

Recommendation to Change the Name of the Department of Family Medicine to the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health

The Department of Family Medicine proposes to change its name to the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. The timeline for implementation is tentatively scheduled for July 1, 2015. Community health has been essential to the mission of the Department of Family Medicine (DFM) since it was established as the department of Family Medicine and Practice in 1970 and when the name was changed to the Department of Family Medicine in 1992. By changing its name to the department of Family Medicine and Community Health, the department confirms its original mission in an era when the relationships between the clinical, social, environmental and demographic factors that affect health are critical. Renaming DFM to include Community Health will emphasize the importance of community for health students and residents, for faculty research and scholarship, for the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), and for the communities served. This is consistent with both the name change of the UW School of Medicine to the UW SMPH and the call for greater integration of public health and primary care nationally.

The plan for educational programs of the DFM began with communities from the outset. Post-graduate training was established to be community-based and statewide, reflecting different populations and different needs. DFM's goal was to produce graduates who would enter practice in communities throughout the state and nation, with an emphasis on service to communities of need. The over 1300 graduates of the UW Department of Family Medicine residency programs have distributed themselves throughout the state, nation, and world. In 2013, 65% of residency graduates began practice in Wisconsin. On average, 30% of DFM graduates are practicing in rural communities in Wisconsin and other states. Without these graduates, Wisconsin would have an increase in Primary Care Health Professionals Shortage Areas (PCHPSA) of almost 50%, adversely affecting access and impacting quality and costs of care. In addition, a disproportionate number of graduates who have moved outside of Wisconsin have practiced in underserved communities. All residency campuses of the DFM have working relationships with FQHCs and community agencies, adding to the care of the medically disadvantaged.

Community health is more than the delivery of services to populations in need. It is training the next generation of family physicians to truly be community responsive through a curriculum which emphasizes skills of population management, appropriate use of resources, partnering with communities for health and advocacy. Particularly since the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act with its goal to insure tens of millions of Americans and its focus on prevention, DFM graduates will need to be prepared to find new ways to manage chronic diseases, deliver acute care, and provide effective preventative interventions for both individuals and designated populations in a practice environment that may be quite different from how the current health care delivery system is structured.

The Department of Family Medicine and Community Health will continue to use the administrative structure and governance that currently exist within the Department of Family Medicine. The residency programs within the DFM will assume the new name. There is no impact on admissions to the residency programs, completion requirements, or undergraduate course listings, nor does this change have any financial support implications. Adopting the name the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health would encourage clinicians, teachers, and investigators from the department to continue to align the principles of community health with other activities of the Department and create additional pathways of excellence for faculty and learners. Nationally, 45 other academic departments of family medicine include the terms "community health" or "community medicine" as part of their titles and missions. As the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, the department would have the opportunity to emphasize its educational, clinical, and research missions while furthering its commitment to individual community and population approaches to improving health.

This name change was unanimously approved by a vote of the Family Medicine executive committee on April 7, 2010. The proposal was subsequently approved by the School of Medicine and Public Health Academic Planning Council on January 21, 2015, and the University Academic Planning Council on February 19, 2015.