DATE: September 9, 2009
TO: Drs. Cook and Hoas
FROM: Allen Szalda-Petree, Chair, Psychology
SUBJECT: Support letter for the Bioethics Certificate Program

The faculty of the Psychology department are highly supportive of Drs. Cook and Hoas proposal to establish a Bioethics Certificate Program at the University of Montana. Undoubtedly, students in our Clinical and School Psychology graduate programs would benefit greatly from such a certificate program.

Drs. Cook and Hoas expertise in the area of Bioethics is extensive. In fact, their 15 year, nationally recognized research program revealed that rural health care professionals often have insufficient resources to deal with some of the more complicated health related problems that arise.

Most, if not all, health care training programs provide program specific ethics training – e.g., the most typical ethical issues related to practicing as a psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, etc. However, the majority of these health professionals face day-to-day health care issues that are more comprehensive than their program specific ethics courses were designed to cover. The on-line Bioethics Certificate Program would allow students currently in training programs access to a more comprehensive ethics curriculum while completing their training. In addition, practicing health professionals would be able to enhance their training while continuing their jobs thereby increasing the likelihood of seeking out such training. Obviously, such a training resource would ultimately result in better care for patients/clients in rural settings.

The Bioethics Certificate Program will directly benefit students at the University of Montana, health care professionals, and health care users across the state. Drs Cook and Hoas are highly valued faculty members in the Psychology department and the faculty of the Psychology department are fully supportive of the proposed Bioethics Certificate Program.
Ann Cook, Ph.D.
Director, National Rural Bioethics Project
Department of Psychology
The University of Montana

September 21, 2009

Dear Ann:

I am very pleased to offer a strong support for your current proposal to establish a Bioethics Certificate program at the University of Montana, Missoula. I believe that with its focus on professionals who work in health and human services in rural areas, this program will help to fulfill an essential need for relevant training for those who work under challenging circumstances.

I have learned, over the years, how very difficult it is for rural providers to have access to relevant and practical ethics training. For example, the opportunities for attending training activities are limited for rural providers due to vast geographic distances and the resultant increase in the time and resource commitment.

I have also learned that the research and clinical environment in rural communities can present special issues. However, I am not aware of any existing ethics training program that would focus explicitly on rural issues. Often, ethics training curricula focus on academic issues analyzing hypothetical scenarios and questions. Yet, based on my research experiences, I am aware that rural healthcare providers face very practical ethical challenges such as those related to lack of patient-clinician confidentiality stemming from living and working in a small community or those related to severe lack of resources – time, money and personnel – that are present in many rural hospitals. Rural providers often receive little or no training on how to resolve these real-world problems. Furthermore, rural health care providers receive little or no training on how to navigate the protection and consent issues related to participation in research studies.

The proposed Bioethics Certificate program that builds on your expertise and long-term research and involvement in rural communities and healthcare settings would help address these needs by providing rural providers with relevant knowledge, skills and resources for their everyday practice.

Please keep me informed of the status of this important effort.

Warm regards,

Katarina Gutmannova, Ph.D.
Research Scientist
Social Development Research Group
9725 3rd Ave. NE, Suite 401
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98115
MEMO

To: Ann F. Cook, PhD., Director, National Rural Bioethics Project
From: Keith F. Lynip, Director, Extended Learning Services
Date: 9/4/2009
Re: Expression of Support for an Online Certificate in Bioethics

I'm writing to convey my support and that of my unit for a new Certificate in Bioethics, which will be designed for online delivery.

An online Certificate in Bioethics nicely complements the existing online Master of Public Health degree. Additionally, by offering this certificate online, we anticipate that it will serve a wide range of professionals already in service across Montana and beyond. For these individuals, returning to campus for this certificate would simply not be an option. Lastly, it offers to students in campus-based programs an attractive option to add to their educational portfolio, in a format that provides considerable flexibility for them.

We intend that our support for this program will be substantive, and come in the form of the following:

- Aiding in general program development—e.g. marketing, logistical support.
- Providing online instructional design and development support—both through expert consulting by our Instructional Designers and through financial support for course development
- Allocating sufficient finances to pay extra-comp for the faculty members intending to teach these courses extra-to-load.
- Providing technical support for faculty and students in this program.
September 1, 2009

UM Faculty Senate
UH 221
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Dear Faculty Senators,

I am submitting this letter to express my support for the proposed online Bioethics Certificate being developed by Ann Cook, Director of the National Rural Bioethics Project and Research Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, and Helena Hoas, Research Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, in collaboration with Continuing Education and other campus entities.

As you know, The University of Montana’s School of Public and Community Health Sciences offers online, digital learning courses leading to a Master of Public Health (MPH) or a Certificate of Public Health (CPH). The MPH is a 42 credit graduate program, while the CPH is a 12 unit program. I believe this outline Bioethics Certificate would be of keen interest to our 41 MPH graduate students and some of our 10 CPH students as well. Dr. Cook, an affiliated faculty member of our program, teaches PUBH 570, Ethical Issues in Public Health, as a required course for the MPH. This course has consistently received excellent evaluations from our students, with several indicating a wish to take additional similar courses.

It is my understanding that proposed Bioethics Certificate would consist of an online series of 4 classes available for either graduate or undergraduate credit and would be a formal competency-based course of study, similar to those offered at approximately a dozen universities around the country. While a number of bioethics certificate programs have been developed nationwide, this proposed program (other than one offered in Palo Alto California) would be the only one west of the Mississippi. Moreover, this would be the only Bioethics Certificate Program designed to respond to the kinds of ethical issues that emerge when providing health and human services in more rural areas of the country.

I recommend and support this certificate program without reservation. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Craig Molgaard, PhD, MPH
Chair and Professor
September 15, 2009

Members of the Board of Regents:

I write in support of the Bioethics Certificate Program being proposed by The University of Montana’s Department of Psychology. The program addresses a crucial need for students enrolled in the School of Social Work and for social workers practicing throughout Montana.

The School of Social Work offers the baccalaureate and master degrees with an emphasis in generalist and integrated practice in rural communities. Currently, the School of Social Work offers only one campus-based ethics course to undergraduate students. The course introduces students to the field of ethics and dilemmas frequently encountered in social work practice. The course does not address the ethical implications of social work practice faced by more seasoned professionals and those practicing in rural communities. The School of Social Work has 50 students in its master’s program, many which live and practice outside of Missoula. Similarly, the School offers some continuing education courses to social workers throughout Montana. The vast majority of the graduate and continuing education students seek opportunities to broaden their knowledge and enhance their skills without having to travel long distances or incur high costs while away from home and work. The Bioethics Certificate Program can better address the educational needs of the School’s graduate students, and many of its alumni, by offering relevant ethics courses and placing them on-line. I support the proposed program and will encourage students to consider the certificate as a way to complement their education.

If you have any questions, contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Ryan Tolleson Knee, PhD
Chair, School of Social Work
September 8, 2009

Members of the UM Faculty Senate
C/O Ann Cook
Department of Psychology - Corbin 341
The University of Montana

Dear Members of the UM Faculty Senate,

It is my pleasure to express my strong support for the Certificate of Bioethics that is proposed by our colleagues Ann Cook and Helena Hoas.

I am on faculty at the School of Public and Community Health Sciences, which offers a 42 credit hour Master in Public Health (MPH) degree. The degree can be completed on-line with the exception of one campus based intensive course. While that on-line program is still under development, we currently have dozens of MPH students most of whom are professionals working in public health around the State of Montana. Ann Cook developed and teaches a core course on ethics for the MPH program. Students rave about the course and Ann’s case-based approach to teaching. Moreover some students have expressed an interest in taking more on-line graduate courses in ethics, which are currently not offered at UM. The four courses proposed in the Certificate in Bioethics would fill that need for MPH students. Indeed I can imagine a number of MPH students will combine the bioethics certificate with the MPH degree, which they can accomplish through taking the Certificate in Bioethics as electives for the MPH degree. In essence it would provide MPH students with the option of specializing in ethics as part of their generalist MPH degree. I am confident that this option will be attractive to students, especially since there are very few relevant on-line graduate courses that satisfy the elective requirement.

As an active researcher, I also provide research mentorship undergraduate and pre-doctorial students, postdoctoral fellows and (increasingly) junior faculty. My mentees have been awarded what have become very competitive pre-doctorial fellowships and supplemental funds to support diversity from the National Institutes of Health. I am also providing mentorship to a UM faculty member who is applying for a career development grant from the National Institutes of Health. Application for funding in each of these programs requires that we describe a plan for on-going training in the protection of humans and ethics. It is expected that the training will be much more extensive than the basic on-line training that UM researchers take to satisfy the requirements for the Institutional Review Board. It has been very difficult to provide this training at UM. In one case, reviewers asked us to provide more training that we initially proposed. Again the courses offered by the Certificate in Bioethics would both satisfy the application requirement and provide trainees with high quality, structured and interactive training.
I am very enthusiastic about the possibility of the Certificate in Bioethics for both MPH students and research trainees. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance as the proposal moves forward in the approval process.

Sincerely,

Kari J. Harris

Kari Harris, PhD, MPH
Associate Professor
September 24, 2009

UM Faculty Senate
University Hall 221
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Colleagues:

Professor Ann Freeman Cook has asked me to write a letter of support for her proposal for a Bioethics Certificate Program. I am pleased to do so in my capacity as Professor of Pharmacy Practice and Director of the Montana Geriatric Education Center, which is housed in the College of Health Professions and Biomedical Sciences on the University of Montana campus.

The proposed Bioethics Certificate Program would be a valuable resource, both for pharmacists and other health care professionals interested in ethics, as well as all practicing health care and social service professionals working with Montana’s aging population. Almost all health care professionals, including pharmacists, have a requirement for continuing education, and there is a new emphasis on in depth study of a topic, rather than superficial updates on many subjects. The proposed certificate program would provide an excellent opportunity for an in depth study of the subject of bioethics for those health care and social service professionals, as well as students preparing for those fields. The proposed orientation towards ethical issues and dilemmas that arise in rural areas is particularly appropriate.

The Montana Geriatric Education Center has an online curriculum as one of its initiatives and has been building this curriculum for the past seven years. Ethics is a subject area that has not been addressed to date in the MTGEC curriculum, so having this certificate program available for our participants would complement our offerings. The proposed online format is an excellent one for reaching students in all areas of our large, rural state, and has worked well for the Montana Geriatric Education Center.

The MTGC would be willing to help promote the Bioethics Certificate Program through our website as well as through our many continuing education programs and materials. The Institute for Gerontology Education on the University of Montana campus would also be available to support and promote the program at the undergraduate level to those students interested in gerontology.

We look forward to the availability of the Bioethics Certificate Program at the University of Montana in the near future!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gayle Hudkins, Pharm. D.
Professor, Pharmacy Practice
Director, Montana Geriatric Education Center
September 1, 2009

Faculty Senate
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Dear Senate President,

I am writing to offer my support of the Bioethics Certificate Program proposed by Drs. Anne Cook and Helena Hoas. I have had the opportunity to work with them over the years in a variety of situations and deeply appreciate the attention their research has brought to the ethical challenges encountered in rural health care settings. Clearly this program will meet an important need of rural, if not all, health care providers.

I first met Drs. Cook and Hoas when I served as a member of the executive board of the Saint Patrick Hospital Institute of Medicine and Humanities. They were then, and continue to be, very committed to ensuring that ethical discussions and practices guide the interactions between patients, families, providers and healthcare systems, especially in the areas of end-of-life treatment decision-making. As a clinical specialist in gerontological nursing, I am acutely aware of the significant ethical dilemmas that can occur, especially as a person’s health deteriorates. This is a very stressful and difficult time for patient, families and healthcare providers alike. It is important that informed end-of life treatment decision-making be supported by ethical, evidence-based practice designed to reduce stress, improve communication and enhance compassion during this very difficult time. Traditional methods used to teach the principles of ethical practice to students (who often have very little clinical experience) need to be supplemented by practical, interactive ethics education this programming can provide.

This programming will benefit not only health professions undergraduates but the graduates as well. As an advanced practice nurse and nurse educator, I know how challenging it is for healthcare providers to provide ethical care in the current dynamic (often turbulent) rural and urban healthcare settings. The baccalaureate nursing students I work with raise important questions about ethically challenging practices they have observed in the clinical settings, so it is not surprising to me that the need for continuing education in bioethics has been a consistent finding in Dr. Cook’s and Dr. Hoas’ research with rural healthcare providers. The proposed Bioethics Certificate Program is an excellent strategy that will begin to address this need by providing relevant ethical education using action teaching. It also will provide novice nursing students with an opportunity to engage in an interdisciplinary discussion of ethical issues outside of their regular nursing courses, an opportunity that is sorely missing in most health professions educational curricula.

I encourage you to support this proposal and thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Linda Torma, MSN, APRN, GCNS-BC
Clinical Specialist in Gerontological Nursing
Adjunct Assistant Professor, MSU-Bozeman College of Nursing, Missoula Campus
September 3, 2009

Faculty Senate  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812

Dear Members of the UM Faculty Senate:

I am pleased to write this letter of support for the proposed Bioethics Certificate Program. The mission of our organization, the Northwest Research and Education Institute, is to enhance quality healthcare through research and education with an emphasis on the needs of rural/frontier healthcare providers and communities. As the Executive Director, I regularly encounter bioethical questions related to the access and delivery of healthcare in extreme rural/frontier areas of our state and region and I applaud your efforts to develop this program.

As far as I know, there are no other certificate programs in the US, or for that matter, any academic ethics programs or courses for healthcare professionals, which are devoted to the unique challenges of bioethics in extreme rural/frontier locations. Over the past few years, a group of us here in Billings – others within my institute and faculty from the university - have talked about the need to focus on bioethics in the frontier, especially in light of healthcare reform. Many healthcare providers and others in Alaska, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Wyoming, and other frontier regions encounter bioethical questions everyday, care deeply about these issues, and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to an effort like the certificate program. The four core courses that have been proposed would provide information and skills that are directly relevant to lives of rural healthcare providers. It is significant that the course content will be developed based upon findings from rural studies.

Thank you for your consideration of this new Bioethics Certificate Program, an education program which has the potential to positively impact the quality of care in rural/frontier Montana and elsewhere.

Sincerely,

Deborah Peters  
Executive Director
September 8, 2009

Nancy W. Hinman, Ph.D.
Chair, Faculty Senate
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

Re: Certificate in Bioethics

Dear Dr. Hinman:

The Western Montana Area Health Education Center (AHEC) is pleased to provide this letter of support for a Bioethics Certificate Program. High among the mission priorities for AHEC is the retention of health care personnel in rural and underserved communities. Professional isolation is a contributing factor in personnel turnover in rural Montana. Therefore, the Western Montana AHEC seeks to create needed professional continuing education in an effort to allay professional isolation. The proposed Bioethics Certificate Program could be a meaningful addition to on-going education needs of medical providers in our region.

We urge the Faculty Senate to approve the proposed Bioethics Certificate Program.

Sincerely,

Lawrence L. White, Jr.
Director
September 12, 2009

Dear Program Review Committee:

As a community health educator who teaches health promotion at The University of Montana I strongly support the Bioethics Certificate Program proposed by the Director of the National Rural Bioethics Project. In my role as a teacher, I continually impress upon my students the value of developing health related programs that are grounded in ethical principles and are informed by, and responsive to, local needs and distinctive social and cultural patterns. Furthermore, I am aware of the increasing role of government in the promotion of the public’s health and I am concerned that health professionals whose job it is to inform individuals who are directly involved in the “legislation of health” often are unaware of the ethical implications of their actions. The availability of on-line courses in bioethics will provide an opportunity for all professionals, regardless of their geographic location, to enhance their knowledge and skills in this increasingly important area.

In our undergraduate and graduate programs in the Department of Health and Human Performance we prepare students to become Certified Health Education Specialists. Many health educators choose to work in rural areas where human service providers have consistently reported a lack of access to relevant ethics training that addresses problems that arise within that context. The establishment of a Bioethics Certificate Program would provide our students with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and resolve ethics related issues that accompany the development of health related programs. Furthermore, students in the Health and Human Performance Department would be able to complete the certificate program without adding more than a few credits to their current program of study. By choosing to take their elective course requirements in bioethics, both undergraduate and graduate students will be able to enhance their professional skills without delaying the completion of their degrees.

I strongly endorse the establishment of a formal, competency based course of study in bioethics. It is my hope that through the support of this program we can make a positive difference in the lives of Montana’s rural, vulnerable and underserved populations.

Sincerely,

K. Ann Sondag, Ph.D., CHES
Professor, Health Promotion
September 5, 2009

Dear Ann,

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my enthusiastic support for the proposed Bioethics Certificate Program. This 4 course program would respond to the need for relevant, practical, bioethics training opportunities for working professionals. As a practicing physician and as Director of the Institute of Medicine and Humanities, I can well attest to the need for such an effort. Healthcare providers do not currently have enough options for obtaining practical and relevant education in bioethics. In particular, there are few courses that move beyond the focus of specific academic disciplines to delve into practical issues that we deal with in practice daily. A certificate program that is interdisciplinary and would allow exploration of the ethical linkages, issues, challenges, and approaches that exist within and among the diverse healthcare and health-related disciplines would be extremely valuable. I also applaud your commitment to a highly experiential approach to learning that integrates the key findings from your rural studies. Finally, the very practical emphasis your Bioethics Certificate Program places on developing and enhancing the skill set necessary for busy practitioners to approach ethical dilemmas common to patients in rural areas is welcome, and enrollment will underscore the popularity of this approach.

The Bioethics Certificate Program brings useful discussion to a campus with 13 different training programs in the healthcare field. As Director of the WWAMI program of medical student clinical training in Missoula, I can underscore the need for this kind of curriculum.

I will wholeheartedly support and work closely with the faculty of this Bioethics Certificate Program to help make it a successful endeavor.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

P. Schlesinger, MD
Executive Director
IMH/WWAMI Program

173 Skaggs Building 32 Campus Drive Missoula, Montana 59812 Phone: 406.243.4576 Fax: 406.243-4141

A joint program of St. Patrick Hospital and Health Sciences Center and The University of Montana
Dear Ann:

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the Bioethics Certificate Program at the University of Montana-Missoula. Having directed and managed clinical research for 20 years now, and working closely with research physicians from nearly every clinical area in several medical schools and hospitals; I understand well the ethical challenges that both IRBs and research investigators face in the conduct of clinical research.

I currently oversee two clinical research programs here at St. Patrick Hospital and Health Sciences Center in Missoula. We regularly have 30-40 ongoing, active clinical research protocols in neuroscience and cancer. Our inpatient projects, as well as investigator-initiated projects are reviewed by our local IRB, and we also use the services of several centralized IRBs for our outpatient studies. Though our challenges vary from project to project, and from physician to physician, there are always shared interests across the board in addressing the complex safety and ethical issues involved to best protect our patients.

Having adequate training both for our physician investigators and for members of our IRB is a vital piece of the proper conduct of our research. This is a challenge that requires particular attention in rural areas and community hospitals, where exposure to and experience with clinical research can sometimes be less developed. It is equally important to provide education in research ethics for students who will become the future researchers of our time. As the Preceptor for PharmD students rotating through clinical research, I’m often told by them that they would benefit from more and better education in the area of research ethics.

The focus of your efforts will make critical contributions to our clinical research in the rural state of Montana. I am pleased to extend my support for this valuable project.

Sincerely,

Cindi Laukes, M.A.
Director, Clinical Research
The Montana Neuroscience Institute
September 3, 2009

University of Montana
Faculty Senate
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in support of the proposed Bioethics Certificate Program. I can attest to the critical need for the program both from the perspective of a Ph. D. candidate at the U of M and as a working health care professional in Montana. Rural health providers currently lack access to appropriate resources for ethics related decision making in the contest of small towns and hospitals of rural Montana. Existing certification programs lack content relevant to health care providers practicing in often remote rural areas. The proposed certificate program will be practice based and of vastly more use than programs which privilege theory over practice.

I urge you to approve the Bioethics Certificate Program. It can provide tremendous and much needed support to students anticipating health care related careers and practicing clinicians facing difficult ethical decisions in patient care. Please feel free to contact me if I can offer further information.

Sincerely,

Cindy A. Schaumberg MSW, LCSW
Clinical Nephrology Social Worker
St. Patrick Hospital & Health Sciences Center Dialysis
615 W. Alder
Missoula, MT 59802
406-327-1772
schaumberg@saintpatrick.org
September 7, 2009

University of Montana Faculty Senate
Missoula, MT

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support for a Certificate in Bioethics program at the University of Montana that is being proposed by Dr. Anne Cook and colleagues.

I am a practicing Clinical Laboratory Scientist with more than 25 years of experience, and am currently completing my Masters in Public Health on-line through the University of Montana. I understand the importance of a course of study in which students will be taught to recognize moral problems in public health and clinical practice, research and health policy, as I often deal with these sorts of dilemmas at my current workplace, as the Deputy Laboratory Director at the Montana Public Health Laboratory.

In addition, by pursuing my MPH while still working full time, I value the opportunity to have these resources available to me through distance learning. I was privileged to take my Ethics course during the Summer of 2008. I wasn’t sure that Ethical Issues in Public Health could be effectively taught through distance learning since so much of the coursework requires debate and discussion. However, Dr. Cook very successfully engaged all of the class and achieved the necessary interaction, and the on-line experience was very positive.

I believe that many health-related professionals already working in rural areas such as Montana would benefit from this Certificate in Bioethics, especially because of its emphasis on rural health. There would also be value to those individuals still pursuing their undergraduate or graduate studies in health related disciplines.

I urge you to support this proposal, as I believe a need exists in the health community for the knowledge gained through a Certificate in Bioethics, especially with an emphasis on rural health.

Sincerely,

Susanne Norris Zanto, CLS(NCA) SM(NRCM)
MPH Candidate
Jamie S. Kennedy, Pharm.D.

September 11, 2009

Faculty Senate
The University of Montana—Missoula
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812

Dear UM Faculty Senate:

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of the Bioethics Certificate Program being submitted to the Faculty Senate by the National Rural Bioethics Project at The University of Montana—Missoula.

The state of Montana has significant rural and American Indian populations. Given this, it is necessary for academic and non-academic researchers to have access to practical ethics coursework because the principles of these groups may differ from that of urban populations. For example, in some cultures it is considered rude to maintain direct eye contact with an elderly individual. Communities also tend to be multi-generational, which can affect how outsiders are perceived. As a result, it is vital to offer courses that incorporate issues that are significant to both these population groups.

In conclusion, I fully support the efforts of the National Rural Bioethics Project’s Bioethics Certificate Program that is designed to provide a basic introduction to bioethics with an emphasis on practice-based repercussions for decision-making in healthcare.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jamie S. Kennedy, Pharm.D.
LT, United States Public Health Service
Staff Pharmacist
Blackfeet Community Hospital
Browning, MT
September 3, 2009

University of Montana Faculty Senate
c/o: Ann Freeman Cook, Ph.D.
Research Professor,
Director, National Rural Bioethics Project
Department of Psychology - Corbin 341
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812-7397

To whom it may concern:

I am writing today in unqualified support of the proposal championed by Drs. Cook and Hoas to develop a Bioethics Certificate Program with an emphasis on the ethics of rural healthcare services. I base my support for this proposal on my experiences as a healthcare provider and administrator, a local public health leader, and an MPH candidate in the University’s School of Public and Community Health Sciences. For the last five years I have served our community as the Executive Vice President of Operations for RiverStone Health (the local public health agency for Yellowstone County, MT) and the Assistant Health Officer for Yellowstone County.

Healthcare ethics represent one of the greatest challenges and opportunities in healthcare today. We live in an era in which the development of technologies is far outstripping our consideration of the ethical implications of those technologies. As our nation’s leaders debate the merits of potentially transformational reformation of the complex healthcare system that comprises nearly one-fifth of the world’s largest economy, we focus our attention on payment reform, workforce development, insurance reform, the role of government, and myriad other details yet the reform discussion is strangely silent, perhaps dangerously so, to the ethical and moral underpinnings and consequences of the system and its proposed changes.

The University of Montana had the foresight to ensure that its MPH program includes PUBH 570, Ethical Issues in Public Health, which is taught by Professor Cook. As one of the first cohort of UM MPH students, I had the opportunity to be in the inaugural offering of PUBH 570. I entered this class in 2006 with 30 years of healthcare experience that ran the gamut from working as a nurse’s aide in a community nursing home to leading a regional cancer center as its Chief Executive Officer and included experience in home care, hospice care, inpatient hospital care, rehabilitation, long term care, primary care, and most recently public health. Some of my fellow students were at very early points in their careers, so we brought a rich diversity of experience and perspectives ("lenses" as Dr. Cook would soon teach us) to our shared journey of ethical discovery. We all learned much about ourselves, our belief systems, and most importantly how to ensure that the ethical discourse is inextricably integrated into the overall discussion and analysis of public health and healthcare issues; as an editorial comment, given the absence of ethical consideration in the political debate
over healthcare reform, perhaps Congress and the Administration ought to be required to spend a summer studying with Professors Cook and Hoas.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of PUBH 570 to our group as students and me personally as a public health professional is the unique focus Dr. Cook placed on the implications of rurality on ethics. It is easy to assert that the ethical discourse should proceed independently of the social setting and context, but in reality it is apparent that context matters. Consider this simple scenario: Your physician asks you to consider participating in a clinical trial for which her practice is a clinical site. She properly assures you that your decision to participate or not to participate will have no impact on the care you will receive from her. Most of us sitting in Missoula or Billings would feel fairly comfortable saying “No, thanks” because even if we sense that the doctor is disappointed or even perturbed with us we can always switch physicians to someone else in the group or community.

Now, consider exactly the same scenario but change the setting to the frontier reaches of eastern Montana. Your doctor is not only the only healthcare provider for a 100 mile radius, but she delivered you when you were born, delivered your children, came to your house every time you called her at 2:00 AM, and sat holding your hand and your father’s hand as he slowly but comfortably passed away after a long bout with cancer through which she ensured his comfort and freedom from pain. Is it as easy to say “No, thanks” in this scenario? If context doesn’t matter, then the answer is yes, but in reality context matters. If you decline, what will happen the next time you call at 2:00 AM? How will you feel when you run into the doctor you disappointed in the grocery store or at the weekly high school football game?

Dr. Cook taught us that as public health and healthcare professionals we need to be aware that the power differential can be easily, even if inadvertently, shifted in our favor under conditions of rurality. This is a powerful lesson and one that should not be limited to those students in the MPH program. The University of Montana has made numerous efforts to create a niche, a sustainable competitive advantage if you will, for itself as an institution that has a special understanding of what it means to live in rural America and the intermountain west. The proposed Bioethics Certificate Program is not only completely consistent with the University’s vision and niche, but also creates a unique and important addition to the body of knowledge in healthcare, public health, and certainly bioethics. The on-line format engenders the ideal opportunity for working professionals in Montana and across the nation, indeed around the world, to gain this specialized and critical knowledge in a fashion that again reinforces the University’s commitment to serve persons living in rural areas.

For all these reasons, I strongly encourage the Faculty Senate and the Board of regents to approve the proposal championed by Professors Cook and Hoas to create the University of Montana Bioethics Certificate Program.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

John Felton, MBA, FACHE
September 17, 2009

University of Montana Faculty Senate
Ann Freeman Cook, Ph.D.
Research Professor,
Director, National Rural Bioethics Project
Department of Psychology - Corbin 341
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812-7397

To whom it may concern:

I am writing today with enthusiastic support of the proposal to develop a Bioethics Certificate Program with an emphasis on the ethics of rural healthcare services. I base my support for this proposal on my experiences as a local public health professional and health officer for a rural county in Montana.

Healthcare ethics represent one of the greatest challenges and opportunities in healthcare today. Additionally, there are many ethical issues in public health practice in Montana. Some of the key public health ethical areas include: use of public health authority; proper and ethical resource allocations; negotiating political pressure; and ensuring quality standards of care. The public health professional needs to have the framework and skills to address public health situations.

I am particularly enthusiastic about a program that emphasizes the implications of rurality on ethics. Distinct ethical issues can develop in more rural areas of the country and we have not had much support and guidance when trying to resolve them. For example, rural areas often have scarce resources and the decisions and the pressure on how to allocate those resources are very important.

It is an exciting and challenging time to be a public health professional in rural Montana. Pandemic flu, obesity prevention, scarce resources, and health care reform are all areas that sound ethical decisions are needed. Also, the on-line format planned for this program offers an ideal opportunity for working professionals in Montana and across the nation.

For all these reasons, I strongly encourage the Faculty Senate and the Board of regents to approve the proposal to create the University of Montana Bioethics Certificate Program.

Sincerely,

Melanie Reynolds, MPH
Health Officer
Lewis and Clark County

The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis and Clark County residents.
September 20, 2009

Helena Hoas, Ph.D
Research Director
National Rural Bioethics Project
Professor, Research
Department of Psychology
343 Corbin Hall
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812-7397

Dear Dr. Hoas:

This letter is written in support for approval to offer a Bioethics Certificate through the University of Montana – Missoula. As healthcare professionals, we often encounter situations that present ethical dilemmas, either personally or professionally.

The accrediting organization for hospitals, The Joint Commission, identifies several standards that define organizational processes that must be present to address ethical dilemmas in patient care. Each accredited hospital must have a multidisciplinary Ethics Committee which is comprised of a variety of healthcare professionals and generally physician led.

As a nursing leader in management and administration for several years, it is common that Nurses are asked to be participate in Ethics Committees and Patient Case Reviews with little education regarding a framework and understanding of ethical decision making. A larger framework embraces Catholic Healthcare institutions through the Ethical and Religious Directives.

I am in support of a Bioethics Certificate Program to be administered in a formal competency based course of study. This is particularly important to our more rural Montana communities that have fewer and/or limited resources with expertise in this very critical review process.

Sincerely,

Sue Warren, RN, MSN, C.N.A., BC
Clinical Director
Great Falls Clinic
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September 8, 2009  

To the UM Faculty Senate:

I am writing today in support of the Bioethics Certificate Program proposed by Drs. Cook and Hoas. I am currently a graduate student in the University of Montana’s MPH program. In 2006, I took Dr. Cook’s online course, PUBH 593: Ethical Issues in Public Health as an elective.

The course I took with Dr. Cook gives me a strong basis from which to recommend this program. Just like the ethics course, the proposed certificate program is online, empirically grounded, and captures the teaching style of Dr. Cook. I found that the format of the ethics course was critical to its success in addressing the needs of the class, which was composed of students and professionals across multiple disciplines, and I am confident that this format would be similarly suitable for the Bioethics Certificate. Dr. Cook’s teaching, combined with consummate direction from Dr. Hoas, will respond well to the needs of Montana and beyond.

Dr. Cook made a considerable effort to dissolve the barriers intrinsic to any online course. I attribute part of her success to the range of communication modes she employed—from the discussion and announcement sections of the Blackboard software to class and individual emails. Through such channels, she maintained a stronger presence than I had ever felt from any professor before—whether online or in person. This was crucial for me, since the reading and writing demands exceeded those I had experienced in either my bachelor’s degree in chemistry, biology, and psychology, or in my master’s degree in neuroscience. Since our discussions were in writing, they had a sense of permanence and accountability that encouraged insightful critique. This is a powerful aspect of the online format, as clearly such permanence and accountability also exists in practice. While rigorous, the excitement of the class reciprocated Dr. Cook’s own enthusiasm.

My prior experiences with ethics courses led me to resist them since they tended to focus mainly on theoretical approaches. For this reason, I would not tend to recommend more ethics courses as a way to promote ethical thinking. At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, I have seen lockstep theoretical curricula too often leave students with a distaste for the subject, eventually relying on rules and incentives as solutions to ethical tensions. Any incentive system, however, can be subverted by ill will. Drs. Cook and Hoas have responded to the call for heightened ethical thinking by facilitating a practical environment that strives to create and nurture both moral will and moral skill, a necessary combination for practical wisdom.

The dialogic aspect of Dr. Cook’s course fostered ethical inquiry as it plays out in practice. Our class grappled with empirical issues, where roles and relationships were often unclear and ethical dilemmas did not fit neatly into this vs. that paradigms commonly emphasized in other ethics courses. The evidence-based discussions necessitated a shift from purely positional arguments to merit-based ones. Our class quickly learned that uncertainty pervades ethical situations and that we must often embrace that uncertainty rather than avoid it, just as in real-life scenarios.
PUBH 595 has continued to provide benefit, a testament to the value and need for the Bioethics Certificate endorsed by Drs. Cook and Hoas. After taking the course, my fellow classmates and I strongly recommended that it be required for the public health program. Today, I am glad that it is. Furthermore, this course continued to have an influence on me during my recent master’s in health communication at Purdue University, where I worked for Purdue’s IRB and started an ethics essay award in honor of Dr. Cook. Most importantly, the efforts of Dr. Cook have helped shape my goals of pursuing rural medicine and public health in Montana.

The proposed Bioethics Certificate Program aligns well with those who are pursuing degrees or practicing in legal or health-related fields, and I am proud to recommend this program for The University of Montana.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Brian D. Ostrum
Arladne A. Avellino, MPH
aaboomer@gmail.com

To:
University of Montana Faculty Senate
The University of Montana
Missoula, Montana 59812-7397

To Whom It May Concern,

I write to strongly support the institution of a certificate of bioethics organized by Drs. Cook and Hoas at the University of Montana. As a previous student at the University of Montana, I was given the amazing opportunity to work with Drs. Cook and Hoas through my Honors Project sponsored by the Davidson Honors College. Having worked in clinical medicine in Missoula in emergency medical services, having completed my masters in public health and now being close to completing my medical degree, I can completely attest to the need for the type of program of study in bioethics that they propose.

Though Missoula itself is not rural, as you know, many rural communities that have extremely limited access to healthcare resources surround it. Because of this, many residents travel fairly long distances to seek care in urban areas like Missoula. The caregivers in these areas have very limited time and resources to pursue continuing education opportunities such as exploring issues in bioethics. In sponsoring an online certificate program like the one proposed, the University of Montana would benefit these healthcare providers and communities with ongoing access to important educational opportunities that, I believe, would improve the quality of care they and their institutions are able to provide. Further, making this course of study available to those interested who live and work in larger areas such as Missoula would allow these caregivers new opportunities to further understand the complex issues, ethical dilemmas, and often system-wide conflicts that plague healthcare delivery in rural medicine and many more of the patients they serve who travel seeking services.

As a student who just completed a course of study in public health and who will be completing my medical doctorate in December, I can attest to the necessity for increased opportunities for study in medical ethics. Though, technically speaking, ethics study is required by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) and its sponsoring group the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) in medical school, the time and efforts spent on these issues are severely lacking. Having had the opportunity to pursue an in-depth study in bioethics with Drs. Cook and Hoas while studying as an undergraduate at the University of Montana, I have been extremely disappointed with the course of study and resources available at the graduate level in these areas. And, as a current student in suburban New York, as a student, I have had absolutely no access to studying bioethics of rural medicine,
though I hope and plan to return to practicing in an area like Missoula where knowledge of ethics issues in rural medicine is extremely beneficial. I use myself as the example, because having an online certificate program like this one proposed would be perfect for people like me living in metropolitan areas. I would love to do it!

Finally, there has been a great push in medical education, as I am sure there has been in undergraduate and graduate education, to support the learning styles of the 'Millennial Generation.' Sponsoring online programs such as this one at the University of Montana greatly encourages students to pursue their interests through an educational manner that they prefer and can relate to. Not only will this program be accessible to people across the United States because of it being online, but students who are in Missoula will also greatly benefit from its existence simply because many of them prefer courses that encourage and support the characteristics of 'Millennial Generation.'

I was so excited when Drs. Cook and Hoas told me about this program. I hope that my alma mater will support their efforts. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Thank you for your time.

Yours truly,

Ariadne Avellino
[signed 9/4/09]

Ariadne Avellino, MPH
MD Candidate Class of 2009
University of Montana Graduate Class of 2003
September 9, 2009

Dear University Faculty Association:

It is with enthusiasm that I write this letter of support for the implementation of the Bioethics Certificate Program under review at the University of Montana for Drs. Ann Cook and Helena Hoas. Now is the time while the country focuses on health care for these talented researchers to use their research experience to the benefit of the University of Montana and the health community at large. Coursework can shed light on very important issues such as the context and expectations of health care, patient safety, protections when conducting human subject research, risks and health interventions, disease prevention and control, rationing and allocation.

My support of this effort is based on my experiences as an educator, a student, a Native American, and a former member of the Joint Investigational Review Board for St. Patrick and Community Hospitals, Missoula. The lack of relevant and practical ethics coursework can undermine important efforts such as the development and training of Institutional Review Boards, more than adequate preparation for university students to enter the health careers workforce, and health care personnel to sustain a clear picture of past and present bioethics.

I have learned that bioethics is a critical area of inquiry for persons who are involved in health and human services, research and education. During an IRB training program I attended in Great Falls Dr. Jeremy Sugarman from Duke University, a featured speaker, was asked why the prestigious Duke University research programs were shut down for not following IRB protocol. His answer was simply...hubris. We cannot afford, at any level, to ignore the importance of bioethics in health care training or practice.

However, I have learned that very few courses approach those issues in an interdisciplinary fashion. Moreover, I do not know of any other certificate programs that focus on bioethics in rural settings. Drs. Cook and Hoas were guest speakers for our Mental Health Careers Opportunity Program in the UM Psychology Department, a recruitment program for high school students from Indian reservations and rural areas. They became an asset to our program because of their first hand knowledge of bioethics in rural settings and their ability to tailor their presentations to the level of their audience. Indeed, they taught a writing course for our advanced students and received some of highest student evaluations.

With sincere recommendations,

[Signature]

Linda Osler
PO Box 9438
Missoula, MT 59807
406 370-4961
September 18, 2009

Dear Faculty Senate,

As a Master of Public Health student I am very interested in the proposed Bioethics Certificate Program! In real world situations where theory meets practice and where resources are limited, I believe that it is especially important to have a solid foundation in bioethics to draw from. For myself, I do not think a deep understanding of ethical principles should be left to on the job training when my greatest teacher may be trial and error. Rather, I prefer to be prepared to meet controversy with a solid knowledge base. Furthermore, the current bioethics course offered through the MPH program challenged my perceptions and fostered a desire to dig deeper and increase my understanding of various topics. For this reason, I believe the Bioethics Certificate Program will foster a desire for lifetime learning among its students.

Sincerely,

Julie Stevens