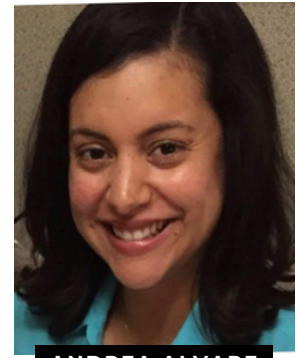


How Montclair's MPH Program Prepares Leaders for Impact

Discover how Montclair equips professionals to tackle real-world health challenges.



ANDREA ALVARE

In communities across the nation, public health professionals are the often-unseen force working to safeguard the public's health. From disease prevention to health education and equitable access to care, these professionals form a frontline defense that operates quietly but effectively. Andrea Alvare, an alumna of Montclair State University's Master of Public Health (MPH) program, exemplifies this dedication. Now serving as the Director and Health Officer for the City of Rahway, her journey highlights the vital role public health professionals play in keeping communities like Rahway healthy and safe.

Andrea Alvare found her calling in public health through a deep-rooted passion for community wellness and equity. She credits Montclair State's MPH program with equipping her with the skills and confidence to lead Rahway's public health initiatives. The program's strong focus on community health and its foundation in health equity principles were essential in shaping her approach to tackling Rahway's complex public health challenges.

"Montclair's MPH program was invaluable in preparing me for this role," Andrea shares. "The program didn't just prepare me for the health officer exam, it prepared me to design and implement health programs. From outreach efforts to program evaluations, I use those skills every day."

A key component of Montclair's MPH program is its focus on real-world learning opportunities. During her time in the program, Andrea completed an extensive internship with the Middlesex County Office of Health Services, an experience she describes as pivotal to her career. Her project—a cost-benefit analysis for a trap-neuter-vaccinate-release (TNVR) program for stray cats—proved essential when the Rahway City Council debated implementing a similar initiative.

"When the council considered the TNVR program, I was able to guide the discussion with an informed perspective," Andrea explains. "Thanks to my internship, I understood the policy implications and benefits, which made a significant impact on the decision-making process."

Andrea's internship experience, combined with the academic rigor of Montclair's program, gave her the confidence to address Rahway's complex health challenges head-on. "The internship prepared me for the bigger challenges I now face as a health officer," she recalls.

For Andrea, public health is about more than just statistics and policies - it's about ensuring access to preventive services for all. Growing up, she witnessed firsthand the impact of health disparities within her community. This experience inspired her to pursue a career in public health and advocate for underserved populations.

"Often, people who are uninsured or underinsured don't receive the services they need," Andrea explains. "My mission is to ensure that everyone in my community has access to preventive services, no matter their financial situation."

Montclair's emphasis on health equity was instrumental in shaping Andrea's approach to public health. "The program's focus on health equity gave me a deeper understanding of how to tackle the unique challenges we face in Rahway," she says.

Beyond the rigorous curriculum, Montclair's MPH program fostered a close-knit community that Andrea continues to value. Her cohort, made up of diverse professionals from fields like medicine and education, enriched her experience and helped her grow.

"The diversity in the program really enhanced our discussions and group projects," she recalls. "We supported each other, and that sense of community was invaluable."

That network extended beyond graduation, as Andrea was able to hire two former classmates to work with her. "When hiring, I knew the quality of work they would bring to the table. It's been rewarding to continue those relationships after graduation."

As the world faces new public health challenges, professionals like Andrea Alvare remain the unsung heroes working tirelessly behind the scenes. From inspecting restaurants to prevent foodborne illnesses to preparing for potential outbreaks, public health professionals play an essential role in community safety.