

# PAA NEWSLETTER

*Pi Alpha Alpha, California State University, Dominguez Hills*



## Welcome to Fall 2020 !

*by Andre Khachaturian*

*Dear Friends,*

*Thank you for your feedback! We are actively working on making the newsletter and our services better. As we begin a new academic year, the editorial board thought we would tackle the topic of online education. There is a range of opinions and studies regarding this issue. There are even lawsuits making their way in the court systems trying to address whether students are entitled to refunds by the universities they attend (see <https://bit.ly/3j85BkO>). So we reached out to our fellow Pi Alpha Alpha members for their perspectives on online learning and teaching. I would like to introduce you to Roxana Pleitez who completed her 12-week online MPA program in 2017 and Logan Todd who completed his 8-week online MPA program also in 2017. Professors Rui Sun and Johnny Thomas also shared their insights on online teaching.*

*Finally, please don't forget to register for the PAA fall member meeting. We also encourage you to apply for the PAA Research Fellowship Award (see page 5).*

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**Roxana, please tell us a little about your experience with the CSUDH MPA program.**

*I initially chose to do the campus program because I was afraid of the online option. Also, I was pregnant with my first child, and did not think the online option would work for me. One week before the on-campus semester began, I had my child and the campus option no longer applied to me so I enrolled in the online program. One important aspect that I realized was that online learning requires discipline and self-commitment in addition to the help of supportive instructors and family.*

*I enjoyed the program particularly during my second year where I received an amazing opportunity to become a research assistant with Dr. Rui Sun, Associate Professor in the Department of Public Administration. With Dr. Sun's mentorship, I became a better scholar and we submitted a publication titled "Do Charter Schools Improve Student Performance?" This paper was presented at the 46th Western Decision Sciences Institute Annual Meeting in Vancouver, BC, Canada. In addition, I presented it at the CSUDH Student Research Day and was awarded first place during the second session of presentations for Business, Economics, and Public Administration. Without instructors like Dr. Sun and my supportive family, it would have been difficult for me to complete my degree.*

*In fact, the support that I've received from all faculty was amazing, which made my MPA journey such a joyful experience.*



**Roxana Pleitez, MPA '17, Public Management Concentration**

**Did you encounter any challenges in online learning? If so, how did you overcome these challenges?**

*I was afraid of online learning and to interact with the rest of the class. The set-up of the weekly modules provided by the instructors made the challenges easier. Also, the instructors provided plenty of information about expectations. This helped me to succeed and overcome challenges.*

**Do you have any advices for students who are new to online learning?**

*Yes, I will tell them that everything is possible if you set your mind to it. Also, do not procrastinate because it will not help at all. Time passes anyway, and if you spend your time investing in your future, your investment will bear fruits in the long-term.*



Logan Todd, MPA '17, Nonprofit Management Concentration

**Did you encounter any challenges in online learning?**

*I was concerned about the challenges of pursuing a degree entirely online and attending a university that I had never personally visited. Yet, the most omnipresent and potent challenge of online learning, in my experience, was time management.*

**Do you have any advices for students who are new to online learning?**

*Remember why you are doing this. Having experienced both, I don't believe that online learning is harder than in-person learning, or vice versa. They are both freeing in some ways, and definitely both challenging in some ways. It is important to be realistic about what the challenges are and address them in a way that works for you.*

**Logan, what did you enjoy the most about online learning?**

*I enjoyed the freedom that it allowed. I decided to pursue a MPA with a concentration in Nonprofit Management while I was working in a field related to my undergraduate degree. My motivation was to change careers and to launch a new career in nonprofit management, but I was also engaged and in a position of responsibility in my current field. Attending online allowed me to continue to work in my field and be present for professional and personal accomplishments while working toward my future. With online courses, I was able to pursue an education at Dominguez Hills without having to uproot my life and allowing me to fit my studies around my schedule.*

**How did you overcome these challenges in online learning?**

*I learned early on that the most important strategy to address the challenge of time management was to be transparent with the people in my life and myself about how much time I needed each day and each week to succeed and do a good job. I figured out a block of time that worked around my work schedule and family time and worked hard to maintain that block of time throughout my studies. I found that, especially in the accelerated 8-week MPA program, it was best to work on my studies a little bit each day, whether that was reading a textbook and taking notes, or working on a large assignment.*

## Faculty's Perspectives on Online Teaching

*I have been teaching online classes since 2011. I attended Blackboard and Quality Matters training programs and participated in Faculty Learning Communities over the years. I try to keep up with the development of the technology, learn best practices, and implement them in my classes. Since our MPA program is NASPAA accredited, we have to make sure all three modalities meet the high standards set by NASPAA. I find this is especially challenging in the intensive 8-week online program where instructors have to cover all the contents taught in a typical 16-week campus program and assess student learning outcomes consistently.*



**Dr. Rui Sun**  
Associate Professor  
PAA Faculty Advisor

*Some strategies I use in both in-person and online classes include planning ahead, aligning class activities with specific course objectives, be clear about expectations, giving students very detailed instructions, communicating with students frequently, and encouraging student engagement by proposing questions closely related to class readings and current public administration events. This year, I started incorporating Zoom live meetings in my online classes. I'm also working on pre-recorded lectures with closed captions to enhance accessibility.*

*As Logan and Roxana mentioned earlier, both in-person and online learning could be challenging in its own way; if you set your mind to it, you can accomplish your goals. Some students are forced to take online classes because of the pandemic. My advice is to stay focused and make the most out of this situation while maintaining safety and health. I believe that with appropriate learning and teaching strategies, online education could be as effective as in-person one.*



**Professor Johnny Thomas**  
PAA Treasurer

*One of my key teaching strategies is to help keep students engaged and participating in productive dialogues. I support this strategy with learning activities that facilitate and support ongoing engagement- student to student, student to content, student to instructor and student to the world.*

## Calendar of Events

**Fall Member Zoom Meeting:** Monday, Sept. 14, 2020,  
6:00-7:00pm

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://csudh.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJIItde2oqTIjH9cpwWX6iXh-oBB6BNAYyQBI>

**PAA Fellowship Award Program:** Now Accepting Applications!

The PAA-CSUDH Research Fellowship Award Program aims to promote graduate and undergraduate scholarship through offering PAA members and prospects in the CSUDH Department of Public Administration the opportunities to work under the supervision of faculty on research projects of their interests.

Each awarded student will be granted a fellowship amount of **\$700** for working on a research project of his or her interest. The award funding is supported by the PAA-CSUDH annual membership dues and donations. Application deadline: **9/30/2020**. For further information on how to apply, please visit:  
[https://www.dropbox.com/s/sbrmj8ciyj2mewb/PAA\\_Research\\_Fellowship.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/sbrmj8ciyj2mewb/PAA_Research_Fellowship.pdf?dl=0)

## PAA Leadership Team

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*We welcome your suggestions and feedback. Please contact us at [paa@csudh.edu](mailto:paa@csudh.edu) or our individual emails listed above.*

*Please also consider joining our chapter's LinkedIn group at: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13847794/>*

