



DrPH in Public Health Laboratory Science and Practice Overview

To address a chronic shortage of individuals qualified to serve as CLIA laboratory directors in the public health sector, the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) has partnered with the University of South Florida (USF), College of Public Health (Tampa, Florida) to establish a new degree track for their already existing DrPH program.

This new track is entitled "*DrPH in Public Health Laboratory Science and Practice*". It offers a curriculum for future public health laboratory leaders who desire to become nationally certified CLIA laboratory directors. Uniquely, this degree can be achieved primarily by taking Internet based (i.e., online) courses, with minimal in-person (on campus) requirements. With the possible exception of students who reside near USF's Tampa campus, the doctoral research will be conducted at the student's work location, or a nearby host laboratory, under the supervision of a qualified individual.

Importantly, the curriculum for this new doctoral degree addresses all 15 competency domains for public health laboratory professionals.¹ This addresses a need that has been expressed by currently laboratory directors throughout the nation. Specifically, they need applicants who are not merely trained scientists, but who are also "competent" in the aspects that are unique to public health laboratory science and practice.

From the 1960s through the mid-1980s the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta jointly operated a program that produced Doctors of Public Health in Public Health Laboratory Science and Practice.² Didactic academic courses were provided at Chapel Hill, NC and doctoral research was conducted in Atlanta, at the CDC. The cost of providing students with a 3- to 4-year, full-time, on-campus doctoral program eventually led to its demise. Since then, the U.S. has been without a similar program with the goal of preparing future public health, environmental, and agricultural laboratory scientist-managers and directors.

Our hope is this new DrPH degree will fill a need that has existed since the UNC-CDC program ended.

¹ Ned-Sykes, R., C. Johnson, J. Ridderhof, E. Perlman, A. Pollock, J. DeBoy. 2015. Competency Guidelines for Public Health Laboratory Professionals. *Morb. Mort. Wkly. Reps.* Vol 64, Suppl. 1, May 15, 2015

² U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control. Graduate program in public health laboratory practice. Atlanta, GA, Jan. 1972, 4E9921172.