

DATE: April 15, 2004

SUBJECT: Tennessee College of Public Health Update

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Staff will report to the Commission on progress since its last meeting concerning a proposed Tennessee College of Public Health. Following is a brief summary:

Tennessee currently does not have a nationally accredited college of public health. There are existing public health programs at the University of Tennessee – Knoxville, the UT Center of Health Science, the University of Memphis, and East Tennessee State University. None of these programs, however, offer the required full complement of programs to be accredited by CEPH, the Council on Education for Public Health.

An accredited college of public health would qualify Tennessee for federal support to fund programs and services that will significantly improve the health of Tennesseans. Initial federal funding is conservatively estimated at \$10 million per year. The importance of improved public health is highlighted by Tennessee’s poor health ratings and the enormous cost of TennCare.

THEC proposes to take the lead role in coordinating a joint effort with the State Administration and higher education to study and provide recommendations concerning public health programs in Tennessee. The first priority of the study will concern establishing a college of public health that is eligible for CEPH accreditation.

THEC proposes to hire Mr. Tom Samuel for the 2004-05 fiscal year to direct this activity. Mr. Samuel is a former State of Tennessee executive, who currently is the executive associate director of the University of Kentucky, School of Public Health.

Arrangements have been made with the administration for the THEC 2004-05 operating budget to support this effort, which will not exceed \$180,000: \$150,000 for Samuel’s base salary and benefits, plus \$30,000 for operations.

Mr. Samuel’s initial assignment will be to determine the feasibility of establishing an creditable Tennessee College of Public Health, drawing from the existing public health programs in Tennessee universities. If a collaborative model is considered feasible, his next objective will be to develop a proposal. If a collaborative is not considered feasible, he will develop alternative proposals for an creditable college of public health.

In addition, Mr. Samuel's responsibilities will include assessing and defining the role of higher education in the State's public health agenda, and seeking external support for public health initiatives.