



CEPH

COUNCIL *on* EDUCATION *for* PUBLIC HEALTH

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June 11, 2013

Francois Elvinger, DVM, PhD
Director, Public Health Program
Virginia Tech
Population Health Sciences Department
Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine
100 Sandy Hall (0395), 210 Drillfield Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0442

Dear Dr. Elvinger:

On behalf of the Council on Education for Public Health, I am pleased to advise you that the CEPH Board of Councilors acted at its June 6-8, 2013 meeting to accredit the Public Health Program at Virginia Tech for a five-year term, extending to July 1, 2018.

We are enclosing a copy of the Council's final accreditation report. The report is also being transmitted to the chief executive officer of your university as the Council's official report. This differs from the team's report that you received prior to our meeting in the following areas:

- The Council changed the finding for Criterion 1.2 (Evaluation & Planning) from partially met to met with commentary. The Council also adjusted language in this section. This change reflects information provided in the program's response to the site visit team's report.
- The Council changed the finding for Criterion 1.5 (Governance) from met with commentary to met and adjusted language in this section. This change reflects information provided in the program's response.
- The Council adjusted language in Criterion 1.6 (Resources) to reflect information provided in the program's response.
- The Council adjusted language in Criterion 2.4 (Practical Skills) to reflect information provided in the program's response.
- The Council adjusted language in Criterion 2.5 (Culminating Experience) to reflect information provided in the program's response.
- The Council changed the finding for Criterion 3.3 (Workforce Development) from partially met to met and adjusted language in this section to reflect information provided in the program's response.
- The Council changed the finding for Criterion 4.4 (Recruitment & Admissions) from met with commentary to met and adjusted language in this section to reflect information provided in the program's response.

I would call your attention to the disclosure provisions in our adopted procedures. The program is expected to make its official accreditation report available to the public on request 60 days following the accreditation decision. The program may make the report (with the final self-study) available in full on its website, or it must clearly indicate on the website how to request a copy of either document. See p. 26 of the [Accreditation Procedures, amended June 2012](#) for additional

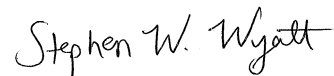
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information. You may append a written response whenever you distribute the report. The official report also will be available on request from CEPH after 60 days, but it is our intent to refer all initial requests to you. If you provide this office with a copy of a written response by August 2, 2013, we will be pleased to append it whenever we respond to a request for the report. Please note that this response is optional.

We would also like to remind you that whenever an accredited school or program undergoes a substantive change, it is obligated to provide written notification to CEPH of the intended change. Substantive changes are defined in the procedures manual, but generally include offering a new degree, adding or discontinuing an area of specialization, offering a degree program in a different format or at a distant site and making major revisions to the curricular requirements. Additional information about substantive changes is available on our [website](#).

We appreciated the many courtesies and helpfulness extended to the site visit team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen W. Wyatt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen W. Wyatt, DMD, MPH
President

Enclosure

cc: CEPH Councilors

REVIEW FOR ACCREDITATION
OF THE
PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM
AT
VIRGINIA TECH

COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

SITE VISIT DATES:

October 8 - 9, 2012

SITE VISIT TEAM:

Christopher G. Atchison, MPA, Chair
Matthew Stefanak, MPH

SITE VISIT COORDINATOR:

Maraquita L. Hollman, MPH

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) regarding the MPH Program at Virginia Tech. 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 October 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.

The university traces its roots to 1872 as a land-grant college named Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College. Virginia Tech is chartered as an educational institution under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and is governed by the Board of Visitors.

The institution offers 65 bachelor's degrees and 150 master's and doctoral degrees with an enrollment of almost 31,000 students. Virginia Tech is made up of eight colleges 1) agriculture and life sciences; 2) architecture and urban studies; 3) engineering; 4) liberal arts and human sciences; 5) natural resources and environment; 6) business; and 7) science; and 8) the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Graduate School. The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine is a private, independent medical school jointly managed by Virginia Tech and Carilion Clinic. Note: The Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute is one of seven research institutes of Virginia Tech. The public health program is not affiliated with the institute.

The MPH degree program admitted its inaugural class of 48 students in fall 2010. The self study notes that subsequent enrollment for 2011-2012 was 26 new students, 33 students in 2012-2013, and by 2014-2015, 40 new students are expected to enroll each academic year.

This is the program's first review for accreditation.

Characteristics of a Public Health Program

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 Virginia Tech degree programs. Virginia Tech has been continuously accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) since 1923. The MPH degree incorporates an ecological perspective of health. The program's grounding in the human-animal-environmental "One Health" interface and the university value of "Ut Prosim" (That I May Serve) reflect the program's aims to promote collaboration and foster professional public health values. The program's funding consists of start-up funds, tuition fees and grants and contract revenues. The program continues to develop and implement new evaluation methods to ensure the professional preparation of its graduates. The program faculty, Virginia Tech faculty and Virginia Tech leadership emphasize the delivery of public health education with passion, the bonds of trust between community leaders and the MPH program and the interaction and transfer of knowledge and ideas between the program faculty and other colleges at Virginia Tech.

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 Virginia Tech MPH program has a mission statement that includes learning, discovery and engagement. The mission statement of the MPH program is:

Protect, improve and promote population health in Southwest and Southside Virginia, the Commonwealth, Central Appalachia, the Nation, and the world by training future public health leaders through learning, discovery, and engagement in public health.

The program has three goal statements for learning (education), discovery (research) and engagement (service). Each goal statement is supported by two or four measurable objectives. The goal statements are:

1. The program, grounded in a “One Health” model at the human-animal-environmental health interface, will provide experiential learning and professional preparation in the core and concentration competencies, functions and responsibilities of public health, and support placement of its graduates into public health positions.
2. Faculty, in partnership with students and external collaborators, will conduct public health research that addresses the individual, social and ecological determinants of health, reflects the human-animal-environmental “One Health” interface, reduces social inequalities in health, and builds healthy communities.
3. Faculty and students will serve public health needs through development of mutually beneficial partnerships with communities, local health departments, medical and veterinary organizations, community-based organizations, and other public and private institutions, to improve local, state, regional, national and global public health, contribute to workforce development, and advance “One Health.”

The MPH program developed its mission, goals and objectives collaboratively with university stakeholders, faculty, students and its external advisory board.

The review process for the mission, goals and objectives is conducted by core faculty, students, the MPH program leadership and the external advisory board. Strategies to monitor and revise the mission, goals and objectives consist of planning meetings, strategic planning, committee meetings and the review of data when available from MPH reports and evaluations. The mission, goals and objectives are found on the MPH program’s website and in all program materials.

The objectives and outcomes utilized by the program to enable evaluation and implementation appear to be comprehensive and appropriate. Objectives for learning include admission standards, student achievement measures and regional engagement in learning. Objectives for discovery are intended to

demonstrate both faculty productivity as well as the larger university's commitment to the region. The objectives for engagement detail both faculty and student participation with the practice community in the region as well as demonstrate the program's contributions to the needs of the region.

The Virginia Tech MPH program lists seven values that were determined in a work session with core program faculty and students. The workgroup reviewed multiple documents and in the end did not develop a new system of values but found that the Virginia Tech's Core Values and Virginia Tech's Principles of Community express the values of the MPH program. The values are:

1. Freedom of inquiry
2. Mutual respect
3. Lifelong learning
4. A commitment to diverse and inclusive communities
5. Ut Prosim (That I May Serve)
6. Personal and institutional integrity
7. A culture of continuous improvement

The MPH program also follows the following principles from the Virginia Tech's Principles of Community:

1. We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.
2. We affirm the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity and mutual respect.
3. We affirm the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the university. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.
4. We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training and interaction with others.
5. We pledge our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of "Ut Prosim" (That I May Serve).

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 met with commentary. The program, led by its core faculty, has established a Program and Policy Committee, which has established objectives associated with the program goals for Virginia Tech's program. These objectives are based upon the three program goals of learning, discovery and engagement as well as a category for faculty complement (resources). The program has also established an Assessment Committee which tracks evaluations and provides an annual report for review by the core faculty and the department head. This report is then shared with the external advisory board, the dean, a joint steering committee representing both the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine

and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute and other university administrators.

Information from the evaluation materials is used at multiple occasions to inform program review and development. This includes discussion and use of regular meetings of the Program and Policy Committee, at core faculty meetings held at the end of each semester and the core faculty's annual retreat. The student association and the external advisory board meetings also involve discussion based on evaluation results. Despite the relative youth of the program, information from the assessments has already been used by the faculty to change course sequencing and composition as well as to address overall course requirements for the inclusion of specific content.

The preparation of the program's self study began in October 2010 and involved the program's entire faculty. Each accreditation criterion was assigned to a faculty member as a lead with subsequent reports from those faculty designees shared with the core faculty. The effort was supported by an on-line repository as well as a hard copy filing system and, in 2012, further supported with the designation of a part-time staff member.

After the initial draft of the self study was approved by the core faculty, the draft was shared at program committee meetings, with collegiate leadership, students and the external advisory board at their meetings of April and August 2012. Further distribution of the self study was facilitated by both e-mail and notices placed in print media.

The commentary relates to the fact that the program has only begun to collect data by which the program's progress against defined objectives can be measured. In several cases, particularly those related to competency assessments and employer data, efforts have only just begun to put data collection systems in place. The program is encouraged to continue to enhance its data capacity and to use these data for ongoing improvements to all aspects of the program.

1.3 Institutional Environment.

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

This criterion is met. Virginia Tech is accredited by SACS and has been accredited since 1923. The university completed its most recent re-accreditation in 2010, with its next reaffirmation in 2019. The university traces its roots to 1872 as a land-grant college named Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College. Virginia Tech is chartered as an educational institution under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and is governed by the Board of Visitors.

The institution offers 65 bachelor's degrees and 150 master's and doctoral degrees with an enrollment of almost 31,000 students. Virginia Tech is made up of eight colleges 1) agriculture and life sciences; 2) architecture and urban studies; 3) engineering; 4) liberal arts and human sciences; 5) natural resources and environment; 6) business; and 7) science; 8) the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Graduate School. The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine is a private, independent medical school jointly managed by Virginia Tech and Carilion Clinic. Note: The Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute is one of seven research institutes of Virginia Tech. The public health program is not affiliated with the institute.

The Board of Visitors is composed of 14 members, 13 of whom are appointed by the governor of Virginia. The fourteenth member is the president of the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services, who serves ex-officio. The presidents of the Faculty Senate and the Staff Senate also serve ex-officio, as non-voting representatives. Every year, both an undergraduate and graduate student is selected through a competitive review process to serve as non-voting representatives to the Board of Visitors.

The MPH degree program admitted its inaugural class of 48 students in fall 2010. The self study notes that subsequent enrollment for 2011-2012 was 26 new students, 33 students in 2012-2013, and by 2014-2015, 40 new students are expected to enroll each academic year.

The president is the university's chief executive officer and has responsibility for the operation of the university in conformity with the policies determined by the Board of Visitors. The senior vice president and provost, who reports to the president, is the university's chief academic officer and the president's principal deputy. All MPH faculty and staff are accountable to the director of the MPH program, who also serves as chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences. The MPH director reports directly to the dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, who reports to the provost. The director of the MPH program also consults with the associate provost for faculty affairs and the associate provost for resource management and planning, as well as the vice president and dean for graduate education. The program follows all policies and procedures at Virginia Tech. The MPH program has the autonomy to make regular decisions about the development and implementation of the MPH program.

Decisions for funding allocations for the MPH program based on tuition and program fee revenue and start-up funding are negotiated between the College of Veterinary Medicine and the provost's office annually. The self study notes that the provost's office provided start-up funds directly to the College of Veterinary Medicine for the first five years of the program (2010- 2015) and that in academic year 2014-2015, the MPH program is expected to be self-supporting and recover all costs from tuition and fees, and service and research revenue.

The MPH program follows university and College of Veterinary Medicine recruitment, hiring, selection, academic standards and advancement procedures for faculty members. This includes the use of search committees, annual faculty evaluations and promotion and tenure decisions by the departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee.

The MPH program must follow the academic standards and policies set by the graduate school. Due to this requirement, the approval of curricula is the responsibility of the Graduate Curriculum Committee of the Commission of Graduate Studies and Policies. The Curriculum Committee also reviews all courses on an annual basis to ensure alignment with the MPH degree competencies.

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 public health program is administratively housed within the Department of Population Health Sciences in the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. The chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences is also the director of the public health program. He reports to the dean of the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. Additionally, the program is supported by a memorandum of understanding with the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. The Joint Steering Committee has been established to oversee the partnership between the Virginia Tech College of Veterinary Medicine and the independent Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute. This committee consists of the deans of both colleges as well as the senior associate dean for research and graduate studies and the associate dean for finance and administration from the college of veterinary medicine and the associate dean for basic science education from the school of medicine. These two colleges provide both faculty and resources for the public health program. Each college also supports joint degree opportunities for their students.

The academic responsibilities of the program follow standards established by the Virginia Tech Graduate School which also plays a lead role in setting standards for the program, admission of students and granting degrees.

The director of the public health program works with the dean of veterinary medicine, associate dean, associate provost and program faculty to develop and implement an annual program budget. The program director also has final responsibility for program decisions and submission of degree candidates to the Graduate School. Finally, the department chair reviews faculty research and service expectations established by the faculty activity report.

At an operational level, more than 60 faculty from across the university contribute to the teaching, research and service responsibilities of the program. The Center for Public Health Practice coordinates some of the faculty research and service activities. The center was established with initial seed exploratory funding from the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment and is housed in the Department of Population Health Sciences. Collaboration is also enabled by a "Public Health Network at VT" consisting of more than 60 faculty from across campus who are interested in the goals of the public health program.

Consistent with its mission, the program is guided by advice from an external advisory board consisting of representatives from local health districts, community health agencies and other public health entities. The chair of the board is the current commissioner of health for the state of Tennessee.

Ethical standards for the program faculty are established in the statement of principles of ethical behavior found in the Virginia Tech faculty handbook. These standards address issues of scholarship, students, instruction, collegiality, roles in the university and in the community. Access to this information is through the university's website.

Specific protocols to address student grievances, both academic and other, are found in the MPH Student Handbook posted on the program's internal scholar site and may be advanced through contact with the associate director of the public health program. Additionally, the university has established an office of graduate student ombudsperson as well as an overall university appeals procedure. There have been no formal grievances filed at the time of the site visit.

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 has established an appropriate number of topic- focused management committees consisting of core faculty and students. The following committees exist:

Program and Policy Committee – Membership includes all core faculty members and one student. Responsibilities include the development and enforcement of policies and procedures, implementation of a faculty mentoring program and overseeing ethical standards and student grievance policies and procedures. Final decisions are made by the director of the public health program.

Admissions Committee – Meets following application deadlines to review applications and make admissions decisions. Membership includes program faculty as well as one student representative.

Assessment Committee – Consists of three core faculty members and a student. The role of the committee is to oversee the assessment of the strategic goals, ensure the program meets CEPH requirements, track student progress and identify issues that require corrective action.

Curriculum Committee – Consists of three members of the core faculty and two student representatives, one from each of the academic concentrations. Its role is to assure alignment between academic offerings and program competencies.

External Advisory Board – Meets twice per year and consists of representatives of public health affiliated agencies, institutions, associations and corporations. It provides strategic directions, advises on accreditation, provides financial advice, assists with student placement and promotes the program. It is convened by the deans of the Colleges of Veterinary Medicine and of the School of Medicine and chaired by the current commissioner of health for the state of Tennessee.

Promotion and Tenure Committee – Carry outs guidelines established at the university and college level but operated under the auspices of the Department. This committee has been identified but has not yet been constituted.

Intercollegiate and professional engagements by the faculty are also facilitated through the Center for Public Health Practice and Research initially funded by the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment and housed in the Department of Population Health Sciences. The management of the relationship between the institute and the program is guided by a memorandum of understanding signed by the dean of the college of veterinary medicine and the director of the institute.

All core program faculty are actively involved in program leadership. All have served on academic committees and five of six faculty have served on committees at the department or university level including the College's Executive Committee and the University's Faculty Senate.

Students serve as full voting members on the four program committees. The program also supports a student association and students are eligible for membership in the graduate student association of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

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 with commentary. The program receives funds from three sources: start-up funds, tuition fees and grant and contract revenues. Initial or startup funding was provided by the university in

the amount of \$988,000 allocated in diminishing amounts over four years. Additional funds come from tuition (some portion of which is returned to the program through a university-led annual budget process) and fees, as well as grants and contracts awarded to faculty. The program is expected to be self-supporting by fiscal year 2015. University officials told the site visit team that they are confident that the program is on target to reach this goal. Three years of budget information is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Sources of Funds and Expenditures by Major Category, Fiscal Years 2010 to 2013			
	2010-2011 (actual)	2011-2012 (actual)	2012-2013 (budgeted)
Source of Funds			
Tuition & Fees	368,588	337,257	610,095
State Appropriation (start-up)	420,000	321,000	163,000
University & College Funds	21,748	32,169	42,391
Grants/Contracts	564,569	597,233	663,142
Indirect Cost Recovery	759	2,000	2,800
Other (Aday Award)		3,390	3,700
Other (Center for Public Health Practice and Research)		75,000	75,000
TOTAL REVENUE	1,375,664	1,368,049	1,560,128
Expenditures			
Faculty Salaries & Benefits	477,670	682,372	917,155
Staff Salaries & Benefits	32,886	46,792	45,012
Operations	38,225	51,887	82,050
Travel	10,987	26,635	22,050
Student Support	37,833	56,993	61,876
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	597,601	864,679	1,128,143

From these sources the program has retained eight core faculty, one adjunct faculty and four faculty affiliates contributing a total of 8.04 FTE. Startup funds enabled the hiring of four faculty, and revenues from grants and contracts, including a HRSA-funded public health training center grant, enabled the retention of an additional five faculty. This resource enables a core faculty/student ratio that is acceptable for each concentration. The MPH program meets the minimum requirement for faculty in each concentration area.

The department employs a full-time administrative assistant who assists program faculty in grant development and fund management.

The program's physical location is on the main campus with a classroom in the basement and other classrooms available in adjoining buildings. A conference room is available. The program is scheduled

to move into permanent space in 2013-2014. In addition, one faculty member utilizes 550 sqft of laboratory space in the Integrated Life Science Building (ILSB) in the Corporate Research Center made available by start up funds provided by the department, the college and the university.

The college makes computer equipment available and provides 24-7 technical support. Computer access is also available via university libraries and a math emporium. The college also supports a laboratory for study design and statistical service which can help faculty and students with research projects.

Library resources are provided both through the university and the College of Veterinary Medicine. The library has a staff member with expertise in health topics available to public health students.

The MPH program has received strong support from the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute and external community partners. For example, the School of Medicine provides 30% salary support for a professor in the infectious disease concentration. The surrounding communities offer learning opportunities, serve as practicum locations and provide preceptors. There is a memorandum of understanding with the state health department, which oversees the local health agencies and, by extension, facilitates working relationships between the program and the local agencies for student placements and research.

The commentary relates to the fact that community representatives who met with site visitors identified the need to expand resources, including scholarships, to support the strategic objective of recruitment of students from the region.

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 currently offers two MPH concentrations. Table 2 presents the program's degree offerings. The program of study for the two concentrations requires the completion of 42 credit hours of coursework. The curricular requirements include: 18 credit hours of core public health courses, 12 credit hours of concentration-specific courses, three credit hours of electives, six credit hours of practicum experience and three credit hours of culminating experience. A review of the curricular requirements shows a sufficient depth and level of required coursework for each concentration. The program offers two joint degrees further described in Criterion 2.10.

Table 2. Degrees Offered		
	Academic	Professional
Masters Degrees		
Public Health Education		MPH
Infectious Disease		MPH
Joint Degrees		
College of Veterinary Medicine		MPH/DVM
School of Medicine		MPH/MD

2.2 Program Length.

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

This criterion is met. The program of study for both concentrations requires the completion of 42 credit hours. The Virginia Tech Office of the Register defines one semester credit hour is equivalent to 150 minutes per week in the classroom for 15 weeks. Most MPH courses are three credit hours each.

Over the last three years, no MPH degrees were awarded for fewer than 42 credit hours of coursework.

The MPH program allows students to transfer up to 16 credit hours of graduate-level courses. The transfer credit is first reviewed and approved by the program’s Curriculum Committee. Once approved, the transfer credit is listed on the student’s plan of study, which is submitted to the Graduate School. The Graduate School, upon review of the student’s transcript, approves the transfer credit when it approves the student’s plan of study. The courses must be passed with a B or higher to be accepted as transfer credit. In the last three years two students have transferred 12 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 are required to complete six core courses. The core courses address the five core knowledge areas in public health and total 18 credit hours. One of the required courses is PHS 5004 Fundamentals of Public Health (three credits), which is an overview and introduction to the five core areas of public health. The five core discipline courses are listed in Table 3.

The site visit team reviewed syllabi, and core courses are appropriate for master’s level study.

Core Knowledge Area	Course Number & Title	Credits
Biostatistics	STAT 5674: Methods in Biostatistics	3
Epidemiology	PHS 5024/HNFE 5724: Epidemiology	3
Environmental Health Sciences	PHS 5014: Environmental Health	3
Social & Behavioral Sciences	PHS 5034: Health Behavior and Health Education	3
Health Services Administration	PHS 5044: Public Health Administration	3

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 with commentary. The MPH program requires a field experience that places students in a practice-based situation. Sites for practicum experiences include health departments, health clinics, schools, community organizations and private institutions. Field placement sites may be located domestically or internationally and field experiences may be paid or unpaid. Students, in consultation with the practicum coordinator and the student's faculty advisor, are responsible for finding and arranging a practicum site. Students have several resources to locate a practicum site including MPH faculty members, other faculty members at Virginia Tech and a list of sites that have hosted MPH students since fall 2010. Students may also propose a placement organization from their own networking experience. The Virginia Tech MPH program has a standing relationship with the Virginia Department of Health – New River Health District that allows two students (one from the public health education concentration and one from the infectious disease concentration) to complete a practicum experience each semester at this health district.

Students complete a learning contract that is between the preceptor, faculty advisor and practicum coordinator. The contract must be completed by the end of the semester before the practicum is scheduled to begin as it formally establishes the conditions under which a student works on the practicum. The contract should include the following: selected core and concentration competencies, learning objectives, activities, outcomes for the project, opportunities for exposure to broader public health experiences (approximately 10% of the practicum hours), any notes regarding travel arrangements, access to data, required paperwork, a schedule of weekly meetings with preceptor and evaluation plans, both midterm and final. All MPH students including dual degree students have professional liability insurance via a Virginia Tech policy while completing their fieldwork.

Working students may complete their practicum in their primary place of employment as long as it is above and beyond their normal work duties and does not include reporting to their regular supervisor. Students must discuss this placement option with their faculty advisor and practicum coordinator and

approval must be given for this type of practicum to occur. The site visit team heard from two current students completing their fieldwork in their place of employment. These students shared very positive experiences and verified their practicum experience in addition to their regular employment responsibilities and that their preceptors are not their regular supervisors.

The practicum experience consists of a total of 300 hours of on-site practice placement hours. MPH students may begin their practicum experience following the successful completion of at least 21 MPH course credits, including Fundamentals of Public Health (PHS 5004), Methods in Biostatistics (STAT 5674) and Epidemiology (PHS 5024/HNFE 5724). Students must complete a practicum experience in their chosen MPH concentration. The MPH program has not granted any practicum waivers. Per the self-study, there is no expectation that the program will grant waivers of the practicum experience.

Practicum preceptors should possess the following: (1) an MPH or other advanced degree in public health, or extensive (at least 10 years) practice experience working in the public health field; (2) expertise in the student's assigned project area; (3) experience and status with the organization; (4) an ability to serve as the key link between the student and the agency and between the student and community if applicable; and (5) an interest and competence in supervising and mentoring. These characteristics are verified by the practicum coordinator. If the practicum location does not have an individual who meets the above listed requirements, the student may identify both an on-site supervisor and off-site preceptor which will assist the student with practicum requirements and completion of the field experience.

The practicum coordinator, preceptor and faculty advisor work closely to evaluate student performance. This evaluation process includes: (1) a student mid-practicum survey; (2) a student arranged mid-practicum meeting or conference call between the student, preceptor (site supervisor if applicable), faculty advisor and practicum coordinator; (3) a student arranged end-of-practicum meeting between the student, preceptor (site supervisor if applicable), faculty advisor and practicum coordinator; (4) a student competency assessment form; (5) a preceptor evaluation form; (6) a preceptor competency assessment form; (7) site supervisor evaluation form (if applicable). Students are required to submit materials from the final project and a final project report. The faculty advisor, in consultation with the preceptor (site supervisor if applicable) and the practicum coordinator assigns the final grade (A-F) for the practicum based on the evaluations, practicum project and final report.

Preceptors spoke enthusiastically about student field experiences and the knowledge that students bring to their field experiences. Site visitors learned from alumni and students that their practice experiences reinforced their knowledge of public health and expanded their knowledge and abilities to work in the field of public health.

Program faculty identified a need for earlier preparation and skill building for students in advance of the field experience. At the time of the site visit, the program announced a recently-adopted revision of the curriculum to require a one-credit professional seminar and a research methods and grant writing course prior to the practicum.

The commentary refers to the fact that the assistant director of the public health program is also the practicum coordinator. Given the extensive responsibilities associated with the assistant director in the current structure of the MPH program and the time and effort needed for the practicum coordinator duties, the MPH program would benefit from having a separate individual as the practicum coordinator. The hiring of a practicum coordinator is especially needed as enrollment numbers continue to increase and more students are in need of counsel, assistance and evaluation from the practicum coordinator. Also, the hiring of a practicum coordinator would aid in the identification of new practicum sites, which would increase the availability of practice experiences for students and collaborative efforts of the MPH program with additional practice site locations.

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 with commentary. All MPH students are required to complete a culminating experience during their final semester for a total of three credits. This experience consists of several requirements: (1) two weekends of skill-building sessions led by core faculty and other outside experts in grant writing, presentation/communication skills and media training, preparation for career opportunities and fellowships; (2) online discussions with fellow capstone participants and faculty members; (3) grant proposal writing assignments where students select current requests for proposals, complete weekly assignments and receive feedback from their faculty advisor and capstone instructor; and (4) a capstone project.

The capstone project consists of two elements: a 20-page paper and a 20-25 minute Power Point presentation. Students are required to choose a public health challenge, describe the topic in the context of the five core disciplines of public health, and design an intervention using the five core disciplines of public health using both core and concentration competencies. Students are not required to use the public health issue that they addressed in their field experience. Students work with their faculty advisors and the capstone instructor on the development and presentation of their capstone project. Students are required to use a set format for the paper which consists of the following: (1) title page; (2) abstract; (3) introduction; (4) public health problem statement; (5) findings from existing evidence-based practice; (6) additional findings from practicum experience if applicable; (7) proposed intervention and program plan; (8) conclusion; and (9) references. Public health education concentration students are required to include

an evaluation plan for the proposed intervention as part of the capstone project. Infectious disease concentration students are required to include a research methods section for the capstone project. Students present their capstone projects on the final day of the culminating experience course in-front of an audience of faculty members, fellow students and community partners on the Virginia Tech campus.

Site visitors reviewed several capstone projects, and they showed rigor, professionalism and creativity. Site visitors heard positive feedback from alumni regarding their culminating experiences, which were varied in topic area final product. Based on feedback from the site visit team, the program developed and received approval for a grading rubric that promotes a standardized evaluation of the capstone project of student learning and competency attainment.

The site visit team learned that the MPH program faculty will implement several changes to the capstone project beginning in 2012-2013. First, students will be required to address the same public health challenge in both practicum experience and capstone project. This change was precipitated by faculty observations that students who utilize the same challenge in both practicum and capstone project tend to achieve better products for both MPH program requirements. Second, students will be required to complete a reflection paper that demonstrates student proficiency to integrate the five core disciplines of public health along with core and concentration competencies into their public health training.

The commentary refers to feedback that site visitors heard from several alumni during the visit regarding the proposed change that will require students to address the same public health challenge in both practicum experience and capstone project. Alumni shared their perspective that it is of great benefit that students are allowed to examine different public health challenges between the two requirements and that the existing arrangement provides greater depth of experiential learning and public health knowledge reinforcement.

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. Competencies have been defined for the MPH degree program and for the two concentrations (public health education and infectious disease). The competencies were developed in 2010 by the program's core faculty and were based on a list of competencies from the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH). The core faculty consolidated the ASPH list into 16 competencies in 2011 that core faculty believe students should master as a result of completing the program. The program's external advisory board has reviewed, revised and approved these competencies for the program and its two concentrations.

Competencies for the public health education concentration mirror the seven areas of responsibilities outlined by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC), ensuring that the students will be prepared to take the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) exam. Absent a standard set of competencies like those developed by NCHEC, faculty in the infectious disease concentration developed competencies for this concentration by reviewing and adapting competencies from three to four other accredited schools and programs.

A review of course syllabi confirmed that the 16 MPH program competencies and the concentration competencies have been incorporated into learning objectives for these courses. The self-study presents a crosswalk of core competencies with the six required courses for the MPH degree as well as the practicum and capstone experiences. The program has put into place several mechanisms for how it assesses the need to update competencies to reflect changes in public health practice, including surveys of employers, alumni, periodic needs assessments with regional public health leaders and external advisory board guidance.

The competencies are shared with all MPH students through multiple means and are reviewed with students during orientation and in program meetings each semester. Students complete self-assessments of their proficiency in the competencies at three times during their degree program.

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 met with commentary. The MPH program uses various methods of assessing student performance: exams, quizzes, presentations, research papers, practicum and culminating experience. Students are required to maintain an overall grade point average of 3.0 (on a four-point scale). All courses on the approved plan of study, including supporting courses must be completed with a grade “C” or better. All graduate students have a mandatory annual review of progress at least once a year by their advisory committee. Students whose grade point average falls below the required standard are placed on academic probation by the Graduate School. Students are usually given one semester to improve their grade point average to the standard. If students do not reach this requirement the Graduate School consults with the students’ department about dismissal from the graduate school. A department can appeal to the Graduate School for additional time for a student to achieve an acceptable grade point average, providing the student is making reasonable progress in raising the grade point average. Any appeal for additional time must be made from the departmental graduate program director or the department head. If extra time is allowed, the student is informed in writing of the amount of additional time allowed for achieving an acceptable grade point average. If the department does not support a time extension, the student is dismissed from the Graduate School. Site visitors learned that since the start of

the Virginia Tech MPH program three students have been placed on academic probation and all three students were expelled from the program.

The program assesses student progress in achieving competencies: (1) during core and concentration coursework; (2) via student-self assessment of core and concentration competencies at the beginning of the program, before the practicum and at the completion of the capstone course; (3) via preceptor evaluation at the conclusion of the practicum experience; and (4) via capstone instructor evaluation with consultation with the student's advisor, at the completion of the capstone course.

The MPH program has both full and part-time students. Full-time students are expected to complete their degree requirements in two years, and part-time students complete their degree program in three to five years. The self study provides graduation rates for academic years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 with rates of 87.5% and 81.8%.

The self study presents summaries of data on graduate employment per concentration for the years 2011 and 2012. The top three destinations for the MPH graduates during this time period were further education, government and health care.

At the time of the site visit no students had taken any national examinations.

The MPH program assesses its alumni via an annual electronic survey, which is distributed in the summer to the year's graduates. Six out of seven students from one cohort and five out of 10 students from another cohort responded to the alumni survey. Survey results showed favorable comments and feedback regarding the MPH program.

The commentary relates to the lack of the implementation of a systematic process for tracking employer assessments of MPH graduates. The MPH program has created an employer survey that measures the overall satisfaction the employer has with the alumnus and specific measures of alumni capabilities. However, at the time of the site visit this survey had not been distributed to employers due to the fact that the MPH program has a small number of graduates, and employer feedback would be relatively sparse for some of these employers since alumni just recently began their positions with employers. The MPH program plans to distribute the employer survey as the number of alumni increases and the occasion for employer feedback becomes available. The site visit team learned that the MPH program is willing to accept informal employer feedback such as telephone calls and emails regarding jobs from employers who acted as preceptors for students or have employed alumni in other positions.

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 met. The program currently offers one simultaneous degree and one dual degree. Per Virginia Tech policies, two different degrees sought together at one institution is a simultaneous degree and degrees sought concurrently at two different institutions are considered dual degrees. The MPH/DVM degree is defined as a simultaneous degree and the MPH/MD degree with the Virginia Carilion School of Medicine is a dual degree. For the purpose of the accreditation process and site visit both of these degrees are listed as joint degrees in the self-study.

Currently there are 17 students in the MPH/DVM program. The MPH/DVM program is a five-year program where students must meet the admission requirements for both degree programs. Students may choose to complete either MPH concentration. At the time of the site visit all MPH/DVM students were completing the infectious disease concentration instead of the public health education concentration. MPH/DVM students complete their MPH coursework through their years of veterinary school training, with an additional semester of MPH coursework following graduation from veterinary school. MPH/DVM students enroll and complete all of the same MPH core required classes (total: 18 credits) as stand-alone MPH students except PHS 5024: Epidemiology and STAT 5674: Methods in Biostatistics (total: six credits). In order to attain the needed competencies and knowledge in these two classes students complete the following four courses for a total of eight credits: VM 8084: Veterinary Epidemiology, VM 8534 Introduction to Statistics for Biomedical Research, VM 8684: Advanced Epidemiology and PHS 5984: SS Biostatistics and Epidemiology in Public Health. MPH/DVM students enroll and complete all of the infectious disease concentration courses (total of 12 credits) as stand-alone MPH students except BIOL 5664G: Advanced Virology. In order to attain the competencies and knowledge addressed in this course, students complete the following four courses for a total of 11 credits: VM 8064: Veterinary Immunology, VM 8324: Veterinary Parasitology, VM 8334: Veterinary Bacteriology and Mycology and VM 8124: Veterinary Virology. Joint degree students complete three elective credits from the veterinary

curriculum with advisor approval. MPH/DVM students enroll and complete PHS 5924: Capstone and are required to complete all parts of course. Finally, MPH/DVM students complete a nine-week block of three DVM clerkships in year four of their DVM degree program, and this counts as their MPH practicum requirement as long as the MPH requirements as determined in the practicum learning contract are met.

Currently there is one student in the MPH/MD program. The MPH/MD program is a five-year program and students must meet the admission requirements for both degree programs. Students may choose to complete either MPH concentration. At the time of the site visit the one MPH/MD student was completing the public health education concentration. MPH/MD students complete their MPH coursework by adding an additional year of study between their second and third year of medical training. MPH/MD students enroll and complete all of the same MPH core required classes (total: 18 credits) as stand-alone MPH students except PHS 5024: Epidemiology and STAT 5674: Methods in Biostatistics (total: six credits). In order to attain the needed competencies and knowledge in these two areas joint degree students are exposed to and complete requirements in their medical school block 1-4 training. Public health faculty have reviewed the MD curriculum and identified the specific modules that align with the “missing classes.” MPH/MD public health education concentration students enroll and complete all of the public health education concentration courses, the practicum experience and capstone experience and meet all requirements as stand-alone MPH students as required. Public health education concentration students complete three elective credits from the medical school. MPH/MD infectious disease concentration students enroll and complete all of the infectious disease concentration courses except: BIOL 5664G Advanced Virology. In order to attain the needed competencies and knowledge in this class for MPH degree requirements these students complete requirements in their medical school block 1-4 training. MPH/MD infectious disease concentration students enroll and complete the practicum experience and capstone experience and meet all requirements as required as stand-alone MPH students. Infectious disease concentration students complete three elective credits from the medical school with advisor approval.

Two dual degree students commented positively on the class sequencing and transition of coursework they found in their dual programs.

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. The MPH program must adhere to university policies as promulgated through the vice-president for research for all of its research activities. All tenure-track and tenured faculty are required to engage in “significant “ research, though the specific requirements regarding percent of time dedicated to research is a product of negotiation between the department head and the individual faculty member. Data describing this responsibility is collected through the annual faculty activity report (FAR), which is used by the department head in annual performance reviews.

The college has established the position of grants and contracts officer to assist with grant writing, identifying funding opportunities and assisting with proposals. The college also has established an office of research and graduate studies which assists program faculty in grant budget development as well as paperwork and provides liaison with the university’s office of sponsored programs. Other offices on campus which support the research enterprise include the Office of Research Compliance, the Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Statistical Analysis, the College of Veterinary Medicine Study Design and Statistical Support Laboratory, the University’s Statistical Analysis Consulting Laboratory and the Office for Advanced Research Computing. The Office of Research Compliance administers the institutional review board.

Practical services provided include notification about funding opportunities, workshops on grant development and submission and financial management for grants. The department recognizes that both pre-award and post-award services are vital for successful grant administration and provides support in these areas.

The Center for Public Health Practice and Research was officially established on July 1, 2011. The purpose of the center is to foster interdisciplinary, collaborative public health practice and research activities at Virginia Tech and among external public health agencies, organizations, practitioners and researchers. The university has also provided seed funding for research development. For example, the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE), the Fralin Life Science Institute, the Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science (ICTAS) and the Occupational Safety and Health Research

Center all have offered competitive grants and/or summer scholarships for conducting pilot studies or developing grant proposals targeted to external funding sources.

The program was established to support southside and southwest Virginia in the identification and understanding of public health problems as well as to develop the workforce which can help address those problems. Each of the faculty has engaged in community based research activities in conjunction with local public health practitioners. Several of these projects have been done in conjunction with formal agreements including a memorandum of understanding with the Baptist General Convention of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Health and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

All faculty, with the exception of a newly appointed member, generated grant revenue in 2011-2012. Although modest in some cases total funding amounted to \$597,233. An increase to \$663,142 is projected for the current academic year.

Research methodology is incorporated into students' capstone experiences. Additionally, at least nine students have been involved in collegiate/community research projects.

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. As a land grant institution, Virginia Tech and its programs have a strong commitment to community service, and this institution-wide commitment is evident in the MPH program. The self-study provides an extensive account of service that faculty and students provide to the region, the Commonwealth of Virginia, national organizations and international communities. Over the last three years the program's six core faculty members reported 35 distinct service activities ranging from technical assistance to a local school district seeking to improve nutrition and physical activity policies, service on the executive board of the American Public Health Association, advising federal agencies on animal health surveillance and involvement in global health exchanges with health professionals from sub-Saharan Africa. Faculty reappointment, promotion and tenure guidelines for the College of Veterinary Medicine identify contributions to the public service mission as one of six criteria for faculty evaluation.

The self study presents a list of faculty service activities during the three-year period. The program has adopted four outcome measures and multiple targets for evaluating its service efforts; the program has met all targets for 2011-2012, the most recent year for which outcome data are available.

MPH program students are afforded many opportunities for volunteer service as well. Community health leaders interviewed by the site visitors especially spoke highly of student involvement in local Medical Reserve Corps' emergency response and seasonal influenza vaccination promotion efforts.

3.3 Workforce Development.

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

This criterion is met. The MPH program has focused its efforts in its start-up phase on assessing public health workforce needs in Southwest and Southside Virginia and on partnering with other public health academic programs in Virginia to create a new public health training center with HRSA funding. This collaborative effort is intended to meet a need for training and continuing education in a state without a school of public health and, prior to 2009, with only three graduate-level public health training programs, and a state in which only 48% of epidemiologists in governmental public health have any formal training in public health. The Virginia Tech MPH program has received a sub-award from the HRSA grant lead applicant at Eastern Virginia Medical School to address workforce development by (1) conducting a workforce needs assessment, (2) providing training programs and continuing education and (3) creating a Pipeline Initiative to stimulate interest among students, community colleges, undergraduate institutions and others in public health as a career.

The self study presents a thorough account of the process by which the program - through the Center for Public Health Practice and Research - conducted the assessment of public health workforce development needs in the region. The assessment identified continuing education in epidemiology, health education and policy, grant writing, and administration and management as priority needs in the region's public health workforce. This Center for Public Health Practice, whose director and assistant director are core faculty in the MPH program, has as one of its goals to develop partnerships with health departments and other community organizations to improve local public health and contribute to workforce development.

The MPH program does not offer a certificate program; public health leaders who have participated in the workforce needs assessment foresaw little demand for a certificate program in a regional workforce that was dominated by mid or late-career public health professionals.

Based on feedback from the site visit team, the program reached out to colleagues in the Virginia Department of Health and the HRSA-funded Commonwealth Public Health Training Center. Using these conversations and the data gathered through the needs assessment, the program developed a solid training plan for 2013-2014.

Program faculty and community representatives described recent and upcoming training on such diverse topics as Civil Rights Act compliance for health department staff, a program for diabetes educators, and integrating obesity prevention counseling into clinical practice; these efforts reflect a willingness to also

respond to immediate requests for assistance in addition to a more deliberate strategy to address priority workforce development needs identified in the needs assessment.

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 program maintains a core faculty of eight individuals distributed across two concentrations, infectious disease and public health education. In sum and in each concentration the faculty has both the requisite academic preparation as well as a range of the disciplines necessary to have a quality program. Seven of eight faculty are doctorally prepared, and four have an MPH degree.

The program is further supported by four other faculty with regular appointments at the university as well as one adjunct professor, all of whom contribute 16% or greater time. There are also 35 other faculty from across the university who provide 1-2% of their time in support of the program. Finally there are five faculty affiliates who provide 2% of their time

The program and university, as set forth in the faculty handbook, have established a special category of faculty, the professor of practice, and established appropriate criteria and ranks to maintain this category as a part of their faculty complement. One member of the program's core faculty is appointed in this category.

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. Faculty are appointed, and promoted according to policies and procedures of the university. The program has developed a resource plan which identifies needed faculty. The provost is the final decision maker regarding recruitment based on the availability of resources. Hiring is done through an officially constituted search committee and is made public through postings on the internet as well as distribution on an international level.

All faculty are designated as members of the general faculty of the university and are divided into five categories: collegiate, library, extension, administrative and professional and special research faculty. Within those categories, tenure or tenure-track faculty follow the following ranks: extra-collegiate instructor, assistant professor, associate professor or professor. Alternatively, faculty may be in a non-tenure track at ranks of lecturer, visiting assistant professor, visiting associate professor, visiting

professor, adjunct assistant professor, adjunct associate professor, adjunct professor, assistant professor of practice, associate professor of practice, professor of practice, clinical instructor, clinical assistant professor, clinical associate professor, clinical professor, instructor, advanced instructor or senior instructor.

In addition to standard faculty rank and non-tenure instructional rank, faculty members may be assigned to one of the following special research faculty ranks: research associate, senior research associate, research scientist, senior research scientist, postdoctoral associate, project associate, senior project associate, project director, research assistant professor, research associate professor or research professor.

All new faculty are assigned a mentor and eligible for mentoring grants to cover costs of help in teaching, technology, university governance and what is valued in terms of research and service.

Within the university there are a number of additional institutional resources available:

- The College of Veterinary Medicine holds a teaching and learning workshop each semester to assist faculty with their teaching knowledge and skills.
- The Center for Instructional Development and Educational Research (CIDER), offers a new faculty/early career teaching certificate available to faculty within three years of their appointment. They also offer one-on-one mentoring of faculty.
- The Faculty Development Institute (FDI) provides teaching and learning infrastructure that meets modern needs for integrating technology across content areas
- The Office of Research offers professional development trainings and events for all faculty.
- Finally, the university has created six “investment institutes” that offer incentives and internal funds to faculty. Most notably the Institute for Society Culture and Environment (ISCE) offers summer scholars program to support work in inter-disciplinary teams to develop new collaborative research or teaching projects.

Promotion and tenure policies and procedures are available in a Faculty Handbook and the department follows the promotion and tenure process adopted by the College of Veterinary Medicine.

The program conducts its own course evaluations, results from which are recorded in each faculty member’s faculty activity report. However, beginning in Fall 2012, the program will utilize the university-wide Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) assessment tool for evaluating courses.

Finally, the program as a part of the university was established with community input and faculty performance has a number of measures recorded in each member’s annual faculty activity report. This includes evidence of dissemination of information to appropriate sections, participation in outreach and responses to inquires.

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. Assuring the diversity of staff and faculty is a focus of the university. The university has established a Diversity Strategic Plan 2010-2013 and has appointed a vice president for diversity and inclusion (ODI). This vice president directs an Office of Diversity with the mission to “promote, sustain and advance an environment that supports principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and community.”

In addition, the ODI works with a university outreach program, AdvanceVT, begun in 2003 to promote women in science and engineering and now assists students, faculty and staff in advancing their careers. The public health program has advanced diversity through the development of a specific diversity plan which addresses the following categories of concern:

- Access
- Campus climate and intergroup relations
- Education and scholarship, and
- Institutional infrastructure

Within these categories the public health program has designated the following specific under-represented populations as focus for its diversity efforts:

- Racial/ethnic diversity in faculty, staff and students;
- Appalachian representation in students; and
- First generation college students in MPH student body.

The program has also developed a specific strategic plan to address diversity with the following goals:

- Promote and maintain faculty and staff diversity
- Increase diversity in students, and
- Promote inclusion

The program currently has eight faculty with five males and three females. There is one African American faculty member and one international member. There is only one staff member, a white male.

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. In the early days of the Virginia Tech MPH program, recruitment efforts for the program were minimal and mostly done by “word of mouth.” In 2011 the MPH program increased its recruitment efforts by creating in-house recruitment materials, which included program brochures. Site visitors learned that as of 2012, more formal four-color recruitment materials are being designed and that

funds have been allocated for this function and distribution. However, at the time of the site visit these materials were not being further developed until a final accreditation decision was received so that an update to accreditation status could be included in the final production of these recruitment materials.

The MPH program utilizes multiple approaches to reach potential students which include (1) an informational website detailing an overview of the MPH program, admissions information and competency and curriculum information; (2) outreach trips throughout the region where Virginia Tech is located; (3) a Facebook page; (4) informational sessions to recruit students from Southside and Southwest Virginia and Appalachia; (5) informational sessions in the Graduate Life Center at Virginia Tech; (6) an all-day information session at Virginia Tech Career Services to introduce the MPH degree to undergraduates; (7) designing and developing specific materials about public health services for Virginia Tech Career Services; (8) presentations to several pre-health groups and fraternities on the Virginia Tech campus; and (9) a fall 2012 presentation to the Careers in Medicine course to introduce public health as a career option to pre-med students.

The MPH program follows three deadlines for admission: (1) early decision (November 15), (2) regular decision (January 15); and (3) secondary decision (April 15) – based on space available. Admission requirements for the MPH program are an application, application fee, official scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), undergraduate transcripts, three letters of reference, personal statement, resume and TOEFL scores for international students whose first language is not English.

Applications are downloaded from the Graduate School admissions site and a hard copy file is created containing all admission requirements. The Admissions Committee meets and reviews each application individually using a standardized application evaluation to render an admission decision. The Admissions Committee makes admission recommendations to the core faculty, and upon approval, the department chair informs the accepted applicants. The Graduate School makes the final determination and offer of admission. The self study notes that if an applicant does not meet the minimum requirement for admission into the MPH program, but shows exceptional promise as a public health professional, the MPH program may suggest that they apply as a Commonwealth Campus student. This option allows a student to take up to 12 credits in the MPH program before reapplying for admission. This opportunity allows a prospective student to determine if the MPH program is compatible with his or her professional goals and to demonstrate their ability to maintain required academic progress for completion of requirements and successful completion of the degree.

MPH program enrollment for 2010 – 2013 has seen total head counts of 47, 25 and 32. There has been a decrease in the number of students choosing to attend the program part-time.

The program has defined outcome measures to evaluate its success in enrolling a qualified student body. These include the student acceptance numbers, GRE averages for MPH enrolled students, average MPH applicant undergraduate GPA, student attrition rates, rate of students following original plan of study timeline to degree completion and rates of students maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA, with no course grade below a C. Over the last three years GRE averages for MPH enrolled students have ranged from 1017 to 1057 and undergraduate GPAs have ranged from 3.0 to 3.51.

Based on feedback from the site visit team, the program has hired a communications consultant who is facilitating the development of new promotional materials, a revamping of the web-site and the design of a system to gather data from admitted applicants who choose not to enroll in the MPH program.

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. The goal of achieving diversity and inclusion at Virginia Tech is carried out via a multi-level system. The 2010-2013 Virginia Tech Diversity Strategic Plan reaffirms the university's institutional commitment to growing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive learning, living and working environment for everyone at Virginia Tech. The vice president for diversity and inclusion heads the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) which is tasked with developing and implementing efforts to achieve the Virginia Tech Diversity Strategic Plan.

The MPH program has designed and implemented a diversity plan for the MPH program in coordination with the ODI. The plan strives to: (1) achieve a more diverse and inclusive undergraduate and graduate student body, faculty and staff; (2) create and sustain an organizational environment that acknowledges and celebrates diversity and employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations; (3) engage students, faculty and staff in learning varied perspectives of domestic and global diversity, inclusion and social justice; and (4) create and sustain an institutional infrastructure that effectively supports progress in achieving goals in the diversity strategic plan. The MPH program follows Virginia Tech's equal opportunity and affirmative action policies.

The MPH program also coordinates with the Office of Graduate Recruitment and Diversity Initiatives (ORDI) in the Graduate School to ensure that the MPH program recruits, retains and graduates a diverse student body. The ORDI offers several opportunities to foster diversity at Virginia Tech: (1) the diversity scholars program which encourages scholarship and faculty-student mentorship through diversity initiatives; (2) the coordinated school visits program which allows Virginia Tech faculty to visit a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) to recruit students and forge relationships with faculty and administrators; (3) the graduate preview weekend where admitted students from underrepresented

groups and first generation graduate students get to visit the Virginia Tech campus; (4) dean diversity assistantships which allows students to receive fellowships and assistantships based on financial need of the student's contribution to diversity to the department; (5) connect lunches provide a safe and open environment where graduate students share suggestions or concerns with being Virginia Tech graduate students with the Graduate School dean; and (6) diversity initiatives proposed by Virginia Tech departments to provide an inclusive graduate student environment.

The MPH program has designated three populations as a focus for its diversity efforts: (1) racial/ethnic diversity in faculty, staff and students; (2) Appalachian representation in students; and (3) first generation college students in the MPH student body. Appalachian representation is defined as a student having parents from an Appalachia county, a student being born in an Appalachia county or a student graduating from a high school in an Appalachia county. The MPH program utilizes the Virginia Tech graduate school definition of first-generation college student which means neither parent completed a bachelor's (four-year college degree) or higher.

The MPH program has designed several strategies to produce effective recruitment and retention of students. The Admissions Committee and the program coordinator implement quality assurance activities. The processes of reviewing applications, selecting and retaining students are in compliance with college and university policy and procedures. Individuals from the MPH program including current students and alumni, make recruitment visits to minority serving institutions, HBCUs, women's colleges and institutions in Southwest and Southside Virginia. The MPH program is developing a tracking database to keep records of where successful applicants are from, how they found out about the MPH program and who their mentors and/or major professors were. The program is currently designing materials to track key information regarding number of students admitted, amount of funding received, degree completion information and gender and racial/ethnic composition of the department for both students and faculty. The department chair provides timely responses to questions, receipt of information, phone calls, campus visits and personal letters from prospective students. The MPH program invites students for campus tours from neighboring institutions. The pre-health advisor in Virginia Tech's Career Services office works with the MPH program to advertise the MPH program to Virginia Tech undergraduates. The MPH program utilizes social media (eg Facebook) to communicate MPH student and faculty accomplishment and collaborations, research, successful grants and professional development activities to attract prospective students to the MPH program. The program is working to design and implement systems to track where students go if they are not choosing the Virginia Tech MPH program and to identify talented prospective students earlier so that interest in the MPH program can be established which leads to the application process and successful admission. Site visitors learned that the program is working to implement plans to accept a fellow from the Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program (MAOP). This

program promotes diversification in student bodies at the undergraduate and graduate level particularly in the areas of science, math and technology.

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 met. All students admitted to the Virginia Tech MPH program receive an enrollment packet that provides relevant academic policies, university policies and curriculum requirements. The program provides a new-student orientation each fall to review academic policies and procedures with all incoming students. Students have the opportunity to meet the director of the MPH program, associate director of the MPH program, assistant director of the MPH program, director of the Center for Public Health Practice and Research, faculty, staff and members of the Public Health Association at Virginia Tech. During orientation the following are reviewed: academic expectations, program requirements, procedures, library resources and university resources. All students have access to the MPH Graduate Student Handbook.

At enrollment, all MPH students are assigned a faculty advisor. Assignments are based on the student's concentration. A faculty advisor remains the student's advisor throughout the duration of the student's studies unless the student requests a change in advisor. Although students are assigned a faculty advisor, they may seek assistance from any faculty member while a student is in the MPH program. Faculty advisors discuss student's career goals, specific areas of interest, development and completion of the required plan of study and student progress. Additional advisement occurs during practicum field experiences and culminating experiences. Joint degree students receive an advisor in both programs to ensure appropriate guidance is given regarding degree requirements and completion of credits.

The MPH program has developed and implemented specific career support for MPH students: (1) providing the link from the MPH website to careers in public health website from the Association of Schools of Public Health; (2) sponsoring discussion sessions with how to manage their on-line profiles in social media; (3) co-sponsoring a statewide career fair in January each year in partnership with other MPH programs in Virginia; (4) conducting an annual informational session on careers in veterinary public health utilizing Centers of Disease Control and Prevention Materials; (5) convening an annual panel discussion of local public health professional to review practicum and career options; (6) providing skill building sessions during the capstone seminar on grant writing and media training; (7) providing information to the public health education concentration students about the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) exam; and (8) regularly posting job announcements on the MPH student Scholar site. MPH students may also access resources in the Career Services Office in the Division of Student Affairs and the Graduate Life Center at Virginia Tech. Faculty members provide career advisement to student

through discussions, sharing professional network contacts and affiliations and distributing internship information and employment opportunities.

The site visit team heard positive feedback from both current students and alumni about their experiences with faculty advising and career counseling. MPH program faculty are very helpful with providing career advice and potential next steps in professional life. MPH students and alumni praised the MPH faculty for their ability to provide individual attention to students' needs, interests and professional goals. MPH students and alumni also complemented positively about the ability of MPH program faculty to provide timely feedback and availability to the student body for faculty advising and career counseling.

Agenda

COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech) MPH Program

October 8 - 9, 2012

Monday, October 8, 2012

- 8:00 am Site Visit Team Pick-Up from Hotel
Francois Elvinger
- 8:30 am Site Visit Team Request for Additional Documents
Francois Elvinger
Kerry Redican
Susan West Marmagas
Laura Alexander
- 9:00 am Team Resource File Review
- 9:30 am Break
- 9:45 am Meeting with Program and Department Administration
Gerhardt Schurig
Cynda Johnson
Roger Avery
Richard Vari
Francois Elvinger
Kerry Redican
Susan West Marmagas
- 11:15 am Break
- 11:30 am Meeting with Faculty Related to Curriculum and Degree Programs
Kaja Abbas
Andrea Bertke
Jennifer Hodgson
Kathy Hosig
Tom Kerkering
Jie Li
Frank W. (Bill) Pierson
Kerry Redican
- 12:30 pm Break
- 12:45 pm Lunch with Students
Jaya Kannan
Chris Pelosi
Caitlin Rivers
Pyrros (Alex) Tellionis
Carla Tyler
Dana Cruikshank
Josh Eikenberg
Emily Eskew
Reed Kennedy
Tyler Litsch
Monica Motley
David Nutter
Pamela Ray
Kimberly Shrader

1:30 pm Break

1:45 pm Meeting with Faculty Related to Research, Service, Faculty Issues
 Francois Elvinger
 Kerry Redican
 Susan West Marmagas
 Kathy Hosig
 Kaja Abbas
 Andrea Bertke
 Frank W. (Bill) Pierson
 Madison Gates
 Stephen Eubank
 Richard Ferraro
 Korine Kolivras
 Leigh Anne Krometis
 Jacque Pelzer
 Elena Serrano
 Nammalwar Sriranganathan

2:30 pm Break

2:45 pm Meeting with Alumni
 Paige Bordwine
 Caitlin Coleman
 Amy Flaggs
 Helen Ferguson
 Megan Stuart

3:30 pm Break

3:45 pm Meeting with Community Representatives and Preceptors
 Ben Davenport, Jr.
 Bill Gruchow
 Molly O'Dell
 Tracy Wilkins
 Michelle Brauns
 Sue Cantrell
 Bill Jacobsen
 Lee Johnson
 Cynthia Rutherford

4:45 pm Resource File Review and Executive Session

5:30 pm Adjourn

Tuesday, October 9, 2012

8:00 am Site Visit Team Pick-Up from Hotel
 Francois Elvinger

8:30 am Meeting with Institutional Academic Leadership/University Officials
 Mark McNamee
 Jack Finney
 Ken Smith

9:15 am Break

9:30 am Executive Session and Report Preparation

11:30 am Working Lunch, Executive Session and Report Preparation

12:30 pm Exit Interview
 Gerhardt Schurig
 Cynda Johnson
 Francois Elvinger
 Kerry Redican
 Susan West Marmagas
 Kathy Hosig
 Kaja Abbas

Andrea Bertke
Frank W. (Bill) Pierson
Tom Kerkering
Laura Alexander