

A3. Student Engagement

Students have formal methods to participate in policy making and decision making within the school and the school engages students as members on decision-making bodies whenever appropriate.

- 1) *Describe student participation in policy making and decision making at the school level, including identification of all student members of school committees over the last three years and student organizations involved in school governance. Schools should focus this discussion on students in public health degree programs.*

The Public Health Student Association (PHSA) coordinates student representatives for school committees. These committees generally meet virtually, allowing online students to participate. Students from all GWSPH programs are represented, including the online (MHA@GW, MPH@GW and DrPH@GW) and undergraduate programs (see ERF > Criterion A > Criterion A3 > A3.1: Student Organizations).

Academic Year	Committee	Student Representative (Program)
2023-2024	Curriculum	Jonathan Lancaster (MPH, Epidemiology)
	Admissions	Rusha Patel (MPH, Global Health Program Design, Monitoring and Evaluation)
	Research	Brendan Fries (PhD, Global Public Health Science)
	Executive Advisory	Paige Kulie (PhD, Health Policy) ⁹ Radha Vakkalagadda (MPH, Health Promotion)
	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Kammikia Barnes (MPH, Community-Oriented Primary Care) Jasmine Charter-Harris (PhD, Exercise Physiology and Applied Nutrition) Mayah Bourne (BS, Exercise Science)
2022-2023	Curriculum	Sweta Waghela (MPH, Global Environmental Health) through December Radha Vakkalagadda (MPH, Health Promotion) and Christina Richard MPH, Global Environmental Health) beginning January
	Admissions	Prabha Raghavan (MPH, Global Health Program Design, Monitoring and Evaluation)
	Research	Monica Forquer (DrPH, Public Health Generalist) ¹⁰ Caitlin Bailey (PhD, Social and Behavioral Health Sciences)
	Executive Advisory	Paige Kulie (PhD, Health Policy) Prabha Raghavan (MPH, Global Health Program Design, Monitoring and Evaluation)
	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Kammikia Barnes (MPH, Community-Oriented Primary Care) Jasmine Charter-Harris (PhD, Exercise Physiology and Applied Nutrition)
2021-2022	Curriculum	Conner Hounshell (MPH, Health Policy)
	Admissions	Christina Kelly (MPH@GW, Public Health Generalist)

⁹ Graduated with an MPH in Epidemiology from GWSPH

¹⁰ Graduated with an MS in Exercise Science from GWSPH

	Research	Rachel Sadlon (DrPH, Health Behavior) ¹¹ through November Monica Forquer (DrPH, Public Health Generalist) Shaon Lahiri (PhD, Social and Behavioral Health Sciences) through December Morgan Byrne (PhD, Epidemiology) ¹² effective January
	Executive Advisory	Brett Wargo (MPH, Health Policy and Community-Oriented Primary Care) through January Conner Hounshell (MPH, Health Policy) beginning February Beth Maclin (PhD, Social and Behavioral Health Sciences)
	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Presley Anokye (BS, Public Health) Priscilla Rodriguez (MPH@GW, Public Health Generalist) Simone Sawyer (PhD, Social and Behavioral Health Sciences)

Additionally, student liaisons participate in departmental committees. For example, each department has a curriculum committee, all of which include at least one graduate student member nominated by PHSA. Undergraduate public health students sit on the BS in Public Health Curriculum Committee. Undergraduate students also lead the Student Engagement Committee (part of TEAM Milken), which is responsible for student-led activities. In the Departments of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences and Prevention and Community Health, undergraduate and graduate students participated in the Academic Program Review process, providing input and meeting with site visitors. Students may sit on faculty search committees, as was the case in the Department of Health Policy and Management when the committee recommended [MaryBeth Musumeci, JD](#).

The PHSA was granted “umbrella” authority for the school in 2014–2015, which allows them to sanction [GWSPH student organizations](#) and set appropriate budgets. Students who register for onsite classes pay a \$3 student activity fee per credit, which supports PHSA’s budget. Annually, graduate student organizations are sanctioned and awarded funding by PHSA if they further the goals of PHSA, which are to increase the value of students’ education and experiences through events that promote student involvement, facilitate professional development and inspire a sense of community. Currently, there are about a dozen sanctioned graduate student organizations including:

- Black Public Health Student Network
- Environmental Justice Action Network
- Global Health Network
- Health e-Leaders Association
- Health Policy Students Association
- Master in Health Administration Student Association
- Maternal and Child Health Student Network
- Milken por la Salud
- NACCHO Student Group

Doctoral students, both PhD and DrPH, may participate in the Milken Doctoral Student Association (MDSA). This organization fosters an interactive space for current students to connect with colleagues across departments and raise any doctoral-related questions and concerns to be discussed. MDSA aims to provide various networking and career events to PhD and DrPH students (see ERF > Criterion A > Criterion A3 > A3.1: Student Organizations). One

¹¹ Graduated with a Graduate Certificate in Health Policy from GWSPH

¹² Graduated with an MPH in Biostatistics from GWSPH

PhD student representative also sits on the PhD Director Committee which is tasked with handling programmatic issues across all PhD programs.

Undergraduate students may participate in TEAM Milken. Through the Student Engagement Committee, students provide feedback and identify student concerns (see [Criterion F2](#)).

Students informally engage in decision-making through their participation in school and department committees, an “open door” policy, and via student and alum groups. The Senior Associate Dean for Academic, Student and Faculty Affairs and the Assistant Dean for Student Services connect with students during orientation and regularly throughout the year, including through virtual and in-person “Meet the Dean” events. Students are always encouraged to reach out if they have questions, concerns or would like to talk. Additionally, GWSPH has some very active alum groups including the MHA and Delta Omega alums. These graduates engage with current faculty and provide informal feedback that influences policy and decision-making.

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

Strengths

- Student organizations are student led with guidance from faculty supervisors.
- Students are actively engaged in GWSPH governance through schoolwide and department committees, providing much appreciated feedback.
- Student engagement in the last year has been robust as they have activated around public health issues, networking and engaging with the broader campus community.
- Student organizations have made efforts to engage our online students and others who participate less frequently. For example, PHSA has a representative from the MPH@GW program and the Health eLeaders Association is specifically designed for MHA@GW student involvement and representation.
- Significant growth of our doctoral programs led to the creation of MDSA, which has been active, engaging students and supporting collaboration across programs and with the Office of PhD and MS Programs.

Challenges

- During the virtual years of COVID-19, student engagement fell drastically. It was slow to improve during the first two years after the return to on-campus activities.
- Student interest and involvement in student organizations is inconsistent. The level of engagement varies significantly, particularly between onsite and online students and full-time and part-time students with other commitments (e.g., employment, families). Additionally, many master’s level students complete their degree programs in about two years, leading to a high rate of turnover of student representatives on GWSPH governance committees.

Future Plans

- As we embrace the transition into a more robust post-COVID-19 era, GWSPH remains dedicated to maximizing diversity and inclusion while continually enhancing the student experience. Leveraging newfound technological capabilities and advancements, we are fervently committed to fostering student engagement, both in person and online, through enriched programming and interactive sessions. We recognize that this approach is pivotal in ensuring that all students, irrespective of their mode of learning, feel an integral part of our vibrant academic community. By prioritizing these efforts, we aim to create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment that caters to the diverse needs and aspirations of our student body, amplifying their academic journey and fostering a sense of belonging that transcends physical boundaries.