

## February SGA Newsletter

### Letter from the SGA

Dear faculty, staff, and students,

February has proven to be a short and eventful month so far! We hope that everyone had a wonderful Mardi Gras. Thanks to everyone who participated in the Mardi Gras float activity. Also, thank you to the students who volunteered at Habitat for Humanity with us. We are excited to see everyone during our next SGA meeting and our fundraiser! We appreciate all your involvement in SGA activities.

Remember SGA is here to answer your questions or concerns, so please reach out to us.

With warm regards,  
SGA Officers

### Congratulations to HPSM on winning the Mardi Gras Float Competition!



#### Upcoming Events

##### February 20

PAL Resource Fair  
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

##### February 26

SGA Meeting  
LEC 303, 12:00PM

##### March 3

Bowl to Feed the  
Hungry Fundraiser  
Rock N Bowl  
2:00 – 4:00 PM

## Habitat for Humanity

New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity's mission is to build homes in partnership with sponsors, volunteers, communities, and homeowner families, whereby families are empowered to transform their own lives; and to eliminate substandard housing in the New Orleans. The program makes homeownership possible for families who are unable to qualify for traditional home loans but have a stable job, good or no credit, and the willingness to contribute 350 hours of sweat equity to the building of Habitat homes. To learn more about Habitat for Humanity or how to get more involved visit their website: <http://www.habitat-nola.org/>

## Reminders

### ***Bowl to Feed the Hungry Fundraiser:***

Please come join us at Rock 'n' Bowl on Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> from 2 PM – 4 PM. The cost per person is \$10 (cash only please) which includes two hours of bowling and shoe rental. The net proceeds will be donated to Ozanam Inn, an organization that provides food, shelter, and clothing to members of the homeless community in New Orleans. Our goal is to raise \$200 for this worthy cause.

This is a family-friendly event open to all faculty, staff, students and guests. To ensure there are enough lanes reserved, we would like to have a head count by Friday, February 16. So, please sign up using this link: **[Bowl to Feed the Hungry](#)**.

**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?**

The Color Purple, Saenger Theater, February 20<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>

St. Patrick's Day Parades: March 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>

New Orleans Entrepreneur Week: March 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>



## SAINT-sational Spotlight



The spotlight section aims to introduce and connect current and prospective students to faculty members, staff, students, and alumni who are out making a difference in the field of public health. Our February spotlight features **Jennifer French (MPH Candidate – Epidemiology Concentration)**, who is about to wrap up her MPH-seeking journey in May and **Casey Thomas (PhD student – BCHS Concentration)**, who has started her PhD program in the fall.

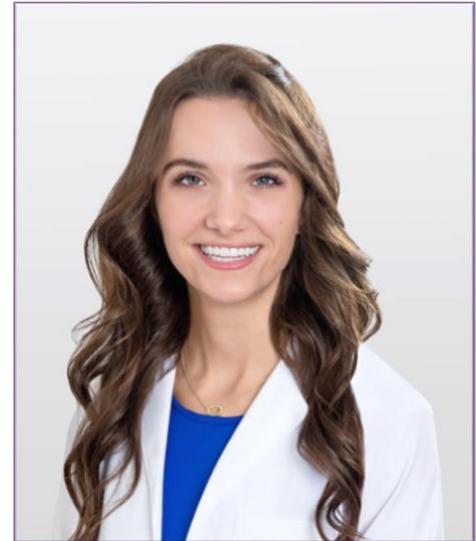
Before moving to New Orleans from Green Bay, WI, **Jennifer French** did a bit of research not only about the school she was coming to but also about the city, but before figuring out her way to public health and LSUHSC-SPH, Jennifer tells SGA she was not always sure of what she wanted to do. Jennifer’s journey in obtaining her undergraduate degree took on different roads to find what she wanted. She explored topics from Nuclear Medicine to English to Music Education. She even went to beauty school, obtained a license in cosmetology, and eventually, went back to finish her undergraduate degree in Human Biology. “It was always going to be sciences. I loved

the sciences, especially genetics,” Jennifer told SGA.

After obtaining her degree at University of Wisconsin - Green Bay in 2015, Jennifer worked in a quality control laboratory for a paint manufacturer to ensure products met quality standards, but after a year working there, she realized she wanted something more. She started researching public health programs, and enrolled in LSUHSC-SPH to obtain an MPH with a concentration in Epidemiology in Fall 2016. “Yes, I’m in the right program. It’s what makes sense to me,” Jennifer tells SGA. “I took a course on cancer epidemiology with Dr. Ed Trapido, and that really brings back genetics into epidemiology. I am taking a genetics course now, and that has been my favorite class.” Jennifer is working with Dr. Hui-Yi Lin on research regarding genetics of prostate cancer.

With graduation in May, SGA asked Jennifer what she wishes to have done earlier on in her MPH-seeking journey and what she plans on doing after. “I would have started getting involved in research and on campus work earlier. I would tell students to get involved in community activities, student groups, and research. After graduation, I hope to pursue a PhD. I started job hunting, and I realized that most [jobs] required PhDs. I also wanted to be in a position to study what I want to study and expand the field. I want to go into research and teaching. I have applied to epidemiology/genetics programs, and I’m waiting to hear back from some programs.” Jennifer also gave SGA a few tips to share with students when it comes to seeking and applying to PhD programs. “Really research the school and the city, and know why you’re applying. See if they provide funding.”

New Orleans, in general, and LSU, in particular are not new scenes to **Casey Thomas**. Casey grew up in Louisiana and obtained her Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Community Health Sciences from LSU. After receiving her Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from the University of St. Joseph in Connecticut, Casey returned to the area in Fall 2017 and enrolled in LSUHSC-SPH in the Behavioral and Community Health Sciences program. She always knew that she wanted to pursue a PhD as she enjoys learning. “[A] PhD [program] is unique in that you learn in different ways... In the classroom, in your studies, in the field. You have opportunity to see your research come alive. It’s more applied, more practical,” Casey told SGA.



What prompted the shift from a one-on-one perspective Casey was accustomed to throughout her master’s program to a more population-based method of care delivery was her work with a non-profit health care company, Qualidigm, which introduced her to the public health sector. “I ended up choosing to return to New Orleans because some of its health outcomes or statistics can be compared to those of third world countries. And that, for better or for worse, makes it a great place to study or research public health.”

Casey’s interests lie in interventions for cancer populations, particularly survivorship populations, from an informatics or communications standpoint. She discussed that the fields of health communications and information technology are only expanding; as such, those in behavioral health wishing to make change can use the tools of these other burgeoning fields to their advantage. “With the advances we’re seeing in medicine, survivorship populations are increasing. This is an emerging field of study - survivorship - that can be complemented by the unique methods for intervention in the informatics or communications worlds.”

Currently, Casey is interning with the Louisiana Department of Health Office of Public Health’s communications team and working as a research assistant to Dr. Stephen Phillippi within the LSUHSC-SPH. Most recently, she applied for the New Orleans Albert Schweitzer Fellowship. Casey intends to work with Dr. Donna Williams and UMC Cancer Center regarding food insecurity and cancer patients. Her proposed project for the fellowship application is a website and corresponding media campaign for the UMC Cancer Center patient population. She envisions the website being a “one-stop shop” for patient resource coordination, with the complementary media campaign promoting the need for increased community collaboration or partnerships so as to better serve this population.

“In terms of career, I eventually hope to work in policy or political lobbying, with my eye on health disparities legislation. Upon graduating, however, I would like to pursue a one-year fellowship with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, potentially in informatics. In general, I picture the beginnings of my career involving program management within a major cancer center or hospital.”

SGA asked Casey about her experience at LSUHSC-SPH so far.

“My mentor, Dr. Phillippi, does an excellent job of reminding my cohort of the culminating effort of PhD (the dissertation). He designs assignments that help us hone the skills necessary for proper research and other professors work similarly. The things we do now can inform our dissertation and perhaps even ease the process. I try to keep my areas of interest in mind no matter what the course is and craft my assignments around these interests accordingly. The BCHS seminar course is also an interesting aspect of the program, not only in terms of its speakers or discussions, but its design. It is a class that brings together BCHS PhD students

in different years of the program; as a first-year PhD student, this is beneficial to me. I am able to ask those a little further ahead of me for insight or advice.”

Casey also expressed interest in PhD involvement in SGA. “There is a need for PhD representation in SGA – someone who can serve a liaison or speak on behalf of PhD portion of the school, which can often be overlooked due to these students not always being physically present in the SPH. I’d like to run for SGA president for the upcoming year.” SGA asked Casey if she has any advice for MPH students. “Often, field experience can inform educational (or other) pursuits. If you are considering the pursuit of a PhD, there’s no rush. If you have the opportunity to work in the field while completing your MPH, seize it. It can shed light on what resonates with you in ways that a classroom setting cannot.”

# Habitat for Humanity Service Event February 17, 2018

