

Dear MEZCOPH Community,

Welcome back to campus! I hope you enjoyed a safe and peaceful summer break with family and friends. In the semester ahead, I look forward to collaborating with you as we welcome new students and colleagues and work together to address current and emerging public health challenges.

In this welcome greeting, I want to share an overview of our incoming student population and other developments that affect us all as we embark on this new academic year.

### **Our Incoming Students**

I am pleased to extend a warm welcome to our 235 new students joining MEZCOPH this fall! Within this sizable class, I am excited to highlight that 122 are incoming undergraduate students. Among them, 108 have enrolled in our BS in Public Health and the remaining 14 have enrolled in our BA in Wellness and Public Health Practice degrees.

Our graduate student cohort has grown by 113, including 80 first-year MPH students, seven MS students, two DrPH students, and 24 new students committed to the path of a PhD. Furthermore, we welcome our international students who have journeyed to Arizona and our campus from various corners of the globe, including Albania, Ghana, Ecuador, China, Iran, Japan, Iran, Nigeria, and many others.

You may have seen the [recent article](#) in UA News announcing our record-breaking first-year cohort in terms of both size and diversity in the history of the university. I'm pleased to let you know that the incoming group at MEZCOPH follows suit with these trends. Among them, 24% identify as first-generation college students, and 77% identify with ethnicities other than white. We are excited to welcome this dynamic incoming class, as well as our continuing students, to a new, promising academic year ahead.

### **New Faculty, Staff and Teaching Assistants**

In addition, we warmly welcome our new and returning faculty members, each bringing a unique range of expertise to further enhance the exceptional commitment to teaching and research excellence that defines our MEZCOPH community.

Enrollments in MEZCOPH undergraduate courses have risen by 7% compared to the fall of 2022. This increase has enabled us to expand the availability of teaching assistantships for both our new and returning students. We have introduced a new D2L site for Teaching Assistants (TAs) which is specifically designed to be our one-stop shop for information exchange, sharing of experiences, and dissemination of TA-related resources. TAs are encouraged to review the recent TA orientation on D2L and check the site regularly for updates.

Furthermore, I would like to welcome our new staff members and express my gratitude to both them and our existing staff for their contributions and commitment toward advancing our public health mission. We appreciate your dedication and valuable contributions in preparing our college for another successful academic year.

### **A New Academic Landscape**

In the year ahead, we face significant changes that are reshaping higher education as a whole. The rapid proliferation of [Artificial Intelligence](#) technologies in the teaching and learning environment has required us to adapt quickly. While AI offers thrilling new possibilities, it also comes with its own set of challenges. I encourage all who are interested to get involved by joining the [Artificial Intelligence Access and Integrity Working Group](#). It is imperative that we collaborate to define a unified objective, guaranteeing the readiness of our students to step into the professional landscape of the 21st century.

Ensuring the health and safety of our campus community remains a priority for us all. You may have noticed the newly placed [emergency procedures posters](#) within the classrooms. We encourage you to pause and acquaint yourself with the evacuation protocols and safety tools relevant to both [Drachman Hall](#) and the [Health Sciences Innovation Building](#). Similarly, our Phoenix-based members are urged to review the [Phoenix Bioscience Core Campus](#) plans. We remain committed to providing a secure and inclusive space where all MEZCOPH students, staff, and faculty can thrive.

In closing, I want to express my enthusiasm for the promising year ahead! I am honored to be a part of such an exceptional and talented community.

Sincerely,

John Ehiri, PhD  
Senior Associate Dean for Academic and Faculty Affairs