



PARKINSON
SCHOOL of HEALTH SCIENCES
AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Bachelor of Science in Public Health Spring 2020 Newsletter

Public Health Faculty Spotlight *by Maria Price*



Elaine Morrato, DrPH, MPH, CPH

Leading and Learning in a New School amid a New Reality: An Interview with Elaine Morrato

On her way to shaping a career in Public Health, Dean Morrato's journey has been sprinkled with curiosity and creativity. With diverse experiences in academic, government and corporate settings, our founding Dean wants to ensure that Parkinson School students experience an education that enables them to make a difference in the world.

When you were a student, what event sparked your original interest in public health?

When I was a student, there was no such thing as an undergraduate degree in public health. I was in biochemistry and I ended up working at Procter and Gamble where I worked on project teams that made innovations and marketed them. There I really enjoyed working on multifunctional teams that developed products which added value to health. I was inspired as an adult learner to pursue a graduate degree so I attended an innovations fair where I discovered the school of public health. I observed how multidisciplinary the discipline of public health was, which really excited me. The lesson here for undergraduates is always stay curious. You never know how what you pursue now may influence your future.

How would you describe your approach to leadership? What experience influenced your leadership style?

My leadership style is influenced heavily by the notion of the five characteristics of effective leaders. From this, a leader sets vision and strategy, is ready to shake it up, empowers others to do the work, models the way and leads from the heart. I learned this from one of the many leadership trainings I've attended throughout my career.

Who have you considered your most impactful mentor? What is the most meaningful thing you have learned?

One from early in my academic career was an individual from Washington University that I'd heard speak at a webinar. I decided to cold email him because I felt he would be a good collaborator on a data project. From then on, he helped guide me through future projects, acquiring research funding and introducing me to other leaders in the research area. This was a mentorship relationship that lasted 10 years. From this, I learned that good mentors are open to possibility! Don't be afraid to go out on a limb and ask someone to be a mentor, the worst they can say is no. But oftentimes, they'll say "yes" and be flattered by your interest.

Describe your perspective on failure? What is one failure of yours that you have come to appreciate?

There is a lot of leadership wisdom on failure. They say, "If you don't fail you're not trying hard enough" but I think the key is whether or not you are able to learn from these. Early in my career, while I was a junior professional I was given the opportunity to lead a team of individuals who held more seniority than me at the time. I failed to fully appreciate that there were members of the team that were perhaps more qualified, educated or trained than I was. This damaged the working relationship on the project. Since then I have always appreciated how critical it is to lead with humility, know that you are always working to learn from others and meet people where they are.

What appealed to you about Loyola's values, mission, and program as you pursued your role as founding dean?

Broadly, I was drawn to the Jesuit values, but more closely, I am compelled by the commitment Loyola has made to educate their students in a way that encourages them to go out and act so that they can make a difference right away. The learning itself is very applied and experiential; it goes further than putting an emphasis on didactic learning but hinges

on the pursuit of *learning by doing*. All of this occurs with deep interest in social justice and health equity mindset. Diversely, I was also attracted to the aspect of the Parkinson program that is meant to focus on entrepreneurship and innovation and exploring what it means to be an entrepreneur in public health. Throughout the development of Loyola's public health program there has been an embrace of creative thinkers that are inclined toward an entrepreneurial and beginner's mindset. *The exploration into identifying what disruption in public health looks like is a facet of the program I found to be unique from any other program.*

In your time at LUC, what experience about its community and/or program has stood out to you the most?

A university's commitment to the students learning experience is very important. Watching how leaders here at the University have developed our response to COVID-19 and observing how always at the core of our choices and decisions is the student and their experience. That is something that has been very impressive to me in my time here.

What aspect of the Parkinson School are you most eager to focus on developing?

Our founder Bob Parkinson brought the social entrepreneur spirit to the identity of our program. I am most eager to see how we continue to create the center for health innovation and entrepreneurship throughout our public health program.

Short term, how do you think COVID-19 will impact the discipline of Public Health within higher education?

More students and families will know what public health is. What our communities are learning about now in the face of COVID-19 has much to do with the epidemiological aspect of the discipline. I believe people are becoming more appreciative of what public health is and the value of investment in public health infrastructure.

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

I think everyone should read *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond. I like it because it shows the interrelationship between health, politics, the development of society and geography. How we live today, is only a slice of the interaction between these dynamics of living in community.

What is one thing you have learned about Chicago that is most interesting or surprising to you?

In Chicago, I was pleasantly surprised to see how much the city has embraced displaying public health messaging. You see billboards and bus stops with displays focused on public health messaging and content. Compared to the area around my home in Washington DC, the focus on communicating public health issues, like maternal health and gun violence, is much less apparent.

How does your knowledge of human health influence your daily routine?

I try to think very preventive. I aim for 10K steps a day and my experience working at P&G has guided my routine as well. There I worked on projects related to gum health and regularity, so I try to floss every day and eat proper amounts of fiber.

What was the last book you read for leisure?

I am reading *American Nations* by Colin Woodward. It's premise develops the notion that the cultures of the original immigrants have deep influences on the values of what we can now observe between state and local values and political ideologies.

What is something you are interested in that you wish you could spend more time learning about?

I like gardening. I'd like to spend more time learning about what flowers and plants do best in Chicago.

If you could go anywhere for three weeks, where would you go and what would you do?

I enjoy going to historic places and really immerse myself in history. I've done some traveling throughout Europe. At this point I'd like to go somewhere in South America. I'd like to immerse myself in the cultures of previous peoples cultures like the Mayans or Incas.

What is your ideal late night snack?

I love Graeter's ice cream. They're a specialty ice cream company made in Cincinnati, Ohio known for their sizable chocolate chips. My favorite flavor is black raspberry chocolate chip, add some fudge sauce and it's just so good! You can find it in Chicago at Whole Foods.

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

My favorite thing to do right now is listening to Conan O'Brien's podcast called *I Need a Friend*.

When students, faculty and staff return to campuses how do you hope to welcome everyone back together?

I would love to do something like what they did last year, have a big picnic with carnival games.

Elaine Morrato, Founding Dean of the Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health, public health expert with a diverse background in government, industry, and academia.

Maria Price is a sophomore BSPH major and contributor to the BSPH Newsletter. Maria also serves on the leadership board of the LUC Public Health Club. The conversation was lightly edited.

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



We find ourselves in the midst of not one, but two, crises.

As of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic is responsible for just over 400,000 deaths worldwide, of which more than one quarter (113,000 and counting) are from the United States alone, despite the fact that the total number of people in the U.S. accounts for just 4% of the world's population. Furthermore, we know that our minority communities have been hardest hit by COVID-19. Nationwide, according to the COVID Racial Data Tracker (<https://covidtracking.com/race>), more than 23,000 Blacks/African Americans have died. A recent NPR report, "What Do Coronavirus Racial Disparities Look Like State By State?" shows us that Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinx are dying at rates much higher than their state's share of the population. In Illinois, for example, Blacks make up about 14% of the state's population but account for 23% of all COVID cases and 30% of all deaths

These disparities are no accident, but the result of what I would characterize as "malign neglect," a phrase I am borrowing from criminal justice scholar Michael Tonry, who coined the phrase more than 25 years ago in his book (of the same name) on race, crime and punishment. In my interpretation, malign neglect refers to our collective indifference toward in-plain-sight inequities in access to healthcare, jobs paying a living wage, quality education, stable housing, safe neighborhoods, and protection from discrimination. In other words, these are in-plain-sight inequities in the things we in public health call the "social determinants of health."

Our second crisis, laid bare by the murder of George Floyd, puts in sharp relief how one of these in-plain-sight inequities in a social determinant of health—protection from discrimination—worsens an already bad set of conditions. As we have all come to learn, Mr. Floyd was arrested for using an alleged counterfeit \$20 bill, and, horrifyingly, paid the price with his life when the arresting police officers displayed (for all to see) malign neglect toward a black life. We know too that his killing was not an isolated event, but came after the racially-charged killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Steven Taylor, and Tony McDade, among others--all since February.

After all of these senseless killings, we seem to have reached a tipping point. Mr. Floyd's preventable death now appears to be viewed, along with all those other racially-charged killings, as intolerable by a critical mass of both Americans and indeed people around the world. This is evidenced by:

- the ongoing protests across cities and small towns both here and abroad,
- widespread acknowledgment of systemic racism by the business community and their commitment to take concrete actions to do better,
- steps toward reforms in policing by municipalities, states, and even perhaps the federal government, and
- new/renewed dialogue about racism in our homes, communities, and workplaces.

While the hard work still lies ahead, I am encouraged by what I see happening. I think we're perhaps finally laying a foundation for meaningful reforms. Here's why:

1. **There's a newfound willingness to confront uncomfortable truths.** For instance, in the last week, I have had the opportunity (on two separate occasions) to talk with my colleagues about racism in a setting completely divorced from the classroom. I know I'm not alone; I'm reading about similar conversations taking place in various settings across the country. We should not underestimate the transformative power of talking and listening.
2. **Young people, including our very own BSPH students (aka "disruptive changemakers"), are leading the way.** Last Thursday, the Public Health Club (PHC) shared their concerns about George Floyd's death and issued what they termed their demands in an appeal to Parkinson School BSPH (see *the letter at the end of this newsletter*). I delight in their word choice, "demands." It showschutzpah, a trait that helps when you're tackling difficult problems—and that's essential when you're speaking truth to power. In that letter our students spelled out a set of practical actions that the BSPH Program must take. Without exception, we plan to adopt their recommendations pertaining to incorporating explicit content and learning objectives about racial justice in our PUBH courses. We also pledge to work with our

sister program in Healthcare Administration to spread these practices across our shared coursework. More broadly, as part of the One Loyola family, we will join with and learn from the anti-racist work underway across our campus.

3. **Our public health values and Jesuit tradition provide us a roadmap.** Achieving racial equity requires changing hearts, minds, and structures. Framed this way, the task ahead might seem impossible—with or without chutzpah. We should reassure ourselves, however, that we are not starting from ground zero. Our Jesuit pedagogy—steeped in a methodology of *self-reflection* and *lived experience* and oriented toward the *care for the whole person*—can help us to examine our own biases and become more fully aware of the experiences and needs of communities of color. We will then be on our way to becoming compassionate, an underappreciated but powerful tool in our racial justice toolbox. Our public health experience reminds us to tackle problems *in partnership* with others and to look for *evidence-based* solutions. There is no denying the fact that the problem is great and our resources are limited. We will not fail if we remain steadfast to our Jesuit principle of *magis*, striving for the better.

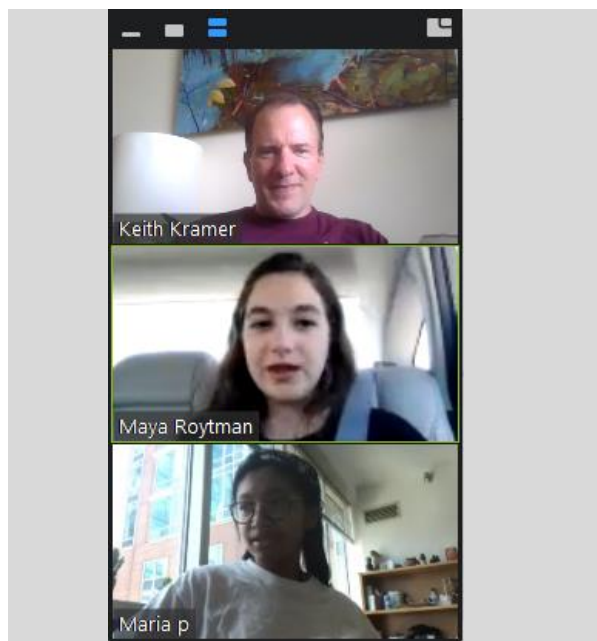
The challenges we face in 2020 are daunting. There is no better—and no more important—time to be studying public health!

COVID-19 Impact on BSPH Students' Summer Plan

We asked BSPH majors how they would be spending their summers in the midst of the continuing pandemic. We have students working on the front lines as EMTs and one volunteering at Howard Brown Health Center as a medical assistant doing contact tracing work. Another student is continuing to volunteer with the [GetMePPE](#) Chicago Project, which helps healthcare providers and at-risk communities get necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). When not working or volunteering, many want to “hunker down and watch movies while prepping for next semester no matter what form it comes in.”

In supporting family and community, one BSPH student stated, “My mother is an ICU nurse, and she has faced many struggles during this pandemic. To help brighten her day when she returns home from her taxing shifts, my sister and I try to prepare nice dinners for her!” Another student expressed that “keeping tabs on friends and family is part of my daily routine now, and the simplest acknowledgment that there is someone who is willing to talk goes a long way while we are all social distancing.” Another student quipped, “I definitely help more with chores around the house (unfortunately)” and then added, “All jokes aside, I have helped my parents, grandparents, and neighbors adapt to online platforms for communication and grocery ordering online.” Students acknowledged that they are coping during this time of more social isolation with “Zoom parties with friends” and an abundance of Netflix and Hulu. They are also appreciating family dinners, walks outside, watching old family videos, and reading books.

When students were asked how they thought this time would change their lifestyle or affect their habits in the future, this wisdom was shared. “I think this time is going to make us hold the little enjoyments in life closer.” Another shared this sentiment about living in the moment, “Each day I find that I simply need to take a deeper breath, listen more closely to the chirping birds outside, and be more in tune with the present. The value of time, as well as the importance of how we spend it, is even more pertinent and apparent in our daily lives than it has ever been before.”



PHC Visualizes Opportunities in a New Landscape by Maria Price

The spring traditionally ushers in a season of celebration and waves of change in the lives of many. It is the time when we celebrate students and observe the valiant sacrifices of those who lost their lives in battle and enjoy nature in vivid and radiant bloom. The many facets of Loyola, students, staff and faculty alike, have continued to do all these things while working to adapt to a new landscape with grace and imagination in an unexpectedly and rapidly changed world.

Members of The Public Health Club's Executive Board recently met with student academic advisor, Keith Kramer, to discuss the organization's approach to fall 2020 activities and engagements.

It was decided that PHC's meetings will be conducted exclusively online and, as noted by Vice President Maya Roytman, the decision "offers us the opportunity to host a broader range of speakers and discussion leaders." Buoyed by this optimistic and encouraging outlook, the PHC Executive Board will work to maintain and grow the newly formed community of enthusiastic PHC students. In looking forward to welcoming Parkinson's incoming class of students, leaders of the PHC remain passionate about nurturing Loyola's enriching and engaging community by creating opportunities for student exploration and inquiry into their interest of public health.

The PHC will focus even more on developing their online platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and an independently operated website. In developing each of these throughout the last year, Executive Board members have enjoyed being able to learn about a wide range of public health issues and challenges while developing strategies to communicate these in an effective and engaging way for both club members and Loyola's broader communities. As we work to settle into the realities of our new world, it is endlessly inspiring to continue visualizing the potential of our wildly different landscape.

For further information on the Public Health Club and programs, contact: lucphc@gmail.com.

Public Health Club Demands Action

The Executive Board of the Public Health Club (PHC) recently issued a [letter](#) to Parkinson School Leadership outlining their demands in response to the recent social unrest against structural racial injustices (the letter is also included at the end of this newsletter). They are currently in the process of updating this letter with additional program-specific demands of the Healthcare Administration Student Council and the Exercise Science Club, and with co-signatures by both organizations. This program-inclusive updated letter, expected sometime before the week of 6/15/2020, as well as the PHC's two official statements on their response to racial injustice, will be accessible through the PHC's Instagram page (@luc.phc)

Resources

Public Health Resources:

- [Public Health Job Board](#)
- [Career Services](#), Christie Andersen Asif, Career Development Advisor (Health Sciences), casif@luc.edu
- [Librarian for the BSPH Program](#), Geoff Swindells, Associate Dean of Research, Learning, & Engagement, gswindells@luc.edu; [Public Health Guide](#)

Student Support Resources:

- [Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health Student Handbook 2019-2020](#)
- [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
Julie Darnell, PhD, BSPH Program Director, jdarnell1@luc.edu

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



Pressing Concerns of Parkinson Students

To: Leadership, Faculty and Staff of The Parkinson Undergraduate Program

From: The Leadership of the LUC Public Health Club

In light of Parkinson's commitment to developing confident and disruptive changemakers in the field of Public Health, by this letter we voice our concerns as students and witnesses to the current social unrest, which is a response of resistance against the historic and systematic assault on black livelihood across our nation and throughout our institutions. Per recent communication to the Parkinson community, we understand there are preliminary steps taken toward affecting meaningful opportunities for engagement, and we would like to work with you on this response to ensure that calls to action from students are reflected and implemented. Prompted by the horrific killing of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement, our nation has seen demonstrations, protests, and demands for acknowledgement of racial issues and reform of our institutions on a scale that is similar to and yet different from the Civil Rights Movement, which began in the 1940's and persisted throughout the 1960's.

With deep conviction, we acknowledge that an active response to the racial tensions and disparities that are rife across our nation and within our institutions is long overdue. Racism is an ongoing public health issue that is associated with and may be the root cause of the majority of public health challenges that affect African Americans. As individuals with the privilege of receiving higher education at an esteemed institution, we are called to reflect on the impact of our presence, privilege, and participation at institutions like Loyola that, implicitly or explicitly, contribute to these racist structures. Dean Morrato's recent communication is most encouraging in its acknowledgement of the inhumanity of racism and its outlining of initial steps for understanding how to begin to create a more just and equitable society. *We are committed to collaborating with you on changes that will ensure that students' calls to action are heard, considered, and implemented.*