



Making a Public Health Pivot

DANA EVANS,
GRADUATE STUDENT

Dana Evans, a graduate student in FDU's Master of Public Health (MPH) program, worked for years on the business end of nonprofits — first in residential services, coordinating support for individuals with disabilities, and then at the Susan G. Komen breast cancer foundation, helping with patient navigation and financial assistance programs.

"My manager at Susan G. Komen saw my ideas and pointed out that I was already operating from a public health perspective," says Evans. "That gave me the confidence to pursue my MPH so that I can better understand the systems that I'm trying to change."

She always wanted a career where she could support people in need, and now she's able to use a public health lens to build better solutions.

"Public health is not just about whether individuals are healthy or not," says Evans. "Public health is about making systems easier to navigate. In my area, it's about providing additional pathways so people can support themselves, care for

their families, buy food and pay for insurance and healthcare. Public health really is what affects people at a population level."

Evans is grateful for the flexibility of FDU's online program, and for the expertise of the professors. The faculty, she says, are aware that students in the program are managing competing responsibilities. "I don't aim for perfection like I used to when I was younger. I aim for growth," Evans says. "I've learned to communicate proactively and openly, and to not be afraid to ask for help or for clarification. FDU's faculty and staff provide support and opportunities for professional development."

Allison Buckingham, assistant professor of public health, for instance, brought Evans on board to her research concerning breastfeeding and lactation medicine. "Dr. Buckingham provides me with so many opportunities outside of the classroom to learn," says Evans.

All this experience is already paying professional dividends. She can easily connect her coursework to her current position at a nonprofit that offers meaningful employment to individuals with disabilities.

Her mindset has also played a large part in her ongoing success.

"When you're doing a graduate program, it's important to realize that you're not starting from scratch. You're bringing knowledge and real-world experience into the classroom. That adds so much value," says Evans. "You have so much behind you that has made you who you are today, and you're bridging that with a new interest or passion."



"It was really important to me to know why I was going back to school, because when you're balancing work, life, parenting and school, that intrinsic motivation is what keeps you going on the harder days," says public health graduate student Dana Evans.

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