

UVA MPH Newsletter

Spring 2026 Edition



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SAVE THE DATE

MPH Celebration

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SPRING UPDATES

SUPPORT US!

Dear PHS 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.

We had an incredible spring with a number of milestones to celebrate as you will read below. Last fall, we took advantage of our proximity to the APHA meeting in Washington DC to support the attendance of several of our MPH students. The students were grateful for the opportunity to be inspired by the large public health community that attends this meeting and to boost their networking – which as you all know is so important, particularly now, in thinking about careers after graduation.

We would like to make this a regular occurrence, even when APHA is farther away. This year, we are focusing on the establishment of travel awards for some of our MPH students to attend APHA. Any donation you can give this year will allow us to support more students to attend. Click [here](#) to make a donation.

Thank you in advance!

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PROGRAM LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

We have bittersweet news to share for two cornerstones of our MPH program that are stepping away in different ways this June – but fortunately they will not be going far! Please join us in celebrating **Ruth Gaare Bernheim**, JD, MPH, who is retiring from the faculty at the University of Virginia, and **Aaron Pannone**, PhD, MS, who is stepping down as MPH Program Director.

For more than 25 years, **Ruth Gaare Bernheim** has demonstrated extraordinary leadership and excellence in education and service as a faculty member at the University of Virginia.

Her myriad contributions include the creation of new public health undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the School of Medicine, most notably our MPH Program, for which she was the Founding Director for more than 20 years, having taught each of the more than 650 MPH alumni and current students at least one graduate course on public health policy, law and ethics. She stepped away from her leadership roles in the Department a few years ago, and has decided to retire this summer. None of us would be where we are without Ruth, and we are so grateful for her remarkable dedication to public health, public health education, and the University of Virginia. Thank you, Ruth!



PROGRAM LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

After many years of dedicated service, **Aaron Pannone** has made the thoughtful decision to step down from his role as MPH Program Director at the end of June.

This transition comes at a natural inflection point for the program, following our recent successful CEPH reaccreditation site visit. Aaron will continue in his role as a core faculty member in the MPH program and is looking forward to continuing to innovate within the classroom—particularly in using emerging tools, including AI, to enhance public health education.

We are grateful that his expertise, creativity, and commitment to students will continue to shape the MPH experience. His outstanding leadership has been instrumental in strengthening the program, supporting students, and guiding us through accreditation with great success.



PROGRAM LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS



We are very pleased to announce that **Kristen Wells**, PhD, MPH, will serve as the next MPH Program Director, effective July 1. Kristen has been a dedicated and instrumental member of our educational programs, including the MPH program, since her arrival in 2012. She brings a strong commitment to innovation in teaching and learning, as well as a deep investment in continuing professional development in education. Her collaborative approach and dedication to student success will help us build on the program's strong foundation and continue evolving in thoughtful and forward-looking ways.

EDUCATIONAL MILESTONES

CEPH ACCREDITATION

Our MPH program has been accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) since 2006, and this year marks another reaccreditation year! Our site visit occurred in January, where we were assessed for compliance on ~two dozen criteria, with the goal of having "met" or "met with commentary" each of them. The CEPH Council then makes a decision on reaccreditation (7 years) based on all of these criteria.

While the Council ultimately decides compliance on each criterion, we are pleased to report that our site visitors assessed that we were compliant on all criteria, with only one "met with commentary" - a tremendous achievement.

The final Council decision will be in June, but we would be remiss not to mention the fantastic preliminary news. We want to highlight the incredible efforts of Aaron Pannone and Alexa Eisenbart in this process that began in earnest well over a year ago. While this is a continuous process that requires constant data collection, evaluation, and adaptations, the work to put together the > 200-page self-study document and to prepare the carefully planned site visit was tremendous, and we are especially grateful for their tireless dedication.

EDUCATIONAL MILESTONES

CURRICULUM REVIEW

No rest for the weary! Post-accreditation, now is a great time to evaluate our curriculum, and we plan to do a comprehensive review over the next year. While our primary objective will continue to align with CEPH competencies, we would like to explore what skills/knowledge you all are using in your careers – and to hear how you think the program could/should evolve in this new era of public health. To that end, please complete this [Alumni Feedback Survey](#) – or feel free to email [Matthew Gurka](#) and set up a time to meet.



SCAN FOR THE SURVEY



EDUCATIONAL MILESTONES

NEW PHS CERTIFICATE IN IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE



We are in the final stages of approval for a new and exciting certificate program in implementation science to be launched in fall 2027 in both Charlottesville and Northern Virginia. The proposed certificate, designed for both health sciences graduate students and professionals, aims to teach students the foundational knowledge needed to translate evidence-based guidelines, processes, and/or interventions to real world settings, and evaluate their implementation and outcomes. We are excited about this new program – please contact [Matthew Gurka](#) if you have questions or want to hear more!

MPH CELEBRATION

As you can see, we have a lot to celebrate! Our graduating students, a successful reaccreditation site visit, Ruth's retirement, thanking Aaron for his service as MPH program director, and welcoming Kristen into this new role! If convenient for you, we would love for you to attend! RSVP [here](#) and contact [Matthew Gurka](#) if you have any questions.



Public Health Sciences Celebration!
May 12, 2026
4-6PM
Kardinal Hall, Charlottesville VA

Scan to RSVP!

