



Public SPAAce

A Newsletter for Friends of the School of Public Affairs & Administration

M.P.A. graduates choose local government in Michigan

Talking to alumni...

There are a variety of reasons why a student might pursue the MPA; for many, the opportunity to lead local government organizations is especially interesting.

For perspectives on public administration from the local level, SPAA Graduate Assistant, Mark Heydlauff spoke with three recent graduates of the SPAA.

Q: How did you get your current job?

Kuk: Sturgis was my internship experience for the MPA. I finished my formal internship for WMU, but was able to continue working on a part-time basis in Sturgis. When I graduated, I was offered a full-time position.

Cairns: I was looking through the listing of open positions published by the Michigan Municipal League (mml.org). I found this one and applied.

Hughes: I was invited to apply for this job in 2005.

Q: What do you find most rewarding about working in the public sector?

Kuk: Knowing that when I come to work, the end product is more than just a widget and I'm working for something more than just a company's profit. This is why I switched from a business degree as an undergrad to study public administration.

Cairns: I find the connection between government units, local businesses, and individual citizens to be most rewarding. Working to

develop policies that attempt to match the interests of these stake-holders is challenging but fascinating.

Hughes: The ability to affect change and make things better in the community. I also like the spontaneity of the position—each day is different and filled with new challenges. I enjoy reacting to changing conditions.

Q: What do you find most difficult about working in the public sector?

Kuk: Many people have a lot of misconceptions about the work we do in government. There is a lot of misunderstanding between citizens and their government; the criticism that comes with that is difficult.

Cairns: The vastness of some policies undertaken by the city can be difficult. We do things on a large scale and we don't have the option of a "do over." We have to ensure that every decision we make serves the people. When we commit dollars to a project, we are not spending our money; we spend the people's money and that is a big responsibility to make sure we "get it right."

Hughes: The competing interests can be difficult. Trying to provide public services in Michigan today is more difficult given the fiscal conditions. We have to do more with less but sometimes expectations are not realistic.

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Who's Who...

◆◆Andrew Kuk is the Assistant to the City Manager for the City of Sturgis, Mich., where he has been employed for the past eight months. He graduated from the SPAA with his M.P.A. in '08.

◆◆Bhama Cairns is the Deputy City Manager/Finance Director/Treasurer for the City of Wayland, Mich. After a career in the private sector as a CPA, she graduated with her M.P.A. from the SPAA in '05. In addition to her experience in Wayland, Bhama also served in the public sector as the Internal Auditor for Kent County, Michigan and as the Deputy Treasurer for the City of Rockwood in southeastern Michigan.

◆◆Mike Hughes (MH) is the City Manager for the City of Sturgis. Following the completion of his M.P.A. from the SPAA in '99, he was hired as the Assistant to the City Manager and then Assistant City Manager in Sturgis until 2003 when he was appointed City Manager of Buchanan, Mich. He returned to Sturgis in 2005.

Q: What practical skills did you learn at WMU you now use frequently?

Kuk: The skills of developing and conducting good surveys and using the tools to analyze the data have been very helpful. That’s a specific example but there are a lot of things from my MPA I use everyday in my professional life. Another specific example is the understanding I gained of the intricacies of city government; understanding the organizational context has been very significant.

Cairns: While I was working on my M.P.A., we took a trip to Washington, D.C. We met with members of the Michigan congressional delegation and spoke with cabinet officials responsible for federal policy in Michigan. What I gained from this experience was an appreciation for the interconnected nature of government. Seemingly small decisions I make in Wayland about how to provide a tax exemption for example, do not just impact our collection of taxes but impact several other units of government. The context of public administration is very important to understand.



Bhama Cairns reviews project plans for upcoming work in the City of Wayland.

Hughes: Analytical decision-making was emphasized when I was at WMU and that is helpful now. How can we best analyze a problem and potential decisions to make the best choice? This is important when tackling challenges.

Q: What “theories” were you exposed to in your M.P.A. coursework that you have “tested/ experienced” in your current job?

Kuk: The idea of multiple stakeholders and their impact on decisions has been evident in several situations here in Sturgis. Decisions are not made in vacuum.

Cairns: The participatory theory of government is something I see everyday. The decisions I make directly involve citizens and other units of government. This drives us to be, as President Obama has also called for, more transparent in government. When we charge another unit of government for a service, we need to show them why it costs that much. We use the people’s money for everything we do; they should have the right to see what we did with their dollars; they didn’t make a donation to government.

Hughes: The theories involving the political context of public administration have been helpful. It has been very important to understand this backdrop for my work.

Q: What advice would you give someone considering your area of public service?

Kuk: Take lessons from every class and look for applicability in your desired field. Also, always consider issues in your local community and consider how you might respond to that situation. I’m a big fan of case studies; I think you can learn a lot by reviewing how someone handled a situation and then consider how you might have handled it.

Cairns: Visit various units of government, meet with the persons responsible for that area, and try to gain an appreciation for what they do.

Hughes: If someone is interested in local government, I would suggest he or she get involved in their own local government. Attend meetings, learn about the issues, and become familiar with the environment of your own local government. This job has a “9-5” component but it is not something you completely walk away from at the end of the day. It will be quite a challenge for someone to change their expectations when he or she realizes the necessity of commitment to evening meetings and the notion that you are never truly “off-work.” If someone can begin to recognize this before choosing this profession, he or she will have a better understanding of the expectations of the job.

Q: As a public sector manager, what value do you place on the education of a potential employee when making hiring decisions?

Kuk: If I were making a hiring decision, I would rate it very highly—especially writing and

people skills. Those skills are especially important when working with the public.

Cairns: I place substantial value on education—especially in government work. There are a lot of details involved in our work—regulations, laws,



From left to right: Mike Hughes, Sturgis City Manager, meets with Frank Perez, Human Resource Director, and Andrew Kuk, Assistant to the City Manager.

News

- **Dr. Melisa Beeson presented** a paper co-authored with Dr. Robert A. Peters at the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference in Chicago. The paper was “Reducing the Gap Between Skills Sought by Employers and Provided by Education”. In addition, she is researching collaborative learning with an interdisciplinary team of WMU faculty. Research produced by this team will be presented at the 2009 Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching in September 2009 in Traverse City, Michigan.
- **Dr. Barbara Liggett was appointed** as Interim Director of the School of Public Affairs and Administration, effective February 2009. She served as a national examination reader in polity for the Presbyterian Church, USA, in St. Louis, Missouri in March 2009. Dr. Liggett also presented “How to Select a Dissertation or Thesis Advisor and Configure a Committee” in a workshop sponsored by the Western Michigan University Graduate College, on March 17, 2009.
- **Ms. Janice Maatman was recently the guest speaker** of the Kalamazoo Rotary Club at their April 13, 2009 meeting. Her presentation was entitled: “Learning to Give, Giving to Learn: Service Learning in One WMU Classroom.”
- **Dr. Matthew S. Mingus**, professor of Public Affairs and Administration, has been working since January with the Provincial Reconstruction Team outside of Baghdad. Mingus’ research focuses on democratic reform and cross-border security. Those subjects will be especially useful as he works with a team comprised of U.S. Foreign Service Officers and specialists in political affairs, governance, agricultural and economic development, education, health and the rule of law. Mingus says, the team’s purpose is to develop a strong sense of local control and to help local officials advocate for

their needs at the national level, through the development of local civil society organizations and infrastructure. Mingus plans to return from Iraq to the WMU faculty in 2010.

- **Dr. Robert Peters recently co-authored a paper**, with Dr. Melisa Beeson, “Reducing the Gap Between Skills Sought by Employers and Provided by Education.” The Winter 2009 edition of the “Journal of Public Affairs Education,” contained Dr. Peters’ article “Using Focus Groups and Stakeholder Surveys to Revise the MPA Curriculum.”
- **Dr. Udaya Wagle published** “How Have the Poor in South Asia Fared between 1980 and 2004? An Assessment of Living Conditions” in the *South Asia Economic Journal*. He also published “Working Poverty in Michigan, 1998 and 2007: The Roles of Transfers, Labor Market, and Demographic Characteristics” as a working paper for the National Poverty Center; he presented this paper at the Eastern Economic Association Conference in New York City in February where he also presented “The Economic Footing of the Poor, 1980-2005: The Roles of Economic Openness and Political Democracy.” Dr. Wagle was also recently awarded a Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award by Western Michigan University to study: “Economic Security under the PROWRA: The Role of Food Stamps on Income, Employment, and Poverty among Low Income Households with Children.”
- **Dr. Yuan-Kang Wang presented** “The Case Against Chinese Exceptionalism: Confucian Culture and the Use of Force,” in August 2008 at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) in Boston. He was recently awarded a Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award from Western Michigan University for study: “Hierarchy and Asia’s Regional Order: Past and Present.”



Melisa Beeson



Janice Maatman



Matthew Mingus



Robert Peters



Udaya Wagle



Yuan-Kang Wang

Dr. Barbara S. Liggett, SPHR appointed Interim Director for SPAA

At a Glance

- Dr. Barbara S. Liggett, Interim Director, School of Public Affairs and Administration
- Ed.D., Western Michigan University
- M.A., Western Michigan University
- B.A., Hope College (Michigan)

Courses Taught

- PADM 6270 —Human Resources Administration
- PADM 6290 —Supervisory Skills for Administrators
- PADM 6441 —Human Resources for Nonprofit Organizations
- PADM 6471 —Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations
- PADM 6630 —Leading the Public Organization
- PADM 6800 —Project Paper Seminar.

Research Interests

- Leadership
- Human Resources
- Ethics
- Nonprofit Board-Staff Relations

Recently appointed as the Interim Director for the School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA), Dr. Barbara S. Liggett has a variety of Western Michigan University work experiences. She is a tenured associate professor in SPAA teaching in the M.P.A. and Ph.D. programs.

Liggett teaches a number of graduate courses in SPAA and also is the facilitator for PADM 7120 —Graduate Internship and chairperson for several doctoral dissertation committees. Liggett served as the Director of the Nonprofit Leadership Programs for Graduate Studies.

Prior to her faculty appointment, Liggett served the University as the Executive Advisor for Quality in the Office of the President and as the Associate Vice-President for Human Resources. Her university work includes human resources strategic planning; designing and implementing human resources systems; directing the human resources department; overseeing the implementation of a university classification system; implementing computerized human resources systems; serving as the university hearing officer for sexual harassment complaints; representing the university in external funding and credit rating processes for university building projects; directing the work of 44 employee teams focusing on quality and service improvement; and coordinating the Kalamazoo Consortium on Higher Education, with the presidents of the four area colleges/universities.

Prior to her work in the University, Liggett was the director of management analysis in Genesee County, Mich., a salary administrator for City National Bank in Detroit, and an employment specialist with Kal-Die Casting Corporation.

Liggett's expertise is in public and nonprofit organizations' human resources systems and leadership. Her consultation practice is extensive with current contracts in local government and nonprofit organizations in Michigan, Florida, Guatemala, and Japan. She focuses on organization system changes for improved workplace relations and productivity, leader behaviors, and collective bargaining.

She is a national examination evaluator, specializing in polity, for the Presbyterian Church, USA. She is certified as a mediator in Conflict Dynamics Profiling and also as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) through the Human Resource Certification Institute. She is a reviewer/editor for Jossey-Bass Publications, South-Western College Publishing, Jones and Bartlett Publishers, and the Society for Human Resources Management. In addition to numerous technical reports, she has published several book chapters and articles in "American Review of Public Administration," "Supervision," "Public Voices," and "Perspectives." She has served on boards in several local and national nonprofit organizations, most recently the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, the American Red Cross, and the Western Theological Seminary.



Nonprofit Leadership Scholarship

Amy L. Gifford Ziegler, M.P.A. student, was chosen to receive the 2009 Nonprofit Leadership Scholarship. Amy was chosen for her excellent academic record, nonprofit career objectives, and interest in furthering the missions of the nonprofit organizations she serves. Currently Amy is Director of the Family Services Network in Branch County, MI. The School of Public Affairs and Administration congratulates Amy and wishes her well as she continues to serve the nonprofit community!

Two selected for nomination to Higher Ed Network

Each year, the Capital Area Higher Education Network (CAHEN) member institutions search for outstanding adult students whose accomplishments in higher education and contributions to the community merit recognition. This year, the School of Public Affairs and Administration is pleased to announce the nomination of Kathy Pelleran and the nomination and selection of Chad Rogers.

Chad Rogers has been selected to receive the 2009 CAHEN Outstanding Adult Learner Award. Dr. Anna Filipova, along with Dr. James Visser and Dr. Robert Peters, nominated Chad because of his "commitment to producing well-written quality work...demonstrated enthusiasm for the subject matter...and thoughtful contributions in class." In addition to his academic accomplishments, Chad has contributed to the student life of the WMU Lansing Campus by being one of the organizers of the event "Finding the Right Combination: School to Jobs."

Kathy Pelleran was also nominated by the School of Public Affairs and Administration for the CAHEN Outstanding Adult Learner Award. In writing the nomination, Dr. Anna Filipova noted Kathy's commitment to public service. "Kathy has managed to combine a graduate student caliber academic record with a public service motivation and attitude toward all her courses and assignments. Her optimistic approach to succeeding in the program is also a testimony to her ability to lead by example." Kathy also contributed to the organization of "Finding the Right Combination: School to Jobs" conference.

The School of Public Affairs and Administration congratulates both Chad and Kathy for their excellence in graduate study.

Fast Facts...

Did you know? Seventy seven (77) students in the past eight years have earned the American Humanics Nonprofit Leadership Certification at WMU. They are working in youth programs, disaster relief organizations, volunteer centers, housing assistance, membership organizations, hospitals, advocacy organizations, churches, senior centers, job training programs, hospice programs, fitness centers, parks, and universities.

Alumni in the News

- Anna Filipova, '07 (Ph.D.), has accepted a tenure-track faculty position at the University of Wisconsin in Osh Kosh. We congratulate her as she begins her new responsibilities this fall!
- Sharon Carr, '98 (DPA), was granted the Honorary Alumnus Award by the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University during the college's May 2009 Commencement. Carr is currently the Business Officer in the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Induction of Pi Alpha Alpha

Pi Alpha Alpha is the national honor society formed to recognize and promote excellence in the study and practice of public affairs and administration. Recently, the WMU chapter inducted the following new members:

- Tamie K. Case
- Susan M. Germann
- Kelly N. Robertson
- Teresa L. Kmetz
- Elizabeth Drerup-McGaughey
- James S. Penix
- Sarah J. Sant

AHA students award \$15,000 in grants to local nonprofits

Students4Giving Grant Celebration



On April 2, nearly 100 people gathered at Kalamazoo Senior Services for the Students4Giving Grant Celebration hosted by the students in the WMU SPAA chapter of American Humanics Student Association. WMU was one of ten schools nationwide chosen by Campus Compact with the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund to receive \$15,000 to re-grant to local nonprofit organizations. This process gave WMU students the opportunity to assess community needs, set priorities, and interact with local organizations. The students were aided by Greater Kalamazoo United Way, who distributed the requests for proposals.

After receiving over 20 compelling applications, students analyzed each proposal, conducted site visits, and met to come to consensus on grant recipients. At the end of this process, grants were awarded to the following organizations:

- Specialized Language Development Center, \$5,000 for its Language Links Program that provides two hours per week of individual, specialized instruction to economically disadvantaged children who are significantly below grade level in reading but who do not qualify or receive special education services.
- Family and Children's Service, \$2,350 for its Parenting Education Classes for birth parents and relatives whose children have been or are at risk of being removed from the family home due to abuse or neglect.
- Eastside Neighborhood Association, \$2,725 for a community garden that will provide gardening expertise, garden tools on loan, and fresh produce to families in that neighborhood.
- YWCA of Kalamazoo, \$2,500 for a speaker at the Kalamazoo Summit on Racism that promotes the elimination of institutional racism.
- New Genesis, \$2,350 for its 5-Star After School Program for children who work to improve their skills in reading and math and their parents to learn how to support their children's academic achievement.

Students selected the following priorities to guide grant selection:

- **Alleviate social injustice**
- **Improve academic skills**
- **Strengthen families**

Students complete project papers for capstone requirement

The MPA Project Paper (PADM 6800) is the capstone requirement of the MPA. It provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of public administration in the completion of an original research project and analysis. While not a formal thesis, the project paper is no less significant. The SPAA is pleased to recognize the following students for their accomplishment in completing their Project Paper in the previous year:

Daniel T. Bartley, Richland, Mich.

"Federal Delivery of Routine Building Maintenance: A Study of the Differences between the Public and Private Sectors"

Christian Borg, Kalamazoo, Mich.

"Using Community Needs Assessments to Influence Organizational Change: A Strategic Perspective"

Brody Boucher, Grand Ledge, Mich.

"The Effects of Alternative Work Schedules on Uniform Patrol Activity in the Michigan State Police"

Tammie Case, Hastings, Mich.

"Barriers to Access and Adherence to Mental Health Treatment"

Sandra Diorka, Holt, Mich.

"Public Awareness of Delhi Charter Township Storm Water Public Education Activities"

Christina M. Drake, Grand Ledge, Mich.

"Safety of Children in Licensed Childcare Family Homes in Relation to Residences of Convicted Sex Offenders"

Mary Farmer, Marshall, Mich.

"It's Your Life: Determining the Effectiveness of the Jackson County Employee Wellness Plan with Regards to Changing Employee Behavior"

Christi Fitzgerald, Caledonia, Mich.

"Recruitment of Physicians to Rural Areas"

Ivy Gill, Benton Harbor, Mich.

"Relationship Between Socio-Economic Status and Voters and Non-Voters in Benton Harbor, Michigan"

Michelle M. Greenlee, Paw Paw, Mich.

"Reducing Criminal Recidivism and Violence Kalamazoo County Mental Health Court"

Maki Hirose, Kalamazoo, Mich.

"Organizational Conditions to Produce Efficient Use of Software: Use of Information Management Software Within Councils for International Visitors"

Teresa Kmetz, Portland, Mich.

"Investigation of Customer Relationship Management in United Ways: A Comparative Study"

Ryann Moore, Mason, Mich.

"Michigan's Arrears Payment Plan"

Keith L. Morris, Lansing, Mich.

"The Legal Volunteer Program at Elder Law of Michigan: An Analysis of the Costs and Benefits"

Kathryn Morrow, Kalamazoo, Mich.

"A Comparison of Perceptions Regarding the Homeless Population's Access to Healthcare"

Kathy G. Pelleran, Lansing, Mich.

"The Relationship Between the High Prevalence of Witnessed

Bullying and the High Prevalence of Violence Among Michigan Middle School and High School Students"

Nicole Pena, Niles, Mich.

"Providing Gender Specific Programming to Female Offenders in Cass County"

James S. Penix, Galesburg, Mich.

"Motivational Factors for Information Technology Volunteers in Southwest Michigan Nonprofits"

Megan A. Russell, Battle Creek, Mich.

"Engaging Disadvantaged Youth in Service"

Sarah Sant, East Lansing, Mich.

"Back in My Day: The Effect of Generational Differences on Leadership, Communication, Core Values, and Motivation in the Michigan Association of School Boards"

Megan Sifuentes, Charlotte, Mich.

"Pay for Performance, A Practical Approach for Michigan Medicaid?"

Kristina M. Stroud, Dimondale, Mich.

"Meta-Analysis of Documented Impacts Associated with the Utilization of Business Intelligence within Public Sector Organizations"

Lisa Thaler, St. Joseph, Mich.

"Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction in Healthcare Workers at Lakeland Healthcare"

Craig Wheeler, Coopersville, Mich.

"Methods of Police Service Delivery in One Michigan County: Lessons Learned"

Kacie Wiersma, Lansing, Mich.

"Professional Development Needs of Aspiring Nonprofit Executives"

Marla Wedge, Allegan, Mich.

"Creating a Link between Domestic Violence Shelters and Animal Shelters in Southwest Michigan to Assist in Removing and Protecting Animals Owned by Victims of Domestic Violence"

Christian Whitt, Niles, Mich.

"A Study of the Notification and Federal Employee Anti-Discrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (NO FEAR): Foundation, Implementation, and Analysis in the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency"

Jennifer L. Wood, Hastings, Mich.

"Expensive Healthcare Premiums Putting Families at Risk"

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Under "other designation" indicate
School of Public Affairs & Administration

Michigan Career... continued from p. 2

procedures-these can't be all learned on the job. An individual must be ready to make significant, long-term decisions on day one. Some decisions can't be reversed and taxpayers have expectations.

Hughes: Education has a high value; it shows the commitment someone has to the profession.

Q: As a public sector manager, what value do you place on the work experience or internship experience of a potential employee when making hiring decisions?

AK: Practical experience is extremely critical; without experience to match education, you are missing a part of the puzzle.

Cairns: The MPA internship is a very important trial period for the profession. You need to have a mentor "show you the ropes."

Hughes: The position for which I am hiring would determine the level of experience I would expect but it is unlikely I would hire someone without at least an internship. When I was hired here in Sturgis as the Assistant to the City Manager, I had already completed three internships and a graduate assistantship. Those experiences were helpful for me and I would look for potential employees who have taken the initiative to gain experience.