



PARKINSON
SCHOOL of HEALTH SCIENCES
AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Bachelor of Science in Public Health Spring 2021 Newsletter

Expansion & Experience: In Conversation with Cynthia Stewart *by Maria Price*



Cynthia Stewart, PhD

Loyola's Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health has expanded significantly since its founding in the summer of 2019. In fall 2020 Dr. Cynthia Stewart joined the Parkinson School as Director of Experiential Learning after serving for 2.5 years as Assistant Director and Academic Internship Program Manager for the Center for Experiential Learning at Loyola. At the start of the 2021 spring semester, Dr. Stewart met with third year Parkinson student, Maria Price, via Zoom to talk about her vision for the expansion of the Parkinson School's Experiential Learning Program, and to share some thoughts on the interests that drive her personally and professionally, as well as the ideas that fuel her devotion to the holistic growth of Loyola students.

Part 1

Since the Parkinson School's opening last year, what has excited you about its introduction to Loyola and the wider Chicagoland community?

One of the things I've been most excited to see through the midst of COVID-19, is that the Parkinson community has been able to rally its knowledge and resources in a way that's allowed them to be instrumental in Loyola's community-wide contributions to confronting COVID. I think the School opened at the perfect time. Parkinson has done a great job at giving its students the opportunity to put action to something current and deeply relevant during a pandemic. I see this through student involvement in programs like the COVID Equity Response Collaborative: Loyola (CERCL): Loyola has charged itself with holding its community responsible for going outside the bonds of its Lakeshore, Water Tower, and Medical campuses in order to apply learned knowledge and skills. The effect of students being present throughout our neighboring communities makes a lasting impact on our students and leaves a footprint within these communities in ways only the Loyola spirit could.

What was the scope of work you did in your previous positions at Loyola?

Previous to my newly appointed position, I was the Assistant Director and Academic Internship Program Manager for the Center for Experiential Learning. In this role I oversaw all the academic internships working specifically with undergraduate programs to assist the students to fulfill the University's requirement of engaged learning experience before graduating, established and maintained new and ongoing institutional partnerships with internal and external employers, devised the terms of these partnerships so they were mutually beneficial, and maintained ongoing relationships with departments and programs across Loyola such as SDMA, SES, Career Services/Employer Relations, and various departments. I also enjoyed teaching EXPL 390, Organizational Change and Community Leadership, where I worked to support students through their internship and capstone learning opportunities. This course in fall 2019 became a required course for the Non-Profit Management minor in the Quinlan School of Business. I also worked directly with

faculty teaching academic internship courses, where I led Lunch and Learn workshops to help them understand how they should work to support their students completing external work opportunities. In order to assist students who were completing unpaid academic internships I managed a Mellon Foundation grant which provided \$1,500 stipend to 10 students each semester. Each semester approximately 30 to 40 students would apply for the funding opportunity.

What did you enjoy most about previous position? What were some of the greatest challenges that you faced?

Above all else, I enjoyed teaching. Having the ability to introduce new topics and concepts to students and watch many of them reflect on, embrace, and employ these in their emerging careers is one of the most fulfilling things for me as a teacher. So too, I find great joy in watching students grow throughout their internship experiences. Many students leave these with not only a boost of confidence but also having had an “Aha! Moment” which influences their perspective on a future career. The unique thing about working in the Center for Experiential Learning, in my opinion, is knowing that we get to watch students acquire the skills needed to go out and “Set the World on Fire.”

The most challenging aspect of my previous role was making sure minority students were informed about resources available to them regarding engaged learning. In response to this challenge I worked with the New Student Programs: Special Populations to participate and host a community group called “Black Girls Meet” which focused on giving Black undergraduate women the tools and mindsets to thrive within a PWI. One benefit is that this safe space allowed the students to express any concerns as well as joys of being a Black student at Loyola and acknowledging the lack of diversity within faculty and staff in various departments throughout the University.

In your new position, what are you most looking forward to pioneering?

In the near future for the Health Sciences Campus, I would like to see a space for Experiential Learning and Career Services where students have the ability when we are able to be back on campus to come in for office hours to discuss how to integrate their engaged learning requirements with their career interests to prepare them for the professional world. I am looking to expanding employer partnerships by vetting new employers and/or resurrecting old partnerships which will provide a great internship/clinical experience for undergraduate and graduate level students. I am also interested in partnering with Campus Ministry to see how to integrate vocation-related workshops for Parkinson students to not only reflect, but to see how to incorporate their values into a professional setting no matter their faith tradition.

What does your day look like in your new position?

It looks very different every day! I could have a to-do list for the day ahead but then receive an email which could require that I shift my focus for the whole day. Currently, I am working with each of the undergraduate and graduate programs within Parkinson in order to place students in internships. I also work in conjunction with Program Coordinators, Program Directors, and Career Services to develop internship orientations, career workshops, and internship placements and clinical requirements. In addition to this I manage all affiliation agreements between Loyola and internship sites which are required before a student can start an internship. I am also currently working in partnership with the School of Nursing and Information Technology Services (ITS) to determine a Client Relationship Management (CRM) for all of Parkinson, which will help us to have one platform to manage employer engagement and student placements. So each day can look different, especially with working remotely and a few days at HSC.

How is Parkinson's culture different than other schools, or departments, that you have worked with at Loyola?

What I like about Parkinson's culture is its exhibited commitment to the ethic of collaboration. I appreciate this because I am a natural collaborator. I always try to work in order to avoid the aspect of siloed work processes. I model this by focusing on emphasizing the importance of each program, and its associated staff and faculty, knowing what the activities of each other's domains are. Toward this point, I've always appreciated Dean Elaine's professed attention toward the health and wellness of her staff and faculty members. Making sure that we are taking care of ourselves and checking in on one another is a regular practice on our team. Because I am still coming into my position in the Parkinson community, I continue to reflect on the social justice aspect of what we are called to do, from an experiential learning standpoint within an institution that has an emphasis of human health, so that I can provide a path for this to take root in the hearts and minds of our student community and the external communities for whom we are called to serve as Parkinson staff, faculty, and students.

Do you have particular academic focuses, or interests, and how do these inform your work as Director of Experiential Learning at Parkinson?

My dissertation focus was on spirituality as a form of resilience. It focused on African American young adults who reflected back on their high school spiritual retreat experience, which resulted in a form of resilience within them to beat the stereotypes of minorities. This very holistically connects to the reason why I'd like to see an integration of Parkinson with the campus ministry. I have a doctorate in Theology, as a result, and related to both my work and personal calling, I find myself asking students “Are you searching for a job or a vocation?” For this reason I was really enthusiastic about

teaching the Organizational Change and Community Leadership course because I had the opportunity to introduce such fundamental questions as these to my students. Here too we discussed the importance of learning a company's values and mission, which will inform if it fits one's career path.

For current and future students studying at Parkinson, what is one principle or concept do you think is critical for them to gain from their experiential learning?

The most essential competency students begin to develop from their focus on experiential learning is confidence and taking initiative, no matter their personal interest or professional aspirations this is the most primary thing experiential learning has to offer students. All students will walk away from an internship experience either saying they learned what they do like or they learned what they do not like within a professional setting. Internships are the best experience to prepare all students for life after college.

Part 2

What is the one book you believe every university student should read before graduating?

I am an August Wilson fan. He wrote a series of ten books, which have been turned into plays and movies (e.g., *Fences*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, etc.). I cannot pick just one, because they are all great. From a cultural standpoint I think his work allows individuals to feel, I don't want to say understand, but perhaps begin to have compassion regarding African American experience. For students within the classroom setting and preparing to go out into the workforce this is critical based on the racial climate within our country.

What do you think is a unique aspect of Chicago or its culture?

I grew up on the Southside of Chicago. For me Chicago is all about food; I'm a foodie. There are a lot of restaurants that range from "hole in the wall" to five-star Michigan Avenue restaurants and I find great fun in experiencing the gamut of these. Chicago has 77 neighborhoods and, in each neighborhood, it feels like you're in a new place. The culture is so alive you can truly begin to feel transported at times. The diversity of neighborhoods makes Chicago unique. By this same juncture, we must also see that Chicago is one of the most segregated cities in the United States. This is the challenge of being in Chicago. What I know is essential, however, is that people must be able to have exposure. Exposure, I learned through work on my dissertation, is a mechanism by which one develops resiliency.

How does your academic knowledge of certain public health concepts or principles inform your daily life and routine?

I am a person of prayer, and this is how my theological knowledge informs my day to day most essentially. Upon reflection, my experience amidst this COVID-19 pandemic has increased my faith in God. Listening to people struggle yet survive while still maintaining optimism for the future, from all that I can understand there is a greater force behind this phenomenon. I also do meditation and yoga. As I continue devoting my focus and attention to issues central to public health, like gun violence, I am moved to seek God through prayer in order to begin to reconcile these social ills and other things gone awry across the city of Chicago. Therefore, my theological training informs my daily life and routine as I see public health issues impact communities of color and wonder, "what is my role?"

What was the last book you read for leisure?

I just started reading *Little Bee*, by Chris Cleave. which is a story about two women, whose lives come together and one has to make a terrible choice, however, this choice pulls them apart, but brings them back to together two years later.

During February, I helped to facilitate one of the Loyola's Black history month discussions, *Across the Bridge*, by John Lewis. It is a reflection of his life as a Civil Rights Leader and the principles of how to fight against injustices and became a change agent for the greater good of all. It is a quick read that you will want to go back and read it over and over, because it is filled with so much wisdom and you can feel his passion as you read each page.

What is your ideal breakfast? Why?

I am a French toast person, also a lover of eggs (sunny side up/over easy). I inherited this love of food from my stepdad who used to be a cook on the Pullman trains. I come from a family of southern cooks, so I love things like grits, hash browns, bacon, and eggs. I don't have this every morning though, most often I have a smoothie, oatmeal, yogurt, or grapefruit. I always try and have a complete meal in the morning. For me, breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

If you need a laugh, where do you go/what do you do?

There are certain TV shows I like to turn on when I have had a hard day and just want to laugh. I think *Grown-ish* and *Black-ish* are funny. I also enjoy watching the classics from the eighties and nineties. I always loved *Claire Huxtable*,

because she reminds me of myself, the comedy of the show she rose to fame on is great. I was able to meet her in person in 2019.

What positive or optimistic phenomena have you observed about yourself, or your community, in the time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic? How does this give you hope as you consider the future?

The COVID-19 pandemic has positively impacted my faith in God. I've relied on this in order to stay positive throughout the duration of the pandemic. In 2020, I lost a lot of family members, some due to COVID, and others due to other medical illnesses, but my spirituality and faith in God gives me hope as I consider the future. What I do appreciate now that I cannot go into church, as an ordained minister, social media has offered us the opportunity to hear various voices of individuals in order to increase my faith.

I am grateful that I am now working at Parkinson and I can see the impact that faculty, medical teams, staff, and students are having within the Chicagoland area due to the pandemic. For LUC to provide the vaccine and COVID testing for the community gives me hope that when we all work together lives can be saved.

Cynthia Stewart, Director of Experiential Learning, Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health, cstewart8@luc.edu may reach out to Dr. Stewart at: ParkinsonEXPL@luc.edu

Maria Price is a junior BSPH major and contributor to the BSPH Newsletter. Maria also serves on the leadership board of the LUC Public Health Club.

BSPH Program Director's Note by Julie Darnell, PhD, MHSA



It's official! I am pleased to announce that BSPH majors can now pursue a five-year dual degree program, which allows full-time students to receive both a bachelor's in public health degree and a master of public health (MPH) degree in just five years. Typically, Loyola's 42-credit MPH Program takes approximately two years to complete. By contrast, the accelerated "4+1" BSPH/MPH Program allows students to count up to 12 credit hours of their BSPH coursework toward fulfilling their MPH course requirements, thereby shortening the time to completion of the MPH (and saving money too!). For example, BSPH graduates continuing their MPH coursework in the summer after their college graduation could expect to earn their MPH degree the following May.

In a nutshell, students interested in the 5-year joint degree program would apply during the spring semester of their junior year. To enroll, students would be required, at a minimum, to have a 3.3 GPA overall and 3.5 GPA in their major. Students admitted into the dual-degree program would be able to deviate from the standard MPH curriculum by counting a combination of specific, pre-approved BSPH courses toward the MPH degree plus taking MPBH 407 Public Health Policy: Concepts and Practice, in lieu of its undergraduate counterpart, PUBH 307 Foundations of Public Health Policy, when they are seniors. BSPH courses that are approved for MPH credit include:

- PUBH 300 Introduction to Public Health; and
- STAT 335 Introduction to Biostatistics; and
- One of the following:
 - STAT 303 SAS Programming and Applied Statistics, or
 - PUBH 301 Health and the Environment, or
 - ENVS 380 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems.

Students interested in learning more should reach out to Program Advisor Keith Kramer.

This new program would not have happened without a push from our BSPH students! I wish to give a special shout-out to sophomores Sara Ruiz and Tatiana Pasewark who wrote a letter of support and solicited signatures from more than 30 of their peers (who represent more than 40% of all BSPH majors). In making our case to the university to approve this new program, we quoted from the students' letter, which astutely spells out the mutual benefits to students and to the university:

“Ultimately, academics may often come down to finances. By condensing the senior year of the BSPH into the MPH, the fiscal burden is reduced, providing a more accessible and equitable program to students of color, first generation students, and students taking on loans to continue their education. At the same time, it would incentivize students to continue their education at Loyola University.”

I am proud of our students for speaking up and taking the initiative to formalize their request. By asserting their position in a formal letter of support, students set forth an expectation for action. Moreover, their letter—once submitted formally—set in motion a process to hold us accountable. I am thrilled that we succeeded in gaining Provost Grzywacz’s approval of the new program. Our BSPH students rightfully share the credit for this victory. When I reflect on this experience, however, I get more satisfaction from how the process unfolded than I do from the actual outcome. Our BSPH students showed us that they understood that they have more power when they unite behind a cause. And they demonstrated that they know how to make organizations accountable. These steps are essential building blocks for leading change, which is exactly what the future public health workforce needs if we are to be successful in realizing health equity.

Impact in Action - Public Health Club (PHC) News by Maria Price

Since the start of the 2021 spring semester, undergraduate students of diverse academic backgrounds and career interests have been working hard on projects that reflect the Public Health Club’s (PHC’s) three central pillars of education, leadership development, and service. Despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for distance learning, PHC hosted three virtual events, covering topics ranging from social epidemiology to the health and social implications of electronic cigarette use.

In a first of its kind service opportunity, PHC members collaborated with American Heart Association (AHA) representatives, Fil Guipoco, Community Impact Director, and Alex Meixner, Regional VP of Advocacy, to develop educational presentations for students at Proviso East High School on the consequences of electronic tobacco use. Many club members eagerly participated in this unique opportunity to practice public health education and advocacy. Sandra Jablonska, a first-year student majoring in biology, contributed to two of the three education sessions which occurred in the span of one week. Although she had some natural hesitations related to presenting to student audiences, she acknowledged the great support that Fil, Alex, and club members offered in order to help her present an engaging and impactful presentation to the high school students. As Sandra notes, “I was struck by how much clarity we could bring. Students spoke about what affected their communities but did realize there are entire fields focused on studying what they described experiencing in their own community.” Overall, Sandra appreciates knowing that the work she and her peers did was “impactful and made them think.” She looks forward to more opportunities helping to lead future activities and engagements of the PHC student organization.

As the semester continues, PHC leadership looks forward to developing and offering a variety of engaging educational opportunities that address the interests of our increasingly diverse and ever growing community of peers who are committed to exploring the field of public health. Check out some of our upcoming programs below:

Upcoming for PHC:

- *Public Health 101 Series: Health Policy and Administration with Dr. Diana Silver, PhD (NYU School of Global Public Health)*, **Tuesday, March 2nd at 6 PM**, <https://luc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIsdeiupzstEtdnQ3ettvm5pUwiWoO6euHB>
- *Public Health Club AMWA Global Health Spotlight: Dr. Sarah Rodriguez, PhD - Pregnant Women, HIV, and Perinatal Transmission, c. 1997: Repositioning a Paradigm Case in International Research Ethics (Global Health Studies & Medical Humanities and Bioethics Lecturer at Northwestern University and the Feinberg School of Medicine)*, **Tuesday, March 16th at 6 PM**, <https://luc.zoom.us/j/81608027458>
- *Public Health Club Speaker Spotlight: Dr. Sparkle Springfield, PhD - Research in Nutrition (Parkinson School of Health Sciences & Public Health)*, **Thursday, March 25th at 4 PM**, <https://luc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0qc-GqrD8jE9UUIftNIAz bzMRdeiseH09P>
- *Public Health Club Speaker Spotlight: Dr. Sean M. Kivlehan, MD, MPH - Global Health & Emergency Medicine (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative)*, **Tuesday, March 30th at 6 PM**, <https://luc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlscu-orz8vH91dJqH7eKM2Z5VklHgFKpcU>
- *Public Health Club Speaker Spotlight: Joel Wu, JD, MPH, MA, HEC-C - Public Health Law and Clinical Ethics (Clinical Ethics Adjunct Professor from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health)*, **Tuesday, April 13th at 6 PM**, <https://luc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYsde-qrDguHN0fghC2VgD3mHJnRHRITpmi>

Parkinson Professional Development Workshop Series

**A collaboration between LUC Career Services and the BSPH Program*

Remaining Spring Term Parkinson Professional Development Workshops

- April 1, *Healthcare Ethics*, 4PM – 5PM, Zoom link: <https://luc.zoom.us/j/97170097491>
- April 15, *Research, Funding and Support: A Panel Discussion Including a BSPH Student's Experience*, 4PM – 5PM, Zoom Link: <https://luc.zoom.us/j/97170097491>

Interested in viewing previous workshops from this academic year?

- **Building Experience During the Pandemic**, Christie Asif, Career Services: [Click here](#) to view the recording.
- **Building a Competitive Pre-Health Application**, Andrea Beaumont, Pre-Health Sciences Advising: [Click here](#) to view the recording.
- **Developing Your Professional Network: LinkedIn and Networking Strategies**, Christie Asif, Career Services: [Click here](#) to view the recording.
- **Is Graduate School in Your Future?**, Christie Asif, Career Services: [Click here](#) to view the recording.
- **Internships & Job Search Strategies**, Christie Asif, Cynthia Stewart, and Gloria Majka: [Click here](#) to view the recording.

Resources

Public Health Resources:

- [BSPH Program Students Sakai Site](#)
- [Public Health Job Board](#)
- [Career Services](#), Christie Andersen Asif, Career Development Advisor (Health Sciences), casif@luc.edu
- Librarian for the BSPH Program, Elise Aversa, Interim Subject Specialist Librarian for Parkinson, eaversa@luc.edu; [Public Health Guide](#)
- Parkinson Experiential Learning: ParkinsonEXPL@luc.edu
- Parkinson Weekly Student Life Newsletter, contact: ParkinsonStudentLife@luc.edu

Student Support Resources:

- [Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health Student Handbook 2020-2021](#)
- [Student Accessibility Center](#)
- [Tutoring Center](#)
- [Writing Center](#)

Interested in Contributing to the BSPH Newsletter?

We are always looking for new content for the BSPH Newsletter. Students may hone their communication skills, share their thoughts, interests, and ideas on a variety of public health topics. Email Keith Kramer, kkramer4@luc.edu.

For more information about the B.S. in Public Health program, please contact:

Keith Kramer, BSPH Program Coordinator/Advisor, kkramer4@luc.edu

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Know someone who is interested in public health? Please share this newsletter.