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Inside This Issue

- 01 New Student Spotlights
- 03 PUBP Research and Professional Development Calendar
- 03 PUBP Alumni Spotlight
- 04 Student-Faculty Research Collaboration



Callie Embry

Community Development

After receiving her M.A. degree in Communication from the U of A, Embry decided to continue her education through the PUBP program's Community Development specialization. She has lived in the same small town for the past 22 years and hopes the knowledge she gains in the program can be applied to current issues in her community.

Embry is interested in public works policy and rural political activism as well as in both academia and the not-for-profit sector. When asked why she chose the U of A PUBP program, she mentioned her appreciation for its interdisciplinary nature and the oppor-

tunities it presents to experience different perspectives.

"I selected the U of A program because of its world-class faculty. Having had a chance to work with some of them in the past, I am excited to continue that work."



Matthew Fey

Policy Management

Matthew Fey received his M.A. degree from the U of A in Political Science with a concentration in Comparative

Politics. Employed as the Associate Director for the College of Education & Health Professions Honors Program, he decided to enter the PUBP program in Policy Management to learn more about the roles policy practitioners and their institutions play in the policy process.

When asked about his current research interests, Fey emphasized his previous work in the area of European policy-making and his continuing desire to analyze its complex legislative processes. He hopes to gain knowledge of U.S. policies that will affect his students as they enter the real world. His goal is to obtain a position in the federal government or in an organization such as the European Union.



Melanie Hoskins

Policy Management

Melanie Hoskins earned her M.B.A. from Webster University and is employed as the Senior Manager of Asset and Lease Accounting at Walmart headquarters. She is interested in gaining more experience in the selection and implementation of state and local

policy through the Public Policy Management concentration.

When asked what brought her into the PUBP program, Hoskins expressed being impressed by the faculty's expertise and interest in matters related to social justice – matters that she hopes to pair with her financial background in her future work.



Trish Lopez

Education Policy

Trish Lopez holds two M.A. degrees in teaching, one of which focuses on teaching English as a second language. She spent the past seven years as a public-school elementary teacher in Springdale and Rogers, AR. From this experience, she decided to enter the PUBP program's Education specialization to analyze the potential policy changes that could better support teachers as well as provide instructional environments that incorporate best practices for students.

Lopez's main research interests range from bilingual and dual-language programs to professional development for teachers and to English learning for culturally and linguistically diverse

students. She chose the PUBP program for its interdisciplinary nature, stating that "the problems faced by students are tied to broader, systemic issues like poverty," which requires input from a variety of sources in order to merge the needs of all stakeholders.

Lopez hopes to continue working in an environment that allows for the practical application of research, whether advocating for reform at the state level, continuing work with teachers to implement research-based best practices in the classroom, or working at a research university that focuses on research-based teaching.



Erin Scott

Agriculture Policy

Erin Scott received her M.S. in Crop, Soil, and Environmental Science from the U of A in 2013. She is in the Agriculture Policy specialization in the PUBP program, holding an interest in the impact of nutrient pollution on water quality as well as the economic influences and impacts on the environment and environmental policy. Scott hopes to continue her work with Dr. Jennie Popp in the Agricultural Economics

Department on the economics of nutrient and water recovery in livestock production.

Referencing her previous education and work experiences in environmental and water science, despite the vast amount of research being conducted to address our most pressing problems, Scott observes that little seems to be translated into policy or regulatory change. While in the PUBP program, she hopes to gain deeper knowledge of the challenges that exist for bridging scientific findings and policy decisions, with the ultimate goal of determining how to move toward more effective policy solutions.

"I have heard positive things from current and former U of A PUBP students about the program and feel it will be a great fit for me to pursue my educational and career goals."

Alumni Spotlight



Dr. Leslie Yingling

Dr. Leslie Yingling graduated from the PUBP program in May of 2018 with a specialization in Education Policy. Throughout her time in the program, she worked in the field of college readiness outreach and diversity education. This role involved directing the College Access Initiative and the U of A Multicultural Center. During this time, Yingling served as Associate Dean of Students in Student Affairs.

Much of Dr. Yingling's research illustrates her passion for this work. When asked about her experience in the program, she stated that her coursework and research "allowed [her] to spend a lot of time studying intersecting systems of power and privilege, social ideals and inequalities, and considering how public education responds to the tensions among them." "What I found most transformative to my awareness and perspective," she stated, "were

theories of power and change and how those interact with the construction of policy ideas and priorities."

After graduating, Dr. Yingling became Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Multicultural Initiatives where she now works closely with the Student Success Center in the Provost's office on institutional innovations related to the U of A's academic retention and graduation efforts.

"I often reference policy theories and frameworks that I engaged in most significantly through my graduate coursework," stated Dr. Yingling. "The interdisciplinary nature of the program was especially relevant to the study of public education policy, which engages research, theory and practice not only in education, but also in sociology, psychology, human development, economics, and more."

"The program allowed me to spend a lot of time studying intersecting systems of power and privilege, social ideals and inequalities, and considering how public education responds to the tensions among them."

Research & Professional Development Series Calendar

December 13th

12:00 - 1:30 PM
Old Main 430

Student-Faculty Research

Learn about current PUBP student-faculty research collaborations. Each study will be discussed, followed by a general Q & A.

Lunch and refreshments will be served!

In Focus: Student-Faculty Collaboration



(From left to right: Dr. Anna Zajicek and Larra Rucker. Photo provided by Paulina Sobczak.)

Larra Rucker and Dr. Anna Zajicek

Larra Rucker began the PUBP program with an interest in Early Childhood Education (ECE), specifically the care and education of children from birth through the age of 5. When asked, she stated that this interest stemmed from her work in the field and led her to study the state policies that regulate the qualification attainment of the ECE workforce.

Rucker partnered with Dr. Anna Zajicek to create a research design with which to examine these complex state-level policies in order to understand them individually, but also to compare state policy to the qualification attainment of the ECE workforce. "Thus far, our research has involved three components, an examination of: (1) ECE policy, (2) ECE teacher qualification attainment, and (3) the alignment of policy and qualification attainment," says Rucker.

The team first examined mandatory ECE workforce policies across all 50 states, inclusive of all routes to qualification for ECE teachers. They then qualitatively coded policy content and used a content analysis to understand policies and developed a policy typology as a comparative tool. In addition to finding differences among states in how they conceptualize the workforce through policy, Rucker and Dr. Zajicek find a divide between the two forms of qualifications - both pre- and post-employment attainment - on which states focus their regulations.

Rucker and Dr. Zajicek further examined the qualification attainment of teachers across all 50 states using a secondary dataset by the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE). Their results demonstrate that state workforces cluster based on the qualification attainment of their ECE work-

force, and further, that geographical patterns are observed in the data.

When asked about the next step in their research, Rucker emphasized their desire to examine the alignment between policy and qualification attainment using the policy types they developed with the NSECE workforce data. Through this work, they hope to support the ECE workforce in attaining qualification through policy - a process that will ultimately benefit the children for whom the workforce provides care.

SPARK News

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