Educating Public Health Doctoral Students About Research Integration and Implementation: UC Berkeley Model

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The Problem…

✧ To solve health issues such as climate change, obesity and violence we must draw on many disciplines and involve stakeholders from many sectors.

But…

✧ Most doctoral programs focus on a narrow set of disciplines and do not provide enough opportunities for students to implement research in realistic settings.
In 2000, the School of Public Health transformed its DrPH program.

The DrPH program includes all disciplines, such as engineering, business, law, policy—as well as traditional public health disciplines.

Students focus on “solving problems” not just “testing theories.”

Students work with many stakeholders from communities, government, and private industry.
The DrPH Program Goals Are…

✧ “Trandisciplinary”: Train students to develop new theories, methods, products and applications

✧ “Translational”: Train students to implement research findings into programs and policies

✧ “Participatory”: Train students to engage with many end-users, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers
Examples of DrPH Research & Action

- DrPH students from multiple disciplines helped the Mexican government revise HIV/AIDS policies.
- DrPH student developed a new video method to engage hurricane survivors to improve emergency preparedness.
- DrPH student created a novel way to apply Health Impact Assessments to school community planning.
- DrPH students worked with youth to integrate their voice into local health assessments and programs.
Health Research for Action center (HRA): A “Learning Lab” for Students

- HRA has been a program at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health for over 20 years.
- HRA staff include researchers, program experts, and policymakers linked to stakeholders worldwide.
- Doctoral, masters and undergraduate students from many disciplines have jobs and internships at HRA.
- HRA staff and students integrate research from all disciplines and apply it across all sectors.
- HRA focuses on participatory “action research”
Early DrPH Program Challenges

- Disciplinary faculty: slow to understand, accept and participate in the program
- Hard to find academic funding
- Hard to link students to other schools and sectors
DrPH Program Successes

✧ Program reputation growing among faculty
✧ Resources are increasing and sustainable
✧ Nearly 100% employment for graduates
✧ Increasing demand

2. University of California, Berkeley DrPH Program: http://sph.berkeley.edu/students/degrees/areas/drph1.php

3. Health Research for Action Center, UC Berkeley: http://www.healthresearchforaction.org
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