

# *Public Policy Bulletin*



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**Chris Bryson**

## *Higher Education*

After earning a M.S. degree in Higher Education from Colorado State University in 2008 and then spending 10 years working in the field, Bryson decided to seek a Ph.D. at the U of A after learning about the PUBP program from current students.

He was immediately drawn to its interdisciplinary focus – an emphasis that he believed would provide him the opportunity to learn from faculty and students from a variety of backgrounds – as well as to its preparation of graduates for both academic and nonacademic positions.

Bryson hopes to further hone his research interests surrounding higher

education finance, student debt, and the GAP year experience, finding his specific niche as he continues through the program.

Then, upon completing the program, his goal is to continue his work as a higher education administrator, specifically focusing on helping students succeed personally, academically, and professionally through new opportunities to lead.



**Ben Galloway**

## *Policy Management*

Although his M.S. degree is in Geography, Galloway has had a growing interest in both macro-level health care policies and policy management more

generally. Looking for a way to gain a better understanding of both topics, he was recommended to the U of A PUBP program by some of his previous professors.

Now that he has entered the Ph.D. program, Galloway hopes to improve his knowledge of the issues surrounding current U.S. health care policies and various public policy processes and apply it to a future position as a university professor.



**Jason Ramage**

## *Higher Education*

As the current Assistant Vice Provost for Research and Director of Research Compliance at the University, Ramage was drawn to the PUBP program as a means by which he could continue his training in Higher Education. He is specifically interested in researching the impact of rising tuition rates on students' access to higher education, as well as impacts of students' debt loads on their decisions regarding family planning, careers, and other life options.

Though he plans to continue leading the U of A's research compliance efforts for the near future, Ramage hopes his PUBP degree will open up future possibilities.



**Erin Shirl**

### ***Agricultural Policy***

Already a full-time University employee providing technical assistance, training, strategic planning, and policy analysis to Tribal governments through the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, Shirl wanted to gain a deeper understanding of agricultural policy and the forces that shape it.

Having earned an LL.M. in Agricultural and Food Law from the U of A, she was drawn to the PUBP program from her previous experiences with the University's learning community, faculty, and mission to serving agricultural producers, believing in the program's ability to prepare its students to become policy researchers and practitioners in the real world.

Shirl's current research interests center around the federal budget and appropriations law and policy which impact the USDA's service to American farm-

ers and ranchers, especially those who are socially disadvantaged and historically underserved. After completing the program, she hopes to use her research to continue her work as a public servant for agricultural producers

*"The UA offers a great learning community, excellent faculty, and a mission to serve agricultural producers, all of which makes it a wonderful place to study agricultural policy."*

while also teaching at the undergraduate level.



**Daniel Staggs**

### ***Policy Management***

After growing up in the jungles of Papua New Guinea, Staggs earned his undergraduate degree and military commission from the U of A. His studies were supported through the George and Carol Olmsted Language and Cul-

tural Immersion fellowship. Since then, he has completed two deployments – one in Afghanistan and another in Kuwait – as well as commanded the U.S. Army's Combatives and Advanced Situational Awareness programs.

Now, though he is currently finishing his M.S. in Security Management at the University of Denver (where he also earned his M.A. in Liberal Studies in Global Affairs with a focus in Global Issues as well as graduate certificates in World History and Culture and Alternative Dispute Resolution), he plans to return to the U of A once more to enter the PUBP program.

Choosing to specialize in policy management, Staggs hopes to build upon his military experience and interests in security management to develop further the policy research surrounding national safety, security, and privacy protection policies – all to give him the knowledge and experience he needs to continue his specialized service to the nation.

*"I have the utmost respect for the professors and staff that diligently groomed and developed my abilities to be successful throughout my career, and it's great to have the opportunity to come back and learn from them again."*

## Research & Professional Development Series Calendar

**March 29th**

**12:00 - 1:30 PM**  
Old Main 523

**Session Featuring Student-Led Research Projects**

Come learn about current PUBP students' research and offer them your feedback. Students to present will be Rachael Moyer, Creed Tumlison, and Melissa Taylor.

*Lunch will be served!*

**April 5th**

**12:00 - 1:30 PM**  
Old Main 523

**Session on Strategies for Non-academic Job Searches**

Dr. Reid will conduct a professional development session for PUBP students on how to find a non-academic job post-graduation.

*Lunch will be served!*

## Alumni Spotlight



**Dr. Elizabeth Smith**

After graduating from the PUBP program with a specialization in P-20 Education in December 2016, Dr. Smith entered into a leadership role for the Teachers Institute for Tulsa – a partnership in Tulsa, OK between the University of Tulsa (TU), Yale University, and Tulsa Public Schools.

In this position, she collaborated with TU and Yale faculty and administrators to implement the Yale National Initiative in the city, which created and provided in-depth content-focused seminars for Tulsa teachers. During this same year, she was also selected as a member of a small, worldwide cohort of faculty members and assessment leaders through the Assessment Leadership Institute.

Then in Fall 2017, Dr. Smith received the Best Paper Award for one of her dissertation papers at the Annual Meeting of the Rocky Mountain Edu-

ational Research Association -- and thereafter began her new position at TU as an assistant professor and chair of its Department of Education.

In addition to her published research surrounding the role faculty play in assessment and school-university partnerships, her education policy course teachings, and her service duties as a faculty member, Dr. Smith also works to build relationships with teachers, administrators, policymakers, and legislators throughout the state of Oklahoma to form a broad partnership to improve its education system.

A published researcher on assessment practices in higher education and school-university partnerships, Dr. Smith uses the interdisciplinary research and policy analysis skills she developed while in the PUBP program to influence Oklahoma's education policy by writing for the Oklahoma Policy Institute and the *Tulsa World* to reach legislators, policymakers, and the public.

Dr. Smith also attributes her choice to broaden her knowledge of education to the opportunities she had in the PUBP program to learn from faculty in different fields and to collaborate with fellow students interested in other types of policy. Because of these experiences, she now seeks to teach her students not only about education policy, but also about its connection to policies on housing, health, and economic security. "If not for having that modeled through the PUBP program," she states, "I am not sure I would have thought this way."

## *In Focus:* Faculty-Student Collaboration



(From left to right: Dr. William Schreckhise and PUBP student Eric Button.)

### Eric Button and Dr. William Schreckhise

Second semester PUBP student Eric Button began his research on veterans' policy while taking Dr. Schreckhise's American Political Institutions course during his first semester in the Political Science M.A. program.

Finding a similar interest in studying the development of veterans' treatment courts (VTCs), or alternative courts of law that focus on criminal cases involving military veterans as defendants, the two began their research into the diffusion of these specialized courts across the U.S.

Utilizing random-effects parametric survival modeling to examine the diffusion of VTCs from 2004 to 2014, the authors found that, despite previous expectations, an individual state's political orientation does not predict

adoption. States dominated by Republicans were no more likely to adopt VTCs than those led by Democrats. They argue that this null finding could be directly attributed to a fairly favorable social construction of veterans across the states.

Of the factors that do matter for VTCs to diffuse successfully, Button and Schreckhise identified 1) the proportion of veterans and 2) the financial returns on VTC investments as highly important.

The authors argue that more research needs to be done into conditions favorable to both creating and maintaining successful VTCs. Button and Schreckhise hope their work will contribute to this area of research, which is largely dominated by local and regional case

studies that only gauge program efficacy.

Through a diffusion analysis approach, the authors hope they can assist state-level policymakers in their decisions about adopting their own VTCs - a choice that the authors argue results in both social and economic benefits for their communities.

## SPARK News

### *Election of New Officers*

**Connie Thomas**  
*President*

**Leah English**  
*Treasurer*

**Dennis Felton**  
*PUBP Student  
Representative*