

Rutgers School of Public Health Enters a New Year & Semester

Dear Rutger School of Public Health & Community:

Welcome to the Spring 2025 semester! I hope you had a restful winter break filled with moments of joy, reflection, and connection.

As we gather once again to advance the health and well-being of all through our collective efforts, I want to express my gratitude for all you do, especially during these incredibly uncertain times when public health is being threatened daily.

We know that public health is at the forefront of some of our most pressing challenges. From focusing on health equity and climate change to how politics impact health and human behavior shapes pandemics, our efforts remain vital



This spring, I challenge you to renew your commitment to tackling these issues with determination, innovation, and, most importantly, compassion.

I encourage us all to reflect on **our** school's mission, vision, and core values, as these principles are not just ideas but the foundation of our efforts to build a healthier and more equitable world.

We will certainly face challenges but must do so with resilience and optimism. Let us support one another, celebrate our achievements, and embrace opportunities this spring.

Sincerely,

Perry N. Halkitis Dean Rutgers School of Public Health

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ORDER HERE!

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Keeping the Public in Public Health

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Welcome back from SEAA!

🔸 Student Connect 🔹 🗨

The **Office for Student Experiences & Alumni Affairs (SEAA)** is excited to welcome students back to the Spring 2025 semester!

SEAA provides opportunities for students and alumni to learn, connect, and advance their public health skills. By overseeing academic advising, career services, student support services, events, and more, the office offers a variety of resources and support to maximize the experience and well- of students while at the school and after they graduate.

Spring is our busiest season for student events and programming, including:

- 🔶 Financial February
- Marching into Post-Grad



🔶 Alumni April Series

🔶 Inaugural Student Showcase & Awards Ceremony



**Current students should check the SPH Student Connect, the SPH Wellness PHirst Connect, and the SPH Career & Practice Connect Canvas pages for the latest updates on upcoming events and information on resources, services, and general student matters.

Upcoming Events & Reminders

Stop by both School of Public Health locations to meet SEAA staff and receive key resources and information needed to start off the new semester on a positive note. Piscataway, 1st Mon., 1/27 | 2-3 p.m. **Floor Atrium** & 5-6 p.m. Newark, 16th Floor Mon., 1/27 | 5-6 p.m. **Reception Area** Join faculty, staff, and classmates for refreshments and good conversation as we kick off a new semester! Piscataway, 1st Mon., 1/27, Tues., 1/28 & Wed., 1/29 | Floor Atrium All from 5-6 p.m. Newark, 16th Tues., 1/28 | 5-6 p.m. **Floor Reception** Area **Online MPH Social,** Wed., 1/29 | 12-1 p.m. Zoom



RECREATION CENTERS

Rutgers Health students now have free access to Recreation Centers!

All actively enrolled Rutgers School of Public Health students now have access to recreation centers on the New Brunswick and Piscataway campuses!

You'll have access to **five facilities**, each equipped with a variety of resources, including fitness centers, pools, and indoor courts. Whether you're into swimming, strength training, or playing a game of basketball, these centers have something for everyone.

Be sure to download the <u>RURec2Go App</u> and to get facility hours, receive important notifications, register for classes, trips & workshops, and browse Fitness & Wellness class schedules.

Upcoming Application Deadlines | *Fall 2025* applications are now available!



------ Upcoming Events

Information Sessions

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

GENERAL INFORMATION SESSIONS

Wednesday, January 29, 2025 | 3-4 p.m. **REGISTER HERE**



Monday, February 17, 2025 | 12-1 p.m. **REGISTER HERE**

INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION SESSION

This session is tailored to answer questions and concerns specific to international applicants. The focus will be on admission requirements for international students as well as provide an overview of F-1 student visa requirements.

Friday, February 21, 2025 | 9-10 a.m. **REGISTER HERE**

Keep an eye out for our **Departmental Information Sessions**, coming in March! These are a great opportunity to connect with program faculty and current students to delve deeper into each of our programs.

Check out our **Admissions Events webpage** to see a full listing of all upcoming events!

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21PHirst Signature Series Webinar

Public Health Workforce Development

Earn CHES/MCHES or NIPH Credit!

Transformative Approaches to Teaching and Learning in Challenging Times - Perspectives on Framing the **Future: Education of Public Health 2030**

CLASS OF 2025

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. EDT





Shan Mohammed, MD, MPH, FAAFP

Clinical Professor, Department of Public Health and Health Sciences Assistant Dean for DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging) Educational and Student Initiatives Bouvé College of Health Sciences, Northeastern University

Rutgers School of Public Health Convocation

Convocation is the Rutgers School of Public Health's annual graduation ceremony. All graduates from the Class of 2025 are invited to join us in person at the State Theater New Jersey in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

During this special ceremony, graduates will hear their name called, walk across the stage in front of their invited guests, and have their photo taken by a professional photographer. All Rutgers School of Public Health graduates from the Class of 2025 (October 2024, January 2025 and expected May 2025) are eligible to attend.

- Tuesday, May 20, 2025
- C 3:30 p.m. 5:30 p.m. Graduates must arrive by 1:30 p.m. Doors open for guests at 3:00 p.m.
 - State Theater New Jersey (15 Livingston Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08901)

Graduating students are required to complete the 2025 Rutgers School of Public Health Convocation Registration to attend 2025 Convocation! More information on the registration can be found on the Rutgers School of Public Health's Convocation webpage.

Visit the Convocation webpage for more info!

ᠣᠣᠣᠣ Check out the Rutgers School of Public Health's event calendar to learn about and/or join various events hosted, co-hosted, or supported by the EVENTS school. You can submit an event for consideration on the calendar **here**.

Our People STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

Inaugural Class of Wellness PHirst Ambassadors

Rutgers School of Public Health's Office for Student Experiences & Alumni Affairs (SEAA) introduced the inaugural cohort of Wellness PHirst Ambassadors in Fall 2024. This initiative reflects the school's ongoing commitment to cultivating a culture of health and well-being.

The Wellness PHirst Ambassadors are student leaders who mentor their peers, promote wellness resources, and co-facilitate programs designed to enhance student engagement and support. This diverse group is dedicated to helping fellow students navigate the Dimensions of Wellness: cultural, social, occupational, intellectual, creative, environmental, physical, spiritual, financial, and emotional.

This ambassador initiative is part of SEAA's program, Wellness PHirst, with a mission to embed wellness practices into the fabric of the Rutgers School of Public Health community - students, faculty, and staff - experience.

Rutgers School of Public Health Students Champion Public Health Advocacy

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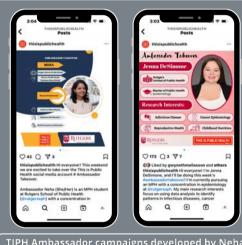
Two Rutgers School of Public Health students are part of the Association of Schools & Programs of Public Health's (ASPPH) 2024-2025 This Is Public Health (TIPH) Ambassador Cohort.

Handpicked by their institutions, TIPH Ambassadors play a unique role in elevating public health education and awareness, bringing fresh perspectives and energy to the profession.

FNU Neha and Jenna DeSimone, both current Master of Public Health (MPH) students, shared their insights and dedication to advancing public health as TIPH Ambassadors. Learn More



Click on a Wellness PHirst Ambassador to learn more!







A First-Generation Student's Perspective on Shaping the Future of Public Health

Abanoub Armanious is a first-generation student whose path to higher education has been shaped by resilience, determination, and overcoming obstacles.

Armanious – an accomplished Master of Science student at the Rutgers School of Public Health and a researcher at the Rutgers Brain Health Institute - is passionate about advancing public health through innovative pharmaceutical research. We sat down with him to discuss his experiences, which not only fueled his success but also served as a powerful reminder of the unique perspectives that first-generation students bring to public health. Learn More

It is not enough to be seen; we must be heard and valued for the insights we offer because, without that, the spaces we occupy will never truly change.



2024 Rutgers Health Chancellor Awards: A Celebration of Excellence in the Rutgers School of Public Health Community

Five distinguished members of the Rutgers School of Public Health community have been recognized with 2024 Rutgers Health Chancellor Awards for their outstanding contributions. These awards honor exceptional achievement in research, education, mentorship, service, and lifetime contributions.

Recognized with the *Sustained Service Award*, **Rhonda Barnes**, admissions coordinator, has significantly and continuously contributed to the quality of Rutgers across her 35-year career at the university. Her dedicated efforts have been vital in supporting the mission and operations of Rutgers Health, ensuring consistent and exceptional service delivery.

I am incredibly grateful to accept this award. It demonstrates my active engagement and meaningful connections across Rutgers University and its community. I am aware that many colleagues and friends have supported and assisted me along the way, so I share this award and recognition with all of the Rutgers School of Public Health.

Paul R. Duberstein, professor and chair of the Department of Health Behavior, Society, and Policy, earned the *Distinguished Mentor Award*. This recognition highlights his outstanding commitment to mentoring postdoctoral and clinical fellows, junior faculty, staff, and students across all academic levels, fostering a culture of growth and development within Rutgers.

I am grateful for all the opportunities I have had to provide mentorship to talented Rutgers staff, trainees and faculty. There is a lot of untapped potential here at Rutgers and I look forward to future mentoring successes.

The Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award for Faculty has been awarded to <u>Jeffrey D. Laskin</u>, a distinguished professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Justice, and director of the Division of Toxicology at the Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences Institute. Laskin's lifetime of distinguished achievments in clinical care, education, research, and community engagement underscores his enduring commitment to advancing the institution's mission and the broader health field.

I appreciate the university's recognition of my sustained record of scholarly and transformative achievements in the fields of pharmacology and toxicology. I am hopeful that my work will inspire future generations of students, post-doctoral fellows and junior faculty to continue working in these exciting fields.

The *Distinguished Educator Award* has been given to **Laura E. Liang**, senior associate dean for academic affairs and associate professor in the Department of Health Behavior, Society, and Policy. Liang has demonstrated exceptional and sustained contributions to education, teaching, and training, continually elevating the academic experience at Rutgers.

Being awarded the Chancellor Distinguished Educator Award is a true honor that celebrates the joy I find in mentoring and teaching, reflecting the collective efforts of my students and colleagues. This award affirms the value of teaching and encourages me to continue pushing the boundaries of educational excellence.

Slawa Rokicki, an assistant professor in the Department of Health Behavior, Society, and Policy, received the *Excellence in Clinical or Health Sciences Research Award*. Her dedication to improving health outcomes and significant contributions as an early career investigator, particularly her research on the structural and social determinants of maternal health, has greatly advanced clinical and health sciences research at Rutgers Health.

For me, this award signifies recognition of the critical importance of advancing knowledge in the field of maternal health, in addressing the substantial racial and socioeconomic disparities in access to quality health care, and in improving health for women and families.



Erica Eliason Joins the Rutgers School of Public Health and Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research

Erica L. Eliason, Ph.D., M.P.H. has joined the Rutgers School of Public Health Department of Urban-Global Public Health as an assistant professor. She is also a member of the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy within the Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research.

Eliason is a health services researcher who focuses much of her work on the effects of health policies on maternal, child, and reproductive health and health equity, with a particular emphasis on Medicaid and CHIP policies. <u>Learn More</u>

> I am excited to join the Rutgers School of Public Health and contribute to the mission of advancing health through an equity and social justice lens. I look forward to collaborating with the community and stakeholders to promote health outcomes across New Jersey.

Mara Getz Sheftel Joins the Rutgers School of Public Health and Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Policy and Aging

<u>Mara Getz Sheftel, Ph.D.</u> has joined the Rutgers School of Public Health's Department of Health Behavior, Society, and Policy as an instructor. She is also a member of the Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research.

She has an interdisciplinary background spanning sociology, demography, public policy, and international studies. Her research is aimed at informing policies and services to improve population health and functioning for older adults. Learn More

I am honored to join the faculty, staff, and students in the Rutgers School of Public Health and contribute to a school so aligned with my overall goal to improve population health and reduce health disparities among older adults. I am thrilled to join an interdisciplinary school and collaborate with scholars and students from diverse fields applying social science theories to public health issues.

Faculty Elected to Collegium Ramazzini

<u>Mitchel Rosen</u>, associate professor in the Department of Urban-Global Public Health and director of the Center for Public Health Workforce Development at the Rutgers School of Public Health, has been elected as a fellow to the Collegium Ramazzini.

The Collegium Ramazzini is an international scientific academy comprised of physicians and scientists from 35 countries headquartered in the Castello di of Bentivoglio, near Bologna, Italy. <u>Learn More</u>



Faculty Named to NIH 2024-2025 Climate and Health Scholars Class

Jose Guillermo "Memo" Cedeño Laurent, an assistant professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Justice at the Rutgers School of Public Health, has been named a 2024-2025 National Institutes of Health (NIH) Climate and Health Scholar.

The NIH Climate and Health Scholars Program connects climate and health scientists from outside the federal government with NIH researchers to share their expertise. <u>Learn More</u>

> My expertise in environmental exposure science positions me uniquely to help NIAMS align its research focus with the NIH Climate Change and Health framework.

Dean of Rutgers School of Graduate Studies Receives the 2024 Friend of Thai Science Award

Mark Robson, dean of the Rutgers School of Graduate Studies and faculty at the Rutgers School of Public Health, has received the 2024 Friend of Thai Science Award from the Office of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation of the Royal Thai Embassy.

The embassy awards this prestigious recognition to those who have made significant contributions to Thai higher education, science, and innovation. <u>Learn More</u>

I am so grateful to Rutgers University for supporting this work and providing a platform for me to apply for competitive funding through NIH and other sources. The Thai word Ajarn (ອາຈາຣຍ໌) means "teacher" or "professor" and is used as a term of respect. I have now been Ajarn Mark for 30+ years.

A triple threat of photography, videography, and IT support with Raymond Clinkscale

Our People

STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

From beginning his career, working behind-the-scenes on daytime talk shows like The Bethenny Frankel Show and Anderson Cooper to joining Rutgers in an IT position that combines his passions of Media, Film, and Technology, **Raymond Clinkscale** knows how to multi-task and capitalize on any opportunity that comes his way.

With job responsibilities that require him to switch between the left and right sides of his brain at any given moment, Clinkscale thrives in an environment at Rutgers where every day is different, and he must use his creative and technical skills simultaneously. Learn More

I take it as an honor to provide myself as a service \P to the community of Rutgers, whether it be answering a technical question or making an individual feel more comfortable in front of the camera for a picture. At the end of the day, I just want to represent myself in the best way and make things better for the Rutgers community.



Rutgers School of Public Health Staff Initiative Blends Art, Wellness, and Community

Rutgers School of Public Health recently celebrated the success of Expressions of Community: A Workplace Program of Mind and Body Wellness. This unique initiative, led by **Michelle Ruidíaz-Santiago**, executive assistant in the Department of Health Behavior, Society, and Policy, and **John Ciampi**, administrative assistant in the Department of Health, Behavior, and Society, was funded by a <u>Rutgers Health Joy at Work grant</u>. The program aims to cultivate a supportive and inclusive workplace culture by fostering community, collegiality, and mutual respect among colleagues.

This semester, the program featured three engaging art sessions that were open to all faculty and staff. Each session focused on exploring the concept of community through artistic expression.

The program will continue in Spring 2025 with guided yoga sessions to further support mental and physical wellness. By championing initiatives like this, the Rutgers School of Public Health sets a standard for fostering workplaces where employees feel connected, valued, and empowered. Learn More

Rutgers Receives \$3.2 Million from NIH to Study Micronanoplastics in the Digestive System

"We hope that the results of our work will help risk assessors and policy makers assess the risks of micronanoplastics ingestion, provide the basis and rationale for regulatory action and will open new areas of research in toxicology and epidemiology for this emerging and novel pollutant," said <u>Philip Demokritou</u>, the Henry Rutgers Chair and Professor of Nanoscience and Environmental Bioengineering at Rutgers Health and principal investigator of the project.

Study Finds Telehealth Effective for HIV Patients

Learn More

Learn More

"For folks who see their doctors several times a year and don't need to give biosamples at every visit, telehealth visits can improve quality of life while maintaining medical efficacy," said <u>Kristen Krause</u>, an assistant professor in the Department of Urban-Global Public Health and the study's first author. "There are a lot of upsides to telehealth, assuming it works as well as in-person visits. It saves patients' time. It reduces cars on the road. If patients are sick, it keeps them home and slows disease transmission."

A Gun Safety Paradox: Study Finds Some Precautions Linked to Riskier Storage Practices

Learn More

"Some parents may believe that modeling responsible firearm use negates the need for secure storage," said <u>Jennifer Paruk</u>, the study's lead author and a postdoctoral researcher at the <u>New Jersey Gun Violence</u> <u>Research Center</u> at the Rutgers School of Public Health. "But storing firearms securely is a part of firearm safety."

Study Finds Widespread Exposure to Hormone-Disrupting Chemical During Pregnancy

Learn More

ZEN is a type of mycoestrogen, an estrogen-like compound produced by certain molds that contaminate grains, meats and processed foods worldwide. While well-studied in animals, where it can cause reproductive issues, less is known about its effects in humans. "We're just at the beginnings of studying how these compounds affect human bodies in all stages of development," said <u>Zorimar Rivera-Núñez</u>, an assistant professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology and senior author of the study.

Why Health and Price, Not Sustainability, Drive U.S. Meat Consumption Choices

Learn More

"There's a disconnect between the mounting evidence on meat's environmental footprint and what's actually driving consumer behavior," said <u>Shauna Downs</u>, an associate professor in the Department of Health Behavior, Society and Policy and lead author of the study. "Our findings suggest that messaging focused solely on sustainability may not resonate with most U.S. consumers regarding meat choices."

Rutgers Public Health Research Illus<mark>trates Rise in Use of Pa</mark>id Family Leave in New Jersey

Learn More

"We know from previous evidence that access to paid leave for pregnant women and their partners has many benefits, including supporting breastfeeding initiation and duration, increasing engagement with postpartum care and reducing the risk of postpartum depression, so seeing this large increase in access to paid leave is very positive for maternal and infant health in New Jersey," said <u>Slawa Rokicki</u>, an assistant professor in the Department of Health Behavior, Society and Policy who led the analysis.

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.

RESEARCH

Public health experts worry about implications of Trump withdrawing US from WHO: 'An enormous mistake'

Read ABC News

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"I think about the WHO as a network of countries around the world that inform and protect each other when health issues are emerging, whether they're health issues entering into the United States, or whether the health issue is going outside the United States," <u>Perry N. Halkitis</u>, dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health, told ABC News. "And so, it is disadvantageous for people, and is disadvantageous for the United States, [who need] access to relevant, timely, important information."

This Carcinogen Keeps Cropping Up in Personal Care Products

Read The NYT

Benzene seems to have cropped up everywhere in recent years. First, it was hand sanitizers with <u>"unacceptable levels</u>" of the carcinogen. Then there were recalls of <u>antifungal foot sprays</u> and alarming reports of tainted deodorants, <u>dry shampoos</u> and sunscreens. If you are concerned about potential benzene exposure, try switching to dry shampoos that come in powder formulations instead of aerosol products, said <u>Emily Barrett</u>, George G. <u>Rhoads Endowed Legacy Pro</u>fessor and vice chair and professor of the Department Biostatistics and Epidemiology.

Trump Said He'd Veto a National Abortion Ban. Voters Should Hold Him to His Word

Read TIME

By Jennifer Weiss-Wolf and Leslie M. Kantor

In the 2024 Presidential election, voters simultaneously cast their ballot for abortion rights and for Presidentelect Donald Trump. A new Rutgers School of Public Health <u>analysis</u> shows that support for abortion ballot initiatives exceeded support for Vice President Harris in every state in which there was a measure.

Firefighting is a dangerous job. Now, there's growing awareness of an invisible risk: cancer

Read PBS

A couple of studies have found higher rates of brain cancer among firefighters than the general population, while others have not. "Brain cancer is a much rarer cancer than bladder cancer or prostate cancer, and it makes it really hard to look at," said <u>Judith Graber</u>, an associate professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, who studies the cancer risk volunteer firefighters face. She also contributed to the IARC classification. "That's why we really need more [research]."

Suicide prevention key to cutting gun violence, advocates say

Read NJ Spotlight

While New Jersey has some of the strongest gun laws in the country, experts say that gun violence is "still too high" in the state and New Jersey needs to capitalize on the work that's already been done. This includes the continued support of organizations on the ground that are working to save lives "each and every day," <u>Daniel</u> Semenza of Rutgers University said in an email with NJ Spotlights News in December.

Resilience and Action: LGBTQ+ Health and Hope After the Election

Listen to PRIDE Podcast

The episode reflects on the results of the recent election and what they mean for the LGBTQ+ community. <u>Perry N. Halkitis</u>, dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health, shares his expertise on health disparities, mental health, and the challenges and opportunities ahead for LGBTQ+ rights and healthcare. Dr. Halkitis discusses the potential impact of policies like Project 2025, the importance of mental health support for LGBTQ+ youth, and the future of inclusive healthcare.

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.



Call for Submissions: Contribute to 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 **February 7, 2025** for consideration. We look forward to featuring your contributions in our upcoming edition!

SUBMIT HERE

