

# *Public Policy Bulletin*



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# Inside This Issue

- 01 New Student Spotlights**
- 03 PUBP Alumni Spotlight**  
**2019 and 2020 Dissertation Award**
- 04 PUBP Students in the News**
- 05 New Social Justice Specialization**



**Toby Klein**

## *Social Justice Policy*

Klein, a Distinguished Doctoral Fellow, holds a M.S. in Community Health Promotion and has entered the PUBP Department's newly-formed Social Justice Policy specialization. Citing Dean Koski and Dean Primack for both introducing her to the program and helping her to stay at the U of A, she is excited to combine her passion for both research and social justice advocacy.

The current vice president of the Diversity and Inclusion Student Council (DISC), Klein is also the president of the Lavender Society - an LGBTQ+ organization dedicated to creating spaces that value and celebrate LGBTQ+ students at the university.

Klein plans to continue her intersectional-based research surrounding the rela-

tionship between institutional power and marginalization, with the hopes of becoming a Chief Diversity Officer in the future.



**Abby Long**

## *Agriculture Policy*

A Doctoral Academy Fellow, Long enters the PUBP program with a M.S. in Agricultural and Resource Economics. She has an extensive background in regional food systems and agricultural supply chains, having worked "on farms, driven trucks, run a school lunch program, and started a local food distribution company before returning to grad school two years ago." She plans to continue her research surrounding food justice considerations and rural community well-being in the

Southeastern United States.

When asked why she chose the PUBP program at the U of A, Long emphasized two points: one regarding the interdisciplinary nature of the program, and the other based on its geographical location.

"I wanted an interdisciplinary program that would allow me to synthesize quantitative and qualitative methodologies [...], and I wanted to select a program that was in a place I wanted to live long term," she stated.

After completing her Ph.D., Long hopes to work in government to develop equitable food policy or to engage in policy development and advocacy in the nonprofit sphere.



**Kolade Olatunde**

## *Health Policy*

A licensed medical doctor, Olatunde also holds a M.S. in Public Health from the University of Ibadan and enters the PUBP program as a Health Policy scholar.

Having a keen interest in preventive and curative medicine, Olatunde's research involves understanding how

we initiate, formulate, and implement policies that prevent diseases and promote universal health insurance coverage.

He chose the U of A after being “impressed and inspired by the crop of the faculty members” and was convinced that he would gain the experience and expertise he needs to become a public health researcher.

“We must continue to expand the frontiers of research and collaborate with others to make our society a better place for everyone.”



**Rachel Piontak**

### ***Social Justice Policy***

Coming into the PUBP program with a M.A. in Sociology from the University of Cape Town, Piontak is specializing in Social Justice Policy. When asked why she chose this area, she stated, “My current work in higher education demands these conversations to happen in tandem in order to adjust policies to benefit all students, regardless of race or zip code.”

Piontak’s research interests currently span from racial equity in education, de-centering whiteness in racial equity work, intersectionality and retention in higher education, and more.

Currently, Piontak also works as an Academic Coach in the College of Engineering, and she hopes to include further program development and administration within the student success services realm.

Though a major draw to the PUBP program was its location on the U of A campus, Piontak also stated that she selected the program “because it combines my interest in public policy and my passion for social justice. The faculty have been nothing short of phenomenal already, so I’m looking forward to the next several years.

When asked if there was anything else she wanted to note, Piontak mentioned her love of book clubs, asking that anyone who wanted to start one to reach out to her!

*“I chose the PUBP program because it combines my interest in public policy and my passion for social justice. The faculty have been nothing short of phenomenal already.”*



# SPARK News

## Upcoming Meeting

Stay tuned for an email from our current president, Abby Long, about scheduling a virtual meeting for early summer!

The goals of the meeting are to:

- 1) plan a socially-distanced, in-person summer gathering; and
- 2) discuss next steps for SPARK, including new leadership.

Want to get signed up for our monthly newsletter? Email [al050@uark.edu](mailto:al050@uark.edu)!



***Are you an ally to LGBTQ+ students? The Lavender Society is offering a virtual graduation ceremony for undergraduate and graduate students Saturday, April 10th at 11:00 AM.***  
***[Click here to RSVP!](#)***

## Alumni Spotlight



**Dr. David Tolliver**

Spring 2020 PUBP graduate, Dr. David Tolliver has taken a position as the Assistant Director of the Student Success and Advising Center (SSAC) at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU).

Established in 2018, the SSAC seeks to encourage student development and academic success. It specifically provides support services for students to assist them in achieving their academic goals, bringing together a collection of services from the university's Office of Student Success, Academic Commons, and Advising Center.

As the assistant director, Dr. Tolliver fulfills many roles, including program oversight and support as well as verification of the requirements and thresholds of admittance criteria to provisionally admitted SMSU students who are selected for the Academic Success Program (ASP). He also teaches mul-

multiple courses under the University Experience, which provides instruction to students in the ASP, and collaborates with other departments, such as the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, to provide mentorship and resources that helps students succeed in college and persist to graduate.

When asked what skills he gained while in the U of A PUBP program that he uses in his current position, Dr. Tolliver responded:

“The program helped me to examine policy problems with an interdisciplinary approach, including those that impact students’ enrollment and success in college. The theories of public policy and a number of theoretical frameworks that I learned in the PUBP program have guided me in my position, particularly with understanding how actors and their actions influence the policymaking process of universities and the systems within they operate. Additionally, I learned research skills that have helped me conduct research studies, including evaluation and assessment of student success programs, as well as, investigations of policies or the lack thereof, that can impact equitable outcomes and efficient processes at SMSU.”

Dr. Tolliver is a previous Southern Regional Education Board Doctoral Scholar and coauthor of *Student Activism as a Vehicle for Change on College Campuses: Emerging Research Opportunities* along with Dr. Mike Miller. Those interested can access the work [here](#).

## 2019 Dissertation Award Winner



(Dr. Ali. Photo provided by LinkedIn.)

**Dr. Roslina Binti Ali**

Congratulations to Dr. Roslina Binti Ali for receiving the 2019 William Miller Public Policy Distinguished Dissertation Award! Her dissertation, “Economic and Policy Evaluations and Impacts of the National Rice Development Policy Strategies in Malaysia: Self-Sufficiency, International Trade, and Food Security,” utilizes economic frameworks to analyze the holistic impacts of the self-sufficiency and international trade policies at the national and farm-household level within the country.

The study’s main findings include the determination that Malaysia is not able to be a competitive rice producer due to its unprofitable domestic production at the world price level, which leads to significant losses without subsidies or producer support provided by the government.

Further, Dr. Ali found through a spatial, partial equilibrium model that pursuing self-sufficiency would effectively

punish Malaysian consumers due to the tremendous increase in rice prices, which would thereby reduce demand for consumption. As a result, she advises the country's government to consider the policy effects on its economy as a whole, which would include farmer and consumer welfare.

Dr. Ali's dissertation committee was chaired by Dr. Eric Wailes. The William Miller Public Policy Distinguished Dissertation Award Committee was comprised of Dr. Valerie Hunt, Chair, Dr. Christian Goering, and Dr. Patricia Koski.

**In the next issue of the  
Public Policy Bulletin:**

We will run a feature story about the two winners of the PUBP 2020 William Miller Public Policy Distinguished Dissertation Award, Dr. Larra Rucker and Dr. Grant West. The title of Dr. Rucker's dissertation is "Understanding Early Childhood Education Workforce Policy: The Relationship between Policy and Teacher Qualification Attainment."

The title of Dr. West's dissertation is "Interpreting Potential Groundwater Policies through Modeling of Market and Non-Market Benefits and Costs." Please join us in congratulating Dr. Rucker and Dr. West on this wonderful achievement!

*Have something you would like to see in the next newsletter? Let us know!*

Email: [jbkerr@uark.edu](mailto:jbkerr@uark.edu)

## *PUBP Students in the News: Electa Hare-RedCorn*



(From left to right: Electa Hare-RedCorn, Deb Echo-Hawk, and Sonny Howell. Photo provided by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Reprinted with permission.)

### **Food Sustainability through Seed Preservation**

Fourth-year PUBP student, Electa Hare-RedCorn, was recently highlighted in *Yes! Magazine* for her work with the Pawnee Seed Preservation Project.

Herself a member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, Hare-Redcorn joined the project in 2012 as a corn seed-keeper. These seeds connect the Pawnee to their ancestors who traveled from Nebraska to Indian Territory in the mid-1870s, several decades after the Trail of Tears.

After being forced off their ancestral land by the U.S. government, the Pawnee took their corn seed into what is now Oklahoma. Unfortunately, however, the corn did not flourish in the Oklahoma soil.

Ronnie O'Brien, a former educational

director of the Great Platte River Road Archway in Kearney, Nebraska, offered to bring some seeds back to the tribal nation's home state for planting. The second crop planted in 2005 was successful. Consequently, the preservation project was officially born.

"Being tied to the seed work has helped me see that traditional ecological knowledge—the understanding of our connection to the soil, seeds, and our culture—it's all intrinsically tied together," said Hare-RedCorn, as quoted in the article. "Even if policy has definitely tried to strip that away, we still have a unique relationship with the seeds and what they mean to us." For those interested in learning more about the project, you can access the original article [here](#).

## *Social Justice Policy: Our Newest Specialization!*



(Photo by Steven Depolo of Social Justice Graffiti Drawings at Grand Rapids Public Museum School. Labeled for reuse.)

The Public Policy Ph.D. program (PUBP) has developed a new specialization, Social Justice Policy. Other specializations in PUBP have always included a strong emphasis on social justice; however, because of student demand and progressive national trends, many PUBP faculty members felt it was time to create a stand-alone specialization.

The specialization will help students interested in understanding the impact policy has on society, especially in relation to marginalized and underrepresented groups. Dr. Anna Zajicek, Associate Dean, Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, will serve as the inaugural Social Justice specialization coordinator. She shares that the specialization was born out of the societal "...struggle with social, political, educational, and economic inequalities." She hopes students pursuing this specialization

will be able to "critically examine these widespread issues and assess the impact of these policies."

Specialization faculty have come together from different units across campus, including: the School of Social Work, School of Law, School of Human and Environmental Sciences, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Department of Sociology and Criminology, and the Department of Political Science.

Dr. Valerie Hunt, Associate Professor of Political Science and Associate Director of PUBP, is a member of the Social Justice specialization faculty and maintains that social justice is the core of PUBP. Dr. Hunt states, "It is our hope that after their studies, projects, and dissertation research, these future leaders, agency directors, educators, partners, parents, and humans will continue their efforts toward making

our society more just." She also shares approaches to how Social Justice students might study current issues. "The COVID-19 pandemic is holding up a mirror to our society, revealing the many social, political, and economic inequalities throughout. Our hope is that our doctoral students will use their critical thinking and analytical skills to unpack statements and related policy impacts, such as those surrounding the #WEAREALLINTHISTOGETHER movement," said Dr. Hunt.

The course of study for the Social Justice specialization investigates and evaluates social justice policies and issues—and encourages students to develop new and effective ideas for policy change that address social, political, and economic inequalities. The specific course of study will vary depending on students' interests and areas of study. Electives include courses on multicultural education, poverty, race, ethnicity, and gender. When asked about the plan of study, Dr. Zajicek maintains that it will "provide students with opportunities to discuss how policy solutions can assist in addressing social inequalities."

*See the Social Justice specialization [website](#) for more information!*

*Read previous PUBP newsletters [here](#).*