

University Senate

Proposed: October 23, 2020

Adopted: October 23, 2020 with
unanimous support

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE

AN ADVANCED CERTIFICATE IN FOOD SYSTEMS AND PUBLIC HEALTH

(MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH)

WHEREAS hunger and malnutrition are serious problems both in the United States and abroad, and are bound to worsen in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic and the advance of climate change in the coming decades, and

WHEREAS there is a growing need for expertise in addressing the challenge of strengthening food systems to sustain public health, and

WHEREAS the Mailman School of Public Health has addressed this need by developing an advanced certificate as part of its Master of Public Health degree program, with a curriculum of eight courses designed to provide a basic understanding of the historical, environmental, and economic impacts of food on public health and health policy, and

WHEREAS both current students and recent graduates of the School of Public Health have recognized the importance of a program, which will prepare graduates for work in the public and private sector as analysts, research managers, and policy advocates, as well as health educators, health program managers, and health writers;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University Senate approve the proposed Advanced Certificate in Food Systems and Public Health; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate Education Committee will review the program five years after its launch.

Proponent: Education Committee



**PROPOSAL FOR A NEW DEGREE, NEW DEGREE FROM AN EXISTING TRACK,
NEW CERTIFICATE, OR NEW CERTIFICATION OF PROFESSIONAL
ACHIEVEMENT (CPA) PROGRAM**

Degree:	Advanced Certificate as part of the MPH program
Program Name:	Food Systems and Public Health
If this program is currently a track in an existing program but has evolved as a stand-alone program, please indicate the program it's based on:	
Sponsoring School(s):	Mailman School of Public Health
Proposed Start Date:	September 2021
Name and Email Address of the Primary Contact Person for this Proposal:	Dana Palmer dm2025@cumc.columbia.edu
Date of Proposal Submission:	

[PARTIAL] DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

1. Purpose

- a. Describe in 1-2 paragraphs the purpose of the proposed program, its target audience, its content, and its format/pedagogical approaches.**

The Advanced Certificate in Food Systems and Public Health is an embedded certificate available to enrolled MPH students who are interested in gaining foundational knowledge and understanding of the role that food plays in public health. This certificate would provide students with the perspectives and skills to influence the evolving relationship between food and public health providing coursework that investigates the historical, environmental, cultural, economic, and behavioral impacts of food on health and health systems. The certificate will prepare MPH students to understand the scientific research methods required to examine the food landscape through a public health framework. Students will also investigate the interconnectedness of food to income inequality, the global economy, climate change and health policy and law.

Students will complete seven required courses and one selective course from an approved list of four courses at the Mailman School of Public Health. These will include foundational courses in public health, food policy and justice, epidemiology and nutrition, and additional courses on topics from emergency management to food law. Aimed at educating current MPH students interested in food systems, students will be equipped to understand the foundations of health and disease from a food science perspective, to design better food systems, and to advocate for improved policies and practices that integrate food and public health.

- b. How does the new program relate to ongoing programs? Will it replace any existing program(s)? Does the proposed program completely or partially duplicate (an) existing program(s) in any other unit of the University?**

In the last several years, the Mailman School of Public Health (MSPH) has introduced several food related courses for students enrolled in the Masters in Public Health program. The growing interest among existing students has been matched by an increasing interest from the general public and key external stakeholders (including MSPH alumni, board members, public health professionals in NYC, and the wider Columbia community) to engage with the Mailman School on issues of food and public health. To respond to that need, the Mailman School launched a successful public lecture series entitled, Food Justice and Public Health, in Fall 2017. This lecture series is now completing its second year and to date has held over 13 lectures with an average of 75-100 attendees per lecture. Additionally, in spring of 2019 the Food Policy and Obesity Prevention student group conducted a student survey regarding food-related curriculum and activities at Mailman. This survey found that 43% of respondents would have been interested in a food-related

certificate if it had been offered. The proposed MPH Advanced Certificate in Food Systems and Public Health builds on this lecture series and responds to the increasing demand for additional content and course offerings from students. It does not replace any existing program nor does it duplicate other programs at the University.

2. Need

a. Why is the proposed program needed locally, statewide or nationally?

As stated, the Mailman School has become increasingly aware of the growing demand for coursework on food and public health from our current students. As a leading school of public health in the country and in the region, we regularly develop new programs to respond to emerging public health issues and workforce needs. As rates of chronic disease and food related illnesses grow and as food becomes increasingly central to issues of civil conflicts, famine, forced migration and climate change, our faculty and researchers are increasingly engaged in training public health leaders in food related issues.

This proposed certificate reflects our ongoing commitment to respond to major issues in public health by revising and refining our educational offerings. We believe we are uniquely qualified in the region and the nation to launch this program.

b. Have students at the University or elsewhere requested this program? How many?

Students at the Mailman School have increasingly requested coursework on food and public health in recent years. In Fall 2017, Mark Bittman joined the Mailman faculty and launched both a public lecture series, Food Justice and Public Health, and a course for MPH students, Food, Public Health, and Social Justice. Both the lecture series and the course have been growing in attendance. Participants have repeatedly asked for additional coursework and opportunities to engage in training related to food and public health. Additionally, as mentioned above, the Food Policy and Obesity Prevention student group survey results found that 43% of respondents would have been interested in a food-related certificate if it had been offered.

c. If the program is career or professionally oriented, have persons in the profession or career requested establishment of the program? Have the employment needs of professionals in the field been taken into account when designing the program?

The Certificate was designed with significant input from faculty and practitioners engaged in food systems and public health. Initially, a committee of ten Mailman faculty with deep expertise in the topics covered by the Certificate (e.g., food policy and justice, epidemiology and nutrition, food safety) met over several months to review all aspects of the proposed program. Learning objectives and course syllabi were reviewed to ensure alignment with workforce needs at the intersection of public health and food systems.

Furthermore, in 2018/2019, the Mailman School engaged a prominent higher education consultant to analyze the market potential of non-degree certificate offerings using the current MPH certificates as a starting point. A Food Systems and Public Health Certificate was included in this market analysis. While the work is ongoing, Huron's preliminary findings indicate that a Mailman certificate in Food Systems and Public Health has enrollment appeal in the non-degree market and that participants have a high potential for future job growth. For this reason we are also proposing, in addition to this MPH certificate proposal, a non-degree Certification of Professional Achievement in Food Systems and Public Health.

d. What other institutions in the metropolitan area and in the Northeast offer similar programs?

The closest institution that offers a certificate in Food Systems, the Environment and Public Health is Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in Baltimore. This certificate is designed for masters and doctoral degree students, but is also open to junior and mid-level professionals as a non-degree offering. While other colleges and universities offer degree programs in the area of food and health, there is a lack of non-degree offerings that focus on Food Systems and Public Health.