

The logo features the letters 'UF' in a bold, blue, serif font. To the right of 'UF' is a vertical line, followed by the text 'College of Public Health & Health Professions' in a blue, sans-serif font. Below this is the text 'UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA' in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font, with 'of' in lowercase and italics.

**UF** | College of Public Health  
& Health Professions  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

# Guidelines for the Social and Behavioral (SBS) track in the Ph.D. of Public Health



# **Doctoral Student Handbook 2025 – 2026**

*University of Florida College of Public Health and Health Professions*

## **Guidelines for the Social and Behavioral (SBS) track in the Ph.D. of Public Health**

**In this handbook, Ph.D. students and mentors will find information related to admissions, academic progression, and graduation from the University of Florida Social and Behavioral (SBS) track in Public Health doctoral program.**

### **Program Director**

Lindsey King, Ph.D., MPH

Email: [Linking@ufl.edu](mailto:Linking@ufl.edu)

Phone: (352) 273-6064

Office: HPNP Building Room 3117

---

## Table of Contents

Mission and Goals .....	2
Academic Program Coordinator .....	2
Tuition and Fees .....	3
Florida Residency Requirement .....	3
On-Campus Policy .....	4
Financial Aid and Guidance .....	4
Registration .....	4
Registration in Final Semester .....	5
Transfer of Credits .....	5
Selection of Discipline for Degree and Major Professor .....	5
Supervisory Committee .....	6
Curriculum .....	7
Annual Evaluation and Individual Development Plan .....	10
Qualifying Examination .....	10
General Guidelines for the Qualifying Examination .....	11
Oral Section of the Qualifying Examination .....	12
Admission to Candidacy .....	13
Dissertation Proposal Presentation .....	14
Final Dissertation Research .....	15
Oral Dissertation Defense & Final Dissertation Examination .....	16
Leave of Absence .....	17
Readmission Procedures .....	17
Transfer Requests from other Concentrations .....	18
Exit Interview and Alumni .....	18
Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientation .....	18
Confidentiality Statement & Health Information Policy (Completed Annually) .....	18
FERPA (Completed Annually) .....	18
HIPAA (Completed Annually) .....	19
Preventing Sexual Harassment (Completed Biannually) .....	19
Student Resources .....	19
Graduate Student Council .....	19
Student Conduct, Academic Dishonesty, and Plagiarism .....	19
Professionalism and Performance in Graduate Assistantships .....	20

University Regulations.....	20
Computer – Acceptable Use Policy .....	20
<b>Rights and &amp; Responsibilities .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>General Rules .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Enforcement.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>E-Mail .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Webpages.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Commercial Pages .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>External Links .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>University Policies .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Disability .....	23
Harassment .....	23
Reporting.....	24
Hazing.....	24
Social Media Policy .....	24
Policy on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages at Social Functions .....	25
Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity .....	27
The Value of Diversity.....	27
Religious Holidays.....	27
<b>Social and Behavioral Sciences Faculty and Staff .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Current Public Health Social and Behavioral Sciences Ph.D. Students.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix A: <i>Guidelines for Written Proposal Preparation</i> .....</b>	<b>39</b>

## **Mission and Goals**

The mission of the Social and Behavioral Science (SBS) track within the Public Health Ph.D. program is to prepare scholars to use theories, methods, and perspectives from multiple disciplines within the social and behavioral sciences to create new knowledge, effectively communicate research findings, and transform practice. As such, graduates of the Ph.D. program will be prepared to compete for assistant professor positions at research universities and assume leadership roles at non-profit and government agencies or institutes, and within industry.

## **Academic Program Coordinator**

The academic program coordinator is responsible for maintaining student records and assisting the graduate program director. This position is also an important source of information and will, likely, have more direct day-to-day contact with the graduate students than will the graduate program director. Students should get to

know the academic program coordinator. In most cases, the academic program coordinator will submit the official documents required by the Graduate School.

## Tuition and Fees

Graduate students, employed by SBS through a Graduate or Teaching Assistantship and those receiving biweekly assistantships, will be eligible for a tuition waiver. For Florida residents, the waiver covers the matriculation fee (often referred to as "in-state" tuition). For first-year doctoral students who are not legal residents of the state of Florida, this waiver will cover the matriculation fee plus the nonresident fee (often referred to as "out-of-state" tuition). Students are responsible for covering the costs associated with student service fees. After one year, doctoral students who are non-resident U.S. citizens or Resident Aliens, are expected to declare Florida their legal state of residence (see below). In general, international students are not eligible for tuition fee waivers or a graduate assistantship unless the major professor provides those funds through externally-funded grants. Current tuition and fee waiver rates per student credit hour are located at <http://www.fa.ufl.edu/bursar/current-tuition-and-fees/>.

## Florida Residency Requirement

Eligible graduate students enrolled in on campus programs may declare Florida their legal state of residence. Graduate students eligible for Florida residency are (1) U.S. citizens with non-Florida residency status, indicated by a resident code of "N" on University records, and (2) Resident Aliens with non-Florida residency status, indicated by a resident code of "E" on University records. International students with a resident code of "A" are not eligible to apply for Florida residency.. Therefore, as graduate assistants are ending their funding periods (typically 3-4 years), they should seek residency, leaving enough time for the status to update. If a student chooses not to establish residency, they may be responsible for paying the difference between in-state tuition and out-of-state tuition.

Recommendations for establishing and declaring Florida as the legal state of residence are outlined below.

- Obtain Request for Change in Residency Status form from Registrar's Office, S222 Criser Hall and review the information and items that will be requested when filing for residency after living in Florida for 11-1/2 to 12 months.
- File a Declaration of Domicile in Florida at the Official Records Office, Room 101 in the Alachua County Administrative Building, located at the corner of University Avenue and Main Street. This document should be filed as soon as you have a local address in Florida. The cost is \$11. Keep the receipt for attaching to the "Request for Change in Residency Status" form that you will submit after residing in the state for one year.
- Obtain a Florida Driver's License, car registration, and register to vote in Alachua County (or other Florida county, if appropriate) as soon as you have a local Florida address.
- Keep any receipts that provide proof of the date of your first residence in Florida (e.g., rental agreements, deposits for establishing utilities, etc.).
- Keep any proof of employment in Florida, especially non-UF employment.
- After residing in Florida for 11-1/2 months, file the completed Request for Change in Residency Status form and required documentation with the Office of the University Registrar.

There are cases, based on the residency status of the student's spouse, which may allow for earlier application and approval. In these latter cases, the student should consult the Registrar's Office as soon as possible to determine residency eligibility based on a spouse's residency status.

The most up-to-date residency information can be found on the Office of Admission's website.

Currently enrolled students seeking reclassification as a Florida resident for tuition purpose should reference the information available through the Office of the University Registrar's website.

### **On-Campus Policy**

This PhD program is a residential, on-campus program that requires in-person class attendance. All graduate assistant responsibilities must be performed on campus. Students are expected to attend all assigned classes in which they serve as teaching assistants and spend a minimum of three days per week working on campus. Admitted students should plan to relocate to Gainesville prior to the start of the program.

### **Financial Aid and Guidance**

It is the general policy of the SBS concentration that graduate students must demonstrate adequate financial support and the program is committed to finding financial support for all doctoral students if necessary and possible. However, the nature of that financial assistance may change on a yearly basis and will be based on admission ranking and adequate progression in the program. Financial aid is generally provided in the form of teaching and research assistantships with the expectation that students will contribute 20 hours per week to these activities except in extenuating circumstances. Students taking longer than four years to complete the doctoral program assume responsibility for obtaining their own financial aid.

Prior to the beginning of each semester, every graduate student will receive a letter of offer specifying (1) the total amount of the stipend for that period, (2) the position to which he/she/they is/are appointed (e.g., Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant, or other), (3) the starting and ending dates of the appointment, (4) the assignment for that period, (5) the supervisor for that period, and (6) other pertinent information. Students will be asked to sign the form to indicate that it has been read, understood, and accepted. A copy of this document will be kept in the student's personnel file.

At the end of every academic year, each supervisor will provide a written evaluation of the student to the SBS concentration. Students will receive a copy of the evaluation and have the right to a written rebuttal in case he/she/they disagrees with the evaluation. The evaluation will also be kept in the student's personnel file.

When possible, decisions concerning the allocation of state stipends are made by the executive committee at the same time a decision is made to admit a particular candidate. (Note: Sometimes awards must be finalized at a later date due to delays in decisions regarding allocations from the university to the college). Allocations will be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure that the student is making adequate progress.

### **Registration**

Students will be registered for classes each semester by the academic program coordinator. Full-time students are required to register for a minimum of 9 (each fall and spring semesters) and 6 (summer semester) credits (at least 1 must span Summer C per UF graduate school policy) while they are actively working toward their degrees. Students receiving assistantships or fellowships must register for the number of credits required by

the Graduate School. Students failing to register for any classes for three consecutive semesters must submit an “Application for Readmission” if they wish to resume their graduate studies at the University of Florida.

### ***Registration in Final Semester***

All candidates must submit a “Degree Application” form online through ONE.UF (<https://www.registrar.ufl.edu/services/degreeapp>) by approximately the second week of their final term (see the Graduate Catalog or posted deadlines for the exact date). This application must be renewed for a subsequent term if all degree requirements are not fulfilled in the term in which the application was filed.

### **Transfer of Credits**

A maximum of 30 semester credits from a related master’s degree program at another accredited university can be applied to the 90-credit requirement for the doctoral programs. All master’s degrees used for transfer of credit toward the 90-credit minimum must have been earned within seven years of the date that the Ph.D. is conferred. All courses beyond the master’s degree taken at another university, to be applied toward the Ph.D. degree at the University of Florida, must have been taken at an institution offering the doctoral degree and must be approved for graduate credit by the Graduate School. All requests for transfer of credit from another institution should be performed by the end of the first year for doctoral students. The student should meet with their faculty advisor at the start of their program to determine which credits from the master’s program may be transferred (up to 30 credits). The student’s faculty advisor will recommend the number of credits earned at another institution which are appropriate for transfer to the University of Florida. This is based on evaluation of transcripts and in some cases, course syllabi. The student, faculty advisor, and the academic program coordinator will complete the appropriate forms.

The academic program coordinator will present the case to the Program Committee and each member of the committee must approve the transfer to move forward. The committee may request additional information in order to make a final decision. Once the committee has approved a credit transfer request, the academic program coordinator will prepare a petition to the dean of the Graduate School with copies of the appropriate transcripts attached. In addition, any prior graduate credits earned specifically at UF (e.g., a master’s degree in the same or a different discipline) may be transferred into the doctoral program at the discretion of the Program Committee. In these cases the total credit maximum cannot exceed 45. Approval to waive a course for a master’s or doctoral program because of similar content to a required course in the SBS required courses, a similar process applies as described above. The student and advisor would prepare the forms and include a copy of the syllabus from the previous course(s). The academic program coordinator would present the case to the Program Committee and if approved, the academic program coordinator would update the student record to reflect the change.

### **Selection of Discipline for Degree and Major Professor**

Upon entering the program, each incoming student will be assigned a faculty advisor/mentor based on match for research interests. Students may change advisors during the summer following their first year upon establishing written agreement from both the new and original advisors. (Note: Students are not allowed to maintain funding from the original advisor’s grant or contract when switching advisors unless there is explicit written permission.) After the summer of the first year, if a student desires to change the major advisor, he/she/they must notify the program director and academic program coordinator in writing. The student will then be assigned to a new advisor as part of a no-fault one time change in mentorship. After this, if a student is

unable to find a faculty that agrees to mentor them, it is the responsibility of the student to seek out an eligible faculty within the SBS program to serve as their faculty advisor.

Students who have made individual arrangements with a professor prior to entering the program and are sponsored through non-College funds provided by this professor may not need to go through this advisor selection process.

The program director and academic program coordinator will advise each student on general policies as set forth in this document. The program director and academic program coordinator are responsible for general oversight of the Ph.D. program for quality assurance, assignment of teaching duties, and recruitment of students.

## **Supervisory Committee**

The supervisory committee is proposed by the student's major advisor in consultation with the student and forwarded to the Graduate School. The advisor must hold Doctoral Graduate Faculty status within the public health program (SBS concentration) and all committee members must hold Graduate Faculty status with the Graduate School. The dean of the Graduate School is an ex-officio member of all supervisory committees. Graduate students should aim to set up their supervisory committees by the time they have completed 24 semester credit hours of course work or the end of their first year, whichever comes first. The student is encouraged to meet with the supervisory committee as often as possible. By the end of the student's first year, the faculty advisor and the student should discuss selecting a supervisory committee. It is recommended that students have requested faculty members to serve on their committee by no later than the mid-point of the second year (prior to preparation for qualifying exam).

The supervisory committee shall consist of at least four Graduate Faculty members including at least two members from within the SBS concentration with SBS Graduate Faculty Status. One member must serve as the external advisor, from outside the concentration. It is recommended that the fourth member is a public health faculty outside of the SBS concentration. The chair need not be tenured but must hold a full-time position in the program and be voted in as a member of the Ph.D. program faculty. All Ph.D. program faculty members with graduate faculty status are voting members. Other supervisory committee members must hold Graduate Faculty status as recognized by the University Graduate School.

Duties of the Supervisory Committee are:

- To provide optimum support and guidance to the student so as to help the student meet academic goals.
- To inform the student of all regulations governing the Ph.D. degree (listed in this document and on the university website). This does not absolve the student from the responsibility of becoming informed of these regulations.
- To meet soon after appointment with the student to consider the student's individual goals and proposed program.
- To evaluate the student's progress to date.
- To conduct the student's written qualifying examination after the student has completed all required course work. The supervisory committee should also assist in and conduct the oral qualifying exam.

- To discuss and approve the student's dissertation topic and if the student has passed the examination to the committee's satisfaction, recommend the student's admission to candidacy.
- To read the student's written proposal, identify questions relevant to the focus area, discuss and approve the written proposal, and discuss and approve the student's proposal presentation.
- To monitor and evaluate the student's progress and give clear directions as to the final dissertation work plan leading to graduation.
- To meet as a committee at least once a year before the student advances to candidacy and every six months thereafter to review the student's research.
- To read the student's full dissertation and to conduct the final oral examination in defense of the dissertation.

It is important to remember that any changes made to the supervisory committee must be approved by the dean of the Graduate School as the changes occur. Changes need to be approved at least 30 days prior to the date of the Final Oral Defense so that all new members will have ample time to become familiar with the dissertation. Committee changes cannot be made after a final oral defense takes place.

## Curriculum

A minimum of 90 credit hours beyond the master's degree is required for the doctoral degree and all credits earned in the approved degree program count toward this minimum. All students must demonstrate, through previous course work, the attainment of basic level knowledge in the five core areas of public health (psychological, behavioral, and social issues in public health; epidemiology; biostatistics; public health administration systems; and environmental health) and assessment and surveillance (see Table 1). Students who do not demonstrate previous coursework in these basic areas must complete it before taking their written qualifying examination.

Course work must be at the 5000 level or higher. Courses for major credit must be taken by letter grade, except for those courses listed as S/U in the catalog. Students with a previous graduate degree can petition the graduate council to have up to 30 credits applied towards the doctoral program. Prior to petitioning the graduate council, the course list must be approved by the Executive Committee.

Each student, together with their supervisor and/or committee, will put together a course program of study specifically designed to meet the student's interests and professional goals. The student is responsible for keeping track of this plan of study document and ensuring that they have fulfilled all requirements. Once a semester or upon updating the plan of study document, the student should email it to the academic program coordinator so that the most recent copy should be kept within their student file.

Prior to the student's first semester, the faculty advisor should meet with the student to discuss the curriculum and help them determine their plan of study. At this time, faculty may direct the student to explore graduate certificates within or outside of PPHP that are relevant to their studies. Each subsequent semester, the advisor should discuss the student's curriculum plan and assist the student in determining what courses may be most applicable to their studies and when would be the appropriate time to enroll in supervised advanced research credits. Please note that some of our courses are only offered every other year, so students and the advisor should note this so that the student does not miss any courses.

In order to register for PHC7980, the student must have advanced to candidacy, per UF Graduate School guidelines (and the qualifying exam milestone has been entered for them by the academic program coordinator). Per UF policy, a student must be registered for PHC 7980 Research for Doctoral Dissertation for a minimum of 3 credit hours in Fall or Spring term or a minimum of 2 hours in Summer C term. NOTE: you must be registered in the above hours in under the faculty advisor's/ chair's department. If a student is registered for PHC7979 credits and is admitted to candidacy during the same semester, a memo can be submitted to the Registrar asking for them to switch the PHC7979 credits to PHC7980 as the student has now entered candidacy.

*SBS Track of the Ph.D. in Public Health*

Course	Title	Required credits
<b>Public Health Core Courses (15 Credits)</b>		<b>15.00</b>
PHC 6052 OR PHC 6050	Introduction to Biostatistical Methods-SAS Statistical Methods for Health Science I-SPSS	3
PHC 6001	Principles of Epidemiology in Public Health	3
HSA 6114	Introduction to the U.S. Health Care System	3
PHC 6410	Psychological, Behavioral, and Social Issues in Public Health	3
PHC 6313	Environmental Health Concepts in Public Health	3
<b>Public Health Core Quantitative/Methods/Statistical Courses (12 Credits)</b>		<b>12.00</b>
PHC 6053	Regression Methods for the Health and Life Sciences	3
PHC 6700	Public Health Research Methods	3
	Varies with program director and advisory approval	3
	Varies with program director and advisory approval (suggestions include: Suggestions include CLP6527/CLP6528 (Measurement, Design, and Statistics I & II), Survival Analysis, Stochastic Modeling, Advanced Epidemiology, Advanced Biostatistics, Survey Research Methods, Measurement, Research Design)	3
<b>Professional Issues (6 Credits)</b>		<b>6.00</b>
PHC 7427	Ethics in Population Science	2
PHC 7727	Grant Writing for Population Health Research	2
PHC 6937	Finding Health Research Information and Communicating Science	1
PHC7909	SBS Journal Club	1
<b>SBS Concentration Core Courses (36 Credits)</b>		<b>36.00</b>
PHC 6251	Assessment & Surveillance for Public Health	3
RSD 7752	Seminar for Instrument Development for Public Health	2
PHC 7587	Seminar in Theory Development/Testing	2
PHC 6405	Theoretical Foundations of Public Health	3
PHC 6193	Qualitative Data Analysis	3
	Theory Breadth Course	3
	Theory Breadth Course	3
	Theory Breadth Course	3
	Special Topic Course	3
	Special Topic Course	3
	Special Topic Course	3
	Special Topic Course	3
PHC 6905	Independent Study or other credits as approved by doctoral chair	2
<b>Supervised Teaching (3 Credits)</b>		<b>3.00</b>
RSD 6900	College Classroom Teaching	3
<b>Supervised Research (3 Credits)</b>		<b>3.0</b>
PHC 7979	Supervised Advanced Research	3
<b>Dissertation Research (15)</b>		<b>15.00</b>
PHC 7980	Research for Doctoral Dissertation	15
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>90.00</b>

## Annual Evaluation and Individual Development Plan

Each year every doctoral student will be required to complete an annual evaluation with their faculty advisor. The student and advisor will fill out their respective portions of the required forms. The student and advisor will then have a meeting to discuss the student's progress and set goals for the upcoming year. The student and advisor will then sign the form and turn it in to the academic program coordinator and program director. The program director and academic program coordinator will ensure that all reviews are completed annually.

As required by the College, each year every doctoral student will complete an individual development plan (IDP) using an online portal (<https://phhp.ufl.edu/files/2011/01/PHHP-IDP.pdf>). The purpose of this document is to help the student achieve career and professional goals. The student will fill out the form and then will meet to discuss the goals with their advisor. The academic program coordinator and program director will ensure that all IDPs are completed annually.

## Qualifying Examination

Qualifying examinations are expected to be completed at the **end of the second year** of Ph.D. studies. Satisfactorily passing the qualifying examination is a requirement for admission to candidacy (i.e., when the student actually becomes a candidate for the Ph.D. degree). To take the qualifying examination, the student must: (1) have a minimum 3.00 GPA; (2) have completed letter-grade course work; (3) have completed all core courses; and (4) be registered as a student at the time the examination is taken. Exceptions may be granted by the supervisory committee (e.g., if a core course is not offered, but the student has fulfilled all other requirements and has formulated a research program). It is expected that the qualifying exam will focus on the student's specific area of interest and background information from Ph.D. course work.

## Timetable for Doctoral Program

Step	Time Frame
Application	Early Spring Year 0
Admission	Late Spring Year 0
Assignment to Advisory	Summer Year 0
Orientation	Summer Year 0
First Semester Plan of Study	Summer Year 0
Prepare list of courses for transfer credits	Fall Year 1
Develop full plan of study	Spring Year 1
Select supervisory committee	Summer Year 1
Approval from supervisory committee on dissertation topic and qualifying exam reading list	Spring Year 2
Take written qualifying examination	Summer Year 2
Oral qualifying exam	Summer Year 2
Complete Electronic Dissertation Training	Fall Year 3
Write dissertation proposal with input from supervisory committee and submit to committee at least 2 weeks prior to proposal defense	Fall Year 3
Defend dissertation proposal	Fall Year 3
Advance to candidacy when successful	Fall Year 3
Conduct dissertation research	Fall Year 3- Fall Year 4
Write dissertation with ongoing input from supervisory committee	Fall Year 4- Spring Year 4

Schedule defense upon approval of supervisory committee chair	Early Spring Year 4
Submit dissertation draft to supervisory committee (at least 2 weeks prior to defense)	Early Spring Year 4
Defend dissertation	Mid –Spring Year 4
Make revisions suggested by supervisory committee	Mid –Spring Year 4
Submit final dissertation to graduate school for approval	Mid –Spring Year 4

### ***General Guidelines for the Qualifying Examination***

- The format for the qualifying examination will be a combined written/oral examination.
- The written qualifying examination should be completed at or about the time when all course work is completed. It is expected that the qualifying examination will be taken by the end of the second year in the Ph.D. graduate program (i.e., summer of year 2).
- By the end of the student’s first year, the student should set up a meeting with their faculty advisor to talk about their qualifying examination so the advisor can help prepare them for what will be expected. If student chooses to complete the scoping review option (see below), student should prepare for when they will plan to start that process. It is suggested that the student start their scoping review no later than 6 months prior to their proposed qualifying exam date (March of their second year would be a good time to start if they plan to take in August of their second year).
- At least one semester prior to when the student plans to take their qualifying exams, they should have their first meeting with their committee. At this meeting, it is suggested that the student prepares a presentation that covers (1) their prospective timeline and relevant coursework/plan of study, and (2) their dissertation research concept. The student should discuss this presentation with their advisor prior to this meeting.
- In preparation for the exam the student will generate a reading list for each of the core areas on the exam under the guidance of their faculty advisor. The reading list should include key books, chapters, or articles that form the foundation of contemporary theoretical and empirical knowledge of the subject matter. The reading list will be submitted to the committee for additions and approval at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the examination, or as agreed upon by the supervisory committee.
- The written part of the qualifying examination for each student will be chaired by a faculty member in the SBS program who is a member of the graduate faculty.
- Prior to the written qualifying exam, the student should provide a written 1-page prospectus of their specific research interest area/ 1-page specific aims to their committee chair. This should be provided no later than one month prior to the qualifying examination date. Once the chair has approved this, the student should provide to their entire committee.
- The qualifying examination committee members will have a meeting prior to the examination to discuss lines of questioning and to address core competencies (relative to each focus area and the student’s dissertation topic).
- The chair of the exam committee, in consultation with the members, will choose the final questions for the exam. The chair may ask each examiner to provide an exam question(s) to the chair at least two weeks prior to the exam date. Any aids (e.g., formula or tables) must be included with the question. All supervisory committee members will grade each section of the exam.
- The student will be given three questions prepared by their primary advisor and supervisory committee. The student will write a comprehensive answer in response to each question. Prior to starting the exam, the student should agree with their mentor on a three week “time block” during which the student can focus primarily on the writing of the exam. The mentor and supervisory committee should set

requirements for all aspects of the written document so that there is no ambiguity for the student. Details such as due date, font, page limits, margins etc. will be specified before the exam commences. As a general guideline, an answer will typically require 8-10 pages of written text (single spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch page margins; may include figures or diagrams, as appropriate; citations should be included throughout).

- The student is given one week (5 working days plus 1 weekend) per question to develop a written document. The questions should be designed to test the student's mastery of the required Public Health coursework as well as the scientific basis and foundational knowledge of their emphasis area/concentration. The questions should be of sufficient depth such that the committee feels it will take 1 week of work for the student to prepare an adequate answer. The exam is "open book" format and the student is permitted to consult the scientific literature or textbooks, etc. during the exam. However, using the honor system the student is not permitted to seek help from any other individuals including students, faculty or other colleagues. Additionally, intellectual integrity is vital to an academic community and for the fair evaluation of the student's work. Therefore, all work completed for the qualifying exam must be the student's own work, completed in accordance with the University's Guidelines on Academic Integrity. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is prohibited and considered cheating. Faculty who suspect students are using AI to complete any portion of their qualifying exam will be reported to the Dean of Students Office and will be subject to academic penalties in the course, at minimum.
- Students have the option of completing a scoping review as part of their qualifying examination in place of question #3 (specialty/topic question). If a student chooses this option, they will get a two week "time block" instead of three weeks to complete questions one and two and should turn in the scoping review along with the two other questions on the last day of the two-week period. It is recommended that the student begin working on the scoping review no later than the semester before their qualifying examination to have sufficient time, as this scoping review should be a very close to final draft that can be submitted for publication. Faculty should encourage the student to work with a librarian to plan the review. The scoping review can serve as one chapter of the dissertation, per committee chair and member approval.
- The student's grade (pass or fail), along with any comments from the examiners will be reported to the qualifying examination committee chair who will then distribute the exam results and comments to the student.
- All students will be required to complete an oral qualifying exam in addition to the written portion.
- Results of the written exam will be available to the student three weeks following the completion of the third exam question. All communication of grading and exam results to the student will be conducted by the examination committee chair.
- Students who fail the written section of the qualifying exam will be dismissed from the program.

### ***Oral Section of the Qualifying Examination***

- The oral section of the qualifying examination will be held 2-3 weeks (no earlier than 2 weeks) following successful completion of the written portion of the exam.
- It is recommended that the student send out a Doodle poll (or similar) to their committee to schedule their oral dissertation defense two months prior to when the defense will take place.
- All oral exams will be approximately 2 hours in length.
- All members of the student's examination committee must be present for the oral presentation (or available via telephone/zoom conference).

- The exam committee chair and members will present the questions from the student's written exam and provide a summary of areas of committee concern. The student will then provide an overview of question responses and respond to committee members' questions.
- Results of the oral portion of the exam will be available to the student immediately following its completion.
- Within the last 20-30 minutes of the 2-hour oral qualifying exam, the student will present their proposed dissertation title and 1-page prospectus of their specific research interest area/ 1-page specific aims on their proposed dissertation topic. This can be a very early draft but will allow the student to describe to the committee what they would like to do for their dissertation and it will give the committee the opportunity to give feedback to the student before they start writing their dissertation proposal.
- The academic program coordinator will distribute the qualifying exam forms to the committee. A working dissertation title is required in order for this milestone to be entered into the student information system.
- The doctoral student becomes a doctoral candidate when the following requirements are satisfied:
  - The student's academic record is satisfactory (3.0 or higher) and the student has no incomplete grades on their record.
  - Required coursework is completed.
  - The supervisory committee certifies that the student has made satisfactory progress to be admitted to candidacy.
  - The student has passed both the written and oral portions of the qualifying exam, has a proposed dissertation title, and the student's committee has approved their 1-page prospectus of their specific research interest area/ 1-page specific aims on their proposed dissertation topic.
  - The Admission to Candidacy form has the required approvals.

If the student fails the oral portion of the qualifying exam, they may retake it only once and it must be retaken within one semester. A re-examination may be requested but it must be recommended by the student's supervisory committee and approved by the Graduate School. At least one semester of additional preparation is considered essential before re-examination.

Between the date of completion of the qualifying exam and the date of the degree, there must be a minimum of two semesters if the candidate is in full-time status or a calendar year if the candidate is in attendance on less than a full-time basis. The semester in which the qualifying examination is completed is counted provided that the exam is completed before the midpoint of the second term. No more than five years may pass between the completion of the qualifying exam and the conferring of the degree.

### **Admission to Candidacy**

Approval for admission to candidacy is based on: (1) the academic record of the student; (2) the opinion of the supervisory committee concerning the overall fitness for candidacy; (3) successful completion of the qualifying examination; and (4) an approved dissertation topic (dissertation proposal).

Graduate School paperwork required: The signed Graduate School forms for the qualifying examination are all that are needed; there is no separate admission to candidacy paperwork.

## Dissertation Proposal Presentation

1. It is suggested that the research proposal be presented no later than one year following successful completion of qualifying exams, usually sooner. To stay on track, it is recommended that the student speak to their faculty advisor directly following their oral qualifying exams.
2. The topic of the research proposal must be an **original research project**. A written abstract of the research proposal, maximum of one page in length, should be provided, examined, and approved by the academic committee chair and committee prior to preparation of the complete proposal.
  - a. Intellectual integrity is vital to an academic community and for the fair evaluation of the student's work. Therefore, all work completed for the proposal must be the student's own work, completed in accordance with the University's Guidelines on Academic Integrity. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is prohibited and considered cheating. Faculty who suspect students are using AI to complete any portion of their qualifying exam will be reported to the Dean of Students Office and will be subject to academic penalties in the course, at minimum.
3. At least one month prior to when the student plans to defend their proposal, the student should send out a Doodle poll (or similar) to their committee to schedule the proposal defense.
4. The written proposal, maximum of 12 pages of text plus references, prepared in the format of a granting agency (e.g., NIH R01 format) should be distributed along with "key" references to the committee at least 14 days prior to the oral dissertation proposal presentation.
5. The student should send the written proposal to the committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense.
6. The student may apply for IRB approval for their proposed dissertation research while writing their proposal, per chair approval.
7. The graduate student will give a succinct, 30-minute presentation (complete with visual aids) that focuses on the proposal topic and methodology. The duration of the oral defense of the proposal is 2 hours. After presentation, the student will be examined by the committee. Oral questions posed to the student will be related to the written and oral dissertation proposal.
8. The committee will identify questions relevant to the research focus area, which may include but not be limited to:
  - Literature evaluation skills
  - Writing skills
  - Theoretical application
  - Scientific background
  - Study design
  - Models of disease or conditions related to Social & Behavioral Science
  - Analytical methods
  - Measurement methods
  - Data and statistical analysis skills (including qualitative analysis skills, if applicable)

- Differentiation of clinical and statistical significance
- Basic concepts covered in the professional courses

5. The final evaluation of the proposal by the dissertation committee should be communicated to the student and the graduate academic affairs committee utilizing the following scale:

a. Pass – With written feedback on strengths and weaknesses

b. Remedial work needed:

- Specific needs for additional learning experiences (e.g., scientific area, statistics, and writing) may be identified.
- Remedial work may include a minor rewrite of the proposal or a major rewrite and re-defense of the proposal.
- Remedial work must be completed within six months from the time of proposal presentation.

The candidate will propose a format for the final dissertation write up at the oral proposal presentation. The final format will be discussed and agreed upon with the candidate's committee at this point. (See template in Appendix A)

The academic program coordinator will distribute the proposal defense form to the committee who will sign the form.

### **Final Dissertation Research**

The Ph.D. final exam consists of an oral defense of the research results that are described in the doctoral dissertation. This exam is given within six months of graduation, after the first submission of the dissertation, and the completion of all other prescribed work for the degree.

Students must submit the dissertation electronically and should refer to the Graduate School Editorial Office for more information regarding the dissertation submission. The guidelines are also online at:

(<https://success.grad.ufl.edu/td/formatting/>)

Electronic submission requires a signed ETD Submission Approval Form, Final Exam Form, and one electronic copy to the Student Services Office.

The Student Services Office should be informed of the examination one week prior to the defense date in order to process the Final Exam Report form and send out notices.

Copies of the student's dissertation must be given to the supervisory committee members at least two weeks in advance of the final examination. Graduation may be delayed for those who do not adhere to this rule.

Intellectual integrity is vital to an academic community and for the fair evaluation of the student's work. Therefore, all work completed for the dissertation must be the student's own work, completed in accordance with the University's Guidelines on Academic Integrity. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is prohibited and considered cheating. Faculty who suspect students are using AI to complete any portion of their qualifying exam will be reported to the Dean of Students Office and will be subject to academic penalties in the course, at minimum.

*All work for the Ph.D. degree must be completed within five calendar years after the completion of the Ph.D. qualifying examination.*

## Oral Dissertation Defense & Final Dissertation Examination

Every candidate for a doctoral degree is required to prepare and present a dissertation that shows independent investigation and is acceptable in form and content to the supervisory committee and to the Graduate School. Because all doctoral dissertations are published, it is necessary that the work be of publishable quality and that it be in a form for publication. Students must follow dissertation submission criteria and deadlines outlined by the Graduate School at UF.

The oral dissertation defense will comprise a presentation (no more than 45 minutes) of the candidate's research. All defenses will be open to the public and should be conducted in person. The PhD candidate and the supervisory committee chair must be physically present together at the same location. If necessary, and with approval of the entire committee, other committee members may attend the defense remotely, using modern communication technology. However, academic units may establish consistent policy to allow attendance via remote means as exceptions to this tradition in rare incidences. For all guidelines regarding physical presence at the defense examinations, please see the [Physical Presence Policy](#) on the UF Graduate School website.

An announcement of the scheduled examination must be submitted in writing to the dean of the Graduate School by the chair of the supervisory committee, program director, and academic program coordinator at least ten working days prior to the scheduled date. An announcement of the examination will be sent via a flyer by the academic program coordinator at least two weeks prior to the date of examination to faculty members in the College of Public Health & Health Professions inviting them to attend.

Although the presentation and initial question and answer session is open to the public, once the presentation has concluded and the chair has allowed members of the public to ask the student questions, the chair will ask members of the public to leave so that the committee can ask the student questions in a closed question and answer format (approximately one hour).

At least four Graduate Faculty members, including all members of the supervisory committee, must be present at the oral portion of the final examination. Only the official members of the supervisory committee may sign the dissertation signature pages.

Assuming the candidate is successful, the Final Dissertation Report shall be signed by all faculty members attending the examination. At the time of the oral defense, all dissertation committee members should sign the signature pages in the dissertation and sign the Final Exam Report form which is to be returned to the Student Services Office. Students will also submit the original copy of their dissertation to the Student Services Office. A written abstract of the project (200 words minimum) will be provided to the dissertation committee chair no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled presentation.

The dissertation, original and copies, are to be signed by the official members of the supervisory committee and by the dean of the College of PHHP. The signed Final Dissertation Report and the original copy of the dissertation should be returned to the Graduate School after the dissertation has been corrected. The original copy and the second copy of the dissertation must be presented to the dean of the Graduate School on or

before the date specified in the University Calendar. A copy of the final dissertation must also be provided to the chair of the student's dissertation committee and committee members by request.

Note: Students must have UF IRB approval prior to starting their dissertation research. Upon completion of the dissertation, students are required to submit the appropriate paperwork to IRB indicating the completion of the study. If a student continues to analyze data at other institutions, they must submit an IRB to the corresponding institution as well.

**Graduate School paperwork required:** Students should contact the academic program coordinator at least one week prior to the defense for the necessary paperwork. Paperwork required includes: 1) Final Exam form which indicates the student has successfully passed their final exam (dissertation defense). This is signed by all members of the committee. 2) Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Signature Page. This indicates that the written dissertation is ready for final submission. If dissertation changes are requested, the supervisory committee chair or their designee may hold the ETD Signature Page until all committee members are satisfied with the dissertation. The form is signed by all members of committee. Signed forms should be returned to the academic program coordinator after final defense to update status. Final dissertation submission cannot be made until the forms are submitted. 3) UF Publishing Agreement is submitted by the student in [GIMS](#). This should be done after the final exam form is submitted but before the final dissertation submission. This form requires mentor approval and input.

### **Leave of Absence**

Students desiring not to register for a consecutive term, but who wish to maintain their graduate student status in SBS, must obtain an approved leave of absence in the form of a letter from the chair of their supervisory committee. A copy of this letter must also be submitted by the chair of the supervisory committee to the academic program coordinator for permanent filing with the student's academic record. Students that are not registered for 3 or more consecutive terms without the written permission of the chair of their supervisory committee will no longer be considered students in SBS programs and must submit an "Application for Readmission" to the Office of Admissions and have it approved by the University in order to resume their graduate studies. If a student is on a graduate assistantship at the time they are requesting a leave, there is no guarantee that the assistantship will be available upon the student's return to the program. If a student is readmitted, they may not necessarily be placed with the original advisor or supervisory committee.

### **Readmission Procedures**

Students who have left the program prior to graduating and wish to be readmitted require the following:

- A minimum GPA of 3.0 for courses taken during the doctoral program.
- Three letters of recommendation from faculty members in the SBS program.

Readmission is not guaranteed, regardless of the circumstances that necessitate it. You may be asked to be re-interviewed by the PhD Steering Committee prior to readmission. You also may be asked to resubmit application materials, such as statement of purpose prior to review.

## **Transfer Requests from other Concentrations**

In cases where students wish to transfer, they should contact the program director and academic program coordinator. Admission is not guaranteed, regardless of the circumstances that necessitate it. Students who wish to transfer from other concentrations require the following:

- A minimum GPA of 3.0 for courses taken during the doctoral program.
- Three letters of recommendation from faculty members in the SBS program.

You may be asked to be interviewed by the PhD Steering Committee prior to admission. You also may be asked to resubmit application materials, such as statement of purpose.

## **Exit Interview and Alumni**

All students are required to complete an exit interview during the semester of their graduation that will be sent by the academic program coordinator.

After graduation, alumni are encouraged to keep in touch with the department. Alumni can contact the program director and academic program coordinator to update contact information, current position, and share success stories.

University of Florida Graduate School policies, including grievance procedures and other pertinent information, can be found on the University of Florida Graduate School website: <http://graduateschool.ufl.edu>.

## **Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientation**

All incoming PhD students are required to attend the Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientation hosted by the UF Graduate School. The academic program coordinator will distribute information about this training to incoming students.

## **Confidentiality Statement & Health Information Policy (Completed Annually)**

All members of the workforce in UF medical components and affiliated entities, including faculty, staff, students, volunteers, and third parties are required to sign UF's Confidentiality Statement. All members of the workforce, whether full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent, paid or not paid, must sign the UF Confidentiality Statement within five business days of joining the workforce or student body, and annually thereafter, agreeing to maintain the confidentiality of patient health information created, received, and maintained by the University of Florida ( <http://privacy.ufl.edu/uf-health-privacy/confidentiality-statement/registration/>).

## **FERPA (Completed Annually)**

The 1974 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, also known as the Buckley Amendment, is a federal law (20 U.S.C. 1232g) that protects the privacy of a student's educational record. FERPA applies to all educational institutions receiving funds from the United States Department of Education, from kindergarten through university level. FERPA training is required annually for UF faculty, staff, and graduate assistants. When working

with student records, a student assistant should work cooperatively with their supervisor to ensure FERPA compliance.

### **HIPAA (Completed Annually)**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a broad federal law that is in part designed to provide national standards for protection of certain health information. As required by HIPAA, the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) promulgated complex regulations known as the Privacy Rule, which implement the federal law. This is completed in myTraining.

### **Preventing Sexual Harassment (Completed Biannually)**

GET80 Harassment Prevention. Every employee of the university (e.g. GA, TA, and RA) is expected to complete this training every two years.

### **Student Resources**

#### ***Graduate Student Council***

The [Graduate Student Council \(GSC\)](#) at UF is the official liaison between graduate students and the UF governing bodies including the Graduate School, University Administration, Student Government, and Faculty Senate. The GSC provides a forum for students to address ideas, needs, and concerns that are unique to the University of Florida graduate students. The budget, funded by Student Government, is used to provide services to graduate students such as travel grants. Invitations to apply for travel awards will be sent over the UF graduate student listserv with eligible dates of travel. A representative (or an alternate representative) is required to attend the monthly GSC meetings for students to remain eligible for travel and other awards. The annual term of a program representative and alternate shall be from September 1 to the following August 31. Students are asked to volunteer to represent their program (we usually ask first year students to complete this duty and can be listed on their CV). The duties of the program representative are outlined in the GSC Constitution.

#### ***Student Conduct, Academic Dishonesty, and Plagiarism***

Each student is urged to read and become familiar with the University of Florida Student Conduct Code. A conviction for a violation under the Code may result in a penalty which can range from severe reprimand to imposition of penalty hours, suspension, or expulsion.

Students are expected to act in accordance with the University of Florida policy on academic integrity. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge:

“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.”

You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

“On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For additional information regarding Academic Integrity, please see Student Conduct and Honor Code or the Graduate Student Website for additional details.

Please remember cheating, lying, misrepresentation, or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and inexcusable behavior.

### ***Professionalism and Performance in Graduate Assistantships***

Graduate assistants are UF employees. As such, they are expected to exhibit the professionalism and performance standards of all UF employees. Professionalism is expressed through one's demeanor, ethics, competence, reliability, and accountability. Principles such as teamwork, punctuality, integrity, and respect are essential to a functioning work environment. Performance is measured through one's application of these principles, as well as through one's contributions. Meeting deadlines, receiving feedback, and being proactive and responsive within projects are required of graduate assistants. Expectations for professionalism and performance include knowledge of UF and departmental policies. Graduate student employees are responsible for informing themselves of these policies.

Both a graduate assistant and their supervisor are responsible for setting clear expectations of work duties, communication, and performance. If a student has fallen behind on their initial plan or if a student isn't meeting the expectations, the supervisor and the PhD director will clarify the student's status and articulate for the student how they can maintain or recover good academic standing with an academic performance improvement plan document. Failure to complete the outlined goals in the plan will result in negative consequences (e.g., suspension or dismissal from the Graduate Assistantship).

### ***University Regulations***

Public Health SBS students are expected to follow all University and College of Public Health regulations which apply to them. Students should be knowledgeable about all official University and College of Public Health and Health Professions notices and rules. For further information on Student Responsibilities, please see the University of Florida Student Guide

### ***Computer – Acceptable Use Policy***

Public Health SBS students must be in compliance with both the College of Public Health and Health Professions and University of Florida computer requirements. Please see the [PHHP IT website](#) for information on remote access to your PHHP desktop or access to the terminal server.

As part of its educational mission, the University of Florida acquires, develops, and maintains computers, computer systems and networks. These computing resources are intended for university-related purposes, including direct and indirect support of the university's instruction, research and service missions; university administrative functions; student and campus life activities; and the free exchange of ideas within the university community and among the university community and the wider local, national, and world communities. This policy applies to all users of university computing resources, whether affiliated with the university or not, and to all uses of those resources, whether on campus or from remote locations. Additional policies may govern specific computers, computer systems or networks provided or operated by specific units of the university.

Consult the operators or managers of the specific computer, computer system, or network that you are interested in for further information.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

The rights of academic freedom and freedom of expression apply to the use of university computing resources. So too, however, do the responsibilities and limitations associated with those rights. The university supports a campus and computing environment open to the free expression of ideas, including unpopular points of view. However, the use of university computing resources, like the use of other university-provided resources and activities, is subject to the requirements of legal and ethical behavior. Thus, legitimate use of a computer, computer system or network does not extend to whatever is technically possible.

## **General Rules**

Users of university computing resources must comply with federal and state laws, university rules and policies, and the terms of applicable contracts including software licenses while using university computing resources. Examples of applicable laws, rules and policies include the laws of libel, privacy, copyright, trademark, obscenity and child pornography; the Florida Computer Crimes Act, the Electronic Communications Privacy Act and the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, which prohibit "hacking," "cracking" and similar activities; the university's Student Code of Conduct; the university's Sexual Harassment Policy. Users who engage in electronic communications with persons in other states or countries or on other systems or networks may also be subject to the laws of those jurisdictions and the rules and policies of those other systems and networks. Users with questions as to how the various laws, rules and resolutions may apply to a particular use of university computing resources should contact the Office of the General Counsel for more information.

## **Enforcement**

Users who violate this policy may be denied access to university computing resources and may be subject to other penalties and disciplinary action, both within and outside the university. Violations may be handled through the university disciplinary procedures applicable to the relevant user. For example, alleged violations by students will normally be investigated, and any penalties or other discipline will normally be imposed by the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. However, the university may temporarily suspend, block, or restrict access to an account, independent of such procedures, when it reasonably appears necessary to do so in order to protect the integrity, security, or functionality of university or other computing resources or to protect the university from liability. The university may also refer suspected violations of applicable law to appropriate law enforcement agencies.

## **E-Mail**

For purposes of this document, e-mail includes point-to-point messages, postings to newsgroups and listservs and any electronic messaging involving computers and computer networks. Organizational e-mail accounts, including those used by student organizations, are held to the same standards as those for individual use by members of the University of Florida community. E-mail is also generally subject to the Florida Public Records Law to the same extent as it would be on paper.

Examples of Inappropriate Uses of E-mail: While not an exhaustive list, the following uses of e-mail by individuals or organizations are considered inappropriate and unacceptable at the University of Florida. In general, e-mail shall not be used for the initiation or retransmission of:

- **Chain mail that misuses or disrupts resources** - E-mail sent repeatedly from user to user, with requests to send to others;
- **Harassing or hate-mail** - Any threatening or abusive e-mail sent to individuals or organizations that violates university rules and regulations or the Code of Student Conduct;
- **Virus hoaxes**;
- **Spamming or e-mail bombing attacks** - Intentional e-mail transmissions that disrupt normal e-mail service;
- **Junk mail** - Unsolicited e-mail that is not related to university business and is sent without a reasonable expectation that the recipient would welcome receiving it; and
- **False identification** - Any actions that defraud another or misrepresent or fail to accurately identify the sender.

## Webpages

Official university webpages (including colleges, programs, departments, bureaus, centers, institutes, etc.) represent the university and are intended for the official business functions of the university. Each official homepage must use an address that ends in "ufl.edu" and be registered with the university's web administrator who will then include it as a link from the UF Web Sites page. The following information must be readily accessible on the main page:

- the name of the unit or group represented by the page;
- a means of contacting the person(s) responsible for maintaining the page content;
- the date of last revision;
- the university word mark; and
- an active link to the UF homepage.

For more information on including the university's wordmark on a web page, please refer to UF's Graphical Standards Policy. To assist users in finding a wordmark suitable for a particular web site, the Office of University Relations and the UF Communications Network have put together a page of official web graphics.

Employee pages represent the individual in their primary role as a UF employee. Incidental personal information on employee pages is deemed acceptable so long as it does not interfere with the function or desired presentation of the unit, cause disruption of normal service, incur significant cost to the university, or result in excessive use of resources. Faculty and staff who wish to publish substantial personal information not related to their University functions should use an Internet service provider rather than using university web resources.

Personal pages represent an individual as a private person and are permitted for students only. Organizational and other pages. Organizational pages represent recognized organizations, clubs, associations, sororities, fraternities, workgroups and committees affiliated with the university.

## Commercial Pages

Using UF web pages for personal gain is forbidden. Any private commercial use of UF webpages must be pre-approved pursuant to existing university policies and procedures regarding outside employment activities. The university may require pages involving commercial use to reside on a specific domain such as ufl.org or ufl.com. For advertising, web page authors should be familiar with the university's policies regarding advertising and donor recognition.

## External Links

UF accepts no responsibility for the content of pages or graphics that are linked from UF pages. However, web page authors should consider that such links, even when clearly labeled, can be misinterpreted as being associated with the University. Links to pages where you have a personal monetary interest are likely to violate policies regarding advertising and commercial use and should be avoided.

## University Policies

### *Disability*

All support services provided to and for University of Florida students are individualized to meet the needs of students with disabilities. To obtain individual support services, each student must meet with one of the support service coordinators at the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>) and collaboratively develop appropriate support strategies. Appropriate documentation regarding the student's disability is necessary to obtain any reasonable accommodation or support service. The Dean of Students website for further information is [www.dso.ufl.edu](http://www.dso.ufl.edu).

### *Harassment*

It is the policy of The University of Florida to provide an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment. Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The University encourages students, faculty, staff and visitors to promptly report sex discrimination and sexual harassment. The web site for more information is <https://titleix.ufl.edu/report/>.

This policy applies to visitors, applicants for admission to or employment with the University, and students and employees of the University who allege sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, by university employees, students, visitors or contractors. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that can occur when:

- The submission to unwelcome physical conduct of a sexual nature, or to unwelcome requests for sexual favors or other verbal conduct of a sexual nature, is made an implicit or explicit term or condition of employment or education; or
- The submission or rejection to unwelcome physical conduct of a sexual nature, or to unwelcome requests for sexual favors or other verbal conduct of a sexual nature, is used as a basis for academic or employment decisions or evaluations; or
- Unwelcome physical acts of a sexual nature, or unwelcome requests for sexual favors or other verbal conduct of a sexual nature, have the effect of creating an objectively hostile environment that interferes with employment or education on account of sex.

## ***Reporting***

Sexual harassment may take the form of unwelcome verbal or physical actions which create a hostile, demeaning, offensive, or intimidating behavior of a sexual nature. **A person who believes that they have been subjected to sex discrimination or sexual harassment should report the incident to any University official, administrator or supervisor. The Office of Human Resource Services investigates all complaints. Incidents should be reported as soon as possible after the time of their occurrence.** Reports of sexual harassment can be reported to the Office of the Dean. A report is filed with the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution if misconduct seems to have occurred. Students who have experienced sexual harassment or who have friends who have been harassed may find it helpful to discuss the situation with someone. Confidential counseling services are available at the University Counseling and Wellness Center and at Student Mental Health Service and the Sexual Assault Recovery Service in the Student Health Care Center. Staff in the Office for Student Services have been designated to assist students who have complaints or questions about sexually offensive behavior by faculty, staff, and students.

## ***Hazing***

It is a violation of Florida state law, Board of Trustees policy and University of Florida policy for students to engage in any activity that may be described as hazing. Hazing is a broad term encompassing any action or activity that does not contribute to the positive development of a person; or that inflicts or intends to cause mental or physical harm or anxieties; or that may demean, degrade or disgrace any person regardless of location, intent or consent of participants. In addition, hazing can be defined as any action or situation which intentionally or unintentionally endangers the physical or mental health of a student for the purpose of initiation or full admission, or affiliation with any organization operating under the sanction of the University of Florida. The University believes that any activity that promotes a class system within organizations is inappropriate. Subservience in any form is unacceptable. Subsequently, activities which facilitate inappropriate levels of authority over students may be deemed as hazing and will not be allowed.

Any student organization found to have violated this policy may face loss of recognition as a student organization. Further, any student found to be involved in any hazing activity will face disciplinary action, and is subject to a maximum sanction of expulsion or suspension from the University. Students, as well as their respective organizations, are also subject to civil and criminal action as it relates to the state law prohibiting hazing. For more information, contact the Office for Student Services or refer to Florida Statute 240.252. For further information please access [https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/1-0081/#:~:text=\(a\)%20Penalties%20for%20individuals%20subject,of%20fines%2C%20and%20the%20imposition.](https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/1-0081/#:~:text=(a)%20Penalties%20for%20individuals%20subject,of%20fines%2C%20and%20the%20imposition.)

## ***Social Media Policy***

The administration of the College of Public Health and Health Professions recognizes that social networking websites and applications including, but not limited to, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc. are an important and timely means of communication. However, students who use these websites and applications must be aware of the critical importance of privatizing these websites and applications so that only trustworthy “friends” have access to the sites. They must also be aware that posting certain information is illegal. Violation of existing statutes and administrative regulations may expose the offender to criminal and civil liability, and punishment for violations may include fines and imprisonment. Offenders also may be subject to adverse academic actions that range from a letter of reprimand to probation to dismissal from the University.

The following actions are strictly forbidden:

- You may not report the personal health information of other individuals, be they friends, relatives, or actual patients. Removal of an individual’s name does not constitute proper de-identification of

protected health information. Furthermore, inclusion of data such as age, gender, race, or date of evaluation may still allow the reader to recognize the identity of a specific individual.

- You may not report private (protected) academic information of another student or trainee. Such information might include, but is not limited to: course grades, narratives evaluations, examination scores, or adverse academic actions.
- In posting information on social networking sites, you may not present yourself as an official representative or spokesperson for the University of Florida College of Public Health and Health Professions.
- You may not represent yourself as another person.
- You may not utilize websites and/or applications in a manner that interferes with your work commitments.

In addition to the absolute prohibitions outlined above, the following actions are strongly encouraged:

- Use of privacy settings to limit the unknown or unwanted access to your profile or application.
- If you choose to list an email address on a social networking site, use a personal email address (not your ufl.edu address) as your primary means of identification.

In addition to the absolute prohibitions outlined above, the following actions are strongly discouraged as these are considered unprofessional and reflect poorly on the individual, the public health profession, the College of Public Health and Health Professions and the University of Florida.

- Display of vulgar language
- Display of language or photographs that imply disrespect for any individual or group because of age, race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.
- Presentations of photographs that may reasonably be interpreted as condoning irresponsible use of alcohol, substance abuse, or sexual promiscuity.

When using these social networking sites, students are strongly encouraged to present themselves in a mature, responsible, and professional manner. Discourse should always be civil and respectful. Please be aware that no privatization measure is perfect and that undesignated persons may still gain access to your networking site. A site such as YouTube, of course, is completely open to the public. Moreover, once an item is posted on a network site, it may not be easily removed. Future employers (residency or fellowship program directors, representatives of employers) may review these network sites when considering potential candidates for employment. You certainly want these individuals to have a positive opinion of you.

### ***Policy on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages at Social Functions***

The College of Public Health and Health Professions adheres to the University's Policy on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages by students and organizations. The policy can be found in the University of Florida Student Guide. A summary of this policy follows.

The sale, service, and consumption of alcoholic beverages on the University of Florida campus must be within the guidelines established by federal and state law and municipal and county ordinance. The sale, service, or consumption of alcoholic beverages is not allowed in classrooms, laboratories, offices, and outdoor areas of the campus. Alcoholic beverages may not be served or consumed at social events held in conjunction with fraternity "rush" or any organized drive to recruit students on campus. Social events held by student groups that are open to the public and in which alcoholic beverages are sold and consumed are permitted only after

permission is obtained from the Office for Student Services (student organizations, fraternities, and sororities) or the director of housing (residence halls, student groups) and only under applicable University rules.

Any student, student group, or employee of the University who is found to be in violation of the law or the University alcohol policy shall be subject to disciplinary action by the University. Any group that holds a function at a location where consumption of alcoholic beverages is permitted shall abide by the following principles when conducting the function.

- a. The group holding the event must establish precautionary measures to ensure that alcoholic beverages are not served to persons under the legal drinking age, to persons who appear intoxicated, or to persons known to be addicted to intoxicants.
- b. At the function, a person (or persons) over the legal drinking age must be designated as the server(s). All alcoholic beverages to be served must be placed in such a manner and location so that access to them can be had only through the designated server(s).
- c. The only alcoholic beverages that may be possessed or consumed at the function are those alcoholic beverages served at the function, and the alcoholic beverages must be consumed within the designated area in which the function is being held.
- d. Non-alcoholic beverages must be available at the same place as the alcoholic beverages and featured as prominently as the alcoholic beverages.
- e. No social event shall include any form of drinking contest or any other activities which encourage the rapid and/or excessive consumption of alcohol at the event.
- f. Alcoholic beverages may not be served or consumed at any social event held in conjunction with fraternity rush or other organized drive to recruit students on campus.
- g. If the function is sponsored by a student group (or groups), the group(s) and event must be registered with the Office for Student Services (student organizations/fraternities/sororities) or the Housing Office (residence hall student groups) prior to the event.
- h. All announcements or advertisements including but not limited to flyers, banners, t-shirts, and newspaper and radio announcements concerning the function must note the availability of non-alcoholic beverages as prominently as the availability of alcoholic beverages and that proper identification must be presented in order to be served or sold alcoholic beverages. Promotional materials must not make reference to the amount of alcoholic beverages available at the event nor to any form of drinking contest.
- i. A uniformed member of the University Police Department, or a substitute approved by the Chief of the University Police Department, must be present at all times during the function and be paid by the sponsoring group.
- j. Advertising which promotes campus events must not portray drinking as a solution to personal or academic problems of students nor as necessary to social, sexual, or academic success.
- k. Promotion of alcoholic beverage brands at sponsored events must not encourage any form of alcohol abuse nor should it place emphasis on quality and frequency of use.
- l. Alcoholic beverages, including kegs or cases of beer, shall not be provided as awards to individual students or campus organizations.
- m. A student adjudicated guilty of a violation of the Alcoholic Beverage Policy of the University shall be guilty of a violation of the Student Conduct Code and subject to sanctions which may include one or more of the following penalties as provided for in rule (C1-4.16(2)) of the Florida Administrative Code: reprimand, conduct probation, suspension or expulsion. Sanctions shall be commensurate with the offense and any aggravating and mitigating circumstances.

### ***Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity***

The University of Florida and the College of Public Health and Health Professions are committed to equal opportunity for all students in all matters related to admissions, housing, public and health accommodations, and other programs and activities across the campus. Furthermore, eligibility for student jobs, clubs, and sports activities (with the exception of recognized fraternities and sororities and certain athletic teams) should be available to qualified individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

### ***The Value of Diversity***

The College of Public Health and Health Professions, along with the University of Florida, strives to develop a climate and environment where the value of diversity among students, faculty, and staff is accepted, encouraged, and embraced. Diversity encompasses differences in age, ethnicity, gender, national origin, physical or mental ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or unique individual style. The individual characteristics, talents, and contributions of all persons are valued and recognized.

The public health (SBS) Ph.D. program is committed to using our platform to advance and address issues related to equality, inclusion, diversity, anti-racism, and social justice. We acknowledge that social injustice is real and ongoing and that actions, not words, are required. Our number one priority is to provide a safe and welcoming environment that champions empathy, diversity, compassion, justice, and equality. The program is committed to listening, critical self-reflection, and learning so that we may be an agent of positive change.

### ***Religious Holidays***

The Board of Trustees policy statement governs University policy regarding observance of religious holidays:

- Students shall, upon notifying their instructor, be excused from class to observe a religious holy day of their faith.
- While students will be held responsible for material covered in their absence, each student shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time.
- No significant test, class event, or University activity shall be scheduled on a major religious holiday.
- Professors and University administration shall in no way penalize students who are absent from academic or social activities because of religious observance.

The University of Florida urges faculty and administrators not to schedule exams or major events on evenings or days observed as holy days by a significant number of students. Students who ask to be excused from class for religious reasons will not be required to provide second-party certification. A student who believes that he/she has been unreasonably denied an education benefit due to religious beliefs or practices may seek redress through the student grievance procedure.

## Social and Behavioral Sciences Faculty and Staff

### Social and Behavioral Sciences Ph.D. Program Director



Lindsey M King, Ph.D., MPH, CHES®, CCRP, CTTS  
Clinical Associate Professor  
Program Director, Social & Behavioral Sciences (SBS)  
Program Director, Ph.D. program in public health (SBS concentration)

Dr. King is a clinical associate professor in the Department of Health Services Research, Management, & Policy and the Dean's Office and she serves as the program director for the social and behavioral sciences (SBS) program and the Ph.D. program in public health (SBS concentration). She also serves as chair and program chair of the American Public Health Association Family Violence Prevention Caucus (APHA FVPC). She received her Ph.D. in public health from the SBS concentration at the UF College of Public Health & Health Professions in 2018. She received her Master of Public Health (MPH) from the University of South Florida (USF) in 2006 with a concentration in community and family health and public health education. She also received her Bachelor of Arts from UF in 2004. Dr. King is a certified health education specialist (CHES®), a certified clinical research professional (CCRP), and a certified tobacco treatment specialist (CTTS). Dr. King's background includes research in behavioral oncology, clinical, epidemiology, and community-based participatory research (CBPR) to address disparities in maternal and child health (MCH), adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed public health community initiatives, violence prevention, and sexual health. Dr. King's primary interests include community-engaged research to identify strengths of communities and eliminate health disparities in underserved populations including racial and ethnic minority populations and sexual and gender minority populations.

### Social and Behavioral Sciences Ph.D. Program Staff



April O'Neal, MPA  
Project Manager and Academic Program Coordinator

April O'Neal serves as the SBS academic program coordinator and administrative specialist to the PPHP Office of the Dean. April provides academic assistance and coordination to the SBS program and provides administrative and project management support to three of the associate deans in the college. The majority of her roles focus on overseeing initiatives that enhance organizational efficiencies that improve collaboration and workflow. April earned her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Florida and her Master of Public Administration from Nova Southeastern University.

## Social and Behavioral Sciences Ph.D. Program Faculty



Jennifer W Applebaum, MS, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Jennifer W. Applebaum, MS, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the Department of Environmental & Global Health at the University of Florida's College of Public Health and Health Professions. Trained as a medical sociologist with a background in animal sheltering, Dr. Applebaum's research focuses, broadly, on the implications of social inequalities on human and companion animal health and well-being. Drawing from sociological theory and concepts to take a social approach to the One Health framework, her research is interested in the intersection of stress, structural-level social processes, the social determinants of health, and the human-animal bond.



Shantrel S Canidate, Ph.D., MPH  
Assistant Professor  
Director for Reducing Health Inequities So Everyone Can Rise (RHISER) Lab  
EPI Associate Director for Outreach and Community Partnerships

Dr. Canidate is a social and behavioral epidemiologist and health disparities researcher with applied experience in HIV outreach to marginal populations and clinical studies related to substance use disorders (SUD) and HIV. She is tenure-track assistant professor in the department of Epidemiology at the UF, the director for Reducing Health Inequities So Everyone Can Rise (RHISER) Lab, and the associate director for Outreach and Community Partnerships with the Emerging Pathogens Institute (EPI) at UF. In addition, she serves as a faculty member within the social and behavioral science program and the Southern HIV and Alcohol Research Consortium. She holds an Associate of Arts (AA) from Daytona State College and a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Health Services Administration from the University of Central Florida. She received her Master of Public Health (MPH) and her Ph.D. in public health with a concentration in social and behavioral sciences from the University of Florida. She completed a NIDA T32 Postdoctoral Fellowship through the UF Substance and Training Center in Public Health within the department of Epidemiology. Dr. Canidate teaches a graduate course within public health, PHC 6441: Understanding Health Disparities in the United States. Her research focuses on applying interdisciplinary approaches to identifying, understanding and addressing substance use and HIV-related health disparities among marginalized populations, such as men who have sex with men (MSM). Her work also aims to leverage electronic health records data through artificial intelligence and utilize causal inference approaches to identify biomedical and behavioral interventions that can reduce racial disparities in HIV care among marginalized populations. Her research interests also racial and ethnic disparities in women's, sexual and reproductive health and disparities in the diagnosis and treatment of dementia among African Americans.



Jose F Colon-Burgos, DrPH, MS  
Assistant Professor

Dr. José Félix Colón-Burgos is an assistant professor in the Department of Environmental and Global Health and within the SBS concentration at the University of Florida's College of Public Health and Health Professions. Dr. Colon-Burgos completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Puerto Rico, Cayey campus, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Community Mental Health and a minor in Sociology. He continued his graduate studies at the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Puerto Rico, Health Sciences campus, where he earned a Master of Science in Health Systems Research and Evaluation and a Doctorate in Public Health specializing in studying the Social Determinants of Health. After his fieldwork in the Dominican Republic studying post-deportation and health, Dr. Colon-Burgos completed two Postdoctoral fellowships at Florida International University at the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC) and the Center for Research on US Latino HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse (CRUSADA).

Dr. Colon-Burgos has worked as a research evaluator with various community, state, and international organizations aiming to tackle social and public health problems from a social justice perspective. His research interests include the study of the social determinants of health and the social determination of health, the effects of inequality and social structures in health, maternal and child health, substance abuse, and sexual risk behaviors, access to health services, and the study of the political economy of health. He incorporates social theory, critical medical anthropology, and critical public health with ethnographic, qualitative, and quantitative research techniques to explore the pathways of health risk in socially marginalized populations.



Brittney Dixon, Ph.D., MPH, CPH, TTS  
Director, Bachelor of Public Health Program  
Clinical Assistant Professor

Dr. Dixon is a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Health Services Research, Management, and Policy and in the social and behavioral sciences concentration in the College of Public Health and Health Professions (PHHP) at the University of Florida (UF). She also serves as the program director for the Bachelor of Public Health (BPH) program. Dr. Dixon received her MPH (health policy) from Florida State University in 2014 and her Ph.D. in Public Health (social and behavioral sciences concentration) from the University of Florida in 2020. Dr. Dixon is Certified in Public Health (CPH) and she is also a trained Tobacco Cessation Facilitator and Treatment Specialist. Dr. Dixon's research focuses on identifying and understanding factors influencing the health and quality of life of individuals in underserved and vulnerable populations, in particular individuals residing in rural communities. Also, her work seeks to understand the factors that influence health disparities found in rural versus urban communities. Dr. Dixon's most recent research focuses on examining how the built environment influences intervention-related weight loss outcomes among rural adults with obesity. She also has research interests in tobacco cessation, community-based participatory research, resilience-building community initiatives, Veteran health, and chronic diseases.



Anna Galloway, P-OTD, MOT, OTR/L, MT-BC  
Clinical Assistant Professor

Dr. Anna Baird-Galloway, OTD, MOT, OTR/L, MT-BC, is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Florida's Department of Occupational Therapy. She teaches five core courses in the OTD program and is known for her innovative pedagogy, including integrating medical improv and cognitive apprenticeship into her course and curriculum design. Her clinical background spans acute care, mental health, and hospice, and she is both a licensed OT and board-certified music therapist. Dr. Galloway's research focuses on occupation-based education and therapeutic uses of music in OT. She also co-chairs the department's Admissions Committee and serves on the OTD and PPHP Curriculum Committees. Her work reflects a strong commitment to teaching, scholarship, and community service.



George Hack, Ph.D., MEd  
Associate Dean for Educational Affairs  
Clinical Professor

Dr. George Hack is the UF College of Public Health and Health Professions' associate dean for educational affairs and a clinical professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy. Dr. Hack received his Ph.D. in Educational Technology from the University of Florida and has designed online and face-to-face instruction in a variety of environments, including secondary, undergraduate, graduate, professional, adult vocational training, and military schools. At the University of Florida, Dr. Hack has served in various roles, working in the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences as a coordinator of extension nutrition education programs, teaching graduate and undergraduate technology courses in the College of Education, and as assistant director for instruction and information systems in the Health Science Center Libraries. He has also collaborated on the Compendium for Children's Health with a team of international physicians, setting up an online environment for pediatricians to receive instruction in Community Pediatrics. Dr. Hack's research interests include human-computer interactions in learning as well as pedagogy influenced by situated and grounded learning theories. In addition, he has served ten years in the military, with four years of active duty in the Marine Corps.



Sarah McCune, Ph.D., MPH  
Research Associate Professor

Dr. McKune is an associate professor in the Department of Environmental and Global Health, the Center for African Studies, and SBS program. She holds a B.A. in French and Sociology from Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C., and earned a Master of Public Health from Emory University in 2002. She completed a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Ecology at the University of Florida's School for Natural Resources and the Environment in 2012 and was a post-doctoral fellow for a collaborative effort between UF and the CGIAR's collaborative research program on Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security (CCAFS). Dr. McKune joined PPHP in 2013 as the director of public health programs, a position from which she ran the campus and online MPH and Public Health Certificate programs for the College. In 2016, she joined the Department of Environmental and Global Health in a joint appointment with the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida. Since 2024, she has served as

Chair of EGH. She is affiliate faculty in the School for Natural Resources and the Environment and advises students from a variety of units across campus, including Sustainable Development, Anthropology, Food and Resource Economics, Medical Geography, and Sociology, as well as those operated by EGH, including Public Health and One Health. Her areas of research interest are global health, gender and development, maternal and child health, and food and nutrition security.



Michael Moorhouse, Ph.D., CRC  
Clinical Associate Professor

Dr. Mike Moorhouse is a clinical associate professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy and the Office of the Dean. Following several years working in the addiction field, he received his Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Science from the University of Florida (2008) and completed a 2 year post-doctoral fellowship (2008-2010) within the Department of Behavioral Science and Community Health. Dr. Moorhouse has a broad range of research interests which can be categorized across three general areas – instrument development/measurement theory, risky substance use behavior, and undergraduate pedagogy. His primary research focuses on validating innovative health science instruments for research and clinical use. Trained extensively in Rasch analysis by Dr. Craig Velozo, Dr. Moorhouse has collaborated with PPHP colleagues to expand or develop a variety of measures, such as the Computer Adaptive Measure of Functional Cognition for Traumatic

Brain Injury (CAMFC-TBI) and the Phases Instrument, a non-compensation recovery measure for people with spinal cord injuries. In addition to his measurement research, Dr. Moorhouse has continued his work in substance abuse having served as a co-investigator on two NIH projects: Creating a Tobacco Cessation Program for People with Disabilities: A CBPR Approach and Developing a Better Assessment of Hookah Use among Young Adults. Recently, Dr. Moorhouse has recently expanded his research agenda by conceptualizing an innovative approach to understanding hazardous college drinking behavior and negative health outcomes. He served as the Bachelor of Health Science program director from 2013 to 2023, where he was directly responsible for the educational and advising needs of more than 400 pre-health junior and seniors and is heavily involved student life as he is faculty advisor to four different student organizations.



Jamie L Pomeranz, Ph.D., CRC, CLCP  
Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Programs  
Director, Bachelor of Health Science Program  
Clinical Professor

Dr. Pomeranz currently serves as the assistant dean of undergraduate programs, the director of the Bachelor of Health Science program, and a clinical professor within the UF PPHP Office of the Dean and the Department of Occupational Therapy. He has obtained three degrees from the University of Florida which include: Master of Exercise and Sports Science, Master of Health Science in Rehabilitation Counseling, and Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Science. He is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and Life Care Planner and has worked with people with disabilities in multiple capacities for over 25 years. His clinical background includes working with individuals with spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, and intellectual disabilities. Dr. Pomeranz has been on faculty at the University of Florida since 2004 and his topics of research include: health promotion

for people with disabilities and life care planning and modern measurement theory. Since receiving his Ph.D. in 2005, Dr. Pomeranz developed over 50 peer reviewed publications and two book chapters. He has and continues to mentor multiple Ph.D. and MPH graduate students from the public health program.



Rebecca L Pearl, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor

Dr. Pearl is an associate professor in the Department of Clinical and Health Psychology and within the SBS program in the College of Public Health and Health Professions. Her research aims to understand and reduce the impacts of health-related stigma, with a primary focus on weight stigma. She has received numerous research awards, including the American Psychological Association Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Psychology and the National Institutes of Health Director's New Innovator Award. Dr. Pearl received her A.B. in psychology from Duke University and her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Yale University. She completed her pre-doctoral clinical internship at McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School and her post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania Center for Weight and Eating Disorders, where she was also an Assistant Professor before moving to UF.



Heather Stark, MD, MPH  
Clinical Associate Professor

Dr. Stark (she/her/hers) is a clinical associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the University of Florida (UF) College of Public Health and Health Professions. Dr. Stark's career in Public Health, spanning 25 years, was initially inspired during her undergraduate studies at Johns Hopkins University and continued through her Medical Degree (MD) at the University of Maryland. She has practiced as a primary care physician and as a public health advocate in community organizations and primary education. Dr. Stark expanded her public health credentials, receiving a Master of Public Health degree at the University of Florida with a focus in Epidemiology and Global Health. Her body of research spans global health research, maternal and child health, nutrition, reproductive health, and social and behavioral change strategies focusing on vulnerable populations with health disparities.

This effort has led to internationally funded projects and field research in Tajikistan, East Asia, and Burkina Faso, Africa.



Julia R Varnes, Ph.D., MPH, MCHES®  
MPH Program Director  
Clinical Associate Professor

Dr. Varnes is the director of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program for the College of Public Health and Health Professions (PHHP), and a clinical associate professor with the Department of Health Services Research, Management, and Policy. Dr. Varnes received her Ph.D. in health behavior, with a minor in research and evaluation methodology, from the University of Florida. Dr. Varnes holds two master's degrees, one in health education (from UF), and one in public health (University of Maryland, College Park). Dr. Varnes has worked in college health at UF for nearly 15 years. She joined UF as faculty in 2014 and joined the College of PHHP in 2021. Dr. Varnes is a Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES®), and also a member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT). Focusing on psychosocial health, Dr. Varnes's research and academic interests are specific to interpersonal violence, objectification, and gender role

expectations. In her teaching, advising, and mentoring, she aims to instill concepts of empowerment, compassion, acceptance, and cultural competency in future professionals.



Melissa Vilaro, Ph.D., MPH  
Assistant Professor

Dr. Melissa Vilaro is an Assistant Professor of Health and Wellness in the Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences at the University of Florida (UF). She previously completed postdoctoral training with a focus on cancer health communication and strategic message design at UF's STEM Translational Communication Center (STCC) where she received a National Cancer Institute, Research Supplement to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research. She also worked as a Postdoctoral Associate at UF's Food Science and Human Nutrition Department where she coordinated a USDA-funded health promotion and social marketing research study. She earned her PhD in Public Health and MPH from UF and BA from Tufts University.



Ashby F Walker, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor

Dr. Ashby Walker received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Emory University in 2007 and serves as the director for health equity initiatives at the University of Florida Diabetes Institute. Dr. Walker is an elected member of the American Diabetes Association National Health Disparities Committee and the Chronic Diseases & Conditions Priority Area Workgroup (PAW) of the 2017 – 2021 Florida State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). Dr. Walker's research as a medical sociologist focuses on type 1 Diabetes and the role that social capital plays in determining health outcomes and she was selected by Diabetes Forecast magazine as "People to Know" for 2019. Dr. Walker is the recipient of five teaching, mentoring, and curriculum development awards and previously served as the chair of social sciences at Mars Hill University in North Carolina.



Gaia Zori, Ph.D., MPH, CHES®  
Clinical Assistant Professor

Gaia Zori, Ph.D., MPH, CHES® is a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Health Services Research, Management, and Policy and in the Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) concentration in the College of Public Health and Health Professions (PHHP) at the University of Florida (UF). Dr. Zori received her Ph.D. in Public Health with a concentration in SBS from UF, her Master of Public Health (MPH) from the State University of New York at Albany with a dual concentration in Social, Behavioral and Community Health and Epidemiology, and her Bachelor of Health Science (BHS) from UF. Dr. Zori is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®) with over 10 years of experience in public health and health education, and she has previously held a variety of professional roles in public health practice including as a CDC/CSTE Applied Epidemiology Fellow in Maternal & Child Health and the director of education for Planned Parenthood of North Florida. Dr. Zori's primary research interests center on understanding the structural factors contributing to disparate outcomes in sexual and reproductive health, as well as effective strategies for the promotion of health equity.

## Current Public Health Social and Behavioral Sciences Ph.D. Students



Mariam Badru, MPH, CPH

Mariam Badru received her Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in Public Health with a minor in Psychology from the University of South Florida (USF) in 2017. During her time here, she served as a Preconception Educator with the Office of Minority Health (OMH). She further completed her Master of Public Health (MPH) degree with a concentration in Maternal and Child Health from USF in 2021. Over the years, she has worked in diverse settings both in the United States and abroad in the areas of program planning and evaluation, epidemiology and academia, including working as a Program Officer with the World Health Organization (WHO) and as a Training and Research Consultant with the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Family Health Services (Maternal and Child Health Section). She is also Certified in Public Health by the National Board of Public Health Examiners, and an active member of the American Public Health Association. Mariam is passionate about investigating and tackling maternal and child health issues and disparities through social and behavioral science research, theories

and methods. Her areas of interest include maternal, infant, perinatal and child health, health disparities, social determinants of health, life course research, maternal mental health and adverse childhood experiences.



Avery Bollinger, MA

Avery Bollinger completed her Bachelor's of General Studies through Fort Hayes State University in 2021 and then completed her Master's of Mass Communications at Brigham Young University in 2022. During her Master's, Avery's research centered on the perceptions of people who adhere to a plant-based diet, and her Thesis focused on examining the effects of eating behaviors on mental health and internalization of weight-based messaging. Her current research interests are sustainable diets, disordered eating/eating disorders, environmental health, and health communications. She has a particular interest in addressing mental, physical, and environmental health issues through an intersectional, collaborative approach.



Antwan D. Brinson, MPH, MS-HEB, CHES®

Antwan D. Brinson, MPH, MS, CHES®, is a passionate Ph.D. student at the University of Florida, College of Public Health and Health Professions, with a focus on Social and Behavioral Sciences. Antwan holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, with a minor in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences, from the University of Florida, along with a Master of Science in Health Education and Behavior and a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Population Health Management. As a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®), Antwan is deeply committed to addressing racial and ethnic health disparities and advancing health equity for marginalized groups and communities. His research interests center around mental health, HIV, community-engaged research, and community-based participatory research, particularly aimed at developing equitable programs for Black, sexual and gender minority adolescents and young adults living with HIV.



Gabriel Costa, MPH

Gabriel Costa received his Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance with a concentration in an Outside Field and a minor in Health Disparities in Society from the University of Florida. While completing his undergraduate degree, he interned at the Florida Department of Health and the WellFlorida Council, focusing on minority HIV prevention programs. Concurrently, he served as an undergraduate researcher in behavioral health and worked as a teaching assistant. He went on to pursue a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Global Health and Health Disparities at the University of Colorado. During his MPH program, he completed an internship at the American Red Cross, worked as a Program Evaluator at the UHealth Family Medicine Food Pantry, served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, and was inducted into the Delta Omega Public Health

Honor Society. Gabriel is committed to advancing public health initiatives both locally and globally. His work focuses on creating equitable health programs for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, reducing substance use, and addressing health disparities affecting Latinx and Black populations. Gabriel's research interests are health equity, substance use disorders, HIV/AIDS, 2SLGBTQIA+, community-based participatory research, social determinants of health, disease prevention, health promotion programming, minority health disparities



Selena Gutierrez, MPH, CHES®

Selena Gutierrez holds a Bachelor of Public Health with a minor in Health Promotion and a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Social and Behavioral Sciences, both from the University of Florida. As a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES®), her work centers on the intersection of mental health, the social determinants of health (SDOH), and the human-animal bond (HAB). At UF, Selena has contributed to trauma-informed and community-based, led qualitative data analyses, and worked closely with community stakeholders to identify and explore gaps in access. Her research explores how emotional support animals (ESAs) can promote emotional wellbeing and reduce health disparities, particularly among underserved populations facing structural barriers to mental health.



Brooke Jennings, MS

Brooke Jennings received her Bachelor of Arts in Criminology with a minor in Forensic Behavioral Health from the University of South Florida in 2019. In 2021, while working full time in mental health research, Brooke concurrently received a Master of Science in Forensic Psychology with a concentration in the Legal System from Nova Southeastern University. Throughout her aforementioned professional career, Brooke has had the opportunity to work on nine research studies, co-author an abstract and commentary, and has been invited to present at the annual American Psychiatric Association conference. Brooke's primary research interests include mental health with a focus in sexual violence, domestic violence, depression, and suicide.



Heather Mendez, MPH, CPH

Heather Mendez received her Bachelor of Science degree in Health Sciences from the University of South Florida (USF) in 2016 and her Master of Public Health degree with a concentration in Public Health Practice from the University of Florida (UF) in 2023. She has worked as an epidemiologist for communicable and environmental diseases and emergency preparedness, as well as for surveillance, informatics, and analytics. She has also worked as an adjunct instructor teaching undergraduate courses in the College of Public Health at USF.

She obtained her Certification in Public Health (CPH), was awarded the MPH Exemplary Student in Public Health Practice, and has been inducted into several honorary societies, including Delta Omega Public Health Honor Society. She is an active member of the

American Public Health Association (APHA) and Florida Public Health Association (FPHA),

and participates in mentorship programs at UF, APHA and FPHA. Her work includes developing maternal and child health communications for minority populations, a surveillance system for infectious disease for a state health department, which has gained interest to be scaled to other programs within the country and will help tailor health interventions that will alleviate the burden of communicable diseases, and has overseen chronic disease screening programs within family health and wellness at a local health department.

Her research with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed approaches has helped raise awareness and build resilience within early childhood facilities within the community. Her research interests include community health, disease prevention, social determinants of health, sociocultural risks and protective factors, health equity, resilience-building and health promotion for vulnerable and underserved communities.



Shahzadhi Nyakhar, MPH

Shahzadhi Nyakhar received her Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences from DePaul University in 2016 and her Master of Public Health from Boston University in 2018. Prior to coming to UF, Shahzadhi was a Community Health Specialist at the Lake County Health Department where she specialized in counseling, prevention, and care for infectious diseases including HIV and Hepatitis C among individuals in addiction rehabilitation programs. She also served as the health department's Deputy Operations Chief for COVID-19 Operations where she and her team strategized and executed a plan to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

At UF, Shahzadhi's research interests include the use of artificial intelligence to improve mental health outcomes, social and behavioral change strategies, and healthcare access. Shahzadhi also developed and teaches the UF Honors course

Essentials of Empathy: Building Emotional Intelligence in Health Professions. She also serves as the Social & Behavioral Sciences student representative on the College of Public Health & Health Professions Research Committee and is a TA for several Master of Public Health courses. Shahzadhi is mentored by Dr. Jamie Pomeranz.



Alex Rodriguez, MPH

As an interdisciplinary researcher, Alex Rodriguez, MPH, mobilizes evidence about the preventative and rehabilitative impacts of arts engagement for mental health into practices and policies that will create equitable infrastructure for communities to thrive.

Currently, Rodriguez is a Public Health PhD candidate at the University of Florida, concentrating in Social and Behavioral Sciences, and a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Research Scholar. Through the UF Center for Arts in Medicine, she has contributed to national and international research, including centering arts engagement as a health behavior, defining arts participation for public health, and co-authoring a WHO report on the arts and health in the US. Rodriguez also recently served as National

Research and Impact Associate for One Nation/One Project, a national arts and health initiative across 18 U.S. cities. In addition to her research, Alex is a Student Think Tank Board Member for the American Journal of Public Health and developed UF's Honors course, Leveraging the Arts to Promote Public Health.

## Appendix A: Guidelines for Written Proposal Preparation

### Procedures

Written proposals are to be submitted on NIH grant application form PHS 398 continuation pages (rev. 12/04) and prepared according to the directions in the application packet, with the exceptions noted below. Forms and instructions are available on the internet at: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>

### Research Plan

**Do not exceed a total of twelve pages** for the following parts (a-d): Specific Aims, Background and Significance, Progress Report/Preliminary Studies, and Experimental Design and Methods. Tables and figures are included in the ten page limitation. Applications that exceed the page limitation or PHS requirements for type size and margins (Refer to PHS 398 application for details) will be returned for revision. The 12-page limitation does not include parts e through i. (Human Subjects, Vertebrate Animals, or Literature Cited).

(a) - *Specific Aims* – (1 page). List the broad, long-term objectives and what the specific research proposed in this application are intended to accomplish, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, or develop new technology.

(b) - *Background and Significance* – (2-3 pages). Briefly sketch the background leading to the present application, critically evaluate existing knowledge, and specifically identify the gaps that the project is intended to fill. State concisely the importance and public health relevance of the research described in this application by relating the specific aims to the broad, long-term objectives.

(c) - *Preliminary Studies/Progress Report* – (2-3 pages). Use this section to provide an account of the students'/academic advisors' preliminary studies pertinent to the application information that will also help to establish the feasibility of the proposed project.

(d) - *Research Design and Methods* – (4-5 pages). Describe the research design and the procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Describe any new methodology and its advantage over existing methodologies. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the aims. As part of this section, provide a tentative sequence or timetable for the project.

(e) – *Human Subjects Research*: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/human-subjects>

(f) – *Vertebrate Animals*: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/research-vertebrate-animals>

(g) – *Literature Cited*. (No page limits). List all references. Each reference must include the title, names of all authors, book or journal, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. The reference should be limited to relevant and current literature. While there is not a page limitation, it is important to be concise and to select only those literature references pertinent to the proposed research.