



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
VIRGINIA TECH.

July 2021 Newsletter

VT and SPIA are busy gearing up for the start of the Fall semester and the return of students to campus after a long hiatus. From completing building repair projects to putting the finishing touches on course syllabi, a lot is happening behind the scenes. We have lined up a good number of virtual and in-person welcoming events next month to kick off the new academic year (see below).

Unfortunately, summer is also the season for transitions and at SPIA we will be saying goodbye next month to two colleagues who have been with us since 2012. Professor [Robin Lemaire](#) (MPA Program Chair and Associate Professor of Public Administration) is leaving VT to go to her alma mater, Louisiana State University. [Leslie Day](#), who has been SPIA's indispensable business manager (financial guru may be a more apt title) will become the business manager for VT's College of Architecture and Urban Studies (CAUS). On behalf of everyone at SPIA, I want to sincerely thank **Robin** and **Leslie** for their years of service to the school and wish them the best of luck in their new positions.

Cheers,

Mehrzad Boroujerdi
SPIA Director

Faculty and Student News

[Mehrzad Boroujerdi](#) (SPIA Director) published an article in TRENDS Research entitled "[Iran's 2021 Presidential Election](#)." He was also quoted in [Augusta Free Press](#) and [Airang TV's Global Insight](#) (South Korea).

[Stephanie Davis](#) (Collegiate Assistant Professor, CPAP) has been selected as a 2021 International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Research Fellow. The project, "Strategic Planning for Small Communities," will provide local government managers and elected officials with recommendations on identifying a mission, vision, and values and how to set goals and strategies to achieve an overall vision for a community. The Fellowship timeline is July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. **Stephanie** also published an article with **Sara Carter** (Town Manager of Town of Amherst and adjunct faculty member in the Local Government Certificate program) in the June 2021 edition of Town and City on "Strategic Planning for Small Communities." Finally, she served as a moderator for the National Government Finance Officer Association's Virtual Annual Conference on July 19 for a session titled "It's not all about the numbers, Important leadership skills for the Finance Office."

[Ralph Hall](#)'s (Associate Director of SPIA and Associate Professor, UAP) work as one of the project leads developing a blockchain-based smartphone app to help farmers is featured in

this [article](#). **Ralph** also talks about his decision to come to the United States, study at MIT, and conduct research on sustainable development and inclusive capitalism in this [video](#).

Karen Hult (Professor, CPAP) was quoted in various news outlets including [Virginian Pilot](#), [Channel4 News](#), [Roanoke Times](#), and [Augusta Free Press](#).

Theo Lim (Assistant Professor, UAP) published an article titled "Patterns in environmental priorities revealed through government open data portals" in *Telematics and Informatics*. For this article, he scraped over 46,000 data objects from municipal and state level open data portals, and used natural language processing and machine learning techniques to understand how different levels of government and places with different political leanings conceptualize "the environment." This month, **Theo** and **Max Dillon** (MURP candidate) finished running a two-week intensive heat resilience planning summer program with middle school students in Roanoke (in partnership with Roanoke City Public Schools). This activity was funded by [ISCE](#), and the research will help us better understand how to translate data into participatory action as cities face increasing challenges of extreme heat due to climate change. Below are photos of (1) a mapping exercise the students did, and (2) sensing of outdoor temperatures.





[Tom Sanchez](#) (Professor, UAP) published "[Exploring the Relationship between Combined Household Housing and Transportation Costs and Regional Economic Activity in Virginia](#)" in *Land*.

[Nareg Seferian](#) (PGG Ph.D. Candidate) has been selected to receive an Armenian Studies Scholarship provided by the Armenian Communities Department of the [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation](#) based in Lisbon, Portugal. His dissertation, supervised by Prof. **Gerard Toal**, will focus on the province of Siunik in southern Armenia. Following the Second Karabakh War, which took place in the autumn of 2020, new borders have emerged between Armenia and Azerbaijan. One year on, **Nareg** intends to conduct fieldwork in Siunik in order to gain insights into the geographical imaginations, geopolitical culture, border regimes, and identity issues currently in flux in Armenia.

[Qiong Wang](#) (PGG Ph.D. Candidate) has been awarded a Graduate Research Fellowship through Virginia Sea Grant. This award supports students whose research addresses coastal challenges in Virginia with up to \$40,000 per academic year. She is developing a resilience quotient system for flood mitigation and managed retreat in coastal Virginia.



New Book

Vibrant Virginia: Engaging the Commonwealth to Expand Economic Vitality and Inclusivity

Whether it's high-tech jobs with Amazon in Arlington, clean energy expansion in Martinsville, small business development in Galax, or cultural tourism in Virginia Beach, community and economic development efforts across the Commonwealth of Virginia remind us that the opportunities and challenges we face in our urban and rural areas are unique but also in many ways universal. *Vibrant Virginia: Engaging the Commonwealth to Expand Economic Vitality and Inclusivity* explores cases across the urban-rural continuum, looking at connections and disconnects, documenting similarities and differences, all with an eye toward highlighting opportunities for community stakeholders from all sectors to address regional challenges. The edited book includes a curated collection of writings that: include both practical experiences and scholarly contributions related to Virginia Tech's Vibrant Virginia initiative; seek to "connect the dots" between learning, discovery, and engagement; advance the important work being done at Virginia Tech and other colleges and universities in Virginia; and celebrate innovative collaborations with communities, stakeholders, and government officials. The hope is that Virginia's leaders – including local, regional, state, federal, private sector, and nonprofit partners – will consider the sound advice provided by the authors in this book to help the Commonwealth achieve its promise of an even stronger, more vibrant, and increasingly inclusive economy and network of communities.

The book will be available for free download through VT Publishing this fall. The sign-up for notifications about the book availability can be found [here](#). The book talk is available [here](#). To learn more about the Vibrant Virginia initiative, including upcoming funding deadlines and past events, visit [here](#).

Hiring

SPIA is hiring for the following three positions:

- An associate or full professor of Public Administration. The job posting is available [here](#).
- A tenure-track assistant professor in Urban Affairs and Planning. The job posting is available [here](#).
- SPIA Business Manager. The job posting is available [here](#).

Please share these opportunities with your networks and encourage qualified candidates to apply.

Virtual and In-Person Orientation Meetings

MPA/PAPA PhD

Online Orientation (Arlington, Blacksburg, Richmond)

Tuesday, August 17

7:00pm - 8:00pm

RSVP via email: elia@vt.edu

<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/88950770884>

MPIA/PGG-GG track

Online Orientation (Arlington & Blacksburg)

Tuesday, August 17

7:00pm - 8:30pm

RSVP via email: elia@vt.edu

<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/81594847322>

PGG-UEDP track

Online Orientation (Arlington & Blacksburg)

Wednesday, August 18

6:00pm - 7:00pm

RSVP via email: elia@vt.edu

<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/87844259724>

MURP Virtual Orientation Event (Arlington & Blacksburg)

Thursday, August 19

6:00pm - 7:00pm

<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/86115745905>

SPIA Freshman Welcome Event - Blacksburg

Friday, August 20

2:30pm - 5:00pm

Architecture Annex

RSVP for the event [here](#)

New MURP Student Welcome Event - Blacksburg

Saturday, August 21
2:00pm - 3:00pm
Architecture Annex/Surrounding Garden
RSVP via email: ngsmith@vt.edu

New MURP Student Welcome Event - Arlington

Saturday, August 21
2:00pm - 3:00pm
900 Glebe Rd. Arlington, VA (Rm TBD)
RSVP by July 30th via email: elia@vt.edu

MPIA/PGG-GG track - Arlington

In-Person New Student Orientation
Saturday, August 21
3:00pm - 4:30pm
900 Glebe Rd. Arlington, VA (Rm TBD)
RSVP by July 30th via email: elia@vt.edu

MPA/PAPA PhD - Arlington

In-Person New Student Orientation
Thursday, Sept 2
6:30pm - 7:30pm
900 Glebe Rd. Arlington, VA (Rm TBD)
RSVP by July 30th via email: elia@vt.edu

IPG Anniversary

The Institute for Policy and Governance (IPG) celebrated its 15th anniversary this month. To read about the institute's accomplishments during this period, see [here](#). IPG's director, Prof. **Max Stephenson**, has reflected on their trajectory [here](#). We congratulate all of our IPG colleagues on this significant milestone.

Featuring Dr. Melony A. Price-Rhodes

Dr. **Melony A. Price-Rhodes**, Senior Program Director at IPG, had a long career in industry with extensive corporate and law enforcement experience. She has experience working with multiple public and private higher educational institutions in the U.S. and abroad in a variety of roles – as a consultant, guest lecturer, student mentor, grant writer, Alumnae Board of Governors member, and university strategic planner.

She joined VT in 1996 as a graduate student and research assistant and as project staff with the Center of Public Administration and Policy (CPAP) while enrolled in the School's MPA program. She is the long-term Principal Investigator and Project Director for the Fairfax County Federal Reimbursement Unit (FRU), a team comprised of research faculty and staff. In FY20, the FRU had a positive fiscal impact for the County of more than \$1.2M, with the goal of assisting children who are in foster care or

who receive County Children's Services Act services.

Melony earned a B.S. degree from UNC-Charlotte in Criminal Justice, a diploma from the A. Madley Academy of Polygraph Science and Methodology, and a master's degree and PhD in Public Administration and Public Affairs from SPIA.

Melony's lifelong love of photography keeps her busy when she is not working. Her photographs have been featured in multiple exhibitions and one of her pieces is on permanent display in the IPG office. **Melony** is a member of the Hawai'i State Society's Ukulele Hui and has performed at, among other venues, the National Air and Space Museum, the U.S. Capitol, National Christmas Tree Pageant, many senior citizen communities, and welcoming veteran Honor Flights. **Melony** and her husband **Doug**, a retired Navy Chief, have been on multiple mission trips to Africa, Cuba, and Alabama. They have a canine daughter, **Kanoa Kalani**, whom they love dearly.

When she is not doing any of the above, you can find **Melony** on the island of Moloka'i photographing and playing the ukulele with her island family.



Conference

Virginia Tech hosted international academics and industry leaders at the 2021 International Science of Team Science Conference where Professor [Shalini Misra](#) (UAP) served as conference co-chair. Read about it [here](#).

Worth Pondering

- [Citizenship for America's 11m undocumented immigrants would boost the economy](#)
- [In Defense of the Master's Degree](#)
- [Liberal Bias in the College Classroom: A Review of the Evidence \(or Lack Thereof\)](#)
- [On the list: Ten prime ministers, three presidents and a king](#)
- [U.S. Conservatives Are Uniquely Inclined Toward Right-Wing Authoritarianism Compared to Western Peers](#)
- [The Geopolitics of Empathy](#)
- [The U.S. is growing more unequal. That's harmful — and fixable.](#)
- [The War on History Is a War on Democracy](#)
- [The world's top 50 thinkers 2021](#)

Follow SPIA



Make a Gift to SPIA

www.spia.vt.edu

[Unsubscribe from this list](#)