November 2021 Newsletter

Dear Students, Staff, and Faculty,

I hope everyone had a nice Thanksgiving holiday. As we enter the home stretch of the Fall semester, our students are gearing up to finish term papers and take exams. Meanwhile, SPIA professors are busy with two faculty searches currently under way at the school (on top of their regular assignments). As you see in the rest of this newsletter, there has been no let-up in developments at SPIA during November. I am particularly proud of the successful completion of the National Security Executive Education Program this month; forming the school's first ever Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee; and embracing the new staff members who joined us at our Richmond campus (see below). Incidentally, you can see SPIA's latest organizational chart here.

I wish you all a great end of the semester.

Sincerely,
Mehrzad Boroujerdi
SPIA Director

Faculty and Student News

Ariel Ahram (Professor, GIA) published "Fluid and Failing, Yet Static: The Afterlife of Arab States" as part of a dossier from the Center for International Studies at Sciences Po (Paris) dealing with transformation of the Arab state. He also co-authored an article with Pishtiwan Jalal (PGG 2020) entitled "Salafism, Sectarianism, and National Identity in Iraqi Kurdistan" which was published in Middle East Journal (vol. 75, no. 3, Autumn 2021). The article draws from research Pishtiwan did for his dissertation on the rise of radical Islamic ideology within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Pishtiwan is now general director of the Kurdish Regional Government's (KRG) Agricultural Marketing Department, which aims to promote food security in the region. Ariel also attended the Middle East Peace and Security (MEPS) 2021 Dohuk Forum in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq where he chaired three of the panels at the forum at the American University of Kurdistan. Delovan Barwari (current PGG doctoral student) also attended. The forum discussed broad issues of peace and stability for Iraq and the region. Among the attendees and speakers were President of the Republic of Iraq Barham Salih, President of the KRG Nechirvan Barzani, and KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, as well as several members of parliament and senior diplomats.

Ralph Buehler (Professor, UAP) gave presentations about his new co-edited book Cycling for Sustainable Cities for the Virginia State Trails Advisory Committee and at an event organized by

the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association (and promoted by the APA chapters for North Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, New Jersey, and Georgia). Buehler also presented his work on COVID-19 impacts on bicycling at the ACSP annual meeting and the International Cycling Safety Conference held in Lund, Sweden. Finally, Buehler commented on his bike parking research in a Streetsblog article.

City Manager of the City of Fredericksburg, VA, has named Natalie Daniels (MURP, 2017) to serve a 4-year term on that community's Planning Commission beginning November 1, 2021.

Stephanie Davis (Collegiate Assistant Professor, CPAP) edited and published two chapters in the Virginia Municipal League's Handbook for Virginia Mayors and Council Members, sixth edition. The two chapters, Budgeting and Revenue Sources, provide guidance and best practices for leaders in Virginia's towns and cities on local government budgeting and revenues. Supporting this initiative were students Victoria McNiff (MPA Candidate, CPAP) and Alisande Tombarge (2020 MURP graduate, UAP).

Karen Hult (Professor, CPAP) commented extensively on the Virginia elections. For example, see here, here, here, and here.

Chad Levinson (Assistant professor, GIA) published "Think Tanks and American Interventionism" in War on the Rocks.

Tom Sanchez (Professor, UAP), MURP student Trey Gordner, and Hannah Shumway (ESRI engineer) presented their paper, "AI for Urban Planning," at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Annual Conference. Sanchez also co-organized a roundtable discussion on urban planning applications of AI that included planning faculty from Texas A&M (Xinyue Ye), Tufts University (Shan Jiang), and the University of Florida (Yan Wang).

Todd Schenk (Associate Professor, UAP) and his colleagues have been working as co-principal investigators on an NSF-funded project to combat antibiotic resistance with data-driven surveillance. This project was covered in this VT News story.

VT News also covered the fantastic work of our colleagues in the Institute for Policy and Governance (IPG) to send life-saving supplies to those in need in this VT story.

DEI Committee

SPIA now has a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. Please feel free to contact the following members of the committee with any ideas or suggestions you may have regarding DEI:

- Prof. **Patrick Roberts** (Chair) robertsp@vt.edu
- Prof. **Theo Lim** tclim@vt.edu
- Prof. **Tim Luke** twluke@vt.edu
- **Kristen Sarik** (Senior in SSC) kristen18@vt.edu
- **Monica Perez** (Junior in EPP) monicaperez@vt.edu
- **Khondaker Mohammed Mohiuddin Ekram** (1st year MURP Student) ekram@vt.edu
- **Zuleka Woods** (PGG doctoral candidate) rdauda@vt.edu

National Security Executive Leadership Program (NSELP)

The School of Public and International Affairs recently completed a second offering of the National Security Executive Leadership Program (NSELP). The program featured fifteen distinguished speakers including Mr. **Sean O'Keefe**, the former Secretary of the Navy and Administrator of NASA. Mr. O'Keefe provided the keynote address, which was sponsored by the Ridenour Faculty Fellowship program. Additional speakers included Dr. **Sezaneh Seymour**, the Senior Advisor to the Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology on the National Security Council, The Assistant General Counsel for Enforcement and Intelligence at the Department of the Treasury, former US officials from congress and the foreign service, and experts from think tanks (CSIS) and corporations (Merrick), as well as faculty from Georgetown University, the National War College, and Virginia Tech.

The program concluded with a full-day National Security Simulation exercise that was designed by **Ed McGrady**, Principal at Monks Hood Media. Participants in the NSELP were a combination of early and mid-career professionals and Virginia Tech Graduate students. The Ridenour Faculty Fellowship and Merrick provided sponsorship that enabled Virginia Tech faculty and members of the School's Advisory Board to participate in the intensive online program. The integration and engagement of National Security experts, academic researchers, and distinguished advisory guests created an optimal learning environment. The coordinating team included **Briana Blanchard** and **Lori Atwater** from VT's Continuing and Professional Education (CPE), and **Amanda Fawkes** and **Tyler Wedrosky** (SPIA). The team compiled participant feedback to build on the inaugural program and to ensure a meaningful course was developed. We are continuing our collaboration with our past participants, speakers, and students to consider in-person, hybrid and continued virtual learning opportunities.

Showcasing Our New Richmond Campus Colleagues

Camden South is the Office & Student Experience Manager (OSEM) for SPIA on the Richmond campus. Camden is responsible for daily management, organization, and coordination of the administrative activities and procedures of the SPIA Richmond Campus. Supporting, coordinating, and participating in faculty research activities are also part of the role. Past research activities include serving as SPIA Richmond research personnel on two strategic planning efforts for the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and Virginia Tech's College of Architecture and Urban Studies. Camden's OSEM role also includes student services for Center for Public Administration and Policy (CPAP). Previously, Camden interned for the Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, giving him the opportunity to learn about the intersectionality of people and the planned, built environment. Camden began his Master of Public Administration degree program with CPAP. His email is Camdens2@vt.edu.

Jennifer Quam-Howell is Special Projects Coordinator for SPIA on the Richmond campus. She has a twenty-year career in hospitality, catering, event production, and event management. Previous roles include Director of Sales at Blue Ridge Catering in Roanoke, Virginia and Senior Event Designer at "Catering by Design" in Denver, Colorado. Jenn is committed to public service with a people-focused orientation. She was appointed Social Chair for the Queensmill Recreation Association Board in 2019, serving a three-year term. Jenn holds a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies with Minors in Communications and Sociology from Virginia Tech, and an A.S. in Culinary Arts from Johnson & Wales University, Denver Campus. Jenn is a graduate student in our Nonprofit and N.G.O. Management Certificate program. Originally from Roanoke, she lives in the Richmond area with her husband of 14 years, Paul, with their three sons and three dogs.

Andrea Briceno-Mosquera was appointed as a Postdoctoral Associate for SPIA on the Richmond campus. The Postdoc role focuses on quantitative and qualitative analysis protocols related to original research of **Leisha LaRiviere**, the SPIA Richmond Principal Investigator. This research includes implementation science studies and longitudinal evaluation of succession management activities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Andrea holds her Ph.D. in Public Administration and Public Affairs from CPAP. In both her academic and professional trajectories, she has focused on quantitative and qualitative analyses examining policy-making processes and evaluations from an equity and inclusion approach. She has taught courses in economic foundations and policy design and served as a research program coordinator at private universities in Colombia.

During professional work with the Colombian government at national and local levels, she evaluated policies aimed to address needs of minority groups. At the international level, she interned at the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington D.C., supporting the evaluation of projects addressing practices of inclusion, diversity, and equity across Latin American countries. Andrea was named a 2019 Equity and Inclusion Fellow of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM). Andrea holds a master's degree in Government and Public Policy from the Externado University of Colombia in partnership with the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) of Columbia University, NY, and a bachelor's degree in Economics from the National University of Colombia.

Yousof Azizi is a PhD Candidate in CPAP, serving as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) for SPIA on the Richmond campus. In this position, Yousof's research focus is a multi-site, multi-tiered, multi-phase longitudinal study of the Virginia Public Sector Leader program (VPSL). Simultaneously, Yousof is working on his dissertation about U.S. foreign policy decision-making, presidential studies, and Iran's nuclear program. Yousof's writing on "President Trump's Iran Policy" appeared in the *Encyclopedia of the American Presidency (4th ed.)*, as well as *International Affairs Review*. In Summer 2021, Yousof was a lecturer for PAPA 6214: Public Policy Process, one of the core requirements for the MPA program at CPAP. He is a past Research Assistant at the Belfer Center at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. In 2015, Yousof graduated with a Master of Public Policy from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. He is also a graduate of Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, Iran, both in BSc and MSc of chemical engineering. His primary areas of interest were energy policy and security. Twitter: @yousofazizi

Events

From November 15 to 18, SPIA helped organize the AgChain Hackathon at Egerton University, Kenya. In his welcoming address, Professor Ralph Hall (UAP) outlined a number of the findings obtained from their USAID LASER PULSE project entitled "Exploring Blockchain Technology to Improve Food Security Through African Indigenous Vegetables in Western Kenya." This hackathon was the second project milestone event this fall, and followed the blockchain webinar held on October 26, 2021. For a short summary of the hackathon see here.

On November 19, SPIA hosted a live webinar with two senior White House officials discussing supply chain resilience and cybersecurity. Jason Tama, deputy for resilience and response at the White House National Security Council, and Jeff Greene, Chief, Cyber Response & Policy at the White House National Security Council, spoke on how the US can ensure supply chain resilience by developing new policies and deploying advanced technologies to detect, prevent, and deter future attacks. The event was sponsored by SPIA, Virginia Tech National Security Institute, and the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative (CCI), and was moderated by Prof. Patrick Roberts (CPAP) and Prof. Jeff Reed (Virginia Tech/CCI).

Worth Pondering

- Africa's Rising Cities
- How Asia is crucial in the battle against climate change
- How US gun culture stacks up with the world
- Los Angeles is aiming to be first major carbon-free U.S. city, but obstacles loom
- Nuclear energy united Europe. Now it is dividing the club
- Ten trends to watch in the coming year
- The gender gap in academic research widened during first wave of the pandemic
- The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics
- The number of people who have died from covid-19 is likely to be close to 17 million
- To prevent floods, China is building "sponge cities"

Follow SPIA

Make a Gift to SPIA

SPIA thanks the following donors for their contributions:

Dr. **Larkin S. Dudley**
Mr. **Matthew S. Worner**