

FEBRUARY 2024

CAAS MPH NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 3



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College of Agriculture & Applied Sciences
UtahStateUniversity

A MESSAGE FROM THE NDFS DEPARTMENT HEAD

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February is always an interesting month for me. It is short and long, all at the same time. Being in Northern Utah, there is often plenty of winter to come, but it is easy to let your thoughts take you to the coming spring with promises of warmer weather, green grass, and of course the excitement of graduation! Spring semester is the time when we get to celebrate the accomplishments of our students, and in this latest edition of our Master of Public Health Newsletter you will learn more about how students contribute to our program through the Student Advisory Board.

The Student Advisory Board is the heartbeat of our program, representing the voices and aspirations of our diverse student body. The board plays an important role in shaping the student experience, fostering community engagement, and facilitating initiatives that help us to deliver a program that supports our students as they launch careers that will impact the health and well-being of individuals and communities. We have plenty of examples of students and alumni from our MPH program having a positive impact on our world – two are highlighted in this edition of our newsletter.

Public health is a cornerstone that unites the Nutrition, Dietetics and Food Science Department's various programs under a common mission of promoting health and preventing disease through food and nutrition. It is exciting to think about all the good we can do in the world together!



Heidi Wengreen
Department Head, Dietetics Professor
Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Food
Sciences

MPH CURRENT STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

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Sarah Klass Veterinary MPH Student

Tell us a little bit about yourself including your undergraduate degree, MPH concentration, and plans after graduation.

I was born in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio and went to college at the University of Findlay about two hours west. I graduated with a Bachelor's in Animal Science (emphasis of Pre-Veterinary Medicine) and Biology. The intent was to go to veterinary school and I was accepted to start Fall 2018. I wanted to gain more experience before starting school again,

so I deferred my acceptance for one year to work at the Clinic for Rehabilitation of Wildlife in Sanibel, Florida. It was a humbling and eye-opening experience. I realized that my passion for animal health lies in conservation instead of medicine. I was accepted into a graduate program at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories in California and started August 2019. I was studying the environmental DNA harbored by sea sponges to track endangered species migration movements. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic put a hold on my funding for 4 years and I was unable to continue my education after year 1 of the program. I moved back to Ohio for a few months and then moved to Florida where I acquired a job at Mote Marine Laboratory studying the harmful effects of *Karenia brevis* Red Tide blooms. This opportunity has been amazing and I have learned so much, however, I would like to get back into the animal conservation world. The MPH program at USU offers a perfect class schedule to work around my full-time job and allows me to get back into the field that I am truly passionate about. I am in my first year of the Veterinary Public Health program and I would love to be able to work in local or state public health departments studying infectious diseases. This program opened my eyes to a new side of conservation and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn more about Public Health and how I can use my skills and knowledge to better my community.



MPH CURRENT STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

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What specific courses or experiences in the MPH program have had the most significant impact on your understanding of public health? How do you envision applying these in your future career?

Since Public Health is a new field for me, I thoroughly enjoyed the Intro to Public Health class my first semester. I was able to gain an understanding of the general field of public health but also relate it to my current job. I have also enjoyed the Public Health Leadership and Administration class, the Global Public Health class, and the Social Determinants of Health class. These classes allowed me to think outside my own experience and view the Public Health system from other viewpoints. I was truly able to learn and understand how Public Health relates to us all. I plan to use these courses to pursue a career in the veterinary science field by researching the effects of infectious diseases in different communities.

In your opinion, what is the most pressing public health issue facing our local or global community? How do you believe your time in the MPH has equipped you to contribute to addressing this issue?

I believe one of the most important public health issues of our time is discrimination and social inequity. As individuals, we have been able to see the deep roots of historical discrimination and younger generations are advocating for change. Important topics like women's reproductive rights, racial inequities, LGBTQ+ rights, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural incompetence have come to the forefront as major human rights issues that need to be addressed and changed. Younger generations are using their voices and new technologies and platforms to communicate their support for these structural changes. Our generation of public health workers will have a unique experience of working with multiple different generations who all have different beliefs and ideals. It is important for us to create programs and support policies that can adapt to our ever-changing social structure. The MPH program allows us to look the current issues communities are facing and learn how to address them in our future careers.

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MPH CURRENT STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

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What advice do you have for incoming students? Are there specific skills, resources, or mindsets that you believe are critical for success in the program and in the field of public health and related fields?

I am still in my first year of the program, but I would encourage new students to come into the classes with open minds and be ready to face your own implicit biases. Be ready to look inward and understand where your beliefs and ideals come from and don't be afraid of change. I came from a very close-knit family and community and, until I graduated undergrad and moved to different places in the country, I never saw anything outside of my home town. It has been enlightening to learn and see other beliefs and communities. I have traveled within the U.S. and overseas and being able to experience other cultures has been the greatest experience of my life. Even though I am only in my first year, I believe that it is important for public health officials and professionals to always be curious and never settle. Always push and advocate for change if it is the best for all communities. Be unafraid, confident, and dedicated to your work and advocate for all people.



STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD OVERVIEW

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The Student Advisory Board (SAB) is an important component of the CAAS MPH program at Utah State University. Those on the board seek to represent all students involved with the graduate program and serve as an important conduit between students and faculty. The great work of public health is grounded in integrative, multidisciplinary group work. SAB provides an excellent opportunity for students to gain experience in collaborative decision making before embarking on their careers. SAB meets a few times each semester and sends a representative to each monthly faculty meeting. SAB provides a platform for student voices to be heard while providing valuable open, constructive feedback about program courses, policies, resources, and more. The collaboration between students and faculty ensures the diverse needs of students are shared and represented while also creating greater transparency with program leadership decisions. The shared decision making subsequently fosters a greater sense of community and an improved academic experience overall. Although in its infancy, SAB has already provided useful contributions to the graduate program's development. As the program grows, so will the influence and role of SAB.

The Vice Chair for the 2023-24 academic year has been on the Student Advisory Board, for 2 years and is in their final semester of the MPH Public Health Nutrition Program. The Role of the Vice Chair includes aiding in facilitation of SAB meeting conversations and stepping in for the Chair as needed. The Vice Chair also works with the Secretary to polish meeting notes and distribute them to all members with reminders of meeting action items, and the date for the next meeting. As with all members of SAB, the Vice Chair actively seeks to bring feedback from peers about course works, polices, resource and any other student need to discuss at SAB meetings.

If you would like to get involved with the Student Alumni Board, please reach out to Natalie Dalley at natalie.dalley@usu.edu.



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Amria Farnsworth is a Utah native who grew up near the Wasatch Mountains. She completed her B.S. of Dietetics with a minor in Hunger and Food Security Studies and Dietetic Internship through Utah State University. She currently works as a clinical registered dietitian inpatient float at two hospitals and in outpatient oncology helping people with cancer manage their nutrition. Amria is in her final semester of the MPH Nutrition program. She has a deep passion for public health but also understands the critical role of clinical healthcare. Amria seeks to eventually integrate preventative public health interventions with clinical treatments to improve the health of individuals and communities. In her free time, Amria and her husband love to travel and explore the outdoors via various sports and activities including hiking, canyoneering, running, rock and ice climbing, and skiing. She also enjoys a calm night in with a book or a movie.



Amria Farnsworth
MPH Nutrition Student
Vice Chair, Student Advisory
Board

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CPH EXAM RECORDED INFO SESSION

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Are you interested in taking the Certified in Public Health (CPH) exam? Watch our recorded information session to learn all about the benefits of being certified, how to prepare for the exam, and much more [here](#).



If you have additional questions about the CPH exam, please reach out to your program advisor or Natalie Dalley at natalie.dalley@usu.edu

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Be the first to hear about everything public health related by following our social media handles! This is a great way to stay up to date on program changes, accreditation updates, public health events, job openings, project/internship opportunities, and more!



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SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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CAAS Scholarships

Many CAAS scholarships are available now, with more expected to open throughout the semester.

Browse and apply for scholarships [here](#).

A graduation cap is placed on top of a clear piggy bank filled with gold coins. The background is a light, neutral color.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Scholarships

The applications for most Foundation awards are currently available with a deadline of
5:00 pm Central Time on Tuesday, February 20, 2024.

Browse and apply for scholarships [here](#).

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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The background of the image is a photograph of the Utah State Capitol building in Salt Lake City. The building is a large, classical-style structure with a prominent central dome and numerous columns. An American flag is visible on a tall pole to the left of the building. The sky is clear and blue.

Public Health Policy Day on the Hill

When: February 23, 2024

Where: Utah Capitol Building, Salt Lake City

Additional information [here](#).



USU Career Design Professional Communication Workshop

When: February 26, 2024, 1-2 pm MST

Where: Anywhere! This is a virtual event, and anyone is welcome to join!

Join the Zoom call [here](#). Meeting password: jHpr4W



USU Career Design

Understanding Organizational Culture Workshop

When: March 27, 2024, 7-8 pm MST

Where: Anywhere! This is a virtual event, and anyone is welcome to join!

Join the Zoom call [here](#). Meeting password: jHpr4W

Utah Public Health Association Annual Conference

Theme: ACT for Health: Aspire, Collaborate, Trust.

When: April 10-11th

Where: Utah Valley University

Additional information [here](#).



Utah Academy of Nutrition And Dietetics Annual Conference

Theme: Fostering Connection, Fueling Innovation

When: April 19-20, 2024

Where: Salt Lake City Marriott University Park

Additional information [here](#).

A panoramic view of the Chicago skyline at dusk, with the city lights reflecting on the water in the foreground. The sky is a mix of light blue and orange, and the buildings are illuminated with various colors.

American Society for Nutrition Annual Meeting

Theme: Where the Best in Science and Health Meet

When: June 29–July 2, 2024

Where: McCormick Place, Chicago, IL

Additional information [here](#).