

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MPH DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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### General Questions

#### **What is the primary difference between the SJSU MPH Distance Education component and the regular campus-based MPH Program?**

Both are components of the whole SJSU MPH Program. The distance education MPH component uses a cohort model where students progress through the course of study in the same 25-27 member group for 2 years. The regular campus-based program offers students the flexibility of completing the program full-time in 2 years or part time in 3 to 7 years. The primary difference between the two is one of curriculum delivery – distance mode versus traditional on-campus mode. In addition, the distance component is entirely self-supporting. All distance expenses are paid from student tuition, whereas the regular campus program is primarily supported through state funds and student tuition and fees. The distance component is offered through the SJSU International and Extended Studies (IES) division and courses are offered through Special Session. However, the Distance Education degree is regarded by the University, and our public health accrediting body, as equal to the campus MPH degree. Therefore, your diploma will NOT indicate that you attended a distance program. It will be the same MPH diploma that the campus students receive.

#### **How is the SJSU MPH Distance Education component similar to the campus component?**

The distance and campus components are similar in that all students receive the same rigorous course content, with the same course learning objectives, and the same professional faculty. However, all distance courses are delivered online and students only meet once a year for about 5-days in San José. Course length varies from five to seven weeks for distance students. Courses are taught sequentially, and not concurrently, with the exception of some overlap during the field experience (internship). In addition, in most courses, distance students meet once a week online for a live class session via the Illuminate learning platform.

#### **Is the San José State University MPH program accredited?**

Yes. The MPH program was established in 1970 and first accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) in 1974. CEPH is the only organization that is approved by the federal government to accredit Graduate Public Health Programs and Schools of Public Health. Our graduate program has been fully accredited continuously since 1974.

Here is a listing of the CEPH accredited MPH programs and schools: <http://www.ceph.org/>

#### **Why is a CEPH accredited MPH degree important?**

Earning an MPH degree from a CEPH accredited academic institution is very important. Many federal, state, county, and local governments and agencies require that job applicants possess an MPH from a CEPH accredited institution. For example, the California Department of Health Services requires that applicants for the Health Education Consultant position must have "Possession of a master's degree with specialization in public or community health education awarded on completion of a program of study accredited by the Council on

Education for Public Health sanctioned by the American Public Health Association" (see: [www.dpa.ca.gov/textdocs/specs/s8/s8333.txt](http://www.dpa.ca.gov/textdocs/specs/s8/s8333.txt) )

### **What is the emphasis of San José State University's MPH program?**

The emphasis of our MPH program is Community Health Education. Our students take the same core public health courses (such as epidemiology, biostatistics, administration, and environmental health) as all public health students in the U.S., except that the majority of our students' coursework, and the focus of the program, is the philosophy and methods of community health education and health promotion. Our curriculum emphasizes the theories and skills necessary to promote public health with individuals, groups, organizations, and communities through educational programs and prevention initiatives, community organizing, capacity building, and policy advocacy. Students seeking MPH degrees with specialization such as epidemiology or health care administration should consider other programs or schools.

### **Who teaches in the SJSU MPH Distance Education component?**

The CEPH accrediting body requires that a significant proportion of the courses be taught by the regular full-time MPH program faculty -- all dedicated career professors. Although we employ excellent part-time faculty to complement the tenured and tenured-track full-time faculty, the regular faculty will teach between one and two MPH courses to each distance cohort. The part-time faculty is derived from very experienced public health professionals and professors from outside of SJSU. Some of these instructors are located in other academic institutions and some in professional public health settings. All of the instructors, including the regular MPH faculty, bring both strong academic preparation and community-based experience to their instruction.

### **How does the SJSU Distance MPH program differ from online MPH programs in other institutions?**

First of all, very few accredited public health schools or graduate public health programs offer an MPH degree almost entirely online. Most offer a combination of both online and classroom instruction, and in some cases require students to come to campus at least once if not twice each semester. The SJSU MPH program requires one five-day campus visit per year. In addition, our MPH program is located in the Department of Health Science within SJSU's College of Applied Sciences and Arts - the largest college in SJSU. SJSU has a student body of approximately 30,000 students. Some MPH programs in the health education specialty area are located within accredited schools of public health and some do not have 'walls' - since they are primarily online only institutions. Our program is classified by CEPH as a Graduate Public Health Program; we are not a school of public health. Schools offer MPH and doctoral degrees in a number of specialized areas (i.e., epidemiology, health policy, administration, social and behavioral sciences, as well as community health education). Regardless of the academic setting, the core curriculum of each public health program is the same. The differences are in the scope and breadth of the institution, the faculty research and community service interests, and the program's philosophy of master's level education. The best way to find out about these differences is to learn as much as you can about each institution, whether or not they are CEPH accredited, and then decide which learning environment and approach would be best for you.

### **How many units are required?**

The formal course of study requires 42 semester units and 400 hours of fieldwork. Core courses (Health Education Core and Public Health Core) comprise 37 units and fieldwork 5 units. In addition, all students must complete no-cost, self-paced, on-line epidemiology and biostatistics tutorials prior to taking HS 261 Epidemiology and HS 267 Public Health Statistics, respectively.

### **How long does it take to complete the MPH program?**

The program is designed for completion in 2 years. Most courses are taken sequentially, not simultaneously, in five to seven week periods per course. In most cases, course scheduling takes into consideration American holidays. Exact course dates for Academic Year Fall 2012 – Summer 2014 will be provided to applicants who are accepted and matriculate.

### **Are there any prerequisite courses?**

No. However, after admission, all students must complete a no-cost, self-paced, on-line epidemiology and biostatistics tutorials prior to taking HS 261 Epidemiology and HS 267 Public Health Statistics, respectively.

### **Can I get academic credit for work experience?**

No, you cannot get academic credit for work experience.

### **Can I get academic credit for courses I have already taken?**

Up to nine units of previous coursework may be approved for transfer credit as long as they were not counted towards a previous degree. These units must come from San José State University, SJSU Open University, another academic institution, or a combination of both. Credit is only available for equivalent courses, as demonstrated by the course syllabus content, course learning objectives, textbooks used, and assignments. For example, let's say you attended a graduate public health program in Boston and completed a 3-unit graduate course in environmental health but moved to the Bay Area for employment reasons. Since you were not able to complete your MPH degree in Boston, and with appropriate review of the course's syllabus, content, and assignments, your Boston course would very likely transfer to the SJSU MPH program since environmental health is also required at SJSU. Approval of previous units is done on an individual basis by MPH Faculty Advisors after admission and requires review and approval by the Graduate Studies Division. **HOWEVER**, since we do not have electives in the MPH program, you must still enroll in the courses for which you receive academic credit and pay the tuition fee. Your previous academic work will substitute for the required MPH course work.

### **What are the academic expectations of the MPH Distance Education component?**

In one word: Commitment! Potential applicants must recognize that this is a very serious, fast-paced academic experience that is taught by career professors and public health practitioners. For most courses, there is a one-week break between each course. There is a two-week break during late December and early January and a two-week break in late July. There is a heavy reading and writing load, as is typical of most public health graduate programs. Generally, students will read approximately 800 pages per course and have several writing assignments. Students can expect to spend at least 10 to 20 hours per week for each class. In effect, students must have excellent time-management skills and be able

to balance their professional, personal, and academic commitments. Most classes, but not all, will have a once-a-week live class session, using the Elluminate Live instructional platform. Students are expected to have good computer skills and easy and consistent access to the internet, since all assignments are downloaded from Desire2Learn and uploaded to Desire2Learn after grading. Small group assignments, and online team presentation assignments, are a part of most, but not all classes. Students in this program do not learn alone, they learn with their classmates. Overall, the distance faculty is seeking applicants who recognize the personal and continuous commitment necessary to complete a rigorous MPH degree in distance mode.

**Is a thesis or project required?**

A thesis or project is not an option in the distance component. It is an option in the campus program. Distance MPH students fulfill the university’s Graduation Requirement through a culminating experience of examinations.

**What does the Distance Program cost?**

Tuition for the fall 2012 cohort is \$24,150 for the 42 unit program, at a rate of \$575 per unit. This rate is fixed for the cohort admitted in fall 2012, throughout their 42 unit program, barring any unexpected state mandated increases prior to admission. If a fee increase is necessary prior to enrollment in the first course, the new rate will implemented but will be honored for the entire 42 unit period, regardless of any subsequent state tuition increases. The instructional fees do not include the cost of books and travel to SJSU (3 trips). The tuition is the same regardless of in-state, out-of-state, or international residency. The tuition is considerably lower than other CEPH accredited MPH Programs. Indeed, in comparison to other accredited MPH Programs offered on-line, with tuition costs ranging from approximately \$28,000 to \$64,000, the SJSU MPH degree is an educational and CEPH accredited bargain.

**How can I find out more about the field of Health Education and Public Health?**

Talk with health educators and public health professionals in your community. You can also visit public health and health education websites for more information. SJSU faculty, alumni, and students are active participants in many of the organizations listed below:

	"What Is Public Health?" Project	<a href="http://www.whatispUBLIChealth.org/index.html">www.whatispUBLIChealth.org/index.html</a>
AAHE	American Association for Health Education	<a href="http://www.aahperd.org/aahe/template.cfm?template=main.html">www.aahperd.org/aahe/template.cfm?template=main.html</a>
APHA	American Public Health Association	<a href="http://www.apha.org">www.apha.org</a>
ASHA	American School Health Association	<a href="http://www.ashaweb.org">www.ashaweb.org</a>
CAMP	Council of Accredited MPH Programs In Community Health Education	<a href="http://www.mphprograms.org/pages/1/index.htm">www.mphprograms.org/pages/1/index.htm</a>
CNHEO	Coalition of National Health Education Organizations	<a href="http://www.cnheo.org/">http://www.cnheo.org/</a>
CPHA-N	California Public Health Association - North	<a href="http://www.cphan.org/">www.cphan.org/</a>
IUHPE	International Union for Health Promotion and Education	<a href="http://www.iuhpe.org">www.iuhpe.org</a>
NCHEC	National Commission for Health Education Credentialing	<a href="http://www.nchec.org">www.nchec.org</a>
SOPHE	Society for Public Health Education	<a href="http://www.sophe.org/">www.sophe.org/</a>
NBPHE	National Board of Public Health Examiners	<a href="http://www.publichealthexam.org/">http://www.publichealthexam.org/</a>