

SELF-STUDY FOR ACCREDITATION
SUBMITTED TO: THE COUNCIL ON EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
SUBMITTED BY: THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL
SCIENCES FAY W. BOOZMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Introduction

The State of Arkansas consistently ranks near the top of many statewide indicators of poor health, including rates of cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, and stroke, and of preventable risk factors which are associated with these major sources of morbidity and mortality. In recognition of the poor health status of Arkansans, and a commensurate awareness of the need to address health promotion and disease prevention in the state, a 64% majority of Arkansans passed the public referendum known as Initiated Act I of 2000 (the Tobacco Settlement Proceeds Act). This Act mandated that all funds received by Arkansas under the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement would be used for health-related programs, especially those that were prevention-oriented. Arkansas is the only state that continues to use the entirety of our tobacco settlement proceeds for health and public health-related efforts. Included among these funded activities is the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health (COPH) at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS). The COPH has developed at a rapid pace since being established in July of 2001. This rapid development enabled it to achieve pre-accreditation by the Council on Education for Public Health in May 2004.

In April 2005, the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees renamed the COPH to honor Dr. Fay W. Boozman, Arkansas' state health officer from 1998 until his untimely death in March 2005. Dr. Boozman was instrumental in the success of Initiated Act I of 2000 and was a significant leader in fostering the collaborative relationship that continues to grow and develop between the COPH and the Arkansas Department of Health, which merged with the Arkansas Department of Human Services in 2005 to become the Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Health (DOH). Dr. Boozman demonstrated a strong commitment to public health education, including obtaining his MPH after his appointment as state health officer. Dr. Boozman also established the Hometown Health Initiative program within the DOH, which exemplifies community-based approaches in public health practice. His leadership embodied key values shared by the COPH, and the naming of the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health is especially fitting.

Mission, Vision, and Key Values

Planning for the COPH began in January 2001. In July 2001, the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees established the COPH as an independent unit with all rights and privileges as other UAMS academic units, with funding from appropriations based on Initiated Act I of 2000. Members of the initial planning committee, including many inaugural faculty members and administrators, developed the College's Vision, "Optimal Health for All," during the COPH's early strategic planning process. To honor the intent of Initiated Act I of 2000, planning committee members developed a Mission that emphasizes the needs of the state: *"to improve the health and promote the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in Arkansas through education, research, and service."* Although this Mission

focuses on Arkansas, the public health issues faced in Arkansas have national and international relevance; thus, the educational, research, practice and other service achievements of the faculty, staff, and students within the COPH contribute across all of these levels.

To fulfill this Vision and Mission, the COPH adopted a community-based health promotion orientation. This orientation is based on the premise that protection and improvement of the community's health is best achieved through full participation of the community in health interventions and other initiatives. One of the first actions taken by the new COPH faculty was to adopt the 1996 statement of the National Policy Task Force on Community-Based Public Health as the cornerstone of this philosophy: "...community lies at the heart of public health... interventions work best when they are rooted in values, knowledge, expertise, and interests of the community itself... health encompasses the physical, mental, spiritual, environmental, and economic well-being of a community and its members." This orientation extends to our research, practice, and other service functions as well as our educational activities and programs. The COPH also has a special commitment to the DOH as well as other key partners and stakeholders, to increase the proportion of the public health workforce that has formal training in the core areas of public health, emphasizing a community focus as the cornerstone of their education. This is a critical means of achieving the COPH's Mission and expanding the impact of the COPH throughout the state.

Growth in the College

The COPH has grown rapidly since our inception in our educational, research, and service activities. Since admitting our first class of 43 students in the Spring semester of 2002, 51 students have graduated from the MPH program. The MPH, which offers a generalist track and five specialty tracks in the core areas of public health, is the largest program in terms of student enrollment. The total current enrollment in Spring 2006 is 134 students. These students are a highly diverse group on the basis of ethnicity (66% Euro-American or white, 26% African-American, 5% Asian-American, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Native American), age (median age of 36 years, range of 22–65 years), professional background (including nursing, pharmacy, health education, clinical research management, library and environmental sciences, dentistry, and workforce development), and county (41 of 75 Arkansas counties represented among students' hometowns). In addition to the MPH, the COPH offers: the MPH as a combined degree option (JD/MPH, MD/MPH, and PharmD/MPH), a Masters in Health Services Administration (MHSA) with students first enrolling in Fall 2006, a DrPH in Public Health Leadership, and (in collaboration with the UAMS Graduate School) a MS in Environmental and Occupational Health in collaboration with the UAMS Graduate School, and a PhD in Health Systems Research also in collaboration with the Graduate School and students first enrolled in fall 2006. Each of these programs has students actively enrolled and progressing satisfactorily.

The research, practice, and service activities of the COPH developed at an equally rapid pace. Total funding for research and contracts has grown from \$49,541 in 2001-2002 to currently \$6.3 million in extramural support for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. In addition, the COPH has established two major centers of research emphasis and one developing center, in keeping with the Mission and Vision of the College and consistent with the major contributors to morbidity and mortality in the state. The two major centers include one addressing obesity and another focusing on tobacco prevention and control. The third

center, more recently formed, focuses on maternal and child health issues; this center is in a very early stage of development. Through all of these scientific and practice-based endeavors, the COPH maintains our focus on service to the Arkansas community and beyond. The COPH-community partnerships that began with the College's inception are growing, and new relationships are beginning. The COPH is engaged in public health service programs throughout the state, with an emphasis on addressing significant racial and ethnic minority health disparities that exist across a variety of health conditions.

Contributing a Critical Perspective

The COPH's focus on prevention and community-based activities contributes a different perspective to UAMS' traditional medical approach and allows for a new focus on concerns that are critical to the health and well-being of the State's citizens. This focus includes: (1) giving highest priority to improving the health and quality of life for the entire community, rather than focusing on medical care for the individual (i.e., a community-based perspective); (2) a heavy emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention as cost-effective ways to maintain the health and well-being of all Arkansans; and (3) a fundamental commitment to the information-gathering and policy development that are necessary to encourage changes that promote health and well-being. The COPH believes that, at our core, public health is about addressing the needs of all people. We define "health" broadly to include all that improves the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities. By emphasizing these values in our training, service, and research programs and through our collaboration with the other academic units at UAMS and our public health and healthcare practice partners throughout Arkansas, the COPH serves as a catalyst and central focus for prevention- and community-focused public health activities throughout Arkansas.