



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
VIRGINIA TECH.

SPIA Community October Update

Dear SPIA Students, Faculty, Staff, and Alumni:

I hope you and your loved ones continue to stay healthy and safe. October was a busy month for us in SPIA as we held a number of successful public events such as “Race and U.S. Foreign Policy” (Oct. 16), “[Renewed Hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh: Why Now, and the Role of Inside and Outside Actors in the Conflict](#)” (Oct. 19), and the “Ask Me Anything session with SPIA Director” (Oct. 23). As part of our recruitment efforts, we started [advertising](#) in both the print and electronic editions of *Foreign Policy* magazine, and continued to offer ongoing virtual [information sessions](#) for prospective students. SPIA also launched its YouTube [channel](#) this month.

To help students register for the Spring 2021 semester, the list of undergraduate and graduate courses can be found [here](#). I am particularly excited to teach my first course (GIA 5314: Middle East Geopolitics) at Virginia Tech, and lead the National Security Executive Leadership Program (NSELP). [NSELP](#) is SPIA’s newest executive education program for mid-level national security professionals and we have put together an exceptional curriculum featuring a group of top-notch speakers. I hope you will help us spread the word about this program that is also open to a limited number of VT graduate students for credit.



The graphic features a dark background on the left with the VT logo and school name. On the right, a circular inset shows two men in military-style green flight suits sitting at a table in a control room. The text on the left reads: "National Security Executive Leadership Program", "March 22-26, 2021 (Online)", "For Mid-Level National Security Professionals", and "www.cpe.vt.edu/nationalsecurity".

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National Security Executive Leadership Program

March 22-26, 2021 (Online)
For Mid-Level National Security Professionals

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I want to remind students who may be feeling distress for academic or personal reasons to please reach out to your advisors/program chairs, me as the school director, and if needed the Graduate School ombudsman. All of us are here to help.

Finally, I want to urge everyone to please perform their civic duty and vote on November 3.

Sincerely,
Mehrzaad Boroujerdi
SPIA Director

Faculty and Student News

[Mehrzaad Boroujerdi](#) was [quoted](#) in a *Newsweek* article about lifting the arms embargo against Iran.

[Ralph Buehler](#)'s (Professor, UAP) forthcoming edited book "[Cycling for Sustainable Cities](#)" was mentioned in a New York Times [article](#), as well as in an [article](#) in the Ottawa Citizen. His new article on pedestrian and cyclist safety was featured by [Streetsblog USA](#). Professor Buehler and John Pucher also published "[The Growing Gap in Pedestrian and Cyclist Fatality Rates between the United States and the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands, 1990–2018](#)," *Transport Reviews* (vol. 41, issue 1, January 2021).

Sara Jordan (SPIA Affiliated Faculty), Samantha L. Fenn (MPA 2019) and Benjamin B. Shannon published "[Transparency as Threat at the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Cyberbiosecurity](#)," *Computer*, vol. 53, no. 10 (October 2020).

Connor Patrick Donahue (PGG) defended his dissertation, "Mare Imperium: The Evolution of Freedom of the Seas Discourse in U.S. Foreign Policy," on September 21, 2020. His dissertation committee was composed of Paul Avey, Mauro Caraccioli, Tim Luke (co-chair), and Yannis Stivachtis (co-chair). Congratulations, Dr. Donahue.

[Ralph Hall](#) (Associate Professor, UAP) was the lead author on a food insecurity study at Virginia Tech that recently led to a \$1.5 million [gift](#) to the university. The story was covered in VT News and [Roanoke Times](#).

[Stephanie Smith](#) (Associate Professor, CPAP) co-authored the following two articles: "[Analyzing the global health agenda: A comparison of priority for diabetes and oral diseases](#)," *Global Public Health* (2020), and "[Strategic orientation and relationship building among dyads in complex public management networks: perspectives from state asthma coalitions](#)," *Administration & Society* (2020).

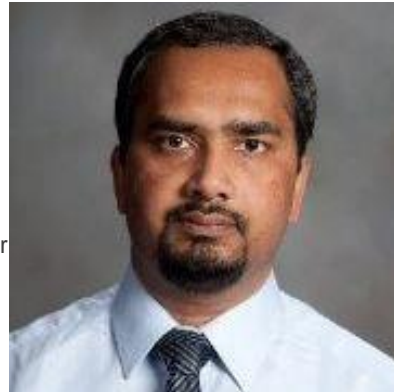
[Jessica Lee Spencer-Gallucci](#) (CPAP) successfully defended her doctoral dissertation, "An Exploration of Inclusive Management Practices: Through the Lenses of Public Managers," on September 30, 2020. Her committee members were Matthew Dull (co-chair), Karen Hult (co-chair), Patrick Roberts, and Anne Khademian. Congratulations, Dr. Spencer-Gallucci.

SPIA Applied Lab - Graduate Assistants 2020-2021

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Minnis Ridenour, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Office Emeritus and the Senior Fellow for Resource Development (SFRD), SPIA received a number of additional graduate assistantships this year. These positions enable SPIA to continue the “Applied Lab” model that Mr. Ridenour had championed. Dr. Anne Khademian, until recently a Presidential Fellow at Virginia Tech, describes the role of the students in this way: “Students in the Applied Lab apply their research and coursework to support the development, advancement, and evaluation of major university initiatives. They support university leaders to bridge research and practice, while gaining insight on the challenges, initiatives, and possibilities of higher education administration and leadership. SPIA students bring interdisciplinary strengths to their work in the Lab, and a passion for translating their research into meaningful practice.”

Here are the two students who are working in SPIA’s Applied Lab during the current academic year.

Shahidur Talukdar is a doctoral candidate in the Center for Public Administration and Policy. His general research interests include: Public Policy, Regional Sustainability, Metropolitan Governance and Development. Shahidur has been assigned to work in the Virginia Tech Office of Strategic Affairs and he has contributed to data analysis for *The Virginia Tech Difference: An Inclusive Process*; conducted competitive landscape analyses for the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) and the College of Architecture and Urban Studies; and helped develop a Diversity Index for Virginia Tech.



Agnes Porter-Gray is a Master’s student in the Public and International Affairs (MPIA) concentration. She has a broad background in civic engagement and legislative advocacy. Agnes will be working with Dr. Yang Zhang and Dr. Sylvester Johnson to conduct research and analysis to support the conceptual development of an international consortium across several research universities. The consortium is a product of the Beyond Boundaries initiative and strives to meet Virginia Tech’s vision to become a global land-grant university.



Program Profile

Do you want to learn more about how communities create, retain, and expand economic opportunities for their residents? Would you like to investigate the long-term impact of COVID-19 on businesses, workers, and communities? Have you contemplated how the racial wealth gap created by systemic racism affects both U.S. GDP and local economic outcomes? If any of these questions pique your

curiosity, you might consider the Graduate Certificate in Economic Development in the School of Public and International Affairs at Virginia Tech. The certificate is designed for those who are interested in acquiring a basic understanding of urban and regional economic development dynamics and the role of policy in influencing them.

The [International Economic Development Council \(IEDC\)](#) describes economic development as “A set of programs and policies that aid in the creation, retention and expansion of jobs; the development of a stable tax base; and the enhancement of wealth.” Planners and others working in adjacent fields need to know how they can develop their economies using the types of programs and policies that IEDC studies. The challenge for policymakers, economic developers, and urban planners today is to design appropriate local and regional economic development policies and programs to respond to challenges resulting from global pandemics, technological development, demographic changes, urban decline, sprawl, and inequity. Enrolled students will learn about programs and policies like these as they select 6 credits from a curated list of core courses and an additional 6 credits in related electives. The Certificate is offered at both the Arlington and Blacksburg campuses and is offered in partnership with colleagues from VT’s [Office of Economic Development](#).

Find out more about the Graduate Certificate in Economic Development [here](#) or contact Dr. Margaret Cowell (e-mail: mmcowell@vt.edu).

Student Spotlight



Sarkawt Shamsuldin (MPIA, 2020) is currently a member of the Iraqi Parliament (Council of Representatives of Iraq) representing the city of Sulaimaniyah. In 2018 when he was elected, he became the youngest Iraqi MP at the age of 34. Sarkawt is deputy chairman of the Civil Society Committee and member of the Iraq-U.S. Friendship Committee. In Parliament, he worked on anti-corruption legislation that held multiple individuals accountable and helped to return properties to state banks worth tens of millions of USD along with another colleague. He also proposed multiple bills and co-sponsored legislation to promote human rights and freedom of speech in Iraq.

Sarkawt is co-founder of the New Generation Movement, a new political party that campaigns to promote young men and women leaders. He co-founded the Future parliamentary caucus where different parliamentarians from various backgrounds united to embrace unity, reject sectarianism, and promote accountability.

Before becoming an MP, Mr. Shamsuldin was the Washington Bureau Chief for NRT TV, and prior to

that he worked for multiple local and international NGOs in the United States and Iraq. He also worked with the U.S. Embassy from 2009 to 2013 before coming to the United States where he received a number of awards from the U.S. State Department. Sarkawt is married and lives in Baghdad.

Worth Pondering

- [Colleges Slash Budgets in the Pandemic, With 'Nothing Off-Limits'](#)
- [International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook Report 2020](#)
- [Report of the Council of Graduate Schools on Graduate Enrollment and Degrees 2009-2019](#)
- [The intellectual flare of the so-called dark ages](#)
- [The pandemic is plunging millions back into extreme poverty](#)
- [The Virus Moved Female Faculty to the Brink. Will Universities Help?](#)

