



January 2021 Newsletter

Welcome to a new year and a new semester! 2020 was a momentous year of turmoil and surprises, and 2021 started with an unexpected political explosion as a mob attacked the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, deaths from the pandemic have passed a staggering 2 million globally and over 400,000 in the U.S. These events remind us, perhaps more so than ever before, of the importance of moral probity. I hope we all attempt to examine our foundational principles during these trying times.

In this month's newsletter, you will read about a wonderful award won by the school and our fantastic Virginia Management Fellows Program, get to know a few more members of the SPIA family, and see the fundraising track record of the school over the last two years.

Sincerely,

Mehrzad Boroujerdi
SPIA Director

Faculty, Staff and Student News

Elia Amegashie (SPIA's Graduate Program Coordinator/Academic Advisor) has started work and stands ready to help students with their questions and issues. She can be reached at elia@vt.edu.

David Bieri (Associate Professor, UAP) was quoted on President Biden's \$1.9T stimulus plan in [CBS](#) and [WDBJ7](#).

Karen Hult (professor, CPAP) commented on the attack on Congress and transition to the Biden administration in various media outlets. See [USA Today](#), [Washington Examiner](#) and [10News](#) for examples.

Nhung Nguyen (Ph.D. candidate, CPAP) co-authored "[Trust in Multi-Level Managers and Employee Extra-Role Behavior in the US Federal Government: The Role of Psychological Well-Being and Workload](#)," in [Review of Public Personnel Administration \(December 2020\)](#).

Todd Schenk (Assistant Professor, UAP) has embedded as a faculty member in the Fralin Life Sciences Institute (in Steger Hall) following an agreement between SPIA and FLSI. Todd's ongoing work on tackling difficult life science problem spaces at the environment-human condition interface made him a perfect fit for this new cooperation.

SPIA Receives Award



SPIA received the 2020 University Exemplary Department or Program Award for the theme of developing and sustaining effective approaches to teaching with a global perspective at the graduate or undergraduate levels. The award includes a \$10,000 contribution to SPIA's budget by the Provost's office.

Back in 2014, Urban Affairs and Planning (UAP) had received the same award for developing and sustaining innovative and effective departmental approaches to fostering *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve) at the undergraduate or graduate level. Congratulations to everyone at SPIA for this tremendous honor which is an acknowledgment of the great work being done by our faculty.

Virginia Management Fellows

SPIA Richmond and the Commonwealth Continue Growth Curve: *Governor's Office and the General Assembly Announce 4th Virginia Management Fellows Cohort*



Recently enacted legislation – Chapter 1289 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly – included additional funding provided by the Governor of Virginia and the Virginia General Assembly in support of ongoing sponsored research led by VT's School of Public and International Affairs, Richmond campus. Research through the Virginia Management Fellows (VMF) program addresses succession planning processes that positively affect leadership bench strength in the Commonwealth's state agencies.

The VMF is \$5.6-million investment operating as a public-public partnership of the Commonwealth of Virginia (Office of the Governor) and Virginia Tech's School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA), Richmond Campus. Under the leadership of VMF Director **Leisha LaRiviere**, SPIA-Richmond assesses national trends in state-level fellowship programs, develops learning objectives and targeted curriculum, and implements learning programs in a continuous improvement process approach. This year, the

Commonwealth funded a public budgeting course (PAPA 6314) for the Fellows, currently taught in our Center of Public Administration and Policy.



A Virginia Management Fellowship is a two-year salaried position that engages with multiple state agencies, public administrators, and elected officials. Fellows experience three agency rotations of eight months accompanied by an agency mentor where they write in-depth research reports addressing persistent agency problems, in addition to building technical and generalist leadership skills in SPIA's Virginia Public Sector Leader program.

Now hiring its fourth cohort, the VMF has seen success serving as a talent pipeline for state government, with 80% of Cohort 1 Fellows entering state service—including current SPIA-Richmond Administrative Coordinator, **Connor Winstead**. Cohort 2 completes the Fellowship in June 2021.

Visit the Virginia Management Fellows website at <https://vmf.spia.vt.edu/>

Apply to Cohort 4 of the Virginia Management Fellows Program.



Research Faculty Profile

Mary Beth Dunkenberger, MBA

Associate Director and Research Faculty at the Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance.



Mary Beth Dunkenberger joined SPIA's Institute for Policy and Governance (IPG) as research faculty in 2007 and specializes in research and technical assistance projects related to human service programs, policies, organizations, and systems. Her particular focus is on public policy relating to human welfare, health, employment, and economic disparities. She has served as principal investigator or co-investigator on more than fifty sponsored research and technical assistance projects over the past ten years, collaborating with many community partners, faculty, and students.

Since 2015, Ms. Dunkenberger has managed the fiscal, human resource, and compliance operations of IPG. She provides leadership in aligning transdisciplinary teams within Virginia Tech and among peer institutions, to address research questions arising as a result of complex problems and contexts. These complex challenges are often referred to as "wicked problems," and include poverty, substance use, mental illness, health inequities, unemployment, and housing. Populations served through IPG's sponsored project work include at-risk children and youth, those struggling with substance use disorder (SUD) and/or mental illness, veterans, and individuals and families challenged by inter-generational poverty.

IPG's work involves a combination of primary research and technical assistance, often linking and adapting evidence-based and emerging practices to new contexts and geographies. Ms. Dunkenberger has led multiple state agency and population-based assessments involving acquisition, management, and obtainment of large data sets for the purposes of conducting evaluations and analysis, using mixed method approaches that combine both quantitative and qualitative inquiry. The portfolio of sponsored work completed, ongoing and continually emerging, is both supported by, and contributes to VT's pledge of *ut prosim* and the land grant mission of Virginia Tech. Ms. Dunkenberger considers herself honored to serve among colleagues equally committed to these principles.

Staff Profile

I am **Kelly Crist**, and I am the Manager of SPIA Faculty and Student Affairs. In this role, I support students in three of SPIA's programs: the Masters in Public Administration Program, the Ph.D. in Public Administration and Public Affairs program, and the Ph.D. in Planning, Governance and Globalization Programs. My primary aim in this role is to serve as a resource for students and provide guidance and assistance where necessary to move smoothly through our programs, from application to graduation. I also provide administrative support to the SPIA Director and the Center for Public Administration and Policy faculty.

Before joining SPIA in 2018, I lived and worked in Washington, D.C. Some of my previous employers include George Washington University, the American Seed Trade Association, and the U.S. Grains Council. I also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mali from 2007 to 2008. One of my favorite hobbies is to travel; below is a picture from my recent trip to South Africa in December 2019.



Alumni Profile

Jeffrey Sutton (MPA, 2000) has been the Chief Financial Officer of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) since 2015. In this role, he leads more than 340 employees to oversee the DEA's budget, finance, procurement, and facility operations in over 200 domestic facilities and 90 offices in foreign countries. Jeff manages \$3.2 billion in budget authority and develops procurement strategies for over \$600 million in acquisition orders. Prior to joining DEA, he was Assistant Director (2007-2012) and the Deputy Director of Department of Justice's Justice Management Division (2012-2015), program examiner at the office of Management and Budget (2005-2006), and research analyst at the Smithsonian Institution (2001-2002). Jeff says, "I can honestly say that if not for my VT-sponsored internship experience, I would not be where I am today." He is happy to help students think through job strategies, especially if they are interested in working for the federal government or one of the many contractors that support federal agencies. He can be reached at jwsutton@gmail.com

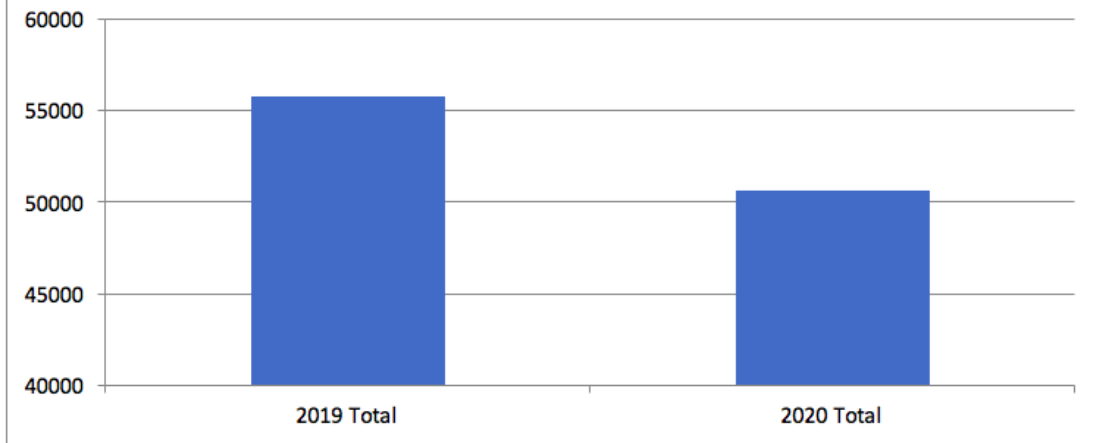


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Yearly Contributions to SPIA, 2019-2020



Worth Pondering

- [Building a Stronger, More Equitable Education System](#)
- [Cities Are Transforming U.S. Foreign Policy](#)
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- [How to Find a Writing Routine That Works](#)
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