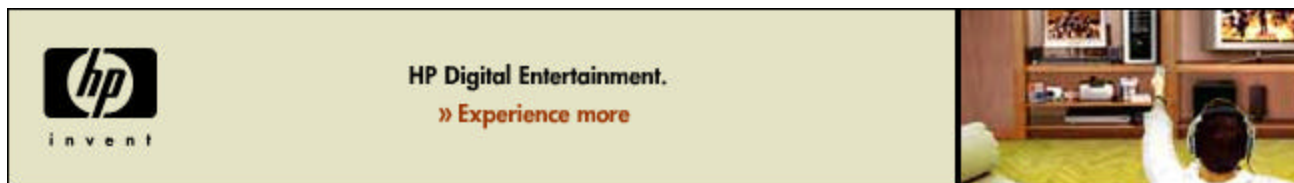


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Kentucky Urging Health Curriculum

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) -- Kentucky's universities are being asked to join the same team to fight chronic public health problems.

The goal is to encourage more people to seek master's degrees in public health -- putting those people at the forefront of efforts to promote healthier lifestyles, higher education officials said Thursday.

The plan will be presented to the Council on Postsecondary Education on Monday at its meeting in Campbellsville. The joint effort would include public health faculty from the University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, Western Kentucky University and Eastern Kentucky University. Those schools offer graduate programs in public health.

Other colleges and universities in the state with public health courses also will be drawn into the effort, officials said.

Higher education has a vested interest in improving public health, said Jim Applegate, the council's vice president of academic affairs.

The costs for treating illnesses caused by obesity and other preventable factors threaten to "eat up" state funds, leaving education and other priorities to divide what is left, he

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"Children's Lett
God" recently c

said.

“So we need to be a part of the solution to that,” he said at a media briefing at the council's office.

The plan calls for public health faculty at the four universities to work together in offering master's degree courses.

They will be viewed “as if they were a single faculty in a single school,” said Tom Layzell, the council's president.

Core courses would be available online. So, for instance, a student at Eastern Kentucky could take a course taught at Western Kentucky.

The collaboration is needed because Kentucky trails other states in the number of public health educators.

“There are ... single schools that have more faculty than we have in the entire state,” Applegate said. “So we have to come together if we're going to be competitive.”

Dr. Rice Leach, commissioner of the Department of Public Health, said more public health training is needed to help steer Kentuckians away from unhealthy choices. The main culprits are poor diets, smoking, alcohol consumption and lack of exercise, Leach said.

“People look like cantaloupes with straws coming out of them,” he said, adding that they are candidates for diabetes and heart disease.

Leach, who is retiring soon, praised Gov. Ernie Fletcher and his wife, Glenna, for promoting better health among Kentuckians.

“If they are successful, we will begin to turn the Queen Mary around in harbor,” Leach said.

A master's degree in public health can lead people toward several career paths, Leach said. They can work as administrators at hospitals or health departments. Other options include working for school districts or corporations to promote healthy lifestyles.

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