

Public Matters

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MAGAZINE

TEXAS
STATE
UNIVERSITY



**The MPA Program
Celebrates 50
Years**

**CRPPT Helmed by
New Director**

**Student Spotlight:
Claudia Cormier**

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2023

Director's Corner



Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan
Director, MPA Program
Department of Political Science
Texas State University

I'm delighted to introduce the sixth edition of Public Matters, the annual magazine of Texas State University's public administration program, which showcases our accomplishments for the year 2023. This year marks the 50th anniversary of our MPA program and our magazine features a special section commemorating this momentous milestone.

We are also excited to introduce the new director of the Center for Research Public Policy and Training, Dr. Helen Lowman, who brings a wealth of experience from the Federal and Nonprofit sectors. Under Dr. Lowman's guidance, the center aims to foster collaboration between faculty, students, and practitioners, deepen our understanding of policy issues, and generate evidence-based solutions to policy and administrative matters.

The alumni spotlights shine on four impressive graduates of our program who have effectively created positive community and social impact at local, state, and international settings. The student spotlights feature Claudia Cormier who had a remarkable year excelling in everything she undertook and Vanessa Dempel, who had a multiculturally enriching Boren Fellowship experience in Azerbaijan. There was a strong showing of MPA students at the Graduate Research Conference where they showcased their research. MPA student Claudia Cormier won the university-wide systems thinking award for her research presentation. This edition also introduces two books published by Dr. Dianne Rahm on Climate Activism and Dr. Patricia Shields on Jane Addams' contributions and legacy.

One of the many ways in which our program bridges the gap between academia and practice is highlighted in the stories about Dr. Thomas Longoria's research practicum course. This piece describes the experiential and research opportunity provided to students as they visited the Texas-Mexico border and interacted with public administrators in the Rio Grande Valley. The piece about Dr. Billy Fields' study abroad course, annual updates about our speaker series, the William P. Hobby Center, and the Certified Public Manager program also reinforce the theme of bringing together academics and practitioners in meaningful ways for student enrichment.

The stories presented in this edition of Public Matters show our commitment to exemplary research, teaching, and service. The events and accomplishments of this year highlight our comprehensive and innovative approaches to public service education. As we look back on the current year and look forward to 2024, we are grateful for the immense goodwill and enduring relationships with our alumni, students, advisory board, and community partners. We will continue to nurture these connections which have strengthened our program for more than half a century.

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Public Matters

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MAGAZINE

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THE MPA PROGRAM CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

The Master of Public Administration program celebrated its 50th Anniversary (1973-2023) with a grand banquet on Saturday, September 23rd. This momentous occasion brought together a diverse gathering of about 160 individuals, including Texas State University administrators, faculty and staff, current students, and our esteemed alumni. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Mr. Franklin R. Parker's keynote address served as a powerful reminder of the profound impact that public service professionals can have on the betterment of society. The recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Awards, a remarkable and diverse group, personify excellence in public administration and have made their mark as chancellors of university systems, legislators, city managers, state agency heads, leadership experts, academic scholars, social impact innovators, chief information officers, chief diversity officers, environmental specialists, and authors just to name a few ways in which they create community and social impact. The awardees reflected on their favorite memories from their time in the MPA program and offered valuable insights from their professional experiences as public service professionals. The event was not only a celebration of the Master of Public Administration program's rich history but also a testament to the remarkable achievements of its alumni and the dedication of its faculty. We look forward to the continued success of the program and the contributions of its graduates to the field of public administration.



ROMY ADAME WILSON

Public Affairs Specialist
Federal Election Commission
MPA 2013

My time in the MPA program at Texas State University was one of immeasurable personal and professional growth. I learned a great deal and gained the confidence and skill to seek out greater opportunities. I have been working in Washington D.C. for the past 9 years and I rely on skills I honed during my time in the MPA program every day. The MPA program is outstanding, and I wish it and its graduates continued success.

ALEJANDRA PEÑA

Deputy Director of Research
Texas Office of Court Administration
MPA 2015

The knowledge attained and relationships built while in the MPA program provided me with many opportunities and the foundation for my current role. Faculty and staff truly value their students and do all they can to ensure their success. It is inspiring to see the great things former students are doing in their communities as a result of their MPA. I look forward to hearing about the wonderful things future MPA graduates will do in the public service sector.



DANIEL REED

Environmental Scientist
U.S. Army (Civilian)
MPA 2009

The TX State MPA program holds such a special place in my life. I came to TX State in 2007 from Tennessee specifically because of the benefits I saw in the school and the MPA program. I gained life-long friendships with my fellow graduate colleagues and professors. I use the foundation and skills learned at TX State every single day in my current job as an environmental scientist for the Federal Government.

NORA NOBLE-CHRISTOFF

Fiscal Administrator
Office of Workforce Opportunities | NH
MPA 2019

After graduating from the Texas State MPA program, I pursued a career in business and economic affairs. I work for the state of New Hampshire as a Fiscal Administrator, where I help run the Office of Workforce Opportunities. Not only did the MPA program help land me an incredibly rewarding job, I also made lasting relationships with other students in the program.

JENN GOLECH

Deputy Officer
Project Connect | Austin, TX
MPA 2012

I am most grateful for the lifelong connections I made during the MPA program with my fellow students who are now fellow colleagues all throughout the Central Texas region. Proud to be affiliated with a program that will continue to grow tomorrow's leaders who will help our region thrive!

VIVECA MARTINEZ

Deputy Director
M.C. vs. Abbott Monitoring Team
MPA 2021

Every course I enrolled in directly contributed to my professional career, providing added knowledge that helped me be successful. With approachable professors, applicable subject matter, relevant real-world discussions, and robust challenge coupled with firm support, the Texas State University MPA program was precisely the right fit for me. I'd recommend it to anyone looking for focused attention and professional development. Wishing this program a happy 50th anniversary.



ALARIC ROBERTSON

Dir. of Transformation & Engagement
HHSC
MPA 2011

The Texas State University MPA program prepared me for a lifelong public service journey. I am still receiving a significant return on my educational investment because of the well-respected, high-quality, caring professors and administrators who invested in me. Happy 50th! I wish you nothing but continued growth and success.



ANGELIQUE MYERS

Director of Communications
Harris County Constable Precinct 1
MPA 2014

My MPA journey was incredible! Professors were diligent in offering various learning opportunities for me and invested in my success every step of the way. The MPA Program allowed me the opportunity to achieve things that I never knew I could, with the support of others and my ambition to succeed. I wish for the program to remain ahead and serve the expansive needs of the public sector and non-profit industry for decades to come.



LARRY DOUGLAS

Assoc. Director - Internal Audit
Postlethwaite and Netterville
MPA 2011

The Texas State MPA Program has been an instrumental catalyst in my 20-plus years of career progression in the public sector. Specifically, the curriculum provided solid learning and great insights to balance my perspective as both a student and working professional. As a proud alumni, I fully support the MPA Program and offer my unwavering support for continued success!

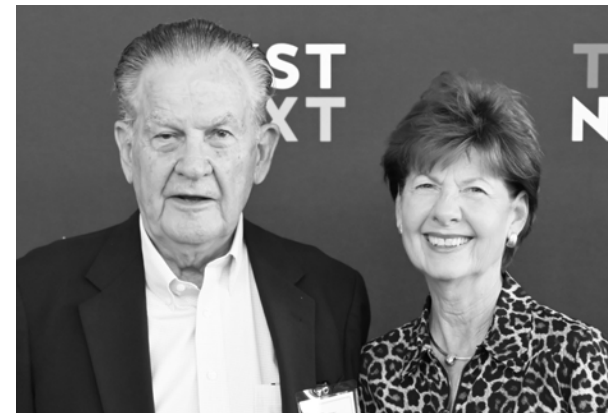


STEPHANIE REYES

City Manager
City of San Marcos, TX
MPA 2001

The Texas State MPA program addressed my personal interests and real-world preparation. I finished the program with a strong foundation in writing, critical thinking, public policy, knowledge about how to navigate complex competing interests and ways to work through ethical dilemmas. Perhaps the most important thing I gained were lasting relationships with people invested in my success and my future. The MPA Program at Texas State is amazing and truly made a difference in my career. I encourage students and employees I mentor to enroll in this program every chance I get! The program is so important to me that I still stay involved by talking with classes when requested and serving on the MPA Advisory Board.





JACOB CHAMBLIN

Lead Associate, Public Partnerships
Save the Children
MPA 2021

Since graduating from the MPA program, I had a job offer from the International Non-Profit called Save the Children. I lobby for them in the states of Texas and Arkansas and travel between Austin and Little Rock to advocate for state funding for early childhood education in rural counties. I wouldn't have been able to get a job like this had I not developed the communication and presentation skills emphasized by the MPA program. I wish the program a very happy 50th anniversary!

DENISE UPSHAW

Dir. of Policy & Communications
NYC Board of Corrections
MPA 2021

The MPA program completely changed the trajectory of my career. In addition to forging valuable relationships and expanding my public administration knowledge base, I also developed in-demand research skills which increased my marketability. Wishing the program, a joyous 50th Anniversary!

YVETTE MENDOZA

Capital Improvement Program Manager
Transportation Department | Austin, TX
MPA 2019

The MPA program at TXST was by far the best experience and most beneficial degree in my career. Since graduating, my career opportunities have drastically opened up. The MPA provided me with the required knowledge to apply in the real world and every day I continue to do so. The professors were instrumental in broadening my mindset. I recommend the program to anyone with a devotion and interest in public service.

BRADLEY BARRETT

Forest Environmental Coordinator
Klamath National Forest | CA
MPA 2017

The MPA Program at Texas State was invaluable in helping me start my career in public administration. The program opened doors to an internship with state government and completing the applied research project gave me confidence that I could take on and complete meaningful projects that have the potential to positively impact the public.

BRIAN MATTHEWS

Team Leader, TOP
TX Commission on Env. Equality
MPA 2019

The Texas State University MPA program is an intellectually stimulating, academically challenging, and adaptive program that prepares students to meet the diverse demands of public service. The program ensures a steady stream of highly trained professionals that will continue to fill key roles in the country's second largest state far into the future.

LUKE SCOTT

Management & Program Analyst
FEMA Region 2 | NY
MPA 2016

The MPA program was a rewarding experience where I gained valuable statistical knowledge, research skills, and communication skills throughout the program and applied research project. This led me down the road of data analysis in my career, something I would not have been able to do without all of the wonderful professors who helped me along the way. I hope the program continues to prosper and educate new professionals for decades to come.



ISMAEL AMAYA

Assistant Dean of Students
Texas State University
MPA 2010

I believe today as much as I did when I began the MPA program that public administration work is not limited to city halls or state capitols. Public service includes the work that happens at public schools and universities, in law enforcement, judicial services, and much more. The Texas State MPA can provide useful skills, knowledge, and tools for a career in public service. Happy 50th to the MPA program.

NICK FUNARI

Director of Sales Strategy
MGT Consulting
MPA 2019

My experience in the MPA program was invaluable – I discovered my first job in government contracting through the internship program. I hold thanks and gratitude to the MPA program’s professors, who provided me with practical lessons in research methodology, critical analysis, public policy, and organizational management. Happy 50th to the Texas State MPA Program!



MARK FEATHERSTON

Chief of Staff
Office of the VP for Research | UT
MPA 2011

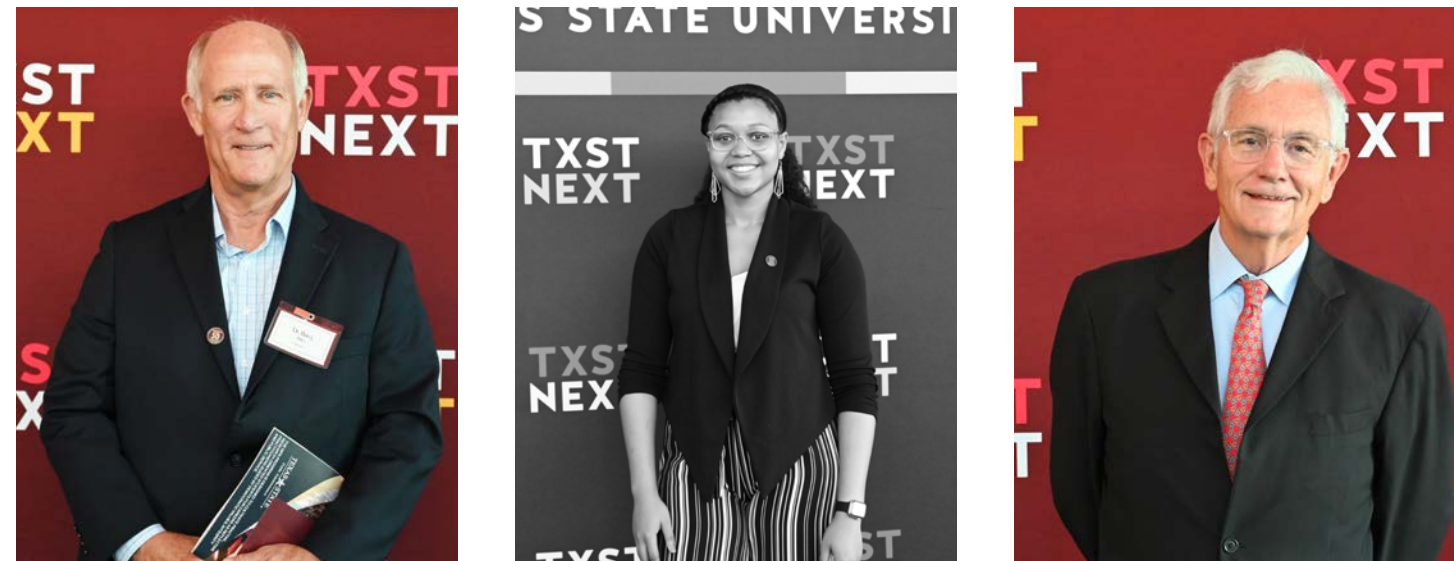
Through the formation of a fundamental public policy and administration knowledge base, and the development of invaluable communication, analytical and management skills, the MPA Program at Texas State unquestionably laid the foundation for my career as a leader in the public sector.

JASON ALEXANDER

Deputy Chief, Airport Affairs
Department of Aviation | Austin, TX
MPA 2009

Participating in the TXST MPA program has been one of the most rewarding and gratifying experiences of my adult life and professional experience. I was working full-time for the City of Austin and TXST offered both a desirable curriculum and accommodating schedule. I learned quickly that I wanted to focus my talents on public service and public administration and TXST created that opportunity for me. The faculty, especially Patricia Shields, Howard Balanoff, George Weinberger, Charles Garofalo, Chris Brown, and Hassan Tajalli ensured mine and every student’s success. I’m grateful to each of them, and still enjoy interacting with them to this day.





DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI, FACULTY, & PANEL

Recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Awards were: Chancellor of The Texas A&M University System John Sharp; Vice Chancellor at The Texas A&M University System and Chief of The Texas Division of Emergency Management Nim Kidd; the chancellor-emeritus of the Texas State University System Charles Matthews; Former (Republican) member of the Texas House of Representatives and assistant vice chancellor for governmental relations for the Texas State University System, the Honorable Larry Gonzales; Deputy Chief of Airport Affairs, City of Austin Jason Alexander; Assistant Dean of Students at Texas State University Ismael Amaya; Former Director at Texas State University Mickey Autrey; Former Assistant Dean at the LBJ School of Public Affairs and currently a Principal at the Uncharted Leadership USA Dr. Barry Bales; Councilwoman, City of Houston, Martha Castex-Tatum; Principal of Las Plumas High School Dr. Lamar Collins; Associate Director at EAG Gulf Coast, LLC Larry Douglas; Executive Director of the NCTX Council of Governments Mike Eastland; City Manager of Cedar Park Brenda Eivens; Former Director at Texas State University Dr. Ana Lisa Garza; Senior VP of Executive Recruitment at Strategic Government Resources Larry Gilley; Former city manager of Temple, TX and deputy city manager of Austin, TX Barney Knight; Former member and chairman of the Texas Railroad Commission David MacCabe; Former Division Director at the Texas Commission On Environmental Quality Eddie Molina; the VP of Operations & DEI at the Charles Butt Foundation, Brion Oaks; Current City Council member for Austin's District 9 Zohaib Qadri; City Manager of San Marcos Stephanie Reyes; Director of Academic Budgets Brendan Scott, Domestic Violence Specialist at the Texas Department of Protective Services and the President of the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence Debby Tucker, and Professor in the Political Science Department at Texas State University Dr. Brian Withrow. Dr. Charles Garofalo, Dr. Bill Stouffer, and Dr. George Weinberger, faculty members who made significant contributions to the program, were also recognized. The awards were presented by a distinguished panel, including Franklin R. Parker, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Manpower & Reserve Affairs, Dr. Kelly Dampousse, President of the University, Dr. Andrea Golato, Dean of the Graduate College, Dr. Patricia Shields: Regents' Professor, and Dr. Howard Balanoff, Director of the William P. Hobby Center for Public Service.

SAMANTHA MARTINEZ

Budget Analyst

MPA 2020

My time in the Master of Public Administration program prepared me professionally for advancement in my career. I am grateful to have made so many connections through my classmates, professors and MPA networking events. I found mentorship from each of my professors who genuinely cared about my success in and outside of the classroom. Congratulations to the program on reaching 50 years! I look forward to seeing many more years of a successful program.

MARCUS PEOPLES, JR.

Portfolio Program Manager
Office of Innovation & Technology
MPA 2019

My time in the Public Administration program was both enlightening and life changing. The rigor of this program required a different level of dedication and focus. To students looking to change the world or find purpose in making the world a better place, I would recommend looking into this program as you are paired with individuals with like and unlike mindsets that will help ignite and keep the flame lit as you embark on the journey of being a trailblazer and change maker.

AIDA BERDUO-BERRY

Senior Manager
Office of CRREI | LA Metro
MPA 2006

I began the MPA Program in 2004 to grow and advance in my career. Completing the program not only helped me professionally but it has provided me with a network of alumni around the country. I'm so glad I pursued my MPA at Texas State. Congratulations on 50 years



Center for Research, Public Policy, & Training Helmed by New Director

Beginning in the Fall of 2023, Helen Lowman has taken on the role of Director of the Center for Research, Public Policy, and Training in the Political Science Department at Texas State University. Additionally, she maintains a part-time role as Senior Advisor to the Associate Director of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection at the Peace Corps and teaches in the Public Administration program at Texas State University. She completed her undergraduate studies at Austin College in Sherman, Texas, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in international studies and Spanish. She obtained a master's degree in international studies from the University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies, and both a master's degree and a Ph.D. in Leadership and Change from Antioch University. Her research focuses on transformational nonprofit leadership, change, and rebranding.



DR. HELEN LOWMAN
Director, CRPPT
Public Administration Faculty



Dr. Lowman's extensive experience in the public administration, government, and nonprofit sectors adds to the credibility that she brings to the Center for Research, Public Policy, and Training. Her strategy for the Center includes bringing opportunities for research in public policy to the students studying at Texas State, offering them hands-on experience in real issues of the day, hosting speakers from a wide range of government and nonprofit organizations to share their career experience with students, and exploring ways to offer students internship and fellowship experiences in Washington, D.C. and beyond.

Having grown up in San Marcos, Texas, she left after graduating from high school and moved back to her hometown in late 2020 to be closer to family. At the time, she was President and CEO of Keep America Beautiful. In this role for approximately five years, she ran the nonprofit, with more than three million volunteers and 650 affiliate organizations, that envisions every community to be a clean, green, and beautiful place to live. Her resignation from Keep America Beautiful in 2022 led her back to the Peace Corps and to Texas State University to begin teaching a public administration course in the Fall.

Dr. Lowman is an innovative and experienced leader in international development and global recruitment. In July 2010, Dr. Lowman was appointed by President Obama to serve as Regional Director for the Europe, Mediterranean

and Asia region where she oversaw Peace Corps programs in 21 countries. During her tenure, Dr. Lowman chaired the working group that initiated and implemented the placement of same-sex couples as Peace Corps volunteers. She also led a significant shift in the region's footprint, including the graduation and strategic phase-out of four country posts, and the assessment, establishment, and launch of three additional country posts.

In 2014, Dr. Lowman became Associate Director of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, overseeing the largest department in the Peace Corps, with staff in eight US-based



“I am fortunate to have had a career in purpose-driven service, from grassroots initiatives to global leadership roles. In my role at Texas State University, I look forward to exploring the frontiers of knowledge at the Center for Research, Public Policy, and Training.”

recruiting offices and Peace Corps Headquarters who were tasked with recruiting, assessing, and placing between 3,000 and 5,000 volunteers in more than 60 countries annually. Within her first year in the role, Dr. Lowman led the agency's reforms to streamline the Peace Corps application and the recruitment and placement process. Under her leadership, the Peace Corps surpassed previous records in numbers of applications, including a five percent increase in applicants who identify as racially or ethnically diverse.

She was then appointed by President Obama as the Director of Individual and Community Preparedness Division (ICPD) for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in October 2015. In her role as Director of ICPD, she oversaw programs that partner at all levels of government, the private sector, and community organizations to increase citizen and community preparedness and encourage the development of disaster resilience across the United States.

During her career, Dr. Lowman has served as Country Director and Associate Director of the Peace Corps program in China, acting Country Director in Mongolia, and as a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand. She has also held senior leadership positions at AFS Intercultural Programs/USA in New York City and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality in Austin and El Paso.



She currently serves on the boards of directors for Pyxera Global and World Neighbors, both nonprofits that work internationally on sustainable development initiatives at the community level. Additionally, she is on the board of directors for the League of Women Voters of Hays County.



“I hope we inspire minds, cultivate solutions, and together, grow a Center where Bobcats are motivated to navigate the intricacies of public policy and global impact.”

Zohaib Qadri



The Texas State MPA program is proud of alum Zohaib “Zo” Qadri who represents District 9 on the Austin City Council. He graduated from the MPA program in 2017. Zohaib was sworn in on the 6th of January and has made history as the first Muslim member of the Austin City Council. We wish him the very best as he serves the public in his new role as a city council member.

Zohaib “Zo” Qadri, born as the first child of immigrants, embarked on a journey that led him from the bustling streets of South Asia to the heart of Texas, where he has become a dedicated advocate for his community. At the age of 12, Zohaib, along with his parents and two younger sisters, made the move to Texas.

Settling in Victoria, Texas, Zohaib quickly developed a deep affection for the state, particularly the city of Austin, which he now proudly calls his true home. His initial aspirations in medicine took him to Austin, where he began pursuing a biology degree at the University of Texas. However, the stark reality of the local cost of living crisis spurred a change in his path, leading him to the humanities and a commitment to improving the lives of Austin’s most vulnerable residents.

Zo’s educational journey continued with a Master’s in Public Administration from Texas State University and a second graduate degree in Global Affairs from Rice University. Armed with academic knowledge, he dove into community advocacy and political campaigns, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of Texas politics.

Zo’s commitment to public service took root during Laura Moser’s campaign for Texas’s 7th Congressional District, followed by his instrumental role in Beto O’Rourke’s U.S. Senate run, where he directed political outreach. His foray into the legislative process occurred during his tenure as a legislative assistant in the Texas House of Representatives, blending academic insight with hands-on experience.

The 2020 Democratic Primary brought Zo to South Carolina, where he served as a Regional Organizing Director for Senator Elizabeth Warren’s campaign. Returning to Austin in early 2020, Zo continued his dedication to progressive causes, advising activist groups and advocacy campaigns on leveraging technology and building strategic alliances for tangible results.

In 2022, the residents of District 9 elected Zohaib Qadri as their representative, entrusting him with the responsibility to advocate for Downtown, Rainey St., Old West Austin, West Campus, Hyde Park, Travis Heights, Bouldin Creek, Mueller, Cherrywood, and more. Zo’s priorities include addressing Austin’s housing crisis, advocating for an expanded and equitable transit system, and championing the rights of the city’s most vulnerable citizens.

Beyond his political endeavors, Zo has been an active volunteer, supporting local community groups during the challenging years following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. His involvement with organizations such as Austin Needs Water, the Central Texas Food Bank, and the Del Valle Community Coalition reflects his dedication to ensuring the well-being of underserved communities.

Zo’s personal life is anchored in Downtown Austin, where he resides with his wife, Wafa, a physician assistant at Baylor Scott & White, and their feline companion, Daisy Mae.

As a city council member for District 9, Zo prioritizes accessibility, diversity, and inclusivity in local governance. He believes that every Austinite, regardless of background or tenure in the city, deserves a voice in shaping the future of Austin. With his passion for social justice, commitment to public service, and a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing his community, Zohaib “Zo” Qadri stands as a beacon for progressive change in the heart of Texas.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

DENISE UPSHAW

Denise Upshaw is a criminal justice reform advocate, personal development enthusiast, and devoted mentor. Born and raised in Oakland, CA, Denise developed a passion for justice reform after witnessing at an early age the devastating effect Get Tough Era (1980s–90s) policies had on her community. Denise's intimate experience with the justice system and desire to improve outcomes for the justice-involved led her to obtain a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice from California State University, Sacramento, becoming the first college graduate in her immediate and extended family. Denise experienced many challenges while navigating college as a first-generation student, but her determination, family support, and career prospects helped her to persevere.

Denise explored many criminal justice career paths during her undergraduate career, ultimately narrowing her scope to youth justice when she discovered an interest in mentoring teen girls at risk of justice involvement. Mentoring was Denise's introduction to public service. In addition to the personal benefits she experienced, working with youth and their families helped Denise gain deeper insight into ways social systems – such as education, child welfare, and housing systems – could reduce youth's involvement in the criminal justice system. Denise would continue to examine these systems' impact on youth justice and mass incarceration throughout her professional and academic career.

Denise's vision for a more preventative, rehabilitative, and humane justice system influenced the transformative positions she pursued, and therefore, ranks highest among her professional accomplishments. Denise proudly spearheaded several youth justice initiatives at a South Bronx high school and at the New York City Department of Correction, including implementing policies to improve reentry outcomes for adolescents and emerging adults, contributing to the plan to transition adolescents off Rikers Island, and developing a menu of workforce development opportunities for emerging adults. In Austin, TX, Denise developed reentry policies for the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, working alongside the district judge to design and implement a reentry specialty court while managing a social services division responsible for coordinating resources for justice-involved youth. It was at this time that Denise learned that to broaden her impact on the criminal justice system, refine her technical skills, and grow professionally, she must pursue a graduate degree.



The MPA program director, Dr. Rangarajan believed Denise's unique background and diverse professional experience would prove valuable for the cohort. However, Denise admits to feeling uncertain about pursuing a graduate degree because of the many personal and professional responsibilities she was juggling and the self-doubt about her academic capabilities ten years removed from a formal academic setting – could the program add value to her career, and could she keep pace with the course work? Denise credits her support team and Will Smith's favorite book, Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, for helping her overcome self-doubt. The two points highlighted within the fictional novel encouraged Denise to pursue graduate school: 1. There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure; 2. When you want something, the whole universe conspires to make it happen. After several in-depth conversations with Dr. Rangarajan about career advancement and professional networking opportunities, class schedules to accommodate working professionals, and program requirements, Denise felt confident she could be successful during and after the program.

The most significant role of the TXSTMPA program in Denise's life was setting the standard for rigor and academic achievement. The COVID-19 global pandemic began to wreak havoc during the middle of Denise's second semester in the TXSTMPA program. Death, illness, fear, and uncertainty swirled Denise's neighborhood and the college

campus. Nonetheless, the MPA program held its rigorous standards, still maintaining the same expectations students started with, ultimately forcing Denise to learn how to operate at a high level even in the face of adversity. Denise learned to hone her focus, make necessary sacrifices, and tap into her ability to be organized, agile, and resourceful. Denise credits the program's commitment to academic excellence for developing her ability to efficiently execute work products, a skill highly sought after by employers. Furthermore, in late 2020, Phi Kappa Phi recognized Denise's extraordinary scholarship and determination by inducting her into its honor society. Denise was later appointed to serve on the TXSTMPA advisory board and speak to students about her unconventional TXSTMPA experience.

Aligned with her practical approach to life, Denise recommends that prospective and current TXSTMPA students believe in their academic talents and leverage them to maximize their MPA experience. For instance, Denise says students must believe they are capable of succeeding in the program despite what comes their way because life will at some point during the program. They must ask as many

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The most significant role of the TXSTMPA program in Denise's life was setting the standard for rigor and academic achievement.



County’s Office of Justice & Safety, Denise leads meaningful justice initiatives that cultivate safe, thriving communities for Harris County residents, while pursuing her hobbies.

Denise often smiles when reflecting on the long-term vision for her career as she continues down her path of public service. To tackle America’s criminal justice system, Denise believes change agents must be data-driven and innovative. Denise joins millions of change agents committed to reimagining the purpose of America’s government institutions and who are identifying the levers of change toward a more just society. In the next five years, Denise envisions herself serving as chief of staff for a vibrant, transformative political official and, perhaps, running for political office herself. In the meantime, Denise continues to mirror her life after a notable Maya Angelou quote: “My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”

questions upfront to understand the program expectations, align those expectations with their goals, and lean on their North Star, support team, or belief system to help them achieve even in the face of adversity. Given that Denise is inherently social, with strong leadership skills and a commitment to public service, she began to innately turn-key newly acquired information during conversations with her team members and mentor. Teaching the information to others or applying it in real time helped Denise retain the theories and methods. In addition, real-time process application increased Denise’s organization’s productivity and inspired staff around her. The value she brought to the organization was recognized, as she was offered a promotion following graduation from the TXSTMPA program.

Denise went on to accept a newly developed position with the New York City Board of Correction as the Director of Policy and Communications. Denise found value in working for a well-established independent oversight board responsible for ensuring humane treatment and conditions within New York City jails. Still, there is no mistaking that Denise found this to be one of the most challenging positions that she has performed. Nonetheless, Denise proudly expanded the Board’s network of strategic partners during her tenure, strengthened community outreach efforts, and memorialized the unit’s policies and practices in an operations manual. Denise’s close to fifteen years of experience in youth justice, courts, and corrections has given her unique insight into the challenges faced by the American criminal justice system and the elements required to effect lasting change. Now serving as a justice policy research analyst for Harris



STUDY ABROAD

STUDY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GET COURSE CREDIT WHILE EXPLORING NEW CULTURES AND CITIES. OUR COURSES REGULARLY VISIT AMSTERDAM AND ROTTERDAM IN THE NETHERLANDS, AS WELL AS BARCELONA, SPAIN.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT MPA.POLISCI.TXST.EDU OR CONTACT THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

CHRISTY CARTER

In the world of Christy Carter, the journey isn't just about reaching a destination; it's about sprinting towards impactful projects, navigating through unexpected twists, and shifting gears after both professional and personal reckonings. In the dynamic narrative of her career, each chapter unfolds an exploration and a choice to contribute to societal change.

Christy's journey began in the corporate landscape after obtaining a business degree. However, the yearning to contribute to societal change propelled her towards a Master's Degree in Public Administration (MPA). Armed with a Bachelor's Degree in International Business Administration, she swiftly transitioned from the private sector to the government and nonprofit arena, driven by the belief that local solutions held the key to global change.

The Texas State MPA program became her foundational bedrock, providing support during her through an unplanned yet self-directed expedition in the sector. In the first semester Christy was selected for a fundraising and marketing internship with the Hays County Food Bank, little did she anticipate that this experience would serve as the catalyst for a transformative and exhilarating journey beyond the wildest dreams of a young girl hailing from a small town in Michigan - more on this later.

Encouraged by Dr. Longoria, the Applied Research Project (ARP) led her to the US-Mexico border in Texas, where she conducted qualitative research on the negative externalities of the border wall according to local public officials. This hands-on experience of mobilizing networks, conducting interviews, and analyzing qualitative data laid the foundation for her future in stakeholder engagement and raising philanthropic capital.

Post-graduation, she embarked on a seven-month work semi-sabbatical in Buenos Aires, Argentina, at a website development company for nonprofits. While working, she worked with a coach to explore her values and desired career path leading her to an action-oriented and democratically-focused nonprofit in Washington, DC—Greenpeace USA.

Starting as a Program Assistant, she quickly stepped into the role of International Fundraising Officer. Christy's global environmental fundraising journey took her to places like Kinshasa, Boma and Matadi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Indonesia, Brazil, China and many more places raising millions for a green and peaceful future. Promoted to Global Major Gifts and Foundations Manager, at Greenpeace



International she moved to Amsterdam, Netherlands in 2016.

In 2019, Christy accepted a new challenge as the inaugural Director of Development at the Global Futures Laboratory at Arizona State University in Phoenix, Arizona.

In 2021, she moved back to the Netherlands, where she launched her own consulting firm and had the honor of working with organizations like Systemic Justice, The World Health Organization Foundation, Greenpeace International, and more to mobilize philanthropic resources for social change.

In October 2023, she embarked on a fresh chapter as an Executive Search Consultant for the social impact and environment practice at Perrett Laver in the Europe office. Simultaneously, she remains committed to providing coaching for individuals eager to align their values and set



intentions for the impact they aspire to make in the world.

Her trajectory reflects not just career progression but a purpose-driven global search for where she can personally have the most impact.

To MPA students, here's tangible advice: dive into what genuinely interests you, actively build meaningful networks, and seek opportunities to assist others on their unique paths. Trust that life has an uncanny knack for guiding you or sometimes kicking you toward where you're destined to make a difference - should that be your goal. Also practically, find scholarships to finance for your education.

Reflecting on my MPA journey, the in-person research at the US-Mexico border in Texas, the independent study at the IASIA Conference with Dr. Howard Balanoff in Rome, and the eye-opening visit to the Wynne Unit of the Huntsville Prison during a criminal justice course stand out. Equally invaluable were the supportive interactions with faculty and staff, creating a nurturing environment throughout my academic pursuit.

Currently based in Rotterdam, Netherlands, with her partner, son and dog, she serves on the board of directors at the John Adams Institute and Cohort Sistas, showcasing her commitment to American culture and improving equity in doctoral education. She also advises the Beyond Giving project at Erasmus University, focusing on philanthropic foundations and global justice in sustainability governance.

In her newest position as an Executive Search Consultant at Perrett Laver, she remains dedicated to assisting organizations in identifying the resources to propel their mission forward.

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Life has a way of leading you where you're meant to be.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

SERGIO VASQUEZ

In the vast landscape of public administration, individuals like Sergio Vasquez emerge as beacons of inspiration, exemplifying a commitment to public service and community development. In a recent interview with Public Matters, Vasquez shared his journey, from choosing the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program to his current role as a Border Program Manager at the Texas Department of Transportation. His story is a testament to the transformative power of education, hard work, and dedication to making a positive impact on society.

Vasquez's decision to pursue an MPA was deeply rooted in his desire to align his career goals with a commitment to community service. Growing up with a strong work ethic ingrained in his Hispanic heritage, he felt a calling to contribute to the betterment of society. This sense of duty led him to embark on a journey that would ultimately shape his role in public administration.

Choosing the MPA program at Texas State was a pivotal moment for Vasquez. He highlighted the importance of diverse classes and the various administrative challenges he learned about which fostered a holistic understanding of various perspectives. His Applied Research Project (ARP), a descriptive study of Mexican hometown associations, not only showcased his analytical and critical thinking skills but also marked the culmination of his academic journey in Spring 2017.

Reflecting on how the MPA program and ARP prepared him for his professional career, Vasquez emphasized how those research classes facilitated the expansion of project management and research skills. This, he believes, has been crucial in managing multi-million-dollar contracts and representing the Texas Department of Transportation on trade border transportation matters.

The program's emphasis on diverse electives allowed Vasquez to tailor his education to his interests. He encouraged current and future students to venture out of their comfort zones, utilize electives that align with their career goals, and build relationships with peers. The importance of continuous learning and curiosity about various fields were recurring themes in his advice.

Vasquez's career trajectory post-graduation has been nothing short of impressive. Currently serving as a Border Program Manager at the Texas Department of Transportation, he manages multi-million-dollar contracts and represents the department on trade border transportation



matters. His involvement in projects along the Texas border attests to his sustained commitment to public service.

His journey started with internships in the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in New Mexico, showcasing his willingness to take on diverse challenges. Vasquez's story emphasizes the value of internships and the impact they can have on one's professional development.

As an alumnus, Vasquez shared his vision for public administration at his agency, focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion. He expressed a commitment to promoting opportunities for all, reflecting his belief in the transformative power of diversity in shaping effective policies and programs. His Hispanic heritage has played a significant role in shaping his professional ambitions.

"I was raised to work hard and to never shy away from difficult situations. Throughout my career, I have worked diligently and met challenges head on."

Vasquez has carried these values throughout his MPA program and into his professional life.

Vasquez's current projects highlight the importance of collaboration on an international scale. His work on a bi-national plan, spanning policies, programs, and recommendations, demonstrates a commitment to addressing the needs of communities on both sides of the border. Collaborating with stakeholders from Mexican border states, local communities, and the public and private sectors, Vasquez's efforts showcase the impact of effective

public administration in addressing complex challenges.

In closing, Vasquez urged students to utilize all resources the MPA program offers. His story serves as an inspiration to current and future students, encouraging them to work hard, be curious, and embrace the diverse opportunities the field of public administration has to offer.

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I was raised to work hard and to never shy away from difficult situations. Throughout my career, I have worked diligently and met challenges head on.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

JENNIFER WHITCOMB

Jennifer Whitcomb graduated with a Master of Public Administration degree from Texas State University in December 2020 as a member of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. She pursued her MPA after already working for twenty years as a chief executive for nonprofit government funded disability focused agencies. Jennifer describes her studies at Texas State as one of the best university experiences she has had. She previously earned BA and MS degrees in other states. She says the knowledge she gained with the MPA at Texas State paved the way for further success in her nonprofit work.

Jennifer dreamed of earning an MPA for years. She felt it was important to have an education to support her endeavors. When the opportunity arose, Jennifer enrolled in the MPA program at Texas State, which she chose because of the flexibility of the program and diversity of the faculty and coursework.

Jennifer balanced her studies with full-time employment as the Director of Finance with the Texas Independent Living Council and raising her daughter as a single parent. She worked with community advocates in several key legislative initiatives, including promoting access to mental health services for the deaf and hard of hearing community, long-term care services, the establishment of the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program, securing state-appropriated funds to open a Center for Independent Living in rural areas, and the right to choose personal care attendants. Her agencies received awards for outstanding services.

Jennifer's Applied Research Project in the MPA program provided groundbreaking information on how mental health providers in Texas's five largest cities were accommodating deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Results of her research project were shared with the Texas Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Jennifer has an interest in pursuing a Ph.D. to continue this important research.

Jennifer believes her studies at Texas State opened a new door for her. After many years within the disability movement, she transferred to the parks and recreation field when she accepted employment as a Finance Director for Waterloo Greenway Conservancy in Austin, Texas. She enjoyed using her study abroad, government financing, and nonprofit experiences to help Waterloo Greenway, a 1.5-mile urban ecosystem, bring the Austin community together. Later, she returned to her former position as the Director of Finance for Texas State Independent Living Council.



Jennifer is also an active member of the Rotary Club of San Marcos and has been a Rotarian for seven years. She became a Paul Harris Fellow in March 2023 and on July 1, 2023. She participates in many community projects addressing hunger, human trafficking, and literacy. Jennifer has had extensive service work on nonprofit boards and councils targeting special interest groups. When asked about her hobbies, she says her favorite hobby is community service.

Jennifer says her favorite educational experience was a study abroad program to Amsterdam and Rotterdam to study their transportation systems. She says valuable experiences in the MPA program included engaging

in collaborative interaction, working on projects, and networking with other students. Her advice to incoming students is to enjoy the remarkable experience and trust that what is taught will be helpful somewhere along the career journey.

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Jennifer balanced her studies with full time employment as the Director of Finance with the Texas Independent Living Council and raising her daughter as a single parent.



Book Spotlights

CLIMATE ACTIVISM in the 21st CENTURY



Dianne Rahm

Dr. Dianne Rahm's riveting book titled: *Climate Activism in the 21st Century* was published in print recently. The book explores the changing perspectives of climate change as a new generation is being exposed to its effects. In the book, Rahm begins by noting the dramatic change in how climate change is being framed in the first quarter of the 21st century. Now, the phenomenon of climate change is being described as "climate emergency" or "climate crisis".

Dr. Rahm builds on her research on climate change that she published in her first book, *Climate Change Policy in the United States*.

Reviewing the past policies and actions taken by each government administration including the first two years of the Biden administration, Dr. Rahm discusses the change in climate activism to now encompass youth involvement. Dr. Rahm notes that the new generation is driven by sentiments of "intergenerational injustices" that have led to inequities that exist in our society and brought the issue of climate change to the forefront. Apart from the societal aspect, Dr. Rahm also describes the scientific advancements made in climate change in the 21st century such as "attributions science" which determines the probability of the impact of climate change on a particular event.

With this increasing knowledge and awareness, as one of the messages Rahm wishes to communicate through her research, Rahm urges community members, public policy administrators, and states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through resiliency and sustainable practices and policies. Rahm states, "Like it or not, we are living in a warming world, and we see the impact of that" in droughts, floods, and winter ice storms. Despite the despair that the new generation might feel living in a world with these growing issues,

Rahm reassures readers in her book that, "There are measures we can take that will [have] positive outcomes..and no matter how trivial the action, we should move in the direction of the positive."

Ultimately, Rahm strives to communicate that each individual action, whether that be of a citizen or city manager, is impactful and important in this effort. To support the public, the government must also participate in major policy change and action to combat the impending effects ahead of us.



Dr. Dianne Rahm



In the early twentieth century, as newsboys traversed the bustling streets of America's cities, Jane Addams keenly observed the struggles of these young, marginalized souls. Her pioneering work in pragmatism and social ethics significantly impacted the realm of public administration. This unique perspective of Jane Addams and her multifaceted world is meticulously explored in "The Oxford Handbook of Jane Addams," published in the spring of 2023.

Dr. Patricia Shields, a distinguished Regents' Professor in the Department of Political Science at Texas State University, is a key contributor as one of the esteemed editors behind this volume. Alongside her co-editors, Maurice Hamington and Joseph Soeters, Shields brings her expertise, insights, and vision to this profound work, which includes contributions from scholars worldwide and comprises 38 chapters, offering a comprehensive exploration of Jane Addams's enduring legacy.

Dr. Shields, in her role as an editor, has also made substantial contributions to four chapters in the Handbook. She perceives Jane Addams's life and legacy as a compelling guiding principle in the realm of public administration.

The intellectual journey presented within these pages delves into how Addams's pragmatic, hands-on approach to societal challenges can fundamentally transform the essence of public administration and serve as a valuable tool for public administrators who act as the "hands and feet of government." In her co-authored chapter with Soeters, titled "Jane Addams and the Noble Art of Peaceweaving,"

Dr. Shields delves into Addams's philosophy of peace and introduces the 4Ps (practical, participatory, pluralistic, and provisional) as criteria for enhancing UN peacekeeping missions, drawing connections to contemporary international relations dilemmas. She emphasizes that in an era where positive peace is a universal objective in public administration, Jane Addams offers an approach that transcends rigid moralism and focuses on building relationships to establish a more participatory democracy.

Professor Shields carries forward this commitment through her course, PA 5370 "Public Management and Ethics," offered by the MPA Program at TXST, where she advocates for the integration of Jane Addams's concepts into public administration, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Addams's ideas in the field.

For decades, Jane Addams's contributions to the fields of sociology, philosophy, democracy, and feminism have been overlooked in contemporary academic discourse. This collection is not just a tribute to Addams's intellectual journey but also a testament to Oxford University's broader vision. As Oxford expands its research on female philosophers, Jane Addams embodies the profound impact of scholarship addressing pressing societal challenges.

Dr. Shields, as a prominent figure in public administration scholarship, plays a pivotal role as an editor in the Oxford Handbook series. Within the pages of this work, readers are invited to embark on Addams's intellectual odyssey, which underscores her unwavering resilience and enduring relevance within the ever-evolving landscape of social theory and philosophy.



Dr. Pat Shields



TXST at the Border

Texas State MPA Students Develop Communication Tools & Strategies that Serve the Needs of Cities on the Texas-Mexico Border

During the Fall 2023 semester, MPA students enrolled in a Research Practicum class. The purpose of this class is to connect students with a public sector client and help them write a final report to address a specific policy challenge. The client was the Texas City Managers Association Region 10 in the Rio Grande Valley. The lead contact was Ms. Elizabeth Walker, Assistant City Manager in Brownsville Texas. Ms. Walker and the Region 10 TCMA chapter identified a need to examine their emergency and crisis communications strategies in light of the unique challenges of governing in a linguistically and culturally diverse region.

The August 2023 Lahaina Maui wildfires that killed more than 100 people were on the minds of local government officials and emergency management coordinators. The Maui fires revealed a number of issues. For example, the failure to use emergency sirens due to uncertainty about how those sirens sounding would be interpreted by residents and questions about the adequacy of text messages and other alerts. The event illustrated the need to “democratize emergency management” and be attentive to the needs of the community in terms of what information they need and how they prefer to receive that information Without listening to the needs of residents in terms of emergency communication and building two-way communication system “disaster prevention and response systems risk failure”.

After two online Zoom meetings with Ms. Walker, a number of themes emerged:

- How can the government build trust with residents in the context of emergency communication before, during and after the event?
- What is the role of social media and other two-way communication tools given the low utilization of these apps among many Rio Grande Valley Residents?
- What are the elements of a culturally sensitive communications and marketing plan? Including one that includes emergency notifications?



As the students conducted their literature review, they uncovered studies that examine the use of promotoras to improve disaster preparedness among Latinos. Promotoras, as individuals who are known and respected in the community, serve as liaisons between their community and the government, and provide health and other critical information.

The students, taking into account limited access to funds and staff time, using social network theory, developed a strategy that leveraged the assets of local government employees themselves. These city employees share the culturally and linguistically diverse characters of the residents and when the employees’ families and social connections are considered, they have the potential to reach the vast majority of residents.

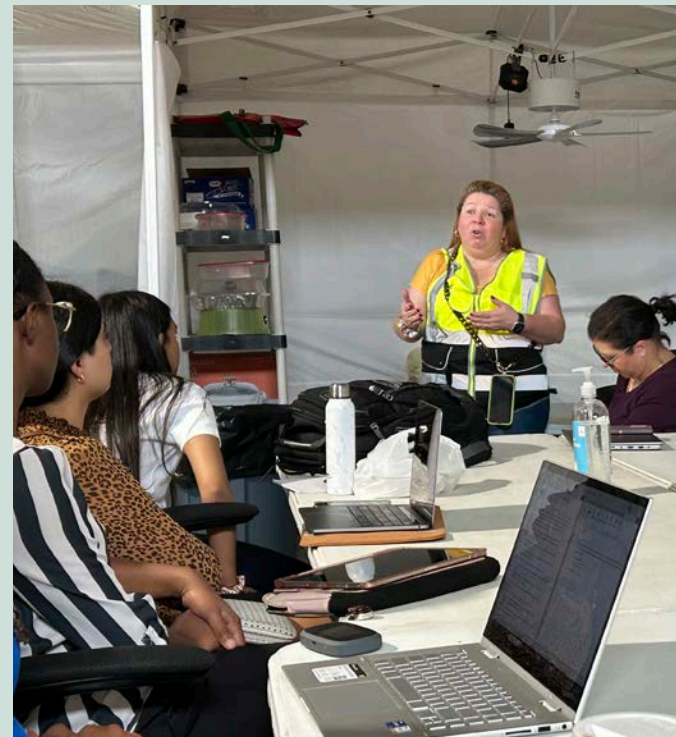
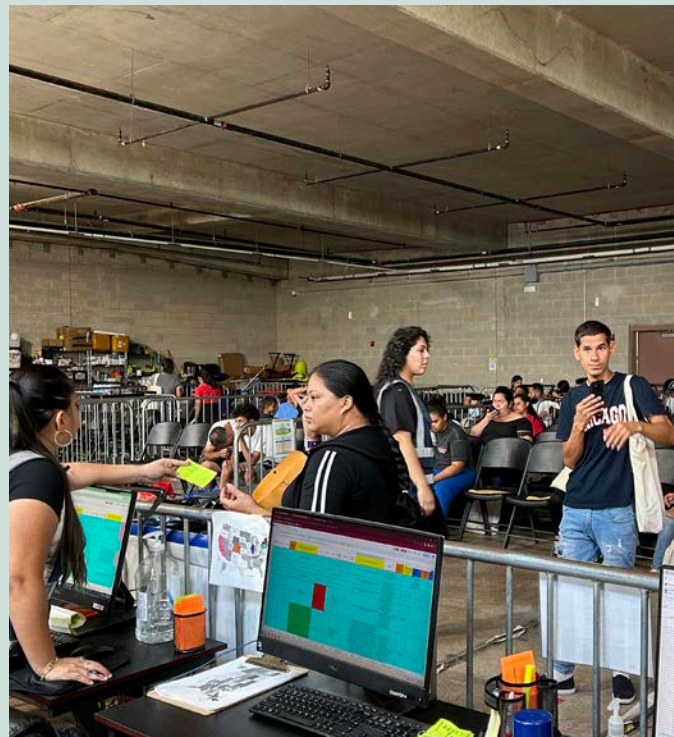


The students developed three recommendations:

- Partner with the Rio Grande Valley promotora public health network and develop a training module to teach city employees how to effectively communicate emergency preparedness information in their own neighborhoods and social circles.
- Develop suitable messages, hashtags, and other tools to use social media to disseminate emergency preparedness information and train and encourage to use social media to get involved with using these tools.
- Review communication methods and messages to ensure that appropriately sensitive and responsive information is also communicated after the event including information about how to cope with loss and stress following a disaster or other event.

In addition to working on the emergency and disaster planning information strategies, The Research practicum MPA students visited Brownsville in October. This trip gave the students the time to learn about the context of local government in the Rio Grande Valley as well as meet and learn from over six local government officials working on emergency planning and communication. They also learned about a very unique emergency and communication challenge: The flow of migrants through the Rio Grande Valley. Students visited the Brownsville migrant influx center (pictured below) and discussed the local government's role in providing assistance to asylum-seeking migrants from Ms. Odee Leal, Emergency Management Director. They learned about how the City of Brownsville has to manage the image of the city and the perceptions of the "migrant crisis." In addition, given the effectiveness of Brownsville's influx center, the city receives multiple requests from the media and other local and state governments to explain what they do, how, and why.

The student trip was funded by the Department of Political Science.



AMSTERDAM

Study Abroad with Dr. Billy Fields

This past summer, Dr. Billy Fields guided an impactful study-abroad course focused on sustainable urbanism. With a decade of program leadership in the International Sustainable Transportation Engagement Program (I-STEP), this study-abroad program not only aimed to educate but also to invigorate, focusing on the marvels of urban systems in the Netherlands. Beginning in San Marcos, students laid a strong foundation through three intensive classes. These sessions emphasized political dynamics and urban design fundamentals.

The true adventure commenced in the Netherlands, as the group immersed themselves in the transit-oriented city of Amsterdam, exploring the city's unique initiatives to enhance bicycle urbanism and create inviting outdoor social spaces. A highlight for the students was an experiment conducted by the city officials involving the creation of a temporary pocket park in the middle of the street to become a lively outdoor picnic! It was amazing to see how the reduction of traffic was instantly replaced by people coming together with their food and drinks to sit out in the sun.

Teaming up with HZ University, they worked on a collaborative community project in Rotterdam. Partnered with Dutch students, TXST students worked together to reimagine a street in the region. Engaging with local planners, embarking on transit tours, and thoroughly studying sustainable urban models, this experience offered a distinctive opportunity to incorporate alternative perspectives and skills from the Dutch students while jointly devising a solution for the street's development.

As the expedition ended, the impact exceeded expectations. This journey not only spurred personal growth but also allowed students to view their own streetscapes and neighborhoods back home in a different light. Students returned enriched with a deepened understanding of community resilience, forged through immersive encounters and experiences.

After the students returned home, Dr. Fields brought transportation professionals together for a best-practice tour of Spanish sustainable transportation projects. In addition to visiting Barcelona and Valencia, the team explored Seville, renowned for its widespread culture of practical bike riding embraced by individuals of all ages. Led by Manuel 'Manu Calvo,' the group embarked on an enlightening tour through Seville, witnessing its remarkable transformation from expansive parking lots and broad streets to lively, bustling neighborhoods.

For Summer 2024, Dr. Fields is leading students to Amsterdam and Delft! This is an amazing opportunity for students that cannot be missed.

Student Spotlight

“Claudia’s journey is a testament to her resilience, unwavering commitment to public service, and the remarkable accomplishments she has achieved over the past year.”

In May of 2019, the life of Claudia Cormier, a dedicated law enforcement officer, took a horrific turn. While working her night shift as a police officer, she found herself confronted by a life-altering incident, but her story is not defined by this moment in time alone. Claudia’s journey is a testament to her resilience, unwavering commitment to public service, and the remarkable accomplishments she has achieved over the past year.

Three years into her career as a law enforcement patrol officer Claudia Cormier’s life changed forever. While on routine patrol one evening, Claudia responded to a call for service of debris on the highway. Since it was her job to ensure this did not cause an accident, she decided to park her vehicle and exit her patrol car. Shortly thereafter, while attempting to keep the roadway safe she was struck by a speeding vehicle. The next thing Claudia noticed was that she was alone, in the dark, and missing her right leg. Instead of giving into fear, Claudia gathered herself and chose in that moment to be a survivor. The impact had launched her into an embankment along the grass and Claudia crawled approximately 50-feet back up toward the highway, but she was unable to radio for help. Fortunately, a passerby who happened to be a nurse had stopped and began rendering assistance.

Claudia is the epitome of resilience after a life-altering experience such as this. After a lengthy recovery, Claudia returned to law enforcement and worked in the Criminal Investigations Division for three years and then pursued advanced leadership positions within the department. After a rigorous examination process, Claudia was promoted to the rank of Corporal in the Patrol Division within the San Marcos Police Department.

CLAUDIA CORMIER



This milestone marks her ongoing commitment to her career in public service. In addition to such advancements in her professional career, Claudia is the recipient of some exceptional accolades and awards that speak to her unwavering dedication to public service that reaches beyond law enforcement and into her community.

One such award is the Systems Thinking Award which was awarded to Claudia for the development of a holistic research approach toward helping law enforcement personnel who were involved in traumatic

experiences. In addition, she was awarded The Fraternity and Sorority Life Advisor Award which is given to those who exemplify leadership on the Texas State University campus.

Claudia was also awarded the 40 Under 40 award which is designed to recognize 40 law enforcement professionals under the age of 40 from around the world who demonstrate leadership and exemplify commitment to their profession. Lastly, she was awarded the IACP/Flock Safety Leadership in Looking Beyond the License Plate Award recognizing the



dedication and initiative of individual police officers whose daily efforts during traffic stops play a large part in preventing additional, more severe crimes.

As we reflect on Claudia’s achievements and her remarkable resilience in the face of adversity, we can’t help but be inspired by her dedication to helping others. Her story serves as a beacon of hope, demonstrating that challenges can be overcome, and adversity can be turned into opportunities for growth.



Boren Fellow

VANESSA
DEMPEL



Baku • Azerbaijan

Vanessa Dempel's story is a great example of how the Boren Fellowship can make a big positive impact on a student's educational and professional life. Vanessa's journey is a fascinating blend of personal growth, career transition, and a commitment to public service.

Vanessa's story begins with meeting Eric Alper, a fellow student at Texas State University who shared his experience as a Boren Fellow in India. This interest encouraged Vanessa to deepen her understanding of studying abroad, leading her to discover an opportunity that aligned with her aspirations.

Interested in learning a new language, Vanessa, who was already translating German, decided to go back to graduate school. She studied Political Science and languages in college, and while her language skills helped her professionally, her interest in public service led her to a different path.

The Boren Fellowship's offer to fund language learning for six months, covering homestay, food, and additional expenses, was the motivation for Vanessa. Choosing the less common path of learning Turkish, a language critical for national security, appealed to her desire to challenge herself and contribute as a future public servant.

Vanessa, as a Boren Fellow, had a special language-learning experience. She had to learn Turkish in just six months, and she took on the challenge with determination. The fellowship, started in the 90s by Senator Boren to mix up language learning in America and inspire people to work for the government, connected Vanessa to a group of people with similar goals.

With Dr. Brian Smith's help from the Office of External

Funding, Vanessa went through a difficult and long application process. She spent a month writing essays on why her chosen language was important for national security. The competition motivated her to improve how she presented herself, an effort that later brought unexpected benefits.

At the beginning of Vanessa's day-to-day life as a Boren Fellow, she was living in Wisconsin for the summer of 2023. She took intense language learning sessions, facilitated by renowned instructors at the best language school in America. The experience laid a solid foundation, making her transition to the immersive abroad portion in Azerbaijan more seamless.

Vanessa finds herself at the crossroads of Georgia, Russia, Iran, and Turkey, on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The experience has not only honed her language skills but also broadened her perspective on cultural, political, and historical complexities.

The Boren Fellowship has not only impacted Vanessa's present but has also shaped her future aspirations. Vanessa envisions a career focused on immigration and marginalized communities. The fellowship has instilled in her a passion for understanding and addressing the integration of diverse populations into society.

For MPA students considering the Boren Fellowship, Vanessa's advice is clear – seize the opportunity. The fellowship not only provides a unique chance for a life-changing experience but also opens doors to numerous job opportunities. Through scholarships, fellowships, and networking, Vanessa emphasizes the importance of building connections that will pave the way for a fulfilling career.



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The Boren Fellowship has not only impacted Vanessa's present, but has also shaped her future aspirations. Vanessa envisions a career focused on immigration and marginalized communities. The fellowship has instilled in her a passion for understanding and addressing the integration of diverse populations into society.

The MPA Guest Speaker Series

The MPA program's lunch and learn series, initiated during the pandemic years, hosts at least three speakers of diverse backgrounds, and experiences every semester. Our students and faculty are introduced to new ideas in academia and practice through talks given by experts in the field who join us in person or via Zoom. This year's series hosted alumni of the MPA program who are environmental and urban forestry experts. Other featured speakers were experts in judicial administration and volunteer recruitment, placement, and management at the Peace Corps.

Bradly Barret & Keith O'Herrin

On Friday February 17th, 2023, the Master of Public Administration program hosted its first lunch and learn event of the year featuring Texas State MPA alumni Bradley Barrett (MPA, JD) and Keith O'Herrin (MPA PhD.) who presented to an audience of 22 students and 3 faculty members.

Bradley is the forest environmental coordinator for Klamath National Forest, California. His responsibilities include wildfire response and recovery, incident management, post fire recovery, and endangered species management. Barret also highlighted that all projects have been given new priority since the Biden Administration approved \$930 million to help the Forest Service curb the crisis of wildfires in the western part of the United States. He ended his presentation highlighting the benefits of the job and provided specific tips on how to pursue a career in forest environmental management.

Dr. O'Herrin works in the Union County Planning Department and North Carolina State Extension. His role as an urban forester includes planning, education, and outreach about tree management. O'Herrin explained what being an urban forester is by invoking a health analogy. He equated the urban forester to a public health official and an arborist to a doctor. In addition to promoting public health, urban forestation contributes to economic development by increasing property values, and increasing consumer spending in urban areas with shade and aesthetic beauty. O'Herrin provided examples of specific areas over time that have changed due to the addition of more trees and touched on the effects of climate change and natural disasters.

The Q&A portion of the talk focused on the most important skills employed by the speakers in their professions. Both Barrett and Dr. O'Herrin emphasized the importance of open communication, collaboration, and stakeholder management as skills that assist them in being effective and successful in their positions.



Aaron Williams

The Texas State MPA program's lunch and learn event on the 29th of March featured Mr. Aaron Williams. His talk was titled "Pathways to Public Service: Volunteerism, International Development, and Diplomacy". Both undergraduate and graduate students of public administration attended this event moderated by Dr. Helen Lowman. Mr. Williams discussed his professional experiences in the public, private and social sectors and shared how the knowledge gained from each sector shaped his mindset and guided his actions.

Reflecting upon his rich experience in volunteerism, international development, and diplomacy, he emphasized the importance of cultural competence, developing positive and productive relationships, clearly understanding the mission of an organization, rising up to challenges, being seen as a collaborative team player as important qualities for successful careers in public service. Attendees learned about his experiences in the Dominican Republic, South Africa, and Iraq and were inspired by his interaction with world leaders like Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. He also shared his experiences as the author of two books (*A Life Unimagined* and *The Young Black Leader's Guide to a Successful Career in International Affairs: What the Giants Want You to Know*) aimed at inspiring youth to consider public service.

Not only did he share his successes with students, but he also shared instances where his failures led to important life lessons. Students appreciated his personable, cheerful demeanor and his ability to connect with the students in an authentic manner. Echoing everyone's sentiment, MPA student Crosville Williams noted that "this was one of the best talks" he attended.



Judge Maame Frimpong

On Monday, April 10th, the MPA Lunch-and-Learn series hosted Judge Maame Frimpong, an attorney and judge who is currently serving as a judge of the United States District Court on the Central District of California. Prior to her appointment to the district court, Judge Frimpong also served as a judge of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, as vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary of the Millennium Challenge Corporation and in various positions in the United States Department of Justice.

Her Lunch-and-Learn presentation covered topics like presidential leadership, her motivations for entering into public service, fairness, her formative experiences, her accomplishments and career highlights, and advice for anyone looking to go into the legal field.

The MPA Lunch-and-Learn series, which was launched in the Spring of 2021, features academics and practitioners as speakers to introduce new perspectives on the field to both undergraduate and graduate students.



Peace Corps Director Carol Spahn

On Tuesday, October 17th, 80 students, faculty, and staff members attended a question-and-answer style presentation from Peace Corps Director Carol Spahn. Topics included the application process, the benefits of serving in the Peace Corps, the types of jobs available, and much more. The Peace Corps, created in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, is a United States volunteer organization that aims to assist developing countries by providing skilled workers in fields such as education, health, entrepreneurship, and community development.

Carol Spahn brings more than 25 years of public and private sector experience and has worked in countries around the world on issues ranging from small business development and infectious disease prevention to women's empowerment. She most recently served as the Peace Corps' chief executive officer and, prior to that, as acting director.

Also participating were current Peace Corps volunteer Christopher Fairchild, and a returned Peace Corps volunteer, Courtney Ray Goodson. Fairchild is a proud Texas State alum, graduating with a degree in economics and a minor in business administration in December 2022. He is currently serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia. As a volunteer, he is teaching at the SENA (or technical trade school) and coaching baseball and other sports. Soon he will begin teaching his own classes at the local college as well. Courtney Ray Goodson is a returned Peace Corps Volunteer (she served as a Business Volunteer in Fiji from 2009-2011), Goodson is now a part of the Texas State University Small Business Development Center, a Small Business Administration (SBA) sponsored organization that fosters small business growth.

After the Q&A, there were snacks and refreshments that attendees enjoyed while having informal conversations with the panelists and other Peace Corps volunteers and recruiters that were in attendance.



Graduate Student Research Conference

MPA students Eric Alper, Ryan Levine, Kaylee Boggan, and Claudia Cormier presented their applied research projects at this year's Graduate Student Research Conference (GSRC) which took place at the LBJ Student Center on the 4th of April. Their research projects were about solid waste management policies in Texas cities, assessment of urban biodiversity, elements of effective water conservation legislation, and creation of an effective return to duty program for law enforcement officers respectively. This year's conference format required poster presentations from all students registered for the conference.

Presenters also discussed their research in the context of systems thinking which is this year's common experience theme. Participating at the GSRC gave them an opportunity to present their work to a diverse audience of students and faculty from various disciplines, family, and friends. The pre-conference process of meticulously preparing the posters for a diverse audience and the in-conference experience of responding to various questions posed by the attendees provided ideas for the refinement of research. This year's presenters and attendees also benefited from listening to a panel of four university professors who shared their perspectives about the different systems students must navigate and sometimes establish to be successful graduate and doctoral students.

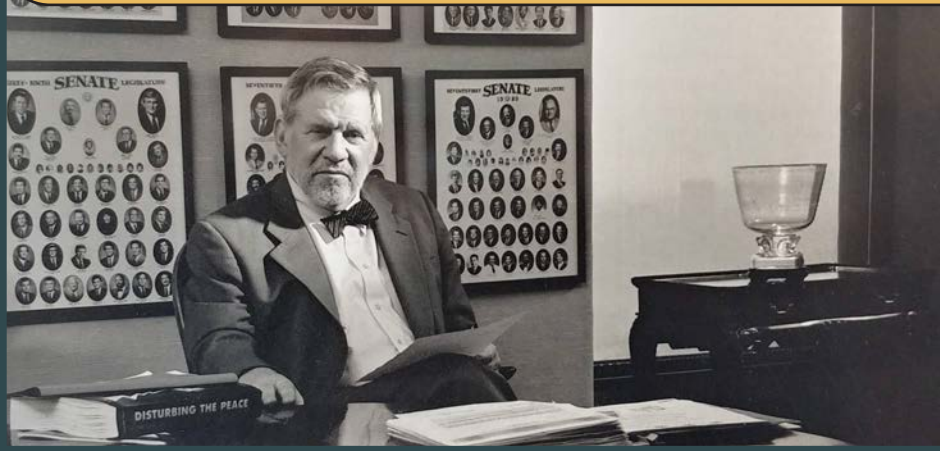


CALL TO ALUMNI:

Did you graduate from the TXST MPA program? We would love to hear from you! Check out the Alumni page on our website to reconnect with us, tell us what you're up to, and share some advice for our current students.

Scan here to visit our website:





Hobby Center Update

The Texas State University William P. Hobby Center for Public Service was established in 1998 after the University received a gift of a \$1 million dollar endowment from former Texas Lt. Governor William P. Hobby.

After the gift was received, The William P. Hobby Center for Public Service was created to provide financial, administrative & logistical support for the public administration and public policy programs conducted by Texas State University's Political Science Department.

In addition to providing financial and logistical support for programs such as Texas State University's Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program, the endowment created an endowed professorship named after former Texas Lt. Governor William P. Hobby. Dr. Howard Balanoff was named as the first Hobby Professor and currently holds the Hobby Endowed Professorship.

Since 1998, the Hobby Center has continued to provide administrative and financial support for public administration and public policy programs. During the period of January 1, 2023 – November 30, 2023, the William P. Hobby Center for Public Service established and sponsored a variety of programs and activities for Texas State University and the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA).

1 The Hobby Center is the Home of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) Good Governance Worldwide Journal/Website.

ASPAs Good Governance Worldwide (GGW) journal/website provides a worldwide network of professional public administrators and academics with a forum for distributing practical information and recommendations for solving public policy and administration problems and dilemmas.

2 ASPA National Conference 1-Day Symposium on March 24, 2023

The Hobby Center selected speakers and conducted a 1-day virtual Symposium on Friday, March 24, 2023. The Symposium was held on the last day of ASPA's National Conference. A series of outstanding speakers presented a variety of excellent presentations on the Symposium theme of "Meeting the Public Policy and Public Administration Challenges of the Next Decade."

The Symposium featured the 2023 William P. Hobby Distinguished Lecture which was delivered virtually at the National ASPA Conference on March 24, 2023.

3 CENTEX ASPA In-Person Awards Luncheon on May 20, 2023

The Hobby Center sponsored the CENTEX ASPA in-person Awards Luncheon in honor of Public Service Recognition Week on Saturday May 20th at Palmer's Restaurant in San Marcos, Texas. The Luncheon was the first in-person event held by the CENTEX ASPA Chapter since the COVID pandemic began in March 2020.

At the CENTEX Luncheon awards were presented to practitioners, alumni, and students at Texas State University's Master of Public Administration (MPA Program), Texas A&M University's George Bush School of Government and Public Service and the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs.

4 Funding for Distinguished Texas State University MPA Alumni Awards at 50th Anniversary on September 23, 2023.

On Saturday, September 23, 2023, the Texas State University MPA Program conducted an in-person anniversary Luncheon in honor of the Program's 50 Years of existence. The Luncheon was held at the Texas State University LBJ Student Center in San Marcos, Texas.

The Hobby Center provided the funding for awards presented to distinguished alumni and faculty at the 50th Anniversary MPA Program Luncheon held at the LBJ Student Center on September 23, 2023.



5 Sponsorship of 1 Day Seminar on Artificial Intelligence (AI) at TXST University Campus in Round Rock, Texas on October 27, 2023.

In cooperation with CENTEX ASPA, ASPA's Section for Public Management Practice and e.Republic the Hobby Center selected speakers and sponsored a one-day Symposium on Artificial Intelligence which was conducted at the Texas State University Round Rock campus.

6 Additional Support and Sponsorships

- Five (5) \$1,000 Scholarships were funded for Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) & Master of Public Administration (MPA) students.
- Membership fees were paid for nine (9) Master of Public Administration (MPA) students.
- Housing and summer session salary support for an international MPA Student under the Hobby Center's Visiting International Students in Texas (VISIT) Program.
- Continued logistical support was provided to the Texas CPM Program, located in Arlington, Texas.



Dr. Howard Balanoff
 Director
 William P. Hobby Center for Public Service

For additional information about the William P. Hobby Center for Public Service, please go to www.txst.edu/cpm or contact Dr. Howard Balanoff, hb02@txstate.edu the Director of the Hobby Center.

Scan here to visit our website:



CENTEX ASPA PRESENTS

Public Service Recognition Week

CENTEX ASPA conducted an in-person Awards Luncheon in honor of Public Service Recognition Week on Saturday, May 20th at Palmer's Restaurant in San Marcos, Texas. The Luncheon was the first in-person event held by CENTEX ASPA since the COVID pandemic began in March 2020.

Awards were presented to practitioners, alumni, and students at Texas State University's Master of Public Administration (MPA Program), Texas A&M University's George Bush School of Government and Public Service, and the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs.

The CENTEX ASPA Public Service Recognition Week Awards Luncheon was sponsored by Texas State University's William P. Hobby Center for Public Service. Participating universities included Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government and Public Service, the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs, and Texas State University's Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program.

The Luncheon began at about 11:30 am with a meet and greet reception which was followed by a plated lunch for about 50 attendees. The awards program ended at about 1:30 pm and was followed by a brief meeting of CENTEX ASPA Officers and Governing Board Members to discuss the selection of program events and activities for the 2023/2024 calendar years.

The featured speaker at the Awards Program was Alan Bojorquez, Attorney and CEO of the Bojorquez Law Firm. The title of his presentation was "Ethics and Public Administration at Democracy's Junction". A Distinguished Alumnus Award was presented by Texas State University MPA Director, Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan to Stephanie Reyes, City Manager of San Marcos, Texas. Dr. Tom Longoria, Texas State MPA faculty member presented a Distinguished Alumnus award to the Honorable Larry Gonzales, former member of the Texas House of Representatives.

Dr. Rangarajan also presented the McGrew Research Award to MPA students Kaylee Boggan and Ryan Levine. Dr. Lori Taylor, from Texas A&M presented the McGrew Research Awards to Bush School

faculty Dr. Deborah Kerr and Dr. Robbie Robichau for their students' Capstone Projects, and Dr. Ken Matwiczak from the University of Texas presented a McGrew Research Award to Dr. David Eaton from the LBJ School for his student's Policy Research Project.

Students from the Texas State University MPA Program and Texas A&M's Bush School were recognized for being inducted into Pi Alpha Alpha, the Global Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. In addition, Texas State University's MPA Program recognized students receiving William P. Hobby Scholarships for the 2023/2024 academic years.

For a detailed Awards Luncheon Program Schedule which includes the names of all award recipients and for additional information about CENTEX ASPA's current and future events, please go to CENTEX ASPA's website www.centexaspa.org

If you have any questions or need any additional information about CENTEX ASPA activities and programs, please contact Dr. Howard Balanoff, hb02@txstate.edu the CENTEX ASPA Special Projects Coordinator.



CPM Update



The **Texas Certified Public Manager Program** has had a very successful 2023. We celebrated our largest graduation to date this summer, graduating 125 students. Together with our winter graduation, we have graduated over 240 students this year. We are also pleased to announce the restart of our partnership with A&M University, which now offers our CPM program at their Laredo location at A&M International.

Additionally, we are developing a new partnership with the Texas Association of Regional Councils. This program will commence in January, and we are thrilled to collaborate with such a prestigious organization with members from across Texas.

Our program at Texas State University also grew in 2023. We piloted an online version of the program in partnership with the University of Houston. The online program is designed for students unable to attend an in-person location. The pilot was highly successful, and following the encouragement of students and alums, we have decided to continue offering this online option. We have just closed admissions for the 2024 online cohort, which filled up very quickly, underscoring our decision to continue providing this valuable service.

We continue to make select Certified Public Manager courses available for academic credit. It is gratifying to note the participation of many Texas State University graduate and undergraduate students this year. Many of these students have been involved through our partnerships with the Department of Political Science and the Department of Organization, Workforce, and Leadership Studies.



Dr. Miha Vindis
 Director
 Certified Public Manager Program

For additional information about the Certified Public Management program, check out our website or contact Dr. Miha Vindis, program director.

Scan here
 to visit our
 website:



MPA Graduates

2023

Applied Research Project:

Eric Alper • "Examining Sustainable Materials Management in Texas: City-Level Analysis and Policy Recommendations"

Kayle Boggan • "The Elements of Effective Water Conservation Legislation in Texas"

Claudia Cormier • "A Gradual Return to Duty Program: An Integral Process for Officers and Civilian Staff of a Law Enforcement Agency"

Christine Cowden • "Exploratory Study of Suburban Housing Affordability Barriers from the Perspectives of Suburban City Planners in Texas"

Josephine Falletta • "A Model Assessment Tool for Building Permit Processing: A Case Study of the City of San Marcos"

Ross Hendrickson • "The Offensive Attack Against Cardiac Arrest: An Examination of Two Differing CPR Programs by Analyzing Return of Spontaneous Circulation and patient Discharge Rate in a Fire and EMS Department"

Ryan Levine • "Assessing Urban Biodiversity Using the Practical-Ideal Type Framework: A Case Study of San Marcos, TX"

Ciana Seddon • "An Ideal Model for Bus Electrification Gauging 10 Municipal Plans for the Transition to Zero-Emission and Hybrid Bus Models"

Non-Thesis Track:

Nelson Avelar
Mona Bakshi
Erica Bellanova
Yasmine Huntley

Tameen Imran
Robert Johnson
Chelsea Johnson
Jordan Moore

Katelyn Moriarty
Kelli Olsen
Garrett Pringle
Latoya Uzoukwu

Faculty Achievements 2023

Refereed Publications & Book Chapters:

Eby, R. F., & **Rangarajan, N.** (2023) Campus sustainability plans: past, present, and future. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*.

Folarin, S., **Balanoff, H. R.**, & Jalal, M. (2023, October 12). Best Practices from the Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program. *Good Governance Worldwide*, (2023 Symposia Issue).

Hanks, E. K., & Hanks, J. C. (2023). Ethics and communication: The essence of human behavior. In *Nano-safety: What we need to know to protect workers* (2nd ed.). Berlin, Germany: DeGruyter.

Longoria, T., & Manganaro, L. L. (2023). The Determinants of Voting for Republican Congressional Candidates in the Texas Borderlands. *Social Science Quarterly*, 104(7), 1392-1405.

Manoharan, A. P., & **Rangarajan, N.** (2023). Communication pedagogy in public affairs programs: Insights from a study of MPA and MPP curricula. *Teaching Public Administration*, 41(2), 221-242.

Shields, P. M. (2023). How Afghanistan influenced the Content of *Armed Forces & Society: An Editor's Reflection*. *Armed Forces & Society*, 49(4), 893-912.

Inbody, D. S., & **Shields, P. M.** (2023). Perspectives on the Afghanistan War: Commentaries on a Misadventure. *Armed Forces & Society*, 49(4), 883-892.

Book Review:

Fields, B. (2023). Cycling for sustainable cities. *Journal of Urban Design*, 28(6), 701-703.

Conference Presentations & Webinars:

Fields, W. M., Los Ciudad Nos Espera, "The Emerging Street of the Future," Las Naves Centre d'innovació social i urbana, Las Naves Centre d'innovació social i urbana, Valencia, Spain. (July 2023).

Fields, W. M., Transforming Streets for Resilient Communities, "Transforming Streets for Resilient Communities: International Overview," Metro New Orleans Chapter of the American Planning Association. (May 2023).

Longoria, T., Midwest Political Science Association, "Determinates of Voting for Republican Candidates in the Texas Borderlands," Chicago, IL. (April 2023).

Rangarajan, N. Annual Conference of the American Society for Public Administration, Presenter "Instilling Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Values in Future Public Service Professionals: Insights from a Document Analysis of DEI Plans" March, 2023 Virtual Conference

Rangarajan, N., Annual Conference of the American Society for Public Administration, Presenter and Moderator "Enhancing Public Service Capabilities through Innovative Education" March, 2023 Virtual Conference

Shields, P., Rangarajan, N., & Casula, M. Annual Conference of the American Society for Public Administration, Presenter "Gauging Research: Uncovering Democratic Norms as we Bridge the Worlds of Practice and Scholarship" March, 2023 Virtual Conference

Shields, P. M., Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces & Society Bi-Annual Conference, "How the Afghanistan War Influenced the content of *Armed Forces & Society: An Editor's 20-year Reflection*," Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces & Society, Reston, United States. (October, 2023).

Shields, P. M. & Soeters, J., Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy annual meeting, "Jane Addams and the Nobel Art of Peaceweaving," SAAP, Denver, CO. (March 2023).

Shields, P. M., Military-Civilian Transition Research Forum, "How Afghanistan Influenced the Content of *Armed Forces & Society: An Editor's Reflection*," Military-Civilian Transition Office, Department of Defense, (December, 2023).

Shields, P. M., Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society bi-annual conference, "Academic Publishing in Military Studies: Insights and Tips from an Experienced Editor," Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, Reston, VA, United States. (October, 2023).

Vindis, M., Centex Chapter of ASPA, "Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Equity: Overcoming Barriers to Access," Organized by ASPA/Good Governance Worldwide Journal & William P. Hobby Center for Public Service, Texas State University Campus (Round Rock), Round Rock, TX, United States. (October, 2023).

Balanoff, H. R., Suri, J., Bojorquez, A., Sculley, S., "Meeting the Public Policy and Public Administration Challenges of the Next Decade," American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), Virtual National Conference (March, 2023).

Meet Our Faculty:



Dr. Chris Brown
Professor



Dr. Howard Balanoff
Professor
Director, Hobby Center for Public Service



Dr. Billy Fields
Professor



Dr. Emily Hanks
Associate Professor



Dr. Susan Johnson
Lecturer



Dr. Thomas Longoria
Professor



Dr. Sherri Mora
Professor of Practice



Dr. Dianne Rahm
Professor



Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan
Professor
Director, MPA Program



Dr. Pat Shields
Regent's Professor



Dr. Hassan Tajalli
Professor



Dr. Miha Vindis
Professor of Practice
Director, CPM Program



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The MPA Program is designed to cultivate practical, research-oriented students for careers as reflective practitioners guided by democratic values, integrity, and public service.