

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Torres (MPA 09) at Grand Teton National Park** (p.2)
- **Ng Scholarship Established** (p. 3)
- **Applied Internship experiences keep students nimble** (p. 4)

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## Message From the Director



### Welcome to our Newsletter!

To keep our students, friends and alumni informed about the MPA program at St. Mary's, we are launching this newsletter. We hope you find it informative and useful. Let us know what you think..

Our mission is to prepare students for careers and leadership roles in urban management and public affairs. The urban management program at St. Mary's University is the only program in Texas whose curriculum is designed to service this mission.

To this end, the program mission is met by strengthening and advancing students' knowledge of urban management and its policy context and developing students' analytic and communication skills.

To paraphrase Denhardt and Denhardt, this program "is geared toward action....toward how to make things happen in public service. Action first requires a base of knowledge...things you simply need to know about government and the administrative process to be effective. There are also value questions that must be settled in the course of making or carrying out public decisions. Finally there are both technical and interpersonal skills that must be acquired to be effective in working with others in this field" (*Public Administration—An Action Orientation*, 2006, 15)

The MPA program at St. Mary's University emphasizes all three areas--knowledge, values, and skills--to assist individuals become more effective, responsible and active public servants.

We are blessed to have a dedicated set of faculty who are focused on operationalizing this mission.

*Art Vega*

### MPA FACULTY

**Alex Briseno**, M.A., Scholar-in-Residence, and former City Manager, City of San Antonio. Teaches Public Administration and Policy and Management of Municipal Budgets.

**Monica Cruz**, MPAff, Adjunct Professor and Assistant Director, University McNair Program. Teaches Policy Formulation and Implementation and Local Politics and Conflict Resolution.

**Henry Flores**, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate School and Professor; Dean Flores teaches research methods, urban politics and governance.

**Frank Garza**, J.D., Adjunct Professor, former City Attorney for City of San Antonio;

# Alumni Highlights--Vanessa Torres, MPA '09



I am a Park Guide for the National Park Service at the **Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve - Grand Teton National Park** located in Northwestern Wyoming. I have worked for the National Park Service seasonally for four summers, beginning in the summer of 2006 where I ventured off to **Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska**. It was during this internship that I knew that I wanted to work outdoors and put my degree to use by writing policy for the Park Service.

I acquired my current permanent position through a student program known as **Student Career Employment Program (SCEP)** through the **National Park Service (NPS)**. The NPS has two types of programs: Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) which is more of an internship program to introduce students to the NPS and its operations as a government entity, and then the second program SCEP, as mentioned above, is for students who are interested in a career in the NPS.

My workday is never the same. I can go from leading hikes out to **Phelps Lake**, working on daily schedules for the staff to working on recruitment for the park. As an interpretive ranger, my main duty is to interpret and tell the story of the natural landscape, and to help people make an emotional connection to the land through programs and ranger-led hikes, as well as a connection to special places that they may have back home. I also assist in supervising seasonal rangers and volunteers, as well as assisting in ensuring that all operations of the Preserve Center are running smoothly. I also assist in administrative duties, such as scheduling, working on diversity recruitment and community outreach in the Latino community in Jackson. Recently, I have been able to use my skills and knowledge in community development by sitting on a committee to help find ways to diversify our visitation here at Grand Teton National Park by beginning communications with the Latino Community in Jackson. The part I love most about my job is that everyday is always different, in one way or another. I get paid to hike and talk to people on a daily basis and have the opportunity to live, work and play in one of the most beautiful places in the country.

Vaguely speaking, I ensure that the rules and regulations of the National Park Service and Grand Teton National Park are being adhered to by visitors in regards to the protection of the natural resources, but I believe that my degree is much more than the literal meaning. I believe that my Masters in Public Administration has an underlying factor of values and skills taught to me by the faculty and staff of St. Mary's University, in which I use and rely on in conjunction with the degree itself. My mentors at St. Mary have taught me to be passionate, sincere, how to work with different people, always work hard and never give up on what you believe. It is these skills that I use in working with the community, visitors and co-workers on a daily basis, skills that I believe would have been hard to come by if not for all my mentors at St. Mary's. I hope to one day move to writing policy for the National Park Service as a whole.



Alex Briseno, Public Service Professor

*If you know of any scholarship or internship opportunities please notify Dr. Vega, so that he can publish the information to the student body.*

## MPA Faculty cont'd

currently with Davidson & Troilo, where he is Chair of the firm's Practice Management Committee and Public Law Section. Teaches Municipal Law and Ethics in the Public Sector.

**Steve Neiheisel**, Ph.D., Professor. Teaches Leadership and Organizational Culture and Behavior; Non-Profit Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship.

**Arturo Vega**, Ph.D., Director MPA Graduate Program and Associate Professor. Teaches research methods, program evaluation and urban planning.

## Ng Scholarship Established

### 2nd Year Student Wille Ng Establishes First MPA Scholarship; Zapata first recipient

The **Willie Ng Scholarship** was established on December 21, 2009, and is intended to provide assistance for Masters of Public Administration students in the amount of \$1,000 for each semester starting in Spring 2010. The scholarship shall be used for tuition, books or fees. The purpose of this scholarship is to reward dedicated MPA students who wish to make an impact on their community.

To be considered for this scholarship, candidates must

- have completed at least 12 graduate credit hours in public administration; and
- submit a 500 word essay describing why they deserve the scholarship, what they plan on doing with their MPA after graduation and how they plan on making a difference in their community.

**David Zapata** is the inaugural recipient of this scholarship and intends to use the scholarship for summer course work.

## Student Accolades

Congratulations to **Jaime Lalley** and **Saad Aldosari**— both who graduated from the Master's in Public Administration Program in December 2009!!!!

Congratulations also to **Amanda Cuevas** and **Jennifer Chaparro**, recipients of the J. Rolando Bono Scholarship from UMAST, awarded at their Annual Banquet.

**Crystal Villarreal** was awarded this year's MPA Graduate Assistantship. Villarreal is one of three current joint MPA-JD students.

# Student Internships-Active and Varied

**Melissa Portugal** is a second semester student in the Master's of Public Administration program. After a grueling semester in Statistics with Dr. Vega, Melissa earned an internship with the City of San Antonio *Downtown Operations Department*. Melissa is analyzing the department's surveys from their "Movies by Moonlight" event. More specifically, she compiles all the answers to the surveys which were taken at the event, and then runs statistical analysis to see the attendance results for certain downtown events. Namely, she looks are how subjects have heard about certain events, and how many times they have attended such events.

**James Massey** is a first year MPA student and is com-

pleted an applied public management experience with the the City of San Antonio Office of Environmental Policy. Massey analyzed the City's recent online "Bicycle Rider-ship Survey."

**Saad Aldosari, Sherita Simmons and Ayed Ahabbi** were inaugural members of the St. Mary's Legislative Internship program. Aldosari, Simmons and Ahabbi spent last Spring in the Texas Legislature as Interns. Aldosari and Ahabbi were assigned to Rep. Gutierrez office. Simmons was worked for to Senator Leticia Van De Putte's and successfully shepherded legislation through the process.

**Arlinda Arriaga** interned with the National Pork Pro-

ducers in Washington, D.C. in Fall 2009.

**Janie Moncada** interned with the University's Human Resource Department and entered and analyzed an employee feedback survey.

**Amada Cuevas** first year student completed an internship with the San Antonio Water Systems, assisting with public relations and communications.

**Nicole Monsibais Prater**—another joint JD/MPA students is completing her internship with State Representative Mike Villarreal.

Graduating students **Leticia Vela** interned with the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center and **Dominic Fabela** work with State Rep. Joaquin Castro.

**"Internships are an excellent opportunity to learn to 'walk the walk'...and apply the lessons learned in the classroom."**  
*Alex Briseno*

## NASPAA MEMBERS AND PI ALPHA ALPHA CHAPTER

The Public Administration Graduate Program at St. Mary's University is an institutional member of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and adheres to NASPAA's code of good practice in pursuing "excellence and quality in its provision of public affairs education."

### Pi Alpha Alpha Chapter at St. Mary's University

Our application to establish a **Pi Alpha Alpha** chapter has been approved by the Chapter Application Review Committee and the National Council; MPA students **Kavita Bhalla** and **Jesus A. Garza** will be the inaugural members initiated into the chapter this Spring.