



March 23, 2015

To: David L. Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean

From: Robert C. Stacey, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

*RCS*

RE: Review of the Master of Health Administration Program (2013-2014)

This memo outlines the recommendations from the review of the Master of Health Administration (MHA) Program offered by the Interdisciplinary Health Services Administration Group in the Graduate School.

Because the MHA program is administratively housed in the Graduate School, I am serving as proxy dean for the Dean of the Graduate School throughout this review. The role of proxy dean includes articulating the following summary and final recommendations based on the review committee report, program response, and Graduate School Council discussion.

Detailed comments on the MHA program review can be found in the documents that were part of the formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee, program, and administrators (March 12, 2014)
- MHA Program self-study (April 1, 2014)
- Site visit (May 22-23, 2014)
- Review committee report (September 23, 2014)
- MHA response to the review committee report (November 7, 2014)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (February 19, 2015)

The review committee consisted of:

David G. Allen, Professor and Director, UW Bothell School of Nursing and Health Studies (Review Committee Chair)

Richard L. Storch, Professor and Chair, UW Department of Industrial & Systems Engineering

Lanis Hicks, Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Health Management and Informatics, University of Missouri-Columbia

William D. White, Professor, Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell University

The Interdisciplinary Health Services Administration Group offers the MHA degree in two delivery modes: the in-residence MHA and the executive format EMHA.



A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on February 19, 2015. After discussion, the Council recommended a five year review (2018-2019) for the MHA degree programs. In addition, it recommended a taskforce be appointed to deliver findings and recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School, Dean of the School of Public Health, and the Graduate School Council by December 15, 2015, as described at the end of this memo.

Specific comments and recommendations regarding the program include the following.

#### Program Strengths

- In both the standard and the executive format, the MHA is a student-valued interdisciplinary program with long-term involvement by faculty from Business, Law, Medicine, and Nursing. It has been a pioneer in adopting a competency-based approach to curriculum development.
- The director and faculty at the time of the review showed a strong, collaborative approach to decision-making, a commitment to the program and its role in strengthening health care systems, and a priceless network of clinical and administrative colleagues who provide lectures, internships, and other support. The faculty director has since resigned and the MHA is currently overseen by an interim director.
- The program has a reputation as a top MHA program and is well-respected by industry, peers, students, and alumni. It recently successfully completed a rigorous accreditation process by the Commission on Accreditation of Health Management Education (CAHME).
- The program enjoys a high level of visibility among health management professionals and the academic community, both nationally and internationally.
- The MHA is a quality degree with excellent placement of graduates, and students are pleased with the internship program.
- There is strong current subscription to and increasing demand for the MHA.
- The program is financially strong.

#### Challenges and Risks

Of primary concern is an ambiguity in reporting and resource allocation. While the program is formally housed in the Graduate School, the operational support, financial oversight, and revenues flow through the School of Public Health and Department of Health Services.

Areas of challenges and risks include:

#### *Organization and Governance.*



- A core challenge is alignment of the vision of the program's future among various key players and access and control of resources required to achieve that vision.
- Advisory Board members, staff, and students all felt that they could contribute to program governance, but structures and processes do not adequately include them.
- Access and control of resources are misaligned. The MHA, a fee-based program through UW Professional and Continuing Education, generates significant revenue. This revenue has been used by the Department of Health Services and School of Public Health in areas unrelated to the MHA.
- The program has a strong Academic Development Plan, but the review committee was unclear whether the Dean of the School of Public Health shared a commitment to the plan. Reviewers noted that the ability to assess the strength of commitments to the program is hampered by a "deep distrust and flawed communication/decision-making processes."
- The review committee noted that any move from a degree-granting program to a true academic unit would require a shift in faculty expectations, allocation of resources to support that shift, and a more functional placement within the University's structure.

#### *Quality and Teaching Load.*

- For several reasons, teaching faculty are not productive researchers. One reason, an issue also noted by CAHME, is that faculty are expected to teach on the order of 10 courses per academic year.
- Students voiced concerns about a lack of feedback from instructors, likely due to the very high teaching loads.
- Students expressed concerns about heavy reliance on team-based learning. The issues described include the large size of the teams and students assuming roles in the teams that do not change, limiting exposure to new roles.
- Students like the internship program, although some would like opportunities outside hospital environments, such as in global health.

#### *Succession Planning and Faculty Recruitment.*

- Impending retirements demand a strong and effective recruitment and hiring plan along with the resources to properly onboard and support new faculty.
- Of specific concern is the availability of resources to implement faculty hires as proposed in the Development Plan, in particular regarding necessary funds for start-up packages.
- The limited number of active research faculty may inhibit the program's ability to mentor new junior researchers.

#### Areas of Concurrence and/or Disagreement



- Faculty and staff wholeheartedly support the recommendation of a taskforce to determine the administrative structure for the MHA program.
- The program agrees with the review committee that structures and processes to facilitate communication and input from advisory board members, staff, and students should be strengthened.
- The program agrees that the current teaching load is excessive, but feels powerless to change it due to administrative structures.
- The program describes having no guarantee that any net revenue generated will be allocated to meet program needs, expressing that the budget planning process is “held hostage” by decisions made in the Department of Health Services.
- The program agrees with hiring faculty at the senior level, but does not see this as viable given the lack of state support for tenure lines.
- Development is underway for a systematic approach to creating and sustaining industry partners.
- The program provides support for faculty to attend conferences, and will work to make this better known among faculty.

#### Graduate School Council Recommendations

During discussion, the Graduate School Council recognized the demand for and viability of the MHA degree program, but echoed significant concerns that were articulated in the review committee report. The Council recommended that the program work to address the review committee’s principal recommendations. In addition, the Council recommended:

- A taskforce should be created and jointly charged by the Deans of the School of Public Health and the Graduate School with developing recommendations that address the program’s organizational structure and governance processes. Recommendations from the taskforce are due to the Graduate School Council for consideration by December 15, 2015.
  - Taskforce membership should include representatives from the Graduate School, School of Public Health, Department of Health Services, faculty from within the MHA program, the MHA chair, one external partner (Law School, Engineering, Business, etc.), students, and alumni.
  - The charge to the taskforce should include a request for:
    - guidance on both short-term decisions (e.g., about sufficient funding to begin recruiting faculty) and longer term decisions around academic home;
    - benchmarks related to funding and hiring to determine timeline and choices around structural location;
    - a clear organizational plan for (a) placement of the unit within the University and School of Public Health with (b) fair and accountable processes for decision making and allocation of resources.



- The program should retain its current placement in the Graduate School while developing benchmarks for funding and faculty recruitment that can shape decisions around its placement and until the taskforce has completed its work.
- The program should be reviewed again in 5 years (2018-2019), by which time its placement and governance processes should be firmly established.

I concur with the Council's comments and recommendations.

cc: Gerald Baldasty, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President  
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs  
Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
Howard Frumkin, Dean, School of Public Health  
Larry Kessler, Chair, Department of Health Services  
Dennis Stillman, Interim Director, Master of Health Administration Program  
UW Members of the academic program review committee  
Members of the Graduate School Council  
David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School  
Alice Popejoy, President, Graduate and Professional Student Senate