Building an Academic Tobacco Control Program While Forging Links with Practice: The University of Washington Tobacco Studies Program

Sara E. Savage, MPH[a]
Abigail C. Halperin, MD, MPH[a,b]

SYNOPSIS

Despite the tremendous impact that tobacco use and tobacco smoke exposure have on morbidity, mortality, and health disparities, few schools of public health in the U.S. offer courses of study on tobacco control or make it a priority in their curricula. An academic concentration in tobacco studies and a master's-level scholarship program were developed at the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine to support and encourage students to pursue tobacco-related coursework, seminars, internships, and thesis work. This article discusses the goals, strategies, and accomplishments of the programs, emphasizing a collaborative approach between the university and state and local health departments, nongovernmental agencies, and research organizations as instrumental to the program's success and ultimate continuation.

[a]Center for Health Education and Research, Department of Health Services, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA

[b]Department of Family Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Address correspondence to: Sara E. Savage, MPH, Tobacco Studies Program, Center for Health Education and Research, Univ. of Washington, Seattle, WA, 901 Boren Ave., Ste. 1100, Seattle, WA 98104; tel. 206-616-3767; fax 206-221-4945; e-mail <sarasav@u.washington.edu>.

©2006 Association of Schools of Public Health

Tobacco use continues to be the primary cause of preventable disease, death, and disability in the United States, killing more than 400,000 people each year.[1] Exposure to secondhand smoke causes an additional 38,000 deaths per year[1] and a wide range of acute and chronic illnesses that result in high medical costs and lost work productivity.[2] In the U.S., tobacco use takes a disproportionate toll on the poor, the uninsured, the mentally ill, and certain racial and ethnic groups. By the year 2030, tobacco use is expected to cause approximately 10 million deaths worldwide, 70% of these in developing countries.[3] Despite these compelling statistics and tobacco's significant impact on nearly all disciplines of public health, few schools of public health offer courses on tobacco control or make it a focus of study and research in their training programs.

The American Legacy Foundation (Legacy), in collaboration with the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH), identified this gap as a serious barrier to producing public health practitioners and researchers who are prepared to address the challenges of the tobacco epidemic. Consequently, they created the Scholarship, Teaching, and Education Program for Tobacco Use Prevention (STEP UP) grant initiative. The goals of the STEP UP initiative were three-fold: (*1*) increase the number of graduate students and faculty in public health who specialize in tobacco studies and research; (*2*) better integrate tobacco-related issues into graduate public health education; and (*3*) build capacity and a stronger infrastructure for tobacco-related education in schools of public health while supporting more productive academic/practice linkages on tobacco issues through projects with communities of interest.

The University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine (UW SPHCM) was the recipient of two competitive STEP UP grants: a $150,000, three-year curriculum innovation grant to develop tobacco-related coursework, which began in May 2002; and a $60,000, two-year pre-doctoral scholarship grant received in May 2003 to provide financial support and guidance to eligible students who focused on tobacco issues while pursuing a master's degree in public health (MPH). These grants were merged to create the UW Tobacco Studies Program (TSP). This article details the experience of developing and implementing this program over a three-year period and describes the successes, challenges, and lessons learned in forging a new topic-based area of study in a two-year MPH program.

BACKGROUND

Prior to the STEP UP grant, there were no courses at UW focused specifically on tobacco and health; only three faculty members were conducting research in tobacco prevention or treatment, and limited relationships existed between the UW SPHCM and local tobacco control organizations or programs. Additionally, until the late 1990s, tobacco control was not a priority on the UW campus. As recently as 2000, UW students could buy cigarettes with their student debit cards in campus outlets, smoking was allowed in several residence halls, the student newspaper accepted tobacco advertising, and the university was heavily invested in tobacco company stocks. By 2001, due in large part to a campaign spearheaded by two research fellows in the UW SPHCM MPH program, including one of the authors (AH), cigarettes were no longer sold on campus, all student housing was smoke-free, tobacco advertising was removed from the student newspaper, and UW had divested from tobacco company stocks. Thus, when the STEP UP initiative was announced in 2002, the stage had been set for an expansion of tobacco control education, and the application for funding to develop a tobacco studies program received enthusiastic support from the dean and Health Services Department faculty and chair.

Planning phase

After obtaining the first STEP UP award, the UW TSP set out to enhance and build curricular innovation and scholarship in tobacco-related studies within the UW SPHCM MPH degree program, creating capacity and infrastructure to attract and support students who wished to gain expertise and develop careers in the field of tobacco control.

Program staff members developed six objectives to meet this goal:

1. Establish a Tobacco Studies in Public Health concentration within the MPH program;
2. Provide up to four fellowships (in the form of financial support and mentorship) per year to eligible and qualified students who commit to specific tobacco studies program requirements;
3. Develop and offer a three-credit elective course on tobacco and public health within the MPH degree program of the UW SPHCM;
4. Establish a journal club addressing tobacco research topics;

5. Incorporate tobacco-related lectures, case studies, and curriculum modules into core MPH classes, seminars, appropriate electives, and school-wide events; and
6. Foster collaborative relationships with other UW faculty as well as local governmental and other health organizations to identify student practicum placements, thesis opportunities, and potential mentors.

The first step toward implementing these objectives was to hire a half-time curriculum development specialist/training coordinator as program manager for the project. The first year of the grant focused primarily on building and readying the components of the program for students—the course, the scholarship program, and identification of mentors and practicum opportunities. Program staff reviewed existing national and international tobacco curricula and developed a draft syllabus that included topics, learning objectives, and potential readings. The course was approved by the department and school in May 2003 and offered the following spring. Without STEP UP funding, this would not have been possible due to a moratorium on new courses in the Department of Health Services.

During the first year, TSP program staff wrote a competitive application for a companion STEP UP pre-doctoral scholarship grant, which was awarded in May 2003. Local organizations and research institutions were assessed for possible tobacco-related practicum placements; publicity materials including a brochure, a web page, flyers, and e-mails were prepared; and by September 2003, the UW TSP was ready to recruit students.

Accomplishments

Over the ensuing two years of the STEP UP grant, the program manager and director worked with faculty and staff within the university as well as with partners outside the university to develop the TSP. While obstacles and challenges were encountered, most initial goals were met: a new elective course on tobacco and public health was offered, a regular journal club on tobacco research topics was convened, guest speaker presentations were integrated into existing classes and seminars, and student involvement in the tobacco control field increased through practicum placements and research.

In addition, the formation of a network of tobacco control practitioners, researchers, students, and organizations was an unexpected yet fortuitous outcome. This network has fostered a collaborative exchange of resources and ideas that has been central to the program's success while providing benefits to the UW SPHCM, partnering organizations, and the larger regional tobacco control community.

The following are the major accomplishments of the program to date, including the processes, challenges, and outcomes of each.

1. Development of a Tobacco Studies in Public Health concentration. In designing a tobacco studies program, TSP staff built upon existing requirements of the UW MPH program and a tradition in the school of allowing MPH students to pursue a sub-specialty within public health, such as international health or maternal and child health. The MPH degree at UW requires a slate of core courses, electives specific to a student's program track, completion of a 120-hour field-based practicum, and a written thesis or capstone project. To complete the tobacco studies concentration, students are required to take a three-credit tobacco and public health course, attend three journal club meetings or seminars, and complete their practicum and thesis or capstone on a tobacco-related topic. Students pursuing an MPH degree from any of the five UW SPHCM departments (Biostatistics, Epidemiology, Health Services, Environmental and Occupational Health, and Pathobiology) are eligible to pursue the tobacco studies concentration. The establishment of a tobacco studies certificate requiring a range of relevant coursework is being considered for the future.

2. Financial support and mentorship for public health students pursuing tobacco studies. Despite irrefutable evidence that tobacco use affects nearly every aspect of public health practice, tobacco control seldom receives the amount of attention that HIV/AIDS or other communicable diseases (and more recently, the obesity epidemic) do. The offer of financial support and guidance in identifying mentors, tobacco-related practica, and thesis work greatly enhanced the ability of the TSP to attract students to the field, and conferred a new legitimacy to tobacco control, elevating its visibility and importance as a public health issue in the UW SPHCM community.

Two levels of awards were established: a $3,000 fellowship that required completion of the tobacco studies concentration, and a $1,500 career development stipend that required enrollment in the course and participation in the journal club. Eligibility criteria were based largely on the terms of the Legacy/ASPH grant: applicants were required to be U.S. citizens, pursue domestically focused research, not receive any funding from the tobacco industry, and be enrolled in a master's degree program. The program was publicized through e-mail, flyers, and orientation sessions.

A review committee comprised of the TSP manager and director plus three other SPHCM faculty and staff members was convened to make award determinations. A flexible framework used to allocate funding enabled the committee to divide available funds among applicants based on the number and quality of applications, strength of the student's commitment, and financial need, rather than being confined to a fixed formula. The $1,500 career development stipend category proved to be useful for two reasons: it encouraged the participation of students who were interested but could not commit to the full concentration, and it allowed program staff to "test out" a first-year student who may have been undecided about pursuing the full concentration program. Due to small but qualified pools of applicants in both years, the committee awarded all applicants some level of funding.

Over the two years, seven students received tobacco studies fellowships, two of them for consecutive years. Four of the seven completed or plan to complete the concentration program. Each tobacco scholar was assigned an academic advisor by the SPHCM, and TSP staff provided advice and mentorship to all scholars on their practicum placements and theses or capstone projects. Fifteen researchers and organizations were identified as possible practicum sources and eight UW faculty signed on as advisors or mentors for students. The scholars worked in a variety of settings for their practicum placements, produced interesting and valuable course and thesis work, provided leadership in organizing seminars and journal clubs, and became involved in local tobacco policy advocacy work (Figure 1). The progress and performance of the students were monitored by faculty through grades and mentoring, and a qualitative self-assessment evaluation form was completed by each scholar. The positive outcomes of the program are best reflected in their own words. One student wrote, "I feel that the Tobacco Studies Program has provided for me a very solid foundation in the breadth and quality of work that has been conducted in the field of tobacco control." Others stated, "The program had a big impact on me and is re-orienting

Figure 1. Student practica, theses, and coursework (2004 and 2005)

Tobacco scholars: practicum placements and activities

1. Group Health Foundation/ Public Health Seattle-King County, Tobacco Prevention Program: Worked with an advisory group of bar owners to assess needs and gain input for a smoke-free strategy guide for bar and restaurant owners
2. Washington Asian Pacific Islander Families Against Substance Abuse (WAPIFASA): Coordinated the WAPIFASA youth council on tobacco prevention
3. Free & Clear, Inc: Assisted in the development of tobacco cessation services tailored to Latino clients and presented the work at National Conference on Tobacco OR Health
4. Public Health Seattle-King County, Tobacco Prevention Program: Identified strategies for creating smoke-free housing in King County

Tobacco scholars: thesis or capstone projects

1. *Strategy Guide for Bar Owners to Go Smoke-free:* Developed a publication for distribution to bars and restaurants throughout King County
2. *Asian Pacific Islander (API) Youth Tobacco Conference as an Intervention for Current API Teen Smokers and High-Risk API Teens:* Coordinated a tobacco use prevention and education conference at the University of Washington that attracted over 25 Asian Pacific Islander youth
3. *The Tobacco Industry's Response to the COMMIT Trial: An Analysis of Legacy Tobacco Documents:* Conducted original research utilizing web-based tobacco industry document libraries and submitted paper for publication

Tobacco course: student paper-presentation topics

1. Harm Reduction(s): Comparing Psychology and Public Health Approaches for Illicit Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco
2. Tobacco Marketing Strategies in African American Communities
3. Tobacco Control in the Philippines
4. The California Smoking Ban: Lessons for Washington State Initiative 890
5. China and Tobacco: What a Sordid Affair
6. Applying the Lessons Learned from Tobacco Control to the Obesity Epidemic
7. Tobacco Dependence Among the Mentally Ill
8. Smoking Cessation Among African American Populations
9. Art Patch (a Seattle project to counter local tobacco industry funding of the arts)
10. Case Study in Korea: Where Customized Regulations Are Needed
11. Tobacco Use Among Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders
12. Sacred Use or Abuse? Tobacco Use, Past and Present, among North American Indians
13. A Beginning Framework for Culturally Appropriate Youth Smoking Prevention
14. Stopping not Quitting: Preventing Post-Partum Relapse for Pregnant Ex-Smokers
15. The Impact of Tobacco Use in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Communities

my career goals," and, "I hope this program continues, as I think it had a major impact in our school," and finally, "I feel that the STEP UP scholarship gave me the opportunity and the skills to dedicate my career to tobacco control."

3. Establishment of a new elective course on tobacco and public health.

Collaborative sponsorship. The Tobacco and Public Health course was designed as a three-credit, seminar-style series of classes covering a wide range of tobacco control issues, from medical consequences and treatment to industry marketing, prevention strategies, health disparities, global impacts, policy considerations, and legal issues (Figure 2). It became clear that the small tobacco research community in Seattle had some but not all of the expertise needed to cover these topics. The Program Director had relationships with national experts who could fill this gap, but the STEP UP grant did not include a budget for guest speakers' travel expenses or honoraria. TSP staff approached the local county tobacco prevention program (Public Health Seattle-King County) about sponsoring one or two speakers in exchange for access to the tobacco course, journal club, and seminars, and utilization of course speakers for a staff in-service or consultation. They enthusiastically agreed to the arrangement, recognizing it as mutually beneficial. Requests to other agencies were similarly successful and the program was able to secure $5,000 from three organizations in 2004 and $8,000 from four organizations in 2005. This additional funding enabled the program to host national and international experts to instruct students (and faculty) in the classroom and to train and advise public health practitioners from sponsoring organizations (Figure 2).

Enrollment. It was a challenge to find an available time slot within a crowded curriculum that did not conflict with required courses, and to entice students to take a new course. The first year, enrollment was low (six MPH students) but in response to publicity efforts outside the UW, five non-matriculated students chose to audit the class, increasing the class size to 11 diverse and motivated participants. The auditors included staff from the county tobacco prevention program, a cancer research scientist, the medical director of a health insurance plan, and an environmental health consultant. The real-world program experience of the local practitioners greatly enhanced discussion and relevance of the material for UW students.

In the second year, increased visibility of the program, positive word of mouth, and a better time slot led to a near doubling of enrollment in 2005. In addition, three researchers—one visiting scholar from Brazil and two scientists from a local public health research institute—audited the course for a total class size of 14 students. Each course session was publicized to sponsoring agencies and other interested parties, resulting in additional "drop-ins" for several of the classes.

Coursework. A course web page that contained the course syllabus, readings, links to helpful web sites, and assignments was established. Students were required to participate in class discussions, write a letter to the editor or research a tobacco control organization, write a final paper on a tobacco-related topic, and give a short oral presentation on their findings (Figure 1). Course evaluations were extremely positive. Of the 22 students who took the class and completed evaluation forms, 95% ranked the course overall as either excellent (n=19) or very good (n=2), yielding a median score of 4.9 out of 5.0. Almost all (21/22) participants gave the course content a rating of excellent, for a median score of 5.0. Additionally, on the question regarding how much the students learned in the course, 91% (n=20) rated this item as excellent, also yielding a median of 5.0.

4. Organization of a tobacco studies journal club. The purpose of the journal club was to provide a forum for students and faculty to discuss tobacco-related topics in-depth and to practice critical analysis of published research. Meetings were held during fall and winter quarters, while spring and summer quarters were reserved for the course and practicum experiences. Topics and meeting times were determined based on input from the tobacco scholars who formed the core of the group, and focused on topic areas not covered in depth by the course, such as the effects of tobacco use and marketing on specific vulnerable populations (Figure 3). The journal club meetings, publicized via e-mail and student lists, also served to attract and identify newly interested students and faculty from both within and outside the UW community, expanding the reach of the program.

5. Organization of campus-based seminars, events, and workshops addressing tobacco issues. While the course was well received by the enrolled students and auditors, few outside this group took advantage of the opportunity to hear the national experts who were brought in for the course, despite wide publicity and targeted invitations to departments and programs within the SPHCM. Incorporating tobacco-related topics into existing seminars and courses, on the other hand, was an effective way to reach greater numbers of students and faculty. In one case, more than 50 students and faculty attended a talk about the health risks and social justice issues

of secondhand smoke exposure as part of a required environmental health seminar. In another case, the TSP reached an additional 35 students by organizing a workshop on the global impact of tobacco as part of a regional international health conference held on the UW campus that had not originally included a session on tobacco.

Seven seminars, events, or workshops were offered between October 2003 and March 2005 (Figure 3). Hosting these seminars had the added benefit of publicizing the TSP and attracting students to take the tobacco course. As with the course and journal club, the seminars were another opportunity for non-UW tobacco control advocates, researchers, and practitioners to participate. An increased number of tobacco-related seminars took place off-campus as well, most of which were arranged in exchange for sponsorship of expert guest speakers for the UW tobacco course (Figure 2).

6. Development of linkages within UW and with outside organizations. Within the five major components of the TSP (concentration, fellowships, course, journal club, and tobacco-related seminars), the project team

Figure 2. Course topics, speakers, and sponsorship

2004 Tobacco and Public Health Course

Session topic	*Speaker and affiliation*	*Sponsor (Other speaker event)*
1. Introduction to Course / History of UW Tobacco Policies	Abigail Halperin, MD, MPH, University of Washington	
2. The History, Rise and Tactics of the Tobacco Industry	Cyndi Lewis, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids	
3. Medical Consequences of Tobacco Use and ETS Exposure	Corinne Husten, MD, MPH, CDC Office on Smoking and Health	DOH TPCP (Workshop for state tobacco prevention sub-contractors)
4. Epidemiology of Tobacco Use and ETS Exposure	Corinne Husten, MD, MPH, CDC Office on Smoking and Health	
5. Understanding Nicotine Addiction	Tim McAfee, MD, MPH, Free & Clear, Inc.	
6. Tobacco Dependence: Approaches to Treatment	Paul Zemann, PHSKC	
7. Tobacco Control Strategies:	Ken Warner, PhD, University of Michigan	Free and Clear and PHSKC (Lecture for Free and Clear staff on harm reduction)
8. Economics of Tobacco	Ken Warner, PhD, University of Michigan	
9. Design and Evaluation of Tobacco Prevention and Treatment Programs	Art Peterson, PhD, FHCRC	
10. Comprehensive Tobacco Control: The WA State Model	Terry Reid and Julia Dilley, DOH TPCP	
11. Counter-marketing of Tobacco: The Truth Campaign	Donna Vallone, PhD, American Legacy Foundation	American Legacy Foundation (In-service for PHSKC staff)
12. Health Disparities and the Impact of Tobacco Use in Vulnerable Populations	Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH, Washington State Department of Health	
13. Community-based Tobacco Control Interventions	Beti Thompson, PhD, FHCRC	
14. International Policy and Politics: WHO Framework Convention	Judith Wilkenfeld, JD, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids	PHSKC (Lunch with UW staff and students)
15. National Policy and Politics: Master Settlement Agreement	David Horn, JD, Washington State Attorney General's Office	
16. Local Policy and Politics: WA State Clean Indoor Air Bill	Kevin Knox and Michael O'Sullivan, American Cancer Society	

continued on p. 535

Figure 2 (continued). Course topics, speakers, and sponsorship

2005 Tobacco and Public Health Course

Session topic	*Speaker and affiliation*	*Sponsor (Other speaker event)*
1. Tobacco Industry Marketing Strategies and Public Health Tobacco Control Strategies	Robert Jaffe, MD, University of Washington	
2. Medical Consequences and Epidemiology of Tobacco Use and ETS Exposure	Richard Hurt, MD, Nicotine Dependence Center, Mayo Clinic	DOH TPCP (State tobacco prevention sub-contractors invited to attend UW lecture)
3. Tobacco Dependence: Understanding Nicotine Addiction and Treatment	Tim McAfee, MD, MPH, Free and Clear, Inc. Paul Zemann, PHSKC	
4. Tobacco Harm Reduction Economics of Tobacco	Ken Warner, PhD, University of Michigan	FHCRC, Social and Behavioral Sciences Affinity Group (Lecture at FHCRC)
5. Comprehensive Approaches to Tobacco Control and Prevention: Case Study in Youth and Young Adults	Abigail Halperin, MD, MPH, UW Art Peterson, PhD, FHCRC Michael Leon-Guererro, PHSKC	
6. Secondhand Smoke: The Policy, Politics and Economics of Clean Indoor Air	Susan Ferguson, JD, TPCHD Rick Porso and David Vance, TPCHD	
7. Health Disparities and the Impact of Tobacco Use in Vulnerable Populations: African Americans and Women	Phillip Gardiner, DrPH, University of California TRDRP	PHSKC (Lunch with PHSKC staff)
8. The Global Tobacco Epidemic and the WHO Framework Convention	Stella Aguinaga Bialous, RN, DrPH, Tobacco Policy International	Free and Clear, Inc. (Lecture and meetings at F&C)
9. Tobacco Product Regulation: FDA Efforts from 1994-2000 and Prospects for New Legislation	Mitchell Zeller, JD, Pinney Associates	PHSKC (Dinner with PHSKC staff)

CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
DOH TPCP = Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Control Program
ETS = environmental tobacco smoke
FHCRC = Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
PHSKC = Public Health Seattle-King County
TRDRP = Tobacco Related Disease Research Program
UW = University of Washington
WHO = World Health Organization

collaborated with colleagues in the UW community and with outside partners to develop and promote the program. Cultivating and nurturing these partnerships were essential to the success of the program.

As the sphere of influence of the TSP grew, faculty, staff, and students within UW who had an interest in tobacco control issues were identified, along with research centers and leaders in the local tobacco control community. The TSP played a significant role in fostering connections between these entities. Program staff created a "tobacco interest" listserv, which currently provides a forum for the program and more than 140 members to publicize tobacco-related trainings, courses, seminars, local policy developments, and events, contributing substantially to the visibility of tobacco control issues on campus and in the community.

The ultimate return on investment for employing a partnership-building approach came in the form of continued funding from the Washington State Department of Health, Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (DOH TPCP) in July 2005. The UW TSP and other Washington tobacco control advocates are fortunate to reside in one of the few states that has sufficiently protected tobacco industry settlement funds and cigarette excise taxes for tobacco use prevention

Figure 3. UW Tobacco Studies Journal Club meetings, seminars, and workshops

Tobacco Studies Journal Club meetings	
2/2/04	The impact of viewing smoking in the movies on adolescent smoking initiation
3/9/04	The impact of tobacco use in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations
10/27/04	The impact of tobacco use in Asian American and recent immigrant populations
1/25/05	Tobacco use in American Indian/Alaska Native populations: health and cultural considerations
2/15/05	Smoking prevalence and policy considerations among mentally ill and incarcerated populations
Tobacco-related topics in SPHCM seminars	
10/15/03	Viewed and discussed the movie, "The Insider" (Student Public Health Association event)
10/18/04	Promoting Secondhand Smoke Policy (COPHP Seminar)
10/21/04	Secondhand Smoke: Social Justice in the Workplace (Environmental Health Seminar)
11/15/05	Legal Issues of a Smoking Ban in Pierce County (COPHP Seminar)
12/3/04	Searching the Universe of Tobacco Industry Documents (TSP Workshop)
2/19/05	The Global Tobacco Epidemic and the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (Conference Workshop)
3/1/05	Scientific Integrity: Tobacco Industry Manipulation of Scientists and Epidemiology (Epidemiology Seminar)

TSP = University of Washington Tobacco Studies Program
COPHP = Community Oriented Public Health Practice
SPHCM = School of Public Health and Community Medicine

and treatment. Due to the robust nature of the state program and as a natural extension of two years of collaboration, the DOH TPCP granted the UW TSP a two-year, $100,000 per year contract to continue a similar scope of work. In funding the UW program, the DOH TPCP recognized the reciprocal benefits of supporting a tobacco control training program that created opportunities for professional development of their own staff and sub-contractors in an academic setting, as well as the ability to influence training of UW graduate students in the field by utilizing them as interns in their programs. The new contract will benefit the UW TSP by furthering connections to DOH TPCP sub-contracted tobacco control programs, thereby increasing the potential for more collaborative relationships such as identification of local guest speakers for the course, and additional student practicum sites.

CONCLUSION

Dean Barry Bloom of Harvard School of Public Health recently declared the control of tobacco advertising, sales, and addiction as the first of eight public health priorities that would significantly improve global health outcomes.[4] This serves as a call to all schools of public health to provide leadership and accountability in their training programs so that public health graduates understand the depth and breadth of the tobacco epidemic and are given the tools and skills to address it. The STEP UP initiative afforded UW and several other schools of public health the opportunity to meet this challenge.

In just three years, the UW SPHCM, a school that had no formal tobacco control curricula, now has in place academic offerings, scholarships, expanding networks, and a growing reputation in the tobacco control field. In fact, for the first time this year, the TSP attracted entering students who came to the school in part to pursue the tobacco studies concentration, and is currently funding six tobacco scholars. While in the beginning the scholarships may have helped entice students to participate in a new program, once engaged, they were captivated by the compelling complexities of a preventable epidemic that takes more U.S. lives annually than HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol use, accidents, homicides, and suicides combined.[5] The tobacco scholars became catalysts for change, promoting awareness of tobacco issues and the TSP by encouraging fellow students to take the course, organizing seminars, and engaging in tobacco-related public health policy and community advocacy work.

The momentum of student involvement, coupled with a collaborative approach to teaching and building the program, were crucial to the success of the UW TSP. We hope this project will serve as an example of how multiple disciplines and sectors can partner to train public health students and give them the knowledge, skills, and passion needed to become the next generation of leaders in tobacco control. When schools of public health make tobacco issues a priority, students

will step up to the challenge and add their voices and expertise to the complex task of combating tobacco-related addiction, disease, and death in the U.S. and around the globe.

The authors thank Elizabeth Weist and Kalpana Ramiah of the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) for their dedication, enthusiasm, and guidance. The authors also acknowledge William Dowling, Chair, Department of Health Services at the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine, for his support and counsel; Terry Reid, Manager, Washington State Department of Health, Tobacco Prevention and Control Program; Roger Valdez, Manager, Public Health Seattle-King County Tobacco Prevention Program; and our other community partners, whose sponsorship and collaboration were essential to the development and sustenance of this program.

The funding and vision for this program were provided by the American Legacy Foundation and the ASPH. The content of this article does not necessarily represent the views of ASPH, the Legacy Foundation, its staff, or the Legacy board of directors.

REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US). Annual smoking-attributable mortality, years of potential life lost, and economic costs—United States, 1995–1999. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2002; 51(14):300-3.
2. Environmental Protection Agency (US). Respiratory health effects of passive smoking: lung cancer and other disorders. Pub. No. EPA/600/6-90/006F. Washington: Environmental Protection Agency; 1992.
3. World Health Organization. The World Health Report 1999—making a difference. Chapter 5, Combating the tobacco epidemic. Geneva: World Health Organization; 1999. p. 65-79. Also available from: URL: http://www.who.int/whr/1999/en/index.html [cited 2006 May 15]
4. Bloom BR. Public health in transition. Sci Am 2005;293:92-9.
5. Institute of Medicine. Growing up tobacco free: preventing nicotine addiction in children and youths. Washington: National Academy Press; 1994.