

A4. Autonomy for Schools of Public Health

A school of public health operates at the highest level of organizational status and independence available within the university context. If there are other professional schools in the same university (e.g., medicine, nursing, law, etc.), the school of public health shall have the same degree of independence accorded to those professional schools. Independence and status are viewed within the context of institutional policies, procedures and practices.

- 1) *Briefly describe the school's reporting lines up to the institution's chief executive officer. The response may refer to the organizational chart provided in the introduction.*

The GWSPH Dean reports directly to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, who in turn reports directly to the President of GW. This relationship is showcased in the organizational chart in the [Introduction](#). The Dean has regular meetings with the Provost and President, both one-on-one and with the other deans.

- 2) *Describe the reporting lines and levels of autonomy of other professional schools located in the same institution and identify any differences between the school of public health's reporting lines/level of autonomy and those of other units.*

The deans of all schools at GW report directly to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. GWSPH and the other schools have generally the same levels of autonomy and reporting lines, with one exception. GWSPH and two other professional schools at GW, the School of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Law School, are considered "closed schools" for budget purposes. See [Criterion C1](#) for more details.

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

Strengths

- The Dean at GWSPH has direct access to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, as well as the deans at other GW schools and leaders of GW's administrative and research support offices. As a result, university leadership is responsive to our requests and knowledgeable about what we do.
- In the current structure, due to the high enrollment and research productivity, GWSPH has an important role within the university and a special place in terms of decision making. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, GWSPH played a key role in guiding the university.

Challenges

- There have been several leadership changes at the university over the last few years, including the president, provost and deans of several schools as well as top leaders within several functional areas (general counsel, research, communications, human resources, IT and finance). These leadership changes, while mostly positive, have created various challenges with continuity and consistency of operations during a particularly challenging time as the university was navigating COVID-19.
- Public health is a growing and currently high-profile field, and remaining competitive in both education and research domains requires a nimble and evolving decision-making structure. This will require more authority within the school, and it will require more autonomy with senior leadership of GWSPH to respond to opportunities in the field.

Future Plans

- We are excited to now have a permanent provost (effective February 18, 2022), new deans and vice presidents and a new president (effective July 1, 2023) after an intensive 18-month search. We look forward to the leadership that they will bring to the university.
- Our plans are to grow the school in ways that will make it one of the top 10 schools in the country. This will require not only strategy but also an enabling environment for growth, rapid decision-making and a concerted level of support for the school. We hope to work with GW and university leadership to secure this support.
- GWSPH will seek the trust and delegation of authority to make critical changes and choices over the next five years to achieve eminence among our larger and better-funded peers. This will include greater autonomy in terms of finances, human resources and key operations across the school. We hope to work closely with the provost and relevant officers to ensure such delegation of authority to support quick and strategic decisions toward increasing excellence.