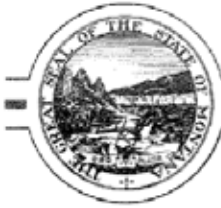


ITEM 126-1011-R0105

**Attachment 2
Letters of Support**

- 1) Dr. Michael Spence, Montana State Health Officer
- 2) Ellen Lahey, Director Missoula City/County Health Department
- 3) Melanie Reynolds, MPH, Office of Public Health System Improvement, DPHHS
- 4) Maggie Bullock, Administrator Public Health and Safety Division, DPHHS
- 5) Pete Conway, Director Billings Area Indian Health Service
- 6) Doug Moore, Medical Director, Yellowstone City/County Health Department
- 7) Lil Anderson, Executive Director, Yellowstone City/County Health Department
- 8) Gordon Belcort, Executive Director MT/WY Tribal Leaders Council

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



JUDY MARTZ
GOVERNOR

GAIL GRAY, Ed.D.
DIRECTOR

STATE OF MONTANA

17 May 2004

David S. Forbes, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences
340 Skaggs Building
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

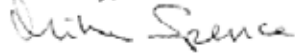
Dear Dr. Forbes,

I am writing this letter in support of the plan to develop a program that will lead to the degree of Master of Public Health (MPH) at the University of Montana. It is my understanding that the program that is being considered will be distance learning based. There is no question that an MPH program would be a welcome addition to our state and potentially provide us with a much needed and sought after group, public health professionals. In addition to a program leading to a graduate degree in public health it would be equally beneficial to have a public health certificate program. The certificate program would be for individuals without public health degrees that were already working in the public health field and wanted more education in their chosen vocation. Individuals not desiring a graduate degree but wanting training in a public health curriculum could also pursue the public health certificate.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has for several years provided summer internships for public health students. We have provided a public health educational and practicum experience for both masters' level and doctoral students from many different schools of public health. These have allowed the students to earn graduate credit and in some instances provided them with topics and data for theses or dissertations.

Lastly, I would like to express my interest in participating as either a visiting or adjunct faculty member in the program. Prior to my accepting the position of Chief Medical Officer in the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services I spent 22 years as a fulltime faculty member in academic medicine and worked extensively on public health projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael R. Spence".

Michael R. Spence, MD, MPH
Chief Medical Officer



MISSOULA CITY-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
301 W ALDER ST
MISSOULA MT 59802-4123

June 6, 2004

David S. Forbes, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences
340 Skaggs Building
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Dear Dean Forbes:

I write to express my support for developing a Master's of Public Health program at the University of Montana, and with particular enthusiasm for employing a distance learning approach.

Those of us in the public health work force are quite aware of the national call for improving the education and preparation of our public health practitioners. Coming from widely varied educational backgrounds, public health professionals often enter the field unprepared for the comprehensive nature and unique charge of public health. This, in combination with the aging-in-place phenomenon of veteran public health professionals, is creating an acute need for graduate-level preparation for new and existing public professionals. And given the job-related and geographical limits that working Montanans face, a distance learning approach has great promise for strengthening Montana's public health workforce.

Our local health department is the second-largest in the state, employing 120 public health workers in delivery of comprehensive population-based services. Our employees have specialized experience and education in numerous focus areas, including epidemiology, environmental health, public health nutrition, health education and promotion, public health nursing, and community-based health care. Few of these experts have graduate degrees in public health, yet many are interested in partaking of every opportunity to learn about basic and advanced public health theory and practice. These opportunities are brought about through conferences, long-distance learning with other secondary institutions and our Montana Public Health Institute. As a public health administrator, I can tell you that making and sustaining arrangements for this stop-and-go approach to professional development leaves much to be desired. As a faculty member of the Montana Public Health Institute, I can also attest that the interest and management support for public health education is growing across the state.

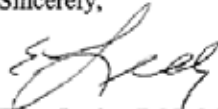
I would expect that the largest participation in a public health distance-learning program at UM would come from current employees of public health agencies, local and state, followed by a smaller group of practitioners or job-seekers choosing a certification option. The full degree, if offered in the flexible manner being discussed, may attract a

ADMINISTRATION (406) 523-4770	ANIMAL CONTROL (406) 523-4785	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (406) 523-4755	HEALTH EDUCATION (406) 523-4775	HEALTH SERVICES (406) 523-4750
NUTRITION SERVICES (406) 523-4740	PARTNERSHIP HEALTH CENTER (406) 523-4769	WATER QUALITY DISTRICT (406) 523-4860		

smaller number initially, but could, indeed, fill a niche in the state for career public health professionals like myself.

Like the many other initiatives that have come from the School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, the development of a Master's in Public Health program is progressive, pragmatic, and has great potential. Please contact me if I can assist in the consideration and development of this proposal in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Leahy', written in a cursive style.

Ellen Leahy, R.N., M.N.
Health Officer

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



JUDY MARTZ
GOVERNOR

GAIL GRAY, Ed.D.
DIRECTOR

STATE OF MONTANA

July 5, 2004

David S. Forbes, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences
340 Skaggs Building
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Re: Letter of Support for a Master's of Public Health Program at The University of Montana

Dear Dr. Forbes:

As the state coordinator for the Montana Turning Point Initiative, I am writing in support of a Master's of Public Health (MPH) program at The University of Montana. Started in 1997, Turning Point is an initiative of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The impetus for Turning Point came from concerns about the capacity of the public health system to respond to emerging challenges of public health. In Montana, the Turning Point Initiative is addressing educational needs among the health-related workforce through the development of the Montana Public Health Training Institute. The goal of the Institute is to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of Montana's state, local, and tribal public health personnel to deal with public health issues.

Through the Montana Public Health Training Institute, several workforce training needs assessments have been conducted. A recent survey by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) indicated that one-third of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) employees would be eligible to retire within the next five years. The 2003 statewide emergency preparedness training assessment results show similar findings. Montana survey data reflects similar trends throughout the nation - as we experience the aging of the health workforce, there is concern about having a highly trained, dedicated workforce to respond to the many challenges to public health.

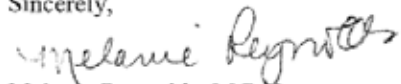
Additionally, our state has unique challenges with our geographically dispersed population, rural health delivery system, and decentralized public health infrastructure. We have had significant capacity challenges such as maintaining our public health resources, retaining and training leadership, securing political support, and developing the needed organizational infrastructure to address basic or emerging environmental public health problems and threats facing our community.

The Montana Public Health Training Institute is targeting the current public health workforce by providing programs in core public health areas including epidemiology, health communications, public health law, and leadership development. An on-line MPH program could provide distance-learning opportunities for individuals already working in public health or considering a career in public health. We would be interested in working with your program in providing these educational opportunities. A certificate of public health option would be a particularly attractive option to our workforce since many public health professionals are unable to commit the time or other resources for a full graduate degree, but would be interested in an intensive public health program.

Relevant public health research can provide fresh insights and creative solutions to health problems and supplies the evidence needed for policy development and program implementation. Some areas of applied research might include health disparities especially related to rural areas and program evaluation. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services would be interested in working with the University of Montana's efforts in providing research and internship opportunities. This would benefit both students and public health agencies. We would be interested in working with the University of Montana in placing students in agency assignments and research projects.

I am interested in continuing to work with the University of Montana in developing a graduate public health degree program for our state. I would be happy to assist in identifying visiting lecturers in the public health practice community and assisting with possible internships and research initiatives. As you know, the Montana Public Health Training Institute staff has been working closely with the University of Washington's Northwest Center for Public Health Practice and the Montana State University on educational and training programs. We are especially interested in an interdisciplinary learning approach using resources from the Montana universities, schools of public health such as the University of Washington, and the public health practice community to develop a comprehensive learning system for all public health professionals. We look forward to working with you on your efforts to develop an on-line MPH program.

Sincerely,



Melanie Reynolds, M.P.H.

MT Turning Point Initiative/Office of Public Health System Improvement

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



JUDY MARTZ
GOVERNOR

GAIL GRAY, Ed.D.
DIRECTOR

STATE OF MONTANA

June 28, 2004

David S. Forbes, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences
340 Skaggs Building
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Re: Letter of Support for a Master's of Public Health Program at The University of Montana

Dear Dr. Forbes

I am writing in support of a Master's of Public Health program at The University of Montana. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and the Montana Public Health Improvement Task Force have identified workforce training and education as a key priority issue in its strategic planning. Changes in health delivery systems, unexpected environmental disasters and hazards, emergency preparedness, and Montana's medically underserved rural areas, challenge our public health system. The public health workforce needs new skills and competencies to address these issues.

The Montana public health workforce includes nurses, environmental health specialists, health educators, program managers and other health professionals. There are approximately 200 state public health workers and over 1,300 public health workers in Montana who work in local, tribal, and state public health agencies. Many public health workers lack formal or consistent public health training and also need to stay current on the latest innovations, technology and public health issues.

Traveling out-of-state for graduate public health programs is expensive and time consuming. It would be beneficial for our state's workforce to have an in-state or distance learning Master's in Public Health program. An on-line program could meet the needs of full-time employees through self-paced learning using distance-learning components. Though we encourage public health employees to pursue advanced education, we do not have funding to support students in graduate programs.

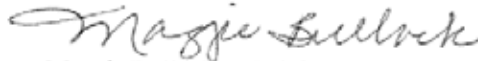
Nationally, several public health programs have offered a certificate in public health based on core public health practices and knowledge as an option for the workforce. This would be very valuable to our state since many health professionals are either unable to

commit the time and other resources for a full graduate degree or they have an advanced degree but would like to have an intensive concentration in the field of public health.

State and local public health programs are wonderful "laboratories" for providing research opportunities for graduate public health students and we would support the placement of students in our agencies. There are possible research projects in epidemiology, health education, environmental health, and community assessment and planning. Research benefits agency and community goals as well as provides a great opportunity for students.

We would like to continue to work with you in developing a graduate public health degree program and other education opportunities for the public health workforce. As you know, we have been collaborating with and appreciate the work of the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine on several workforce development and training projects and we will continue to work with them on our complementary goals of a trained and prepared public health workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maggie Bullock".

Maggie Bullock, Administrator
Public Health and Safety Division
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service
Indian Health Service

JUL 14 2004

Billings Area
Indian Health Service
2900 4th Avenue North
P.O. Box 36600
Billings, MT 59107

Our Reference: OHP/CMO

David S. Forbes, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences
340 Skaggs Building
The University of Montana
Missoula, Montana 59812

Dear Dr. Forbes:

This letter is in support for the University of Montana to develop a Masters of Public Health (MPH) program.


The Billings Area Indian Health Service (IHS) is a federally funded agency that serves approximately 70,000 American Indian and Alaska Natives in Montana. In addition to providing clinical services the Billings Area IHS provides public health services to residents on reservations and non-reservation communities. A distance based MPH program would be beneficial to the rural employees of the IHS and a tool to increase the public health knowledge and skills of IHS and tribal personnel.

The IHS does not fund clinical research activities but does support evaluation and quality improvement projects. Affiliated programs may have some opportunities for epidemiological studies.

The existence of a degree granting public health program enhances the value of the time and effort put in by professional and students to attain this knowledge. A well-trained public health workforce will increase the effectiveness of the public health resources currently available and is essential to maintaining quality public health services.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Terry Dennis, Area Chief Medical Officer, at (406) 247-7110.

Sincerely,


for
Pete Conway
Director, Billings Area

9-1-04

David S. Forbes, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences
340 Skaggs Building
The University of Montana
Missoula, Mt. 59812

Dear Dean Forbes,

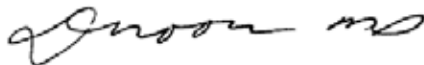
This letter is written in support of the University of Montana's initiative to establish a masters in public health. I have had the opportunity to hear you and Mr. White present on this endeavor as well as spent a few hours with Mr. White reviewing the proposal in detail.

The proposed curriculum, organization, and linkages of this masters program with other institutions of higher learning within this state is a plan I fully support. I also support the focus on the rural/frontier public health issues and the assurance this program is available and tailored to fit the needs of eastern Montana residents.

If I can assist in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me. Mentoring of students, visiting lecturer, or assisting in public health research design and implementation are a few of the ways I could possibly contribute to the success of your program.

Finally, I would like to thank you and Mr. White for the time and effort you have put into this project. If successful in establishing this program, your fingerprints will be on the overall improvement of public health for this state into the next century.

Sincerely,



Douglas L. Moore, MD, MPH
Chief Medical Officer
Yellowstone City-County Health Department



Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council

207 North Broadway, Suite BR-2, Billings, MT 59101-1951
Phone (406) 252-2550 Fax (406) 254-6355 WWW <http://tlc.wtp.net>

8 November 2004

David S. Forbes, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences
340 Skaggs Building
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT. 59812

Dear Dr. Forbes:

The Tribal Leaders Council consisting of the ten Native American Reservations and Tribal Governments in Montana and Wyoming strongly encourages the creation of a distance learning based Master of Public Health program at The University of Montana.

Our tribes have responsibility for the public health needs of more than 75,000 Native Americans. The tribal health clinics and hospitals on our reservations employ more than 200 professionals who work in the various aspects of public health. To be effective in fulfilling our mission to achieve the Highest Level of Health and Health Care for each of the Reservations and Reservation Communities, our Tribal health care professionals need on going access to graduate education in public health. Your proposal to offer the Masters of Public Health (MPH) degree as well as a MPH certificate via distance learning would be of immeasurable immediate and long-term value to our health care personnel. Furthermore, the Indian Health Service has designated the Master of Public Health as a priority health career and therefore Tribal Members in Montana and Wyoming are eligible and encouraged to apply for scholarships to pursue this degree and specializations.

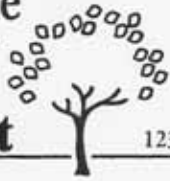
In conclusion, I would personally be interested in assisting you and the faculty in the development of this important and needed program.

Sincerely,

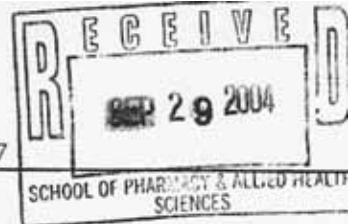


Gordon Belcourt MPH
Executive Director

Yellowstone
City-County
Health
Department



Phone: (406) 247-3200 • Fax: (406) 247-3202
123 South 27th • P.O. Box 35033 • Billings, MT 59107



August 25, 2004

Dave Forbes, Ph.D., Dean
The University of Montana
School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences
Skaggs Building, Room 344
Missoula, MT 59812-1512



Dear Dean Forbes:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today to discuss the proposed Masters in Public Health program that the University of Montana is considering. It is my pleasure to offer the wholehearted support of the Yellowstone City-County Health Department for the development of this program. I believe it will be one that will benefit our state tremendously. I encourage the Board of Regents to approve this program for initiation in 2006.

Yellowstone City-County Health Department is the largest health department in the state, with over 20 public health, social service, and health service programs. Through my local work and statewide collaborations, I can attest to the need for masters-prepared public health workers across the entire state. In our own organization, we currently have four MPH staff, and there is no doubt in my mind that our ability to serve our mission would only be enhanced by the availability of more people with the MPH credential. I am quite confident that multiple YCCHD employees would be attracted to the opportunity to earn a high-quality MPH through a distance learning program such as the one you envision.

I am gratified by your intention to develop your MPH program in collaboration with MSU – Billings and Montana Tech. You are to be commended for your foresight in utilizing existing resources to develop a new program rather than duplicating resources simply because they are housed in different parts of the University system.

If I may, I would like to offer three thoughts for you to consider as you develop the MPH program in its final form. First, flexibility in scheduling courses, including within the order of courses, will be of benefit to the working professionals who are likely to find the distance learning program very attractive. Second, you might consider offering credit for related public health experience or at least offering long term public health professionals the opportunity to challenge courses through a testing process. Third, there is a pressing and growing need for epidemiologists in Montana, so a focus in that area might be very attractive to potential students and very helpful to the entire state.

Finally, please know that part of YCCHD's mission is to provide educational and training opportunities for health professionals. We look forward to future discussions about involving our agency in some ongoing way in the education of your MPH students.

Again, please know that the proposed MPH program has the full support of this organization. I look forward to working with you in the future to bring this exciting new venture to fruition.

Sincerely yours,

Lil Anderson
CEO / Health Officer