

FEBRUARY 2025

# CAAS MPH NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 3



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College of Agriculture & Applied Sciences  
UtahStateUniversity

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

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**Dear MPH Community,**

As we embark on another exciting year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the journey of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program at Utah State University (USU). In 2015, a group of USU professors from diverse disciplines came together to propose the development of an MPH program with multiple emphasis areas. With support from numerous internal and external stakeholders, the program was officially approved in 2017. Over time, it has evolved to better meet the needs of students and the academic units it encompasses. As the program grew in size—both in student enrollment and faculty/staff—so too did our external partnerships and impact.

In 2021, the MPH program in the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences (CAAS) began the accreditation process with the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). In January 2025, 10 years after inception, the faculty and staff had the honor of hosting the accreditation site visit. This was a proud moment for all of us, allowing us to showcase the achievements of our students, improvements to our curriculum, and strengthened connections with the public health field. As someone who has been advocating for this program since the very beginning, I can't help but feel immense pride. While we won't receive our final accreditation decision until July 2025, I am confident that this process has significantly enhanced our program and the education our students receive.

We are incredibly grateful for the unwavering support from our students, faculty, staff, and public health partners. Your feedback, insights, and engagement have been instrumental in our progress, and we could not have reached this milestone without you. Thank you for your continued support of the USU MPH program. Together, we are shaping the future of public health, both in Utah and beyond.



**Dr. Mateja Savoie-Roskos**

**PhD, MPH, RD, FAND**

**Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Services**

**College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences**

**Associate Professor**

**Master of Public Health Program Director**

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# FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

## WILLY LANIER

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Willy Lanier was raised in Alaska where he grew up in close connection with animals and healthcare. With parents involved in epidemiology and veterinary medicine, Willy says he soaked up public health from a young age. As a boy, he competed in sled dog racing and took care of lots of dogs. He also grew up caribou hunting and commercial salmon fishing. After college, he attended veterinary school at the University of Illinois. His epidemiology class in vet school solidified his love for public health.

After college, Willy began his career in food safety as a field vet for the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and after a year in federal civil service, became a commissioned officer in the US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. He then received a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Minnesota. Since then, he has worked for the CDC in the Epidemic Intelligence Service, the FDA in outbreak response coordination and field investigation, and back at FSIS as a senior epidemiologist coordinating outbreak response and strengthening policy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he deployed to oversee programs such as the “test to play/stay” in Utah public schools.

In 2021, Willy began to serve as the Utah State Public Health Veterinarian where he was brought in to promote One Health in the state. A major highlight of this position has been the ability to help establish and expand the Utah One Health Network. Within that network, he has been able to forge partnerships, connect people, and identify gaps in the state's One Health approach to public health. He enjoys creating innovative ways to implement public health initiatives, such as a recent drive-through vaccination clinic that provided immunizations to both pets and their people in Grantsville with the Tooele County Health Department. It was a huge success, and he hopes to expand the concept to additional areas. Willy calls his leadership philosophy “collaborative leadership”, building trust-based teams to accomplish shared goals while drawing on the strengths of all involved.

Willy recently joined the MPH program and is teaching the One Health class. He is uniquely qualified for this position based on his extensive history and his understanding of One Health. He sees One Health as not only the connection



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# FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

## WILLY LANIER, CONTINUED

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between humans, animals, and the environment but also the collaboration between partners needed to solve complex challenges. He views One Health partnerships as a “meta-network,” connecting existing networks in order to gather together a larger network of partners working towards improving public health.

He has worked hard this semester to learn Canvas, get familiarized with teaching, and adjust the One Health course to align with his background, experiences, and perspectives. Willy also serves on the Advisory Board for the MPH program, where he provides feedback on the curriculum. Willy says that the best part of his job is the chance he has to help train and mentor interns and trainees. He says teaching situations are a “two-way street,” where he learns just as much (or even more) from the person he is mentoring. He is always eager to learn and says that teaching is gratifying to him. He loves teaching in group settings and is always looking for more opportunities to teach and mentor. He’s looking forward to see what other opportunities might open up within the community and university in which he can help fill needs and connect people.

Willy is married, and he and his wife have three children, two in college and one still at home. His family lives in Bountiful, UT, and they are currently hosting an exchange student from Ukraine. In his free time, Willy loves to play ultimate frisbee and is a big Tolkien fan. He has also sung with the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square for seven years. In February, he will travel with the organization to Peru as part of a global, musical tour of hope before he concludes his service with the Choir.

The MPH program is very lucky to have Willy join us with his expertise in public health and his passion for teaching and helping others. Welcome Willy Lanier!



**Willy Lanier**

**State of Utah Public Health Veterinarian**

**One Health Instructor  
MPH General Advisory Board Member**

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# ORGANIZATION HIGHLIGHT

# RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF UTAH

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The Rural Health Association of Utah (RHAU) is a professional organization that brings together all areas of healthcare across rural Utah to unify and amplify the voice of our rural Utah Communities.

RHAU works to educate on rural issues and build relationships and share resources, while also leading efforts to increase access and improve existing resources. RHAU members get access to member directories and chat boards, discounts on RHAU resources and events, and increased networking opportunities. Students also have the opportunity to pursue scholarships, for which applications are currently being accepted until the end of March for the 2025 awards.

To learn more about the Rural Health Association of Utah, to join, or to apply for scholarships, visit [www.rhau.org](http://www.rhau.org)



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# STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

## MAKAYLIE LANGFORD

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Makaylie Langford is a student in the Master of Public Health Nutrition program. We had the opportunity to ask her some questions about her Applied Practice Experience (APE) Project and would love to share her experience with you!

### **Can you share with us an overview of your project?**

I am working with the Utah Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (UAND) to raise awareness for the Dietitian Licensure Compact. I've created informational materials that UAND will share with dietitians and legislators. I've also created brief pre- and post-surveys for dietitians and students to gauge how familiar they are with the Compact and how comfortable they are advocating for the Compact and other issues in their communities. Once survey data is collected, we'll look at trends in the data to see how best to support Utah dietitians' advocacy efforts and tailor future education and resources. Outside of my two official project outputs, I'm also helping with webinars for dietitians to educate them on the Compact and support their individual advocacy efforts. On February 12, we had students and dietitians at the capitol building in Salt Lake to talk to legislators.

### **What inspired you to choose this topic for your project?**

I'd heard of the Compact before at different events and I have some previous advocacy experience from when I was in high school and went to Washington, DC with a student organization. My high school experiences showed me how important it is for students to have an idea of what's going on outside the classroom and how things happening in legislation can affect them. Those same experiences showed me that students—or anyone who chooses to be involved—can make positive changes in their communities.

### **What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced during your project?**

During fall semester, I was also doing a clinical internship at University of Utah Medical Center. I loved my internship, but I didn't have as much time to work on my project. Now that I'm done with my internship, the biggest challenge is just communicating with different people and doing a lot of hurrying up just to wait. There are pieces of my project I can't do until we have more information from attorneys, from Senator Vickers (the bill sponsor), or from the Academy.

### **Has this project contributed to your growth as a public health professional?**

Helping UAND with their advocacy efforts has given me an inside look into what

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# STUDENT HIGHLIGHT CONTINUED

## MAKAYLIE LANGFORD

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professional organizations are and what they do. As a single person, there's only so much I can do, but by working with other students and dietitians I can make a much greater difference. UAND also has great networking opportunities for dietitians and I've been able to see more of what life could look like after graduation. I've also gotten a front row seat to see how legislation and policy can impact public health. Public health professionals working within the system can do a lot of good, but public health professionals working to improve the system can do even more.

### **What advice would you give to students undertaking a similar project?**

For any project, I think that having excellent mentors is important. As a student, as much as I study and research, there is still a lot that I don't know and I don't have a ton of experience. By working with people who know more than me and have been working for longer, I've been able to figure out things that I never could have on my own. There are things you can only really learn by jumping in and doing it, but having a coach or a mentor makes a huge difference.

### **Anything else you'd like to share?**

I think a lot of students—and people in general—get intimidated by the idea of advocacy or anything dealing with the legislative process. There are things that still scare me, but you don't have to run for local office to make a difference. There are a lot of easy, simple, pain-free ways to get involved in advocacy.

UAND and other professional organizations send out action alerts when there are big issues being discussed by legislators and responding to those alerts only takes a few minutes. There are email templates that you can add your name and a few personal thoughts too and send to your senator or congressman to say, "I care about this issue and this is why." Your representatives can't really represent you if they don't know what you want. Something—no matter how big or small—is always better than nothing. Taking a few minutes out of your day to respond to an issue that matters to you still counts.



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# PUBLIC HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE US AIR FORCE

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## **The US Air Force is currently recruiting Public Health Officers!**

Public Health Officers in the U.S. Air Force are essential to maintaining the health and readiness of service members. Using their expertise in preventive medicine and medical entomology, they work to reduce the spread of diseases, prevent environmental and occupational health risks, and ensure food safety in both garrison and deployed settings.

Their responsibilities include monitoring health trends, overseeing sanitation standards, and implementing disease prevention and occupational health programs. They also coordinate with medical personnel and public health agencies to ensure a unified and effective public health strategy.

In addition to program oversight, Public Health Officers conduct epidemiological investigations, analyzing health data to identify and mitigate potential threats. They play a key role in responding to disease outbreaks, managing vector surveillance, and providing health education to service members and their families.

By proactively addressing health risks, Public Health Officers contribute to the overall mission readiness of the Air Force, ensuring personnel stay healthy and prepared for duty at all times.

Public Health Officers may also be eligible for retroactive education costs compensation! To find out more about this rewarding career path, contact:

Anton N. Smith, TSgt, USAF  
Officer Accessions Recruiter  
[anton.smith@us.af.mil](mailto:anton.smith@us.af.mil)

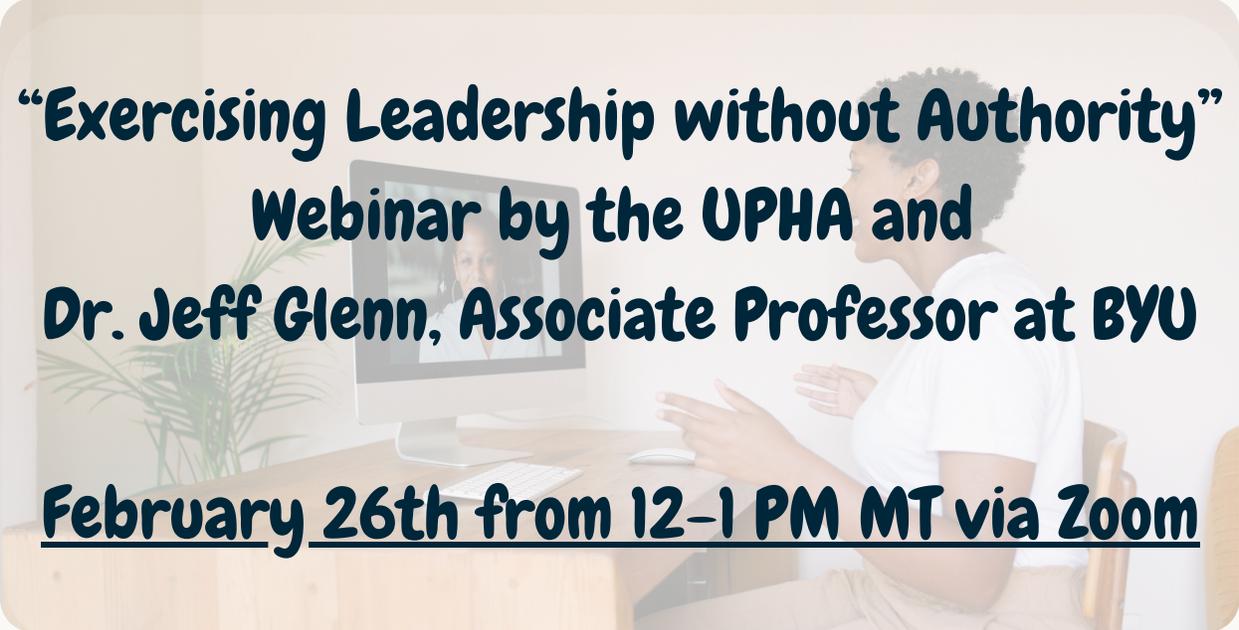


**U.S. AIR FORCE**

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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**“Exercising Leadership without Authority”  
Webinar by the UPHA and  
Dr. Jeff Glenn, Associate Professor at BYU**

**February 26th from 12-1 PM MT via Zoom**



**Utah Dietitian Licensure Compact Update**

**Webinar held February 20 and 24,  
7 PM MT**

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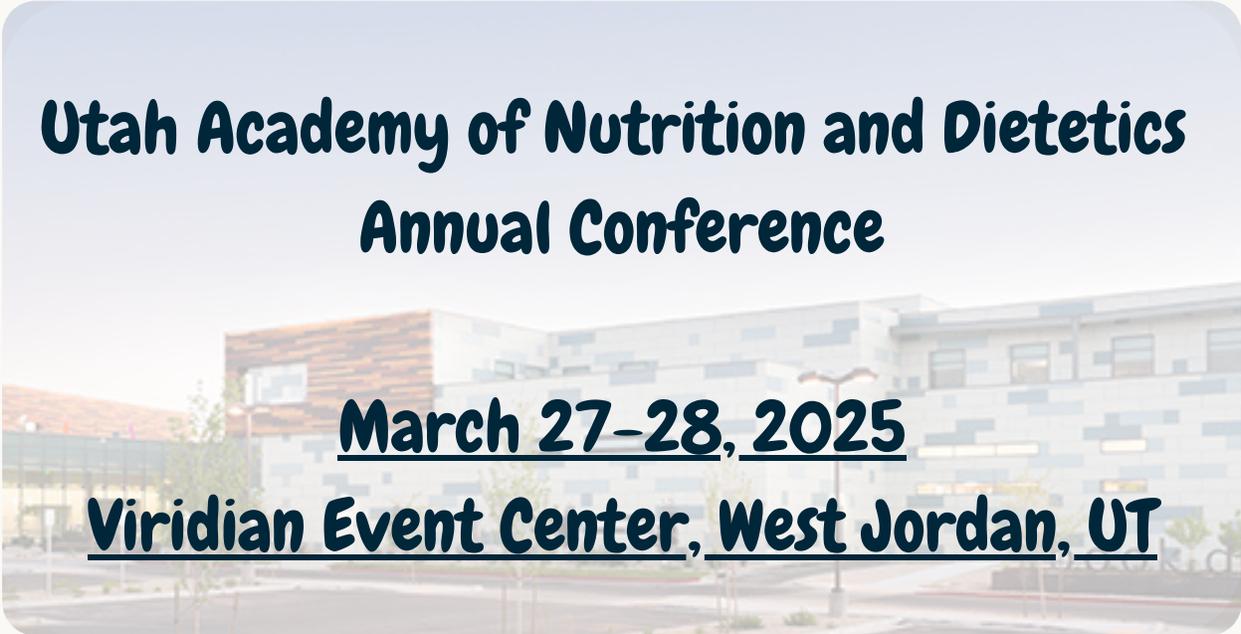
## **UPCOMING EVENTS, CONTINUED**

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A close-up photograph of a pig's face, looking directly at the camera. The pig has dark fur with some lighter patches around its eyes and snout. It is in a grassy field with a blurred background.

**Foot and Mouth Disease Symposium  
Manhattan Conference Center**

**Virtual Attendance Option**  
**March 11-13, 2025**

A photograph of a modern, multi-story building with a mix of grey and brown panels. The building has large windows and a flat roof. There are some trees and a parking lot in the foreground.

**Utah Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Annual Conference**

**March 27-28, 2025**  
**Viridian Event Center, West Jordan, UT**

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS, CONTINUED**

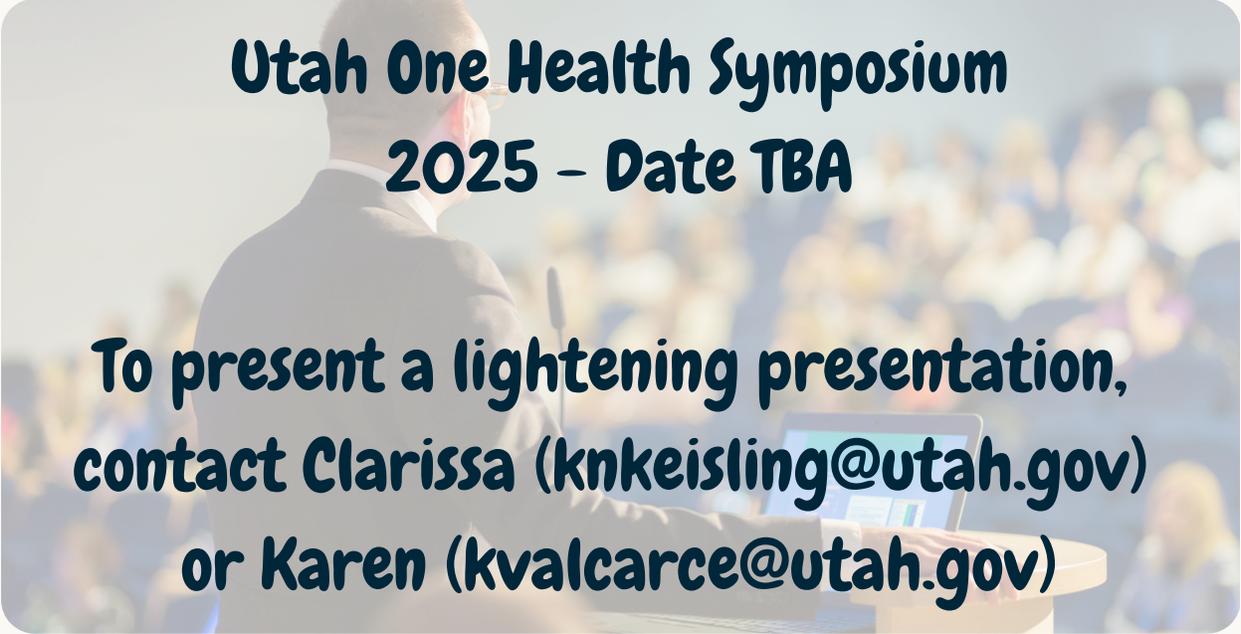
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### **Utah Public Health Association Conference**

**April 2-3, 2025**

**Weber State University, Ogden UT**



### **Utah One Health Symposium 2025 - Date TBA**

**To present a lightning presentation,  
contact Clarissa ([knkeisling@utah.gov](mailto:knkeisling@utah.gov))  
or Karen ([kvalcarce@utah.gov](mailto:kvalcarce@utah.gov))**

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## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Be the first to hear about everything public health related by following our social media accounts!

This is a great way to stay up to date on program changes, accreditation updates, public health events, job openings, project/internship opportunities, and more!



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[@usupublichealth](#)



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[USU Master of Public Health](#)