

# Public Policy Bulletin

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## Welcome New Students!

Featured below are two of the students who joined the Public Policy Ph.D. Program in Fall 2012. Their brief biographies reflect the richness of experience that students bring with them to the program.



### *Jonathan Langner - Family Policy*

*Jonathan Langner is a native of Iowa and grew up in Northwest Arkansas. He earned a B.A. degree in English from Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, and a Master's degree in Education from the University of Arkansas in 2011. Jonathan became a certified ESL teacher in 2005 and has taught English in Germany and Spain, as well as for Spring International Language Center on the University of Arkansas campus. In addition to his studies, he is currently a reference librarian at NWACC and teaches courses on Children's Literature at the Global Campus. Jonathan also practices a modality of holistic therapy called B.E.S.T. and loves to spend time with his family. He has been married to Anna-Luise for five years and they have three children. After completing his Ph.D., Jonathan plans to pursue a career in education and research, and to influence state policy concerning the determinants of family-health.*

### *Lindsay Turner - Distance Education Policy*

*Lindsay Turner is the Coordinator of Credit Off-Campus Offerings at the University of Arkansas Global Campus where she facilitates the coordination and delivery of online university credit courses and programs. She earned a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and a Master's degree in Geography from the University of Arkansas. Lindsay plans to research distance education policy development within Higher Education at both the Federal and State levels. In her free time between working and going to school, she enjoys watching Sci-Fi movies and playing with her black Labrador, Callie. After completing the Ph.D. program, she plans to remain in academic administration in distance education.*



# Student-Faculty Collaboration

Dr. Heather Schneller, who defended her dissertation titled “Family Policies and Institutional Satisfaction: An Intersectional Analysis of Tenure-Track Faculty” in May 2012, and Dr. Anna Zajicek have been collaborating since Fall 2011. Currently, they are working together on a journal article focused on tenure-track faculty assessment of the importance and effectiveness of work-life policies. The collaboration began with a research paper titled “An Intersectional Analysis of Tenure-Track Faculty Satisfaction with Family Policies,” which they presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in Denver in August 2012. The conference paper as well as the journal manuscript explore how four groups of tenure-track faculty, Black women, Black men, White women, and White men, employed at research universities assess the importance and the effectiveness of academic work-life policies, including elder-care policies. The impetus behind this project is the fact that to date no study of academic work-life policies uses an intersectional perspective to examine these issues. We found significant differences in faculty assessments of work-life policies depending on their intersectional locations. For instance, African American women faculty overwhelmingly indicated that eldercare policy is important to career success, while white women faculty were more concerned with the importance of childcare policy. At the same time, white women faculty were the most dissatisfied with childcare policy effectiveness on their campuses. Finally, of all four groups, the African-American men faculty were the most satisfied with their work-life balance. For both authors, an exciting aspect of this collaboration has been the ability to show the complexity of work-life policies in relation to how faculty experience the academic workplace. More importantly, we have been able to shed light on similarities and differences of policy assessments by faculty occupying intersectional locations. This latter contribution is especially encouraging because the majority of literature focusing on women faculty approaches them as a monolithic category, presenting a singular experience.

Personally, Dr. Heather Schneller recalls the importance of this collaboration as a stepping stone on the way to becoming an independent professional: “I have spent my entire career working on a college campus and

active in professional organizations specific to student affairs and college student housing. I had presented on a national level regarding housing and student leadership programs, but working on a paper for the American Sociological Association’s annual meeting seemed to be a daunting task. Dr. Zajicek was persistent in pushing me to consider working on a paper with her for this meeting. I submitted the paper, and was shocked when it was accepted. In my mind, I still thought of myself as a novice still acquiring knowledge and processing ideas, not someone who had ideas to share. I am grateful that Dr. Zajicek saw something different because the meeting was a fascinating experience where I got to present ideas to people contending with the same research interests.”



*Dr. Anna Zajicek and Dr. Heather Schneller*

For Dr. Zajicek, who has also been collaborating with former PUBP students, including Dr. Adele Norris, Dr. Liliana Blum, as well as current PUBP students, including Kalynn Amundson and Rodica Lisnic, these collaborations have been most rewarding. In fact, Dr. Zajicek has always considered student-faculty research collaborations, especially working together on journal publications and conference presentations, to be one of the most important functions of a faculty member. For her, student-faculty collaborations are student-centered and play a critical role in advancing the student’s professional development and contributing to their success in the academy and beyond. Kalynn Amundson, who also presented her student-faculty co-authored paper titled “Pathologies of the Poor: What do the War on Drugs and Welfare Reform Have in Common?” at the 2012 ASA meeting in Denver, echoes this sentiment, “The collaborative process between faculty and students raises the bar for the caliber of work produced by the student. It offers guidance for up-and-coming academics, and provides assistance in navigating the path from research to writing to publication. Such collaboration is invaluable for those in pursuit of an academic career.”

# Alumni Highlights

Dr. Otilia Iancu graduated from the Public Policy Ph.D. Program in 2010 and is currently an Assistant Professor of Public Administration at Savannah State University in Savannah, Ga.



## Dr. Otilia Iancu

*Ph.D. in Public Policy (Family Policy specialization),  
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (2010)*

*Masters in Public Administration, University of Kansas*

*Masters of Computer Science, Universitatea Tehnică  
Gheorghe Asachi, Romania*

### **In which department do you work?**

*I am an Assistant Professor of Public Administration in the Master of Public Administration Program at Savannah State University (SSU) in Savannah, Ga. I teach graduate courses in the MPA Program and undergraduate courses for the Political Science Program. Previously, as a volunteer, I taught two upper-division undergraduate political science courses for the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. While at the University of Arkansas, my dissertation, "Safe Haven Legislation: The Political Story Behind the Policy Diffusion," was awarded the 2010 Public Policy Ph.D. Program Distinguished Dissertation Award.*

### **Describe your work at Savannah State University and your current research interests.**

*The beautiful campus at SSU is a place that wholeheartedly welcomes diversity and is the oldest public Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Georgia. SSU is also the oldest institution of higher learning in the historic City of Savannah. On a daily basis, I work closely with students to help them achieve their academic and future professional goals and I make the classroom experience both interesting and informative. I created, and serve as the editor of, the first Department of Political Science and Public Affairs newsletter. Moreover, I also work with the Director of International Studies in order to establish educational exchanges between SSU and universities in my hometown of Iasi, Romania. I also facilitate collaborations between Armstrong Atlantic University and SSU. My research interests continue to be in the areas of Safe Haven legislation and nonprofit administration. Recently, however, my focus has been on issues related to ePublic Administration and I will present papers on the topic at upcoming conferences.*

### **Other interesting information**

*Throughout my doctoral studies, I had hoped to obtain a position with a university located near a beach and that wish has come true. I enjoy discovering the beautiful beaches along Georgia's and South Carolina's shores, particularly Tybee Island. Last, but certainly not least, I enjoy spending time with my son, Joshua, who, as a ninth grader, solves induction mathematics problems.*



Dr. Michele Wright graduated from the Public Policy Ph.D. Program in 2006, and is currently the Chief Executive Officer, Greater Ozarks-Arkansas Region, American Red Cross.



## Dr. Michele Wright

*Ph.D. in Public Policy (Health and Leadership Policy specialization), University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (2006)*

*M.S. in Industrial Engineering/Engineering Management, University of Tennessee Space Institute (1992)*

*B.S. in Electrical Engineering, Tuskegee University (1990)*

### **In which department do you work?**

*I am currently the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Greater Ozarks-Arkansas Region with the American Red Cross with responsibilities for overseeing Red Cross blood services to 52 hospitals in Arkansas, southwestern Missouri and the greater Memphis area.*

### **What are your current research interests?**

*As a Success Expert, my current research interests uniquely center on helping success seekers from all walks of life achieve success in career and life. My extensive research of some of America's most outstanding women achievers has served as inspiration for my multiple International Book Awards and USA Best Books Award-winning publication "DEAR SUCCESS SEEKER: Wisdom from Outstanding Women" (Atria/Simon & Schuster). This has allowed me to create a groundbreaking success model that I will implement in corporations, organizations and educational facilities around the world.*

### **Other interesting information**

*When I reflect on my own roadblocks to success, including being born with a serious learning disability as well as a severe speech impediment resulting in my inability to speak before the age of five, I am reminded of how essential it is to have champions of success in our life to inspire us towards our own career success. I was very fortunate to have many success warriors in my life, including my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, my husband Terry Wright, my parents, Frankie and Garland Wise, and my professors including Dr. Anna Zajicek, all of whom uniquely supported my numerous success endeavors and empowered me to strive to achieve my full potential in career and life.*

Students in policy at Arkansas (SPARK) kicked off the 2012-2013 academic year with a Back-to-School Social Hour at the home of SPARK member Pearl McElfish. The event was a great success and we were excited to have the participation of so many first-year students. In addition to the social hour, SPARK held its annual meeting where we discussed upcoming events for the academic year. The first event was the



*Erika Gergerich, Tammy Overacker and Danny Chand at the Fayetteville Half Marathon fundraiser*

Fayetteville Half Marathon fundraiser where four SPARK members ran and raised \$430 for the Arkansas ACLU's Bill of Rights Essay Contest. A special congratulations and thanks goes out to SPARK members Danny Chand, Erika Gergerich, Tammy Overacker, and Elizabeth Erin Smith, and to Public Policy faculty member Dr. Janine Parry for participating in this event, and representing our organization in such a worthwhile endeavor.

Also, during the annual meeting, members discussed the opportunity to present their research at the Arkansas Political Science Association (ArkPSA) Conference being held at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Ten SPARK members submitted membership applications to the Arkansas Political Science Association (ArkPSA) and several members have been accepted to present papers during the ArkPSA annual conference March 1-2, 2013.

Finally, SPARK will be participating with the Northwest Arkansas Division of the March of Dimes in their annual March for Babies event being held Saturday, April 6th at the Arvest Ballpark in Springdale.

## Research and Professional Development (RPD) Series

The Research and Professional Development (RPD) series includes on-going research presentations as well as discussions/presentations regarding professional development both inside and outside of the academy. These sessions are organized as faculty and student panel discussions, or in the alternative, as research presentations.

Two RPD sessions were held in Fall 2012. In the first session, Danny Chand presented his research, "Advocacy Inequalities Among Nonprofits: Do Mission and Tax Status Make Differences?" In the second session, Dr. Brinck Kerr and Renee Deshommes presented their work, "Interethnic Competition for Classroom Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal, and Administrator Jobs in Multiethnic U.S. School Districts, 2002-2008."

## Upcoming RPD Session on Finding a Job after Graduation

Presenter: Dawn Farver, Ph.D. Candidate, Civil Engineering, Graduate Assistant with the Graduate School and Career Development Center

Date, Time and Venue: Friday, 22 February from noon until 1.30 p.m. in the Upchurch conference room (#3162) in Bell Engineering.

The Fall 2012 Capstone Seminar completed research on evaluating a student support services program in Northeast Oklahoma by applying a mixed methods approach.

The Capstone Project culminates the coursework for the public policy Ph.D. degree program. An intrinsic component of this course is the appreciation of the interdisciplinary factors affecting policy research and decisions. The course integrates various policy interests in a specific community-based project. Students of this course identify stakeholders and a policy issue of interest to them and to the community. They research the issue, and in consultation with classmates and the community, propose a range of policy options, implementation strategies, and evaluation tools. Students are expected to integrate relevant theory from their core and specialization coursework into the capstone process and into the outcome of their work.



Capstone group members: left to right: Blake Decker, Dr. Valerie Hunt, Kristopher Copeland, Tammy Overacker, Brenda Kilby, Sonia Kapur and Alexander Villarraga O.

The Fall 2012 capstone group conducted a program evaluation of the student support services (SSS) program at a university in the southwest region of the United States. The project examined the SSS program's first objective, which focuses on increasing the retention and graduation rates of eligible students. The target population of the SSS grant is centered on low-income, first generation college students. These students typically fail to matriculate or graduate with the same frequency as students without those characteristics. The project deepens the conceptual understanding of these government funded outreach programs.

A parallel mixed design was used to analyze the SSS program. The quantitative methods used in the study were survival analysis and logistic regression. For the qualitative analysis, a case study research design was implemented. The project findings were that financial aid recipients, black students, students with cumulative GPAs below 2.5, and traditional students were less likely to persist within the SSS program. The services implemented are dictated by the grant guidelines with both mandatory and optional components. These services are administered in an isolated program for each student and students found activities such as tutoring and computer lab most popular. Based on these findings, the capstone group made recommendations that the program should take a systematic approach to target students identified as less likely to persist and create a strategy to retain them in the program. Other recommendations included more program visibility, continuous flexibility of activity offerings, and more personal connections.

For more information on this report please contact Dr. Valerie Hunt (vhunt@uark.edu).