

Reviewer's report

Title: Assuring competence through curriculum design: The UNC Charlotte experience

Version: 1 **Date:** 8 March 2009

Reviewer: George Jakab

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written manuscript that provides a conceptual framework for applying standard strategic planning methods toward the establishment of a School of Public Health (SPH) and its curriculum. As increasing numbers of SPHs are established world-wide, the template provided will undoubtedly be of great value to those planning similar endeavors with an eye on future accreditation. Although well established strategic planning methods have been previously applied to academic curricula – this manuscript is original in that it provides a model for the establishment of a SPH.

This type of narrative manuscript does not lend itself easily to the journal's guidelines to assess the work – as the journal's guidelines follow a more traditional approach toward assessing basic bench research. However, for the sake of completeness:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined? – Yes.
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replica the work? – Yes.
3. Are the data sound and well controlled? – Yes.
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? – Yes.
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? – Yes.
6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? – Yes.
7. Is the writing acceptable? – Yes.

Comments:

1. The importance of this work may be lost because of the title. The manuscript provides a template toward the establishment of a SPH but the emphasis on curriculum design in the title, although important, detracts (discretionary).
2. It is unclear what is meant by the “community members” who are consulted – as they insist that an MSPH degree is established rather than the standard MPH degree.
3. It is not clear how the “S” (research component) of the degree program is strengthened without actually performing research.

4. It would be helpful to know the length of the program – and also a table of the established curriculum (discretionary).

Other Comments:

I wish that this paper had been available for me to follow when I was involved in helping other countries establish their Schools of Public Health.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.