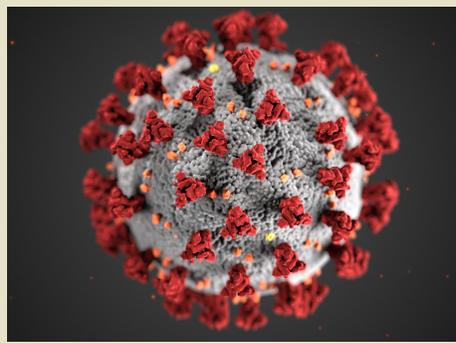


MPH NEWSLETTER

*Utah State University
College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences*



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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

Thank you for taking the time to read our quarterly CAAS Master of Public Health newsletter. We are excited to share with you some student, faculty and program highlights from the past few months. In this newsletter you will find information about our newest faculty member, Casey Coombs, who will be teaching several MPH courses and mentoring MPH Nutrition students starting fall 2021. We also highlight and celebrate on behalf of all of our 2020-2021 MPH program graduates for their hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Graduating with an MPH is an incredible accomplishment and we wish all our graduates the best as they start/continue their careers in the field. We are also excited to recognize Dr. Bart Tarbet's work with USU's Institute of Antiviral Research and the contribution his COVID-19-related research has made over the past year.



We look forward to sharing more exciting program highlights with you next fall in Volume 3 of the CAAS MPH newsletter! We wish you all a healthy and fun summer!

Dr. Mateja R. Savoie-Roskos



Faculty Spotlight: Casey Coombs, MS, RD, BA

The MPH Nutrition program has an exciting announcement! Casey Coombs has recently accepted the position as Professional Practice Assistant Professor. Casey has worked in public health nutrition for over 15 years as a sustainable agriculture Peace Corps Volunteer in Ecuador and an assistant director of a statewide nutrition program. She loves public health because we are all constantly impacted by public health interventions, whether we recognize it or not. This could be in the form of vaccinations, reducing environmental toxins, reducing risk of chronic disease, or any other health-related intervention. She also is interested in the One Health public health approach that USU's MPH program focuses on in detail.

Currently, Casey's research interests focus on increasing food access for food insecure populations in 'emergency' food settings, such as food pantries.. She states that "[though] it is important that people have enough calories to sustain their bodies, it is equally important to ensure people also have access to enough nutritious food to lead active and healthy lives".



Casey is very excited to work with students, particularly at such a time when public health is at the forefront of everybody's minds. She wants to introduce students to the vast number of opportunities in the field of public health and the many doors it can open. Her advice for current and future students is to embrace any opportunities that come your way in the form of job shadowing, volunteer work, internships, and employment. Opportunities in public health are far and wide, and any experience will help you understand health in a more in-depth way!



2020-2021 MPH GRADUATES & STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS



Kim Buesser **MPH Nutrition**

Kim is currently working as a Community Health Worker at the Association for Utah Community Health. Once she graduates, she will be working as a Data Resource Coordinator. Her favorite part of her MPH journey was presenting her research on SNAP-Ed and EFNEP to state directors. Her words of advice for current and future MPH students is to challenge their ideas on health and how social inequities play a role in health. These disparities are what motivate her to reduce barriers and improve population health. Kim graduates in May.



Susie West **MPH Nutrition**

Susie graduated in Summer 2020 and is currently working with the Oklahoma State University as a Rural Opioid Educator. In the next 5 years she hopes to be working on her PhD. During her MPH, Susie worked with USU Extension's Create Better Health program and enjoyed her time there. She encourages all current and future MPH students to embrace creativity, diverse backgrounds, and unique ideas as they move into the public health field.



Victoria Whitworth

MPH Veterinary Public Health

Victoria Whitworth graduated in Summer 2020 and is currently in the WIMU veterinary program, which she graduates from in 2024. In the next 5 years she hopes to finish vet school and her residency and be a champion of One Health no matter where she ends up! She hopes current and future students understand the value of public health, which this last year has taught us a lot about. She wants students to make sure to look at public health from the 'big picture' perspective as they move forward with their careers.



Natalie Dalley

MPH Nutrition

Natalie Dalley is a Registered Dietitian with special concern for maternal and child nutrition. She collaborates with several programs to combat food insecurity and currently manages Five 12, a weekend food backpack program. She recently accepted a position as the program director of Bright Water Foundation, a global organization committed to eliminating water borne diseases in rural villages in the developing world. After raising six children, she returned to receive her Master's in Public Health at Utah State University. She plans to work to improve familial health and decrease health disparities. With a firm belief, this world has enough and to spare, she endeavors to educate and empower the most vulnerable.



Brooke James MPH Nutrition

Brooke graduated in December 2020. She currently doesn't work in the field of public health but in the next couple of years wants to work somewhere she can help people on a day-to-day basis. Brooke's MPH highlight was the Motivational Interviewing course. She likes that it's so applicable both in the work field and in everyday communication. Her advice for future/current MPH students is that it's okay to not know the answer to all of life's questions right now. What is important is that you do what you feel is best for you and take steps to keep moving forward, learning and becoming better than you were yesterday.



2020-2021 MPH Graduates

Public Health Nutrition

Kim Buesser
Alicia Kunzler
Brooke James
Alexandra Vasa
Natalie Dalley
Susie West

Veterinary Public Health

Victoria Whitworth
Rebecca Echols
Maren Haroldsen

Congratulations to all of our CAAS MPH graduates of 2020-2021! We are incredibly proud of your hard work and dedication to completing your graduate degree. We look forward to seeing the mark you make in the field throughout your careers as public health professionals!

COVID-19 Research: Dr. Bart Tarbet, PhD, MS

USU's Institute for Antiviral Research

This MPH Newsletter we would like to discuss the current research of Dr. E. Bart Tarbet, a research associate professor in the ADVS department. Dr. Tarbet has worked at USU since 2008 but before then worked for 12 years in the veterinary vaccine industry where he helped develop vaccines for the West Nile Virus, equine influenza virus, and the first canine influenza virus.

Dr. Tarbet has worked with emerging infectious diseases for the last 25 years and states that COVID-19 is nothing like he's ever seen before. The recent pandemic has sparked a dramatic increase in public involvement and controversy, even politicizing the virus itself. Dr. Tarbet states, "the virus doesn't care what political party you're a part of, it is an equal opportunity virus".

Dr. Tarbet does research with USU's Institute for Antiviral Research, and they have been working with COVID-19 virus for over a year now. His lab has had over 10x its average workload since March 2020. Dr. Tarbet, along with student researchers, have been developing animal models to learn as much as possible about the virus. The institute has run over 60, 2-6 week studies over the past year to test therapeutic modalities and vaccinations on animals infected with the virus.



These studies can be referred to as 'pre-clinical', meaning they are conducted prior to researching compounds in human subjects. Animal models are to mimic the human condition as closely as possible so safe and effective compound can eventually be studied within humans themselves. Over the last few years, USU's Institute of Antiviral Research has been heavily involved in much of the pre-clinical development for many compounds and diseases. These efforts are a multidisciplinary affair that combines the expertise of chemists, biologists, virologists, medical teams, and politicians.



Recently, the institute has started working with the COVID-19 variants that have emerged over the previous months. Dr. Tarbet is optimistic that the COVID-19 vaccine rollout will help control, at least to some extent, the viral variants that many countries and communities are currently dealing with. However, he emphasizes that the nation needs to set politics aside and unite together to overcome the pandemic. "There is power in unity," he says, "and we can do so much more if we work together".

For Your Enjoyment

Save the Rhino International and For Rangers, two organizations involved in the preservation of the African rhinos and elephants, have an annual ultramarathon to raise money for their programs. USU's own Dr. Jane Kelly, the director of the Veterinary Public Health program, is running this race this fall! She will be participating in a 5-day race in Kenya. To learn more about the organizations, please click [here](#). If you would like to contribute to Dr. Kelly's fundraising campaign, please click [here](#).



The race is 220 km (100 miles) and goes through many Kenyan rhino conservation sites. Runners have opportunities to see many wild animals, including rhinos, elephants, lions, buffalo, zebra, impala, giraffe, and even leopards. Good luck, Dr. Kelly, and thank you for participating in such a wonderful event!

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Utah Public Health Association is hosting their annual conference May 18-20, 2021. This event will be completely virtual, and they are still looking for research proposals to be discussed in breakout sessions! Sign up on their website [here](#). The Utah Public Health Association is also a great way to get involved and stay up-to-date on public health events and milestones not only in the state of Utah, but also across the country.

USU is also holding a "Mental Health First Aid" training on May 13th and 14th. This workshop is intended to provide skills on how to approach and respond to the topic of mental health struggles with those we interact with. It also offers suggestions on how to support those in a mental health crisis. Click [here](#) for more information!



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Be the first to hear about MPH program updates by following our social media handles! This is a great way to stay up to date on program changes, class highlights, public health events, and potential job opportunities. It also provides you with the opportunity to network with other public health professionals and programs.

Instagram: @usu.mph

LinkedIn: USU Master's of Public Health

Facebook: Utah State University Master of Public Health Program

