

Areas of Research and Scholarship Excellence Nomination

Area of Existing and Emerging Excellence: Public and Nonprofit Management and Policy

Lead:

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The field of public administration is inherently interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, bridging together theories and perspectives across disciplines as well as those built from within the field to address the complex public management and policy problems. Much of public administration research focuses on the “wicked” problems of today that require collaboration across levels of government and the government, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors to address, such as homelessness and affordable housing, transportation, and the current COVID-19 pandemic.

While faculty in MPA program in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration in CLAS are the central hub of this area, we work with faculty across campus to address different policy and management issues, including with the Urban Institute and the Women + Girls Research Alliance, and contribute to interdisciplinary programs across campus, such as the Public Policy PhD program and the capitalism studies minor. For example, this nomination includes participation from the following colleges across campus:

- **College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS)**
 - **Gerald G. Fox Master of Public Administration Program, Department of Political Science & Public Administration**
- **The William States Lee College of Engineering**
 - **Infrastructure, Design, Environment, and Sustainability (IDEAS) Center**

Keywords: Public and Nonprofit Management; Cross-Sector Collaboration; Public Policy; Social Equity; Transdisciplinary to Address Public Problems



UNC CHARLOTTE
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Gerald G. Fox Master of Public Administration

Executive Summary

Today's societal challenges require collaboration across levels of government—federal, state, and local—and sectors—government, nonprofit, and for-profit. Public administration is an inherently transdisciplinary field bridging multiple theoretical perspectives and lenses to bear on complex problems facing society, the unique management challenges of government and nonprofits, and advancing social equity. MPA faculty not only address contemporary management and policy issues through our research, but serve the community through collaborative research, applied student projects, and our training of future government and nonprofit leaders.

MPA faculty have collective expertise in intergovernmental relations, networks and collaborations, budget and finance, public and nonprofit management, social policy, evaluation, and applied work at the local, regional, and national level. These perspectives are vital to addressing contemporary problems from the affordable housing crises in Charlotte to the global pandemic that require effective public management and collaboration across levels of government and sectors.

The MPA faculty and program bring many assets to the university, such as:

- A nationally ranked MPA program (#58) with Budget and Finance ranked #23 in the nation
- Certificates that can be incorporated with other degree programs in: Public Budget & Finance, Nonprofit Management, Emergency Management, and Urban Management & Policy
- Community-engaged research and scholars with grants with local, state, and national funders
- A transdisciplinary perspective and applied lens on public and nonprofit management and policy that can be added to collaborative research teams
- Well-trained, dedicated, and engaged MPA students for local, regional, and national employers as well as PhD programs
- Active and engaged alumni network, especially with government and nonprofit organizations in the Charlotte metro region
- POLS-Lab a collaborative experimental and survey research resource
- Engagement in interdisciplinary programs like the Public Policy PhD and capital studies minor

Investment in the MPA program, incorporation of our applied management and policy lens to public and nonprofit research across campus, and an expanded focus on public and nonprofit management and policy would not only elevate our collective reputation but also better serve our students, region, and nation. We should equip our students with the applied knowledge to work in public service, broadly defined as government and nonprofits, and to address public problems regardless of job sector. We should translate our research to practice offering management and policy solutions to public problems and collaborate with government and nonprofit organizations to directly address their challenges and offer lessons learned for others. Now is time to serve our community, students, and nation. To further enhance our reputation and capacity:

- Provide funding and administrative support to the POLS-Lab to ensure this cross-campus resource with the potential to serve the community not only survives but thrives
- Establish a Public and Nonprofit Management certificate or concentration in existing interdisciplinary PhD programs like Public Policy and Organizational Science
- Establish an interdisciplinary minor in Nonprofit Studies to bridge those studying nonprofits across campus, address student interests in addressing societal issues, and expand undergraduate employment opportunities
- Provide greater administrative support to the MPA program for both grants to enhance and facilitate funding and community capacity to maintain and enhance community ties, engage alumni, and cultivate partnerships for research, grants, and student opportunities.

Evidence of Strength and Excellence

The transdisciplinary lens of public administration equips us with the knowledge and skills to collaborate across boundaries on and off campus. Both the MPA program and faculty have a growing reputation in several key areas: intergovernmental relations, networks and collaborations, budget and finance, public and nonprofit management, social policy, evaluation, and applied work at the local, regional, and national level. Throughout our work we take our values of accountability, diversity, equity, service, leadership, efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and opportunity.

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the need for collaboration across levels of government and for a greater understanding of our federalist system. Examining the complexity of policy venues, Suzanne Leland, Jacqueline Chattopadhyay, and Jaclyn Piatak have articles in *Governance* and *Policy Studies Journal* illustrating the role of public trust and risk perception in preferences for which level of government should be responsible for different policy areas. Dr. Leland received the Donald Stone Distinguished Scholar Award from the Section on Intergovernmental Administration and Management of the American Society of Public Administration in 2019, highlighting her national reputation in advancing our understanding of intergovernmental relations, an area of greater attention and potential expansion.

As intersectoral collaborations and networks are more frequently needed and used to address public problems, the need to examine the management and implementation of networks arises. Jaclyn Piatak has examined informal accountability dynamics in networks in several articles, including the *Journal of Public Administration and Theory* and a best article award in *Human Service Organizations*. Joanne Carman has worked on funded research from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Zach Mohr received a grant from the Naval Post-graduate School Acquisition Research Program (\$116,267) to examine network performance.

Our MPA program was nationally ranked by U.S. News and World Report for Public Budget and Finance (#23) the first time in 2020. We have three faculty in this area Zach Mohr, Suzanne Leland, and Jim Douglas who not only advance research on government budgeting and finance but also train students and help them get jobs as budget officers, finance directors, and city managers. We'd like to continue to grow our reputation as leaders in Public Budget and Finance as well as be recognized and grow other strength areas.

We should be nationally ranked leaders in public and nonprofit management. Top PhD programs across the nation lack sufficient faculty with a management focus despite the growing attention to public and nonprofit management among students and in the field. While several faculty members participate in PPOL, and Dr. Leland was the 2020 recipient of the Harshini V. de Silva Graduate Mentor Award, we could fill this void by offering a Public and Nonprofit Management concentration or certificate within our interdisciplinary PhD programs like Public Policy and Organizational Science.

We have several collaborations on key topics in public management, both in terms of faculty expertise in topics like contracting, rule following, and public service motivation. Jaclyn Piatak recently published a Cambridge University Press book on examining who has public service motivation and how it influences public policy preferences given increasing polarization, using data from a UNCC module of a national survey coordinated by the POLS-Lab that has also resulted in several journal articles with more in progress. We also have several collaborations, such as Suzanne Leland, Zach Mohr, and Jaclyn Piatak who examine blame attribution in government contracting to private providers using experimental data from the POLS-Lab that has resulted in two publications

so far with several more in progress. Similarly, Dr. Piatak and Dr. Mohr examine gender and rule following in government and nonprofit organizations with two publications out and several more in progress using experimental data from the POLS-Lab and a survey funded by the Women + Girls Research Alliance. The POLS-Lab has supported faculty research within the program, department, college, and across campus. Dr. Piatak currently serves as Associate Editor of the *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs* and *Review of Public Personnel Administration* and on the Editorial Boards of *Public Personnel Management*, the *Journal of Strategic Contracting and Negotiation*, and the *Journal of Behavioral Public Administration*. In addition, Dr. Leland and Dr. Mohr published a textbook with emeritus professor Gary Rassel, *Research Methods for Public Administrators*. POLS-Lab is beginning to garner national attention and with investment from the university would enhance our research capacity, collaboration, and our reputation in public management and behavioral public administration.

We also have excellence and potential for growth in nonprofit management, where Joanne Carman, Sarah Pettijohn, and Jaclyn Piatak have expertise. Dr. Pettijohn's work on the nonprofit sector is often the go-to resource (431 Google Scholar citations to her nonprofit brief) and collectively we have publications in the top nonprofit. Expansion of our existing nonprofit concentration and certificate program and potentially an interdisciplinary nonprofit minor would gain recognition, help local nonprofits, and help students find jobs in the nonprofit sector or social conscious businesses.

Jaclyn Piatak received funding from the American Society of Association Executives Foundation (\$7,500) building upon her internal faculty research grant (\$7,120) to address diversity, equity and inclusion in nonprofit management. In collaboration with an international environmental organization, Dr. Piatak is examining volunteer management with an MPA student, Will Prince, who has presented their work at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. Will is applying to PhD programs, but not at UNCC – a public and nonprofit management track or PhD program would help us further educate our best and brightest. With an MPA alum in an evaluator role at the Mint Museum, Dr. Piatak has a forthcoming publication on racial and ethnic diversity in arts participation and the role of cultural representation with plans to apply for grants in the future. Working with the Points of Light Foundation, Dr. Piatak and Dr. Carman are evaluating their service enterprise program and have surveyed volunteers to examine best practices in volunteer management and engagement. Dr. Chattopadhyay and Dr. Carman have expertise in program evaluation and all MPA faculty have expertise to contribute to addressing national, regional, and local organizations to address today's management and policy issues if given support.

At the local level, Dr. Carman partnered with Lori Thomas and the Urban Institute on Housing First for Mecklenburg County (\$198,983) and won the Bonnie E. Cone Professorship in Civic Engagement in 2020. Dr. Carman has worked with dozens of government agencies and nonprofits throughout her career serving the region and beyond. Dr. Leland was the principal investigator on cross-campus grant with engineering faculty for NC Department of Transportation (\$196,000).

Our work extends beyond the U.S. Using survey data of government professionals across Europe, Jim Douglas has collaborated with Dr. Mohr to examine the comparative use of cost accounting in *Public Administration Review* and with Dr. Piatak to examine the role perceptions in *Public Management Review*. His work also focuses on expenditure cuts in fiscal crises, an issue all too relevant for today's government agencies across the globe.

Investment in the MPA program and POLS-Lab as well as a Public and Nonprofit Management focus for our interdisciplinary PhD programs and a new interdisciplinary nonprofit studies minor could further enhance our excellence and better serve our students, community, and nation.

Alignment with Regional and National Priorities

The strengths and expertise of the MPA faculty and program align with the university's "commitment to addressing the cultural, economic, educational, environmental, health, and social needs of the greater Charlotte region." Faculty have received funding from local and regional governments and foundations to examine pressing issues facing Charlotte, the greater metro region, and state. With funding support for greater capacity for applied work, such as administrative personnel and graduate assistants, we could expand these efforts to serve the community, engage our students, conduct timely work that matters, and enhance our reputation.

As a transdisciplinary program at a university with several interdisciplinary programs across campus, we can help with UNCC's aspiration to "Create meaningful collaborations among university, business, and community leaders to address issues and opportunities of the region." Our applied faculty research with community funders and partners, our applied student projects, internships, and fellowships, as well as our strong alumni network in government and nonprofit organizations in the region and beyond, we are a hub for facilitating and joining meaningful collaborations.

We contribute a vital lens to several of the national funding priorities, such as NSF's big idea on infrastructure with science and engineering, as illustrated by Dr. Leland leading a transportation team with engineering for NC DOT. Our work can contribute across NSF research areas by bringing an applied and government and nonprofit perspective, and most directly relates to the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences. Our applied transdisciplinary perspective contributes an important to pressing issues like NIH's minority health and health disparities, such as Dr. Chattopadhyay's work on health inequities. Many big funders are looking for teams to address the implications for government and society, which is our key area of focus.

Our work is relevant to government agencies and we have submitted grant proposals to agencies like the Corporation for National and Community Service and the National Arts Endowment and have been funded by agencies like Naval Post-graduate School that has interest in public management issues as does the Department of Defense. With greater capacity, we could apply more federal government grants.

While work that impacts government, nonprofits, and society are of interest to national funders, much of our collective funding has also been from smaller grants to address particular management and policy issues, such as elections administration, housing, transportation, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. These opportunities stem from local and national foundations, such as Z. Smith Reynolds and the American Society for Association Executives, as well as local and state governments, such as Mecklenburg County and NC Department of Transportation.

Our work has received internal support through faculty research grants and the Women + Girls Research Alliance and support from outside institutes like the MIT Election Data and Science Lab. However, with regular funding and support for a dedicated graduate assistant, the POLS-Lab could serve as a resource across campus, the region, and nation.

Faculty are deeply engaged and dedicated in our professional associations, including the American Society of Public Administration and the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, that are also potential sources of funding. The transdisciplinary lens supports national and regional priorities that touch on government, nonprofit, and policy issues.

Participating Faculty

Name	Title	Affiliation	Expertise
Jaclyn Piatak	Associate Professor	Political Science & Public Administration, CLAS	Public Management, Nonprofit Management, Intergovernmental Relations, Networks and Collaborations, Social Policy, Applied
Zach Mohr	Associate Professor, POLS-Lab Director	Political Science & Public Administration, CLAS	Budget and Finance, Public Management, Intergovernmental Relations, Networks and Collaborations, Applied
Joanne Carman	Associate Professor	Political Science & Public Administration, CLAS	Nonprofit Management, Networks and Collaborations, Evaluation, Applied
Jacqueline Chattopadhyay	Associate Professor	Political Science & Public Administration, CLAS	Social Policy, Public Management, Intergovernmental Relations, Evaluation, Applied
Suzanne Leland	Professor	Political Science & Public Administration, CLAS	Budget and Finance, Social Policy, Public Management, Intergovernmental Relations, Applied
Jim Douglas	Professor	Political Science & Public Administration, CLAS	Budget and Finance, Social Policy, Public Management, Comparative
Sarah Pettijohn	Assistant Professor	Political Science & Public Administration, CLAS	Nonprofit Management, Public Management, Networks and Collaborations, Applied
Jourdan Davis	Assistant Professor (to begin Fall 2021)	Political Science & Public Administration, CLAS	Public Management, Nonprofit Management, Social Policy
Srinivas S. Pulugurtha	Professor	Professor & Research Director of Civil and Environmental Engineering, The William States Lee College of Engineering	Director of Infrastructure, Design, Environment, and Sustainability (IDEAS) Center

See supporting 2-page CVs for details on individual expertise and contributions to the area of existing and emerging excellence in Public and Nonprofit Management and Policy.