

Giving voice to public health issues

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From a diverse background in Northern Georgia, recent BSPH graduate Setah Alavi has a passion for raising the voices of people who have important stories to tell, a passion that combines journalism and public health.

She first combined these interests in high school, where she participated in a group trip to Peru.

“Because of that experience, I kind of fell in love with public health,” Alavi said. “But journalism has always been the vector by which I have explored public health. It has definitely led me into other things that I think use a lot of the same skills that you get with journalism.”

“I think studying abroad should be required for all public health majors. I think it's been the most important part of my education.”

Setah Alavi, BSPH

Since then, she has been published in both *The Hullabaloo*, Tulane's student-run newspaper, and *The New York Times*, where she wrote about her experience in Peru.

At Tulane, she has used her writing to explore public health further and keep her focus on topics she felt were important.

Her international viewpoint never wavered, leading to a semester abroad in Chile.

“I had a really cool opportunity to actually get involved with both public health and journalism,” she said. “My program itself was centered around public health. And at the end of it (participants) would do a one-month internship or independent research project. And so, I interned with the newspaper there. And I published in total three articles regarding public health.”

She also interned with [Partners in Health](#), a flagship public health organization, doing communications for their Peruvian office. She continued her international interests with a semester in Rome and a summer program in Paris.

As one of her professors put it, Alavi is a rare student who combines enthusiasm, intelligence, and determination with true intercultural competence to serve the community around her, both in New Orleans and abroad.

“Public health is such a broad concept, and I'm really fascinated about it within the Latin American Studies viewpoint,” Alavi said. “Going abroad allows you to go from theory to practice. You learn about all these things in the classroom, and then you actually see them. And you can dive deeper into these concepts, and you can have discussions with local communities about their public health challenges and what they are doing to solve them, and what they would like to do to solve them.”

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Her unconventional path has paved the way toward bigger and better things. She now moves on to work for the North American Meat Institute this summer, with the intention of getting her master's in nutrition shortly thereafter.

“I want to specialize within public health, and then go into journalism. So that way, I'm not just a journalist blindly speaking about public health.”

She hopes her writing can make a difference.

“Can I elicit this reaction to make people want to do something better for others? So yeah, I definitely foresee journalism being a huge part of my future.”