

Master of Public Administration Alumni Newsletter

Fall 2022



Director's Update

This year marks my first year as the new Master of Public Administration Program Director. I am an incredibly proud alumni and excited to serve my alma mater. We started the academic year receiving national accreditation for our Master of Public Administration Program. We are using this as an opportunity to offer new elective courses in public policy, data visualization, performance measurement, and state and local governance to ensure our students - current and future public servants - are skilled to offer solutions for public sector problems.

As we continue to celebrate decades of a public service education, we invite our alumni to engage in our mentorship program or to attend our first annual celebrating students' event (May 2023, scroll to bottom of newsletter) where we honor public servants, past and present. Additionally, our goal is to begin to offer a public service training experience for individuals that might be interested in training instead of pursuing a graduate degree. Look forward to meeting you soon and we would love to hear from you or serve as a guest speaker or join our mentorship program!

—Dr. Sara Rinfret, Professor & MPA Director



Alumni Corner

Shevonda Marie Diane Joyner



Class of '22

Shevonda currently serves as the senior program coordinator for an organization under the Arizona project WET, where she daily applies skills obtained from the MPA Program.

Specifically, when she thinks about how the MPA Program assisted in her career, she reflects upon the crisis management course. In this course, she strengthened her problem-solving and communication skills. As someone who works for state government, it is important to understand how to effectively communicate within and across government. According to Shevonda, "Being a public servant makes me feel like a better person helping my community."

– Shevonda Marie Diane Joyner

Cynthia Nemeth



Class of '12

With extensive experience in the public sector, Cynthia currently serves as Coconino County's Parks and Recreation Director. The NAU MPA Program assisted Cynthia in seeking career advancements, and "having a foundational understanding of being a public servant has been extremely helpful to my career." The NAU MPA coursework not only provided her with various tools that she could apply in her daily work but it also assisted her in developing long lasting relationships with individuals she can count on for being a career sounding board. In her current role, she is excited to work with the public on a myriad of initiatives; her favorite part of her job is to be able to actually see the impact of her team's work. In the future, she is excited to continue to serve the public's needs and see how they benefit from her work.

– Cynthia Nemeth

President Nez



Class of '05

Currently serving as President of the Navajo Nation, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez believes there is one way to leave the Earth, and that is by helping the community. That statement, along with wanting to carry on his grandfather's legacy, led Jonathan to complete the NAU MPA Program. He was advised to get his MPA instead of going to law school because "through public service you empower the employees." After completing the MPA program, President Nez was elected as one of the youngest lawmakers for the Navajo Nation. Jonathan Nez loves to empower his community by bringing people together to come to a solution, and he uses skills he learned from the MPA program to have a better relationship with the public, his culture, and his Tribal relationships. He would tell a current MPA student to "get involved in student leadership, clubs, and elections." – **President Nez**

Current MPA Student Spotlight

Molly Edwards



Molly Edwards is serving as the Public Information Officer/Legislative Liaison with the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission. Throughout her career she has worked on various projects, but the one she is most proud of is HB2166. Molly says, "this was a bill that will allow all Arizona residents, researchers, and policymakers access to critical criminal justice data at their fingertips." Phase 1 passed last year, and we are currently working toward getting Phase 2 passed. The most important part of completing the NAU MPA Program for Molly is to obtain additional education to advance her career. She says, "this program will enable me to sharpen my tools again and keep me current on the skillsets I need in the coming years." – **Molly Edwards**

Emilio Cruz



Emilio Cruz is working as the Program Coordinator within the Transfer Credit & Articulation Department at the University of Arizona. One of Emilio's favorite projects he has worked on in his career is being the Institutional Articulation facilitator for AZ transfer students. This helps transfer students continue their higher education journey, while simplifying the transfer process. The MPA Program directly helps his day job, he says, because "what [is] most important about the MPA program is how invested our instructors are in the material they are teaching us. By showcasing their experiences with the readings, it allows us as students to connect with them so we can learn everything we can and eventually display what we have learned in this program for our future endeavors." – **Emilio Cruz**

Mayen Akpan



Mayen Akpan is a current MPA student and a Human Service Program Development Specialist (Policy Specialist). Looking back at the projects she has worked on throughout her career, her favorite public service project has been aiding in the development of a RAD housing project. She says the most exciting element about the MPA program is, "learning the main roles of public administration to gain a better vision of how to be a great civil servant that can identify, assess, and weigh the needs of society." She has enjoyed the courses Policy Analysis and Evaluation with Dr. Rinfret and Research Methods and Analysis with Dr. Meserve, as both provided her with quality reading material and engaging coursework. – **Mayen Akpan**

MPA Faculty Highlights

Dr. Eric Otenyo

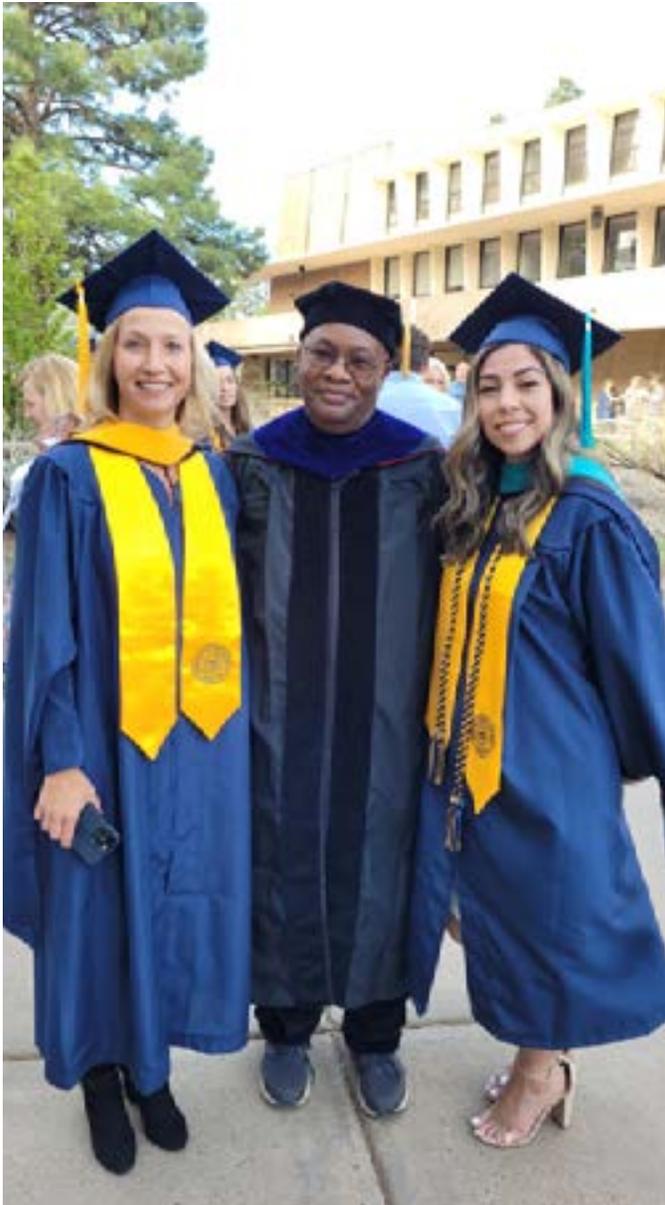
Dr. Eric Otenyo co-authored two book chapters this year: “Presidential Leadership Styles,” in *Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Kenya* and “Policy Images in Africa,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy in Africa*.

Dr. Sara Rinfret, MPA Director & Professor

Dr. Sara Rinfret co-authored two articles this year: *Expanding the discussion of Emotional Labor*, and *Emotional Labor & COVID-19: MPA program director perspectives*. In addition, she co-authored two books: *Environmental Policy in Action*, and *The Environmental Case*.

Dr. Zachary A. Smith

Dr. Zachary A. Smith published *The Environmental Policy Paradox* this year.



1. Dr. Eric Otenyo celebrating 2022 MPA graduates and their success
2. NAU MPA Faculty Meeting

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE!

**POLITICS AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
GRADUATION EVENT!**

WHEN: MAY 11, 4:30-6PM

WHERE: ASPEN ROOMS
(DUBOIS CENTER)



RSVP HERE

**FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND ALUMNI ARE ENCOURAGED TO
ATTEND! PLEASE RSVP WITH YOUR GUESTS BY FEBRUARY 1ST**

Politics and International Affairs Graduate Event

RSVP for the Politics and International Affairs 2022-2023 graduation celebration. We will celebrate alumni public service awards and graduating MPA students.

RSVP Link: <https://forms.gle/eTRBYpfy8Z7QKaPP7> or use QR code above!

NOMINATE YOUR MPA ALUMNI

FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE ALUMNI AWARD

Email kaw583@nau.edu by
January 15th to submit your
nomination!

Please Include: Your nomination's name, the year
they graduated from the MPA program, and 3
sentences why this person has made an impact on
the public service profession.

NAU NORTHERN ARIZONA
UNIVERSITY

Master of Public Administration

Nominate your MPA Alumni

Nominate your MPA Alumni for the new, annual, Public Service Award. Email Karli (kaw583@nau.edu), your nomination by January 15th. This person will be recognized at the celebrating students event in May.

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