

AACR 3

Office of the President
May 4, 2004

Members, Board of Trustees:

CREATION OF A COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Recommendation: that the Board of Trustees approve the creation of the College of Public Health, effective May 4, 2004. The College will consist of the Department of Behavioral Health, Department of Biostatistics, Department of Epidemiology, Department of Health Services Management, Department of Preventive Medicine and Environmental Health, the Graduate Center for Gerontology (including the transfer of primary appointments for faculty currently funded by the Graduate Program in Gerontology), and their associated academic programs.

Background: In 1917, the Department of Hygiene and Public Health was established in the College of Arts and Sciences. The Department offered a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Public Health until the Department was transferred to the College of Allied Health Professions in 1967. The former degree was renamed and reconfigured, and the latter degree was discontinued in 1973. A committee, appointed in 1982, recommended the creation of a School of Public Health, but financial constraints precluded implementation. In 1988, the Department of Preventive Medicine and Environmental Health in the College of Medicine initiated a Master of Science in Public Health with specialization in health care administration, occupational and environmental health, health epidemiology, and toxicology.

In October 1998, the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees approved the creation of the Kentucky School of Public Health in the College of Medicine. In May 2003, the Workgroup on the Organization of Public Health was appointed and charged with recommending structural options for the School of Public Health. The Workgroup recommended the development of a separate, accredited College of Public Health.

Kentucky's health problems arise from individual and community behaviors that place Kentuckians at greater risk for developing and dying from heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. A College of Public Health will strengthen and enhance the public health infrastructure in Kentucky by providing a trained workforce to address these problems at the local and regional level.

Kentucky's high ranking in the prevalence of chronic diseases calls for a concerted effort to focus our health care resources toward alleviating their causes, but the behavioral factors which contribute to the high rate of incidence of these diseases in Kentucky are not easily overcome.

Additional factors compounding the health status of Kentuckians include those that are also attributed to environment, genetics, economics, and tradition. Identifying, isolating, and minimizing these factors require the active involvement of public health professionals who have had the preparation to assess patients and their communities as well as possess the leadership capabilities that will enable them to work effectively with state and federal agencies. Long-term efforts will be needed including an emphasis on prevention and information that will enable Kentuckians to change their behaviors. The public health professionals, who are to meet current and emerging challenges in Kentucky, must be prepared within an educational structure that provides students with training in all aspects of the science of public health, policy development, and program implementation.

A College of Public Health will facilitate the mission of the University of Kentucky by preparing healthcare professionals who will, through teaching and research, serve the residents of Kentucky by improving the quality of life for people.

As the University moves forward to achieve national prominence, a College of Public Health will tap federal resources not currently available to the institution. Recent events have underscored the importance of public health issues, and we expect faculty in the College of Public Health, in concert with faculty in other colleges, to seek grants and contracts from agencies like the Department of Homeland Security and the Center for Disease Control. Certain grant opportunities are available exclusively to accredited Colleges of Public Health. In the same way, students would also benefit from an accredited College of Public Health by gaining access to training/internship opportunities available only to graduates of accredited public health programs.

The proposal has been reviewed and recommended by the Senate Committee on Academic Organization and Structure and the Senate Council and recommended for approval by the University Senate. The Provost of the University supports this recommendation.

Action taken: Approved Disapproved Other _____