, and many agreed that student diversity was one of the primary reasons for choosing Mason’s MPH program. Several students said that they particularly liked the diversity of student ages in the program and had learned from more seasoned students with a range of work experiences.

4.6 Advising and Career Counseling.

There shall be available a clearly explained and accessible academic advising system for students, as well as readily available career and placement advice.

This criterion is partially met. The program has advising services in place to support students’ successful navigation through and completion of the program. Advising begins with a welcome packet at the time of acceptance into the program. The welcome packet helps students connect with program faculty and other students and answers many frequently asked questions. As each applicant is admitted into the program, an academic advisor is assigned based on concentration area. Two primary faculty members in the area of epidemiology and four primary faculty members in the area of global and community health serve as advisors. Students are assigned an advisor based on the first letter of their last name.

All incoming students are required to attend the college’s graduate orientation session the week before classes begin each term. The orientation includes an informal reception, a general presentation and breakout sessions for each department. The Department of Global and Community Health breakout session is delivered by the graduate programs director, but all program faculty are encouraged to attend as well. Topics discussed include an overview of the department, degree requirements, course planning and selection, registration, academic advising, course load limits, applying for graduation, student
conduct and student groups. During orientation, students receive a copy of the graduate student handbook. The handbook, which is revised every fall, is also available on the department website. While students who met with site visitors were generally satisfied with the orientation session, they said it would be more helpful to separate MPH and MS students during the department orientation.

Advisement materials, including an advising checklist and an online appointment scheduler, are available on the program’s website. Students are expected to meet with their advisor every fall to plan for the spring term and every spring to plan for the summer and fall terms.

The student exit questionnaire asks students to rate how much they agree with the statement “Advisement was adequately provided throughout my program.” In 2011-2012, 50% of graduating students agreed with this statement, 33% were neutral and 17% disagreed. The graduate programs director investigated these results further and found that students were frustrated with advisement due to a) difficulty reaching certain advisors; b) the provision of incorrect or inconsistent information; and c) the many changes the program underwent during their time enrolled. In response to these concerns, the graduate programs director a) encouraged the advisors who were identified to be more responsive; b) held a training workshop for all advisors; and c) asked the Graduate Programs Committee to develop a new advisor assignment system, which has been completed.

Students who met with site visitors said that the advisement process has been improved, but it can largely depend on individual advisors, and some are more responsive than others. The students who met with the team were all members of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee, and they acknowledged that they are significantly more involved and proactive than the majority of students in the program. These students indicated that some of their peers would benefit from more outreach from the faculty, specifically in terms of advising and research opportunities.

Career counseling services are available from program and university sources. Academic advisors and other faculty members provide individual guidance to students about internship placements and job opportunities. Advisors and other faculty help students make employment connections and provide letters of reference. University-level services use e-mail, webpages, listservs and other communication mechanisms to link students with career opportunities. The department posts job-related announcements on its website, and the Graduate Student Advisory Council is developing a database of organizational contacts for student use.

The concern relates to the program’s need to offer more career counseling services for students. The program has offered career services to students at the end of the spring semester after the students' poster presentations; however, students said this was too late in the season to be helpful for job
searches. Students said that the timing and quantity of events could be improved so that more students can take advantage of the opportunities. Members of the Graduate Student Advisory Council told site visitors that they are thinking of developing webinars for their peers that will provide guidance about topics such as resume writing, interviewing and securing a practicum placement. On-site meetings with students also revealed that students would like a greater emphasis on networking opportunities during courses and other program experiences.
Agenda

COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT

George Mason University
Master of Public Health Program

December 10-11 2012

Monday, December 10, 2012

8:15 am  Site Visit Team Request for Additional Documents
          Cara Frankenfeld

8:30 am  Executive Session and Resource File Review

9:00 am  Meeting with Program and Department Leadership
          Carlos Sluzki
          Cara Frankenfeld
          Nancy Freeborne

10:00 am  Break

10:15 am  Meeting with Faculty Regarding Instructional Programs
          Heibatollah Baghi
          Becky Dawson
          Lisa Lindley

11:15 pm  Break

11:30 pm  Lunch with Students
          Brigid Boettler
          Suzanne Landi
          Rachel Logan
          Elaine Lydick
          Molly McClanahan

12:45 pm  Break

1:00 pm  Meeting with College and University Leadership
          Peter Stearns
          Thomas Prohaska
          Frank Whittington
          Keith Howell

1:45 pm  Break

2:00 pm  Meeting with Faculty Related to Research, Service and Faculty Issues
          Kathryn Jacobsen
          Joshua Rosenberger
          Rick Zimmerman

3:00 pm  Break

3:15 pm  Executive Session and Resource File Review

4:00 pm  Meeting with Community Partners, Alumni and Adjunct Faculty
          Jeffrey Edge
          Caroline Fuller
          Jordana Harshman
          Laura Poms
          Karen Roubik
          Curtiss Swezy

5:00 pm  Adjourn
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<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>Executive Session and Report Preparation</td>
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<td>12:45 pm</td>
<td>Exit Interview</td>
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