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Eric Button

Policy Management

After earning his M.A. in Political Science from the U of A this past fall, Eric Button entered the Ph.D. program to pursue his research and career interests. Specializing in Policy Management, Button dedicates most of his time to analyzing Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation and benefit services.

As a veteran himself, he hopes to conduct research that enhances the reach and quality of these services while also providing a greater return on investment for taxpayers and stakeholders.

When asked why he chose to stay at the U of A, Button mentioned the difficulty imagining himself losing what he saw as the quality leadership and mentorship of its Political Science Department, both from faculty and other

“From the beginning, I have savored the positivity, the friendly competition, and the challenges to push myself in the PLSC and PUBP departments.”

graduate students. He hopes to earn his degree and then enter into the academic job market either in political science or, more specifically, public policy.



Carolyn Chitwood

Higher Education Policy

Having worked in both a college admis-

sion office and a federally grant-funded higher education access program for a combined seven years, Caryoln Chitwood is continuing her education through the Higher Education Policy specialization in the PUBP program.

Though her research interests are varied, she is most focused on how higher education organizations and state legislators can create and sustain pathways for low-income students to gain knowledge and training beyond high school.

In addition to her studies, Chitwood is a career counselor at the University of Arkansas. Her four years in this role are part of an overall 12 years-worth of experience in counseling and advising roles within higher education, having previously served students at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas and the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Additionally, she worked for four years as a technical editor and writer, skills she hopes will aid her in her future policy work.



Leah English

Agriculture Policy

With a Masters degree in Agricultural Economics from the U of A and another in International Rural Development from Ghent University, Leah English entered the PUBP program to specialize in Agricultural Policy. Currently a program associate for the U of A Center for Agricultural and Rural Sustainability, she has extensive research experience in agricultural economics that she hopes to build on during her time in the program.

While in the Masters program at the U of A, English worked as a research assistant for Dr. Jennie Popp, focusing specifically on input-output modeling to estimate the annual economic contribution of agriculture in Arkansas. Through this research, she came to realize how agriculture is economically linked to many other sectors in the state economy, and thus how policy decisions, even in seemingly unrelated areas, can have a huge impact on the overall economy and the lives of local citizens.

To better understand this impact, English hopes to further develop the skills that can be used to analyze the economic aspects of agricultural policies in a way that may increase the accuracy of their predicted outcomes. Upon completing her Ph.D., she hopes to work as a policy analyst either for the public or non-profit sector.

"I have chosen the U of A program because of its intense focus on public issues and its preparation of high-quality policy leaders to serve the general public."



Dennis Felton

Education Policy (K-12)

Specializing in Education Policy, Dennis Felton hopes to utilize his nine years serving public and charter schools to both conduct empirical research and advocate for underserved student populations.

Focusing specifically on students in high-poverty, high-minority schools, Felton seeks to learn the ways in which the analysis and change of applicable policies can be implemented to increase the overall quality of education.

When asked why he chose the PUBP program at the U of A, Felton emphasized its intense focus on public issues and production of high-quality policy leaders, which allows its students to serve the general public.

After graduation, Felton expects to serve as a Superintendent or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a school

district. He would also like to hold a political position involving education policies and affairs either in the State of Arkansas or at the federal level in Washington, D.C. where he can continue to serve and improve school districts.



Jon Minor

Health Policy

With a M.A. in Education and a specialization in Sports Administration, John Minor decided to enter the PUBP program to continue his education in the field of Health Policy. After 12 years of teaching and coaching at various public schools in the Cherokee Nation, he hopes to research education policies and healthcare issues that impact Native Americans.

After completing the PUBP program, Minor hopes to secure a position in healthcare to reach more Native American citizens and to make services more accessible. Using his contacts within the community, he wishes to assist in the future of Cherokee Nation health initiatives.



Tami Strickland

Agriculture Policy

As the Director of Regulatory Services for Tyson Foods, Inc., Strickland is responsible for labeling policies and regulatory compliance for packaging across the company’s portfolio. She represents the company before federal agencies and interacts with opinion leaders, associations, and special interest groups to identify and influence public policy.

Holding a B.S. in Agriculture, and an M.S. in Agricultural Extension Education, Strickland entered the PUBP program in the hopes of continuing her passion for studying nutrition policy in developing countries and to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to interact with higher-profile entities important to the Tyson business.

While in the program, Strickland also hopes to continue her work on a previous project, OneEgg-Haiti, which involved the creation of a self-sustaining egg farm in the country to provide valuable protein for its children and other residents.

“I was directed to the PUBP program because of my desire to gain advanced training in school guidance, counseling, and administration. After speaking with PUBP professors, I feel like I’m where I’m supposed to be.”



Connie Thomas

Education Policy (K-12)

Entering the Ph.D. program with a Masters degree in Counselor Education, Thomas spent the last 14 years teaching pre-K and Kindergarten as well as serving as a young adult coordinator for the Ouachita Parish Library System. She has also worked as a reading intervention specialist, a senior counselor, and a co-creator of a pharmacy tech pilot program that allowed seniors to complete their state graduation requirements while also learning a valuable trade.

Specializing in both school counseling and clinical mental health counseling, Thomas plans to concentrate her research on the transition from secondary education to higher education, as well that from vocational training to the general workforce. With this de-

gree, she hopes to advocate for positive change in the public school system to make students better prepared to meet society’s growing expectations post high school.

Alumni Spotlight



(Dr. Charisse Childers. Photo provided by Childers.)

Dr. Charisse Childers

Graduating from the PUBP program in 2008, Dr. Charisse Childers specialized in Education Policy, focusing her dissertation on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the state’s College Preparatory Enrichment Program. Her research focused on student success in college admissions and placement exams.

After completing the program, Childers was named Executive Director for Accelerate Arkansas, an eighty-member statewide group of business and education leaders dedicated to knowledge-based economic development in the state.

Serving in this position from 2006 to

2014, Childers left this organization when she was appointed as the first female director of the Arkansas Department of Career Education by Governor Asa Hutchinson – the agency responsible for the state’s career and adult education programs, workforce development initiatives, and rehabilitation services.

As director, Childers is responsible for ensuring that the department prepares a job-ready, career-bound workforce to meet the needs of Arkansas employers. She oversees over \$170 million in federal and state funds, directs almost 600 employees in the work and vision of the agency, leads a twenty-member industry-led board, and oversees workforce training grants, adult education, and other services.

In 2014 Childers was recognized by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation as one of forty non-profit leaders in the state through its “Forty Years, Forty Leaders for Arkansas” distinction. Then in 2016, she was awarded both the Outstanding Alumni award from Arkansas Northeastern College and the “Star of Education, Rising Star State Director” award for state career technical education (CTE) directors who display dedication to the goals and mission of Advance CTE.

When asked how the program prepared her for her current career, Childers pointed specifically to its expansion of her knowledge in education law and policy, as well as its enhancement of her skills in research and writing. “All of these skill sets are used on a daily basis in my position as director of a state agency,” she states. “The ability to study issues and analyze current law and policy with an understanding of the policy process is critical for leadership roles in government and non-profit sectors.”

Student Wins Dissertation Award



(Nathan Kemper with his daughter, Grace Ellen Kemper. Photo provided by Nathan Kemper).

Student, Nathan Kemper, wins PUBP Distinguished Dissertation Award

different groups of individuals form preferences for genetically modified (GM) foods as well as to inform future labeling policy within the agribusiness industry.

Divided into three individual papers, Kemper evaluates techniques for improving discrete choice experiments in the first two, where he finds that the use of the honesty oath in one’s survey design and accounting for the patterns surrounding individuals’ attendance to attributes can create more reliable welfare measures.

In his third paper, however, Kemper focuses on the importance of individuals’ cultural worldviews on their GM policy preferences. Despite differences found across worldviews, however, his results indicate that even those individuals less likely to support changes to GM food labeling policy still support mandatory GM labeling at high levels.

When taken as a whole, Kemper’s dissertation offers researchers the means by which to incorporate Query Theory into their projects and demonstrates how doing so can improve their analyses.

Please join us in congratulating Nathan Kemper for receiving the 2017 PUBP program’s Dr. William Miller Distinguished Dissertation Award!

A clinical assistant professor and undergraduate program chair in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, Kemper’s dissertation titled “Query Theory Applications: Choice Experiments Under Oath, Attendance to Attributes, and Genetically Modified Food Labeling Policy” uses Query Theory to examine how

“The program expanded my knowledge of education law and policy and enhanced my research and writing - skills I now use on a daily basis.”

Alumnus Wins Imhoff Award



(Dr. Christopher Shields. Photo provided by the U of A Department of Sociology.)

PUBP Alumni Named Two of Three Imhoff Award Finalists

This past semester the University of Arkansas Teaching Academy named Dr. Christopher Shields as the recipient of the 2017 Dr. John and Ms. Lois Imhoff Award for Outstanding Teaching and Student Mentorship. Shields, an alumnus of the PUBP program, was recognized by the Academy as a faculty member who has shown excellence in both teaching introductory courses and in forming close, individual mentoring relationships with students.

Joining the U of A as a clinical assistant professor for the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice in 2008, Shields currently teaches two sections of Criminal Law and Society as well as a new upper-division course focusing on human trafficking. He supervises multiple internship sections of over 100 students working with various agencies, advises the Criminal Justice Honor Society, and organizes the de-

partment's annual career fair.

PUBP alumnus Dr. Karen Sebold was a finalist for the Imhoff Award. As a clinical assistant professor and director of undergraduate studies for the Department of Political Science, Sebold often teaches two large sections of American National Government as well as upper-division courses including Congress, Money and Politics, and the Chief Executive. She is also the faculty advisor for her department's honor society.

Through this work, she is able to support the undergraduate students who have earned multiple national grants to further their experiences in the field, whether by visiting the Truman Presidential Library or attending their first professional political science conference.

The PUBP program is pleased to honor both of these alumni for their dedication to excellence in teaching and student mentorship.



(Dr. Karen Sebold. Photo provided by the U of A Department of Political Science.)

Supporting Your PUBP Program during Campaign Arkansas

YOU – our Public Policy alumni – have achieved great success in your careers to promote policies and practices that improve the lives of the people of Arkansas, the nation, and the world. Some of you benefited from graduate assistantships, fellowships, or scholarships as you pursued your research and completed your degree at the University of Arkansas.

Increasing the number of graduate assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships is a key priority for the Public Policy Program and the Graduate School and International Education during Campaign Arkansas, the university's fundraising campaign.

New endowment support plays a critical role in recruiting and retaining highly accomplished graduate students who will lead change through cutting-edge public policy research. Our faculty is committed to preparing the next generation of policy makers, researchers, and advocates to shape policy and legislation that benefits and empowers people around the globe.

If you would like to learn more about how you can invest in our public policy students, faculty, and programs, please contact Julie Olsen, Director of Development at (479) 575-6975 or jkolsen@uark.edu.

In Focus: Faculty-Student Collaboration



(Center: Electa Hare-Redcorn discussing ideas with summit attendees. Photo taken by Bryan Pollard.)

Electa Hare-Redcorn and Dr. Janie Simms Hipp

Second-year PUBP student Electa Hare-Redcorn worked alongside visiting U of A professor, Dr. Janie Simms Hipp at the School of Law to plan the 2018 Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership summit.

As the director of the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, Dr. Hipp personally oversees the Initiative's strategic planning and the technical assistance it provides tribal governments, farmers, ranchers, and food businesses; its academic and professional education programs; and its work to increase student enrollment in the food and agricultural disciplines.

For this summer's summit, the Initiative hosted Native American and Native Hawaiian youth at the School of Law to provide an intensive curriculum that allowed them to explore a particular area of food, agricultural production, or policy on tribal lands.

Offering subject areas spanning ag-

ricultural business and finance, agricultural law and policy, conservation practices and planning, and nutrition and health, each track allowed students to learn directly from industry leaders and experts about agricultural practices they could use to support themselves and their tribal governments in the future.

In addition to their specializations, summit participants took several general courses, including those centered around the ins and outs of tribal governance as well as those providing grower training in accordance with the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule.

Then, as a final experience, participants took a field trip to the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma to tour their food operations – including the meat processing plant and feeding facility, greenhouses and beekeeping operations, and the coffee roasting facility – and learn about agri-

culture in a tribal setting.

Hare-Redcorn was instrumental in the development and administration of this summit and will also be involved in the national multi-year food and agriculture code project it has planned for the future.

Working closely with Dr. Hipp, she hopes to continue to feed her passion for strengthening the tribal capacity for policymaking in agriculture and health, as well as researching ways to reduce chronic disease and obesity among Natives.