

Letter from the SGA

Dear faculty, staff, and students,

Welcome to the new year and the start of the spring semester. Exciting things are taking place this semester, including another SGA social event, Mardi Gras, and for some of you, graduation around the corner. With your continued help and support, we hope to make positive contributions for an atmosphere in our school that supports and builds our characters as future public health professionals and leaders. If you are looking for community service, keep on the lookout for our volunteer announcements. Remember SGA is here for you and with you. We hope you all enjoy the semester!

With warm regards,
SGA Officers



Happy Mardi Gras

Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler

Upcoming Events

January 24

AWIS-SL Mentoring
Lecture Series
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

January 28

Intramurals Begin
Dental School Fields

February 17

Habitat for Humanity
Volunteer Event
8:30 AM

February 20

PAL Resource Fair
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

February 26

SGA Meeting
LEC 303, 12:00PM

Second Harvest Food Bank

Second Harvest Food Bank is leading the fight against hunger in South Louisiana by providing food access, advocacy, education, and disaster response. Second Harvest provides food and support to 700+ community partners and programs across 23 parishes. Their work includes food distribution programs, community kitchen meal service, nutrition education, and public benefits assistance. To learn more about Second Harvest Food Bank or how to get more involved visit their website: <http://no-hunger.org/>

Health in the Headlines

Proposed Louisiana Health Care Cuts

Want to know more about what health care cuts are being made in Louisiana with the new budget plan? Read about it here: http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2018/01/louisiana_health_care_budget_c.html

CDC Cutting Back Global Disease Prevention and Surveillance Operations

To find out about why and where the CDC is cutting back on disease work, check out:

<https://www.kff.org/news-summary/cdc-to-cut-back-disease-prevention-surveillance-operations-in-39-foreign-countries-due-to-funding-concerns/>

Reminders

Mardi Gras Shoebox Float Competition:

SGA is organizing a fun little competition, so we can get into the Mardi Gras spirit. Each concentration in public health will be given the chance to participate in a local tradition of creating a Mardi Gras float using a shoe box. The concentration with the most votes for their float will win a king cake party. The last day to enter floats will be February 5th. Voting will take place on a google form and be open from February 5 – 9th. May the best float win!

Also remember to keep your volunteer hours accounted for by filling out this form: [Service Log Hours](#)



NOLA CORNER

What's happening in NOLA this month?

Tabasco: A Burlesque Opera: January 25 – 28th

Krewe de Vieux, French Quarter: January 27th

King Cake Festival, Champion Square: January 28th



SAINT-sational Spotlight



The spotlight section aims to introduce current and prospective students to faculty members, staff, students, and alumni who are out making a difference in the field of public health. We encourage you to read about their experiences and contributions to the field!

Our January spotlight features José "Pepé" Serrano, a PhD student in the Epidemiology (EPID) program currently preparing for the qualifying exam. "If and when I pass the exam, I will move from being a PhD student to a PhD candidate." SGA sat with Pepé to hear more about his journey to and through public health so far and onto working for a PhD. Pepé's story is also a testament of the value of mentors in academia and throughout an individual's career.

Originally from Mexico, Pepé grew up in South Texas in a town called Brownsville, attending middle and high school there. He went to Baylor University and majored in biology, chemistry and linguistics. Pepé says he went to Baylor knowing that it has a strong pre-med program, but he realized early on that that was not the track he wanted to take. That was when he started looking into the allied health professions, specifically public health, and in his words, "fell in love with it." In 2011, he enrolled in the at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and obtained a master's degree in Global Health Systems and Development. While there, Pepé took an epidemiology course with Dr. Susanne Straif-Bourgeois, who at the time was teaching at Tulane and also the Assistant State Epidemiologist at the Louisiana Office of Public Health (OPH). As graduation approached, Pepé saw a job opening at OPH and now works there as a public health epidemiologist.

"I essentially followed [Dr. Straif-Bourgeois] to the Office of Public Health," Pepé tells us. "I feel like my entire post-graduate academic and just regular career has been dictated by Dr. Straif-Bourgeois. She's excellent, and any chance I get to give a shout out to her, I do." Pepé also worked internationally in Guatemala City and Ethiopia. "The two opportunities helped me think about what I wanted to do." Pepé's interests are in invasive fungal diseases, otherwise known as mycotic diseases. "What we're seeing is that fungal diseases are becoming resistant to high temperatures, and the theory posited is that it has to do with climate change. *Candida auris* is a fungus that has exhibited resistance of up to 108 degrees Fahrenheit, which is much higher than our body temperature. We don't have any cases in Louisiana yet."

When asked if he had any advice for MPH students nearing graduation, Pepé recommends students to "take some time off. Go out there and work." He mentions two reasons he thinks of as to why an individual should enroll in a PhD program: if you have a desire to work in academia and/or if you have a very specific job position in mind. "I will say," Pepé comments, "that something I have been very impressed about here at the SPH... is that LSU has a very strong focus on preparing you for the real world. All the courses have an application aspect to the theory behind the subject...How do I transition from knowing everything to actually talking to a person or serving in an organization or working in a practical setting? LSU is definitely preparing you for all of that."

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this feature are the interviewee's own and do not necessarily reflect the LA Office of Public Health or other parties.