



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

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September 3, 1986

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Reply on tape
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CONFIDENTIAL

To: Henry Blackburn

Fr: David Murray 

Phyllis Pirie and I are scheduled to meet with you on Thursday morning at 9:30. I hope that you have a few minutes to consider this note before that meeting. I've given a lot of thought to the idea of taking over as Director of the MHHP Education Program, and want to share some of that thinking with you. I hope that you will take these comments as they are intended, as food for thought and as a basis for discussion.

I have worked hard over the last two years to get away from much of the administrative and supervisory work that had occupied so much of my time in the past. I have delegated much of the responsibility for direction of my school survey activities to Jan Whitbeck, a very able coordinator. Laurie Zurbey has taken on many of the daily administrative tasks related to personnel and accounting. Ray Stordahl is a very able leader in Fargo-Moorhead and I have been able to reduce the amount of time required to supervise that operation. There are other examples.

I believe that I have used this time to good advantage in the last two years, applying it primarily to analysis and writing. I meet regularly with several graduate research assistants and have the input of a full time programmer and 20% of Anne Goldman's time. Students are assigned to work up the analyses and early drafts of papers with guidance from Anne and I and technical direction from the Linda Schmid. This strategy has led to eight first- or co-authored papers published in 1986, three others in press for 1987, three more now under review, and four others in preparation. It has also helped me establish a national reputation in adolescent tobacco- and drug-use research.

I have also used a part of my time to get more involved in Division and School activities. I now serve on the Division's Data Center Coordinating Committee and Training Committee; on the School's Educational Policy Committee, the new MPH Committee, and most recently on the Administrative Council; I was elected this year to serve on the University Faculty Senate. Previously, I served on the School's Faculty Consultative Committee. I believe that these activities are important to me as a full member of the faculty of the Division, the School and the University; this work can also pay dividends to our teaching and research activities over the long term.

I also brought in a major new grant this year, which I call the Two State Tobacco Project, or TSTP. This is my second five-year grant from NCI and it will permit me to bring in a full-time Ph.D. Research Associate to take over day-to-day management of the two NCI projects, freeing up even more of my time to focus on analysis and writing and on my other interests. The new Research Associate will also increase the faculty level effort applied to the analysis and writing activities from these smoking studies.

At this point, I could look forward to spending much of my time in the next few years harvesting the results of much hard work the last eight years. I have analyses and papers to work on for MHHP, my smoking projects, Hearty Heart, etc.

All of this begs the question: why am I considering taking on the MHHP Education Director's responsibilities. I have two primary reasons. First, my other projects are in pretty good shape, and I will have a full time Ph.D. to direct them, regardless of your decision on my role in MHHP. As a result, those projects can continue to move forward, and papers can be written, though perhaps not as many and perhaps not with as much involvement from me. But it is not as though those projects would die if I reduced my role. This makes it possible for me to consider such a move.

Second, I have a very real commitment to MHHP and a heavy investment in it; I am also very much a team player. I have helped shape the educational program over the last six years and want to see MHHP succeed. We need to put as strong a person as possible in that spot and should do so relatively soon. I don't think it is in the best interest of the study for Maury to continue as Director when his interests are naturally going to be focused on finding a position elsewhere. I also agree with the arguments that we should replace Maury from within. In my view, it would take too long to bring in an outsider, to get that person up to speed, etc. By that time, the education program would be over. I also don't think its fair to the investigators who remain to bring in a new person to take over after so much of the hard work is done. These reasons make me willing to consider such a move.

In terms of my own qualifications, I do feel that I am well prepared for this role. I have served as Maury's Associate Director since 1981 and am more familiar with the administration and direction of the education program than any one other person besides Maury. I think I could provide the smoothest transition and would look forward to gradually moving the education group out of program planning and implementation and into analysis and writing. Apparently many of my colleagues agree since they have effectively drafted me for this role.

For these reasons, I agreed to let the group submit my name as potential replacement for Maury. However, there are several issues that we need to discuss prior to making any final decision. I hope that our meeting with Phyllis can settle any general questions about the proposals for Maury's replacement and new Associate, Terry Pechacek's replacement, and the chair for the senior behavioral scientist. I hope that you and I can then spend some time privately discussing these specific issues.

Before I could agree to take on this role, I would need your clear support of me as the person you want to take over the Health Program for MHHP. You are

the Principal Investigator and I think it is vital that you make the decision; our 'committee' can consider solutions, but the final decision must be yours. I would not want to do it without your clear support.

I would also need to fully replace Maury as Education Director, taking over all of his responsibilities. This would include his role on the Executive Committee, his control of the Education budget and staff, direction of the MHHP Health Program Working Group, etc. I would need to know in advance about any understandings or arrangements concerning staff, space, etc. so as to avoid future problems. It would need to be a clean transition.

You and I will need to develop an effective working relationship. We have not worked closely together in my eight years in this Division, and I'm not sure how you will like me on a day to day basis. I believe that I do a good job of managing projects, but I do deal with people very directly. You have objected in the past when some of my notes or comments have gone too far, and I hope that I have learned from your suggestions. All I ask is that we communicate regularly, and that we be clear with one another about our expectations.

I would also need your support for the full-time Associate Director and for a replacement for Terry Pechacek's position as proposed. I believe that the MHHP education program will be in trouble unless these positions are filled in the next year.

I would need Maury's real commitment to serve as Associate Director, with your support for that role for the balance of Maury's time with us. I don't think it is appropriate for Maury to disengage from the 'program work' of the project and devote all his time to analysis and writing when the work he would be giving up would simply drop on those of us who remain. I agree that it is important that he have enough time to finish projects that only he can do, but there are limits to what is reasonable here, since he is leaving by choice. Any other arrangement would be unfair to the other faculty on MHHP.

I also think that it would be appropriate to adjust my salary if you do decide to ask me to take on these added responsibilities. As Education Director, Maury has had the highest salary of any of the Health Program Working Group. I agree that Directors should be paid more than those whom they direct and would view this as a natural event for whomever took over as Health Program Director. I know that it is unusual to adjust salaries mid-year, but it is also unusual to give up so much time which would be spent on analysis and writing and exchange it for heavy administrative responsibilities which have few intrinsic rewards.

Let me just add two closing comments. There are two events which could affect my willingness to take on this role in January. First, should it prove difficult to recruit the Ph.D. Research Associate for my smoking studies, I might have to delay taking over Maury's role. Second, should the promotion and tenure decision go against me this year, I would have to reevaluate my effort distribution and probably reduce the amount of time I could spend on administrative activities, including Director of the Education Program for MHHP. I suspect that Maury's focus on administrative activities contributed to the APT's vote last year, and I have not yet passed that hurdle. We may be optimistic about what will happen this year, but it is impossible to predict the outcome with any certainty.

I hope that these comments are helpful to you as you consider the suggestions in our 'group' memo to you last week. I look forward to discussing the general plan with you and Phyllis, and hope that you and I can spend some time on the particulars as they relate to my viability as a replacement for Maury.

Let me add an appology for not getting this note to you on Wednesday as I had intended. I had hoped to get it to you before you left this afternoon, but you had left when I finished. There is plenty of time to consider the issues raised here and to discuss alternatives. See you in the morning.



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Murray

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January 23, 1986

TO : Robert Kane, M.D.

FROM: David M. Murray, Ph.D.

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RE: Comments on the Organization of the School

When you visited with the Epidemiology faculty on January 7, you shared a more detailed picture of your goals for the School than I had heard in previous discussions. I also heard a call for the faculty to share not only our reactions to your ideas but also our own goals for the school. I've outlined some of my thoughts in this note, dealing first with the general approach to School organization, followed by a more detailed discussion of teaching and research issues. I've scheduled an appointment with you for Tuesday, January 28 at 9:00 a.m. to discuss my suggestions.

Approaching the Question of Reorganization

You indicated that you want to initiate any major changes that might occur by next fall and that you want broad input from the faculty. Business and political leaders have long recognized that change is often easier early in their tenure and I'm generally supportive of trying to move along with all due speed; however, it is also important to establish a timeline, to adopt goals, and to select methods to reach those goals which have substantial support within the school. It is neither necessary nor perhaps even possible to achieve consensus, but change will be more rapid and less disruptive if the faculty and the Dean generally agree on the targets and work together to define the means to reach them. One of the lessons I've learned from behavioral science is that group behavior change is both easier and greater over the long term if the change agent works to ensure that the target population feels a sense of partnership and even ownership in the desired changes. Pushing too fast or promoting goals which are not supported by a substantial portion of the target audience may result in structural rather than behavioral change. My first suggestion then is to develop substantial support for any new long-term goals, for the specific actions required to meet them, and for the timeline for implementation.

Teaching

I've learned a great deal about the teaching activity in the school in the last two-and-a-half years as member of the EPC and there is much I would like to see happen in this area. You have already spoken publicly in favor of the

excellent

first two goals listed below, though you haven't suggested specific actions. The others are based on my own observations of teaching in the school.

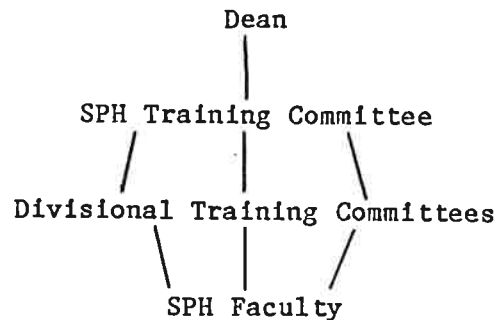
The school should seek to:

1. Improve the efficiency in the use of its teaching resources.
2. Offer a school-wide MPH rather than discipline- or division-specific MPH degrees.
3. Base teaching assignments on training, experience and student evaluations in order to provide the best instruction.
4. Coordinate teaching and training at the School level to avoid conflicts of content and timing, to ensure consistent preparation of students, and to ensure regular evaluation and followup for instructors.

Suggested Actions. I propose that we approach these goals by changing the SPH governance system for teaching and training MPH students. At present these activities are coordinated largely at the division or program level and the quality of that coordination varies from program to program. This decentralized coordination is inefficient and actually may encourage duplication of course content, conflicts in course scheduling, and inconsistencies in the way that instructors are evaluated and in the way that students are treated. The size and physical separation of the SPH faculty mean that many are poorly informed about courses outside their division. The relative autonomy of the various programs encourages the development of specialized courses "for our students". The pressure to meet APT teaching requirements provides an additional incentive to offer more courses. With no common gatekeeper providing quality control, we have a system that is not adequately managed. We now have over 400 course titles including research design courses in six different programs, administration courses in five different programs, at least three programs offering courses on alcohol problems, behavior change strategies, public health policy or law, etc. As a result, we have faculty who increasingly complain of duplication and encroachment.

The Educational Policy Committee now does not provide centralized coordination of teaching. It does develop recommendations for school-wide educational policies but does not see itself as having any enforcement responsibility for those policies nor does it see itself responsible for coordination through establishing and monitoring procedures for such issues as course scheduling, review of teacher evaluations, etc. The EPC has generally limited itself to policy issues. With no other unit providing sufficient centralized coordination, there is a gap of leadership. I propose that EPC be strengthened and given explicit responsibility for this function.

The new governance system is diagrammed below:



The current EPC would be replaced by the SPH Training Committee which would have a different membership and expanded responsibility. Its members would include an Associate Dean, school support staff as needed, and the chairpersons of each of the Divisional Training Committees. (These chairpersons might be appointed by Division Heads though the FCC surveys have shown substantial support for election of such chairpersons to a fixed term by division faculty. Election may help ensure representativeness, some freedom from administrative pressure, and the use of fixed terms provides for easy rotation of the responsibility and the workload.)

The new SPH Training Committee would face several start-up tasks:

1. Compilation of documentation on all existing courses in the school.
2. Automatic deletion of courses which have not been taught in three years.
3. A content analysis of all remaining courses (excluding readings and research hours courses) to sort them into clusters based on common content; this analysis might be guided by the existing SPH educational objectives or by the competency areas defined by the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH). (EPC attempted this task in 1984 but had very poor cooperation from Divisions and faculty. This may reflect the lack of any real authority available to EPC to obtain information and enforce school policies related to education.)
4. Preparation of recommendations to the Dean on elimination of unnecessary courses with special attention to combining courses which are similar in content. Among the recommendations might be suggestions for instructors for the newly defined courses. (Particularly where individual course have been combined, team-teaching might be given serious consideration.) The goal would be to offer the best possible course for the content rather than multiple, widely-scattered courses on the same material. This would be a major task and would require a regular exchange of information and ideas with other SPH faculty through the Divisional Training Committees and Divisional faculty meetings. It will also require a substantial time commitment for those involved. The recommendations should be reviewed by the Dean and the faculty as a whole. A series of open faculty meetings might be an important part of this process.

5. Preparation of policies and procedures for school-wide review of teaching performance and course scheduling.

Ongoing tasks would include:

1. Review of all proposals from Divisional Training Committees for new courses.
2. Review of all course evaluations conducted by the Divisional Training Committees and monitoring of the Divisions' responses to those evaluations.
3. Preparation of quarterly course schedules based on requests from the Divisional Training Committees,
4. Review of training policies.
5. Review of procedures for MPH projects and written and oral exams to improve standardization across the school.

This plan would provide the centralized coordination of training activities now inadequate in the school. It would involve more faculty in discussions of collaborative teaching activity. It would reduce the number of courses in the school and the overlap among those retained. It would help focus faculty on the teaching interests of the School as a whole rather than just on the teaching interests of a single program. It should improve the quality of the teaching in the School.

The Training Committee could be the key group in any move toward a single MPH program. The course content analysis could be used to help define a core curriculum.

These steps would require some painful decisions. They will require changes in the role of the EPC. They will also require time to complete, probably a year of steady work. They also will require strong leadership in the SPH Training Committee and hard work by the Divisional Training Committees.

In spite of the costs, the potential benefits are substantial.

Research

The School should seek to:

1. Improve the quality of research in the School.
2. Increase the number of faculty actively involved in research activity.
3. Increase the level of interdisciplinary research.

Proposed Actions. Epidemiology has been successful in meeting these goals within the division and there may be several factors responsible. You asked on January 7 for us to try to identify some of these factors. I've listed several here. The Division has:

1. Brought together faculty from several disciplines who are interested in common research questions.
2. Mixed experienced faculty with inexperienced faculty on collaborative projects, thereby continuing the development of the less experienced faculty.
3. Created core "service groups" (data processing, chemistry laboratory, telephone survey group, field survey group) which can provide expensive services to a large number of studies, thereby reducing the cost per study while maintaining quality control.
4. Adopted a true "collaborative model" wherein we each play different roles on different projects, at times serving as PI directing "others" and at times serving as staff working for those same "others".
5. Encouraged individual and group initiative and entrepreneurial activity. Terry Pechacek once suggested that it was best always to have 150% of one's salary on funded or proposed applications. Henry Blackburn is very supportive of this level of initiative and does not create barriers.
6. Demanded publication. It's easier to get funding if you have published, and its essential to future funding that you continue to publish.
7. Restrained the level of activity in other areas (such as teaching) to permit more time for research. Research and teaching are both time intensive activities and you can't do both full time.

I propose that the School build on these experiences to improve the School-wide research record. Specific actions might include:

1. Identification of research questions of interest to the faculty and convening interest groups around them. These groups could meet to discuss possible collaborative projects and go forward as those discussions suggest. This action would help mix experienced and inexperienced faculty and encourage initiative. Ideally, this would happen on its own, but with as much going on in the School as there is, and with as much physical separation as there is, additional effort should be made to convene such interest groups. The Dean's office could be instrumental in this regard and by helping to circulate program announcements from NIH and other sources. These groups should continue to meet regularly even if a project doesn't surface immediately. Members can benefit from a regular exchange of ideas and can discuss activity on related projects, etc.

I believe it would be counter-productive to reorganize the divisional structure so as to cluster faculty on the basis of their doctoral

training. An example would be creation of a Behavioral Sciences Division. Groups should be organized around common interests and research questions, not using arbitrary criteria that may no longer be related to what they do. Epidemiology has been successful in part because of the interdisciplinary nature of its faculty and because we are interested in common questions. Forced homogeneity of training reduces opportunities to learn new methods and may actually increase the heterogeneity of research interests.

2. The Dean's office could also help to identify "service groups" available to investigators. Functions of interest might include data processing, data analysis, chemistries, survey staff/organizations, etc. Centralized coordination of these activities might also prove helpful. Involvement with such functional groups extant within divisions through collaboration with faculty in these divisions would provide an excellent opportunity for further faculty development.
3. Teaching others how to collaborate is a tough one. To some, to collaborate means to get what you want from the other guy. To others it means sharing and pooling resources to achieve a common objective. When members of the faculty openly question the need for collaboration (as occurred at a recent School faculty meeting), one wonders if true collaboration can be possible. We need to get rid of the traditional academic notion that individual faculty members are independent entities if we are to move the School forward. That's a tough one and I don't have simple solutions. As a behavioral scientist, I suggest that the Dean serve as a role model, identify and reward other effective models, provide explicit criteria and rewards for such collaboration, and provide regular opportunities for faculty to describe their collaborative efforts.
4. Faculty must be encouraged to give up, or get rid of other activities if they don't have enough time for research. Your suggestion of establishing 2-5 year behavioral contracts with each member of the faculty might be helpful here. These agreements could be used to push collaboration and to reduce time on other tasks. You can set goals and expectations. You'll have to have some rewards at the end, but papers often serve that function. You can also try to use the merit salary system.
5. Bring in the right new faculty. Tenured faculty may be encouraged to modify their behavior, but they may be firmly entrenched as well. You can encourage, reward, offer opportunities, etc., but if someone doesn't want to change, your only option may be to concentrate your resources and rewards elsewhere. The situation is obviously different for new faculty, and you can have considerable influence on the make up of the School over time by working to select collaborative researchers for positions as they open up.

Divisional Reorganization

The School is now organized primarily by programs which produce graduates for specific jobs. The programs in Dental Public Health, Public Health

Nutrition, Public Health Nursing, Public Health Administration, Veterinary Public Health, Maternal and Child Health and Public Health Education are the best examples; most are grouped together administratively as the Division of Community Public Health Programs. All turn out MPH students.

Other programs exist as independent divisions, are individually larger than the other programs, have defined research missions and offer Ph.D. programs: Epidemiology, Biometry, Environmental Health and Hospital Care Administration. These programs also produce MPH students.

Positioned somewhat independently are the three Centers operated out of the School. They vary in the clarity of their research mission and provide no teaching programs.

Any alternative to this organizational system should be considered only if it would significantly improve the School's ability to meet its teaching and research goals. In addition, no new structure should be imposed without substantial support of the faculty. One alternative that might be worth considering is to organize around common research and teaching interests. Current faculty could be assigned to the new Divisions based on research and teaching interests though voluntary affiliation should be considered very carefully. Each of the new Divisions should include faculty from several disciplines.

As I've said earlier, any reorganization should be guided by the long term goals for the School and these goals, the methods to achieve them and the timeline should have substantial support from the faculty. Each of the existing programs was created for a reason. If the reasons are still valid, it may be inappropriate to modify the current structure.

Comment

It's a long note, though hopefully an interesting one. I look forward to Tuesday's meeting and a chance to discuss these ideas.