

**Board of Regents, University System of Georgia
Administrative Committee on Public Health**

Meeting – April 13, 2007
President’s Conference Room, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta

Summary of Proceedings

Committee Members and Attendees

Armstrong Atlanta State University (AASU)

Dr. Barry Eckert, Dean, College of Health Professions

Dr. Sandy Streater, Chair, Department of Health Sciences

Dr. Michael Mink, MPH Program Director

Fort Valley State University (FVSU)

Dr. Yudan Wei, MPH Program Coordinator

Georgia State University (Georgia State)

Dr. Michael Eriksen, Director, Institute of Public Health

Georgia Southern University (Georgia Southern)

Dr. Charles Hardy, Dean, College of Public Health

Medical College of Georgia (MCG)

Dr. Barry Goldstein, Provost

Dr. Frank Treiber, Vice President for Research

Dr. Carol Campbell, Dean,

Denise Kornegay, Director, Statewide AHEC Network

University of Georgia (UGA)

Dr. Mark Wilson, Department Chair, Health Promotion and Behavior

Ashley Wells, MPH/DrPH Program Coordinator

University System of Georgia (USG)

Dr. Daniel Rahn, Senior Vice Chancellor for Health and Medical Programs

Dr. Sandra Stone, Vice Chancellor for Academic Planning and Programs,

Committee Chair

Dr. Valerie Hepburn, Public Health Academic Programs Consultant

Drs. Stone and Rahn convened the meeting at 10:00am. Committee members and attendees introduced themselves.

Dr. Rahn provided an overview of the University System of Georgia’s (USG) efforts to coordinate and integrate health and medical sciences programs. He spoke of the challenges and the need for all of the institutions to work together to promote improved health and wellness for the state of Georgia. He outlined the work of the Task Force on Health Professions Education and the nursing initiative currently underway. The USG is developing a new strategic plan and the group needs to consider how to link health and the education of health professionals to the overarching goal of economic development and progress for the state.

Dr. Rahn posed the question of how best to integrate the public health academic programs into the health and medical sciences programmatic umbrella. The group suggested emphasizing improvement of the “public’s” health and economic progress through reduced illness and disability. Further, since the role of public health researchers and practitioners is the investigation of health concerns and the analysis of policy options to promote improved outcomes, the public health programs should provide the knowledge infrastructure to support other medical and health sciences initiatives.

The group agreed that strategic collaboration among the public health programs as well as the medical and health sciences programs was important. Data and infrastructure limitations constrain progress and ongoing performance evaluation. Linkages to clinical programs would be valuable, but the group must ensure that health promotion and prevention research is not subsumed by an overriding focus on treatment.

Drs. Rahn and Hepburn reported that a letter of inquiry had been submitted to the Healthcare Georgia Foundation, seeking support for academic health program infrastructure and a public health workforce study. The Chancellor has agreed to provide matching funds for the initiative. The feedback from Healthcare Georgia has been positive. However, given the grant cycle, it would be late 2007 before any effort could be launched. Should the funding become available, Georgia would consider a research partnership with a few other states. The public health education programs would be actively engaged in the process.

The group talked about the need for a mission statement and agreed to craft something using the initial strategic plan adopted by the Board of Regents in 2004. Dr. Hepburn agreed to be responsible for circulating language for consideration.

Dr. Goldstein introduced Dr. Treiber and Ms. Kornegay to present information on research and service programs operated by the Medical College of Georgia which could provide support to the public health programs. Dr. Treiber presented an overview of research underway at MCG, and challenged the group to find opportunities to work together on a range of clinical and community projects. Ms. Kornegay shared information about education and practice opportunities available through the statewide Area Health Education Center (AHEC) network. The six AHEC regions provide significant resources for academic health programs and, yet, few public health partnerships presently exist. The group agreed that more linkages should be developed with the AHECs and with MCGs clinical research.

Dr. Stone expressed her pleasure in meeting with the group and learning more about public health activities. She provided an overview of her background and experiences and outlined some of the challenges and opportunities being presented to the USG and the Board. She then called on each of the institutional representatives to give an update on their program activities and progress.

Dr. Hardy reported that Georgia Southern was well underway with faculty and student recruitment. Having been approved to offer the DrPH in three areas, Georgia Southern is busily securing the resources to support the doctoral programs and the five MPH tracks. They are working toward CEPH accreditation and will be seeking applicant status in the future. Dr. Hardy identified

sponsored research as one limitation for Georgia Southern at present. He also indicated that they plan to explore providing the MPH core and a certificate program through web-based technology.

Dr. Streater discussed AASU's recent CEPH review and recognition with seven year accreditation. They have decided to keep their program focused on community health education, which has been their strength and interest since the program's inception. They are working with the cancer coalition group in Savannah. To preserve quality, AASU will slightly lower its enrollment numbers to maintain 60 to 70 in the program with 15 to 20 students graduating annually. AASU's online program is growing which is taking more faculty time than might be anticipated.

Dr. Eriksen reported that Georgia State has been recruiting a number of faculty candidates this year. Senior hires have been much easier than junior faculty hires. The public universities are competing with well resourced private institutions and the public health field is very competitive at present. Georgia State's student application pool continues to be very strong, with more than 200 applicants annually. Part-time students and the thesis requirement have slowed graduation rates, so the program is struggling to find the balance between admissions and matriculation rates. Dr. Eriksen reported that Georgia State had a positive CEPH site visit in January and expects to receive five year accreditation in June 2007.

Dr. Campbell reported that MCG is seeking to maintain a small MPH program with focus on informatics. Presently, there are 23 students and the program limits admission to 15 annually. MCG is preparing for CEPH accreditation which they expect to occur in 2008. Many of MCG's class are provided online and the work load required for distance learning continues to pose a challenge for faculty. MCG has focused their public health research efforts on community-based activities.

Dr. Wilson and Ms. Wells reported on UGA faculty and student recruitment activities. UGA has to balance the needs of heavily subscribed undergraduate public health programs with the graduate research and teaching demands. UGA has been approved to offer the DrPH, in addition to their existing PhD programs; they will enroll a small number of DrPH students in the fall. They expect to have 100 MPH students across the five program tracks. UGA is preparing its self-study for submission to CEPH in mid-2008. Sponsored research continues to be a strength for UGA. UGA is facing similar faculty recruitment challenges as reported by the other institutions.

Dr. Wei emphasized that the focus for the FVSU program continues to be environmental health. They have more than 30 students presently enrolled and hope for several graduations this spring. FVSU is challenged by having only one dedicated public health faculty member at present. They see their role as important for public health practice and environmental health in middle Georgia. Collaboration would be beneficial to FVSU.

The group discussed the components and structure of the annual progress reports from the institutions. The limitations of the USG data systems combined with the mandates of the USG strategic plan for public health education make it necessary to collect certain data directly from each institution. To reduce the burden, the group agreed to try to streamline reporting to track CEPH required data elements. Dr. Hepburn will prepare draft templates for review by the group.

The goal is to finalize collection from the institutions and submit a narrative report to the USG by the end of fiscal year.

The group discussed several opportunities to work together, specifically the master teaching program and the student conference. Dr. Stone agreed to consider whether resources might be identified to support the master teachers' conference in the future. Dr. Hepburn is working with the Georgia Public Health Association (GPHA) to secure resources for a graduate public health student conference to be held in conjunction with the association's annual conference. She encouraged that faculty and students seek to become more involved with GPHA as a venue for research dissemination and policy advocacy. Dr. Campbell suggested that Administrative Committee on Public Health consider meeting in conjunction with this year's GPHA conference. Dr. Hardy proposed that the group consider ways to market public health education and practice in Georgia. A web portal and service learning projects could support any marketing effort. The group agreed that establishing a recognized "mission" for the public health education in Georgia will be an important first step.

Drs. Rahn and Stone thanked the group and encouraged them to keep focused on their important work. There are many challenges facing Georgia and public health research, policy and practice can provide meaningful solutions in many areas. Resource cultivation and partnership development should be key goals for the group.

The next meeting of the ACOPH will be held during fall semester. Dr. Hepburn will work Dr. Stone and the AASU group to plan for a meeting during the GPHA conference. Additional information will be shared by email correspondence.

The group thanked Drs. Rahn, Goldstein and Campbell and the entire MCG staff for their hospitality. The meeting adjourned at 1:00pm.