

The Director's Column

Dr. Nils Hennig, Program Director



Welcome to the newest issue of the Scoop. I want to acknowledge that many of us are nauseated by Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, the loss of life and human suffering, the horrors of the war crimes, the humanitarian catastrophe, and the raising of the nuclear stakes. War destroys more than bodies and minds. It tears up the roots of human wellbeing and slashes the fabric of human community. War destroys everything public health stands for. At its best, public health

focuses on the prevention of disease and health promotion. Therefore the public health community has a responsibility to educate, to speak out, to warn, and sometimes even to scream. This brings me to an essay titled "We the Screamers" by Arthur Koestler. Although the text


is about a different time, it does seem topical today. I am quoting and paraphrasing from an email I received from Alan Cassidy, editor of «NZZ am Sonntag» on 4/3/22.

Koestler was a Hungarian-Austrian writer. Born into a Jewish family in Budapest in 1905, he worked as a reporter during the Spanish Civil War, where he was taken prisoner by the Fascists. He later witnessed Stalin's show trials in Moscow, which led to his renunciation of communism. When the Nazis went to war in Europe, he fled to England. In "We the Screamers" Koestler explored why so many people in Europe had remained inactive for so long in the face of the looming Nazi threat. He divided the people into "screamers," among whom he counted himself, and the great mass of everyone else, who had ignored all warnings. In 1944 he wrote: "We, the screamers, have been at it now for about ten years" since the Reichstag fire, which gave the Nazis the pretext for persecuting

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Gathering Students and Faculty Together around One Health and Emerging Pathogens

By Lily Cohen, MD Student and Calla Khilnani, MD Student



One Health is the idea that the health of people is connected to the health of animals and our shared environment.

When we protect **one**, we help protect **all**.

www.cdc.gov/onehealth

The One Health and Emerging Pathogens Interest Group is a ISMMS student-run organization founded in 2020 by Lily Cohen and Calla Khilnani. The group is dedicated to educating medical and graduate students about the many links between human, animal, and environmental health (One Health), and serves as a community for students interested in learning more about or conducting research

within the fields of One Health, emerging infectious disease and outbreak epidemiology, zoonotic disease ecology, microbiology, virology, immunology, data science and more. The group organizes an annual lecture series bringing interdisciplinary voices within the field of One Health to Mount Sinai. These lectures are recorded and available to view on <https://webcommons.mssm.edu/onehealth/upcoming-events/>. The group's new student leaders include Master of Science in Clinical Research Student Lila Klein, Master of Public Health Student Kiran Nagdeo, and MD student Leore Lavin. Students and faculty interested in becoming involved with the group should get in touch with them!

This spring, One Health led a two-day "Meet the PI: Student Research Opportunities in One Health". The organizers, Lily and Calla, were hoping to create a space in which students could connect with mentors who are carrying out powerful and innovative research. Each principal investigator spoke about their work, student research opportunities, and funding possibilities. About 15 students

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Gathering Students and Faculty Together around One Health and Emerging Pathogens

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participated in each day of this inaugural event. The group was grateful to the many faculty members who participated and showed their excitement to collaborate with students at Mount Sinai. The event gave students the opportunity to connect with faculty without the awkwardness of a 'cold email'. Following the event, the group received positive feedback from students, several of whom reached out to participating faculty as potential mentors. Even

for those students who were not specifically looking for a research mentor, the event was a great opportunity to learn more about some of the research being done at the school.

(Right) Students and faculty at the "Meet the PI" event in Spring 2022.



How I Applied My Public Health Training



"Working with vulnerable community members on vaccine hesitancy in the midst of the pandemic reminded me of not only how important the work that public health professionals do is, but also how much work is left to be done." –

Debra-Kay Grant

Debra-Kay Grant

I feel fortunate to have had program staff available to assist me during my search for an Applied Practice Experience (APE). I was encouraged to choose an APE opportunity that I was passionate about and that would help me use and enhance the skills that I wanted to hone. Throughout the APE process, the emails from program staff were full of information and expanded my view of the opportunities to apply my classroom knowledge.

In February 2021, I received an email, not unlike others that I have received before, regarding two internship programs offered by Mount Sinai: the Public Health Internship Program and the Global Health Disparities Research Training Program. I was excited to find information on the vast and varied past projects as well as the opportunity to be mentored by experts in their fields.

For my APE, I worked with the Department of Environmental Medicine at Mount Sinai within the Public Health Internship Program. I was assigned to contribute to a research project about COVID-19 risk communication in partnership with community-based organizations. I was tasked with working to provide accurate, health literate COVID-19 health messaging to communities with some of the lowest vaccination rates in NYC.

I worked with a team consisting of a group of brilliant minds, spear-headed by Dr. Luz Claudio, Professor of Environmental Medicine and Public Health, and Chief of the Division of International Health. The first part of my APE assignment consisted of mentoring STEM-curious high school students who were part of the summer Brooklyn Health Disparities Center (BHDC) program with Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health. The students were tasked with completing a research project with another community based organization and present their project at the conclusion of the program. My group worked with the Caribbean Women's Health

Association (CWAHA), which is a Brooklyn-based organization that offers various services and advocates for community members. The CWAHA was interested in the reasons for vaccine hesitancy amongst their program participants in hopes of improving their vaccination rates. I feel grateful for the opportunity to work collaboratively with these organizations.

The second portion of my project consisted of utilizing the findings of the research that we conducted to develop health literate risk communication messages in the form of message maps. The message maps were developed in collaboration with the CWAHA organization. I regularly met with the organization to ensure that the messaging would be appropriate for their participants.

This project gave me the opportunity to utilize what I have been taught about risk communication and health literacy in service to the community. I also had the opportunity to develop my leadership skills by working with young minds and to hone my research process skills. I was provided invaluable mentorship and support throughout the program, and I can say that, that helped excite my interest in my future public health endeavors. Working with vulnerable community members on vaccine hesitancy in the midst of the pandemic reminded me of not only how important the work that public health professionals do is, but also how much work is left to be done.



"During our sessions we will have guest speakers who provide professional insights on specific topics so that our residents are able to further their knowledge on living a healthier lifestyle."

– Shamar Wilson

Shamar Wilson

While in the process of choosing my APE, my initial thoughts were to pick an area that I am genuinely interested in and that hits close to home. I looked for two months, and I was beginning to lose hope until I checked my student email and saw the APE internship opportunity at Jewish Association Serving the Aging (JASA) NORC RNA. After reading the details of the internship, I became extremely interested. I began doing simple google searches on NORC or Naturally Occurring Retirement Community. JASA is one of the agencies in the city that specializes in providing services to NORC's, which are

mainly buildings that have senior residents who are the majority population, so they become eligible for services and programs to assist them to maintain autonomy and quality of life. The site I am now located at is in need of a wellness/nutrition program, social groups/activities, and other community engagement activities to get the residents involved and interacting with one another to build a solid community-based family. The more I visit the site and engage with residents at the NORC, the more I realize this is the perfect APE for me because our senior citizens experience issues that I would've never considered.

This new experience allowed me to help this invisible population to have a voice and assist them in having their needs met. So far, we are meeting about 3 times a week in person or over Zoom with our writing group sessions, where we discuss literature and residents read stories they've written and we all share our thoughts. We are also about to roll out other sessions we've designed, centered on fitness, eating habits, sleep habits, and mental health awareness. During our sessions we will have guest speakers who provide professional insights on specific topics so that our residents are able to further their knowledge on living a healthier lifestyle. My 9 years of experience of working at Mount Sinai hospital has contributed tremendously to my connection with this population. There are instances when I feel an interconnectedness between the patients I interact with at work and those that I serve at the NORC. It's almost like a continuation

from the hospital into their homes.

This APE is extremely meaningful to me and I am passionate about it because I intend on being their age one day in the future. I know that I would still want to live an independent life with full autonomy. An agency like JASA, that provides resources and programs to help with maintaining that lifestyle, is what I would advocate for and stand by completely. The residents are very knowledgeable and live amazing lives: many of them are successful educators, writers, and finance professionals who may not have family that live close by to check on them daily. It means so much to them knowing that they have these services within their building.



JASA Workshops

The Director's Column

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their political opponents. "We said that if you don't quench those flames at once, they will spread all over the world; you thought we were maniacs."

Koestler's words remind me of Russian friends who have witnessed over many years, how Putin's regime persecuted independent voices, media workers, NGO workers and members of civil society and put them behind bars. They witnessed atrocities during Putin's wars in Chechnya, Georgia and Syria, and were convinced early on that Putin would not limit himself to Russia, that he wanted to expand his authoritarian claim to power – including Ukraine. There were other such voices. They weren't heard.

Only now, when Putin's troops are shelling Ukrainian residential buildings and hospitals, where innocent civilians are being killed, raped and tortured, and millions have been forced to flee, many of us are taking notice. That is little consolation for the warners, for the "screamers". Koestler wrote: "Now and then we succeed in reaching your ear for a minute. I know it each time it happens by a certain dumb wonder on your faces, a faint glassy stare entering your eye... but it only lasts a minute. You shake yourself like puppies who have got their fur wet; then the transparent screen descends again and you walk on."

Let us hope it will be different this time.

Interviews with Alumni

Two writers for The Scoop newsletter connected with two alumni from the class of 2018 to ask some of the burning questions on students' minds.

Nina Williams, MPH

Pharmacy Project Specialist at
AmeriSourceBergen

Interviewed by Ammal Bashir, MPH Student



Nina Williams, MPH

Q: The Master of Public Health at Mount Sinai offers many tracks. What attracted you to study Healthcare Management specifically?

A: Initially, I was not intrigued by healthcare management at all. For the majority of my life and career, I was interested only in going to dental school. I ended up taking a year to serve the community in AmeriCorps, similar to Peace Corps, and I realized I really enjoyed the population health side of work. This pushed me to start my MPH and then I applied to the Mount Sinai Global Health Summer Experience in Arizona, where I realized I wanted to pivot to management. I enjoyed the fact that the different mentors and folks in charge of the program were very supportive. It seemed like an area I would grow in and always be learning in.

Q: Can you talk more about your Global Health Summer Experience?

A: I was assigned to a program in Southeast Arizona, working in tandem with the Southeast Arizona Health Education Center (SEAHEC), led by Gail Emrick, MPH. We worked in tandem with the Tohono O'odham Nation. It is hard to even envision it but the size of their land is almost the size of Rhode Island—spanning from Arizona to northern Mexico. My work involved helping this tribal community build up a health workforce curriculum for students of a local community college on the nation's territory. This specific community had just gone through sovereignty, meaning they became an independent state separate from the government, with their own rules and regulations, which is why we were sent onto their site. Each week we put together content for the students of the community to learn more about the field of public health. Seeing my determination to recreate my own coursework—Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Social Determinants of Health—Gail Emrick set my team up with tribal leaders and individuals that worked within the department of health for our community. During our first presentation of content to these leaders, we were told to incorporate more of the tribe's beliefs and values into our curriculum. I began to survey the students each week on what public health issues they felt they were being impacted by, so I could better tailor the curriculum to their community needs. These surveys influenced the development of my graduate capstone thesis project. It is so crazy how these programs shape our lives because I probably would not have made that pivot to management had I not done this

experience, and I know the same is true for my friends who also did the Global Health Summer Program!

Q: Can you give an example of how your Master's coursework translated into your work experience?

A: The most impactful course was Organizational Behavior and Human Resources with Matt Baney, MS, Senior Director, Institute for Advanced Medicine, Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery. He really took the time to give us his take on the real world and integrated health system. Matt had a number of guest speakers come in who were able to talk about their experiences in the healthcare field. One who made a remarkable impact on me was an alumni of the MPH Healthcare Management track, and she came to speak on her current work experience as a Mount Sinai Health System Administrative Fellow. When I heard her speak it was like “Boom!” - a lightbulb moment, I knew I had to reach out to her to learn more about the program. The application was pretty intense, but I was accepted to the 2 year program. Without that class I would not be on the career path I am on today.

Q: What did you take away from your experience as a Mount Sinai Health System Administrative Fellow and what advice would you give to those looking to apply?

A: I knew I wanted to go into administration, but didn't know where to begin; the program gave me exposure to different departments without the commitment that comes from a job. I was placed at Mount Sinai Beth Israel when they were going through a massive revamp, and I helped reorganize certain departments

of the hospital so that they were ready to be picked up and moved to the new hospital. That experience changed how I view healthcare. There is so much that goes into running a department that people do not really think about- like how do we ensure the phone lines all direct to one main phone?

I also did rotations in Ambulatory care which was very tough and I realized that was not for me. Then I pivoted to leaders working in the more business aspect of healthcare management. From there, I transitioned into system level strategies. Overall, there were a lot of really unique, different programs I worked on. The program is what you make of it, and if you know what you want to do then you can focus on that and meet the people you need to connect with right away.

Q: Tell us a little bit more about your current position as a Pharmacy Project specialist.

A: My first fellowship rotation was with Joe Pinto, MHA, MS for the pharmacy downtown. After I finished the fellowship, I went back downtown and worked as a project manager. It was intense-during primetime pandemic surge. My department was exploring different solutions as they pertain to employee COVID testing. During that time, Joe reached out to me telling me he was working at the system level. Months after he reached out, I reconsidered his proposition and had an in depth conversation with him about the role. I would serve as a resource to Mount Sinai's corporate pharmacy team on behalf of our pharmaceutical wholesaler. We ensure that the prescriptions get from our distribution centers to our specific Mount Sinai locations. I took on the role this past July 2021 and serve as a sort of facilitator to make sure that the people who are purchasing our prescriptions for their site have the correct credentials. The role includes a lot of work in client solutions, strategic planning and analysis. I really do enjoy it! I am glad I got to stay at Sinai, I love Sinai!

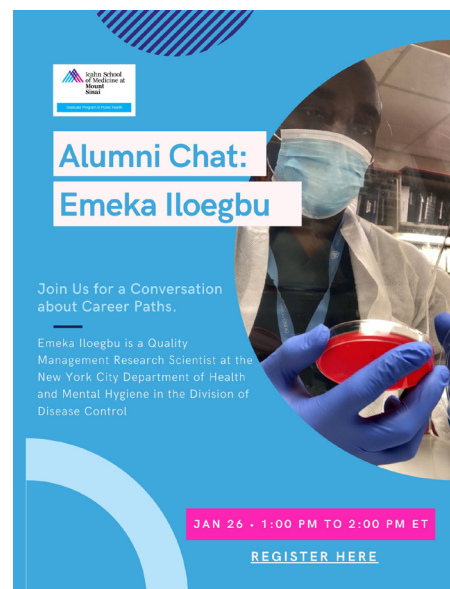
Q: What was your favorite part of going to Mount Sinai?

A: It is really necessary to identify mentors and sponsors. A mentor is someone you can go to for advice. When you are deciding between this job and that job, you'll be able to run it past them and learn from their experience. A sponsor is someone you can go to with the same question, but they can also bat for you and speak on your behalf to get your foot in the door. That is a very vital piece of information I learned at a webinar at Mount Sinai, and it was a major theme during my training. Everyone was so supportive, and every experience I had linked itself to the next. People were willing to vouch for me having seen my work, pushing me on to bigger and better projects. Sinai feels like home to me!

Emeka Iloegbu, MPH

City Research Scientist – Quality Management, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Interviewed by Karen Awunyo, MS in Epidemiology Student



Emeka Iloegbu, MPH talked with current students during an Alumni Chat in Winter 2022

Q: I am in my final half of my program and need to know how I can make connections and have hands-on experience before I graduate.

A: Don't wait for the school to post an internship. Research organizations and find team members that you can connect with by email. Find an area that keeps you up at night - a specific subject or population group. I sent emails with mutually beneficial content about what I could also bring to them. It is not always about what they can give you but what you can give.

For my first hands-on experience, I emailed a director in cardiac services about note taking in emergency response. You would be surprised how urgently people are needed, whether the position exists or not they will make room for you if you are determined. I've also worked as a Disaster Reserve Volunteer with the American Red Cross and at one point, I did an internship in Geneva, Switzerland.

Q: How can we use our time wisely if working fulltime and school full time?

A: I use time on a day to day basis, not weekly. I suggest making creating goals and objectives to organize, writing them out, and using that to determine where to put your energy. Map it all out, write it clearly. Identify your goals (private versus public). List out your skills. Understand your threshold and when you can push yourself.

Q: What is one piece of advice you want to share?

A: Stay in touch with your colleagues and working groups. These are the people that will remember your name and connect you in the real world, after school. Update your resume/CV and your LinkedIn, and make sure you list your accomplishments! Do not try to be humble on your CV!

Why Public Health Law?

By Wendy Barillas, MPH Student



My name is Wendy Barillas, and I am a 2nd year Master of Public Health (MPH) student, concentrating in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and emphasizing my

studies in Health Policy and Law. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Global Health Public Health and I aim to pursue a career in Public Health Law. You may ask, why public health law? I will tell you why.

Throughout my six years of study in public health, I found that my passion peaked when discussing bridging the gap between historically marginalized and disadvantaged

communities and the health care system. I also found that I was interested in policy structure, bylaw reform, and advocacy. With that being said, I had no direction on where these two sections could merge until the end of my first year in the MPH program.

In taking the various introductory courses required throughout the first year of the MPH program, I learned that policy is health on a larger scale, and without proper policy reform, we will never be able to fully bridge the gap in our society. I also learned that health is indispensable, and when making any decisions regarding health reform, we must account for all the potential barriers that could affect the populations' ability to succeed. In knowing this and seeing how my passion closely aligned to these issues, I saw two options for myself: (a) I work in health care advocacy, and or (b) I continue

my education, go to law school, and work on reforming health policies.

I love the work that I have been doing to bridge the gap between the Latinx community in Los Angeles County and Orange County, CA, and the health care system, but I felt constricted in solely educating the population. This feeling of wanting to do more and find solutions for my community, is what drove me to get my MPH. Once I started to dive into the curricula, I found an intersectional career in Public Health Law.

I believe that in focusing on Public Health Law, I get to find the upstream causes for disease and inequity, while also having the tools to be able to lessen the burden. This career path still allows me to work towards public good, and help me make changes with a long-lasting effect.

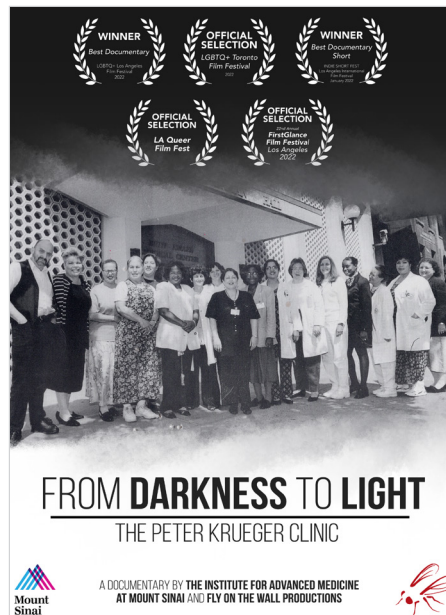
National Public Health Week 2022

Each year the Graduate Program in Public Health students and staff announce events that recognize National Public Health Week at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. This year, the National Public Health Week Planning Committee was composed of MPH students: Gabriella Selva, Sahiti Yarakala, Arthi Vickneswaramoorthy, and Camila Zarate Montoya and Assistant Director of the Program, Jennifer Valdivia Espino.

Virtual Film Screening and Talk about From Darkness to Light

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Attendees watched the new film, From Darkness to Light, a touching documentary film that captures the voices of patients and caregivers at the forefront of the HIV/AIDS crisis, highlighting the groundbreaking care provided by the Mount Sinai Beth Israel-Institute for Advanced Medicine, Peter Krueger Clinic. After the screening, Executive Producer Matt Baney, Senior Director at the Institute for Advanced Medicine, Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery introduced the audience to key staff and patients who were featured in the film to share more about their experiences.



Webinar: How our foods can be protective and improve your health

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

The Mount Sinai Institute for Exposomic Research hosted this lunchtime webinar with Chris Gennings, PhD, Director of the Division of Biostatistics and Professor, Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health; and Professor, Department of Population

Health Science and Policy, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Health at the US/Mexico Border: Nogales Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Students were invited to learn about the 14-year partnership Mount Sinai has with the South-East Arizona Health Education Center (SEAHEC), and work together to identify leadership and funding strategies to support the annual Nogales Spring Break Service Learning Trip for 2023.

Paws and Picnic for ISMMS Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Students and Trainees with THAW

Thursday, April 7, 2022

In celebration of Graduate Student Appreciation Week, all Graduate School students were invited to visit Moby, Mount Sinai full time Facility Dog for the Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department.

Student Day of Service: The New York Common Pantry

Friday, April 8, 2022

Student organized a group service activity with New York Common Pantry. This organization reduces hunger and promotes dignity, health and self-sufficiency.

Public Health Research Day 2022

The Graduate Program in Public Health at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai held the annual Public Health Research Day on May 26, 2022. Events included Opening Remarks from Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, MPH and MS in Epidemiology student oral and poster presentations and an alumni panel discussion. During the day we celebrated our graduating students' accomplishments. Here's what our students have to say!

Our virtual Public Health Research Day 2022 was awesome this year! Not only was I impressed to hear and see what other students were working on, but presenting my own culminating experience and getting feedback was super helpful. I also felt like Dr. Walensky's talk was so inspirational. She really hit the nail on the head when she encouraged us to keep pushing forward in our pursuits despite being in the gray areas of the pandemic and other issues in the world. We don't know the fate of the rest of the year, or even next year, but we do know that the work each of us are doing day in and day out is important, and I'm thoroughly inspired by that.

– Vanessa Figaro-Rock, MSW



Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, delivering Opening Remarks

As a first-year MPH student, I was excited to attend Public Health Research Day. By looking at my colleagues' presentations of research, I learned how all my epidemiology knowledge can be applied toward society. After hearing the detailed feedback faculty gave presenters, I realized how important it is to develop my research ideas with several faculty. One important thing I learned from all the mentors, my colleagues, alumni and Dr. Walensky is that if I ever find my ideas or project not working, I can return to an earlier jumping-off point to propel my research rather than burnout from mental stress and losing hope. Overall, after attending

Research Day, I firmly believe that we as health researchers are all driven to make significant impacts on our society.

– Lokesh Patil, MPH Student

As a first year MPH student at Mount Sinai, I got a glimpse of what my future looks like at Public Health Research Day. All the presentations were very insightful and helped me envision the kinds of research I'd like to do in my time here. The highlight of the event was Dr. Walensky's remarks. Her encouraging words motivated me to become a great public health professional and a better human being. She has inspired me to ask the big questions, and most importantly, to listen. Dr. Walensky beautifully empathized with us and taught us to embrace the gray in these uncertain times.

Her invaluable tips will always remain in my mind to keep motivating me in my journey. I'm grateful that we got to hear her encouraging words. They were a beacon of hope in these uncertain times.

– Kiran P. Nagdeo, MPH Student

Alumni Panelists



Alumni panelist Rennie Negrón, MPH shared her experiences and career path that has led to her current role as Administrative Director of the Institute for Health Equity Research at Mount Sinai.



Alumni panelist Mark Thompson, MPH, explained how he continues pursuing his passion for outreach as the program coordinator at the New York State Dept. of Health AIDS Institute.

Spring into New Career Strategies!

Learning from the OCSS Spring Workshop Series

By Justine Marcinek, MPH Student

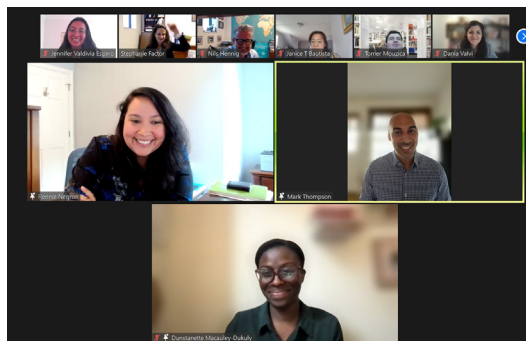
Your next internship is right around the corner! To help you get ready, the Office of Career Services and Strategy (OCSS) offered a variety of skill-building events during their Spring Workshop series. As an MPH student working on my Applied Practice Experience this summer, I thought it would be a good idea to take advantage of these opportunities. I attended workshops for Acing the Interview and Optimizing LinkedIn, which were hosted by Dunstanette Macauley-Dukuly, Program Manager for Career Services and Alumni Relations. Here are some key takeaways:

- **Doing Your Research:** As a candidate, interviewing is a way for you to assess how well the open position fulfills your needs and desires for professional growth. Researching the organization's online presence helps you better understand how your expertise, goals, and values align with the company's mission, vision, and strategies. Demonstrating that you've taken the time to learn about the company's initiatives is a plus.
- **Looking at LinkedIn:** Use highly searched industry keywords in your headline (the 120-character space underneath your name) to thoughtfully capture your current position.
- **The "Write" Stuff:** Learning how to apply the STAR (Situation-Task-Action-Result) and CARR (Context-Action-Result-Relate) methods to interview questions can be intimidating. Take some time to reflect on the experiences you had in your latest classes, extracurricular role, or internship. How did you exemplify leadership, manage conflict, and organize your time effectively? What specific actions did you take to deliver tangible results, and how can you relate these tasks to the role you're currently looking into? Jot down the details in a document that you can refer back to in preparation for your next interview. That way, you can provide detailed examples to highlight your accomplishments!
- **Following through:** Conducting an informational interview with a LinkedIn contact can help you understand their perceptions of current challenges in the field and recommendations for additional resources or contacts. Send a personalized thank-you note to your contact within 48 hours.

There are many ways to gain professional public health experience during your time at Mount Sinai. With practice, you will grow more confident in your ability to weave industry knowledge into your next LinkedIn job search or interview. For more information, contact ocss@mssm.edu. Now is the time to grow your network!

Join us for our next events!
Stay tuned to your email!

2022 Public Health Research Day Alumni Panel



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations to all the June 2022 graduates! We wish you the best as you become change-makers in the field. Please stay in touch!

Interested in having your writing or photos published in The Scoop? Be a part of our next issue! Contact one of our editors to get involved.



The Scoop Spring 2022

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