

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Spring 2025 Newsletter



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Department of
Public Administration**

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Spring 2025 Newsletter

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NIU MPA program ranked 4th nationally for local government management; 11th in public finance.



NIU's **Master of Public Administration (MPA)** program retained two top-15 positions in the 2025 U.S. News and World Report rankings.

NIU was ranked fourth in the nation in the specialty field of local government management, 11th nationally in the specialty of public finance and budgeting, and 61st in overall public affairs among the 271 ranked programs.

NIU's perennially ranked MPA program — which produces about one-third of city managers in Illinois — is the top-ranked local government program among public and private university programs in Illinois.

"We are thrilled to learn that the public administration community continues to see us as a leader in local government management and public budgeting and finance," said **Scott Robinson**, professor and chair of the Department of Public Administration. "We will continue to serve the state of Illinois and beyond by training the next generation of public servants."

Our MPA program has a 95% job-placement record within six months of graduation. Robinson credits the paid internship program that ensures students are well-prepared for the job market.

Many NIU MPA program alumni go on to become city or county managers, finance directors, park directors, as well as police and fire chiefs. Both NIU MPA faculty and alumni have played a major role in efforts to professionalize municipal staff statewide and advance the national good government movement. Some alumni work for the federal government and the private sector — serving as consultants to help private industry with public service needs.

"Earning my Master of Public Administration at Northern Illinois University opened doors to a career path I never imagined possible," said alumnus Matthew Galloway, a U.S. Navy veteran and economic development specialist with the village of Hoffman Estates. "This degree has led me to a fulfilling role in public service, where I've been able to make a meaningful and noticeable impact in the communities I serve."

In addition to the traditional in-person experience, NIU offers a fully online MPA program. It is exclusively designed for professionals who have two or more years of service in the public sector which includes government and nonprofit organizations. Public service professionals can also opt to take five courses and earn a Graduate Certificate in public budgeting and financial management or a Graduate Certificate in public management. Credit hours earned from the graduate certificates can be applied toward the pursuit of the MPA degree.



Public Administration's New Office Administrator.



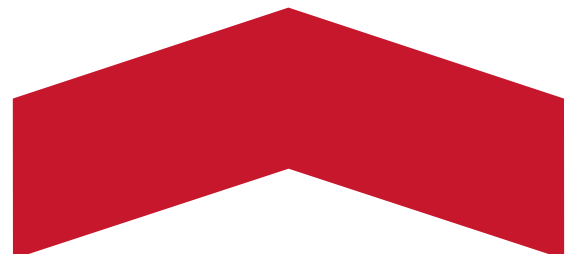
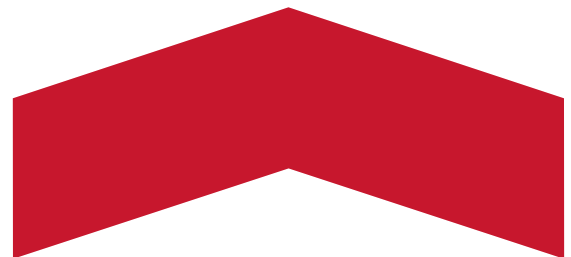
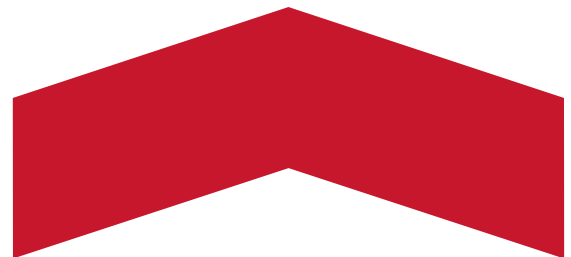
Our department welcomed **Rebecca (Becky) Iaccino** as our new office administrator. With an academic background in philosophy, specializing in political and ethical philosophy, she brings a thoughtful and purpose-driven approach to her role. Her passion for

helping others and her longstanding interest in government led her to a graduate assistant position at NIU. During that time, she enjoyed supporting students and contributing to the academic community, which inspired her to seek a full-time position to further serve the university and its students.

Iaccino is thrilled to join a department that values collaboration and compassion, both for its students and for one another. She looks forward to supporting the team and maintaining a positive, productive environment for everyone.

Outside of work, she is a proud mother of twin boys. She enjoys video games, reading and advocating for greater inclusivity and understanding for individuals with disabilities — a cause close to her heart since becoming disabled five years ago. Drawing on her experiences, she strives to create a more open and supportive world for all.

Iaccino is always ready to assist anyone in need. While she may not have every answer at her fingertips, her determination to find solutions ensures that no question goes unanswered. She invites anyone to reach out for support and looks forward to contributing to the success of our department and its community.



Green Office Initiative Update.

Our Department of Public Administration has earned a Green Offices Certification Silver rating through NIU's Campus Sustainability Green Office Initiative. This program recognizes the use of sustainable practices in everyday office operations. Our participation supports NIU's commitment to being a leader in sustainability and promotes the use of sustainable practices across campus.

The practices recognized by the program align with those recommended by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). Implementing them helps NIU work toward its goals in the Sustainability and Climate Action Plan and build a stronger campus culture of sustainability.

We are proud to show our support for making NIU a leader in sustainability.



#HuskiesGoGreen

MPA LinkedIn Network Growing.

Celebrating the small wins, we have noticed our social media following doubled, particularly on our LinkedIn network. With an average monthly growth rate of 9%, we are happy that the content is performing well.

This expansion is not just about numbers; in the field of public administration, this growth is vital. It continues to strengthen our network of alumni, expands opportunities for current students, graduates and directly supports our department's mission. Through an engaged network, each new connection represents a potential partnership, a shared learning opportunity and a step toward creating positive change in our communities. Watching our alumni support each other, share expertise and work together is inspiring. We encourage you to stay connected and continue to help us build this network and form new connections along the way.

If you haven't already, connect with us on [LinkedIn](#).

The Public Service Leadership Degree Continues to Grow.

The **Public Service Leadership (PSL)** degree offered through the School of Public and Global Affairs (SPGA) is one of the few quickly growing programs at the university. This program encourages public service employees to complete their undergraduate degrees and allows for “prior learning credit” to recognize the significant on-the-job learning students have in their careers. Professor **Kurt Thurmaier** has been instrumental in forging relationships with community colleges and external professional associations. Post-traditional adult learning is one of the priorities of NIU, and this program provides an excellent opportunity for degree completion. Alumni interested in this degree opportunity or in sharing this with colleagues should contact the **department** for more information.

2025 Topgolf Outing – Save The Date.



As the flowers begin to bloom, we have started planning for our annual TopGolf outing on Sept. 25. Don't miss out on an evening with fellow alumni, friends and get to meet with our new students! Stay tuned for more information as we get closer to this event.

NIU Red and Black Filled the Capitol at NIU Advocacy Day.



Our Department of Public Administration was well represented at NIU Advocacy Day in Springfield, Illinois. MPA students and Denise Burchard were among a group of alumni and students who took the time to discuss the legislative priorities of Northern Illinois University.

THE 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES ARE:

» **Adequate and Equitable Funding:**

NIU supports the governor's proposed 3% increase in the Fiscal Year 2026 higher education appropriations and advocates for a rational funding formula that ensures predictable and sufficient resources.

» **Efficiencies in Capital Construction Projects:**

NIU recently received a historic \$40 million gift toward the construction of its state-funded Health Technology Center Project. It is imperative that this project moves forward efficiently to maximize the impact of private funding and accelerate operations.

» **Expanding Partnerships for Student Persistence and Degree Completion:**

NIU supports a statewide higher education strategy that strengthens collaboration between four-year public universities and two-year community colleges.

» **Regulatory Modernization and Relief:**

NIU continues to seek relief from regulations and requirements that place undue administrative and fiscal burdens on universities. This will allow us to allocate more resources toward academic programs, student support services and operational efficiency.

» **Funding and Grant Policies:**

NIU opposes funding policies that undermine public and nonprofit higher education institutions.

The group had several productive meetings with representatives and senators from their home districts and others.

Advocacy Day is held every year and alumni are encouraged to participate in promoting the priorities of NIU to our legislators.

RECENT EVENTS



Roy O'Kelly, Emily Brier, Illinois State Senator Donald DeWitte, Denise Burchard and Rose Korleski.



Emily Brier and Illinois State Representative Nicole La Ha.

Department Partners with IAMMA to Offer Undergraduate ILCMA Conference Experience.



Our Department of Public Administration, in collaboration with a group of IAMMA members, extended an invitation to undergraduate students from colleges across central Illinois to attend the ILCMA Conference to explore careers in local government. A total of 23 students from seven colleges — University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Eastern Illinois University, Eureka College, Monmouth College, Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, University of Massachusetts and Dartmouth — attended the event at the Marriott Hotel.



RECENT EVENTS

The students were welcomed with a breakfast session, during which they heard a legislative update from Brad Cole, executive director of the Illinois Municipal League.

Following breakfast, the students participated in a local government panel discussion featuring senior managers from various local governments. Moderated by Yates McLaughlin, the panelists shared their career journeys, described what a typical day in local government looks like, and provided valuable advice for students considering a future in public service. The panel was engaging, sparking further questions and discussions from the students.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING PANELISTS FOR SHARING THEIR INSIGHTS:

- » **Nicole Albertson** – Human Resources Director, city of Bloomington.
- » **Tessa Ferraro** – Associate Planner, town of Normal.
- » **Andrew Huhn** – Finance Director, town of Normal.
- » **Terry Lusby** – Public Works Director, city of Champaign.
- » **Sue McLaughlin** – Deputy City Manager, city of Bloomington.

After the panel, the students attended the closing keynote session titled “Great City/County Leadership Amid Change” and were treated to a lunch sponsored by the Sommers Foundation.

For further insights from the ILCMA Winter Conference, you can watch the discussions online: [ILCMA Conference Discussions](#).

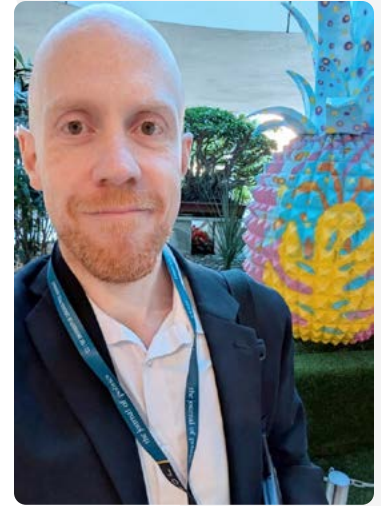


Undergraduate and MPA students at ILCMA Winter Conference Undergraduate Session.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) continues to provide major grants for the planning and policymaking capacities of the Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability, and Energy (IESE) and our Department of Public Administration.

To date, we have secured \$1.955 million to support 12 undergraduate students and 12 graduate students over a four-year period — all fully funded through research fellowships. In support of NIU students authoring the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, students have assisted with grant scoring rubrics and administrative processes, drafted academic articles and run surveys of park districts statewide.

They will soon field a public survey, conduct stakeholder interviews and develop a parcel-based geographic information system. One of the MPA capstone projects in spring 2025 is running through this research engagement, and Professor Tom Skuzinski attended the Southern Political Science Association conference to present on this relationship and data about park budget priorities.



Professor Skuzinski at the Southern Political Science Association 2025 Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



IDNR research fellows in a hybrid meeting in fall 2024. Environmental studies students complete pre-professional capstones to prepare them for success in their MPA and allied degrees. Last year, we partnered with Lake County on drafting sustainable procurement standards and a tree-planting program. The feedback of the staff noted that the students worked at a level that “matched what we would expect from a consultant.” This year, we are partnering with the village of Downers Grove on multiple projects with 12 students. Kudos to MPA alumna Melissa Burlingame-Greenhagen, IESE assistant director, for her amazing instructional and mentoring skills.



Pre-professional capstone ENVIS Students after their final presentation to Lake County stakeholders.



By giving to our Department of Public Administration, you are playing an important role in supporting students and faculty. Through annual giving or planned giving and endowments, there is a method to fit just about any budget.

For more information, please contact

Laura Knight, senior director of advancement,
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, laura.knight@niu.edu.

There are several ways to make your gift to
NIU's Department of Public Administration.

» **ONLINE:**

Make a credit card gift online

(designate your gift to the Department of Public Administration).

» **BY PHONE:**

1-877-GIV-2-NIU.

» **BY MAIL:**

One-time credit card payments or check gifts may be made using the [Gift Form](#).



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