### I. Program Mission and Goals

The primary mission of the Public Health Program is to prepare competent professionals in public health who will work to improve the health status of populations through organized community efforts based on the application of sound public health principles and practices. It is the goal of the Public Health Program to prepare flexible, broadly trained professionals who will be able to assume positions of responsibility in the public health and health care fields, and who will be able to respond appropriately to the rapidly changing demands of the profession. The mission and goal are consistent with those of the university which, among other things, support the development of leaders in their chosen professions.

### II. Student Learning Objectives (Learning Outcomes)

| 1. Program graduates will be able to identify, measure, and prioritize the specific health needs of populations. | • Capstone course assessment  
• Comprehensive examination  
• Program alumni survey  
• NIU alumni survey  
• Employer survey |
|---|---|
| 2. Program graduates will be able to plan, implement, and evaluate public health programs. | • Capstone course assessment  
• Comprehensive examination  
• Program alumni survey  
• NIU alumni survey  
• Employer survey |
| 3. Program graduates will be able to synthesize and critique the findings of public health research. | • Capstone course assessment  
• Comprehensive examination |
| 4. Program graduates will be able to analyze the social, economic, political, and professional forces that affect the delivery of public health services. | • Capstone course assessment  
• Comprehensive examination  
• Program alumni survey  
• NIU alumni survey  
• Employer survey |
| 5. Program graduates will be able to identify the principal factors contributing to health and disease and the appropriate public health interventions. | • Capstone course assessment  
• Comprehensive examination  
• Program alumni survey  
• NIU alumni survey  
• Employer survey |
| 6. Program graduates will be able to demonstrate a mastery of information-handling skills that underpin the planning, monitoring, and evaluation responsibilities of those in public health positions. | • Capstone course assessment  
• Comprehensive examination  
• Program alumni survey  
• NIU alumni survey  
• Employer survey |
| 7. Program graduates will be able to identify the principles of effective management of health-related programs and services. | • Capstone course assessment  
• Comprehensive examination  
• Program alumni survey  
• NIU alumni survey  
• Employer survey |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV. Methods</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Objectives Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Course Assessment (AHPH 589) (Direct)</td>
<td>Course requires students to demonstrate the ability to identify, measure, and prioritize the health needs of populations. It also requires students to plan, implement, and evaluate public health programs. Instructor evaluates performance based on objectives in consultation with the program assessment coordinator.</td>
<td>Course is offered during the spring semester. Findings reported to faculty in the fall semester.</td>
<td>Course instructor for AHPH 589 in cooperation with the program assessment coordinator</td>
<td>Objectives 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Examination (Direct)</td>
<td>This written project requires students to demonstrate the ability to synthesize and critique the findings of public health research, design a comprehensive needs assessment using primary and secondary data sources, plan a public health program to deal with the demonstrated need, describe the implementation of the program, and design an evaluation plan to measure program effectiveness. It also requires the student to identify social, economic, political, and other obstacles to program implementation, as well as communication and management approaches to be used in the program.</td>
<td>Comprehensive examinations are offered each term. Results of the examination are analyzed in the fall semester for the previous year. Emphasis is placed on identifying trends in group performance.</td>
<td>Program Assessment Committee</td>
<td>Objectives 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Alumni Survey (Indirect)</td>
<td>A survey of graduates of the Public Health Program is conducted by the program to ascertain perceived abilities to assess public health needs and plan, implement, and evaluate public health programs. In addition, students are queried about their abilities to identify and provide solutions to public health problems.</td>
<td>Biennially</td>
<td>Program assessment coordinator</td>
<td>Objectives 1, 2, 4-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIU Alumni Survey (Indirect)</td>
<td>The 5-year-out survey of graduates of the Public Health Program conducted by the office of Assessment Services is used to evaluate graduates’ experiences and opinions of the program.</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Program assessment coordinator</td>
<td>Objectives 1, 2, 4-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Survey (Indirect)</td>
<td>A survey of employers of graduates of the Public Health Program is conducted to evaluate graduates’ ability to assess public health needs, and to plan, implement, and evaluate public health programs. In addition, employers are queried about graduates’ level of preparation and any strengths and weaknesses of the program that are evident in their experience with our graduate(s).</td>
<td>Biennially</td>
<td>Program assessment coordinator</td>
<td>Objectives 1, 2, 4-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. Procedures Used in Program Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V. Outcome</th>
<th>Capstone Course Assessment (AHPH 589)</th>
<th>Comprehensive Examination</th>
<th>Program Alumni Survey</th>
<th>NIU Alumni Survey</th>
<th>Employer Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Program graduates will be able to identify, measure, and prioritize the specific health needs of populations.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Program graduates will be able to plan, implement, and evaluate public health programs.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Program graduates will be able to synthesize and critique the findings of public health research.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Program graduates will be able to analyze the social, economic, political, and professional forces that affect the delivery of public health services.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Program graduates will be able to identify the principal factors contributing to health and disease and the appropriate public health interventions.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Program graduates will be able to demonstrate a mastery of information-handling skills that underpin the planning, monitoring, and evaluation responsibilities of those in public health positions.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Program graduates will be able to identify the principles of effective management of health-related programs and services.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. Procedures Used in Program Assessment

1. **Capstone Course Assessment**: The instructor of the capstone course provides an assessment of the extent to which objectives 1 and 2 in the program assessment plan have been met. The instructor analyzes performance retrospectively for the previous spring semester based on group presentations, examinations, and a health planning paper with the aim of evaluating the overall attainment of the program’s learning outcomes. Toward this end, evidence of student performance is aggregated to give a program-level insight which makes the process systematic and less anecdotal. Program performance is evaluated in regard to the degree to which groups of students are able to identify, measure, and prioritize specific health needs of populations and plan, implement, and evaluate health programs. The instructor shares the findings with the program assessment coordinator who looks for secular trends in the data and shares the findings with the faculty each fall semester.

2. **Comprehensive Examination**: The overall pass rate on the comprehensive examination broken down by gender and race/ethnic status is calculated each fall for the previous year by a member of the program assessment committee. Additionally, since the comprehensive examination is comprised of seven sections that correspond to the core requirements of the M.P.H., and since each comprehensive examination is graded by section, specific core areas needing improvement or modification can be readily identified. All findings are reviewed by the program assessment coordinator who looks for trends and patterns in the data. The findings are reported to the program faculty in the fall semester. The goal is to achieve a pass rate of 90% based on a three-year average overall and in each of the gender and race/ethnic-specific subgroups.

3. **Program Alumni Survey**: Every other summer, the program assessment coordinator conducts a survey of program alumni in accordance with objectives 1, 2, 4-7. The alumni survey instrument is reviewed biennially to assure that the information collected conforms to the assessment objectives. The results of the alumni survey are shared with the program faculty every other fall semester.

4. **Employer Survey**: Every other summer, the program assessment coordinator conducts a survey of the employers of program alumni in accordance with objectives 1, 2, 4-7. The alumni survey instrument (described in #3, above) asks for permission to contact the respondent’s employer. Employers of alumni who gave permission are then contacted. The employer survey instrument is reviewed biennially to assure that the information collected conforms to the assessment objectives. The results of the employer survey are shared with
the program faculty every other fall semester.

5. **NIU Alumni Survey**: The results of the Graduate Alumni 5-year-out Survey, conducted by Assessment Services is used to evaluate the degree to which the M.P.H. program meets objectives 1, 2, 4-7. The 5-year-out survey is used to identify general program-level issues from the perspective of alumni who have been out of the program for a longer time that those included in the Program Alumni Survey (mentioned above). One serious limitation the 5-year-out survey is the low response rate.

**VII. Evidence**

There are five separate methods of assessment for the MPH program. Evidence of the extent to which students are achieving program outcomes is given below, by assessment method.

**Capstone Course Assessment**: No patterns or trends in the capstone course assessment were discerned that would indicate the program was not meeting its learning outcomes.

**Comprehensive Examination**: A total of 37 students have taken the comprehensive examination in the past in the past 9 terms (including summers). Five of the 37 failed on their first attempt (13.5%). Only one failed on the second attempt, so the overall pass rate was 97.3%. No disparate patterns were evident in the race and gender composition of those who failed the examination. Similarly, no clear-cut patterns of strength or weakness were discernable in the section-by-section analysis of the comprehensive examination.

**Program Alumni Survey**: A total of 32 surveys were sent to program alumni. In all 18 (56%) were returned. A total of 78% reported working in a field related to public health; 77% of those found their job within three months of graduation. Eighty-three percent of the respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. The alumni survey contained questions regarding the graduate’s perception of their preparedness in seven areas. They are:

- Program planning and evaluation skills
- Applying research findings from the public health literature
- Understanding forces that shape the delivery of public health services
- Understanding the principle factors that contribute to health and disease
- Understanding principles of managing health-related programs
- Developing information-handling skills that underpin public health
- Understanding contemporary public health issues and problems

None of the respondents indicated that they felt unprepared in any of the areas. An average of 89.6 percent either strongly agreed or agreed that they were well prepared in the seven areas.

Additional questions assessed the MPH internship, academic advising, and global satisfaction with the program. Eighty-three percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their internship experience made a positive contribution to their education. Seventy-seven percent strongly agreed or agreed that they were well advised by their program adviser, and 100 percent rated their education in the program as excellent, very good or good. None rated it as fair or poor.

**NIU Alumni Survey**: The number of responses to the Graduate Alumni 5-year-Out Survey for the M.P.H. program was small, but indicated a high level of satisfaction with the program. Students gave favorable responses to questions regarding scheduling patterns of courses, availability of internships, value of the degree, depth and appropriateness of course content, quality of advising, preparation for comprehensive examinations, preparation for career, and employment.

**Employer Survey**: Of the 18 completed alumni surveys (from above) permission was granted to contact 12 employers, and 10 employers completed the survey. The employer survey contained questions regarding the employer’s perception of our graduate’s preparedness in seven areas. They are:

- Program planning and evaluation skills
- Applying research findings from the public health literature
- Understanding forces that shape the delivery of public health services
- Understanding the principle factors that contribute to health and disease
Understanding principles of managing health-related programs
Developing information-handling skills that underpin public health
Understanding contemporary public health issues and problems

All of the employers (100%) strongly agreed or agreed that MPH graduates were well prepared in the seven areas.

Additional questions assessed the employers’ views on MPH graduates’ preparation for their current job responsibilities, commitment to life-long learning. All of the employers (100%) indicated that the graduates were well prepared for their current job responsibilities and were committed to life-long learning.

VIII. Use of Results

Details of how the results of the program assessment are used are given in section IV (above). Each time an assessment is conducted the results are reviewed in light of the program, school, college, and university missions. In the most recent year, the results of program assessment have also been used to assess how the program contributes to the goals of the Illinois Commitment.

IX. Future Information Needed

At this time there is no indication of significant gaps in the information collected from the program assessments. In general, the data from the 2002 surveys indicate the program is preparing students well and employers are satisfied with the education the graduates have received.

X. Timeline:

The timelines for collecting required information are provided in table IV (above). There is no indication of a need to collect additional information at this time.

14 January 2004