

Chapter 8: Undergraduate Discipline Spotlight

The Department of Health Science prepares students to promote health, prevent diseases, and keep individuals and communities safe. The program provides training for entry-level positions in municipal, county, state and national health departments, voluntary health agencies, and health maintenance organizations (HMOs) as well as curricular background necessary for graduate work in public health, medicine, physician assistant, occupational therapy, dentistry, or health administration programs. Upon completion of the Health Science Program, students are able to: 1) demonstrate proficiency in the areas of responsibilities and competencies of the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®), and 2) apply these competencies through field experiences and community involvement. The Health Science Program curriculum and outcomes are assessed using several processes, tools and data sources.

The Health Science program curriculum is aligned with the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC) areas of responsibility, competencies, and sub-competencies of the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®) and with the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) public health domains. The CHES® responsibilities and competencies are updated every 5 years based on the NCHEC field practice/job analysis. The CEPH accredits the Health Science Program community, worksite, and public health curriculum. The program accreditation is maintained through ongoing documentation of compliance and annual reports. The reaccreditation procedure is every five years and requires a program self-study process of 18-24 months followed by a CEPH team site visit to gather feedback from students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and other key stakeholders about the program quality and effectiveness.

The primary assessment tool for measuring students' knowledge and skills on the areas of responsibilities and competencies of the CHES® is the national certification examination offered twice a year through the NCHEC. All Health Science students take the CHES® certification exam as their senior exit test during the semester before graduation. Successfully passing this examination indicates that students have the knowledge and skills needed to perform at an entry-level health educator position. For more than 20 years, the program has collected and continues to track students' scores in the CHES® examination and utilizes this information to improve the curriculum and educational practices in the program. As a result of this on-going quality improvement process, the overall passing rate of the Truman Health Science students in the CHES® exam exceeded the national average rate by at least 20% for the last five years.

Application of the CHES® competencies through field experiences and community involvement is assessed through student submissions of artifacts, logs, reflections, presentations, and other assignments to verify practical experiences in several health science courses, specifically in the Internship in Health Education, the Public Health Practicum, and the Capstone: Program Implementation and Evaluation. The Internship in Health Education course is designed for students who primarily want to work in a public health setting. Prior to the course registration, students are required to seek guidance and approval from their academic advisor to identify and secure a minimum of 240-hour internship experience (typically off-campus) with community, worksite, or public health organizations. The Public Health Practicum course is designed for students who want to work in the clinical setting, and the course provides students with a structured opportunity off-campus to observe or assist health professionals in their field of interest. Students develop their personalized learning objectives for their specific work setting based on the CHES® competencies and identify specific assignments/deliverables for the

minimum 40 practicum hours. The course faculty review and approve student learning objectives and assignments prior to the start of the practicum. Lastly, the Capstone: Program Implementation and Evaluation course requires all Health Science students to complete a minimum of 20-hour capstone experience where students demonstrate their skills in health program needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation through on-campus or off-campus integrated service learning.

Career outcomes of the Health Science graduates are assessed via an annual survey implemented by the University's Career Center. The survey gathers information on the first destination of Truman students related to job, graduate school, or service placements after graduation. The annual survey report provides insight on what percentage of Health Science graduates enter the workforce or enroll in graduate program within six months after graduation. Given that the completion of the survey is not required for all health science students, the Health Science Program uses information from this survey with prudence and the understanding of its limitations.

Critical thinking, analytical writing, interdisciplinary thinking, and quantitative reasoning of all Truman students are assessed via their Senior Portfolio, a requirement for graduation. Health Science students submit artifacts in their portfolio that highlight their accomplishments and achievements during their progress in the Health Science Program. Students are prompted to submit their artifacts during their 300-level health science course and required to complete their portfolio in their capstone course. A group of Truman faculty members evaluate students' submissions, and scores from these assessments provide insight into how the Health Science students' score on these general skills compare to the general University student body.

Health Science students' program experience is assessed via the Graduating Senior Questionnaire (GSQ) that is given to all graduating students. This questionnaire examines satisfaction with the major, access to instructors, faculty advising, outside interaction with faculty, course availability, and hours spent by students outside of the class period for class work. Information from the GSQ helps the program identify areas of improvement in supporting students' academic achievements.

In summary, the Department of Health Science maintains and offers a quality program that meets students' needs, professional accreditation standards, and the Missouri workforce needs via ongoing assessments and improvements of its curriculum and program activities/efforts.