



The University of Saskatchewan School of Public Health Background, June 2007

What is the School of Public Health?

The School of Public Health is a new interdisciplinary entity at the University of Saskatchewan that will connect teaching, research and community outreach under one umbrella with a focus on public health. This School will bring together new and existing resources to advance and sustain research, graduate training and outreach on a wide range of issues related to public health.

Why create this School?

The role of public health has changed significantly in recent years. There is a global call to bolster public health systems to ensure they are well positioned to meet future challenges. Outbreaks such as SARS, BSE, water-borne illness, rising rates of obesity, diabetes and mental illness have focused attention on the state of the Canadian public health system and current infrastructure inadequacies. The vital role of public health in creating and supporting a healthy society underscores the need to establish a comprehensive School to understand and solve complex health issues affecting individuals and communities.

What will the School do?

With the goal of becoming a preeminent centre of learning and research in Canada, the School of Public Health will focus on five major areas: (1) vaccinology and immunotherapeutics; (2) veterinary public health; (3) agricultural and rural public health; (4) Aboriginal peoples' health; and (5) socio-behavioral dimensions of public health.

In terms of academic programming, the School will increase the size and scope of graduate education on campus. The present course-based Master's degree in Public Health (MPH) will become the foundational program of the School. Current thesis-based Master and Doctoral programs will be supplemented in the next five years by new graduate MSc/PhD programs in vaccinology and immunotherapeutics, epidemiology, biostatistics and socio-behavioral health and health administration.

The University will work closely with community based organizations, the health regions, Saskatchewan Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada to provide advanced population and public health services.

Who's involved and how will the School operate?

The School has been developed in close collaboration with the deans of the U of S health science colleges, key research centres, the Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture, the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, the Saskatoon Health Region, and Saskatchewan Health.

The School will function much like a college, and will be led by an executive director, who will report to the Provost and be a member of Dean's Council. A rich interdisciplinary balance will avoid heavy reliance on any one discipline and provide a critical mass of faculty to deliver programming. Care will be taken to ensure School activities do not jeopardize any current programs. Faculty will have joint appointments in the School and disciplinary colleges to allow various levels of involvement in School activities, and to enrich both the colleges and the School. Initial resources for the School will be supplied by the University's Academic Priorities Fund.

When will the School be operational?

With the approval of the School by U of S Council in May 2007, the executive sponsor, appointed by the Provost, will now choose an acting director, recommend founding faculty and oversee the selection of an executive director. The acting director, in turn, will develop programs, establish a budget, hire personnel and find space for the School. The School will offer programming in fall 2007. The School's executive sponsor, who will oversee the project, is Dr. Karen Chad.

What impact will the School have?

The School will increase the amount and excellence of population and public health research, enhance graduate research opportunities, and link the university more closely to the community.