

University Senate

Proposed: April 2, 2015

Adopted: April 2, 2015

**RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AN ADVANCED CERTIFICATE
IN HEALTH COMMUNICATION (MSPH)**

WHEREAS, the Mailman School of Public Health offers Master of Public Health candidates a choice of specializations, each leading to a certificate in the subject to be awarded in addition to the Master of Public Health degree; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for the master of public health candidate to gain an area of specialization in addition to the core curriculum offered; and

WHEREAS, health communication has emerged as an important field of theory, research and practice in the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, there is a demand among public health professionals for such a program; and

WHEREAS, the proposed certificate does not duplicate an existing program in any other unit of the University

WHEREAS, the proposed certificate will be the first program in the New York City area to lead to a graduate credential in this field;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate approve the Advanced Certificate in Health Communication proposed by the Mailman School of Public Health.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the resolution be forwarded to the President and the Trustees of Columbia University for their approval; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Education Committee review the program in five years.

Proponent:

Committee on Education

1) Purpose

As recognized by several public health and global health agendas and organizations, health communication has emerged as an important field of theory, research and practice in the 21st century. As stated by Healthy People 2020, health communication is central “to improving population health outcomes and health care quality, and to achieve health equity.” The many contributions of health communication towards such goals are well documented both in domestic and global settings, and are the foundation for the increasing demand for formal health communication training in a variety of sectors, including public health, healthcare, and community development. Nested in New York City, the world’s media capital, which is also home to a multisectoral and vibrant communication and digital community, this certificate program provides unique opportunities for meaningful interactions with innovative organizations and prepares students to pursue careers in nonprofit organizations, government agencies, hospitals, foundations, research institutions, communication firms, the healthcare industry and other relevant organizations. Whether reaching vulnerable and underserved populations, engaging communities or the general public on specific health conditions, framing health issues and advocating for policy change, or working to increase capacity for effective health communication in population or clinical settings, students who complete this program will be prepared to design, implement and evaluate health communication interventions; will delve into the importance, use and integration of different health communication areas and related media; and will also acquire critical skills in health literacy, new media, risk communication, health equity communication, cultural competence and other contemporary issues in health communication.

The Mailman School is committed to knowledge creation, the translation of science for impact, and the education of the next generation of public health leaders. As stated by Healthy People 2020, health communication is central “to improving population health outcomes and health care quality, and to achieve health equity.” Given the current and projected importance of health communication for public health both in the U.S. and internationally, a certificate that recognizes expertise and experience in health communication is not only in line with the mission of the school but is critical to its success. This certificate expands in important ways the menu of sub-specializations available to our Columbia MPH (CMPH) students under our new curriculum, launched in fall 2012. Students in the CMPH now have both a main concentration (department focus) and a required, second, certificate focus. During planning and continuing through two years of offering the new CMPH, the School has assessed the certificate options, identifying areas of strength at the School and identifying any gaps in academic offerings. Health Communication will be an important addition to the certificate programming at Mailman.

This certificate is an important addition to the certificate options at Mailman. It is a completely new area of focus. The proposed certificate does not duplicate an existing program in any other unit of the University, although the School of Continuing Education at Columbia University does offer two similarly-titled degrees: a Master of Science (MS) in Strategic Communications, and an MS in Communications Practice. These programs focuses

on developing and implementing communications strategies that advance an organization's goals and mission. There are two required courses in this program, SCOM K4101 Audience, Communication, and Persuasion and SCOM K4112 Strategic Storytelling that have somewhat similar learning objectives to the four required courses that will be offered as part of the proposed certificate. However, the MS program is business focused, not specifically health related, and designed for working professionals in a variety of professions. The certificate program will be the first designed exclusively for public health practitioners.

2) Need

Health communication was allocated a chapter for the first time in the Healthy People 2010 objectives, illustrating the field's growing importance. In these objectives, health communication is seen to have relevance for virtually every aspect of health and well-being, including disease prevention, health promotion and quality of life. As of 2013, the Coalition for Health Communication lists twenty-four graduate programs with an intense focus in health communication and a goal to develop students as professionals in the field of health communication <http://www.healthcommunication.net/CHC/about.htm>. According to Edgar and colleagues "Even with a dramatic increase in the number of degree programs, there is still an always growing demand for more academic opportunities that will expand the field of health communication professionals" (Journal of Health Communication, 2004).