



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
VIRGINIA TECH.

SPIA Community March Update

Dear SPIA Students, Faculty and Staff:

Over the last few weeks, we have seen the disruptive and destructive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we have had to deal with the troubles of a sudden transition to online teaching, over 23,000 people around the world have so far lost their lives and 500,000 people been exposed to the virus in over 155 countries. In the midst of this pandemic, it behooves us to remember these sagacious words of Sa'di, a 13th century Persian poet:

*All human beings are in truth akin, all in creation share one origin.
When fate allots a member pangs and pains,
No ease for other members then remains.
If, unperturbed, another's grief canst scan, thou are not worthy of the name of human.*

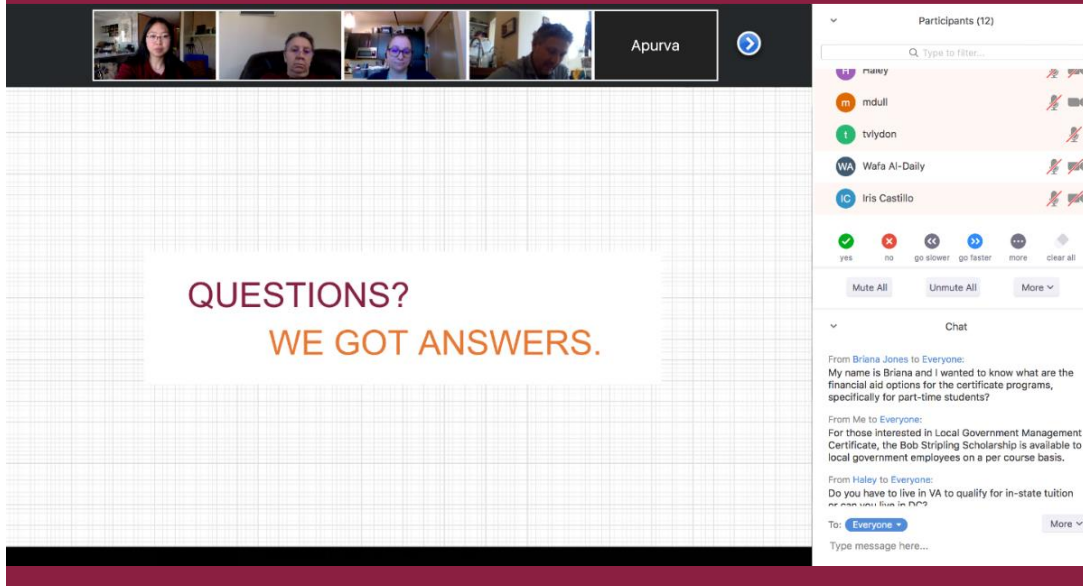
Thank you to everyone for proving yourself “worthy of the name of human.” It has been truly touching to see the care, flexibility, fortitude, and professionalism that the entire SPIA community has exhibited during these difficult times. As informed citizens as well as experts in public policy and international affairs, we each can contribute to augment the (inter)national discussion on this pandemic. Professor Patrick Roberts’s [op-ed in the Washington Post](#) is one such intervention. [Dr. Jeff Stern](#), a CPAP PhD, who leads the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, is another example.

It is thanks to the work of faculty like Patrick and alumni like Jeff that SPIA was ranked again as one of the [Best Public Affairs Programs](#) (out of 276 comparable schools nationwide) in the 2021 list of U.S. News & World Report.

With gratitude,
Mehrzaad Boroujerdi
Director, VT SPIA

On March 26, the Center for Public Administration and Policy (CPAP) hosted a Virtual Info Session. Participants from all over the world joined to ask questions about our programs.

Stay tuned for more virtual info sessions! Especially as we all take measures to stifle the spread of virus, we need your help to spread the word about SPIA.



Faculty & Student News

Professor Steve Hankey received CAUS Honorifics Committee's unanimous vote for the award for Excellence in Research.

Professor Maggie Cowell was recently appointed to the Editorial Board for [Urban Affairs Review](#) and elected to the Governing Board of the [Urban Affairs Association](#) (2020-2023). She was also appointed to be a track chair for economic development at the Annual Conference of the [Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning](#) for a three-conference term of 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Professor Theo Lim received a New Faculty Mentoring Project Grant from the VT Provost office.

Neda Moayerian (PGG) defended her dissertation entitled "Exploring the Connections between Community Cultural Development and Sustainable Tourism in Central Appalachia" on March 19, 2020. Neda will be starting a post-doctoral research position jointly sponsored by the Institute for Policy and Governance (IPG) and the Office of Economic Development (OED).

Ceara Rudd, Environmental Planning and Policy (EPP) major, received CAUS's Phi Kappa Phi medallion.

Congratulations to all!

Did you notice?

On March 16, 2020 we unveiled the new [SPIA](#) website. I want to thank everyone who contributed ideas and content for the website over the last six months. In particular, I want to thank Eunju Namkung (SPIA's Communications and Media Relations Coordinator) and Matthew Jezierski (SPIA's IT Manager) for their tireless efforts in revamping the website. Please take a look at the new website and share your comments or questions [here](#).

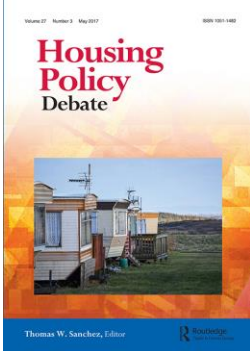
Staff News



Leigh Bower came to SPIA in 2014 from a career consisting of over 20 years in commercial real estate in Atlanta, Georgia where she represented over 6 million square feet of office product in eleven submarkets of the city. She has been the Undergraduate Program Assistant and graduate coordinator for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program. Leigh, who has been instrumental in every aspect of these programs, will retire in August 2020 and it will be hard to fill her shoes. We thank her for her years of excellent service to our students and faculty.

Alumni News

SPIA alumni, **Dr. Jorge Atilas**, was appointed dean of Extension and engagement and director of the West Virginia University Extension Service.



DID YOU KNOW? *Housing Policy Debate* (HPD) is an international academic journal that publishes original research that evaluates and informs housing and community development policy. Subjects include affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, housing-related poverty alleviation and integration strategies, and metropolitan development trends. The Journal also aims to explore linkages between housing policy and finance, energy, environmental, and transportation policies through interdisciplinary approaches. HPD was originally founded and published by the Fannie Mae Foundation in 1989. It was not just a trade publication promoting Fannie Mae but a rigorously researched academic product. In 2008, former UAP Professor Robert Lang (also formerly at the Fannie Mae Foundation) brought HPD to Virginia Tech as part of the Metropolitan Institute. In 2010, UAP Professor Tom Sanchez became editor and led the transition from a quarterly to bi-monthly publication as well as extending the scope of published research from domestic to international. The current impact factor is 1.786 and HPD's SCImago journal ranking (SCJ) is 22 out of 181 within Urban Studies.

