



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
VIRGINIA TECH.

## SPIA Community August Update

Dear SPIA Students, Faculty, and Staff:

**Welcome to the 2020-21 Academic Year.** August 10 marked my first anniversary as SPIA's director. Of course, fiscal challenges and COVID-19 saw to it that it be a tumultuous first year! As I reflect on the last academic year, I take pride that we still made important progress. We managed to unveil a [new website](#), increased our social media footprint, and adopted a much more data-driven approach to our decision making. I also learned the following lessons:

- First, in uncertain times, flawless answers won't exist.
- Second, while the vagaries of life force you to live with uncertainty, don't let them paralyze you.
- Third, SPIA and its people are resilient. The immeasurable "capital" of SPIA lies in the ingenuity of our faculty and staff, the seriousness of purpose of our students, and the compassion of our alumni and advisory board members. We will draw on this remarkable capital as we embrace a new academic year that is still largely virtual.

Please note that since most faculty and staff will be operating virtually during the Fall semester, you should try to email them instead of dropping by their offices. You can find their contact information at [spia.vt.edu/people](http://spia.vt.edu/people). We will continue to provide updates to the entire school through our main mailing list, [spia-announcements-q@vt.edu](mailto:spia-announcements-q@vt.edu). If you are not on this distribution list and wish to be added, please send an email to [kcris@vt.edu](mailto:kcris@vt.edu).

Finally, it is bittersweet to share the news that this month we say goodbye to two of our UAP professors, **Thomas Skuzinski** and **Wenwen Zhang**, who are respectively moving to Northern Illinois University and Rutgers University. Tom and Wenwen served SPIA with intelligence and warmth. I thank them both for their years of service to the school and wish them the best at their new institutions.

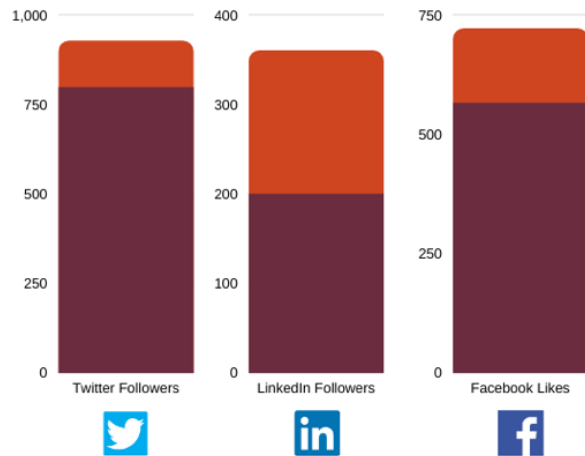
I wish everyone a safe and productive semester. Please be in touch ([mehrzad@vt.edu](mailto:mehrzad@vt.edu)) if there is any issue at all that you need to discuss with me.

Sincerely,  
Mehrzad Boroujerdi  
Director, VT SPIA

WE'RE GROWING!

# ONE YEAR SNAPSHOT: Aug '19 vs '20

@VTSPIA



## Faculty and Student News

Congratulations to our newest SPIA Ph.D. [Jessica Agnew](#) (PGG, PhD) who on July 31, 2020 successfully defended her dissertation entitled *Buying to Thrive: Exploring the Potential for Market-Based Approaches to Contribute to Increases in Diet Diversity in Mozambique*. Her dissertation committee consisted of Professors [Ralph Hall](#) and [Kevin Boyle](#) (as co-chairs), [Kathy Hosig](#), and [David Bieri](#). Over 50 people joined the public section of her defense from multiple countries, including Mozambique, which is a testament to the interest in her work and her collaborative approach to research. Here is a [short video](#) that captures some of Jessica's fieldwork last year.

[Ralph Buehler](#) (Professor, UAP) [published](#) a book review of "Better buses—Better cities: How to plan, run, and win the fight for effective transit" in the *Journal of Urban Affairs*. Ralph also presented (along with Professor [Wenwen Zhang](#)) results of the spring MURP studio class, analyzing e-scooters on Virginia Tech's campus, to Ford Motor Company.

[Stephanie Davis](#) (Collegiate Assistant Professor, CPAP) has been appointed to serve as a team member on the Government Finance Officers Association's "Rethinking Budgeting for 2020" project. The overarching goal of this project is to develop guidance on how to allocate resources in an environment where the participants all share a common resource base (i.e., the tax base), while maintaining and enhancing trust between participants and a belief that the process was fair. The guidance developed by the project team will be used to inform a comprehensive educational and outreach campaign to local governments.

[Theo Lim](#) (Assistant Professor, UAP) and colleagues published an [article](#) in *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening* examining the adaptive management and governance process in the first few years of Philadelphia's Green City, Clean Waters program. Philadelphia is recognized as having one of the most ambitious goals for incorporating nature-based stormwater management infrastructure (such as rain gardens and bioswales) in the United States and worldwide. The analysis shows how the political processes surrounding the rollout of a new stormwater fee and credit program complicate typical engineering and economics-based estimates of how widespread voluntary adoption of green

infrastructure will be.

[Shalini Misra](#) (Associate Professor, UAP), [Patrick Roberts](#) (Associate Professor, CPAP) and co-author **Matthew Rhodes** published "[Information overload, stress, and emergency managerial thinking](#)" in *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* as well as a second article entitled "[The Ecology of Emergency Management Work in the Digital Age](#)" in *Perspectives of Public Management and Governance*. Finally, as co-leads, Patrick and Shalini are leading a working group on Technology, Policy, and the Public Sector in the COVID-19 environment. This effort was supported by the National Science Foundation-funded Social Science Extreme Events Research (SSEER) network and the CONVERGE facility at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder. The agenda setting paper they drafted this summer with their group can be accessed [here](#).

[Dustin Read](#), an affiliated faculty at SPIA, was [appointed](#) head of the Department of Apparel Housing and Resource Management.

SPIA undergraduate **Caroline Smith** and **Courtney Swanson**, PhD student in Psychology, are student leaders of a proposal that has been selected for funding through the [Virginia Tech Together Campaign](#) competition. The competition selected a total of 5 student-led projects that provided outside-the-box solutions to navigating the COVID-19 pandemic on campus this fall. Caroline and Courtney's project proposes training facilitators and designing "virtual communities" for students this semester. Congratulations to Caroline and Courtney! **Theo Lim** (Assistant Professor, UAP) is the faculty advisor of the proposal.

### **SPIA Efforts: By the Numbers**

**Director's Monthly Community Newsletters:** Fall '19 & Spring '20 marked the beginning of the monthly SPIA Community Newsletter, which includes a message from SPIA Director Mehrzad Boroujerdi and the latest achievements and news among the SPIA faculty, staff, students and alumni. Thank you all for staying tuned to community news. Let's keep up the high open rates — we're averaging **39.8%**!

**Bus & Metro Campaign:** Starting in November, VT SPIA launched a WMATA Bus and Metro Ad campaign. These campaigns led to a **40% increase** in expressed interest by prospective students.

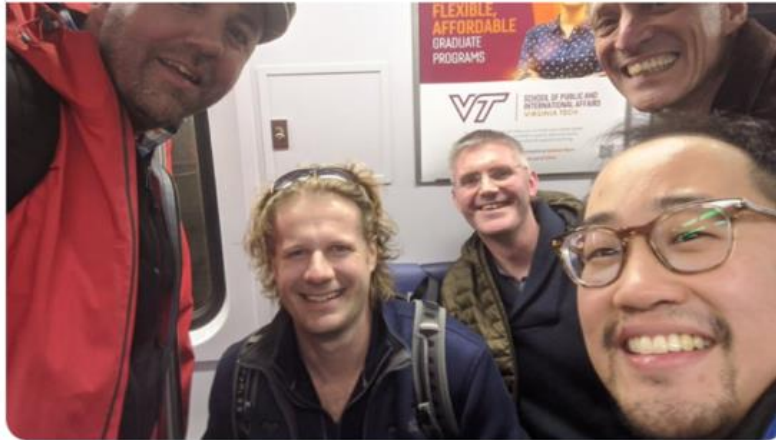


**Virginia Tech SPIA** @VTSPIA · Jan 9

Shout out to VT SPIA urban planning faculty who not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk... I mean, metro the #metro! 🚇 #ispyVTSPIA #WashingtonDC #Arlington #Virginia @wmata @vtncr

**Todd Schenk** @toddschenk · Jan 8

@VTSPIA #Represent on @wmata! Proud to be riding w/ @CHAOLIM85 @RalphPHall, Hankey & Wernstedt... @VTSPIDirector @VTMURP @UAPVirginiaTech @VTCAUS



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**Mehrzad Boroujerdi, PhD** @VTSPIDirector · Nov 13, 2019

Always puts a smile on my face when I catch sight of one of these @VTSPIA buses. Go SPIA! #ispyVTSPIA



**Virginia Tech SPIA** @VTSPIA · Nov 12, 2019

Bus in @ArlingtonVA knows what's up! Earn a Masters or PhD on your own time with @VTSPIA. Learn about our flexible learning options in Arlington, Blacksburg and Richmond: [spia.vt.edu/degree-overvie...](http://spia.vt.edu/degree-overvie...) #ispyVTSPIA



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## Alumni News

**Nicole Elias** and **Amanda Olejarski** (SPIA/CPAP Ph.D. alums) published an [edited volume from Routledge](#) on how bureaucrats can use constitutional principles to navigate ethical challenges. Most of the contributors are VT alums or current and former faculty.

**Allie Kahl** (MURP alumni) was [quoted](#) in a story in VT News about her work with the Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment's working group. She will be pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee Knoxville this fall.

**Tara D. Reel** (MURP, 2017 and former graduate student representative on the VT Board of Visitors in 2016-17) has a new position as a Community Planner with the USDOT Volpe Center in the Policy Analysis and Strategic Planning Division. She provides support to several Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) initiatives, including being team lead for the FHWA Transportation and Livability Portfolio. She also works with the Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office (ITS JPO) on initiatives involving emerging transportation technologies.

**Max Rooke** (double major in Public and Urban Affairs and Geography) will be moving to South Dakota this fall to start a new position as a planner and GIS specialist in the Office of Equalization and Planning in Meade County.

**Sabith Khan** (PGG Ph.D., 2015) and his co-author Daisha Merritt published [Remittances and International Development: The Invisible Forces Shaping Community](#) (Routledge, 2020). The book offers a compelling narrative of how and why remittances occur and their impact on both the giver and recipient communities. Khan maintains that “remittances sent globally are three times the amount of international development aid. This fact should alone help us focus on the importance of this phenomenon, which is not fully understood.” Dr. Khan serves as Assistant Professor and Program Director of the Master of Public Policy & Administration program at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, CA.

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## Program Profile

### **SPIA Offers Opportunities to Explore and Become Certified in Leadership & Management and in Public Finance: *Virtual options for Graduate Certificates in the School of Public and International Affairs***

Graduate certificates in Nonprofit and Non-Governmental Organizations (N.G.O.) Management and Public and Nonprofit Financial Management (PNPFM) focus on the most vital and urgent challenges for nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations. These certificates are designed to be offered in a completely virtual format. They are ideal for rising professionals across the globe navigating the complex fiscal, managerial, and networked environments of nonprofits and NGOs during a time of significant change. Courses in both programs focus on leadership, management, and program evaluation with an emphasis on accountability. Students engage with theory and practice in local, state, and national government contexts, as well as international issues related to economics and development.

Although complimentary in design, the Nonprofit and NGO Management (NPNM) certificate emphasizes research-based foundations for leading with limited resources and in dynamic situations, while the PNPFM certificate focuses on concepts and practices of fiscal management in government, university, and complex non-profit organizations.

Recently named as director of both certificate programs, Leisha LaRiviere, Associate Director for the School of Public and International Affairs in Richmond, has exciting plans for new course offerings. LaRiviere brings her experience of leading and managing multimillion-dollar operations in the public and private sector for more than 25 years to the revised certificate programs. Professor LaRiviere’s research foci include policy and practice in government and NGO leadership development, organizational theory and context, and facilitative and participative leadership scholarship. One exciting new course in the NPNM certificate is SPIA 5564: Nonprofit and Nongovernmental Organizations Law and Ethics.

Both certificates will announce other new opportunities at an orientation during Fall 2020 semester. Stay tuned for the date and the Zoom link and join the discussion. Courses easily fit into current student’s

plans of study across the school and can be taken advantage of right away.

**INTERESTED NOW?** A few seats are available for Fall 2020 in SPIA 5534: Nonprofit Organization Leadership taught by Dr. Max Stephenson in the NPNM certificate. There are limited seats available in two classes of the PNPFM certificate: SPIA 5024: Introduction to Public and Nonprofit Finance Management, and SPIA 5544 Public and Nonprofit Financial Management. Both courses are taught by Visiting Professor, Dr. Sheryl Bailey.

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## Graduate Assistants



- [Eunju Namkung](#) (MURP and MPA) will serve as SPIA's communications and media relations coordinator.



- **Thi Hong Nhung Nguyen** (Ph.D. candidate, CPAP) will help with program development.



- [Behnaz Raouf](#) (MURP candidate) will provide research support and program development.

### Worth Pondering

- [How Life in Our Cities Will Look After the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

- [In the 75 years since Hiroshima, nuclear testing killed untold thousands](#)
- [The Absent Student](#)
- [The Pandemic Depression: The Global Economy Will Never Be the Same](#)
- [In Dispiriting Times, It Helps to Get 'Lost in Thought'](#)
- [Can History Soothe the Pain of 2020 for Academia?](#)
- [The Tragedy of Vaccine Nationalism](#)
- [Pandemic underscores how public parks shape public](#)
- [What will it take to achieve gender equality in American politics?](#)

