

# JHBC PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Spring 2025



Department of  
Public Administration



## NEWSLETTER

### MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT CHAIR, DR. ROBERT STOKES

Welcome the Spring 2025 edition of our Department of Public Administration newsletter!

This issue focuses on the role of politics — or more precisely, the importance of elected public service leadership in shaping our local communities.

As our nation grows increasingly divided by partisan rhetoric at the federal level, it's important to remember the words of former New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, who famously said, *"There is no Democratic or Republican way to clean the streets."* His point still resonates: at the local level, effective public service transcends party lines and is grounded in practical, people-centered leadership.



Robert Stokes  
Department Chair

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## Message from the Department Chair

This past November, we were proud to see three of our part-time instructors elected or appointed to city council seats.

- Dr. David Ready, who had served more than 20 years as the appointed City Manager of Palm Springs, won a seat on the Palm Springs City Council, highlighting the dynamic contrast between administrative and elected leadership roles.
- Dr. Treasure Ortiz was elected to the 7th District seat in San Bernardino, our university's home city, following a competitive campaign against a well-established political rival.
- Bob Miller, one of our long-time instructors, was appointed to the 1st District council seat in Yucaipa after a recall election — one of 77 such recalls across California in 2024. Bob had previously served on the Yucaipa School Board and also held positions as a city manager and police chief during his long career in public service.

Given these exciting developments, we felt it was the perfect time to highlight the achievements of our instructional faculty, alumni, and current students who are making a difference in elected and administrative roles across the region. In this edition, we're proud to feature:

- Katherine Kolcheva, a recent MPA alumna, now serving as Chief of Staff to San Bernardino County Supervisor Kurt Hagman.
- Kristy MacDougall, Chief of Staff to State Senator Kelly Seyarto (32nd District, Murrieta).
- Josiel Perez, Communications Specialist for Riverside County's 5th District Supervisor, Yxstian Gutierrez.
- Dennis Hawkins, who has served for 25 years as a school board trustee in South San Jose and also worked as Assistant and City Clerk for the City of San Jose.

Each of these individuals embodies the spirit of community-minded leadership, using their skills and education to directly impact the lives of others.

**We truly want to extend a special thanks to everyone who contributed their thoughtful responses and insights to this newsletter. A special thank-you goes out to Melisa Laci for her contributions to this newsletter.**

### New MPA Concentration in Human Resource Management

In collaboration with the Jack H. Brown College's Management Department, the MPA program at CSUSB will offer a new concentration in Human Resource Management starting Fall 2025. This concentration will require our current seven core MPA courses, along with four specialty HR courses (and one free elective).

In addition to the required core course, PA 6620: Human Resources Management in the Public Sector, two PA courses — PA 5190: Diversity in Public Organizations and PA 5570: Public Sector Labor Relations — will be required. Also, two Management courses — HRM 5570: Strategic Human Resource Management and PA 5580: California Human Resources — will be required.

Each course will also be required for a new Master of Science in Human Resource Management being offered by the College, meaning these courses will include a blend of private, nonprofit, and public sector HR students.





# New Bachelor of Arts Degree in Public Service

Starting in Fall 2025 (pending final approval from the CSU Chancellor's Office), the Department of Public Administration will offer a new Bachelor of Arts in Public Service degree.

The Bachelor of Arts in Public Service is designed to prepare students for impactful careers across various sectors dedicated to serving the public good. This interdisciplinary program integrates public administration, public and social policy, and organizational management to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to address complex social and community challenges.

The curriculum emphasizes both theory and practical application of public service, teaching competencies in leadership, ethics, budgeting, human resources, policy analysis, community planning, and community engagement.

This new degree will stand apart from the current B.A. in Administration that has long defined the Jack H. Brown College undergraduate experience. It is also designed to be flexible, offering more free electives than the previous B.A. degree, and will be more transfer-friendly – allowing students to enter the program without prerequisite courses.



### Interview

#### DR. DAVID READY



##### Professional

City Manager, Palm Springs, California; 2000-2021  
City Administrator, Flint, Michigan; 1992-2000  
Deputy for Budget and Economic Development, Canton, Ohio; 1989-1992  
Adjunct Faculty, CSUSB; 2001- present

##### Academic

B.A. Political Science – Kent State University – Ohio  
M.A. Urban Affairs – University of Akron – Ohio  
J.D. University of Akron, School of Law – Ohio  
Ph.D. Political Science, Wayne State University - Michigan

**You served as the City Manager for Palm Springs for over 20 years, how would you compare the mindset of being an appointed manager with being an elected official? How do these roles differ?**

Having served as City Manager of the City of Palm Springs for 21 years in an administrative role, now as an elected member of the City Council, the change to a legislative role has been illuminating. Leadership skill sets which drive the administrative side of government, conversely, from a legislative perspective, require a modified approach and mindset which incorporates much more political consensus.

By way of example, concepts familiar to MPA students of policy “development” and “implementation” merge at the legislative and administrative juncture of a City Council meeting. To the extent this full spectrum of the governmental process is appreciated and calculated into a leader’s thinking, my experience here, has been an ability to improve policy outcomes. This might manifest as an administrator’s actions which address legislators’ political constraints. Conversely, legislators’ mindsets should have greater sensitivity to administrative constraints. Such a legislative/administrative syncing approach is most effective for complex issues as homelessness, affordable housing, etc., where values, limited resources and inter-jurisdictional dimensions can create significant policy barriers.

### From City Management to City Council

#### **What have you learned so far about being a city council member that you did not know before?**

As a City Council Member, the expectations of constituents and various community stakeholder groups have greater political clarity and urgency than what is generally experienced from the administrative side of government. The importance of this reminds me of a comment by the late Senator Bill Bradley, of New Jersey, who noted that, “without administrative bureaucracy, nothing gets done, however, without legislative political direction, administration usually focuses on the wrong things.” For me, this illustrates the critical interconnection of the legislative/administrative process to build greater governing capacity.

#### **How does your prior experience in public service impact the way you govern as an elected official? Do you think people with prior public service experience are better suited to lead?**

Prior public service experience most assuredly impacts the way I govern as an elected official – not the least of which is a deep respect for the importance of administrative staff to successfully implement any policy or program. Public service experience over time tends to place you in the inescapable path of learning – in a good way – instilling a sense of “political wisdom,” which could be considered the “art” side of public administration.

Those without prior public service experience are not necessarily at any disadvantage, as good leadership requires a range of skills. Yet, lessons learned from those who have such experience can serve as “intellectual nourishment” for any MPA student.

#### **How do your experiences as a public official, both past and present enhance your ability to teach in the MPA program as CSUSB?**

Importantly, my experience on both the legislative and administrative sides of local government, as noted above, reinforces the concept of how intricately intertwined these two areas are. As a City Manager, I came to understand that by addressing City Council legislative barriers and constraints (the political aspects) through tailored policy proposals, I could often gain additional legislative resources and support. This, in turn, allowed for better implementation of programs on the administrative side.

For me, this translates into teaching students in the MPA program not just what needs to be done in addressing government issues, but how to do what needs to be done. For example, in many cases, identifying solutions (the “what”) can be relatively straightforward. However, providing a path to implementation (the “how”)—both legislatively and administratively—is much more challenging.

This requires building consensus, securing resources, getting the organization on board, working with other levels of government and outside organizations, and more. Each of these is a significant challenge that can complicate even a simple government action—let alone the complex issues facing local governments today.

With this approach, my goal for students is to think critically from a “solutions perspective,” which addresses two general concerns. First, actions that can mitigate the negative effects of street-level bureaucracy (organizational issues like capacity, limited resources, internal resistance, etc.), which—if not addressed—can sabotage program implementation. Second, and just as importantly, developing an acute awareness of what I call street-fighting pluralism—the political allocation of resources by elected officials. Although never an easy task, helping students address these concepts early in the policy process can, in my experience, lead to more successful policy outcomes—or what I’ve termed “creating welcome government.”

### **How long have you been teaching at CSUSB, and what courses do you teach?**

I’ve taught as an adjunct faculty member at CSUSB since 2001, teaching a wide range of courses including; Local Government Administration, Local Economic Development, Administrative Regulation, Government and Business Relations, Government in the Digital Age, Public Policy Analysis, Intergovernmental Relations, and Public Administration Theory.

### **What do you enjoy most about working with MPA students?**

Over the years, as I’ve been able to connect students with insights on working through local government issues – both the successes and failures – their excitement and appreciation of these kinds of candid discussions has been most gratifying. Moreover, students’ curiosity and challenging questions have always helped me personally to expand my own awareness of the important issues of governance.



Palm Springs has renamed the dog park behind City Hall in honor of former City Manager David Ready, who spearheaded the park's creation.



### Interview



#### DR. TREASURE ORTIZ

Dr. Treasure Ortiz is a double CSUSB alumna, earning both her bachelor's and master's degrees in public administration. She then went on to complete a Doctorate of Public Administration (DPA) at the University of La Verne. Treasure gave the keynote speech at the 2025 Spring PAA Event, where she collected the CSUSB MPA Distinguished Alumna Award.

Dr. Ortiz had spent over a decade working in Human Resources for local municipalities in the Inland Empire. After an unsuccessful run for the mayor's office in 2022, Dr. Ortiz was elected to serve on the San Bernardino City Council for Ward 7 in 2024, running on a platform of transparency and accountability in city government.

#### **You ran for mayor of San Bernardino two years ago. What were some of the fundamental differences in running for a city-wide office compared to a council district race?**

The biggest difference was the number of personal contacts I was able to make with residents in my ward during my city council campaign, versus running a city-race for mayor. During the mayor's race, I knocked on over 15,000 doors throughout the city, but that only allowed me to reach approximately 2,100 voters. In the council election, I was able to focus on likely voters in just my ward, which allowed me to make 2-3 contacts per household. Moreover, with a ward race, I also personally know a lot of my neighbors, which made it so much more personal and welcoming.

The second biggest difference was being able to afford to reach the maximum number of voters through mail. My ward has about 8,000 households of voters of all propensities (probability of voting). I was able to send 5 or 6 mailers to every house plus put out 600 signs in supporters' yards. Since I am extremely particular about who I accept campaign donations from, a smaller race proved much better for me.

#### **What have you learned so far about being a new council member that you did not know before?**

That people really believe what they do behind closed doors shields them from accountability.



### A Candidate's Journey in Public Service

**How does your prior experience in public service impact the way you govern as an elected official? Do you think people with prior public service experience are better suited to lead?**

My prior experience has provided me with a foundation of understanding what is needed to govern. Public Administration is a field of study that covers all departments within the public sector. I believe that people with prior and/or current public service experience are better suited to lead. It's like any other profession, knowledge is power. Just as a resident, I was able to stop bad things from moving forward on agendas, call out bad practices, and help my community because I understand how government is and is not allowed to operate. Now as an elected leader, I'm at the table and that means the community is fully represented.

**How do your experiences as an elected official, both past and present, enhance your ability to teach in the MPA program at CSUSB?**

Transitioning from the policy implementor (administrator) to policy creator (elected) has enhanced my ability to look at and discuss more in depth the importance of knowing and thinking about outcomes and consequences of policy decisions. From the administrator side of government, you are the subject matter expert, but you can only give your best recommendation, knowing that elected officials have the final say.

I want my students to understand how valuable they are to the process and how important it is to educate the policy makers and be ready for the questions or challenges. Good public policy depends on having an informed electorate.

**How long have you been teaching at CSUSB, and what courses do you teach?**

I have been with CSUSB for 5 years. I have taught PA 6110: Public Administration Theory & Practice; PA 6610: Procurement; PA 6030: Research Methods; PA 5570: Labor Relations; PA 5190: and, Managing Diversity in Organizations. For the undergraduate program I teach PA 3050: Organizations in Multicultural & Diverse Societies; PA 3150: and, Society, Business and Global Governance.

**What do you enjoy most about working with MPA students?**

I enjoy being able to discuss our work at an intellectual level. Most of our students have public sector experience, so being able to combine the theory of it with their real-world examples brings what we do to life. Serving others is a calling and the passion that CSUSB MPA students have for the community. This makes every class awesome and a privilege to be able to teach. And I really love when I get to meet students in person when I'm at county or city event, it makes it even more real to see everyone in their element, being their amazing selves.

### Interview

#### BOB MILLER



Bob Miller has ably served as a Lecturer with the Department of Public Administration at the California State University San Bernardino since 2011. Over that time, he has taught graduate courses focused on public and emergency management and ethical leadership.

Mr. Miller served for nearly 28 years in law enforcement roles. A retired member of the California Police Chiefs Association, he served as the Chief of Police for the City of Colton from 2007-2011. During his tenure as Police Chief, he also served as Interim City Manager in 2009.

Since his retirement from public service, Bob has utilized his front-line leadership expertise to help other policing agencies be more effective by serving as a consultant for cities across CA.

Mr. Miller holds both a bachelor's and master's degrees in management from the University of Redlands. He is also active in his community as he was elected to the Yucaipa/Calimesa Joint Unified School Board, Governing Board Area 5 in 2022. And most recently, in December 2025, he was appointed to a city council seat to represent District 1 in the City of Yucaipa.

**You were appointed by the sitting council after the results of the recall election. What qualities did the council see in your past service that led them to choose you for this important role?**

The council likely saw in me a strong commitment to public service, leadership experience, and a deep understanding of the needs of our community. Having served as a school board member and as the Chief of Police in Colton or as Interim City Manager. I have a track record of making difficult decisions in the best interest of the public. My background in management, coupled with my military service, has shaped my ability to lead with integrity, accountability, and a focus on results. I believe the council recognized that I bring a steady hand, a collaborative approach, and a deep sense of duty to this role.

### From Chief of Police to City Council

**You previously served on the elected school board of Yucaipa. What are some of the key differences between serving on a school board and a city council?**

While both roles require leadership, governance, and fiscal responsibility, the focus and scope of each are quite different. As a school board member, my primary responsibility was ensuring students received a quality education by overseeing curriculum, budget allocations, and policies affecting schools. The city council, on the other hand, deals with a broader range of issues, including economic development, infrastructure, public safety, and quality-of-life matters for all residents. The city council also has a direct impact on land use, zoning, and financial policies that shape the long-term future of the community. Both roles require engagement with the public, but the city council's decisions often have a more immediate and visible impact across the community.

**What have you learned so far about being a new council member that you did not know before?**

One of the biggest takeaways has been the complexity of balancing community expectations with the practical realities of governance. I've always understood the importance of public input, but being on the council has reinforced just how vital transparency and communication are in building trust.

I've also learned more about the intricacies of city budgeting, development projects, and how intergovernmental relationships shape local decision-making. Additionally, I've gained a deeper appreciation for the role of staff and how crucial it is to work collaboratively with them to implement council policies effectively.

**How does your prior experience in public service impact the way you govern as an elected official? Do you think people with prior public service experience are better suited to lead?**

My experience in public service—whether as Chief of Police, a school board member, or in the military—has reinforced the importance of servant leadership. I approach governing with a focus on accountability, transparency, and putting the community's needs first. Having been in leadership roles where difficult decisions had to be made, I understand that not every decision will be popular, but it must be made with integrity and long-term vision.

As for whether prior public service makes someone better suited to lead, I believe it provides a strong foundation. Experience in public service gives individuals an understanding of government processes, the ability to navigate bureaucracy, and an appreciation for collaboration. However, leadership is also about vision, character, and the ability to engage with people—qualities that can be found in those from diverse backgrounds, not just public service.

### From Chief of Police to City Council

**How do your experiences as an elected official, both past and present, enhance your ability to teach in the MPA program at CSUSB?**

Teaching in the MPA program allows me to bring real-world insights into the classroom. Having served in various leadership roles, I can provide firsthand accounts of public administration challenges, decision-making processes, and the realities of governance. My current role on the city council adds another layer to my teaching, as I can discuss contemporary issues affecting local governments in real time. I also emphasize the practical application of leadership theories, budget management, and public engagement strategies—giving students a well-rounded perspective on public service.

**How long have you been teaching at CSUSB, and what courses do you teach?**

I have been teaching at CSUSB in the MPA program for 12 years, focusing on courses related to Leadership, Management of Public Organizations, and Emergency Management. These courses align closely with my experience in public service, providing students with both theoretical knowledge and practical applications.

“Leadership isn’t about making popular decisions—it’s about making the right ones with integrity and a long-term vision.”

**What do you enjoy most about working with MPA students?**

What I enjoy most is the passion and dedication that MPA students bring to public service. Many of them are already working professionals in government, nonprofit, or law enforcement sectors, and they bring valuable perspectives to class discussions. It’s rewarding to help them connect academic concepts to real-world challenges and to see them grow as future leaders in public administration. Their enthusiasm for making a difference in their communities is truly inspiring.

**Did You Know?**

#### Did You Know?

- California has 58 counties and 483 incorporated municipalities (cities and towns), each with its own local government structure.
- California has over 2,000 independent special districts that provide specific services like water, fire protection, or transportation - more than any other state.
- There were 2.7M public sector employees in the state of California as of March 2025.



## Katherine Kolcheva: MPA Grad's Path to Political Impact



**Katherine Kolcheva**

**Katherine Kolcheva**

**Chief of Staff at County of San Bernardino, Fourth District Supervisor Curt Hagman**

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### **1. What made you interested in politics and/or working for a politician?**

Interestingly enough, my interest in politics wasn't about politics. It began with a desire to help others and a profound curiosity about how the world worked. During grade school, I channeled a lot of my energy into learning about history.

I was an avid reader and fascinated with world leaders and the legacies they built. I also enjoyed helping others. It was only later, as a young adult, that I realized my interest in history, curiosity about systems and societal structures, and desire to help others could be blended together in the world of politics.

This interest led me to pursue an internship during the last semester of my undergraduate studies. I remember being over the moon for an opportunity to learn more about public service. Following my internship at the congressional office, I joined the re-election campaign for the same member of Congress. Being surrounded by people who were passionate about making a difference was inspiring and further solidified my personal commitment to public service.

After the election, I moved on to other campaigns and found that I excelled at and enjoyed the strategic elements of helping good people get elected to office. Building on my experience, I applied for a role with the State of California in a local office. These early experiences provided me with a strong foundation in problem-solving, staying engaged in the issues facing a community, and working toward solutions that aligned with the priorities of the elected officials I supported.

## Katherine Kolcheva: What It's Really Like Working in Politics

### **2. What was your academic and professional preparation for doing so?**

As an undergraduate student, I chose to study Business Administration with a focus on Economics. Studying market dynamics and concepts such as the scarcity of resources helped inform my personal perspective when it comes to making decisions that impact others. This academic foundation has served me well in my current and prior roles. Though it wasn't my favorite subject, accounting classes proved especially valuable—particularly for managing budgets, making informed recommendations, and advocating for data-backed changes.

Truthfully, I have always enjoyed school and found that my work ethic, along with my writing and analytical skills, prepared me to take on the many challenges presented by this field. Early on, even during elementary school, I looked for opportunities to lead projects, which helped build my confidence in leadership—something I rely on to this day in my current role.

Finally, I find that being curious, asking thoughtful questions, and creating a space for others to share has been a valuable skill. When it comes to solving problems, leading with empathy has helped me build meaningful bridges and foster collaboration, which has allowed me to be effective in my role. Empathy is a soft skill that is often overlooked in leadership, and sometimes perceived as a weakness, but I see it as a strength—one that I deeply value in my approach to leadership.

### **3. What is the job exactly? What does your average week look like? What kind of issues take precedence in the office?**

I serve as the Chief of Staff to a highly vision-oriented elected official. The responsibilities of this role can vary week to week and depend heavily on the priorities of the elected official as well as the professional strengths of the Chief of Staff. Specifically, in my role, I focus on problem-solving, advocacy, policy development, and communication with staff and the public. I see myself as a champion for my boss, the community, and my team—ensuring that what we do as an office reflects his vision as well as the needs of the community.

Each week is filled with opportunities to solve problems and make an impact. This year, the office I support launched a podcast focused on giving the public deeper insight into how government works and what elected officials actually do. The podcast shares leadership lessons, behind-the-scenes dialogue with other leaders, and guides listeners through decisions that have shaped our community. I enjoyed using my creative skills—leading the branding, designing the vision and mission, and shaping the direction of each episode.

## Katherine Kolcheva: Putting the MPA to Work

### **4. How did earning the MPA at CSUSB align with your professional goals and skill needs?**

Earning an MPA with a focus on Leadership aligned with both my personal and professional goals. I was the first person in my family to graduate with a bachelor's degree in the United States. Pursuing an MPA was both a professional aspiration and a personal promise to myself. After working in local government and politics for over a decade, I decided to pursue an MPA to continue developing as a professional. The MPA program at CSUSB has been an invaluable experience—reinforcing what I learned through work, while also challenging me to think differently. The program introduced new concepts that have enabled me to be an even more effective leader in my current role.

I enjoyed the classes and learning what public administration looks like for others. Specifically, I appreciated going through the program with a cohort of classmates who had experience in different areas of public service. Learning from both the professors and my peers made the experience rewarding. My job often focuses on the big picture, so hearing about the challenges others face in more specific areas helped inform my own decisions and leadership style.

### **5. Any advice for people wishing to go into this line of public service work?**

Public service involves sacrifice. Having dedicated the majority of my professional life to serving my community, I can personally attest to the hard work and dedication that staff at the political and agency levels put in to do their very best. I feel blessed to witness the drive and joy that professionals in this field gain from serving others. The people I have the pleasure of working with are passionate, hard-working, and driven. They work weekends, holidays, and after hours to make a difference. What others might view as a job, they see as a calling—and it keeps them coming back every day to serve others.

Public service also demands a willingness to do things differently. When we receive complaints or feedback from the community and stakeholders, we take it seriously. The office I lead constantly looks for new ways to do things and re-evaluates whether our efforts are truly effective and aligned with our mission. Sticking to the status quo without addressing its impact can lead to poor outcomes for those who come to us for help. Embracing change, evolution, and data-driven improvement is key to serving our constituents effectively.

## Kristy MacDougall: From Intern to Chief of Staff



**Kristy MacDougall**

**Kristy MacDougall**

**Murrieta, CA**

**Chief of Staff to California State Senator Kelly Seyarto,  
32nd District**

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### **1. What made you interested in politics and/or working for a politician?**

Leadership and public service have always been of interest to me. I wanted to be part of the decision-making process and advocate for meaningful change.

I wanted to be in the room where decisions were made and where my thoughts were being considered. Over time, my understanding of leadership has evolved. True public service is not about being in the spotlight. It's about creating strong support systems behind the scenes, empowering others, and working toward a shared goal where everyone's voice is heard and represented. Working in government, and for politicians I believe in, gives me the opportunity to do just that.

### **2. What was your academic and professional preparation for doing so?**

After graduating high school as class valedictorian, I attended UC San Diego, where I double-majored in political science and history. I initially worked in marketing at theme parks, but I knew in my heart that I wanted to pursue politics and public service. I took a leap, left my job, and started as an intern in a State Assembly office. Since then, I've worked my way up, serving six different representatives in both houses of the California Legislature for nearly 19 years and working on several political campaigns. Every step helped build the knowledge and perspective I now bring to my role, and I continue to grow with each new experience.

### **3. What is the job exactly, what does your average week look like? What kind of issues take precedence in the office?**

As Chief of Staff to a California State Senator, I oversee a talented team that handles everything from legislation to community outreach. Every week is different but tasks include managing office priorities, meeting with stakeholders, reviewing policy proposals, staying on top of district concerns, and of course supporting staff by providing the tools they need to do their jobs effectively.



# From Intern to Chief of Staff: One MPA Student's Journey Through Public Service

The issues we focus on depend on what's most urgent for our constituents and the Senator: housing, education, public safety, transportation, etc. My role is part strategy, part support, and always grounded in service. I feel fortunate to work for a Senator who truly values public service, community input, and collaborative leadership which are the qualities that set the tone for how our office operates. While the work can be demanding, I genuinely enjoy the variety and the opportunity to help shape meaningful policy and respond to real community needs.

## **4. How does the MPA at CSUSB align with your professional goals and information needs?**

The MPA program at CSUSB has been a perfect complement to both my professional development and personal growth. It's providing me with a deeper understanding of leadership, public management, and organizational dynamics. As I've moved into more senior roles, I've learned that being an effective leader means managing people just as much as managing projects. The program gives me both the theoretical framework and practical tools to empower my team, lead with understanding, and grow into the next phase of my career. It's also a personal goal fulfilled. I've wanted to earn my master's for a long time, and this program offered the flexibility I needed.

## **5. Any advice for people wishing to go into this line of public service work?**

Start where you can and be open to learning. Whether it's an internship, campaign, or entry-level government job, every role offers valuable lessons and connections. Public service is about commitment, collaboration, and doing the work, often behind the scenes, to make things better for others. Stay grounded in your values, support your team and co-workers, and never underestimate the power of listening. Build relationships, stay curious, and be willing to keep learning. Oh, and align yourself with leaders and politicians that you believe in. Those who lead with integrity and a genuine motivation to serve. I've been fortunate to work for many elected officials, including my current boss, who lead with humility and purpose, and who understand that leadership is about service, not self-promotion. If you're driven by purpose and want to make a difference, this is a rewarding path to pursue. Though challenging and time consuming, I absolutely love my job, my boss, and my team, and genuinely enjoy this career.

## Josiel Perez: A Communicator's Role in Public Service



**Josiel Perez**

**Josiel Perez**  
**Communications Specialist**  
**County Administrative Center (County of Riverside)**

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### **1. What made you interested in politics and/or working for a politician?**

Although often messy, politics is an essential part of our society. It determines our present and our future. It determines who gets what, when, where, why, and how. By working in politics, I can make an impact on our community for the better.

### **2. What was your academic and professional background/preparation for doing so?**

I studied Political Science at the University of California, Riverside (UCR). I explored various theories of human nature, government structures, and the impact of politics on our lives. At UCR, I had the pleasure of learning from seasoned professionals, such as Professor and former Mayor of Riverside, Ronald Loveridge.

Near the end of my studies, I had the opportunity to study in Tokyo, Japan, where I learned how to succeed in a different environment and culture. This experience taught me firsthand how different systems, policy priorities, and political values can significantly affect people's lives.

After graduating, I joined the Office of Riverside County Fifth District Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez. Initially starting as an intern, I gained hands-on experience in multiple roles within the office. Soon after, I became the Communications Specialist.

### **3. What is the job exactly, what does your average week look like? What kind of issues take precedence in the office?**

As the Communications Specialist, I serve as the voice of the office, breaking down complex government concepts and projects for residents to understand.

## Where Policy Meets Purpose

Although my day-to-day changes as needs arise, my average week consists of collaborating with internal staff, county departments, and external stakeholders to enhance our messaging; creating items such as press releases, weekly messaging, and monthly newsletters; handling emergency management response, ensuring we develop a unified message during critical situations; and preparing talking points for the Supervisor. Ultimately, my focus is on strategic communication and disseminating our office's key messages. The motto of our office is "Thrive in D5." To achieve that goal, our office aims to empower vulnerable populations, including youth, unhoused or at-risk individuals, veterans, and justice-impacted individuals. Thus, we have created a variety of programs to address their needs. For example, our Second Chance program provides justice system-impacted youth (ages 16-24) with career counseling, job opportunities, and wrap-around services.

### **4. How does the MPA at CSUSB align with your professional goals and information needs?**

I strongly believe that an MPA at CSUSB will enhance my understanding of government functions and management, providing insights into the challenges that affect policy implementation outcomes. In my role as Communications Specialist, I've witnessed how well-intentioned policies can face hurdles in reaching and benefiting vulnerable populations. I believe the MPA program will provide me with the tools necessary to identify challenges in implementation and messaging and come up with effective solutions.

With this knowledge, I will be empowered to better serve in my role as Communications Specialist for the Office of Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez.

### **5. Any advice for people wishing to go into this line of public service work?**

For those who want to work in politics, I have a few recommendations. First, work on your communication skills. Whether it be stakeholders, residents, or internal staff, this line of work requires you to communicate, both written and verbally, complex issues and initiatives to a variety of audiences. I work toward improving this skill every day. Second, start building meaningful relationships. That means reaching out to people involved in your field of interest. Consider inviting them to coffee. You never know where that conversation will lead you. Third, make an effort to volunteer or intern if possible. I started as an intern and eventually became a member of the staff. Finally, identify experienced individuals in your field of interest and seek their mentorship. I have a few mentors who have guided me as I've navigated my path. I would not be where I am without them.

## Dennis Hawkins: A Voice of Experience in Local Government



**Dennis Hawkins**

“ I'm passionate about helping local governments become more responsive and efficient. The MPA program is giving me fresh tools to build on my real-world experience and better serve the communities I care about.

**Dennis Hawkins** brings over 26 years of experience in city and county government management, paired with 24 years of service as an elected school district trustee. With a rare combination of practical leadership and deep-rooted public administration expertise, Dennis offers a unique perspective—having shaped public policy as both an elected official and a seasoned administrator.

As the former City Clerk for the City of San Jose, Dennis led a team that supported the legislative and administrative operations of the Mayor and the 10-member City Council. He also served as the City's election and compliance officer, successfully revising the City's conflict of interest code and managing the weekly Council agenda process.

One of Dennis's most notable accomplishments was leading San Jose's redistricting process—unanimously adopted without opposition. He also restructured the City's board and commission system to increase diversity and streamline operations.

### **Fiscal Stewardship & Grant Success**

Dennis has extensive experience with both capital and operating budgets. He has written, secured, and managed significant grant programs at the federal, state, and local levels—channeling funds into critical areas such as parks, recreation facilities, law enforcement, and code compliance in underserved neighborhoods.

### **Innovating Human Resources in Public Safety**

In his role overseeing firefighter recruitment in San Jose, Dennis reformed the testing and selection processes to raise standards and prioritize candidates with specialized skills such as paramedicine and bilingual proficiency. His initiatives reduced hiring time, streamlined background checks, and cut costs by 50%.



### Student Spotlight: Dennis Hawkins

Dennis also improved personnel management across various city departments, including the airport, transportation, legal, and mayoral offices, overseeing hiring from entry-level roles to senior executive positions.

#### Long-Term Impact as an Elected Official

During his 24 years as a school district trustee, Dennis helped guide board goal-setting, develop a 5-year master plan, and implement strong governance standards. His leadership contributed to better accountability, improved evaluations, and the successful hiring of three superintendents.

#### A Lifelong Learner in the MPA Program

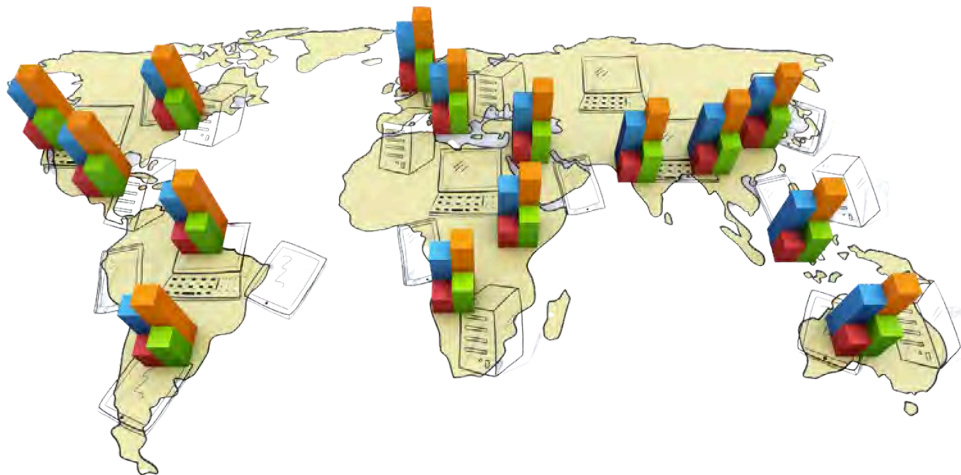
Now in his first semester of the MPA program, Dennis is committed to lifelong learning and professional growth. His goal is to continue enhancing the quality and effectiveness of public services in the communities he serves. His extensive background makes him a valued member of the MPA student body, and a role model for those looking to create meaningful impact through public administration.

#### MPA by the Numbers

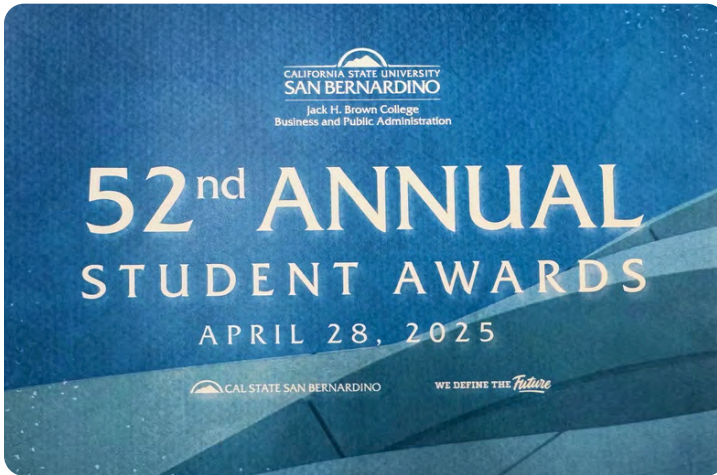


Employment in public administration roles is projected to grow steadily.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, roles such as city managers, urban planners, and public policy analysts are expected to grow by 6-9% through 2032, faster than average for many sectors.



## Annual Alumni and Student Awards



## *Congratulations*

**Congratulations to our 2025 Honorees!**

**Distinguished Alumna Award:** Dr. Treasure Ortiz

**Chair's Award:** Mariela Zurita

**Outstanding Student Award**

**Graduate:** Abigail Haskell

**Undergraduate:** Veronica Trujillo

We are proud of your accomplishments and look forward to your future successes in public service.



Spring 2025 PAA Inductees

### PI ALPHA ALPHA HONOR SOCIETY: EVENT RECAP

Pi Alpha Alpha is the Global Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. There are more than 160 chapters located around the world at NASPAA member schools. Pi Alpha Alpha is run by NASPAA: The Global Standard in Public Service Education and is directed by a National Council of 14 members. Information about the society can be found on [The National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration](https://www.piaa.org/) web page.

The purpose of Pi Alpha Alpha is to encourage and recognize outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in public affairs and administration. Its objectives, such as fostering integrity, professionalism, and effective performance, promote the advancement of quality in the education and practice of the art and science of public affairs and administration. PAA membership identifies those with the highest performance levels in educational programs preparing them for public service careers.

### *Spring 2025 PAA Inductees*

Abigail Haskell  
Anthony Ortega  
Bashir Khan  
Itzel Olguin  
Jesse Flores  
JoAnn Jordan  
Joel Garcia  
Kristy Macdougall  
Mariela Zurita  
Melanie Bettenhausen  
Natalie Ruegger  
Nebrisa Fish  
Rebekah Ferreti  
Renee Walker  
Rocio Hernandez  
Ruby Doreen Walla  
Selena Lopez  
Stephanie Jacinto  
Stephen Carter  
Victor Hernandez



"Public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation."

— Margaret Chase Smith, U.S. Senator



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Business and Public Administration

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JACK H. BROWN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
A NEWSLETTER FROM THE MPA PROGRAM

<https://www.csusb.edu/mpa>

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