

IUPUI GAC Reviewer Form

Documents Reviewed:

IUPUI Health Communication PhD Degree Program_Nov_30_11.pdf, and appendices A-J

Summary of Proposal:

The proposal is for a new PhD degree in Health Communication which will take advantage of the strengths of professional education already happening here on the IUPUI campus. This is a very well written proposal with many strengths. My primary suggestion is that the amount of student effort toward research be increased, as detailed below.

1. Are the goals clear and achievable?

Yes.

2. Is the program academically sound?

Yes, although I recommend increasing the research portion of the degree, as detailed below.

3. Are faculty resources available to offer this certificate without undercutting other key missions of the unit?

The answer to this is not clear. Faculty responsibilities need to be detailed to show that the addition of these students and the required new courses can be done with the faculty designated.

4. Is there overlap, either real or potential, with any other unit that could harm the program or be exploited to help the program?

No, and support from the IUB communication program is very positive.

5. My recommendation, comments/concerns regarding this proposal...

The list of primary faculty for the program looks good, as does the list of adjunct people who can contribute to the courses and/or research of the students in this proposed program. The unique nature of IUPUI—with nationally recognized health schools embedded within the campus—makes this a perfect environment for students to learn about and do research in health communication.

It is especially important to me that the PhD program in Bloomington is supportive of the Health Communication PhD here in Indy.

There are seven new courses proposed for this degree, and I cannot really assess the difficulty of establishing those courses, given the present faculty workload. It would be helpful to have a listing of the courses with the faculty who will be responsible for them, along with a tally of how many hours each faculty member

teaches. That is, I wonder if there is enough faculty time available to teach the new courses.

In looking at the curricula for similar programs around the country, I conclude that there is no standard for how much research should be part of a PhD in communication. I found dissertation hours ranging from 3-24; this reflects a lack of consensus among communication scholars on the value of research preparation for their students.

Unless research in health communication is actually less rigorous than research in other fields, it seems to me that the higher end of that scale would be better for preparing students for their future careers. The IUPUI degree, as it now is proposed, gives students basically two or three semesters of research, depending on how the C6xx Fieldwork/Research course turns out. I found no specifics of what that course would be. If C6xx Fieldwork/Research turns out to be only participating in someone else's research, then the dissertation work comes down to two semesters.

I suggest that the faculty consider changing this length of time for research to something longer. Part of my rationale for this relates to the nature of fieldwork itself. Few young scientists get their fieldwork right on the first try, usually because they are unable to anticipate the true nature of the field environment until they actually begin to collect data. And unless the faculty mentor has done research in exactly the same environment as the student, he or she is unlikely to be able to anticipate all the contingencies that may exist in that environment, either.

Thus, for a student to do a really good piece of independent work, something like four semesters seems to me to be a more realistic period for dissertation research and writing.