Distinctly Brown

Over 250 years since its founding, Brown remains committed to the values that define and sustain our record of excellence and influence in the world. Brown is a place where ideas, passion, and constructive irreverence lead to lives of purpose and positive consequence. Our students have opportunities to learn, grow, and explore amidst a supportive and distinguished community of scholars.

About Behavioral and Social Sciences at Brown

The Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSS) is a multidisciplinary academic department in the Brown University School of Public Health. Over 50 BSS faculty members are actively engaged in research and teaching to understand the behavioral and social determinants of public health problems and to develop interventions to change behaviors and improve social contexts related to public health. Their collaborative research has a substantive focus on behavioral health issues such as alcohol and other drug abuse; smoking and tobacco use; obesity, nutrition, and physical activity; HIV and sexually transmitted infections; and health disparities and culture.

Our educational goal is to train the next generation of public health scholars and practitioners to engage in scientific research and programmatic activities to reduce the burden of disease and improve the wellness of populations.

Brown School of Public Health

The Brown University School of Public Health has three distinguishing features. First is an overarching approach that carries across our departments and 11 nationally-renowned research centers and institutes: we learn public health by doing public health. The enterprise has expanded since its founding in 2000 to support more than 200 faculty and 275 undergraduate and graduate students—and to attract over $56 million in annual external research funding. Second, we embrace Brown University’s ethos of service to others. Our work has impact on entire populations, with the potential to improve the health and well-being of millions. And finally, the School is focused on training professionals who can collect, analyze, and apply data that informs public policy. Graduates from our programs go on to fulfilling careers in education, service, policy, and practice in the fields of public health.

Contact Info

DEPARTMENT CHAIR
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Student Profile
SYLVA SHANGANI
ScM student in BSSI

The first girl from her Kenyan village to attend a national secondary school, Sylvia went on to Moi University, where she studied Public Health, and gained field experience as a researcher. She plans to use the training she's received at Brown to contribute to the international discourse on how to improve the utility of behavioral interventions in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

“The massive HIV/AIDS epidemic in Kenya has touched me in strong personal ways through the grief of losing close relatives to HIV-related illnesses. What stands out to me is the complex socio-cultural and behavioral enigma HIV represents. It is more than a clinical condition, and to conquer it requires successful behavioral and social interventions.”

Faculty Profile
KIM GANS, PhD, MPH, LDN
Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences
Director, Institute for Community Health Promotion

A nutritionist with over 28 years of experience in intervention development and evaluation research in community-based settings, Professor Gans works to improve eating habits and prevent obesity among ethnic minority, low income, and low literate populations. She studies innovative health communication technologies and is winner of the 2013 Mary C. Egan award for pioneering innovative approaches to public health nutrition from the American Public Health Association.

“I really enjoy doing community-based behavioral research. Every day is different and I have the opportunity to meet and work with amazing people.”

Degrees Offered
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Master of Science (ScM)
Master of Arts (AM)

Plus, a fifth-year Master degree for Brown Undergraduates (AM or ScM)

Requirements for admission
The Master's program in Behavioral and Social Sciences Intervention (BSSI) provides advanced training in the critical understanding and application of theories of behavior change in public health, clinical medicine, and social intervention programs. Candidates should have undergraduate concentrations in Community Health, Human Biology, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Communications, or Education, and should possess strong critical thinking, scientific or analytic writing, and quantitative or logical reasoning skills. Professional, research, or volunteer experience in public health, social intervention, or program implementation or evaluation is helpful. Applications are reviewed beginning January 1 and ending May 31. This program is ideal for students interested in working in health program evaluation, program management, community-based organizations and other non-profit services, managed care, treatment intervention research, and clinical trials.

The Behavioral and Social Health Sciences Doctoral Program trains health behavior scientists to understand the social and behavioral factors that influence health-related behavior across multiple levels, including individual, community, environmental, sociocultural, and policy levels; and to ameliorate public health problems by designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions that influence health-related behaviors. Our program seeks students with strong potential for independent scholarship in Behavioral and Social Health Sciences. The most competitive applicants will hold a Master's degree in Public Health, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Education, or Communication. Applicants must have completed statistics, calculus, or probability coursework, and demonstrate research experience relevant to public health. The application deadline is January 5. This program is ideal for students interested in working in basic and applied research settings such as academia, government and non-governmental organizations, and health care. Applicants are required to submit GRE exam scores (within five years). Other standardized tests (e.g., MCAT, LSAT) may not substitute for the GRE. Subject test scores can be submitted but are not required. TOEFL scores are required for a student whose native language is not English, but may be waived for those who hold a bachelor's or master's degree from a US institution.

- Apply online through the Brown graduate School: http://www.brown.edu/academics/gradschool/apply
- Course Offerings link: http://www.brown.edu/academics/public-health/courses-manual
- Financial Assistance link: http://www.brown.edu/about/administration/financial-aid/graduate-overview-facts-tips-and-tools