

INTRODUCTION

The MEZCOPH Transition from a Collaborative College of Public Health Structure to a Single Institution Structure

In 1993, when the Arizona MPH program was established, and in 2000, when the College of Public Health was established, the three Arizona universities (The University of Arizona (UA), Arizona State University (ASU), and Northern Arizona University (NAU)) agreed to a tri-university collaborative structure, with The University of Arizona as the lead institution. Thus in 2000, the leadership from all three universities affirmed the continuation of the tri-university collaboration for the College of Public Health. From the beginning, the University of Arizona provided core funding for the College, but with the expectation that the sister institutions would invest, beginning during the early years of the development of the College.

Programmatically, the collaborative effort included offering four of the five required core areas of the MPH at The University of Arizona, namely Biostatistics; Epidemiology; Environmental and Occupational Health; and Health Education and Social and Behavioral Sciences. The leadership of the fifth core area (Health Policy and Administration) area was at Arizona State University. All three of the partnering universities recognized how essential it was to the collaboration for ASU to provide the responsibility for leadership in this area.

The collaborative structure as defined and developed did not hold up to the scrutiny of the 2003 accreditation review, for we were informed of a rating of "not met" on criterion V. A. -- the required MPH instructional program. Moreover, difficulties in the organizational setting and governance of our College resulted in ratings of "met with commentary" on criteria II.B. and III.

Stresses had already developed in the collaborative structure before the accreditation review, and when it was learned that all five core areas had to be "owned" by The University of Arizona, the rationale for and the commitment to sustaining the collaboration disappeared. In the summer of 2003, the Presidents and Provosts of all three collaborating universities and the Dean of the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, agreed that the College should make the transition to a UA-only College of Public Health. This decision was propelled by the requirements handed down by the accreditation review, which in turn highlighted issues related to resources and who provides them, recruitment and how it is planned and executed, administrators and who appoints them, and at the foundation the very real complexities of

governance across universities even under the best of conditions. The theoretical construct had broken down, namely that faculty from all three universities could work within the structure of a college fully established within the lead institution. It proved too difficult for the Dean to exercise normal authorities and responsibilities within colleges in a sister institution, and the Provosts found it impossible to create an overarching governance structure with secure funding that would meet the needs and respect the authorities of all participating units and leaders, while at the same time being responsive to accreditation requirements.

In hindsight, it was not the best of times to try to achieve a tri-college collaboration, for this same period of time was suddenly marked by devastating budget cuts to higher education in the State of Arizona. Partly as a response to this, reorganizations were taking place in all three Arizona universities, and the Arizona Board of Regents (through its "Changing Directions" mantra) was encouraging each institution to be far more independently enterprising in connecting mission objectives with strategic activities.

By July 1, 2004 the tri-college collaborative effort had become transformed to, quite simply, The University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. With that change came the establishment of the 5th core concentration at UA proper, resulting in all 5 core concentrations operating fully with UA MEZCOPH faculty, and provision by UA central administration of adequate resources of a permanent nature to stabilize the academic programs.

We now believe through our own self-evaluation that MEZCOPH has improved itself by fully meeting all 10 Council on Education for Public Health accreditation criteria for Graduate Schools of Public Health, including its capacity to sustain this effort in a manner marked by excellence.