

Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

ACTION ITEM

For Meeting of July 17, 2024

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JOE C. WEN SCHOOL OF POPULATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH, UC IRVINE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UC Irvine proposes the establishment of the Joe C. Wen School of Population and Public Health within the Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences. The proposed school would focus on cutting-edge, inclusive research and instruction to optimize health and well-being while focusing on culturally diverse communities in Southern California and beyond. The School's areas of research would vary from big data analytics, to community engagement around social determinants of health, to structural and behavioral interventions, to environmental health impacts, to chronic disease epidemiology and survivorship, and more—all with the ultimate aim of reducing health disparities.

UC Irvine hosts a Program in Public Health that is well established and is functioning as a School in all but name. In this sense, this School proposal is based in transitioning the existing Program in Public Health into a School of Population and Public Health. The School would include the existing Departments of Epidemiology and Biostatistics; Environmental and Occupational Health; Health, Society and Behavior; and Population Health and Disease Prevention. These four founding departments will house nine degree programs total, with two bachelor's programs, four master's programs, and three doctoral programs.

The financial viability of a future School of Population and Public Health is strong. Joe C. Wen and family have pledged \$42.5 million to create a new endowed fund and support the School's highest priorities, and to honor his support, UC Irvine has proposed naming the proposed School the "Joe C. Wen School of Population and Public Health." In addition, the existing Program in Public Health has received a \$14 million grant from the Irvine Health Foundation. Both of these funding boosts provide the resources needed to transition the Program in Public Health into a preeminent School of Population and Public Health with great transformative potential towards reducing the burden of disease and disability in Southern California and around the world through research, teaching, and service.

RECOMMENDATION

The President of the University recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee recommend to the Regents that Section 15 (a) of the Academic Units and Functions, Affiliated

Institutions, and Related Activities of the University, as provided for in Standing Order 110.1, be amended as follows:

Additions shown by underscoring; deletions shown by strikethrough

10. Professional Schools

Public Health

- Joe C. Wen School of Population and Public Health, at Irvine, with curricula leading to degrees of Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, Master of Public Health, and Doctor of Philosophy.

BACKGROUND

The existing UC Irvine Program in Public Health is well established and is functioning as a School in all but name. The Program in Public Health's mission centers on the conduct of research and instruction to reduce the burden of disease and disability in culturally diverse communities in Southern California and around the world, thus the mission of the existing Program and the proposed School would not significantly differ. The Program developed one of the first undergraduate degrees in public health within the UC system and has been recognized for its pedagogy and commitment to training a diverse student body. The Program has one of the largest and most diverse undergraduate populations at UC Irvine, with 50 percent of students identifying as first-generation college students and 80 percent being Asian American, Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black, or two more underrepresented minorities. The Program's bachelor's degree programs have emerged as two of the top majors at UCI and in the past six years, first-year enrollment has grown 140 percent. At the graduate level, the Program's graduate degree programs have been established for more than ten years and have now developed a track record of graduates being placed in academic teaching and research positions within prominent institutions in Southern California.

As a sign of the Program's growth, faculty recruitment has accelerated considerably in the last five years. The Program in Public Health's faculty has grown from 23 members to now 47 Senate faculty, 10 clinical faculty, two adjunct faculty, 45 research specialists, and 20 postdoctoral researchers. Also in the last five years, the Program in Public Health has joined three other schools and one institute (Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Integrative Health Institute) within the 200,000-square-foot Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences. If the Program in Public Health becomes the School of Population and Public Health, all of these units within the College of Health Sciences

will unify towards an interprofessional education agenda that trains a future generation of health providers.

In the UC system, there are currently three Schools of Public Health, at the Berkeley, Los Angeles and San Diego campuses. Several other UC campuses offer public health degrees that reside in departments or other programs or schools that have different core priorities. All three UC schools and other public health programs cover similar discipline areas, as they must address common accreditation requirements by the Council on Education for Public Health. UC Irvine's School of Population and Public Health would join UC's other Schools of Public Health in serving a diverse student population and in its mission and commitment to focus on health equity in research, teaching, and service. Moreover, UC Irvine's School would fill a meaningful gap in the public health infrastructure of Orange County and the Southern California region at large. In Orange County, significant health problems include undertreated mental health problems, opioid abuse, disproportionate adverse impacts of chronic and infectious disease, and a need to focus on successful aging.

Meeting Campus and System Priorities

The Joe C. Wen School of Population and Public Health would focus on cutting-edge, inclusive research and instruction to optimize health and well-being while focusing on culturally diverse communities in Southern California and beyond. Housed within the Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences, the School's areas of research would vary from big data analytics, to community engagement around social determinants of health, to structural and behavioral interventions, to environmental health impacts, to chronic disease epidemiology and survivorship, and more—all with the ultimate aim of reducing health disparities. The mission statement of the School would be as follows:

The Joe C. Wen School of Population and Public Health is dedicated to the achievement of health equity for all populations through research, teaching, and service, to reduce the burden of disease and disability in culturally diverse communities in Southern California and around the world. Championing the principles of evidence-based public health science, the School aspires to understand and impact population-level social, biological, behavioral, and environmental determinants of health.

At its inception, two priorities would guide the School. The first would be community engagement: the School would serve its communities through its affiliates partnering with communities as they recognize the community's health needs and barriers to health equity. The second priority would be diversity and inclusion: within the School, faculty would continue to train a diverse group of graduates as future leaders in public health who promote diversity in their own ranks.

Population health refers to understanding health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group. Many determinants of health, such as medical care systems, the social environment, and the physical environment, have at least a

partial biological impact on individuals at a population level. The proposed name of the School encompasses this broader interpretation of inequitable distributions of health impacts across the Southern Californian and global populations.

The Joe C. Wen School of Population and Public Health will join UC Irvine's Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, all within the Susan and Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences, towards a unified approach in training the next generation of health providers.

Academic Rigor

At its core, public health education is based on an academically-rigorous, science-based curriculum that is grounded in disciplines such as epidemiology, environmental science, biostatistics, biology, and physical and biobehavioral sciences. This curricular core is complemented by a strong social science component that includes ethics, behavioral sciences, political sciences, anthropology, sociology, and economics. In this way, public health is inherently interdisciplinary as it addresses the health and welfare of societies. In accordance with these traits of public health, the School of Population and Public Health would include multiple departments: (1) the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics; (2) the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health; (3) the Department of Health, Society and Behavior; and (4) the Department of Population Health and Disease Prevention. During the School's establishment phase, these academic units would operationalize the two priorities of community engagement and diversity and inclusion. Beyond these priorities, and across the departments, there would be several research focal areas including health equity; chronic disease etiology, prevention, and survivorship; environmental and occupational risk factors; global health; health services/population health; emerging and infectious diseases; biostatistical methodologies; and other emerging research areas such as nutritional science.

The four founding departments will house nine degree programs total: two bachelor's programs, four master's programs, and three doctoral programs:

- Bachelor of Arts in Public Health Policy;
- Bachelor of Science in Public Health Science;
- Master of Public Health (emphasis areas in epidemiology or sociocultural diversity and health);
- Master of Science in Public Health (concentrations in disease prevention or global health);
- Master of Science in Environmental Health Sciences;
- Master of Science in Epidemiology;
- Ph.D. in Public Health (concentrations in disease prevention or global health);
- Ph.D. in Environmental Health Sciences (tracks in environmental toxicology or exposure sciences & environmental epidemiology); and
- Ph.D. in Epidemiology.

At the undergraduate level, the general goal would be to provide education in public health science and its applications, leading to graduates who can take this broad science-based foundation and apply it to graduate programs or other professional training or to real-world careers, including but not limited to public health. Themes around understanding and applying the scientific method and evidence-based inquiry, as well as themes around social determinants of health, health equity, and social justice, would be foundational as concepts such as these have remained underlying themes in the development of undergraduate public health over the last two decades. The Bachelor of Science in Public Health degree would be relatively specialized in that it would prepare students for public health careers after graduation.

At the graduate level, the goal would be to conduct research that informs effective strategies to reduce the burden of disease and disability in culturally diverse communities in Southern California and around the world through excellence in research, public service, and education. The graduate programs would be designed to prepare students for leadership roles in an array of careers including academic research, teaching, policy, and organizational leadership. Across all the graduate programs, students would gain in-depth knowledge of the public health field and its overarching mission of promoting health and well-being through rigorous coursework and training in theory and research methods. While the Master of Public Health curriculum would provide training for health professionals integrated with the same STEM and social science framework applicable to a master's level degree program, the M.S. and Ph.D. programs would prepare graduates for disciplinary leadership—graduates who can successfully lead independent and collaborative research careers in academic institutions, who can teach at advanced levels of instruction, and who can lead research efforts at agencies dedicated to public health at all levels of organization. The M.S. and Ph.D. programs would have a research focus as part of their curriculum mentored by accomplished faculty members on the most pressing public health questions.

Faculty in the exiting Program in Public Health currently collaborate with the three other schools within the Susan & Henry Samueli College of Health Sciences as well as several programs of public health across the UC system, all of whom share an accreditation-guided curriculum to fulfill the necessary competencies and learning outcomes. As a current Council on Education for Public Health–accredited program of public health, UCI's Program in Public Health is held to the highest academic standards. With the expansion of the Program from one to four departments in 2020, the current Program accreditation has been expanded to include the graduate degree programs and the curricula for the M.S. and Ph.D in Epidemiology and Environmental Health Sciences. Currently, the Program has secured accreditation through 2025 but is presently engaged in an 18-month Council on Education for Public Health self-study process to be accredited as a school of public health.

Enrollment, Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion, and Retention

The COVID-19 pandemic motivated and invigorated a new generation of individuals eager to support their communities, close the disparities gap and address emerging public health crises. This has resulted in a spike in applications, and consequentially, enrollments. In 2020–21, the Program had 58 enrolled students in the MPH program. In the current academic year, 2023–24,

enrollment has grown to 105. The Program plans to have a slow and steady increase in enrollment with a target of 150 students by 2026. Additionally, faculty have focused on supporting a steady cohort of 90 to 100 excellent doctoral candidates after growing from 66 students in 2021–22, thus contributing to the UC 2030 goal of educating residential students, preparing them for success and meeting in-state health needs.

In turn, the undergraduate program has experienced a steady increase and, at any given time, the Program has anywhere between 1,200 to 1,400 students. In addition to an increase in incoming first-year students, students transfer from within UCI from other science schools and community colleges across the state.

The following are enrollment and budgetary projections:

School of Population and Public Health Degree Program Enrollment					
	Year 1 2023– 24	Year 2 2024– 25	Year 3 2025– 26	Year 4 2026– 27	Year 5 2027–28
B.A. in Public Health Policy	440	455	470	470	470
B.S. in Public Health Sciences	949	969	989	989	989
Unaffiliated – Public Health	36	40	44	48	52
Master of Public Health	105	120	150	170	190
M.S. in Public Health	0	0	0	0	0
M.S. in Environmental Health Sciences	6	7	8	8	8
M.S. in Epidemiology	4	4	5	5	5
Ph.D. in Public Health	42	43	44	44	44
Ph.D. in Environmental Health Sciences	26	26	28	28	28
Ph.D. in Epidemiology	22	23	25	25	25
Total Student Enrollment	1,630	1,687	1,763	1,787	1,811

Please note that the M.S. in Public Health program would not enroll students directly as it would only be open to students originating from the Ph.D. in Public Health program; students admitted to the Ph.D. in Public Health program would have the option of additionally earning the M.S. in Public Health.

The School of Population and Public Health would inherit from the existing Program in Public Health a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan, which represents a multi-year effort to provide an optimal learning and research environment where all expect equity, support diversity, practice inclusion, and honor free speech.

This plan relies on four overarching pillars:

- *Diversify and recruit*: Diversification of the School at all levels and establishing pathways into population and public health programs and careers;

- *Foster school community and retain*: Positioning students, faculty, and staff for short- and long-term success and building a culture of belonging for all;
- *Train and mentor*: Enhancing the foundation of understanding at all levels for everyone; and
- *Partner and engage*: Partnering with community groups and outside institutions to enhance inclusiveness, equity, and opportunity for all.

Progress on these pillars will be accomplished over a multi-year time frame and supported by the Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, who will provide administrative leadership, coordination of initiatives, and evaluation of progress. To provide continuity through changes in leadership, and to track the trajectory of progress, the primary assessment for diversity, equity, and inclusion will be a biennial report, which will track progress on the various metrics based in the four pillars. Led by the Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the biennial report will be reviewed and discussed among School of Population and Public Health faculty, staff, students, and leadership, and strategies and priorities for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan will be updated in response to needs and progress.

Finally, reducing the debt ratio for students who graduate from the Program in Public Health will also be a goal for the new School. The Program's use of donor funding for scholarships and increased faculty research portfolios will be key to retaining students as a result of the need to pay competitive salaries for graduate student researchers and teaching assistants and readers. With the restructuring of the budget model at UC Irvine and across the UC system, the increased funding provided by donors, and faculty research will allow students to remain financially supported throughout their graduate degrees. To date, the Program's development team has established six endowed scholarships that support graduate student needs.

Administrative Structure and Financial Viability

The existing Director and Founding Dean of the Program in Public Health would oversee the operations, finance, and administration of the School and its four departments. The Director and Founding Dean would report to the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, with a dotted line to the College of Health Sciences Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs. The four department chairs within the School of Population and Public Health would report to the Director and Founding Dean. Members of the faculty would report to their respective department chair. The School's leadership would include an Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs; an Associate Dean of Academic Affairs; an Associate Dean of Research; and an Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The Associate Deans of Faculty Affairs and Academic Affairs would work collaboratively to facilitate faculty in meeting their workload responsibilities and course sequencing for degrees equitably. The Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs would have administrative responsibilities to ensure faculty meet workload obligations and are in good standing for merit and promotion reviews and work closely with each department chair and others on new faculty hires and transfers, merits and promotions, as well as with the elected faculty chair and vice chair on faculty bylaws and policies. The Associate Dean of Research would work with pre- and post-award financial staff to ensure that proposal and grant management activities maximize the ability of faculty to successfully obtain and execute

extramural grants. The Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion would work closely with the equity advisor and the various diversity-related initiatives within the School to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion.

UCI's executive administrators, including the Chancellor, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, and Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs, agree that transitioning the Program in Public Health into a School of Public Health is a strategic priority for the campus. Public health remains an area of growth in the campus' training and research enterprise and the Program's reputation is strong and will continue to be competitive across California.

Despite the five-year plan to address campus budgetary constraints, the Program in Public Health remains as a fiscally secure entity. First, the Program has had multiple philanthropic successes, most importantly Joe C. Wen and family's pledge of \$425 million to create a new endowed fund. In addition to this donation, UC Irvine has secured from the Irvine Health Foundation a gift of \$14 million for the School of Population and Public Health. This gift will support the creation of seven endowed chairs. Added to this is the Program in Public Health's current research portfolio, which has nearly tripled in the last five years. These budgetary increases will support the new budget framework that will focus on the indirect cost resource allocations back to the school for operational spending to support off-scale salaries for faculty recruitments, additional staff hiring specifically in grant management, marketing, and student recruitment, and finance, graduate student researcher and teaching assistant funding, and overall school support.

Review and Approvals

The proposal for the Joe C. Wen School of Population and Public Health has been reviewed and recommended for approval by the UC Irvine campus and subsequently the Office of the President and the systemwide Academic Senate, following all required procedures. These rigorous procedures involve committees of the Academic Senate on the campus and systemwide, as well as the responsible academic leaders at UC Irvine and UC Office of the President, culminating with the recommendation for approval from the UC Irvine Chancellor, UC systemwide Academic Council, and the UC President.