

University of Washington
Department of Global Health
Program Review Committee Report

Site Visit: April 16-17, 2015
Date of Report: May 19, 2015

Program Review Committee Members

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Background

The University of Washington Department of Global Health (DGH) was established in 2007 through a generous gift and endowment from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and matching funds from Washington State and University resources. Dr. King Holmes became the founding Chair of the new Department of Global Health. The Department is unique, as it is administratively housed in both the School of Medicine and the School of Public Health. It has as its mandate harnessing the expertise and interdisciplinary power of all 16 UW schools and colleges. Currently the Department is the second largest Department at the University in terms of research funding, with 28 Centers, Programs, and Initiatives (CPIs), and over 350 faculty representing 41 departments and 15 UW schools and colleges. The DGH is widely recognized for its internationally renowned faculty, dedicated staff, and accomplished students.

Shortly after its creation, the Department incorporated several longstanding UW training programs. These programs include the Pathobiology PhD Program (since 1959), the Master of Public Health International Health Program (since 1987), and two Graduate Certificate programs (Global Health and HIV & STIs). With several newer programs, the DGH has nearly 500 students, residents, and fellows in DGH degree and certificate programs.

The DGH has not yet undergone a Program Review because it has been in existence less than ten years (approximately seven years). This review is being conducted in accordance with state legislative mandate, under the direction of The Graduate School. A meeting was held by the Graduate School on November 3, 2014 to issue a charge to the Review Committee, to review the requirements and due dates for the Self Study, to decide on which programs should be included in the review, and to decide on the dates for the Site Visit. It was agreed at that meeting that this review will evaluate the following four programs:

1. Undergraduate Minor in Global Health;
2. MPH in Global Health;
3. PhD in Global Health: Metrics and Implementation Science; and
4. Graduate Certificate in Global Health (with parallel review of three additional Graduate Certificates).

Committee Charge

Overall, the charge to the committee was to assess the quality of the degree and certificate programs offered by the department, and to provide faculty and the Chair of the Department constructive suggestions for strengthening those programs.

This review will provide the University with a clearer understanding of each program's quality, educational value, role within the University and community, role within the academic discipline, and resource requirements.

Recommendation

Based on review of the materials provided to the committee, and extensive interviews conducted during the Site Visit with faculty, staff and students, it is the unanimous recommendation of the committee that the Department of Global Health continues for the maximum ten-year period. The remainder of this report describes in more detail the very positive aspects of the department, the challenges that the department faces today, and opportunities in the future.

Overall Assessment

The Review Committee has made an overall assessment of the DGH, rather than four individual programs. We believe it is artificial to consider each of the four programs separately, as there is much interaction and crosstalk among the four degree programs. It would also not be cost-efficient. Thus, our evaluation is based on the program as a whole.

The Review Committee unanimously agreed that the University of Washington Department of Global Health is outstanding. It is a world-class organization that is recognized internationally for its cutting edge research; its important contributions to the training of global health professionals; and its passion for improving the health of people worldwide.

The Department is unique in being administratively housed in two different Schools at the University of Washington: the School of Medicine and the School of Public Health. Although this results in some additional administrative burden, it emphasizes the importance of developing and maintaining a truly multidisciplinary environment, which is essential in addressing the many and complex problems of global concern. It is the only Department of Global Health (DGH) of this configuration in the world, and has been enormously successful at staying at the leading edge of the development of this discipline.

The PhD program is quite new, and is the only one like it anywhere. It has two tracks: metrics and implementation science. It expects to grant its first PhD this Spring Quarter. There are currently approximately 15 students in the program. As a group they seem to be quite content and are highly complementary towards the program.

The general sense of the Review Committee was that the Department offers educational opportunities of exceptional value, and that there is a global commitment to foster international student diversity in its educational programs.

There is an historic reliance on an undiversified revenue portfolio that appears to be finite and shrinking (e.g., I-TECH, NIH). The leadership of the Department is well aware of this, and we applaud their urgent and diligent efforts to develop alternative sources of revenue.

Specific Recommendations of the Review Committee

1. It is the Review Committee's understanding that there is no formal written strategic plan for the Department. We believe that it is important for the Department to undertake a strategic planning process, with special consideration of a plan for growth vs consolidation (i.e. topical diversification, expanding beyond HIV-AIDS) and financial planning. The strategic plan should allow for opportunistic growth, but should use the intelligence of what is available for growth areas, and focus on faculty strengths and projected student demand. We were not given detailed financial data and did not review the financial status of the Department. Nevertheless, from informal discussions we are of the impression that there is some concern. A strategic plan that includes a hard financial analysis of program needs, revenue sources, and teaching and research implications is essential so there is a funding strategy to match the pedagogical strategy. The plan should be achievable.
2. It does not appear that the Department is reaping the full potential benefits of such a distinguished Advisory Board. The Review Committee recommends that the Board be reconfigured to be more development oriented and to use their extensive knowledge and practical experience in the donor community to substantially enhance the development efforts of the School and Department.
3. Staff were very passionate about their work and appreciated their working environment. The Review Committee heard from the students that they were likewise highly appreciative of the staff. The students indicated that there could be some improvement in student services and data systems. They were particularly concerned about data systems for alumni, but also for identifying local opportunities that support the MPH and other students with practicum and internship opportunities. The Review Committee recommends that the Department think strategically about how to better match the supply of student skills and desires for work experience with the market needing and wanting these skills. It was proposed that it might be advantageous to require that students be required to bid on internships.
4. The Review Committee sensed that more can be done to take advantage of in-country partnerships and think of those as a strength. We recommend that you exploit in-country

relationships and the DGH ground presence with industry and others looking for reliable, trusted in-country partners. Consider this as a base for study abroad. To the extent possible, continue and deepen these relationships and the network of overseas alum and research partners that are a hallmark of the DGH faculty efforts.

5. The Review Committee believes the Department could benefit from better “packaging of the product the DGH offers”. It might be beneficial to think about this from the donor and employer perspective. What do they want to see in our graduates in the way of training and experience? Are we teaching the right things to the people most likely to use the skill sets effectively? We might be able to better package what we can offer with the market demand. For example, the Pathobiology PhD Program is a very strong and highly regarded multidisciplinary program that functions independently within the DGH. It may be advantageous for the Department to emphasize the complimentary nature of that program, and encourage a more integrated package approach in their informational and recruiting material.
6. Regarding growth. The Review Committee recommends caution in continuing to grow as rapidly as the Department has since its inception. The newly-instituted budgeting system (ABB) rewards multiple large classes (which are generally undergraduate classes). This is not a model consistent with the training and mentoring of graduate students. Individual one-on-one mentoring is a major strength among all the departments in the SPH, and should not be lost due to revenue-driven changes. Growth and expansion to undergraduate education should not be at the expense of the quality of the existing DGH degree programs. These and other issues (e.g., class size, classroom availability, are the four programs evaluated here all viable in the longer term, are there positions available for DGH graduates) should be considered in conjunction with strategic planning efforts.
7. The diversity in the DGH’s MPH and PhD programs is applauded and is a major reason graduate students choose the Department. The maintenance of the balance between US and international students should be of the highest priority, despite University financial challenges. Many would consider it the moral responsibility of a great university to provide educational opportunities to the future leaders of resource-poor countries.
8. To date, faculty have not been compensated for mentoring individual students. The Review Committee recommends that this practice be re-evaluated at this time. This is a central aspect of the degree programs and is a significant factor in the high quality of the degree programs.

Strengths

The DGH has numerous strengths. Faculty have a passion for education, and consider training as a primary mission. They take great pride in their teaching program. The PhD program is the only one of its kind in existence, and has a very strong start. Many of the faculty are internationally recognized

experts in their area of research, and are literally “writing the book” on a particular topic. This has elevated the profile of an outstanding graduate program to a new standard. The junior faculty we talked to uniformly expressed feelings of connection and of being supported by colleagues and the Chair of the department. They all seemed quite pleased with their circumstances. Students were in general very happy to be in their particular degree program. They clearly recognize the extraordinary learning environment they are in. International students said they felt particularly welcomed. The staff expressed a remarkable degree of satisfaction and even excitement in their jobs, and seemed quite pleased and content being part of the DGH.

Possible Threats

The primary potential threat to the long-term viability of the DGH is the financial viability of the current organizational structure and financial practices of the Department and School. The Review Committee was not charged with evaluating the financial aspects of the DGH and did not have access to financial documents. Nevertheless, it became clear to the Committee that uncertainty and concern about budget permeates through virtually all aspects of the Department. Like the other departments in the School, the DGH must be ever diligent in maintaining the high quality that characterizes the Department now in the face of continuing shrinking budgets.

Summary

The Department of Global Health at the University of Washington is an outstanding program that is considered one of the best in the world. In existence only seven years, it has played a large role in defining the concept of Global Health. It is highly unusual in being part of two different Schools, and thus reporting to two different Deans. The founding Chair of the Department, Dr. King Holmes, who has recently stepped down from that post and the recently appointed new Chair of the Department, Dr. Judy Wasserheit, have done a superb job of establishing and developing this Department into a leadership position in the field in only seven years. The potential future contributions are boundless. We hope the recommended strategic planning effort will take place and will help define the future direction of the Department.