

The DrPH adapts to the changing environment of public health

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About five years ago, the [Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) introduced a brand new fully online Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) program. Since that time, the field, however, has undergone significant changes. In response, school leaders engaged students, faculty, employers, and other public health practitioners to ensure that the program continues to offer an innovative and

practical degree that meets the needs of the next generation of public health leaders.

As a result, the school will introduce an updated and redesigned [DrPH in Leadership in Social and Behavioral Sciences](#) starting this fall.

The new DrPH in Leadership in Social and Behavioral Sciences retains its status as the most advanced professional degree to equip public health practitioners with the skills and knowledge needed to become effective leaders and advocates for health equity at the highest levels. The reimaged degree places greater emphasis on the key tenets of program evaluation, implementation science, applied and community-engaged approaches, and communication for public health leaders.

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— Gretchen Clum

"Health equity and advocacy are central to our program and will continue to be," said Gretchen Clum, associate dean for academic programs and program director of the DrPH program. "Students expressed strong interest in advanced skill development, such as strategic planning and leadership. While we have these skills in our current program, we wanted to develop them further in the redesigned program."

The program's updated curriculum includes courses in strategic communication, implementation science, and multisectoral collaboration and partnership building. Continuing students will benefit as well, with several curricular changes that reflect the newly emphasized goals.

The core objective of the program is to develop applied public health leaders with skills grounded in evidence-based methods and pragmatic approaches to addressing public health problems, specifically with an eye toward health equity.

Unlike a PhD program, which is primarily research-focused, the DrPH is designed for professionals interested in strengthening leadership skills, applied practice, and working directly with communities and leading organizations to advance population health.

“The DrPH program is designed for working professionals,” Clum points out. “All courses are online, and materials are asynchronous. We also hold live sessions to connect students with faculty to unpack pressing public health issues, engage in problem-solving, and build community among our online students.”

The program also includes a student-led field experience in a public health setting, guided by faculty mentorship, and a high-level written culminating experience, both with an applied focus.

Students enter the Leadership in Social and Behavioral Sciences DrPH program with diverse professional backgrounds and interests. From maternal and child health, to community-building initiatives and nutrition, the topics covered are wide-ranging and tailored to students’ interests.

One of the department’s strengths is its ability to accommodate those varying interests while providing the key skills and tools to support students’ success.

“The program framework emphasizes leadership, program planning and evaluation, implementation science, grant writing, health equity, advocacy, and strategic communication for public health leaders,” Clum says. “We’re interested in training students in applied, evidence-based approaches to improve population health.”

“So, a student’s area of interest can vary, and it does. We have amazing students who are already working professionals coming in with their interests established, and they develop them further here, working within the framework that we provide in the program to become leaders at the highest levels promoting public health.”

Applications are open now. Learn more at: <https://sph.tulane.edu/sbps/drph>