A message from the editor…

Happy Spring 2020 semester!

Thank you for reading the MPH Memos newsletter! For new students and as a refresher for returning students, the MPH Memos exists to connect, highlight, and inform MPH students at UTK. Students send submissions, faculty and other students recommend students for stories and features, and I am always on the lookout for relevant information.

The Memos are sent out by print, email, and website three times per semester, taking more of a long-form approach to events and departmental happenings. Be sure follow the Department on social media or check the website or Listserv for more regular updates. I hope you enjoy the stories and resources and happenings I am able to pull together and as a result, you feel more connected to other students, the Department, and the field of public health.

Please send submissions throughout the semester to me by email at cbmiller@vols.utk.edu or through this survey, which is always open for your feedback: https://memossurvey.questionpro.com. Thank you again for reading! - Catherine Miller

Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 3, 2020</td>
<td>Spring 2020 Comprehensive Exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 6—12, 2020</td>
<td>National Public Health Week (<a href="http://www.nphw.org/about-nphw">http://www.nphw.org/about-nphw</a> )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 24, 2020</td>
<td>Last day of classes for Spring 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be sure to frequent the Graduate School page for information and important deadlines related to graduation. It is your responsibility to meet the posted deadlines for your anticipated graduation date.
Ahmad Mitoubsi
Student Highlight
Ahmad is this year’s PHGSA President.
Let’s get to know him!

Hey, Ahmad! Please introduce yourself.

Hi, my name is Ahmad Mitoubsi. I am a third semester in the MPH program. My concentration is in Health Policy and Management. I was born and raised in Knoxville, TN and I call Tennessee my home. I like to travel, cook, and enjoy the Great Smokey Mountains. I graduated undergrad from UTK in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

Awesome! Why did you choose to pursue an MPH?

The MPH is appealing to me because of the broad range of public health topics it covers. As I volunteered in many different organizations, like Remote Area Medical, I saw patients in pain and who needed help in many ways. These experiences volunteering inspired me and provided me with insights on both people’s health and healthcare. Those moments made me want to make a change to impact the community.

You’re this year’s PHGSA President. Congrats! Can you give people an overview of what PHGSA is and what your plans are for this year?

The Public Health Graduate Student Association (PHGSA) is a University of Tennessee student organization for MPH and DrPH students. The PHGSA board members are planning many exciting events for the year. PHGSA envisions increasing members, increasing public health awareness, resume building, and getting people involved in the community.

We are planning on having several events over the course of the spring semester including:

⇒ A recruitment and information party
⇒ PHGSA members volunteer event
⇒ Donation box at events for the campus homelessness and hunger initiative
⇒ National Public Health Week events
⇒ End of the year party and much more

Any public health graduate students can be involved and to get involved please reach out to me or one of the board members. We are looking for a bright and cheerful semester!
Help us welcome our 2020 PHGSA Officers!

**President:** Ahmad Mitoubsi, HPM student, amitoubs@vols.utk.edu

**Vice President:** Zhannae Cummings, CHE student, zcummin1@vols.utk.edu

**Treasurer:** Samira Tamimi, HPM student, stamimi@vols.utk.edu

**Secretary:** Kayla Simon, HPM student, kbyerle1@vols.utk.edu

**Philanthropy Chair:** Sierra Turner, CHE student, sturne61@vols.utk.edu

---

**PHGSA Event**

The Public Health Graduate Student Association (PHGSA) would like to invite you to our recruitment/mixer pizza party on 2/20/2020 at 6:30 pm (right after seminar)!

This is for all students (MPH or DrPH), faculty and staff.

There will be PIZZA, PRIZES, and FUN! PHGSA would love to see everyone there!

**Thursday, February 20th at 6:30 pm in HPER 239**

Please RSVP using the link below and note any dietary restrictions. We hope to see you there!

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M3FmtOdqQNSft4OrVj0JxAo4uxVynUDE9PklIHSDEU/edit

---

**Public Health Graduate Student Association (PHGSA)**
Graduate Student Senate (GSS)

Do you know the Graduate School has a Student Senate? Our Senator is Ashlyn Schwartz, PhD student. Here’s what she said about GSS:

The Graduate Student Senate (GSS) is a student-run organization which serves as a liaison between graduate students and the administration. We help to ensure that policies at the university are created and maintained to best serve our graduate student population.

Specifically, if you have questions, comments, or concerns regarding travel awards, graduate student resources, professional development travel awards, and graduate student events, please reach out to me at aschwa13@vols.utk.edu.

Public Health Resources

Public Health Newswire

The American Public Health Association (APHA) posts public health news and conversation at the Public Health Newswire at http://www.publichealthnewswire.org/. You don’t have to be an APHA member to access the site. Every few days, they pull together current and relevant public health-related news stories from a variety of sources. You can also search by topic! Check it out! While you’re there, submit an abstract to APHA 2020—abstract submissions are due February 20, 2020.

Or, check out the CDC’s weekly publication: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report for weekly public health information and recommendations. Subscribe and learn more at: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/mmwrsubscribe.html
Sierra Turner is a first-year MPH student in the CHE concentration. She had a memorable winter break experience and shared it with me for the Memos!

Sierra’s mom saved up this year to take Sierra and her sister on a cruise to Central America and Mexico in December. They have been on one cruise before as a family, but this was their longest. They visited Grand Cayman Island; Roatán, Honduras; Cozumel, Mexico; and Belize City, Belize.

At Grand Cayman Island, they swam with stingrays and snorkeled. In Honduras, they took a bus tour and saw the city, and they jet skied. In Cozumel, they snorkeled again, and Sierra got stung by multiple jellyfish. She even got to try a fish pedicure! Belize was a surprising favorite.

The family got to enjoy time together, making memories, and bond as a family that otherwise doesn’t get to see one another much due to work schedules. Last year and this year, Sierra’s family used the tradition of a yearly vacation to find solidarity and unity and fun after the loss of their father in 2015. Sierra speaks Spanish, and she really enjoyed acting as her family’s interpreter and seeing other women who look like her and also speak Spanish.

With this cruise, Sierra has now visited 11 countries. She has had a goal since she graduated her undergraduate program; within five years of graduating undergrad, she wants to buy a one-way ticket to Central or South America to live and work there for at least one year. She enjoys being a part of research projects and the structure of research. She has found, through being a part of Dr. Ehrlich’s research team, that she is more detail-oriented than she thought she was; and she has found that to be a desired skill in the research field!

She hopes to complete her MPH Field Placement internationally and is working to build those connections now. With her passion for community health and research, she wants to work in public health research when she graduates. She hopes to start as a research assistant in an international university, ideally in Central or South America. Thanks for sharing your experience and how it related to your professional goals, Sierra!

Do you have an interesting personal or professional experience to share with other students in the Department? Contact editor, Catherine Miller, at cbmiller@vols.utk.edu. I’d be happy to help you share your experience and share your story with other MPH students!
The **Hunger Studies Working Group** is a new group of staff, faculty and students from across the UTK campus that have come together through their common interests related to food insecurity.

The group represents a united effort to lessen problems faced by students and to raise awareness throughout the entire campus community about hunger - on a local to global scale - and its effects and causes. The group, working together with the various departments on campus and with community partners, will develop sustainable initiatives to lessen the effects of food insecurity on our campus.

The end-goal is to find solutions for food insecurity among our campus community – including staff and students online and on campus – through long-term initiatives and university policy. However, **initially, the Hunger Studies Working Group aims to increase awareness of food insecurity on a campus through a themed-year on food insecurity awareness including events and activities.**

If interested in joining the Working Group or learning more about their work, talk to Dr. Brown, or contact Gretchen at gneisler@utk.edu.

---

The Department of Public Health is conducting 3 searches for faculty positions. They include:

1) A faculty member with expertise in Health Policy and Management

2) Department Head for the Department of Public Health

3) Two teaching faculty, to teach undergraduate and graduate courses.

Your input is valued! For each position, candidates will visit and have several opportunities to meet students. You can attend their Job Talks or their meetings with students to get to know them and let the Search Committee know your thoughts. These are a great way to have an impact in the future of our Department!

If you have questions or comments, please talk with Dr. Brown.

---

Some Public Health students are attending the 2020 Planned Parenthood Takes the Hill on Tuesday, February 2020 at the Cordell Hull Building in Nashville, TN. Attendees will receive legislative skills training, meet with legislators, and attend committee hearings on behalf of Planned Parenthood. Transportation, lunch, and a t-shirt are provided. Contact Molly at mrigell@vols.utk.edu for more information!

Sign up here: [https://www.weareplannedparenthood.org/onlineactions/63aqwF4hFUaGLcoqcq-SZq2?emci=6b22cd08-bf30-ea11-a601-2818784d6d68&emdi=51468968-5e31-ea11-a1cc-2818784d084f&ceid=13126496](https://www.weareplannedparenthood.org/onlineactions/63aqwF4hFUaGLcoqcq-SZq2?emci=6b22cd08-bf30-ea11-a601-2818784d6d68&emdi=51468968-5e31-ea11-a1cc-2818784d084f&ceid=13126496)
Hey, Steffi! Thanks for sharing about your Field Placement in the Memos.

Please introduce yourself.

Hello everyone! My name is Steffi Sellge and I am a third year veterinary student in the dual DVM/MPH Program. I was born in Boston, MA, but have moved almost every 2-4 years of my life before moving to Knoxville for veterinary school in 2017.

I have a dog (Chance) and two cats (Mowgli and Bernard). When I'm not studying, I enjoy yoga, eating tasty food, running, and hiking with Chance.

I graduated from UTC in Chattanooga with a Bachelor of Science in Biology, and have always known I would become a veterinarian!

Awesome. Why did you choose to pursue an MPH?

I discovered the Dual DVM/MPH program during my first year of veterinary school, and knew I had to enroll. I have always been passionate about the intersection of animals, especially wildlife, and humans and how that relationship can improve the lives of both sides. So it seemed only natural that my DVM degree would teach me how to help animals while the MPH would give me the tools to help humans as well!

Learn more about the Dual DVM/MPH program that Steffi is a part of: https://publichealth.utk.edu/degree-programs/dual/

MPH students of all concentrations may also be interested in an international One Health conference hosted by alumni Kelsey Nicolson and Dr. Hannah Robinson in Fairbanks, Alaska. Click here for more details: https://www.uaf.edu/onehealth/events/2020_conference/index.php

Continued on next page...
Department News: Congratulations!

Femi Onaade is an MPH student in the HPM concentration, and she is a graduate assistant working with the SORRT class and Graduate Certificate in Food Safety. She and her husband, Femi, welcomed baby Leeann Iroyinayo Oyedeji, on 1/24/2020. They are all doing well. Congratulations!

Dr. Kintziger is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health. Dr. K and her husband, Jeff, welcomed baby Judah David, on 1/21/2020. Dr. K shared that she likes to plan, but nothing about this little guy has been according to plan! He decided to make his grand entrance in the world several weeks early. However, mom and baby are both doing well. And big sister, McKayla, is enjoying her new room and helping care for her little brother!

Tell us about your MPH Field Placement! Where did you complete it? What were your main deliverables?

This past summer I had the privilege of going to University of Pretoria in South Africa to work in the Public Health Department. While there, I helped create a digital survey to give to dairy farmers in the province that looked at their management of their cattle and how it may lead to antibiotic resistant cases of mastitis in the herds.

I also used SAS to analyze samples submitted to the University’s lab for the levels of antimicrobial resistant samples of their canine patients across many years.

So neat! What are your plans post-graduation? How did your FP help you define those goals?

Through my experiences during my field placement and the amazing mentors I had, I discovered that I want to pursue a PhD when graduating veterinary school in 2021. If not for the MPH program and my field placement, I would have taken an entirely different path.

I want to encourage students looking at field placements to explore outside of their comfort zone, especially since there are many scholarships or paid positions out there that can help fund international field placements!

Thank you for sharing your experience with the Memos, Steffi!
We invite you to join the

Equity & Diversity Book Club

Hosted by the Equity and Diversity Committee
Refreshments will be provided.

Spring 2020 Book: White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo

Book Club meetings will occur after Graduate Seminar (6:30pm) in the Public Health Conference room on the following dates:
- January 30th: Chapters 1-4
- February 27th: Chapters 5-8
- March 26th: Chapters 9-12
- April 23rd: TBD (Make-up Meeting/Wrap-up Meeting)

The book is available at Hodges Library to be reserved. This book is also available at Walmart, on Union Ave. Books and on Amazon.

The E &D Committee would like to remind the Department about the Book Club this semester! All are welcome to attend. The e-book is available for checkout at: https://www.lib.utk.edu/.

You can RSVP for the meeting here: https://edbookclubmeetingrsvp.questionpro.com. Contact co-chairs Darrian Nash (dnash6@vols.utk.edu) or Dr. Jabson Tree (jabstree@utk.edu) with questions. They hope to see you there!
Sierra Turner, 1st year MPH student in CHE concentration and PHGSA Philanthropy Chair, gave us a recap of the Black Issues Conference, which took place on February 1st in the Student Union. At least four Public Health graduate students attended. Thanks, Sierra, for this recap of the event and your reflections on it as public health in action!

Let’s start with how I found out about the conference! I was at TRECS in January working out, and I saw a flyer noting the Black Issues Conference. Instantly, I took a picture and texted the photo out to all of my friends and coworkers in Knoxville. I notified all of my professors in the PH Department that this event was occurring (even though an email was not sent out by the campus organization arranging the event). I felt inclined to spread the word because I just knew this conference was going to be of great value. There were 5 graduate students (4 from the Public Health department) who sat with me for Opening Session.

The conference took place in Student Union on February 1, 2020 – which is the first day of Black History Month! In total, I observed about 200 attendees. Personally, I thought there would be more people present, but regardless, there was a decent amount of people. Of those present, there was about a 70/30 ratio of those of color to those who were white. With this representation, I must say, I have never felt so welcomed in my life on UT’s campus. Seeing dozens of people who like me, seeking to their further knowledge on Black issues, was an experience I won’t forget.

After the 15 minute opening session, the conference broke out into workshops. I had the hardest time deciding which of the 6 Workshop A options. In particular, I was torn between ‘Mental Health among Afro-Centric People: Every Piece Is Vital To the Puzzle’ and ‘Redefining what it Means to be Black’. I was torn because I wasn’t sure if I wanted my Workshop Session A to pertain to my professional interests (aka the Mental Health workshop) or my personal interests (aka Redefining what it Mean to be Black workshop). After processing my choice aloud with my nearby peers, I decided to use this conference as personal nourishment rather than the latter. In effect, I let this decision guide my Workshop Session B choice as well.

The session was set up lecture-style and led by a middle-aged African American male telling his story. He grew up thinking that being black meant to be a “thug” or be “hard”, and he realized having that perspective of blackness limited him in reaching his full potential. As he aged, he began to adjust his perspective to allow his blackness to not only allow him to be limitless but also empowered. Although I could not personally relate to his life experiences, I did resonate with his perspective change on blackness. I too thought that being black in America meant I would never be enough, but I am slowly but surely realizing that a one-label characteristic does not define all that I am and what I can bring to the table.

For Workshop Session B, I attended ‘How to Advance Civil Rights through Politics’. This session was organized panel style with time for Q&A at the end. As of recently, I have become more interested in policy-based approaches, so I thought this session might be good for me…and it was! I learned that although we have made progress in the Black community, in many facets of civil rights, we have not progressed at all. It also included ways to get involved in local politics here in Knoxville. Being new to Knoxville, I found this panel quite interesting and informing!