



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
VIRGINIA TECH.

## June 2021 Newsletter

This month the university announced that the College of Architecture and Urban Studies (CAUS) Dean **Richard Blythe** will be stepping down from his post this summer to become pro-vice-chancellor of the Faculty of Humanities at Curtin University in Perth, Australia. Dr. **Rosemary Blieszner**, the former dean of VT's College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, will serve as the interim dean of CAUS. Assisting Dean **Blieszner** in her new job will be SPIA Professor [Yang Zhang](#), who has been appointed Associate Dean for Research and as such will be a new member of the CAUS Executive Committee (for more see below). As director of SPIA, I want to thank Dean **Blythe** for his service and look forward to working with Dean **Blieszner** and Professor **Zhang** in their new roles.

During these summer months, construction crew are busy taking care of various repair projects in the Architectural Annex building in our Blacksburg campus. The building should be in a much better shape when the Fall semester begins.

In the meantime, as you see below, SPIA is hiring a new assistant professor of urban planning, and has launched a new graduate certificate program in Transportation Planning and Policy.

Enjoy your summer break.

Sincerely,

Mehrzad Boroujerdi  
SPIA Director

## Faculty and Student News

[Mehrzad Boroujerdi](#) (SPIA Director) did interviews on Iran's presidential election with Deutsche Welle (Germany), National Public Radio ([6/13/2021](#) and [6/17/2021](#)), and [The World](#). He was quoted in [L'Orient-le Jour](#) (Lebanon), [Asia Times](#) and Wall Street Journal ([6/19/2021](#) and [6/20/2021](#)). **Boroujerdi** also published an article on the Atlantic Council blog entitled "[What will Raisi's cabinet look like? Hardline and full of war vets.](#)"

[Shukriya Bradost](#) (PhD candidate, PGG) published an [op-ed](#) on Iranian presidential elections in Al Jazeera.

[Ralph Buehler](#) (Professor UAP), doctoral candidate [Denis Teoman](#), and MURP student [Marco Viola](#) were part of a research team that published a new [article](#) comparing walking distances in Germany and the U.S. in the Journal of the American Planning Association. **Buehler** was also part of an international team publishing a [paper](#) on bicycling rates in 17 countries across 6 continents in Transport Reviews. **Buehler** commented on the impacts of COVID on bicycling on [Virginia Public Radio](#) and the Living Local TV program. Moreover, he presented his research on sustainable transport and bicycling for [HUB Cycling in Vancouver, Canada](#), the Active Transportation Alliance in Chicago, the University of Denver, and the Technical University of Denmark in Copenhagen.

[Karen Hult](#) (Professor, CPAP) was quoted on the Democratic primary and electoral races in Virginia at numerous outlets including [Augusta Free Press](#), [10WAVY.com](#), and [Martinsville Bulletin](#).

[Thomas Sanchez](#) (Professor, UAP) has been appointed by the American Planning Association (APA) to chair their education committee. This will be a very good opportunity to connect with the profession on a national scale and help (re)invigorate their certification maintenance program in partnership with the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). **Sanchez** was also part of a [panel](#) presentation on "APA Technology & Your Career" for the American Planning Association (APA). The audience of the panel were certified planners or those seeking certification through the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). In addition, **Sanchez** was invited to be a member of APA's strategic planning committee on artificial intelligence (AI). AI has been identified as a leading [topic](#) of importance to APA membership.

[Gerard Toal](#) (Professor, GIA) delivered a [Keynote](#) Address at the Frozen Conflicts in Eurasia Workshop at the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center, University of Illinois.

A book entitled Ethics for Contemporary Bureaucrats edited by two CPAP alums, [Nicole Rishel Elias](#) and [Amanda Olejarski](#), was positively reviewed in American Review of Public Administration vol. 55, 5 (2021): 406-407. American University Distinguished Professor **David Rosenbloom** writes that, "With strong connections to the Center for Public Administration and Policy at Virginia Tech, the editors and contributors to Ethics for Contemporary Bureaucrats admirably carry the constitutional school and "Manifesto" forward." Many CPAP alumni and some current faculty participated in this edited volume.

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## New Graduate Certificate

The graduate certificate in Transportation Planning and Policy is designed to teach students about transportation systems and related public policies. Students will learn about travel behaviors and the socioeconomic impact that transportation systems have on surrounding areas (e.g., local, regional, national). Transportation systems can include personal transportation systems (e.g., automobile, bicycle, scooter) and public transportation systems (e.g., buses, trains/subway, shared bicycle/car programs). The program covers topics such as transportation policy and planning issues associated with land use patterns, resource allocations, and changing political environments. Graduates will be prepared to contribute to transportation planning and associated public policies.

Number of Credit Hours

12 credit hours of graduate level courses

**Core Courses: 6 credit hours**

UAP 5644: Transportation Systems Planning (3 credits)

UAP 5864: Topics in Transportation Planning and Policy (3 credits)

**Restricted Elective courses: 6 credit hours**

Students will select two courses from the following list.

UAP 5114: Computer Applications in Urban Planning and Management (3 credits)

UAP 5224: Planning Methods and Technologies (3 credits)\*

UAP 5424: Metropolitan Planning Topics (3 credits)

UAP 5794: Environmental Planning Studio (3 credits)

\*Students in the Masters of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program are encouraged to choose electives other than UAP 5224 because UAP 5224 is a required core class for MURP.

Faculty Coordinator: [Ralph Buehler](#)

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## 2020 Annual Report

SPIA's 2020 annual report is now available at <https://spia.vt.edu/about/reports.html>. Check out the accomplishments of our alumni, faculty, staff and students.

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## Hiring

SPIA is recruiting a tenure track assistant professor in Urban Affairs and Planning. The job posting is available [here](#). Please share this with your networks and encourage qualified candidates to apply.

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## Featuring Faculty: Yang Zhang

SPIA faculty member [Yang Zhang](#) is looking forward to his new role at the College of Architecture and Urban Studies. Later this year, he will serve as associate dean for research at the college.

"CAUS has a long tradition of intellectual and scholarly diversity and strength. Research excellence among CAUS faculty includes traditional peer-reviewed publications as well as design-based and digital publications and entrepreneurial activities. As the college continues to cultivate its research profile in the context of Virginia Tech's [Beyond Boundaries](#) vision, I think it is important for research administrators like myself to support our faculty and students with humility and lean on collective

deliberation for ideas,” said **Yang**.

“This is an energizing time for supporting and promoting research. Research expenditure on interdisciplinary, collaborative projects has been on a steady rise in recent years, greatly increasing the potential for CAUS’s intellectual and scholarly diversity,” **Yang** also said.

**Yang**'s personal research interests are in the areas of natural hazards mitigation and disaster recovery. He has served on National Science Foundation and Department of Homeland Security proposal review panels and managed grants and contracts from federal and state agencies as well as private foundations. Interdisciplinary collaboration has been central to **Yang**'s past work. He is a founding member of the [Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Program in Disaster Resilience](#) and part of a team working on a [National Science Foundation-funded, multi-year interdisciplinary grant in Disaster Resilience and Risk Management](#).



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## Featuring Staff: Karen Boone

First, I have such wonderful childhood memories of growing up in a close family. I was born and raised in Dublin, Virginia with my parents and two sisters – living beside one set of grandparents. Fortunately

for me, I got to know both sets of grandparents and a great-grand parent. My family lived, and continues to live, close to each other, making it possible to have holidays and get together often. Growing up on a farm made me appreciate working hard and loving nature. Having a garden, animals, and my loving family around was wonderful. I have fond memories of eating at the table every meal and attending church on Sundays. The next wonderful memories are after I met my husband while wrangling cattle up on farm. A descendent of **Daniel Boone**, he is a wonderful man that I have been married to for 26 years. He is a scientist in the field of medical diagnostics. We were blessed with two sons **Jordan** and **Nathan**.

My journey at VA Tech began some time ago.

I had taken a year off from work to be with my son Jordan after his birth. When he turned one I had the opportunity to work at Tech in the Biology department. After working in the fiscal department for many years, my boss offered an opportunity for me to move into the undergraduate office (which I took). It was wonderful to meet and work with the students. But over time I missed the financial work. So, I then moved into a new job with Institute for Policy and Outreach, into their financial office working with sponsored research funding. Wow, the grant world was exciting and a little scary. I had to learn new rules of what you can and cannot do – which was just what I wanted, new challenges! Being a small department, I learned to be well-rounded.

In time our department combined with another and we changed our name to the Institute for Policy and Governance (IPG). My job has continued to evolve in the duties I perform. It has never been boring. I really love working with the PIs on their grant work. My current duties are to monitor all funds and reconcile monthly statements, work with the PIs on their funding and their employees, and enter changes. If needed, I do labor redistributions and enter all types of GRA ships, wage, P14 and emergency hire positions. I also maintain all hire, payroll and funds paperwork for the department.

On the other side, I handle purchasing and payment processes, travel, reimbursements, and budget transfers among other things. As you can see, my job covers a lot of different tasks and is driven by what is needed on a given day. After 23 years at Tech, I am always learning something new because software and policies are continually changing and it is my job to stay on top of these changes.





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## In Remembrance

It is with great sadness that SPIA has learned about the passing of its former professor and director of the Metropolitan Institute [Robert E. Lang](#). **Rob** used to teach in the Urban Planning program from 2001 to 2010. He was a great colleague and thought leader.

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## Worth Pondering

- [Declining urban and community tree cover in the United States](#)
- [Even before covid-19, the world was investing more in science](#)
- [Federal government will maintain expansive work-from-home policies after pandemic](#)
- [Los Angeles Has a Housing Crisis. Can Design Help?](#)
- [Ph.D. Oversupply: The System Is the Problem](#)
- [Social media are turbocharging the export of America's political culture](#)
- [Economy The Four Fault Lines of the World](#)
- [The Global Liveability Index 2021](#)
- [The Thucydides Trap](#)

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