



WE ARE THE MPA PROGRAM AT THE USF SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

...AND WE CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD!



UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA


With the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, the **University of South Florida's Master of Public Administration (MPA) program** stepped up to the plate in the 2020-2021 academic year in the areas of research, teaching, and community engagement to help inform policy. We are delighted to share with you a few of the strides we have made...

POLICY RELEVANT COVID-19 RESEARCH

Faculty in the MPA program conducted research on COVID-19 to help inform policy and practice for local governments. The research topics ranged from emergency preparedness to vaccines and federal stimulus policies, and from fiscal and service impacts of COVID-19 to the strategies being implemented by local government leaders to address those impacts.

Undergraduate Program Coordinator and Associate Professor **Dr. Stephen Neely** teamed up with Assistant Professor **Dr. Christa Remington** and SPA Director and Associate Professor **Dr. Robin Ersing** to conduct a statewide survey of 600 Floridians, which measured emergency preparedness, as well as general opinions regarding the COVID-19 public health crisis and related policy issues. Their research findings, which gained local and national attention, showed that a large majority of Floridians (82%) believe that prevention guidelines being emphasized by public health officials – such as wearing a mask in public and practicing social distancing – are effective at slowing the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, when asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their household's readiness for an emergency, only 15.5% of Floridians reported being less prepared, while 36.5% said they are more prepared and 48% reported that COVID-19 did not affect their household's readiness for an emergency.

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In partnership with USF's Florida Center for Cybersecurity (Cyber Florida), **Dr. Neely** also conducted a nationwide survey of 1,003 U.S. adults to measure attitudes and opinions regarding **COVID-19 vaccines, as well as potential federal stimulus policies**. His findings revealed that while a majority of Americans said they will probably get vaccinated, many remain concerned about the efficacy and safety of recently approved vaccines. Furthermore, Americans overwhelmingly favor additional federal stimulus policies in response to COVID-19, and they continue to support stronger COVID-19 mitigation efforts.

Dr. Neely partnered again with USF's Cyber Florida on a national survey examining online behavior and the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey examined a variety of COVID-related issues, including (1) changes in online behavior due to the pandemic; (2) the use of social media and the internet to learn about COVID-19; (3) stimulus policy preferences; and (4) vaccine intentions. The survey results were covered nationally, and **Dr. Neely** published summaries of these data—along with Dr. Ron Sanders, Cyber Florida's Staff Director—in the *Tampa Bay Times*, as well as the *Government Executive* magazine. The MPA program's Quantitative Analysis class (PAD 6703) used these data to write survey research memos.


MPA Program Director and Associate Professor **Dr. Stephen Aikins** conducted a nationwide survey with the goal of **determining the effects of COVID-19 mitigation measures on U.S. county and municipal revenue and public services provided**, and to identify the policies implemented to address fiscal challenges posed by COVID-19. The findings showed that a total of 79% of jurisdictions had an estimated FY 2020 budget revenue loss of up to 14%, 50% had a FY 2020 sales tax revenue loss of up to 9%, and 52% had a FY 2020 income tax revenue loss of up to 14%. Moreover, the measures various governments adopted to deal with the revenue shortfalls included reducing funding for police, fire, healthcare, and mass transit services.

OTHER ONGOING RESEARCH PROJECTS

This year, **Dr. Remington** is a co-principal investigator on a grant funded project in partnership with faculty from Georgetown University, Florida International University, and Ohio State University. This research project looks at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on first responders and their job

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performance, as well as organizational factors that mitigate or increase these negative impacts. So far, they have collected over 7,800 surveys nationwide, and conducted over 100 in-depth interviews.

Associate Professor **Dr. John Daly** is currently working on the development of a book-length manuscript titled "***Human Security in the Kingdom of Eswatini***." This research addresses aspects of human security issues that those living in the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland), a poor southern African nation, are currently facing. **Dr. Daly** is also working with Visiting Instructor **Dr. Steve Spina** on a research project regarding what local governments can do to mitigate social injustices facing people of color.

USF MPA & SUNCOAST ASPA HOSTS VIRTUAL COVID-19 EVENT

In partnership with the Suncoast Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), our MPA program held a virtual COVID-19 event that brought together local government leaders, public administrators, MPA alumni, and students around the theme of "***Providing Public Service in the Midst of a Pandemic: Strategies Adopted for Managing COVID-19 Impact and Challenges***." The event which featured Jill Silverboard, Pinellas County's Deputy County Administrator & Chief of Staff, as the Guest Speaker, also assembled a panel of dynamic and experienced public administrators to exchange ideas and share with their fellow local government leaders their experiences regarding the challenges of fiscal and public service delivery posed by COVID-19, and how these leaders have been managing and navigating through those challenges.

USF MPA ADVISORY BOARD GROWS WITH NEW MEMBERS

In 2021, our MPA program added 6 new distinguished practitioners and 2 student leaders to our **Advisory Board**. The Board elected Bobby Green, former City Manager for Auburndale, as the Chair and Carl Harness, Hillsborough County's Chief Human Services Administrator, as the Vice Chair. The additions have strengthened the role of the Board in providing strategic advice and guidance on curriculum and program quality, the needs of potential employers, internships, community partnerships, and alumni engagement.

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USF MPA INAUGURATES AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

We believe a strong and engaged alumni network that helps to promote our MPA program is instrumental in accomplishing our strategic goals. To this end, in 2021 we established an **MPA Ambassadors** program with the following goals: (1) to create a platform for participants to share their experience and knowledge of the MPA degree and certificate programs in the community; (2) to promote the degree and certificate programs; (3) to assist in recruiting new students; and (4) to help future graduates by connecting them with alumni. The Ambassadors are already busily working on various programs aimed at student success. Ultimately, our MPA Ambassadors will help transform our alumni connection within the MPA program and SPA, as well as strengthen our partnerships with the communities that we serve.

RECENT FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

- Aikins, S.K.** (2020). An Examination of the Relationships Between Audit Automation and Performance Measurement Implementation in Government Internal Audits. *Journal of Accounting and Finance*, 20(8): 85-98.
- Sanders, R.P. & **Neely, S.R.** (2021, January 22). To Beat the Pandemic, Biden Needs to Take the Politics Out of It. *Government Executive*. Retrieved from <https://www.govexec.com/management/2021/01/beat-pandemic-biden-needs-take-politics-out-it/171583/>.
- Neely, S.R.**, Eldredge, C., & Sanders R.P. (2021). Health Information Seeking Behaviors on Social Media During the COVID-19 Pandemic Among American Social Networking Site Users: Survey Study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 23(6): e29802.
- Ersing, R.L., Neely, S.R., & Remington, C.L.** (2021, July 21). To Overcome Vaccine Hesitancy, Public Officials Need to Get Creative. *Government Executive*. Retrieved from <https://www.govexec.com/management/2021/07/overcome-vaccine-hesitancy-public-officials-need-get-creative/183935/>.



Remington, C.L. (2020). Cultural Competence Training for International Response and Recovery Workers. In C.C. Knox & B. Haupt (Eds.), *Cultural Competency for Emergency and Crisis Management: Concepts, Theories and Case Studies* (pp. 210-221). Routledge.

Remington, C.L. (2020, August 21). Coronavirus pushes Floridians toward self-reliance in face of hurricanes. *Tampa Bay Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.tampabay.com/opinion/2020/08/21/coronavirus-pushes-floridians-toward-self-reliance-in-face-of-hurricanes-column/>.

Witkowski, K., **Remington, C.L.**, & Ganapati, N.E. (2021). Focus Group Research in Disaster and Emergency Management. In J.D. Rivera (Ed.), *Disaster and Emergency Management Methods: Social Science Approaches in Application* (pp. 123-141). Routledge.

Remington, C.L. (2021, July 3). Post-pandemic self-reliance may be misplaced during Florida's hurricane season. *Tampa Bay Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.tampabay.com/opinion/2021/07/03/post-pandemic-self-reliance-may-be-misplaced-during-floridas-hurricane-season-column/>.

Ganapati, N.E., **Remington, C.L.**, & Newman, M.A. (in press). Emotional Labor, Gender, and Public Administration. In P.M. Shields (Ed.), *Handbook on Gender and Public Administration*. Edward Elgar Publishing.