

Graduate Opportunities in My Research Group

Thank you for your interest in a graduate degree at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health. Please note that HSPH has both a Master's and PhD program in the Departments of Nutrition (MPH and PhD); Global Health and Population (MPH, SM80, and PhD); and Environmental Health (MPH, SM80, and PhD). I thought it might be helpful to tell you a little about HSPH's admissions process, since it may differ from what other universities do, as well as to provide you with some information about my own research interests.

At HSPH, applications are reviewed first by a centralized administrative staff, then by an admissions committee of a specific department, and then by faculty members of that department. The PhD in Population Health Sciences is offered under the aegis of the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) and is awarded by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Students in this program will gain broad, interdisciplinary knowledge in quantitative and qualitative methods of enquiry for understanding the health of populations, and developmental approaches to population health science. For additional details on the PhD in Population Health Sciences program, [please visit this website](#).

Within the Nutrition field of study, students can choose between two areas of specialization, [Nutritional Epidemiology](#) and [Public Health Nutrition](#). There are also a number of interdisciplinary concentrations offered. [See the full list of concentrations](#).

Applications to the PhD Program in Population Health Sciences are due December 1st for the following Fall cohort (ex. December 2020 application to start Fall 2021). Each application is thoroughly reviewed by the admissions committee made up of Department of Nutrition faculty. Applicants are notified by e-mail when a decision is available, normally by March 15. Further information regarding the admissions process can be found on the [GSAS Admissions website](#).

I encourage you to explore the Department of Nutrition's website (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutrition/>). Further information regarding the Department's degree programs can be found at [Prospective Student Resources](#).

The admission committee for each department at HSPH consists of faculty from diverse backgrounds. This has two important implications for applicants. First, it's essential that faculty members in addition to me be supportive of your application. Because admission decisions are made by several faculty members, you should write your essays in such a way that specialists in any area of public health can understand the significance of what you are proposing to do.

Speaking personally, I don't expect you to have a fully formed thesis topic in mind when you apply (indeed, students who arrive thinking they know exactly what they want to do may end up changing their minds). But I would like to know what types of research questions you consider interesting and important and why you think so. I would also like

to know what types of methodological skill sets you already have and which you hope to acquire.

In recent years, my research has focused primarily on the intersection of environmental change and sustainable food systems, specifically: 1) the investigation of terrestrial wildlife declines in Madagascar on food security and human nutrition; 2) the investigation of marine fishery collapses across the globe on food security and human nutrition; and 3) the development of climate-smart health surveillance systems. However, as you will see by looking at my research group's webpage (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/christopher-golden/>), we have worked on a variety of topics, and I am certainly not locked into these areas. Notwithstanding the heavy emphasis of my group on issues of planetary health and nutrition, I welcome students who work on other health domains (and, indeed, my students have worked on vector-borne disease and communicable disease). My goal is to use ecology, conservation biology, and the social sciences to develop insights that lead to effective policies for addressing pressing food security, development, and conservation challenges. With respect to my team, I'm looking for students who are strongly interested in planetary health, are collaborative and interactive, and are dedicated to producing public health research that matters. My group has tended to have a strong field-based research component and I have existing field research in Madagascar, Kiribati, and Niger.

In judging applicants, I look at all aspects of the candidate's record: experience, publications, GPA, statement of purpose, test scores, and letters of recommendations. I don't apply any strict formula in weighing this information, although I try to find applicants who are strong in all components. I am open to co-advising students if you are successful in another department and still wish to work with me.

Having been at Harvard for a long time, I am amazed at the depth of talent among our students. Unfortunately, faculty do not receive new students every year. This puts me in the very uncomfortable position of having to say "no" to some incredibly talented individuals. Please don't feel discouraged if your application for admission is rejected.

If you have any questions about my work, please don't hesitate to email me. You are also welcome to contact any members – past or present – in my research group. Please peruse [my website](#) for info on my work and other student collaborators.

If you have more questions about the various programs, I would welcome you to contact:

Nutrition: Stefanie Dean (sdean@hsph.harvard.edu)

Global Health and Population: Allison Gallant (agallant@hsph.harvard.edu)

Environmental Health: Barbara Zuckerman (bzuckerm@hsph.harvard.edu)

Chris Golden
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