

THE MPA NETWORK

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EASTERN
MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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



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The MPA Network is published by the Department of Political Science at EMU to inform MPA alumni, current students, public officials, and academics about the activities of the MPA program and its graduates.

<http://www.emich.edu/mpa>

CIVIL RIGHTS SPEAKER SERIES

This past year, [the Civil Rights and Social Justice Center at EMU](#) – along with the Department of Political Science and the Department of Africology and African American Studies – presented a three-part speaker series titled, “60 Years of Civil Rights: From the Church House to Social Media—the Struggle Continues.” The events provided a throughline narrative of civil rights activism in America over the last half century. Political Science Department Head and MPA Faculty Member Dr. Barbara Patrick is the founder and current director of Civil Rights and Social Justice Center. Helen Harding, who recently graduated from the EMU MPA program and served as a graduate assistant last year, worked on coordinating and promoting the events and provided the following summary of the first event:

To inaugurate the event series, Dr. Leslie McLemore gave a keynote address to a full auditorium in Sill Hall on November 17, 2022. Dr. McLemore has a long history of activism which started in Mississippi in 1964, when he helped coordinate voting registration efforts in Black communities. At that time, Dr. McLemore was a field secretary for SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and vice chairman of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Dr. McLemore told the group of students, faculty, staff, and community members about his experience as a young person who was deeply committed to the movement; he talked about his education, his influences, his family, and his values.

The talk was followed by a facilitated discussion with two other elder civil rights activists—Reverend Dan Aldridge and Mr. John Hardy, both from Detroit. The panel took questions from the audience which made for a frenetic, but interesting discussion. The panelists recounted stories from the frontlines of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. This gave their audience a personal account of the brutality they and their colleagues endured, but also the moments of joy that they shared—my favorite story was about SNCC meetings and how they often started with members singing songs together. The evening ended by Dr. Patrick giving students-attendees Dr. McLemore’s book, “Freedom Summer: A Brief History.” These were generously provided by EMU Engage.

During Dr. McLemore’s time here at Eastern, he not only spoke at the Civil Rights and Social Justice Center’s event, but he made connections around campus. Facilitated by Dr. Patrick, Dr. McLemore attended Dr. Pyle’s undergraduate class, shared meals with faculty, and gave an interview with archivist Matt Jones, of University Archives. Dr. McLemore’s energy, commitment, and legacy are a true testament to resilience, perseverance, and reserve. It was an honor to hear him speak and be in his presence.

The second event "Neshoba: The Price of Freedom" was cancelled due to inclement weather. The third event "A Conversation on Race, Policing, & Social Justice: Where Do We Go From Here?" featured Marques Banks from the Black Movement Law Project, followed by a facilitated panel discussion with Natalie Holbrook, Michigan Criminal Justice Program; Dr. Aaron Rollins Jr., Peace, Justice, & Conflict Transformation Program, University of Louisville; Eleanore Ablan-Owens, Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice; and Rai Lanier, Michigan Liberation.

2022-23 MPA TEACHING FACULTY

David Klein, Ph.D.

Tucker Staley, Ph.D.

Stephanie Zorn-Kasprzak,
MOL, CCAP

Barbara Patrick, Ph.D.

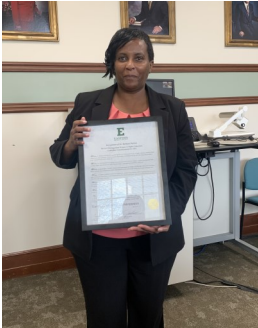
Shu Wang, Ph.D.

Gregory Plagens, Ph.D.

Kevin Welch, MPA

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

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT NEWS



DR. BARBARA PATRICK

Dr. Barbara Patrick was named the recipient of the Distinguished Woman in Higher Education Leadership Award by the Michigan American Council on Education Women's Network for her outstanding leadership; advocacy work for students, faculty, and staff; and expertise in social science, gender, race, and public policy.

Dr. Patrick and her coauthor, Aaron C. Rollins of the University of Louisville, won the award for the best article published in 2022 in the journal *Public Administration Quarterly*. The article "Delivering Culturally Competent and Equitable Police Services Via Social Media: Assessing Two Way Dialogue between Police Agencies and Vulnerable Citizens" may be read [online](#).



DR. SHU WANG

Dr. Shu Wang is the project lead for a collaboration with the Southeast Michigan Criminal Justice Policy Research Project (SMART) at Eastern Michigan University and the City of Chelsea to reimagine safety and security for community members in Washtenaw County.

SMART comprises criminal justice and public administration experts dedicated to mobilizing EMU's expertise in serving the broader community and regional needs in criminal justice reform and policy development. An outside audit of Chelsea's policing practices found that some of their high-risk policies such as training and use of force weren't aligned with national policing agencies. To help improve policing and collaboration between the department and the citizens of Chelsea, SMART faculty will provide training sessions, community engagement events, and strategic planning sessions.

"I hope this project can help Chelsea heal from the trauma in 2020 by starting a productive conversation between public safety officers and local residents," said Wang. "Through this project, I hope they can learn from each other, foster and solidify trust, and create a shared vision for public safety upheld by the community."

Dr. Wang also won a summer research award for her work on "The Impact of Wind Energy on Local Tax Base in Michigan."

IN MEMORIAM: DOREEN MENDELSSOHN

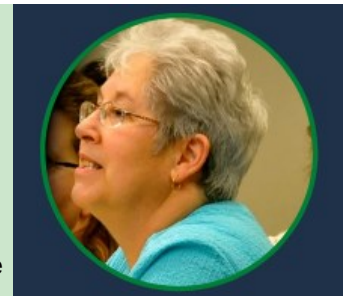
Senior Secretary, Department of Political Science

Our hearts remain heavy in political science as we mourn our dear friend, Doreen Mendelssohn, who passed away on July 16, 2023, after a long illness. The heart and soul of the political science department since 1999, Doreen provided administrative support to seven department heads and many faculty members with whom she worked over the years. Doreen ran the department with competence, calm, and good cheer. She was especially beloved by the graduate assistants and student workers with whom she worked, who have responded to her passing by calling her "an amazing mentor with a heart of gold," "a true beacon amongst all the chaos," "a second mom and mentor," and a "welcoming and supportive cheerleader" who was always there for her students, even after they graduated and left the university. We will never forget the ladybug decorations everywhere in her office, the joy she took in her interactions with our students (including jokingly trying to get them to pay for course overrides), and her signature expression, "Gotta love it!" as she coped with all the job threw at her.

Doreen was a kind and generous friend, a dedicated mentor to so many students, and was much beloved by all of us. We hold her in our hearts and will always remember the impact she had on so many. May her memory be for a blessing.

The family has scheduled a memorial on August 19 at 3 p.m. at the Eagles Club, 24401 5 Mile Road, in Redford.

You may contribute a memorial fund to honor her memory and work at EMU on the EMU Foundation website: <https://www.emich.edu/foundation/give/index.php?fund=02819>



OUTSTANDING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR AWARD RECIPIENT, PATRICIA DENIG

The EMU MPA Program is proud to recognize Patricia Denig as the 2023 “Public Administrator of the Year.” The following is an excerpt of Dr. Greg Plagens’ speech for Patricia, 2013 EMU MPA alumna who now serves as the Director of Human Resources for Pittsfield Charter Township:

Pittsfield’s current township supervisor, Mandy Grewal said that: “A lot of people do not know that Patricia came to human resources as a second career. We knew each other from Washtenaw County, where we both worked as planners. She went through additional training and certification, and I hired her in the HR role for Pittsfield Township. She picks things up quickly and does a tremendous job.”

After her early career in nonprofit administration, Patricia served in various roles with Washtenaw County, including Director of Planning Services in the Office of Strategic Planning and Interim Director in the Department of Employment Training and Community Services. Patricia has enjoyed the diversity of experiences in her career.

Across all of her positions, she was most rewarded when learning something new and when mentoring or coaching someone to be successful. Patricia said, “I believe lifelong learning is critical to an individual’s success and their ability to grow, change, and be flexible with what life gives you. I also love seeing someone set a stretch goal and then achieve it!”

Patricia always appreciated when supervisors believed in her abilities to accomplish great things. Sometimes, she noted, they were more certain that she could do something than she was. That has influenced how she approaches managing. **“Having someone believe you are capable of something more than you think is instrumental in helping you succeed.** It has inspired me to try to do the same with others, and it is always so rewarding to see the light come on and see them succeed.”

Human resources is a role that has required a lot of learning, but it has allowed Patricia’s strengths to shine through. She has poured herself into the role day after day. Supervisor Grewal said that Patricia has what she likes to call the human touch. “She is empathetic, and employees appreciate it. One thing she does is to leave small pieces of chocolate on people’s keyboards when they are away from their desks just to let them know they’re being thought of and are appreciated.”

I have observed Patricia’s human touch in my graduate classroom, where Patricia has come over several years as a guest speaker. The students always enjoy hearing about the role of the HR director and its many challenges. At the end of each session, Patricia always invites students to contact her with questions about HR or the profession. I know that several students have sought her insight and advice as they were planning transitions in their own career paths. It is this level of concern for others, among other things, that distinguishes Patricia.

She has distinguished herself through volunteer service over the course of her career, serving the following organizations for more than a decade: WEMU, the United Way of Washtenaw County, Catholic Social Services, the Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce, and Meals on Wheels. She has also served numerous other nonprofit organizations for lesser periods of time.

“Making a difference in the community or for an individual, it’s why I entered the profession and what gives me the most satisfaction. I always love surprising an employee, resident, or business by going above and beyond their expectations. Sadly, many think “government workers” do the minimal amount necessary and are slackers, so it’s always a joy to WOW them by providing a high level of expertise, professionalism, helpfulness, thoroughness, and even just simple kindness when they contact my department.”

As I move toward concluding my introduction of Patricia, I want to share one last anecdote. I asked Patricia what advice she would give to people entering the profession today. She said, **“Always remember that Public Service is a noble profession, and we need bright, energetic individuals in the field. It may not pay as much as many private sector jobs, but making your community, state, or country better is worth so much more than dollars.”**



MPA ALUMNI RECEPTION AND AWARDS CEREMONY

The annual MPA reception was held on April 3, 2023, in the EMU Student Center. A number of alumni, professors, current students, and friends of the program gathered to mingle and celebrate our honorees both in person and on Zoom. Patricia Denig, Director of Human Resources for Pittsfield Charter Township and 2013 EMU MPA alumna, received the Outstanding Public Administrator award. MPA students were inducted into the Pi Alpha Alpha honor society, and the MPA Intern of the Year was presented.

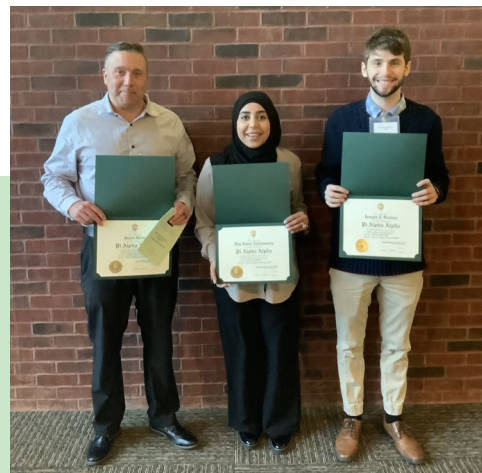


MPA alumni, past faculty, friends, and family smile for photos at the reception.



Dr. Tucker Staley recognizes the Pi Alpha Alpha inductees.

(Below) Dr. Greg Plagens and Patricia Denig, the Public Administrator of the Year



Congratulations to this year's **PI ALPHA ALPHA INDUCTEES**

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.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Fay Jamal Alshimmary | Jason Meier |
| Elle Cole | Joseph J. Sculuca |
| Chelsea Marie Hanson | |

FEATURED STUDENTS

BARSON FELLOWSHIP AWARD



Congratulations to Stacie Blakley, who was awarded the John Barson Fellowship for the 2023-24 academic year. Stacie shared: "What an honor and privilege it is to have been selected! I'm so thankful to the endowment and to the scholarship committee for this generous contribution to my educational success and investment in my future as a nonprofit leader. For the past five years, I have worked in the nonprofit realm of healthcare at Gift of Life Michigan, where I was recently promoted to a leadership position. The knowledge I have gained in the EMU MPA program has furthered the development of my leadership skills, and I am certain that it will continue to factor into my success in nonprofit management. **Throughout my career, I have always endeavored to use my skills to contribute to creating positive change, and I look forward to using the competencies I have gained in this program to aid me in becoming a change leader in my role.**

PARDEE/MGFOA SCHOLARSHIP AWARD



Congratulations to Willow Newman, the Jeffrey C. and Mary W. Pardee/MGFOA Scholarship award recipient. Willow shared: "**I am very touched and honored to be the recipient of such a prestigious award, and I am looking forward to the amazing learning opportunities I will have as a member of the MGFOA.** My career interests lay in the realms of nonprofit management and strategic planning in the areas of sustainability, parks, social and environmental justice, and education. Currently, I work as a Fellow for the City of Ann Arbor on their Solid Waste Ordinance creation for Organics collection and Construction & Deconstruction working towards the goal of a sustainable circular economy by 2030. I am also working with the City of East Tawas to design a community park on 5 acres of old growth forest next to Lake Tawas that I am donating to the city for preservation, education, and community.

Want to learn more about our graduate students?

Visit our website to view the profiles of students in our MPA program:

<https://www.emich.edu/political-science/grad/master/graduate-students.php>

MPA INTERN OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Erin McCargar, the MPA Intern of the Year. Dr. Greg Plagens, who was the faculty advisor for the internship seminar course, shared the following:

In response to one particular journaling exercise about knowledge, skills and abilities, Erin had this to say about her experiences:

“While interning with Canton Township, I have applied for an electric vehicle infrastructure grant, conducted ordinance research, provided policy recommendations, participated in a master planning process, conducted site plan reviews and site inspections, and participated in professional development opportunities. These experiences have helped me to gain context and practical, real-world understanding of how to apply the concepts I learned in the classroom. For example, in my courses I learned some baseline information about types of local ordinances. In my internship experience, I’ve had the opportunity to read specific ordinances in depth, understand common problems and issues with the ordinance, investigate legal challenges, participate in ordinance revision, and talk with citizens and staff about their experience navigating the ordinance.”



When asked in another exercise why doing an internship and taking the internship seminar should qualify for academic credit at EMU, Erin said the following: **“Working in my organization is not just a “job” or an extra-curricular. Every day I am analyzing the different experiences I am having as they compare to what we have learned in class. This means I am constantly thinking about my academic experience and applying it in more ways than I have at any other previous time. For me personally, being able to do something practical or hands-on with the information I am trying to learn has always been most successful.”**

GRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

On March 23, 2023, MPA student Erin McCargar presented her research "An Examination of Income Inequality and its Impact on Employee Motivation" at the EMU Graduate Research Conference. Dr. Barbara Patrick served as her faculty mentor.

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.

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