Virginia Tech Master of Public Health (MPH) Program Action Plan in response to Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies Resolution 2017-18A:

Resolution to Incorporate an Inclusion and Diversity Education Component into Graduate Education

Required Topics and MPH program's action plan:

1. ***The Virginia Tech Principles of Community as they apply to the valuing of human diversity and inclusion.***

   - Listing of the Principles of Community:
     - The Master of Public Health Program has affirmed that the Virginia Tech Principles of Community embody the values of the program. The Virginia Tech Principles of Community are listed in the MPH Program Student Handbook, on the program's website, and on every MPH course syllabus.

   - Orientation Workshop on Principles of Community:
     - Attending orientation is a requirement of all new MPH students. As of Fall 2019, a one-hour workshop at orientation is dedicated to introducing students to the VT Principles of Community. It is led by the Program Coordinator and the MPH Student Ambassadors.
     - During the workshop, students first break into small groups to list on a flip chart and rank order the values/standards/ideals that important in spaces where they live, work, learn, and play. They report back to the larger group. Students are then introduced to the VT Principles of Community and, as a large group, compare and contrast their list of values/standards/ideals to the VT Principles of Community. Lastly, students break into small groups and brainstorm on ways to uphold the VT Principles of Community in public health practice, as students, as citizens, etc. They then report back to the larger group and discuss these strategies.

2. ***Available avenues of redress and our shared responsibilities as active by-standers.***

   - Listing Avenues of Redress:
     - All MPH syllabi include a link to the Graduate School compliant/appeal procedure and how to appeal a grade. Specifically:
       "*Honor Code*
       All students are expected to exhibit the fundamental beliefs of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code in this course, and when completing all assignments. The fundamental beliefs underlying of the Graduate Honor Code are:
       - *to trust in a person is a positive force in making a person worthy of trust;*
       - *to study, perform research, and teach in an environment that is free from the inconveniences and injustices caused by any form of intellectual dishonesty is a right of every graduate student, and*
       - *to live by an Honor System, which places a positive emphasis on honesty as a means of protecting this right, is consistent with, and a contribution to, the University's quest for truth.*
       Please visit the Graduate School Honor System's webpage

(https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations/graduate-honor-system.html) for specific information regarding expectations and policies related to the Graduate Honor Code.

Graduate Student Complaints and Appeals Processes

The university provides a variety of informal means and formal processes for graduate students to address concerns that arise in the academic setting, with the goal of resolving disputes in a fair, collegial manner. For discussion of processes and examples, please visit: graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations/expectations-for-graduate- education-overview/complaints-and-appeals.html"

- The MPH Student Handbook includes summary information and links to the Graduate Honor Code, the Graduate Student Ombudsperson, the Graduate Honor Code and the Graduate School compliant/appeal procedure and how to appeal a grade. Specifically: *"Expectations for Graduate Education, Complaints and Appeals*

  Graduate Honor Code

  The Graduate Honor Code establishes a standard of academic integrity. The code demands a firm adherence to a set of values and is founded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others. Compliance with the Graduate Honor Code requires that all graduate students exercise honesty and ethical behavior in all their academic pursuits at the university, whether these undertakings pertain to study, course work, research, extension, or teaching. To learn more about the Graduate Honor System and the Honor Code, visit this website (https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations/graduate-honor-system.html).

  Graduate Student Ombudsperson

  The Graduate Student Ombudsperson (http://www.graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu/), with an office in the Graduate Life Center, provides confidential assistance to graduate students to resolve issues and address concerns that arise within the university setting. The ombudsperson provides a resource for and information about institutional policies and acts as a facilitator to work toward resolutions of graduate students' concerns. The office is an informal avenue for graduate students, and consultations are kept confidential, unless the student grants permission for the ombudsperson to discuss issues with involved parties or administrators.

  Complaint/Appeal

  The Public Health Program follows the Virginia Tech Graduate School appeal procedure, which includes how to appeal a grade. The graduate school procedures can be found here (https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations/expectations-for-graduate-education-overview/complaints-and-appeals.html).

  Appealing a Grade

  University policy states that the assignment of a grade is the sole prerogative of the instructor of the class. It is incumbent upon the instructor to establish the criteria for grading in the syllabus that is distributed at the beginning of the term. All grades are to be based on established grading criteria and not on personal conduct or opinions unrelated to academic standards. A student may not do extra work to raise his/her grade. If a student feels that a grade has been calculated incorrectly or has

been assigned in a prejudiced or capricious manner, the student should discuss the matter with the instructor. If discussion between the instructor and the student cannot resolve the issue, the student should appeal to the department head. In the unusual circumstance that resolution does not occur at the departmental level, the student may appeal to the college dean who will attempt to reconcile the matter by whatever mechanism seems most appropriate for that college and for that case. A grade appeal must be made by the student as soon as possible but no later than the end of the student's subsequent term of enrollment after the grade in question has been assigned."

- <u>Shared Responsibilities as Active By-Standers:</u>
  - An overview of academic bullying, how to report academic bullying, and a brief description of how to disrupt academic bullying, and a link to the Disrupting Academic Bullying Initiative on the Graduate School website are also included in the MPH Student Handbook. Specifically:

    "Academic Bullying

    The MPH program encourages students to learn more about academic bullying and how to be an active bystander and report academic bullying when they witness it. The Graduate School has provided many resources to learn how to recognize and respond to academic bullying in the Disrupting Academic Bullying Initiative. Below provides an overview of academic bullying and avenues to address. Complete information and resources from the Graduate School can be found here (https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/we-hear-your-voice/disrupting_academic_bullying.html).

    What is Academic Bullying?

    Academic bullying occurs in academic or professional spaces including, in the classroom, in meetings, at conferences, in the lab, and in both face-to-face, email, and social media interactions. Forms of academic bullying can include (but are not limited to), physical, verbal, written acts or behavior, or excluding behavior such as ignoring or dismissing individuals or groups. Hostile behaviors include damaging physical property or individuals, intimidation, threats, and other disruptive, humiliating, sarcastic, and/or vicious behavior. Offensive behaviors include inappropriate behaviors such as abusive language, derogatory remarks or insults, the use of condescending, humiliating, or vulgar language, shouting or use of unsuitable language, or the use of obscene gestures or mocking. Academic bullying also includes behaviors or comments that indicate disregard for one's concerns, ignore one's contributions, or minimize one's efforts. Other exclusion behaviors or openly withholding information. Implementing expectations of unreasonable workload, limiting earned vacation and prohibiting one's own agency for professional choices and personal decisions can also be considered academic bullying.

    Reporting Academic Bullying

    Instances of academic bullying can be reported to the Graduate Student Ombudsperson. Students can set up a meeting with the Graduate Student Ombudsperson or submit information through this form (https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3gR6CDbKkf6OrtP) that is sent directly to the Graduate Student Ombudsperson. More information can be found

here (https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/we-hear-your-voice/disrupting_academic_bullying/resources_for_targets/access_points_for_support.html).

Disrupting Academic Bullying

If you witness academic bullying, there are actions you can take to disrupt it. The following is a summary of strategies that a bystander can use. Complete details on the strategies can be found here. Not all of the following may be practical in every situation, but being aware of options can help you assess what may be appropriate based on the circumstances.

1. *Acknowledge that you are witnessing behavior that qualifies as bullying.*
2. *Be a bystander who disrupts academic bullying*
3. *Ask the target if they would like assistance.*
4. *Shut down bullying behaviors in group situations.*
5. *If appropriate, speak to the aggressor in private about their behavior.*
6. *Know the resources available for the target and yourself.*
7. *Submit a report via this referral form (https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3gR6CDbKkf6OrtP)."*

3. **The impact that personal actions and words have on self, others, and the communities—university, national, and global—in which we live; issues of privilege, bias, power, prejudice, and discrimination; concepts of multiple personal, social, and cultural identities.**

and

4. **The process of individual introspection required both to understand one's own forms of implicit or unconscious bias and to create inclusive environments.**

- Coverage in MPH Core Curriculum Required Course:
  - PHS 5054: Public Health Leadership and Interprofessionalism is a required MPH course. A learning outcome of the course is for students to describe their personal leadership style and role as a leader in ensuring diversity and inclusion and cultural competency in the workplace. The didactic for the learning outcome is provided to students by covering the concepts of diversity and inclusion, as well as comparing and contrasting the two concepts, the ladder of inference, stereotypes and unconscious bias. Students engage in partner activities and conversations to hone in on the concepts of diversity and inclusion by contrasting the experiences of privileged vs. marginalized groups and discussing how to create inclusive environments. Students also complete a self-assessment for inclusion practitioners and envision how to transfer inclusive practices to and in their work.
  - Students also participate in a facilitated discussion on implicit biases. The discussion includes recognizing your own biases, acknowledging your biases (and the importance of this acknowledgement), and working on solutions to address these biases.

- Coverage for DVM/MPH Students:
  - DVM/MPH students do not take PHS 5054, but all DVM students take an 8-hour certificate program in anti-racism and implicit bias through the Diversity and Resiliency Institute of El Paso. This includes three modules.
    - Module 1 explores what it means to be anti-racist, and unpacks the relationship between historical events, institutional frameworks, the ideology of white

supremacy, and how those things have come together to construct the social norms, stereotypes, and bias which inform our perception and behavior.

- Module 2 deals with identity, personal bias, white privilege, colorism, and prejudice. These are concepts that are not easy to talk about, and often bring up strong feelings, including anger, guilt, and denial. In the module, students will unpack them, reflect on individual impacts, and provide tools to start making changes.
- Module 3 focuses on becoming an Anti-Racist Ally. This is not a one-time decision, but involves decisions every day about whether to stand up, or stay silent. Students will consider how to be an ally, tone policing, emotional labor, how to have difficult conversations, and how decisions to become an anti-racist ally impact outlook on the world and relationships.