Are We Preparing Our Students for Success? Employment Outlooks for Policy Graduate Students

2019 Spring Conference
May 14 – 15, 2019
Mathematica Policy Research Offices
Washington, DC

APPAM

41st Annual Fall Research Conference

Rising to the Challenge:
Engaging Diverse
Perspectives on Issues
and Evidence

November 7-9, 2019
Denver, CO

Welcome to APPAM's 2019 Spring Conference. The conference will focus around the theme, Are We Preparing Our Students for Success? Employment Outlooks for Policy Graduate Students. This conference will bring together graduate program representatives, and academic and non-academic employers to look at the skills being taught in graduate policy programs, discuss curricula trends, and assess whether these skills are what employers need in practice.

We will kick off on Tuesday evening with a plenary that brings together public policy and public affairs alumni to reflect on their graduate program experience, focusing on skills they learned that are valuable in their current positions and skills they wish they learned. We will hear from program alumni that work in a range of industries including academia, research, and government.

Wednesday brings a full day of programming with an opening plenary on digital and analytical literacy followed by six sessions on topics such as employer perspectives, innovations in program curricula, and differences in doctoral programs. I hope that all sessions and events at the conference will be filled with productive discussions and positive insight on what is needed to connect education and practice in the policy field.

Thank you for participating in this important conference. I look forward to seeing you in Washington.

Patty Troppe

Patty Troppe, Ph.D.

Institutional Reps Chair
Spring Conference Chair

Conference Information

Parking

There are several public parking garages near the conference location. Please note the hours of the garage for both valet and self-park, especially for Tuesday evening's plenary session.

Registration

Please wear your conference badge at all times. If you pick up your badge on Tuesday evening, please bring it with you for Wednesdays events as well. You can pick up your badge when you check in at the registration desk during the following hours:

Tuesday, May 14: 4:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Wednesday, May 15: 8:00 am – 2:00 pm

Wi-Fi Access

Wi-Fi will be available for all conference attendees through the following network:

Network: MeetingWiFi
Password: ProgressTogether

2019 Spring Conference Agenda

Tuesday, May 14

4:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Registration

Location: 12th Floor Lobby

Please come to registration to check-in and pick up your conference badge. Attendees will use the same badge for both Tuesday and Wednesday events.

4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Reception

Location: 12th Floor Lobby

Please join us for beer, wine, and hors d'oeuvres as we prepare to kick off the Spring Conference!

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Dinner Plenary: Public Affairs Program Graduate Perspectives: What I Valued and What I Wish I Learned

Locations: Dinner served in 10th Floor Cafeteria; Plenary in 10th Floor Commons

The panel will discuss the range of skills taught in masters and PhD policy programs and how those skills are used on a daily basis. They will discuss the disconnect between skills that are taught and skills that they wish were taught but are not. The discussion will take place over a buffet dinner and questions from the audience are encouraged.

Speakers

- Moderator: Patty Troppe, Westat
- Kirk Heffelmire, Internal Revenue Service
- Kimberley Meinert, US House of Representatives
- Steven Putansu, US Government Accountability Office
- Sarah Tahamont, University of Maryland

Wednesday, May 15

8:00 am – 2:00 pm

Registration

Location: 12th Floor Lobby

Any attendee who did not pick up their conference badge on Tuesday evening should stop by Registration on Wednesday morning. Your Conference badge grant you access to all of the conference events.

8:00 am – 9:00 am

Breakfast

Location: 12th Floor Lobby

Join fellow Spring Conference attendees for a light breakfast before kicking off a full day of event programming.

9:00 – 10:15 am

Opening Plenary: Digital & Analytic Literacy to Bridge the Skills Gap

Location: 12th Floor Conference Center

New federal legislation fundamentally resets the future for policy makers and government managers. The Foundations for Evidence Based Policymaking Act of 2018 shifted requirements for data notification and data processing away from silo efforts (the traditional punch card approach) to a very large, unstructured database approach. Therefore, graduate education must refocus teaching on both the ability to decisively function in highly technical, big data environments and on the need for interpretation of high-quality analytic outputs. There is also a need to consider the technical skills required of policy analysts and public managers dealing with machine learning and rapid technological change. The curricula of the future will necessarily incorporate nontraditional technical skills to such as coding, privacy education and more. Enhanced teaching of technical and analytic skills today will prepare tomorrow's workforce to be problem solvers managing both machine and human assets. Skill sets related to complex issues of protected public data, rules against sharing and the limits of digital and analytic literacy will be discussed.

Speakers

- Moderator: Dora Kingsley Vertenten, University of Southern California
- Heather Campbell, Claremont University
- Juliet Musso, University of Southern California
- Logan O'Shaughnessy, Consumer Protection Privacy Bureau

Wednesday, May 15

10:30 – 11:30 am

Attendees will choose one of the following two sessions from 10:30 am – 11:30 am.

Session #1: Differences in Doctoral Programs: Variation in Admission Requirements, Program Characteristics, and Graduation Requirements

Location: 12th Floor Conference Center

Substantial variation exists in our doctoral programs regarding admission requirements, program characteristics, and graduation requirements. This panel will feature several faculty involved in doctoral education to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these differences. Specifically, the following will be addressed. In terms of admission requirements, are students who intend to study part-time allowed to apply? Are students with a bachelor's degree eligible to apply? With regards to program requirements, one of the topics discussed will include the content of the methods curriculum for doctoral students. Finally, the discussion on graduate requirements will be on the dissertation requirement and whether schools prefer one manuscript or multiple (or three) articles. In addition, the topic of whether co-authored research can satisfy part of the dissertation requirement will be discussed.

Speakers
- Moderator: Alison Jacknowitz, American University
- Sarah Jane Brubaker, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Joe Cordes, George Washington University
- Anil Deolalikar, University of California, Riverside

Session #2: Open Access Employability Skills and Tools

Location: 12th Floor Caucus Boardroom

The session will discuss the usage of open access Community of Learning for an MPP degree program. On this community platform, materials / tools are shared, free of charge, to our MPP students and everyone else that is interested. The project was implemented by Maastricht University in Academic year 2017-2019 and will be updated for next year as well. The speakers will discuss the program, what went right, what could be improved and what the next steps for the program are.

Speakers
- Mindel van de Laar, Maastricht University / UNU-MERIT
- Katerina Triantos, Maastricht University / UNU-MERIT

Wednesday, May 15

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Networking Lunch

Locations: Lunch served in 12th Floor Commons; Extra seating in 12th Floor Conference Center

Attendees are invited to discuss the morning plenary and sessions with their peers while they enjoy lunch. A buffet lunch will be available for all attendees.

12:45 pm – 1:45 pm

Attendees will choose one of the following two sessions from 12:45 pm – 1:45 pm.

Session #1: Innovations in the Teaching of Professional Skills

Location: 12th Floor Caucus Boardroom

One of the tensions that has defined the field of public affairs and public policy is the clash between the rather specialized subfields of traditional academic disciplines and equipping our scholars and graduates to impact public policy more effectively. Specifically, our field struggles with ways to make policy choices in the public space, even when our research and work provides valuable insights and useful guidance about many of these choices. While much attention has been focused on traditional public speaking and writing skills in the recent literature, technology is opening up a new portfolio of tools and opportunities that can allow our schools to better equip our students to not only do work that informs policy, but also to impact how it is made. Panelists will share some of the exciting innovations that their respective programs have developed to both better equip students to be effective in impacting public policy, and also to immerse them more deeply in learning environments that directly engage them in the development of actual and adopted solutions to public policy problems.

Speakers

- Moderator: Mike Shires, Pepperdine University
- Sandra Archibald, University of Washington
- Angela Evans, University of Texas, Austin
- Rachel Swanger, Pardee Rand Graduate School

Wednesday, May 15

12:45 pm – 1:45 pm – continued

Session #2: Work for Uncle Sam in Challenging Times: Perspectives from Government Employers

Location: 12th Floor Conference Center

While engagement with government is a core component of the mission of APPAM's academic institutions, non-governmental employers are increasingly outcompeting government as an employer of choice for talented graduates. This session takes an unabashedly pro-government employment perspective to discuss two critical questions: (1) How can governments and universities strengthen the pipeline of publicly-engaged recent graduates into public sector positions? (2) What skills, competencies, and experiences will be most critically in demand for government employers in the future?

Speakers
- Moderator: Jackie Speedy, Carnegie Mellon University
- Rob Seidner, US Office of Management and Budget
- Jenni Owen, Office of North Carolina Governor Ray Cooper
- Vicky Mei, The Lab at DC, Government of the District of Columbia
- Peter Morrissey, The Volcker Alliance

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Attendees will choose one of the following two sessions from 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm.

Session #1: Crossing the Line: Innovations in Alumni Shaping Public Policy Curricula

Location: 12th Floor Caucus Boardroom

Traditionally, academics have adamantly rejected external influences over graduate program curricula. However, the rapid pace of political, economic, and social change in the modern world, as well as translational problems between public policy scholarship and practice, often leads to a disconnect that is detrimental to professional graduate students. This session will explore innovative ways in which alumni have been "brought to the table" in shaping public policy curricula. In addition to discussing innovations, this session also hopes to identify and resolve challenges to incorporating alumni perspectives in curriculum design, including managing expectations for alumni engagement, working with alumni to identify practical learning objectives, and ensuring bi-directional relationships between research and practice.

Speakers
- Maria Fitzpatrick, Cornell University
- Lori Taylor, Texas A&M University
- Kenneth Rogerson, Duke University

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm - continued

Session #2: Smoothing a Bumpy Road: Matching Government Employer Demand with Policy Graduate Supply

Location: 12th Floor Conference Center

The match between government employers and policy program graduates too often seems evasive even when there is an apparent good fit between the two. This panel will focus on challenges that government employers and policy graduate degree programs face when seeking to connect each other's worlds, and strategies for addressing those challenges in ways that result in more policy program graduates pursuing careers in the public sector. It will offer possibilities for creating and maintaining lasting pathways between the two.

Speakers

- Moderator: Jenni Owen, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper
- Michael R. Dail, North Carolina Department of Public Safety
- Peter Morrissey, The Volcker Alliance
- Jeffrey Simms, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Join Us at These Future APPAM Events