

MPA Student & Alumni Newsletter

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Department of Political Science
Sam Houston State University
www.shsu.edu/mpa

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DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

By *Fatih Demiroz, PhD*

Welcome to the fourth issue of the MPA Student and Alumni Newsletter. I hope 2022 has been a wonderful year for you and that you enter 2023 with good health and well-being. I have a few updates for you before you enjoy the Newsletter.

First, I welcome Dr. Aisha Ahmadu to our program. She is our latest addition to the MPA faculty lineup. Dr. Ahmadu graduated from Mississippi State University with a Ph.D. in public administration. Her research and teaching interests include public budgeting and finance, and disaster management. You might have already met her if you took PADM 5383 Program Evaluation this semester.

Second, I have exciting news regarding Blackboard, our learning management system. Blackboard has rolled out its new version called Blackboard Ultra. Blackboard Ultra comes with a fresh design and new features. It will make courses more accessible on multiple platforms (i.e., smartphones, tablets, desktop computers) and user-friendly for students and faculty. The MPA program is one of the early adopters of Ultra on campus, and our faculty have already started transferring their courses to Ultra. Transitioning the entire program to the new system will take a while. If you have any questions about Blackboard Ultra, please reach out to us.

A big shout-out to Dr. Wang for preparing this Newsletter. As always, the Newsletter is full of exciting news and updates about our program, students, and alumni; and it looks terrific. Also, many thanks to the MPA faculty and staff for their hard work and dedication to our program.

Please reach out and tell us about developments in your life (e.g., promotions, new jobs). Also, if you are hiring or looking for an intern at your agency, we will be happy to circulate such announcements among our students and alumni.

I wish you all Happy Holidays and a healthy and happy new year.

ALUMNI INSIGHT

By Garret Bubela (MPA '12)

Garret Bubela serves as the EMS Director for El Campo EMS. He previously served as the Assistant EMS Director for El Campo EMS, a flight paramedic for Memorial Hermann Life Flight, and as a registered nurse in the Emergency Room, Nursery, and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. He earned his Associate's in EMS from WCJC, Bachelor's in Criminal Justice from UHV, Bachelor's in Nursing from UTA, and a Master's in Public Administration from SHSU. He is a Texas Peace Officer. Born and raised around El Campo, and a 2005 graduate from El Campo High School, he lives outside of El Campo with his wife Megan and children, Keegan and Macie.

I serve as the EMS Director for El Campo EMS in El Campo, TX. Our service provides EMS care to the west side of Wharton County, which has a population of approximately 20,000 residents. We have five ambulances, fifteen full-time employees, and approximately thirty part-time employees. We average around 2,700 calls for service a year. I am responsible for managing a \$2 million budget, the 45 employees, assuring ambulances are staffed, making sure we have supplies, customer relations, revenue management, and everything else you could possibly think occurs in an EMS service. Luckily, I have a great leadership team that keeps everything on track. I enjoy my position with El Campo EMS, as it allows me to serve the community where I grew up and help to shape the future of prehospital care in our area.

My path to my current position seemed long, with many twists and turns. However, I cannot complain since I am now a department head at the age of 35. I started off at Sam Houston fresh out of high school, pursuing a bachelor's in Ag Business. While in my first semester at SHSU, I was also taking classes at Blinn to get my EMT certification, since this was something that interested me in high school. After 1 year at SHSU, I decided to pursue my EMS career further and moved home to obtain my paramedic certification at a local junior college. I began working for El Campo EMS as a paramedic and loved it. While I worked on the ambulance, I knew I wanted to further my knowledge, so I obtained my MPA degree. After I got a few years of experience under my belt as a paramedic, I transitioned to another company to work as a Flight Paramedic, but remained part-time with my hometown EMS service. Once I was on the helicopter, I realized that the nurse on the helicopter was making twice as much money as me, but doing the same job. Therefore, I went to nursing school and obtained my RN license. I went to work in the hospital when El Campo EMS asked me to come back on as the Assistant EMS Director. I worked as the Asst. EMS Director until I was promoted to the EMS Director position.



Having my MPA helped me tremendously in getting this position. Many cities look for administration/ leadership candidates who have a master's degree when filling their positions. If someone doesn't have a degree when they get the position, then they tend to get one shortly after. The good thing on my long path to my current position is that I ended up with the knowledge that makes me marketable in many different fields, if I ever choose to leave the profession.

"...the skills and knowledge public servants need the most are in leadership and finance."

In my opinion, the skills and knowledge public servants need the most are in leadership and finance. Many times, in the EMS service, you will see someone work their way up through the ranks, getting promoted from level to level, until they become EMS Director. The problem with this method is that such a person often has little leadership or budget experience. I have seen a public service business fail time and time again when it tried to promote people from within who weren't qualified for the position.

Fortunately, The MPA program at SHSU gave me the knowledge I needed to have an effective public administration career. I decided to attend graduate school at SHSU because I loved my first year of college there and always wanted to go back and finish a degree as a Bearkat. I found the MPA program online and was sold on wanting to get it from SHSU instead of any other college. I chose the MPA program because I was in EMS at the time and knew I needed either an MPA or MBA if I ever wanted to advance in EMS or city management one day. Seeing that I was already in the public sector, I decided to go the public administration route.

The biggest thing I would have liked to have known on the first day of graduate school is that I would not encounter a single multiple-question test throughout the entire program. This isn't meant to scare anyone away, as I learned I could do just as well on written tests. If I had to give advice to a first-semester student, I would recommend getting to know your professors. Even though all my classes were online, I felt as if I was taking in-person classes due to the open communication the MPA professors provided. I was able to form bonds between many of my professors and truly liked every one of their classes. Additionally, I was learned from other students during group assignments and online discussions. I was able to soak up quite a bit of information from my classmates, many of which had established careers and worked in all areas and levels of public service. While all the MPA courses helped develop my knowledge base, the classes that had the most impact on my future career were the ones that focused on grant writing, organizational leadership, and finance.

"Even though all my classes were online, I felt as if I was taking in-person classes due to the open communication the MPA professors provided."

I would love to attribute my successes to my hard work and the knowledge SHSU gave me in the MPA program, but that would be selling short so many other areas in my life. For example, I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without the support of my wife, Megan, and children, Keegan and Macie. I wouldn't be successful as an EMS Director without my team of other EMS providers I work with. The last parting wisdom I can give to someone entering a public service field, or any profession, is to be a servant leader. Work alongside your subordinates, show them you care, and treat them how you would want to be treated.

Faculty Spotlight: Thomas W. Haase, JD, PhD

Dr. Haase joined the Department of Political Science at Sam Houston State University in 2015. His research interests include disaster management, resilience, and public administration education and he has published in journals such as Administration and Society, Journal of Public Works Management and Public Policy, Natural Hazard Review, and The International Journal of Public Administration. His teaching background includes online and face-to-face courses on international disaster management, disaster law and politics, community and social resilience, and program evaluation. Dr. Haase supports the Huntsville community as a volunteer for Walker County's Community Emergency Response Team (C.E.R.T). Prior to his transition to Huntsville, Dr. Haase lived in Beirut, Lebanon, where he served as the Chair of the American University of Beirut's Department of Political Studies and Public Administration.



Q: How did your decision to attend college impact your life?

After high school, I attended Chadron State College, an open enrollment institution located in a rural agricultural community. As an incoming student, I could not imagine the impact that this decision would have on my life. Over the next four years, I enrolled in classes that challenged my understanding of the world, I read books and poems that exposed me to the lived experiences of others, I joined student organizations that taught me about community and good governance, and I learned empathy for those whose perspectives differed from mine. I also had the privilege to interact with dedicated professors who challenged me to explore the world. With patience and thoughtful reassurance, my professors encouraged me to push my envelope by attending cultural events and participation in trips to metropolitan areas inside and outside the United States. To put it simply my collegiate experiences had a fundamental impact on my life journey.

Q: Can you describe your teaching philosophy?

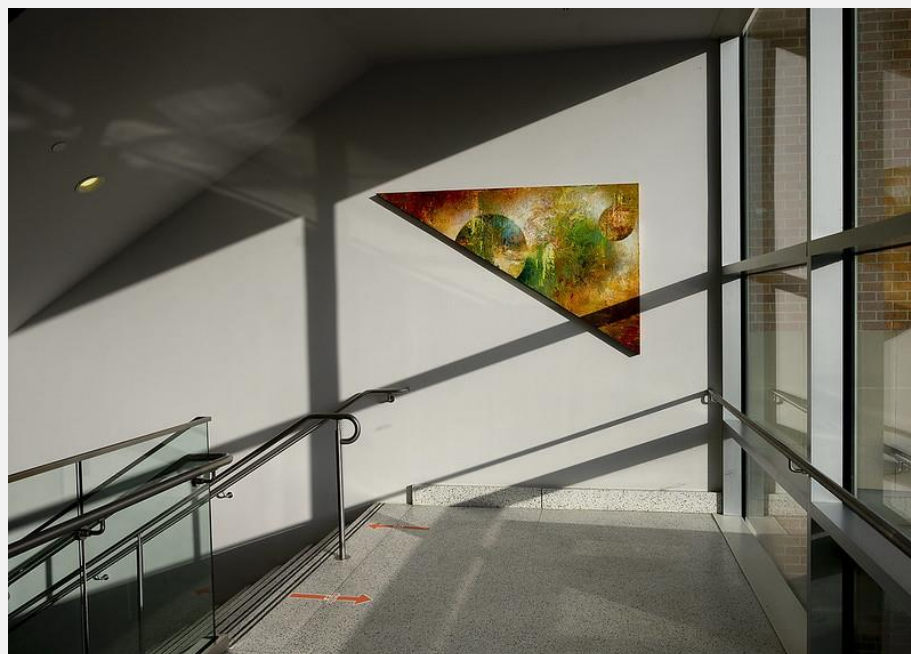
My teaching philosophy is based upon the belief that institutions of higher education have responsibilities that go beyond providing students the opportunity to earn a degree. To this end, I believe that universities are responsible for mentoring students, many of whom are first-generation or from historically marginalized communities, so they can develop the foundations they need to reach their potential as human beings, to improve their lives and the lives of their family, and to become active citizens. As an educator, I am driven by the desire to leave an impression on my students by empowering them to acquire a deep understanding of the material covered in class and by encouraging them to embrace the rich complexity of life.

Q: How do you help students to connect course material to the real-world?

I design my classes to ensure students complete hands-on activities that enable them to acquire the practical skills they need to thrive personally and professionally. For example, in my undergraduate emergency management courses, students engage with risk assessment resources such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency's flood map database. After an introduction to this tool, students are asked to determine the flood risk for where they currently live. They are also informed they can use this tool to determine the flood risk for homes where they may want to live in the future. Such activities help students to deepen their understanding of the course content and how it is relevant to real-world situations. These activities also empower students to take action to protect themselves, their families, and their communities.

Q: What have your research activities focused on?

Over the last few years, my research has explored questions about the definition of resilience, the presence of resilience in rural communities, and whether regulatory structures hinder the management of risk. In recent years, my research activities have expanded to include practical dimensions of emergency management. For instance, last summer, I worked with a colleague to complete a study that investigated the perceptions of Texas emergency managers toward the use of new technology in their planning processes. Similarly, I have completed interviews with university emergency managers throughout the United States to understand the emergency management challenges that exist in higher education.



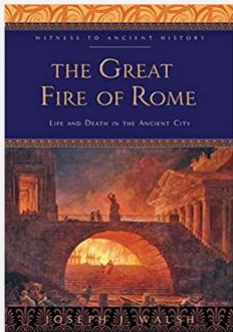
THE CUTTING EDGE

By Thomas W. Haase, JD, PhD

This section of the MPA Student and Alumni Newsletter presents the abstracts of books that might interest MPA students and alumni. This section also includes a curated list of recently published (or soon to be published) books. If you would like to write a short summary (~400 words) or a longer review (~800 words) of a recently published book that is relevant to our students and alumni, contact Dr. Haase at twh024@shsu.edu.

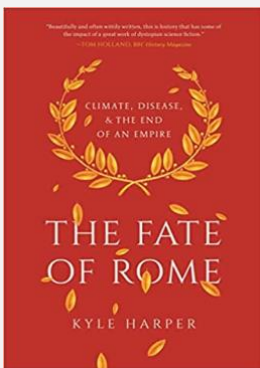
Book Abstracts

Walsh, Joseph J. 2019. *The Great Fire of Rome: Life and Death in the Ancient City*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.



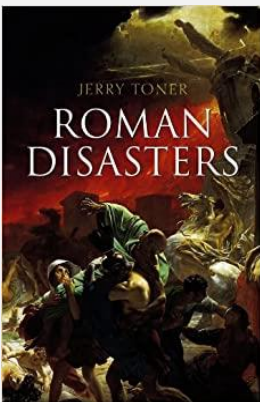
Peril was everywhere in ancient Rome, but the Great Fire of 64 CE was unlike anything the city had ever experienced. No building, no neighborhood, no person was safe from conflagration. When the fire finally subsided—after burning for nine days straight—vast swaths of Rome were in ruins. In *The Great Fire of Rome*, Joseph J. Walsh tells the true story of this deadly episode in Rome's history. He explains why Rome was such a vulnerable tinderbox, outlines the difficulties of life in that exciting and dangerous city, and recounts the fire's aftermath and legacy—a legacy that includes the transformation of much of ancient Rome into a modern city. Situating the fire within the context of other perils that residents of Rome faced, including frequent flooding, pollution, crime, and dangerously shoddy construction, he highlights the firefighting technology of the period and examines the ways in which the city's architecture and planning contributed to the severity of the blaze. Introducing readers to the grim realities of life in that overwhelming and overwhelmed city while chronicling its later glories, *The Great Fire of Rome* is grounded in the latest scholarship on fire analysis and forensics.

Harper, Kyle. 2019. *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.



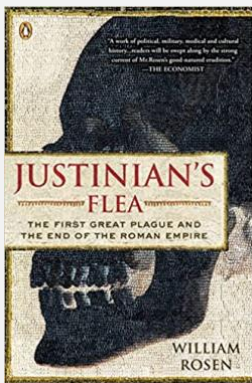
Here is the monumental retelling of one of the most consequential chapters of human history: the fall of the Roman Empire. *The Fate of Rome* is the first book to examine the catastrophic role that climate change and infectious diseases played in the collapse of Rome's power—a story of nature's triumph over human ambition. Interweaving a grand historical narrative with cutting-edge climate science and genetic discoveries, Kyle Harper traces how the fate of Rome was decided not just by emperors, soldiers, and barbarians but also by volcanic eruptions, solar cycles, climate instability, and devastating viruses and bacteria. *The Fate of Rome* is a sweeping account of how one of history's greatest civilizations encountered and endured, yet ultimately succumbed to, the cumulative burden of nature's violence.

Toner, Jerry P. 2013. *Roman Disasters*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.



Roman Disasters looks at how the Romans coped with, thought about, and used disasters for their own ends. Rome has been famous throughout history for its great triumphs. Yet Rome also suffered colossal disasters. From the battle of Cannae, where fifty thousand men fell in a single day, to the destruction of Pompeii, to the first appearance of the bubonic plague, the Romans experienced large scale calamities. This insightful book is the first to treat such disasters as a conceptual unity. It shows that vulnerability to disasters was affected by politics, social status, ideology and economics. Above all, it illustrates how the resilience of their political and cultural system allowed the Romans to survive the impact of these life-threatening events. The book also explores the important role disaster narratives played in Christian thought and rhetoric. Engaging and accessible, *Roman Disasters* will be enjoyed by students and general readers alike.

Rosen, William. 2007. *Justinian's Flea: Plague, Empire, and the Birth of Europe*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.



During the golden age of the Roman Empire, Emperor Justinian reigned over a territory that stretched from Italy to North Africa. It was the zenith of his achievements and the last of them. In 542 AD, the bubonic plague struck. In weeks, the classical world of Justinian had been plunged into the medieval and modern Europe was born. At its height, five thousand people died every day in Constantinople. Cities were completely depopulated. It was the first pandemic the world had ever known, and it left its indelible mark: when the plague finally ended, more than 25 million were dead. Weaving together history, microbiology, ecology, jurisprudence, theology, and epidemiology, Justinian's Flea is a unique and sweeping account of the little-known event that changed the course of a continent.

Recent and Forthcoming Publications

- Aronsson-Storrier, Marie, and Rasmus Dahlberg, eds. 2022. *Defining Disaster: Disciplines and Domains*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Belich, James. 2022. *The World the Plague Made: The Black Death and the Rise of Europe*. 1st ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Benz, Terressa A., and Graham Cassano, eds. 2022. *Urban Emergency Mismanagement and the Crisis of Neoliberalism: Flint, MI in Context*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.
- Cuomo, John M. 2022. *Leadership Refined by Fire: A Firefighter's Guide to Developed Leadership Skills, Motivate and Inspire Others, and Deliver Exceptional Care for the Public*. Jupiter, FL: Wild Bull Media.
- Fu, Albert S. 2022. *Risky Cities: The Physical and Fiscal Nature of Disaster Capitalism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Johnson, Lacy M., and Cheryl Beckett, eds. 2022. *More City Than Water: A Houston Flood Atlas*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Kousky, Carolyn. 2022. *Understanding Disaster Insurance: New Tools for a More Resilient Future*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Phillips, John Neal. 2022. *Sitting on a Keg of Dynamite: Father Bill, Texas City, and a Disaster Foretold*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Struzik, Edward. 2022. *Dark Days at Noon: The Future of Fire*. Chicago, IL: McGill-Queen's University Press.

RECENT MPA GRADUATES

[Summer 2022]

Dunham, Derek L.
Geuea, Kathleen R.
Hernandez, Rafael J.
Tucker, Haley N.

[Fall 2022]

English, Alexander C.
Gonzales, Julissa N.
Hernandez, Mariah D.
Langwell, Norman R.
Le Norman, Dustin R.
Sproat, Michael C.
Tobola, Trent A.



ALUMNI & STUDENT UPDATES

Victoria (Gill) Nickl [MPA '14]

- Accepted position as Sr. Financial Analyst with American Red Cross in October 2022.
- Husband Matt was recently promoted and is studying for his Ohio Boilermaker's license.
- Victoria and Matt welcomed their baby girl, Cecelia, in May 2022.

Asaf Varol [MPA '17]

- Worked at the Department of Software Engineering at Firat University between 2017 and 2020.
- Promoted to a full-time professor at the Department of Computer Engineering at Maltepe University, Turkey.
- Served as a Lecturer at the Department of Engineering Management and Technology at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga since August 1, 2022.

Daniel Kramer [MPA '19]

- Has been appointed Assistant Fire Chief for the City of Schertz, TX.

Eloy Vega [MPA '19]

- Selected as Fire Chief for the City of Port Neches, TX.
- Nominated and elected Chairman of the South East Texas Regional Radio Committee American Red Cross Volunteer for the Gulf Coast Chapter.
- Will attend the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, PA as part of the completion requirements for the Executive Fire Officer designation.
- Accepted to the Oklahoma State University Fire and Emergency Management, Ph.D. Program for Spring 2023.

George Negrete [MPA '20]

- Retired from the military after 21 years of active duty Army and Texas Army National Guard service.
- Serves as DEA Special Agent at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City and has been promoted to a DEA group supervisor position in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Advice: Life is always full of challenges but never stop learning.

Ron Steward Jr. [MPA '20]

- Hired as Fire Chief for Williamson Co. ESD 5 in Jarrell, TX in July 2022.
- Admitted to Johnson University's Ph.D. program in Leadership Studies for Spring 2023.

Hillary C. (Love) Webb [MPA '21]

- Was married in Luckenbach, Texas on June 10, 2022.

Lane Arrendell [MPA '22]

- Hired by the City of Bastrop Texas as a Project Manager for the Engineering Department.

Connor Sharp [current MPA student]

- Promoted from Firefighter-Paramedic to Engineer/Operator-Paramedic for the Houston Fire Department (July '22)

FACULTY UPDATES

Aisha Ahmadu, PhD

Recent Activities and Publications:

- Nukpezah, J. A., Ahmadu, A. S., Ukwandi, K., Adu, E.P., & Abraham, R. (forthcoming). Public Budgeting in Developed and Developing Countries. In K.D. Dzigbede & W.B. Hildreth (Eds.), *Research Handbook on Public Financial Management*. Edward Elgar Publishing (London, United Kingdom).
- “Investigating the Determinants of Federal Assistance to Subnational Governments Following Traumatic Events.” 34th Annual Association for Budgeting and Financial Management (ABFM) Conference. September 2022. Miami, Florida.

Thomas W. Haase, JD, PhD

Recent Activities and Publications

- Haase, Thomas W. and Wen-Jiun Wang (n.d.) “The Texas All-Hazards Planning System (TAHPS): The Acceptance of New Technology by Emergency Management Officials.” Texas Emergency Management Advisory Council, Planning Sub-Committee. Report Submitted: July 2022.
 - Contract with Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to conduct an After-Action Review (AAR) of their COVID-19 pandemic response operations. Lee Miller (PI), Professor in the Department of Sociology; Thomas W. Haase (COPI), Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science; Magdalena Denham (COPI), Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Security Studies; Christine Blackburn (COPI), Assistant Professor in the Department of Security Studies; and Amanda Scarbrough (COPI), Associate Professor in the Department of Population Health
 - Gave presentation: “Metacognition and Emergency Management Professionals: The Use of Reading Logs to Facilitate Active Learning” for the panel Promoting Student Metacognition and Learning: A Multidisciplinary Panel, Sam Houston State University, PACE Teaching and Learning Conference, August 18, 2022
 - Participated in QEP - Engaging Learning Workshop. Sam Houston State University, PACE Center, Walker Educational Center, June 13-16, 2022.
-

Sungdae Lim, PhD

Recent Activities and Publications:

- “Sexual Misconduct: Policies to Improve Institutional Accountability and Reduce Individual Burdens”, published in *Nonprofit Policy Forum*.
- “The Nonprofit Role in Building Community Social Capital: A Moderated Mediation Model of Organizational Learning, Innovation, and Shared Mission for Social Capital Creation”, accepted in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. Lead and corresponding author.
- “The ASCEND Model: Addressing Academic Inequity for Students Facing Homelessness and Aging Out of Foster Care”, presented at the *2022 Public Management Research Conference* annual meeting.
- “The Actual and Perceived Gender Gap in Career Development among Korean Public Employees: Do Family-Friendly Policies Mitigate the Gender Promotion Gap?”, presented at the *2022 Korean Association for Public Administration* annual meeting.
- “Are Coproducing Citizens Privileged? A Social Equity Approach to Coproduction of Local Infrastructure Projects and Policy Implications for Publicness of Coproduction”, presented at the *2022 Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action* annual meeting.

Wenjiun Wang, PhD

Recent Activities and Publications:

- “Managing Risk and Information Asymmetry in Cross-Sector Networks: The Case of the West Texas Fertilizer Plant Explosion” (Forthcoming), *Journal of Emergency Management*. Co-author: Clayton Wukich, Cleveland State University and Thomas W. Haase, Sam Houston State University.
- “The Texas All-Hazards Planning System (TAHPS): The Acceptance of New Technology by Emergency Management Officials.” Texas Emergency Management Advisory Council, Planning Sub-Committee. Report Submitted: July 2022.
- “Student’s earthquake risk perception, warning messages and protective actions”, Discussant at the *2022 International Social and Public Affairs Conference*, November 2022. Taipei, Taiwan (Online)
- “Climate Change and Local Governance” Guest Speaker at the University of Taipei, Taiwan. December 2022.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Published twice a year, the MPA Student and Alumni Newsletter will provide updates on the MPA program, our faculty and staff, current students, and graduates. To ensure the Newsletter reflects your interests and celebrates your accomplishments, we welcome your contributions in the following areas:

Personal & Professional Announcements related to moves, births, marriages, deaths, promotions, career transitions, graduations, certifications, accomplishments, awards, etc.

Activities and Events information related to activities and events that you, your organization, or another organization plan to hold or sponsor over the next few months.

Job Opportunities announcements related to job opportunities that you, your organization, or another organization plan to open over the next few months.

Grant Opportunities announcements related to grant opportunities that you, your organization, or another organization plan to open over the next few months.

Information Briefs We invite students and alumni to submit information briefs (400-500 words) that covers a topic that would be of interest to our student and alumni community.

Book Summaries or Reviews We invite students and alumni to submit short summaries (~300 words) or reviews (~1000 words) of a recently published book or report that would be of interest to our student and alumni community.

Submission Deadline

The next issue of the newsletter will be published in June 2023. Submit content to Dr. Wang (wjwang@shsu.edu) by May 1, 2023.



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