Recommendation to Change the Title of the Department of Health Behavior to "Department of Health, Behavior & Society"

Submitted to CPH Interim Dean, Dr. Wayne Sanderson, and CPH Faculty Council Chair, Dr. Steve Fleming

On October 20th 2014, the faculty of the Department of Health Behavior unanimously voted (all faculty members were present, with the exception of Christina Studts, Cynthia Lamberth, and Ramona Stone, who expressed support for the name change via email) to change the title/name of the department to the "Department of Health, Behavior & Society." Summarized below are the background and rationale leading to this recommendation and request for a change in our department's title.

Background: The evolving nature of theory and practice in public health has led to far less emphasis on changing the behavior of individuals and far more emphasis on changing the conditions of society that shape and limit the adoption of health-protective behaviors. Hence, the concept of “health behavior” is slowly being replaced with the concept of a far more ecologically-oriented approach to changing the behaviors that foster or deter good health.

Rationale for Department Name Change: This name change is needed to better (and more accurately) reflect the mission and expertise of our department. We are very much oriented around the concept that the social and physical environments are the primary determinants of individual-level health behaviors. Because the social and physical environments are determined by factors collectively referred to as “society” we have annexed that term to our name. Following the convention of our counterpart department at Johns Hopkins University, this annexation takes the form of Health, Behavior & Society.

In summary, on behalf of the Health Behavior faculty, I request that the College of Public Health take the necessary next steps to formally change the department's title to “Health, Behavior & Society.” Of course, please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Richard Crosby, PhD
Endowed Professor and Department Chair