

ACADEMIC ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

BARB CUEVAS



"I am so thankful that I have Barb as my advisor!", says Blake Scruggs, a Junior in the Exercise Science program. "She goes above and beyond to prepare me for every semester, and then some! She actually just told me about a job position that is within my major, that I applied for and got this week!"

Barb Cuevas has been with the University of South Carolina for over fourteen years. Not only has she been teaching in the Arnold School of Public Health since 2007, but she also received both her bachelor's degree and master's degree from the school. Now, as the Director of Undergraduate Student Services in ASPH, she not only trains and supervises all Public Health advisors and manages the advisor assignments, but she is the Practicum Coordinator for the Exercise Science program as well. One of her most impressive qualities is her ability to put her all into everything she does. Although she continues to wear many different hats and shoulder countless responsibilities within her current role, she still maintains her passion and investment in the success of her students.



BARB CUEVAS, MPH
Director, Undergraduate
Student Services;
Clinical Instructor,
Exercise Science

"My favorite thing about advising is pretty simple...", Barb says, "Helping my students see their potential, even if they cannot. When I am meeting with a student, they have 100% of my attention. I listen to them, I hear their dreams and sometimes, I have the tough conversations with them if things are not going well. Those tough conversations push the students to reflect on what actually makes them happy, what builds their confidence, what motivates them to attend class. Occasionally, it is not the current career path they are taking and once they realize this, it is a game changer. They are happy and relieved that they no longer need to struggle in courses that do not make them happy. Together, we figure out a plan in order for them to achieve their goals. It may not always look the same as another student, but it is their plan! They take ownership of it."



Olivia Davis, a senior Public Health major, says, "Upon arriving at UofSC as a transfer student at the beginning of my junior year, I was still unsure of what career path I wanted to take, as well as how to navigate USC in general. It was not until I was assigned to Mrs. Cuevas as my advisor that everything began to come together. After just our first meeting, we decided on a career path, the journey to get there, and many options to aid in success. She took the time out of her busy schedule to speak with me any time that I asked and was always opened to communicating for as long as needed. It is not only apparent in her communication, but also in her energy during meetings, that she is passionate about her student's journey to success."

Barb advises between 150 – 250 ASPH students each semester in addition to her responsibilities as a Director of Undergraduate Student Services and Practicum Coordinator, yet never lets her students feel anything less than seen, heard and supported. She is extremely well versed in curriculum and the policies, procedures and nuances of the large institution that is UofSC, but continues to go the extra mile for her students. When asked for strategies on how she avoids burnout, Barb says, "Do I feel overwhelmed sometimes during the semester? Absolutely, everyone does, but I do not let this interfere with my student interactions. They are my number one priority. If I have someone having a mental health crisis, I will stop what I am doing to make sure they receive the help they need. If a student needs advice on how to handle a situation with an instructor, we will walk through different scenarios until they find one they are comfortable with." She also says advisors must set some boundaries to help avoid burnout, "Have set times during the day for appointments, walk-ins and answering emails. Keeping the day organized will help reduce stress. I use an old fashioned desk calendar to keep me on task. What is the priority of the day and what needs to be done by end of the week. You also need to be flexible because you never know what each day may bring! If it is getting late and you are working on something, go home, it will still be there in the morning. Advisors need their personal time too!"

"Her compassion has been one of my biggest motivators and I owe a great deal of my progress to her", says Olivia of Barb. "I genuinely believe that I could not have been blessed with a better advisor. Her dedication shines bright, and she deserves a round of applause for all of her hard work." Barb says that the best thing an advisor can do is show each individual the respect they deserve, guide them through their academic career by showing them the resources that are available, and then watch the student start to feel empowered and in control of their own destiny.



"It is hard to explain, but I feel this is what I was meant to do."

-Barb Cuevas



WOULD YOU LIKE TO NOMINATE AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR FOR A SPOTLIGHT?

[SUBMIT YOUR NOMINATION](#)



Academic Advising
University of South Carolina