

# Public Matters

JANUARY-DECEMBER, 2020

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MAGAZINE

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## STUDENTS HELP CRAFT PAFRs

Learn about the experience of Texas State MPA students who helped cities craft Popular Annual Financial Reports.

## BOOK ON MULTICULTURALISM

Read about Marcus Peoples, Jr.'s children's book that promotes diversity and multiculturalism.

## ALUMNI RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Discover how our alumni have helped the community during the pandemic.





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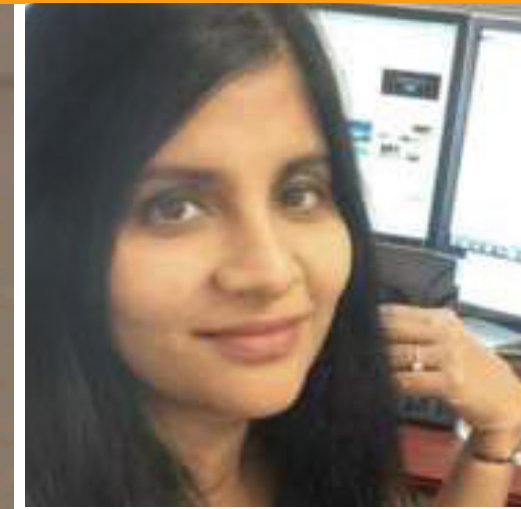
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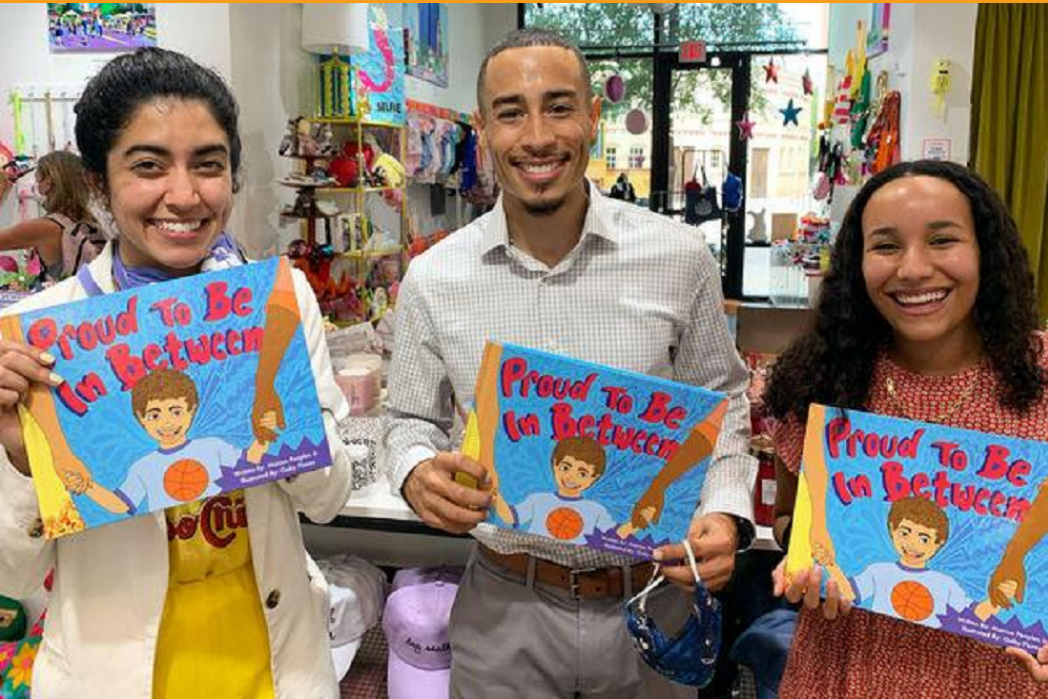
I am delighted to present the third edition of *Public Matters* magazine which covers the experiences and accomplishments of students, faculty and alumni of the Texas State MPA program for the year 2020. What a year this has been with the myriad challenges we faced due to the spread of the pandemic! When collective panic and fear set in around mid-March due to the public health crisis we faced, everyone associated with our program demonstrated incredible courage and spirit to ensure that our programmatic operations continued as smoothly as possible. Despite the challenging circumstances, the MPA program had robust student enrollment all year. Texas State University provided various resources and technological support to help faculty and students transition seamlessly to synchronous/asynchronous online teaching and learning. Some faculty even offered face-to-face classes to students who preferred this modality of instruction. They ensured adequate physical distancing and hygiene protocols in classrooms.

As graduates of a public administration program and as accomplished professionals in their respective organizations, our alumni and students who are working professionals are making a mark during these unusual circumstances. Given that many of our alumni hold important positions in local, state, and nonprofit organizations, this edition features a write-up about some of them who played a crucial role during the pandemic in their professional capacities. We also shine the spotlight on three accomplished alumni of our program. Apurva Naik who works for the federal government, Dr. Saidat Ilo who is on the political science faculty at the University of Houston, Victoria and Paul Diaz who works for the City of Waco, are featured in this edition.

Our current set of students worked on various applied research projects. Some helped cities craft popular annual financial reports. Those wide-ranging student experiences are documented in this edition. Our efforts to prepare students for the professional world continued during this challenging year via talks and other events conducted as webinars. I hope you enjoy the write-ups about various events organized to enhance the quality of student learning. We hope for a return to normalcy in 2021 and wish for good health and cheer for our community of students, faculty, staff and friends of the MPA program. We will continue to place emphasis on high quality research, teaching and service as we look forward to a new year.

**Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan**  
MPA Program Director  
Texas State University

# Proud to be in Between



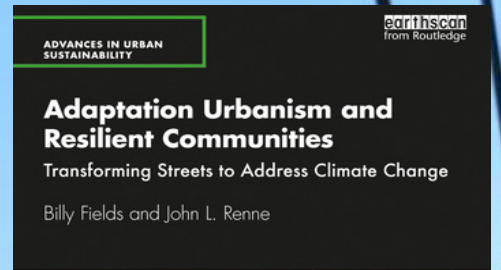
MPA alumnus and author, Marcus Peoples Jr. promotes diversity and cultural awareness through sharing his personal story.

Marcus Peoples Jr., a 2019 graduate of the Texas State MPA program, recently published his book titled *Proud to Be In Between*. Marcus wrote the book with hopes of “building and strengthening awareness for cultural identity” and to provide a way for “families to teach children about multicultural backgrounds.” Published in July 2020, his book provides positive literature that embraces diversity and helps normalize discussions about both cultural differences and similarities, stating “[*Proud to Be In Between*] is a culmination of all my experiences to help aid multiracial families discuss the difficult topic of race and ethnicity.” His efforts emphasize the values of diversity and multiculturalism that are key foci of the field of public administration and are further supported at Texas State University. Marcus thanks the Texas State MPA program for “the love and support shown to [him] as a Bobcat” and for “[providing] the resources to fuel [his] love and passion for [his] community.” He credits his double-minority family background and experiences at Texas State for fostering his passion about cultural diversity and helping him “grow both academically and professionally.”



# Adaptation Urbanism and Resilient Communities

Dr. Fields's *Adaptation Urbanism and Resilient Communities* will be published by Routledge in 2021. Dr. Fields, whose research focuses on transportation, urban policy, public health, and hazard mitigation, will examine resilience planning for streets throughout the world. The book contains a series of case studies of coastal cities including Copenhagen, London, New Orleans, Miami, and Rotterdam. In an era where climate change exacerbates infrastructural challenges coastal cities face, street space has become increasingly important. Dr. Fields demonstrates a need for street spaces to be designed to help manage water and minimize greenhouse gas emissions. This challenge is being met through improved street designs that add green and blue infrastructure directly into the hearts of cities, which decreases flooding, improves local quality of life, and slows neighborhood traffic to make transportation safer. Dr. Fields has significant experience studying these infrastructural challenges; prior to joining the Texas State MPA program, Dr. Fields directed the Center for Urban and Public Affairs at the University of New Orleans. Additionally, Dr. Fields leads an annual summer semester study-abroad class to Amsterdam to explore these issues in-person and teach Texas State students how other cities are addressing climate change's impact on city infrastructure. The study-abroad program partners Texas State students with international students at the HZ University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, providing students the opportunity to learn from and network with peers outside of the U.S.



# Alumni Spotlights

Learn how our Texas State MPA alumni have shaped their careers and what advice they have for current and future students.



Paul  
Diaz

Budget Manager  
Waco, TX

*Paul Diaz was a political science graduate working as a catastrophe property claims adjuster when he began looking into how he could make his “sliver of the world better.” He knew law school was a popular option for political science B.A.’s, but in his career field research he found many others continue on to pursue public administration. Although his initial interests were in environmental policy, the Texas State MPA program opened his eyes to the variety of other options available to him. Through his statistics and budgeting courses, Diaz became “fascinated with the nexus of public policy, stats, forecasting, and budgets.” Along with his Applied Research Project (ARP) on fuel economy standards, those new skills became a part of his core career tools for “forecasting property tax, sales tax, and debt capacity modeling.” Diaz now works as the Budget Manager for the City of Waco, having previously worked in similar positions with the Cities of Sugarland and Georgetown. His advice to students is to, “be a social butterfly,” and make connections with fellow classmates. Not only can one learn from each other, but one can make real connections for the future when looking to hire or be hired. He observes that “the hardest part of any organization is getting in. By developing those relationships, you lower the bar for entry.” He encourages everyone to apply to internships and learn from those willing to share their knowledge. He emphasizes the importance of learning invaluable skills such as Excel, pivot tables, SUMIFS and VLOOKUP even if one is not a “math person”. . . Lastly, he emphasizes the importance of work-life balance as “key to ensuring satisfaction in your career and healthy relationships...You are so much more than your job title.”*



# Apurva Naik

Economic Development Integrator  
Austin, TX

needed at upper levels of government.

One of the most unique aspects of Texas State’s Master of Public Administration program is its diversity, Naik says. The flexibility of evening and online courses accommodates working professionals, and locations in San Marcos and Round Rock helps attract students from all over central Texas. The ability to meet, work, and network with the variety of MPA students helped Naik make life-long friends, develop a “valuable network of colleagues” in both the public and private sectors, and prepare him for the collaboration and teamwork needed in his career. He encourages current and prospective students to think in advance about their ARPs so they can best formulate a topic, conduct their research, and effectively support their statements and conclusions.



*Apurva* Naik is the Economic Development Integrator for the Austin Regional Office of the Economic Development Administration, and a Texas State MPA alumnus. Naik’s role requires federal inter-agency cooperation to promote economic development and provide resources to communities in need around the country, particularly those that have traditionally been underserved, suffered economic losses, or are victims of natural disasters. Naik works on programs to promote capacity building at local and regional levels that in turn create job opportunities and help businesses expand. His work in the public sector, vital to the development and prosperity of communities from New Mexico to Arkansas, has benefited tremendously from his experiences in the Texas State MPA program.

Naik chose to pursue an MPA at Texas State because he “wanted to learn the research methods, management theories, and intricacies of public policy formation in order to be a more effective and successful public administrator.” 12 years in to his career of public service, Naik sought the “training, education, and resume strength of earning an MPA from a reputable state university in Texas.” The decision proved fruitful, with lessons taught in the classroom coming into practice “daily in [his] career,” and courses on public policy, public management and ethics, and organizational theory “establishing the foundations needed to be a successful leader in the public sector.” His capstone ARP (Applied Research Project) helped develop the “effective, efficient and reliable research” skills



# Saidat Ilo

Assistant Professor of Political Science  
Victoria, TX

*Dr. Saidat Ilo* is a Texas State MPA alumna who is currently an Assistant Professor in political science at the University of Houston-Victoria. As a political science undergraduate student, Ilo had always been curious about how organizations functioned, though remained unsure what profession to enter. As graduation approached and Ilo needing to continue her student status in order to participate in a Track and Field championship event, she found the perfect answer in the Texas State MPA program. Ultimately, her experience as a graduate student in the MPA program proved invaluable for her career. The MPA’s Applied Research Project (ARP) encourages students to “translate theory to practice and take abstract terms and concepts and apply them pragmatically.” Ilo used her ARP as an opportunity “to learn about the inner workings of public institutions” which helped prepare her for, not only her current position, but also her first career at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Outside of the ARP, Ilo was thankful for the presence of public administration practitioners in the MPA program, with numerous classes “taught by people in the field.” Their experience helped “offer insights and expertise” to the assigned readings.

Ilo is currently working on a book chapter examining “China’s Foreign Policy Towards Africa” and fully expects to apply the tools she developed in the MPA program to this major research project. She also serves as a board member for the League of Women Voters – Fort Bend, encouraging citizens to take part in government and “participate in our democracy, before, during and after an election”. Ilo’s message to current and future students in the MPA program is one of patience and trust: while things might not always make sense initially in the classroom, “once you start working on your ARP and when you start working in your chosen profession...there will come a time when you start making connections between what you learned and be able to apply them to your life.”

# Alumni Respond to COVID

MPAs are helping their communities during this global threat.

*Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, people everywhere have experienced difficult choices and demanding hardships. Many times, the best place to look for help is in one's own community. We interviewed a few of our Public Administration alumni to see how they were personally affected by the pandemic and what they did in response to help the community around them.*

**Troy Houtman** is a 2012 graduate who works for the City of Wichita, Kansas. He says his department which is “responsible for bringing people together has hit a tragic stop. So [they] had to... redirect. Our talents and abilities have been used to augment community care with feeding programs, community education, expanded fitness programs, assisting in medical support and other community support programs such as temporary housing, and teaching sites for those not able to attend school or don't have an internet connection.”

**Megan Bermea** is a 2020 MPA graduate who works for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). She says her team's “programs have experienced significantly increased demand due to the COVID-19 virus... [they] are responsible for implementing federal and state policy waivers to allow many of [their] programs to utilize telehealth and telemedicine services and other flexibilities to continue to serve their clients, many of whom are the most vulnerable among us.

[They] are also responsible for administering federal grant funding from the CARES Act to increase budgets in WIC and family violence due to the surge in demand. [They] have had to amend contracts, write new administrative rules, adjust budgets and funding sources, apply for grants, push out daily COVID communications, host COVID webinars, and still maintain regular daily operations and oversight of the programs and services”.

**Kevin Scott** is a 2011 graduate who works for the VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority in San Antonio whose work has been collaborating “with Capital Metro and Houston Metro transit agencies on emerging disinfection processes utilizing HEPA filtration, ionization, and UV light to further combat COVID-19” to better protect the public from the virus while making sure “the local economy [is] progressing by getting the public to work” and helping “first responders who rely on transportation to local hospitals.”



**Kelley Sadler** is a 2019 graduate of the MPA program who now works for Westside Infant-Family Network, a nonprofit organization whose clients “are disproportionately affected by COVID as [they] exclusively work with a low-income community struggling with intergenerational trauma.” Sadler says that her organization “jumped in and provided emergency basic needs to families such as rental assistance, utility assistance, grocery delivery, diapers/wipes,” and more. Sadler has personally helped her organization by finding “potential funders and drafted grant proposals to fund [the organization's] services as they are needed more now than ever.”

**Bailey Verschoyle** is a 2018 MPA graduate, who works right here at Texas State University in the College of Education advising center, said that “there's been an added emphasis on helping address student concerns about returning to campus... due to the pandemic – either by helping the student find all online courses, sharing the University's plans to return, or sharing other relevant campus resources.”

**Ashley Wayman** is a 2019 MPA graduate who now works for the City of Rollingwood, Texas and has helped her community by being “tasked with maintaining [their] online response to COVID-19, by creating a city website and resources, keeping residents informed via... electronic notification system, and promoting health and hygiene in the city.” Wayman has also “been very involved in planning and budgeting for the upcoming fiscal year” for the City of Rollingwood.

**Apurva Naik** is a 2014 MPA graduate who works for the U.S. Department of

Commerce in the Economic Development Administration branch as an Economic Development Integrator. Naik says that the “EDA received approximately \$1.5 Billion in CARES Act funding to assist underserved communities in Coronavirus Pandemic assistance in areas such as infrastructure improvements, workforce training and many other forms of grant funding,” and that he is “the head of the Region 6 Economic Development Recovery Workgroup... to respond to the economic needs of communities within the region (Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and New Mexico).”

**Harold Stone** is an MPA program alumnus from 2000 who now works in the Texas Senate focusing on helping Texans of “Senate District 19... whether it be unemployment or other issues such as closed government offices, access to testing, and emergency access to state resources.” Stone says that his office staff is still committed to safety and providing the level of services “our constituents expect from their State Senator's Office.”

**Jeremy Garret** is an MPA program alumnus from 2014 who is now self-employed at Milestone Legal Media. Garret has helped several “law firms with Zoom so they can communicate with clients and participate in depositions.”

**Brian O'Neill** graduated from the MPA program in 2008 and now works for the San Antonio Fire Department as a Battalion Chief. O'Neill has personally helped his battalion by providing “PPE and training necessary to respond to COVID-19. Also, [he] assisted [his] department by helping to establish protocols and policies to prevent COVID-19 spread within [their] department.”

*If you would like to help those that have been adversely impacted by the pandemic, here are just a few of the many organizations and resources available.*

**Aunt Bertha** - [www.findhelp.com](http://www.findhelp.com)

Connecting people to verified social care providers

**United Way** - [www.unitedway.org](http://www.unitedway.org)

Mobilizing communities to help communities

**Central Texas Food Bank** - [www.centraltexasfoodbank.org](http://www.centraltexasfoodbank.org)



# MPA Students Gain Hands-on Experience

Working with city governments, students learn how to produce financial reports through on the job training.



Every year, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and its award program connects graduate students with local governments around the nation seeking to produce a Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR). These reports, designed to be “readily accessible and easily understandable to the general public,” are an excellent opportunity for graduate students to participate in local government as well as help cities increase transparency with their residents. This year, Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) partnered with GFOA and Texas State University, to support MPA students Breanna Higgins and Roque Salinas in the PAFR Fellowship Program. Higgins worked with the City of Pearland, Texas while Salinas was paired with the City of Pleasant Grove, Utah.

The PAFR Fellowship Program was an exciting opportunity for Breanna Higgins, who developed her professional skills and grew her network while providing an invaluable service to the City of Pearland, her assistance helping Pearland to receive GFOA’s Triple Crown, recognition for receiving all three GFOA awards. Higgins credits the fellowship for helping her “work even better virtually” and expanding her “Excel and Canva skills.” Tasked with helping the city produce a PAFR, Higgins worked closely with the city’s finance department and connected with MPA students around the U.S. She hopes “future Texas State MPA students take hold of this opportunity” when it next presents itself and that future fellows, “ask questions, lean into one another, and not be afraid to make mistakes” when developing their PAFRs.

Roque Salinas had previously interned with the Travis County Budget office, an experience which he credits helped him “[see] how hard the staff works in order to manage the county budget.” When accepted to the PAFR Fellowship Program, Salinas requested that he be assigned to a smaller city so he could apply what he had previously learned in his internship and “bring more value and do more hands-on work.” In the City of Pleasant Grove, home to 37,000 residents and with a budget of about \$17 million, Salinas worked alongside the financial department to produce this year’s PAFR, an experience he says gave him “a lot of insight” into local government and one in which he encourages other MPA students at Texas State to take part.

“Ask questions, lean into one another, do not be afraid to make mistakes.”



# MPA Students Reflect: The Pandemic's Influence on Life, Work and Education



## How Texas State University MPA Students Rallied

John Jay College of Criminal Justice's Women in the Public Sector developed a blog series on the role of gender amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The series, titled *Gender Dialogues: A Space for Community and Conversation*, featured stories from three Texas State MPA students who shared their pandemic experiences. As students, public administration practitioners, and women, Désirée Adair, Melissa Bell, and Megan Bermea had a unique lens on the virus's impact.



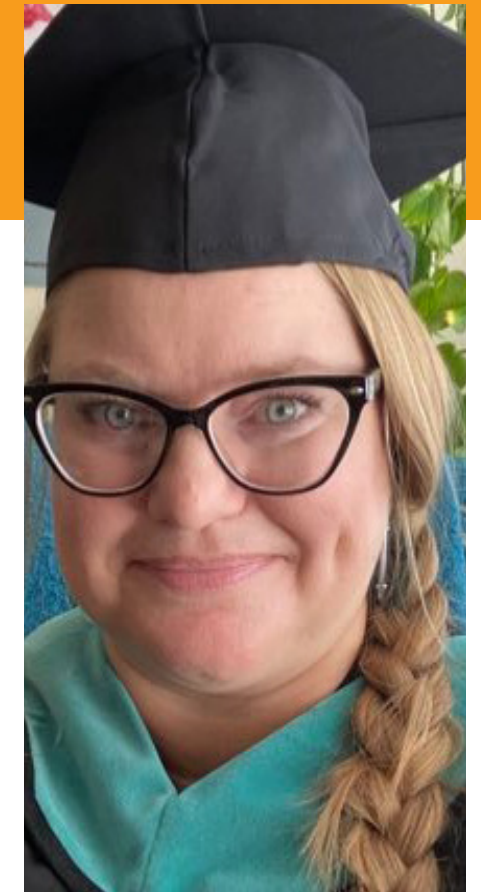
Désirée Adair

*With* the Texas stay-at-home orders announced in March, Désirée Adair's personal and professional life was upheaved, forced to balance her work for the Applied Research Project (ARP) with becoming a major contributor to her children's education as schools moved to an online environment while her husband risked in-person employment as an essential worker. Adaptation was required and she credits her public administration studies with helping prepare her "to do more with less." Adair's ARP focuses on professionals returning to work after a career break, a decision common for women who experience career disruptions. Covid-19 gave new meaning to her research; she gained an appreciation for "public servants as they face new challenges – such as work modifications, balancing risks for employees and the public, and rapidly managing change."



Melissa Bell

*No* stranger to emergency situations, Melissa Bell used to work overtime during hurricanes at non-profits to help persons hard of hearing. The pandemic, however, has forced her to rebalance her personal and professional life while considering the health risks to her and her household. Bell's experience as a graduate student in the Texas State MPA program has helped her manage the stress of the pandemic and appreciate the values gained through public service. Her professors have connected her with organizations where she has been able to learn about actions taken at all levels of government; learn more about the drive for responsibility, compassion, and transparency towards citizens; as well as the government's perseverance and desire for innovative responses to the pandemic. Bell continues to model these values and apply critical thinking skills emphasized by the MPA program as she oversees an advocacy and technology program through which she supports specialists providing live captioning and sign language interpreters at press conferences.



Megan Bermea

*Megan* Bermea was in her final semester of her Texas State MPA program as well as a full-time manager with Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) when the pandemic began to surge. Not only was she affected personally when she contracted the virus, battling it for over 3 weeks before she began to recover, the HHS was faced with the insurmountable task of "balancing the increase in public health and healthcare demand with significantly reduced available resources." A complex and challenging situation that required she remain focused and responsive whenever new information was presented. With the HHS requiring contracts be amended, new administrative rules be written, budgets adjusted, and Covid webinars held, Bermea credits the "skills, knowledge, and applied experience of [her] MPA education" for helping her avoid being "lost in a sea of despair and panic amidst [the] global pandemic."

## Veterans Alliance of Texas State Honors Dr. Marc Wallace



In July 2020, Dr. Marc Wallace was awarded the Above and Beyond Award from the Veterans Alliance of Texas State (VATS). The student organization, comprised of U.S. military veterans and their supporters, assists veterans with the transition from military service to student-life at Texas State University. The award is presented annually to a Texas State student, staff, and faculty member for their exceptional support of Texas State student veterans. Dr. Wallace is the 2020 faculty award recipient for his involvement in VATS, with one student praising Dr. Wallace for his presence at the “many seminars... geared towards veterans.” The student nomination for Dr. Wallace indicated that he was “careful not to show favoritism of any sort” but also continuously demonstrated his “appreciation for the non-traditional veteran students in his classes.” The son of and brother to U.S. military service members, Dr. Wallace has always valued and pursued public service. “The award,” he said, “is probably the second proudest accomplishment in my life after obtaining my Ph.D.” The Texas State MPA program has among its core values integrity and service, values which Dr. Wallace and his role with VATS demonstrate daily.



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## Texas State's Dr. Patricia Shields Honored with TSUS's 2020 Regent's Award

Dr. Patricia Shields was designated as a 2020 Texas State University System Regents' Professor, one of the highest honors a faculty member in Texas can receive. The award, given to just 3 faculty members this year, recognizes faculty members in the Texas State University System that demonstrate a record of distinguished teaching, accomplishments in scholarship, and a record of service at the local, state, and national levels. The Board of Regents evaluates faculty members across 13 campuses and serving 86,000 students, and the Regents' Award recognizes Dr. Shields' continued excellence in teaching, scholarly publications, and service at Texas State. Dr. Shields is only the second woman from Texas State to win the award, which was established in 2007.

Dr. Shields has been the recipient of numerous professional and teaching awards, which she attributes to the success of students' research. Under her leadership and guidance, Texas State MPA students have earned regional and national awards as well as published journal articles and presented at national conferences. Dr. Shields thanks “all of my ARP (Applied Research Project) students who challenged [her] and who stepped up and completed amazing research.” Her success as a professor extends into scholarship and service with Dr. Shields publishing 4 books and over 60 articles and book chapters which have been cited over 3,000 times. Additionally, Dr. Shields has been serving as the editor for the *Armed Forces & Society* journal since 2001. She credits her work with MPA students for making a critical difference in her professional life and helping her serve as a mentor “all over the world [to] faculty in military academies and specialists in civil-military relations.” The Texas State MPA program is proud to be home to professors as successful as Dr. Shields and celebrates her recognition as a 2020 Regents' Professor.

# MPA Faculty and Students Receive Honors and Recognition



Texas State University and Alpha Chi Honor Society recognize excellence in our students and professors.

MPA faculty members also received other recognitions this year. The College of Liberal Arts at Texas State University bestows upon faculty awards for excellence in teaching, research, and service during its annual fall faculty meeting. This year's event was held online and Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan received the 2020 College of Liberal Arts Achievement Award for Excellence in Teaching. She was recognized for this honor at the college's virtual fall faculty meeting in August.

MPA faculty were also honored with the favorite professor recognition by student members of the Alpha Chi Honor Society. Drs. Emily Hanks, Thomas Longoria, Marc Wallace, and Nandhini Rangarajan (who was honored for the 2nd year in a row) were rec-

ognized in November 2020 in an online event conducted by the Texas State University chapter.

Alpha Chi is a national honor society which promotes academic excellence and exemplary character among undergraduate college and university students and honors those who achieve such distinction. Graduate students with a 4.0 and at least 15 hours of graduate course-work at Texas State also qualify for Alpha Chi membership. Alpha Chi is the oldest honor society at Texas State, founded in 1922. Two exemplary MPA students Denise Upshaw and Katie Curtiss were student inductees into the Alpha Chi National Honor Society.

# Dr. Longoria Engages with Inklings

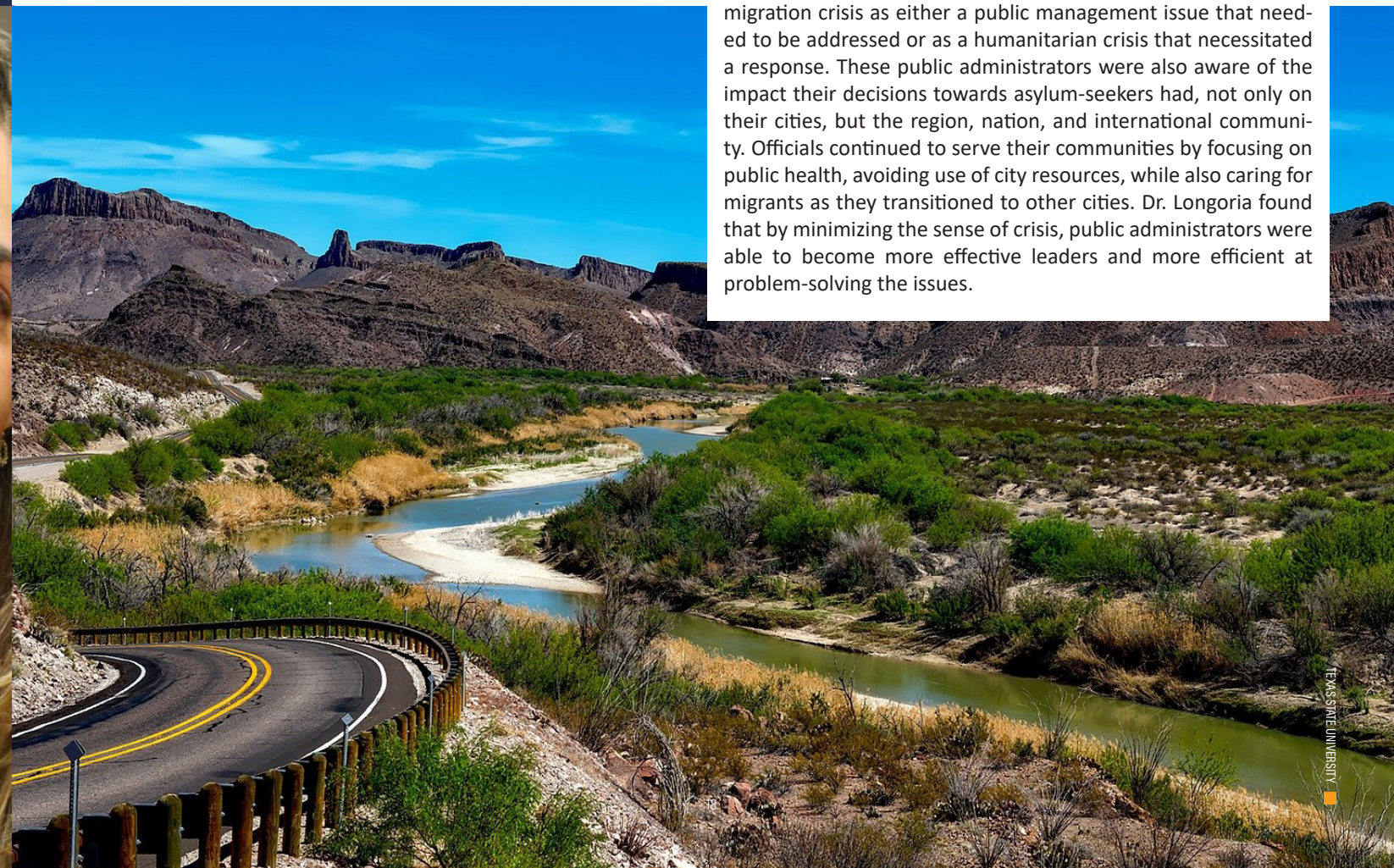
Dr. Thomas Longoria shared his research, "Reponses to the 2019 Migration 'Crisis' by Texas Border Local Government Officials: Perceptions and Perceived Responsibility to Act", with the Department of Political Science's Inklings.



For over twenty years, the Department of Political Science's Inklings has invited faculty members and graduate students to meet with one another to discuss their research and engage with their peers. On November 5, 2020, Dr. Thomas Longoria, professor of public administration and director for the Center for Research, Public Policy, and Training, shared his project focused on Texas public officials' responses to immigration in 2019.

Dr. Longoria began by introducing attendees to the issues faced by immigrants and Texas officials, with the former often fleeing criminal networks and violence, walking more than a month to reach the U.S.-Mexico border, and the latter having limited funds and options to effectively help asylum-seeking immigrants. Dr. Longoria's research focuses on what happens to immigrants, and the sense of responsibility local public servants have, after they are processed and released from border control. Using surveys and semi-structured interviews with officials in key Texas cities, his research seeks to explain what enhances officials' sense of responsibility towards their own citizens as well as incoming immigrants.

He found local officials often rationalized their approach to the migration crisis as either a public management issue that needed to be addressed or as a humanitarian crisis that necessitated a response. These public administrators were also aware of the impact their decisions towards asylum-seekers had, not only on their cities, but the region, nation, and international community. Officials continued to serve their communities by focusing on public health, avoiding use of city resources, while also caring for migrants as they transitioned to other cities. Dr. Longoria found that by minimizing the sense of crisis, public administrators were able to become more effective leaders and more efficient at problem-solving the issues.



# Helping the Community Through Public Service

## Austin (District 1) Councilmember Natasha Harper-Madison shares her views on becoming an elected official.

On November 19th, Austin Councilmember Natasha Harper-Madison (District 1) spoke via Zoom with her constituents, interested members of the public, and students, faculty, and staff from Texas State University (TXST). Cyber attendees were primarily from San Marcos, Austin, and Houston. Dr. Marc A. Wallace from the public administration program served as the moderator for the 75-minute conversation. Her lively dialogue with the attendees about her journey into public service touched upon several themes, including her passion for public service, the benefits of learning from mistakes, the importance of mentorship, the value of close friendships, the challenges of work-life balance, and the intrinsic rewards she obtains from public service.

Councilmember Harper-Madison is a native Austinite who has dedicated her life to serving East Austin. As noted on her district website, her humble beginnings “endowed her with an intimate knowledge of her community’s strengths and its unique struggles.” Primarily located east of I-35 and west of the SH-130 toll road, District 1 is 46 square miles and the largest of Austin’s 10 districts. Demographically, the 77,807 residents (2010 census) of District 1 are primarily Latino and African American, 23.8 percent hold a bachelor’s degree, 26 percent live in poverty (2013 data), 29.2 percent lack health insurance, and 8.9 percent are unemployed.

Ms. Harper-Madison outlined how her background as a successful entrepreneur ignited her interest in community advocacy. She served as president of the East 12th Street Merchants Association and founded East Austin Advocates, a nonprofit dedicated to connecting under-represented residents with the resources they need to succeed. Ms. Harper-Madison is also passionate about government that serves the people and is active with Take5to-Vote, an organization that helps constituents engage with their government by providing training and breaking down barriers like identification issues and transportation needs.

As a devoted community activist, but a political novice, Harper-Madison narrated how her transition into politics was rocky, but ultimately successful. For instance, she had the fortitude to knock on many doors to communicate with constituents but did not consider the value of a structured campaign staff. Fortunately,

she received mentorship during her first campaign in 2018 for the Austin City Council to win her district seat. She is the chair of the Health and Human Services Committee and sits on the Housing and Planning Committee, Judicial Committee, and Regional Affordability Committee.

To serve the residents of her diverse district, Ms. Harper-Madison discussed several of her efforts including zoning for affordable housing, access to healthy food choices, and better transportation opportunities. For the “missing middle” range of homeowners, more needs to be done to improve housing. Options include changes to the minimum lot sizes and square footage requirements to improve availability and affordability. A second struggle for her district is access to food at a grocery store instead of the corner store. Without incentives from the City of Austin to attract a grocery store, Ms. Harper-Madison mentioned the positive existence of farmers markets. However, since these pop-up venues tend to sell culturally unfamiliar food, cooking classes should also exist to teach residents how to prepare, for example, turnips. Lastly, “transit justice” is absent for many residents in need of reliable public transportation. Infrequent busses and service routes do not help to connect residents to services, amenities, and cultural options within the city. She stated that Project Connect seeks to address many of these issues.

To maintain work-life balance, Ms. Harper-Madison stated that anyone seeking public office should begin the process through soul-searching. Next, a conversation must occur with any children, partner/spouse, and family members. As a mother of four children (ages 8 to 23) and the wife of Austin Fire Department Lieutenant Thomas Madison, she stated that public scrutiny will impact the lives of family members based on a candidate’s decision to pursue elected office. Ergo, there must be a heart-to-heart conversation because of the long hours required and the



inevitable public criticism. Ms. Harper-Madison elaborated by saying her family should not have the same position on issues that she does. In fact, she emphasized that an elected official’s family should strive to maintain some distance between what the parent does for a living and their own lives.

Once elected to public office, Ms. Harper-Madison encouraged the attendees to read the criticisms sparingly and avoid internalizing them. “There will always be negative comments.” She provided a comparison between the two paths of her life. “No one is mad at you as a community advocate. However, once you become an elected official, people are mean.” Thus, it helps to maintain a level of emotional intelligence to continue the focus on the peoples’ work.

She encouraged the audience to quell their ego and to surround themselves with intelligent people. As she stated, “I don’t want to be the smartest one in the room. I need talented people to help me progress.” She cautioned attendees, however, to be mindful of the individuals within their circles, for some people will not have a candidate’s best interest at heart. Dr. Wallace noted that friendship is a dart board with an inner circle (bullseye) followed by various rings of closeness. Ms. Harper-Madison responded that as a public figure there are consequences for having people in your circle that seek to create problems for your career. Additionally, when an elected official seeks to leverage her public position to gain favors, e.g., avoiding a traffic ticket, this can result in an ethics violation and more public scrutiny. She added that numerous

aspects of her life are public, including statements on the council, her salary, and financial disclosure requirements for the household.

One of the questions from the audience centered on the process for teambuilding as it relates to the police department. Ms. Harper-Madison stated that police departments generally should recruit beyond white, male, Christian, former military, or individuals with previous policing experience. Through root-cause analysis, efforts should be made to modify the recruitment process at the academy level to influence the graduate that serves the community. More could be done to weed out officers with a history and propensity for violence. Though a majority of law enforcement does not fit the stereotype, the Office of Police Oversight, the Public Safety Committee, and the citizens panel to review the use of force are necessary elements to maintain the public trust.

The overarching theme for Ms. Harper-Madison’s comments revolved around policy choices that elected officials make. Dr. Wallace asked what should be emphasized within public policy courses at Texas State University to prepare students for life after college. Ms. Harper-Madison noted that the pipeline for policy analysts should be improved. Professors should emphasize the practical application of policy, including problem solving, critical thinking, competence, and how to be resourceful. She also stated that mistakes will occur in life, which is part of the learning process. The key is to learn from the mistake to be successful.



# Learning from Practitioners

## Texas State University's Manager in Residence Program

Assistant City Manager Mr. James Earp is the Manager in Residence for the Texas State University MPA program. According to him, "The Manager in Residence (MIR) program continues to be the premier advocacy program in the state of Texas whereby tenured local government managers from the Texas City Management Association and leading universities, such as Texas State, partner to enrich the Public Administration program by providing real, timely and practical professional experience to complement the outstanding academic coursework. Through mentorships, lectures of practice, workshops, and leveraging the student city management association, students in these programs receive greater visibility in the market and understand the application of what they are learning in the classroom." The Manager in Residence program has been a part of the MPA program at Texas State for three years now and it provides an insightful avenue to students in the Public Administration program to get advice and guidance from public servants. Mr. Earp's educational background in finance and economics and his practical experience as assistant city manager overseeing some of the city's economic, financial, and budgetary matters was invaluable as he engaged with students in PA 5313, Public Sector Economics. He actively participated in student discussion forums in the public sector economics class to help students understand the practice side of things.



**INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC SERVICE DURING THE PANDEMIC**

SEPTEMBER 11, 2020  
11:30 TO 12:30

Presenters:

Diana Torres Director of Economic Development Kyle	James R. Earp, CPM Assistant City Manager Kyle	Stephanie Reyes Assistant City Manager San Marcos
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RSVP by Scanning

Join via Zoom at:  
<https://txstate.zoom.us/j/96940427650>



TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
MPA PROGRAM PRESENTS

**ESSENTIALS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW: A LEADER'S INSIGHTS**

Featuring Mr. James Earp  
Assistant City Manager, Kyle, TX

October 30, 2020  
12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Join us via Zoom to learn how to conduct an effective interview and have a greater understanding of what to expect in the interview process. This workshop will benefit students entering the job market and those interested in conducting effective interviews.

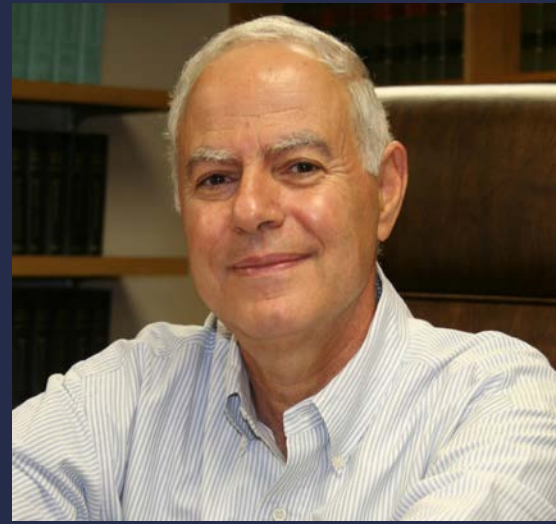
For additional details, contact Dr. Rangarajan at [nrl@txstate.edu](mailto:nrl@txstate.edu)

Join on Zoom via  
<https://txstate.zoom.us/j/97125736745>

This past year the MIR program, in collaboration with Texas State's MPA program, hosted two events to help students gain a better understanding of public service delivery during the Coronavirus pandemic as well as to help them learn about the essentials of an effective interview. The first event, Innovations in the Public Service During the Pandemic, hosted by Mr. Earp with guest speakers Stephanie Reyes, Assistant City Manager - San Marcos, TX, and Diana Torres, Director of Economic Development in Kyle, TX, provided insight into how small / mid-sized city governments have been able to innovate and adapt to obstacles created by the pandemic. Speakers provided several examples of collaborative innovations intended to help their communities. Mr. Earp highlighted the City of Kyle's commitment to not laying off any of its employees and how the city was "ahead of the curve" when it came to online meetings and telecommuting. Ms. Reyes praised the City of San Marcos for its continued dedication to innovation and emphasized that due to this core principle they were able to "stay agile, fluid, and dynamic" in response to the virus. Ms. Torres, a member of the San Marcos Business Reopening Taskforce, elaborated upon the work accomplished by the taskforce to help local businesses either maintain the CDC's restrictions in order to remain open or help modify their business models to fit the altered environment. It was a fantastic opportunity to learn how local government is flexible and to appreciate its ability to continually work for the people especially during crises. The second event, Essentials of an Effective Interview, provided insights about the interview process both from the perspective of the employer and the potential candidate, elaborating on the different elements of the interview process. Typically, interviewees tend to focus on their own demeanor and comportment on interview day. Mr. Earp expressed the importance of getting to know the interviewer's perspective as well. He provided numerous insights about getting to know the perspectives of the interviewer and the organization. Understanding the expectations, values, and priorities of the employer facilitates the interview process for applicants. Mr. Earp provided the attendees several examples of good quality interview practices and practical tips on what to avoid while preparing for an interview.

# Texas State University's William P. Hobby Center

Responsible for the Texas Certified Public Manager program since 1995, the Hobby Center has continued their support of the Department of Political Science and MPA program.



Dr. Howard Balanoff  
Professor  
Director, Certified Public Manager Program

The Texas State University's William P. Hobby Center for Public Service conducts the Texas Certified Public Manager (CPM) program and is led by the MPA program's very own Dr. Howard Balanoff. In July 1995 Texas State's Hobby Center was designated by the Governor of Texas and the National Certified Public Manager (CPM) Consortium to deliver the CPM program throughout Texas. About 200 participants are currently enrolled in the program, delivered in the cities of San Marcos, Houston, Nacogdoches, Edinburg, Round Rock, Lubbock, and Arlington. Since its founding 25 years ago, over 2100+ public administrators have graduated from the Texas CPM program.

The Texas CPM Consortium announced at its annual Board of Directors meeting held on October 28, 2020, that the Texas Certified Public Manager (CPM) program has met the accreditation review

William P. Hobby  
Texas Monthly Magazine, 1997

*The CPM program has been reaccredited for an additional six years.*

standards of the Accreditation Review Committee and has been re-accredited for a 6-year period, until 2026.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, traditional in-person graduation ceremonies could not be held. This did not, however, lessen the achievements of our 2020 CPM graduates. A virtual ceremony was held in December to honor our 37 June graduates, 20 August graduates, and 68 December graduates from Texas State University, Texas Tech University, the University of Texas at Rio-Grande Valley, Stephen F. Austin State University, and the University of Houston. The graduation speaker was Austin, Texas City Manager, Spencer Cronk.

The pandemic has also led to a shift in how the CPM program operates, now being offered in a virtual format using live Zoom presentations. All CPM courses have also been converted to Canvas, Texas State University's collaborative learning environment. Enrollment in these courses have continued to increase and we do anticipate returning to face-to-face instruction beginning Fall (September) 2021.

On March 27, 2020, the Hobby Center would have sponsored the 18th annual William P. Hobby Distinguished Lecture & Luncheon at Texas State University's Avery Building in Round Rock, Texas. This takes place during the annual conference of the Texas Certified Public Manager (CPM) program and had over 100 registrants before it was canceled due to the spreading coronavirus. Other events postponed or canceled included the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) Centex Chapter Public Service Recognition Week Awards Banquet.

The Hobby Center supports the Department of Political Science and MPA program in many ways, including scholarships and MPA intern fellowships for Texas State University public administration students. In 2020 the Hobby Center funded several Hobby Family MPA Scholarships at \$1,000 each and several MPA Hobby Family Internships at \$1,500 - \$3,000 each. In addition, the Hobby Center has been a major sponsor for receptions/dinners for student organizations such as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Student Chapter.



# Texas State University 2020 MPA Graduates

Students faced unprecedented hardship this past year. Yet through adversity, with ingenuity, they rallied. Congratulations class of 2020!

## Spring

### ARP\* Track

**Caroline M. Butler:** The Provisional Aid of Human Trafficking Survivors

**Morgan A. White:** The National Flood Insurance Program in Texas: An Assessment of Non-Participating Communities

## Summer

### ARP Track

**Megan M. Bermea:** Beyond Policy Innovation: Analyzing Access to Long-Acting Reversible Contraception

**Araceli Gonzalez:** Evaluating Park Amenities and Services: A Case Study of City Parks in Kyle, Texas

**Brian P. Matthews:** Sustainable Innovations: A Descriptive Study of Sustainable Innovation Originating from Higher Education Institutions

**Alexandra E. Robey:** Saving Humans' Best Friends: Characteristics to Build and Sustain No-Kill Communities

**Andrea N. Salaymeh:** A Web Content Analysis of 20 Texas Child Advocacy Centers; A Descriptive Study of Services Utilized by the Multidisciplinary Team in Child Abuse Investigations

### Non-Thesis Track

**Caronarda F. Benbow**

**Mia Demers**

**Ariana Hauser**

**Bryan A. LeMeilleur**

**Samantha Martinez**

*\*Applied Research Project*

## Fall

### ARP Track

**Désirée B. Adair:** Back to Work: A Descriptive Study of Municipal Human Resources Directors' Perceptions Toward Returner Programs

**Melissa B. Bell:** Toward Equal Access: A Model for Lay Advocacy Programs that Serve People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

**Sarah A. Daly:** Building Equitable Education Systems: An Analysis of Funding Equity at Texas Elementary Schools

**Margie Fernandez Pew:** Best Practices for Coping Method Resources for Police Officers who Experience Critical Incidents in Central Texas

**Nora A. Noble Christoff:** The Implementation of Local Agricultural Policies and Programs: Establishing Best Practices for State Agricultural Agencies

**Yvonne K. Spell:** Gauging Water Conservation Efforts of Central Texas Municipalities Against Best Management Practices Set Forth by the Texas Water Development Board

**Jennifer R. Whitcomb:** 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

### Non-Thesis Track

**Luis C. Acuna**

**Stacy L. Foster**

**Robert P. Gonzales**

**Joshua Gregory**

**Charles F. Hudnall**

**Jamar Keaton**

**Jacklyn D. Levisay**

**Rory G. Perez**

**Esther D. Ramirez**

**James D. Regan**

**Nicholas Thompson**

**James J. Vowell**



# Faculty Publications | 2020

## Dr. Christopher Brown

**Brown, C. R. (2020). The Special Purpose District Reconsidered: The Fifth Circuit's Recent Declaration that the Edwards Aquifer Authority is a Special Purpose District under the Voting Rights Act, and the Tortured History that Led to That Decision. *Hastings Environmental Law Journal*, 27(1). Retrieved from [https://repository.uhastings.edu/hastings\\_environmental\\_law\\_journal](https://repository.uhastings.edu/hastings_environmental_law_journal)**

"The United States Supreme Court has carved out an exception to the Voting Rights Act's One Person, One Vote requirement: the special purpose district exception, which applies to units of government that govern one resource shared by two or more user groups, like an aquifer. (Such a natural resource used in common by several competing groups is called a common pool resource). The idea is that the One Person, One Vote requirement would place total control of the resource in the hands of the most populous user group, which would deprive other user groups of any control over their share of the resource. This article seeks to evaluate the Voting Rights Act dispute that followed the creation of the Edwards Aquifer Authority--which regulates the Edwards Aquifer of Central Texas--to assess the special purpose district's implications for common pool resource governance in general."



## Dr. Hassan Tajalli

**DeSoto, W. H., & Tajalli, H. (2020). Gendered Patterns of Drug Use on a University Campus. *World Medical Health Policy*, 12(1), 32–46. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.332>**

"Substance use patterns are important to understand because they can have a variety of effects on those who engage in them. Some of these consequences can be harmful. This is especially true for young adults in college settings who are making the transition to adulthood. While the issue of substance use looms large in the research literature on college students, less attention had been focused exclusively on women in this important setting. This paper attempts to address this limitation in existing research by assessing the utility of two theories of human behavior for explaining substance use among female college students (i) Social Learning Theory and (ii) General Strain Theory. There does appear to be support for learning theory but not for strain theory."



## Drs. Nandhini Rangarajan & Patricia Shields

**Casula, M., Rangarajan, N., & Shields, P. M. (n.d.). The potential of working hypotheses for deductive exploratory research. *Quality and Quantity*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-020-01072-9>**

"While hypotheses frame explanatory studies and provide guidance for measurement and statistical tests, deductive, exploratory research does not have a framing device like the hypothesis. To this purpose, this article examines the landscape of deductive, exploratory research and offers the working hypothesis as a flexible, useful framework that can guide and bring coherence across the steps in the research process. The working hypothesis conceptual framework is introduced, placed in a philosophical context, defined, and applied to public administration and comparative public policy. Doing so, this article explains: the philosophical underpinning of exploratory, deductive research; how the working hypothesis informs the methodologies and evidence collection of deductive, explorative research; the nature of micro-conceptual frameworks for deductive exploratory research; and, how the working hypothesis informs data analysis when exploratory research is deductive."



## Dr. Patricia Shields

**Shields, P. M., & Sookermany, A. (2020). Dynamic Intersection of Military and Society. In *Handbook of Military Sciences* (pp. 1–12). Springer. Retrieved from [https://link.springer.com/reference-workentry/10.1007/978-3-030-02866-4\\_31-1](https://link.springer.com/reference-workentry/10.1007/978-3-030-02866-4_31-1)**

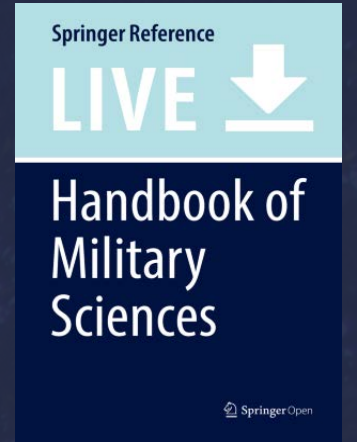
"The military and society interact and shape each other every day. This chapter examines the diverse, interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to understand and explain that interaction. It begins by defining and situating the field's origin story in military sociology and political science. Key scholars and events are highlighted to show how the field evolved as the world moved from the Cold War to the War on Terror and beyond. During that time the scope of the field grew incorporating scholars from around the world and across an array of disciplines. The chapter then narrows to discuss key topics central to the field – civil military relations, public opinion/popular culture, recruitment and retention, minority representation (women, minorities, LGBTQ), military families, and veterans' studies. The chapter ends with a discussion and examples of the methods scholars use to study established and emerging research questions."

**Klockner, K., Shields, P. M., Pillay, M., & Ames, K. (2020). Pragmatism as a Teaching Philosophy in the Safety Sciences: A Higher Education Pedagogy Perspective. *Safety Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2020.105095>**

"The education of safety science professionals is a key requirement to ensuring the ongoing recognition of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) as a profession. Safety science educators, at some point in their academic career, are required to align with an appropriate teaching philosophy, however this important aspect of education pedagogy rarely receives scholarly attention in the safety sciences. Therefore, this article makes the case for philosophical pragmatism as an overarching teaching philosophy that works well within the evidence informed safety science practice model. Pragmatism is a logical and valuable teaching philosophy which centers on linking theory, research, ideas and actions to multi-disciplinary practical applications. It is embedded in the notion that both multiple stakeholder, and multiple perspectives are required to solve practical safety-oriented problems. Pragmatism links to a reflective practitioner paradigm whereby students are asked to think critically about what they do. Further, learning is influenced by self-discovery. The key theoretical underpinnings of pragmatism are presented, as well as the 4 Ps of pragmatism (Practicality, Pluralism, Participation and Provisional) as a teaching framework. The rationale for embracing pragmatism as a higher educational teaching philosophy for the safety sciences is presented. Pragmatism is seen as both a path forward in reducing the theory into practice divide for safety science educators and professionals, and a teaching philosophy which enhances the safety science pedagogy educational lens."

## Faculty Presentations

**Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan, Dr. Sherri Mora, and MPA Alumna Ashley Wayman** presented their research in the 2020 ASPA conference session held online in April 2020. Their papers were part of a session entitled "Examining the Evolving Role of Gender in Established Governance Structures" which was moderated by Dr. Patricia Shields. This session featured research that will be part of a forthcoming book co-edited by Dr. Patricia Shields entitled "Handbook of Gender and Public Administration" to be published by Edward Elgar Publishing. Dr. Rangarajan's research paper "A Review of Scholarship on Gender and Public Personnel Administration from 2008-2019" described the trends in scholarship in both American and international journals on gender and public personnel issues. Dr. Mora and Ashley Wayman's presentation was entitled "Empowering Women in City Management: Career Aspirations of Mid-Level Women in Texas City Management".



# PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM FACULTY



Howard Balanoff, Ed.D.  
Endowed Professor  
Director, Hobby Center for Public Service  
*Areas of Interest: Personnel Administration, Comparative Policy & Administration, Organization Theory & Behavior, and Leadership*



Dianne Rahm, Ph.D.  
Professor  
*Areas of Interest: Environmental Policy, Science & Technology Policy, and Public Policy*



Christopher Brown, J.D.  
Associate Professor  
*Areas of Interest: Environmental & Natural Resources Law and Administrative Law*



Nandhini Rangarajan, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Director, Public Administration Program  
*Areas of Interest: Public Management & Organizational Creativity, and Research Methods*



Billy Fields, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
*Areas of Interest: Environmental Policy & Management, Place Management, Hazard Mitigation, and Transportation Policy*



Patricia Shields, Ph.D.  
Professor  
*Areas of Interest: Civil Military Relations, Pragmatism of Public Administration, and Research Methods*



Emily Kay Hanks, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
*Areas of Interest: Non-Profit & Voluntary Sector, Public Values, and Applied Communication*



Hassan Tajalli, Ph.D.  
Professor  
*Areas of Interest: Research Methods, Statistics, Program Evaluation, and Public Policy*



Thomas Longoria, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Director, Center for Research, Public Policy, and Training  
*Areas of Interest: Local Government Policy & Administration, Urban Politics, and Non-Profit Management*



Marc Wallace, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Practice  
*Areas of Interest: Organizational Effectiveness, Urban Development, Health Care, and Education*

## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Composed of alumni, faculty, practitioners and students, the Public Administration Advisory Council informs the Program Director of current and past experiences in the program, as well as needs in the public sector, to ensure the program is responsive to students and trends within the workplace.

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Susan Johnson

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The Texas State University System is governed by a nine-member Board of Regents appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. Board terms are staggered so that three members of the Board are appointed every two years during the legislative session. A non-voting student regent is also appointed annually to the board for a one-year term.

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