Behavioral and Social Health Sciences (BSHS) Doctoral Program

Program Overview. The BSHS Doctoral program trains health behavior scientists to (a) understand the social and behavioral factors that influence health-related behavior across multiple levels, including individual, community, environmental, sociocultural, and policy levels; and (b) ameliorate public health problems by designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions that influence health-related behaviors. Training emphasizes understanding the bases of health behavior and health behavior change from an interdisciplinary perspective, integrating perspectives from traditional behavioral sciences (e.g., psychology, psychiatry) and social sciences (e.g., sociology, anthropology, communications). Active participation in research, both student- and faculty-led, is seen as an essential component of doctoral training. BSHS doctoral students demonstrate mastery of relevant theory and methods, assessed via coursework and examinations, and complete a dissertation that represents original research.

The major requirements for the PhD in BSHS are:

1. Coursework. The BSHS curriculum consists of 16 required courses in the categories of (a) BSHS core, (b) Statistics, (c) Methods, (d) Diversity, and (e) Content Courses. Doctoral students are expected to receive a grade of A or B in all courses that count for credit toward the BSHS degree.

2. A first-year research apprenticeship with advisor. Students affiliate with a research lab in year one. This research placement may overlap with a funded research assistantship. The purpose of this experience is to develop research skills relevant to the student’s program of study, and to learn how to conceptualize research questions. The apprenticeship often results in opportunities for publication and future collaboration.

3. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training. During their first semester, doctoral students complete the Responsible Conduct in Research (ethics) training program offered by the School of Public Health. This course includes lecture, discussion, and online components, and culminates in a final evaluation. All BSHS students engaged in research must maintain all relevant CITI certifications.

4. Teaching experience. All doctoral students in Public Health gain teaching experience by serving in teaching roles for a minimum of two semesters. BSHS doctoral students will serve at least once as a paid Teaching Assistant (TA) assisting a faculty member to teach a large public health course, typically in their second or third year. The second teaching experience (TE) is taken for course credit; the TE serves both the student’s professional development and the department’s needs. Consistent with a professional development focus, students enrolled in a TE are expected to attend at least 2 teaching-related seminars (offered by the Department, School, or the Sheridan Center for Teaching).

5. Doctoral Seminar in Public Health: All doctoral students in the School of Public Health attend weekly department-specific sections of the Doctoral Seminar (also known as Journal Club) until admitted to doctoral candidacy. The content of the student-lead Seminar rotates through discussions of journal articles and presentations of student and faculty research. The Seminar typically takes place on three Fridays per month and incorporates the monthly i-BSHS Seminar Series, which BSHS students are required to attend. I-BSHS seminar speakers meet with BSHS doctoral students as a group during their visit.

6. Qualifying exam: Completion of core course and advisor-led independent study courses serve as preparation for the qualifying exam. Qualifying exams are completed in January of the second year (or the third year for students who do not already have a Master’s degree). The exam consists of two components: a sit-down written exam evaluates understanding of core coursework and a take home written exam evaluates students understanding of important concepts in their research area. Doctoral students must pass the qualifying exam prior to proposing a Dissertation.

7. The Dissertation: The training for PhD students in BSHS culminates in preparation of the Dissertation, a series of three distinct thematically-linked research papers that will help to launch the student’s independent research career. The formulation of the hypotheses and/or thesis must be original. At least one of the papers should involve quantitative data analysis; at least one of the papers should involve new data collection (typically requiring IRB review); and at least 2 should be data-focused (including qualitative research, meta-analysis, and/or secondary data analysis). If one of the papers is a literature review, it should be a systematic review.
Advising and Progress Reports. All BSHS doctoral students have primary and secondary advisors who assist them in creating an Individualized Development Plan, which is updated annually. Students meet regularly with primary advisors, and after entering doctoral candidacy they meet at least twice a year with their dissertation committee. BSHS students are reviewed annually by the program faculty who provide written feedback on their progress through program milestones, summarized in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Expected completion by the end of:</th>
<th>To remain in good standing complete by the end of:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish CITI certification</td>
<td>Orientation week</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCR Training</td>
<td>Semester 1</td>
<td>Semester 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete required coursework</td>
<td>Semester 5</td>
<td>Semester 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualifying exam</td>
<td>Jan 31 in Semester 4</td>
<td>Jan 31 in Semester 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation proposal</td>
<td>Semester 5</td>
<td>Semester 7(^1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation defense</td>
<td>Semester 8</td>
<td>Semester 10(^1)</td>
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\(^1\)According to Graduate School policy, students have up to 5 years after admission into the program to achieve candidacy. Similarly, it is University policy that the dissertation should be completed within 5 years of admission to candidacy (approval of dissertation proposal). The timeline presented here represents departmental expectations. Additional time may be granted upon petition to the faculty.

Financial support for F31 awardees. The BSHS program commits to “topping off” the annual F31 stipend so that the student receives a full year stipend at the standard Brown doctoral level, which is $36,436 ($3026/mo) for the 2020-2021 academic year. In addition, the BSHS program will reserve up to $4,000 per year for F31 awardees to cover travel and/or research costs related to your training plan. This is a substantial amount of institutional investment in support of F31 awardees.

School of Public Health (SPH)
The Brown University SPH is ranked in the top 10 Public Health Schools with regard to NIH funding and is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health. The BSHS doctoral program, housed in the Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences, is one of 4 departments and doctoral programs in the SPH. The SPH building is within walking distance of both the Brown main campus and the Brown Medical School. All departments and most centers are co-located in the building, which also houses 5 classrooms, over a dozen small conference/ seminar rooms, student and faculty lounges, and student computer clusters. The SPH provides each doctoral student study space and a laptop computer. Brown SPH is a highly collaborative environment; BSHS students are encouraged to take courses in departments outside the SPH and to invite faculty from outside their primary department to serve on dissertation committees, to promote interdisciplinary research.

In addition to the academic support provided by the department and program staff, BSHS doctoral students and their faculty advisors are supported by 13 research centers that provide pre- and post-award support to faculty and students, tangible resources such as conference rooms and computer support, as well as a community of research staff and collaborators. [if relevant, insert specific center or lab resources available to student, and trim elsewhere]

Brown University
The Graduate School provides funds annually to support conference travel. The Graduate School also awards funds for competitive proposals to travel both domestically and internationally to pursue research, collaboration, and training. Brown University also provides resources to support BSHS doctoral students and their professional development, including consultation and formal workshops offered by the Writing Center, CareerLAB: Centers for Career and Life After Brown, the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, and training modules relevant to scientific research offered by the Initiative to Maximize Student Development.

Brown University also operates an extensive network of computing facilities and services available to BSHS students and faculty, including a load-balanced web server environment, virtual machines, database servers, web authentication services, and a range of online communication and collaboration tools. These facilities are connected to departments through a high-speed 10 Gigabit Ethernet network. Brown Computing and Information Services also makes a wide variety of applications available for personal computers, including data analytic software (SAS, SPSS/AMOS for Windows, Stata, NVivo), and other
support software (e.g., Endnote, Filemaker). Brown also supports Qualtrics, a state-of-the-art online data collection and management software.

As Director of the BSHS Doctoral Program, I affirm my strong support of [student name] and this application and the accuracy of this statement of Institutional Support. Approved by: Kate B. Carey, PhD