



March 2022 Newsletter

The beginning of spring brought SPIA some great news. In the latest [ranking](#) of schools of public affairs by *US News & World Report*, SPIA was ranked 39 out of 267 (in the top 15%). I congratulate all of our alumni, students, faculty, and staff for this [recognition](#) and know that we can aim even higher in the years to come.

The unfortunate war in Ukraine once again reminded us as scholars that brutal conflicts can break out at any time. Those of us in schools of public policy have a special responsibility to analyze the dynamics and consequences of war from multiple angles as done by professors David Bieri and Gerard Toal (see the faculty news section below).

Mehrzad Boroujerdi
SPIA Director

Faculty News

Dr. **Justin Abold-LAbreche** (CPAP and Nonprofit and Financial Management Certificate instructor) has been named [deputy assistant secretary for planning and performance management](#) at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. You can read about Dr. Abold-Labreche's career in digital transformation in this recent [interview](#). Congratulations Dr. Abold-LAbreche.

[David Bieri](#) (Associate Professor, UAP) had a number of media appearances. In a TV [interview](#) with Fox 5 DC, he discussed the Federal Reserve's first interest rate hike since 2018 and what the return to "conventional monetary policy" during not-so-conventional times means for the economy. In another TV [interview](#), he commented on persistent supply-chain issues that are impacting the construction industry. In a radio [interview](#) for WFIR Roanoke, he discussed how the war in the Ukraine further accentuated short-term inflationary pressure via disturbances in global energy markets. In a TV [interview](#) for WFRX Roanoke, he discussed a new bill that is heading to Gov. Youngkin's desk that will give banks across the Commonwealth a competitive edge in handling Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies."

[Jim Bohland](#) (Professor Emeritus, SPIA) published a chapter with Erv Blythe entitled "Virginia Barriers to Competitive advantage in Broadband Expansion," in M. Cowell and S. Lyon-Hill, *Vibrant Virginia: Engaging the Commonwealth to Expand Economic Vitality* (Blacksburg: Virginia Tech Publishing, 2022), and an op-ed entitled "Is the Decline of Democracy Inevitable?" in the online newspaper Fair Observer (January 31, 2022). Jim also presented a paper with Andreas Rechkemmer entitled "Convergence of

Populism, Nationalism and Fundamentalism: Recreating a Climate of Authoritarianism and Intolerance” for the workshop on Discourses of Hate, Tolerance and Co-existence, sponsored by Hamid Bin Khalifa University, Doha, Qatar (February 17 and 18). Finally, Jim was a guest speaker in a seminar on Regional Economic Development for the planning program at Virginia Commonwealth University.

[Mehrzad Boroujerdi](#) (Director, SPIA) was [quoted](#) in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* on Iranian views of the Ukraine conflict. He also delivered a talk in Persian on the theory of neoliberalism in international relations at the Iranian International Studies Association (March 15).

[Karen Hult](#) (Professor, CPAP) was interviewed a few times by [WFXR \(FOX\)](#) regarding Biden's State of the Union.

[Patrick Roberts](#) (Associate Professor, CPAP) was approved for promotion to the rank of Professor. Congratulations Patrick.

[Gerard Toal](#) (Professor, GIA) wrote an [article](#) on the Ukraine war for The Irish Times and discussed the war [here](#) and [here](#).

Featuring Our Students

[Zuleka Randell Woods](#) lives in the hyphen of the United States and Liberia. She is a dual degree student pursuing a doctoral degree in Planning, Governance & Globalization (PGG), and a master's degree in public health. She has a previous master's degree in Higher Education from Northeastern University in Boston. Zuleka works as a Graduate Assistant for the Virginia Tech Graduate School Office of Recruitment, Diversity, and Inclusion (ORDI). She also sits on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee for SPIA. Prior to joining VT, Zuleka worked at Ferrum College with first generation students and as a member of their Academic Resource Team. She also worked with cultural centers at Northeastern University and in academic support services at Tubman University in Liberia. Zuleka is passionate about storytelling. In her recent work, [Ba-Ya \(Play Cook\)](#), she uses everyday situations to highlight gender-based violence in Liberia. You can find Zuleka on Instagram: [@Zuleka](#) and Twitter: [@Zulekatweets](#), where she shares her work, culture, and stories.



National Security Executive Education

SPIA will offer the third iteration of its [National Security Executive Leadership Program](#) (NSELP) from October 31 to November 4, 2022. This intensive one-week, professional development program is designed for professionals interested in national security, as well as Virginia Tech master's and Ph.D. students. Participants will gain a firm foundational knowledge of the U.S. national security apparatus, instruments of national power, the appropriations process, and crisis decision-making, as well as insight into key technical and global policy issues. The program curriculum centers on how the technical, philosophical, and policy aspects of national security connect, and will include participatory learning in the classroom and via a day-long simulation. VT students who successfully complete all requirements will receive 3 credits for this course while non-VT participants will receive 3.5 CEUs and a Virginia Tech certificate of achievement.

Departing Staff

This month we said goodbye to two of SPIA's staff members. **Natalia Gutierrez-Smith** (Administrative Operations Coordinator) and **Heather (Amanda) Fawkes** (Program Coordinator in Richmond). We thank Natalia and Amanda for their years of service to the school. Below is a picture from a surprise goodbye party for Amanda at our Richmond campus.

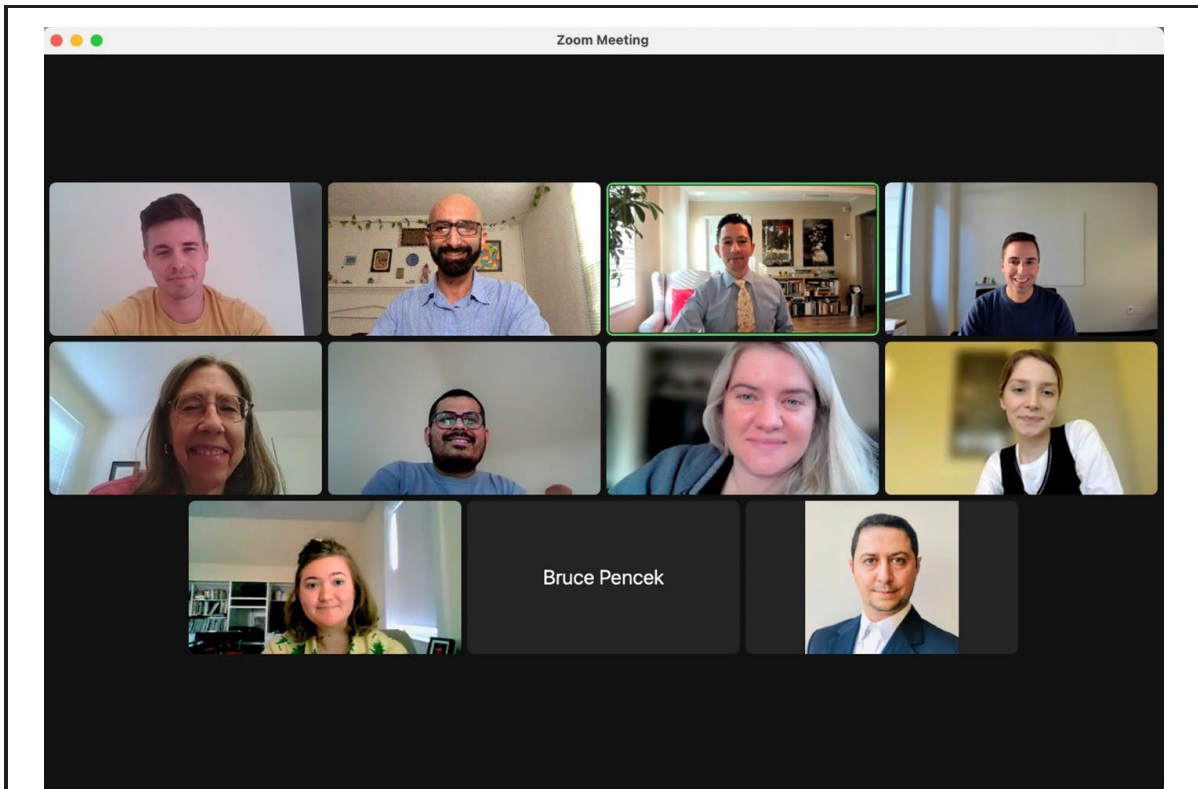


New Study Abroad Program

[Sustainable Transitions in Employment, Economic Welfare, and the Environment](#) is a unique program in Pisa, Italy, which will provide students with a transdisciplinary perspective on sustainable development. The program is intended for rising seniors and graduate students interested in planning, policy, economics, business, innovation, environmental studies, and law. This study abroad program includes a [summer school at the University of Pisa](#), attendance at the [14th Conference of the European Society for Ecological Economics \(ESEE\)](#), and [hiking in the Apuan Alps](#). Interested students should contact Professor Ralph Hall directly (rphall@vt.edu) by Monday, March 30.

Events

The Forum on Social and Political Thought and Public Administration and Virginia Tech (PAVT) co-sponsored the event “The Normative Dimensions of Policy Design and Implementation” on March 22. The guest speaker was **Michael Sellitto** who has served as Special Assistant to Deputy Secretaries of State William J. Burns (2014) and **Antony Blinken** (2015), and was the White House Director for Cybersecurity Policy on the National Security Council staff (2015–2018). He is presently the Deputy Director of the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence.



Meanwhile, Dr. [Ray Zuniga](#) invited all the students in his PAPA 5904: Project and Report class to the Blue Ridge Axe Throwing & Arcade near the Thomas Connor House on March 24th for some much needed midsemester stress release.



Summer 2022 Courses

See the list of summer 2022 courses offered by SPIA [here](#).

Message from ICMA Fellowship Winner



The [ICMA](#) Local Government Management Fellowship is a competitive, career development, opportunity, aimed at recent MPA/MPP graduates interested in local government. Selected finalists have the opportunity to interview with host localities to be placed in full-time management-track local government positions. Finalists are selected based on academic performance, demonstrated leadership potential commitment to public service, communication skills, initiative, creativity, and positive attitude.

Thanks to a classmate and Dr. **Stephanie Davis**, I saw this opportunity and felt it would be the perfect next step for me upon graduation to continue to explore my interest in local government while developing my professional skills and resume. I am happy to announce I was selected as a finalist and even more excited to share that after the interview process, I have been offered a position to complete this fellowship with Sarasota County, FL starting in July. Sarasota County has been hosting fellows for the past 14 years and aims to customize this experience for each fellow by exploring different areas of local government interest and by being mentored by the Deputy County Administrator through the whole experience. After my first interview with Sarasota County, I knew the supportive work environment and commitment to the fellow's development would be the best fit for me and I couldn't be more excited to transition into this position and see how my interests and skills grow over the next year.

As part of the application process, applicants are asked to write a response to a case study, which weighs very heavily in the selection process. The MPA program and all the knowledge and skills I have learned through the program allowed me to respond to this case study the best way, keeping ethical public service and good governance at the center of my response. This program has prepared me to take on this fellowship with the confidence that I have a solid foundation of theory and practice to be successful in the roles and projects I will be tasked with. Before beginning my MPA journey, I had no clue I would be interested in local government. I am grateful for my time in this program.

Kari Furrow

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Worth Pondering

- [4 Emerging Trends You Should Know About](#)
- [Afghanistan's last finance minister, now a D.C. Uber driver, ponders what went wrong](#)
- [Agile Government: The Role of Public Affairs Education](#)
- [Americans are more willing to welcome Ukrainians than others fleeing violence](#)
- [An International Relations Theory Guide to the War in Ukraine](#)
- [College students have become fearful of expressing their views](#)
- [Estimating Excess Mortality Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Is Graduate School Worth It? A Comprehensive Return on Investment Analysis](#)
- [Islam has a rich tradition around finance. Crypto is prompting new questions](#)
- [Over 200 Companies Have Withdrawn from Russia - But Some Remain](#)
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