

TOPIC: PROPOSAL TO OFFER A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE IN PUBLIC HEALTH AT FORT LEWIS COLLEGE

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I. SUMMARY

Fort Lewis College has submitted a program proposal to offer a Baccalaureate degree in Public Health. This degree will prepare students for entry-level work in public and community health and related fields. These students will also be prepared for graduate programs in public health and other health fields. This program is designed to improve retention of Native American students and establish pipelines from Dine College, a public higher education institution chartered by the Navajo Nation, as well as establish pipelines with the University of Colorado for master's and doctoral admissions for Native American students.

II. BACKGROUND

The following is summarized from Fort Lewis College's proposal to offer a BA in Public Health:

The study of public health combines the social sciences, sciences, mathematics, humanities, and the arts, while serving as a vehicle for the development of written and oral communication skills, critical and creative thinking, quantitative and information literacy, teamwork, and problem solving. It incorporates local and global civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural competence, and ethnical reasoning and action, while forming the foundation for lifelong learning. During the development of the proposed public health degree program at Fort Lewis, collaboration occurred with members of the following departments: Biology, English, Sociology, Psychology, Native American Studies, and Anthropology. Classes taught through each of these departments are in the proposed curriculum for the public health degree. The proposed degree is interdisciplinary and grounded in liberal arts philosophy in reality, not just in theory.

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

The BA in Public Health degree supports the role and mission of Fort Lewis College. The statutory mission states:

There is hereby established a college at Durango, to be known as Fort Lewis College, which shall be a public liberal arts college, with selective admission standards with a historic and continuing commitment to Native American education. In addition, the college may offer professional programs to serve regional needs. The center of southwest studies provides a valuable regional, national and international source. C.R.S. 23-52-101 (1)

EVIDENCE OF DEMAND

Fort Lewis College has identified a strong rationale for offering a public health degree. A recent student survey of biology and non-biology majors was conducted and 67 percent of students were interested in a health-related major. Approximately 70 percent understood what a public health major would study, indicating a high level of existing knowledge about public health among Fort Lewis students. The proposed public health degree will fill a void of non-hard science-based majors for students interested in health and will presumably help more students finish a health-focused degree. A focus on the community aspects of public health will appeal to many Native American and other minority as well as pre-health students who may go back to their communities after completing their studies at Fort Lewis.

DUPLICATION/SIMILAR PROGRAMS IN THE STATE

Currently, no other undergraduate institution in the state of Colorado offers a public health major, although the University of Colorado Denver is currently in the process of designing and approving an undergraduate public health degree.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

The Department staff has reviewed this proposed program to ensure that it meets the State's performance measures outlined in C.R.S. 23-1-107. The program meets all performance measures.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the BA in Public Health degree to be offered by Fort Lewis College.

V. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. 23-1-107

ACCOMPANYING MATERIALS

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs office and are available upon request.