

University of Michigan School of Public Health

MEMORANDUM

From: Dean Smith & Edith Parker
To: Department Doctoral Program Chairs
Date: September 15, 2009
Re: Continuous Enrollment in School of Public Health Doctoral Programs ~ *Funding Plan*

The School of Public Health enrolls doctoral students in seven programs:

- Biostatistics
- Environmental Health Science
- Epidemiologic Science
- Health Behavior and Health Education
- Health Services Organization and Policy
- Industrial Health
- Toxicology

Beginning with Fall Term 2010, all doctoral students will be required by Rackham policy to be continuously enrolled during the fall and winter semesters - from the first term of enrollment through completion of the Ph.D. degree. To prepare for this new policy, the School of Public Health needs to develop plans in three areas: Funding, Record Review and Communications. This memorandum contains a description of the School's funding plan for your review. We will be scheduling a meeting of the doctoral program chairs to discuss this within the next couple of weeks.

I've also included some initial thoughts on plans for record review and communications to the faculty and students. These will be discussed further with you during the Fall Term.

Funding Plan

The Continuous Enrollment Policy requires Ph.D. students to register every fall and winter semester, unless they are on an approved leave of absence or have extramural study status. The registration requirements for summer will be unchanged; students will register if they are taking or auditing a course, taking preliminary examinations, or defending the dissertation. Rackham has published data on the patterns of registration by program for doctoral students. More information on the new policy and these registration data are available on Rackham's website:

Currently, students in each program are expected to be continuously enrolled until they reach candidacy. Rackham's analysis of registration patterns confirms that during pre-candidacy, most of our students register every fall and winter term. We do not expect to see any increase in registration at the pre-candidacy level, hence we are not making any plans for funding changes in pre-candidacy. If you think that the Continuous Enrollment Policy may result in changed registration patterns for your pre-candidates, please bring the circumstances to my attention so that I can follow-up on this possibility with Rackham.

It is in the candidacy phase of study that many students have periods of time when they are not registered during the academic year. Upon reaching candidacy, some students have been on "detached study" or merely not enrolled for terms while working on their dissertations and not taking classes or defending. Beginning with Fall Term 2010, these students will be registering in fall and winter terms. For the School as a whole, we are estimating an increase of 19-25 registered candidates under the new policy.

At the School of Public Health we are reviewing current student enrollment and completion patterns - and we encourage each doctoral program to review its own enrollment data. It appears that most of our students are continuously enrolled, even in candidacy, and have been supported by faculty/center research programs with Graduate Student Research Assistant (GSRA) positions, by department teaching programs with Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) positions, by traineeships, or by other University fellowships. A small number of students every year pay their own tuition.

Rackham has done careful planning for this policy change. A fundamental principle of their planning is that students will not pay more tuition under the policy than they would have paid under current practice. To accomplish this, the Regents will be asked to approve a reduction in the candidacy tuition rate next year when they are setting tuition rates for the 2010-11 academic year. This reduction in the rate will be proportional to the increase in enrollment, and will make the implementation of the policy tuition-revenue neutral on a University basis.

However, the financial impact for a school or college varies and will depend on the extent of the change in its doctoral programs. Although there are new costs associated with an increase in registered candidates, there also are resources that come to the school through the University's activity-based budget model and from the savings associated with the reduction in the tuition rate for those sources where the savings can be captured and redirected. Rackham is creating a tuition fellowship program that will direct its savings to the schools and colleges.

Sponsored research grants that have candidates appointed in GSRA positions will realize savings from the reduction in the tuition rate. These savings will accrue to the grant. Similarly, students who pay their own tuition will see some savings.

The School has identified the necessary resources to cover the new tuition costs associated with the increased level of candidacy registration noted above. Rackham will be providing tuition fellowships to our programs in proportion to the savings it realizes from its current levels of support for our students. In addition to the General Fund budget allocation increase and the savings we will realize from GSI and University fellowships, the School is committing the needed additional funds. These sources will combine to fund a program for tuition fellowship awards. Although these fellowships will cover only tuition, and therefore are not as attractive a form of support as the GSRA, GSI, and fellowships that are preferred sources, they will allow us to cover any new costs of tuition for our students and achieve the goal of not shifting any new tuition burden to them.

This program will be managed at the School level. The process that we will use will be designed with your advice over the course of the next year. Students need to be making satisfactory academic progress to be eligible for an SPH tuition fellowship. Each doctoral program will need to formally track students' academic progress to support decisions about tuition support. Programs should work to provide GSI, GSRA, or fellowship opportunities to students before requesting support through a tuition-only fellowship.

This is the essence of the School of Public Health's funding plan. We welcome your comments on it.

Additional Notes: Students with Extramural Study Status or Approved Leaves of Absence

Some of our Ph.D. students take courses or a full course of study as a student at another institution for work that is directly relevant to their Ph.D. degree work here. During the periods when they are officially a student elsewhere, they will have Extramural Study status and will not be required to register at UM. Students with Extramural Study status are not eligible for a tuition-only fellowship in the terms when they are registered elsewhere.

Leaves of absence will be granted for medical and health-related reasons, family needs or dependent care, military service, or for personal reasons. Students on approved leaves of absence are still considered to have active status in their programs, but have suspended their work on the degree program for a temporary period of time. Students on a leave of absence will not register during the leave and so have no need for tuition-only fellowship eligibility during that time period.

Record Review Plan

The continuous enrollment requirement will apply to new and continuing students starting Fall 2010. Therefore, programs are asked to review active student records now. As part of this review, you should identify students who are not making progress toward degree and determine whether action can be taken now to re-engage those students, and possibly have some complete their degree before the policy takes effect in Fall 2010. Further, programs are asked to initiate a discontinuance action for students if they are no longer actively working on their degrees or if they have withdrawn but it is not yet reflected in the administrative information system.

Our ability to accurately estimate the change in our registered candidates and to adequately fund the tuition fellowship program described above will be greatly improved if we know that the University's data systems accurately reflect the status of our active students. To this end, we will ask you to provide information to us in late January 2010, after the start of the Winter Term that indicates the status of your Ph.D. students including an expected completion date for those who might be finishing in 2010. If students have discontinued their active participation in the program, we are asking that you update the Student Administration Data System before that time.

This is the essence of the SPH record review plan. Please indicate if you have any comments on this plan; review of the list of active doctoral pre-candidates and candidates indicating their status and anticipated completion date, when known.

Communications Plan

To implement the continuous enrollment policy, programs will need to develop a Communications plan that covers, at a minimum, the following items:

- Program funding plans for registered students
- Announcement and explanation of new or revised funding procedures for active students as a group and for individual students
- Text for use in admissions offer letters to students applying for Fall 2010 (Rackham will provide models.)
- Updates to program print and web materials to reflect Rackham and program policy and process changes (Target Completion: Summer 2010)
- Procedures to review and take action when notified that students are not registered in a fall or winter term so that students can comply with the continuous enrollment policies.

Rackham will offer training and orientation for program and college/school administrative staff during the summer of 2010.