

## **ABSTRACT: 2019 ELAM Institutional Action Project**

**Project Title:** Exploring the Future of Public Health at Michigan State University

**Name and Institution:** Debra Furr-Holden, PhD; Michigan State University

**Collaborators and Mentors:** Provost and Executive Vice-President June Youatt and Associate Provost, Vice President and Dean Norman Beauchamp

**Topic Category:** Administration

**Background, Significance of project:** There has been tremendous growth in public health education, research, practice, service, outreach and engagement efforts at Michigan State University in the past several decades. As a public, research-intensive, pioneering land-grant university - a stronger public health infrastructure offers exciting new opportunities to demonstrate excellence across core missions of education, research, clinical practice, and service.

**Purpose/Objectives:** Dr. Debra Furr-Holden was tasked by the Provost to serve as a neutral convener of stakeholders across campuses to gather information from the MSU community and answer the broad question: "What might MSU be able to do in the arena of public health that will continue to improve our efforts if we were organized in a School of Public Health?"

**Methods/Approach/Evaluation Strategy:** An Advisory Committee was established that included staff, faculty, administrators, two alumni, and a student. Fifty listening sessions were held across campuses between October 2018 and February 2019 to gather insights on possible opportunities and challenges, as well as next steps to strengthen the public health infrastructure at MSU.

**Outcomes/Results:** Five major themes emerged during this process: (1) MSU has unique features that define us in the public health landscape including (i) community embeddedness, (ii) an existing statewide footprint for public health research practice and training through MSU-extension, (iii) a strong community-based model for public health that leverages our land grant mission and the work of MSU-Extension; (2) Expansion of our public health educational programs including a new public health undergraduate major and increased support for and expansion of our graduate public health programs is wanted; (3) Further rationale and input (including both internal and external experts) are needed on the prospect of creating a School of Public Health (versus another structure that would support MSU's public health mission); (4) Future phases of this work should include experts on curriculum development, School/Program development, accreditation, and change management; and (5) Critical questions remain that should be answered in the next phase of the process including: mission, vision, and goals as well as financial structures and funding.

**Discussion/Conclusion with Statement of Impact/Potential Impact:** MSU's has multiple unique features that would add great value to the existing national public health landscape. Moving forward, it will be important to clearly define the next phase of the process and engage essential stakeholders and experts. Similarly, providing additional opportunities for broader public input across campuses and from community stakeholders once a more clearly defined structure and plan is developed is wanted and would strengthen collective buy-in and participation.



# Exploring the Future of Public Health at Michigan State University



Presented by: Debra Furr-Holden, PhD

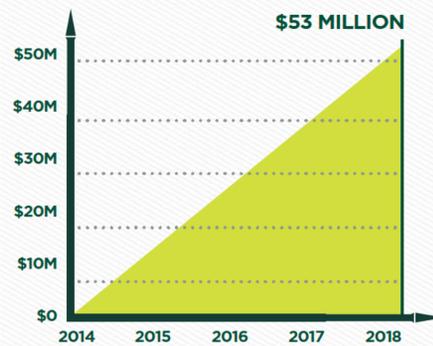
Mentors: Provost & Executive VP June Youatt, PhD; Associate Provost and Assistant VP Norman Beauchamp, Jr. MD, MHS

## INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- There has been tremendous growth in public health education, research, practice, service, outreach, and engagement efforts at Michigan State University (MSU) in the past several decades.
- MSU has experienced rapid growth and success in our public health efforts in Flint in 4 years.

**\$53 MILLION**  
EXTERNAL FUNDING  
IN 4 YEARS.

From 2014 – 2018, Michigan State University's public health researchers have been awarded more than \$53 million cumulatively in externally sponsored grants for Flint community research.



**16 RESEARCHERS**  
Sixteen public health researchers were recruited, including four Endowed C.S. Mott Professors.

**29 INDIVIDUALS CONTRACTED**  
to work on Flint studies.

**30 ORGANIZATIONS COLLABORATING**  
on Flint research.

**88 NEW JOBS CREATED IN FLINT.**

- As a public, research-intensive, pioneering land-grant university - a strong public health infrastructure offers exciting new opportunities to demonstrate excellence across core missions of education, research, clinical practice, and service.
- MSU-Extension has more than 700 Extension agents deployed across the state and a robust statewide infrastructure that could support expansion of our public health infrastructure.



## PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

- Using a participatory, inclusive process to answer the broad question: **“What might MSU be able to do in the arena of public health that will continue to improve our efforts if we were organized in a School of Public Health?”**

## METHODS

### 1. Establish an Advisory Committee

- Board representation – 1 staff, 3 faculty, 2 senior administrators, 2 alumni, and a student.



### 2. Convene stakeholders across campus

- A discussion guide was distributed in advance, and 50 listening sessions were held across MSU campuses between October 2018 and February 2019, including: 17 Colleges and their Deans, 3 community partner groups, and 2 Town Halls - to gather perspectives and next steps to strengthen the public health infrastructure at MSU.

### 3. Synthesize feedback, establish next steps

- Qualitative analysis was used to identify common themes related to the core missions of research, education, service, outreach, and engagement.
- A report was created that summarized findings and outlined next steps.

## RESULTS

Six major themes emerged during this process:

- (1) **MSU has unique features** that define us in the public health landscape including (i) community embeddedness, (ii) an existing statewide footprint for public health through MSU-Extension, (iii) a strong community-based model for public health.
- (2) **Expansion of public health education programs** is wanted, including a new public health undergraduate major, increasing expansion of the existing Masters of Public Health Program, as well as Masters and Doctoral programs in Epidemiology and Biostatistics.
- (3) **Further rationale and input are needed** on the prospect of creating a School of Public Health (versus another structure that would support MSU's public health mission).

**Future phases** of this work should include:

- (4) **Expert input** on curriculum development, school and program development, public health accreditation, and change management;
- (5) **Establishment of mission, vision, and goals;** and
- (6) A plan for the **financial structure and funding/raising.**

## STATEMENT OF IMPACT

MSU's is uniquely poised to add tremendous value to the existing state and national public health landscape. There is great enthusiasm among our university and community partners for expanding our public health infrastructure. Using a highly participatory and inclusive process that allows stakeholder input and transparency on the process and outcomes proved successful in this phase of the work and should be continued moving forward.