

#### H4. Student Recruitment and Admissions

**The school implements student recruitment and admissions policies and procedures designed to locate and select qualified individuals capable of taking advantage of the school's various learning activities, which will enable each of them to develop competence for a career in public health.**

- 1) *Describe the school's recruitment activities. If these differ by degree (e.g., bachelor's vs. graduate degrees), a description should be provided for each.*

The university, including GWSPH, seeks to recruit and enroll a diverse student body with the ability to succeed in its undergraduate and graduate academic programs. A special emphasis is placed on recruiting applicants who are URP (as defined in [Criterion G1](#)). Additionally, GWSPH aims to accept academically qualified students with a demonstrated passion for public health who can contribute to public health research, practice and service. The recruitment activities at GWSPH are wide-ranging and designed to attract talented applicants and raise awareness of the school's program offerings. The employed strategies vary slightly based on the type of program.

##### Undergraduate

Recruitment at the undergraduate level is managed by the [University Office of Undergraduate Admissions](#). They are responsible for promoting undergraduate academic programs across the university, and most recruitment is focused on the student experience and usually is not specific to public health or GWSPH. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education and the undergraduate academic advisors connect with accepted students during the university's "Inside GW" days, both in person and virtually. GWSPH also emails accepted students, welcoming them to the school and encouraging them to deposit and cement their status.

##### Residential Graduate

The GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment is responsible for recruiting for all residential graduate degrees (MHA, MPH, MS, PhD and DrPH) and often redirects prospective students, if interested in undergraduate or online graduate academic programs, to their respective admissions managers. Most of the recruitment and advertising is focused on public health, as the MPH programs are the most populous at GWSPH. Recruitment initiatives include but are not limited to:

- Retargeting ads that display for students after they find GW on the SOPHAS website
- GWSPH website, which is easy to navigate and available 24/7
- Virtual viewbook, available on the GWSPH
- Graduate fairs, including the This is Public Health Graduate School Fair
- Professional conferences, including the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) annual conferences
- Alum gatherings, hosted by the GW Development and Alumni Relations Office, annually at the APHA conference
- Virtual and in-person open houses
- Informational webinars
- Panels with alums or current students speak about their experiences
- Panels with faculty, current students and community partnership speak about service or research opportunities
- Class visits where applicants can sit in on a residential lecture
- Drip campaign of targeted emails to prospective students at each stage of interest, application, admittance and matriculation

- Targeted emails to a database of names purchased from the GRE Search Service
- Social media posts on Instagram, X, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube. While the posts across these media platforms are generally not directly related to marketing and recruitment, they do highlight student and faculty achievements, bringing recognition to the school and its programs. GWSPH does have an admitted student Facebook group that allows new students to network.

See ERF > Criterion H > Criterion H4 > H4.1: Recruitment activities.

#### Online Graduate (@GW)

Our third-party vendor, 2U, is responsible for all marketing of the online programs (MPH@GW, MHA@GW and DrPH@GW). Given the virtual nature of the programs, all marketing and recruitment is also virtual. 2U employs web-based marketing strategies, including retargeting ads, Google analytics, organic leads and subscriptions to Facebook, LinkedIn and Google for posting ads. As 2U also markets for other universities, they have a database of individuals interested in public health and can also target these prospective applicants for GW admission. Last, 2U hosts several informational webinars on financial aid, the student experience, degree requirements and open houses.

A dedicated team of 2U admissions personnel contact prospective applicants via email and phone. They provide assistants through the entire application process and matriculation. Early priority and priority deadlines, set by 2U, further encourage applicants to commit to the online programs. 2U hosts virtual touring of classes and webinars for admitted students. As a result of these strategies, the meld rates are considerably lower in the online programs compared to the residential programs.

- 2) *Provide a brief summary of admissions policies and procedures. If these differ by degree (e.g., bachelor's vs. graduate degrees), a description should be provided for each. Schools should discuss only public health degrees. Detailed admissions policies, if relevant, may be provided in the electronic resource file and referenced here.*

#### Undergraduate

The BS in Public Health admissions process is coordinated by the [University Office of Undergraduate Admissions](#). Prospective students apply to the degree via the Common Application and select public health as their intended major. This application is open to first-year applicants, transfer students, international applicants and undocumented applicants. Generally, the university is test-optional, though there are some [exceptions](#) (BS in Public Health is test-optional). Admissions policies and decisions are determined at the university level. Internal transfer students are required to meet [eligibility criteria](#) and submit a transfer request form to declare public health as their major.

#### Residential Graduate

The admissions process for residential graduate academic programs is managed by the GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment. All residential MPH and DrPH applications are submitted through SOPHAS, the Schools of Public Health Application Service. Applicants must identify an MPH program at the time of application submission. Required application components include:

<b>MPH</b>	<b>DrPH</b>
Online SOPHAS application + fee Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended (international transcripts must be evaluated by World Education Services (WES)) At least three letters of recommendation Personal statement Résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) English language proficiency	Online SOPHAS application + fee Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended (international transcripts must be evaluated by World Education Services (WES)) At least three letters of recommendation Personal statement Résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) English language proficiency Interview

Once applications are complete and verified, the GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment transfers applications to designated faculty reviewers in each program. The number of application reviewers varies by program size, ranging from one to five. Each program has its own set of criteria by which it judges applicants, but each generally looks for candidates who have a documented interest in public health and have the qualities needed to be successful in the program. In the case of the DrPH, selected candidates are interviewed by Zoom or phone. MPH applicant interviews are not mandatory, though applicants may request an informational interview with the GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment. These interviews are not evaluative and have no impact on reviewers' admittance decisions. The reviewers document their decisions regarding admittance in SOPHAS, and the GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment emails the applicant a letter of admission via Salesforce. Included in this letter is a deadline for acceptance and information on depositing.

MPH students matriculate in all three terms (fall, spring and summer), but DrPH students matriculate only in the fall term. Admittance decisions occur on a rolling basis, though there are deadlines for term matriculation, and students may defer up to one year if accepted. Test scores are optional for residential MPH and DrPH students.

Academic and needs-based scholarships are available to residential MPH applicants. Residential and online DrPH applicants are eligible for academic scholarships only. As part of the application review process, faculty members provide a scholarship rating based on academic preparedness, relevant experience and departmental priority (defined by each department). Based on an applicant's rating and overall GPA, the GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment determines a scholarship amount. Scholarship ranges from \$12,000 total to the entire cost of a master's degree. Not every student receives an academic scholarship. Need-based grants are based on the College Scholarship Service profile (College Board).

Online Graduate (@GW)

DrPH@GW and MPH@GW applicants apply through a 2U-hosted application system. The application criteria are the same as the criteria for the residential programs.

<b>MPH@GW</b>	<b>DrPH@GW</b>
Online application + fee Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended (international transcripts must be evaluated by World Education Services (WES)) At least two letters of recommendation Statement of purpose Résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) English language proficiency	Online application + fee Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended (international transcripts must be evaluated by World Education Services (WES)) At least three letters of recommendation Personal statement Résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) English language proficiency Interview

Completed applications are uploaded by the 2U admissions team to Salesforce and assigned to a GW faculty member. A rotating roster of MPH faculty are responsible for reviewing MPH@GW applications, while the DrPH program leadership reviews all DrPH@GW applications. The criteria by which reviewers judge applications is generally broad because the majority of students in these online programs are generalist. Virtual interviews are required for the DrPH@GW but not the MPH@GW.

Decisions are made on a strict timeline, a benefit of GW admissions marketed to applicants. 2U is responsible for notifying applicants of their application decision. Like the residential programs, admissions decisions are made on a rolling basis with deadlines for matriculation each term, albeit four times per year for the MPH@GW. The online programs differ in that they have early priority and priority deadlines in addition to the final application deadline to incentivize students to commit to the program.

All accepted MPH@GW students in 2023–2024 receive a \$10,000 scholarship, the funding of which is split 50/50 between 2U and GWSPH. No additional academic or needs-based scholarships are available for MPH@GW students. DrPH@GW students receive an academic-based scholarship.

- 3) *Provide quantitative data on the unit’s student body from the last three years in the format of Template H4-1, with the unit’s self-defined target level on each measure for reference. In addition to at least one from the list that follows, the school may add measures that are significant to its own mission and context. Schools should focus data and descriptions on students associated with the school’s public health degree programs.*

Template H4-1

<b>Outcome Measures for Recruitment and Admissions of GWSPH Students</b>					
	<b>Target<sup>103</sup></b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023<sup>104</sup></b>
<i>Undergraduate</i>					
Percentage of priority underrepresented students by race/ethnicity accepting offers of admission	50%	53% (171/324)	57% (208/367)	62% (219/352)	56% (10/18)
Percentage of priority underrepresented students by military status accepting offers of admission	7%	0.01% (2/324)	0.01% (3/364)	0.003% (1/351)	0%
<i>Residential Graduate</i>					
Percentage of priority underrepresented students by race/ethnicity accepting offers of admission	50%	46% (210/457)	52% (279/539)	54% (251/467)	58% (43/74)
Percentage of priority underrepresented students by military status accepting offers of admission	7%	5% (2/431)	4% (20/539)	3% (16/467)	4% (3/74)
<i>Online Graduate</i>					
Percentage of priority underrepresented students by race/ethnicity accepting offers of admission	50%	52% (209/399)	57% (412/727)	60% (253/424)	63% (134/213)
Percentage of priority underrepresented students by military status accepting offers of admission	7%	7% (33/452)	7% (53/803)	8% (36/461)	11% (26/231)

The percentage of URP applicants with current or former military experience is below target levels for every group except online graduate applicants. An online education may be more conducive to earning a degree, given the transient nature of military work. An additional factor affecting lower than target percentages of URP military applicants is the portion of tuition covered by the GI bill, which is less than half of undergraduate tuition. According to the US Department of Veterans Affairs, just under 2,000 GW students are using the GI Bill (all chapters)

<sup>103</sup> Targets are aligned with approximate percentages of URPs in the general US population. GWSPH strives to accept applicants representative of the demographics of the US population.

<sup>104</sup> Spring and summer 2023 only

at the university, which amounts to 4.6% of the student population, which is in line with residential graduate applicants.

- 4) *If applicable, assess strengths and weaknesses related to this criterion and plans for improvement in this area.*

#### Strengths

- The GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment is staffed by a hardworking team of seven members split between admissions and financial aid. This team is responsible for admitting 1,350 to 1,650 residential graduate students each year.
- The GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment financial aid staff assist residential and online students who receive institutional aid. Federal and private loan aid are administered by the GW Office of Student Financial Assistance.
- The recruitment and admissions process for the online graduate degrees is streamlined, and applicants get personalized service. 2U strives to remove as many barriers to application as possible, such as waiving the application fee, and we have a smooth handoff between 2U and our admissions team.
- GW staff and faculty make all admission and financial aid decisions, including for online students.
- The DrPH@GW program soft launched in 2023. Only GWSPH alums were allowed to apply for the fall 2023 start. The number of applications received far exceeded expectations (i.e., 49 versus less than 20), reinforcing the decision to offer an online doctoral program.
- GWSPH hired a new Director of Admissions in fall 2023. She has experience working at GW and with the 2U platform.
- GWSPH is steadily increasing international student enrollments at both the master's and doctoral degree level in alignment with our strategic plan.
- GWSPH is steadily increasing enrollment in our doctoral programs (PhD and DrPH).
- At GW, undergraduates are free to transfer across schools once they are admitted to university. GWSPH reduced barriers for transfers, and the undergraduate program consistently maintains a net positive student transfer ratio.

#### Challenges

- GWSPH faces a high melt rate between admittance and matriculation, particularly among international students. This increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic for obvious reasons. Students who melt often cite finances and/or the ability to obtain a visa as major factors in their decision to not matriculate. Scholarships offered by GWSPH apply only to the cost of tuition, and some admitted students do not have the financial resources for living in the expensive DC metro area. GWSPH materially increased the number of matriculating international students (24 in 2019 and 55 in 2023). These students require additional support navigating visa requirements and financial matters. This puts an additional strain on our already small admissions team.
- In recent years, the competition among online graduate programs has increased considerably, offering applicants more choices. The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily boosted enrollment in these online programs.
- Marketing is another centralized service at GW, and GWSPH does not have consistent access to meaningful marketing support.
- The challenges and opportunities for the undergraduate program are best understood in the larger context of how GWSPH interacts with the university. For example, GW Admissions controls undergraduate admissions numbers. They have consistently admitted fewer students than our desired program size.

- GWSPH is moving forward with admissions based on preliminary university guidance about the recent SCOTUS ruling. We are analyzing how the guidance will impact current admissions processes as well as admissions in general. GWSPH is committed to ensuring a diverse community of students within the parameters of the law.

#### Future Plans

- GWSPH is reviewing admissions team staffing and needs for greater support for international and doctoral student recruitment in particular as well as for our growing residential programs to determine how best to meet the needs with available resources. Additional personnel may be needed.
- Based on anecdotal feedback from applicants, the GWSPH admissions website could be improved to be more user-friendly and easier to navigate. The GWSPH Office of Admissions and Recruitment is currently discussing how to achieve this goal.
- GWSPH is developing marketing tools to highlight the benefits of our online degrees and what makes us unique in the graduate education market. For example, online students may still benefit from our location in DC as many of our distinguished online instructors are from the area and have valuable real-world experience. GWSPH also offers immersions for our online students, which allow students to interact and network in person and actively participate in activities such as attending congressional hearings in DC or touring National Health Services in the United Kingdom.
- Applications for the fall 2024 DrPH@GW cohort opened in August 2023 to the public. The goal is to recruit and accept an even more diverse cohort of students with varied backgrounds and interests in public health. Looking ahead, GWSPH aims to find additional opportunities for more scholarships and funding packages so that the DrPH can continue to be a top tier competitive program, attracting the strongest students possible.
- Based on the immersion success in our MHA@GW program, the MPH@GW launched an immersion experience in spring 2023 that was very well received by students. Additional immersion opportunities are being discussed as a strategy to increase connectivity and engagement among students and as a marketing strategy to differentiate ourselves from similarly priced competitors. Concentration- or topic-specific immersions are of particular interest among students. All MPH@GW immersions are optional.
- Even though the new MPH@GW concentrations launched relatively recently, additional concentrations may be considered based on student and stakeholder feedback.
- The university recently acquired Slate, a customer communications software specifically used for marketing, recruitment and admissions in a single unified interface. Undergraduate Admissions intends to implement Slate in 2024, with graduate program admissions implementation starting in 2025.