F3. Assessment of the Community’s Professional Development Needs

The school periodically assesses the professional development needs of individuals currently serving public health functions in its self-defined priority community or communities.

1) Define the school’s professional community or communities of interest and the rationale for this choice.

As a public land-grant university, the college defines its primary professional community of interest as public health professionals within the state of Florida. However, as an R1 doctoral university, the college also serves many communities both outside of the state and internationally, and those connections also facilitate opportunities to provide professional development.

2) Describe how the school periodically assesses the professional development needs of its priority community or communities, and provide summary results of these assessments. Describe how often assessment occurs.

No one process is used to capture the interests of these diverse audiences. Assessment of the professional development needs of the college’s priority community occurs through strong partnerships with public health stakeholders who serve on the college’s Public Health External Advisory Committee, through HealthStreet (which conducts needs assessments and trainings in several Florida counties) and through SHARC, which offers a professional development program for those who are interested in improving health outcomes and reducing HIV transmission among the diverse range of populations affected by alcohol and HIV.

The Public Health External Advisory Committee is comprised of public health professionals in both academia and in the public health workforce, including alumni of the college. In December 2017, the committee discussed the following workforce development questions:

1. What skills are employers seeking in public health graduates now?
2. What does the UF public health program need to do to help build out students’ skills?
3. What skills do employers want in the future?

Discussions were categorized into skills related to public health research and those related to public health practice. Numerous recommendations were made to enhance professional development opportunities to allow students to make stronger contributions to the public health workforce upon graduating from the program.

Recommendations from the research group included:
- data skills, such as primary data collection and monitoring and assuring quality of data
- communication skills, such as grant writing skills and how to present data to lay audiences
- career readiness and professionalism, including leadership development and networking skills

Recommendations from the practice group included:
- skills in identifying and understanding health issues, such as community assessment and evaluation
- writing skills, such as public health grant writing
- oral communication skills
- data skills
- professionalism

Meeting minutes outlining the results of the discussion as well as minutes describing actions taken to follow up on the discussion are located in ERF F3-2.
HealthStreet utilizes a community health worker model to continually conduct assessment of the health needs and concerns of populations in Florida. These findings are then disseminated to public health professionals and agencies in the state to help them better target those needs and concerns. The HealthStreet weekly report, available on the website and sent to public health partners, details these findings. In addition, through involvement in local, regional, national and international meetings, HealthStreet members identify the needs for training and education of their various stakeholders and develop additional educational offerings based on those needs. These offerings are described in section F4.

The mission of SHARC is to improve health outcomes and reduce HIV transmission among the diverse range of populations affected by alcohol and HIV infection in Florida. To fulfill this mission, SHARC fosters interdisciplinary translational research, training and community engagement. SHARC stakeholders include faculty at UF and at other universities, community-based organizations that focus on HIV support and prevention and patient advocates. SHARC faculty continually assess the professional development needs of their communities by providing support for research protocol development and through service with community-based organizations, including the Area 3/13 Ryan White Planning Council and the Florida Consortium for HIV/AIDS Research. SHARC also hosts a training and development program for a wide range of trainees.

3) If applicable, assess strengths and weaknesses related to this criterion and plans for improvement in this area.

Strengths:
- Assessment of the professional development needs of the college’s communities is ongoing and includes multiple public health stakeholders. While the state of Florida is the primary professional community of interest, there is involvement of stakeholders from other areas both within and outside of the country.

Weaknesses:
- None identified