

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



April 13, 2011

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE
Vancouver Senate
2016 - 1874 East Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1

To: Senate
From: Academic Policy Committee

RE: Merger of the School of Environmental Health into the School of Population and Public Health

Our Committee has reviewed the material provided by the College for Interdisciplinary Studies and the Faculty of Medicine for the merger of the School of Environmental Health into the School of Population and Public Health. The attached documents set out the rationale for this request.

In consideration of this request, and the desire for the combined unit to have the same name as one of its predecessor entities, we are of the opinion that the simplest way to proceed is to transfer the affairs one school to the other and then dissolve the former. Therefore, we are pleased to recommend that Senate approves and recommends to the Board of Governors as follows:

That the Doctor of Philosophy and the Master of Science in Occupational and Environmental Health programs – and all other academic responsibilities including the offering of coursework - be transferred to the School of Population and Public Health from the School of Environmental Health;

That Senate recommend to the Board of Governors that all faculty members with current appointments in the School of Environmental Health have their appointments transferred to the School of Population and Public Health except for those appointments recommended to be transferred to other academic units by the Provost.

That the Senate approve and recommend to the Board of Governors that the School of Environmental Health be disestablished; and

That the above take effect 1 June 2011.

The Committee is of the understanding that the Senate Curriculum Committee will be considering material shortly to give effect to the first clause of this motion in Calendar program entries.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Harrison
Chair, Academic Policy Committee



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MEMORANDUM

March 23, 2011

To: Senate
c/o Lisa Collins, Manager of Secretariat Services

From: David H. Farrar
Provost and Vice President Academic

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Farrar', followed by a horizontal line.

Re: Merger of the School of Environmental Health (SOEH) into the School of Population & Public Health (SPPH)

Motion:

That Senate approve the merger of the School of Environmental Health (SOEH) in the College for Interdisciplinary Studies into the School of Population & Public Health (SPPH) in the Faculty of Medicine, effective 1 June 2011.

Rationale:

The "Proposal to Merge the School of Environmental Health into the School of Population and Public Health" Report, recommends the merger of SOEH into the SPPH. The Report is attached. The recommendations contained in the Report were approved unanimously at the meeting of March 9, 2011 of the Provost (David Farrar), the Dean of Medicine (Gavin Stuart), the Principal of the College for Interdisciplinary Studies (Michael Burgess), the Director of the School of Environmental Health (Kay Teschke) and the incoming Director of the School of Population and Public Health (David Patrick). The merged units will operate under the name School of Population & Public Health (SPPH), effective 1 June 2011.

Attachment:

"Proposal to Merge the School of Environmental Health into the School of Population and Public Health" Report, March 15, 2011

Proposal to Merge the School of Environmental Health into the School of Population & Public Health

Executive Summary

Here we propose the merger of the School of Environmental Health (SOEH) in the College for Interdisciplinary Studies into the School of Population and Public Health (SPPH) in the Faculty of Medicine.

It is traditional in North America and Europe to locate research and teaching of occupational and environmental health within a school of public health. For 20 years, the University of British Columbia has hosted this discipline in its School of Environmental Health, and in a linked but smaller group in the former Department of Health Care and Epidemiology. Motivated by the creation of the School of Population and Public Health, its interdisciplinary vision of public health, and its move to the same building as SOEH, there is now broad support for a merger.

Such a merger would see the SOEH teaching program – the only one of its kind in western Canada and one of only three in the country – and its research – among the strongest in Canada and highly regarded throughout the world – become an integral part of SPPH. The proposed merger of this established centre of excellence into the School of Population and Public Health will help develop a vibrant nexus of research and teaching, and enhance UBC's place among the world's best universities.

We believe the merger will provide significant benefits to faculty, students, and staff of both Schools, as well as the University and external stakeholders. We expect it to facilitate student recruitment and strengthen mentoring in the occupational and environmental realm, provide additional breadth and depth to SPPH, foster new research and teaching opportunities, ease administrative burdens, and allow economies of scale in resource allocation.

We propose the following:

- the merger be made effective June 1, 2011
- the name School of Environmental Health no longer be used, and the personnel and programs of SOEH be integrated into the SPPH Occupational and Environmental Health theme
- SOEH's MSc in Occupational and Environmental Hygiene be retained as a separate program within SPPH
- SOEH's PhD program be integrated with the SPPH PhD program over time
- SOEH's continuing education program become the basis for a SPPH-wide program
- most SOEH courses be reassigned SPPH course codes
- SOEH faculty be appointed as faculty in SPPH
- SOEH research, laboratory, and student appointments continue unchanged, but within SPPH

- SOEH administrative and information technology staffing be evaluated for integration with SPPH and economies of scale
- SOEH space on the third floor of 2206 East Mall be transferred to SPPH

All elements are described in detail in the proposal that follows.

3. Rationale for the Proposed Merger of SOEH into the School of Population and Public Health (SPPH)

3.3 Physical Context

The two Schools have been housed in different locations on campus, about a kilometer apart, but in June 2010 SPPH moved into the same building as SOEH: 2206 East Mall.

The proposed merger would increase flexibility in housing staff, students, and faculty throughout the building, and provide a larger pool of meeting/classroom space.

3.4 Benefits of the proposed merger

3.4.1 Benefits to the academic mission and organization of the School of Population and Public Health

It is traditional in North America and Europe for occupational and environmental health and hygiene to be within a School of Public Health. In the United States, schools of public health must include occupational and environmental health to be accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health. Environmental health is one of the five core disciplines of an MPH program specified by the US Association for Public Health Schools.¹ Similarly, environmental public health is one of the core competencies of the Canadian public health workforce, as specified by the Pan-Canadian Public Health Network.²

The UBC School of Population and Public Health has an Occupational and Environmental Health “theme,” but the large majority of its members are faculty, staff and students whose primary appointments are in the School of Environmental Health. The majority of courses associated with the theme are taught by faculty members whose primary appointments are in SOEH. Decisions related to teaching and curriculum of this theme are made by SOEH. Thus SOEH fulfills the role of a virtual division within SPPH, but most of its faculty, staff, and students are not fully part of SPPH or its decision-making processes.

SOEH is one of the strongest hubs of occupational and environmental health research in Canada and is internationally recognized as a leading program in this area. Its institutional partners and collaborators include the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health of the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, the Environmental Health Surveillance Division of the BC Centre for Disease Control, WorkSafeBC, and the BC Lung Association. As schools of public

¹ ASPH Education Committee. *Master's degree in public health core competency development project*. Version 2.1. October 2004 - June 2006. 2006. Available at www.asph.org/UserFiles/FinalVersion2.1.pdf

² MPH Guidelines Working Group and the Public Health Human Resources Education Working Group. *Guidelines for MPH Programs in Canada*. Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, 2009 Available at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/php-psp/pdf/guidelines-lignes_directrices_MPH-2009-eng.pdf

health are being developed throughout the country, the sub-discipline of occupational and environmental health is being fully included. It is confusing for UBC's School of Population and Public Health to be differently organized than those elsewhere in the western world.

Most schools of public health are fundamentally interdisciplinary, and include health, social science, engineering, administration, and policy realms. The proposed merger would create an expanded SPPH with enhanced interdisciplinarity.

- SOEH faculty have appointments, professional associations, and expertise that span occupational hygiene, environmental health, acoustical engineering, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, chemistry, journalism, pathology, respiratory medicine, ergonomics, safety, atmospheric sciences, landscape architecture, and urban planning.
- The Bridge Program, a strategic training program bridging public health, engineering and policy, is housed in SOEH. It has over 50 participating faculty in the public health, engineering and policy realms, and a cadre of superb students. Its base would be moved to SPPH, also strengthening the interdisciplinarity of the expanded public health school.
- SOEH faculty members bring connections to other strategic training programs: Public Health and the Agricultural Rural Ecosystem; Population Intervention for Chronic Disease Prevention: A Pan Canadian Program; and the AllerGen National Centre of Excellence.
- The built environment and health is emerging as a major interdisciplinary research focus. SOEH faculty are leading in several fronts of this domain: building acoustics; indoor air quality; active transportation motivation and safety; sprawl, automobile dependence, and obesity; community design and vehicle-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; sustainability. By bringing together the environmental, planning, epidemiological and chronic disease expertise via the proposed merger, SPPH would be well positioned to compete for operating, team and centre of excellence funding in this area.

The merger would bring to SPPH SOEH's strong international ties to organizations such as the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, and the International Commission on Occupational Health. Environmental and occupational risk factors are recognized as major contributors to the global burden of disease. The World Health Organization's 2004 comparative quantification³ concluded that overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, unsafe water, household solid fuel use, urban air pollution, occupational particulate exposures, occupational injuries and lead exposures were all in the top 20 leading causes of global mortality, responsible for ~10 million deaths per year. The proposed merger would strengthen and broaden the Global Health and Vulnerable Populations theme of SPPH and also strengthen the global health activities of faculty and students within SPPH's current Occupational and Environmental Health theme.

3.4.2 Benefits to the student and teaching experience in both Schools

The proposed merger responds to concerns and ideas expressed by prospective and enrolled students in the two Schools over many years. In addition, the specific details related to graduate programs were reviewed by students at all stages and reflect their ideas.

³ Ezzati M, Lopez AD, Rodgers A, Murray CJL (Eds) (2004) Comparative Quantification of Health Risks: The Global and Regional Burden of Disease Attributable to Selected Major Risk Factors (Volumes 1 and 2). Geneva: World Health Organization

The proposal would make UBC more competitive in graduate student recruitment, vis-à-vis other universities with schools of public health where occupational and environmental health is fully integrated.

- Prospective students interested in occupational and environmental health have found it difficult to decide between the two Schools, given the cross-listed courses and the faculty members in common. In fact, there is little rationale for most students to choose one over the other, unless they are interested in only one of either the hygiene or the epidemiology aspects of occupational and environmental health. This is very rare.
- The merger would provide a clearer path to graduate work for Environmental Health Officers within the public health system. They need both the epidemiology training offered by SPPH and the exposure assessment training offered by SOEH, and exemplify a professional group for whom decisions between the schools are very difficult.

Admitted students in both Schools with an interest in occupational or environmental health find it frustrating to be in different academic units.

- There is less opportunity to interact and less critical mass to have influence in general courses such as research-in-progress seminars.
- Admitted students in both Schools need to overcome administrative hurdles to take courses in the other unit. A merger would clarify their option to take all public, occupational, and environmental health courses.
- Students in both Schools have indicated that a merger into one would enrich their overall educational experience.

The proposed merger would create a SPPH that is more attractive not only to students, but also to faculty and staff, because of the broader scope of students and teaching. Additional teaching-related synergies could be developed by the merged School, for example the potential to

- offer sub-sections for certain courses, split by PhD and MSc, or by theme, e.g., research-in-progress
- expand the base of alumni as ambassadors for the School.

3.4.3 Strategic opportunities

An expanded SPPH would have the potential to develop new education programs given the larger umbrella of expertise, for example:

- a built environment and health graduate program
- an interdisciplinary sustainable building science graduate fellowship program
- an environmental health undergraduate program

Most public health schools in the US and Europe have continuing education programs, but at the moment, none of the schools of public health in Canada do. SOEH currently operates a continuing education program in occupational and environmental health directed at professionals and other practitioners. The merger would allow the expanded SPPH to develop a multifaceted continuing education program, to allow upgrading and certification maintenance for alumni and other professionals. An expanded continuing education program could generate significant resources and increase the visibility of SPPH.

SOEH maintains analytical laboratories. Within an expanded SPPH, they could be used for teaching, research and service by a greater base of faculty, staff, students, and outside agencies. The SOEH Laboratory currently collaborates on public health research with the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University, underscoring the potential to expand such collaborations within UBC.

SOEH has both staff and faculty expertise in knowledge exchange that would expand and enhance the new communications staff in SPPH.

Merging the students, staff, and faculty interested in occupational and environmental health into one unit might provide the critical mass for developing a UBC/Vancouver Coastal Health clinic serving the working population. Such clinics are frequently available in European countries, but are a rarity in Canada. A clinic would not only provide the public with a clear location to seek expertise in occupational and environmental health, but would also provide excellent experience for students training as physicians, nurses, occupational hygienists, and environmental health officers.

3.4.4 Resource management and efficiency

Because of research and teaching overlap, many faculty members in both Schools have appointments in the other; this creates unnecessary administrative and reporting duplication that would be alleviated in an expanded SPPH. Faculty currently appointed in both Schools would benefit from the removal of pressure to distribute research funding equitably between the units and faculties involved.

Merging the two Schools would ensure consistent policies and procedures, and management of staff and finances. Staff, faculty, and students who operate across both Schools would welcome the simplification of systems, and the removal of small inequities between the two.

Both Schools maintain similar committees (curriculum, admissions, awards, etc.). A merger will allow a larger base of faculty, staff, and students to serve on a smaller number of committees.

Both Schools run field placement programs for their masters programs. The merger would provide opportunities for a larger base of contacts and better resource allocation for field placements.

The merger would provide an opportunity to reorganize administrative and IT staff to achieve economies of scale, back-up services, and specializations in function.

The merger would create a larger pool of research staff, allowing more efficient use of such staff (e.g., part-time appointments across projects), more opportunities for continuity of staff, and more opportunities for cross-training and quality improvement. The expanded base of researchers may provide enough critical mass to create a research services unit that supports researchers in grant writing, study design, implementation, knowledge translation, and communication. Such units exist at other schools of public health and are particularly useful in mentoring new investigators, the conduct of small studies, and providing continuity of service between grants.