

February 29, 2016

Dear current and potential public health undergraduate students,

As the undergraduate program directors, we want to make you aware of some recent discussion amongst leadership and faculty at the School in regard to the future of the School of Public Health's undergraduate program. We would like to be very clear that no decisions have been made yet, but we want to keep you fully informed throughout the process.

The Berkeley campus is currently facing a substantial structural deficit and embarking on a strategic planning process designed to reimagine the fundamental structures and processes of the University. As we assess what this will mean for our School, we are asking ourselves hard questions about what programs to reduce, consolidate, or discontinue altogether if our efforts to generate alternative sources of revenue and improve our operating efficiency cannot keep pace with the budget cuts.

One of the programs we're considering discontinuing is the undergraduate program. We know that our undergraduate program is popular and well regarded—and we would prefer to expand the major rather than eliminate it. However, we are facing a probable major reduction in the size of our faculty and in financial support for graduate student instructors and program staff. As a result, we may be forced to focus instead on expanding programs that can directly return tuition revenues to the School and/or generate professional degree fees.

We have decided to suspend our undergraduate spring admissions cycle while we are determining the future of the major. This was a difficult decision, but it will ensure that students do not experience a disruption in their education after declaring a major. We anticipate a final decision about the future status of the major to be made this summer or early fall, after we are able to consider the impact of final campus budget cuts and academic restructuring. If the program is to continue, we would re-open the application cycle in August or December.

We want to stress that this will not affect students who are currently enrolled as declared students—we will make sure enrolled students will be able to graduate as public health majors and complete their required courses.

We apologize for the stress and uncertainty this situation causes for our students. Because we want UC Berkeley students to be informed in order to make the best possible decisions, our advisors have encouraged prospective students to have multiple alternatives for majors.

There will be other opportunities in the coming weeks for students to provide input and discuss the future of the School. If you have questions or concerns, you can visit with our advisors, email sphug@berkeley.edu, or reach out to Shederick McClendon, assistant dean of student services, at samccclendon@berkeley.edu or 510-642-9654.

Best regards,
Jeff Oxendine and Bill Satariano,
Program Directors
Undergraduate Public Health Major