

Purpose of this Document and Source of Information

This Strategic Situation Assessment presents a *summary* of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is based, in part, on discussions held during the **Steering Committee's** first three meetings; comments from **30 informal discussions** facilitated by Steering Committee members between April and June 2011; responses by more than 800 alumni, students, faculty, staff, and community partners to a **web-based survey** (full survey results are summarized in a separate document and available [online](#)); and **stakeholder interviews** conducted with 19 individuals, including deans of associated schools at the University of Washington and representatives of partner agencies.

Strengths

- A collegial, highly productive, world-class faculty. The caliber of the School's research and the strength of the School's departments.
- Committed, knowledgeable, resourceful staff
- High quality, productive students.
- A strong national and global reputation.
- Well-established academic programs in many key areas of public health.
- Entrepreneurial culture with a strong record of external funding support.
- Good collaborations within the SPH, UW and with external organizations.
- Strong research, health care delivery, and public health organizations in the region.
- Seattle is a great geographical location with an abundance of natural and cultural attributes.

Weaknesses

- Inadequate state supported funding base, resulting in excessive reliance on grants & contracts.
- Physical facilities widely dispersed and many are substandard.
- Fragmented School community, with less faculty-to-faculty and faculty-student interactions than needed.
- Difficulty in attracting and retaining diverse faculty and students.
- Rising tuition.

Opportunities

- Unique position as the preeminent school of public health in the region
- Strategic location on the Pacific Rim, poised for global health activities.
- Strong linkages with regional, national, and international public health agencies and foundations.
- Demand for educational opportunities by mid-career professionals.
- Large and growing student demand for public health learning.
- The School could be more proactive in advancing the practice of public health and reassess the MPH curriculum to ensure our graduates are equipped as leaders for today's and tomorrow's challenges.

Threats

- Plateau and possible decline in external research funding.
- Decreased state funding for higher education.
- Loss of some faculty due to competing institutions and retirements.
- Emergence of competing schools of public health.
- Economic recession.

Academic Program Reviews

Department reviews within the past decade emphasize the outstanding contributions of faculty in **training** students, conducting **research**, and **collaborating** with colleagues across the university and partners in the community. Below are selected quotes from committee reviews.

Biostatistics (2003)

“The Department of Biostatistics is one of the best Biostatistics departments in the world with signatures in educating the next generation of biostatisticians, developing methods for the analysis of event-time data, statistical methods in epidemiology, and service to the profession, the nation, and the world. Faculty are leaders in methodological and collaborative research in all areas of medicine and public health. Students are well educated statisticians with a strong background in theoretical statistics and special emphasis on methods applied to the areas of medicine and public health.”

DEOHS Review (2010)

“The training, research, and service conducted by faculty in DEOHS is recognized regionally, nationally and internationally. Some examples of faculty leadership include editorial service in prestigious journals and the establishment and/or continuation of major competitively-awarded centers and grants.”

Epidemiology Review (2005)

“Overall, the Department of Epidemiology research and graduate programs are very competitive nationally and internationally, and enjoy the respect of peer departments. While there is no national ranking of epidemiology departments, it is clear that the UW Department of Epidemiology is among the leading departments in the U.S., especially in the areas of cancer, cardiovascular, and STD epidemiology, with emerging strengths in genetics and other infectious diseases.

Global Health (pending)

The Department of Global Health, launched on January 1, 2007, is housed in both the School of Medicine and the School of Public Health, and charged with engaging all Schools and Colleges at the UW in interdisciplinary global health programs. After five years, the DGH has grown to be the second largest UW department in terms of extramural funding; the most diverse department with faculty, students, and staff from many countries throughout the world; and the most interdisciplinary. The December 2011 meeting of the DGH External Advisory Board, Chaired by Dr. William H. Foege, described the programs of the DGH as “stunning” and “inspiring”.

Health Services Review (2006):

“The quality of both the Ph.D. and M.S. programs is very high. This is due primarily to two factors: the quality of members of the faculty who have become involved in these programs and the emphasis on research methods. The latter is evolving into the common denominator of top doctoral programs in health services research, policy and administration.”