



THE SCARLETTER



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Congratulations to the Class of 2024

Friday, May 17, 2024 – Over 200 Rutgers School of Public Health graduates attended the school's 39th convocation ceremony.

Several inaugural degrees were celebrated, including the first class of Doctor of Public Health degrees and several Master of Public Health degree concentrations: Population Aging, Population Mental Health, Public Health Practice for Health Professionals, and Online Global Public Health.

Watch the 2024 convocation YouTube livestream recording:



As you begin your next chapter, please consider staying connected with us, sharing your success and impact. Learn more on how to stay involved with your alma mater [here](#).

Want to access your graduation photos?

Visit ProPics' website and type in your last name to review and purchase your photos [here!](#)



Photo Credit | Raymond Clinkscale



Dean Appointed to The National Academies' COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Research and Communications Committee

Perry N. Halkitis, Rutgers School of Public Health dean and Hunterdon Professor of Public Health & Health Equity, has been appointed to The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (The National Academies) COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Research and Communications Committee.

The committee will evaluate the systems, methods, processes, and communications of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Immunization Safety Office regarding the safety of COVID-19 vaccines during the pandemic. Additionally, the committee will provide recommendations for sustaining, maintaining, and strengthening monitoring systems and communications.

Beyond monitoring and evaluation, this ad hoc committee will assess the statistical and epidemiological methods and processes employed to detect and analyze potential safety problems with the U.S. COVID-19 vaccines. Moreover, this assessment will catalog the findings from safety monitoring procedures, including pertinent positive and negative findings.

Committee members will also evaluate the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's external communications about its safety monitoring systems, the findings of COVID-19 vaccine safety monitoring, and vaccination and clinical guidance recommendations to healthcare professionals, public health officials, and the public.

[Learn more about the committee here](#)



“ It is an honor to have been selected to serve on this this committee, which will help to inform how we more effectively communicate with populations during public health emergencies. We know that people are not rational beings, so it's critical that future initiatives and efforts understand the fluid and agile state of human experiences. We need to meet people where they are in order for public health to work. ”

This theme is central to his upcoming book - *People & Public Health: How America Created the HIV, COVID-19, and other Modern Date Pandemics* - which will be published by Johns Hopkins University Press next winter.

DEAN PERRY N. HALKITIS



Photo Credit | Raymond Clinkscale



This year marked the second year of Wellness PHirst, the **Office for Student Experiences & Alumni Affairs'** (SEAA) student wellness rewards program. Wellness PHirst is a mission to embed wellness practices into the fabric of the Rutgers School of Public Health student experience by framing all SEAA-led initiatives as applicable and impactful to student wellness.

Each month throughout the 2023 - 2024 academic year, students had the opportunity to participate in activities and events centered around themes of wellness and to earn rewards through the Wellness Winners program.

Wellness PHirst utilizes the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) 8 Dimensions of Wellness framework, alongside a few additional important dimensions (creative and cultural), to help shape the student experience and highlight the importance of student well-being across these dimensions.

This year's program facilitators - **Claire Brown** and **Samantha Gonnelli** - developed 25 core qualifying activities, centered around six of the Wellness Dimensions noted above: intellectual, occupational, financial, spiritual, and social-emotional. Participating students earned Wellness Wins by completing those qualifying activities throughout the year.

Bonus Points were also provided to students who self-reported engaging in wellness activities related to any dimension of wellness (including physical, environmental, cultural and creative). These qualifying activities provided a structure for students to engage in intentional wellness promoting behaviors that would benefit both the student directly and SEAA staff.



Claire Brown (left), director for student experiences and alumni affairs, and Samantha Gonnelli (right), academic support counselor, work within the Office for Student Experiences and Alumni Affairs at the Rutgers School of Public Health.

Learn more about the SEAA and the team [here](#).

Program Highlights

1,000+ Wins Earned

across all qualifying activities and bonus activities - accounting for 1,000+ wellness touchpoints, behaviors, and activities throughout the year.

50+ Participants

who committed their time and energy to engaging intentionally in student wellness initiatives.

150+ Self-Reported Activities

highlighting students' personal and community wellness activities beyond the program.

COMING SOON

During the 2024 - 2025 academic year, SEAA will be facilitating multiple new initiatives under the Wellness PHirst umbrella, including:

- **Wellness PHirst Wellness Winners Rewards Program**
- **Wellness PHirst Ambassadors** to support student programming and peer-to-peer wellness initiatives
- **Wellness PHirst APE Interns** to help improve the office's implementation and evaluation of Wellness PHirst
- **PHirst Step Fridays** to introduce incoming students to the school's culture and the wellness resources we offer



SEAA Programming Preview

During the 2023 - 2024 academic year, the Office for Student Experiences & Alumni Affairs (SEAA) hosted **85+ programs and initiatives** to support students across the dimensions of student life, academics, careers, practice, and alumni affairs.

This upcoming year, **we are set to host 100+ new events** - our exciting slate of programming includes (*but is not limited to!*):

- **PHirst Step Fridays** orientation events for incoming students
- **Wellness Wednesdays** community-building and self-care events
- **Welcome Weeks** workshops and socials
- **Opportunities October** Trends Talks
- **Networking November** workshops and student-alumni networking sessions
- **De-Stress December** sessions and Hot Chocolate Chats
- **Jumpstart January** goal-setting and post-grad planning sessions
- **Financial February** workshops and trainings
- **Marching into Post-Grad** workshops and panels
- **Alumni April's** 5th birthday celebration
- **MPH Student Practicum Capstone Presentations + May Student Showcase & Awards Ceremony**

Questions?
[Contact SEAA](#)

● Admissions Lounge ●

Upcoming Application Deadlines

Looking to apply to the Rutgers School of Public Health? We have **Extended the deadline for Fall 2024 MPH, MS, and Certificate Applications!** We are accepting applications until **July 15, 2024.**

[Appy for Fall 2024 HERE](#)

***Spring 2025 and Fall 2025 applications are coming soon! The SOPHAS application for 2025 will open in mid-August.*

Upcoming Events

Attend one of our virtual sessions to learn more about all that the Rutgers School of Public Health has to offer! Not able to attend the events listed below?

Check out our [Admissions Events webpage](#) to see a full listing of all upcoming events.

[Contact Admissions](#)



Virtual Information Sessions

Hear from the Office for Admissions and Recruitment about the application process and ways to strengthen your application!

Tuesday, June 25 2024 | noon to 1:00 p.m. [REGISTER HERE](#)

Thursday, July 18 2024 | 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. [REGISTER HERE](#)



Chat with Admissions

This is your chance to chat one-on-one with an admissions representative!

Use the Chat feature on the bottom right corner of the webpage.

Friday, June 14, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. [CHAT HERE](#)

Monday, July 15, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. [CHAT HERE](#)



Global, But Make it Local: Rutgers School of Public Health Offers Global Education at Home






ΧΑΡΟΚΟΠΕΙΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
HAROKOPIO UNIVERSITY

Transforming Food Systems for Sustainability

New Brunswick, NJ • June 10 through June 20

Rutgers School of Public Health's global course *Transforming Food Systems for Sustainability* is now in session! Students from Harokopio University in Greece and Rutgers University students will learn:

-  In-depth knowledge and analysis of how food system transformations can support shifts towards sustainable diets
-  How food is produced within various production schemes and how it moves through long and short food value chains
-  How food systems can be leveraged to promote good nutrition, health, and sustainability

The course provides the unique opportunity for students to get a global experience without traveling abroad!

For more information on future courses, students can reach out to the Rutgers School of Public Health's Office for Global Programs officeofgp@sph.rutgers.edu



HIGHLIGHTS

- *Communicating sustainability
- *Panel discussions with guest speakers from Rockefeller Foundation
- *Urban agricultural initiatives

EXPERIENCES

- *Queens Food Tour
- *Ethos Farm to Health
- *Sun Harbor Seafood and Grill
- *Barnegat Best Seafood
- *Barnegat Bay Oyster Collective



Faculty Spotlights

Rutgers School of Public Health Faculty Named Endowed Professor and Inaugural Chair

Emily S. Barrett was appointed to the George G. Rhoads Endowed Legacy Professorship and **Nir Eyal** was named first Bergen Chair in Biomedical Ethics. [Learn More](#)

Faculty Accepted to Sustained Training in HIV and Aging Research (STAHR) Program

Kristen Krause, has been accepted into the Sustained Training in HIV and Aging Research (STAHR) program.

STAHR aims to develop promising clinical and translational scientists into independently funded researchers whose careers will make a lasting contribution to the area of HIV and aging mental health research. [Learn More](#)

Rutgers School of Public Health Faculty Recognized with University Awards

Rutgers School of Public Health faculty, **Emily S. Barrett**, **Marybec Griffin**, and **Jaya Satagopan**, have received Rutgers University Awards for their service. [Learn More](#)

Student Spotlights

Student Honored for Maternal Health Work by New Jersey Governor and First Lady

Uzo Achebe, a Rutgers School of Public Health student, was recently honored for her maternal health work by New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy. Achebe is a maternal health program supervisor for The Children's Home Society of New Jersey, which is embedded in Capital Health Systems. [Learn More](#)

Doctoral Student Recognized for Outstanding Community Engagement Efforts

Sean Stratton, a fourth year PhD student at the Rutgers School of Public Health, has received the Inaugural Rutgers Graduate Student Community Engagement Award from the Rutgers School of Graduate Studies.

Stratton is working with Shereyl Snider at the East Trenton Collaborative to help address lead exposure concerns within the East Trenton neighborhood of Trenton, New Jersey. [Learn More](#)

Public Health Career Inspired By Family Legacy and Personal Challenges

Lisa Harrison-Gulla began her public health career 30 years ago helping those suffering from addiction in their treatment and recovery. Now, she's using her experience – along with a new doctoral degree from Rutgers – to help shape policy supporting the public health workforce. [Learn More](#)

The following message was shared on behalf of the Dean and Assistant Dean for Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion.

Wednesday, June 19, 2024, is Juneteenth, or Emancipation Day, a holiday celebrating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States. Juneteenth, originating in Galveston, Texas in 1865, is celebrated annually on June 19 across the United States. In 2020, Juneteenth became a state holiday in New Jersey, and in June of 2021, the United States Senate and House of Representatives voted to designate Juneteenth as a national holiday. Rutgers President Jonathan Holloway declared Juneteenth an official university holiday, with the University and Rutgers School of Public Health recognizing the day on Friday, June 21, 2024. The federal holiday will be celebrated on Wednesday, June 19, 2024.

Juneteenth serves as a reminder for African Americans of their historical fight for freedom in the United States and serves as a symbolic representation like Independence Day, celebrated on July 4. This day is important as it reminds us of the journey African Americans have traveled and the work that needs to be done in this country. As stated by [Dr. Lacey Hunter](#) in a 2020 interview,

“For African American people, Juneteenth is a reminder of their historical fight for unconditional freedom in the United States.”

It is a time for celebration and reflection. While many will participate in celebratory activities with their families and in their communities, others will use this as a day of reflection. As we continue to struggle with the reality and legacy of institutional racism, this is a time to reflect on how we can commit to rejecting racism in all forms, individually, in our communities, and in our school.

The United States, built by generations of enslaved individuals, must continue to fight the lingering impact of slavery, which is rooted in so many of our local, state, federal, private, and public institutions. **Racism is (and has been) a public health crisis**, and we must confront it in our work as public health professionals, and our personal lives.

The work we have been enacting at our school in collaboration with the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health over the course of the last few years has been directed towards dismantling racism and structural racism in higher education institutions, which have been rooted in anachronistic policies that fail to embrace inclusive excellence. This work builds on our policy of **zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination**.

BOOKS

- *How the Word is Passed*, Clint Smith (2021)
- *Island of Color: Where Juneteenth Started*, Izola Ethel Fedford Collins (2004)
- *Juneteenth: The History and Legacy of the Holiday that Commemorates the End of Slavery*, Charles Rivers (Ed.), (2021)
- *Juneteenth: The Story Behind the Celebration*, Edward T. Cotham, Jr. (2021)
- *Juneteenth*. Ralph Ellison (2021)
- *On Juneteenth*, Annette Gordon-Reed (2021)
- *The 1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones (2021)



Teri Lassiter is assistant dean for Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion for Education and an assistant professor at Rutgers School of Public Health.

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Women Smoke More, Are Less Likely to Quit

People who identify as lesbian, gay and bisexual – particularly women – respond more positively to tobacco marketing, are more inclined to smoke cigarettes daily and may have a more difficult time quitting, according to two studies by a Rutgers Health researcher.

Ollie Ganz, assistant professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health and member of the **Rutgers Institute for Nicotine and Tobacco Studies**, who is lead author of the studies, discussed the significance of the findings to future policy. [Learn More](#)



Racist and Heterosexist State Policies and Policing May Be Increasing Black Suicide Risk

“Structural oppression and policing drive everyday discrimination, which is a strong predictor of suicide risk,” said **Devin English**, an assistant professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health and lead author of the **study** published in the *Journal of Psychopathology and Clinical Science*. “This link was clear for participants in our study.” [Learn More](#)



Essex County Launches 2024 Survey On LGBTQ+ Health Needs

Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo Jr., the Essex County Office of LGBTQ+ Affairs, and the Essex County Office of Public Health Management are collaborating with the **Center for Health, Identity, Behavior and Prevention Studies (CHIBPS)** at the Rutgers School of Public Health to seek assistance in spreading the word to recruit individuals to complete an **online survey** for the LGBTQ+ Health Needs Assessment.

This study aims to understand the quality of care, neighborhood safety, mental health surrounding coming out and disclosure, and experiences with health care and substance use. [Read Patch News](#)



Fighting for the Future of LGBTQ Pride at Rutgers

Perry Halkitis, dean and Hunterdon Professor of Public Health & Health Equity at Rutgers, and founder and director of CHIBPS, and **James F. Dougherty**, Rutgers’ alumnus, former chairman of the Board of Trustees of the university, and current member of its Board of Governors discuss Rutgers’ long track record of advocating for the LGBTQ+ community, the importance of health care providers who are sensitive to the needs of these individuals, why LGBTQ pride should be celebrated year round, and empowering the community to always feel safe. [Listen to Managed Care Cast](#)



New Jerseyans Are Divided On Whether Firearms Increase Protection From Intruders in the Home

“Although opinions may be divided about the risks involved in having firearms in the home, the **data** is clear on this issue,” said **Michael Anestis**, associate professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health and executive director of the Rutgers School of Public Health’s **New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center**.

“Having a firearm in the home dramatically increases the risk of suicide for all members of the household, while also increasing risk for unintentional shootings and fatal domestic violence. If firearm owners are not aware of this, they may not be taking the necessary precautions to help avoid those outcomes, like storing the firearm securely in the home and storing it legally away from home during times of stress. If a firearm is kept at home to keep people safe, firearm owners should make sure they are actually doing what is necessary to accomplish that goal.” **Learn More**



Gun Violence Touches Nearly 60 Percent of Black Americans – and Predicts Disability

Survey data from 3,015 Black Americans linked specific disabilities ranging from trouble concentrating to difficulty dressing or bathing with exposure to various types of gun violence: being shot, being threatened with a firearm, knowing a shooting victim, and witnessing a shooting or hearing of one nearby.

“Traditionally, the majority of efforts related to gun violence have focused on reducing homicides, but this study indicates that we need to provide more support to those who face such exposures to violence beyond homicide,” said **Daniel Semenza**, director of interpersonal violence research at the Rutgers School of Public Health’s **New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center** and lead author of the **study**. **Learn More**

Rutgers Researchers Examine Black Men’s Perceptions of Labeling After a Violent Firearm Injury Protection From Intruders in the Home

“The self-identification as a ‘survivor’ versus ‘victim’ following violent injury may have salient implications for the mental health of Black men,” said **Nazsa Baker**, a postdoctoral fellow with the Rutgers School of Public Health’s **New Jersey Gun Violence Research Center**. “Internalizing a victim identity could exacerbate trauma reactions, negative cognitions about self-worth and powerlessness, feelings of helplessness and other symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.” **Learn More**





Inaugural Perry N. Halkitis Endowed Chair in LGBTQ+ Public Health and Inaugural Director Rutgers Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health

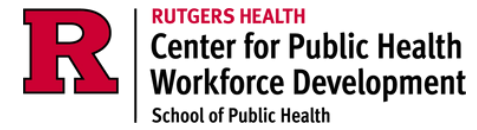
The Rutgers School of Public Health has earned widespread recognition as a leading hub for sexual gender minority health.

Under the leadership of [Perry N. Halkitis](#), dean and Hunterdon Professor of Public Health & Health Equity at Rutgers, the school established the world's first Master of Public Health concentration in LGBTQ+ Health, recruited faculty with complementary LGBTQ+ research programs, and launched the academic journal Annals of LGBTQ+ Public and Population Health with the aim of advancing the dissemination of research on health disparities and interventions.

This position, supported with a [\\$3 million gift by James F. Dougherty](#), will ensure a lasting foundation for a science-based, human rights approach to LGBTQ+ health and well-being at Rutgers University. The endowed chair will also serve as the inaugural director of the Rutgers Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health.

[Learn More](#)

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



October 15 - December 10, 2024

Hybrid Learning: One in-person leadership workshop followed by seven online learning modules

In occupational safety and health, **leadership skills make all the difference.**

The Occupational Health and Safety Leadership Program is designed for occupational safety and health professionals from all sectors looking to improve their leadership skills and prepare for advanced roles.

Modules will focus on developing leadership skills and advanced safety management strategies to improve safety performance:

- *Leadership Workshop and Reinforcement Session*
- *Understanding Risk and Human Behavior*
- *Safety Performance Improvement*
- *Innovation and Technology*
- *Strategic Planning for Occupational Health and Safety Programs*
- *Communications for Health and Safety Leaders*
- *Ethics in Occupational Safety and Health*

Register Here*

The cost to register is \$1,425 for the 8-week program. Register by July 1 using code **EBIRD** and receive a **10% discount!*

✉ rutgerstraining@sph.rutgers.edu

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Researchers Explore Health-Promoting Behaviors of African American and Black Immigrant Men

Published in the *American Journal of Men's Health* and led by **Daina Potter**, a data analyst at the Rutgers School of Public Health, the **study** highlights that a strength-based research approach can offer significant insights into how African American and Black immigrant males navigate GI conditions.

[Learn More](#)

Depression During Pregnancy is Tied to Increased Emergency Department Visits for Infants After Birth

Slawa Rokicki, assistant professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health, reviewed data in New Jersey, a state with universal maternal depression screening. The **study**, published in the April issue of *Health Affairs*, examines the association between the severity of perinatal depression and the use of emergency departments in the first year of an infant's life.

[Learn More](#)

As Federal Menthol Ban Languishes, Black Smokers Are Left to the Mercy of Marketers

Evidence shows that the tobacco industry engages in predatory marketing tactics and that companies push certain products on specific groups," said **Kymberle L. Sterling**, associate professor and assistant dean for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for Faculty and Talent Development at the Rutgers School of Public Health and associate director for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the Rutgers Institute for Nicotine & Tobacco Studies and lead author of the study published in *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*.

[Learn More](#)

Mental Health First-Aid Training May Enhance Mental Health Support in Prison Settings

Led by **Pamela Valera**, assistant professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health, the researchers collaborated with the National Council of Mental Wellbeing to develop the **pilot study**, published in *Psychological Services*, to evaluate officers' mental health knowledge and attitudes before and after undergoing the remote training.

[Learn More](#)

Social Networks Provide Crucial Support for Older Adults Living With HIV, Rutgers Health Study Finds

Having social support and strong social networks is vital to the health and well-being of older adults living with HIV, according to a Rutgers study. Published in *AIDS Care* and led by **Kristen Krause**, an instructor at the Rutgers School of Public Health, the **study** examined the social connections of older people living with HIV in Newark, N.J. – a region frequently overlooked in research focusing on this demographic.

[Learn More](#)

This section highlights select research and reports from the Rutgers School of Public Health. This is not a complete list of all faculty, staff, student, and unit research.

● ● I N T H E N E W S ● ●



America has a \$250 billion problem: Microplastics have invaded our bloodstreams and may increase the risk of heart attack and stroke

"The water we drink, the food we eat is loaded. They're loaded with microplastics," says **Philip Demokritou**.

[Read Fortune](#)

Does assisted dying mainly concern "poor" patients abroad, as French MPs claim?

"In the United States, to use medical assistance in dying, you must have heard about it, find out who prescribes it, make appointments, identify the pharmacies that prepare the products...It requires a lot of resources, not just financial," reports **Elissa Kozlov**.

[Read Actual News Magazine](#)

Millions of current smokers became addicted when they were teens – and nicotine marketing targets adolescents today just as it did decades ago

"There are various evidence-based resources that could be built upon to help young people evaluate tobacco advertising messages, empowering digital and social media users to actively evaluate information rather than remain a passive target for the industry's marketing," reports **Jon-Patrick Allem**.

[Read Yahoo News](#)

N.J. reports huge jump in number of people seeking gun carry permits

"We have no reason to believe that any permits were approved that should not have been, but this either means that only folks who should be approved are applying or the plausibility of denying a request is limited, resulting in nearly universal approval regardless of the implications for public safety," said **Michael Anestis**.

[Read Lehigh Valley Live](#)

Push to legalize psychedelic mushrooms for therapeutic uses in NJ

"This bill really takes a lot of the risk, or the concerns about risk, out of all of this and leaves us with a structure that is going to help safely ensure that people who need this medicine or could benefit from this medicine are able to get it," said **Caroline Dorsen**.

[Read NJ Spotlight News](#)

This section highlights select media mentions from the Rutgers School of Public Health. This is not a complete list of all faculty, staff, student, and unit media mentions.



THE SCARLETTER

Call for Submissions: Share Your Voice in *The Scarletter*!

Do you have a story to tell, research to share, or an achievement to celebrate? We invite all members of the Rutgers School of Public Health community to contribute to the next edition of *The Scarletter*. Whether you're a faculty or staff member, student, or alumni, we welcome submissions that showcase your experiences, insights, and expertise in public health.

Share your perspectives, highlight your accomplishments, and engage with our readers as we continue to build a vibrant and inclusive community through our newsletter.

Submit your content ideas by **August 1, 2024** for consideration. We look forward to featuring your contributions in our upcoming edition!



[SUBMIT HERE](#)

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