

## **Master of Public Health Student Survey (2013)**

### **The University of Tennessee**

An anonymous electronic survey of MPH students was completed in April 2013. The survey was designed to secure satisfaction ratings, information and recommendations from current students to guide and assist the faculty and MPH Academic Program Committee in their quest to continuously improve the MPH degree program. The MPH program has three concentrations of study: Community Health Education (CHE), Health Planning & Administration (HPA), and Veterinary Public Health (VPH). In future reports, Health Planning & Administration will be referred to by its new title, Health Policy and Management.

### **Survey Instrument**

The survey instrument was modified from one initially utilized in 2007. The existing survey instrument was converted to online format, and the MPH program director and student survey director made modifications to clarify wording, based on feedback from program faculty and students.

Rating of satisfaction levels on a five-point Likert scale was requested. The survey items focused on one's "experience as a student" in the MPH program. Additionally, respondents were asked about their overall satisfaction with the MPH program. The survey system required a response to each of 14 items, plus demographic questions in order to advance in completing the survey. Opportunity for response to an open-ended question was provided on an optional basis. On average, respondents were able to complete the survey in approximately 5 minutes.

### **Dissemination of the Online Survey**

The survey was administered online during the month of April 2013. An initial email was sent in early-April providing the survey link. In mid-April, a second email was sent providing a reminder to complete the survey. Three days later, a third email was sent providing a second reminder to complete the survey. The student survey director, serving as the responsible graduate assistant, distributed the first three emails. A fourth email from the MPH program director in late-April provided a final reminder to complete the survey.

Of the current MPH students, all 38 received the survey via email. Twenty-seven of 38 students completed the survey for an overall response rate of 71.1%. Data were downloaded to an electronic database and analyzed using IBM SPSS 20.

### **Demographic Information**

Regarding demographic information, the survey requested information related to MPH degree concentration, degree completion (full-time or part-time), and hours completed to date. These data were used to determine the distribution of survey respondents across each survey item. The response rate by concentration was over 50% for all concentrations.

Table 1. Respondents by Concentration

Concentration	Number	Percent	Response Rate*
CHE	15	55.6	78.9
HPA	7	25.9	70.0
VPH	5	18.5	55.6
Total	27	100.0	71.1

\* Response Rate based on the percentage of total students by concentration who responded to the survey

Table 2. Respondents by Full-time or Part-time Status as a Student (n=27)

Student Status	Number	Percent
Full-time	22	81.5
Part-time	5	18.5
Total	27	100.0

Table 3. Respondents by Hours Completed to Date (n=26)

Hours Completed	Number	Percent
0-10	7	26.9
12-20	5	19.2
21-30	8	30.8
31- 40	4	15.4
41 – 50	2	7.7
Total	26	100

### **Experience as a Student in the MPH Program**

The survey sought information related to experience as a student addressing fourteen different items such as: quality of faculty advising, faculty encourage active student involvement in learning, information obtained via MPH listserv is helpful, adequacy of guidance in preparing for field practice, opportunity to provide input to the MPH Program, courses are appropriately challenging and others. A five-point Likert satisfaction scale was used: 1=not very satisfied, 2=less than satisfied, 3=satisfied, 4=more than satisfied and 5=very satisfied. These data were used to determine the mean satisfaction by concentration, as well as overall. The items regarding field practice and career planning guidance were answered by all 27 respondents; however for these two items, respondents were given a six-point Likert scale with the addition of 6=not applicable. Therefore, respondents who chose “not applicable” were not applied to the mean calculation for those items.

Table 4. Satisfaction with Experience as a Student in the MPH Program  
(n=27, unless otherwise noted)

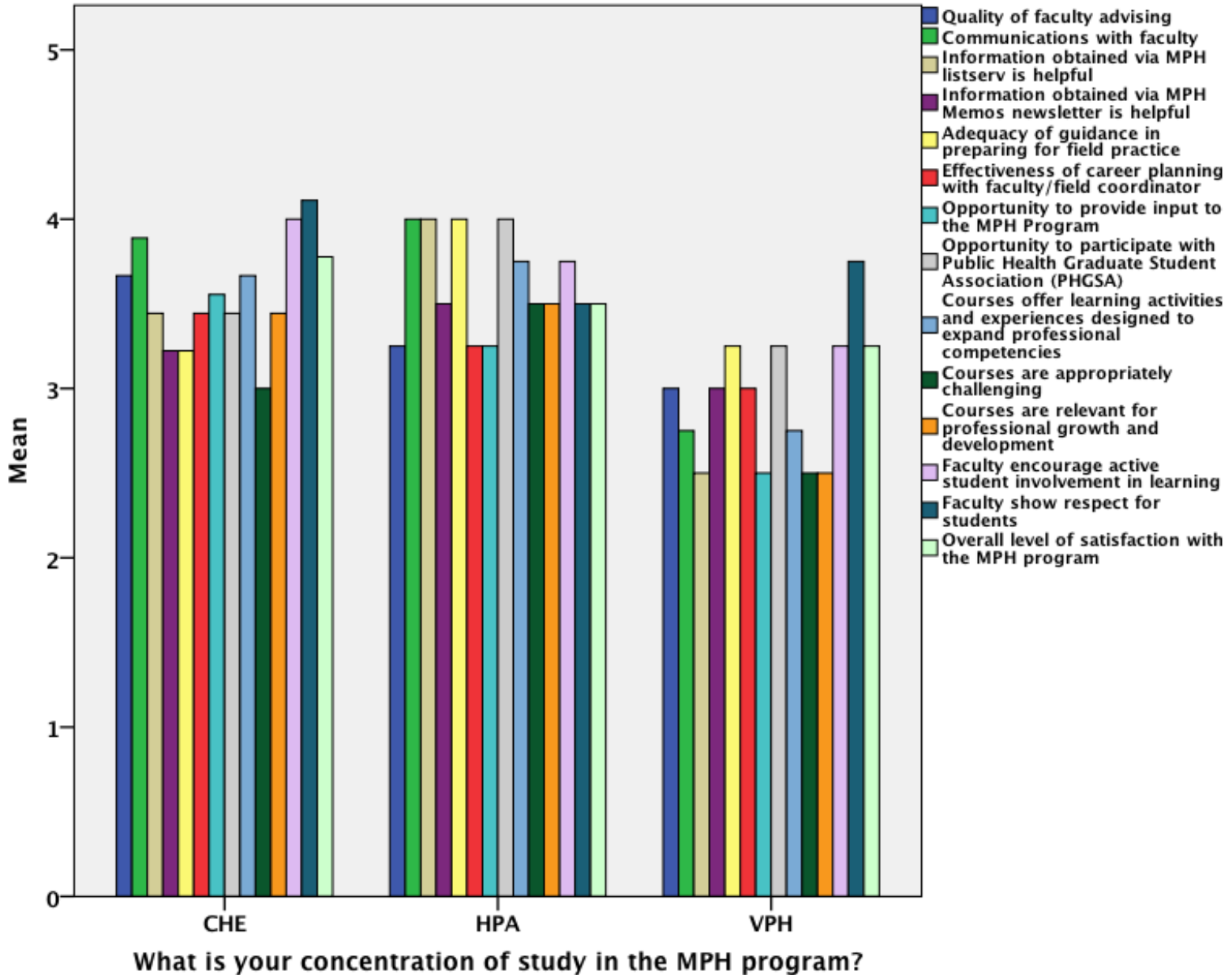
<b>Experience as a Student</b>	<b>Mean Satisfaction</b>			
	<b>CHE</b>	<b>HPA</b>	<b>VPH</b>	<b>Total</b>
Quality of faculty advising	3.60	3.14	3.00	3.37
Communications with faculty	3.93	3.57	2.80	3.63
Information obtained via MPH listserv is helpful	3.73	3.57	2.60	3.48
Information obtained via MPH Memos newsletter is helpful	3.33	3.29	3.00	3.26
Opportunity to provide input (e.g. through opportunity to be a student representative to the Academic Program Committee)	3.60	3.29	2.80	3.37
Opportunity to participate with Public Health Graduate Student Association (PHGSA)	3.53	3.71	3.40	3.56
Courses offer learning activities and experiences designed to expand professional competencies	3.67	3.86	2.80	3.56
Courses are appropriately challenging	3.13	3.43	2.40	3.07
Courses are relevant for professional growth and development	3.40	3.57	2.40	3.26
Faculty encourage active student involvement in learning	4.00	3.43	3.20	3.70
Faculty show respect for students	4.27	3.43	3.80	3.96
Overall level of satisfaction with the MPH program	3.80	3.43	3.20	3.59
Adequacy of guidance in preparing for field practice (n=18)	3.10	4.00	3.25	3.33
Effectiveness of career planning with faculty/field coordinator (n=19)	3.60	3.20	3.00	3.37
<i>Total Average Satisfaction</i>	<i>3.62</i>	<i>3.49</i>	<i>2.98</i>	<i>3.47</i>

Overall, respondents were “satisfied” with their experience as a student in the MPH Program. Courses are appropriately challenging was the only survey item nearing “less than satisfied” with a total mean of 3.07. All total satisfaction items were above the “satisfied” total mean of 3. Respondents were nearly “more than satisfied” with one item, faculty show respect for students, with a mean of 3.96.

Satisfaction levels based on concentration revealed the CHE and HPA respondents were mostly “satisfied” or “more than satisfied” with their experience in the MPH program, with total means of 3.62 and 3.49 respectively. The VPH concentration fell just under “satisfied,” with a mean of 2.98. The VPH means were skewed toward “less than satisfied” on several items including courses are appropriately challenging, courses are relevant for professional growth and development, and information obtained via MPH listserv is helpful. The CHE respondents were “more than satisfied” with two items, faculty encourage active student involvement in learning and faculty show respect for students. They were “satisfied” with all other items. The HPA

respondents were “more than satisfied” with one item, adequacy of guidance in preparing for field practice. They were “satisfied” with all other items.

Figure 1. Satisfaction with Experience as a Student in the MPH Program



The survey also sought information about overall satisfaction with the MPH program. Overall, respondents were “satisfied” with a total mean of 3.59. The CHE and HPA concentrations had 100% of respondents “satisfied” or higher with the program, with means of 3.80 and 3.43 respectively. Twenty percent of VPH respondents were “less than satisfied” bringing their mean satisfaction to 3.20. No respondent was “not very satisfied” with the MPH program.

Figure 2. Overall Satisfaction with the MPH Program

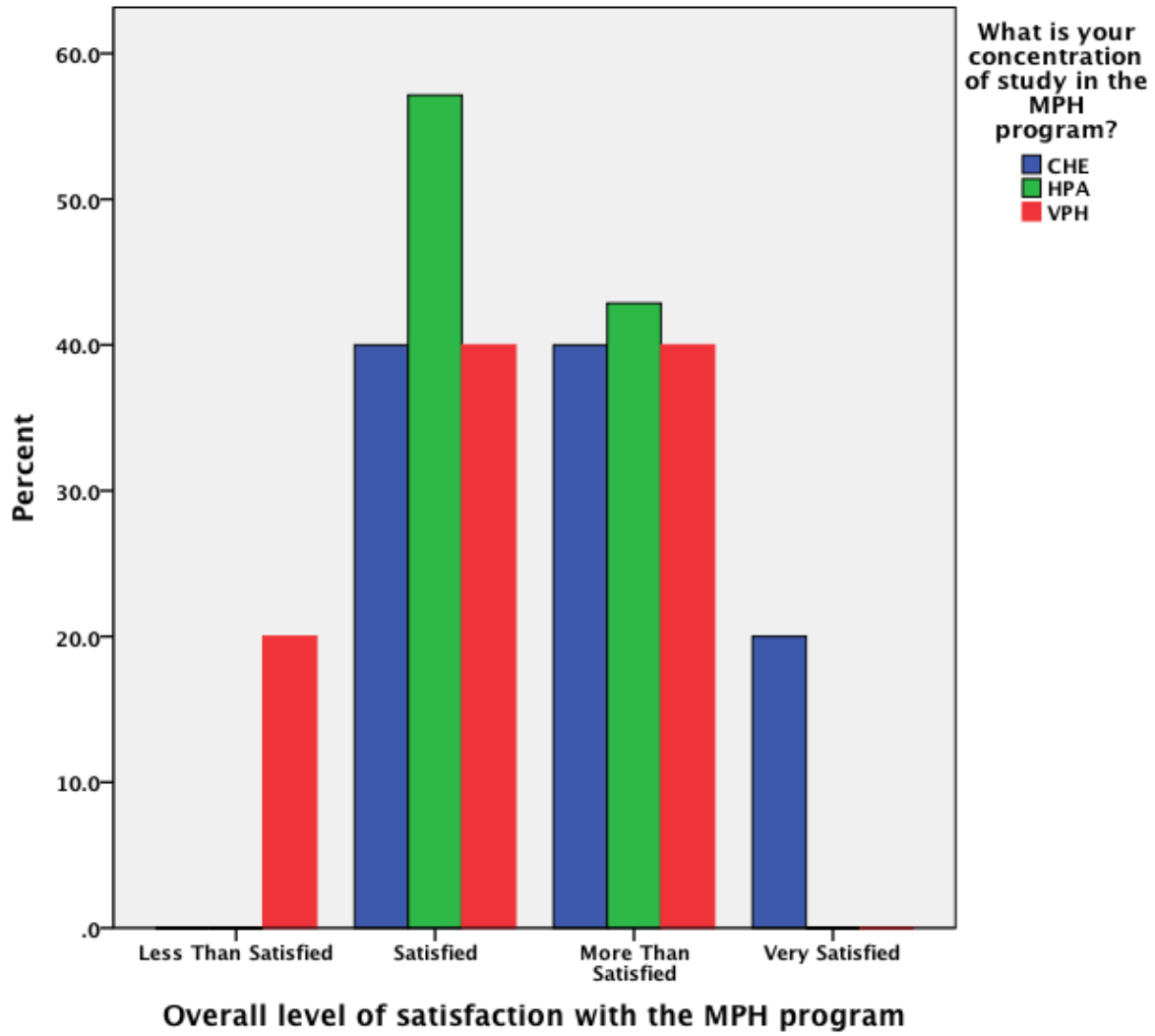
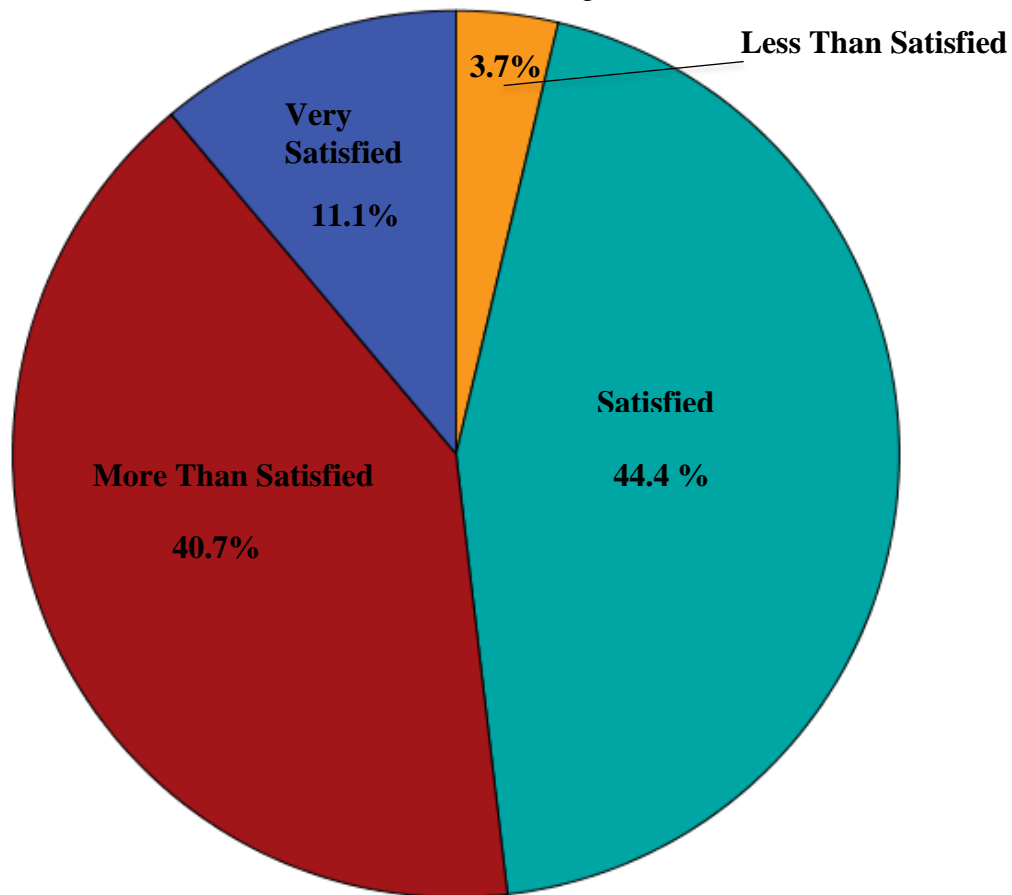


Figure 3. Overall Satisfaction with the MPH Program (n=27)



Overall Satisfaction with the MPH Program

### **Recommendations for Improving the MPH Program**

Students were given the opportunity to respond to one open-ended question about improvement. A total of six respondents responded to the optional question “Do you have any recommendations for improving the MPH program?” The response rate for this question was low at 22.2%. Two responses consisted of “N/A” and “None.” Highlights of the other four comments are provided below.

- I think it would be beneficial to future students to hire faculty who do not have another job other than being a professor. I also think it would be better to not be so one sided on political matters when it comes to health care. Some professors in the program do respect political views of students and present both sides of political matters, others do not.
- More opportunities for non-GAs to be involved in research or grant writing.
- I think offering more 25% assistantships instead of providing some students with 50% assistantships would be helpful.
- Overall I'm very pleased. The professors and faculty are generally engaging and willing to help you in any way possible! The frustrations I have are with courses which did not seem to be of an appropriate level. I sometimes worry that we don't have a professionally applicable course profile in some courses, though others seem to bend over backwards to

give you a true take on real-life career skills. It's also frustrating when courses are only offered once during the academic year, particularly when there is no opportunity to take important core courses (such as program evaluation) over the summer.

## **Summary**

The anonymous MPH student survey sought information from 38 currently enrolled students in April 2013. The overall response rate for the survey was 27 of 38, or 71.1%. The distribution of respondents by concentration was over 50% for all concentrations. Respondents were asked fourteen items about satisfaction with their experience in the MPH program. Analyses were based on the three concentrations, as well as combined responses.

Overall, respondents were “satisfied” with their experience in the MPH program. The total mean satisfaction was highest for faculty items - faculty show respect for students and faculty encourage active student involvement in learning – with a mean of 3.96 and 3.70 respectively. Courses are appropriately challenging was the only item nearing a “less than satisfied” with a total mean of 3.07. All total satisfaction items were above the “satisfied” total mean of 3. Satisfaction levels based on concentration revealed the CHE and HPA respondents were mostly “satisfied” or “more than satisfied” with their experience in the MPH program, with total means of 3.62 and 3.49 respectively. The VPH concentration fell slightly below “satisfied,” with a mean of 2.98.

One open-ended question was asked regarding recommendations for improving the MPH program. The response rate was low at 22.2%. Four recommendations for improvement were provided. Comment topics ranged from graduate teaching assistantships to faculty concerns.

Although 28.9% of current students did not respond to the survey, it is assumed that the respondent data can be generalized to all current students and can be utilized to guide faculty and the MPH Academic Program Committee in improving the program. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are similar to characteristics found for all students in the MPH program. By keeping the survey completely anonymous, the MPH program director and student survey director endeavored to provide an opportunity for honest, non-influenced responses by participants. However, maintaining anonymity prevented follow-up requests directly to non-respondents. Although comments provide important insights regarding student perspectives of the program, the responses for the open-ended question were limited and may not provide a generalizable perspective.

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