

**4.4 Advising and Career Counseling. There shall be available a clearly explained and accessible academic advising system for students, as well as readily available career and placement advice.**

**Required Documentation\***

**4.4.a Description of the school's advising services for students in all degree programs, including sample materials such as student handbooks. Include an explanation of how faculty are selected for and oriented to their advising responsibilities.**

Advising occurs at both the University and College levels. At the University level, the Graduate School offers an orientation session, intended to promote success in graduate programs, for all new graduate students before the beginning of fall and spring semesters. New students are notified of this session in their letters of acceptance and they are encouraged to attend. In fall 2013, UF also initiated a family-student welcome event. The event is a daytime picnic, which provides an environment in which students can get to know each other and learn about services at UF to support academic and family success. Information for accompanying spouses and children is available, in addition to a wealth of resources for graduate and professional students.

At the College level, academic advising is provided by the faculty in each program. Throughout the College, students are assigned faculty-level academic advisors who provide guidance on course selection, meeting other program requirements, and career opportunities. In addition, they encourage students to access resources available at the University level, as appropriate to each student's goals and needs. The dean's office also supports a professional advising staff, which is available to consult with individual programs regarding academic administrative procedures and to assist individual students or faculty advisors with registration or other advising concerns as requested.

Students admitted to the MPH program are required to attend a three-hour orientation session scheduled a day or two before classes begin in the fall and spring semesters. Students from all concentrations attend the first part of the session which covers key elements in the *MPH Student Handbook*, information about registration, guidance regarding availability of academic advising and career development services, introductions to the Health Science Center Library, the Public Health Student Association, Delta Omega, and the College financial aid officer, and guidance on being successful in graduate school, including the UF policy on academic integrity. At the end of this session, students divide into concentration-specific groups and meet with the members of their concentration faculty.

The associate director of the MPH program provides a first line of advising to MPH students. She works with the students to identify career goals, familiarize them with the MPH core and concentration-specific competencies, and make an initial selection of courses to meet those goals and competencies. In addition, each student is assigned a

---

\* Other professional programs are not included in responses to this criterion.

faculty advisor within his/her concentration. As students progress through the program, they may change advisors, usually because they discover other faculty members with interests more similar to their own. Public health faculty advisors are committed to mentoring students in their discipline to assist them in identifying possible careers and positions specific to their areas of interest. They meet with their advisees throughout the program, approve all plans of study and internship proposals, supervise internships and final papers, and approve their final presentations. In addition to assistance from the MPH associate director, faculty advisors are assisted by the MPH internship coordinator who works with students in selection and logistical arrangements for internships, as well as monitoring progress during the placement.

The MPH Portfolio plays a key role in the advising process. Students are expected to monitor achievement of the competencies and to bring their portfolios with them to each advising session. Selection of internships is also linked to competencies students need or desire to enhance via practical experience.

Orientation to the online MPH program covers the same scope of topics, but it is conducted online. Because the program offers a limited set of courses in only one concentration, advising early in the program is carried out by the director of public health professional programs in consultation with the director of the MPH program. As the students near the point at which they should consider an internship and special project, they are assigned a faculty advisor with similar interests and appropriate skills. The MPH internship coordinator works with both campus and online students.

The PhD and MS programs in the College assign faculty advisors to new students, often before the students arrive. These advisors assist students to get started in their programs and help them to identify members of their supervisory committees, in accord with rules and regulations of the UF Graduate School. For master's programs, the supervisory committee consists of at least two Graduate Faculty members. If a minor is designated for a thesis degree, the committee must include a Graduate Faculty member from the minor department. For PhD students, the supervisory committee consists of no fewer than four members selected from the Graduate Faculty. At least two members, including the chair, are from the major academic unit, and at least one member is from a different educational discipline with no ties to the home academic unit to serve as the external member. One regular member can be from the home or any other academic unit. If a minor is chosen, the supervisory committee includes at least one person selected from the Graduate Faculty from outside the discipline of the major for the purpose of representing the student's minor.

The general duties of all supervisory committees include informing the student of all regulations governing the degree sought, checking the qualifications of the student, and planning and approving a program of study. Specific duties include approving the research proposal, administering qualifying examinations, supervising thesis or dissertation research and approving the dissertation (final examination). Graduate School rules are published in the *Graduate Handbook* at

<http://graduateschool.ufl.edu/files/handbook.pdf>. A copy of the *Graduate Handbook* is in the Resource File.

In addition to the Graduate Handbook, each academic program has a student handbook specific to the individual program. These handbooks are available at each program's website. During the 2011-12 College review of PhD programs, PhD handbooks were assessed for content, completeness, organization and accessibility. A set of "best practices" was identified and some handbooks were modified to meet those standards.

### **4.4.b Description of the school's career counseling services for students in all degree programs. Include an explanation of efforts to tailor services to specific needs in the school's student population.**

Career counseling services are available at the University and College/program levels.

#### **University of Florida**

At the University level, The Career Resource Center (CRC) and the Graduate School provide services.

The Career Resource Center, <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>, offers the following:

**Career Counseling and Advising.** The CRC offers individual and group career counseling to students who would like assistance in their career decision-making process. If students have questions related to job searches or industry of interest, career advising is available. Advisors critique curriculum vitae, resumes and job search correspondence.

**Career Workshops.** The CRC offers a series of workshops to help with career development needs. Topics include:

- Career planning
- Exploring majors
- Resumes and cover letters
- Researching employers
- Finding full and part-time jobs and internships
- Networking
- Salary negotiations
- International opportunities
- Interviewing, including mock interviews
- Graduate education

Workshops may be arranged by and held in any academic unit or student organization on campus.

**CRC Resources.** The CRC houses a variety of resources to assist with career development. Materials include books on career choice and guidance in the job search

process. Information on the CRC website includes resume and curriculum vitae preparation, job openings, the academic and non-academic job search process, salary ranges, employer information and issues in higher education.

**Gator CareerLink.** A powerful online resource, Gator CareerLink (<http://www.crc.ufl.edu/students/studentGatorCareerLink.html>) provides up-to-date services, tools and career resources online.

**Career Fairs and Networking Opportunities.** The CRC offers seven career fairs throughout the academic year to graduate and undergraduate students who would like additional assistance in their career decision-making process.

In addition to CRC resources, the UF Graduate School provides Professional Development Workshops, <http://graduateschool.ufl.edu/student-life-and-support/professional-development>, to assist graduate students to gain information, insights and skills they can use in academia and the job market. Each fall and spring semester, this series of mentoring workshops covers topics like effective time management and research strategies, preparing for examinations and final defenses, getting manuscripts published and obtaining student grants.

### **College of Public Health and Health Professions**

In February of each year, the College sponsors a full-day career fair, which features employers in industries seeking graduates with the degrees we offer. Additional career development opportunities are provided by individual programs.

The MPH internship coordinator organizes a Professional Development Series of presentations and discussions throughout the academic year. The series, part of the Seminar in Contemporary Public Health Issues, utilizes resources from the CRC and the College to offer sessions on such topics as career choices, resume building and interviewing skills. One session of the series is a preceptor luncheon, during which students have opportunities to meet potential internship preceptors and/or employers. Additional sessions are often scheduled at the request of students and/or potential employers, such as the CDC and the Peace Corps.

Students are required to maintain portfolios online throughout the MPH program (<http://mph.ufl.edu/students/mph-portfolio/>). At a minimum, portfolios include checklists of MPH and concentration-specific competencies, resumes, writing samples, and the graphics from their final presentations. Students are advised on ways to use these materials to prepare for job interviews.

MPH students are encouraged to attend the American Public Health Association and the Florida Public Health Association annual meetings to make professional contacts, begin networking, and utilize the job search services of APHA. As students express interest in specific types of positions, they are often referred to individuals in the public health community who hold similar positions for discussion and networking. Job solicitations that are received by the program or individual faculty members are shared with students

via email and with alumni on the MPH Alumni Facebook page. If students indicate in their exit interviews that they currently do not have job offers, staff and faculty contact them personally to offer continuing assistance. This assistance includes forwarding all appropriate job announcements directly to the graduate.

Career counseling in MS and PhD programs is managed by faculty mentors who meet regularly with students and often provide or find resources for travel to professional meetings where students can network with professional colleagues and identify job opportunities.

#### **4.4.c Information about student satisfaction with advising and career counseling services.**

Instructional programs use a variety of methods to assess student satisfaction with academic advising and career counseling. In the MPH program, students have the opportunity to provide feedback through informal discussions with MPH faculty and staff as well as a formal exit survey. The exit survey of graduating students collects quantitative and qualitative data about aspects of the program, including academic and career advising. Exit survey data for 2012-13 are shown in Table 4.4.c.1. Students were asked to rate the items shown on a scale of 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent). Mean scores ranged from 4.0 – 4.2. MPH students tend to find the faculty available to them and to be satisfied with advice regarding course selection and other opportunities, such as internships and connections with potential employers.

While these scores are acceptable, the program would like the means to be closer to 4.5. The Public Health Executive Committee will take up this issue in 2014.

**Table 4.4.c.1 Graduating MPH Students' Assessments of Advising, 2012-13**

<b>Advising and Career Counseling</b>	<b>Mean Scores N=85</b>
Accessibility of faculty	4.0
Course selection advice	4.0
Internship advice	4.1
Special project advice	4.2
General academic advice	4.2
Career advice from faculty or staff	4.1

In the 2011-12 survey of PhD students in the College, 64% agreed or strongly agreed that academic advising support is adequate and appropriate. However, 96% of PhD alumni who had graduated within the past five years agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. These findings suggest that the value of academic advising is better recognized after graduation when alumni are in professional/academic positions that provide an opportunity for comparison with colleagues. At the same time, the College recognizes that providing a better understanding of the value of advising during the PhD experience is as essential as the advising itself.

The MS programs in the College are new and very small. Systematic assessments of the advising and career counseling experiences of these students have not yet been undertaken.

### **4.4.d Description of the procedures by which students may communicate their concerns to school officials, including information about how these procedures are publicized and about the aggregate number of complaints and/or student grievances submitted for each of the last three years.**

The process for managing student grievances is specified in the UF *Student Handbook*, which is posted on the website of the Dean of Students Office at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/home/about/student-handbook>. Student grievances are managed through several sequential steps, any one of which can result in resolution, and therefore conclusion, of the matter at hand. Students are encouraged to first attempt to resolve the grievance with the person or persons whose actions are directly being questioned or with the department chair or his or her designee. If this process does not result in resolution of the concern or the student is unwilling/uncomfortable addressing concerns directly to the person involved or the department chair or his or her representative, then the student can request (in writing) a review of the situation by the EEO officer for the College, currently the Executive Associate Dean, whose responsibility it is to conduct an investigation of the facts and respond to the student in a timely manner as designated in the grievance procedure. Students may appeal decisions to the Dean, who has final College authority regarding student grievances. Students dissatisfied with College decisions can request a review of the matter by the Provost, who represents the final authority.

There have been six complaints/grievances filed with the Dean's Office in the past three years, two in 2010-2011, one in 2011-2012, and three in 2012-2013. The complaints included one involving faculty communication about academic performance evaluation, one involving academic requirements and course scheduling flexibility, one regarding management of an honor code violation, two involving academic program dismissals, and one involving a postdoctoral fellowship termination. Because of the nature of these complaints, providing documentation in the Resource File could violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). However, College leaders are prepared to discuss the nature of the complaints during the site visit.

The Office of the Ombuds (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu/>) is available to assist students in resolving problems. The ombuds serves as a resource to students in helping them understand policies and procedures, as well as unfavorable petition decisions, and in changing focus to assure future academic progression. The ombuds may also gather information that is pertinent to appeal decisions from the College or vice president regarding grievances for which the ombuds has been engaged.

Students are provided information about grievance processes verbally at new student orientations and in writing in their student handbooks. These procedures are also accessible on the University website. Additionally, students can provide feedback on

many issues through the UF Office of Student Affairs, semester course, program and curriculum evaluation surveys, and exit interviews or surveys.

### **4.4.e Assessment of the extent to which this criterion is met and an analysis of the school's strengths, weaknesses and plans relating to this criterion.**

This criterion is met.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The University provides an array of advising and career counseling opportunities for students.
2. The College has a strong infrastructure for academic advising.
3. Individual College programs have clear procedures for academic advising and professional development and assure that every student has an academic advisor.
4. MPH students have indicated high levels of satisfaction with advising and career counseling.
5. PhD alumni, within five years of graduation, have indicated almost unanimous support for the level of advising they received in their PhD programs.
6. Grievance procedures for students are posted on the website of the Dean of Students Office, included in instructional program handbooks, and reinforced during new student orientations.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. While MPH mean scores on advising and career counseling are in an acceptable range, they could be improved.
2. PhD students have indicated a lower level of satisfaction with advising than alumni.
3. MS programs in Biostatistics and Epidemiology are new and do not yet have systemic approaches to collecting information on student satisfaction with advising and career counseling.

#### **Plans:**

1. Continue to provide academic advising and career counseling services described above.
2. Discuss MPH graduating students' assessments with the Public Health Executive Committee in spring 2014 and develop specific plans to improve these services.
3. Enhance efforts to convey the value of advising to PhD students.
4. Develop exit surveys for students in the new MS programs to express their opinions regarding advising, career counseling and other program characteristics.