

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA  
**MPA PROGRAM**  
 FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER



## **WELCOME-- STUDENTS, ALUMNI, & FRIENDS!**

As we conclude another successful academic year, we would like to welcome our MPA and graduate certificate students, faculty, alumni, and other stakeholders to review this newsletter. The newsletter has been designed with our readers in mind to ensure its contents are appealing and informative.

A lot has happened since the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year that we would like to highlight, both for your information and reference, to enable you to keep abreast with developments in our program.

In this newsletter, you will find news of interest to students, alumni, faculty, stakeholders, and friends of our MPA program. These news items include efforts made by the MPA program to improve student learning outcomes and to strengthen our MPA program.

We begin by highlighting program developments, followed by updates regarding our students and alumni, as well as faculty news.

Please take some time to review the contents of the newsletter and provide feedback as to what you think needs to be included or done differently going forward. Thank you!

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- Program News
- Student News
- Alumni Spotlights
- Faculty News
- Give to What Moves You!



## **UP NEXT: PROGRAM NEWS**

Do not forget to check us out on digital platforms:



Read our previous newsletter issues:

[2018](#) | [2019](#) | [2020](#) | [2021](#) | [2022](#)

# PROGRAM NEWS

## BULL-U-CRAT BALL EVENT

On November 17, 2022, the USF School of Public Affairs, together with elected and appointed government officials and the Tampa Bay community, celebrated the achievements of our Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. This year's theme was the "Bull-U-Crat Ball" which featured keynote speaker Hon. Betty Castor on "Florida as a Laboratory for Public Policy."

One of the primary goals of this event was to help raise funds to endow scholarships in honor of our departed faculty – the late Professor Emeritus Jamil Jreisat, founder of our MPA program, and the late Professor Joan Pynes, founder of our Nonprofit Management graduate certificate. We also highlighted the accomplishments of our students and alumni by awarding scholarships to deserving graduate students, presenting awards to (and recognizing new) MPA Alumni Ambassadors, and inducting qualified graduates into the Pi Alpha Alpha Honor Society.

Together we will continue to make great things happen for our MPA students and alumni as they emerge as the next generation of leaders in government and public service!

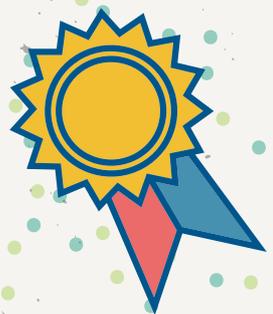


# BULL-U-CRAT BALL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



*Congratulations to the 11 MPA alumni inducted into Pi Alpha Alpha:*

*Katherine Bleakly, MPA '21  
Scott Burrows Jr., MPA '21  
Cayla Duckworth, MPA '21  
Sharon Hamisak, MPA '22  
Octavia Jarnegan, MPA '21  
Edward Lewis, MPA '21  
Gertrude McDaniel, MPA '22  
Humayra Qadir, MPA '21  
Shelley Rossetter, MPA '21  
Bryan Skorczewski, MPA '22  
Christina Stevens (Wisz), MPA '22*



# BULL-U-CRAT BALL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS CONT...



*Congratulations to 6 of the current MPA Alumni Ambassadors that were recognized with the following awards:*

*We are proud to recognize 13 new members that have agreed to join the existing 14-member MPA Alumni Ambassadors group:*

### Outstanding MPA Alumni Award

*This is awarded to an MPA alumni who exemplifies positive change through their contributions to the MPA program, community, and profession as Dean of MPA Ambassadors.*

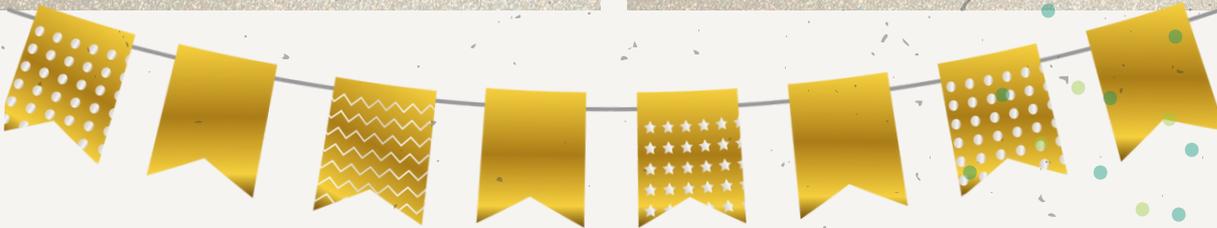
*Sean Lopez, MPA '19*

### MPA Ambassador Service Awards

*This is awarded to MPA alumni in recognition of their participation, support, and commitment to the MPA program as an Alumni Ambassador.*

*Emily Colón, MPA '14  
Lisa Mifflin, MPA '08  
Susan Obarski, MPA '14  
Ratna Okhai, MPA '15  
Alexis Searfoss, MPA '19*

*Jerell Blenman, MPA '20  
Xavier Colon, MPA '21  
Cayla Duckworth, MPA '21  
Christopher Findley, MPA '21  
Sharon Hamisak, MPA '22  
Octavia Jarnegan, MPA '21  
Michael Manning, MPA '20  
Gertrude McDaniel, MPA '22  
Rebecca Moistner, MPA '21  
Humayra Qadir, MPA '21  
Johnathan Sims, MPA '18  
Christina Stevens (Wisz), MPA '22  
Edgardo Valentin, MPA '18*



# PROGRAM NEWS CONT...

## MPA SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER

With the help of the Jreisat family, Drs. Ellis Blanton and Robin Ersing, and the good leadership of Mike Suarez who led our fundraising efforts at the Bull-U-Crat Ball event, we raised enough funds for the endowment of the Jamil Jreisat scholarship!

Although we made great strides to raise funds for both scholarships, we fell short of our endowment goal of \$25,000 for the Joan Pynes Memorial scholarship. Both scholarships have made significant impacts on the lives of our students, and we want to continue preserving the legacy and memory of our departed colleagues.

Please join us in supporting our MPA students by making a gift of any size to the Joan Pynes Memorial scholarship—this will ensure an enduring legacy of her dedication to student success and the nonprofit sector!

- **[Donations to the Joan Pynes Memorial Scholarship can be made online here](#)** *(click on link).*



**[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE HERDFUNDER VIDEO!](#)**

We greatly appreciate your donation, which will be used to help aspiring public and nonprofit administration professionals develop the skills they need to help improve the lives of others in society, while also strengthening the MPA program's ability to attract and support its students.

## MPA CREDIT HOUR REDUCTION

We are excited to share that, effective Fall 2023, the MPA program reduced its number of required hours from 45 to 36 credits! Students who need an internship will need to complete 39 credit hours.

Under Dr. Aikins' leadership, we accomplished this reduction in two steps. First, we combined two core courses – PAD 6060: Public Administration Theory and PAD 6105: Organization Theory & Leadership – into one. The new course will now be PAD 6060: Public Organizational Theory & Leadership. This brought the core requirements down to 24 credit hours. Second, we reduced the required number of electives from 15 to 9 credit hours; thereby bringing the total minimum credit hours required down to 36 (24 core hours + 9 elective hours + 3 capstone hours).

Given the competitiveness of the current higher education landscape and the increasing cost of higher education, we believe this change will make our MPA program more attractive to students seeking to finish their degree promptly and at a lower cost. Furthermore, this increases our competitiveness amongst other programs in the state, while still meeting the NASPAA accreditation requirements.



# PROGRAM NEWS CONT...

## MPA AMBASSADORS' SECOND YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The USF MPA Ambassador program works to promote the academic and professional success of students through outreach and engagement, recruitment and fundraising, and mentoring. This past year, Alexis Searfoss (MPA '19) moved into the role of Dean of Ambassadors. Her focus was to build upon the success achieved under the previous Dean of Ambassadors Sean Lopez (MPA '19).

This year, the group co-hosted an in-person career panel with the USF ASPA Suncoast Student Chapter and held a virtual resume review/interview tips workshop for MPA students. Both events provided the opportunity for current graduate students to meet professionals who graduated from the USF MPA program, ask career questions, and get tips on how to make their resumes stand out. Both events received positive feedback from the students and Ambassadors who participated, with many exchanging contact information to keep in touch.

Additionally, they held monthly meetings that included robust discussions around what opportunities exist for Ambassadors to assist in the areas of fundraising as well as internship placement. The group also discussed how the first year under the established charter worked, made some updates, and developed new initiatives for engagement amongst the MPA Ambassador group including an annual interest survey of Ambassadors to help lead planning for future years.

For the upcoming year, the group will use feedback from the Ambassador interest survey, as well as the student survey from the resume workshop, to identify a plan that will build upon the group's successes. They plan to host in-person networking events for MPA alumni and students in both the Fall and the Spring semesters. They will also continue growing their initiatives in community outreach, engaging alumni, fundraising, and supporting current students with mentoring and internship assistance.

A big thank you to Denise McDaniel (MPA '22), Lisa Mifflin (MPA '08), and Ratna Okhai (MPA '15) for serving as their focus leads this past year and to all of the Ambassadors who supported their efforts! For more information on the USF MPA Alumni Ambassadors program, [visit their webpage here](#) (click on link).



# STUDENT NEWS

## ASPA SUNCOAST STUDENT CHAPTER

The ASPA Suncoast Student Chapter, led by President Mari Nicole Rosales, worked to create a community between all MPA students by providing a strong support system as they progress through their journey in the program. The chapter held monthly socials in both Hillsborough and Pinellas County that allowed MPA students to mix and mingle outside of the classroom!

The student chapter also collaborated with the MPA Alumni Ambassadors and co-hosted a career panel on campus featuring 6 USF MPA alumni. Students had the opportunity to learn about the Ambassadors' career journeys, important skills to develop during a career, challenges that arise within the career journey, advice on how to get a foot in the door, and each Ambassador's perspective on what drew them into the careers they have now.

*Congratulations*  
**TO OUR RECENT MPA GRADUATES!**

**Fall 2022:** Tiffany Brady, Andrew Brown, Kasaira Burgos, Sherrj Courtney, Wendi Hannigan, Kayon Henderson, Tiana Hill, Dominique King, Daniëlle Lang, Fetia Massillon, Shannon Mills, Angelo Rallo III, Julie Stevenson, Jonathan Till, Eric Tsai, and David Yunk.

**MPA degree in honorarium: Morgan Van Horn (may her soul rest in perfect peace)**

**Spring 2023:** Christopher Bishop, Eric Cruz, Nicole Delfino, Samantha Fiore, Mari Nicole Rosales, Henry Trent, and Dakota Winn.



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



## **BRAULIO COLÓN, MPA '10**

*Executive Director | Florida College Access Network*

Raised in a working-class home with his mom and three brothers, Braulio's childhood was rich in love and culture, but not money. Growing up in poverty, supplemented by government support, introduced him to the role government plays in filling gaps and that inspired him to make a difference in the lives of others facing similar circumstances.

As a USF student, he began volunteering for local nonprofits and interning with legislators, experiences that set him up for his first job working in communications for the FLDOE. He later worked in public library media relations and advocacy for

Latino students in higher education, which led to co-founding and leading the development of the Florida College Access Network (FCAN) at USF. After serving as the Vice President for Florida Student Success Initiatives at Helios Education Foundation, he is now back at FCAN as the Executive Director, where he exercises his passion for enhancing access to higher education for all Floridians, especially those outside the mold of "traditional" college students.

Braulio completed his MPA by taking 1-2 classes at a time over the course of 7 years under the auspices of his employer at the time (FLDOE). He was impressed by the passion of his professors who emphasized ethics, doing the job right, and making sure government functions at a high level. He notes that he has applied insights and knowledge from the program in every job he's had.

He advises that as holders of an MPA, graduates have a responsibility to be good stewards and responsible leaders. This isn't something to be taken lightly because democracy depends on public trust in our government. MPA's should serve as models of what good public service looks like and take pride in it.



## **LIZ WOOTEN-RESCHKE, MPA '06**

*President/CEO & Lead Consultant | Connect For More*

For Liz, public service started early in life with involvement in Girl Scouts during elementary school, and then student government and the dance team while in high school and college. She started her career as a public school teacher, where she served as a dance team coach and student government sponsor as well.

She then shifted her career to the nonprofit sector, and later started a for-profit consulting firm called Connect for More that serves the nonprofit sector. Originally operated by her alone, her company now has over twenty employees. As the CEO, she enjoys the fulfillment and flexibility of owning her own business. In the last 14

years, she has expanded Connect for More's focus from its systems and communication development, to evaluation, board governance and engagement, strategy, culture, and courageous leadership.

The USF MPA program played a significant role in Liz's career, most notably the mentorship and long-time support of the late Dr. Joan Pynes. In addition, she continues to run into fellow alumni of the program and is glad to have cultivated those relationships while at USF. The program helped her see direct linkages between the public and nonprofit sectors, which helps her work with nonprofit boards to understand their role in advocacy.

She advises current MPA students to recognize the value of connection with others by cultivating relationships and keeping track of little details and shared experiences with classmates. She recommends coming to people with a specific request rather than asking to "pick their brain." Doing so creates more meaningful and focused connections while also respecting others' time and expertise. Finally, she advises being kind to oneself. Graduate school is a period of growth and transition, a ripe time to set up successful habits and behaviors that you can later bring to your career.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT CONT...



## ANDREW KETCHEL, MPA '12

*Partner | Capital City Consulting*

Public service and political involvement runs in Andrew's family. His father ran for Congress in the early 90's, and both of his parents have served as elected officials—Circuit Court Judge and County Commissioners. He was brought up with political engagement and voting as important values. He always thought he would follow his dad and brother to law school after being a student athlete and political science major at USF, until he learned about the MPA program.

Looking back at his time in the MPA program, he had experiences that had a lasting impact on his life. For example, he was the first USF student to participate in the prestigious Florida Gubernatorial Fellows Program, which involved moving to Tallahassee for a year to work and learn. The experience helped him make connections with others, including taking a course from former Governor Ruben Askew.

Andrew was able to leverage these connections to take on a position in Governor Rick Scott's Office of Legislative Affairs, and later joined the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and became its Director of Legislative Affairs. For the past 6 years, he has served as a partner at Capital City Consulting. He credits the MPA program with providing him with a solid foundation for how government functions and the academic principles that underlie it.

He advises students to continue to build on successes from the past and to be willing to take risks early on, especially when it comes to taking jobs that may not be in your life plan. He recommends remaining open to allowing experiences to change your idea of success, and to pursue opportunities as they come. Finally, he advises students to remain ethical, be the kind of person you'd want to work with, treat people with respect, and don't burn bridges throughout your career.



## JOANNA CHESHIRE, MPA '12

*Chief of Staff | Pasco County*

When Joanna started school, she thought she would go into dentistry, but a chemistry class changed her route. Her professor offered extra credit to students who observed the 2004 presidential debates and turned in a write-up. These extra credit assignments turned into deep conversations with her professor and inspired her to change her major to political science, where she had the opportunity to participate in USF's Legislative Internship Program. This developed her interest in the legislative process and how it can make the community a better place.

Developing and maintaining strong relationships with people she met during her education and time in Tallahassee paved the way for the first step of her career as a Legislative Assistant for former Representative Bill Heller. She had an amazing experience, but when he lost the reelection, she didn't look for another position as a legislative aide. Instead, she threw herself into the MPA program, where she received a graduate teaching assistantship with Dr. Susan MacManus.

During her studies, Joanna also took a part-time position as a Special Projects Assistant for the Pinellas County Administrator at the time, which became a full-time position upon her graduation. She expanded her experience as a Public Relations Director for the Children's Board of Hillsborough County and as the Legislative Affairs Director for the Pinellas County Sheriff's office before becoming the Pasco County Chief of Staff in 2021.

A recurring theme in her career is the importance of relationships. She still keeps up with people she has met along the way, including professors, classmates, and her undergraduate students, and these relationships have sometimes led her to new opportunities. She recommends that MPA students be smart about who they surround themselves with. She advises that you never know how people will resurface in your life, who you will work for someday, or who will work for you or be your colleague. It is important to be mindful of how you act and to make a good impression.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT CONT...



## DR. CHANDRA DAVIS, MPA '10

*Education & Operations Manager | University of South Florida*

Chandra started working on her bachelor's degree at age 30 after getting a job at USF. She found her passion in public policy because it allowed her to learn why things are the way they are. While working as an Office Manager in the Department of Criminology, she met and befriended the MPA faculty before embarking on her MPA journey, particularly Drs. Jamil Jreisat, Joan Pynes, and John Daly.

When she felt ready to enroll in classes, her GRE scores were not where they needed to be. Dr. Daly encouraged her to take 1-2 classes to see how she would perform, and it went very well! The late Dr. Jreisat was a mentor to her, and she took every class he offered in the MPA program. He was a tough, but kind professor and she learned so much from him. The late Dr. Pynes also had a lasting impact on her.

After 8 years, Chandra took a position with USF Undergraduate Studies. At the time, she felt her career took off because she began writing proposals, attending and presenting at conferences, and expanding her professional knowledge. One of her major professional accomplishments was starting a transfer student mentorship program called TEAM. In 2018 she began the program from scratch, interviewing mentors and recruiting mentees. Now the program has over 20 mentors and has served over 100 mentees, and she is extremely proud of the reach and impact of this program.

Since completing the MPA program, she continued her education and has now earned her Ed.D. in Educational Innovation. She says the MPA program shaped her as a professional. It also encouraged her to continue to grow as a professional and as a person. She advises prospective MPA students not to count themselves out because of a standardized test. Instead, let yourself be seen as a person, not just an application. She encourages students to build relationships with faculty and to really absorb the information, rather than taking a class for the grade, because the information in the courses will keep coming up in their professional careers.



## JUSTIN TRAMBLE, MPA '16

*Executive Director | Tampa Bay Waterkeeper*

Justin always wanted to be a part of something bigger than himself when he planned to pursue law school after completing his bachelor's in political science. He distinctly remembers a pivotal conversation with the now former Governor of Georgia with whom he was interning. The Governor told him that there are a lot of avenues for making a more direct impact than his current course. This message inspired him to become more intentional about public service.

While in the USF MPA program, he cold-called the City of Treasure Island, telling them that he was working on his MPA and wanted to get some work experience.

They agreed to hire him to help with their strategic planning process, which later led him to work there for 6 years as their Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation.

Justin credits USF for its strong emphasis on networking, collaboration, and community, underscored by technical skill in managing people and situations. He recalls lessons from consultant-type projects for local governments he completed while working on his MPA that provided real-world experience that directly connects to work he does professionally each day. Today, he is the Executive Director of Tampa Bay Waterkeeper, a grassroots organization that advocates for clean water. He explains that a large part of his role today involves connecting people, a skill he developed while in the program.

He says that building relationships with other people in the program is just as important as the material you learn. Maintaining these relationships is also important because those in the program will become leaders in the area after graduation. He still stays in touch with fellow alumni through quarterly lunch meetings, a practice that he greatly values.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT CONT...



## CHRISTINA STEVENS (WISZ), MPA '22

*Director of Annual Giving | Tampa General Hospital*

Christina recently accepted a new position as the Director of Annual Giving and Special Programs at TGH, where she leads the annual giving fundraising strategy for the hospital system. During the interview process, she was asked why she chose to get an MPA degree and how the coursework would be relevant to her now position. She was able to speak to many of the classes that she took while in the program and how they continue to help her succeed in her current role—specifically the public budgeting, quantitative analysis, and capstone course.

She also published her first peer-reviewed research article as lead author. In 2022, Dr. Stephen Neely shared the survey project that she worked on with him as part of her independent study, including some great media appearances and op-eds that she completed based on the data. Since then, she has continued to work with him and Dr. Joshua Scacco from the Department of Communication on an article examining the impact of breakthrough COVID-infections on vaccine intentions. The piece was published in PEC Innovation and is [available online](#) (*click on link*).

Christina also serves as an MPA Alumni Ambassador. The goals of this group are to share their experience and knowledge with current students, to help future graduates by connecting them with alumni from the program, and to strengthen our partnerships with the communities that we serve. She is grateful to the wonderful education and professors from USF and she appreciates all of their guidance and support throughout her time in the MPA program.



## PATRICK GIAMBELLUCA, MPA '16

*Supervisor | Heritage Harbor Community Development District, Seat 2*

Soon after Patrick completed his MPA degree, he learned that it was qualifying week for elections in his Community Development District. With his experiences in the MPA program and his undergraduate degrees in criminal justice and political science—during which time he served on the Student Government and became a member of the Election Rules Commission—he knew he had what it took to get the job done.

After his successful run for office, he served a four-year term. He focused on interacting with constituents, infrastructure, and getting the Community Development District's financial management program back on track. Although his term ended in 2021, he worked tirelessly with Hillsborough County to help address problems with a dangerous intersection at the entrance to the development. To the delight of community members, his efforts were recently fulfilled with the completion of a traffic light, featured in a recent [Fox News report](#) (*click on link*).

Patrick credits the USF MPA program for ensuring that its graduates become well-rounded public servants. He recommends that students take as much as they can out of their courses. He still remembers feedback from his professors that left a significant impact on him. Additionally, he advises that working in public service involves interacting with the public. People might not always agree, but if you listen to everybody's input and come to a resolution that serves the public interest, you will have done your job.

*We are incredibly proud of our MPA alumni  
and all of their terrific accomplishments!*



## **DR. STEPHEN AIKINS**

FORMER MPA PROGRAM DIRECTOR & ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

### **DR. AIKINS STEPS DOWN AFTER 6 YEARS AS MPA PROGRAM DIRECTOR!**

It has been 6 years since Dr. Aikins received a call in Ghana from the former School Director, Dr. Ronald Sanders, on that fateful day in July 2017 to be the next USF MPA Program Director. He was initially hesitant to take up the role after our program's unsuccessful re-accreditation bid, but on August 7, 2017, he assumed the directorship role in the interest of our dear MPA program. On August 6, 2023, his term came to an end, and he stepped down from the directorship role with pride given how far our MPA program has come regarding the accomplishments to date.

Over the past 6 years, Dr. Aikins has provided strategic and tactical leadership for the MPA program, including managing programmatic improvements, student learning assessments, course scheduling, advising, faculty-student relationships, and initiatives to enhance the competitiveness of the MPA program. The evidence shows that under his leadership, the MPA program has made good progress in several areas, including changes to the MPA curriculum, accreditation, class offerings, scholarship endowment, the Advisory Board, alumni outreach, partnership with our local public entities, and new faculty hires.

Effective Fall 2023, the program gained approval from the USF Graduate Council to reduce the required number of MPA credit hours from 45 to 36 credit hours, with an additional 3 credit hours for students who need to do internship. This was done as part of the program's continual efforts at programmatic improvements, and Dr. Aikins sincerely thanks the MPA faculty, SPA Director, and MPA Advisory Board for their support and efforts that made this accomplishment possible. Additionally, the GRE requirement is now waived for all applicants with an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher. The cardinal purpose of these changes is to make our MPA program more competitive in attracting students without jeopardizing the quality of course delivery. We believe these steps will better position our MPA program for successful recruitment and increased enrollment in the coming years.

Under Dr. Aikins' leadership, the MPA program successfully went through re-accreditation in 2018, and has since passed every annual accreditation maintenance review to date. In Summer 2023, Dr. Aikins submitted the self-study report for the NASPAA accreditation site visit which will take place in Spring 2024. Based on the collective efforts of MPA faculty and work done to date, there is no doubt in his mind that we will pass the next accreditation review with flying colors.

In our MPA program, student success is our number one priority. Recognizing the fact that we do not have to keep students in the program any longer than they should be, and as a clear departure from prior years, the program now offers more nonprofit courses each semester and includes core courses in our Summer offerings to help students graduate in a timely manner. With the help of the Jreisat family, Drs. Blanton and Ersing, and the good leadership of Mike Suarez who led our fundraising efforts in the 2022/2023 academic year, the MPA program has raised enough funds for the endowment of the Jamil Jreisat scholarship and has made progress towards obtaining funds for the Joan Pynes Memorial scholarship.

# FACULTY NEWS CONT...

Dr. Aikins believes the endowment of these two scholarships will help us improve funding availability for our students and move us closer to our aspiration of being the MPA program of choice by attracting and retaining students. It is therefore his hope that our program will double the efforts to obtain enough funds to endow the Pynes scholarship as well.

Dr. Aikins spearheaded the expansion and restructuring of our MPA Advisory Board by formalizing the position of Board Chair and bringing in additional experienced government leaders and other professionals, as well as the student presidents of our USF ICMA and ASPA student chapters. Consequently, we have a vibrant and effective Board under the capable leadership of Chairman Bobby Green, who provides excellent guidance and strategic direction to the program.

Dr. Aikins also established the MPA Alumni Ambassadors group and the annual MPA newsletter to facilitate outreach with our stakeholders. The Ambassadors have actively engaged and provided support to our students, including organizing resume workshops, and advising students on employer expectations. Dr. Aikins thanks all of our Ambassadors for their service and dedication to our students and program. The MPA newsletter, which has been published annually since 2018, features the good works and accomplishments of our alumni, among other things, and has generated a lot of interest among many of our graduates to continue supporting our program in new ways.

With the help of Dr. Ersing, the MPA program has also brought in two new faculty members. Dr. Tamara Markoski has been an exceptional addition to our program since Fall 2022, and we are excited to have Dr. Ratna Okhai join us this Fall 2023. Our MPA program has strong ties with friends and supportive government and nonprofit entities in the Tampa Bay area. Many of these friends have served as mentors and hosts of our student interns and have provided practical insights regarding what it takes to be successful public administrators. Dr. Aikins is very grateful to these individuals and organizations, especially members of our Advisory Board, who have repeatedly been there for our students during crucial times of need.

To conclude, Dr. Aikins once again thanks the MPA faculty, our students, Advisory Board, as well as SPA leadership and colleagues for all their support during his tenure as Program Director. A special thanks also goes out to Annie Valdez who has been a pillar of our accomplishments during the last 6 years. It has been an honor for Dr. Aikins to serve as Program Director and he looks forward to working with you in his new capacity as a regular MPA faculty member!

## **Publication**

- Aikins, S. K. (2023). Effects of Intergovernmental Revenue on Local Government Draw on Fiscal Reserves: Evidence from COVID-19 Fiscal Stress. *Local Government Studies*. **DOI: [10.1080/03003930.2023.2212586](https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2023.2212586)** (click on link).

# FACULTY NEWS CONT...



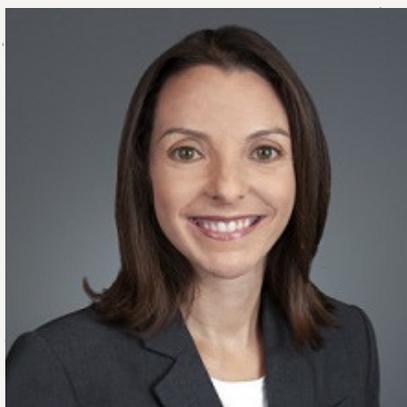
## **DR. TAMARA DIMITRIJEVSKA-MARKOSKI**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Dr. Markoski joined USF in Fall 2022. She taught the Public Budgeting course (PAD 6227) in the Fall and Organization Theory & Leadership (PAD 6105) in the Spring. In her classes, students analyzed existing state and local government budgets and worked on solving some common organizational issues.

Dr. Markoski's research focus is performance measurement and management across local governments, and in the past year, she published three journal articles in leading public administration journals.

- Dimitrijevska-Markoski, T. & Nukpezah, J. A. (2023). COVID-19 Risk Perception and Support for COVID-19 Mitigation Measures among Local Government Officials in the U.S.: A Test of a Cultural Theory of Risk. *Administration & Society*, 55(3): 351-380.
- Azevedo, L., Haupt, B., & Dimitrijevska-Markoski, T. (2022). Operational Challenges in a US Nonprofit Network Amid COVID-19: Lessons from a Food Network in Virginia. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 33(2): 297-317.
- Dimitrijevska-Markoski, T. (2022). Reducing COVID-19 Racial Disparities: Why Some Counties Make Data-driven Decisions and Others Do Not? *Public Performance & Management Review*, 45(5): 1235-1257.



## **DR. JOCILYN MARTINEZ**

VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF INSTRUCTION

For the Public Service and Leadership minor, Dr. Martinez taught undergraduate courses such as Introduction to Public & Community Service (PAD 3003) and Leadership in Public & Community Service (LDR 3301). For the MPA program, she taught graduate courses such as Policy Design & Implementation (PAD 6307), Project Management (PAD 6134), and Comparative Public Administration (PAD 5836).

Dr. Martinez designed a new elective course on Public Procurement (PAD 6934). This class introduced students to the fundamental principles of spending public monies. The course curriculum also provided students with fundamental skills that are applicable to any public sector job.

To help integrate theory and practice, Dr. Martinez includes service-learning projects in the courses she teaches. This gives students an opportunity to engage with those working in the public sector to increase their understanding of how to address the real challenges that public organizations face. Service-learning projects can help to build a student's professional network and could lead to a potential job opportunity in the future.

# FACULTY NEWS CONT...



## **DR. CHRISTA REMINGTON**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Dr. Remington received funding through the Natural Hazards Center for a project entitled “The Rise of the Zero Responder: Social Capital and Grassroots Response after Hurricane Ian.” This study looked at individuals who put themselves in harm’s way by helping their neighbors before first responders could arrive on scene during Hurricane Ian, which hit Florida in September 2023. Based on this work, she appeared in several news segments in the Tampa Bay region such as Bay News 9 and Fox 13.

Dr. Remington mentored several MPA students and recent graduates pursuing a Ph.D. by allowing them to gain research and writing experience. She also served as the faculty mentor for the USF ASPA Suncoast Student Chapter. The student chapter hosted several student networking events and a career panel with local practitioners.

In her Emergency Management course (PAD 6934), students had the opportunity to interact with local experts from the State of Florida Emergency Management, Feeding Tampa Bay, and USF Emergency Management. In this course, students utilized an assessment tool to examine several Florida counties’ Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans and generate recommendations to improve them based on best practices.

Dr. Remington also published two scholarly works:

- Headley, A. M., Remington, C., Witkowski, K., Contreras, S. L., & Ganapati, N. E. (2023). The Impact of COVID-19 on First Responders in the United States of America. *International Journal of Emergency Services*, 12(2): 243-251.
- Cabas, A., Lorenzo-Velazquez, C., Ingabire Abayo, N., Ji, C., Ramirez, J., Garcia, F. E., Perodin, J., Hwang, Y., Dashti, S., Ganapati, N. E., Nicolas, S., Whitworth, M. R. Z., Guerrier, K., Saint Fleur, N., Contreras, S., Lagesse, R., Marcelin, L. H., & Remington, C. L. (2023). Intersectional Impacts of the 2021 Mw 7.2 Nippes, Haiti, Earthquake from Geotechnical and Social Perspectives. *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America*, 113(1): 73-98.

# MAKE A DIFFERENCE & GIVE TO WHAT MOVES YOU!



Here at the USF School of Public Affairs, we are constantly amazed by the dedication of our students, faculty, and most of all... you! Your gift ensures that students learn, faculty inspire, researchers innovate, and so much more.

When you give a gift, it touches the entire USF community and beyond. How could it not? Think about it. A scholarship for a student impacts a family. A donation to a program provides equipment for a whole class. All it takes is one gift to transform lives.

You can submit your pledge online by clicking on one of the funds available below or by **[visiting our donations website here](#)** (*click on link*). Thank you for giving and for believing in our Bulls!



## **JAMIL JREISAT SCHOLARSHIP**

Named after and established by the late Professor Emeritus Dr. Jamil Jreisat, this scholarship rewards outstanding academic performances by graduate students in the USF MPA program or Public Management graduate certificate students.



## **JOAN PYNES MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**

In memory of the late Professor Dr. Joan Pynes, this scholarship rewards outstanding academic performances by graduate students in the USF MPA program or Nonprofit Management graduate certificate students.



## **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM**

Support our MPA program's operating fund. Your generosity makes great things possible—thank you for supporting our graduate students!

# ABOUT THE USF SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A group of diverse, interdisciplinary scholars and former practitioners, the School of Public Affairs has a strong commitment to applied social engagement and making differences in the community. The vision of SPA is to become a premier community-centered hub for public affairs education and research. Our School provides quality education, research, and public service to prepare leaders in public administration and urban and regional planning. It engages in public policy, scholarship, and outreach activities in an urban region to meet community, national, and global needs.

# ABOUT THE MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The **MPA program** ([click on link](#)) provides quality education to prepare students for professional and managerial roles in public service. Our program's mission is to provide each student with an opportunity to enhance his or her knowledge of, and participation in, public service through continuing education, training, and development. We maximize engagement with our community through the use of applied class projects, internships, and the development of mutually beneficial exchanges with practitioners.

Do you want to make a real difference?  
Give back to your city,  
community, or country? Get a

**Master of  
Public Administration  
Degree**

from the  
University of South Florida!  
[Click to Apply](#)



*thank  
you*

EDITORS: MEREDITH ABEL  
ANNIE VALDEZ