

Public Matters

JANUARY-DECEMBER, 2021

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MAGAZINE

TEXAS
STATE
UNIVERSITY

NASPAA SUSTAINABILITY BADGE

Texas State MPA Program is awarded the Sustainability Badge from NASPAA

NEW PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE

Dr. Miha Vindis joins the MPA Faculty

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

Learn about Melissa Steger, Kelvin Spencer, and Jenn Golech's public service accomplishments.



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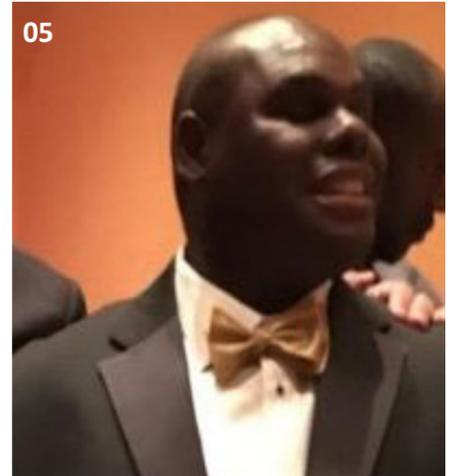
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Texas State University's
Manager-in-Residence:
James Earp
Assistant City Manager
Kyle, TX

For more information on this program, see page 27.

Director's Corner



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I hope you enjoy this fourth edition of *Public Matters*, the annual magazine of Texas State University's public administration program. This edition covers student, faculty, and alumni accomplishments for the year 2021.

Our work as educators took on new meaning as our programmatic activities were carried out in the midst of events that challenged the field. Public administration was thrust into the spotlight in 2020 with the onset of the pandemic and ensuing expectations for effective government responses to it. The start of 2021 was no different, at least in the state of Texas. The raging pandemic coupled with an extreme weather event in February paralyzed the state and public administrators managing and regulating public utilities, emergency preparedness, and water services faced incessant public scrutiny.

With the state experiencing snowfall, icy conditions leading to slippery roads, blackouts, water shutdowns, boil water notices, and fatalities, there were many learning moments for academics, practitioners, and students of public administration. This edition provides details about a couple of timely talks organized to shed light on these issues. Mr. James Cargas provided insights into avoiding another catastrophic blackout in Texas and Mr. Juan Ortiz's talk offered insights into the city of Austin's office of homeland security and emergency preparedness. In addition to these talks, several other expert speakers were invited to engage in conversations with our students about topics of fundamental importance to the field such as diversity and inclusion, communication, and collaborative competencies, details of which are provided in this edition of *Public Matters*.

Our efforts to bridge the gap between academia and practice continues with the addition of Dr. Miha Vindis, to our faculty as a professor of practice. His experience in the private and non-profit sectors will help our undergraduate and graduate students understand

the nexus between government, business, and civil society. Our manager-in-residence Mr. James Earp continues to provide mentorship to students about the practice side of government. Read about the scholarly article on the Manager-in-Residence program at Texas State University in the faculty publications section of this magazine.

The piece about applied research projects further reinforces our commitment to cultivate research-oriented practitioners. Imparting skills such as divergent thinking during the research ideation process, project management skills and communication skills for research reporting are hallmarks of this pathway to graduation. Readers will find a full list 2021 graduates and their culminating projects in this edition of the magazine.

The alumni spotlight sheds light on the accomplishments of MPA alumnae Melissa Steger, the current president of the Public Risk Management Association, Jenn Golech, a transportation specialist for Project Connect, and Kelvin Spencer, an enforcement specialist for the Environmental Protection Agency. True to our mission of cultivating research-oriented practitioners, our alumnae and students have been participating in research conferences, engaging in academic and applied research. Many such achievements are highlighted in this magazine.

As we wrap up 2021 and look forward to a new year, we renew our commitment to exemplary research, teaching, service, and student success through high-quality curricular and co-curricular experiences.



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

Dr. Miha Vindis

New MPA faculty member and Director of the CPM Program.

Dr. Miha Vindis joined the MPA faculty as a professor of practice in the Fall of 2021. He currently teaches undergraduate and graduate courses covering various management and organizational topics. Dr. Vindis is also the new director of the Certified Public Manager (CPM) program, where he is working on expanding across Texas and beyond.

“I am excited to be part of the MPA program at Texas State University and enjoy supporting our students as they prepare for professional careers.”

Dr. Vindis was born in Slovenia and grew up in Thailand. He attended university in Germany, where he studied business and literature. Dr. Vindis began his professional career at Deloitte, working in Financial Advisory Services on financial due diligence reports for various clients. In 2002, he joined Shell, where he held several posts in the company’s downstream business in Europe. His work focused on supply chain optimization and strategy, which took him across much of the European continent.

Dr. Vindis earned his Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin in Public Policy and concentrated on virtual leadership and strategy. Most of his research focuses on behavioral economics and the means through which we build and sustain trust. Dr. Vindis has taught management and finance courses at the McCombs School of Business and is also on the faculty at the Executive Masters in Public Leadership at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at University of Texas – Austin.

In addition to his academic work, Dr. Vindis is also a founding partner of Engage Leadership Consulting, a niche consulting firm focused on leadership and team development. He is also a partner at Realized LLC, where he advises clients on scenario thinking and strategic planning.

“I began leadership consulting in 2010 and have been able to combine my professional and academic expertise. This work has exposed me to a variety of case studies and ideas which I often draw on in courses.”

In his spare time, Dr. Vindis is a mentor for MBA students & entrepreneurs and a social enterprise angel investor. He also serves on the Board of Habitat for Humanity Texas and is an adviser for numerous student organizations. He currently lives in Austin, TX, with his wife, two cats, and a dog.

The MPA program is proud to welcome him to the faculty here at Texas State.



MPA Program Awarded Sustainability Badge

NASPAA
Public Service Indicators
Texas State University



NASPAA recognizes TXST’s MPA program & its sustainability initiative.

Texas State’s Master of Public Administration program in 2021 was awarded the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration’s Sustainability Badge, recognizing the program’s exemplary courses and scholarship in sustainability. The program’s “significant content focused on sustainability” qualifies it as a model for similar programs. Texas State is one of four schools that received badges this year and recognized on NASPAA’s awards page. The NASPAA recognition was enabled by Drs. Rahm, Fields, and Brown’s quality contributions to the area.

Dr. Dianne Rahm teaches undergraduate and graduate classes with a focus on environmental policy. Dr. Rahm’s research has sought to explore the intersection of public policy with science and technology in general and energy and the environment. Her work on policy for environmental cleanup of contaminated facilities, hazardous and toxic waste policy, energy policy including state efforts to boost renewable energy, policy toward fracking and the impacts of fracking on communities, climate change policies, and general environmental polices regulating air, water, solid and hazardous wastes, land, species, the oceans, and the atmosphere is internationally known.

Dr. Billy Fields’s courses on urban sustainable transportation help build an understanding of the historic foundation of transportation policy. In his classes students explore the underlying concepts related to congestion management, transit, and active transportation planning, and impacts on land use and sustainability. The experiential focus of the class unpacks the transit and active transportation systems of the Netherlands when offered as a study abroad course and the US system and that of central Texas when it is offered during the regular semesters.

Professor Christopher Brown’s work examines water policy from a sustainability lens. He observes that no single public policy problem will be more urgent than maintaining a water supply for the state of Texas’ burgeoning population. The singular importance of this increasingly scarce resource compels everyone planning a career in public service to learn the fundamental principles of Texas ground and surface water law, the responsibilities of state and local governments charged with water-related responsibilities, and the regulatory framework that governs the Texas water supply. Professor Brown hopes that his course will also help students gain an understanding of our collective responsibility as problem solvers for the public that relies on government for water.

TXST MPA Alumna is the New President of Texas Municipal League

On May 11, 2021 MPA Alumna Martha Castex-Tatum was named the new President of the Texas Municipal League (TML). TML is a voluntary association established in 1913. Today, more than 16,000 mayors, council members, city managers, city attorneys, and department heads are member officials of TML through their cities’ participation. Guided by its purpose statement—Empowering Texas cities to serve their citizens—the League provides legislative, legal, and training services to city governments.

Martha graduated from the Texas State MPA program in 1997 after completing an applied research project entitled “Violence in the workplace: An assessment of HEB distribution center’s security procedures”. The purpose of her research was to provide “insights into workplace violence preparedness that organizations may often overlook”. Since graduating from the program, Martha has held some important positions in public service. From 2000-2003 she served on the San Marcos City Council and in 2018, Castex-Tatum was elected to Houston’s District K Council seat. She also served as the Vice Mayor Pro Tem of the City of Houston. Martha holds the unique distinction of being the first TML president to have served on two city councils.

In her new role as president of TML, Castex-Tatum says she will provide assistance to the staff of over 1,150 Texas member cities that belong to the TML network. She noted that she is “looking forward to working alongside some dynamic elected officials who dedicate themselves to serving Texans every day.” The Texas State MPA program congratulates Martha on this wonderful accomplishment and wishes her the very best as she works to enhance local government effectiveness in the state of Texas.





Alumni Spotlights

Hear from three MPA alumni. Learn how they've shaped their careers and what they took away from their time at Texas State.

Melissa Steger

Associate Director
Austin, TX



Melissa Steger began her career at The University of Texas System (UT System) as a workers' compensation clerk, filing documents and running errands. She soon began asking questions, learning more about workers' compensation and, as a result, was promoted several times over a short period. "I set a goal as my young career grew to someday run UT System's self-insured, self-administered workers' compensation program." As a steppingstone, she decided to pursue a Master of Public Administration degree.

Texas State University's MPA program was able to accommodate her full-time employment through evening courses, as well as provide her an additional layer of learning through personal experiences other students could share within each class. "The friendships, networking, and support from professors were valuable takeaways," Steger notes. Working on the Applied Research Project (ARP) was both difficult and unique, "the ARP is undoubtedly an arduous process requiring focus, time-management, and a commitment that far outweighs everyday life distractions. Managing these challenges is a lifelong by-product of the ARP process that continues to benefit me today."

Steger succeeded in meeting her career goal, she is now the Associate Director for Workers' Compensation at UT System, overseeing the unemployment fund covering more than 125,000 employees and a department that is performing at record-breaking levels. She is also President-elect on the Board of Directors for the National Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA), the largest risk management association dedicated solely to the practice of risk management in the public sector. "My career has been peppered with strong mentors who saw potential in me and took a chance on my ability," Steger says, PRIMA gave her a platform to offer the same opportunity to others. With membership, PRIMA gives students the ability to connect with other professionals, creating valuable networks and help towards their lifelong careers.

Thinking back to her MPA, Steger remembers when she was feeling overwhelmed, and she began to internally challenge her ability. Her ARP advisor, Dr. Patricia Shields, gave her the confidence to finish. "I still lean on that gift today and pass that same message on to current and future students of the program. You are good enough and do deserve that degree and the accolades that come with it."



Kelvin Spencer

Enforcement Officer
Dallas, TX

Kelvin Spencer is an Enforcement Officer for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Dallas, TX, holding companies and government agencies responsible for their environmental impact by ensuring Texas' soil and water are not contaminated with pollutants from construction projects. Delivering essential work to keep our rivers, natural springs, and bodies of water clean, Spencer is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment where people can live their lives without fear of hazardous waste products entering their food or water.

Spencer credits his social and classroom experiences at Texas State in helping prepare him for his position with the EPA and his career in public administration, mentioning specifically his courses with Drs. Howard Balanoff and Patricia Shields. "I originally wasn't even in the MPA program but studied sociology with an interest in public policy," he says, "the Department of Sociology suggested that I try out the MPA program and everything went from there." His interest in public administration grew with each class he took, learning how to help improve the lives within his community. His research papers focused on accessibility, information management systems, and environmental policy, all topics which turned out to relate directly to his current position. He adds, it all "ended up coming together."

Spencer's Applied Research Project (ARP) was a culmination of his research on accessibility, entitled "Assessing the Accessibility for the Blind and Visually Impaired of Texas State Agency Web Sites". His research spoke from both a personal and professional point-of-view, citing developing improvements in technology being made available for the visually impaired. This newness brought its own obstacles, "it was a challenge to find out all this information and learn all the new technology for the blind and visually impaired while being blind, myself." Spencer believes it was "time well spent," however, as he now uses these tools and resources in his daily work.

Committed to making Texas a safer place to live, Spencer credits Texas State with giving him the foundations upon which he was able to build his career. In the years to come, he is looking at expanding his education within the field of public policy; and has expressed interest in public representation. Spencer readily encourages students take advantage of everything they learn from their courses and professors, "anything that interests someone is something worth exploring and reading more about."

OPERATIONS CONTROL CENTER



Jenn Golech

Deputy Officer
Austin, TX

Originally hailing from Ohio, Jenn Golech received her undergraduate degree from Kent State University. Her interest in the public sector began at 18 years old, when she was hired to drive a bus for the university. After she graduated and accepted a private-sector position in her degree field, she realized she wanted to return to public transit and took a job with the City of Austin's transit agency, Capital Metro. It didn't take long for her to develop the goal of seeking a leadership position within the agency, and within the 14 years she worked with Capital Metro, she was ultimately promoted to Director of Operations and Customer Experience.

She credits the Texas State Master of Public Administration program with helping her reach that goal, having graduated with her MPA in 2012. Working full-time, as a single mother with a young baby, she says, "it nearly killed me! But I was so appreciative of having all the classes necessary to complete the degree offered at night or online." Coming in with work experience also made Golech feel her graduate courses were easier than her undergraduate courses, "I had already been working in the public sector, so everything felt applicable rather than abstract." Her courses on legislation and law have been especially helpful, and her ARP developed her understanding of tackling large projects. "It taught me how to take a very, very large project and break it down incrementally to have a successful outcome...in a specified amount of time." Learned skills, she still uses in her day-to-day life.

She was with a private tech company for about a year after leaving Capital Metro, when she realized she missed the public sector, "For me," Golech says, "it just wasn't as compelling to work for the bottom line as it was to work for the public good." Today, Golech is the Deputy Officer for the City of Austin's Project Connect, a \$7.1 billion sustainable transit expansion project coordinated with Capital Metro and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), with an estimated 13-year implementation timeline. With so many different stakeholders involved, a lot of coordination needs to take place. The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) has very specific requirements, Golech works closely with bills passed down through the Texas legislature, and often interacts with City lawyers on policy and conflicting ordinances.

When asked if she has any advice for future students, Golech offered, "I think education is always useful and you get out of it, what you put into it...also, be open to what professors and other students have to say, you can really learn a lot." When speaking about the public sector, she finishes by adding, "there's a limitless amount of jobs you could do or things you could learn, the field is wide open. I think it's great to get as many people involved as possible."

The PAFR Fellowship Program

MPA students learn new skills, while helping local governments simplify their financial reports.



Every year, Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) connect MPA students and local governments around the country via the Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) Fellowship program. Fellows examine a city's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, a lengthy document containing everything that occurred in its previous fiscal year, and develops a PAFR, a shorter, more digestible report that can be better understood by members of the local community. In turn, the PAFRs are submitted to GFOA's awards program, created to encourage the regular development of these simplified reports.

Jay Alvarado, current Texas State MPA student, was assigned to work with the City of Mesquite, TX, home to 145,410 residents with a budget of over \$230 million. Along with weekly virtual meetings with ELGL, Alvarado worked closely with Mesquite's chief financial officer, Cindy Smith, and other PAFR fellows to create Mesquite's first PAFR for GFOA awards contention. As many fellows do not live near their assigned governments, they must take the initiative to research the local area to create a more familiar document for its local community. Alvarado was trained to read financial budget documents, to develop various forms of graphics for easy communication, to utilize Canva and Excel, and how to best communicate with his assigned city. By the end of the program, fellows successfully developed an interesting and informative financial document that can be printed for distribution and / or published online, which helps to promote pride and transparency in the local government and community. Alvarado added, "I proudly accomplished my first goal towards a 2nd career in public service. The PAFR Fellowship was an exciting learning opportunity, and I highly recommend it for anyone seeking invaluable experience in state and local government financial management. I am honored that GFOA / ELGL selected me for the program, and I am proud of the accomplishment."

The PAFR Fellowship program provided a rewarding experience for Desiree Adair, Texas State 2020 MPA graduate. Adair partnered with Eagle County, CO, which has a population of 55,127 and is home to the Vail Resort and Ski area. Her fellowship experience consisted of remote workshops with the ELGL program manager, GFOA experts and other fellows, as well as weekly meetings with Eagle County's finance manager and senior accountant. Adair says, "I gained a deeper understanding of budgets, finance, and financial reporting to the public," it provided a real-time application of knowledge gained from her MPA program. Adair found it "interesting to see the implementation of CARES Act funds received and the planning for ARPA funding to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 within the county." Her professional development included learning best design practices and



Top Photo: Texas State MPA student, Jay Alvarado
Bottom Photo: Texas State MPA alumna, Desiree Adair

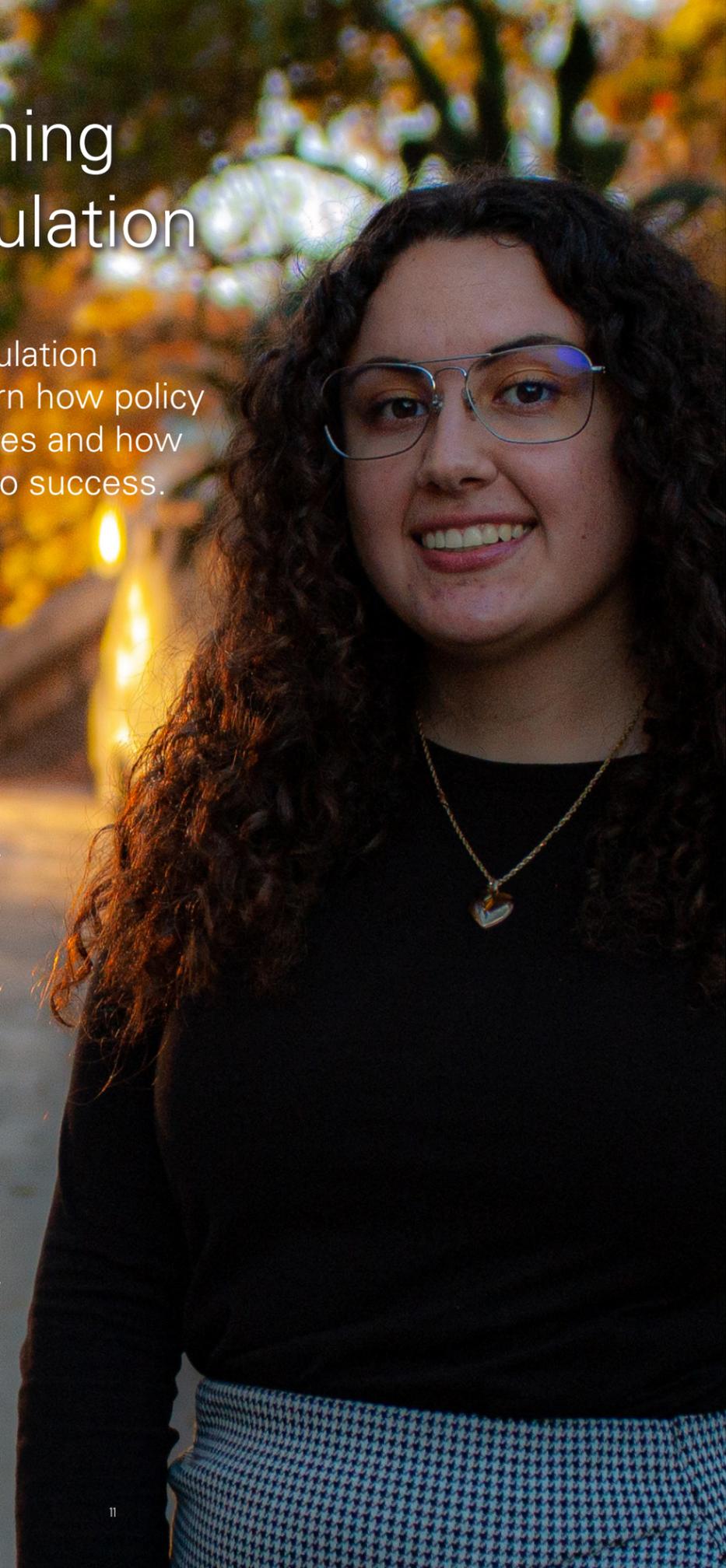
Canva Pro, enhanced knowledge of public finance, expansion of Excel presentation skills, as well as the opportunity to grow her network with public sector professionals and other fellows in Texas and across the nation. During Adair's fellowship she concluded, "my passion for public service has grown and my professional skillset has expanded, while providing a valuable public contribution." MPA students who are offered participation in the PAFR Fellowship program will regard it as an excellent opportunity to grow, learn, and provide service within a local government environment.

Applied Learning Through Simulation

With NASPAA-Batten Simulation Competition, students learn how policy actions impact people's lives and how communication is critical to success.

On February 27, Texas State MPA student, Breanna Higgins, participated in the virtual 2021 NASPAA-Batten Student Simulation Competition, a day-long event allowing graduate students around the world to test their skills with real-world public policy issues. Simulations were developed by the Center for Leadership Simulation and Gaming at the University of Virginia's Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy. This year's NASPAA competition featured nearly 400 students from 120 universities in 30 countries at 4 regional competitions, with the final four 1st place regional winners later facing off to determine the 2021 competition winner. As part of the competition, teams put together a policy memo and presentation. Evaluations of student performance were based on the team's simulation scores and observations by subject matter experts who served as judges.

Out of twenty competing teams, Higgins and her teammates placed fourth in their regional competition. "Doing well is always the goal, however, my teammates and I decided to just enjoy the opportunity," Higgins added, "during the event, we learned the importance of communication with one another and the other countries in our competition world. However, a big takeaway I had was 'Economies can recover, but people cannot.'" While Higgins and her team did not walk away as first-place winners, she did walk away with a better understanding of how policy actions and inactions impact lives. "The 2021 NASPAA-Batten Competition, while virtual, led me to meet incredible people and learn so much about public policy. I hope those in the future, who decide to compete, remember to communicate, contribute globally, and have fun."



Advocating for Accessibility

MPA Alumna Melissa Bell gave a presentation based on her applied research project at the Northeast Conference on Public Administration (NECoPA) in November 2021. Melissa's career has involved serving people who are deaf or hard of hearing in state government and the non-profit sector for over 20 years. In her capacity as an advocate and ally, she has promoted equal access and equal opportunity and now oversees the advocacy and technology specialist programs serving this population for the State of Texas. Her applied research project focused on developing a model lay advocacy program to serve people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Ideal components were compiled through a thorough review of the literature and then evaluated by directors of state agencies across the country that oversee advocacy programs within state government agencies. The topic was of great interest to her and had important implications for the field in which she works.

Through her research, Melissa discovered areas where advocacy programs could be strengthened. She realized that forming cohesion among states' advocacy programs, formalizing the advocacy profession through certification and training programs, and developing best practices were of utmost importance. Melissa is always looking for opportunities to spread awareness about the issues faced by the deaf and hard of hearing population. When she learned that NECoPA's conference theme in 2021 centered around diversity, equity, and inclusion, she submitted a proposal and invited Matthew Dickens, deaf advocate and current state employee, to co-present in American Sign Language on the value and impact of enhancing services for the deaf and hard of hearing community. Melissa recommends pursuing these types of opportunities to other students and alumni.



Melissa said that she "appreciated the opportunity to be part of NECoPA this year to speak on the topic of inclusion for people who are deaf or hard of hearing". She also noted that "I feel passionate about the work of advocacy for this segment of the population to be able to have access to information and communication in all areas of life. It was fascinating to learn about the research other presenters have conducted on various topics in government related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Most other presentations focused on race, gender, and other topics popular in the mainstream, so I was glad to have the chance to include accessibility issues to the dialogue."

Speaking at NECoPA was one of Melissa's first venues to promote the research she conducted. She hopes to participate in future conferences and events to interact with practitioners with similar interests and advance scholarship in this area. She drafted a manuscript suitable for a scholarly journal, based on her ARP, and is pursuing a venue where it could be published to raise awareness among a wider audience of the advocacy efforts needed to serve this population.

Inspiring our Future Leaders

Texas State students speak with local government professionals.

In September, Texas State partnered with Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) to hold an online event as part of ELGL's #ELGLInspire series. Sponsored by Texas City and County Management Association (TCMA) and the Government Finance Officers Association of Texas (GFOAT), 11 professionals from local governments around the Austin, TX area met with more than 70 Texas State students, many of whom belonged to the political science and public administration programs, to discuss "the challenges and opportunities in each sector of local government."

Each presenter spoke about their career and specific field, including city management, finance, and public works. Afterwards, students were given the opportunity to interact in small groups with each presenter, networking with the professionals and asking them questions. The day concluded with a presentation

on "Next Steps," which sought to instruct interested students on how to find work in local government or pursue related graduate degrees.

The event was met with positive reviews. When asked about their favorite part, one student replied, "can I say – everything!?! I enjoyed listening to... each of the speakers. It was truly inspiring." Another singled-out Stephanie Reyes, Assistant City Manager of San Marcos, "she reminds me of one of my coworkers – clear, concise, and genuine. You could tell, she just stands out."

ELGL is a professional organization designed to "engage the brightest minds in local government... with the objective of fostering authentic and meaningful connections that are grounded in practices of equity and inclusion."

Texas State University's William P. Hobby Center for Public Service

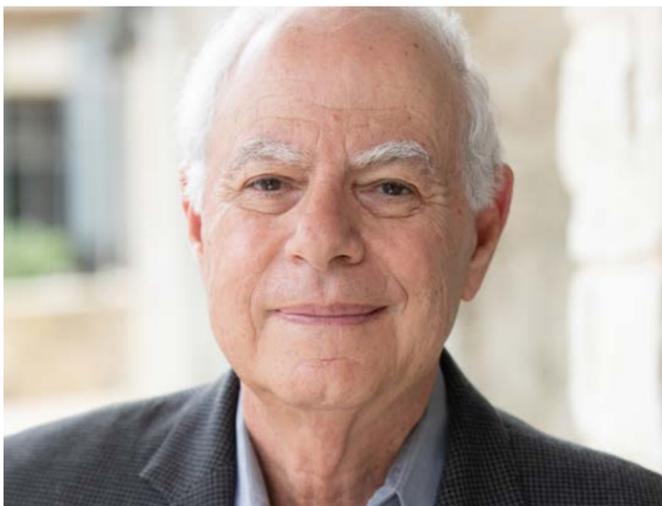
The William P. Hobby Center for Public Service trains public and nonprofit managers in the ethical values and technical competencies associated with outstanding public service. 2021 saw the beginning of several new programs within the center.

This year, the Hobby Center has reconstituted its Visiting International Scholars in Texas (VISIT) program, dedicated to hosting international faculty and graduate students for short visits to Texas State University for research and teaching. In March – June 2022, the Hobby Center will welcome visiting scholar Dr. Sheriff Folarin, Professor of International Relations and Politics with Covenant University, Nigeria. Folarin is an African scholar with teaching and research experience in international and comparative public administration. While at Texas State, he will conduct research and provide guest lectures in political science and public administration courses. The Hobby Center looks forward to funding many such visits with scholars around the world and, in addition, the center has set aside funding to support Texas State public administration faculty and graduate students to travel to other international institutions.

The Hobby Center also works closely with the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and this year has assumed sponsorship for the journal *Good Governance Worldwide*, the official publication of ASPA's largest section, the Section for Public Management Practice (SPMP). As director of the Hobby Center, Dr. Howard Balanoff has been given the role of editor-in-chief and will begin updating the journal's editorial board and staff.

ASPA's annual conference was again held virtually this year. Balanoff participated by convening the panel "Leadership Strategies for an Organizational Turnaround." Speakers included Sheryl Sculley, author, consultant, and recently retired City Manager of San Antonio, TX, and Dustin Haisler, Chief Innovation Officer of e-Republic, publisher of *Governing* and *Governing Technology*.

The Hobby Center's Texas Certified Public Manager (CPM) program works closely with ASPA on membership for all Texas State University students enrolled in the CPM and MPA programs. For additional information about the programs and activities of the William P. Hobby Center, please contact Hobby Center Director Dr. Howard Balanoff at hb02@txstate.edu and CPM program Director Dr. Miha Vindis at mvindis@txstate.edu.



(Left) CPM Director, Dr. Miha Vindis
(Right) CPM program, graduation reception
(Opposite page, top) ASPA panelist, Sheryl Sculley
(Opposite page, bottom) Hobby Center Director, Dr. Howard Balanoff

The Texas CPM Program Continues to Grow

The Texas Certified Public Manager program is concluding another successful year. Despite limitations imposed by the pandemic, the program has expanded across the state and continues to offer high-quality training and education. In addition, through the hard work of its staff and collaboration with speakers, educators, and public leaders, the program utilized its virtual format to reach new communities across Texas.

This year, Dr. Howard Balanoff, who has directed the program since 1996, is stepping down. We would like to welcome Dr. Miha Vindis who will serve as the new Director of Texas State's CPM program. Dr. Vindis is a Professor of Practice in Texas State University's Department Political Science, whose areas of interest include organizational behavior, civic engagement, and leadership studies. Dr. Balanoff will continue in his role as Director of the William P. Hobby Center for Public Service, co-director of Arlington's CPM program, and Professor in Texas State's Department of Political Science.

In December 2020, the program held

its largest virtual graduation ceremony, with more than 80 public sector leaders earning their CPM certification. Spencer Cronk, Austin's City Manager, spoke to the graduates. The summer 2021 virtual graduation granted another 62 students their certificates, and invited Mark Israelson, City Manager of Plano, to speak.

While these graduations have been successful events, the CPM program hopes that it can once again host its graduation events at the Texas Capitol next summer. The December 2021 graduation was held at Texas State's campus in Round Rock and a reception dinner for the Arlington CPM graduates took place in Dallas.

These CPM programs, across the state, are transitioning back to in-person instruction as pandemic restrictions are eased. The program is once again hosting events to facilitate networking and will continue the transition to in-person events as appropriate. At the same time, through the flexibility of the program team, instructors, and students, these two years have demonstrated that a virtual program is feasible and in demand. The Texas CPM

program will work with program teams, students, alumni, and partners at the National CPM Consortium to explore the possibility of adding a virtual option for Texas in the future.

The CPM program wants to recognize the contributions of its alumni. They are often the star guest speakers, and many have opened their networks, allowing the program to facilitate networking across cohorts. In addition, the generous donation from Don Kinnett has allowed the program to supplement the William P. Hobby and Barney Knight scholarships, which are now able to offer two more \$1000 scholarships to CPM students in Round Rock or San Marcos.

The CPM program has an exciting year ahead as it slowly returns to physical instruction, revamps its online presence, and finds creative new ways to connect with its stakeholders. The program is always open to new students and new ideas and encourages everyone to visit the website at www.txstate.edu/cpm.

LUNCH

& Learn

A new lecture series hosted by the MPA program.

The MPA program launched their Lunch & Learn lecture series in 2021, inviting scholars and professionals to discuss public administration in practice with Texas State students and faculty.

Ms. Carrie Thompson, Director of Operations at Texas State University's Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, presented at the MPA Program's virtual Lunch and Learn lecture series on January 29. Her talk, entitled "Collaborative Engagement in Public Policy and Science-Based Decision Making," explored her career in the environmental niche of public administration. Thompson has worked over 20 years for the federal government as a biologist and mediator, including roles in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, the California State Nature Conservatory, the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, and now at the Meadows Center, which serves as a non-profit organization, a research center, and an environmental education center.

Throughout her career, Thompson has used her training and experience in public administration to inform her decisions. The topics she touched on included framing, the nature of science, upstream and downstream approaches to scientific policy, and the differences between collaboration and co-labor approaches.

Followed by a question and discussion session, Thompson emphasized the importance of mediation skills and provided the audience with resources for obtaining certificates in mediation training.

On February 12, Dr. Meghna Sabharwal, head of the University of Texas at Dallas' Public and Nonprofit Management program

delivered a short talk entitled "Creating Inclusive Workplaces". Sabharwal gave a brief biographical overview of her life, including her college education in India and her arrival to the U.S. During the journey, Sabharwal discovered her passion for public management and administration and how people, in general, relate to one another. From the beginning, her career has been focused on diversity, emphasizing the importance of including diverse people. Her lecture focused on the personal elements of inclusivity, defining terms like bias and stereotype, and explaining how to identify and combat exclusionary thinking. She concluded the talk by expressing that an organization's most important resource is its people and that by having more inclusive workplaces organizations can help everyone involved reach their potential.

On March 5, Dr. Lila Valencia, a senior demographer at the Texas Demographic Center, spoke to Texas State students and faculty via Zoom about "Texas Demographic Shifts and Implications for Public Policy." Valencia discussed the history and functions of the Texas Demographic Center, which is the lead demographic center in the State of Texas and the primary liaison between the state and the Census bureau. Her talk focused on demographic trends in Texas and the major factors that influence population growth in the state. Her presentation covered details about the racial and ethnic composition of Texas and gave attendees insights into the different types of estimates and projections that the Texas Demographic Center makes upon requests from the public and private sector. Valencia concluded her talk by providing information about how students can request data, and

other entities can partner with the Texas Demographic Center on different projects of mutual interest. Her presentation generated several questions from the participants.

On September 24, Texas State professors Dr. Stephanie Dailey of the Department of Communication Studies and Dr. Shetay Ashford-Hanserd of the Department of Organization, Workforce, and Leadership Studies spoke about "Public Communication Competencies: Effective Strategies for Individuals, Organizations and Communities" at the first MPA Lunch-and-Learn event of the fall semester.

The lecture was split between the two presenters, with Dailey covering communication theory and Ashford-Hanserd covering its application. As Jay Alvarado, a student attendee noted, "they were the perfect combination to present a talk about communication and its practical application." Additionally, both presenters gave concrete methods and strategies for improving one's communication, with the speakers focusing on both interpersonal, organizational and public communication. The lecture had a lively audience feedback session, during which many students chimed in with anecdotes and questions.

The MPA Lunch-and-Learn series, which was launched in the spring of 2021, features academics and practitioners, introducing new perspectives on the field to both undergraduate and graduate students. The fall semester's theme focuses on competencies. This talk by Dailey and Ashford-Hanserd focused on communication competencies because, as Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan, director of the MPA program and organizer of the series, puts it: "many graduates of our program are thrust into positions very early on in their professional careers where they are expected to use public information and communication skills."

On October 15, the MPA Lunch-and-Learn series hosted Dr. Heather Getha-Taylor, University of Kansas. Dr. Getha-Taylor is a prolific researcher and writer who has authored or co-authored more than 60 articles, book chapters, and scholarly reports. Additionally, she serves as Editor-in-Chief of *Public Personnel Management* and has received numerous rewards for her scholarship, teaching, and projects.

Getha-Taylor delivered a webinar titled "Connecting Bold Public Service Goals and Individual Efforts: Three Steps to Improving Your Collaborative Competencies." The talk was visually appealing and engaging, with Getha-Taylor making use of novel metaphors to illustrate her theories. A particularly illustrative and central metaphor was that of "narrative polyphony." Polyphony, literally "many sounds," describes the interplay of instruments to produce a unified and rich arrangement. Getha-Taylor used this musical concept to elaborate on the process of collaboration in a group or organization, arguing that, like an orchestra, an organization relies on many voices to create a full and diverse but singular sense of direction and purpose.

Getha-Taylor also presented several concepts with which to understand the collaborative process. They included collaborative inertia, collaborative advantage, and collaborative resilience, which describes the ability of organized communities to overcome hardships which would overwhelm individuals. With these concepts, Getha-Taylor made a convincing case for collaboration, which is essential since "no one has the energy to solve many problems on their own." Apart from illustrating concepts that would help students build collaborative competencies, Getha-Taylor also provided details about how to conduct studies on collaboration, including where and how to obtain data. Her talk had important implications for students, practitioners and academics.



Ms. Carrie Thompson
Director of Operations
Meadows Center for Water & the Environment



Dr. Meghna Sabharwal
Program Head
Public & Nonprofit Management program
University of Texas - Dallas



Dr. Lila Valencia
Senior Demographer
Texas Demographic Center



Dr. Stephanie Dailey
Associate Professor
Dept. of Communication Studies
Texas State University



Dr. Shetay Ashford-Hanserd
Associate Professor
Dept. of Organization, Workforce, & Leadership Studies
Texas State University



Dr. Heather Getha-Taylor
Professor
School of Public Affairs & Administration
University of Kansas

PREPARING for Disaster



Emergency management and planning helps to prevent disaster and aids recovery when it strikes.

The Department of Political Science's Discourse in Democracy, in partnership with the Texas State Common Experience program and the university chapter of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), invited Mr. Juan Ortiz to speak to the university community on October 27. As director of the City of Austin Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Ortiz is a member of the Emergency Management Association of Texas, the International Association of Emergency Managers, ICMA, and the Local Government Hispanic Network. Though the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management is one of the smallest departments for the City of Austin, it is the most visible office during an emergency.



A native Texan, born in Rio Hondo and raised in Brownsville, Ortiz earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Emergency Administration and Disaster Planning in 1994 from the University of North Texas in Denton. During his presentation, he reminisced how his career with the City of Fort Worth's Office of Emergency Management began a month before he finished his degree. At the time, most people in society did not understand the purpose of his degree. As such, he often had to explain why disaster preparedness mattered. The experience as an Emergency Management Officer in Fort Worth would serve as the first step in his career journey.

Ortiz described the challenges he encountered in emergency management including reporting to multiple bosses. For instance, he stated that it is possible to report to the fire chief, assistant city manager, the mayor, and a county judge. The latter two individuals are the most important offices during a disaster. He contends that his civics and American government classes were the most important courses he took because they explained how government functions.

When a disaster does not occur, Ortiz is busy writing and revising plans. His 28-year career in the United States Coast Guard may have influenced his ability to plan. In military parlance, "proper planning prevents [predictably] poor performance." To create a good plan, all stakeholders have a part to play in the process. His remarks centered on the cyclical process of emergency management that occurs in four phases: preparedness, response, recovery, and prevention/mitigation. For municipalities, the planning process includes community outreach, for people need to receive the necessary information about a disaster. The audience was encouraged to buy supplies ahead of a disaster to avoid the last-minute rush to the supermarket or a big box store. Supply chain system management issues exacerbate the challenges of last-minute preparedness. Water, canned goods, and other non-perishables can be purchased slowly and rotated regularly to avoid spoilage. Also, in an emergency supply kit it is important to include flashlights, batteries, medical supplies, and one gallon of water per day per person for consumption. The federal standard for a supply kit is three days; however, a 7-14-day supply is better. Ortiz reminded the audience to get to know their neighbors whether they live in an apartment or a house. Details about preparedness materials can be found on his department's official website through austintexas.gov. WarnCentralTexas.org is an emergency notification system for residents within Central Texas' 10 counties.

Though his office is small, it has added personnel over the years. Ortiz said his office seeks graduate students with knowledge of public administration, financial analysis, and Spanish speaking skills. With the large grants his office receives, he needs personnel to help manage those funds in compliance with the grant requirements.



Great Texas Blackout

On March 24, Texas State University hosted energy expert and sustainability advocate James Cargas, JD, founder of New Energy LLC, to provide insights into the causes of the 2021 Texas Blackout. Cargas served as Houston's Senior Assistant City Attorney for Energy from 2008-2019. Prior to that, he served on President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development in the Department of Energy and as Deputy Director of the North American Energy Standards Board.

Drawing on his expertise in energy law, national and local policy, and energy markets, Cargas' talk explored the dynamics of energy procurement, causes of the Texas blackout, and the role played by human failures. He contended the blackout was not caused by frozen wind turbines, the Electrical Reliability Council of Texas' (ERCOT) independence from federal regulation and neighboring grids, or the 2002 Texas deregulation of electricity markets. Rather, it was the lack of weatherization by the natural gas industry, poor preparedness and forecasting by the grid operator, and lack of coordination between state natural gas and electricity regulators. Concluding, it was "a terrible tragedy that was foreseeable and preventable."

Most of the audience's questions focused on the future of renewables, deregulation, and careers in green energy. Cargas observed, "Texas is the sixth largest generator of wind in the world and the largest in the United States" and is about to expand its use further. ERCOT has a significant number of wind and solar farms scheduled to connect to the Texas grid in 2021, and zero new coal plants. Given the size of the state, the shift to renewables has taken some time but is finally becoming a significant source of power.

In closing, Cargas offered advice for people currently working within the oil and gas industry who want to transition to the renewable industry. Oil and gas sectors generally have higher salaries but also tremendous volatility, resulting in hiring and firing booms. By comparison, the renewable industry is an emerging market for career growth, with more modest salaries but greater job security. Applicants, he suggested, "should find ways to 'green up' their resume through volunteer work with environmental groups, planting trees, or river clean-up. Green energy companies want to see that an applicant cares about the environment and climate change." These companies want to know a person's heart is aligned with the mission and goals of the company's culture.



Diversity | in the MPA Program

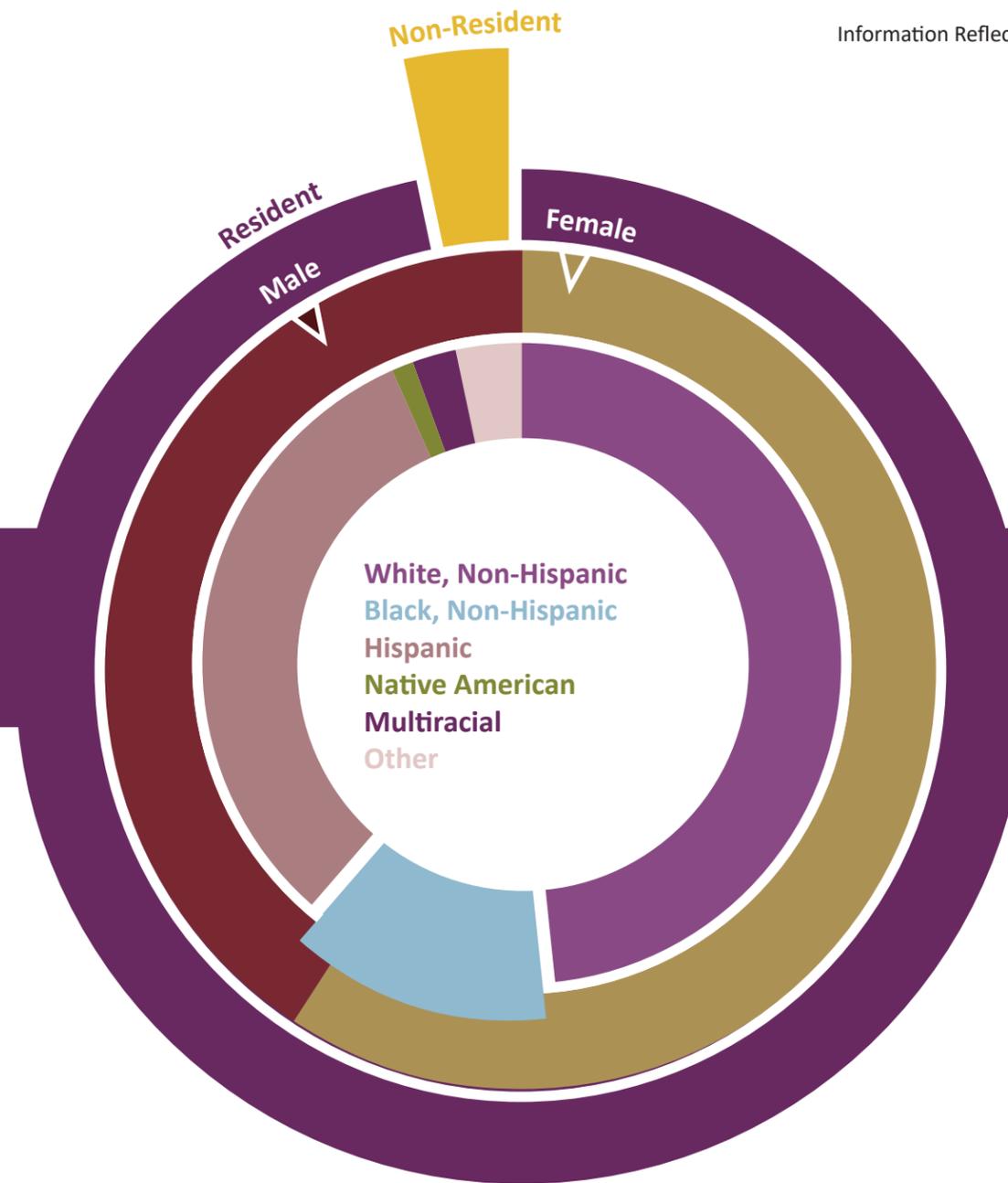
Ninety-one MPA students were enrolled in the year 2021. This cohort consisted of 32% Hispanic/Latino students, 13% Black, non-Hispanic students, 48% White, non-Hispanic students and 7% from other ethnicities. Fifty-nine percent of the 2021 students were female. Apart from a strong commitment to recruit and retain a diverse student body, the Texas State MPA program uses a multi-pronged approach to promote a climate of diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility.

Over the years, from a scholarship standpoint, our students and faculty have worked on research projects that address these issues. MPA Alumna Melissa Bell's applied research project "Toward Equal Access: A Model for Lay Advocacy Programs That Serve People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" assessed advocacy efforts for the deaf and hard of hearing in 38 US states. MPA alumna Jennifer Whitcomb is an experienced chief administrator for nonprofit organizations funded by federal, state, and local government appropriations and grants. Her applied research project "What Mental Health Providers in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Austin, San Antonio and El Paso in the state of Texas are Doing to Accommodate Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals" looked at municipal level efforts to help this population. Kaylee Lawrence's applied research project "Utilizing a Cultural Wealth Framework to Examine First-Generation Resources Available at Public Universities in Texas" described and assessed higher education resources for first-generation students.

Dr. Shields is co-editor of the forthcoming *Handbook on Gender*

and *Public Administration* which features a chapter authored by her and MPA alums Ashely Wayman and Samantha Alexander entitled "Women in Texas local government: the road to city manager". This chapter used combined results from two applied research projects to examine pathways and roadblocks to women's ascent to the position of city manager. Dr. Shields authored another chapter, "The origins of the settlement model of public administration: stories of women pioneers". The *Handbook on Gender and Public Administration* book also features a chapter by Dr. Rangarajan, and political science alum Mark Lottman entitled "Trends in International scholarship on gender and public personnel administration (2008-2019)". Dr. Thomas Longoria's 2014 work *Are we all equal at death?: Death competence in municipal cemetery management* in his words "reviews the cultural and social equity aspects of the consumption of cemetery services and develops tools to take into account social equity and cultural concerns for public sector cemetery managers". Drs. Longoria and Rangarajan's 2015 article on cultural competence, "Measuring Public Manager Cultural Competence: The Influence of Public Service", developed and tested an instrument to measure cultural competence.

Our faculty have been active in the conference circuit presenting papers on such topics. Dr. Shields's paper "The U.S. Sanitary Commission: Recovering Women's Leadership, Management and Compassion During the Civil War" was presented at the 2020 national conference of the American Society for Public Administration. She also presented a paper in 2019



entitled "Women's historic public engagement: Finding public administration in the peace and suffrage movements" at the National Academy of Public Administration's Fall Meeting in Arlington, Virginia. In the past, Dr. Patricia Shields has represented our program at the Executive Women in Texas Government Conference to understand the working climate for female administrators in the state. Our faculty also participate in the Conference of Minority Public Administrators and in ASPA's Section for Women in Public Administration. Dr. Rangarajan is on the board of the South Asia Section for Public Administration, a newly initiated sub-section of the American Society for Public Administration.

Other initiatives include faculty participation in the "Allies Training" program offered by the university, which helps "participants with information and resources that will help eliminate

myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes often associated with LGBTQIA persons". Our students engage in the Women Leading Government Leadership Institute and network with women leaders in government. Dr. Longoria teaches in the Latino/Latina studies program. He is also a member of the Diversity and Gender Studies Advisory Council.

To introduce students to diverse public administrators our Lunch & Learn speaker series and the Department of Political Science's Discourse in Democracy speaker series bring in experts of varied cultural, racial, ethnic, experiential, professional and geographic backgrounds such that our students get exposure to diverse perspectives. The MPA program also benefits from counsel provided by a diverse advisory board on programmatic and curricular initiatives.



2021 MPA Graduates

MPA students transition to TXST alumni.

Applied Research Projects

A Pathway to Gaining Essential Research Experience and Skills.

The Applied Research Project (ARP) is one of three pathways to graduation for Texas State University MPA students. A well-structured three-course sequence facilitates student completion of these empirical research projects. Students who have a research bent of mind and who wish to take advantage of decades of faculty experience guiding such ARPs, tend to choose this pathway to graduation. Our graduates have obtained great positions when hiring managers deemed these ARPs to be demonstrative of great ideation, rigor and relevance, good quality writing, effective project management and critical thinking.

In 2021 there were several interesting ones completed. MPA students addressed research ideas of interest at the county, city, university, and state levels. Karrie Cook's applied research project was timely as it developed an ideal model for virtual internships in the public sector by gathering data from interns, public professionals, and academic internship coordinators. Spurred by the plight of interns not having the full internship experience during the pandemic, she was keen on developing a virtual internship model informed by key stakeholders. Breanna Higgins' project entitled "Is Professionalism in The Eye of The Beholder: Describing Student and Practitioner Perceptions of Professionalism" delved into differing perspectives of professionalism. One important set of variables in her study pertained to professionalism in electronic meetings which again was a timely examination of changes to workplace meetings necessitated by the pandemic.

Four applied research projects focused issues of interest to youth and students in institutes of higher education. Kaylee Lawrence's ARP used a Cultural Wealth Framework to examine first-generation resources available at public universities in Texas. Margarita Muniz's ARP also examined resources available to first-generation students, but her focus was on border state universities. Alma

Garcia evaluated the University of Texas at Austin's approach to addressing food insecurity experienced by undergraduate students. Denise Upshaw developed a model assessment tool for youth reentry and reintegration into society. She conducted a case study of the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department's SOAR Reentry Court Program.

Local level issues were examined in a couple of projects. Autumn Smith's ARP "An Ideal Model for Suicide Prevention in the Fire Service: Evaluating the suicide prevention programs of Texas Commission on Fire Protection certified special district fire departments in Hays County, TX" underscored the need for more mental health support for firefighters and evaluated current programs in place to address this important issue. Briana Gilmore's work "The Visualization of Public Information: Describing the Use of Narrative Infographics by U.S. Municipal Governments" used a visual content analysis approach to study how cities used narrative infographics for various purposes. Her project combined contemporary themes of data visualization, information transparency and accountability. Her paper emphasizes the role played by infographics in overcoming barriers such as information overload, time constraints, and language barriers, while effectively reducing the information gap between government and the public.

Overall, this culminating experience, though cognitively and logistically demanding, equips students with the right competencies and skills needed for effective project management, for the pursuit of doctoral degrees, and for research reporting that has multi-domain applicability. A full list of completed projects and names of 2021 graduates are provided in this magazine. Applied Research Projects completed by our graduate students can be accessed at <https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/105>.

Applied Research Project Track

- Kaitlyn Beavers:** Healthcare Quality in Texas: An Exploration of Accreditation in Texas Community Hospitals
- Jason Coleman:** An Explanatory Analysis of Elderly Abuse in Texas
- Karrie Cook:** Virtual Internships in the Public Sector: Developing an Ideal Model from the Intern, Public Sector Professional, and Academic Internship Coordinator Perspectives
- Katherine Curtiss:** American Generational Cohorts and Volunteers: A Study of Generationally Influenced Functional Motivation
- John Donohoe:** An Explanatory Analysis of Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrests in Austin, Texas
- Alma Garcia:** Gauging The University of Texas at Austin's Approach to Address Food Insecurity Experienced by Undergraduate Students
- Briana Gilmore:** The Visualization of Public Information: Describing the Use of Narrative Infographics by U.S. Municipal Governments
- Breanna Higgins:** Is Professionalism in The Eye of The Beholder: Describing Student and Practitioner Perceptions of Professionalism
- Kaylee Lawrence:** Utilizing a Cultural Wealth Framework to Examine First-Generation Resources Available at Public Universities in Texas
- Matthew Lingafelter:** Farmers Markets & COVID-19: A Descriptive Study of Farmers Markets Operating in Austin, Texas During the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Margarita Muniz:** A Content Analysis on the Stategies Applied by Border State Universities to Help Overcome Challenges Faced by First Generation Students
- Autumn Smith:** An Ideal Model for Suicide Prevention in the Fire Service: Evaluating the suicide prevention programs of Texas Commission on Fire Protection certified special district fire departments in Hays County, Texas
- Denise Upshaw:** A Model Assessment Tool for a Comprehensive Youth Reentry and Reintegration Strategy: A Case Study of the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department's SOAR Reentry Court Program

Non-Thesis Track

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ian Alba | Hyung Lee | Zamira Rodriguez |
| Juan Alvarado | Eric Martin | Maribel Rosalez |
| Lyle Blanco | Viveca Martinez | Roque Salinas |
| Greg Brooks | Caitlin Minton | Monica Suarez |
| Robert Cantu | Danielle Morin | Ralph Warren |
| Jose Castelan | Christopher Mulvaney | Hunter White |
| Victor Jubril | Angela Pates | Matthew Wilke |

MPA Faculty Share **Research**

Exploring climate impacts and scenario thinking with Inklings.



In the early and middle decades of the 20th century, a small group of intellectuals met weekly at Oxford University to read aloud and discuss their works in progress. The meetings were known for a lively exchange of ideas, and the group members called themselves the Inklings. In the spirit of the original Inklings, the Department of Political Science at Texas State University has held gatherings and talks for some twenty years in which political science faculty members have presented their thoughts and research. Our Inklings talks, reflecting the diverse interests of our department's faculty, have addressed a wide variety of issues, always with the spirit of fellowship, exchange of ideas, constructive criticism, and some occasional humor.

On March 25, Dr. Billy Fields spoke about "Adaptation Urbanism and Resilient Communities," exploring accessible, safe, and pleasant spaces as well as environmentally friendly transportation development as climate change begins to challenge cities. His presentation was full of examples, case studies, and photographs taken during his research. Rex Wyatt, a graduate student in the political science program said he enjoyed the event, noting "Dr. Fields' presentation was full of insight on the changing nature of our urban environments, particularly due to increased city densities and our changing climate."

On October 7, Dr. Miha Vindis explored his ongoing research in scenario thinking. Vindis defined scenario thinking as planning which considers "alternate future scenarios" instead of attempting to establish a single forecast of the future. This process, Vindis argued, allows participants to identify key drivers of change and prepare to act even in the face of uncertainty. The talk drew on Vindis' extensive experience in the private sector, and gave several examples of his system's application, including one colorful example in which a brainstorming session he conducted with executives at a steel manufacturing company led directly to the company's acquisition of a massive refinery. The presentation was illuminating and engaging, with one student noting the talk "shed light on the cultural thinking we are ingrained into" and "insightfully demonstrated how to properly consider the future and our thinking."

Faculty Publications | 2021

Faculty Awards

Contemporary Strategy and Landpower Essay Award (third place) recognizes the most significant contributions to the Army's professional knowledge of landpower and/or contemporary strategy published in *Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly* in 2020.

Scott, Ryan, Shields, Patricia and Means, Odel (2020) The COVID-19 Enemy is Still Advancing. *Parameters: Quarterly Journal of the US Army War College* 50:3, 33-43. <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol50/iss3/5>

The US military has a historical precedence for dealing with a pandemic while simultaneously conducting large-scale combat operations. Two twentieth-century examples assess the extent to which the military adapted operations following an influenza outbreak and make clear military and civilian leaders must balance strategic objectives when facing threat multipliers such as COVID-19.

Dr. Thomas Longoria

Thomas Longoria & John Milford (2021): Explaining Borderlands Local Government Administrators' Perceived Responsibility to Aid Asylum-Seeking Migrants, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2021.2017789

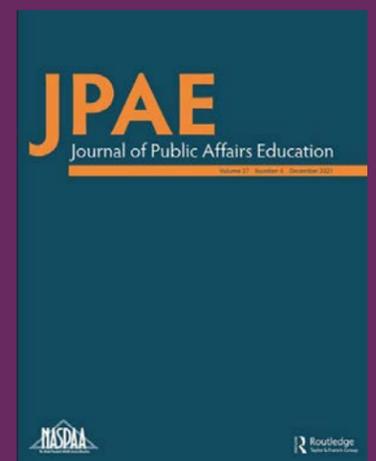
"In the first eight months of 2019, 33,084 unaccompanied children and 205,290 family unit asylum-seeking migrants were apprehended and released into South Texas border cities. The migrant crisis is a case of "high profile" policy making for local government officials who must balance values of political neutrality and policy responsiveness in order to respond to this "crisis." This study presents data from a survey of 61 local government officials in Texas border cities and interviews with six senior local government administrators. This survey finds that officials who perceive fewer negative policy impacts associated with asylum-seeking migrants and acknowledge tradeoffs between human and national security are more likely to express a responsibility to act and provide humanitarian aid despite political polarization on the issue at the federal, state, and local government levels."



Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan

Rangarajan, N., Lottman, M., & Earp, J. (2021). Enhancing professional and practical experiences for MPA students: Lessons from a manager-in-residence program. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2021.1959139>

"Considerable scholarly attention has been paid to various efforts aimed at preparing graduate students for careers as practitioners of public administration. One such approach is hiring practitioners-in-residence (PIR) or employing professors of practice. This paper first reports results of a web content analysis of 355 NASPAA programs that determined the extent of use of PIRs. Results show that only 17% of programs explicitly list a practitioner-in-residence. Given that less than a fifth of programs have practitioners-in-residence on their faculty, this paper provides an in-depth description of one such initiative i.e., Texas State University's experience with the Manager-in-Residence (MIR) program. Numerous ways in which the MIR program helped connect MPA students with the practice side of public administration are described. Finally, the implications of such a program for public administration pedagogy and practice and its potential for adoption by programs are discussed."



Drs. Nandhini Rangarajan & Patricia Shields

Ancira, J., Rangarajan, N., & Shields, P. (2021). Bridging the academic-practitioner divide: Findings from a survey of public administration faculty and Practitioners. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2021.1891396>

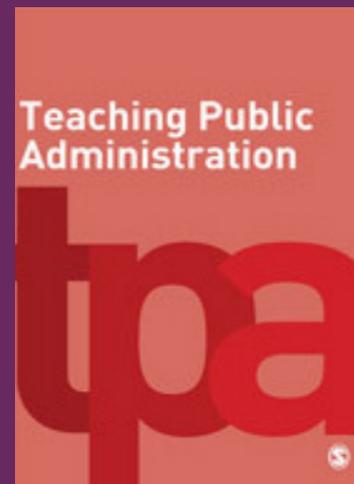
“The academic practitioner divide and strategies to close that gap have been important lines of inquiry in the fields of public administration and public affairs. This study contributes to that significant body of work by reporting results from two surveys of faculty in NASPAA accredited programs and of practitioners affiliated with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). These surveys tapped into the perceptions of both groups of respondents about five categories of strategies (e.g., knowledge sharing, technological strategies) aimed at reducing the divide. The overarching objective of this research is to examine if respondent status as faculty or practitioner had an impact on their perception of these strategies. Results from a multivariate analysis of variance indicate that both faculty and practitioners accord significantly different levels of importance to three of the five categories. Open-ended responses yielded additional insights. Implications of this research and its findings for public affairs education are discussed.”



Dr. Marc Wallace

Wallace, M. A. (2021). Wildavsky or a workbook: Advice for the novice faculty member teaching undergraduate public finance. *Teaching Public Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01447394211028891>

“The article examines five areas novice instructors should consider before teaching public finance. First, instructors should ascertain their comfort level along the qualitative-quantitative continuum. This ranges from a high-level overview of the budgetary process, politics, players, and outcomes (qualitative) before descending into spreadsheets with formulas for decision making (quantitative). Second, instructors should know which resources to assemble including textbooks, government documents, and spreadsheet guidebooks. Third, instructors should understand the department’s expectations for the course along the qualitative-quantitative continuum based on students’ career paths. Fourth, instructors should assess students’ capabilities to grasp budgeting exercises and spreadsheets competently. Finally, instructors should monitor how the course content aligns with regional employers and the academic program’s advisory board. Many academics would argue that these five points are rudimentary for any instructor’s pedagogy, until they teach public finance.”



Faculty Presentations

Shields, P., Rangarajan, N., & Casula, M. (2021). Gauging good governance: A practical tool for normative evaluation research. Presented at the Annual Conference of the American Society for Public Administration, Washington, D.C. <https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/13661>

“This PowerPoint presentation at the 2021 ASPA conference introduces a new research purpose for Public Administration and applied research generally. Traditionally, scholars have recognized three purposes for empirical research – exploration, description and explanation. This paper advocates for a fourth purpose we call gauging. The three dominant research purposes implicitly operate in the world of objectivity. Gauging, in contrast, is a purpose nested in normative goals. It is similar to description, which asks “what questions”. Gauging instead asks “what should” questions such, “What should be done to improve an administrative process?” We argue and show that this unnamed purpose is hidden in plain sight in common practices such as accreditation. We also suggest the use of the practical ideal type of framework as a way to frame empirical research using the gauging purpose. Examples are provided.”

Improving Climate Resilience

Dr. Fields promotes his 2021 book.

Adaptation Urbanism and Resilient Communities: Transforming Streets to Address Climate Change, a 2021 book by Dr. Billy Fields, examines efforts from the cities of Copenhagen, London, New Orleans, Miami, and Rotterdam to improve the safety, livability, and climate resilience of streets around the world.

To support the book’s release, Dr. Fields was interviewed by the Active Towns podcast to discuss its key findings and explore opportunities for more resilient streets in central Texas. “This episode with Billy Fields, Ph.D. has reinforced our appreciation for just how interconnected everything is in our world, from active mobility to land use to pollution and the climate. Add to that the fact our mobility and stormwater systems can work together rather than against each other”, said Active Towns. Dr. Fields also participated in webinars with the National Academy of Sciences Transportation Research Board AMS50 and the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center, mentioning how compact development, sustainable transport, blue/green infrastructure, and equity are among the “key factors that create a resilient street system”, which plays a huge role in transportation and is a necessity for cities. Additionally, Dr. Fields presented on the underpinnings of resilience theory with the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions at Florida Atlantic University. The center is dedicated to helping communities and decision makers plan for urban and environmental issues and enhance quality of life through partnerships, education, and research.

Dr. Fields recently worked with Texas State’s Honors College on the Stelos Scholars program and crafted a 1-day, immersive experience for students to explore Austin’s transportation system, modeling the approach from his previous work with Texas State’s summer study abroad program in Amsterdam. *The Austin Sustainable Transportation Experience: An Experiential Guide for Exploring the City’s Transportation System* was designed as a game where students received points for experiences designed to deepen their understanding of the current transportation system and expose them to the potential changes that could improve transportation policy.



(Left) Adaptation Urbanism: Sankt Kjelds Plads, Copenhagen
(Above) Dr. Billy Fields



To increase student awareness and interest in public administration, TCMA initiated the Manager in Residence program.

Manager in Residence James Earp

Assistant City Manager, Kyle, TX
MIR, Texas State University

Through the MIR program, Texas State's public administration faculty increased student opportunities to better understand the practitioner perspective of governance and administration by introducing skill-based workshops, mentorship sessions, and guest lectures featuring James Earp.

Department of Political Science, MPA program | mpainfo@txstate.edu | 512.245.2143



Public Administration Faculty



Howard Balanoff, EdD
Endowed Professor
Director, Hobby Center



Christopher Brown, JD
Associate Professor



Billy Fields, PhD
Associate Professor



Emily Kay Hanks, PhD
Associate Professor



Thomas Longoria, PhD
Professor



Sherri Mora, PhD
Senior Lecturer
Associate Chair, Dept. of Political Science



Dianne Rahm, PhD
Professor



Nandhini Rangarajan, PhD
Associate Professor
Director, MPA Program



Patricia Shields, PhD
Regents' Professor



Hassan Tajalli, PhD
Professor



Miha Vindis, PhD
Professor of Practice
Director, Texas CPM Program



Marc Wallace, PhD
Associate Professor of Practice



ICMA Texas State University Student Chapter

Learn about local government management, meet local government professionals, develop useful career skills, and connect with other students.

International City/County Management Association - Student Chapter
ICMA TXST

Contact us for membership information!
icmatxst@txstate.edu

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