The community health graduate program assessment plan is a strategic plan designed to assist community health program faculty to measure both student and overall program effectiveness. The key assessment that follows attempts to provide evidence to inform community health faculty with regard to a) student progress and b) reflective assessment for the continuation of the development and enhancement of the community health graduate program.

Submitted by: Dawn S. Tarabochia, PhD

Montana State University
Department of Health & Human Development
Community Health Graduate Program

The graduate program in Community Health Education is concerned with improving health and well-being for all through the promotion of healthful lifestyles, healthy family functioning, community actions for health, and conditions that make it possible to live healthful lives. The program draws on public health, health education, psychology, sociology, family science, and other social and behavioral sciences. This program is focused on community involvement because community health emphasizes an interactive process in which target populations are active participants in their health, rather than passive recipients. The Community Health graduate program offers a skills-based graduate degree that integrates theory and critical thinking to assess and act on the needs of individuals, families, and communities. Students learn to plan, implement, and evaluate programming designed to promote health, human development, and well-being with families and communities.

Community Health Program Learning Outcomes

Graduate Program Learning Outcomes

The community health education program established the following program learning outcomes. These learning outcomes were created in alignment with standards from the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc., The majority of the program learning outcomes (outcomes 1-6) are based on standards from the Competency Based Framework for Health Education Specialists (2010), specifically the Health Educator Job Analysis (HEJA) 2010 Model Area of Responsibilities and Competencies. The program learning outcomes include:

1. Have the knowledge and skills to assess needs, resources, and capacity for health education.
2. Have the knowledge and skills to plan health programs.
3. Develop an evaluation plan for health education programs.
4. Develop a research plan for community health/health education.
5. Have the knowledge and skills to act as health resource person.
6. Develop the knowledge to communicate, promote, and advocate for health and health education.
7. Develop cultural awareness and sensitivity
8. Develop and apply communication and professional skills.

Alignment of Program Learning Outcomes by Community Health Course

Table 1 shows the alignment of community health required graduate courses to the program learning outcomes suggested by standards outlined in the HEJA 2010 Area of Responsibilities and
Competencies.

### Table 1. Graduate Course Alignment to Community Health Graduate Program Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CHTH 428</th>
<th>CHTH 445</th>
<th>HHD 501</th>
<th>CHTH 502</th>
<th>HHD 512</th>
<th>CHTH 575/590</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have the knowledge and skills to apply theories and/or models</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the knowledge and skills to plan health programs.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an evaluation plan for health education programs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a research plan for community health/health education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the knowledge and skills to act as health resource person.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop the knowledge to communicate, promote, and advocate for health and health education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop cultural awareness and sensitivity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and apply communication and professional skills.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Community Health Graduate Program Assessment Overview

Formative and summative evaluation of the graduate Community Health Education program is an iterative process that relies on consistent input from faculty, students, and community health professionals.

Data points in the community health education program assessment plan include:

- Alignment of program learning outcomes as established by the HEJA (2010) areas of responsibilities and competencies by courses required in the community health education program.
- Alignment of graduate community health courses to associated skill level development as established by the HEJA areas of responsibilities and competencies.
- Development of benchmarks to evaluate student knowledge and skill level associated with program learning outcomes at the appropriate skill levels.
• Benchmark data collected throughout the student’s academic program in community health education to assess student knowledge and skills as aligned with the program learning outcomes set forth by the HEJA areas of responsibilities and competencies.

The assessment plan for Montana State University-Bozeman Graduate Community Health Education program proceeds through a series of benchmarks, which are assessed through test scores, designated assignments, and final grades designed to meet specific program learning outcomes as defined by the HEJA Areas of Responsibilities and Competencies. The final overall assessment of student learning culminates with the final benchmark-completion of a graduate level paper/project or thesis.

The assessment process comprehensively addresses both knowledge and skill outcomes. The following benchmarks have been identified as most important to the assessment of the community health graduate program as a means to evaluate the attainment of knowledge and skills associated with the program learning outcomes. Key assignments were identified for the evaluation of student knowledge and skill attainment and are used as benchmarks to assist faculty in identifying whether graduate students in the program are meeting/exceeding program learning expectations.

Benchmarks for the Community Health Graduate Program Assessment

Benchmarks for the assessment of the community health education program and student knowledge and skill acquisition were developed. These benchmarks are listed below.

➢ **Benchmark 1- Have the knowledge and skills to apply theories and/or models.**

Benchmark 1 is evaluated through the assessment of the CHTH 502 course. The focus of this course is the application of health theories and models. The CHTH 502 course provides information on commonly used health theories and models. The focus of the course is student ability to assess, teach, and apply specific theories and models associated with the community health profession. The final grades from the course will be used to assess student competency. The following scale will be used to report benchmark data: A/A‐=1, B+/B‐ = 2, C+/C= 3, C‐ =4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 1 with a score of 1 or 2.

➢ **Benchmark 2- Have the knowledge and skills to plan health programs.**

Benchmark 2 is currently being assessed by student performance in the CHTH 445 Program Planning course. This course uses an instructional manual from the Cecil C. Sheps Center for Health Services Research for outlining the program planning process. Students work in groups and partner with a community mentor to develop a community health program plan. The final product of this course includes a final report and a formal group presentation to the community mentor. The following scale will be used to report benchmark data: A/A‐=1, B+/B‐ = 2, C+/C= 3, C‐ =4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 2 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.
➢ **Benchmark 3- Develop an evaluation plan for health education programs.**

Benchmark 3 will be assessed in the CTHH 445 Program Planning and Evaluation course. Students will understand the basic principles underlying program evaluation. Assessment will use final grades as the assessment measure. The following scale will be used to report benchmark data: A/A− = 1, B+/B− = 2, C+/C− = 3, C− = 4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 3 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

➢ **Benchmark 4- Develop a research plan for community health/health education.**

Benchmark 4 will be evaluated through the assessment of final grades in the HHD 512 Research Methods course. This course prepares students to plan a research project specific to the student’s area of interest. This includes developing a purpose of research, writing research questions, creating sampling and data collection plans and the assessment of appropriate methods for data analysis. The instructor for this course will be responsible for assessing student skill development and remediation of skills throughout the course. This skill assessment will cumulate in the student’s final grade. The following scale will be used to report benchmark data: A/A− = 1, B+/B− = 2, C+/C− = 3, C− = 4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 4 with a score of 1 or 2.

➢ **Benchmark 5- Have the knowledge and skills to act as a health resource person.**

Grades earned in the HHD 501 Professional Communication Skills in HHD course will determine benchmark 5. This course focuses on the development of professional writing skills, how to find and cite peer-reviewed research, and how to format a paper using APA format guidelines. Final grades from this course will be used to determine student competency. The following scale will be used to report benchmark data: A/A− = 1, B+/B− = 2, C+/C− = 3, C− = 4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 5 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

➢ **Benchmark 6- Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity**

Benchmark 6 will be assessed in the CTHH 428 Health Disparities course. This course is focused on understanding health differences that occur due to social policies and health behavior practices associated with social policies. This course utilizes a social justice perspective and focuses on cultural awareness and sensitivity practices within communities and health care settings. These concepts are assessed by the student's final grade. The following scale will be used to report benchmark data: A/A− = 1, B+/B− = 2, C+/C− = 3, C− = 4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 6 with a score of 1 or 2.
The successful completion and student comprehensive exams and a graduate level paper, project or thesis will determine benchmark 7. The following scale will be used to report benchmark data: A/A- = 1, B+/B- = 2, C+/C= 3, C- =4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 7 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student will not graduate from the program until completion of the paper is achieved.

Community Health Education Assessment Data AY 2015-2016

The following data was collected as per the community health graduate assessment plan for AY 2015-2016. The data includes: the total number of community health graduate students who graduated, alignment of program learning outcomes by course, and benchmark data selected by community health education faculty to assess student knowledge and skill attainment at various levels throughout the student’s academic program.

Overview of Community Health Graduates

In the 2015-2016 Academic Year, the community health graduate program graduated 6 graduate students. The majority of these students completed professional papers in partial fulfillment for the requirements of graduation.

Benchmark Data for AY 2015-2016

Benchmark 1 - Have the knowledge and skills to apply theories and/or models to the assessment process.

Benchmark 1 is evaluated through the assessment of the CHTH 502 Health Theories and Models course. Student averaged grades will be converted into the scale listed below and reported as an overall average. Data for AY 2015-2016 was:

- **Overall average: 1.00**

A/A- = 1, B+/B- = 2, C+/C= 3, C- =4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 1 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

Benchmark 2 - Have the knowledge and skills to plan health programs.
Benchmark 2 is currently being assessed by student performance in the CHTH 445 Program Planning course. Student grades will be converted into the scale listed below and reported as an overall average. Data for AY 2015-2016 was:

- **Overall Average: 1.75**

A/A- = 1, B+/B- = 2, C+/C = 3, C- = 4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 2 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

➤ **Benchmark 3- Develop an evaluation plan for health education programs.**

Benchmark 3 will be assessed in the CHTH 445 Program Planning and Evaluation course and assessed by the final grade earned. Student grades will be converted into the scale listed below and reported as an overall average. Data for AY 2015-2016 was:

- **Overall Average: 1.75**

A/A- = 1, B+/B- = 2, C+/C = 3, C- = 4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 3 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

➤ **Benchmark 4- Develop a research plan for community health/health education.**

Benchmark 4 will be assessed in the HHD 512 Research Methods course and assessed by the final grade earned. Student grades will be converted into the scale listed below and reported as an overall average. Data for AY 2015-2016 was:

- **Overall Average: 1.25**

A/A- = 1, B+/B- = 2, C+/C = 3, C- = 4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 4 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

➤ **Benchmark 5- Have the knowledge and skills to act as a health resource person.**

Benchmark 5 will be evaluated through the assessment of final grades in the HHD 501 Professional Communication Skills in HHD course. Students must pass this course with a B- grade (80%) or higher. Student grades will be converted into the scale listed below and reported as an overall average. Data for AY 2015-2016 was:

- **Overall Average: 1.25**

A/A- = 1, B+/B- = 2, C+/C = 3, C- = 4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 5 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.
Benchmark 6- Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity

Benchmark 6 will be assessed in the CHTH 428 Health Disparities course. Students must pass this course with a B- grade (80%) or higher. Student grades will be converted into the scale listed below and reported as an overall average. Data for AY 2015-2016 was:

- **Overall Average: 1.00**

A/A-=1, B+/B-=2, C+/C=3, C-=4, and D+ or lower = 5; students pass Benchmark 6 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

Benchmark 7- Completion of a graduate level paper/project or thesis.

The successful completion and student comprehensive exams and a graduate level paper, project or thesis will determine benchmark 7. Students must pass the comprehensive exam prior to completion of the final paper, project or thesis. Student grades from CHTH 575 professional paper or project or CHTH 590 Thesis will be converted into the scale listed below and reported as an overall average. Data for AY 2015-2016 was:

- **Overall Average: 1.00**

A/A-=1, B+/B-=2, C+/C=3, C-=4, and D+ or lower = 5; Students pass Benchmark 7 with a score of 1 or 2. Anything lower and the student must retake the course.

Vital Statistics for AY 2015-2016

During AY 2014-2015, the community health education program graduated 2 graduate students. Student GPA ranged from 3.73-3.79. Currently the program is unable to reliability track student’s professional career attainment. However, the program has made attempts to track students.

What Was Learned from the AY 2015-2016 Assessment

The completion of this assessment indicates that graduating students are leaving the community health graduate program having accomplished the competencies established in this assessment. As stated in the AY 2014-2015 assessment report, the faculty has completed a review of curriculum. In addition to this review, the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing has released a new study assessing the competencies needed by professionals in the workforce. Based on the results of this study, the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing has suggested
substantial changes in competencies and sub-competencies associated with the community health and health education profession. Thus, the community health graduate faculty has determined that curricular changes need to be incorporated to better train our students for master level professions in community health.

Program Responses Made from Data Collected for the AY 2015-2016 Assessment

Based on the information collected from this assessment and changes at the national level, there have been suggested changes for the training of future professionals working in community health and health education. Therefore, the community health graduate faculty is working to assess current courses for compliance to newly suggested competencies and sub-competencies as well as develop new courses to meet these competencies and sub-competencies. An updated program assessment plan will be generated for AY 2016-2017 to reflect changes made at the national level.
References