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School of Public Health
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School of Graduate Studies
School of Public Health

July 31, 2014

Stephen W. Wyatt, DMD, MPH
President, Council on Education for Public Health
1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 220
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Wyatt:

In response to CePH's request for evidence demonstrating that a thorough assessment of our new culminating experience has been performed, please find the interim report from LSUHSC School of Public Health included as a separate pdf file. We believe the evaluation data, in the form of student exit surveys and faculty comments, clearly demonstrate that the culminating experience for MPH students is providing an integrative experience where students achieve competence in both school-wide and program-specific skills. We strive to continually improve the educational experience of our students and look forward to hearing from the council regarding our efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Culbertson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Richard Culbertson, PhD
Interim Dean and Professor

LSUHSC Interim Report on partially met criterion 2.5

In the fall 2013 accreditation decision letter, the Council asked that the school “*should provide evidence that the school has conducted a thorough assessment of the new culminating experience for MPH students that was implemented during the 2013 spring semester. (Criterion 2.5).*”

Beginning with the 2013 summer semester, the school’s Evaluation Committee conducted exit surveys of MPH graduates each semester. Five questions on the survey targeted assessment of the culminating experience. Overall, response from our graduating students during the 2013-14 academic year was positive with greater than 80% of the students reporting that the CE helped them attain the school-wide competencies chosen for their project. Additionally, the data demonstrate the revised CE was able to address the weaknesses noted in the original accreditation self-study by increasing focus on the competencies and addressing inconsistent expectations across programs (Table 1). Students were also afforded the opportunity to provide comments during the exit survey. Overall, the comments reflect a positive CE experience by students.

In addition, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Don Mercante, conducted a focus group with faculty members of the Proposal Evaluation Committee in July 2014. The role of this committee, comprised of one faculty member from each of our five core disciplines, is to review culminating experience proposals. The purpose of the focus group was to afford committee members a forum for sharing their thoughts and experiences with the current proposal evaluation experience. In general, committee members agreed that the current proposal and project-based culminating experience’s greatest benefit was that it afforded students opportunities to demonstrate greater independence in work, self-motivation, and personal accountability, as well as demonstrating attainment of competencies. Committee members reported the major disadvantage of the current project-based CE was the high faculty workload required to evaluate proposals. A common sentiment among committee members was that the current process was likely not to be scalable to a larger student population in the future. The committee members noted that the IRB approval process, for those CE projects requiring such authorization, were challenging for some students within the time constraints of one semester to complete their project. Other comments from committee members included the desire to convert the present Pass/Fail grading system to a letter grade scale and a perception of inconsistent depth/quality of work produced by students.

Table 1. Responses from questions relating to culminating experience from MPH student exit surveys.

Exit Survey 2013-2014 Questions*	% of respondents who either strongly agreed (5) or agreed (4)
My culminating experience project helped me attain the school-wide competencies that I chose to address for my project.	81.3% (13/16)
My culminating experience project helped me attain the program competencies that I chose to address for my project.	87.5% (14/16)
My faculty advisor guided me during all phases of the project.	81.3% (13/16)
Other faculty member(s) assisted me during the project.	64.3% (9/14)
The Culminating Experience Manual provided me with adequate information regarding the project.	81.3% (13/16)

* Incorporates data from Summer 2013, Fall 2013, and Spring 2014 MPH graduates.