

# Robert Hsu



**R**obert Hsu's life passion is public health, particularly issues related to nutrition, physical activity, smoking, and health inequalities. At Penn, Robert has explored public health through various activities. He has been involved in public health research in obesity prevention and smoking, as well as research abroad at Cambridge University. Robert was previously the co-president of Penn Fitness for Life, which provided health education and physical activity programming at a local school. As a project leader in Social Impact Consulting, Robert has provided public health organizations with consulting services. Finally, Robert created the Healthy Food Truck Initiative, partnering with food trucks to improve the eating environment and change consumers' behavior. For his Civic Scholars capstone project, he investigated the effect of short-term e-cigarette use on young adults' attitudes towards smoking and e-cigarette use under the guidance of Professor Andrew Strasser. Robert is graduating from Penn with a B.A. in Biology and B.S. in Economics (individualized concentration in public health). Next year, he will be working at Bain & Company in Washington D.C., where he hopes to gain experience in the healthcare industry and food and beverage companies.

# CAPSTONE PROJECT

## “Effect of Short-Term Use of E-Cigarettes on Young Adults’ Attitudes Towards Smoking and E-Cigarettes: A Pilot Study”

Faculty Advisor: **Dr. Andrew Strasser**, Perelman School of Medicine, Psychiatry Department

The advent of the e-cigarette in the past decade has numerous implications for smoking, which remains the most significant cause of death in the United States—with the CDC estimating 480,000 annual deaths attributable to smoking. E-cigarette awareness, trial, and use have grown tremendously in the past few years. While e-cigarette use and trial were initially concentrated in current and former smokers, in recent years, e-cigarette use and trial have increased in adolescents, young adults, and non-smokers, creating worry and skepticism towards e-cigarettes in the public health community. Though many early studies reported that e-cigarette users initiate and continue use of e-cigarettes because of a desire to quit or reduce smoking, recent studies suggest that a portion of users may actually be motivated by curiosity. Furthermore, studies in younger populations also show that they may not try e-cigarettes for cessation purposes. As a result, we are aiming to study the effect of short-term e-cigarette use in young adult smokers not looking to quit on their attitudes towards smoking and e-cigarette use, which may elucidate how increasing e-cigarette trial and use will ultimately affect tobacco use behaviors in this population.