

# Public Health Memos

## WELCOME BACK & HAPPY SPRING SEMESTER!

Welcome back for a new semester Department of Public Health! For some, you may be graduating this spring—congratulations, you are so close to being done! Don't forget to [register for the Graduate Hooding Ceremony](#) in May if you plan to attend. For others, you may have just made it through your first semester in graduate school—congratulations, that is a huge accomplishment! Check out this edition of memos for campus events, a new faculty highlight, PHSA news, and more! As always, if you have any future ideas or feedback for the memos, please feel free to email me at [pprother@vols.utk.edu](mailto:pprother@vols.utk.edu)

## CAMPUS EVENTS

- **Tacos, Traditions, & Ts.** Tuesday, February 22nd 8 AM—5PM. [Event information.](#)
- **VOLS ACTIVE Bystander Training for Graduate Students.** Hosted by the Office of Title IX. Friday, February 25th 12-1 PM. [Register here.](#)
- **Adam Steltzner.** Hosted by the Campus Events Board. Tuesday, March 1st 7-8 PM. [Event Information.](#)
- **Safe Zone Training—Tier 1.** Hosted by the Pride Center. Thursday, March 3rd 1-3 PM. [Register here.](#)
- **Fresh Check Day—Wellness Fair.** Wednesday, March 9th 11 AM—2 PM. Pedestrian Walkway. [Event Information.](#)
- **Inclusive Communication.** Hosted by the Division of Diversity and Engagement. Thursday, March 24th at 1:00 PM. [Register here.](#)
- **Healthy Weight Colloquium—The Intersection of Nutrition & Reproductive Health. Addressing Disparities.** Friday, March 25th 12:30-5:00 PM via ZOOM. [Register here.](#)

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## IMPORTANT DATES

- Spring Break is **March 14th—18th**
- MPH Comprehensive Exam on **April 8th**
- Last day of spring classes is **May 10th**
- Graduate Hooding Ceremony is **May 20th**



## Upcoming Events & Reminders

1. PHSA member meetings are held on the First Thursday of the month—thanks to everyone who came out to the February 3rd meeting at Barley’s! Upcoming meetings are on March 3rd and May 5th!
2. Students taking the comprehensive exam in April—stay tuned for comp study sessions in March.
3. PHSA Officer Nominations are now open for the 2022-2023 school year. Do you know an outstanding undergraduate or graduate student who could help to lead and organize meetings, volunteer events, and socials for the PHSA? Is that you? Fill out the form [here](#).

**POSITIONS**

<b>PRESIDENT</b>	<b>TREASURER</b>	<b>VICE PRESIDENT</b>
<b>SECRETARY</b>	<b>PHILANTHROPIST</b>	<b>UNDERGRAD</b>
		<b>REP</b>

Are you interested in serving in a leadership role in the Department of PUBH? Apply to be a leader over PHSA!

*If you have questions reach out to us!*

## NEW FACULTY HIGHLIGHT: DR. KENNETH SMITH

### **Please introduce yourself!**

I am Ken Smith, a new Assistant Professor of Public Health. I received my BA in Economics and International Studies from Towson University in Maryland. I earned my Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health where I studied economic demography and health economics.

I consider myself a health economist and public health practitioner. As a health economist, my initial research focused on healthcare financing, including developing and testing risk adjusters for Medicare Advantage. My international work includes designing a risk adjuster to allocate funding to local health units in Regione Emilia-Romagna.

As a public health practitioner, I have built a national profile of work with increasing impact. As director of chronic disease prevention for the Philadelphia Health Department, I led efforts to pass the most comprehensive menu labeling ordinance in the country. As an analyst for the National Association for County and City Health Officials, I supported local health departments across the country to build healthier communities through policy, systems, and environmental change.

Before coming to Tennessee, my work focused on regional and state-level policy and systems change in Texas. My last policy win in Texas was the successful passage of a bill providing preventative dental benefits for adults with disabilities in Medicaid.

### **What is your role in the department and what are your research interests?**

I currently teach two courses: Healthcare Organizations: Behavior and Management (527) and Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change (528). Both courses are requirements for the MPH students with a health policy and management concentration. The latter is a new health policy course that will give students the skills to tackle the wicked problems that are ubiquitous in public health.

I bring that same spirit to research. My goal is to build a body of scholarship that increases our understanding of the role of economic forces and systems dynamics in driving health inequities and keeping them locked in place. My focus



is on the implications of health disparities on people with multiple vulnerabilities, such as minorities with disabilities.

### **Why did you choose public health and what advice would you give new public health students?**

I landed a job as a research coordinator at Hopkins after undergrad. That job involved interviewing patients for a hand injury study. My boss, currently the Dean of the Bloomberg School of Public Health, encouraged me to explore public health as an option for graduate school. I took her advice.

I encourage new public health students to study non-health sectors like planning, housing, human services, etc. Decision-making in these sectors shape health and health equity. They also could be future sites for employment and leadership.

### **What is your favorite thing so far about Knoxville and UTK?**

Location. I'm sort of a mountain-woods guy, so I love the terrain in Knoxville. Knoxville is ideal for biking and hiking, two of my favorite activities. Knoxville is an easy drive or quick flight to family and friends. I'm tickled that one of my cousins is a UTK doctoral student.

## APEX SPOTLIGHT: SARA COLEY

### **Please introduce yourself!**

My name is Sara Coley. I am a second year MPH student with a Community Health Concentration. I am from Harriman, TN, which is about 45 minutes outside of Knoxville. I currently am a GA for Project NOW with Dr. Meschke and I am a GTA for PUBH 201. My hobbies include fostering so many puppies for Slumdog Rescue Crew, yoga, and eating great food.

### **Tell us about your Applied Practice Experience!**

My APEX is through the Department of Public Health here at UTK and with the Graduate School of Medicine. Dr. Russomanno was looking for a student to help her facilitate a Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) simulation at the Healthcare in Appalachia conference. For my APEX I was really interested in finding an opportunity that would allow me to incorporate Social Determinants of Health and how they are intertwined with health outcomes. Currently, for the simulation, we are creating a board game for providers to play that goes through possible SDOH that their patients or peers may experience. We will facilitate this board game and a brief presentation with the overview of what a SDOH is and what providers can do about it. I am having so much fun working with Dr. R and getting to learn about the different approaches to addressing SDOH.



### **What are your career goals after graduation?**

After graduation, I hope to get a job in research to see if it's something I would like to pursue further. I would really love to evaluate health disparities and how they affect overall population health, specifically of rural communities.

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**Do you have questions about the APEX? When to complete it? What are the requirements? Ideas for potential sites? [Check out information on the website](#) or contact the APEX coordinator, Dr. Jennifer Russomanno at [jrussoma@utk.edu](mailto:jrussoma@utk.edu)**

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**February is Black History Month! UTK, The Office of Multicultural Student Life, and the City of Knoxville have been celebrating all month with great events like the Black Issues Conference and Frederick Douglass Day. Check out some of the upcoming events below!**

- [Restorative Justice Open Mic Workshop](#). A creative expression workshop that centers on anti-racism and social justice issues.  
*Tuesday, February 22nd  
5:30-7:00 PM.*
- [Exploring Inequities in the Health Sciences: Black History Month Panel](#).  
*Tuesday, February 22nd  
5:00-6:15 PM.*
- [Light of the Truth Exhibition](#). *At the Student Union starting February 25th.*
- [YWCA Race Against Racism 2022](#). An opportunity to visit various locations throughout Knox and Anderson Counties that have significance to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in our community. 30 different locations and its all done on your own time via a mobile app.
- [“I Can’t Breathe.”](#) Hosted by the Beck Cultural Exchange Center. *February 24th-26th 7:30 PM.* An opera that explores themes of grief, loss, love, identify, and hope. Inspired by and written in the wake of repeated instances of fatal police brutality perpetrated against African Americans.
- [Justice on Trial](#). Hosted by the Beck Cultural Exchange Center. *February 27th 5:30 PM at the Overcoming Believers Church.* An off-Broadway play that challenges us to ask the hard questions that make our world a better place in a time where our nation is reeling from the pain of a pandemic, the injustice of an unjust judicial system, and the desire for black people to be treated equal.



**Other ways to honor Black History Month besides attending events?** Learn about Black History through local museums and exhibits in Knoxville. [Here’s a list from Visit Knoxville](#). You can also [support black owned businesses](#) in Knoxville or if you’re an online shopper, check out [Black-owned Etsy Shops](#). Netflix, Hulu, and other streaming services are also [featuring films and television series](#) that weave together diverse threads of the Black experience.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY!

## One Health Summit Leadership Team

Currently looking for public health students!

A leadership summit which brings together participants from various health disciplines (medical, veterinary, public health, environmental, etc.), will help foster growth in and between the health leaders of tomorrow. A 2-day One Health leadership summit will allow students to better develop the soft skills that are so desperately needed in the next era of health leaders and will also challenge them to connect their discipline to others.

This summit will be built on a pre-existing leadership development framework, and land on a community level call to action. Participants will go through a progression-by-scale development process, which will begin with introspection, merge what they learn in those sessions with team-based initiatives, and then finally apply it to their communities.

We are excited to announce several positions available for our student-led, core leadership team which will be responsible for coordinating the event and ensuring its long-term sustainability. **The position is best suited for those on track to graduate in 2023.**

Contact us here:

**Mariah Dee**  
mfarring@vols.utk.edu

**Zachary Wildman**  
zwildman@vols.utk.edu

**Tamara Roba**  
troba@vols.utk.edu



### Core leadership (6-8 individuals)



The core leadership team will be made of students passionate about health leadership and/or One Health; ideally, two members from each of the four key health areas outlined here.



Several other members will be involved in this event, including stakeholders (including administrations of the various sectors of the UT college system and external interested groups); event group facilitators (likely will be older students or young graduates); students who want to help with the planning or execution of the event (working group); and faculty mentors who may aid in areas such as curriculum development.