



DOWNSTATE
SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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REMARKS FROM DEAN DEMISSIE



Kitaw Demissie, MD, PhD;
Dean and Professor

As we celebrate the release of our second alumni newsletter, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to our newest Downstate School of Public Health graduates—welcome to our growing community of public health leaders! Your journey is just beginning, and we are eager to see the impact you will make. To our alumni, your voices and experiences are invaluable, and we invite you to contribute your stories, insights, and updates to future issues. Your feedback is essential—what would you like to see in upcoming communications? Whether it's career spotlights, networking opportunities, or research highlights, we want this newsletter to serve you. Thank you for being part of our mission to advance public health in Brooklyn and beyond.



MENTORING SYMPOSIUM @SUNY GLOBAL CENTER

On January 17th SUNY Downstate held the 1st Annual Mentorship Symposium: “Advancing the Science & Practice of Mentorship in Biomedical, Behavioral, and Clinical Research.” The event began with introductions from Drs. Marlene Camacho-Rivera, Marcus Lambert, David Christini, and Carla Boutin Foster, the symposium co-chairs. Dr. Adaira Landry, physician, speaker, author, and coach, delivered a keynote address on equitable mentorship that set the tone for the remainder of the day. The event explored the foundations of sustainable, effective, and equitable mentorship in STEM. Attendees included educators, researchers, healthcare professionals, and students who participated in lightning talks, interactive workshops, and a panel discussion on sustainable mentorship strategies and fostering a supportive culture.



APHA NEWS: FEATURING JANILLE WILLIAMS, DRPH



Dr. Janille Williams recently earned her DrPH in Epidemiology from SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University. She currently serves as a Surveillance Data Analyst with the NYC Department of Health's Bureau of Hepatitis, HIV, and STI. At the 2024 American Public Health Association Conference, Dr. Williams presented her dissertation research, titled “Disparities in Knowledge and Awareness of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and HPV-Related Cancers Among Sexual Minorities in the United States, 2017-2020.” Her work highlights critical health disparities impacting underserved communities and emphasizes the need for targeted public health interventions. In recognition of her impactful research, Dr. Williams was honored with the Epidemiology Section Student Abstract Winner 2024 Award, reflecting her dedication to advancing health equity and promoting evidence-based solutions for all communities. Congratulations Dr. Williams!

We are interested in your accomplishments, personal or professional. If you would like us to highlight your achievements or be an alum feature, please email: Paula.Spann@Downstate.edu



WELCOMING NEW FACULTY AND STAFF



Charles Barnes is our newest staff member of the School of Public Health, serving as our Student Engagement and Success Coordinator within the SPH Office of Student Affairs. In this role, Charles will assist with student recruitment and oversee students' retention and satisfactory academic progress. Charles holds a Bachelor of Arts in History, focusing on Russian History, from the University of New Haven, a Master of Science in College Student Affairs from Nova Southeastern University, and recently completed a Master of Arts in Creative Publishing and Critical Journalism from The New School University.



Jenna Noray has joined the School of Public Health as the new MHA Professional Development Coordinator, where she will support MHA students, foster community relationships, and provide support for students and faculty. Jenna holds a Bachelor's degree in Health Administration and Business from the University of Southern Maine and an Advanced Certificate in Public Health from SUNY Downstate's School of Public Health.



We're pleased to welcome Dr. Norcini Pala to our SPH faculty! Dr. Norcini Pala holds a master's degree in clinical, social, and experimental developmental psychology from the University of Parma, Italy, with a focus on psychometric and internet-based research methods and obtained his PhD in Clinical Health Psychology, concentrating on the biopsychosocial factors affecting HIV infection progression, from Milano, Italy.



We're pleased to welcome Dr. Juul to our SPH faculty! Dr. Juul holds a PhD in Epidemiology from the NYU School of Global Public Health, an MSc in Public Health Nutrition from the Karolinska Institute (Stockholm, Sweden), and a BA in Nutrition and Dietetics from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Madrid, Spain). As an NYU Provost's Postdoctoral Fellowship awardee, she completed her postdoctoral training at the Department of Public Health Policy and Management at the NYU School of Global Public Health.



FACULTY ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS OF 2025



Congratulations to Dr. Anika Daniels-Osaze for being selected as a Fellow in the 2025 SUNY Black Leadership Institute (BLI) cohort. As one of only eight participants, she will take part in a nine-month program dedicated to developing diverse leaders across SUNY. This well-deserved recognition highlights her commitment to leadership and excellence in public health education!



Dr. Azure Thompson and Dr. Daniel Ehlike represented the School of Public Health at Downstate's Black History Month discussion on health equity, where experts examined systemic barriers and solutions to healthcare disparities. Dr. Ehlike highlighted the impact of social determinants and structural inequities on health outcomes, while Dr. Thompson explored the links between substance use, mental health, and systemic disparities. Congratulations to both for their contributions to this critical conversation on advancing health equity and accountability.



Dr. Marlene Camacho-Rivera has been named an honoree for the 2024 Latin Impact Awards, presented by Bethpage Federal Credit Union and hosted by Noticia NYC, Noticia Long Island, and Schneps Media. This prestigious award recognizes her outstanding contributions and impact in the community. She will be honored at the awards gala and VIP networking event on September 12, 2024, at Terrace on the Park in Queens. Congratulations, Dr. Camacho-Rivera!



Congratulations to Dr. Sharifa Nasreen and Dr. Victor Puac-Polanco for receiving a pilot grant from the University of Michigan's Social, Behavioral, & Economic COVID Coordinating Center (SBE CCC) to explore trust in the health system and COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among U.S. adults. We are excited for the impact it will have on advancing public health and healthcare equity!

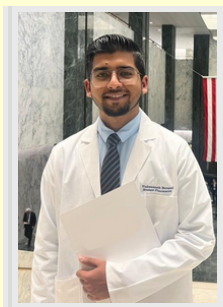


In a recent study, Dr. Lori Hoepner and colleagues examined the potential risks of bisphenols, chemicals found in plastics, on childhood conditions such as asthma, allergies, and eczema. This work highlights the ongoing concerns over BPA substitutes and their hormone-disrupting effects, underscoring the need for continued research and stronger protections for children and pregnant women. Congratulations to Dr. Hoepner for her contributions to this critical field of research!

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to visit the SUNY Downstate SPH website and learn more about our programs, faculty, curriculum, scholarships, and more!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT / UPDATES



Vishwanauth Persaud, MPH, is a graduate of the SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University School of Public Health, where he earned his Master of Public Health (MPH) degree with honors in Health Policy and Management. A SUNY Downstate Public Health Scholarship Fellow, Vishwanauth's passion for healthcare policy, pharmaceutical economics, and medication safety is shaping his dynamic career, leading to impactful contributions in research, academia, and professional leadership.

As part of his MPH studies, he completed a culminating thesis on "Pharmaceutical Spending & Innovation: A Multivariable Analysis on Cost Allocation and Its Effects on Medical Innovation and Healthcare Progression." Additionally, his culminating project focused on "Utilizing Chain Community Pharmacies to Assess Cardiovascular and Diabetic Prescription Trends in The Bronx: Identifying Health and Financial Disparities." His research provided valuable insights into the intersection of pharmacy, health equity, and financial policy. Currently pursuing a Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree with a specialization in Managed Care at Touro College of Pharmacy, Vishwanauth is dedicated to bridging the gap between healthcare policy and patient-centered pharmaceutical care. We can't wait to see what you do next!

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