



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
VIRGINIA TECH.

April 2021 Newsletter

As faculty and students sprint toward the end of the Spring Semester, we have a lot to be proud of. This month *U.S. News & World Report* published its annual [rankings](#) of the best public affairs programs, and SPIA came in at 48th among some 285 schools of public affairs. We know that the quality of the programs we offer is better than what the rankings indicate and the stories below about the accomplishments of our students, faculty, and alumni support that claim.

I wish students well in completing their papers/projects and taking their final exams. In turn, I wish the faculty well with grading all those papers, projects, and exams.

Sincerely,

Mehrzad Boroujerdi
SPIA Director

Student and Alumni News

[Yousof Azizi](#) (Ph.D. Candidate, CPAP) was named a 2021 PA Theory Network Fellow.

[Damion Blake](#) (ASPECT PhD, 2012) has been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor with tenure at Elon University.

[Joe Castle](#) (CPAP PhD, 2020), who did his dissertation research on federal technology policy and open source software and currently works at GSA, was mentioned in an [article](#) in the Federal News Network.

[Xavier Harmony](#) (PhD student, PGG) presented research at the 62nd International Meeting of the Transportation Research Forum on April 8. A conference committee awarded Xavier the "Best Student Paper" award for his paper entitled "Can transportation network companies replace the bus? An evaluation of shared mobility operating costs." In addition to the honor, Xavier will receive a plaque and a cash prize.

[L. Maria Ingram](#) (Ph.D. Candidate, CPAP) [published](#) an op-ed entitled "Justice, Warning Lights and Organizational Capacity" in *PA Times*, the flagship magazine of the *American Society for Public Administration*.

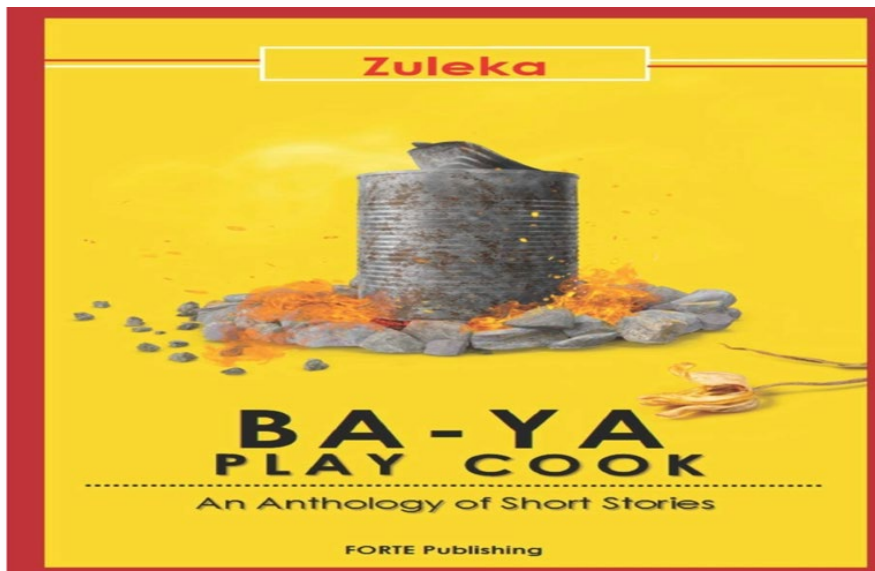
[Ashley Reynolds Marshall](#) was appointed Charlottesville's first deputy city manager for racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. She is seeking a Ph.D. at CPAP, with a dissertation about "collaborative governance, corporate social responsibility and collective impact/collaborative programming."

[Chad Newswander](#) (CPAP Ph.D., 2009) won the 2021 Mosher Award for the best article in *Public Administration Review* written by an academic. The award was presented to Chad and his coauthors at the ASPA conference for their [article](#) entitled "Why Public Employees Rebel: Guerrilla Government in the Public Sector."

[Regan Westwood](#) (double major in Environmental Policy & Planning and Smart & Sustainable Cities) was selected as the recipient of the 2021 Phi Kappa Phi Medallion Award for being the top graduating senior this spring in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies. Her advisor is Dr. Theo Lim. Only one such award is given to each college at Virginia Tech, so this is quite an achievement!

[Davon Woodard](#) (PGG Ph.D. Candidate, 2021) accepted a fall 2021 tenure-track faculty appointment as the new Assistant Professor of Race and Urbanism in the School of Urban Studies at the University of Washington Tacoma. The co-chairs of his dissertation are Tom Sanchez and Kris Wernstedt.

[Zuleka Woods](#) (PGG Ph.D. Candidate and Graduate Assistant at the Office of Recruitment, Diversity, and Inclusion) published a book of short stories based on sexual and gender-based violence in her home country, Liberia. The [book](#) is available now on Amazon.



Faculty News

[Ariel Ahram](#) (GIA) was promoted to the rank of full professor.

[Mehrzad Boroujerdi](#) (SPIA Director) was quoted in [Haaretz](#) newspaper (Israel), [New York Times](#), and [Washington Post](#) on the Iranian nuclear issue. He also did a radio [interview](#) with Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and an [interview](#) with Alhurra TV (in Arabic) on similar topics.

Professor [Ralph Buehler](#) (Professor, UAP) commented in The New York Times on a new study about [COVID bike lanes](#) and in Forbes on the upcoming [challenges for Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg](#). Buehler also gave a presentation on his new book for the [Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency, Florida](#), and published an editorial about the [impacts of COVID-19 on bicycling in North America and Europe](#) in the journal *Transport Reviews*. He also presented a [poster of his research on e-scooters](#) at the Third Annual National Mobility Summit of the US Department of Transportation University Transportation Centers. Finally, Buehler gave a presentation about [pedestrian and cyclist safety](#) for the Northern Virginia Regional Commission.

[Stephanie Davis](#) (Collegiate Assistant professor, CPAP) was appointed Chair of the Commission on Local Government on January 5, 2021. The Commission on Local Government promotes and preserves the viability of Virginia's local governments by fostering positive intergovernmental relations. The commission is composed of five members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Virginia General Assembly. The members are required by statute to have knowledge and experience in local government, and they can hold no other elective or appointive office while on the commission.

[Mary Beth Dunkenberger](#) (Associate Director, IPG) was recognized with the 2020-2021 College Award for Outreach Excellence through Virginia Tech's Office of Outreach and International Affairs.

USAID released a [story](#) on the Exploring Blockchain Technology to Improve Food Security Through African Indigenous Vegetables project in Western Kenya that Professor [Ralph Hall](#) (UAP) is involved with.

[Theo Lim](#) (UAP) was awarded the 2021 CAUS Certificate for Excellence in Teaching and received two grants from the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) for 2021-2022. The first ISCE grant (along with co-PI Thomas Pingel) engages vulnerable populations in extreme heat resilience planning through citizen science and co-production of knowledge. The project has the potential to make an important contribution to both scientific literature and community practice. The second ISCE grant with co-PIs [Tom Sanchez](#) (UAP), **Chris North** (Sanghani Center for Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics), and **Alec Smith** (Dept. of Economics) looks at the application of artificial intelligence to urban planning. The project will be partnering with the American Planning Association over the next year. Finally, Theo's article "Examining privilege and power in US urban parks and open space during the double crises of antiblack racism and COVID-19" in *Socio-Ecological Practice Research* (with co-author Fushcia Hoover) was selected as the Editor's Choice article for the current issue.

[Shelley Mastran](#) (UAP Professor of Practice) has just published *On the Brink of Change: A Historical Geography of Fairfax County, Virginia, c. 1960*. It is available from the Reston Museum (www.restonmuseum.org). The book is illustrated with maps prepared by MURP student Andrew De Luca.

Urban Affairs and Planning professor [Tom Sanchez](#) was recently the academic editor for a thematic

issue of *Urban Planning*. The issue, [Innovations and Development in Urban Planning Scholarship and Research](#), included articles on innovative planning research activities which included his article, "[Urban Planning Academics: Tweets and Citations](#)," and the [editorial](#) for the issue. Sanchez also co-authored a paper, "Landscape Architecture Faculty Performance Evaluation Using Citation Analysis" with Keunhyun Park and Jessica Zuban from Utah State University. The paper was presented at the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) 2021 Annual Conference. As mentioned above, Professor Sanchez and Theo Lim also received an ISCE grant.

[Todd Schenk](#) (UAP) was promoted to the rank of associate professor with tenure. He also published an [article](#) with co-authors in the journal *Nature Sustainability* entitled "Addressing the contribution of indirect potable reuse to inland freshwater salinization." Read about the research [here](#).

[Stephanie Smith](#) (CPAP) published a co-authored [article](#) entitled "The rise and fall of global health issues: an arenas model applied to the COVID-19 pandemic shock" in *Globalization & Health*.

[Max Stephenson](#) (UAP) co-edited (with Cathy Grimes) [Conversations in Community Change: Voices from the Field](#) (VT Publishing, 2021)

New Exhibit and Book Exploring Brazil's Largest Favela

Complexo da Maré is a group of 16 contiguous favelas and housing projects in the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro. Home to an estimated 140,000 individuals, Maré is Brazil's largest agglomeration of those communities and one of the most densely settled areas in the hemisphere. Often depicted in a negative light, these favelas are in fact vibrant and diverse neighborhoods. The Complexo is the subject of an exhibition, *Maré from the Inside*, now on offer in Newman Library, consisting of photographs by the noted Italian photographer Antonello Veneri and produced by local resident Henrique Gomes. The two artists worked together from 2013 to 2019 to obtain the portraits during a period when Brazil's national government occupied the community militarily and the city hosted the World Cup and Olympics. The striking exhibit offers intimate family and individual photographs as well as evocations of daily community life.

Two scholars from Virginia Tech, Desiree Poets from the Department of Political Science and [Max Stephenson](#) from SPIA and the Institute for Policy and Governance, as well as **Nicholas Barnes** from St. Andrews University, have worked closely with Gomes and Veneri and additional contributors from Bard College, Virginia Tech, Maré, and Brown University to produce an edited companion book to accompany the exhibit just published by Virginia Tech Publishing entitled *Maré From the Inside: Art, Culture and Politics in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil*. The volume may now be downloaded as a PDF [here](#) and will shortly also be available for purchase from Amazon.com in softcover. The team will also soon release a virtual version of the exhibit and a Portuguese language edition of *Maré From the Inside*. The exhibit will be on view at Newman Library until September 30, 2021 and the editors will announce events related to it in due course.

PhD Candidate Highlight

At their March meeting, the Board of Visitors appointed [Phil Miskovic](#) to serve as the 2021-22 Graduate Student [Representative](#) to the Board. In this role, he'll work with university administration and governance to ensure graduate students have a strong voice in decision-making. Phil is a PhD student in CPAP, focusing his research on local government. Phil splits his time between Blacksburg and Crewe, a town of about 2,300 population in rural Nottoway County, about three hour's drive from the main campus, where he serves as mayor. He says his motivation comes from a desire "to bridge the gap between theory and practice, especially in economically disadvantaged areas rich with strong communities and culture, but lacking in financial resources or the subject matter expertise of the modern public administrator." His elected service began in 2012 with his first of four 2-year terms as a member of Crewe Town Council before being voted into his current role in the 2020 municipal election. Phil has a Master's degree in Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness from Virginia Commonwealth University and a BA in Religion from Hampden-Sydney College. He also serves as a graduate assistant in public relations for the College of Architecture and Urban Studies and as the emergency planner for Virginia's Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS). Prior to his employment with DBHDS, Phil was a policy analyst for Virginia's Secretary of Public Safety in the administration of then-Governor Bob McDonnell.

Phil also serves on the Board of Directors of the Virginia Municipal League. In 2019 he was the first recipient of the Emerging Leader Award by the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership. In his free time, Phil enjoys cooking, traveling, and home renovations. His Crewe home is a century-old historic Catholic Church he purchased and painstakingly repurposed for its current use.



Featuring Faculty: Chad Levinson

Chad Levinson joined SPIA in 2018, where he teaches classes on U.S. foreign policy, the nature of political power, and research methods in the Government and International Affairs program. He is grateful for the collegial support he has received from his colleagues, and the financial support he has

received from the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment, which has allowed him to pursue a new line of research into the media strategies used to promote foreign military and diplomatic interventions by the United States. He is even more grateful for the inspiration he gets from his students, in Northern Virginia and Blacksburg, and around the globe.

He is also working on a book adapting his dissertation, which won the Leonard D. White award from the American Political Science Association for best dissertation in the field of public administration. It examines the symbiotic relationship between the White House and extra-governmental organizations in the marketing of ambitious foreign policies to the U.S. public. A paper based on the book was recently accepted for publication in *Foreign Policy Analysis*, focusing on the Vietnam War and its contribution to the rise of conservative think-tanks, particularly the *American Enterprise Institute*.

He originally hails from Chicagoland, where he returned after living in New York City for over a decade in order to pursue his doctorate, which he completed at the University of Chicago's political science department in 2017. He has also held residential fellowships at the Kennedy School of Government and Williams College, and has crisscrossed the country along with his dog in the pursuit of his archival research and the best barbecue within twenty miles of a presidential library (Joe's Kansas City Bar-B-Que, Kansas City, KS, though Franklin Barbecue in Austin, TX isn't bad either). He is also a fairly good cook, a novice hiker, and a decent gardener.



Featuring Staff: Leslie Day

I began my career at Virginia Tech in March 2007 at the College of Veterinary Medicine, and have since worked in the Department of Finance (College of Business), and in the CAUS Dean's Office before coming to SPIA in 2012. Originally a Fiscal Technician, I found an interest in financial management and pursued the role of Business Manager to allow me to use both fiscal and analytics skills. At SPIA, my work involves financial and HR oversight including managing budgets, staffing plans, post-award research support, and ensuring compliance with various policies and procedures.

In 2019, I began pursuing a Master's of Accounting & Information Systems with a focus on Data Analytics in the Pamplin College of Business. While work and school take up the majority of my time, I also enjoy spending time with my husband, attending hockey games, cooking, and traveling, especially to National Parks.



Summer Courses

Check out the [list](#) of exciting courses SPIA is offering in summer 2021 while keeping in mind these deadlines:

- For Summer 1 (5/24 to 7/2) the last day to register is 5/26.
- For Summer 2 (7/7 to 8/13) the last day to register is 7/9.
- For Summer 3 (5/24 to 8/13) the last day to register is 5/27.

Thanking Donors

We thank the following donors for their generosity.

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Worth Pondering

- [It's Time to Rethink Higher Education](#)
- [The Well-Heeled Professoriate: Socioeconomic Backgrounds Of University Faculty](#)
- [The faces of student debt](#)
- [The rise of domestic extremism in America](#)
- [Roar of hope. Silence of despair](#)
- [Covid-Era College: Are Students Satisfied?](#)
- [Do Students Feel Heard on Campus?](#)
- [As pandemic surges anew, global envy and anger over U.S. vaccine abundance](#)
- [Elevating Human Capital: Reframing U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Leadership Imperative](#)
- [How to Cope With a Fear of Public Writing](#)
- [Provosts Face the PandemicWorld military spending rises to almost \\$2 trillion in 2020](#)

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