

Landmark Doctor of Public Health program rebrands as more DrPH programs come online

Mon, 07/07/2025 - 12:00

|

Dee Boling dboling@tulane.edu

[View PDF](#)



The first inaugural cohort of DrPH students were hooded this spring. (Photo by Derek Bridges)

In 2022, Tulane's [Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) launched a Doctor of Public Health program in Leadership, Advocacy and Equity. Applications poured in for this unique program delivered fully online.

Initially, the program was offered as a school-wide degree; however, school administrators soon realized that there was demand for similar programs tailored to specific disciplines resident within the school. Therefore, leaders decided to house the degree, in the [Department of Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences](#) (SBPS), which was an excellent fit for a program focused on health equity.

Earlier this year, as some institutions of higher education came under increased public and political scrutiny, terms like equity have drawn renewed attention and, in some cases, negative attention. Program administrators heard from many students who feared that the program's name might dampen their efforts in securing jobs using the degree's existing title. After significant discussion, school leaders ultimately made the decision to change the degree name to the [DrPH in Leadership in Social and Behavioral Sciences](#).

"This change reflects a strategic decision, not a shift in our values," said [Dr. Gretchen Clum](#), associate dean for academic programs and director of the rebranded DrPH program.

This decision was not made lightly. Equity and advocacy are both central tenets of public health and align with the school's vision of "optimal health and well-being for all." Further, the focus on equity and advocacy are central to the work of the Department of Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences, which currently ranks as the 11th top social and behavioral department in public health by [US News and World Report](#). SBPS Chair [Dr. Akilah Dulin](#) said that while the "name of the program has changed, our commitment to health equity and advocacy is unwavering."

The program graduated its first class this past May. Thirty graduates received their degrees with the option to have the degree program listed as either the former or current name of the program. The first inaugural cohort of DrPH students were [hooded as part of the doctoral ceremony](#), recognizing all of the work they had put in over the past several years. Each student brought their unique background and experiences to the degree and emerged as leaders ready to lead health promotion and equity efforts to significantly impact health for all.

The program has been a remarkable success. The cohort model built a doctoral class of colleagues and friends and continues to flourish with new cohorts entering twice a year.

With the name change complete, the program is positioned to continue growing and preparing public health leaders ready to meet complex challenges, gained in a collaborative and engaging educational environment.