



COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**Offices of the Dean**

145 N Riverside Drive  
100 College of Public Health Building, S160  
Iowa City, Iowa 52242  
319-384-1500  
Fax 319-384-4123

November 4, 2019

Montserrat Fuentes, PhD  
Executive Vice President and Provost  
Professor of Statistics and Actuarial Sciences  
and Biostatistics  
University of Iowa  
111 Jessup Hall

Re: Collegiate Review

Dear Provost Fuentes:

It is my pleasure to respond to the report of the Collegiate Review Committee report. The College received the final report from the Collegiate Review Committee on Thursday, September 19, 2019. The final report was made available to faculty and staff on a SharePoint site and feedback in the form of open-ended comments were solicited. In addition, the Executive Committee of the College discussed and offered feedback on the report.

I have outlined the recommendations (in italics) and the Collegiate response to the recommendations below.

*We recommend that the College continue to track interdisciplinary collaborations, especially because many CPH faculty and staff members expressed concern about how the new budget model may affect such investments.*

As noted in the report, the College has done this and will continue to do so.

*We recommend the College explore the visualization tools prepared by the OVPR to better understand the evolution of interdisciplinary collaborations over time, and to identify those research centers, departments and other groups of people who are most engaged. The tools will also be valuable in identifying Colleges and Centers across campus where partnerships are more limited or underutilized and thus provide opportunities for strategic growth in new interdisciplinary research and collaborations.*

Faculty and staff expressed excitement about the possibility of using visualization tools to track interdisciplinary collaborations during the faculty/staff survey and Executive Committee discussions. However, concerns were also raised about the ease of comprehension of the tools and the degree of face validity of the data presented. The college is interested in working with OVPR to further refine

and validate these tools with the goal of integrating the use of the tools into department and collegiate planning and discussion.

*Even with the self-reported performance outcome measures (Figure 1) and the OVPR visualization tools, it was difficult for the committee to assess how the interdisciplinarity of CPH compares to other Colleges at the University of Iowa (UI). Nor was the committee able to assess how CPH ranks relative to its peer institutions across the United States concerning interdisciplinary activity. With their recent development of the data visualization tool, we believe OVPR should work with Colleges at UI, including CPH, to help provide such assessment of their interdisciplinary, both within and beyond the University.*

Consistent with above, we are excited to work with OVPR to further refine and validate the data visualization tools to make them more useful.

*There are many well-documented challenges to conducting interdisciplinary research at American Research Intensive (RI) universities, including evaluating impact of publishing outside of one's primary field of study, how to appropriately allocate credit on collaborative research products, impact on promotion and tenure decisions, and overcoming differing funding and incentive structures (e.g., salary, student support mechanisms, etc.) across disciplines. Indeed, many of these challenges exist at UI. Given its stellar record of interdisciplinary collaborations to date, the committee felt that CPH is well positioned to be a leader at the UI in helping to establish best practices for interdisciplinary research. If not yet established, the Committee encourages the CPH to set clear expectations and guidelines for faculty that engage in interdisciplinary research that illustrates a commitment to the value of such research going forward.*

As noted by the committee, the College has a stellar record of interdisciplinary collaborations. As a faculty, we have often noted that interdisciplinary collaboration is in our “DNA” as it is in the field of public health. We would be glad to set the tone across campus in the area of best practices for interdisciplinary research. In that regard, at the university level, our faculty have co-led committees to: examine potential barriers of BAM for interdisciplinary collaboration, including exploring how distribution of F&A/ICR can better reflect the contributions and participation of all faculty involved; and ensure appropriate shared intellectual and academic credit to all investigators on a grant.

We appreciate the suggestion to set clear expectations and guidelines for faculty that engage in interdisciplinary research. To respond to this suggestion, I have tasked Dr. Jeff Dawson, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, to review what is currently in place and draft appropriate guidelines, if needed, with input from faculty governance and Executive Committee.

*We recommend that the CPH improve the marketing of their research centers to increase their visibility on campus and leverage their resources, both personnel and financial, to stimulate more interdisciplinary research opportunities at UI. There may be strategic partnerships with other research centers and organizations on campus (e.g., including but not limited to PPC, CHEEC, CGRER and the new Office for Sustainability and the Environment through CLAS) to pool resources and create more meaningful opportunities to seed new research collaborations and promote interdisciplinary student training in this time of team science.*

Our Research Office, under the leadership of our Associate Dean for Research, Dr. Cori Peek-Asa, has made this a point of emphasis. The College of Public Health produced its first Center Report in

2011, most recently updated in 2019. The College also launched a Center Assessment that includes steps to promote and support Center collaborations, and the College hosts a bi-annual Pilot Fair to promote our Center's pilot awards. The College also collects Success Stories that are shared to stakeholders and potential funders to tell the story of our research and research Center success. We will continue activities such as this. We also wonder if there might be a role for OVPR to connect the various centers throughout the university to stimulate more interdisciplinary research opportunities.

*We recommend that the College communicate with the faculty and staff the objectives and expectations of the three collective areas of excellence. It may also be time to discuss benefits of adding or reframing areas. Any future conversations about existing or potential new areas of excellence for CPH should be inclusive of all faculty and research staff.*

The College is currently undergoing a strategic planning process, and as part of that process will include discussion of the current areas and if changes might be appropriate. The process to identify the original three collective areas of excellence was inclusive of all faculty and research staff and any further discussions/processes, including the strategic planning process, will continue to be inclusive of all.

From the responses in the faculty and staff survey and Executive Committee discussions, the College realized that better communication in general about the collective areas of excellence, including our activities and successes in these areas, is needed. Going forward, we will work to undertake and highlight activities of the college in these areas (e.g., better identify and communicate which of our funded research and scholarly projects relate to the collective areas; highlight when our Institute of Public Health Research and Policy executives-in-residence and scholars-in-residence align with our areas of excellence; hosting a college-wide symposium that focuses on one of our areas of excellence).

We thank the Review Committee for their work and very helpful feedback and look forward to addressing their recommendations.

Sincerely,



Edith A. Parker, DrPH  
Dean, College of Public Health  
Professor, Community and Behavioral Health