

# UVA MPH Newsletter

Fall 

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 2024



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### SUPPORT US

See next page for  
information

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### PHD SURVEY

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### SAVE THE DATE

Spring 2025 Alumni  
Networking Event

## Dear MPH Alumni,

Here at PHS, our department continues to grow, and we are setting the stage for even greater advancements. These achievements are made possible in part thanks to the generosity of alumni like you.

As we plan for even greater strides in 2025, we will reach out soon to ask that you support our efforts by making a donation to education scholarships in the **Department of Public Health Sciences**. Your support directly contributes to the growth and success of our department, ensuring we remain at the forefront of public health education. Whether you give \$50, \$500, or somewhere in between, *every gift counts*. We hope you will join us in shaping the future of public health. Together, we can ensure our legacy of impact continues.

**Thank you for your support!**

## PhD Program Interest Survey

The MPH Program is exploring the possibility of launching a PhD program in Public Health, and we want to hear from you! Your feedback is essential to helping us gauge alumni interest and shape this potential new initiative. Please take a moment to share your thoughts by completing this brief survey [here](#).

**RSVP HERE**

**SAVE  
THE  
3.20.2025 DATE**

Join the Master of Public Health Program at our annual  
**Alumni Networking Reception!**

**When:** Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

**Where:** Northside Social, Upstairs Wine Bar | 205 Park Ave, Falls Church, VA

**What:** Hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and great company will be provided.

Please RSVP by **Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>**. For any questions, contact Aaron Pannone. We can't wait to reconnect with our amazing alumni!



# Welcome New MPH Students!

This fall, the Department of Public Health Sciences welcomed **61** new students to the UVA School of Medicine. Among them, 54 new students joined the Master of Public Health (MPH) Program, along with 7 students in the Master of Science in Clinical Research (MS-CR) Program.

We are excited to see how this new class will make their mark both within UVA PHS and beyond! See more in the [SOM Medicine in Motion News](#).



# Alumni Spotlight

**Malik Phillips**

We are excited to shine the spotlight on one of our outstanding alumni, Malik Phillips! Malik graduated from our MPH program in 2021. With a passion for addressing health disparities in rural and minority populations, he is now pursuing a doctoral degree in **Social and Behavioral Sciences** at VCU's School of Public Health.

Recently, Malik showcased his research at the **Virginia Public Health Association Annual Conference**, where he presented on *"Evaluating Perceptions of Lung Cancer and Screening Practices Among African American Males."* The photo below captures Malik at the conference alongside UVA MPH Professor Aaron Pannone. It was a proud moment for our program, witnessing Malik share his impactful work with public health professionals across the state!

We're excited to follow Malik's journey as he continues to drive change through research and advocacy. We wish you all the best in your studies and future endeavors, Malik!





# MPH 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

This year marks the **20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UVA's MPH program**, a milestone highlighting two decades of advancing health equity and shaping public health leaders. Since its launch in 2004, the program has grown exponentially, with over **600 alumni** working across Virginia and beyond. Current program director Aaron Pannone, PhD, credits the program's growth to rising awareness of public health's importance. *"There's a greater understanding now of the social determinants of health...COVID also increased interest,"* he notes.

The program offers both an intensive one-year option or a three- to four-semester track. With flexible learning options and a focus on interdisciplinary education, students are provided with the flexibility to align their education with their career goals. This year, the program welcomed 54 new students, continuing its growth trajectory from 48 graduates in the 2023-2024 academic year.

In February of 2024, Matthew Gurka, PhD, re-joined the Department of Public Health Sciences as Chair, succeeding Ruth Bernheim, JD, MPH, who held the position from 2010-2024. His goals for the program emphasize the need for continued innovation for continuous growth. *"The data we use to improve outcomes and inform policy are becoming larger and more complex, and tools like AI allow us to use these data in powerful ways. At the same time, communicating important public health messaging is more and more challenging,"* Gurka adds.

As the UVA MPH program celebrates **two decades of excellence**, it remains committed to individualized, interdisciplinary education and to fostering a vibrant public health community – one that is prepared to meet the evolving needs of the field.

See more in the [Virginia Medicine Magazine](#).

# Return of SAC

We are thrilled to announce the return of the MPH **Student Activities Committee (SAC)**, revamped and re-energized after a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic! This initiative aims to foster student growth, camaraderie, and community engagement. The Committee is now organized into three dynamic subcommittees: **Professionalism**, **Service**, and **Social**. Here's a glimpse of what each subcommittee brings to the table. Below is a photo of some of our committee co-chairs.

**Professionalism Subcommittee:** This group is dedicated to equipping students with tools for career development through organizing career development events, networking opportunities, and workshops. Expect guest speakers, resume reviews, and interview prep sessions to help students sharpen their skills and set themselves up for post-graduation success.

**Service Subcommittee:** Public health is grounded in service, and this group puts this value into action. Students coordinate volunteer events, outreach activities, and build community partnerships. Our first major initiative – the Haven Supply Drive – collected essential items like toiletries, socks, and winter clothing for a local homeless shelter.

**Social Subcommittee:** This group focuses on creating spaces for students to relax and form lasting connections. From casual meetups to festive end-of-semester celebrations, these events aim to foster friendships and promote a sense of community among students – something we've all missed after the disruptions of recent years.



# Delta Omega

## What is Delta Omega?

The Delta Omega Honorary Society in Public Health was founded in 1924 at Johns Hopkins University within the School of Hygiene and Public Health to promote the graduate study of public health, and to recognize outstanding achievement in the new field.



**Delta Omega**, the public health honorary society, recently celebrated its 100th birthday, and here in the MPH program we're working to make our chapter even more active!

Delta Omega has chapters all across the country, and we're glad to be one of them. Members are inducted into Delta Omega each year to honor their hard work and passion for public health. The goal of our **Gamma Pi chapter** is to connect students, faculty, and alumni to strengthen the MPH program. We hope to do this through speaker events, alumni mentoring programs, supporting all current students, and more!

Stay tuned to learn more about opportunities for alumni involvement in Delta Omega in future newsletters!



# Forms & Outreach

## Steering Committee Member Wanted

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The MPH Program is looking for an alumnus or community member to join our Steering Committee. The **MPH Steering committee** explores advances in internal educational policy, provides guidance on external program relationships, and serves as the Accreditation Committee. The Committee meets every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, from 10:30-11:15 a.m. via Zoom. If interested, please contact Aaron Pannone (afp2n@virginia.edu).

## UVA Health Protectors Website

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A new project for the UVA Medical Center's Population Health Website – **UVA Protectors of Health** – is underway. Co-developed by Dr. Don Detmer, a Professor of Medical Education in the PHS department, and current MPH student Alexa Eisenbart, this website highlights individuals and organizations at UVA and in our community who actively seek and apply knowledge to protect and promote health. The goal of this initiative is to encourage a cultural shift from reactive care to proactive health engagement, celebrating those whose efforts in the community transform and preserve health – and, in doing so, inspire others to take action.

We are eager to expand the website's reach to include MPH alumni and students, with plans for monthly spotlights featuring their work. If you know of an individual, organization, or initiative that embodies the spirit of health promotion and action, we would love to hear from you! Please visit the website [here](#) to explore featured stories and submit your ideas for future spotlights.

# Stay in Touch!

**Interested to see MPH news outside of this newsletter?** Stay up to date with MPH happenings through our social media. Our social media accounts are listed and linked below.

**Instagram:** [@uva\\_phs](#)

**Facebook:** [UVA Department of Public Health Sciences](#)

**LinkedIn:** [UVA Department of Public Health Sciences](#)

