

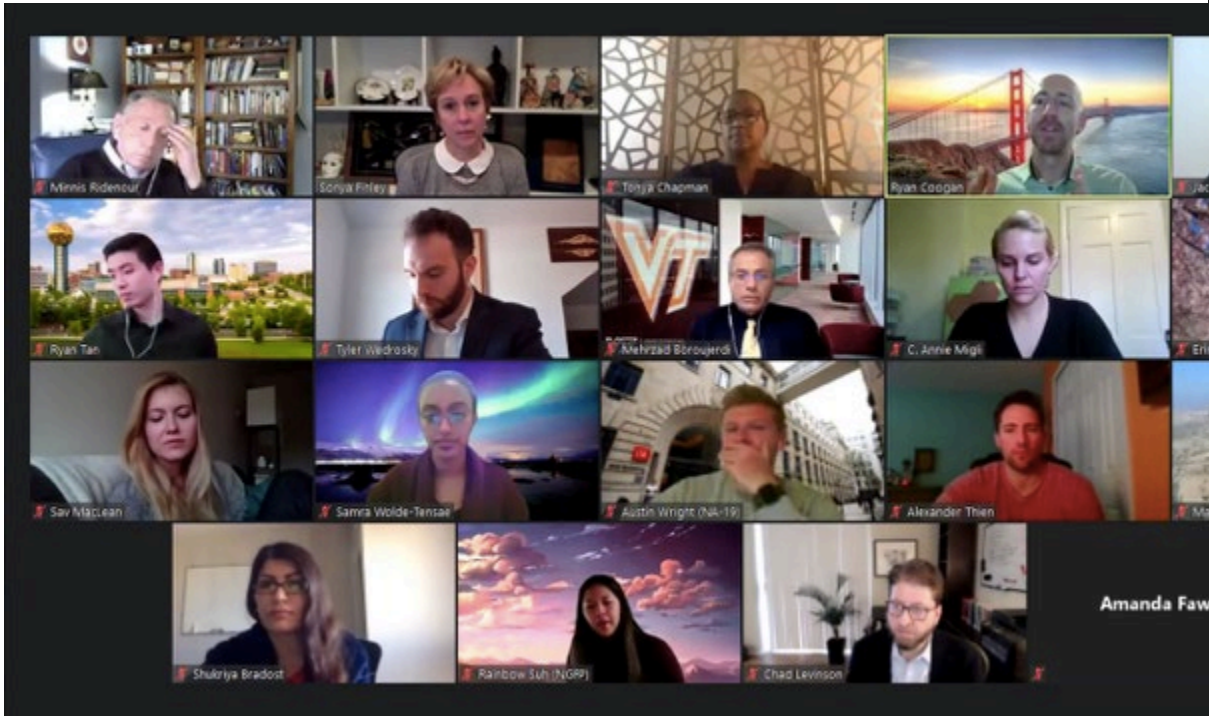


SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
VIRGINIA TECH.

March 2021 Newsletter

This month marked a new chapter in the history of the School of Public and International Affairs as we offered the first iteration of the [National Security Executive Leadership Program](#) (NSELP). The program featured 17 distinguished speakers including a former Secretary of the Navy and Administrator of NASA, a former Director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Treasury Department's Director for International Engagement and Mission Support, experts from think tank (CSIS) and corporations (Amazon, MITRE), as well as faculty from Georgetown University, the National War College, and Virginia Tech. The program was attended by mid-career professionals and Virginia Tech graduate students who enrolled in the program as a special study course.

The [Ridenour Faculty Fellowship program](#)'s sponsorship enabled SPIA 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 for participants. The program coordinating team included **Patty Tatro** and **Lori Atwater** from VT's Continuing and Professional Education (CPE), and **Amanda Fawkes**, **Eunju Namkung**, and **Nhung Nguyen** (SPIA). The team worked diligently with me for sixteen months to plan this program including the re-design of the course to move from an in-person format to completely online. We are already looking to plans for next year's program to include additional engagement opportunities with our speakers and thought leaders in the field of national security.



Sincerely,

Mehrzad Boroujerdi
SPIA Director

Faculty News

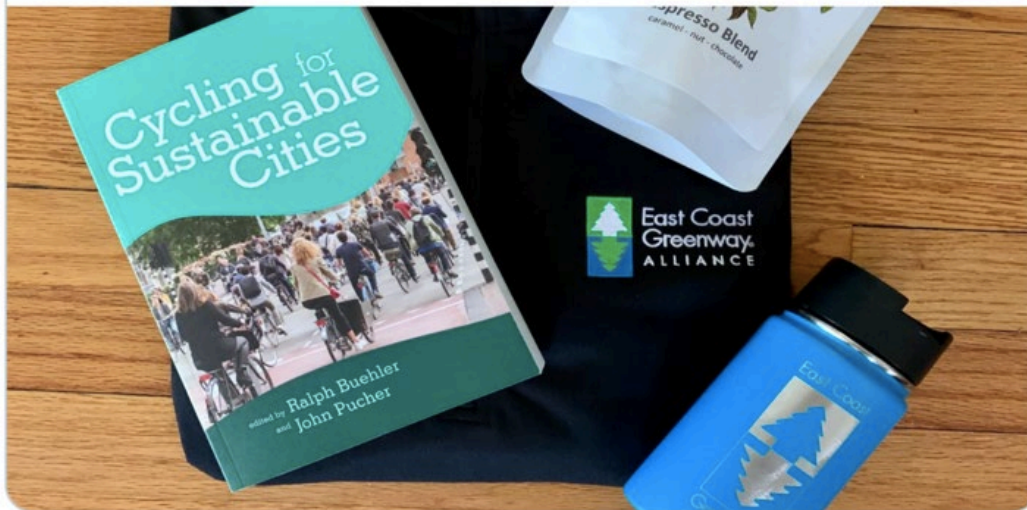
[Mehrzad Boroujerdi](#) (SPIA Director) served as commentator at a [book talk](#) at New York University and as a panelist at an event with the [Atlantic Council](#). He was featured prominently in a [video](#) produced by *The Economist*, and was quoted in a story in [Newsweek](#).

[Ralph Buehler](#) (Professor, UAP) was [interviewed](#) by Voice of America about increases in bicycling during the COVID crisis. He also published a [paper](#) co-authored with former SPIA faculty Wenwen Zhang about infrastructure preferences of e-scooter riders on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg in *Transportation Research Part D*, and made a presentation on Economic Benefits of Cycling at Accelerating Active Transportation Change in Northern Virginia conference held at George Mason University. Also, the East Coast Greenway coalition, which connects 15 states and 450 cities and towns for 3,000 miles from Maine to Florida, gave a copy of Dr. Buehler's new book to all of their employees.

 **East Coast Greenway** @ECGreenway · 17h

In lieu of an in-person staff retreat, we sent the retreat to our staff, including a copy of "Cycling for Sustainable Cities," edited by Ralph Buehler and our Advisory Board member John Pucher!

Learn more [➔ mitpress.mit.edu/books/cycling-...](https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/cycling-...)



[Stephanie Davis](#) (Collegiate Professor, CPAP) received a new faculty mentoring grant from the VT Provost's Office.

[Ralph Hall](#) (Associate Professor, UAP) took part in an [IIHCC](#) Forum Series on the [Future of Work](#), and [commented](#) in a study about the best cities to own an electric car.

[Karen Hult](#) (Professor, CPAP) commented on Supreme Court's likely upholding of Arizona [voting restrictions](#) and on Virginians [wearing masks](#) on 10News TV.

[Theo Lim](#) (Assistant Professor, UAP) co-authored an [Op Ed](#) in the Roanoke-Times on behalf of the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) community in Roanoke and the New River Valley.

[John Provo](#) (Adjunct Professor, UAP) was [appointed](#) director of Virginia Tech's new Center for Economic and Community Engagement. John previously ran the university's Office of Economic Development.

[Tom Sanchez](#) (Professor, UAP) organized and moderated an online symposium entitled "The Intersection of Smart Cities with Housing & Community Development." The symposium featured authors from 7 different universities who contributed articles to a special issue of Housing Policy Debate. Sanchez is editor-in-chief of Housing Policy Debate and was assisted by PGG student Mahtot Gebresselassie. In addition, Dr. Sanchez delivered an invited keynote lecture on "Smart in the Sustainable City" for the Al-Azhar Engineering Fifteenth International Conference, sponsored by Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. The lecture addressed the topics of planning for future, sustainable

cities, and artificial intelligence.

Student News

[Nada Alwadi](#) (PhD student, PGG) moderated a [discussion](#) organized by TRENDS Research & Advisory on how governance can unlock the potential within individuals, communities, and sectors to shape a better future.

[Mahtot Gebresselassie](#) (PhD Candidate, PGG) was nominated for and joined the Virginia Tech [Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society](#) in February. Named after the first African American to earn a PhD in Physics at Yale University in the late 19th century, the society recognizes scholarly excellence in doctoral studies. Congratulations, Mahtot.

Marc William Jasper (PGG) defended his dissertation entitled “Prisoner Release as Conflict Management” on March 12, 2021. The chair of his dissertation committee was Professor Joel Peters and professors Giselle Datz, Ariel Ahram and Glenn Robinson were the other committee members. Congratulations, Dr. Jasper!

[Alberto Jaimes](#) (MPA and Grad Certificate in Public Finance, 2020) has been accepted to the Indiana University-Bloomington Ph.D. program in Public Affairs with full funding. He plans to pursue the public finance field of study.

On World Water Day (March 22), Dr. [Raj K. GC](#) (PGG PhD, 2020) presented a paper from his doctoral research entitled “What factors determine the productive use of rural water systems in the middle hills of Nepal?” during an international webinar on “Community-led multiple-use water systems (MUS) in decentralized water development.” His presentation focused on how the design of rural water systems in Nepal impact the extent and scale of water-based productive activities the systems can support. The webinar was organized by the Nepal MUS Network and hosted a global panel of experts to share recent research findings/lessons learned and to discuss emerging opportunities.

[Denis Can Teoman](#) (PhD Candidate, PGG) published a [commentary](#) in German in the Wiener Zeitung (a newspaper in Vienna, Austria) about how public spaces and public transport are affected by COVID in the U.S. (and to a smaller extent in Europe).

Alumni Profile

Sarah Jonson is the Technical Advisor for Youth Agency and Engagement at the International Youth Foundation (IYF), a Baltimore-based nonprofit whose programs focus on strengthening youth agency, expanding youth economic opportunities, and facilitating more youth-inclusive systems. She is responsible for providing strategic leadership and supporting existing projects and business development efforts in the areas of youth agency, leadership, civic education, and meaningful youth engagement. Sarah is also charged with ensuring that IYF designs and implements holistic, positive

youth development programming that is socially inclusive and promotes greater equity for communities experiencing marginalization or disenfranchisement. A tall order, she translates and internalizes this role as having the honor and serious duty of holding IYF accountable for implementing programming by, for, and with young people.

A 2016 SPIA graduate, Sarah's Virginia Tech studies and work experiences heavily influenced her professional interests and trajectory. She started as a part-time graduate student and full-time assistant lacrosse coach in the athletics department before accepting an assistantship with the Center for International Research, Education, and Development's Women and Gender in Development program. During her time in Blacksburg, she was also an active member of the Institute for Policy and Governance's Community Change Collaborative. She carried the knowledge, skills, and passion she gained for inclusive development approaches into her Peace Corps service in northern Namibia where she worked at a vocational training center as a community economic development advisor. Sarah's master's thesis, chaired by Dr. Max Stephenson, focused on occupational segregation in Namibia, particularly women's experience training for and working in male-dominated construction and manufacturing industries.



Staff Profile



Matthew Jezierski is the IT Support Specialist for the School of Public and International Affairs. He provides computer support to faculty, staff, and students on the Blacksburg campus. In addition, he is the webmaster for the school's website, the Building Emergency Coordinator of the Architecture Annex and the Thomas Conner House, and the building manager of the Architecture Annex.

Matthew graduated from Virginia Tech in 2016 with a B.S. in Computer Engineering and is currently pursuing his Master's in Information Technology degree, along with a graduate certificate in Software Development and Internet and Network Technologies at Virginia Tech.

Information

All previous issues of SPIA's monthly newsletters are now available [here](#). These newsletters provide valuable institutional memory for our school.

Did you know we now offer a new graduate certificate in Nuclear Science, Technology, and Policy (NSTP)? Read about it [here](#).

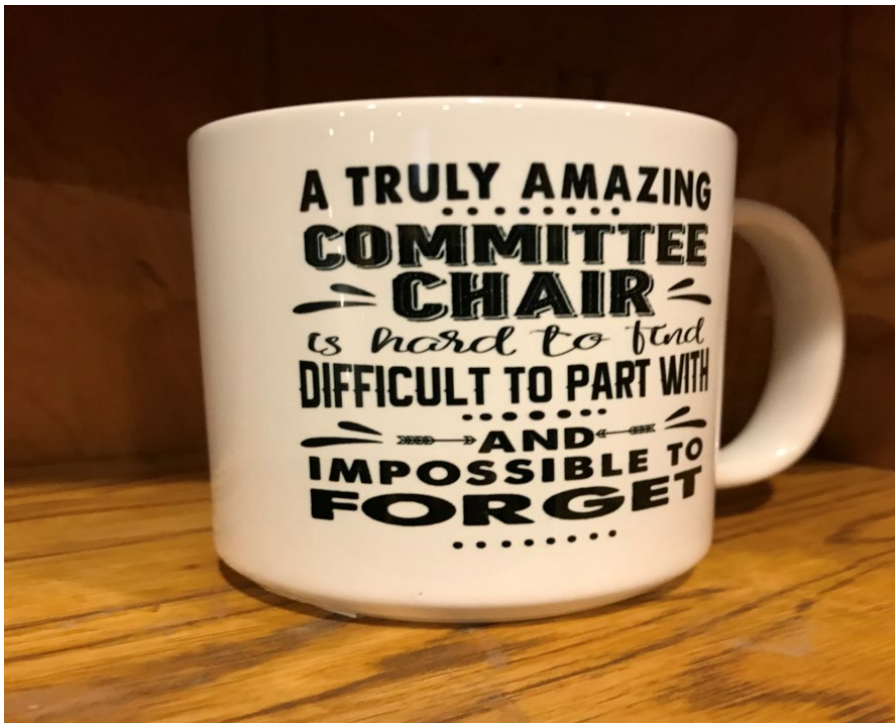
If you are wondering what editorial boards SPIA faculty are currently serving, please see [here](#).

Check out our ongoing virtual information sessions [here](#).

Did you see our ads in Military Times and the [Peace Corps](#) e-newsletter?

Creative Way to Thank a Mentor

This mug was given to Professor Max Stephenson by a student who recently defended her dissertation.



Thanking Donors

The amount of contributions given to SPIA during Giving Day 2021 increased by 37% compared to Giving Day 2019 (there was no Giving Day in 2020 due to Covid-19). We sincerely thank the following donors for their generous and meaningful gifts during the past two months:

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Worth Pondering

- [Bright side of the moonshots](#)
- [Covid-19 cases are rising again in much of the world](#)
- [Freedom in the World 2021](#)
- [In the shadow of its exceptionalism, America fails to invest in the basics](#)
- [Policy School Deans Want It All](#)
- [Where Have All the Houses Gone?](#)
- [Who's Responsible for a Ph.D. Student's Success?](#)
- [The billionaire boom](#)
- [The long, ugly history of anti-Asian racism and violence in the U.S](#)





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