As we conclude another successful (yet unprecedented!) 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 2020/2021 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!
On February 8, 2021, we held our first Board meeting of the year. Bobby Green was elected as Board Chair and Carl Harness as Deputy Chair. We’ve also added 6 new distinguished public servants and 2 student leaders to our Advisory Board (click on link). Together, the 17-member Board—joined by MPA faculty—consists of knowledgeable leaders, practitioners, alumni, and professionals from the Tampa Bay region originating from the public and nonprofit sectors. The new Board members are:

- Dan Biles – County Administrator, Pasco County
- Al Braithwaite – City Manager, City of Oldsmar
- Daniel McDonald – Police Officer & Homeless Liaison Officer, Tampa Police Department
- Shawn Sherrouse – City Manager, City of Lakeland
- Jill Silverboard – Deputy County Administrator & Chief of Staff, Pinellas County
- Luis Viera – Councilman, District 7, City of Tampa
- Brandon Henry – President, USF ICMA Student Chapter
- Danielle Lang – President, USF ASPA Student Chapter

The above individuals join the following 9 Board members who have already been selflessly guiding the MPA program during the last several years:

- Brian Corley – Supervisor of Elections, Pasco County
- Bobby Green – Former City Manager, City of Auburndale
- Carl Harness – Chief Human Services Administrator, Hillsborough County
- Lea Hollar – Consultant, Hollar Real Estate Services
- Bill Horne – City Manager, City of Clearwater
- Jonathan Lewis – County Administrator, Sarasota County
- Katie Parkinson – Chief Operating Officer, Senior Connection Center
- Steve Spina – Visiting Instructor, University of South Florida
- Mike Suarez – President, Suarez Insurance

The Advisory Board exists to support USF’s MPA program by providing strategic advice and input on programmatic ideas, as well as guidance in areas of curriculum, program quality, the needs of potential employers, internships, community partnerships, and alumni engagement.
PROGRAM NEWS CONT...

USF MPA & SUNCOAST ASPA HOSTS VIRTUAL EVENT

On March 11, 2021, our MPA program—in partnership with the Suncoast Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)—held a virtual event on Providing Public Service in the Midst of a Pandemic: Strategies Adopted for Managing COVID-19 Impact and Challenges. Featuring guest speaker Jill Silverboard, Deputy County Administrator & Chief of Staff for Pinellas County, we assembled a panel of dynamic, experienced public administrators to exchange ideas and experiences regarding the challenges of fiscal and public service delivery impact, presumably caused by COVID-19, and how these leaders have been managing and navigating through those challenges.

Congratulations to all of our award and scholarship recipients, including the Jamil Jreisat and Joan Pynes Memorial scholarship recipients and the Pi Alpha Alpha honor society inductees! A very special thank you to our panelists for sharing their insight on public service amid COVID-19, and to our Advisory Board and newly inaugurated Alumni Ambassadors for supporting our program and students, as they become our community’s future leaders.

CLICK HERE TO WATCH OUR RECORDED EVENT!
Ron & Libby Sanders Public Service Scholarship 2021

Undergraduate Recipients:
- Zach Blair-Andrews, Political Science (minor in Public Administration)
- Courtney Wilkerson, Political Science (minor in Public Service & Leadership)

Jamil Jreisat Scholarship 2021 Recipient:
- Sharon Hamisak, MPA Student

Jamil Jreisat Scholarship 2021 Recipient:
- Tiana Hill, MPA Student

Joan Pynes Memorial Scholarship 2021 Recipient:
- Phillip McEuen, GCNM Student

Ron & Libby Sanders Public Service Scholarship 2021 Undergraduate Recipients:
- Zach Blair-Andrews, Political Science (minor in Public Administration)
- Courtney Wilkerson, Political Science (minor in Public Service & Leadership)

Congratulations to our 2021 Pi Alpha Alpha Inductees!
- Rich Alvarez, MPA ’20
- Reginald Dagasa, MPA ’19
- Samantha Genske-Condon, MPA ’20
- Boniswa Joseph, MPA ’20
- Michael McLaughlin, MPA ’19
- Nailia Ogunnaie, MPA ’20
The goals of the MPA Alumni Ambassadors program (click on link) are to (1) create a platform for participants to share their experience and knowledge of the MPA degree and certificate programs in the community; (2) promote the degree and certificate programs; (3) assist in recruiting new students; and (4) help future graduates by connecting them with alumni. Ultimately, 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. The MPA Alumni Ambassadors are:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization/Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>ELIZABETH CARDENAS, MPA '17</td>
<td>Division Director, Compliance Services, Government Relations &amp; Strategic Services</td>
<td>Hillsborough County</td>
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<td>EMILY COLÓN, MPA ‘14</td>
<td>Assistant City Manager, City of Lakeland</td>
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<td>SANE HAIDARA, MPA ‘19</td>
<td>Founder / President - Association pour le Développement Communautaire au Sahel, Mali</td>
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<td>RYAN LEAVENGOD, MPA ‘08</td>
<td>City Manager - City of Lake Alfred</td>
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<td>LISA MIFFLIN, MPA ‘08</td>
<td>Southern District Community Affairs Officer - Office of the Comptroller of the Currency</td>
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<td>RATNA OKHAI, MPA ‘15</td>
<td>PhD Student, Governance &amp; Policy Research - University of Central Florida</td>
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<td>OKAN SULER, MPA ‘19</td>
<td>Treasury Controller - Ministry of Treasury &amp; Finance, Turkey</td>
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<td>JUSTIN TRAMBLE, MPA ‘16</td>
<td>Assistant Director, Parks &amp; Recreation - City of Treasure Island</td>
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<td>ZOE JENKINS, MPA ‘18</td>
<td>Budget Analyst, Local Government Management Fellow - Jefferson County, Colorado</td>
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<td>SEAN LOPEZ, MPA ‘19</td>
<td>Management Analyst II, Office of Performance &amp; Budget - City of Largo</td>
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<td>SUSAN OBARSKI, MPA ‘14</td>
<td>Senior Director, Project Management Office - International Society for Pharmaceutical Engineering</td>
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<td>ALEXIS SEARFOSS, MPA ‘19</td>
<td>Associate Director of Constituent Relations, University Advancement - University of South Florida St. Petersburg</td>
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<td>JEFF TILLMAN, MPA ‘13</td>
<td>Assistant City Manager - City of Auburndale</td>
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<td>LIZ WOOTEN-RESCHKE, MPA ‘06</td>
<td>President / CEO &amp; Lead Consultant - Connect for More</td>
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USF MPA FACULTY CONDUCTS COVID-19 RESEARCH

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for not only the public health sector, but also for the practice of public administration. Job demands have increased in many public organizations in an attempt to help resolve the current crisis, while public sector workers operate under greater strains for resources. Faculty in the MPA program have been conducting research on COVID-19 to help inform policy and practice for local governments. The research topics range 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.

Associate Professor Dr. Stephen Neely teamed up with Assistant Professor Dr. Christa Remington and SPA Director Dr. Robin Ersing to conduct a statewide survey of 600 Floridians, which measured emergency preparedness (click on link), as well as general opinions regarding the COVID-19 public health crisis (click on link) 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.

In partnership with USF’s Florida Center for Cybersecurity, 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 (click on link). His findings reveal that while a majority of Americans say 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.

MPA Program Director 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 (click on link), and to identify the policies implemented to address fiscal challenges posed by COVID-19. The findings show 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.
USF ICMA STUDENT CHAPTER: COMING TOGETHER DURING COVID

As with the rest of the world, the Robert R. Green International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Student Chapter at USF quickly adapted to their new reality of the COVID-19 pandemic. Per university guidelines, they hosted events virtually this year. While they certainly missed the dynamic of meeting in-person, virtual events offered new and exciting advantages—such as hosting guest speakers and attendees whose schedules would otherwise not have allowed them to attend our traditional on-campus meetings. Speakers this year included Emily Colon of Lakeland, Matt Spoor of Safety Harbor, JP Murphy of Belleair, Felicia Donnelly of Oldsmar, Jeff Tillman of Auburndale, and Ryan Leavengood of Lake Alfred.

Chapter members also attended the virtual ICMA annual conference, which was originally slated to be held in Toronto. Leadership was selected at a virtual election and are as follows: President – Brandon Henry; Vice President – Tess Ocean; Secretary/Treasurer – Gabriella Gonzalez. The chapter is also proud to announce that Gabriella Gonzalez was this year’s recipient of the Florida City and County Management Association’s (FCCMA) B. Harold Farmer Scholarship, making it the second year in a row a USF student was honored and seventh since 1992. Elections for the 2021-22 officers will be held at our first meeting of Fall 2021 (date, time, and location are TBD).

If you’re looking to get involved in the student chapter, like them on Facebook (click on link), join them on BullSync (click on link), or email the President at usficma@gmail.com.

USF ASPA STUDENT CHAPTER: A YEAR IN REVIEW AMID COVID-19

Although this past year has made proper social engagement difficult for many students, USF’s American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) Student Chapter members have been closer than ever. They have recently joined under the Suncoast ASPA Chapter and they’re excited for the many opportunities this venture will offer. After their Spring Board meeting, they decided to create a podcast that they’re currently working on where they will interview academics and practitioners in the field of public administration.

Over the last year, their chapter has undergone a redistribution of the board, and their members have joined in on various webinars that ASPA has offered. They are looking forward to the Summer and Fall semesters, where they will hopefully begin to hold in person events, which will allow them to conduct business while socializing in a responsible manner.

If you’re looking to get involved in the student chapter, like them on Facebook (click on link) or email the President at aspausfstudentchapter@gmail.com.
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FALL 2020 GRADUATES!


CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SPRING 2021 GRADUATES!

Scott Burrows, Xavier Colon, Kendrick Donnelly, Brad Gilkes, Kaitlyn Stelzer, and Gwendella Washington.

ASHLEY BERNAL

Management Analyst | Town of Belleair

Ashley was awarded the Town of Belleair’s 2019 Employee of the Year Award for her dedication, innovation, creativity, and personal growth. As a Management Analyst in the Administration Department, she took on more work responsibilities including planning two staff events, launching a new employee evaluation tool, assisting with the new budget year, and seeking innovative process solutions for Belleair. Her department is small, so she wears multiple hats on a day-to-day basis, but she says every day is different and brings its new set of fun challenges.

Belleair implemented programmatic budgeting, which typically takes 3-5 years to fully implement, but she was able to get it done in 6-8 months. She worked tirelessly to get that accomplished, but she always tries to do what is best for the employees and citizens of the community.

Ashley was originally an engineering student, but once she began to work in the public sector, it was the most excited she had ever been, so she decided to change fields and pursue an MPA degree. She has always wanted to help people and make a difference, and now she gets to see it firsthand. Her primary goals are to get her doctoral degree and work her way up to City Manager—to achieve the ICMA Credentialed Manager designation—but she doesn’t plan to stop there. Belleair will always have her heart, but she aspires to eventually move up to county or state level, and just keep going from there!

GABRIELLA GONZALEZ

Secretary/Treasurer | USF ICMA Student Chapter

Gabriella was awarded the 2021 B. Harold Farmer Scholarship, which was established in 1992 in honor of B. Harold Farmer (an FCCMA past president) who served as a mentor for many Florida city and county managers. This scholarship honors Mr. Farmer's commitment to professional local government management and the use of innovation to deliver services to Florida residents.

Gabriella received her Bachelor’s degree in political science. Upon graduation, she interned with the Borgen Project, which is a nonprofit organization that sets out to fight global poverty. The organization’s ability to selflessly help others is what inspired her to pursue a career in public service. Her upcoming plans consist of attending the FCCMA conference in June where she will formally receive her award. She will take advantage of this opportunity to network with and learn from public administration practitioners, as her ultimate goal is to one day become a City Manager. Until then, she will continue pursuing her MPA degree, while remaining an active member of the FCCMA and ICMA organizations, in hopes of achieving her future career goals!
ROBERT GREEN, MPA ‘88
Former City Manager | City of Auburndale

Robert retired in April 2021 after 30 years of service as Auburndale’s City Manager. He received his undergraduate degree in Public Administration from UCF in 1987 and his MPA degree from USF in 1988. Previous to this role, he served two terms on the Auburndale City Commission from 1981-1986 and served as Mayor in 1983, 1985, and 1986.

During his time as City Manager, he established a tuition reimbursement program to assist city employees in obtaining college degrees, and he would require his assistants to obtain an MPA degree as part of their promotional opportunities—all 7 of his assistants have professionally advanced in the profession to become city managers. In 2016, he was named one of America’s Top Ten Managers for his mentoring and fostering of future public sector managers.

In 2013, Florida’s first ICMA Student Chapter (at USF) was named in his honor. The annual $1,000 contribution that the City of Auburndale has made to the Robert R. Green ICMA Student Chapter will continue for 10 additional years, through 2031. Bobby introduced several innovative incentives during his time, including the Havendale Christmas Parade, which was first introduced in December 2002. He will also be named “Grand Marshall” of the 2021 Christmas Parade.

JEFF TILLMAN, MPA ‘13
City Manager | City of Auburndale

Jeff, previously serving as Auburndale’s Assistant City Manager, took over for Bobby Green as City Manager in April 2021. He received his undergraduate degree from FSU in Finance and Real Estate in 2007 and obtained his MPA degree from USF in 2013.

His first opportunity working in public service was during high school when he worked summers and after school in Auburndale’s Parks and Recreation department. After college, he interned with the City of Auburndale and that solidified his path into public service. The immediate impact that can be seen within a community is something that drew him to the profession, as well as the diversity of the workload.

Jeff has served as the Parks and Recreation Manager for the City of Lake Alfred, a Management Analyst for the City of Kissimmee, and as the Assistant City Manager for the City of Panama City before he relocated back to Auburndale.

There is no typical day as the City Manager, but the varying tasks and responsibilities are something he looks forward to and what he enjoys most about local government management. He currently serves as the Chapter Mentor for the ICMA Student Chapter at USF and is the Dean of Ambassadors for the MPA Alumni Ambassadors program at USF.
Shawn Sherrouse, MPA ’16
City Manager | City of Lakeland

Shawn was appointed as Lakeland’s City Manager in November 2020, following Tony Delgado’s retirement. He also served in the U.S Marine Corps for 8 years, and during that time he served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. However, it was not his military service overseas that influenced his desire to work in public service. Instead, it was an event he participated in while stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. There was a community with a river running through it and a dam system that had been jammed (by migrating trout) that was at risk for flooding the adjacent community. His mission was to use hand nets to place the fish into cargo nets suspended from helicopters, and then the helicopters would release the fish on the opposite side of the dam until the river opened up again. That mission saved the community from flooding, and the residents were so grateful that a month later they held a big fish fry celebration to thank everyone who had participated in the mission. Their heartfelt gratitude made a lasting impact on Shawn, and this is what led him to pursue a career in public service.

Following the Marine Corps, Shawn returned home to Lakeland where he worked as a Data Collector for the Polk County Property Appraiser’s office for 11 years. During that time, he began taking college classes at night, obtained his license as a State Certified Residential Appraiser, and was eventually promoted to Residential Appraisal Supervisor and Branch Office Manager. While in that position, the City Manager of Auburndale, Bobby Green, would call on Shawn each year for information regarding property valuation totals and associated taxes. This led to an opportunity for him to serve on the City of Auburndale’s Planning/Zoning Commission. Eventually, the City of Auburndale hired Shawn as their Community Development Director, a position he served in for 7 years. When he was later offered a promotion to become Auburndale’s Assistant City Manager, he agreed under Mr. Green’s condition that Shawn would pursue an MPA degree. Shawn worked in that position for 4 years, until 2016 when he was hired by Tony as Lakeland’s Assistant City Manager.

Lisa Mifflin, MPA ’08
Southern District Community Affairs Officer | Office of the Comptroller of the Currency

Lisa established two scholarships at USF—one in financial services, which supports the increased representation of Blacks in the fields of finance and accounting; and the other in public policy, which supports the increased representation of Blacks in the pursuit of advanced studies in public sector administration and policy-making. She created both scholarships to encourage more diversity in these career fields.

She received her Bachelor’s degree in Finance from USF and decided to pursue an MPA because she wanted to transition into a new career path that had a direct impact in underserved communities. She believed that an MPA degree would allow her to better align herself with the type of work she wanted to do.

Working at the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC)—a department of the U.S. Treasury—she went from financial examining to now performing focused outreach and engagement with banks and local community organizations to facilitate partnerships that support affordable housing, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization. Her job requires her to understand the credit needs of local communities throughout Florida, then plan and conduct outreach events that create a forum for dialogue, which ultimately leads to banks engaging with local organizations to support the community needs. She feels that her position is unique because, unlike most roles in government, she gets to bring the public, nonprofit, and private sectors together.

Lisa is also active in the USF Black Leadership Network and the Black Alumni Society. Her advice to others is to always keep going forward. Her path out of college was not a straight line, but she got it done—she believes that when you really want something, you keep climbing to get it.
SANE HAIDARA, MPA ‘19
President | Association pour le Développement Communautaire au Sahel (ADCS)

Sane founded the Association pour le Développement Communautaire au Sahel (ADCS), a local nonprofit organization based in his home country, Mali. He meets with local leaders, parents, and teachers to discuss fundraising strategies to support the Breakfast Project for disadvantaged children in Timbuktu. His organization not only addresses the nutrition problem of children in the Sahel, but it also encourages community development initiatives.

The Breakfast Project is a source of hope for parents who cannot provide breakfast at home to their school-aged children due to poverty. The main challenge his organization faces is a lack of funding to support the nutrition program. However, ever since the breakfast program began, student attendance, achievements, and retention have increased significantly. They started with 115 children, and they’ve now grown to 181 as a direct result of the breakfast program. Children’s overall learning levels have improved by 57%. Prior to this program, the learning levels were as follows: 35% in reading, 45% in writing, and 51% in math. Now, the levels are at 53% for reading, 71% for writing, and 61% for math.

Sane came to the U.S. as an international student from Timbuktu, and he received his Bachelor’s degree from St. Petersburg College (SPC) and his MPA from USF because he wanted to further his knowledge in order to help his home country improve their government services. While at SPC and USF, he participated in numerous clubs and organizations, and received several awards and scholarships, including the 2016 Most Engaged International Student Award at SPC and the 2018 Jamil Jreisat Scholarship. He was very involved in student activities and always encouraged other students to become civically engaged because he felt that it was important to gain as much experience as possible. He wants to make a difference in the world and one day plans to run for government.

Sane truly enjoys seeing his work make a positive impact in his community, and children in Timbuktu are returning to school because they’re able to receive breakfast while there. His advice to anyone wanting to make a difference is to start in your own community—this way you will not only make an impact in the world, but you will also feel a great sense of accomplishment and pride in the work you do.

RON PIERCE, MPA ‘10
President & CEO | RSA Consulting Group

Ron was selected as a recipient for the 2020 USF Fast 56 Award. This prestigious award recognizes and celebrates the world’s 56 fastest growing USF Bull-owned or Bull-led businesses. In 2009, he founded RSA Consulting Group, a full-service consulting firm that specializes in all areas of government and legislative affairs, community affairs, strategic planning, as well as media and public relations in Florida.

For more than 21 years, Ron has been on the forefront of guiding Florida policy. He began his legislative career working in the Florida Legislature as a District Legislative Assistant in the State House. He has worked with hundreds of legislators, lobbyists, community activists, and civic organizations, guiding numerous pieces of legislation through both chambers.

Outside of his work at RSA, Ron has been recognized for his extensive involvement with many community-related organizations throughout the Tampa Bay region. He also teaches for USF (his alma mater) as an adjunct, overseeing the undergraduate LIP and TIP public policy internship programs, which offers students an in-depth, hands-on experience in Florida government.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT CONT...
Lakshmi recently accepted a job with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a Grants Management Specialist. After completing her master’s degree in Rehabilitation Science in India, she worked as a Program Manager for an international nonprofit organization with a focus on disability and mental health in Africa and Asia. She has won national awards representing India in international exchange programs and international forums. She has an enriching work travel experience, having visited more than 15 countries.

She came to the U.S. in 2010 to pursue an MPA degree at USF. During her studies, she worked as a graduate assistant in the Department of Psychology and the Center for Urban Transportation and Research (CUTR). She was inducted into the Pi Alpha Alpha Honor Society and is also a Certified Research Administrative (CRA) professional (advanced level). Upon graduating with a 4.0 GPA, she began working for USF’s Office of Sustainability as a Program Manager, where she managed the Student Green Energy Fund program for a year. She then went on to work for USF Research & Innovation as a Grant Manager until 2018, and then left to join Georgetown University in Washington D.C. as a Senior Grants and Contracts Administrator in early 2019.

In January 2021, she joined the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and currently manages Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grants, which focuses on the promotion of mental health in millions of people. She enjoys her new role in supporting a greater mission and in the next few years she is looking forward to becoming a subject matter expert and taking up leadership opportunities within the federal agency.

Connor was accepted into the political science PhD program at the University of Oklahoma. He has always loved academia and wished to pursue a PhD degree since he began his undergraduate career at Eckerd College, where he majored in political science and minored in international relations and global affairs. He felt that before he could chase after his dreams of teaching at the collegiate level, he first needed to strengthen his academic skills. This led him to pursue an MPA degree from USF.

Through his future research, he hopes to understand our nation’s deeply rooted administration issues and wants to formulate theories on how to solve those problems. Once he begins his PhD program, he hopes to learn how to properly conduct relevant scholarly research, while teaching as a graduate assistant, so that he is able to help future generations to come.

We’re incredibly proud of our MPA alumni and all of their terrific accomplishments!
The 2020/2021 academic year has been a very busy year for Dr. Aikins, despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to his regular leadership and management of the MPA program, he has been involved in several initiatives and reforms aimed at strengthening the strategic direction of the MPA program and raising the profile of USF’s School of Public Affairs.

In order to augment the efforts of the highly respected MPA Advisory Board members that have provided valuable guidance to the program over the years, Dr. Aikins led efforts to expand the Board by bringing in six additional well-respected and experienced public sector leaders and two student leaders. The expanded Board now has a Chair and a Deputy Chair who will lead the effort to provide strategic advice and input on programmatic ideas, as well as guidance in areas of curriculum, program quality, the needs of potential employers, internships, community partnership, and alumni engagement. In discharging their duties, the Board members will deliberate and assess the MPA program in the aforementioned areas, monitor emergent issues relevant to the success of the program, and provide necessary input that will help meet the needs of our students, stakeholders, and the communities we serve.

Dr. Aikins also initiated the creation of our new MPA Alumni Ambassadors program to connect and strengthen ties with our alumni in the Tampa Bay area, the state of Florida, and around the world. The goals of the ambassador’s program are to (1) create a platform for participants to share their experience and knowledge of the MPA degree and certificate programs in the community; (2) promote the MPA degree and certificate programs; (3) assist in recruiting new students; and (4) help future graduates by connecting them with alumni. Ultimately, MPA Ambassadors will help transform our alumni connection within the MPA program and School, as well as strengthen our partnerships with the communities that we serve.

In collaboration with the Suncoast Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), Dr. Aikins led the MPA program to organize a well-attended online event that assembled a panel of dynamic, experienced public administrators to exchange ideas and experiences regarding the challenges of public service delivery caused by COVID-19, and how the administrators have navigated through those challenges. The event activities included the inauguration of our MPA Alumni Ambassadors, the induction of MPA alumni into the Pi Alpha Alpha Honor Society, and the award presentation of the Jamil Jreisat and Joan Pynes Memorial Scholarships to current MPA and graduate certificate students, as well as the Ron & Libby Sanders Scholarship to undergraduate students minoring in Public Service & Leadership.

Dr. Aikins also served on USF’s Black Employee Steering Committee. This committee exists to advance anti-racism efforts at USF in support of the university’s ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion. Given the tumultuous events of the past year that have caused considerable distress on many college campuses and communities—especially within minority communities—the steering committee provided an avenue for honest discussions with university leadership about issues pertaining to diversity and equity. Additionally, the committee has organized several online “Enlightenment Workshop Series” that provides an open space for honest discussions about diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

Dr. Aikins also conducted a nationwide survey to determine the impact of COVID-19 mitigation measures on U.S. county and municipal revenue and public services provided, and to identify the policies implemented to address the fiscal challenges posed by COVID-19. The survey results, which were shared with county and municipal governments across the country, show a total of 79% of jurisdictions had an estimated fiscal year (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%. In response to the revenue shortfalls, various governments have adopted measures to deal with such impacts. The measures include reducing funding and FTEs for various administrative services in FY 2020 and planned reductions in FY 2021, reviewing programs to eliminate waste, postponing certain expenditures, and scrutinizing operations for savings.

Finally, Dr. Aikins published the following article on audit automation and performance measurements in government internal audits.

Dr. Daly’s research-related activities currently focus on two projects. One is the development of a book-length manuscript titled "Human Security in the Kingdom of Eswatini." This research also 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.

Examples of human security issues discussed in this book include areas of food, health, gender, education, and environmental insecurities facing many—if not most—living in Eswatini. The manuscript will focus on what Eswatini public officials are doing and what additional policies can be implemented to mitigate the suffering caused through pressing life conditions in impoverished settings.

A second area of research currently in progress is a peer-reviewed journal manuscript that Dr. Daly is co-authoring with Dr. Steven Spina. The journal article is entitled "Crisis Within A Crisis in Times of National Disaster: What Local Governments Can Do to Mitigate Social Injustices Facing People of Color."

It identifies and discusses what local governments can do to reduce the level of injustices that people of color currently face in their daily lives in America’s cities. Currently, this manuscript is being revised for resubmission and publication consideration.

Dr. Stephen Neely
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

This spring, Dr. Neely partnered with USF’s Florida Center for Cybersecurity (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) is currently using these data to write survey research memos.

This spring, Dr. Neely is partnering again with Cyber Florida on an additional survey examining public opinions related to the potential regulation of social media and its expanding role in democratic discourse.
This year, Dr. Remington became a co-principal investigator on a grant funded project in partnership with 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 performance, as well as organizational factors that mitigate or increase these negative impacts. So far, they’ve collected over 7,800 surveys nationwide, and conducted over 100 in-depth interviews. Under her direction, three of our current MPA students landed the competitive internship on the first responders research project.

Dr. Remington’s Emergency Management students (PAD 6934) toured behind the scenes of the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital to see how they modified and adapted their facility during the COVID-19 pandemic. The students also had a chance to interact with notable emergency management guest speakers such as Tom Brennan (City of Oldsmar’s Emergency Management Coordinator), Jim Carpenter (Feeding Tampa Bay’s Director of Facilities and Disaster Response), and Travis Garrett (VA Hospital’s Emergency Management Director). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Remington has been asked to review emergency preparedness policies and provide recommendations for communities, businesses, and nonprofits in the State of Florida.

Dr. Spina has been working on teaching two hybrid courses in the MPA program and one online undergraduate course. In addition to this, he serves as President of the Suncoast Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), and they are in the process of developing a virtual meeting this year. This annual meeting will recognize the contributions of public service.

This meeting also serves as their annual awards ceremony. They provide awards in the following categories:

• Picot B. Floyd Public Service leadership Award
• Jamil Jreisat Outstanding Public Administrator Award
• Joan E. Pynes Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership and Management Award
• Public Management Innovation Award
• Public Service Exemplars Award

Nominees for these different awards are welcome from local practitioners, SPA faculty, staff, and students, and ASPA members.
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