Strategic vision for Epidemiology

The Columbia University Mailman School department of epidemiology is one of the oldest and most distinguished departments of epidemiology in the world. Building on a core of excellence in scholarship and teaching, the department seeks to continue innovating and evolving to better meet emerging challenges in a changing world.

With that in mind this document aims to clearly articulate a strategic direction for the department, serving as the intellectual scaffolding on which department activities, from research, through education, and translation of our scholarship, can build. This is not intended to be a ‘final document’, but rather a ‘living document’, to be updated, and improved with the passage of time.

Scholarship

We are committed to understanding the cells-to-society determinants of global population health. In keeping with the goals of an epidemiology of consequence we explicitly intend our work to inform prevention efforts that improve the health of populations. We are interested in putting our science to work in the public arena, translating findings to policy and implementation scale-up.

We are dedicated to developing new and novel methods, and will adopt methods from other disciplines that can fruitfully inform our quantitative population health science. We are willing to embrace a broad range of approaches and to build partnerships with complementary disciplines to achieve these ends.

We aspire to explore and allow new ways of thinking to flourish, to catalyze cross and inter-disciplinary work, and to articulate frameworks that comprehensively explain the production of health and can galvanize effective population health practice.

Education

We aim to innovate in education and to foster an environment of educational excellence. We aim to engage in the teaching of epidemiologic science to a diverse body of students, to use multiple educational modalities, and to create the spaces for the continuing exchange of ideas that promote the field and its reach. We are committed to training students who will be leaders in quantitative population health science and in public health practice. We aim for our students to learn practical skills and to be prepared for a lifelong engagement in knowledge discovery, translation, and implementation.

We aspire to an inter-disciplinary education for our students, grounded in the basic skills of epidemiologic science but encouraging the embrace of complementary quantitative methods that can help answer key population health questions. Our education is embedded within a model of experiential learning and active mentorship that flexibly encourages students to function at their maximum capacity.

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1 This document builds on a vision first articulated through faculty-wide discussions in 2010. This evolving vision emerged from a department leadership retreat in December 2013 with subsequent iterations through broad faculty-wide consultation through the first half of 2014.
Translation

We aim to identify the causes of population health so that we may improve population health. To that end the department aspires to translate scholarship to implementation in an effort to contribute to the creation of conditions that make people healthier. We aim to make our scholarship accessible so that it may inform and influence the health sciences, the public health conversation, and the production of population health.

We are committed to translating our science to the broadest audience possible, including public health stakeholders and non-traditional actors who have the capacity to influence the health of populations. To this end we aim to solicit input from thinkers from diverse spheres of influence, to form strategic partnerships, and to catalyze advances in policy and practice that improve public health.