Message from the Chair

Dear HPEB, I want to start by congratulating you on nearing the finish line for the Fall 2022 semester. Next, I want to thank you. Thank you for being present, thank you for your excitement about learning, and thank you for allowing me to share in and celebrate your accomplishments. This newsletter is all about you. I usually have a lot to say that I squeeze into this introductory piece in tiny font but for this edition of News and Kudos, you are completely in charge and running the show. Your words are inspiring and your commitment to your public health work is remarkable. I always ask that you read the newsletter and share with your networks. Today I ask that you read the newsletter more than once. Enjoy reading about everyone’s daily rituals that keep you going (and perhaps you will adopt some of them). And join me in thanking Dr. Hala Ghattas and Graham Fengler (MPH student) for agreeing to be featured in our spotlight series and read about what motivates them to do what they do. Their words and actions inspire me. There is an expression about ‘bringing the house down’ when an audience responds to a performance with great enthusiasm, applause, and cheers. So … we shall bring the house down in our response to your work featured in this newsletter. And as one of my favorite authors, Alexander McCall Smith, wrote, “Love, kindness, acts of generosity … a hand on the shoulder, a look, a considerate word. These things can bring the house down.” He must be familiar with HPEB as there is no other way to doing the work we do. With gratitude, Daniela
Congratulations are in Order!

Congratulations to Ran Zhang, PhD candidate, who is the Fall 2022 recipient of the Butterfoss Community-Based Research Endowed Fellowship.

Congratulations to Megan Austin and Gazi Pritom, PhD students, who were selected for the inaugural 2022-2023 Arnold School of Public Health Diversity Fellows Program. The Diversity Fellows will support the school’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in providing opportunities for engagement, achievement, and education around DEI efforts.

Congratulations to Jaci Foster Williams, online professional MPH student, who was elected as president of the South Carolina Association for Physical Education and Sport (SCAPES).

Congratulations to Jennifer Mandelbaum, PhD candidate and December 2022 graduate, on receiving the Rising Star Award from the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors in recognition of her work at the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Jennifer will also be starting a new position as healthcare economics consultant for Optum Behavioral Health Solutions.

Congratulations to HPEB doctoral students – Atefeh Aghaei, Kara Davis, Christiana Johnson, Victoria Lambert, Fanghui Shi, and Ran Zhang – who received conference travel awards from the Arnold School of Public Health.

Dr. Casey Giraudy was selected to participate in the 2022-2023 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Anti-Racism course being offered for University 101 instructors.

Instructor Kersten Cope was accepted into the distance DHSc program at Campbell University in North Carolina.

Dr. Caroline Rudisill, Dr. Mark Macauda, and team received the Excellence in Patient Engagement in Research Award for their Prisma Health Seed grant at October’s Prisma Research Showcase. Their work is entitled, “Expert patient perspectives on screening and addressing the social determinants of health at Prisma Health.”

Dr. Caroline Bergeron, HPEB alum, was named Honorary Graduate by the University of Montreal’s Department of Communication. To celebrate the Department's 40th anniversary, 40 honorary graduates were selected from its graduating classes at the undergraduate and graduate level and Caroline was selected for her Masters in Communication that was completed in 2010. LINK
HPEB in the News!

Nkechi Okpara’s (PhD candidate) Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation’s Commission on Dietetic Registration Doctoral Scholarship was featured on the Arnold School website. Congratulations Nkechi. LINK

Dr. Kim Butler Willis, HPEB alum, was featured on the USC website in a lovely piece about first-generation college students. LINK

UofSC’s FIRST program, funded by the NIH Common Fund and designed to recruit diverse early-stage faculty, was featured on the USC website. The program will make diversity, equity, and inclusion a strong priority for faculty recruitment into public health and nursing. Dr. Lucy Ingram in HPEB is a co-investigator on this grant. LINK

Funding News

Dr. Shan Qiao and colleagues received a supplement grant from the NIH/National Institute of Mental Health to study the use of All of Us data to examine the impact of Covid-19 on mental health among people living with HIV. LINK

Carrie Draper, Dr. Nick Younginer, and team secured continued funding for the SNAP-Ed program. Congratulations Carrie and team. LINK

Dr. Shan Qiao received an NIH Contract for a research project entitled, “Taxonomic Meta-Analysis to Identify Strategies to Support HIV Treatment Adherence and Retention.”

Dr. Xiaoming Li, Dr. Peiyin Hung, and team received funding for a new U01 from NIH to study telehealth disparities in maternal care during the pandemic. LINK
Dissertation Presentations

Congratulations to the following students who defended their dissertations:

Jennifer Mandelbaum, “Predictors and outcomes of nutrition facts label use among U.S. adolescents.”

Ellen Stowe, “Greenspace across the U.S.: Exploring equity and associations with physical activity, obesity, and health-related quality of life.”

Congratulations to the following students who defended their dissertation proposals:

Kara Davis, “Exploration of the association between obesogenic environments and childhood overweight/obesity rates in rural counties in the United States.”

Publications & Presentations


Gupta D, Self S, Thomas D, Supra J, Rudisill C. Using a novel digital platform to examine resource utilization of social determinants of health screening within a large healthcare system. Medical Care (forthcoming; accepted 12 Oct 2022).


HPEB Spotlight Series: Dr. Hala Ghattas

Describe Yourself in Three Words:
Pragmatic, Driven, Adventurous

The Best Book that Hala has Ever Read:
Samarkand by Amin Maalouf

Hala’s Favorite Place in the World:
A warm beach with my feet in the Mediterranean sea.
Hala’s Biggest Influence Throughout Her Career:
I would have to name so many as I’ve been very lucky to have had great mentors, collaborators and students throughout my career. Each of their perspectives has helped to shape the way I approach my research and teaching. Mostly by challenging me with “so what?” questions regarding what we’re doing, why we’re doing it, whether it matters, and for whom...

Hala’s Biggest Fan/Greatest Supporter:
My mum – she’s cheered me on (and sometimes accompanied me) through various transcontinental moves, provided childcare whenever I’ve needed it, and is the ultimate source of philosophical wisdom.

What Three Things Hala would bring to a Deserted Island:
1. A pillow (I value comfort)
2. A pocket water filter (I’m in public health)
3. A lifetime supply of chocolate covered coffee beans (addresses two of my addictions)
How Students Can Get Involved in Hala's Research Group:
Just drop me an email or knock on my door! I’m looking for students interested in applying rigorous analytical methods (I have lots of data that need analysis), who are passionate about nutrition and health equity, and who are keen to be involved in research that engages communities meaningfully.

Where Hala Sees Her Research Heading in the Next Few Years:
I plan to continue to focus on documenting inequities in food insecurity, malnutrition, and poor health in global contexts, and on using this evidence to develop and evaluate interventions to redress these in vulnerable populations. I am particularly concerned about populations affected by conflict, climate change and forced migration, but also hopeful that my research can engage them in finding innovative interventions and solutions that can help to set them on trajectories to better nutrition and health.

Two Pieces of Advice Hala Would Give to Someone Moving to a New Country for a New Job:
1. When you move to a new country for a new job, you’re changing all aspects of your life for your work. So make sure you are going somewhere where the job seems amazing but also where you can foresee that other important parts of your life can flourish.
2. Be prepared for A LOT of paperwork, but things will fall in place one piece of paper at a time.
Hala's Recent Accomplishment:
Our work on children’s lived experiences of food environments in the Middle East was recently included in a UNICEF publication entitled A systems approach to improving children’s diets; Learning from lived experiences. We translated our data into a story that highlights the role of context in defining what school-aged children eat and uses the story to pinpoint policy solutions. The product is a profile of 11-year old Meriem that uses children’s voices to illustrate obesogenic environments in an urban middle-income setting. [see Pic 1]
Describe yourself in three words: Life long learner

Graham's Recent Accomplishment:
I recently taught my first health promotion class, a Stop the Bleed course that is focused on educating bystanders as first responders to trauma events. The course primarily consists of bleeding control skills for those without formal medical training. It felt great to share some of my knowledge and skills as a combat medic in ways that could save lives.
Graham's Next Steps After Graduation:
Following graduation, I hope to work either within government or a large health system, impacting regulatory or organizational policy to ensure optimal health for all South Carolinians.

Graham's Graduation Celebration Plans:
I’m planning a ski trip to Vail after graduation. I have not been skiing in many years, so I’m excited to reignite my passion for the sport and shred some powder!

Graham's Greatest Influence:
I have had so many great mentors that it was very hard to choose just one. I have absolutely loved learning from Dr. Kenison throughout my time here at UofSC, as she is so knowledgeable on just about any topic you could think of, and it seems like she knows everyone. I hope to be able to expand my network just as wide and impact meaningful changes in similar ways, although she has certainly set the bar very high!
Graham's Favorite Book:
I really enjoyed *All the Light We Cannot See*, a novel about WWII that follows the lives of a young woman from France and a young man from Germany throughout the war. Although it is very sad, it provides a glimpse of life on two different sides of a very somber period in time.

Graham's Biggest Fan:
My biggest supporters, outside of my HPEB cohort, whom I plan to maintain lifelong relationships with, are probably my parents. They have been there for me throughout my studies and I know that they will support me in whichever path I ultimately choose!
Graham's Favorite Place:
Although I love the beach, I feel that the mountains are probably my favorite. I really enjoy the beautiful scenery and the serenity you can get in the mountains. If you can get up early enough for the sunrise, you will never forget it!

Graham's Favorite USC Memory:
It is hard to choose one favorite memory from my experience at UofSC. I would say that the friendships I’ve developed with my cohort were my favorite part of the experience. As the program is much smaller than undergrad, I really feel that we all know each other so well, and I know I could call on any of them for just about anything.

What Graham Would Bring to a Deserted Island:
Survival-wise, I would probably take my iPhone (low-orbit satellites to the rescue!), a flint fire starter, and a lifestraw.

Graham's Advice:
I would tell a future MPH student to aggressively network. There is so much wisdom and experience in the faculty and staff here, as well as many of the students, so you should jump at any opportunity to build new connections.
The Little Rituals That Keep *HPEB* Going

At the end of every day, I review and update my Hobonichi Techo (cousin size), and write about the day in my reMarkable 2. -Unknown

I take my dog for a walk every morning and evening. It's sometimes a short walk up the street, and other times a longer trek. I love spending time outside and seeing my happy pup enjoying the sights and smells around us. -Jennifer Mandelbaum

I unplug when eating lunch. -Christiana Johnson

My daily ritual is to spend an hour every morning at the gym lifting weights before work and classes. To end my day, I like to watch one episode of any show. -Kim Le

Cardio exercise: either outdoor running or elliptical training. -Ben Fisher

I get up and go outside every 2 hours. -Unknown

Drinking a cup of hot water. -Xueying Yang

I take a daily two-hour break away from my laptop. -Unknown

Take a daily two-hour break away from my laptop. -Unknown

Gratitude Coffee! Every morning as I make my coffee I think of something I'm grateful for or to be able to do that day and am reminded of it as I drink the cup! -Cam Garrett

A good daily walk, in the most natural setting possible, is how I stay both grounded and connected. It's the best way to bond with my dog, keep up with my neighbors, and watch the seasons change. -Brooks Yelton

At least one sun salutation and a very good cup of coffee. -Debbie Billings

Good daily walk, in the most natural setting possible, is how I stay both grounded and connected. It's the best way to bond with my dog, keep up with my neighbors, and watch the seasons change. -Brooks Yelton

Go by Panera to get coffee on the way to work every day. Panera forever! -Maria Sophocelous

Every morning I write out five things I'm grateful for and meditate for 10-15 minutes setting my intention for the day! -Unknown

HPEB, I want to let you in on a little secret. Every day, once a day, give yourself a present. Don't plan it, don't wait for it. Just let it happen naturally. -Dale Cooper

I have joined the Strom Thurmond Wellness and Center and am doing exercise class 3-4 days a week. -Unknown

Every morning I wake up and have a cup of coffee. I love drinking coffee because it gives me something to look forward to every single morning. -Zach Jenkins

I exercise to keep my body moving and reduce the impact of the hours of sitting. This also helps me to disconnect mentally. Recently I have been trying to practice at least a 5-minute guided meditation in the mornings to prevent high anxiety levels. -Liz Cruz

Wearing yoga pants and walking shoes (when I have no teaching or business meetings). The feeling of being ready to exercise makes me full of energy (even though I am not able to go to gym that day). -Shan Qiao

I maintain a daily habit of practicing gratitude, especially for the small things, such as the smell of delicious food, a good parking space, or unexpected free time. Practicing gratitude directs my attention to the good experiences and people in my life and puts me in a positive mindset. Practicing gratitude also helps me be more grateful for the bright spots when facing challenges and setbacks. -Rochelle Altman

I exercise to keep my body moving and reduce the impact of the hours of sitting. This also helps me to disconnect mentally. Recently I have been trying to practice at least a 5-minute guided meditation in the mornings to prevent high anxiety levels. -Liz Cruz
Every morning when I get up I make my bed to start my day strong and in a good mindset. -Megan Austin

Drinking one cup of coffee/tea without technology.
- Morgan Boncyk

An unplugged and disconnected morning run faithfully provides a dedicated space to untangle thoughts and pray through the upcoming day. Sometimes, I wish I had more time to run further. Sometimes, I wish I would have turned around sooner. Regardless, each and every run is a gift I am grateful to have completed! - John Bernhart

I set aside at least five minutes to myself, so that I can quiet my mind. I also thank God for my blessings, no matter how little they may seem. - Nabila Inak

I start every morning with my planner, identify the day’s to do list, and create a rough order to address them. - Unknown

Not every day, but I enjoy playing tennis - helps fuel my social, competitive, and active sides. On a more daily basis, I try to chill for a few minutes every evening with my cat on my lap playing Wordle and Quordle. - Unknown

It reminded me of my own morning ritual like starting my day with drinking hot water with fresh lemon squeezed into it. I then call my parents. I feel that getting their blessings in the beginning of the day keeps me going throughout the day. And it also makes me feel at peace that I have spoken to them and that they are doing fine. Lastly, they always ask about my day’s plan, so it reminds me of all the pending tasks and helps me plan and prioritize. - Mayank Sakhuja

I lay down in my office for 10 minutes and do yoga to center myself for the remainder of the day. Sometimes the "centering" occurs earlier than others. - Bella Alonso

Evening ritual - pre-dinner "hunting game" with my cat, Sir Francis Bacon, and then cuddling with him on couch. During this time, I often play favorite Doctor Who episodes that I probably watched 5+ times already. - Minji Kim

Every morning when I get up I make my bed to start my day strong and in a good mindset. After a long day of class or work, I also take time to decompress through exercising, cooking, or watching a movie. Each of these keeps me glued together. - Megan Austin

My wellness non-negotiables include starting my day by solving the Wordle puzzle, followed by a short jog while listening to a fun podcast like the Moth, and finally having oatmeal with my favorite food, peanut butter, for breakfast. - Anna Chupak

Taking time at the end of the day to go through all of my text messages to make sure I stay in contact with family and friends! It helps keeps me accountable and ensures I don’t miss a response! - Ally Hucek

Writing down 5 things I am thankful for before going to bed. - Keren Herran

My 3 wellness non-negotiables are running, meditation, and family meals.
- Brie Turner-McGrievy

Making and eating breakfast with Debbie and Diego. - Jim Thrasher

Sounds like the opposite of what motivates most people, but what motivates me is finding common ground. I love talking politics with strangers (especially with those whom I disagree). If you ever want to chat and try to find some humanity and common ground in a counter perspective, please don’t hesitate to reach out. :) - Jaron King

Write down 5 things I am thankful for before going to bed. - Keren Herran
HPEB doctoral students and a puppy go apple picking in the mountains!

HPEB students volunteer their time for USC Service Saturday at the Belser Arboretum
Frances E. Ashes Goins, RN, MPH, FAAN (Honorary Doctorate), affiliate and friend of HPEB, shared her experiences caring for her daughter Cheryl and engaged us in a meaningful discussion about caregiving and public health.
HPEB students, alumni, and partners represent at the American Public Health Association Meeting in Boston.
Picnic in the Horseshoe; Yoga on the Green; Coffee, Conversation, Food, Games, Mentoring, and Laughter in the Penthouse Conference Room… Who could ask for anything more?

Dr. Caroline Bergeron, HPEB alum, was named an Honorary Graduate by the University of Montreal's Department of Communication.
Please send submissions for *News and Kudos* to Krista Russell so that we can share and celebrate your work!

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Soon-to-be HPEB graduates and alumni, please continue to keep in touch with us! Please also ensure your contact information is current with the Arnold School by updating your information here: [Link](#)

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*Ally Hucek’s pup Henry (HPEB mascot) celebrated his second birthday. Hope you had a great birthday, Henry! Michelle and Shawn Arent’s pup Nadja (EXSC and HPEB mascot) hung out with Cocky, USC mascot. Daniela has Zoom calls with both of these dogs!*