



West Chester University



MPH Connections



Fall 2023 Issue

Editor: Lindsey Howell

Co-editors: Dr. Stacie Metz and Dr. Gopal Sankaran

Table of Contents

Greetings from MPH Program Director Dr. Stacie Metz	3
Graduate Student Association Awards	5
Student Achievements and Words of Wisdom	6
National Health Education Week Celebration	10
Alumni Share Their Expertise	13
Future Opportunities for Students	16
Student Health and Well-Being Expo	18
WCU Earns Community Impact Award	21
Alumni Excel	22
WCU at APHA Annual Meeting	25
Faculty Accomplishments	27
Happy Holidays!	30



Greetings from MPH Program Director Dr. Stacie Metz

WCU MPH Program earns CEPH Reaccreditation for Full Seven Years!

I have exceptional news to share! We were notified on December 20th that the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) Board of Councilors voted at their December 14-15th meeting to fully re-accredit the WCU MPH Program for the maximum of seven years. With this our MPH Program is accredited by CEPH until December 31, 2030.

We are grateful to the lengthy list of students, alumni, and advisory board members who shared their experiences with the CEPH site visit team in April this year. Your contributions are invaluable and ensure we fulfill our mission to prepare diverse public health professionals who advocate and promote health, well-being, and human rights for all people. I am tremendously proud of our MPH community and their dedication to partnering with us to provide a high-quality, equitable education through a sustained quality assurance process. I appreciate the work of our MPH Program faculty and the administrators who met with the CEPH site visit team and shared their valuable insights about the program and vision for its future.

Below is a special thank you to those who provided significant contributions in the CEPH re-accreditation process.

- **Program leadership:** Thank you to Dr. Ramona Stone (ALE and Community Health Track Coordinator) who closely worked with me throughout the process and developed a strong data-driven narrative reflecting our programmatic accomplishments, Dr. Harry Holt and Dr. Melanie Vile for their track-specific expertise (Health Care Management and Environmental Health Track Coordinators), and Dr. Zeinab Baba for managing our competency assessments (MPH Assessment Coordinator and incoming BS Public Health Program Director).
- **MPH faculty and staff:** Thanks to our collaborative team including Drs. Jim Brenner, Lorenzo Cena, Sharon DeJoy, Erin Knight, Nene Okunna, Gopal Sankaran, and Chiwoneso Tinago; Tammy Wyatt for administrative support; and adjunct faculty Chelsey Price, Dr. Louise Makau-Barasa, Dr. Judy Suska, and Michael Werner; and retired faculty including our previous MPH Program Director Dr. Lynn Carson.
- **Advisory board leaders and members:** We were honored to collaborate with our advisory boards to identify the areas that are ready for change. Thanks to our MPH Student Advisory Board Presidents during our review period - Sara Hassan (2022-23), Danielle DiGiorgio (2021-22), and Amrit Baral (2020-21), to Chrissie Dziembowski (Co-Chair, MPH Community Advisory Board) for her sustained commitment, and to all other advisory board members!
- **Self-study reviewers:** We are grateful to those who reviewed and provided critical feedback on our self-study document including alumni Ashley Cifarelli, Katie Kucz, Bhumika Patel, Aerielle Waters, and Kate Willner; College of Health Sciences staff MaryEllen Stephens and Stephanie Kienle; and Drs. Erin Knight, Gopal Sankaran, James Brenner, Sharon DeJoy, and Professor Emerita Maura Sheehan.
- **MPH student site visit session participants:** We thank our students for sharing their academic experience with site visitors - Sara Hassan, Muhammad Umair Ilyas, Parisa Karimzadeh, Casey Kelly, Balee Lesser, Maitiya Meadows, Ragha Mohan, Karlene Shaw, Alec Sporn, Katie Sullivan, Julinette Vazquez, Erik Wilson. The public health profession is fortunate to have each of you.

- **Alumni, site supervisor, and community partner site visit session participants:** We appreciate you sharing how you uniquely collaborate with our program ~ Amrit Baral, Calvin (Mike) Baysinger, Juan Castro, Ashley Cifarelli, Chrissie Dziembowski, Casey Fenoglio, Rashad Freeman, Krystal Harbaugh, Katie Kucz, Judy Suska, and Michael Werner. Your contributions to the MPH Program, students, and community are critical to building the public health workforce and promoting health and wellness for all populations.
- **College of Health Sciences Dean's Office:** We thank the full team in the Dean's office for their significant contributions to our program including Dean Dr. Scott Heinerichs, Associate Dean Dr. Cheryl Gunter, Stephanie Kienle (former Director of Internships & Practica who redesigned our ALE process), Kelly Smith (Budget Manager), MaryEllen Stephens (Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions), and the administrative support team of Jana Davis and Lenora Overton.
- **Students, alumni, and community & campus partners:** Thank you to our stellar students, graduate assistants, alumni, Delta Omega Public Health Honorary Society Alumni Board, practicum site supervisors, and community partners; campus partners such as the Graduate School & Graduate Dean Dr. Lisa Calvano, Global Engagement Office, and Office of Wellness Promotion; and the WCU upper administration - Interim Deputy Provost & VP for Academic Operations Dr. Jeffery Osgood, Jr., outgoing President Dr. Christopher Fiorentino, and incoming President Dr. R. Lorraine (Laurie) Bernotsky.
- **CEPH site visitor team:** Lastly, we are grateful to our CEPH site visitor team who assisted in our program improvement process by evaluating the quality of our education, research, and service contributions.
- **And many more!**

Thank you!

I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to our students, alumni, internship supervisors, community partners, advisory groups, and faculty and staff. Your unwavering commitment to cultivating your authentic professional self and the next generation of public health leaders is inspirational. Together, we are joining our unique talents to drive positive systemic and social and environmental change.

Please let us know can we help YOU and your agency with collaborative service or research, internships, or to disseminate job or event announcements. You can reach me at smetz@wcupa.edu.

Best wishes for the new year ~ may the public health force be with you!

Dr. Stacie Metz



Job, internship, fellowship, and professional development opportunities
Accomplishments of students, alumni, and faculty
Share job postings and refer friends or coworkers to join if interested in public health



MPH Student Advisory Board
Student events and accomplishments
Professional development opportunities and campus resources



Events and professional development opportunities
Accomplishments of students, alumni, and faculty
Campus resources

Congratulations to our 2023 Graduate Student Association (GSA) Award Recipients in Leadership, Service, and Advocacy

This the third year where graduate coordinators have partnered with the Graduate Student Association and the Graduate School to acknowledge excellence by our graduate students. Program faculty nominate and choose one student to acknowledge in one of three categories of Excellence: In the Field, In Scholarship and Creative Activity, and In Leadership, Service and/or Advocacy. Only two students per program can be acknowledged each year. We are honored to present the two GSA Awardees for the year 2023.

Desiree Harris



Desiree's leadership pursuits have intersected with public health, student success & belongingness, and cultural competency. First, she served as a Graduate Assistant with the WCU Athletic Academic Mentoring Program where she worked collaboratively with student-athletes to address concerns or barriers hindering academic progress. The program coordinator often commented about her dependability, ability to provide feedback for quality improvement, and her strength as a role model to both the program participants and newly trained graduate assistants. Second, Desiree is a member of the executive committee in our MPH Student Advisory Board in which she acts as a liaison between students and faculty and plans events. For instance, she served as a student diversity panelist in the DEI Faculty Learning Community in the College of Health Sciences. Third, she served as the President of our NAACP chapter. We have no doubt her collaborative and adaptive leadership skill set will serve her well in her DrPH program at Morgan State University that started in Fall 2023!

Sara Hassan

The Master of Public Health Program faculty were honored to nominate Sara Hassan. Sara graduated in August 2023 and served as President of the MPH Student Advisory Board (SAB) for the 2022-23 academic year. Sara is an outstanding leader who has made extraordinary contributions to her scholarly, campus, and wider communities. Sara is a leader who takes initiative and welcomes collaboration. A leader with a vision. A dependable leader. An impactful leader. As President of MPH SAB, Sara has connected students, faculty and staff within the Department of Public Health Sciences through various events and activities that foster belonging and collegiality. Sara has also connected MPH SAB with the broader university and external and global community through, for example, the panel discussion on The Health & Human Rights of Refugees & Migrants which was held virtually in February 2023. In all, Sara fully embodies the qualities of an exceptional graduate student leader and we look forward to seeing her flourish and drive positive change in the community.



Get to Know Our Department of Public Health Sciences Graduate Assistants

Daniel Engelbrecht's Environmental Health Research with Dr. Lorenzo Cena and Dr. Melanie Vile

Congratulations on earning an Environmental Health Graduate Assistantship with Dr. Lorenzo Cena and Dr. Melanie Vile. Can you talk about your current research with Drs. Cena and Vile?

At present I assist Dr. Cena with analyzing and sorting our environmental field data. We are working on a project which was initiated to quantify and assess the impact that fugitive gases originating from an agricultural site in Pennsylvania have on the surrounding community. Through further analysis, we will be able to publish those results which premise the unique interactions that occur between agriculture and

residential regions. Also, I assist Dr. Vile in preparing the installation of a particulate matter sampler which is intended to provide the Environmental Protection Agency with data in a region they currently don't have ambient sampling in. These projects require collaboration between colleagues, staff, various organizations, government officials, and others. These experiences are at the crux of my professional development: professional interaction, collaborative studying, gathering data, analyzing it, and using it to further our understanding of our relationship to our environment. This role is a privilege, and I am incredibly grateful for my opportunity to function in it at West Chester University.



**Daniel Engelbrecht
(MPH in Environmental Health)**

What are your interest areas and what type of career do you hope to pursue? What courses or professional development opportunities helped you to cultivate your skill set in these areas?

Through my career I aim to leave a body of research, knowledge, and accomplishment that furthers the mission of equity, wellness, and interconnectedness. I believe this is best done through competence in as many areas as possible. The MPH program collectively, but especially Policy in Public Health, has helped me learn new ways of engaging others to find our commonalities, to work together in new ways, and to recognize our unique roles in contributing to solutions through collaborative efforts. With that in mind, the MPH has empowered me to seek competence, to use it to initiate change, and to help others where able. Those goals will be realized through professional and volunteer services which address resource conservation, environmental assessments, remediation, project monitoring, and especially contamination prevention. The best way to respond to an accident is to have prevented it in the first place through the application of competence.

DR. CHIWONESO TINAGO'S GRADUATE ASSISTANTS' OUTSTANDING WORK

Can you share about the research and your role on the research team?

Naya: I've had the pleasure of working alongside Dr. Tinago as her Graduate Assistant since Fall 2021. I began working as a Community Liaison as a resource to WCU students and a research assistant. Within the past year, I've had the opportunity to assist with two research projects by reviewing research proposals, assisting with the development of documents in the planning phases and data analysis. One project focuses on evaluating the impact of a sustainable subsistence farming project in with KIHEFO, an NGO in Uganda, the Rabbit Farming Project. The rabbit farming project has been implemented to improve food security and household income. My responsibility as a research assistant has provided me with essential professional development by strengthening my diplomacy skills, research skills, and overall professionalism.

Maitiya: Over the past year, I have been able to gain so many skills and experiences working with Dr. Tinago. Most of the work I have done has been with organizing and facilitating panels and presentations for Dr. Tinago's *HEA 418 Preparation for Internship and Professional Practice* class. In addition to organizing internship and graduate school panels to speak to her class, I have been able to work with Naya and Dr. Tinago on a project focusing on understanding essential caregiving practices in adolescent and young mothers in Chester County. By assisting with interviews and surveys and reviewing and coding transcripts for this project, I have been able to assist Dr. Tinago and develop these skills that I know I will use in the future for my career.



**Naya Weeks
(MPH in Community Health)**

What are your interest areas and what type of career do both of you hope to pursue? What courses or professional development opportunities helped you to cultivate your skill set in these areas?

Naya: My interest areas have certainly expanded within the past two years as I have been exposed to various sectors of the public health world. I am currently working in the community health sector as a program coordinator for a non-profit that provides free vision services to children in the Philadelphia region. My experience in my current career and as an MPH student has elevated my interests in community health and research but have since grown to love global health and global research. The core classes that have helped cultivate my skill set in population health and research include HEA 531 Community as a Basis for Health, HEA 539 Technologies for Community Health Program Planning & Implementation, and HEA 645 Global Community Health Promotion & Advocacy.

Maitiya: My interest areas include maternal and child health along with health promotion and community outreach. By being exposed to these realms of public health, I have gained a true interest in these topics and hope to work in these fields for the duration of my career. Some courses that helped cultivate my skill sets in this area would be HEA 531 Community as a Basis for Health, HEA 543 Strategic Communication for Health Equity, HEA 615 Policy in Public Health, and HEA 645 Global Community Health Promotion & Advocacy. These courses have helped me really understand and decide what aspects of public health I enjoy learning about and what I want to continue to learn about post-grad.



**Maitiya Meadows
(MPH in Community Health)**

Shared Advice For Current MPH Students

Community Health

While you are here at WCU in the MPH program, take advantage of all possible opportunities! Our advice is to try to get involved in organizations or attend networking events and conferences to grow your professional development. In addition to this, have conversations with your professors and build your connections. By building these connections, you can put yourself in various positions where you may be offered jobs because you were in the right place at the right time. The MPH Student Advisory Board is a great opportunity to be a part of an academic board and work alongside colleagues and faculty. There are various professional opportunities to be considered as MPH students including the Delta Omega Society and public health organizations such as Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) and American Public Health Association (APHA). *(MPH GAs Maitiya Meadows and Naya Weeks)*

Environmental Health

All Environmental Track students should be aware of and familiar with the ACGIH, AIHA, and NFPA. These are only a few of the agencies worth visiting frequently as their work is a direct reflection of what is taught in the MPH. Their work is a direct application of how we are assessing our health, protecting our health, and where we are still studying our health. Those areas are a direct invitation for students to engage in innovative solutions and opportunities, including internships local to the students. Students should also challenge themselves to review and follow international organizations (such as BOHS) to observe other philosophical approaches to health and the solutions we can learn from and apply in other contexts. *(MPH GA Daniel Engelbrecht)*

Health Care Management

A few tips I would have for MPH-Health Care Management students would be to engage with professors and build relationships for guidance, networking, and potential research opportunities. I would also suggest networking with peers to expand their professional network. Over the past few years, I have learned that the world really is very small and you never know what new opportunities will arise from connections you have made! *(MPH student Alexa Moran, BS, RRT CHSE)*

On My Mama: Black Women and Maternal Mortality *by Maitiya Meadows*



Each year WCU hosts the Ruby Jones Conference on Race, Social Justice, and Civic Leadership. The Ruby Jones Conference allows students and faculty to come together to discuss issues regarding race, social justice, and civic leadership. By having these conversations, these discussions can help develop ideas that help change the campus, community, and social climate. The Ruby Jones Conference is dedicated to Professor Ruby Jones, one of the first Black faculty members hired at WCU. Before coming to WCU, Professor Jones was a K-12 educator, along with being involved with the NAACP, the YWCA, and the American Association of University Women. Professor Jones has been described as an educator, humanitarian, and civic leader. By hosting this conference every year, there are more opportunities to discuss various issues among educated people, and more chances for strategies and solutions to be made.

This year, the Ruby Jones Conference was held on Saturday, October 28th, and Maitiya Meadows, MPH-Community Health candidate, planned and facilitated a panel discussion on maternal health among Black women. She recruited panel experts that represented mothers and doulas to discuss their maternal health experiences.




This panel featured three women, Fanta Koita (mother and MPH-HCM student & GA), Jazzmin Boyd (doula), and Torri Burrell (mother) who are all native to the Philadelphia area. All panelists provided input on the disparities Black women face while going through the prenatal, labor, and delivery process. Throughout the panel presentation, the interactive audience asked questions about the maternal health of Black women and powerful statistics were provided.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Black women are 3 times more likely to die during labor than other races and this is very telling considering that there were 69.9 deaths per 100,000 live births as compared to other races. It was also mentioned that 14.8% of U.S. live births were considered preterm among Black women, and this can cause long-term developmental issues and other health issues that may or may not be resolved throughout their lifetime.

By highlighting these statistics throughout the presentation, Ms. Meadows facilitated a platform for the panelists to discuss what can be done to improve maternal health of Black women at the individual and structural levels such as the healthcare system. There were many mentions of knowing your body and trusting your gut, but the main take-home message was that we need to address structural influences on Black maternal health and empower Black women to have successful pregnancy and delivery experiences.

Celebration of National Health Education Week October 16-20, 2023



In Celebration of National Health Education Week,
WCU Master of Public Health Program and PA SOPHE present:

FACES OF HEALTH EDUCATION

Promoting Wellness, Equity, and Health Literacy

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2023
6-7PM (EST)**

JOIN VIA ZOOM (MEETING ID: 697 869 5284 |
PASSCODE: 993865 | CALL-IN +1-309-205-3325)

A Panel Discussion Featuring:


KATIE KUFFNER, MPH
Public Health Educator, Chester County Health Dept;
Adjunct Faculty, Dept of Public Health Sciences, West Chester University

BRIDGET MARLEY, MPH, CHES, CTTS-M
Health Promotion Coordinator, University of Chicago

JAYME TROGUS, MPH
Director, Office of Wellness Promotion, West Chester University

EDWINA VINTON, MPH, CHES
Public Health Program Analyst, City of Philadelphia Dept of Behavioral Health &
Intellectual disAbility Services
(former Health Education & Training Specialist at Dept of Public Health)

Questions? Contact Dr. Stacie Metz at smetz@wcupa.edu



In celebration of the National Health Education Week, the MPH Program and PA Chapter of the Society for Public Health Education (PA SOPHE) hosted a virtual panel discussion on Tuesday, October 10th entitled The Faces of Health Education: Promoting Wellness, Equity, and Health Literacy. PA SOPHE President Dr. Whitney Katirai gave opening remarks with the National Delegate Dr. Rebecca Rich also in attendance. The WCU Director of the Office of Wellness Promotion Dr. Jayme Trogus and three of our dynamic alumni, Katie Kuffner, Bridget Marley, and Edwina Vinton, shared about their experiences working in the health education field. Additionally, they offered tips for engaging diverse communities at health fairs/expos and other events. Current students may access the event recording on our MPH Program Informational D2L site.

Careers in Health Education and Promotion: A Chat with MPH-Community Health Alumni Edwina Vinton, Bridget Marley, and Katie Kuffner



Edwina Vinton, MPH, CHES
Public Health Program Analyst
City of Philadelphia -
Department of Behavioral Health and
Intellectual disAbility Services
(formerly served as Health Education and
Training Specialist at the City of
Philadelphia - Department of Public Health)

Having completed my MPH at WCU with a concentration in Community Health, I felt ready to enter the workforce. Participating in group projects aided me in assuming the proper leadership role. It enabled me to begin my previous work as a Health Education and Training Specialist at the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, focusing on HIV health. The curriculum at WCU gave me the knowledge, abilities, and insight into the significance of public health both locally and globally. I attribute my current success as a public health professional to WCU because it created the avenue for networking and volunteering opportunities, which have allowed me to conduct research, share my knowledge of preventative medicine, and develop health initiatives within the City of Philadelphia.

My advice to MPH candidates, those who may wish to pursue a similar career path to mine, is that they should have a strong interest in HIV health and become engaged in the community via volunteering. They should consult public health experts for guidance on the advantages and disadvantages of the field as well. A capstone project that centers around HIV health should be chosen. This will give them the ability to immerse themselves in the subject, opening up possibilities for additional research.



Bridget Marley, MPH, CHES, CTTS-M
Health Promotion Coordinator
University of Chicago

I am a 2020 graduate of West Chester University's MPH-Community Health program. I completed my undergraduate degree at East Stroudsburg University where I found her love for public health as a peer health educator. Prior to my current role at the University of Chicago, I worked as the Student Wellness and Prevention Coordinator at Austin Peay State University in Tennessee and at Chimes: Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems Prevention Department in Media, Pennsylvania.

In my current job, the projects that excite me are the ones working to build a better community. We've created a homegrown mental well-being program that incorporates a community of care model, with the hope to work toward becoming a health and wellbeing promoting campus, and ultimately signing the Okanagan Charter. A challenge that I believe we are facing is the ever-growing needs of our student body and the lack of ability to make swift change. Large systems like this one require a lot of jumping through hoops and it sometimes makes us seem out of touch with the current needs. We work to address the social determinants of health and health inequities daily. We work with campus partners to address inequities that arise through anecdotal data or through quantifiable data from the Healthy Minds Study or the National College Health Assessment.



Katie Kuffner, MPH
Public Health Educator at Chester County Health Department and Adjunct Faculty Member in WCU Department of Public Health Sciences

Describe your MPH program experience.

Interestingly, my MPH program experience was actually over 20 years ago! The program was smaller but gaining traction and attention from other professionals going back to school and community organizations. Something I loved about this program was the array of public health topics we were exposed to. We were given a foundation to be able to work broadly across disciplines and interact with a variety of professionals such as fellow students, educators, clinical staff and researchers. At the same time, I also found this challenging; there are so many directions one can go in in this field! As I've mentioned before, what drew me to the program and still entices me to be a part of it, was the welcoming feeling I historically felt from the Health faculty and staff. My undergraduate degree was in Psychology. As I was completing my Health Minor, I spent more time within the College of Health Sciences which really peaked my interest to pursue my MPH from WCU. Since being in the program, I am still integrated at the university through my County position and as an Adjunct Instructor and have seen that welcoming feeling continue to embrace campus and current students.

Can you chat about your current job and service to the community?

While I have been in my position for a pretty long time, it has never felt like the same job! I have worked under different grants with a variety of focus areas and initiatives. Also, I could never complete any project alone. Teamwork is essential in public health! I have been very fortunate to be able to work closely with fellow health educators, be part of local coalitions and have access national public health related conferences and resources. I would say the first half of my career, I was very prevention and disease focused. Things like nutrition education and cancer prevention presentations were what I was drawn to. Through funding opportunities, I was exposed to the Injury Prevention side of public health. We became trained in an evidence-based falls prevention program. It was exciting to see competencies from the MPH program play out into real life practice. I was also able to become a member of the Chester County Safe Kids Coalition and help with their local programs. Something our agency and counterparts within the state are facing is a loss in the funding that supported most of our initiatives. This has caused a shift in how we are currently doing health promotion. This transition period has reinforced within me both personally and professionally, that the community is the focus of Public Health. Our job is to work as a team to ensure that the community has a voice, is supported, and to build trusting relationships to enhance overall health, safety and wellbeing.

What is your biggest piece of advice to anyone considering a position like yours?

Stay connected with your professors 😊 Explore all the resources available to you. Take advantages of free/low cost trainings, webinars or conferences. Connect with others and ask to do informational interviews. Volunteer or shadow at local organizations outside of your required projects, it can give you a more well-rounded view of the field and help make connections. Stay positive! I mentioned funding a lot. I know some positions in this field are based on limited funding. Don't hesitate to take it, as it may lead into a longer or different project. You don't have to be the expert in all of it. Some of us will be better at public speaking, while others will focus on statistics or epidemiology. The key is to work together and have fun!

Alumni Share their Journey Pursuing Post-MPH Administrative Fellowships and Doctoral Programs



CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP AND DRIVE CHANGE

Topic :
Virtual MPH Alumni Panel on Post-Master's Fellowship and Doctoral Programs

 Tuesday, November 21, 2023

 6:00 - 7:00 PM

 Zoom

Zoom Link:
<https://wcupa.zoom.us/my/drstaciemetz?pwd=cFRSRIIYT2p0eW1wa3NGTE1Yayt2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 697 869 5284 | **Passcode:** 993865
Call-in: +1-309-205-3325

Register now at : 

Questions?
Contact Dr. Stacie Metz at smetz@wcupa.edu



Stephanie Belinske, DrPHc, MPH (she/her)
Chronic Disease Epidemiologist, State of Delaware; DrPH candidate in Health Equity and Social Justice, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health



Jameyshia Franklin, DPAC, MPH (she/her)
System Director of Volunteer Service & Visitor Experience, Main Line Health; DPA candidate at WCU; former Main Line Health Administrative Fellow



Rashad Freeman, MPH, CHES (he/him)
PhD student in Health Behavior, Associate Instructor & Research Assistant, Indiana University Bloomington



Kesha (Dr. K) Stone, DrPH, MPH (she/her)
Regulatory Affairs Manager, AstraZeneca; DrPH in Epidemiology, Morgan State University



Doris Swarn, MPH, LSSG (she/her)
Business Analyst, SolutionHealth; former Administrative Fellow, St. Joseph Hospital

On November 21, 2023, the MPH program hosted their 3rd Annual Cultivate Leadership and Drive Change Alumni Panel event. Alumni eloquently shared their journey into pursuing post-MPH administrative fellowship or doctoral programs. Current students can access the recording on the D2L MPH Program Information Site. We applaud each of them for their leadership and capacity to influence change in the field.

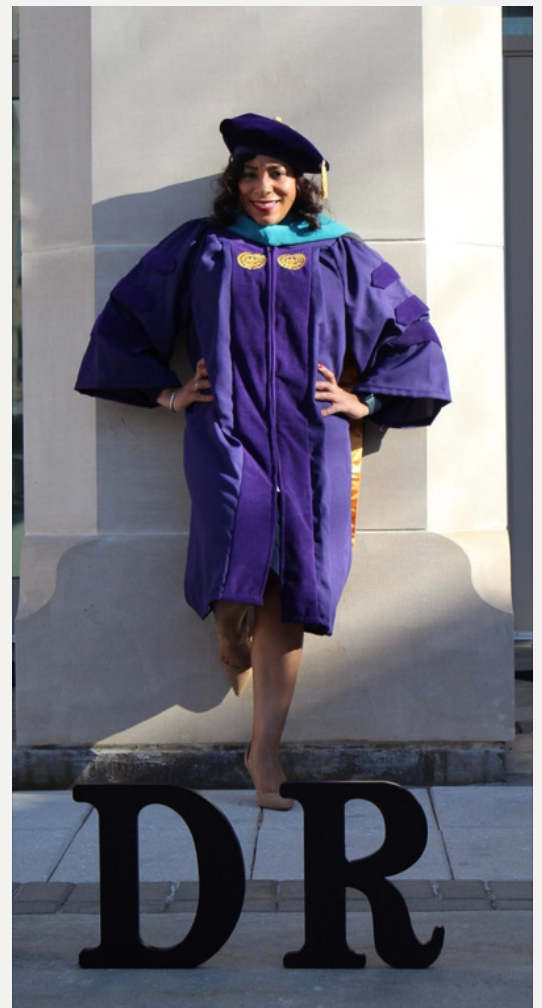
MPH Alumni Dr. Jameyshia Franklin Shares about her Doctoral Experience in the WCU DPA Program



Jameyshia Franklin, DPA, MPH (she/her) was one of our panelists. She graduated with her Doctorate in Public Administration (DPA) from West Chester University this December and is the System Director of Volunteer Service & Visitor Experience at Main Line Health. She was also a former Main Line Health Administrative Fellow. Dr. Franklin kindly shared about her experience as a DPA student and how it informed her work at Main Line Health.

My doctoral program at WCU was a great experience especially as I further my career in healthcare. I have no regrets for deciding to get my doctorate. The Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) program prepared me for the healthcare challenges faced during the height of COVID-19 pandemic. This was the first time in my studies and in my work professions that I was able to see the intersection between Public Policy and Public Health at work. Pursuing my DPA degree gave me a deeper appreciation for the work I do in the healthcare field and why it's important for healthcare leaders to be advocates for public and health policy.

Going back to school to pursue my doctorate enhanced my time management skills. While I was a full-time student, I was also working fulltime and being a full mom of two. I had to manage my time wisely to meet school and work expectation. The DPA program also taught me how to be flexible and adapt to change that may be outside of one's control. Being flexible is important when you are working in the healthcare field and public policy arena because things change rapidly, and you must be able to adapt and pivot. I would encourage anyone who is considering pursuing a doctorate to go for it and trust yourself. You will learn new skills and expand your knowledge in areas that can support your professional development.



Alumni Share about Public Health Careers in County, State, and Federal Roles



MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM PRESENTS:

A CALL TO SERVE

Promoting and Advocating for Public Health
in Government Roles

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2023
5-6PM (EST)

JOIN VIA [ZOOM](#) (MEETING ID: 697 869 5284 |
PASSCODE: 993865 | CALL-IN +1-309-205-3325)



Featuring WCU MPH Alumni Panelists

**MICHAEL CIMMINO,
MPH**

Director, National Standards Group
Centers for Medicare and
Medicaid Services

**ASH SCHAFFER,
MPH**

Disease Investigation and
Surveillance Coordinator
Chester County Health Department

**AERIELLE WATERS,
MPH, CHES**

Public Health Program
Administrator
Bureau of Family Health
Pennsylvania Department of Health

**SARAH SHRIMPLIN
YACCOUB, MPH**

Public Health Advisor
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention

Questions? Contact Dr. Stacie Metz at smetz@wcupa.edu

On September 19, 2023, the MPH program hosted an alumni panel discussion about public health careers in county, state, and federal governmental agencies. Our four alumni shared how they promote and advocate for public health in their roles. Current students can access the recording on the D2L MPH Program Information Site.

Thank you to our four alumni - Michael Cimmino, Aerielle Waters, Ash Schafer, and Sarah Shrimplin Yacoub - for their outstanding insights into the public health field and for inspiring others to pursue public service careers. Their professional accomplishments are critical in addressing structural inequities and promoting health and wellness for all communities.



2024 National Case Study Competition in Health Education

(online or in-person professional development experience for students)

The National Case Study Competition in Health Education, Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE), Eta Sigma Gamma (ESG), and the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC) are pleased to announce their partnership to expand the National Case Study Competition in 2024. All four entities will be collaborating to continue the tradition of providing students with a top tier professional development experience.

Now is the time for schools, students, and advisors to begin planning to participate in the competition. Beginning in spring 2024, the Competition will be dually conducted, continuing the practice of offering an online competition experience, but adding on onsite option for students choosing to attend the SOPHE Annual Conference in St. Louis.

Our WCU BS Public Health and MPH students have participated in the case study competition in the past! Form a team now! Dr. Stacie Metz and Dr. Rebecca Rich are ready to mentor!

Dates to Note:

Registration opens for the competition (early January, 2024)

Registration closes (February 16, 2024)

Case and materials e-mailed to participating schools (February, 26-27, 2024)

Onsite portion at the Hyatt at the Arch in St. Louis, MO (March 18, 2024)

Online portion of competition (March 19, 2024)

More information will be coming soon. If you have questions about the competition, contact Karl Larson, NCSCHE Executive Director, at ncsche@gmail.com.



SOPHE
Become a Collegiate Champion

Undergraduate & graduate student liaisons between SOPHE and colleges and universities.

Benefits:

- Enhance leadership skills.
- Expand network.
- Polish communication skills.
- Build career experience.
- Boost organizational strengths.

Role of a Collegiate Champion:

- 2-year commitment: First-year leadership. Second-year mentorship.
- Host a SOPHE-sponsored event each semester.
- Promote professional & academic opportunities.

Visit: www.sophe.org

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Contact Dr. Stacie Metz or Dr. Rebecca Rich if you are interested in applying to become a SOPHE Collegiate Champion.

Each Champion serves a two-year term, first year as a Champion from August to May and the second year as a mentor to the successor. SOPHE and our program believe that mentorship is vital to the success and relationship-building of students and alumni. You will also work with the PA SOPHE chapter leadership (three of whom are from our department) on co-hosting two SOPHE-sponsored professional development events and organizing a community service experience for students and faculty. WCU MPH students served as Champions in the past.

Applications are coming soon. For more information, visit <https://www.sophe.org/membership/collegiate-champions/>

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS:

6TH ANNUAL HLDNV HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT STUDENT CASE COMPETITION



The Healthcare Leadership Network of the Delaware Valley (HLNDV) will host the 6th Annual Health Care Management Case Competition on Friday, March 8, 2024 at 7pm via Zoom. Take advantage of this opportunity to showcase your talents and gain presentation experience and potentially earn a scholarship award! Students are asked to submit abstracts of no more than 500 words. A group of reviewers will select the top abstracts and these teams will present to a panel of judges on Friday, March 8, 2024.

DEADLINE for ABSTRACTS Friday, February 16, 2024

Submit abstracts to: merritt.brockman@gmail.com | Link will be sent directly to those invited to present

AWARDS WILL BE PRESENTED AS FOLLOWS:

1ST PLACE - \$1,500, 2ND PLACE - \$1,000, 3RD PLACE \$500

Entrant Requirements

- No more than three team members per abstract
- All team members must currently be enrolled (full- or part-time) in an accredited undergraduate or graduate program

Abstract Topic

(500 words or less): The healthcare industry in Philadelphia, PA is big business! It accounts for 22% of jobs and hosts many internationally known healthcare organizations. But it isn't just a great location to find a job if you work in healthcare, it's also a hotbed for innovation that has the potential to change the course for many organizations in our immediate location and beyond! Your task is to present an innovative strategy, scientific achievement or delivery methodology that is happening right here in Philadelphia. Provide an overview: who are the stakeholders, how did this come about, what market forces drove this and what are the immediate and long term impacts? Finally, present how you think this particular initiative will make an impact on the health care industry, locally, nationally, or globally. Essays will be judged based on chosen topic & rationale (1/3), supporting evidence provided (1/3), and clarity of presentation (1/3). Finalists will present via Zoom on Friday, March 8 at 7:00 PM.

Funding provided through the Donald Snook Education Fund Donald Snook, Ph.D., was a leading healthcare executive in the Philadelphia area for three decades, serving as a hospital CEO and industry leader before his untimely death in 2002. An ACHE Fellow, Don served on the faculty of several graduate programs in healthcare management and was a popular author and speaker for ACHE. He was a valued mentor to several generations of students and early careerists, and demonstrated legendary passion and enthusiasm for the profession of healthcare management. Don's legacy has been honored by establishing a memorial fund in his name. The Fund was founded to support the education of students in the greater Delaware Valley and is managed by the Academic Relations Committee.

The Healthcare Leadership Network of the Delaware Valley (HLNDV) is the local chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives. Dr. Harry Holt serves as the co-chair of the Academic Relations committee which organizes the competition. WCU MPH students across tracks have been well-represented in the competition with students competing and winning top prize money in past competitions. Overall, it is an excellent opportunity for students to network with senior executives and learn more about the technology innovations that are applied to healthcare in the Philadelphia area. Dr. Holt welcomes the opportunity to work with any student or student team that is interested in submitting an abstract and participating in the competition. Please contact him at (office) 610-436-2142 or email hholt@wcupa.edu.

2023

STUDENT HEALTH & WELL-BEING EXPO

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2023 • 1-3PM

SAVE THE DATE

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Dr. Jayme Trogus (Director, Office of Wellness Promotion) and Dr. Rebecca Rich (Assistant Professor, Dept. of Public Health Sciences) co-coordinated the 2nd Annual Student Health & Well-Being Expo. They also mentored table exhibitors in developing innovative and interactive health education activities for the student body. Thank you for your exceptional work!

MPH student Kayla Gaffney (below) serves as the Office of Wellness Promotion Graduate Assistant and worked with Dr. Trogus and Dr. Rich on the planning and implementation of the event. Additionally, MPH students in the Fall HEA 531 Community as a Basis for Health class participated as table exhibitors. Their interactive health education activities focused on sexual health, mental health & wellness, and sleep disorders. Respiratory care, environmental health, and the global health research team were also well-represented and facilitated engaging activities!



Behind the Scenes of the Expo Coordination



Dr. Rebecca Rich and Leah Frantz (MPH-Health Care Management student and Graduate Assistant) share about their collaboration with Dr. Jayme Trogus on the planning of the 2nd Annual WCU Student Health & Well-Being Expo that was held on November 8th.



Dr. Rich: The idea for this event came from Dr. Jayme Trogus, Director of the Office of Wellness Promotion, and I talking about our passion for college student well-being and health education in this setting. We are both fairly new to WCU and realized that coming back from COVID, students needed engaging ways to learn about how to take care of themselves and connect with each other. This led us to inviting student-led peer health education vendors to be the focus of the expo. This year, we had 27 vendors in nearly all dimensions of wellness, from mental health to alcohol use, sexual health, environmental health, healthy food options, and so many more. The partnership between the Department of Public Health Sciences and the Office of Wellness Promotion is sure to continue and grow beyond the expo for years to come!

A critical public health skill is the implementation of health education strategies to build capacity and support at both an individual and community-level. Leah, as an MPH student and Graduate Assistant with Dr. Rich, how did this experience supplement your MPH training and future career aspirations in health care management?

Leah: Getting the opportunity to be involved in the planning and evaluation process for the Student Health & Well-Being Expo has greatly enhanced my learning experience and given me skills to apply to my future career. It was extremely eye opening to see all the little details and immense planning that goes into making a day like the Expo. Each task from mapping the vendors to make a cohesive experience for the attendees, to analyzing responses from surveys to find patterns in feedback have allowed me to practice skills that I will take with me in my healthcare management career.

Students and early career professionals often would like to bolster their health education skill set. Dr. Rich, what suggestions do you have for them?

Dr. Rich: The CHES certification is the first suggestion that comes to mind. Having the CHES certification not only means you are qualified and have the skillset to deliver strong health education programming, but it can also make you feel more confident in taking on new tasks. I'd also suggest finding some online trainings or webinars in your area of interest to keep you current. For example, I'm a sexuality educator so I attend the Sex Ed Lecture Series online webinars a few times a year because things are always changing and I want to stay up to speed for my students. And like Leah said, getting involved in activities that are happening around you (like the expo) can help you develop valuable transferable skills.



Common certifications in the health education and promotion field include: Certified in Health Education Specialist ([CHES](#)), Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist ([CTTS](#)), and National Board-Certified Health & Wellness Coaches ([NBH-HWC](#)). You may also wish to consider trainings in motivational interviewing ([Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers – MINT](#)) or wellness coaching ([Wellcoaches: Center for Coaching Excellence](#)).

WCU Earns Community Impact Award from the Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County by Naya Weeks



(L-R) Janet Bradley, WCU social work director of field education; Sharon DeJoy, associate professor, public health sciences; Lee Ann Sullivan, MCHC board member and community volunteer; Milena Lanz, MCHC executive director; Chiwoneso Tinago, associate professor, public health sciences; and Michael Burns, associate professor and chair of English

The Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County (MCHC) is a non-profit organization providing families in Chester County with health care access, prenatal health support, and kindergarten readiness since 1991. MCHC’s mission is “to improve maternal and child health through the collaborative efforts of individuals, providers, and policy makers.” MCHC awarded West Chester University with the Community Impact Award at the Celebrating Healthy Families Dinner & Silent Action on October 12, 2023, recognizing a long-term internship and research partnership. This past year, MCHC has collaborated with faculty at West Chester University such as Dr. Sharon DeJoy and Dr. Chiwoneso Tinago, working towards improving public health in Chester County.

The MCHC Executive Director Milena Oberti Lanz is a proud WCU MPH Alum continuing efforts towards her passion for supporting underserved families in Chester County. Milena has contributed over 25 years of experience in nonprofit efforts in the Greater Philadelphia Region and has been Executive Director since 2016. MCHC has also provided WCU students from various departments such as Public Health, English, and Social Work with internship opportunities to support the purpose of MCHC. The outstanding partnership expands to WCU Department of Public Health Science faculty members. For instance, Dr. Chiwoneso Tinago is collaborating with MCHC on a study to understand essential caregiving practices in adolescent and young mothers in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Two MPH graduate assistants, Naya Weeks and Maitiya Meadows, are student collaborators on this research providing support in planning, implementation, and data analysis.

Doula Stakeholder Engagement with Dr. Erin Knight

On November 12, 2023, MPH HCM student Alissa Schroeder and faculty member Dr. Erin Knight presented their research, titled “Informing state policy and system change: Licensed providers’ perceptions of doula care” at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA) in Atlanta, Georgia. Faculty member Dr. Rebecca Rich and community partner Leah Woodall from the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, were co-authors on the presentation. The study was part of a project that began in spring of 2022 with support from Krystal Harbaugh (MPH-CH 2022 graduate), designed to inform policy changes that would increase access to doula care in the state of Delaware. This work is important because there is growing evidence that doulas (lay birth workers) contribute to improved outcomes for birthing people of color and those from low-income communities, who currently experience inequities; however, barriers to care exist. To address these barriers, Delaware is among a growing number of states pursuing Medicaid reimbursement for doulas. Medicaid is the public health insurance program for people with low income, jointly financed by the federal government and state governments. In order to reimburse doulas through Medicaid, the state must apply for approval from the federal government, and the application requires the state to resolve a number of outstanding policy questions.



To inform state efforts and help answer some of these questions, we engaged the community of providers to gather their insights and hear their perspective on important issues related to doula training, certification, and relationships with other members of the care team. We conducted focus groups with doulas across the state in fall of 2022, and subsequently conducted key informant interviews with physicians, midwives and nurses in spring of 2023. We shared our doula focus groups findings at the APHA meeting in 2022, findings from the provider interviews at the most recent meeting of APHA in 2023, and ultimately developed recommendations that we shared with a statewide advisory board in summer of 2023. Reports from both studies are available on the [website](#) of the Delaware Healthy Mother & Infant Consortium (DHMIC), which provides statewide leadership and coordination of efforts to prevent infant and maternal mortality. We are happy to report that Delaware House Bill 80, proposed by Rep. Minor-Brown (who sits on the DHMIC) requiring that doula services be covered by Medicaid by January 1, 2024, was signed by Delaware Governor Carney on August 9, 2023.



Alumni Spotlight: Krystal Harbaugh, MPH currently works as Lead Researcher at Booz Allen Hamilton. She shared about her collaboration with Dr. Knight back as a student. “My experience working with Dr. Knight on the Doula Project was incredibly valuable and prepared me for my current role as a Lead Researcher for prevention-related studies. During my experience, I observed how Dr. Knight effectively and eloquently consulted with other professionals. I often think about these critical communication skills and do my best to apply them whenever I advise my clients. Additionally, the project planning and coordination experience I gained were key skills that have helped me to develop and deliver plans of actions and milestones for client research studies. The comprehensive professional skills I obtained during my experience on the Doula Project is what landed me my first job as a public health professional and are critical skills I utilize daily in my current role. Working with Dr. Knight was an incredible learning experience for which I will be eternally grateful!”



See below for the two report URLs.

- Knight, E. (2023). Doula Stakeholder Engagement: Focus Group Study Report. Prepared for the Division of Public Health, Delaware Health and Social Services. https://ddphim.s3.amazonaws.com/resouces/committees/doula-ad-hoc/DE_Doula_Stakeholder_Engagement_Report_-_Focus_Groups_with_Doulas_Final_8.25.23.pdf
- Knight, E. & Rich, R. (2023). Doula Stakeholder Engagement: Report on Interviews with Licensed Providers of Maternal Health Care. Prepared for the Division of Public Health, Delaware Health and Social Services. https://ddphim.s3.amazonaws.com/resouces/committees/doula-ad-hoc/DE_Doula_Stakeholder_Engagement_Report_-_Interviews_with_Licensed_Providers_of_Maternal_Health_Care_Final_8.25.23.pdf

MPH Alumna Ethel Richards Awarded the Dr. Robert Sklovsky Memorial Scholarship!

Ethel Richards, also known as The Plant Based Nutritionista™, is the founder and Chief Inspiration Officer of iEatMorePlants, LLC. She is also the creator of In the Kitchen w/The Plant Based Nutritionista™ podcast. Her business and brand exist to inspire you with practical tools, tips, and information to take your health back one meal at a time by eating more plants® and moving your body. Ethel believes in this approach so much that she trademarked the simple equation: Gut Health + Movement = Mental Health™. Her equation was designed to help us remember the interconnectedness of food and movement in how we think and move through all the spaces in which we live. Currently, Ethel is a 2nd year Diversity Scholar in the online MScN at NUNM and is looking forward to practicing clinical community nutrition after graduation.



Source: <https://nunm.edu/scholarship-recipient-2023-2024/>

Most recently, Ethel Richards, MPH'08 competed for and won one of the three \$5,000 Dr. Robert Sklovsky Memorial Scholarship awards from the National University of Natural Medicine (NUNM). The purpose of this scholarship is to enrich NUNM's learning community by recognizing and supporting outstanding students from underrepresented populations that include consideration of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and socioeconomic status. This scholarship invests in the inherent value of all people and recognizes that a healthy community includes individuals from various backgrounds, with diverse talents, interests, and life experiences. This scholarship honors diversity.

Ethel's scholarship essay focused on the importance of diversity and inclusiveness in her academic discipline of nutrition and how her personal experiences have informed her views. A substantial component of Ethel's essay discussed the impact of her study abroad experience with Emeritus Professor Dr. Debra Bill in Guanajuato, Mexico in 2007, where she studied the important role of promotoras (lay social workers) in community health. Ethel's essay also discussed food insecurity as observed during her most recent international venture to Cape Town, South Africa, and her plans to practically extend the experiential learnings of both international ventures to help address food security in her current local community of Metro Atlanta, Georgia.

Considering that most comorbid (or disease) statistics have marginalized humans at the top of the list and that nutrition is the foundation of all preventable diseases, substantial diversity and inclusion are critical if we expect to see a substantial dent in the increasing comorbid trends in our collective global public health. I've spent time studying in Mexico, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and recently South Africa and one thing is clear, there are few clinicians and allied health professionals that substantially reflect and speak the language of the underinvested and underserved populations they serve. Diversity, inclusion, and belonging in academic training programs and in the professional workplace, at all levels, is crucial if we really want to see sustainable solutions and healthcare outcomes, like eliminating food deserts and food insecure areas, lowering the healthcare GDP in the United States, and increasing fresh food access leading to better national and international health outcomes overall.

I'm honored to be a scholarship recipient of the Dr. Robert Sklovsky Memorial Scholarship and recognize that every human needs consistent access to fresh quality affordable food if they are to realize positive health outcomes. Yes, I'm here to inspire you to "take your health back one meal at a time by eating more plants®", but I'm also here to be a voice for those whose voices often go unheard and ignored in underinvested and underserved communities. Residents of uninvested and underserved communities must also benefit from and have easy access to certified naturally grown and/or organic whole fresh plant food (e.g., fruits, vegetables, herbs, beans, and legumes). This access should not be seen as a luxury, benefit, or amenity based on zip code or census tract. In the words of Ann Wigmore, "The food you eat can be either the safest and most powerful form of medicine or the slowest form of poison."

To keep up with Ethel Richards, M'08, subscribe to iEatMorePlants® as well as The Plant Based Nutritionista™ YouTube Channels and follow iEatMorePlants® as well as The Plant Based Nutritionista® on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and/or LinkedIn. You may also visit her website: www.iEatMorePlants.com.

The Critical Importance of Respiratory Care in Public Health



**Alexa Moran BS, RRT, CHSE
(MPH in Health Care Management student)
Director of Clinical Education, WCU/Bryn Mawr
Hospital; Instructor, Respiratory Care Program,
Bryn Mawr Hospital**

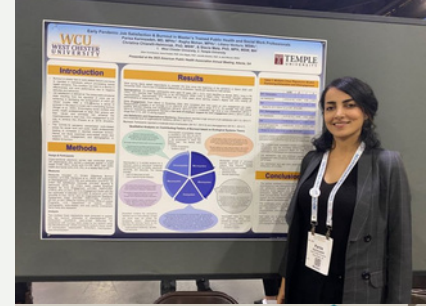
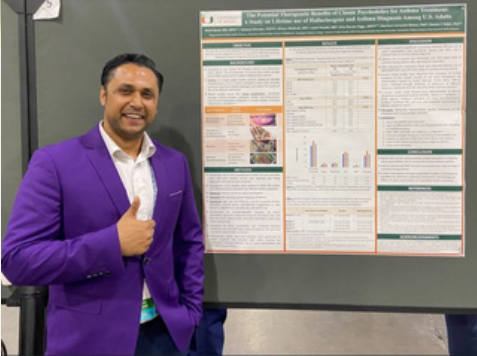
Congratulations again on your work the Director of Clinical Education & Instructor for the WCU/Bryn Mawr Hospital Respiratory Program. Can you talk a little about your role and why respiratory care holds critical importance in the field of public health?

Within my role as Director of Clinical Education, I coordinate the student's clinical rotations, oversee all necessary clinical clearances, generate affiliation agreements, and serve as a liaison between the program and our 16 clinical sites. Within my role, I also develop and run clinical simulations. Clinical simulations help our students practice their skills in a safe environment prior to stepping foot in the hospital. Simulation also allows our students to experience interprofessional education and collaborate with other disciplines within college of health sciences such as, nursing, nutrition, speech language pathology, and the physician assistant program. Respiratory therapists work to evaluate, treat, educate, and care for patients with breathing disorders.

They have become particularly crucial in the care and treatment of COVID patients. As COVID often affects the lungs, respiratory therapists provide critical care to these patients through ventilator management and by helping to maintain adequate oxygenation and ventilation. In addition to the part they play in the COVID pandemic, respiratory therapists also work with infants as young as 23-weeks old who have incomplete lung development as well as adults who have been diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) such as emphysema or pulmonary fibrosis. As it relates to public health, respiratory therapists play a vital role when it comes to tobacco use and lung disease. They educate their patients on smoking cessation, demonstrate proper inhaler use and breathing techniques, and offer support.

What is your interest area and how do you see the blend of respiratory care and health care management?

Prior to being in an educational role, I was in a supervisor role for a respiratory care department. I think that the experience I have gained within that role and the courses I have taken in the MPH program, have significantly helped me become a better director of clinical education. Within my role, I manage relationships between the respiratory care program and each clinical site and am responsible for the student's overall clinical experience. I also teach students about the many layers of the health care industry. Although all my courses I have taken have been extremely beneficial, I would say my favorite classes thus far have been HEA 513 Legal Aspects of Health Care and HEA 516 Health Care Management with Dr. Holt. I took a lot of what I learned in each course and was able to pass on that knowledge to my respiratory care students!



Students, Alumni, and Faculty Present and Connect at the 2023 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting & Exposition!

Alissa Schroeder, MPHc, Dr. Erin Knight, Dr. Rebecca Rich, and colleague presented on “Informing state policy and system change: Licensed providers' perceptions of doula care.”

Parisa Karimzadeh, MD, MPHc, Ragha Mohan, MPHc, and Dr. Stacie Metz presented with WCU social work and Temple public health colleagues on “Early pandemic job satisfaction and burnout in master’s trained public health and social work professionals.”

Amrit Baral, MD, MPH, PhDc is currently a PhD candidate in Epidemiology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Amrit and his co-authors presented on “The potential therapeutic benefits of classic psychedelics for asthma treatment: A study on lifetime use of hallucinogens and asthma diagnosis among U.S. adults” and “Disparities in drug poisoning mortality among adults in Florida by race/ethnicity and Hispanic heritage.”

Casey Fenoglio, MPH, CHES® (Director of Community Engagement at Pottstown Hospital - Tower Health) and colleagues presented their documentary, “Takin’ it to the streets: A unique approach to healthcare,” in the Public Health Film Festival Short Films session. The film highlights the Montgomery County Street Medicine program and the collaborative effort to bring healthcare to those experiencing homelessness.

Rashad Freeman, MPH, CHES® is currently a PhD student in Health Behavior at Indiana University Bloomington and presented with colleagues on “Using the longitudinal studies of child abuse and neglect (LONGSCAN) to apply an expanded adverse childhood experience (ACEs) framework to predict substance use in late adolescence.”

Thank you to Dr. Gopal Sankaran for his service as an elected member of the APHA Executive Board!

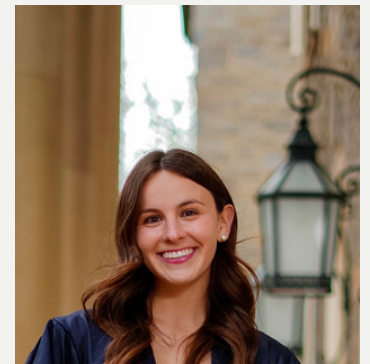


Photos include the Executive Board members and leadership.

2024-2025 PROVOST RESEARCH GRANT AWARDED TO DRS. HOLT, STONE, AND KIM



Drs. Harry D. Holt and Ramona Stone in collaboration with Dr. Jongwoong Kim from the Department of Geography and Planning were awarded a Provost Research Grant for the 2024 – 2025 Academic Year. Dr. Holt and Stone are also very grateful for the contributions and research of MPH student and Graduate Assistant Melanie DeCecco in the preparation of the proposal submission. Melanie is finishing her first semester in the MPH Community Health Track. She previously completed a Bachelor of Science degree at the Pennsylvania State University in Biobehavioral Health with a Minor in Health Policy and Administration.



Melanie DeCecco
(MPH-Community Health
student and Department of
Public Health Sciences
Graduate Assistant)

Graduate students will be working in collaboration with Dr. Kim, Holt, and Stone on the study throughout the Fall 2024, Spring 2025, and Summer 2025 semesters. They will be assessing rural hospital performance, clinical outcomes, and financial data along with using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map changes in access to care for rural patients.

This study will produce preliminary data on the impact of recent hospital mergers, consolidations or restructuring on hospital sustainability and compare them to rural hospitals that have not been consolidated or restructured. GIS analysis will be used to map changes in access to care that rural Pennsylvania residents have to hospitals that have merged, consolidated, or restructured. This study focuses on rural hospital sustainability in Pennsylvania. Over 29% of rural hospitals nationwide are at risk of closing in 2023 for financial reasons. In Pennsylvania, 12 of the 43 rural hospitals are at risk of closing due to loss of patient services and low financial reserves. Five out of these 12 are at risk of immediate closing due to uncovered expenses and very low financial reserves; this translates into 28% of the rural hospitals at risk of closure in Pennsylvania. This study focuses on identifying the changes that take place in Pennsylvania hospitals to mitigate the situation, most commonly hospital mergers, hospital consolidations with a larger system, or hospitals adopting some other health care delivery model.

The study will use quantitative methods to describe, compare, and contrast on key indicators, as relevant to each goal above in our population of interest:

- (1) rural hospitals of Pennsylvania that incurred a status change during 2016-2022,
- (2) stand-alone rural hospitals in Pennsylvania, and
- (3) rural hospitals with similar circumstances in three neighboring states (OH, MD, WV).

This pilot study is a significant contribution to the fields of rural hospital sustainability and healthcare finance. Understanding these factors is critical to the ensuring rural hospitals remain accessible for rural residents and understanding the impact of recent hospital mergers/consolidations or restructuring. The need to develop this knowledge is critical as rural hospital closure rates steadily increase, federal regulations constantly change in an attempt to keep rural hospitals operating. A better understanding of rural hospital sustainability will assist managers and policy makers develop approaches for survival as a standalone hospital or strategically merge or restructure to remain operational.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

[*DENOTES STUDENT AUTHOR]

Anguyo, G., Tinago, C. B., Scalleat, M.*, Weeks, N.*, Kamugisha, A., Sankaran, G., Johnson, K., Baba, Z., Davidson, P., & Katirai, W. (2023). Assessing the Effectiveness of Rabbit Farming in Communities with Food Insecurity and Poverty. Research and oral presentation at the Africa Interdisciplinary Health Conference (AfIHC) in Nairobi, Kenya, on Wednesday, August 9.

Karimzadeh, P.*, Mohan, R.*, Chiarelli-Helminiak, C., & Metz, S. (2023). Job satisfaction, civic engagement, and burnout in MPH and MSW professionals early in the pandemic. Poster presented at the American Public Health Association 2023 Annual Meeting & Expo, Atlanta, GA, November 12-15, 2023.

Knight, E., Rich, R., Schroeder, A.*, & Woodall, L.J. (November 12, 2023). Informing state policy and system change: Licensed providers' perceptions of doula care. American Public Health Association Annual Meeting & Exposition.

McDonough, K. & Knight, E. (2023). Eliminating barriers, supporting sport spaces among youth who are incarcerated. Oral Presentation at the 2023 North American Society for the Sociology of Sport.

Sankaran, G. (2023). Invited by Women in Global Health (WGH), served as a panelist for a fireside chat session on Towards a Gender Equal Global Health: A Conversation. 151st Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association in Atlanta, Georgia on Tuesday, November 14.

Sankaran, G. (2023). Oral presentation, Who protects public's health in the face of calamities: Leveraging technology and other innovative tools for future action. 151st Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association in Atlanta, Georgia on Monday, November 13.

Sankaran, G. (2023). Invited Panelist, fireside chat session on UN Sustainable Development Goals: Opportunities to Increase Health Equity. Presented on Challenges to provision of sustainable oral health care for children globally. 151st Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association in Atlanta, Georgia on Sunday, November 12.

PUBLICATIONS

Brown, C.*, **Vazquez, J.***, **Metz, S. M.**, & **McCown, D.** (2023). Effects of an 8-week mindfulness course in people with voice disorders. *Journal of Voice*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2023.10.031>

Edelblute, H. B., **Baba, Z.**, **Tinago, C. B.**, & **Fyalkowski, S.*** (2023). Exploring acculturative stress and family dynamics in African immigrant students in the US: Implications for mental health. *Ethnicity & Health*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2023.2279935>

Knight, E. (2023). Doula Stakeholder Engagement: Focus Group Study Report. Prepared for the Division of Public Health, Delaware Health and Social Services. https://ddphim.s3.amazonaws.com/resouces/committees/doula-ad-hoc/DE_Doula_Stakeholder_Engagement_Report_-_Focus_Groups_with_Doulas_Final_8.25.23.pdf

Knight, E., & **Rich, R.** (2023). Doula Stakeholder Engagement: Report on Interviews with Licensed Providers of Maternal Health Care. Prepared for the Division of Public Health, Delaware Health and Social Services. https://ddphim.s3.amazonaws.com/resouces/committees/doula-ad-hoc/DE_Doula_Stakeholder_Engagement_Report_-_Interviews_with_Licensed_Providers_of_Maternal_Health_Care_Final_8.25.23.pdf

Lavery, A., **Knight, E.**, **Cole, S.**, & **Metz, S. M.** (2023). Interprofessional collaboration to address social isolation and facilitate intergenerational service-learning within graduate education. *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*, 15(1), 14-22.

McDonough, K. & **Knight, E.** (2023). Inequitable access to sport in juvenile justice across the USA: Findings from a national survey. *Health Promotion International*, 38(2), daac170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2023.2244042>

McDonough, K. & **Knight, E.** (2023). Utilizing a logic model for sport program planning, implementation, and evaluation in juvenile justice systems. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 94(8), 29-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2023.2244042>

ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS

Baral, A., **Cranford, H. M.**, **Sharma, J.**, & **Pinheiro, P. S.** (2023). The prognostic role of cigarette smoking in Kidney Cancer survival. *Cancer Medicine* 12(13), 14756-14766. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cam4.6104>

Casola, A. R., **Luber K.**, & **Riley, A. H.** (2023). Period poverty: An epidemiologic and biopsychosocial analysis. *Health Promotion Practice*. First published online August 21, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248399231192998>

Chery, M., **Baral, A.**, **Rolle, L.**, **Bernard, M.**, **Sanchez Alfonso, A. G.**, **Duthely, L. M.**, **Jean-Louis, G.**, **Seixas, A.**, & **Blanc, J.** (2023). Depression and sleep health in a nationwide survey: Implications for depression therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sleep*, 46(1), A424. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/zsad077.0962>

Nahin, R., **Feinberg, T.**, **Kapos, F. P.**, & **Terman, G. W.** (2023). Estimated rates of incident and persistent chronic pain among US adults, 2019-2020. *JAMA Network Open*, 6(5), e2313563. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.13563>

Khoshbaten, M., **Maleki, S. H.**, **Hadad, S.**, **Baral, A.**, **Rocha, A. V.**, **Poudel, L.**, & **Abdshah, A.** (2023). Association of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and carotid media-intima thickness: A systematic review and a meta-analysis. *Health Science Reports*, 6(9), e1554. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.1554>

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sankaran, G. (2023). Committee for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CELT) Fall Book Club. Read *Relationship-Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College* by Peter Felten and Leo M. Lambert, 2020, Johns Hopkins University Press. Virtual discussion meetings on Wednesday, October 4 and Wednesday, November 8.

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Metz, S. M. (2023-present). Site Visitor, National Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)

Metz, S. M. (2023-present). Elected Board Member, The Alliance for Health Equity, Coatesville, PA

Sankaran, G. (2023). Moderated the scientific session, Pandemic Preparedness: Lessons Learned and Moving Forward. 151st Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association in Atlanta, Georgia on Monday, November 13.

Sankaran, G. (2023). Member, Code of Conduct Review Panel, an ad-hoc committee of the Executive Board of the American Public Health Association (APHA) beginning in September. Reappointed to Governance and Finance & Audit Committees of the Executive Board of APHA for another one-year term beginning in November.

INVITED GUEST LECTURES

Sankaran, G. (2023). Invited guest lecture, An Overview of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, in PH 250: Health and Disease course at Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado, on Monday, September 18.

Sankaran, G. (2023). Invited series of three guest lectures, Foundations of Epidemiology; Descriptive Epidemiology; and U.S. Health Care System, Health Disparities, and Health Equity, in PAS 515: Professional Issues and Healthcare Policy course for Physician Assistant students at West Chester University, Exton Campus, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, September 6, 13, and 20, respectively.

Sankaran, G. (2023). Invited series of two guest lectures, Foundations of Epidemiology and Descriptive Epidemiology in PHYA 542: Research Methods in Health and Disease course for Physician Assistant Studies students at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Pennsylvania on Tuesday, August 15 and 22, respectively.

We wish
you the
happiest
of
Holidays!

