

PFF Program Alumni Spotlight: Rebecca Foco, Ph.D.



Rebecca recently received her Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Health Promotion and Education. Her dissertation is titled, “The Role of Faith Leaders in Partnerships among Health Promotion Researchers and Faith Communities.” Rebecca holds a Bachelors of Arts in Political Science and a Master of Arts in Industrial Relations, both from the University of Minnesota. She served as a Graduate Research Assistant and adjunct instructor in the Department of Health and Human Performance. She has also been a research assistant for the Community Partnership for Ethical Research in the School of Medicine. This fall Rebecca joined the faculty of Curry College in Milton, Massachusetts as an Assistant Professor in the Community Health and Wellness Program.

What does “Preparing Future Faculty Program” mean to you?

The PFF Program provided an incredible opportunity to explore the ramifications of entering the academy as a faculty member. The PFF Program gave us an opportunity to reflect on what it means to teach in a higher education setting in the company of a diverse set of fellow graduate students. I was challenged—actually dragged kicking and screaming—out of my comfort zone and came to embrace new methods and ideas for using technology in teaching.

The mission of the PFF Program is to examine the question “What does it really mean to be faculty?” How did your experiences in the PFF Program enhance your understanding of what it means to be faculty and impact your plans for a career in academia?

We spent a significant amount of time discussing the three pillars of academic life—teaching, scholarship, and service. It created a space to reflect on where my abilities and interests lie and how I could craft a career that fit with those interests and abilities. I particularly appreciated the discussions of the various types of institutions of higher education and the various opportunities within each.

How did experiences with the PFF Program and receipt of the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement give you an ‘edge’ in your career?

My experiences with the PFF Program and the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement were cited as an influential factor in the decision to interview me for the position that I eventually accepted. Curry College, where I will be working, is a student-centered environment that values innovative

teaching. PFF’s national reputation, I believe, demonstrated that I take teaching seriously and have been prepared for the classroom.

The capstone experience of the PFF Program is the internship/externship in which the student is mentored by a senior faculty member. Tell us a little bit about your internship/externship experience, and share with us the impact that the project and the mentoring relationship had on you.

For my internship experience, I taught HPEX 354, School and Community Health Resources. I had the distinct privilege of having Dr. Maïke Philipsen as my mentor for my internship experience. While I had taught several classes prior to this experience, the time we spent reviewing the syllabus and course materials was invaluable. Moreover, the mentoring relationship has continued as Dr. Philipsen is my dissertation advisor.

What is the most crucial piece of advice that you would give to students currently enrolled in the PFF Program coursework?

Take full advantage of all that is available to you through the PFF Program. The faculty members are extremely knowledgeable and are more than willing to share their collective wisdom. Find opportunities to put into practice as much of what you are learning as possible and develop relationship with your colleagues.

Go to the PFF Program’s “Resources” page:

<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/programs/pff/resources.html> to read previous Alumni Spotlights.

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