

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents has approved a new doctoral program in biostatistics for the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health.

The program, which will begin next fall, is the fourth doctoral program in the College of Public Health. The other doctoral programs include:

- health promotion and disease prevention research;
- health services research, administration, and policy; and
- environmental health, occupational health, and toxicology.

Earlier this fall, the College of Public Health earned accreditation from the Council on Education for Public Health and is now a full member of the Association of Schools of Public Health.

The college is one of only 49 accredited schools and colleges of public health in the United States. Only 27 of these schools are affiliated with academic medical centers.

“This is an exciting time for public health in Nebraska,” said Ayman El-Mohandes, M.B.B.Ch., M.D., M.P.H., dean of the College of Public Health. “This degree is another step in elevating our college and a prime example of how we serve the state.

“Modern public health practice requires multidisciplinary teams of professionals. Biostatisticians are a critical member of that team. They serve academic health centers, researchers and departments of health to insure accurate interpretation of data related to biosciences and population health.”

Biostatistics is vital to the correct design and interpretation of research, especially in human and biological sciences, Dr. El-Mohandes said.

A biostatistician creates and applies methods from across the spectrum of mathematical and statistical science to support quantitative research in the health sciences.

“After all the results are in, biostatisticians provide the research team with analysis of the data along with accurate interpretation of what they mean and any inferences they might have,” Dr. El-Mohandes said. “This is especially useful in clinical trials and other medical research where valid conclusions must be drawn from complex data sources.”

Students interested in this program include graduates with a master’s degree in biostatistics, statistics, mathematical sciences, or a related field with substantial mathematical training, computing experience and an interest in public health and biomedicine, he said.

Career options for professionals with a Ph.D. in biostatistics include government and private agencies, the biomedical industry, and academic health centers.

A fifth public health doctoral program in epidemiology and two more master’s programs are scheduled to come before the board for approval in 2012.