



# OBESITY & HEALTH: AN UNDERGRADUATE MINOR FOR FUTURE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS



INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON

Bloomington, IN

Educators from Indiana University Bloomington developed a 15-credit "Obesity and Health" minor for undergraduate students wishing to add education and training on obesity to their studies. Coursework addresses the etiology, assessment, social determinants, and treatment of overweight and obesity in both adults and children. Behavioral strategies important in prevention are explored. A similar minor program could be offered for students at other undergraduate institutions with the necessary faculty expertise.

## SCENARIO

Despite widespread recognition of obesity as a public health crisis, few U.S. health professionals report adequate training in obesity prevention and management. Health professional training programs cite lack of time and space in the curriculum as major barriers to addressing obesity comprehensively. In contrast, the relative curricular flexibility of many 4-year undergraduate programs presents an opportunity to connect students with obesity-related education and training early in their careers.

Recognizing that the high demand for professionals with expertise in obesity would give their students a competitive edge upon graduation, leading medical, public health, nutrition, and physical activity educators from Indiana University Bloomington developed the *Obesity & Health* minor.

## Educational Objectives

Prepare future health professionals to:

- ▶ state current obesity facts and guidelines;
- ▶ examine the evolution of human culture related to obesity;
- ▶ describe the complex etiology of obesity and related complications;
- ▶ describe the methods used to assess body fat;
- ▶ identify possible health risks that arise from excess body fat;
- ▶ discuss the relationships between diet, physical inactivity, and obesity;
- ▶ apply behavioral techniques regarding healthy eating and physical activity;
- ▶ communicate effective and supportive principles of healthy weight management to others; and
- ▶ apply the latest in evidence-based obesity research regarding physical activity, nutrition, psychology, behavioral theories, and medicine.

## About the Educators



**IU School of Public Health**  
Department of Applied  
Health Science



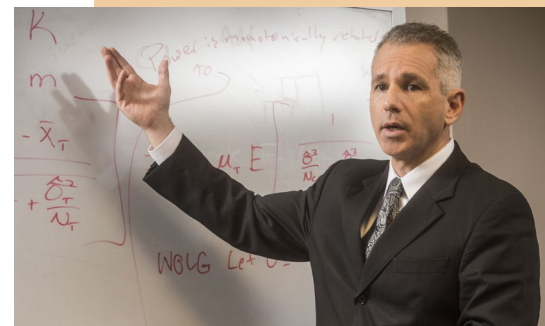
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### KEY COMPETENCIES:

Obesity as a Disease  
Disparities/Inequities in Care  
Integration of Community Care  
Language for Obesity  
Strategies for Patient Care



# CURRICULUM

## Obesity & Health Undergraduate Minor

✓ **15 credits** of obesity-related coursework

✓ **Core courses:**

- Obesity and Health\*
- The Nature of Cancer
- Heart Health & Diabetes
- Nutrition for Health (or Human Nutrition)

\* can be taken as a stand-alone course to satisfy IUB's Social & Historical Studies general education requirement

Coursework broadly addresses the etiology, assessment, prevention, treatment, and behavioral aspects of overweight and obesity in both adults and children. Additional topics covered in the curriculum include:

- physiological, behavioral, and cultural aspects of weight management
- the impact of obesity on individual, family, and community health
- promising trends in obesity treatment

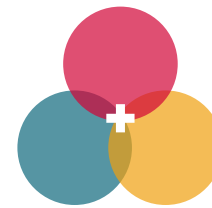
### "Obesity & Health"

*This course aims to broaden student understanding of the myriad aspects of obesity and health.*

*Key components of the course:*

#### Personal Goal Setting

As students learn about nutrition, reduction of sedentary behavior, and weight management, they directly experience obesity-related challenges via weekly healthy eating and physical activity goal setting, followed by personal reflection.



#### Letter to the Editor

Students write to an editor or relevant thought leader to raise consciousness about an obesity-related issue in the community and suggest local actions that can be taken to address obesity.

#### Active Learning

In-class group discussions, group presentations, peer reviews, case studies, and physical inactivity breaks keep students engaged in addressing the complexities of obesity prevention.

# OUTCOMES

» **500+**  
**students**

completed the "Obesity and Health" course for credit between 2013 and 2019. Most students (about 75%) were from majors outside of public health.

The *Obesity & Health* minor is available to students in any degree program who wish to add an obesity and health specialty to their studies. The minor requires:

- successful completion of 15 credit hours, including the core courses noted above and one elective;
- a minimum grade of C- in each course and cumulative minor GPA of 2.0.

## BONUS: INTENSIVE OBESITY TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

IU faculty and staff are at the forefront of obesity education and training for Indiana's future and current health professionals. In addition to the *Obesity and Health* minor, they have pioneered several regionally-tailored, high-intensity obesity education programs:

- **IU School of Medicine Obesity Symposium**
- **Indiana CTSI Retreat at IU Bloomington**
- **Obesity Research Short Courses**

Academic institutions and professional organizations across the country should seek to replicate these opportunities for trainees and providers in their states.



*I think when [educators] are successful in getting young people involved [in the field of obesity research], and helping those new people achieve, it is a great success.*

– **Dr. David Allison**

Dean of the IU School of Public Health-Bloomington



SEE ALSO: All nine modules of the 2019 "Causal Inference in Behavioral Obesity Research" short course are now available as free educational resources through IU Expand. The curriculum provides rigorous exposure to the key fundamental principles of causal inference in behavioral obesity research and techniques for applying those principles in research.