

Tulane SPHTM: Making its case in Washington

Tue, 03/19/2024 - 14:55

|

David Gladow dgladow@tulane.edu

[View PDF](#)



Denys Symonette Mitchell poses in front of the office of New Orleans Rep. Troy A. Carter.

The [Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) saw multiple members of its community pop up in different capacities in Washington D.C. recently.

Denys Symonette Mitchell, a student in [the DrPH program](#), found herself invited to Washington after reaching out to the March of Dimes senior vice president of public policy and government affairs with a policy memo she developed for Dr. Kristefer Stojanovski's SPHL 8200 course: Public Health & Social Policy.

That course teaches students the science of conducting rapid evidence synthesis reviews, communicating the science through policy memos, testimony, and infographics, and crafting stories and narratives to engage with policymakers.

Much to Mitchell's surprise and delight, her policy submission provoked an immediate response -- and an invitation to present at the organization's Federal Day of Advocacy.

"When I sent the LinkedIn message over the weekend, little did I know that their Federal Day of Advocacy was soon approaching, and I never could have guessed that days later I would be shadowing the SVP, which is basically the role I adopted for the assignment," Mitchell said. "I'm totally in awe ... this was truly one of the best class assignments ever—the application of public health policy and practice at its finest."



Mark VanLandingham and Mike Johnson.

As it turns out, Mitchell had company in our nation's capital, as Dr. [Mark VanLandingham](#), Professor Emeritus in the Department of [Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences](#), was visiting on behalf of the Advocacy Day for the Population Association of America and the Association of Population Centers.

VanLandingham's group attended nearly 60 meetings with key House and Senate staff in personal, leadership, and committee offices, and also spent time with several Louisiana representatives in particular.

A highlight was getting to meet personally with Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and advocate for census issues.

“I got to speak briefly to him about the importance of funding for the agencies of central importance to population science, especially NIH, NSF, and the Census Bureau,” VanLandingham said. “He reacted warmly when I introduced myself as a professor at Tulane. He listened attentively to my pitch and responded thoughtfully.”