

# The University of California Global Health Institute Opportunities and Challenges

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## KEYWORDS

- Global health • Interdisciplinary • Education • Research
- Governance

The mission of the University of California Global Health Institute (UCGHI) (<http://www.ucghi.universityofcalifornia.edu/>)<sup>1</sup> is as follows: “Recognizing the long-standing and emerging challenges to global health, the University of California Global Health Institute will create multi-campus, trans-disciplinary centers of expertise to address these challenges through a novel problem-based and action-oriented structure. By integrating the vast expertise of faculty on the ten campuses, this unprecedented University-wide initiative will focus on producing leaders and practitioners of global health, conducting innovative and important research, and developing international collaborations to improve the health of vulnerable people and communities in California and world-wide.”

In just a few years, the University of California (UC) has taken major steps in creating a unique transdisciplinary, multicampus academic global health model in the rapidly evolving field of global health. After 3 years of planning funded by the UC Office of the President (UCOP) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the UCGHI was launched in November 2009 and has since evolved into an alliance of resources across the 10 campuses unequalled in its breadth and depth of faculty expertise and capacity to lead the global health movement. UC’s strength in a range of

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disciplines from agriculture and engineering to health sciences and economics gives the university a comparative advantage over the 260 US and Canadian universities that have created global health programs in the past decade. The UCGHI, linked closely with existing campus global health programs, expands the interdisciplinary reach in research, education, and service to be a catalyst to the growth of the global health discipline on all 10 campuses. It is a model emblematic of a future envisioned in the 2010 report of the UC Commission on the Future: University of California in the 21st Century (<http://ucfuture.universityofcalifornia.edu/>).<sup>2</sup>

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The idea for the UC-wide global health initiative was conceived as a result of discussions of the 2005 UC Long-Range Guidance Committee, which concluded that major universities have to have global reach if they are to be competitive in the twenty-first century. The UCOP then provided funding to begin the initial planning process. Subsequent planning was accomplished over a 3-year period, thanks to a generous planning grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Planning was undertaken by several committees made up of faculty, administrators, and students representing the 10 campuses of the university and with the guidance of an External Scientific Advisory Committee. The initial plan was to form a UC-wide School of Global Health, but when the California economy collapsed in 2008, the vision was scaled back to establish, instead, an institute with 3 multicampus centers of expertise (COEs). It is hoped that UCGHI will serve as the nucleus of a future UC School of Global Health.

## VISION

The vision is that the institute will represent a paradigm shift from traditional academic programs. The institute is designed to be problem based and not discipline based and is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary program bringing together faculty and trainees not only from the health sciences disciplines but also from nonhealth sciences, such as agriculture, business, economics, engineering, law, the social and behavioral sciences, and veterinary science. The unparalleled academic resources of the UC are thus engaged to address major global health problems. The program unifies faculty and students from all 10 campuses of the university. The programs of UCGHI are action oriented and go beyond those of traditional academic programs, which focus on education, research, publication, and dissemination. In addition, UCGHI strives to implement research and policy projects on a large scale. UCGHI is designed to be value adding and will collaborate with, but not attempt to replicate, the existing schools and programs.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UC GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

No university is better situated than the UC to be a leader in global health. The global health sector is a significant contributor to the economy of California. A recent study conducted by the UCGHI faculty showed that the global health sector supports 350,000 high-quality jobs in California, which generates nearly \$20 billion in wages and salaries in the state per annum (<http://www.ucghi.universityofcalifornia.edu/planning/reports.aspx>).<sup>3</sup> California citizens need to be prepared to participate in and expand this workforce. With California's large number of immigrants and proximity to the Mexican border and the Asia Pacific region, the health of California is increasingly intersecting with the health of the world. The growing burden of disease in lower-income countries and potential infectious disease outbreaks focus attention on how

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