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TAMUCC's Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program

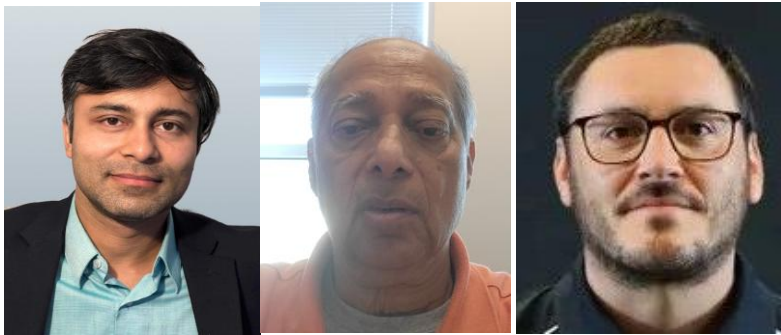
Spring 2026



TAMUCC MPA Celebrates 35th Anniversary

The Master of Public Administration Program at Texas A&M University Corpus Christi is celebrating the 35th anniversary of the program's creation. The first two students were enrolled in classes in January 1991, and the full state approval for the program came in Fall 1991. The program was featured at the Islander Alumni Toast Event on February 27th, and alumni were invited to the homecoming basketball games and block party on February 28th. Pictured is the first MPA Coordinator, retired professor Dr. Phil Rhoades giving the toast, and some of the MPA faculty and College of Liberal Arts administrators and staff at the block party event.

"It was inspiring to reunite with some of our program alumni, as well as to meet others for the first time. Through our alumni and current students, our MPA program has made a tremendous impact on policy and governance in our local community, state, region, and beyond. It was nice to reflect on the combined impact from the past 35 years, as we look towards ways our program can evolve to continue supporting the needs of our community, our mission, and that of the university, said Department of Social Sciences Chair, and MPA faculty member, Dr. Isla Schuchs Carr.



Dr. Shahriar Islam Dr. Haroon Khan Dr. K.J. Toombs

New Faces, New Roles

The MPA faculty has been joined by three new faces and one “old face.” **Dr. Charles Etheridge**, who’s taught Grant Writing in the program for a number of years, has assumed the duties of MPA program coordinator as **Dr. Isla Schuchs Carr** has become Chair of the Department of Social Sciences. Congratulations to Dr. Isla as she takes on a new challenge. Read more to find out about faculty who’ve joined TAMUCC’s MPA faculty.

Dr. Haroon Khan was born and raised in Bangladesh. After completing his bachelor's degree from the University of Chittagong, he pursued graduate studies at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois, before earning his Ph.D. from the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas. His research interests include human resources management, leadership, the American presidency, and globalization. Outside of academia, he has a passion for tennis – though a broken ankle, suffered while channeling his inner Nadal, serves as a humbling reminder of his enthusiasm for the sport.

Dr. K.J. Toombs earned his master's in history at Pittsburg State University and his doctorate in Political Science from Idaho State University. Over the past five years, he has taught history, political science, and public administration courses at several institutions, including Odessa College, Southern Oregon University, UTPB, and Muskingum University. He has also held positions in both the public and nonprofit sectors and currently serves as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy Reserves. His academic and professional interests include environmental policy and natural resource management, regional planning and economic development, and nonprofit management. Outside the classroom, he enjoys golfing and spending time with his family.

Dr. Md Shahriar Islam was a Visiting Assistant Professor of Public Administration in 2025-2026 and will join TAMUCC as an Assistant Professor this fall. Originally from Bangladesh, he earned his Ph.D. in Community and Public Affairs from Binghamton University, SUNY, his MPA from London Metropolitan University, and his undergraduate degree in Public Administration from the University of Dhaka. His research focuses on technology and equity in public service, behavioral public management, and global public opinion and political behavior, with publications in journals such as the International Journal of Public Sector Management, the Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration, and Democratization. A member and treasurer of the South Asian Section of ASPA, he regularly presents at international conferences across Bangladesh, India, South Korea, Spain, and the USA. He has previously taught at Tarleton State University and the University of Dhaka, covering public policymaking, budgeting, organizational behavior, and research methods. He also has a lifelong curiosity about astrophysics and the universe.

Alumni In Action

Three TAMUCC MPA alumni spoke at an event sponsored by the South and West Texas Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration on April 20th, 2026. Featured alumni included Elvia Aguilar, Executive Director of Alumni Engagement at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Ryan Gant, a health educator for Fort Bend County Health & Human Services, and Doug Matthijetz, the Fire Chief for Copperas Cove, Texas. Read more about each of them on this page.

The South and West Texas ASPA Chapter strives to represent and connect public service professionals, as well as faculty and students of public administration and public affairs in the South and West regions of Texas. The chapter works to bring professional education and networking opportunities to its members and promotes research on public issues relevant to the unique region along the U.S.-Mexico border. Membership includes more than 800 working professionals and students.



Ryan Gant, B.S, MPA, CHWI, is a public health professional with over eight years of experience in community health education, program implementation, and public-sector service with local government. She currently serves in the Community Health & Wellness Division at Fort Bend County Health & Human Services (FBC HHS)



Douglas Matthijetz is the Fire Chief for the City of Copperas Cove, bringing more than three decades of experience in the fire service. He began his career with the Corpus Christi Fire Department in 1990, advancing through every rank before retiring in 2026 as Deputy Fire Chief.



Elvia Aguilar is the Executive Director of Alumni Engagement at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. A 2017 graduate of TAMUCC's MPA program, she has worked at Visit Corpus Christi, as a public relations consultant, and as feature editor for the *Corpus Christi Caller Times*.

MPA Alumna Arlene Medrano Headlines Hooding Ceremony

Arlene Medrano, the executive director of the Corpus Christi Downtown Management District, was the keynote speaker at the Fall 2025 College of Liberal Arts Hooding Ceremony. Medrano spoke of the values of strength, resilience, and courage.

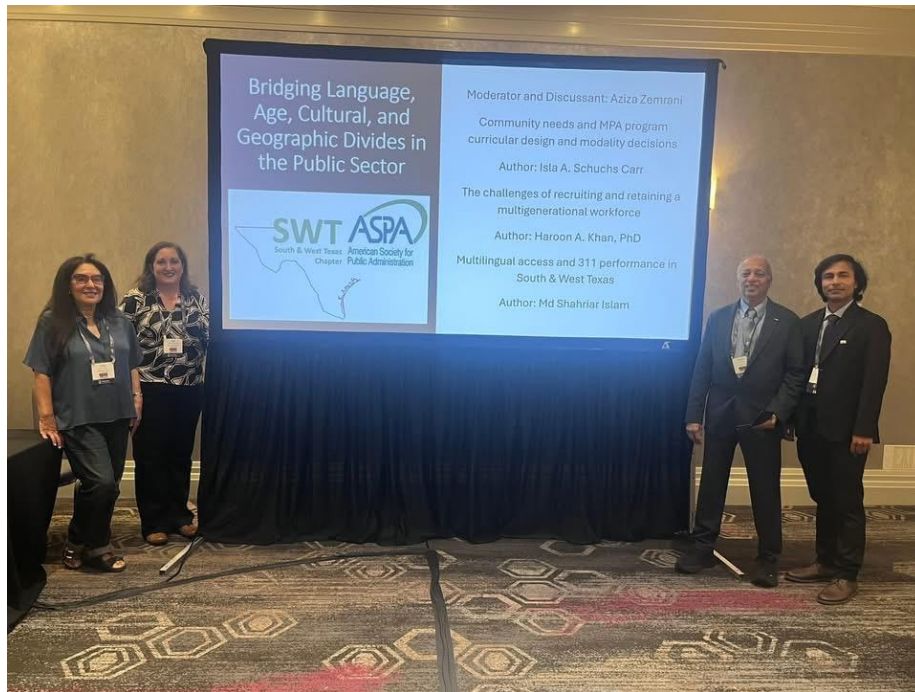
Medrano's extensive work experience in Corpus Christi and Alice includes overseeing improvement plans and establishing a reinvestment zone projected to generate \$44 million in private investment.



Support MPA Programming!

The **MPA Gift Fund** supports TAMUCC MPA students by providing program support for networking events, professional development, mixers, and graduation celebrations. Please consider supporting this important program. Just scan the QR code to donate!





TAMUCC MPA at South & West Texas ASPA

The South & West Texas ASPA Chapter hosted a panel at the 2026 Annual American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) conference in Hollywood, California this March. The panel: "Bridging language, age, cultural, and geographic divides in the public sector", included presentations from several SWT ASPA members, **Dr. Isla Schuchs Carr** (chapter president), **Dr. Haroon Khan**, **Dr. Md Shahriar Islam**, and **Dr. Aziza Zemrani** (chapter vice president), served as the moderator and discussant for the panel.

If you would like to join SWT ASPA to access other educational web series and a vast array of public service resources and networking opportunities, contact Dr. Isla A. Schuchs Carr, SWT ASPA President, at Isla.SchuchsCarr@tamucc.edu or SWTASPA@gmail.com



Pi Alpha Alpha (PAA)

Pi Alpha Alpha (PAA) is the global honor society for students of public administration, public policy, and public affairs. Administered by NASPAA (the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration), it recognizes academic excellence and promotes integrity and professionalism in public service. More than 30,000 people are members in more than 160 chapters around the globe.

TAMUCC has a vibrant PAA chapter. Students inducted in Fall 2025 included **Seth Moran**, **Emily Malouf**, **Ishita Pathak**, and **Anne Thomas**. **Abigail Evans** served as the chapter president for Fall 2025. Students inducted in Spring 2026 included **Kwadwo Amoako-Baah**, **Enock Kimutai**, **Spencer McElwee**, **Paul Vandehey**, and **Leslie Perez**. **Ishita Pathak** served as the chapter president for Spring 2026. PAA members must complete a service project that benefits the community. This year PAA students collected more than 200 pounds of food for Izzy's Food Pantry, an on-campus effort that combats food insecurity faced by TAMUCC students.

PAA members also know how to have fun! In December, PAA students decorated a holiday tree that was entered in the "Islander Lights Academic Forest," a holiday-themed contest among university organizations and academic programs. The MPA program tree won first place, based on a campus-wide vote. The award came with a catering voucher that funded PAA sponsored social events for students.



Fall PAA induction ceremony. Pictured are Dr. Haroon Khan, Fall Chapter President Abigail Evans, Emily Malouf, Ishita Pathak, Anne Thomas and spouse, Dr. Isla Schuch Carr, and Dr. Chuck Etheridge. Inductee Seth Moran is not pictured,

Ishita Pathak and the winning tree



PAA members show off the boxes of food collected for their service project. Pictured are chapter sponsor Dr. Haroon Khan, Enock Kimutai, Kwadwo Amoako-Baah, Emily Malouf, and Spring Chapter President Ishita Pathak.



Spring PAA induction ceremony. Pictured are Dr. Isla Schuch Carr, Paul Vandehey, Enock Kimutai, Spring Chapter President Ishita Pathak, Kwadwo Amoako-Baah, Spencer McElwee, chapter sponsor Dr. Haroon Khan, and Dr. Chuck Etheridge. Inductee Leslie Perez is not pictured.



Student Grant Writing Success

Students in Dr. Chuck Etheridge's Spring 2025 Grant Writing MPA course were successful in their application for the Behmann Brothers Foundation on behalf of the Coastal Bend Food Bank to expand protein distribution in the Coastal Bend Area. The Food Bank and TAMUCC have had a successful partnership for more than 20 years, providing our students with valuable learning opportunities while providing real benefit for our community. Students participating included: **Presly Austin, Bryce Earls, Iris Fuentes, Candus Garcia, Valerie Jimenez, Hannah Mitchell, Julia Norrell, Bryan Ortiz, James "Einar" Phillips, Anna Thomas, and Paul Vandehey.**

"TAMUCC's MPA students are smart, motivated, and committed to their community. They threw themselves into work because, for them, the grant application wasn't just a class assignment—it was a way to make an impact. It's hard to fully express how proud I am of these students," said course instructor Dr. Chuck Etheridge.

2025-2026 Graduates

TAMUCC's MPA program was proud to graduate 12 students. Fall 2025 graduates included Abigail Evans, Valerie Jimenez, and Hannah Mitchell. Spring 2026 graduates included Presly Austin, Kwadwo Boakye Amoako-Bahh, Brittani Fletcher, Elijah Guerra, Gerardo Hinojosa, Enock Kimutai, Emily Malouf, Seth Moran, and Ishita Pathak.

The graduation ceremony is an important rite of passage, demonstrating to the community at large that students have completed a rigorous academic program and possess the commitment, resilience, and specialized knowledge required to tackle complex challenges in the field of public administration. However, the **hooding ceremony** is a more intimate ceremony that gives students, faculty, friends, and family a chance to celebrate together. Faculty consider it a great honor when a graduate asks a faculty member to present the graduate with their Master of Arts hoods at this ceremony. Below are pictures from the Fall 25 and Spring 26 hooding ceremonies.



Fall 25 hooding attendees include (front row) include Abigail Evans, Hannah Mitchell, and Valerie Jimenez. Faculty attending (back row) include Dr. Isla Schuch Carr, Dr. Chuck Etheridge, Dr. K.J. Toombs, and Dr. Shahriar Islam.



Participating in the Spring 26 Hooding Ceremony are Ishita Pathak, Dr. Sarah Scott, Dr. Chuck Etheridge, Seth Moran, Dr. Haroun Khan, Elijah Guerra, Dr. Shahriar Islam, Enock Kimutai, Gerardo Hinojosa, and Kwadwo Boakye Amoako-Bahh

The Shoreline is the newsletter of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi's Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. For questions or information, please contact Chuck Etheridge at charles.etheridge@tamucc.edu or at 361-825-5755. If you'd like to suggest a story, let us know how you're doing and what you're up to, or to find out more about our programs. We'd love to hear from you!