

Master of Science in Health Sciences



Health Education at Western Illinois University is an interdisciplinary field aimed at promoting health and preventing disease, disability and premature death through education-driven behavior change activities designed for individuals, groups and communities. Graduate-level health educators are generally hired as directors of health education/promotion programs in a variety of settings.

Admission Requirements

All candidates must meet the general admission requirements of the Western Illinois University School of Graduate Studies. Each candidate must show evidence of having completed coursework in human diseases, either prior to admission as a degree candidate or before completion of his or her program of study.

Degree Requirements

Students choosing to pursue a Master of Science in Health Sciences may choose from two options: (1) Public Health or (2) School Health. The Public Health option requires 42 semester hours (SH), including an internship, while the School Health option requires 36 SH. Both options include 15 SH of core courses; required option courses; and a capstone project of a thesis, professional paper/project or a comprehensive exam. A post-baccalaureate certificate program in Health Services Administration (12 SH) is also available.

The core curriculum for the MS in Health Sciences is consistent with the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. (NCHEC); the Public Health option required courses are consistent with the Council for Education in Public Health (CEPH) areas of knowledge basic to public health; and the School Health option is consistent with the Illinois School Health endorsement. Graduates are competent to assess individual and community needs for health education; plan health education strategies, interventions and programs; conduct evaluation and research related to health education; administer health education strategies, interventions, and programs; serve as a health education resource person; and communicate and advocate for health and health education.

Credentialing

Graduates of the program are eligible to obtain credentialing as a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) from the NCHEC.

Career Opportunities

Health Sciences program graduates are prepared to be directors of programs in the areas of community and public health education. Graduates are highly marketable. According to U.S. Department of Labor projections, the demand for health educators is expected to exceed the available workforce between 2012-2022. Factors that have increased this demand include an increased rate of chronic illnesses (i.e., cancer, hypertension, arthritis, diabetes and heart disease), an aging population and the rise in childhood and adolescent obesity and eating disorders.

Health educators are employed as directors and leaders in a variety of settings including college and university health centers, hospitals and clinical care settings, nonprofit agencies (e.g., the American Heart Association, American Red Cross, Hospice and the American Diabetes Association), local and state departments of public health, disaster and emergency services agencies, government programs and agencies (e.g., Centers for Disease Control), business and industry and schools.

U.S. Department of Labor Statistics data reports that upon degree completion, the average salary range for graduate-level trained health educators is \$40,000-\$60,000.

Program Location:
Macomb, Quad Cities

Contact Information

Questions about the program:
Department of Health Sciences and Social Work
Associate Professor Maureen Bezold,
graduate coordinator
(309) 298-1076
MP-Bezold@wiu.edu
or
Lorette Oden,
department chairperson
LS-Oden@wiu.edu
wiu.edu/health

General admission questions:
School of Graduate Studies
(309) 298-1806 or (877) WIU GRAD
Grad-Office@wiu.edu
wiu.edu/grad


**Western Illinois
University**

Health educators have an opportunity to choose among various focus areas, including, but not limited to:

- Alcohol and drug education, prevention, and intervention
- Smoking cessation
- Maternal health and wellness
- Risk reduction for chronic diseases (heart disease and cancer)
- Sexual health
- Violence and abuse prevention and intervention
- Geriatric health
- Child and adolescent health
- Emotional health and stress management
- Employee/worksites wellness

Faculty Expertise

Nine faculty members, holding advanced degrees from 17 universities across the United States, provide course instruction and research mentoring to graduate students. Efforts are made to provide a faculty mentor who matches each student's interests. Faculty have expertise in the following areas: women's health; program evaluation; risk assessment; needs assessment; community development; emergency preparedness; bioterrorism; health behavior theory; environmental health; sexuality education; health services administration; alcohol and drug prevention; health risk appraisal; diabetes education; geriatric health; eating disorders; and spiritual, emotional, multicultural and occupational health.

Assistantship Opportunities

A limited number of graduate assistantships, which provide a monthly stipend and a tuition waiver, are available. Undergraduate and graduate grade point averages, scholarship records, recommendations and a personal statement provide the criteria for awarding assistantships. Applications are made through the School of Graduate Studies.

Western Illinois University is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity employer with a strong commitment to diversity. In that spirit, we are particularly interested in receiving applications from a broad spectrum of people, including, but not limited to, minorities, women and individuals with disabilities. WIU has a non-discrimination policy that includes sex, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability and veteran status.

Internship Opportunities

The capstone internship experience allows students to apply their academic training in various health agencies, institutions, organizations, businesses and industries at local, regional, national and international sites. Students have previously interned at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; the American Red Cross; Illinois Hospital Association; Genesis Medical Center; Friendship Manor; Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney, Australia; the Peace Corps; John Deere Health; and the American Heart Association.

Distinctive Features

Departmental faculty have served in leadership positions in such organizations as the American Public Health Association, the American School Health Association, the Society for Public Health Education, the American Association for Health Education, the National Safety Council and the Illinois Sex Education Task Force. This wide variety of professional preparation and strong commitment to serving students enables the department to provide a rich breadth of courses and research opportunities leading to the comprehensive and thorough training of its graduates. By taking courses at Western, students are able to complete courses in a traditional classroom setting, online or by distance education.

Featured Alumna

Amy C. Smart received her Master of Science in Health Sciences – Public Health Option degree in 2015. She is a Public Health Advisor with the Public Health Associate Program (PHAP), within the Office for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support (OSTLTS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Ms. Smart has been assigned to the Health Statistics and Surveillance Section, Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), since 2015. Ms. Smart addresses the needs of vulnerable populations through the development and dissemination of valuable public health information. She works closely with section staff to conduct consequential epidemiology to generate publications on important and emerging health topics, including special summary and technical reports, fact sheets for educated or lay audiences, and policy briefs. Before joining PHAP, Ms. Smart worked as a Community Capacity Builder for the United States Peace Corps in rural Botswana.



“The education I obtained through the Health Sciences program at WIU was more important than any textbook concept or classroom discussion. With expert faculty and challenging courses, I was pushed to the edge of my academic abilities. I developed skills, know-how, confidence and the ability to identify and address my own limitations. Since obtaining my master’s degree at WIU, I have put my education into practice to successfully develop and implement programs, assess priorities, recommend policies and conduct meaningful research. While I still have much to learn, WIU has instilled in me the desire to never have an ordinary career in the field of public health, but to be a leader in the profession of making a difference in the lives of others.”

– Amy C. Smart, MS, May 2015
Public Health Advisor, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention