

# Competencies for Global Health Graduate Education

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## KEYWORDS

- Global health • Competencies • Public health
- Graduate education

*Health is a necessary prerequisite for a harmonious, productive, prosperous, and peaceful world. It is indeed central to the aspiration of the world's people and of their governments and as such health is a global priority.*

—T. Shilton, 2009<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The multitude of social, political, technological, and economic forces currently fueling globalization (**Box 1**) are also driving the current unprecedented interest and growth in world health, health education and promotion, and global workforce development (**Box 2**).<sup>2–4</sup> These inflection points have drawn attention to the many imperatives and priorities for the expansion of workforce development and capacity-building, both within and across nations. Long-standing professional and geographic differences in education and training programs, licensure/certification standards, and roles and specialization requirements, however, have compromised national and international health education agenda setting. Equally impacted has been consensus building regarding the development of educational standards across the professions. Despite the repeated calls for collaboration and interprofessional education, little progress has been achieved to date in relation to these goals even within regions and individual countries. In the United States specifically, the silo-based and variable educational approaches across the health professions at large and the related

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Box 1

Forces of globalization

- Greater international connectedness and interdependence
- Intensification of a competitive global marketplace
- Expansion of flows across countries (resources, people, goods, information, innovations)
- Escalation of dependency on intellectual capital and innovation for productivity and growth
- Greater focus on the role of prevention in health
- Increased threats of infectious disease outbreaks, natural disasters, unintentional man-made disasters, and biological and terrorist attacks
- Heightened public visibility of a global health agenda
- Societal demand and movements for greater global equity
- Incremental potential for global conflict and loss of security

specializations have been highlighted in all 3 of the Institute of Medicine committee reports addressing the quality chasm related to health care.<sup>5-7</sup>

The call for educational transformation across health professions in the United States has been uniform and resounding by leaders and researchers in educational and workforce development, foundations, health professions commissions, and professional organizations.<sup>8-13</sup> In addition, several international conferences and forums have promoted widespread engagement, ownership, and collaboration in

Box 2

Drivers of interest and growth in global health

- Increased opportunities for traveling, living, studying, and working around the world
- Innovations in information technology and communication
- Ease of communication and travel
- Emphasis on internationalization facilitated by global media
- Heightened public awareness as a matter of US foreign policy
- Greater student interest around the world regarding issues affecting health, health care, and health services
- Growing belief that health is a basic human right and a moral imperative
- New demand among undergraduates, graduate, and professional students for education and training experiences aligned with marketplace factors
- Proliferation of schools of public health across the globe, including increased global health degree-granting and certification programs
- Internationalization of health and education, expansion of free-standing institutes and centers focusing on global health and the promotion of health
- Enlightened self-interest and global health investment by the American public
- New donors with unprecedented levels of funding for global health and related areas of workforce development, research, and discovery
- Social justice movements on campuses: increased student compassion and activism fueled by world conflicts and health challenges
- Expansion of global health disciplinary frameworks beyond the health professions

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