

MPH Memos

WELCOME BACK!

Happy New Year Department of Public Health! Welcome to 2021! Hope you all took some time to relax and recharge this break as we head into another unconventional semester. Tips for success? Set small, attainable goals, establish a routine, focus on one task at a time, take regular breaks, and practice self-compassion. As a reminder, there are three memos released per semester. If you have any feedback, submissions, or comments, please feel free to contact me at pprother@vols.utk.edu and take this [short survey to provide feedback about the newsletter](#).

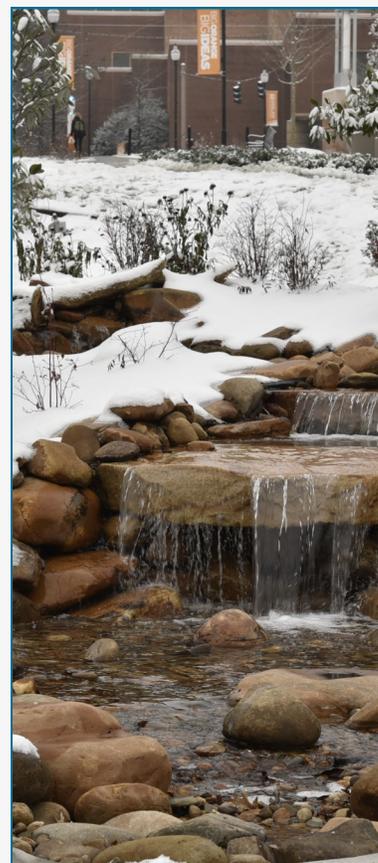
CAMPUS EVENTS

- **Safe Zone Tier 1 & Tier 2 Trainings:** Hosted by the Pride Center. Multiple dates throughout February, March, and April. [Register here](#).
- **Graduate Student Social:** Hosted by the Division of Student Success. Thursday, February 4th 5-6 PM. [ZOOM link](#). Tuesday, February 9th 5-6 PM. [ZOOM link](#).
- **Community Engagement Seminar Series:** Cultural Competency and Community Engagement. Hosted by the Office of Community Engagement and Outreach. Thursday, February 18th at 2:00 PM. [ZOOM registration link](#).
- **CMJ Student Leadership Series:** Effectively Communicating Across Difference. Thursday, February 25th at 6:00 PM. [ZOOM link](#).
- **Generating Justice Spring Speaker Series: Allyship: Step by Step.** Hosted by the UT College of Social Work. Thursday, February 25th at 7:00 PM. Attend via Facebook Live. [Event link](#).
- **Community Conversations:** Health Equity and Race. Hosted by the Office of Community Engagement and Outreach. Friday, February 26th at 10:00 AM. [ZOOM link](#).

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IMPORTANT DATES

- National Public Health Week is **April 5th-11th**
- Last day of classes is **Wednesday, April 28th**



PHGSA: MEET THE NEW OFFICERS

Egla Lopez: President

I am a first-year PhD student and grew up in New Mexico. My passions include physical fitness and cooking/baking. My research interests include the Latinx community and diversity and inclusion.



Movement Sciences Department at the University of North Florida. My research interests are centered around exercise for prevention and treatment of hyperglycemia during and after pregnancy. Other interests include hiking, yoga, craft breweries, plant-based baking and cooking, art, and spoiling my lab/boxer mix.

Parth Goenka: Treasurer

I was born and raised in Johnson City, TN. I went to NYU for undergrad where I got my BA in Global Public Health/Sociology with a pre-health emphasis. I'm currently studying health policy & management, and I have enjoyed my time so far. I'm hoping to have a career as a doctor, either in Primary Care or Oncology. Either way, I hope to use my MPH to address disparities in cancer care within the SE United States. For fun, I love watching sports (big NY Giants & NY Knicks fan), cooking, & traveling.



Jeremy Kourvelas: Vice President

Originally from Memphis, I have lived in Knoxville for more than a decade. After obtaining a BA in psychology from UTK and working in multiple emergency departments across East TN for four years, I have returned to my alma mater for an MPH, concentrating in CHE while seeking a health policy certificate. I currently work as a GA for the [Smart Policy Network](#), crafting policy briefs about telehealth and substance use disorder, and as a GTA for the public health department, assisting in the development of online classes. Improving the American healthcare system is my career goal, and in my spare time I shoot photography, play guitar in a band, and write fiction/non-fiction.



Isis West: Philanthropist

My name is Isis West and I am a first year MPH student in the epidemiology concentration from Nashville, Tennessee. I attended the University of Tennessee, Knoxville for undergrad and received a Bachelor's of Arts in Anthropology with a minor in Public Health. I am also the first in my family to graduate from college and enter a master's program. Currently I serve as a Graduate Assistant for the Office of Academic Inclusive Initiatives. Within this position I am responsible for creating and implementing programs for First-Generation students at the University and guiding their success throughout their first year. On my free time I like to paint and watch Big Brother!



Bethany Rand: Secretary

I am a first-year doctoral candidate in the Public Health PhD program, with a cognate in exercise science. I work as a GA for Dr. Samantha Ehrlich in the Department of Public Health. I received my Master of Science degree in Exercise Science & Chronic Disease while serving as a GRA and lab instructor in the Clinical & Applied



APPLIED PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

Meet the interim Applied Practice Experience (APE) coordinator, Amanda Letheren! Learn about her below and tips for finding an APE.

Please introduce yourself!

I am a DrPH candidate in the Department of Public Health in Community Health Education finishing my fifth and final year. I am originally from Lilburn, Georgia (suburb outside of Atlanta), but I consider Maryville, Tennessee my home. My research is focused on improving access to care and eliminating health disparities in rural communities. More specifically, my dissertation focuses on the impact of rural hospital closures as it relates to access to care in vulnerable communities of TN. Outside of academia, you can find me cooking, yoga-ing, or walking my dogs!



What is your role as the APE coordinator?

This semester, I am serving as the Interim Applied Experience Coordinator. I completed both of my MPH and DrPH Applied Practice Experiences within the department, so I am very familiar with the process. The Applied Practice Experience is a 240 hour professional experience that bridges academic theory to public health practice. It is required for our MPH graduate program and is typically completed in the last semester before graduation. The APE often serves as a springboard to employment in the public health workforce!

Do you have any tips for finding and securing an APE?

Tips to consider when selecting an APE field site:

1. Location. Ideally, your field site should be in the city you wish to live. Are you able to relocate? Do you need to stay local? These are the questions you should be thinking about.
2. Funding. Is funding essential?
3. Type of agency. Government? Non-Profit? For-Profit? Hospital? Selection of agency should be based on your career goals.

For additional information, visit the [Public Health Website](#) and check out the forms listed under “Students.” Please contact me at alethere@vols.utk.edu with any questions!

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect us all from our personal lives to our graduate studies as we adapt to virtual learning. As public health students, we have a responsibility to be role models in how to stay safe, healthy, and protect others!

Reminders:

- Anytime you are going to campus, complete the [Daily Health Self-Screening](#) in the Tennessee App.
- The Student Health Center is offering [COVID-19 testing!](#) You can call to make an appointment at **865-974-5050**.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds, wear a mask, and stay six feet away from others!
- For information about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the [TN Department of Health](#)
- Participate in [UTK community saliva testing](#). There are several dates & locations



APE HIGHLIGHT: KAYLA SIMON

MPH Concentration: Healthcare Policy and Management.

Grad School Jobs: Graduate Teaching Assistant for Julie Grubaugh in PUBH 201, Graduate Research Assistant for Project Wellness with Dr. Samantha Ehrlich.

My hobbies during grad school have been reading and painting to relax. During quarantine, my husband and I went on a lot of walks around our apartment complex and in the park nearby. We walked so much a stray cat (we creatively named Orange) started following us every time we go out. He now gets regular pets, meals, water, and has a bed on the porch.

Tell us about your applied practice experience!

My Applied Practice Experience came about after Julie said we could get a job that also counts as our APE if it's in public health. I had applied to four unpaid internships and only heard back from one. I immediately applied to several public health related jobs in the area. I interviewed for my current position with the East TN Regional Health Office in mid-November, and they offered me the job two weeks later. Before coming back to school, I worked in health education for a few years, and I think my existing connections (plus new ones I've made in school and the fact that I'm in graduate school) helped set me apart from the other applicants. My official title is Public Health Program Director, and the program is one from the Opioid Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) grant from the CDC. My goal after school was to work for the State or another local government so it's a relief to have achieved that before graduation.



The main priorities of my grant (and what I'm focusing my APE on) are developing an Acute Opioid Overdose Response plan for the region, developing new Emergency Department Overdose Protocols, and providing technical support to counties with anti-drug coalitions and those working to expand syringe exchange services. Day to day I'm in meetings with folks at the Knox County Health Department or other substance misuse non-profits like Metro Drug Coalition and ASAP of Anderson County. So far, I've used program evaluation, epidemiology, and program development skills I learned in class. The State Health Department is very by the book, which I appreciate. It leaves some room for creativity but relies heavily on CDC best practices and evidence-based protocols. My bread & butter.

What are your career goals after graduation?

My plan after graduation is to stay in this position until the grant ends in 2023. Afterwards I would like to move to a director or coordinator position in the STI/HIV prevention department (my first love).

ATTEND THE BLACK ISSUES CONFERENCE!

SAVE THE DATE
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2021

16TH ANNUAL

BLACK ISSUES
CONFERENCE

Manifesting Hope, Health, and Healing

REGISTRATION & PRESENTATION PROPOSALS
NOW OPEN AT
TINY.UTK.EDU/BIC21

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE
OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL STUDENT LIFE

For more information and disability accommodations, please contact the Office of Multicultural Student Life at 865-974-6861 or multicultural@utk.edu

The conference will be held from 10 AM- 4PM via ZOOM. Register by February 4th.

Come support one of our own MPH students who will be a presenter, Zhanna Cummings! Zhanna's presentation will be *Where are the Resources? Discussing Mental Health in Students of Color on UTK's Campus and the Call for Action*. 11:15 AM–12:05 PM.



Hear about the experience from students who attended last year below!

"I learned so much about Black Culture in this conference—things that were never discussed in any of my years of schooling"

- Sierra Turner, MPH Student

"When I attended last year, I went to see how many Black students, faculty, and staff are at UTK. I went to feel included. I went to feel like I belonged. And I did."

- Zhanna Cummings, MPH Student

"Last year, I joined friends in learning more about Black Issues within my own city centering on systemic racism, voting rights, representation within Knoxville City Government, and how UTK could elevate the experiences of Black students."

- Kayla Simon, MPH Student



HEALTH ADVOCACY!

What's going on in TN? Want to learn how to take action for public health issues? Check out the resources below!

- [Healthcare Advocacy Series](#) presented by the TN Justice Center and UTK College of Nursing
- [Action Center](#). Check out featured campaigns and ways to contact state leaders.
- Find ways to advocate for mental health policy through [NAMI TN](#)
- APHA [Advocacy for Public Health](#)

PUBLIC HEALTH RESOURCES

- [CDC's Zoonoses & One Health Update Webinars](#)
- Sign up for the YWCA [21-Day Racial Equity and Social Justice Challenge 2021](#) for articles, podcasts, and opportunities to reflect on your personal experience.
- APHA is accepting abstract submissions for oral and poster presentations for the APHA 2021 Annual Meeting. The deadline is **March 21st**. Find more information [here](#).
- Check out John Hopkins University [COVID-19 In Motion](#). Daily one-minute videos with critical data on COVID-19 in the U.S.
- Join the Goodreads [This is Public Health Book Club](#).
- Join the YWCA [Great Race Against Racism](#) for Black History Month.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

- **Resource Highlight Series:** [Title IX Virtual Lunch Hour](#) and [LGBTQ+ Health Services at UT](#)
- **Graduate Commons (Hodges Library, 131)** is a dedicated space for graduate students to meet, study, and get access to technology. Study rooms are available on a first come basis.
- Need help with writing for a course, thesis, or dissertation? Make an appointment online with the **Judith Anderson Herbert Writing Center**.
- **The Student Counseling Center (SCC)** is offering individual, group, and couples counseling via ZOOM. Students seeking services should call 865-974-2196 to arrange a brief assessment.
- UTK Student Life is hosting a series of [Wellness Wednesday](#) Events throughout the semester

