

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 latest issue of the MPA Student and Alumni Newsletter. I hope you are off to a great start in the summer. I have a few updates for you.

First, the SHSU MPA program has been ranked # 17th in the Best Accredited Colleges' Best Online MPA Programs list. We are ahead of many prominent schools. It is a magnificent result and a testament to the hard work and dedication of the MPA faculty to the program's success.

Second, I have bittersweet news to share. Dr. Haase has accepted an offer from the Security Studies Program and he will start teaching there in Fall 2023. Congratulations to Dr. Haase for your move and thanks for your incredible sacrifices and contributions made to our program. He will be missed dearly.

Third, SHSU's MPA Program was one of the sponsors of the Texas Emergency Management Conference that was held between May 30 - June 2 in Fort Worth. Dr. Wang and I represented the MPA Program at the conference. We had the opportunity to meet and chat with current and prospective students and alumni. It was a great pleasure seeing all of you who stopped by.

Finally, thanks to Dr. Wang for preparing the summer 2023 issue of the newsletter. 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.

ALUMNI INSIGHT: Management Lessons Learned after the Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes

By Asaf Varol, PhD (MPA '17)

Asaf Varol is a lecturer in the Mechatronics Program of the Engineering Management & Technology Department, at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC). He is also a professor at Maltepe University, Türkiye. He earned his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering at Karadeniz Technical University (TR) in 1983. His research areas include machine learning, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, mechatronics, robotics, and distance education.



On February 6, 2023, two significant earthquakes occurred in Kahramanmaraş, Türkiye. The epicenters of the earthquakes occurred in Pazarcik and Ekinozu Districts. This earthquake affected the provinces of Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Elazig, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis, Malatya, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, and Şanlıurfa. More than 50,000 people died. These events were so large, that even today, debris removal efforts are ongoing. The earthquake dealt such a blow to Türkiye that the pains of this terrible disaster will be experienced for many years to come. This brief identified a few lessons to learn from the event.

The Impact of Social Media during the Earthquake

After the earthquake, many videos were published on social media. In these videos, the difficulties experienced by the rescue teams and the deplorable state of the earthquake victims were released. While aid was flowing to Türkiye from around the world, much of the aid could not be delivered to the earthquake victims in time. Thanks to the images displayed on social media, aid convoys multiplied. Additionally, those who wanted to take advantage of the situation hesitated, in part they worried they would be easily identified in the videos. The videos also demonstrated that more could be done to improve Türkiye's disaster response system.

The Limitations of Türkiye's Disaster Legislation

After the 1999 Gölcük Earthquake, one of the deadliest natural disasters in the history of modern Türkiye, important policy changes were made to the country's disaster management system. For instance, the government developed new regulations and standards, which were influenced by the disaster management legislation of the United States and European countries.

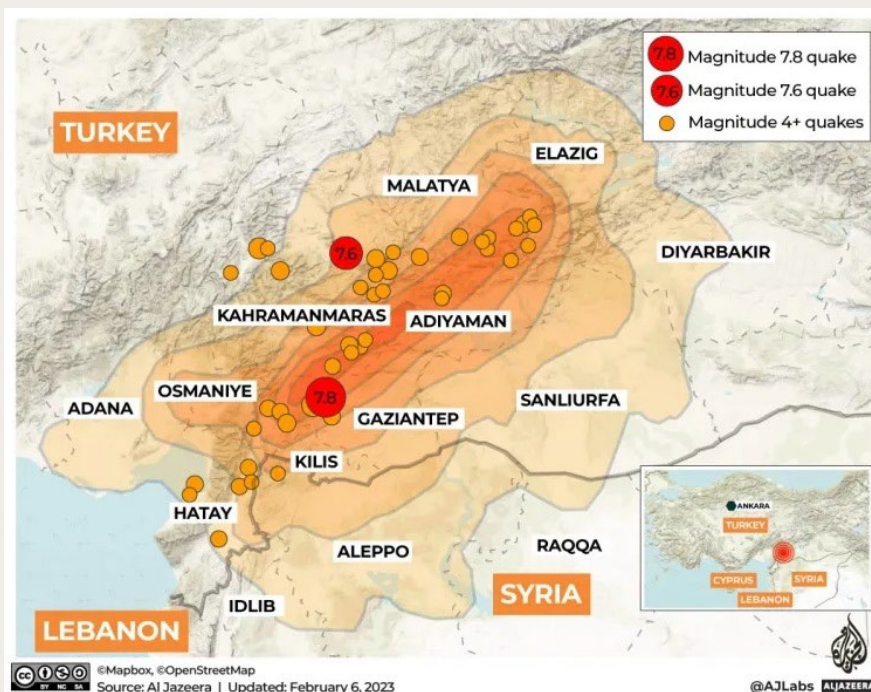
Although it was claimed that there were no shortcomings in the legislation and standards, after the earthquakes that occurred in Kahramanmaras, many of the buildings built after 1999 were destroyed. This demonstrates that the new regulations were not sufficient to mitigate the risk. There were also problems with the implementation of regulations.

Specifically, the emphasis on centralized governmental control in the disaster management system created several problems. At the time of the disaster, many organizations lacked personnel who had the training in disaster management needed to implement effective operations (Varol, 2019).

As a result, problems soon became apparent with disaster response and recovery efforts. When AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) attempted to undertake disaster response and recovery activities, the scope of the event prevented AFAD from accessing many of the affected regions. As a result, rescue efforts could not be conducted at the desired pace.

Additionally, after the earthquake, aid was provided from other provinces of Türkiye and many countries sent rescue teams. However, administrative obstacles prevented foreign search and rescue teams from being immediately deployed. This delay has consequences. Had the search and rescue teams been deployed more quickly, it is likely that more lives could have been saved.

There were also problems with the distribution of financial assistance. For instance, after the earthquake, financial assistance flowed into an association called Ahbap Platformu (AHBAP). The mission of AHBAP is



“to provide all kinds of help, in the form of in-kind and cash assistance, to those in need, to strengthen the awareness of solidarity across all segments of society” (AHBAP 2023). However, for various reasons, AFAD did not want financial assistance given to AHBAP. This caused delays in the distribution of financial assistance and the delivery of much-needed supplies such as tents, which caused victims to experience additional harm.

The Importance of Disaster Management Education

Disaster management is a science. Considering the disasters experienced throughout the world, it is important for countries to develop a cadre of emergency management professionals who are trained to cope with disasters. In the United States, disaster management-oriented training is given in undergraduate and graduate programs. One such program can be found at Sam Houston State University. Thanks to the education I received while pursuing my Master of Public Administration, I published an article that compared the disaster management training provided in the United States to the disaster management training provided in Türkiye (Varol, 2019).

For countries to take effective measures against disasters, training at the master's and doctorate levels should be encouraged and increased. Educational institutions can also contribute by

teaching volunteers to understand how non-governmental organizations should organize and prepare for disasters. Educational institutions can also help governmental organizations such as AFAD and AHBAP to carry out their disaster response and recovery activities more effectively.

Conclusion

The Kahramanmaraş earthquakes demonstrate that earthquake rescue, resilience, and recovery activities could not be implemented as intended or desired. Political concerns, discrimination among non-governmental organizations, and the fact that many of the volunteers did not receive sufficient disaster management training inhibited search and rescue activities and the distribution of much-needed disaster assistance. While the central government has taken steps to heal the wounds caused by the earthquake, it remains to be seen whether these steps will yield results.

References

- AFAD (2023), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disaster_and_Emergency_Management_Presidency, Access date: April 29, 2023.
- Ahbap.org (2023), <https://ahbap.org/dernegin-amaci>, Access date: April 29, 2023.
- Varol, A. (2019), Disaster Management, Disaster Education and Disaster Awareness: The Case of America, *Firat University Journal of Social Sciences*, 29(1): 193-204 DOI: 10.18069/firatsbed.538678 (in Turkish).

Faculty Spotlight: Wenjiun Wang, PhD

Wenjiun Wang is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Sam Houston State University. Her research interests include emergency management, decision-making, and local governance. Dr. Wang received her PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in 2012. Previously, she served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Administration and Public Policy at National Taipei University, Taiwan.



As a first-generation college student who was born in Taiwan, I never dreamed I would become a professor and researcher in the United States. After high school, I followed my parent's advice to study public administration because they thought I could get a job with a government agency that would guarantee long-term job security. Little did I know, and to my parent's great surprise, my decision to study public administration took me to places no one could anticipate.

My Emergency Management Journey

My interest in emergency management goes back to 1999. At that time, I was an undergraduate student and Taiwan found itself working to overcome the effects of the ChiChi Earthquake. This earthquake killed more than 2,200, injured more than 10,000, and left many thousands homeless. Despite the risks that threaten Taiwan, I was shocked to learn that my country did not have a formal emergency management law in place. This event planted a seed in my mind. It convinced me I needed to use my time in college to learn more about the complexities of government and public policy issues. I also felt the desire to understand the world from different perspectives.

My curiosity led me to pursue a Master of Public Administration. While in graduate school, I worked as a research assistant for several of my professors. I found I enjoyed using the scientific method to search for answers to complicated questions. Eventually, I realized that I wanted to become a researcher like those I had the honor to work with. My academic advisor at the time was Dr. Chang-Tay Chiou. Dr. Chiou was a leading scholar in policy analysis, and he authored the first book published in Taiwan that discusses the functions of government in emergency management. He would eventually encourage me to pursue a PhD and to study emergency management in the United States.

With the support of a government scholarship, I was able to pursue my PhD at the University of Pittsburgh. I worked with Dr. Louise Comfort, a renowned scholar in the field of public administration and emergency management. While I lived in Pittsburgh, Taiwan experienced another major disaster. In 2009, Typhoon Morakot, the deadliest typhoon to impact Taiwan in recorded history, brought excessive rain and caused major flooding throughout the island. Landslides buried entire villages and killed almost 700. Despite the adoption of the disaster management law, Typhoon

Morakot raised questions about the capacity of Taiwan's emergency management system to prevent and respond to major disaster events. The event also raised questions about the extent to which Taiwan's government had learned from the experience of the ChiChi Earthquake.

Seeking answers to these questions, I decided to draw upon public administration theories that explain how organizations learn and adapt to changing and uncertain environments. With this in mind, I designed my dissertation research to learn how Taiwan's disaster response system operated during two major disaster events: the Chichi Earthquake and Typhoon Morakot. I was partially interested in examining the extent to which Taiwan's emergency management system learned and adapted to the challenges of these disruptive events. As a part of the data collection process, I made site visits and interviewed government officials, first responders, nonprofit organization leaders, volunteers, and business owners who were involved in response activities and made critical decisions during these events.

First responders searching for survivors in collapsed residential buildings after 1999 Chichi Earthquake. *Source:* Wikipedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1999_Jiji_earthquake



These interviews were valuable because they helped me acquire an understanding of the challenges involved with solving difficult problems in the context of emergencies. The interviews also enabled me to develop a deep appreciation for people who devote their lives to the service of others. Despite the consequences caused by disaster, I learned that disaster events can shine a light on the positive aspects of humanity: people want to help each other. This is where emergency management practitioners come into play.

To be successful at their job, emergency managers need to be able to solve those unexpected or rare problems for which no one has an immediate answer, and they need to create and implement solutions that require the collective effort of many actors. To get things done, emergency managers also need the decision-making wisdom to navigate politics and bureaucracy. Learning about their experiences motivated me to study the practice and profession of emergency management.



慈濟文史館 (照片授權方式: 姓名標示-非商業性-禁止改作)

Typhoon Morakot caused a major flood. *Source:* Tzuchi H-library.
<https://photo.swcb.gov.tw/Repository/ViewEvent?eventid=637583159536475866>

Current Research Interests

After I moved to Texas, I received the opportunity to meet emergency managers and first responders employed at the state and local levels. These individuals reminded me of those who worked in Taiwan's emergency management system. Despite working in two different parts of the world, I found that emergency management personnel share many common characteristics. They developed wisdom from their years of experience dealing with new or unexpected problems. They also can coordinate actors who have different and often conflicting interests and can get these actors to work together to solve large problems with limited resources. Despite the difficulties and challenges that they encounter on the job, they also have a tremendous passion for what they do. It is this passion that makes me want to learn how to help emergency managers to do their job and to do their job well.

As the value and importance of emergency management become increasingly recognized by society, many local governments have created part-time or full-time emergency management positions. As a result, more people are deciding to become professional emergency managers. This development has made me interested in understanding how emergency management is done at the local level. Specifically, I want to learn how emergency offices are designed and managed and how these offices allocate their workforce and resources. I am also interested in how emergency management officials do their jobs and want to identify the characteristics that make a good emergency management professional.

Recently, I initiated a research project that investigates the experiences of individuals with fire services backgrounds who decide to make a career transition to emergency management. Due to their experience with emergencies, and their familiarity with local contexts, fire service personnel in some jurisdictions are often tasked with emergency management responsibilities. Other fire officials choose to transition to the field of emergency management due to personal interests.

There are advantages and challenges for fire service officials who transition to the field of emergency management. If we can get a better idea about the differences and similarities between the fire service and emergency management, and the experiences of individuals who have made such a transition, we can help other fire officials prepare for emergency management careers.

Call for Participants

If you or someone you know have fire service backgrounds and are currently involved in emergency management activities, please contact me at wjwang@shsu.edu.

My research colleague and I would like to learn about you and your experiences.

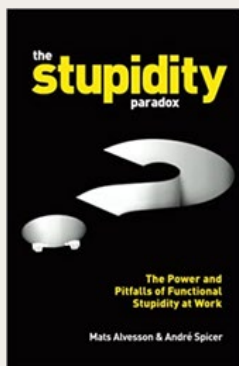
KNOWLEDGE SPOTLIGHT

By Thomas W. Haase, PhD

This section of the MPA Student and Alumni Newsletter focuses on the publication of book summaries that fall within the interests of 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 (~1500 words) of a recently published book that is relevant to our students and alumni, please contact Dr. Wang at wjwang@shsu.edu.

Book Summaries

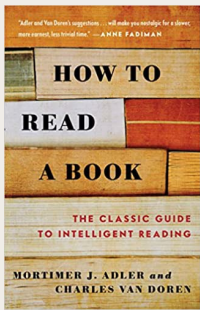
Alvesson, Mats, and André Spicer. 2016. *The Stupidity Paradox: The Power and Pitfalls of Functional Stupidity at Work*. London: Profile Books.



Higher-educated individuals want knowledge jobs, but this book suggests that most jobs are stupid. This book introduces us to the Stupidity Paradox, which suggests that smart people end up doing stupid things at work. In the short term, this has good results, but it lays the foundation for disaster. The book also introduces us to the concept of Functional Stupidity, which is the inclination to reduce one's scope of thinking and focus only on the narrow, technical aspects of the job. People do stupid things because of 1) cognitive bias; 2) satisficing; 3) mindlessness; 4) skilled incompetence; and 5) ignorance. There are several varieties of stupidity: 1) thoughtlessness (just acting); 2) normality (norms set the context); 3) pure stupidity (rare); and 4) functional stupidity, which is

the absence of reflexivity, justification, and substantive reasoning. Managers encourage stupidity through 1) forceful and direct means, 2) issue avoidance; 3) agenda setting; and 4) ideology. Managers also encourage functional stupidity through 1) authority, 2) seduction; 3) naturalization; and 4) opportunism. To de-stupidity (to think critically), we must observe, interpret, and question. The book closes by reviewing nine processes that can trigger people to think critically, for example, reflective routines, devil's advocate, post and post-mortems, and welcoming newcomers. Be careful when trying to stop functional stupidity, however, as this process can create tensions and problems.

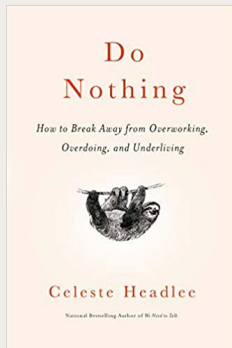
Adler, Mortimer Jerome and Charles Lincoln Van Doren. 1972. *How to Read a Book*. Revised and Updated Edition. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.



First published in 1940, this practical book argues reading can provide us with information (good) and understanding (better), the latter can lead to enlightenment (best) about ourselves and our world. Those dependent on low-quality reading, the internet, radio, and television for information cease to grow intellectually, morally, and spiritually. When this happens, they begin to die. Those who can read well can achieve understanding, advance their work and careers, and keep their minds alive and growing. To read well, one must know more than how to read. One must be able to read actively and critically. One must also read books that are above their head (hard to understand).

To read well, one follows the Art of Reading, which is where the mind, with no external help, uses symbols on a page to elevate itself from knowing less to knowing more. There are four cumulative levels of reading: 1) elementary; 2) inspectional (skim and superficial review to get the big picture); 3) analytical (break down for complete consumption); and 4) syntopical (identify relationships among multiple books). Each level is covered in detail, with the primary emphasis on analytical reading. There are three stages and eleven rules of analytical reading. While there is no perfect way to navigate this process, the process does become easier with experience. Rules 1 to 4 cover the first stage: pigeonhole (classify the book); x-ray (summarize the book in a few sentences); outline (in just a few pages); and identity (determine the intent of authors). Rules 5 to 8 cover the second stage: come to terms with the book (find keywords); mark sentences and discover propositions; identify arguments; and identify the solutions. The book also notes the relationship between reading and writing. Rules 9 to 11 cover the third stage: critique and judgment (critique when certain; critique reasonably; and give reasons). Once a book is understood, a reader can agree, disagree, or suspend judgment. As they seek understanding, readers who are active and critical are guided by four questions: 1) what is the book about (its primary and secondary thesis), what is being said in detail (its main ideas, assertions, and arguments), and 3) is the book true, in whole or in part, and 4) what of it? Note that criticism does not mean disagreement. There are four primary foundations for disagreement. The author is: 1) uninformed; 2) misinformed; 3) employs illogical reasoning; or 4) provided an incomplete analysis. The book also covers the types of reading aids, how to classify a book, how to mark and write in books, and how to read different types of books, and contains a reading list and reading exercises and tests.

Headlee, Celeste Anne. 2020. *Do Nothing: How to Break Away from Overworking, Overdoing, and Underliving*. First Edition. New York: Harmony Books.



Modernization and technological developments have changed our perception of time and encouraged us to work more. As a result, work has become controlling. This book introduces us to Parkinson's Law, which suggests that work expands to fill the time available for its completion. If you have found yourself in this position, you might wonder how you can escape this situation. You can break this cycle by 1) becoming aware of how you use your time; 2) setting clear barriers (e.g., limiting time and exposure to email); 3) going after what makes humans happy; and 4) setting end goals, smaller specific goals, and then align your end goals with your mean goals. A mean goal is a specific objective, like a certain income, that leads to a bigger, greater goal. Your mean goals must support

your end goals, or else they lead to a waste of time and effort. Your mean goals are flexible. In contrast, end goals are non-negotiable. In other words, you don't compromise on your end goals because you are unwilling to accept something else. End goals often provide a direction instead of a specific destination. They must be expansive enough to pursue for a lifetime.

Recent and Forthcoming Publications

Belich, James. 2022. *The World the Plague Made: The Black Death and the Rise of Europe*. 1st ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gaudet, Rob. 2022. *The Cajun Navy: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Rescues*. New Orleans, LA: Pelican Publishing.

Gies, Erica. 2022. *Water Always Wins: Thriving in an Age of Drought and Deluge*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Kousky, Carolyn. 2022. *Understanding Disaster Insurance: New Tools for a More Resilient Future*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

McNabb, David E., and Carl R. Swenson. 2023. *Disaster Management Policies and Practices: Multi-Sector Collaboration in Emergencies and Disasters*. New York, NY: Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group.

Moses, Joshua. 2022. *Anxious Experts: Disaster Response and Spiritual Care from 9/11 to the Climate Crisis*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania 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

[Spring 2023]

Culbreath, Kenneth
Davis, Pernell A.
James, Tahirah A.
May, Mckenzey B.

Roberts, Jay B.
Stephens, Jessica L.
Street, Aaron L.
Varelans, James P.



ALUMNI & STUDENT UPDATES

Todd Jacobs [MPA '21]

- Hired as the Emergency Management Coordinator at the University of Texas at Dallas in May 2023

Johnathan Killings [MPA '20]

- Promoted to Fire Chief of the City of El Paso, Texas in December 2022

Daniel Kramer [MPA '19]

- Accepted to the Oklahoma State University Fire and Emergency Management, PhD Program for Fall 2023

Samuel Masiel [MPA '19]

- Appointed as the Assistant City Manager for City of Huntsville, Texas



If you have any personal or professional announcement to share with us, please send it to wjwang@shsu.edu

FACULTY UPDATES

Aisha S. Amadu, PhD

Recent Publication / Activities:

- Ahmadu, A.S; Nukpezah, J.A; P. French, E; & Menifield, C.E. (May 2023). “Disasters and Social Vulnerability: Determinants of Federal Subsidiarity Assistance.” Public Administration Review.

Thomas W. Haase, JD, PhD

Recent Publication / Activities

- Wukich, Clayton, Thomas W. Haase and Wen-Jiun Wang (2023) “The Case of the West Texas Fertilizer Plant Explosion.” *Journal of Emergency Management*, 21 (2): 109-122. <https://doi.org/10.5055/jem.0758>
- Haase, Thomas W. (2023) “Public Administration in the Republic of Lebanon: Recent Reforms, Current Constraints, and Future Prospects.” In *Public Administration in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Shahjahan Bhuiyan, 34-61. New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor and Francis.
- Miller, Lee M., Thomas W. Haase, Magdalena Denham, Christine Blackburn, and Amanda Scarbrough. (2023) *DSHS Consolidated Report: After Action Report for the COVID-19 Pandemic (February 2020 to July 2021)*. Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), 30 pages.
- Miller, Lee M., Thomas W. Haase, Magdalena Denham, Christine Blackburn, and Amanda Scarbrough. (2023) *Central Office: After Action Report for the COVID-19 Pandemic (February 2020 to July 2021)*. Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), 113 pages.
- Haase, Thomas W. (Forthcoming) *Crisis Management*. In K.P. Kearns & W. Wang (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Nonprofit Management, Leadership, and Governance* (pp. xx-xx). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Sungdae Lim, PhD

Recent Publication / Activities:

- “Why the network coordinator matters: The importance of learning, innovation, and governance structure in coproduction networks” in *Journal of Civil Society*. Lead and corresponding author
- “The Nonprofit Role in Building Community Social Capital: A Moderated Mediation Model of Organizational Learning, Innovation, and Shared Mission for Social Capital Creation” in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. Lead and corresponding author.
- “Are Coproducing Citizens Privileged? Citizen-Engaging Service Innovation at the Expense of Social Equity Erosion in the U.S.” in a Routledge book series, *Building a Fair Society: The Role of Public Management in Achieving Social Equity*. Lead and corresponding author.

FACULTY UPDATES

Wenjiun Wang, PhD

Recent Publication / Activities:

- Kearns, Kevin and Wenjiun Wang (forthcoming). The Encyclopedia of Nonprofit Management, Leadership, and Governance (ed.) UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
 - Wukich, Clayton, Thomas W. Haase and Wenjiun Wang (2023) “The Case of the West Texas Fertilizer Plant Explosion.” Journal of Emergency Management, 21 (2): 109-122.
<https://doi.org/10.5055/jem.0758>
 - ‘Wearing Multiple Hats: Emergency Management Coordinators in County Governments.’ Presented in 16TH Annual EMAT Leadership Symposium. Feb 12-15, 2023.
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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.

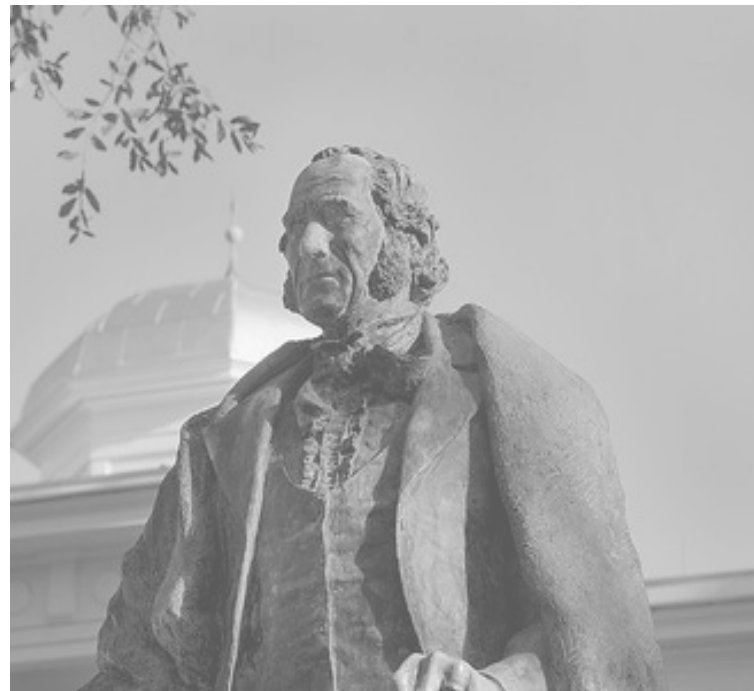
Grant Opportunities announcements related to grant opportunities that you, your organization, or another organization plan to open over the next few months.

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 December 2023. Submit content to Dr. Wang (wjwang@shsu.edu) by November 15, 2023.



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