

IDC 1 (MPH): Letter of Intent to Develop New Academic Degree Program in M.P.H. Master's in Public Health between University of North Carolina Asheville and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Gillings School of Global Public Health)

Effective Date: No Date

IDC Committee Report

IDC Committee Members: Laura Bond, Amanda Wray, Sonya DiPalma, Peter Haschke, Mark McClure, Ken Betsalel (Chair)

Ex Officio Members: Wiebke Strehl, Micheal Gass

Date: September 3, 2018

Summary: The "Letter of Intent" is the first formal step to develop a joint Master's Degree in Public Health between University of North Carolina Asheville and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Gillings School of Global Public Health. If approved by the Faculty Senate, the Letter of Intent will go to the University of North Carolina General Administration (GA) for review. It should be noted the Letter of Intent is a "Request to Plan Review," meaning the first step in the GA review process is to get authorization to plan. If approved by GA, the University of North Carolina Asheville and the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Gillings School of Global Health can begin the formal process of developing and negotiating a "Request to Establish a Review" of a New Joint Master's Degree Program in Public Health (M.P.H). If the "Request to Establish" the new joint M.P.H. is approved by GA it then goes to the University of North Carolina Board of Governors (BOG) for further review and approval. A summary GA time table is as follows:

Within four weeks of the submission of the Letter of Intent (Request to Plan to Review) GA either approves in which case the parties have four months to submit the Request to Establish, or GA responds with questions, to which the parties have four weeks to respond. Within four weeks of receiving the parties Request to Establish Review GA responds that the proposal is either complete or GA requests information to which the parties must reply within four weeks. If the Request to Establish the joint M.P.H. is approved by GA, it is forwarded to the UNC Graduate Council for four-week review period. In this period, Graduate Deans submit campus comments to GA for information and consideration. GA reviews comments and within two weeks either is prepared to make recommendation to EPPP Committee or parties are notified of any remaining issues and the parties have four weeks to reply. Upon GA recommendation degree program brought to next EPPP Committee meeting. Upon EPPP Committee approval degree program brought to next BOG meeting. BOG acts on EPPP Committee recommendation

(Source: The UNC Policy Manual 4000.1.1 [R] Adopted 05/06/09 Amended 08/26/13 Amended 02/01/16* Supersedes Policy 400.1.1[R] of the same title, originally adopted May 6, 2009, and amended August 26, 2013; see table UNC Policy Manual Table: “Process for Planning and Establishment of New Master’s Degree Program” page 7 of 9).

It should be noted that none of these steps above preclude the preplanning and authorization that is needed to initiate the state approval process. In fact, it is expected that the institutions that initiate the Letter of Intent have exercised due diligence in reviewing plans to initiate new degree programs and have a process of review in place prior to Letters of Intent going forward. It is for this reason, among others, that Faculty Senate approval of both institutions (UNC Asheville and UNC Chapel Hill) is required along with the signatures of the highest relevant academic officers of both universities—including both Chancellors). In order to begin such a complex and robust planning and review process (that eventually may also involve professional review and accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Council on Education for Public Health) it is administratively prudent and legally sound that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is set out outlining the terms and conditions and a time frame and “implementation-map” going forward. In short, the proposal and review of the proposed joint M.P.H. program, like any new proposed graduate degree program, must be thorough, meaningful, and complete. The process of planning and review must also be fair, open, inclusive, and time sensitive. Such a process requires organization, communication, and leadership at all levels of planning and review.

Background and Context: As understood by this Institutional Development Committee (IDC) the conversations for a joint program in Public Health began informally in 2016 if not earlier between faculty members of UNC Asheville’s Health and Wellness Department and the Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC). The perceived need in Western Carolina (especially in rural areas) for health professionals and health related services was real and growing. In January of 2017, a MOU was signed between MAHEC, UNC at Chapel Hill for Its Gillings School of Global Health (hereafter Gillings), and UNC Asheville.++ Under the MOU “All partners commit[ed] to planning the development of an accredited MPH curriculum. All partners anticipat[ed] **providing faculty for teaching**, developing curriculum, and supporting public health research” (MOU January 1, 2017 Sec.1b p.1, emphasis added.) It is IDC’s understanding in the same time period Gillings requested permission to deliver and establish its own MPH degree program in Asheville that would draw on but not limited to UNC Asheville faculty. Such UNC Asheville faculty would have courtesy appointments as Gillings adjunct professors and listed as such on their website. It should be stressed as of today there is no joint degree granting program between Gillings and UNC Asheville. What is sought in IDC 1 is state GA permission to formally begin the planning process for a joint degree program in Public Health (M.P.H.) with an focus on Rural and Place-based Health Transformation(Letter of Intent, p.3).

Authority to Decide and Recommend to the Faculty Senate

IDC draws its authority to review, develop, and recommend policies and programs to the full Faculty Senate from a variety of sources including but not limited to the UNC Asheville Faculty Handbook, Standing Rules of the UNC Asheville Faculty Senate, and the implied authority found in UNC Asheville Mission Statement, UNC Asheville Statement of Values and in such documents as declaration of Shared Values passed by Faculty Assembly of the University of North Carolina which embodied the Code of the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina. IDC also draws guidance and authority from The UNC Policy Manual Section 400.01 on “Regulation for Academic Program Planning and Evaluation” which mandates that “Each institution [in this case meaning UNC Asheville] must have a clearly defined process for the review and approval of proposals to plan or establish new degree programs...All constituent institutions process must be followed and constituent institution approval must be received before a proposal may be submitted to UNC-GA” (Sec I.B. 1). In addition, “Chancellors of the constituent institutions [in this case again meaning UNC Asheville and UNC Chapel Hill] shall communicate to UNC-GA their intentions or requests with respect to [*inter alia*] {1. Request for authorization to plan any new degree program {2. Request for authorization to establish any new degree program” (I.C. 1.,2.). For standards and guidance in the development and evaluation of programs and proposals, IDC draws on the above documents as well as UNC Asheville Strategic Plan (June 10, 2016) which reaffirms the university’s mission in providing distinctive quality public liberal arts education and its core values of “diversity and inclusion”, “innovation”, and “sustainability”. IDC pays particular attention to Directive 4 of the Strategic Plan which calls on us to be mindful of “organizational capacity” of the university to develop and sustain quality education and that “Success does not mean doing more; it means doing better” (4). The Strategic Plan counsels that the heart of sustainability is the “financial health of the institution.” While it is clear from the Strategic Plan high quality undergraduate public liberal arts education is what makes UNC Asheville a distinctive leader in higher education, it also makes room for growth in capacity and institutional change. The Strategic Plan also invites the university to “Determine the best approach to identifying, evaluating, and when appropriate implementing select graduate programs that would enhance UNC Asheville’s liberal arts mission and help build our distinctiveness” (11) As a result in consultation with the Senate Executive Committee and the Senate, IDC was led in 2018 to initiate processes, standards, and best practices in development and evaluation of proposals for graduate programs and degrees at UNC Asheville which included a review of past contributions of faculty, the Senate, and the IDC in the development of criteria to evaluate Master Degree proposals. Key to those standards was the criteria set out by IDC in 2006 that the graduate programs should be constant with the university mission, thematically organized in such an interdisciplinary way they are not housed in a specific department, that the proposed master degree programs are unique, and that such programs are self-sustaining financially and do not take away but rather enhance undergraduate education. Further the committee recommended that to insure the emphasis on undergraduate education no more than 3% of students be enrolled in graduate programs at UNC Asheville (April 13, 2006).

It was in this context that in the Spring of 2018 IDC unanimously resolved to entertain “thoughtful applications for new master programs.” The committee held the view based on all that had gone before “any expansion of graduate offerings should be deliberate, incremental, and carefully considered, and that any new programs should enhance, not detract from, the undergraduate experience.” (Presented to the Senate, May 3, 2018; IDC Final Report). In sum,

IDC believes proposed Masters degrees should be of high quality, distinctive, programmatically and financially sound, and of benefit to UNC Asheville and its distinctive undergraduate experience. Given that yardstick IDC offers the following findings, questions, and recommendations:

Findings:

1. The proposed joint MPH in Public Health is a quality program in terms of meeting real health needs of the people of Western North Carolina.
2. The proposed joint M.P.H. program emphasis on rural health and health leadership make it distinctive when compared to other programs in the region offering graduate education in public health.
3. From a course curriculum and delivery the proposed joint MPH program appears innovative a (it should be noted however; curriculum matters fall under the domain of UNC Asheville Academic Policy Committee (APC). Should the Letter of Intent pass Senate and the initial GA review, the process calls for APC review and Senate approval).

Questions:

Where IDC continues to have questions concerns the cost and benefits of the proposed program to UNC Asheville, how credits for hours and graduation are to be recorded and counted; and the proposed programs impact on the delivery of undergraduate education at UNC Asheville.

1. How exactly will the program be financed? While IDC reviewed relevant documents including a Request to Plan (March 13, 2018); Memorandum of Understanding (January 1, 2017), and Budget Forecast (May 15, 2017) questions remain, including overhead and administrative expenses, faculty and administrative salaries.
2. Who exactly is responsible for administering the program now and in the future? Recruitment and advising of graduate students? Field placements? Supervising graduate students progress? Is and will this continue to be a UNC Asheville responsibility?
 - 2a. What happens to the Gillings/MAHEC M.P.H. program if UNC Asheville does not join? Will it continue? If so, will the UNC Asheville faculty continue to teach in the M.P.H. program? If so, under what contractual arrangements? Who will pay for them?
3. Which institution gets credit of graduation of students? Can such accounting be shared?
4. What will its impact on undergraduate education at UNC Asheville be overall? What will the specific impact on teaching loads, credit, salary, and administrative costs be to the home Department of Health and Wellness? Assuming that the joint M.P.H. program “pays for itself” planning documents suggest possible adjunct replacement of full-time faculty in the Department of Health and Wellness to meet undergraduate teaching needs; and the possibility of using grants

and adjuncts to meet UNC Asheville M.P.H. graduate school administrative commitments and teaching responsibilities.

In short, IDC has questions regarding the actual cost-benefit administration and implementation of the joint program from a UNC Asheville undergraduate teaching and learning perspective.

Recommendations and the Responsibilities of Shared Governance:

Despite our reservations and concerns, IDC recommends full Senate consideration and vote on IDC 1. IDC has been reassured that questions and concerns regarding costs and benefits, and administering of the program including credit for awarding degrees and finance of program and possible negative impact on undergraduate education will be fully reviewed and addressed in a forthcoming process that is open, inclusive, rigorous, well organized and led at the next stage of development and review should the Letter of Intent pass the Senate. It is a matter of trust and verification.

In the spirit of shared governance, we agree and voted unanimously on August 31, 2018 to support the Letter of Intent. Should the Letter of Intent pass the Senate we expect full engagement of university leadership and administration along with the relevant academic divisions, departments, faculty, and Senate committees and leadership to a process that is scrupulous, fair, open and faculty and student centered. Of course, whatever the outcome, if GA authorizes UNC Asheville and Chapel Hill to begin the formal process of planning, the outcome of that planning process will be reviewed once again by IDC and the full faculty Senate. Ultimately due diligence and shared governance is an ethical and fiduciary responsibility of the highest order.

+ GA recently changed name to “The System Office”

++ The effective date for the Memorandum of Understanding Between Mountain Area Health Education Inc., and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for Its Gillings School of Global Public Health, and The University of North Carolina Asheville is January 1, 2017-August 31, 2018

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Page 5 of 5