



The MPA Network

SUMMER 2025

Newsletter of the Master of Public Administration Program at Eastern Michigan University

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Workshop Provides Public Safety Professionals with Strategic Planning, Budgeting, Grant Writing, & Data Skills

On September 12, 2024, EMU's Department of Political Science collaborated with the Civil Rights and Social Justice Center and Staff and Command Executive Leadership Program to present "Partnerships & Collaborations in Public Safety: Working Together to Address Community Needs." At least 50 individuals attended this workshop that was designed to grant public safety professionals access to skills in strategic planning, budgeting, grant writing, and data analysis. The keynote speaker was Elvin Barren, Chief of Police for the City of Southfield, MI. Since joining the City of Southfield in 2019, Chief Barren has instituted a variety of new initiatives and policy revisions and is recognized for his leadership and determination for community involvement and outreach. MPA faculty members Dr. Barbara Patrick and Dr. Tucker Staley presented two of the breakout sessions, and MPA students assisted with the planning of this event. Students were invited to a networking session after the workshop so they could meet with the public safety professionals.



MPA faculty Dr. Tucker Staley, Police Chief of Southfield Elvin Barren, Political Science Department Head Dr. Barbara Patrick, and Director of the Southeast Michigan Criminal Justice Policy Research Project Dr. Kevin Karpiak



EMU's Chief of Police Matthew Lige speaks during the opening session.



MPA students assist with the public safety workshop.

Students & Alumni Learn from Each Other in the Mentorship Program

2024-25 marked the second year of the MPA Mentorship and Professional Development Program. In this program, public administration students are paired with MPA alumni and have the opportunity gain career advice, job shadow, network, and attend professional meetings with their mentors. When students continue on for a second year, the mentorship program focuses on career readiness; mentors help students by discussing career opportunities, reviewing their resume, and providing support through a job application process. This year, 11 MPA alumni were paired with students, including 9 MPA students, based on similar interests or career sectors.

On October 4, 2024, mentors and students attended an orientation when they met each other and worked together in developing a mentee-mentor commitment contract, which outlined expectations, goals, and action steps of the mentorship. Throughout the year, the MPA program checked in with the pairs, and the participants provided updates about their activities. Mentors and students were invited to the Political Science Department Awards Banquet to share their experiences. Based on the feedback received, the Mentorship & Professional Development Program was a meaningful and worthwhile experience for most participants, and we look forward to engaging students and alumni again this coming year.



To become a mentor, please sign up on the [MPA Alumni webpage](#).

Mentors and mentees at the Political Science Awards Banquet

“[My mentor] Joseph has shown me a lot of what the nonprofit world has to offer. I never realized how an organization could be on the smaller size, but still make a big impact in the community. I knew wanted to work in nonprofits but was unsure of what kind of nonprofit I wanted to go into. Joseph explained to me how it took him many years to find the right nonprofit for him and that I should keep my options open. It was reassuring to me since what I think may be the right choice might not be at all and there will always be other options.”

Summer Torres, MPA Student

2024-25 EMU MPA ADVISORY BOARD

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STUDENT NEWS



MPA student Makaiya Snead (right) and undergraduate political science student Naomi Barbour (left) received a \$4000 grant from EMU

Women in Philanthropy for their project entitled, “From Artifacts to Action: A Community Engagement Initiative Centering Black History.”

The grant brought Dr. Khalid el-Hakim and the Black History 101 Mobile Museum he curates to EMU as part of the MLK Celebration.

Political Science Awards Banquet

This year, the Political Science Department hosted a joint recognition banquet celebrating our undergraduate and graduate students in the department on April 7, 2025, in the EMU Student Center. A number of MPA alumni, professors, current students, and friends and family gathered to mingle and celebrate our honorees. MPA students were inducted into the Pi Alpha Alpha honor society. The MPA Intern of the Year award, the John Barson Fellowship in Public Administration award, and the Jeffrey C. and Mary W. Pardee/ MGFOA Scholarship were presented. Participants in the Mentorship & Professional Development Program shared their experiences. We also presented a new award, the “Emerging Public Service Leader Award” to an EMU MPA alum who has demonstrated exceptional leadership potential early in their public service career. Brian Rombalski, Township Manager of Saginaw Charter Township, was the inaugural awardee.



Dr. Barbara Patrick welcomes guests at the awards banquet.



Dr. Tucker Staley presents the scholarship recipients.



MPA faculty with Emerging Public Service Leader Awardee Brian Rombalski



Emerging Public Service Leader Awardee Brian Rombalski shares advice with students.



Congratulations to this year's Pi Alpha Alpha Inductees

**Samuel Howard
Hailey Kitchen
Evie Murphy
Wesley Scallions
Makaiya Snead**

We are proud of you and your outstanding academic achievements!

Pi Alpha Alpha is the global honor society for public affairs and administration students in programs accredited by Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration.

Emerging Public Service Leader Award

Congratulations to Brian Rombalski, the MPA Program's inaugural recipient of the "Emerging Public Service Leader Award." For this award, MPA faculty selected a recent EMU MPA graduate who has demonstrated exceptional leadership potential early in their public service career. This award celebrates up-and-coming leaders who have the initiative, capacity, and commitment to strengthen their communities.



Brian Rombalski has been the Manager of Saginaw Charter Township since 2022. He graduated from Saginaw Valley State University in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. Brian then attended the EMU MPA program and worked as a graduate assistant. He started as an intern at Saginaw Charter Township, for which he was selected to be the "MPA Intern of the Year" by EMU MPA faculty, and then became the Assistant to the Manager before he graduated from the EMU MPA program in 2018. In 2019, he was promoted to the role of Assistant Manager and then to Manager of Saginaw Charter Township after three years.

Brian shared: "I am very much honored to have received the Emerging Public Service Leader Award. Eastern Michigan will always hold a special place in my heart as the faculty and staff helped to guide me on the path to my chosen career. The MPA program staff care about the people in their program. Not just as students, but as human beings. Their guidance and tutelage prepared me to take on any challenges that face local government. The long nights studying, preparing papers, and presenting to my classmates and professors have directly translated to my working life.

I look forward to celebrating the future recipients of this award, and hope to help guide the next group of public leaders that the MPA program is sure to produce. A word of advice to all those pursuing a career in local government: it may feel at times that the job is thankless as the only calls you receive are those

of a disappointed resident. **Trust me when I tell you that there will always be subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) reminders that the work you do truly impacts the lives of those in the community. Be passionate about your work, and your coworkers will see that and follow."**

MPA faculty member and Political Science Department Head Dr. Barbara Patrick shared: "It has been a genuine pleasure to observe Brian's development into an emerging leader within our department and the broader community. From the moment he stepped into the role of graduate assistant, he approached every task with dedication, humility, and a clear sense of purpose.

In the classroom, Brian consistently demonstrated initiative and adaptability. He not only supported students academically but also connected with them on a personal level—creating an environment where ideas were respected and curiosity was encouraged. In his tenure as a graduate assistant, he managed responsibilities with maturity and foresight, balancing his duties with engagement and integrity.

As a leader of the Public Administration Club, Brian truly distinguished himself as a thoughtful and inclusive leader. He helped to organized initiatives that brought students together and fostered meaningful dialogue on issues of importance.

I'm excited for what's ahead—especially his contributions to Saginaw and beyond. Even more, I look forward to Brian serving as a mentor to our students aspiring to leadership roles in state and local government. His guidance will undoubtedly help shape their career planning in public service."

Barson Fellow



Dr. Tucker Staley & MPA student Woodrow Williams

Congratulations to Woodrow Williams II, who was awarded the John Barson Fellowship for the 2025-26 academic year. Woodrow shared: “This is an amazing

blessing! As a newly married father of 3, pursuing a career change at midlife--the financial boon that this provides for me and my family cannot be overstated. A massive weight has been lifted with the financial award attached and being selected for this Fellowship is vindication for the years of dedicated and diligent work that I have put into both school and family. I am deeply honored and grateful to have been selected. My ultimate plan is to one day run for political office at the state level. Additionally, I am very much interested in pursuing government work, at both the local and state level. As I have been taking time during the course of my graduate studies to intentionally pursue networking opportunities---including acceptance into the MPLP Fellowship through MSU, volunteering time with various political campaigns, and organizing political events for the community within the EMU framework--I have truly found my stride in regard to the type of work that would be fulfilling for me while simultaneously contributing positively to both political discourse and society. **I hope to find a role for myself that has the potential to create the greatest good for the most people.”**

2024-25 MPA TEACHING FACULTY

Gregory Plagens, Ph.D.

Tucker Staley, Ph.D.

Shu Wang, Ph.D.

Stephanie Zorn-Kasprzak, MOL, CCAP

Visit the Political Science Department website to learn more about our faculty: www.emich.edu/polisci



MPA Intern of the Year



MPA student Samuel Howard & Dr. Shu Wang

Congratulations to Samuel Howard, MPA Intern of the Year. Sam shared: “During my internship with the Graham Sustainability Institute, I conducted a study to

determine the feasibility of hiring a sustainability coordinator for the City of Rockford, MI. As part of this, I interviewed various sustainability coordinators around the state and country, met with administrators and elected officials within the city, and researched alternative methods for implementing sustainability leadership within city administration. Ultimately, I created two deliverables for this internship: an internal recommendation for the City of Rockford and a shareable guide to implement sustainability leadership available on the Graham website for any Michigan community to use. I think the research aspect of my internship was the most valuable.

Being able to conduct the research and meet with various actors in sustainability exemplified how municipal employees can work together to craft policy and recommend solutions to common issues.

Overall, I found this internship very eye opening and helpful as I work toward a career in municipal government. Being put in a situation where I had less expertise and had to learn new subjects, while sometimes challenging, gave a glimpse into how municipal employees are faced with topics they don't necessarily have expertise in. Adapting to these situations and being able to quickly research and understand policy options will be a big help in my career.”

Do you have internship or job openings at your agency?

Feel free to send them to rsoliven@emich.edu, and we would be happy to share them with our students.

Pardee/MGFOA Scholarship

Awardee

Congratulations to Eamon Conner, the recipient of the Jeffrey C. and Mary W. Pardee/Michigan Government Finance Officers Association Scholarship. Eamon shared: “I am extremely thankful to have been chosen for this scholarship, and I can’t wait to continue learning more about public finance. Two policies that I spent time reviewing were the capitalization and purchasing policies during my first internship. As I learned more and communicated with the Treasurer, I spent time researching the policies used by many communities across Michigan. This included looking into resources available from MGFOA. With that, I am excited to learn more about MGFOA as I continue to move forward in my career. Looking towards the future, I aspire to work for one of the many parts of the Michigan State Government. I have spent time exploring the different opportunities in many different departments, but currently I am opening my horizons. Recently, I began a second management internship in local government, spending time completing projects involving finance policy, community outreach, sustainability, and more. These experiences have broadened my scope to possibly consider working at the local government level. So while I aspire to work in the state government, recent experiences have begun to leave me torn between local and state government work. But more importantly, **I aspire to work in governmental role serving the people of my community, whether that’s local or across the state.**”



PA Club

This year several MPA students and faculty worked hard to reestablish the Public Administration Club. They look forward to providing undergraduate and graduate students with opportunities to learn about the public service field, job opportunities, professional development, tools for success, the significance of networking, and other pertinent issues impacting citizens and public administrators who serve at the forefront addressing problems at the local, state, and federal levels of government.



Executive Board

- Evie Murphy - Executive Director
- Eamon Conner - Assistant Director
- Samuel Howard - Communications Director
- Wesley Scallions - Conference Director
- Hailey Kitchen - Networking Director
- Woodrow Williams - At-Large / Incoming Networking for 25-26
- Dr. Shu Wang - Advisor

To join, please visit <https://www.emich.edu/political-science/undergrad/organizations/pa-club.php>

Congratulations to our Fall 2024 - Winter 2025 MPA Graduates!

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Nigel Berry | Hailey Kitchen |
| Maureen Feighan-Kurth | Kendric Nowling |
| Kevin Fofanah | Wesley Scallions |
| Samuel Howard | Makaiya Snead |
| James Jameson | |

Be a mentor & help a student learn about public service careers

Want to help a public administration student by sharing your personal experience? Help us empower the next generation of public service leaders by serving as a mentor in the EMU MPA Mentorship & Professional Development Program. We are excited to connect our current students with alumni from

the MPA program so they can build professional relationships, gain career advice, job shadow, and attend professional meetings, conferences, or workshops with their mentors. To learn more and to sign up, please visit the [MPA Alumni webpage](#).

MAKE A GIFT and help our program grow

If you would like to give back to the MPA program, please consider making a contribution.

The **MPA Program Support Fund** supports student and alumni programming.

The **Joe Ohren Student Internship Fund** supports students who are doing an unpaid internship for academic credit.

The **Raymond Rosenfeld Professional Development Fund** supports student participation in conferences, workshops, and other opportunities that will help them excel in their public service careers.

All contributions are tax-deductible.

Donations can be made online: <https://www.emich.edu/political-science/alumni/donate.php>

Thank you for your support!

Update Your Contact & Career Information

Do we have your updated contact and career information? Do you have news you would like to share with us? Would you like to be more involved in the EMU MPA Program? Let us know by completing our online [alumni contact form](#).

Master of Public Administration Program at
Eastern Michigan University

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