



Northern Illinois
University

Making an Impact

Department of
Public Administration
AY 2022-2023 Annual Report



Welcome from the Chair

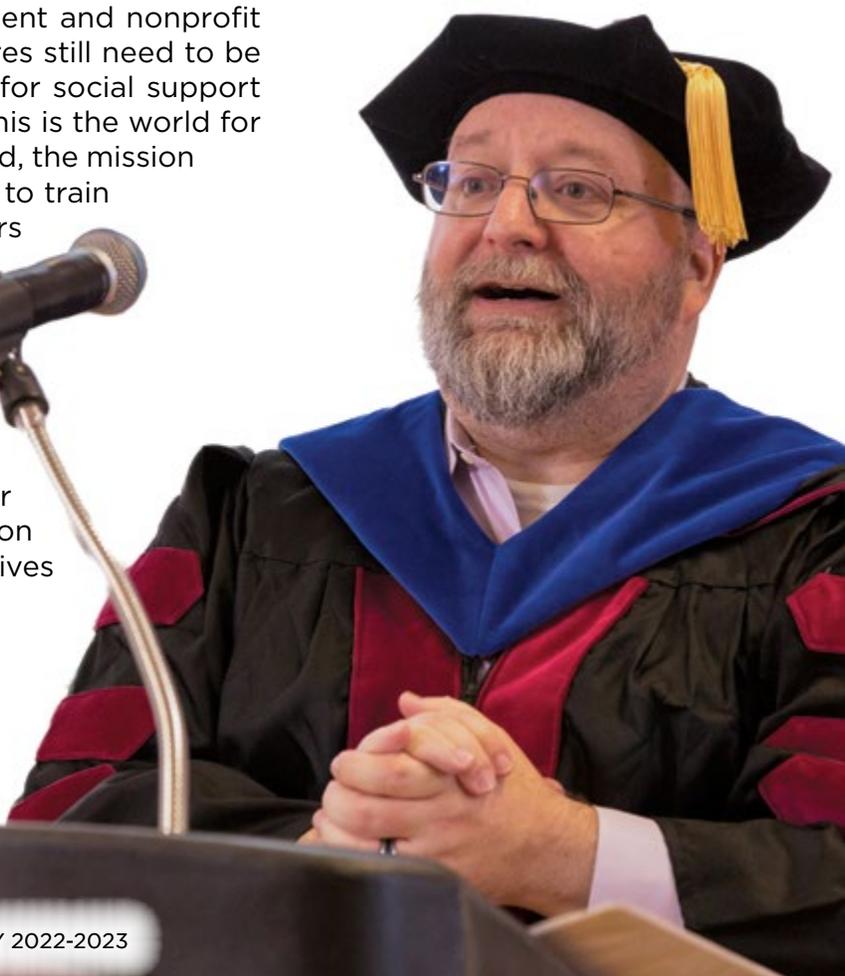
The Department of Public Administration celebrates our 60th Anniversary during the upcoming academic year. This is an excellent moment to look back at the successes of the program as well as forward to the future. Our own Kurt Thurmaier provides an update of this distinguished history in a later section of the annual report. I will use this space instead to discuss some of the remarkable changes in public service education over this time.

It is hard to describe how many changes public service (and public service education) have experienced over this period because there are so many. Our program has seen the rash of assassinations and civil unrest of the late 1960s, the Vietnam War and growing distrust in government in the 1970s, broad attacks on the capabilities of government programs in the 1980s, the emergence of the internet in the 1990s, the proliferation of technological innovations in the 2000s and 2010s, through to the recent pandemic and a new period of social unrest. Our program has seen the emergence of email as a means of communication, ubiquitous communication with cellular phones and the development of social media.

For all the changes that our department has seen in its history, some elements remain the same. The public still needs effective and ethical administrators in our government and nonprofit organizations. Parks still need maintenance. Fires still need to be put out. People still need assistance applying for social support programs. People still need public services. This is the world for which we train students. For all that has changed, the mission of our department continues. We will continue to train the next generation of public service leaders and equip them with the tools they need to tackle the challenges presented by the many developments described above — and for the inevitable other developments impossible to predict for the future.

Join me as we report on a year of transition for our department and plan for a year of celebration of its many contributions to our lives and the lives of others. ■

— Scott Robinson, professor and chair



The History of the Department of Public Administration, 2013-2023

The sixth decade of the Master of Public Administration program at Northern Illinois University has seen the program move into its own department, develop an online course delivery platform, double enrollments, enhance the JD/MPA option and globalize the curriculum and student body.

Created inside the Department of Political Science in 1979, **the Division of Public Administration became an independent Department of Public Administration within a new School of Public and Global Affairs Jan. 1, 2013.** The school's founding units included Public Administration, Political Science and the new Center for NGO Leadership and Development (NGOLD) with a new undergraduate major in civic leadership and community engagement. NGOLD has evolved into the Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies with a renamed major, minor and certificate in nonprofit and NGO studies.

Division Director Kurt Thurmaier was appointed as the first department chair by Dean McCord. The reorganization of the division into its own department accomplished several strategic goals. Prior to 2014, NIU's program was the only top 50 MPA/MPP program still operating within a political science department, and the overall ranking had been declining steadily in the U.S. News peer evaluation rankings. All but one other MPA program had become housed in a public affairs school following the Maxwell School model at Syracuse University. Public Administration faculty benefited from the independence because tenure decisions were now based exclusively on the peer review of PA colleagues who valued the theory/practice connection in research as well as teaching. NIU would become much more attractive to high-quality, young faculty who wanted a department home that fit the prevailing profile of an independent unit within a public affairs school. Finally, the School of Public and Global Affairs itself offered new opportunities for interdisciplinary public affairs curricula and research; a natural worldview of an academic field that historically has drawn from multiple fields for research and teaching that improves governance in communities, states and nations.

The department used three initiatives to increase MPA enrollments from academic year 2013-14 to 2019-20 (AY14-AY20). AY 2013-14 enrollments were 67 MPA students, mostly intern-track students in two cohorts of about 25 students each. An external review of the program revealed that peer institutions had many more part-time, midcareer students as a percent of total enrollments. **The faculty decided to relaunch the Graduate Certificate in Public Management (GCPM) as an alternative path back to graduate school for midcareer professionals.** Enrolling as a student-at-large with a simple, one-page application and a supervisor's recommendation, the midcareer GCPM student could demonstrate their academic qualifications in their first two MPA courses, earning recommendations for full admission to the MPA from the PA faculty. Once the GCPM students enrolled in the intro course, PSPA 600 (formerly PSPA 500), most were hooked on the value of the MPA, finding the theory/practice framework based on 13 program competencies a highly valuable professional development. Total enrollment grew from 67 students in 2013-2014 to 113 students in 2016-2017, with 28 of the 2016-2017 students taking classes as GCPM students. Total enrollments grew 68% (see Figure 1).

The key to the success of the GCPM was a **second initiative to convert the MPA course schedule to an intensive, quasi-executive, eight-week format.** That is, each week of the course was actually two weeks of coursework in a traditional semester course. This was feasible for part-time students because they were only in a single class each week, just as in a semester course, but now they were able to earn six credits a semester instead of three, cutting the time needed to earn their full degree in half. They could earn the five-course GCPM in just a single year. Full-time internship students would have one eight-week period with a single course, then the second eight-week period

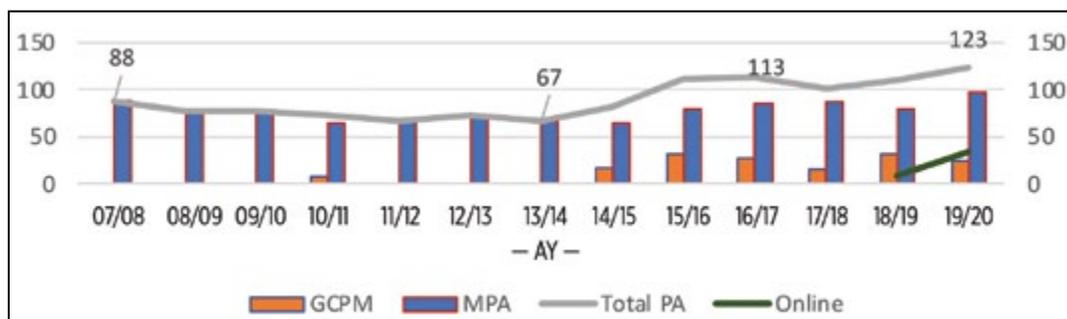


Figure 1. MPA enrollment trends, AY2008-AY2020.

The History of the Department of Public Administration, 2013-2023 (continued)

with a two-course load. As full-time students, they could manage the double course load with their 20 hours per week internship.

The third initiative to increase enrollments manifested as **the launch of the online GCPM (oGCPM) program in fall 2018, and the online MPA (oMPA) program in fall 2019.** The first pioneering nine students in the oGCPM program continued through the oMPA launch and most graduated after their successful online capstone course in spring 2021. As seen in Figure 1, the launch of the oMPA increased enrollments in spring 2021 to a record 123 students.

The COVID-19 pandemic was disruptive to everyone's lives in so many ways. But for almost all the PA faculty, the switch to an online format in spring 2020 for their courses that had been meeting in classrooms was not a problem. All the regular faculty had already created at least one online version of their course, so pivoting to the online synchronous meetings in Zoom was easy, and the formats for the online and classroom versions (in terms of assignments, readings, etc.) were very similar. One lasting impact of the pandemic seems to be that almost all mid-career students are now choosing the oMPA format. In fall 2020, about 60% of total enrollment was online GCPM and MPA students, an increase from 35 oMPA in AY20 to 59 oMPA students in AY23. The pandemic has had a negative impact as well; the fall 2021 and fall 2022 intern track classes were dramatically lower than previous years, dropping total enrollment by 24 students. Recruiting current undergraduate students is very difficult, and the trend of lower MPA enrollments is nationwide.

While the domestic market for new precareer, intern-track students has fallen dramatically, the international demand for NIU's MPA program has increased as dramatically. Admitted students with English as their native language have performed very well in the intensive MPA courses. Moreover, once the students have been able to gain transportation, they have been successful in getting internships in area local governments. Hanover Township Administrator James Barr pioneered the international student internship option, and it has been quite successful. More students have obtained internships in the latest round of internship placements for summer/fall 2023. Globalizing the MPA in accord with the newest NASPAA accreditation guidelines in the last decade has included new double-degree MPA/MPP programs with Strathmore University in Nairobi, Kenya, and Chiang Mai University in Thailand. The department is also actively developing

local government training programs for Indonesian local government officials working in a dramatically decentralized governance structure under a new constitution. These efforts align with the traditionally strong connection between the MPA program and NIU's Center for Southeast Asian Studies, both of which were created by Professor Dan Wit in 1963. Indonesia has many high-ranking government and academic officials with NIU doctoral degrees in political science, including many with public administration as one of their subject fields.

The MPA student body is changing in one more way. **Effective in AY 2016-2017, the department launched a new public service law and management specialization.** Students apply for both NIU Law School and the MPA. Once admitted, they spend year one in law school, then switch in year two for the MPA, including placement in an internship that uses law and MPA skill sets. Students can apply 12 credits from their MPA to the law degree and vice versa, reducing total time for both degrees by a full year. Aaron Merriman is our newest JD/MPA graduate, recently hired as an assistant state's attorney at the McLean County State's Attorney's Office in Bloomington, Illinois.



*Aaron Merriman,
NIU JD/MPA alum.*

...

The sixth decade of the MPA program has been one of tremendous growth and development. The faculty and staff have adapted to the changing demands for online education by midcareer students with a high-quality degree program worthy of our consistent top-five ranking in peer reviews. While the decade has brought much joy and satisfaction from these achievements, we note the passing of three faculty members who contributed so much to the development of our program.

...

As our department turns to its next decade, it does so under the new leadership of Scott Robinson. Our faculty are eager to move forward with curricular initiatives that will expand the appeal of the MPA to public budgeting and finance professionals as well as emergency management professionals. Adapting to the changing demands of public service professionals is a legacy they cannot ignore. ■

In Memoriam

Professor and President Emeritus William Monat, aged 92, passed away at home in Jupiter, Florida, Sept. 23, 2017. Monat began at NIU as a public administration faculty member, went on to become president of NIU and then the first chancellor of the Regency Universities System of Illinois. He returned to NIU in 1986 to teach public administration until his retirement in 1992. He stayed active into retirement and was instrumental in helping the MPA program become an independent department in a new School of Public and Global Affairs. The annual Monat Scholarship is awarded to one of our top two outstanding MPA students each year at graduation.

[NIU Today September 26, 2017, NIU remembers William Monat, former NIU president and visionary](#)

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Professor Emeritus Dan Wit died June 11, 2018 at the age of 95 in Rancho Mirage, California. As the political science department chair, Professor Wit created the graduate public administration degree program (then the Master of Arts in Public Administration), and working with Clyde Wingfield, the first division director, placed Duane Olivier in the first MPA internship, a position created in the city of DeKalb, where he started working in January 1963. The annual Wit Scholarship is awarded to one of our top two outstanding MPA students each year at graduation.

[Daily Chronicle obituary June 11, 2018, Daniel Wit](#)

...

Stephen Berg, 74, died March 23, 2023, in Wausau, Wisconsin. Berg earned his MPA at NIU and after a stint as a city manager returned to NIU to earn a Ph.D. in political science. Berg became one of the most effective recruiters of political science undergraduates into the MPA program. As a full-time instructor for the department for several years before retirement, he taught the Introductory Public Administration course, State and Local Government, Bureaucracy and the Public Policy Process and Government in Metropolitan Areas. He received excellent teaching evaluations and regularly mentored his students to careers in local government management. A big, burly guy with an infectious laugh and wry sense of humor, he was a great addition to our PA faculty.

[Daily Chronicle obituary April 18, 2023, Stephen Berg](#)

Department Mission

The mission of the Department of Public Administration is to improve the quality of life for all in local communities by strengthening professional and ethical public and nonprofit management through our teaching, scholarship and community engagement. ■



Department Updates

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to say that our department has achieved significant milestones despite the ongoing challenges posed by the “new normal” because of the pandemic such as changing enrollment trends (domestic and international), strong preference for remote learning, bridging the digital divide and stakeholder engagement, to name a few. In this section, we will provide you with an overview of our department’s performance, including key accomplishments and challenges faced. We hope that this update will give you a better understanding of our department’s contributions to the field of public administration and local government management, and our plans for continued growth and success. ■

Meet Our New Staff

Within the past year, our department underwent extensive staffing transitions. We are pleased to announce that we have welcomed several new key team members to our NIU MPA family.

As many of our stakeholders know, staffing changes require patience and flexibility as everyone learns and grows into their new roles. We are excited about the fresh perspectives, enhanced capabilities and renewed energy that these transitions bring to our department.

Scott Robinson started as the department chair in July 2022

Scott E. Robinson was raised in Texas, attending high school in Duncanville, Texas, and receiving a B.A. in government and politics from the University of Texas at Dallas. He completed an M.A. and Ph.D. in political science from Texas A&M University.

It was during his time as an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Dallas that Robinson began studying emergency management as part of the National Science Foundation’s “Enabling the Next Generation of Hazards Researchers” program. His early work in this tradition focused on the management of evacuees from the path of Hurricane Katrina – with special attention to how Texas school districts managed associated challenges. Robinson has also taught at the Bush School at Texas A&M University, Rice University and the University of Oklahoma (where he served as the Bellmon Chair of Public Service and chair of the Department of Political Science).

Robinson’s research focuses on how to coordinate planning and response to major disruptive events like natural disasters, public health emergencies and

homeland security issues. This work has emphasized the importance of integrating nonprofit organizations in emergency planning, regional/inter-local coordination and communication of preparedness information to the public.



*Scott Robinson,
department chair.*

The research has resulted in books by Cambridge University Press, Routledge and Westphalia Press. Robinson has also co-authored a research methods textbook for Routledge that is currently in its second edition. Robinson teaches a range of classes ranging from public management to public policy and research methods to emergency management.

Robinson’s current research focuses on the role of trust in administrative agencies in risk communication and project management for large-scale government projects. ■

Jeanna Ballard filled the role as the assistant to the chair in March 2022

While new to her role, Jeanna Ballard is not new to our department. She graduated with a dual MPA degree earned through her joint studies at Northern Illinois University and Renmin University of China in Beijing. She was also the recipient of the ILCMA Banovetz



Jeanna Ballard, assistant to the chair.

Fellowship in 2014. She began her career with the Center for Governmental Studies, where she assisted with more than 100 projects for various local government, nonprofit and educational organizations. Her expertise focused on strategic and comprehensive planning, technical assistance, performance improvement studies and leadership development. Ballard has shared her insights in several Civic Leadership Academy (CLA) classes, empowering aspiring

leaders in civic engagement. She also teaches an undergraduate public service leadership course and the MPA internship course at NIU, further shaping the next generation of public servants and recruiting new students to the MPA program.

With great enthusiasm, Ballard looks forward to offering individualized guidance, forging meaningful connections and providing valuable resources that will aid students in navigating their educational and career journeys. She fully embraces the responsibility entrusted to her in shaping students' academic experiences, recognizing the profound impact it can have on their future. Her ultimate goal as assistant to the chair is to assist students in making the most of their educational opportunities and achieving their career aspirations, fostering a transformative and laying the foundation for the emergence of a remarkable next generation of leaders. ■

Bethany Grim started as the office administrator in Sept. 2022

Bethany Grim came into the position with experience working in nonprofit management, property management and sales. Through her variety of experiences, she has organized and hosted state-wide and national conferences, assisted in the management of a 600-unit property, handled payroll and membership for nonprofits, managed an extensive mailing list for nonprofits, reviewed lease contracts and a multitude of other duties. As a student, Grim served on NIU's Student Government Association as legislative director, on her residence hall's executive board as the administrative vice president and assisted fellow students in forming their own clubs and organizations on campus.

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, Grim spent her time as a stay-at-home mother to her now 3-year-old son, Oliver. She also took advantage of the lockdown to complete her bachelor's degree in political science, becoming the first person in her family to successfully complete a four-year degree. She hopes to continue her education in the coming years.

Grim is incredibly excited to be the department's office administrator. She has a passion for helping others achieve their educational goals but prefers to be more of a background character in that process. The office administrator position fits that passion perfectly with its focus on paperwork and finances for the department.



Bethany Grim, office administrator.

In her free time, Grim researches politics. One of her goals in life is to never hear, "I don't know how government works" or, "My vote doesn't matter" again. She believes that the way to achieve that goal is through education on the systems of government. She also builds computers, reads extensively and runs around local parks with her son. ■

Internship Placements for International Students

We are thrilled to share an exciting update showcasing our commitment to our department's (and university's) diversity, equity and inclusiveness initiatives. In AY2022-23, we successfully placed two international students in local government internship sites aimed at offering valuable hands-on experiences and professional development which in turn has enhanced their academic growth and made for more robust classroom discussions. We anticipate placing at least two to three more international students in internships for AY2023-24.

Muhammad Yahya, a second year MPA student, is currently serving in an internship with Hanover Township. Yahya described his internship experience this way, "Through my internship at Hanover Township in Cook County, Illinois, I gained practical experience in public administration that allowed me to apply my academic knowledge in real-world scenarios. This experience helped me cultivate essential skills and forge connections within local government, opening potential career pathways. Moreover, the opportunity to contribute positively to the community and gain a deeper insight into the workings of public organizations is invaluable."

His supervisor, Hanover Township Administrator James Barr, stated that "Muhammad has become a valued member of the Hanover Township team. He has brought his experience and perspective to important projects including a comprehensive update to the township's quality of life index, has aided in drafting the Township's 2023-2024 GFOA budget document and has taken the lead in crafting the township's first popular annual financial report. Muhammad has a bright future in public service, and we are fortunate he is spending this formative time with us."

The second internship placement was with recent graduate Stacey Tetteh, who interned for the village of Burr Ridge. When asked to reflect on her internship experience, she stated that, "prior to interning with the village of Burr Ridge, I had little love for finance, as I thought it would be a field for math geeks. An internship with the village of Burr Ridge has sparked



Muhammad Yahya at his internship site in Hanover Township, summer 2023

an interest and exposed me to certain policies that shape local government finances, which will no doubt prove invaluable in my future academic progress and career. For me, each day at work has been a good learning experience, and I hope for more and greater insights."

Evan Walter, village administrator for Burr Ridge and Tetteh's intern supervisor commented that "Stacey joined the village this spring and quickly jumped into action, assisting our finance department staff with utility billing and accounts receivables projects as well as our public works department in organizing some of our administrative functions. In a small but full-service community, Stacey's past experience and analytical skills developed working for the federal government in her native Ghana have proved to be very applicable on a number of the village's service deliverables. Her experience in Burr Ridge will undoubtedly assist Stacey in developing her perspective in her future academic and professional goals."

This initiative marks a significant milestone for our department as we extend our support beyond the classroom, empowering our international students to thrive in both the MPA program and today's competitive job market. By facilitating these internships, we aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering an environment that nurtures professional growth and cultural exchange. ■

Notable Programs and Events

ICMA Student Chapter

The NIU ICMA Student Chapter (NISC) is a group that strives to educate themselves on all aspects of public administration, including local governments, regional authorities and other professional affiliates. The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is dedicated to advancing the profession of local government management. As a part of its core mission and constitution, ICMA has established a code of ethics that sets the standards for ethical behavior in the field. Many student chapters of ICMA have been formed at universities across the world, dedicated to promoting and following the code of ethics established by the organization.

The NIU ICMA Student Chapter was reinvigorated by a group of MPA students in 2022, after a brief closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Their goal was to create a community of students who were committed to ethical behavior and professionalism in the field of local government management, while expanding education, building their network and collaborating with unique stakeholders.

The NIU ICMA Student Chapter is led by a board of officers, including a president, vice president/treasurer and secretary. These officers are responsible for organizing events and activities that promote the values and principles outlined in the ICMA code of ethics, as well as working hard to expand recruitment and membership.

The current president, Yates McLaughlin, has a legacy of local government management, focusing his efforts primarily on expanding recruitment, establishing precedence and creating a better culture within NIU ICMA student chapter members. Stanley Anukwuocha, the vice president/treasurer, is an international student from Nigeria and focuses his efforts on human resource management. He has been the recipient of a plethora of professional scholarships throughout his time in the U.S. and NIU. He is also



*Yates McLaughlin,
NIU ICMA student
chapter president*



*Ethan Hoffman,
NIU ICMA student
chapter secretary.*

involved as a senator representing graduate students in the Student Government Association, constantly building connections and expanding diversity, equity and inclusion efforts throughout the public administration field and the NIU community as a whole. Ethan Hoffman, the current secretary, has been an NIU student through and through, being a student government director in his undergraduate studies and focusing primarily on how to make public service more consistent and transparent.

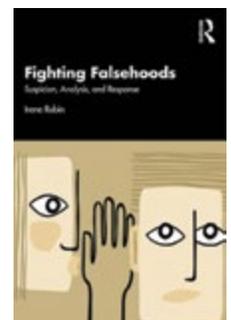
One of the NISC's primary activities is a speaker series that connects local government officials with students to speak about their experiences in the field. These speakers are chosen based on their commitment to ethical behavior and their adherence to the ICMA code of ethics, including plenty of alumni from the program. The chapter encourages its members



*Stanley
Anukwuocha,
NIU ICMA student
chapter vice president.*

to pursue internships and other professional opportunities in the field of local government management. By gaining practical experience in the field, members are better equipped to adhere to the principles of the ICMA code of ethics and the practices of public administration.

The most recent event that members attended was a presentation with NIU Professor Emeritus Irene Rubin. Throughout her career, she has published several books including "Running in the Red," "Class Tax & Power" and "Shrinking the Federal Government." She was the editor-in-chief of the Public Administration Review, the premier journal in the field of public administration and the first female editor in its nearly 80-year history. Rubin has won several awards from major professional organizations including the Charles H. Levine Memorial Award for Excellence in Public Administration from the APSA, and the James L. Blum Award for Distinguished Service in Budgeting from the American Association for Budget and Program Analysis. Students were able to hear about her current work and central focus



*Rubin, I. (2022).
Fighting falsehoods:
Suspicion, analysis,
and response. Taylor &
Francis.*

Notable Programs and Events (continued)

of the event, entitled “Fighting Falsehoods: Suspicion, Analysis, and Response,” which focuses on the main developments and trends in the area of fake news, misinformation and disinformation. This is just

one of many examples of the pool of educators and speakers who consistently engage and connect with students of the NIU ICMA student chapter. ■

ILCMA Winter and Summer Conferences

Donor funds supported eight students’ attendance at the 2022 ILCMA Winter Conference and six students’ attendance at the 2023 ILCMA Summer Conference. Both precareer and midcareer students found it to be an excellent experience that allowed them to meet and interact with a variety of public service professionals and alumni. Sessions at the conferences addressed cyber security, fraud and phishing lessons and best practices, maximizing tourism in your community, building a thriving work culture, funding sustainability projects and generational changes and trends in the workplace, to name a few.

Student attendance at these conferences is incredibly beneficial for their professional development by helping them create their own professional networks, learning from seasoned professionals about solutions they used to overcome complex problems and ultimately gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of the demands of the profession.

“Thank you for the opportunity to attend the ILCMA winter conference! As a mid-career student in the online program, I appreciated meeting students and professors in-person that I’ve worked with online. The professional conference reminded me why I’m in the NIU MPA program,” said Theresa Stack, midcareer MPA student.

The department is appreciative of the donors who make these experiences possible for our students. And we are looking forward to attending many more professional development opportunities next year. ■



MPA students singing karaoke while celebrating IAMMA’s 50th anniversary at the winter ILCMA conference.



MPA booth at the winter ILCMA conference.



MPA students at the ILCMA Winter Conference. From left to right: Paola Garcia, Cecilia Anderson, Noah Rife, Ashton Stipp, Theresa Stack.



Scott Robinson with students (from left to right) Michael Harper, Graice Trajani, Daniel Langguth, Dylan Moffitt, and Kevyn Sutter at the ILCMA summer conference.



Photos courtesy of the village of Addison.

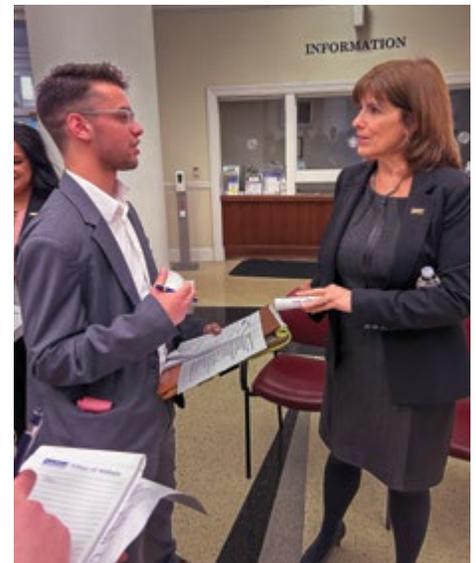
PSPA 630 students at Addison Community Inauguration ceremony

As a part of their coursework, students from PSPA 630: Local and Metro Government, attended the April 27, 2023 Addison Community Inauguration Ceremony at the Addison village hall.

Newly elected officials from five Addison bodies took the oath of office before Brian McKillip, retired associate judge of the 18th Judicial Court. Student musicians from Addison Trail High School and Indian Trail Junior High School performed during the ceremony.

Students were tasked with conducting interviews with the elected officials as part of a research paper for the class, including identifying common themes during remarks made at the event and gaining insight into the officials' community experiences and relationships with their respective agency administrators.

The instructor for PSPA 630 was Don Weiss (NIU MPA 2016 alum), community relations director for the village of Addison. ■



Department colloquia and intern supervisor appreciation luncheon

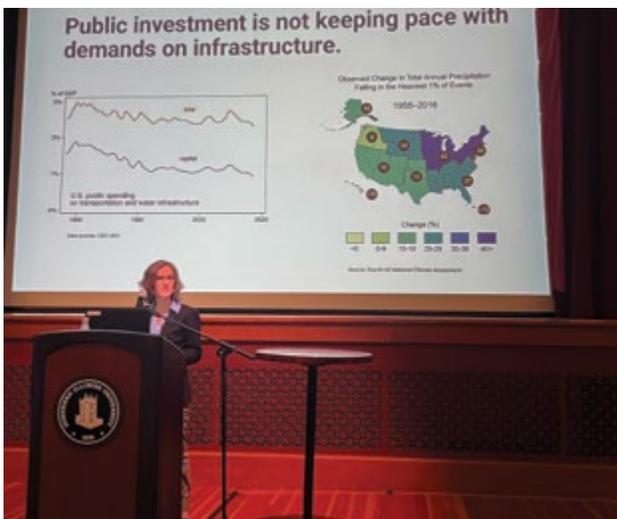
Fall Colloquium: How Local Newspapers Boost Political Support for Infrastructure Investment

The Department of Public Administration and the Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, and Energy hosted a graduate colloquium in fall 2022 with Meg Mullin.



Meg Mullin.

Mullin is an endowed professor of innovation and sustainability for the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. Mullin gave a keynote address about how the durable physical infrastructure in the United States provides a foundation for economic growth and protection of public health and safety. She explained that despite broad public support, the condition of the U.S. infrastructure is in decline, and communities have been slow to invest in projects and facilities that can withstand escalating climate change risks. Professor Mullin's work draws on recent research to describe the political constraints on infrastructure investment and the contributions of local newspapers to reducing those constraints. A community's physical infrastructure, she argues, is tied to a healthy news infrastructure. ■



Spring Colloquium: The Resilience Principles and Disaster Risk Reduction Practices — An Assessment of Flood Hazard Management at the State and Local Level

The department hosted a Graduate Colloquium in March 2023 with Brian Gerber.

Gerber directs the top-ranked graduate program in Emergency Management and Homeland Security in the U.S., co-directs Arizona State University's Center for Emergency Management and Homeland Security

and manages a national database of county-level disaster losses. Gerber's keynote address focused on how understanding the interactions of distinct policy and administrative systems is critical to understanding emergency management in general, but specifically why performance on risk reduction and resilience indicators are derived by the interactions of those systems. ■



Brian Gerber.

Intern Supervisor Appreciation Luncheon

Along with the spring colloquium, the department hosted its annual Intern Supervisor Appreciation Luncheon. Our internship partners play a critical role in the success of MPA graduate students and make a valuable contribution to the future of public management.

Intern supervisors and intern students were asked to nominate their supervisor or intern for the Internship Award for Excellence and Intern Supervisor of the Year Award. ■

The 2023 Internship Award for Excellence nominees were:



Noah Rife, intern with the village of Brookfield.

According to his intern supervisor, Stevie Ferrari, assistant village manager, Noah Rife was nominated for his overall affable approach, communicative style and hard work ethic that he has provided the organization since coming on board. He is warm in greetings to both internal staff and residents and represents the village manager's office well. Rife has already been involved in a variety of projects including, but not limited to coordinating a village all-staff appreciation day, facilitating information training of external work management system and surveying staff to assist building a new internal work management module.

Overall, his willingness to take on projects, ability to ask questions when appropriate, and provide effective thoughtful input to processes will make him an asset to any organization. ■



Ashton Stipp, intern with the village of Roselle.

Ashton Stipp's intern supervisor, Caron Bricks, community development manager, stated that throughout her internship, "Ashton has touched on many of the competencies of the MPA program while also providing crucial work products for many of the departments within the village." For example, she is a member of several work groups that pertain to specific actions within the village's strategic plan, she worked with the finance director and village administrator to create the village's first grant application policy that is effective, efficient and equitable, and she created an app-based inspection checklist for health inspections."

Overall, Stipp has been able to assist nearly every department in the village and is able to provide a holistic view of the organization. ■

The 2023 Internship Award for Excellence recipient is:



Paola Garcia, intern with Elk Grove Village.

Paola Garcia is now fully employed at Elk Grove Village. Her intern supervisor at the time, Brianna Bacigalupo, stated that, "Paola has become fully immersed in all aspects of local government, and she has already excelled in several of the MPA program's competencies, improving our organization each step of the way. For example, Paola is exceptionally talented in her ability to effectively work with stakeholders."

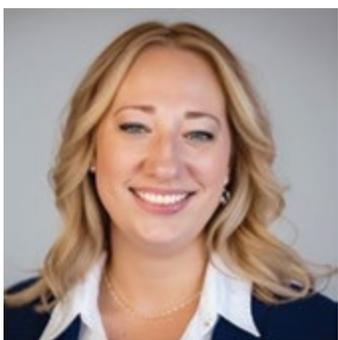
Early in her internship, Garcia saw an opportunity to blend her passion of sustainability and public service by developing and publishing a 2022 sustainability report. The report uses the framework established by the Greenest Region Compact to summarize and evaluate current sustainable practices conducted by the village. Garcia's ability to effectively lead a team and to create an environment in which everyone feels comfortable to contribute to the conversation is nothing short of impressive, and the village would not have been able to move the sustainability initiative forward without her. ■

The 2023 Intern Supervisor of the Year Award nominees included:



Matthew Bajor, assistant to the village manager for the village of Algonquin.

Matthew Bajor was nominated by student Ethan Hoffman, who described Bajor's commitment to his role as an intern supervisor as truly exceptional. Bajor is always available to answer questions, provide guidance and lend his expertise to help Hoffman overcome any challenges. Bajor's prior experience as an alumnus of the NIU MPA program is evident in his approach to teaching. He encourages Hoffman to apply the materials learned in class to his work, using the same principles, including the 4 E's. This has allowed Hoffman to see the practical application of what he is learning and appreciates the value that Bajor's experience brings to his overall learning experience. ■



Caron Bricks, community development manager for the village of Roselle.

Caron Bricks was nominated by student Ashton Stipp. Stipp stated that her internship experience has been transformative for her career development due to Bricks' internship supervision. Bricks constantly offered her new opportunities to work on projects from doing health inspections, to researching fee updates and putting together agenda items for board meetings. Overall, Stipp stated, "I cannot say enough good things about my experience at the Village of Roselle. From this experience I am glad to have gained Caron's mentorship and I am prepared to start my career as a young professional." ■



Stevie Ferrari, assistant village manager for the village of Brookfield.

Stevie Ferrari was nominated by student Noah Rife. Rife described Ferrari's leadership as being collaborative. He stated, "She has given me a path to learn from my mistakes and allow me to believe in myself. Stevie clearly demonstrates what she expects of me in my work and takes the time to make sure we both understand each other. I now understand the value of leadership as shown in the lessons taken from PSPA 650. Working with Stevie has further solidified the type of leader I want to become." ■



George Issakoo, assistant city manager for the city of Lake Forest.

George Issakoo was nominated by student Yates McLaughlin who described Issakoo's leadership this way: "Day after day, George is always throwing something new my way, whether it is looking at a new process to complete an absence request within the city, preparing to present in front of city council or things to expect from a police ride-along. George works hard to show me different vendors or organizations in the profession, encourages me to go to professional development events and always lets me know of my strengths. Overall, George consistently delivers wisdom, laughter and motivation to someone who is just entering the profession." ■

The 2023 Intern Supervisor of the Year Award recipient is:



James Barr, township administrator for Hanover Township.

James Barr was nominated by student Muhammad Yahya who explained that within the short six months of interning for Barr, he can confidently say that his leadership style is both inspiring and effective. He encourages open dialogue, values diverse opinions and recognizes the contributions of every member of the team. Some special projects Yahya has been working on include developing a feasibility report, writing the quality-of-life index document and assisting with developing the budget in accordance with GFOA's guidelines. Barr always asks if the work and the processes are in alignment

with the theoretical approach being taught at NIU to help with the theory and practice connection. Overall, Yahya said, "James embodies the qualities of a transformational leader and his contributions to my professional development are invaluable."

The nominees and awardees are recognized for their exceptional achievements and contributions to the internship program. Intern supervisors' dedication to public service and outstanding mentorship, have not only elevated their own careers but have also paved the way for the next generation of leaders to follow.



Intern supervisors and Intern award winners and nominees.

MPA Program Rankings

U.S. News & World Report has named NIU's Master of Public Administration (MPA) program fifth in the nation in the specialty field of local government management.

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 not only in Illinois, but also the upper Midwest.

Additionally, NIU's MPA program ranked 12th nationally in the specialty of public finance and budgeting and 53rd in overall public affairs among the 269 ranked programs.

"It is wonderful to see Northern Illinois University ranked among the best programs in the world," said Scott Robinson, chair of the Department of Public Administration. "In local government management, we are ranked near programs like the University of Georgia and Arizona State University and just above Syracuse University — the long-time top overall program. These rankings are a testament to the efforts of our students and instructors in preparing the next generation of practitioners in public affairs."

The MPA program has a 95% job-placement record within six months of graduation. Robinson credits the paid internship program, a fixture for 60 years, 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 staffs statewide and advance the national good government movement.

Beyond city management, alumni venture into an extensive array of professional paths, securing positions within public service organizations at the local, state, and federal levels. They not only pursue careers as nonprofit leaders but also extend their reach into the private sector, where they serve as consultants, aiding private industries in meeting their public service requirements. Their invaluable expertise

bridges the gap between sectors, ensuring effective collaboration and service delivery.

May 2023 graduate Nicholas Wheeler stated, "The NIU MPA program has been crucial in my development as a leader and public servant. Being able to apply what we learn in class to real-world problems is vital to helping your organization thrive, and your professors and classes give you the tools to do so. I've had the opportunity to work with various local governments, state government agencies, and elected officials on a variety of projects, and having an NIU MPA education has truly been a difference-maker."

In recent years, NIU has begun offering a fully online MPA program. It is exclusively designed for employees working at least two years in local governments of all types. Public service professionals can also opt to take just five courses and earn a graduate certificate in public management that is focused only on local government management or strategic public management and leadership.

Wayne Duckmann, a 2022 graduate from the midcareer MPA program, said that his favorite element of the program was the professors and the feedback.

"You are pushed and challenged, but every class is more than just taking a class and getting a grade," said Duckmann, who serves as the community and economic development director for the city of Freeport, Illinois. "Every professor is providing positive criticism to make me a better professional. The coaching aspect is unique to this program." ■

Alumni can be found throughout the Chicago area at the administrative helms of such cities as:

- Arlington Heights
- DeKalb County
- Dixon
- Elgin
- Elk Grove
- Farmer City
- Highland Park
- Hoffman Estates
- McHenry County
- Peoria
- Schaumburg
- Skokie
- Winnetka

Capstone Project Presentations

The capstone presentation is a requirement of the PSPA 699 Public Service Research Course. The Capstone Project provides a culminating experience in which students apply concepts, theories and research skills gained in the program to professional practice. The primary goal of the capstone course is to integrate and synthesize what students have learned in the MPA program.



Scott Robinson and Kurt Thurmaier with students presenting their capstone presentations in-person on April 28, 2023.

By analyzing contemporary issues in local government and nonprofit organizations, students demonstrate their knowledge and apply it to real-world problems. The capstone report and presentation showcase the students' qualifications and expertise, serving as a practical, team-based, problem-solving exercise within public or nonprofit organizations. Students work in teams of two to four, analyzing an organizational or policy problem and delivering a professional report with recommended solutions. This course combines classroom learning with practical experience and teaches effective management of teams, negotiation skills, project planning and monitoring, and professional presentation skills. Students are responsible for defining project scope, planning, scheduling and producing deliverables (reports and presentations) by utilizing their knowledge and competencies gained from core and elective courses in the MPA program. ■

Northern Illinois University

Master of Public Administration

Capstone Project & Local Government Collaboration

Calling All Innovative Organizations!

Join Our MPA Capstone Project

Northern Illinois University

Earn Your Master's Degree in Public Administration

Education
The NIU-MPA program is ranked 3rd in the nation for local government, 14th in public finance & budgeting, and 49th overall in public affairs.

Experience
Students will be placed in a two-year PAID internship with a local government or non-profit organization to tackle current public management challenges and gain real public service experience.

Professional Network
Professional development activities are required to help students learn best practices and build relationships with others in the field to expand their own professional network.

With a Record of a 95% Job Placement Rate within Six Months of Graduation!

Capstone Project

Participating Local Governments

Illinois

- Village of Niles
- Village of Northbrook
- Village of Gurnee
- City of DeKalb
- McHenry County
- The Greater-Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation (GAGDC)

Wisconsin

- City of Whitewater
- City of Janesville
- Rock County
- Burnett County

Nonprofit Organizations

- Egyptian Theatre, DeKalb, IL
- Tails Humane Society, DeKalb, IL
- Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois
- CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children) DeKalb County

How to Get Involved!

About the Capstone Project

Our capstone project brings together brilliant minds from various disciplines to tackle real-world challenges faced by organizations like yours. As part of their academic journey, our talented master's students are eager to apply their knowledge, skills, and creativity to solve complex problems.

Why Participate?

- Access Cutting-Edge Talent: Collaborate with bright, motivated master's students who possess the latest knowledge and fresh perspectives.
- Innovative Solutions: Gain valuable insights and out-of-the-box solutions to the challenges your organization faces
- Cost-Effective Collaboration: Our capstone project provides a cost-effective way to tap into the expertise of budding professionals without long-term commitments
- Networking Opportunities: Establish connections with the future leaders in your industry, fostering relationships that can extend beyond the project

Potential Project Areas

We welcome participating organizations from diverse sectors, including but not limited to:

- Police and fire department related topics
- Local government performance measurement and management
- Program evaluation
- Technology and IT
- Citizen public relations and communication
- Data analysis
- Budgeting and finance
- Human resource management
- Economic development
- Strategic planning and implementation

Degree Programs

MPA Traditional Program

- Earn your degree on a full-time or part-time basis
- Executive eight-week evening classes
- Two locations (DeKalb and Naperville)

MPA 100% Online Program

- Earn your MPA in less than three years
- Executive eight-week format that starts in mid-August and mid-January
- Complete coursework independently on your own schedule
- Faculty committed to quick response time to student inquiries

Graduate Certificate in Public Management (GCPM)

- Earn your graduate certificate in one year by taking five online classes
- Executive eight-week format that starts in mid-August and mid-January
- Credits apply toward the Master of Public Administration degree (MPA)
- Complete coursework independently on your own schedule

Previous Capstone Project Topics

- Social Media Policy Amendments
- Sustainability Analysis
- Data Collection & Presentation Practices
- Police Social Worker Program Evaluation
- Performance Measurement Plan
- Code Enforcement Study
- Use of Stay Interviews
- Business Registration and License Process Analysis
- Police Officer Mental Health & Wellness Program
- Feasibility Analysis of Pet Food Pantry Program
- Volunteer Recruitment Strategies
- Peer Mentorship Program Evaluation
- Fire/EMS Consolidation
- Economic Development Strategies
- Police Body-Worn Cameras Program Evaluation

Analysis Tools

- SWOT Analysis
- Employee Interview
- Focus Group
- Customer/Citizen/Community Survey
- Comparative Analysis
- Document Review
- Legal Research
- Impact Analysis
- Stakeholder Analysis

Deliverables

- Executive Summary
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Policy Memo
- Policy Recommendation

Contact Us Today

Getting involved is easy! Simply reach out to us to express your interest in collaborating on our MPA Capstone Project. Our team will guide you through the process, including scoping the project, selecting the best-fit students, and ensuring a smooth collaboration.

Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to harness the power of top-tier MPA students for your organization's growth and innovation.

- Email: publicadm@niu.edu
- Phone: 815-753-0183
- Website: mpa.niu.edu



Pi Alpha Alpha Inductees.

Congratulations to the Graduating MPA Class of 2023

The graduating class of 2023 reached a significant milestone in their academic journey, marking the culmination of years of dedication, perseverance and personal growth. Throughout their time in the MPA program, these graduates not only acquired knowledge, but also honed critical thinking skills, developed meaningful relationships and embraced diverse perspectives. They tackled challenges head-on, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in the face of unprecedented circumstances. The remarkable achievements of these graduates serve as a testament to their hard work, passion and unwavering commitment to success. As they venture into the world, we are confident that they will make meaningful contributions to society and continue to shape a brighter future for themselves and others.

During the department's Pi Alpha Alpha Awards and Hooding Ceremony, several students, faculty, instructors and alumni were recognized for their notable and lasting contributions to the department.

Pi Alpha Alpha induction

Northern Illinois University established a local chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha, the National Honorary Society for Public Affairs and Administration in 1977. Pi Alpha Alpha membership is prestigious for our students as well as for our public administration program and the university. Only Master's degree students who have completed at least 21 semester hours of graduate work with a GPA of at least 3.7 may be inducted. We are proud to induct the following new members into the NIU Chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha. ■

Congratulations to the 2023 Pi Alpha Alpha inductees:

Natalie Benner	Nolan Ming
Roy Brines	Danice Moore
Andrew Buckwinkler	Ryan Oates
Gabriel Bueno	Thomas Semanic
Alexandra David	Michael Shurhay
Ashley Hines	Ashton Stipp
Kent Huizinga	Enkhnasan Taylor
Corey Incandela	Stacey Tetteh
Timothy Johnson	Matthew Turner
Luke Masella	Nicholas Wheeler
John Mastandona	Annaka Whiting ■



Valerie Salmons, Pi Alpha Alpha presenter.

Congratulations to Student Award Winners

Monat Scholar

Professor and President Emeritus William R. Monat was an outstanding public servant who engaged with new ideas on how to improve a public service organization and put excellent ideas into practice. That is why we named our highest award in his honor.

The 2023 Monat Scholar is Corey Incandela.

Corey Incandela graduated from St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, in 2021 with a degree in political science. He interned at the village of Oswego from June 2021 to January 2023. During his internship, he worked in the village manager's office on a variety of projects including writing grants, crafting policies and local ordinances, and assisting in HR and budgetary projects. His key takeaways are to ask a lot of questions and not to be afraid to make a mistake. Currently, Incandela is working in government relations for the Northern Illinois Food Bank. His role is to build and maintain relationships with elected officials, and further the food bank's policy goals which are mostly state and federal food and agriculture-based. ■



Kurt Thurmaier and Corey Incandela.

Daniel Wit Scholar

Daniel Wit chaired the newly established Department of Political Science and founded the Master of Public Administration program.

The 2023 Daniel Wit Scholar is Andrew Buckwinkler.

Buckwinkler started as the management intern for the village of Schaumburg in 2021. Throughout his time as the village's intern, Buckwinkler demonstrated a remarkable commitment to bringing best practices to the organization. His notable achievements included the implementation of an online submission portal, which streamlined the special recognition application process. Additionally, Buckwinkler played a pivotal role in enhancing transparency and public reporting of villagewide performance by transitioning department performance indicators to automated Power BI dashboards.

Buckwinkler's outstanding contributions did not go unnoticed. In recognition of his accomplishments, he was honored with the prestigious 2022 IAMMA Intern of the Year Award and was named the 2022 ILCMA Banovetz Fellow at the association's annual winter conference.

Building upon his success, Buckwinkler transitioned into a full-time role as a Management Analyst with the village of Schaumburg while simultaneously pursuing his master's degree. While working full-time, Buckwinkler has assisted the MPA program by helping restart the department's ICMA student chapter as a founding member and serving as secretary for the chapter in both his first and second years in the program. Despite this schedule, Buckwinkler maintained an exceptional 4.0 GPA. Recently, he was recognized as the department's outstanding graduate student at the American Society of Public Administration's (ASPA) annual conference. ■



Kurt Thurmaier and Andrew Buckwinkler.

Student Award Winners

David and Catherine Arnold Fellowship Award

The Arnold Fellowship is named after David and Catherine Arnold, the founders of the Banovetz Fellowship. The Arnold fellows are expected to build professional networks among their peers as they become the next generation of public administrators. This exciting fellowship is open to both preservice and midcareer students and provides up to \$1,500 for attendance at a state or national conference.

The 2023 David and Catherine Arnold Fellowship Awardee is Justice Arthur.

Justice Arthur recently completed his first year in the MPA program. He is not only dedicated to his studies but also serves as a graduate assistant for both the Department of Public Administration and the NIU Foundation. He finds immense motivation in the opportunity to serve the public and contribute to the greater good. Arthur's career aspirations revolve around becoming a fundraiser and leading an organization that focuses on water, sanitation and hygiene, education and poverty alleviation, with a particular emphasis on children, women and youth.

To support his professional growth and development, Arthur has been awarded the prestigious David and Catherine Arnold Fellowship. This fellowship will enable him to attend the 2023 Nonprofit Storytelling Conference in San Diego, California. During the conference, Arthur will have the opportunity to acquire valuable skills and knowledge in various areas, including fundraising through storytelling, board development, donor acquisition strategies, social media fundraising techniques, grant storytelling strategies, leadership development and team building. The conference attendance supported by the fellowship will equip Arthur with essential tools to excel in his future fundraising endeavors and make a significant impact in the nonprofit sector. ■

Outstanding Peer Award

The Outstanding Peer Award is based on student nominations and votes.

The 2023 Outstanding Peer Award went to Jarell Blakey.

Jarell Blakey started the program interning for the city of DeKalb. And it is not surprising that before graduating, he was offered a full-time position with the village of Tinley Park. One student noted that Blakey is a thoughtful and dedicated professional who is always willing to help others. Blakey has been described by both classmates and instructors alike as bringing life to the classroom. ■



Greg Kuhn and Justice Arthur.



Eunju Rho and Jarell Blakey.

James M. and Audrey M. Banovetz Fellowship

Endowed by many of our MPA alumni and friends, the James and Audrey Banovetz Fellowship honors Professor Banovetz and his wife Audrey for their leadership in developing the NIU graduate program in public administration as one of the finest programs in the United States. The fellowship program encourages NIU MPA students to become involved in the activities of their professional associations and expand their learning and networking beyond the classroom. In addition to the honor of being named a Banovetz fellow, a recipient of the fellowship receives a \$1,500 stipend to defray the cost of attending a major professional conference. Nominees must be fully enrolled in the NIU MPA program in good academic standing and must have completed at least 10 semester credit hours toward their MPA degree.



Greg Kuhn and Stanley Anukwuocha.

The 2023 James and Audrey Banovetz Fellow is Stanley Anukwuocha.

Stanley Anukwuocha completed his first year in the MPA program, and his dedication and active involvement are truly commendable. He holds multiple roles that exemplify his commitment to public administration. As the vice president of the ICMA NIU Student Chapter, he plays a vital role in shaping the direction and activities of the organization. Additionally, Anukwuocha serves as a graduate assistant for the Department of Public Administration, contributing his skills and knowledge to support various initiatives. Recently, he was elected to represent the needs and interests of NIU graduate students as a senatorial member in the Student Government Association.

Anukwuocha's post-graduation objective is to secure a leadership or management position within a local government organization. His envisioned roles could encompass positions such as city/county manager or director of a city/county department. In these capacities, he aspires to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability within local government programs, services and human resource functions. Anukwuocha's overarching goal is to address community needs and challenges, striving to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals within the community.

To further his professional growth and development, Anukwuocha has been awarded the esteemed James and Audrey Banovetz Fellowship. This fellowship will enable him to attend the upcoming ICMA conference in Austin, Texas. Anukwuocha recognizes the conference as an opportunity to gain insights into current practices and human resource requirements in local government. He believes that participating in this conference will allow him to develop essential leadership skills. Moreover, the conference will provide him with access to a network of professionals and resources that will prove instrumental in his future career plans in public service. ■

Congratulations to Student Winners

Award Winners

Aspa Outstanding Administrator Award

The Department of Public Administration is proud to honor and recognize outstanding public service professionals who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, by serving as transformational leaders for their public service organizations. This award honors those administrative professionals who, in the face of complex problems and issues, rise to the challenge by designing solutions, taking risks and creating innovations that empower their organizations to overcome the obstacles facing them. The department is able to nominate an alum as our outstanding public administrator for the Chicago Chapter of ASPA. They are recognized at the same ceremony in Chicago as our Daniel Wit Scholar.

The 2023 ASPA Administrator of the Year Awardee is Kimberly Richardson.

Richardson serves as the assistant city manager for the city of Peoria. She started in this role in January 2022. She previously was the deputy city manager with the city of Evanston, Illinois and assistant to the village manager with the village of Flossmoor. Richardson has nearly two decades of experience working in local government within the city manager's office. She holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Public Administration from Northern Illinois University.

As the assistant city manager, Richardson serves as a key member of the city's leadership team with direct responsibility for managing assigned departments and effectively implementing citywide strategic initiatives and policies. She coordinates daily interdepartmental activities and identifies, analyzes and proposes solutions to operational procedures and problems, staff and budgetary issues. Richardson provides highly responsible staff assistance to the city manager and serves as a resource to other departments. She acts as city manager in the city manager's absence.

Richardson has dedicated herself to advocating and supporting inclusive practices and policies that support women and young professionals in the workplace. Richardson serves on several professional boards and currently is the board president of the League of Women in Government and a member at large for ILCMA. ■



Kimberly Richardson, assistant city manager for the city of Peoria, Illinois.

Outstanding Service Award to the Program

Our faculty recognize persons who have significantly contributed to the success of our Department of Public Administration and its mission of educating students to improve the performance of governance. Outstanding service to the department takes many forms. The essence is that the honorees have helped the faculty and staff significantly move the department to a new level of excellence.

The 2023 Outstanding Service Award Honoree is Denise Burchard.

Denise Burchard's career has spanned multiple aspects of local government leadership including academia, village management and consulting.

Burchard completed her undergraduate degree in political science and a master's degree in public administration (MPA) from Northern Illinois University where she later worked for the program to recruit and mentor students, place interns and promote the profession. Previously, Burchard worked for the villages of Northfield, Western Springs, Woodridge and Bloomingdale, all in Illinois. While raising three children, Burchard stayed professionally connected and worked in a variety of positions including public relations consultant, community college instructor, municipal recruiter and consultant. Burchard volunteered as a guardian ad litem for CASA Kane County and has served on nonprofit boards throughout her career.

Currently, Burchard serves as the village administrator for the village of Campton Hills, Illinois. ■



Denise Burchard, village administrator for the village of Campton Hills, Illinois, and Alicia M. Schatteaman.

Outstanding Service Award to the Profession

Among the many dedicated public service professionals who work hard every day to improve the delivery of public and nonprofit services in communities across this nation, there are exceptional individuals who consistently exceed the already high standards set in this field. This year, the faculty recognized someone who has surpassed expectations in their commitment to serving the local government profession.

The 2023 Outstanding Service Award Honoree is Dawn Peters.

Dawn S. Peters joined the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University in September 2001 as a research associate in the areas of economic and community development and association management. She currently serves as an assistant director at CGS and oversees the association management team. Peters currently serves as executive director of the Illinois City/County Management Association (ILCMA), Wisconsin City/County Management Association (WCMA), the Midwest Leadership Institute and until just recently the Illinois Local Government Lawyers Association.



Dawn Peters, assistant director for NIU Center for Government Studies, and Alicia M. Schatteman.

Prior to joining the center, Peters was the coordinator of the Master of Public Administration program at Northern Illinois University. Peters holds a master’s degree in public administration (MPA) and a bachelor’s degree in political science from Northern Illinois University. ■



Student Spotlight

The spotlight section is where we shine a light on the remarkable achievements and inspiring stories of our outstanding students. Department faculty and staff selected two students, one midcareer and precareer. Each student featured here represents the embodiment of hard work, dedication, a passion for learning and public service.

Stanley Anukwuocha

During his first year in the MPA program, Anukwuocha showcased his remarkable achievements and unwavering passion for human resource management. With a strong educational background, he obtained a National Diploma in Public Administration and Management from the Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) in Enugu, Nigeria, graduating with an upper credit (*magna cum laude*). His academic journey continued with a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike (MOUAI), Nigeria, where he earned first-class honors (*summa cum laude*) and was recognized as the “best graduating student” at the convocation ceremony. Seeking continuous professional growth, he completed a professional diploma course in human resource management at the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria.

While pursuing his MPA, his dedication and hard work have been acknowledged through numerous scholarships and awards, including the Google Career Certificate Scholarship Program in Project Management, the 2023 Scholarship of the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA), the 2023 Graduate Leadership Award of Northern Illinois University, and the prestigious James M. and Audrey M. Banovetz Fellowship.

Anukwuocha is a current intern for the village of Wilmette.

Anukwuocha's remarkable achievements have been shaped by pivotal courses such as Not-for-Profit Resource Management, Introduction to Public Service, Organizational Theory and Behavior in Public Service Organizations, and Public Administration and Law. These courses have provided him with a deeper understanding of the profession and contributed to his exceptional success.

Looking ahead, Anukwuocha's aspirations include gaining practical work experience in a local government setting and pursuing a Ph.D. program in either human resource management or public policy analysis. His ultimate career objective is to become a professor, sharing his knowledge and expertise with aspiring students and making a lasting impact in the field of public administration.



Stanley Anukwuocha.

To witness Anukwuocha's award-winning achievements, please click on the following links:

[**2023 NFBPA Scholarship Award Ceremony.**](#)

[**2023 NIU Leadership Award Ceremony.**](#) ■



Paola Garibay

Paola Garibay is a first-year MPA student but has been a proud Huskie since 2013. She earned her B.S. in Business Management in December 2017. Her first job out of college was in the logistics industry where she was able to expand on her customer service, sales and project management skills. After 3 1/2 years, Garibay was longing for fulfillment and began her search for a role where she could make a real impact in the lives of others. Garibay was fortunate to find an amazing role with a nonprofit organization, the Berwyn Development Corporation, that focuses on supporting the business community. When a position on the economic development team opened, Garibay was given the opportunity to take the role with one condition, she must pursue an advanced degree in a related field. Once she decided on an MPA, she couldn't think of a better institution to attend than her beloved NIU. When Garibay is not busy with work and school, she loves to cook, cuddle with her pups and travel with her husband.



Paola Garibay.

When asked to reflect on how the MPA program is benefiting her career, Garibay offered the following perspectives: Having completed three courses in the MPA program, the value it offers has become apparent. Despite lacking prior educational background or work experience in economic development, the combination of on-the-job learning and MPA courses has allowed for a meaningful connection between daily work and the foundational knowledge necessary for success in the field. Garibay stated, "I have had numerous a-ha moments while completing the weekly readings. I feel more confident in my understanding of my organization's structure, the programs we run and the importance behind them beyond their local impact in Berwyn."

Learning from peers with diverse backgrounds in public administration has also proven insightful. The introductory course, led by Julie Langer, laid the groundwork for the program, emphasizing the importance of professional writing skills that will remain invaluable for years to come. Garibay is excited to be enrolled in PSPA 635 Local Economic Development Policy this summer, as it directly relates to her current role as project manager of economic development. According to Garibay, the course has already touched upon familiar programs like TIF grants, commercial lending, and zoning, further enriching knowledge and applicability. Above all, the MPA program's fully asynchronous structure is greatly appreciated, providing the necessary flexibility to balance work, personal responsibilities, and pursuit of a quality education. ■

Instructor Spotlight

The exceptional guidance, dedication and support of our instructors are invaluable to the success of our students and the program. These remarkable individuals, who already hold full-time positions as city managers, nonprofit executive directors and other influential roles in local government and public management, dedicate an additional 15 to 20 hours per week to guide and support students. Their commitment knows no bounds as they wholeheartedly contribute to equipping our students with the essential management competencies crucial for thriving in their public and nonprofit careers. With expertise spanning strategic planning, human resources management, information technology, ethics and various other subjects, these instructors effectively bridge the gap between classroom theories and real-world management practices, drawing from their own extensive experiences. Their passion, devotion and exceptional knowledge are deeply cherished by our students, fostering an environment of enthusiasm and dedication that resonates throughout the program.



Mark Franz.

The department would like to highlight the recent recipient of the 2023 Outstanding Instructor of the Year Award which is selected based on student nominations.

The 2023 Instructor of the Year Awardee is Mark Franz.

Mark Franz is currently the village manager for the village of Glen Ellyn, Illinois. He has 25 years of municipal experience and was the 2015 ILCMA president. Previously, he was the village manager in Homewood for eight years and has worked for the city of Evanston and the Village of Northbrook earlier in his career. He is a graduate of Indiana University, and received a MPA from Northern Illinois University. He is currently the chair of the ILCMA Committee on Professional Conduct.

Franz recently taught the Local Government Administration and Local Economic Development Policy courses. Student nominators noted that, Franz “related to every student, constantly voiced unique perspectives and questions to foster dialogue. He provided students with an extremely reliable sense of the local government management profession, especially as a city manager himself.”

Another student commented, “Mark had a certain charisma that made it exciting to attend class. I feel like he took the theory we would read about and practically apply it to the real world giving us better understanding of important topics.”

Overall, Franz has helped inspire students to not only pursue, but look forward to a rewarding career in local government.

When asked, “How do you think the role of public servants has evolved over time, and what do you see as the future of the public service profession?” Mark responded that the future of the profession is indeed the next generation that must be extremely nimble and ethical to tackle the problems of the day that includes sustainability, economic development and public safety challenges to name a few. Finding these solutions through a public engagement approach that minimizes the impacts of extreme positions commonly found on both left and right. However, local government officials may be the last bastion of government that treasures the middle ground and are trusted to provide common sense tactics to local government issues. In short, strap in, you will likely have a great seat on the train back to trusting in government as the solution, not the problem. That solution is professional and impartial local government. “We need you on board!” ■

Alumni Spotlight

The contributions from our alumni to the field of public administration are a testament to the quality of education and training provided by our department. We take pride in your accomplishments and want to continue to celebrate your successes with the current students and faculty. We kindly ask that you consider sharing your recent accomplishments with us, whether it be a new job or promotion, an award or recognition, a published article or book, or any other notable achievement. Your success story can inspire and motivate our current students as they navigate their career paths in public administration. Please share your updates with us by emailing publicadm@niu.edu, and we will feature your achievements on our website, social media and other communication channels. Your story may also be included in our annual report or upcoming newsletter.

This year the department is highlighting Jim Norris and Tasheik Kerr for their remarkable contributions to the field.

Jim Norris

James H. Norris joined the Center for Governmental Studies in the position of senior public management and local governmental specialist after having served as the village manager of the village of Hoffman Estates, Illinois from 1998 to August 2020. Previously, Norris served as the city manager of Gladstone, Missouri; the assistant village manager of Schaumburg, Illinois; Palatine, Illinois; and interned for the village of Western Springs, Illinois. After obtaining a B.A. degree from the University of Missouri in St. Louis in 1980, he received an MPA from Northern Illinois University in 1983. Norris was an adjunct lecturer for the NIU MPA program as well as in the Bachelor of Science in applied management program for almost a decade and previously taught at Northwest University in the master's in public policy program and at Park College (Missouri) in the master's in public affairs program.



Jim Norris.

At the Center for Governmental Studies, Norris works primarily with the strategic management, policy and community development group having participated in either strategic planning or organizational studies for over 25 municipalities or agencies during his tenure.

During his tenure in Hoffman Estates, Norris at various times served as the chair of the executive board of the Northwest Suburban Municipal Joint Action Water Agency, chair of the Northwest Central Dispatch Joint Emergency Management Agency, chair of the executive committee of the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County, and chair of the Northwest Central Dispatch Agency.

Norris is also a past president and member of the Illinois City/County Management Association, past president and member of the Chicago Metropolitan Manager's Association and is a life member of the International City/County Management Association. Norris also served more than a decade on the Illinois Municipal League Manager's Committee, including a term as chair, where he was a passionate advocate for public safety pension reform and consolidation.

Norris was asked to provide his insights on the question prompt: "How do you perceive the evolution of public servants' role, including your own experience teaching for our department and what do you envi- >



sion as the future of the public service profession?” In response to the question, Norris shared the following perspectives:

“The day-to-day work of public servants has evolved dramatically over the forty plus years since my arrival in the NIU MPA program. However, the overall role of ethically serving and maintaining the public trust has remained basically the same with some very important changes.

“Technology has changed the day-to-day work of the public servant. Technology 40 years ago was some version of an IBM mainframe computer, with green screen slave terminals used primarily for financial applications, with dot matrix printers. Word processing was done by IBM electric typewriters, and you were lucky if it had backspace erase tape if you made a spelling mistake, otherwise you would get out the Wite-Out and then type over the blotchy correction hoping it looked OK. If residents had major issues of concern, they would write a letter that would be received three days later. Several years later, that letter might have been delivered by fax. Today, the pace has dramatically changed with instantaneous demands for service along with digital pictures of what needs correcting. Social media impacts not only pace, but also the tenor of discussion on an issue. Therefore, impactful, accurate, rapid communication has become the norm with many communities and agencies hiring communications professionals to monitor social media and technological requests for service.

“This has become even more important with the rapid decrease in neighborhood or regional newspapers who used to follow local governments and agencies very closely. Today local governments and agencies basically write their own news in the form of press releases, website articles and through the use of social media. This places a tremendous ethical burden on the agency to be transparent and accurate.

“There have been other changes during those 40 years as well. In class we learned about the four pillars of public administration being efficiency, economy, effectiveness and social equity. With that

said, the profession was not diverse and social equity in practice seemed to be the least important of the four pillars. In 2005, the late H. George Frederickson wrote an article in the *Public Administration Review*, entitled, *The State of Social Equity in American Public Administration* and he said, ‘But in public administration, I insist that we engage with the problem of inequality, that we dirty our hands with inequality, that we be outraged, passionate, and determined. In short, I insist that we actually apply social equity in public administration.’

“While public administrators and public servants had been slow to react, recent social movements have caused diversity, equity and inclusion to move to the forefront in many public and private organizations and with that more diversity is being seen in the public administration profession, which is a tremendous positive change.

“The NIU Department of Public Administration has evolved as well. Forty years ago, there was not a nonprofit management or a public law emphasis area, there were no courses on economic development and very little in the way of how to use technology in any aspect of public administration. The department has evolved to keep pace with evolving changes in society to educate successive generations of future public administrators.

“I believe the future of public administration and public service is to continue to serve the public trust as effectively and ethically as possible and to constantly strive to value diversity, equity and inclusion while serving with transparency and unbiased honesty. Unfortunately, the country today is blasted with one-sided, tainted versions of truth. Storytelling has become an art and it does not seem to matter if the story is the unbiased version of the truth or something spun to serve a purpose. Those in public service will need to story tell with transparency and unbiased honesty to maintain professional integrity and to guard the public trust. Public service is an honorable profession that will continue to positively and effectively impact the quality of life of residents and/or nonprofit constituents well into the future.” ■

Tasheik Kerr

Tasheik Kerr is currently the assistant city manager for the city of Evanston. She earned her MPA in 2017. Prior to her position with the city of Evanston, she served as an intern with the city of Newberry, Florida, while completing her B.A. degree at the University of Florida and interning for the village of Dolton. Upon graduating with her MPA, she worked as a management analyst for the city of Ames, Iowa, from 2017 to 2020.

Kerr now provides analytical and administrative support to the city of Evanston city manager's office. Her current responsibilities include overseeing the implementation of the city's reparations program, staffing various boards, commissions and committees. Specifically, she serves as the staff lead for the reparations committee, the equity and empowerment commission, and the Evanston Arts Council. She is also working with staff on conducting union negotiations and assisting on a host of other special projects.

As she reflects on her most noteworthy projects, Kerr shared that she implemented the Ames Community Institute, a program geared toward diverse stakeholders to educate about city government, address immediate concerns and build rapport with civic leaders. In her current role with the city of Evanston, she mentioned the implementation of the city's reparations program, a first-in-the-nation program that aims to remedy the harm caused to Black Evanston residents. Her ability to work with the committee to address past discriminatory policies and practices and inaction on the city's part has been the highlight of her career thus far. She also shared other noteworthy projects, such as her work to enhance Evanston and Northwestern campus and the community's relationship, negotiating a lease agreement of one of the city's most controversial properties, and working with all departments on the city council goals.

As it pertains to the question of how the role of public service has evolved over time and what she sees as the future of the public service profession, Kerr responded that there is an increase in governments embracing technology to improve work-life balance for employees, business processes and policies. Though it was

already taking place, she mentioned the pandemic accelerated this change. Kerr shared that due to the pandemic, the city of Evanston has implemented a remote work policy whereby employees can work from



Tasheik Kerr.

home a few days of the week and can remotely connect to their in-office desktops. Kerr also shared that residents can obtain permits by having their building inspections performed via video, and there are more ways to pay for services digitally rather than paying for services in person. As for policy decisions, the city has contracted with Zencity to provide insights into residents' sentiments regarding proposed policies. Zencity also provides insights into issues that are a growing concern for residents and may call for government intervention.

Kerr also shared that public service's role has evolved in providing equitable services. She mentioned that some local governments and organizations are more intentional about diversity, equity and inclusion. In talking to her colleagues from other communities, she noted some are taking steps to ensure that voices from underrepresented groups are considered before undertaking service delivery. These efforts are helping to address systemic inequalities.

As for the future of public service, Kerr responded that she is still determining what this might look like in ten years due to the coming age of AI and the increasing polarization in our politics that is spilling into how policies are enacted at all levels of government. Since public service professionals work for the greater good, she is sure the future of public service will be OK, just a bit more challenging. ■

Meet The MPA Faculty



Scott Robinson.

Scott Robinson, professor and department chair

It has been a year of firsts for me as well as my partner. Of course, this was my first year at NIU. Accordingly, I was able to assist with many first events around the department calendar: my first ICMA meeting, my first ILCMA and WCMA meetings, my first Top Golf fundraiser, all the way to my first NIU PAA reception and graduation. It was a delightful year. Beyond the NIU activities, this was the first year for my partner and I to experience four distinguishable seasons. We enjoyed them all (though, admittedly, it was a mild winter). We are looking for a busy summer of travel (including our recent trip to Peru for our 25th anniversary) before starting the ride all over again.

There have been academic successes as well. Most notably, I received the Petak Award from the American Society for Public Administration for the best paper in emergency and crisis management. This award was special in that I was able to share it with two of my former students — one of whom started as a faculty member at the University of Nebraska-Omaha this year while the other is finishing his Ph.D. at the University of Oklahoma. I have also started work on what may be a multiyear project for Sandia National Labs to provide tools for project management of large — infrastructure-scale — public projects.

I look forward to seeing what the next year brings. ■





Kurt Thurmaier.

Kurt Thurmaier, distinguished engagement professor

The public service profession is challenged by an environment in which political leaders are able to lie, convincing followers to defy indisputable facts. The implications for public and nonprofit professionals who are dedicated to making the world a better place are troubling. It is hard to discuss and negotiate policy and program alternatives when a sizable share of your population believes an alternative reality or believes they are so righteous that compromise is a four letter word. The way forward that is inclusive of views demands that people meaningfully engage with people holding diverse perspectives to find common ground, and acceptable compromises, to improve public services. The decline of balanced media coverage such as still survives in some newspapers coupled with the explosion of lies and misleading information on social media makes all of this difficult. The classroom is more challenging than ever because students tend to get their “news” from bubble feeds that show them what they want to believe rather than the balanced perspective from professional journalism. They also don’t like to read something longer than 280 characters, seriously limiting their ability to understand the complexity of public policy issues they need to confront in their public service careers.

I’ve enjoyed being back in the classroom teaching public budgeting again. My goal is to help our students learn how to specify the budget problem and define the solution set — very powerful tools that shape the debates about how much to spend from what revenue stream that somebody pays (see TANSTAAFL rule of budgeting). I’ve also enjoyed spending more time on research projects, including working with colleagues on two papers related to our state survey of Illinois township supervisors and administrators. We’ve already published two papers, including one about how townships responded to changing demands for general assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. I was also able to conduct some budget balancing experiments with former doctoral students (now professors) to test the strength of public support for public safety spending relative to public works, and how willing people are to pay for these services. Experimental budgeting research is cutting edge work, and the earlier presentations of the results at conferences probably helped improve our national ranking in public budgeting and finance. More importantly, these experiments and others will help local government leaders rethink citizen engagement opportunities beyond listening to the nattering nabobs of negativism at public hearings. ■



Kurt Thurmaier, Tochi Madueke and Jaehee Jong celebrating the presentation and publication of their second township study paper after the MPSA 2023 Conference.



One can relax when not serving as department chair.

Meet the MPA Faculty



Alicia Schatteman.

Alicia Schatteman, associate professor

My scholarship and teaching focus is on nonprofit management, specifically strategic planning and financial management. With COVID-19, demand for nonprofit services greatly increased while fundraising and volunteering declined. While there were new funding opportunities, these have now ended and demand for services remains high. Similar to the business and government sectors, recruiting and retaining staff is still a challenge while many staff leaders are retiring and front-line staff are experiencing burnout. Nonprofit and government employees will also continue to face pressure to provide high quality services while balancing operational budgets. Our local communities are more diverse so public servants will need to continue to build trust and listen to the various stakeholders to best serve their needs. That will mean thinking creatively about how to meet a variety of needs, whether that's using technology or other ways to communicate.

Since 2019, I have served as the director of the Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies, an interdisciplinary undergraduate major in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In this role, I teach and lead our undergraduate program, manage the Huskie Closet, supervise the 40TUDE nonprofit student consultant team, and conduct applied research. In terms of scholarship, I finished my book on nonprofit strategic planning, which will be published by Johns Hopkins University Press early in 2024. It is a practical guide, but grounded in academic research, written to assist nonprofit boards particularly for small and medium-sized organizations. I also co-authored an article about comparing municipal public libraries with public library districts (Schatteman, A. and Liu, L.Y. 2022. "Measuring What Matters: Comparing Costs and Performance of Municipal Libraries and Library Districts", *Public Library Quarterly* 42(4): 373-397). This publication adds to our understanding of performance management by comparing the two different organizational structures. ■



Alicia Schatteman with nonprofit students at the ARNOVA Annual Conference held in November 2022.



Thomas Skuzinski.

Thomas Skuzinski, associate professor

This was a year of taking on new and exciting challenges that will help strengthen both the department and local governments throughout the region and state. In July 2022, I began a four-year appointment as director of the Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability and Energy (ESE), an interdisciplinary research hub at NIU with over \$4 million in current grants and contracts and over 40 faculty associates from across six NIU colleges and 14 departments, including Public Administration. The new role aligns well with a longstanding commitment I've had to sustainability, likely from growing up seeing the peculiar juxtaposition of stunning natural beauty and industrial development that is so common in the Rust Belt. ESE houses the Environmental Studies (ENVS) major, which has over 100 students who are motivated by a commitment to wanting to make the world a better place. Over the past year, I have worked with Public Administration to begin developing an undergraduate-graduate pipeline from ENVS into the MPA that will bring essential skills and knowledge into Illinois local governments. ESE and these students can build significant capacity in Illinois local governments navigating grant-seeking and policy changes motivated by CEJA and the federal Inflation Reduction Act. We're already liaising with many local governments to aid with sustainability planning, greenhouse gas emissions inventories, zoning sustainability audits and similar needs. We're continuing to roll out the Illinois Municipal Sustainability Survey to learn about sustainability policy adoption, implementation and governance in cities, villages and towns statewide.

The marrying of student success with community impact has always mattered to me — it's the main reason I went into academia. I was fortunate this past year to secure a major contract with Illinois Department of Natural Resources to have both undergraduate and graduate students serve as grant reviewers for the agency's Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) funding program. We were able to create a Sustainability Research Fellows program through this opportunity with paid internships for more than 20 students and will be continuing this for the foreseeable future. The students had a chance to play a direct role in a policy process, see intergovernmental relationships at work, receive mentoring from retired park district directors and bring \$60 million to park districts statewide. Many of them met with agency leaders in Springfield, and Governor Pritzker acknowledged the importance of their contribution in a press event. IDNR was pleased enough with this work that the agency will be continuing their engagement with us by having students help develop the State-wide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. This relationship — and another focused on digital equity with Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity — will be foundational to the start of a sustainability policy and justice lab I am establishing that will continue to serve state agencies and local governments through the amazing work of NIU undergraduate and graduate students.

I also enjoy giving students exposure to unique, formative experiences. This has partly happened through planning the departmental colloquia featuring Meg Mullin (fall 2022) (and in other semesters Dan Immergluck, Manny Teodoro, Davia Downey and Ashley Nickel), who can bring cutting-edge scholarship to our student-interns. In 2022, I also enjoyed being the coordinator and author of the inaugural ICMA Student Case Simulation Competition at the national conference in Columbus. The competition allowed our students to be on teams with peers from MPA programs at many other universities as they solved a real-world problem. The ability to work quickly and collaboratively is something at which NIU students excelled.

Alongside all this student-facing work, I found time with collab- ➤

orators to publish two peer reviewed articles. One is in *Transport Policy* — the second-highest-ranked journal in transportation policy — and describes a new way to measure organizational fragmentation in metropolitan transportation systems. Many of our alums regularly have to confront and overcome how to meet public needs in a very fragmented and poly-centric institutional setting, with dozens if not hundreds of general purpose and special purpose governments. The article (“Exploring the Link between Regional Transportation Governance and Outcomes: A Novel Measure of Organizational Fragmentation in Metropolitan Public Transportation Systems”) tackles how we can more consistently measure those institutional features at a regional scale to better study their causes and consequences. The next published through *Urban Affairs Review* and examines fragmentation but with regard to land use regulation (“Envisioning a role for RIGOs in cross-boundary land use regulation”). Both articles included doctoral student Carolina Velandia Hernandez, who has public administration as one of her subfields and will be a future scholar contributing to the strength and diversity of the field. Velandia Hernandez was recognized this year as both an outstanding graduate student in political science and as a public administration theory network fellow.

We were asked in these write-ups to consider how the field of public administration is evolving, and I’d like to focus on two ideas that are part of this evolution and are at the conceptual core of sustainability: systems-thinking and interdisciplinarity. Sustainability is about the long-term balancing of equity, economy and ecology (sharing two pillars in common with public administration) to ensure that we use resources in such a way that we meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. This is a highly complex, difficult task and it’s one in which linearity, equilibrium and stability give way to messier ideas like circularity, emergence and adaptation. Public administration scholars have for decades been moving away from linear conceptualizations of the policy process, oversimplifications about the separation of politics and administration and limiting understandings of intergovernmental and interorganizational relationships as hierarchical and dyadic. In short, we are starting to move more toward systems-thinking. We also are much more willing to draw inspiration from and seek collaboration with scholars and leaders from outside public administration. We have long done this with other public-sector disciplines (e.g., planning, public policy) and the social sciences (e.g., economics, political science). But we’re now building bridges to the humanities, to the arts and to STEM disciplines. Major sources of federal and state funding are requiring this kind of boundary-crossing, and local governments are often looking for individuals who are adept at drawing from diverse ways of thinking and knowing. Evolving toward systems-thinking and interdisciplinarity are essential to the resilience of public administration, and I’m excited to be in a department that is embracing these changes.

When I wasn’t working (and admittedly I need to find more time for that!) I was enjoying continuing to settle into DeKalb with my husband, Michael, who it turns out is quite the skillful gardener. I was also a very proud brother: my sister Elvira graduated in May 2023 with a MPA degree from NIU, meaning there are now two Skuzinskis in the Public Administration family. Go Huskies! ■



Skuzinski lives in DeKalb with his husband, Michael.



Christopher Goodman.

Christopher Goodman, associate professor

Public servants are increasingly being asked to do more, taking on increasingly complex policy and management problems and facing an increasingly demanding public. Societal progress creates a more complicated governance environment, and public servants must adapt to these new realities. Thankfully, NIU's Department of Public Administration has long been at the forefront of these ever-changing realities.

NIU's pioneering local government internship program and our longstanding dedication to connecting theory to practice allow the department to see and hear how the profession is changing — both from our interns, students and alumni. We return this information to the classroom, making our teaching more relevant to students. And so, the virtuous cycle continues.

The ever-increasing complexity of local governance demands more of public servants. The silos of old are no longer relevant. Traditional management skills are still necessary; however, a deeper understanding of the communities we serve is essential. So many local issues are interconnected, perhaps even more so in the areas traditionally covered by local governments. Planning and zoning is connected to law enforcement which is connected to taxation, and the list goes on. And many of these issues are connected to broader societal concerns like segregation, poverty and exclusion. The profession increasingly asks practitioners to understand these concepts deeply and interact with them at a high level. Perhaps more importantly, elected officials and the public demand that public servants act.

The department's dedication to connecting theory to practice gives students a good basis; however, we too must adapt. That involves bringing new concepts into the classroom beyond the traditional management core, and we do so to prepare students to face the demands of a changing profession.

Over the past year, my research has focused on understanding how states preempt local governments in various policy areas. This is important for local government practitioners because preemption is only increasing, and we need to understand why such preemptions happen to develop strategies to deal with them. In general, the ideological makeup of the state legislature is what's driving preemptions — more ideologically conservative state legislatures preempt more often. This is in some ways disappointing because there are few ways to change the ideological makeup of state legislatures; however, effectively explaining the challenges local governments face may help.

I have also spent significant time speaking with the media about Disney and Florida's conflict with the Reedy Creek Improvement District, or the Central Florida Tourism Oversight board. As an expert in special districts, I have attempted to provide context on this evolving conflict while highlighting the wealth of local government expertise at NIU. ■



Eunju Rho.

Eunju Rho, associate professor

Public administration, as both a field of study and practice, has experienced significant changes throughout history. However, its core emphasis on bridging theory and practice has remained steadfast. Reflecting on the evolution of public administration education, Robert B. Denhardt (2002, p. 526) identified timeless and enduring questions: “Do we seek to educate our students with respect to theory or to practice? Do we prepare students for their first jobs or for those to which they might aspire later? What are the appropriate delivery mechanisms for MPA courses and curricula? What personal commitments do we make as public administration educators?”

The integration of theory and practice remains a steadfast mission and learning objective across all MPA classes offered at our esteemed institution. At the NIU MPA program, we pride ourselves in providing a comprehensive array of professional development opportunities that equip our students with the necessary tools to shape their career trajectories and bolster their practical skills, assets and experiences, thereby making them highly sought-after by prospective employers. In our commitment to serving our students’ needs, we offer a diverse range of courses that can be accessed both online and in-person. Even amidst the formidable challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, our online delivery methods have undergone significant enhancements, allowing us to successfully operate the highly acclaimed Online 100% MPA program. This initiative has been instrumental in providing valuable learning opportunities to mid-career professionals who possess a strong desire to pursue master’s level education while balancing their existing responsibilities. As faculty members, we are unwavering in our dedication to the advancement of public administration education. We continually strive to refine our teaching methodologies, actively participating in faculty development programs and sharing our expertise with our esteemed colleagues. These collective efforts and collaborations have enabled us to achieve noteworthy milestones, and we are particularly delighted to commemorate our 60th anniversary in the upcoming academic year of 2023-24, where we will shine a spotlight on our longstanding achievements.

Personally, since joining the NIU Department of Public Administration in 2017, I have been honored with the Professor of the Year Award twice, in 2020 and 2023, in recognition of my commitment to teaching and exemplifying the qualities of a public service professional. During the award ceremony, the student presenter lauded my abilities, stating, “Professor Rho is an excellent teacher. What I most admire is her remarkable ability to stimulate students by intertwining her warm personality with her vast knowledge of the course work. Those who had her for PSPA 607 and PSPA 608 would say that she is someone who makes the extra effort to ensure every student is accommodated. She is also someone who we all look up to and aspire to be as a public administrator. She inspires, motivates and encourages her students, not only in the aforementioned ways, but with her style. She makes the lectures engaging for students, which is not an easy task. She sets the bar high, and I am striving to emulate those qualities.” These two teaching awards mark significant milestones in my journey as a public administration educator.

Looking forward, the public service profession is on the cusp of further transformation and adaptation. Key trends and drivers that will shape its future include: 1) embracing technology, 2) fostering innovation, 3) forging collaborations and partnerships to address complex challenges, 4) ensuring agility and adaptability, and 5) placing a strong emphasis on ethical conduct, fairness, and inclusivity. The NIU MPA program is committed to delivering an exceptional educational experience.

rience that seamlessly integrates theoretical foundations with real-world applications. I am proud of our students' achievements and remain steadfast in our pursuit of excellence as we shape the future of public administration education. I am excited to be part of this journey and committed to preparing the next generation of public administrators who will navigate these trends and drive positive change in our society. ■



Eunju Rho with her husband, Ilwoo Ju, and son, Daniel.



Jaehee Jong.

Jaehee Jong, assistant professor

I believe that there are several key ways in which public service has changed in the past decade. First, most people would agree that advances in IT have had a great impact on the nature of work and work processes, as well as on the shape of the workforce across all areas of work, and that these changes have profoundly affected the work of public managers. Second, as demographic changes continue (e.g., the region's population is aging and continues to become more racially and ethnically diverse), local governments and urban planners need to give greater attention to the differing needs of different demographic groups. Third, there has long been a sense that the increasing size of the aging workforce is a concern for organizations in general, and that public organizations must address critical issues related to HR to manage an aging workforce. In addition to these ongoing aspects, the unprecedented circumstances associated with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created major disruptions to existing management practices. As a result, the need for public servants to learn to adapt quickly to changing circumstances is now, more than ever, critical to the effective functioning of public agencies.

These external issues provide both opportunities and challenges for public agencies. From the public servant-citizen relationship perspective, the trends associated with the changes surrounding public agencies suggest that public agencies need to 1) stay current with changes in the IT field and to ensure that public servants have the skills and tools to provide services effectively, and 2) find ways to address varying citizen expectations from diverse populations, both of which require public servants to be more responsive as a core public value. Looking the issues through an HR lens, particularly the organization-employee relationship perspective, it is important for public organizations to consider the expectations and goals of public servants in the face of emerging changes and how HR programs might be redesigned to ensure that public servants have necessary skill sets and competencies and feel motivated to continue learning and developing new skills across their work-life age span.

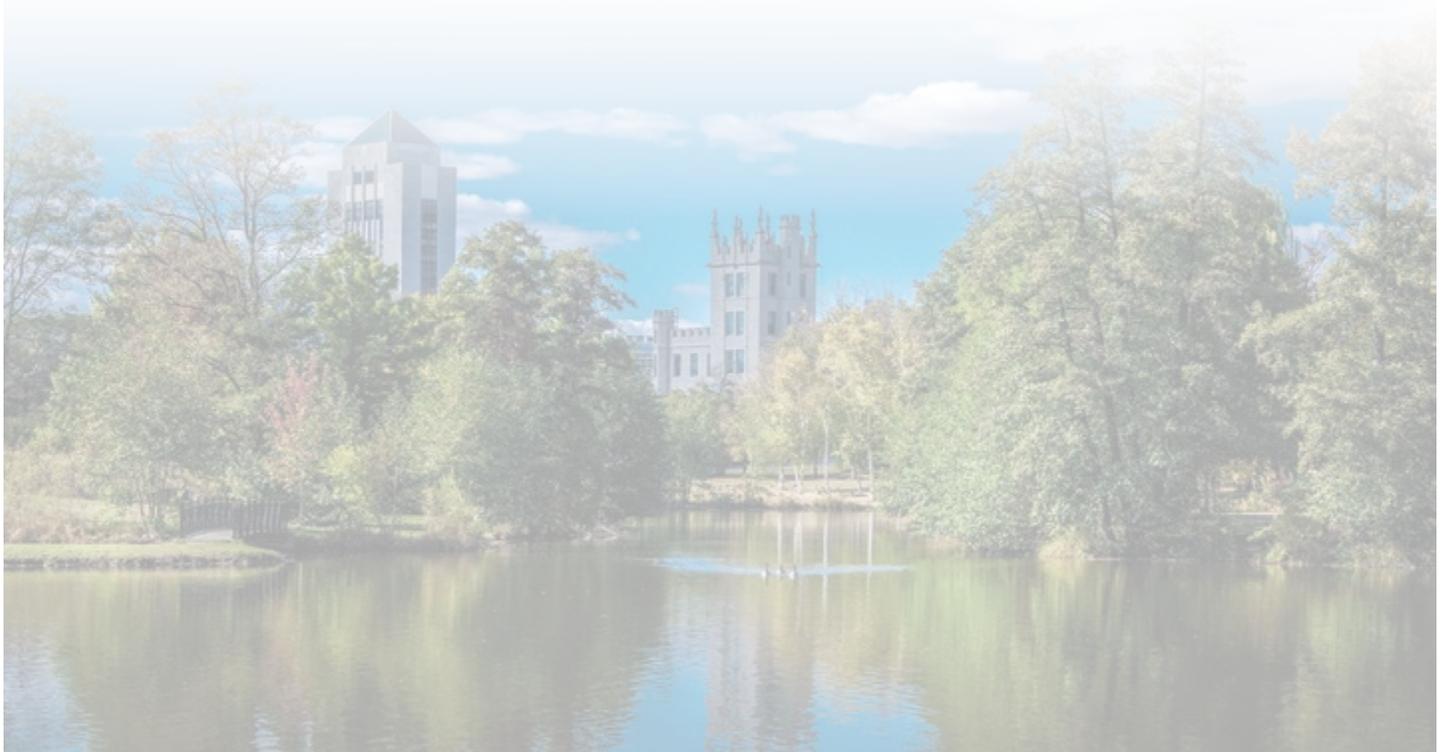
We are all aware that local governments have been experimenting with new policies and practices during the last few years to address unprecedented challenges >

related to the workforce, safety and health, and service quality. Moreover, we can assume that the phenomena associated with the challenges and trends mentioned above will continue into the future (i.e., new IT advances, increasing service needs from diverse residents, and an aging workforce). Local governments, with their emphases on public safety, education, health and social services, and other related areas, are thought to be more human oriented; this work involves high levels of human centered approaches and interactions. I believe that learning to employ new IT skills and techniques effectively while staying focused on the human element of their work is at the center of many emerging changes and trends for future public service professionals.

One of my recent publications examines how local government and public servants respond to increasing demands and expectations from residents. Based on survey data collected from Illinois township officials in 2021, I collaborated with two co-authors (Kurt Thurmaier and Tochukwu Madueke) to study townships' capacity to manage increased financial assistance needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the collaborative capacity of townships. This paper was published in *Public Organization Review* in March 2023. In this paper, we suggest that townships need to increase their capacity for resilience in the face of environmental shocks by collaborating with other local governments and nonprofit agencies as a normal practice. Conducting the study at the local government and community level aligns well with the mission of the MPA program and its strength in local government management and allows me to connect my research interests with the needs of local public officials and alumni of the field. I look forward to continuing to conduct this type of research activities in the near future. ■



Jaehee Jong with her dog, Billy.





Julie Langer.

Julie Langer, assistant professor

Administrative models in the U.S. have long championed formal approaches to governing and management that emphasize a clear distinction between bureaucratic experts and the public at large. While these models have created a professional system of administration which subdued earlier patrimonial and patriarchal tendencies, some have suggested that these technical approaches to governing, while efficient, have also created undemocratic bureaucracies that do not “see” those outside of the apparatus of government as partners in creating and supporting a democratic society. To be sure, many jobs in government require specialized training, expertise and planning, and formal organizations are still an absolute necessity — yet, it’s also necessary to reflect on how these systems impact the public’s relationship with government and whether they hinder public access and participation. Emerging approaches to public administration have these ideas as their core. New models resituate public administration in democratic theory and go beyond nods to collaboration, instead highlighting the importance of involving an empowered and capable public more deeply in the functions of government.

Despite these efforts to highlight the democratic role of public organizations and improve citizen engagement and public participation, there is little consensus among public managers about the usefulness of these strategies and their practice remains far from ubiquitous. In looking to the future of public service, there are many unknowns, but what is clear is that the field of public administration, and local governments in particular, will have important decisions to make about how to create organizations that promote both technical efficiency and democratic participation. Local government organizations — schools, libraries, police stations, hospitals — are often the most visible form of government to citizens in their everyday lives. Sometimes, these organizations provide the only direct contact citizens have with government. In an age of misinformation, mistrust and democratic backsliding, this means that local organizations can play a crucial role in promoting and maintaining democratic norms and ideals by reengaging citizens, rebuilding trust in democratic institutions and generating the social capital needed to keep communities strong. This can only happen if we begin to value and support work that is not only technical and efficient, but substantive, supportive, and relational.

My work over the last year has focused on examining the important roles that local government organizations play in supporting the substantive parts of society that further democratic ideals. In an upcoming piece for the journal *Public Management Review*, you can read my article titled, *Organizational Identity and Citizen Participation in Government*, which looks at how the values and norms that define local government organizations shape public managers thinking and action around public participation. This summer I will also be representing NIU’s MPA program at the Annual Public Administration Research Conference where I will be presenting work in partnership with Arizona State University and Indiana University’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs which explores how librarians make sense of the moral and managerial issues facing their organizations and what this means for the democratic roles that public libraries play in the U.S. ■



Julie Langer with Timothy (husband), and Ava and Mason (children).

Thank you to all our past faculty

We would also like to recognize faculty members from the past 10 years who have dedicated their time, expertise, and unwavering commitment to shaping the minds and futures of countless students.

Yu-Che Chen
Aaron Deslatte
Gerald Gabris
Heidi Koenig

Craig Maher
Lindsay McDougle
Kim Nelson
Michael Peddle, professor emeritus

Gregory Porumbescu
Eric Zeemering ■

Thank you to all our Instructors

The department would like to recognize and thank all our instructors from the past 10 years that have helped grow our program and cultivate several generations of public service leaders.

Curt Behrens
Stephen Berg
Peter Burchard
Denise Burchard
Brian Caputo
Erica Ceka
Ian Coyle
Stephanie Dawkins
Sam Ferguson

Mark Franz
Pam Gallahue
Mel Henriksen
Shawn Jeffers
Greg Kuhn
Lori Luther
James Norris
Brian Richardson
Peter Schaak

Mindy Schneiderman
Gloria Simo
Matthew Simpson
Marc Thorson
Debbie Van Sickle
Robin Weaver
Don Weiss
Andy Williams
Liangfu Wu ■

We are excited to announce several upcoming events that promise to offer memorable experiences and a chance to get together with current or former classmates, teachers and colleagues. Mark your calendars and get ready to join us for events filled with inspiration, learning and connection.

- **NIU Alumni and Friends Dinner** — Hosted during the ICMA Annual Conference Oct. 2.
- **Fall Colloquium** — Held at the DeKalb campus Nov. 17.
- **60th Anniversary Celebration** — Spring 2024.

Stay in Touch

Follow us on LinkedIn and Facebook to stay up to date on current happenings and for more details on the upcoming events. To receive emails from the department about current updates, upcoming events, etc. please scan the QR code and provide and/or update your contact information.



Stewardship Report

We extend our sincerest appreciation and deepest gratitude to all the donors who have generously supported our Department of Public Administration over the years. Your unwavering commitment to our mission of promoting effective governance and public service excellence has been instrumental in our success. Thanks to your invaluable contributions, we have been able to enhance educational programs, foster research initiatives, and provide transformative learning experiences for our students. Your support has enabled us to equip future public administrators with the skills, knowledge and resources necessary to tackle complex societal challenges. We are truly grateful for your belief in our department and for the meaningful impact you have made on our students and faculty. Your generosity inspires us to continue striving for excellence and advancing the field of public administration. Thank you for your enduring support and for being champions of public service.

In line with the theme of this year's report, "A Look Back on the Profession of Public Service Throughout the Years," we would like to acknowledge our donors

not only for their generous contributions but also for the duration of their support. Donors are categorized into three categories: gold, silver, and bronze, based on the length of donations. Gold represents donors who have supported the department for 25 years or more, silver recognizes those who have contributed for 15 to 20 years, and bronze signifies those who have donated for 10 to 15 years. For those that have donated for one to 10 years, your generosity has already made a tremendous impact, and we encourage you to consider becoming lifelong donors. By continuing your support, you can help us create lasting change and transform countless lives and communities in the years to come.

The department is grateful for the unwavering commitment and loyalty demonstrated by each of our donors. Your sustained support has been instrumental in the department's accomplishments, enabling to advance the profession of public service and make a lasting impact on many communities. Thank you for your enduring dedication and for being integral to our journey throughout the years. ■

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The department would also like to recognize the sponsors whose support played a pivotal role in making the 2022 Annual Fundraising Event at Topgolf an incredible success. Their generosity and commitment to our cause were instrumental in creating a memorable and impactful evening.

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Building Communities.
Improving Lives.



Be a Part of the Solution

The department wants to collaborate with all our partners (alumni, sponsors, donors, friends, etc.) to promote the exciting opportunities in the local government career path. We are seeking everyone's support to revitalize and generate interest in public service, benefiting both the MPA program and the local government profession.

Here are a few examples of actionable steps we can take to increase interest in public service. If you're interested in pursuing any of these initiatives individually or would like to collaborate with the department, please reach out to us. We are eager to explore these opportunities and test their effectiveness.

Organize informational sessions: Host workshops or information sessions to educate individuals about the roles and responsibilities within local government. Provide insights into the diverse career paths available and showcase success stories of those working in public service.

Engage with local schools and universities: Collaborate with educational institutions to introduce students to the opportunities in local government. Offer internships, guest lectures or mentorship programs to expose them to real-world experiences and inspire their interest in public service.

Develop outreach programs: Create outreach programs that target underrepresented communities and encourage their participation in local government. Provide resources, training and mentorship to empower individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue careers in public service.

Use social media and online platforms: Leverage social media platforms to share stories, testimonials and information about local government careers. Create engaging content that highlights the impact of public service and encourages individuals to explore opportunities in their communities.

Collaborate with community organizations: Partner with community organizations, non-profits and professional associations to promote local govern-

ment careers. Organize joint events, panel discussions or networking opportunities to showcase the benefits and possibilities of working in public service.

Offer financial incentives: Establish financial incentives (e.g., employee tuition reimbursement) specifically for individuals interested in pursuing education or careers in local government. This can help alleviate financial barriers and encourage more people to consider public service as a viable option.

Foster mentorship programs: Develop mentorship programs that connect aspiring individuals with experienced professionals in local government. These mentorship relationships can provide guidance, support and valuable insights into the field, fostering interest and encouraging career exploration.

Engage in community outreach: Actively participate in community events and engage with the public to raise awareness about local government careers. Set up booths, give presentations or facilitate discussions to create opportunities for dialogue and information sharing.

Highlight the impact of local government: Share success stories and case studies that illustrate the positive impact of local government initiatives. Showcasing tangible outcomes and success stories can inspire individuals to pursue careers in public service and contribute to their communities.

Collaborate with local media: Partner with local media outlets to showcase the importance of local government and the opportunities it presents. Encourage coverage of local government success stories, initiatives and the contributions of public servants to generate interest and awareness in the field.

Gain insight into the preferences of today's job seekers: Understand what qualities and benefits applicants seek in an employer, ensuring that the government becomes an attractive and compelling career choice. ■

Looking Back to Look Ahead

As we get ready to celebrate the department's 60th anniversary milestone, it is astonishing to realize how swiftly time has passed. It feels like just yesterday that we celebrated the department's 50th anniversary and reflected on the half century of accomplishments and memories. The speed at which the years have flown by serves as a reminder to cherish each moment and appreciate the milestones that mark our journey through time. As we anticipate the 60th anniversary, let us embrace the opportunity to honor the past, celebrate the present, and eagerly anticipate the future that lies ahead.

We invite you to take a trip down memory lane and explore the news article commemorating the 50th anniversary:

NIU Today September 9, 2013
'Golden' Opportunity to Make a Difference



A Look Back

Major Events in Public Administration

1787: The United States Constitution is signed, providing the foundation for American government and establishing the concept of public administration.

1883: The Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act is enacted, creating a merit-based system for federal government employment.

1901: The National Municipal League is founded, promoting the professionalization of municipal government.

1916: The National Park Service is created, establishing a new model for public administration in the management of natural resources.

1933: The New Deal is implemented, expanding the role of the federal government in public administration and establishing new programs and agencies to address social and economic issues.

1947: The Marshall Plan is implemented, providing assistance to rebuild Europe after World War II, and establishing a new model for international development and foreign aid.

1965: The Great Society is implemented, expanding the federal government's role in public administration and implementing new programs to address poverty, health care and education.

1978: The Civil Service Reform Act is passed, further modernizing the civil service system and promoting greater efficiency and effectiveness in public administration.

1980s-1990s: The era of "New Public Management"

emerges, emphasizing greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in public administration through market-based reforms and private sector management techniques.

1993: The Government Performance and Results Act is enacted, requiring federal agencies to set strategic goals and measure their performance.

2001: The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 lead to significant changes in public administration, including the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and new policies and practices to enhance national security.

2002: The creation of the Department of Homeland Security in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks marks a significant shift in federal government priorities towards national security and emergency preparedness.

2008: The Great Recession leads to major changes in public administration, including the implementation of new programs and policies to address economic challenges and the reorganization of government agencies.

2010: The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) is enacted, expanding access to health care for millions of Americans and establishing a new regulatory framework for the health care industry.

2020: The COVID-19 pandemic leads to major changes in public administration, including new policies and practices related to public health, emergency management and the delivery of government services.