

# Summer Academy Participants to Present at Capstone Showcase

*Join Policy Pathways and VCU's Wilder School in celebrating students' accomplishments at a Capstone Showcase Saturday, July 6th from 10 AM - 12:30pm (EST).*

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, July 5, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "Policy Pathways' work connects high school, community college, and early college students from all communities and backgrounds to the vital work of public servants. Public service is a bold and noble profession. Policy Pathways uncovers talented future leaders through their outstanding programs, of which we are a proud supporter."

~Dr. Susan

Gooden, Dean of VCU's Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

The 2024 session of the Summer Academy for Policy Leadership and Public Service, co-hosted by Policy Pathways and VCU's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, will culminate this Saturday, July 6th, with a showcase of students' Capstone projects and Keynote address from Chandler Holeman.

Chandler Holeman is an alumna of both the 2022 Summer Academy for Policy Leadership and Public Service Online and Policy Pathways' Policy Research Internship Program. Most recently, Chandler has served as a delegate for the Congress of Future Medical Leaders and participated in Building Opportunities and Overtures in Science at Duke University.

This year's Capstone projects are as follows:

-The Environmental Hazards of Coal Dust in Hampton Roads, VA; Capstone Leader Pastor Lathaniel Kirts



The poster for the Summer Academy Capstone Showcase features a blue and orange color scheme. At the top, it displays the logos for Policy Pathways and VCU's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. The main title is "SUMMER ACADEMY" in large, bold, white letters, with "POLICY LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE" underneath. Below the title are four small images: a factory with smoke, two women carrying water jugs, a group of people, and a person speaking at a podium. The central text reads "CELEBRATING FUTURE POLICY LEADERS" and "CAPSTONE PRESENTATIONS AND CLOSING CEREMONY". The schedule is as follows: 10AM CAPSTONE PRESENTATIONS, including "THE ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS OF COAL DUST IN HAMPTON ROADS, VA" by Pastor Lathaniel Kirts, "THE IMPLICATIONS OF COLONIALISM AND CAPITALISM IN FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES IN WEST AFRICA" by Dr. Jacques Houssou, "INCREASING THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS OF COLOR IN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS" by Ms. Verlisha Brandon, and "THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF REPORTING IN-CUSTODY DEATHS IN MARYLAND" by Dr. Terence Keel. A KEYNOTE SPEAKER, Chandler Holeman, is featured with a small portrait. At 11AM, the closing ceremony keynote speaker is Chandler Holeman. The event is on Saturday, July 6, from 10-12:30 (Eastern Time), and is free and open to the public. Contact information includes the in-person location at VCU Hibbs Hall Auditorium, Room 303, and online access via Zoom with the URL https://shorturl.at/h2225 and passcode 2024Policy. The contact email is info@policypathways.org and the phone number is (866) 465-6671.

Join Policy Pathways and VCU's Wilder School in person or online at Saturday's Capstone Showcase!

-The Implications of Colonialism and Capitalism in Francophone Countries in West Africa; Capstone Leader Dr. Jacques Houssou

-Increasing the Number of Students of Color in Study Abroad Programs; Capstone Leader Ms. Verlisha Brandon

-The Issues and Challenges of Reporting In-Custody Deaths in Maryland; Capstone Leader Dr. Terence Keel

The 2024 Summer Academy cohort is made up of remarkable young people who yearn to learn, challenge, and transform themselves both in and outside of the classroom.

Shania Gibson, Richmond native and current attendee of Reynolds Community College, has poignant aspirations to help her community and one day, the world. She is interested in topics such as human rights, environmental change, homelessness, and anti-corruption, which she has acted upon by volunteering with the James River Parks system and at the Hillard House, working with unhoused children. From a young age, she shares, "I've always known the world could be better, but never thought my voice would be big enough to make a difference. As I've gotten older, I have met incredible people who were able to spark change from nothing. Individuals like that have helped me realize my voice does have effect; it can bring about change. Any voice can be used and heard, it is only a matter of sharing YOUR voice." Shania is seeking to use the Summer Academy as the "great first step" in her endeavor to "make bigger changes" in her community.

Neha Jain came to the Academy to better understand the policy-making process, which will inform her future plans of making change through policy. She is most interested in the arenas of human rights and education. "I believe that everyone should be treated equally and have access to basic human rights, one of them being access to education," she says. "After all, education empowers individuals and strengthens societies." Alongside committing time to tennis, piano, and Model UN, she is working on a project to increase awareness of inclusivity at her high school. If all goes well, she will complete this undertaking with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. Starting with the overturning of Roe v. Wade, she was "intrigued by the impact different policies have on people every day." Hearing about the conflicts occurring around the world as well, such as in Palestine and Ukraine, further provoked her curiosity about the international impact of US policies.

Raunak Kaur Rajani, on track to become the youngest licensed dance instructor of international Latin dance in the United States, has been involved in social issues for some time. She



**SHANIA  
GIBSON**  
RICHMOND, VA



**NEHA  
JAIN**  
GLEN ALLEN, VA



**RAUNAK  
KAUR RAJANI**  
GLEN ALLEN, VA

Shania, Neha, and Raunak will present their Capstone projects at the Closing Ceremony's Capstone Showcase.

completed an internship at the Commonwealth Attorney's Office of Henrico which included watching court cases, reviewing reports of past crimes, listening to jail calls, and interviewing Assistant Commonwealth Attorneys to glean insight into the dangers of the city's proximity to Highways I-95, I-64, and I-81. "My passion for debate and legislative processes fuel my interest in policy, providing me with a platform to advocate for informed policies that prioritize community safety and well-being," she says. Raunak is a member of Model UN, Spanish club, Arabic and Art Honor Societies, and is a tutor, competitive dancer, and 2nd degree black belt in Mixed Martial Arts.

All are welcome to attend the Closing Ceremony celebrations; mark your calendars for Saturday, July 6, 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM! Join us in person on the VCU campus: Hibbs Hall Auditorium, Room 303, 900 Park Avenue, Richmond; or hop on the webinar at <https://shorturl.at/H2225> (Passcode: 2024Policy).

For more information, please contact [info@policypathways.org](mailto:info@policypathways.org) or (866) 465-6671.

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