

May 31, 2023

To: Hilary Godwin, Dean, School of Public Health

From: Joy Williamson-Lott, Dean

Kima Cargill, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs



RE: Review of the Institute for Public Health Genetics (2021 - 2022)

This memorandum outlines the Graduate School's final recommendations from the Institute for Public Health Genetics academic program review. Detailed comments on the review can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (December 2, 2021)
- Self-Study (April 4, 2022)
- Site visit (May 16-17, 2022 (conducted virtually))
- Review committee report (August 3, 2022)
- Institute for Public Health Genetics response to the report (December 20, 2022)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (February 16, 2023)

The review committee consisted of:

- **William Bremner**, Emeritus Professor and former Chair, UW Department of Medicine (Committee Chair)
- **Stephen Hawes**, Chair and Professor, Department of Epidemiology; Adjunct Professor, Departments of Global Health and Health Services
- **Colleen McBride**, Grace Crum Rollins Chair, Department of Behavioral Sciences and Health Education, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University
- **Jennifer Smith**, Director, Certificate in Public Health Genetics; Associate Professor, Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health; Research Associate Professor, Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan

The Institute for Public Health Genetics offers the following degree programs:

- Master of Public Health (Public Health Genetics)
- Master of Science (Genetic Epidemiology)
- Master of Science (Public Health Genetics)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Public Health Genetics)
- Graduate Certificate in Public Health Genetics

Hilary Godwin, Dean of the School of Public Health, and Bruce Weir, Director of the Institute for Public Health Genetics and Professor of Biostatistics, attended a Graduate School Council meeting to discuss outcomes from the review. The Council reviewed all documents from the review prior to the meeting. A summary of the review documents and the Graduate School Council discussion are attached to this memo.

#### Graduate School Council Recommendations

The Graduate School Council commends the Institute for Public Health Genetics on the strength of its programs, faculty, and students. After discussion, the Council recommended the following:

- Full academic program review in 10 years (2031-2032)

Additionally, Interim Report in four years (2025-2026) to provide updates on:

- Leadership changes,
- Seeking financial support for the Institute and levels of cooperation and support from the Deans of SPH, Medicine, Law and the Chairs of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Health Systems and Population Health, Medical Ethics and others.
- Input should be gathered from students concerning their views on a variety of issues directly concerning them as described in the report.

We concur with the Council's recommendations.

cc: Mark Richards, Provost and Executive Vice President  
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Provost  
Bruce Weir, Director of the Institute for Public Health Genetics  
Review Committee Members  
GPSS President

## **Attachment**

### **Summary prepared by the Graduate School Director of Academic Program Review**

**Site visit date:** May 16-17, 2022 (conducted virtually)

#### **Degrees/Certificates included in the review:**

- Master of Public Health (Public Health Genetics)
- Master of Science (Genetic Epidemiology)
- Master of Science (Public Health Genetics)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Public Health Genetics)
- Graduate Certificate in Public Health Genetics

**Overall Review Committee Recommendation:** Continuing status for all degree programs with a subsequent review in 10 years.

Additionally, Interim Report in four years to provide updates on:

- Leadership changes,
- Financial support for the Institute and levels of cooperation and support from the Deans of SPH, Medicine, Law and the Chairs of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Health Systems and Population Health, Medical Ethics and others.
- Input should be gathered from students concerning their views on a variety of issues directly concerning them as described in the report.

#### **Program Strengths (as described in Review Committee Report)**

- The faculty, drawn from many departments and various schools in the University is very strong and highly respected locally and nationally
- The quality of the students attracted to the program is very high...Many varied and important roles filled by graduates of the program
- Students and faculty agree that the core IPHG courses and curriculum provide a strong foundation...high level of satisfaction with course content and offerings...Overall, the Committee felt that the core curriculum was cutting-edge, comprehensive, and appropriate.
- Students value the elective flexibility and ability to take courses across the UW campus, both inside and outside the School of Public Health. However, with the revised Master of Public Health curriculum, students have too few electives.
- The IPHG offers several undergraduate courses, which are highly successful...Expanding in this area could represent a significant source of revenue for the IPHG.
- IPHG students come from a broad range of academic backgrounds, which can be challenging in some regards, but the IPHG has successfully created an integrative environment in which this diversity creates a unique learning experience.
- Students in IPHG are greatly appreciative of the faculty, including both core faculty and affiliates. They find the faculty to be qualified and competent in their respective fields, and highly dedicated to providing resources and opportunities to IPHG students.

**Challenges & Risks (as described in Review Committee Report)**

- Given the broadening scope of genomic discovery particularly in the realm of chronic disease and epigenetics, the program could consider evolving as well...Committee recommendation to pursue a strategic planning process to plan a staged expansion of the program.
- Impending leadership changes in IPHG...These transitions will necessitate careful attention and support from the SPH Dean's office...The history of the IPHG in the few years prior to 2015 demonstrates the chaos and near-termination of the program in the absence of support from the SPH Dean's office.
- The IPHG was established 25 years ago and funded through a University of Washington Initiatives Fund and in the early years had state funding to cover operating costs. However, UW funding is no longer provided and IPHG is not self-sustaining. Funding currently is at the discretion of the Dean's office in the School of Public Health, and during the last decade, support from SPH has varied considerably, putting the program at risk. Committee recommends for IPHG to work with School of Public Health Dean's office to establish MOU for long-term financial commitment to support core operations.
- IPHG meets most of its instructional needs through faculty with appointments across a variety of departments, both in and out of the SPH, but does not hire faculty or assign faculty duties. The program is dependent on departments offering core courses consistently, and is vulnerable to faculty retirement and/or departments choosing not to offer the required and elective offerings of the PHG programs due to low enrollment and lack of clear transitions in teaching assignments.
- Most faculty affiliated with the IPHG are uncompensated outside of teaching responsibilities and there are few faculty devoted to the success of the program. Expectations of faculty are not well established...Some faculty described the affiliation as a volunteer effort.
- IPHG program has one full-time staff member...If the program plans to expand the number of students in the various programs as part of a strategic plan for growth, additional staffing resources will be needed.
- IPHG does not have high visibility within Seattle, the UW, or even within the School of Public Health. IPHG leadership should increase interactions with UW chairs/deans, leverage synergies with equity and anti-racism strategic plans, and consider opportunities within UW Population Health Initiative.
- A recommendation from students is to include disability studies in the core curriculum, since a large proportion of IPHG students will work with people who have disabilities or will research disabilities. Additional courses on race in genetics and LGBTQ+ issues were suggested by students as well.
- Many of the required and elective courses are offered by departments outside the IPHG. Therefore, the PHG students are not in the home department of many courses that they need, and thus often do not have priority for enrollment. Since the IPHG does not "own" many of the courses that the students take, it can be hard for the IPHG administration to ensure access to these courses. This is especially problematic in courses that are outside of the School of Public Health.
- Although students agree that their faculty advisors are highly competent, there is a concern that the program may be growing too large for the four PHG leaders to effectively advise all incoming students for the duration of their first year.

- While the program has been successful in helping many of their students to attain research funding, there is no internal mechanism for supporting students who are having difficulties finding a research placement.
- Students expressed an explicit need for more up-to-date documentation about program expectations, required courses, approved electives, forms for waivers, examinations, and who is core and affiliate faculty. The information on the website, including the student handbook, has not been updated in a number of years and some items, such as the list of potential electives, are outdated.
- Several groups of students expressed an interest in gaining a better understanding of the equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) priorities within the IPHG...Further, some students noted the lack of diversity in PHG core faculty and other PHG staff, suggesting that it would be beneficial to students to have people with different characteristics and backgrounds to guide their education, particularly for issues such as race and genetics and other implications of genetic technology for society.

#### **Areas of concurrence (as described in Unit Response)**

The Institute for Public Health Genetics largely accepted and agreed with the committee's assessment and recommendations. The IPHG offered a few points of clarification, as identified below in *Areas of Disagreement*.

#### **Areas of Disagreement (as described in Unit Response)**

- Regarding strategic planning process, the IPHG clarified that a strategic planning process for IPHG was initiated in the 2021-2022 Academic Year and is expected to conclude by December 2022.
- Regarding the recommendation to identify additional existing instructors, value support for service within IPHG, and evaluate the need for new hires, the IPHG clarified that it has no financial resources to support faculty engagement and is sensitive to any perception that School of Public Health support for IPHG is at the expense of support to departments.

#### **Discussion with the Graduate School Council on February 16, 2023**

The Graduate School Council discussion of this review included the following key topics:

- *Interdisciplinary program challenges*: The Council noted that the Institute for Public Health Genetics faces challenges similar to other interdisciplinary programs at the university; faculty involvement beyond teaching is often voluntary and in addition to their own departmental responsibilities; the loss of any one faculty member can be a significant challenge. The School of Public Health has had conversations about whether this program could be more appropriately housed somewhere within the school but has not yet identified a better location.
- The Council noted a review committee recommendation that attention is needed to the program's graduate student handbook. This has emerged as a theme in other reviews as well, and in

response, the Graduate School has developed guidance for graduate programs for developing student handbooks.