

2023

PhD Program Handbook

University of Maryland School of Social Work

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW, or SSW) Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program is to prepare graduates to conduct interdisciplinary research and become exemplary social work scholars and educators. The PhD program's mission is based on the belief that social work has its own body of knowledge and a perspective which must be extended, verified, and revised using methods of scholarly inquiry. In its 50-year history, the UMSSW PhD program has developed strengths in research and data analysis methods, as well as in opportunities for applied research and for dissemination. The location of the program on an academic health science and human services campus promotes interdisciplinary preparation and collaboration. Our graduates find work in academic, research, policy, and agency settings.

All PhD programs at UMB are under the auspices of the Graduate School. The individual schools, including the School of Social Work, control specifics in their programs (e. g. admission, curriculum), and the Graduate School provides centralized electronic application support, new student orientation, program approval and review, course approval, and student progression oversight. The UMB campus is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

This handbook is designed to provide information on program policies and procedures for prospective students, current students, alumni, faculty, and staff members. *This information is subject to change and should be verified through contact with the program.* The best way to reach PhD program administration is through the email address phd@ssw.umaryland.edu. A great deal of information and resources are on the PhD program website: <https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/phd/>.

PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS

Prospective applicants are advised to read program-specific information and admissions requirements on the website at <https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/phd/applicants/> and to visit the Graduate School's website at <https://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/> for more details on the application process.

Applications to the PhD program in social work open in July of each year, and the application deadline for the following fall is January 5th. The PhD program offers fall admission only. The MSW degree is required for all applicants prior to enrollment in the PhD program. Post-MSW experience is desirable but not required.

Applications are evaluated by the faculty members who serve on the PhD Program Committee (PPC). Applications are scored by at least two faculty members and then their ratings and comments reviewed by the PPC as a whole. Brief virtual interviews are conducted by members of PPC to learn more about an applicant. Applicants are notified about the admission decision by mid-March. The University of Maryland, Baltimore is a signatory of the Council of Graduate Schools' April 15 Resolution; as such, no applicant is required to make an enrollment decision prior to April 15. (https://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CGS_April15_Resolution_Oct2020Revision.pdf)

Prospective students are encouraged to visit the PhD program, either in person or virtually, in order to experience the program's culture firsthand. Visits may include meeting program administrators; attending one or more class sessions; meeting faculty who teach in the program or work closely with PhD students; and connecting with current PhD students. If you are interested in a visit, please contact phd@ssw.umaryland.edu to make arrangements.

PROGRAM ENTRY OPTIONS

Students may elect to enter the PhD program on a part-time or a full-time basis. Full-time students have the option of accepting a Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA), accompanied by a stipend, health insurance, and tuition remission. Part-time students take fewer courses per semester (usually two, rather than three). They may receive tuition remission through the UMB Graduate School Plus award. The majority of PhD students enroll full-time, with a GRA.

Enrollment as a full-time student has advantages in terms of faster progression through coursework and other program milestones. Participating in a GRA is of particular value as it provides first-hand experience in applying research skills. The part-time option allows students who are employed outside the program the opportunity to pursue a PhD. Please see the Plan of Study documents, which can be found at <https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/phd/coursework/?&>, for more detail on each option.

On rare occasion, an incoming student may be able to transfer a limited number of credits from PhD-level social work coursework in another program. The time limits (maximum 5 years to candidacy and maximum 9 years to graduation) apply to transfer credit as well as to time enrolled at UMB. Transfer credit requires approval of the PhD program and the Graduate School administration.

ORIENTATION

Incoming first-year PhD students attend a week-long orientation with activities at the UMSSW and the Graduate School. This orientation covers multiple topics relevant to social work PhD education, such as developing a scholarly identity, valuing diversity and inclusion, and working with students and faculty. Logistical and administrative details, as well as policies and procedures affecting students, are addressed during this week. Newly-enrolled students have the opportunity to meet faculty and administrators and hear from more advanced students, and to become familiar with the campus. Also during this week, the program provides between 12 and 18 hours of faculty directed, un-graded content on quantitative data analysis to prepare students to enter coursework.

PHD COURSEWORK

The required and elective courses focus on accomplishing the program objectives, guided by the program mission. To graduate, all PhD students will complete coursework as described below, pass the comprehensive examination, name a committee, write and defend a dissertation proposal,

advance to candidacy, and finish the dissertation. Per the Graduate School guidelines, students must advance to candidacy within five years of entering the program and must successfully defend the dissertation within four years of advancing to candidacy.

The 53-credit curriculum consists of 15 courses plus dissertation credits. Students begin with 23 credits of core courses: quantitative and qualitative research design and methods (9 credits); data analysis and statistics (6 credits); philosophy of science and socially just research (2 credits); and research practicum (6 credits). Additional required courses include intervention research (3 credits), an integrative seminar (3 credits), teaching methods (3 credits), advanced research or data analysis (3 credits), and theory in the student's area of interest (3 credits). Students also take an additional 3-credit elective. After completing the integrative seminar, students take a comprehensive examination. The final phase of the program is the completion of 12 hours of doctoral dissertation credits.

Students receiving tuition support may not enroll in any course using "audit" status. They are required to take graded courses.

Required courses. The research methods and data analysis courses encourage skill development in research and study design (observational through experimental) and critical evaluation of scholarship, and quantitative data analysis from univariate through generalized linear models. These courses are co-requisites of one another to emphasize the connections between design and methods. The Philosophy of Science and Socially Just Research seminar sequence (one credit each semester for fall and spring) covers big questions regarding epistemology and ontology, social justice, and ethics, with emphasis on real-world examples of anti-racist, anti-oppressive social work research.

The qualitative course covers data collection and analysis and provides a grounding of the paradigms undergirding qualitative inquiry. The two-semester research practicum allows students to work together to design and conduct a research study, with both individual and collaborative products resulting from the project. The teaching course focuses on development of teaching strategies and classroom methodologies, and the intervention research course teaches skills to design and evaluate social work interventions, as well as providing opportunities to develop a research proposal. Finally, the integrative seminar brings together theory, literature, and research methods to support students in developing and articulating a research agenda and preparing for the comprehensive exam and dissertation.

Elective courses. Students enroll in three elective courses for a total of nine credit hours. At least one elective must be an advanced methods course, and students may select from qualitative, quantitative, or research design methods appropriate to their area of research. One elective must be a theory course in the student's substantive area. One elective course must be taken outside the School of Social Work. This provides opportunities to build skills in interdisciplinary work and to learn from colleagues and instructors from other disciplines. Nearly all students enroll in an outside course elsewhere on the UMB campus, at the University of Maryland – College Park, or the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Within the UMSSW, we routinely offer electives in advanced methods.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The comprehensive examination (“comps”) is an eight-week structured review and synthesis paper, answering a question of the student’s design. The comprehensive examination is comprised of four milestones, submitted at specific deadlines throughout the summer; the final milestone is a written paper detailing findings. Full-time students most commonly complete the comprehensive examination the summer following their second year, and part-time students most commonly complete the comprehensive examination the summer following their third year. Comps may be completed from any location, as long as the student has access to a computer and the internet. Any departure from the typical timeline for comps must be approved by the PhD Program Director, usually in consultation with the PhD Program Committee (PPC) and the student’s chair.

Prior to beginning the comprehensive examination, students select a chair or co-chairs. Most frequently, the comps chair will then be the dissertation chair; however, some students change chairs following comps, particularly if their area of interest changes. The role of the chair for the comprehensive exam is to assist the student in framing a question that is appropriate for review (i.e. is relevant to the field in a content area). The chair also has an evaluative role, as discussed below. On rare occasion, a student may elect not to identify a chair for the comprehensive exam, generally based on uncertainty about the dissertation topic. In this case, the PhD Program Committee will select a chair for the comprehensive exam from among PPC faculty members.

The integrative seminar course covers content on selecting a chair. The chair must have Regular Graduate Faculty status, as determined by the Graduate School. Faculty members who have Associate Graduate Faculty status may serve as a co-chair. Program administration can assist students in determining who is eligible to chair. Selecting a chair should be accompanied by completion of the Nomination of PhD Dissertation Chair form (see Blackboard/PhD Student News/Forms).

The learning objectives of comps are as follows:

- *identify a targeted body of research using a systematic search process;*
- *document their search process using a PRISMA diagram;*
- *demonstrate mastery comprehension of each study, including its research question, sample, methods, and findings;*
- *critique each study, including limitations related to the research question, use of theory, sample, method, approach, analysis, and social justice considerations;*
- *aggregate findings across studies to describe the field, noting both what is known and unknown; and*
- *critique the research in the targeted area of study, including what future studies are needed to compensate for limitations in the existing literature and to further knowledge that emerged from this synthesis.*

Comps are reviewed by three readers: the chair, the coordinator of the comprehensive exam, and a member of the PhD Program Committee. If the student has identified co-chairs, one will replace the PhD Program Committee member as the third reader. Early in the fall semester after they complete comps, students receive their results. Accompanying the decision (“pass,” “marginal

pass,” or “fail”) is feedback from all three readers. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the feedback with each reader.

Comprehensive examination outcome and grievance procedures. In the case of a fail decision, the student will receive feedback from the coordinator of the comprehensive exam and the readers on required changes, and a date for a new submission to be re-reviewed by the same committee. Only one resubmission is permitted, and unsuccessful completion of the resubmission will result in dismissal from the PhD program.

A student who wishes to contest the decision on the comprehensive examination may submit a grievance to the PhD Program Director for consideration. If the PhD Program Director is serving as chair, the grievance may be heard by the PhD Program Committee or by a substitute faculty member.

A student dismissed after unsuccessful completion may file an appeal with the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School in writing within 10 working days of the student's receipt of the notice of dismissal, per Graduate School policy.

ADVANCING TO CANDIDACY

Becoming a PhD candidate requires three things: completing all coursework, completing and passing the comprehensive exam, and successfully defending a dissertation proposal. Students have a maximum of five years to advance to candidacy, per Graduate School policy.

Students complete a dissertation proposal after the comprehensive exam, often concurrent with their final course(s). The dissertation proposal is a document detailing the purpose, significance, context, and methods for the dissertation study the student will conduct. Although dissertation proposals vary among students, they typically consist of the following chapters or sections, which may not appear in this order:

- Introduction (including the importance of the questions or aims of the dissertation)
- Literature review
- Theory
- Method

A full committee will review the written dissertation proposal, hear the oral defense of the proposal, and make a determination of the outcome of the proposal defense. See <https://graduate.umaryland.edu/media/Graduate-School/Documents/Procedures-for-Examination-of-the-Doctoral-Dissertation-PDF.pdf>, “Composition of the Doctoral Examination Committee,” for details on committee membership. An internal form, available on Blackboard/PhD Student News/Forms, is the “Nomination of PhD Program Committee.” Completion of this form and the Director’s signature indicates that the committee as named meets Graduate School requirements.

The dissertation proposal should be developed in close consultation with the student’s chair and committee. All committee members should have ample time (a minimum of three weeks) to review

and submit feedback on the proposal, and the student should respond to committee feedback and allow for re-review as needed prior to the defense. Often, the proposal will go through several rounds of review and revision prior to the proposal defense. All committee members should be in agreement that the proposal is ready to defend at least ten days in advance of the proposal defense, as indicated by their signature on the “Proposal Readiness” form

(https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/media/ssw/phd/phd-forms/Proposal-Readiness-Form--editable_pdf.pdf).

Proposal defense procedures and outcome. The dissertation proposal defense is similar in process and structure to the dissertation defense. The student and committee should reserve two hours for the full defense. Guests, which may include other students, faculty, or staff, as well as friends and family of the student, are welcome to attend the presentation portion of the defense. The PhD program uses email and/ or Daily Bulletin announcements to publicize the defense.

The defense proceeds as follows:

- (1) Welcome and introductions;
- (2) Private meeting among the committee alone, to determine whether the proposal is ready for defense and to respond to any questions the committee members may have about procedures;
- (3) Presentation by the student, giving an overview of the proposed study (20-30 minutes total);
- (4) Questions from any guests, after which the guests are excused;
- (5) Questions from the committee to the student (the “examination” portion of the defense);
- (6) Deliberation among the committee without the student present; and finally
- (7) Determination of the outcome of the defense.

The outcome of the proposal defense is either pass with no or very minimal changes to the written document; pass (with non-trivial revisions to be re-reviewed by one or more committee members); or fail. A student who fails the proposal defense may re-defend on a second occasion, with a second failure resulting in dismissal from the PhD program. At time of proposal defense, the chair will have committee members sign the “Defense Report” form with the committee decision. This form must be filed with the PhD Program Director immediately following any attempted oral defense of a doctoral dissertation proposal.

Following successful defense, students will complete the “Admission to Candidacy” form, which indicates that the student meets candidacy and program requirements, and requires an unofficial transcript to ensure that all courses have been completed. The form is available here: <https://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/media/Graduate-School/Documents/Academic-Progress/candidacy-2021.pdf>. After the proposal defense, and at least six months prior to the planned dissertation defense, students submit the “Nomination of Members for Final Doctoral Examination Committee” form (https://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/media/Graduate-School/Documents/Academic-Progress/Doctoral_Committee-Update-2019.pdf).

An appeal in the case of Academic Dismissal may be filed with the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School in writing within 10 working days of the student's receipt of the notice of dismissal, per Graduate School policy.

DISSERTATION

Following successful proposal defense, the student advances to candidacy and conducts the proposed dissertation research. Often, a first step as a candidate is submission of a research protocol to the Institutional Review Board (IRB; see <https://www.umaryland.edu/hrp/institutional-review-board-irb/>; the School of Social Work has an internal human subjects protections committee that can also provide support). The dissertation may follow a traditional monograph format or a multiple paper format. Methods employed are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Among current candidates and recent graduates, dissertation studies are approximately equally divided between primary and secondary (including administrative) sources of data. Students are encouraged to pursue dissertation topics of great interest to them, using the methods most appropriate for the questions they wish to address.

The Graduate School's website (<https://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/Current-Students/Information-for-Graduating-Students/>) contains a wealth of information on dissertation timelines and required documents, as well as dissertation procedures. The Graduate School frequently offers or sponsors sessions, including the Dissertation Bootcamp and the Graduation Seminar, of use to doctoral candidates as they complete their dissertation work. The timelines are particularly important, as there are a number of documents and milestones each candidate must accomplish in order to defend the dissertation and graduate. For example, the final date a candidate is eligible to defend a dissertation tends to occur about a month prior to the end of the semester. As with the dissertation proposal, candidates often go through multiple rounds of revision and feedback with the committee before the dissertation is ready for defense.

In order to defend a dissertation, the candidate must have a minimum of 12 dissertation credits. The candidate must be registered for credit in the semester they defend, and must apply for graduation for the semester that corresponds with their defense. Tuition remission accompanying a Graduate Research Assistantship or Plus award will only be applied in the fall and spring semesters; summer defenses are not supported with these mechanisms.

The dissertation defense procedures mirror those of the proposal defense (see above), except that the presentation will also include results and discussion of the project's findings. Committee members are encouraged to attend the defense in person, when possible. Once again, guests are welcome to attend the presentation portion of the defense. At the conclusion of the dissertation defense, the committee determines the outcome. The following language comes from the Graduate School's "Procedures for Examination of the Doctoral Dissertation":

At the end of the examination, the candidate and any others in attendance who are not part of the committee withdraw, and the committee deliberates in private on the acceptability of the written dissertation and the oral performance of the candidate. The chair asks each member for an opinion, and following these deliberations, the members vote on whether the candidate has passed or failed. There are two levels of pass: 1) the dissertation is accepted with very minor changes, if any; or 2) the dissertation requires significant, non-trivial revisions. In the latter case the committee sets a time-line for completion of revisions and names the committee members who will certify satisfactory completion of the revisions. The members sign the report of the committee and register their votes. The affirmative votes of a majority plus one of the committee members

constitute a successful defense of the dissertation; this means that the required number of affirmative votes is either four from a five-member committee or five from a six- or seven-member committee. The candidate may be failed if the committee finds that either the quality of the written dissertation or the candidate's presentation is wanting. The committee may find that, in spite of a decision that the dissertation document was defensible, it has defects that prevent it from being accepted. If these defects are minor in nature, the committee may vote to accept the dissertation pending remedial modifications. If the defects are more serious, the committee may decide to fail the candidate and require a new examination. Alternatively, the dissertation document may be determined to be sound but the candidate's defense inadequate. In this case the committee must decide on a date for a new examination. The Report of the Examination Committee form signed by the committee must be returned by the Graduate School representative to the Graduate School office no later than two working days following the examination. The candidate's program director must also be provided with a copy of the report. The candidate should be informed of the decision as soon as possible. In the event that the candidate fails the examination, the Graduate School representative will submit a letter within two working days to the dean of the Graduate School stating that the candidate has failed, the reasons for the failure, the decisions concerning necessary remedial action and approximately when a new examination is to be held. The Graduate School representative must return the letter with the signed Report of the Examination Committee. Copies of the letter must be provided to the candidate, the chair, and the Graduate Program Director. The new examination must be conducted within one year from the date of the defense of the first examination. The chair must notify the Graduate School of the date of the second examination so that the necessary paperwork may be sent to the Graduate School representative. The candidate may present for the doctoral examination at most twice.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Students are encouraged to connect with a variety of faculty during their time in the program. Advising and mentorship can take many forms and often students engage several different faculty in providing aspects of needed mentorship. First-year students will receive academic advising from the PhD Program Director.

In subsequent years, students are encouraged to develop longer-term mentoring relationships with faculty they identify as supportive of their professional aspirations. These faculty may be supervisors of Graduate Research Assistants, potential or current dissertation chairs, instructors in PhD courses, and/ or the PhD Program Director. The Program Director is available to any student for individual or group advising and support, and holds periodic cohort meetings, which are intended to serve as group advising sessions for each cohort of PhD students.

GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) are the most common mechanism to financially support full-time students. GRAs allow students to attend full-time while learning from mentored research opportunities. Each year, faculty are invited to submit a GRA request, describing the project(s) and desired student skills. Faculty with external or competitive internal funding to support GRAs are

given preference. Beyond that criterion, GRAs are assigned based on match between faculty or project needs and student interests and abilities. Although some GRA relationships extend for multiple years, the contracts are fixed at either 10 or 12 months, with 20 hours per week of work. GRA contracts begin September 1 of each year and continue through either June 30 (10-month GRA) or August 31 (12-month GRA). Typical practice is to match students with GRA opportunities working with several different faculty members during the course of their PhD education so that they can benefit from additional mentors and learn about varying projects, skills, and work styles. Full-time students making adequate progress to degree are guaranteed a GRA each year. In or after year 2, some students may elect to divide their GRA time between mentored research and independent teaching in the MSW program (see below for more information on teaching opportunities).

TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

Students with an interest in independent teaching may request to teach a course as half of a Graduate Research Assistantship for one or both semesters of the GRA contract for that year. Students who have completed the teaching methods course and have served as a Teaching Assistant are eligible for teaching consideration. Teaching opportunities are subject to approval by the PhD Program and MSW Program administration. On a case-by-case basis, students who have not yet taken the teaching course and/ or served as a TA may be considered for a teaching role if they have relevant MSW teaching experience in their background.

A Teaching Assistantship (TA-ship) is an important step in developing teaching skills. A TA experience is entirely voluntary on the part of both the student and instructor and is outside coursework and GRA assignments. TAs may participate in a variety of teaching opportunities – typically, TAs facilitate classroom exercises and discussions, respond to student queries or needs, give at least one lecture, and participate in grading of student assignments. The named instructor is responsible for the course as a whole and is an important source of learning and feedback for the TA. The TA should plan to attend all class sessions unless specific arrangements are made otherwise. The TA arrangement can be used with face-to-face, virtual, and hybrid models of instruction. Students should consider TA opportunities that represent course content they are interested in teaching independently in a future semester. Many faculty may work with TAs, but part-time or adjunct faculty members generally do not have service expectations as part of their role, so full-time faculty are most appropriate for mentoring TAs. PhD program administrators may have useful advice about specific courses and instructors that align with student interests.

OTHER STUDENT SUPPORTS

UMSSW PhD scholarships and fellowships. Students are invited to apply for several competitive internal awards. These awards are supported by PhD Program funds (as in the case of four \$4,000 dissertation awards per year and 12 \$600 travel awards per year) or by named awards. The Grand Challenges award, the Zuravin award, the Wooten award, the Kong-Jin Memorial award, and the Harrington Fellowship provide material support to student research, training, and skill development. Depending on the award, the funds may be used for books, training and conference

travel, and dissertation-specific needs (e.g. participant payments, transcription costs, dataset or software purchase). More information about PhD program awards is available at <https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/phd/phd-awards--scholarships/> and on Blackboard.

External funding for students. Faculty with external or competitive internal funding to support Graduate Research Assistants are the first to be assigned students, giving these GRAs the opportunity to conduct mentored research on a funded project. Furthermore, students are encouraged to pursue funding support for their own research whenever possible. External funding sources have included the Fahs-Beck Fund for Research and Experimentation, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the National Institute of Justice, the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Hartford Foundation, the Home Visiting Research Network, and the Administration for Children and Families.

Space and core facilities. The UMSSW PhD program is primarily housed at 550 W. Baltimore Street, on the 5th floor. This space is separate from the majority of UMSSW offices, classrooms, and the MSW program. Having separate physical space allows the program to occupy a shared, rather than diffuse, space and to concentrate many academic and programmatic activities in a single area. The hallway in which the PhD program is located contains two classrooms in which all PhD courses are conducted. The hallway also includes office space for PhD program administrators, the PhD student office work space, and PhD student lounge. The student lounge is a large space with PC-equipped cubicles, a networked printer and scanner, tables and other furniture, and a refrigerator and microwave. A small library of research and reference materials is available to PhD students in the lounge. The PhD student office is designated as a quiet work space and contains PC-equipped cubicles. The computers in the lounge and office provide ready access to qualitative and quantitative software.

Additional work space is available to students as well. Private conference room space is available on the 5th floor and can be reserved for conference calls or meetings. Students who serve as GRAs may access computing, printing, and meeting space in the main UMSSW building at 525 W. Redwood Street, which facilitates collaboration with mentors and research teams. In some cases, students require dedicated computers or private office space for data protection. In these instances, the PhD program administration works with the UMSSW administration to assign appropriate spaces to meet the requirements of data use agreements.

PhD students have 24-hour access to the spaces and materials they need. All students are provided key-card access to the building for purposes of entry after-hours and on weekends. The PhD student office and lounge have coded entry.

Campus-wide and School of Social Work student support services. The UMB Office of Educational Support and Disability Services acts as a central point of contact for the identification and provision of reasonable accommodations designed to assist qualified students with disabilities including physical, learning, sensory, psychological, ADHD and medical conditions in achieving their academic goals. Staff members work with students to obtain interpreters, note takers, accessible parking, and other support services related to attending classes. This office provides

other resources relevant to all students, including workshops on time management and study strategies.

The Social Work PhD Program provides as-needed academic support to enhance learning and outcomes for all students. Services include access to statistical and grant review support, and editorial support. Student organizations for the School and campus provide social and academic support for our diverse student body. PhD students participate in the campus-wide Graduate Student Association, some UMSSW committees, and other campus groups and events. Within the PhD program itself, students participate in an International Student Association, a PhD Recruitment Committee, Social Committee, and the PhD Program Committee, which has oversight of program policies and procedures.

Many training and learning opportunities outside the classroom are part of the UMSSW calendar. Program-supported Professional Development Seminars, hosted two or three times per semester, cover a range of topics of interest to PhD students. Recent seminars have included non-academic careers, mentorship, CV development, and writing for publication. To promote career readiness, a “job club” meets several times throughout the fall and spring semester and focuses on preparation for the job market. The Associate Dean for Research organizes lectures from scholars in and outside the School of Social Work to present about methods and findings to the UMSSW community. Each semester, the Daniel Thursz Lecture features a notable scholar or activist presenting on social justice issues.

The UMB Writing Center provides one-on-one consultations, online writing resources, and a variety of workshops and events. The Center for Information Technology Services provides students with media sharing, IT support, and training classes. The Wellness Hub provides interprofessional workshops, coaching, and family support resources. The University Recreation and Fitness program is committed to enriching the physical, mindful, cultural, spiritual, and social development of the UMB community. A fitness center and swimming pool are housed in the student center.

The UMB Student Counseling Center is also used by PhD students. They offer group counseling sessions (e.g., Coping Skills and Minority Student Process Group), as well as individual counseling sessions. In times of crisis, a few of our students have used these services. The Student Health Center is supported by student fees. It has daytime, evening and weekend services.

The UMB Office of International Services assists both individual international students and provides advice and direction to academic administrators. Prior to arriving in the U.S., the Office serves as the major contact for student regarding immigration regulations. After students matriculate, the Office provides advice regarding financial aid, leaves of absence, and visa sponsorships.

Library services. The University of Maryland Health Sciences and Human Services Library (HS/HSL) is dedicated to providing quality information resources and infrastructure supporting the education, research, clinical care, and public service missions of the University. It is consistently ranked among the top 25 health sciences libraries in the country. The building provides 118,000 net square feet of space with 106 individual study carrels, over 45 group study rooms, and 56

computer workstations for students and three microcomputer labs. The library is open about 80 hours per week, including weekend and evening hours.

HS/HSL provides a dedicated librarian to the UMSSW to support students and faculty. The UMSSW librarian is well-known to the students. She provides orientation as well as guest lectures during the first year of required classes. This has increased student comfort in requesting help, particularly for improving literature searches. The library liaison plays a particularly important role in helping students prepare for the comprehensive exam by teaching them state-of-the-art review procedures and providing individual support for the students' searches.

PHD PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The PhD Program Committee (PPC) is comprised of faculty, students, and program administration. Per the Faculty Plan of Organization, the PPC governs the curriculum and student affairs in the PhD program. The seven elected PPC members must be Regular or Associate members of the Graduate Faculty; at least four must be PhD course instructors. The PhD Program Director is a voting member of the PPC and generally sets agendas and chairs PPC meetings. At least two student members – one from the first year and one from the second or later – also serve on the PhD program committee, representing student interests. All PhD students are invited to attend PPC meetings and participate in discussion. Generally, the PPC meets monthly during the academic year. Many PPC decisions are made by consensus or acclamation, with formal procedural or policy changes requiring a majority vote.

Faculty members on the PPC contribute service in multiple ways, including but not limited to: reviewing applications for new students; monitoring and supporting student progress; determining curriculum matters such as adding, changing, or discontinuing particular courses; evaluating comprehensive examinations; reviewing Independent Study applications; recommending student activities and supports; and reviewing applicants for student fellowships and scholarships.