



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

REGULAR CALENDAR ITEM: II.C.

MEETING DATE: May 16, 2024

SUBJECT: New Academic Program
Tennessee State University
Public Health, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
CIP Code: 51.2201 (Public Health, General)

ITEM TYPE: Action

ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Approval

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Tennessee State University (TSU) proposes a 72-credit hour Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Public Health designed to be completed in four (4) years. The proposed program will be offered on-ground with some synchronous, online delivery allowing for national collaboration through the Technology Hub, a TSU partnership with Amazon, Apple, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), as well as the HBCU C² system, which is designed to foster research at HBCUs across the country. The proposed program will offer a concentration in Public Health Sciences and is designed to prepare researchers at the doctoral level. The proposed program will be the only program in the state to examine public health issues such as pandemics, health disparities, environmental health, and global health through a holistic cultural competency framework approach. Students will receive advanced instruction in the core disciplines of public health, including epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental health, policy, and behavioral science, as well as courses that examine the underlying causes of and the impact of health disparities, alongside the development of culturally relevant strategies to address healthcare disparities.

Graduates of the proposed Public Health, PhD will be prepared for careers in public health research, senior level administration, policy making, and education. The proposed program was developed in direct response to stated desires by the Tennessee Department of Health and the Metro Nashville Public Health Department, as well as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration for a diverse pool of trained public health professionals to support health services in Tennessee. Providing doctoral-level training in public health at Tennessee's public HBCU aligns with priorities from the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health to increase public health researchers with cultural competency to increase health outcomes for African Americans and other vulnerable populations.

INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNING BOARD APPROVAL

The proposed Public Health, PhD program was approved by Tennessee State University's Board of Trustees on June 15, 2017.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION DATE

August 1, 2024

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE MASTER PLAN AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN

The proposed Public Health, PhD supports the State Master Plan goal to provide “workforce and economic development and enhanced competitive research” and will contribute to desired “improvements to public health and improved civic engagement.” Further, the program will provide skilled, credentialed graduates who are prepared for work in the high-demand fields of healthcare research and will provide an accessible pathway for underrepresented students to attain an advanced degree. Finally, the proposed Public Health, PhD aligns with workforce development goals in the State Master Plan by ensuring skilled Tennesseans are available to employers in the public health sector.

The proposed program aligns with TSU’s institutional mission and strategic plan by creating an academic program that “prepares a diverse population of leaders” by offering a pathway to advanced public health training for diverse students; by offering “affordable and accessible education programming” through a doctoral program at a lower cost than private institutions in the metro Nashville area; and by “cultivat[ing] a climate of interdisciplinary research” through an increase in scholarly inquiry, research, and public service in the proposed program. The program will provide opportunities for collaboration with programs across TSU’s campus, such as the College of Agriculture, School of Nursing, and the Center for Prevention Research and with other institutions to bolster and expand research opportunities.

CURRICULUM

The proposed program will consist of 72-credit hours of coursework, offered mostly on-ground. Students will complete 18 credit hours in core courses, including Health Administration and Policy, Health Behavior, Biostatistics, Environmental Health, and Epidemiology. All students will complete 12-15 credit hours of research methods (quantitative, qualitative, community-based research, program planning, and mixed methods), and 12 additional hours of public health science focused courses. Finally, students will select 18 hours of electives aligned to their research focus, and complete 12-credit hours of dissertation research. Twenty-seven new courses will be developed for the program.

The proposed Public Health, PhD will be housed in the Department of Public Health, Health Administration, and Health Sciences in the College of Health Sciences. In the future, TSU is planning to create a School of Public Health to house the proposed program along with existing public health-focused programs. The department will seek accreditation with the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH), as well as membership in the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the Consortium of African American Public Health Programs (CAAPHP). Current undergraduate and graduate degrees in public health at TSU are accredited by CEPH.

Program outcomes for the proposed program will ensure students will be able to:

- Critically read and synthesize published literature.
- Assess appropriateness of study design and analytic approaches, and recommend and describe additional feasible approaches.
- Conceptualize and specify a structured research problem which encompasses developing viable alternatives.
- Conduct and analyze research that advances current understanding of specific problems to address gaps in knowledge.
- Write a study protocol, know how to recruit subjects, and develop study instruments.
- Collect and manage, or supervise the collection, and management of data.
- Analyze health disparities related to cultural norms and differences.
- Apply research methods to investigate social and environmental factors that contribute to different health outcomes within different populations.

- Apply standard public culturally competent modalities to the measurement of behaviors, conditions, and exposures that impact community health.

PROGRAM PRODUCTIVITY

Projections for the Public Health, PhD program estimate that six (6) students will enroll in the first year, with total enrollment of 16 by year seven. The program will graduate its first students in year four. The campus anticipates low attrition figures due to the requirements of CEPH accreditation for doctoral programs in public health, which requires retention of at least 80 percent. TSU is positioned to provide robust retention and graduation rates aligned with admission criteria and ongoing supports for admitted students.

	2024-5	2025-6	2026-7	2027-8	2028-9	2029-30	2030-1
Enrollment	6	10	14	18	15	16	16
Graduates	0	0	0	6	4	4	3

PROGRAM DUPLICATION

Five (5) higher education institutions in Tennessee currently offer public health doctoral programs, though none of those programs are at public institutions in the Nashville metropolitan area. The University of Memphis, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Vanderbilt University offer PhDs in Public Health and related areas (such as Health Outcomes and Policy Research, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, and Public Health Sciences). East Tennessee State University and University of Tennessee, Knoxville currently offer a Doctor of Public Health (DrPh), although UTK’s program is currently in phase out and will terminate in 2025.

TSU also offers a Master of Public Health and is confident the proposed Public Health, PhD will not have a negative impact and will likely enhance the existing program through increased opportunity for research for all students.

STUDENT DEMAND

From 2016-2022, more than 25 percent of the 51 graduates from the TSU Master of Public Health program expressed interest in pursuing a PhD during their exit interviews. In 2019, TSU surveyed undergraduate and graduate students affiliated with TSU’s Department of Public Health, Health Administration, and Health Sciences. Of the 369 respondents, 77 percent (n=284) were moderately or very interested in pursuing a PhD in Public Health at TSU. Additionally, in 2020, Kaiser Health News reported that between 2010 and 2020, applications to public health programs have increased 75 percent and new enrollments increased 83 percent, showing widespread demand for public health training.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM GRADUATES

Program graduates will be prepared for various careers in public health research, including positions in postsecondary education, health education, epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy, as well as health safety. Trained, culturally competent healthcare workers and researchers are increasingly in demand for a variety of reasons, including changing demographics and an increased need for health disparities research. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that 2.4 million new public health jobs will be created through 2029, not including replacing the 40 percent loss to the public health workforce that is expected due to retirement.

Tennessee’s 2020 Master Plan suggests that the state should “support the development, recruitment, and retention of a sufficient and quality health and healthcare workforce.” The Tennessee Department of Health, Health Disparity Taskforce for Tennessee has identified a growing increase in health disparities and social

inequities that could be addressed through the translation and dissemination of culturally competent research in public health by doctoral-level researchers. Finally, several federal agencies have identified increased need for educators, researchers, and practitioners in public health areas to address disparities in health outcomes, including the National Institutes of Health, the American Public Health Association, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Letters of support indicating a willingness to partner and sponsor internships for students enrolled in the proposed program are included from: the Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee Representative Harold Love, Congregational Health and Education Network, the TSU College of Agriculture, Saint Augustine's University, Chicago State University, Metro Nashville/Davidson County Health Department, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Urban Campus and Core, Morgan State University, and Texas Southern University.

Additional existing community and industry partnerships for public health programming at TSU include TSU's Department of Human Sciences, the Consortium of African American Public Health Programs, Kaiser Permanente, American College of Healthcare Executives, Association of Public Health Nutritionists, American Heart Association, Tennessee Kidney Foundation, Focus First, Harvard University, Boston School of Public Health, University of California at Irvine, the Center for Health Prevention, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, the American Red Cross, the American Cancer Society, Eli Lilly Company, and the Office of the Center for Disease Control Director.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO DELIVER THE PROGRAM

Twelve full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty will teach in the program, and the department plans to hire one (1) additional full-time graduate faculty member. The program will hire a program coordinator to provide support for program accreditation and management, along with outreach support for recruitment and enrollment of students. Costs associated with these hires will be \$108,000 and \$67,500 annually and are expected to start in year one. Existing space on the TSU Avon Williams campus will be used for offices for faculty and graduate assistants, and study carrels will be provided for all enrolled students. One (1) graduate assistantship will be offered starting in year one, increasing to two (2) assistantships in year two and beyond.

EXTERNAL JUDGEMENT

An external review of the proposed program was conducted during a virtual site visit on November 29, 2023 by Dr. Cynthia Harris and Dr. Jennifer Reneker. Dr. Harris is Associate Dean and Director and Professor of the Institute of Public Health at Florida A&M University, while Dr. Reneker is Associate Professor and Interim Chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The site visit included meetings with campus administrators and faculty from TSU, as well as current TSU students and industry partners.

Dr. Harris and Dr. Reneker noted that the program is "in alignment with several key areas, including increased degree production and workforce needs within the state." The reviewers also noted the "rich cultural and ethnic diversity in middle Tennessee as a driver of research and population health needs," as well as the "benefit of housing this degree program within an HBCU." The reviewers recommended approval "based on the need for doctoral degrees in public health and the staunch support of the identified stakeholders."

ASSESSMENT AND POST-APPROVAL MONITORING

An annual performance review of the proposed program will be conducted for the first seven (7) years following program approval. The review will be based on benchmarks established in the approved proposal. At the end of this period, the campus, institutional governing board, and THEC staff will perform a

summative evaluation. If benchmarks are not met during the monitoring period, the Commission may recommend that the institutional governing board terminate the program.

PROGRAM COSTS AND REVENUE

The proposed one-time and recurring expenditures for the Public Health, PhD program are listed in Table 1. Projected revenue is displayed in Table 2.

Table 1: Estimated Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program

<i>Estimated Costs to Deliver the Proposed Program</i>								
One-Time Expenditures								
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Faculty & Instructional Staff (Faculty Lead)								
Accreditation								
Consultants	\$3,700							
Equipment		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000
Information Tech								
Library								
Marketing								
Facilities								
Travel		\$2,400		\$2,400		\$2,400		\$2,400
Other								
<i>Total One-Time Expenditures</i>	<i>\$3,700</i>	<i>\$5,400</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$5,400</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$5,400</i>		<i>\$5,400</i>
Recurring Expenditures								
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Faculty & Instructional Staff (Note 1)		\$108,000	\$111,240	\$114,577	\$118,014	\$121,555	\$125,202	\$128,957
Non-instructional Staff (Note 2)		\$67,500	\$69,525	\$71,070	\$73,202	\$75,971	\$78,251	\$80,599
Graduate Assistants		\$51,690	\$104,465	\$105,576	\$106,716	\$107,883	\$109,080	\$110,308
Accreditation		\$4,475	\$4,475	\$8,949	\$8,949	\$8,949	\$8,949	\$8,949
Consultants								
Equipment		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000		\$3,000
Information Tech								
Library								
Marketing		\$11,000	\$9,000	\$8,000	\$7,000	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$4,000
Facilities								

Travel		\$6,000	\$6,000	\$11,400	\$12,000	\$17,400	\$18,000	\$23,400
Other		\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
<i>Total Recurring Expenditures</i>	\$0	\$254,665	\$307,705	\$325,572	\$328,881	\$343,758	\$347,482	\$362,213
Grand Total (One-Time and Recurring)	\$3,700	\$260,065	\$307,705	\$330,972	\$328,881	\$349,158	\$347,482	\$367,613

Table 2: Projected Revenue

Projected Revenue								
Category	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Tuition		\$130,140	\$222,325	\$319,032	\$420,444	\$359,123	\$392,640	\$402,464
Grants			\$200,000	\$200,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Other*		\$700,000	\$609,753					
Total Revenues	\$0	\$830,140	\$1,032,078	\$519,032	\$920,444	\$859,123	\$892,640	\$902,464

**Geier Funds: The PhD in Public Health will be supported by funding from the Geier Lawsuit and Consent Decree (Geier, 2022). A portion of that award was designated to provide graduate degree opportunities at TSU, and more than \$700,000 remains in the fund for use to establish public health programming.*