

**CENTER FOR DEMOGRAPHY & POPULATION HEALTH  
GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

This document is intended as a brief overview of the facilities, academic programs, and administrative procedures for graduate students affiliated with the Center for Demography and Population Health (CDPH) at Florida State University. More detail can be found by clicking on the links provided throughout the document. Important sources of information for graduate students include the [FSU Graduate School](#) and, in particular, the [information for new students](#), which includes a campus-wide Graduate Handbook. Other key sources include the [FSU Graduate Bulletin](#), and the General Bulletin's [academic year calendar](#).

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## **About the Center for Demography and Population Health**

Within the structure of Florida State University, CDPH is classified as both an administrative unit and an academic instructional unit.

- Administratively, CDPH is an interdisciplinary support unit for research conducted by Center Faculty Associates (core faculty) and Faculty Affiliates (affiliated faculty), and their doctoral students. As an administrative unit of FSU, CDPH operates within the administrative context defined by the University and the College of Social Sciences and Public Policy. The Center's by-laws are posted on the Center's website.
- Academically, the Center is home to an interdisciplinary graduate program that leads to the Master of Science degree in Demography (MSD). This program is described in full on the Center's website, but highlights of the program are provided below.

### *Location and Facilities*

The Center for Demography and Population Health is housed in a suite of offices on the sixth floor of the Bellamy Building on the Florida State University campus in Tallahassee, Florida's capital city. The Center's physical space includes offices for core faculty and graduate students, a small reading room, and a shared conference room and kitchen. The Bellamy Building also houses the home departments of the Center's core faculty, including Economics, Geography, Sociology, and Urban & Regional Planning. Home departments of most CDPH affiliates, including the Colleges of Medicine and Social Work and the Departments of Biostatistics and Psychology, as well as Strozier Library and Dirac Science Library, are within walking distance of the Bellamy Building.

All Center faculty and graduate student offices are equipped with desktop computers with direct Ethernet connections and access to the university's wireless network. Graduate student computers are networked to two shared printers. CDPH maintains the College's network license for Stata software. The College maintain licenses for Stata and ArcGIS software, and the university has SPSS, SAS, and other software packages in its virtual lab. Should you need any other packages, we will try to accommodate your needs; please start the process by conferring with your major professor. The university is a full participant in ICPSR, affording its faculty and students full access to all ICPSR-licensed data, and a member of the Atlanta Federal Research Data Center, providing access to restricted federal data.

## **Master of Science in Demography**

CDPH is home to the nation's oldest and largest multidisciplinary program leading to the Master of Science in Demography (MSD). This program has been designed for students seeking to develop proficiency in the use of demographic concepts, data, and techniques. The curriculum emphasizes demographic practice and the development of intellectual and analytical skills useful in a research or data-intensive setting.

### *Admissions*

Applicants to the MSD program apply online through the FSU [Graduation Admissions Portal](#). Admission decisions are made by the CDPH Director in conjunction with input from the faculty members of the CDPH Executive Committee. Questions concerning the application and admissions process should be sent to the Director at [popctr@fsu.edu](mailto:popctr@fsu.edu) or by phone at 850-644-1762.

### *Admission Requirements:*

Applicants to the MSD program must meet the **university's academic requirements**, including:

- A completed undergraduate degree at the time of entry into the program.
- B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) for upper division undergraduate course work.
- Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores sent directly to the Florida State University. Average scores for recently accepted CDPH students are 70<sup>th</sup> percentile for verbal reasoning and 56<sup>th</sup> percentile for quantitative reasoning.
- International applicants who have not earned at least one degree from an English-primary university must also take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and provide an official test score of at least 80.

Applicants also must complete the **CDPH departmental application** which requires

- A personal statement describing the applicant's motivation for pursuing the MSD and career goals,
- A writing sample in the form of a short essay that links demography to a contemporary social, economic, political, or health issue
- Two letters of recommendation from faculty (or qualified employers, with the Director's permission) evaluating the applicant's suitability for graduate study.

### *Degree Requirements (revised effective July 2011)*

Candidates for the MSD degree are required to complete a minimum of 33 semester-hours, including at least 18 semester-hours of data analysis and statistics, 6 semester-hours of demographic seminars, and 6 semester-hours for preparation of the Masters Research Paper. A detailed course list and copy of the curriculum tracking form are provided on the Center's website.

### *Master's Research Project*

The MSD program does not require a traditional master's thesis. Instead, students are expected to complete an independent research project with an article-length report under the direction of a two-person committee comprising CDPH core faculty. One committee member will have special expertise in the student's area of study; this faculty member will serve as the student's major professor. Research projects are tailored to meet the interests, skills, and professional aspirations of individual students, and acceptable report formats range from professional papers or project reports to academic papers. Whatever the format, the paper is intended to be a capstone for MS training, and is typically completed in the final semester of the program, often in conjunction with a professional internship.

### *Professional Development*

A critical aspect of the MSD program is its emphasis on professional development. All students participate in a Professional Development Seminar which provides guidance on résumé development, job and internship searches, professional networking, and interviewing. Students are encouraged (but not required) to take a professional internship during the summer prior to graduation. Students are ultimately responsible for seeking and making application for internships, although the Center Director and core faculty provide support in locating suitable positions.

### *Graduate Adviser*

The Director serves as the general Graduate Adviser to all students admitted to the Demography program. MSD students should have at least one advising meeting each semester. Enrolled students should take courses recommended by the Graduate Adviser, to insure timely completion of their degree requirements.

### *Fees and Course Loads*

For a detailed official description of graduate tuition rates, student fees, and related costs, consult the FSU Graduate School [web page on funding and awards](#). Students who are not Florida residents may qualify for in-state tuition through the [Academic Common Market](#) (ACM). ACM eligibility must be established prior to matriculation.

The MSD program has been designed to be completed in one calendar year, with graduation anticipated in August of the year following enrollment. A **full-time course load** for graduate students is 12 credit-hours per semester. Students should register for no more than 15 credit-hours per semester. Students who register for fewer than 12 credit-hours (i.e., less than a full-time load) may not qualify for graduation in the expected one-year period.

#### *Policy & Procedures on Exemption*

Students who have previously taken and passed graduate-level courses required by the MSD program with a grade of B- or better, or equivalent courses, are allowed to substitute other courses to meet program requirements. It is the intent of this provision to enable students to acquire more advanced training than would ordinarily be required as part of the MSD degree. Permission must be given by the Graduate Advisor, subject to the advice of faculty on the CDPH Executive Committee.

#### *Professional Conduct and Academic Integrity*

All students affiliated with CDPH in any capacity are expected to demonstrate the highest professional standards in terms of personal behavior and ethics. Investigation and resolution of alleged violations of the FSU [Student Code of Conduct](#) and the [Academic Honor Code](#) are coordinated through the FSU [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). MSD students who have been accused of conduct or honor code violations should alert the CDPH Director.

#### *Appeals Process*

CDPH values collegial governance based on best professional practices. All actions or decisions of the Director may be appealed to the CDPH Executive Committee and, following this, to the Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Public Policy. Specific University procedures exist for grade appeals and other academic grievances, including Academic Honor Code violations. See the [Regulations and Procedures](#) section of the Academic General Bulletin or the website of the FSU [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) for details.

## **Resources for Graduate Students**

### *Office Space, Computer, and Reading Room*

CDPH provides work space (desk or carrel), desk-top computers, and networked printers to all students enrolled in the MSD program. Space is provided to doctoral students working with Center Faculty Associates as available. Rooms 606, 606a, and 608 are dedicated to student use. Doctoral students who are writing dissertations or teaching may be assigned to unused faculty offices on a temporary basis. Office space and computer access is meant to provide students with some of the resources that they need to successfully complete their degrees. The CDPH Director assigns office space to graduate students on the basis of:

- a. Enrollment in the MSD program;
- b. Employment as a research assistant on a CDPH-based research grant; or
- c. Supervision by a core CDPH faculty member (as space is available).

The Center's Reading Room (608) provides quiet space for reading or thinking, and has wireless access for laptop use.

Students should not install software or firmware on Center computers, nor should they attempt to resolve computer problems themselves. Rather, any issues should be brought to the attention of CDPH staff or the Director, who will contact the College IT staff. Students should practice good computer hygiene and they are responsible for maintaining their own backups. Hard drives will be reformatted once the student graduates, withdraws from the program, or otherwise surrenders the office space.

All students housed in the Center share responsibility for preserving an environment conducive to successful professional work. Cell phone calls may be made in the Bellamy Building atrium or outside the building. Any problems should be brought to the CDPH Director, who will resolve them in a way that is fair to and respectful of all involved students.

### *Conference Travel*

Graduate students affiliated with CDPH are strongly encouraged to attend annual meetings of the professional organizations in the field, including the [Southern Demographic Association](#) and the [Population Association of America](#). Through the generous support of CDPH alumni and friends, some funds are available to help reimburse approved travel expenses *for students in the MSD program*. Travel by doctoral students is supported by their home academic departments, who receive a regular budget allocation from the College of Social Sciences and Public Policy for this purpose. Funds are also available to all graduate students from the [Congress of Graduate Students](#) (COGS) for attending as well as for presenting at a professional meeting.

Funds for MSD students are distributed at the discretion of the CDPH Director. The amount of money awarded will depend on the availability of funds, the number of students requesting travel assistance, and the cost of the meeting (e.g., travel distance, hotel costs, and registration fees).

Funds available through COGS are available on a first-come, first-served basis and are limited to one (1) \$100.00 conference support grant and one (1) conference presentation grant (which varies according to the travel distance, up to \$500.00). Because COGS funds are limited, students who anticipate travel to a professional meeting should begin the process of securing financial support as soon as possible.

Graduate students traveling to professional meetings need to complete a Travel Authorization Request *at least two weeks in advance of the departure* (forms are available on CDPH website). Students make their own travel plans and upon return present their receipts for transportation, lodging, and conference registration to the Office Assistant in Bellamy 601. Receipts for meals are not needed as all travel expenses for meals are covered by a fixed per diem rate covered by the University.

#### *Funded Awards and Recognition*

Through the generosity of alumni, friends and faculty, CDPH students may benefit from the following awards.

##### *The William J. Serow Scholarship*

Dr. William J. Serow was a former director of CDPH and a Professor of Economics. Contributions by family, friends, and colleagues have been used to create an endowed scholarship in his memory. This scholarship is awarded to the MSD student who shows outstanding aptitude for a career in Applied Demography and helps defray costs of completing the degree. The recipient is selected by core faculty at the end of the Fall semester, in large part on the basis of academic performance in required courses. All MSD students in good standing are automatically considered for this prize.

##### *Walt Terrie Award*

Dr. E. Walter Terrie was a faculty member and applied demographer in CDPH for many years. Contributions by friends and colleagues throughout the profession of Applied Demography have been used to endow a special memorial fund. The fund is used to present an award of \$400 for the best paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Demographic Association, dealing with applied demographic research and/or local area demography. Winners are selected by a committee appointed by the President of SDA, including at least one FSU faculty member. MSD students are encouraged to submit their completed Master's papers.

### *CDPH Colloquia*

During the academic year, CDPH hosts occasional colloquia, including “brown bags” and the annual Charles Nam Lecture. Students who have been awarded desk space in CDPH are expected to attend CDPH colloquia. Brown bag presentations are informal presentations scheduled during the lunch hour on Friday afternoons; they generally highlight research conducted by CDPH-affiliated faculty and students. The Nam Lecture is an annual event held in honor of Dr. Charles B. Nam, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus, and founding member of CDPH. Each year’s Nam Lecturer is selected by Dr. Elwood Carlson who holds the Nam Professorship in Sociology, with input from the CDPH Director and core faculty.