

FALL 2020

ASKEW SCHOOL NEWS

Official Newsletter of the
Askew School of Public Administration and Policy



BEST GRAD SCHOOLS
US News

Florida State University

Ranked in 12 programs and 5 specialties

Public Affairs



Public Affairs ☆

Program and Specialty rankings

- #25 in Best Public Affairs Programs (tie)
- #17 in Public Management and Leadership
- #11 in Local Government Management
- #30 in Public Policy Analysis (tie)
- #20 in Public Finance and Budgeting (tie)
- #18 in Urban Policy (tie)

2021 School Rankings

Every year, *U.S. News and World Report* ranks graduate schools around the country on various programs, based on national surveys of program directors and deans. For the 2020 - 2021 year, it has ranked the Askew School 25th in the nation. The School is also 5th in the Southeast and 1st in Florida.

Some of the School's specialties and programs were also ranked, including:

#25 in Public Affairs	#17 in Public Management and Leadership
#11 in Local Government Management	#30 in Public Policy Analysis
#20 in Public Finance and Budgeting	#18 in Urban Policy

Hopefully next year, the School can continue to move further and climb higher in the rankings.

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Gigi Rollini (JD/MPA '03)

Why did you choose a degree in public administration?

The practice of law and the power of policy go hand in hand. Government decisions about guiding and binding policy drive what we do as lawyers on a daily basis.

Like so many who ultimately pursue a career in law, I am a public servant at heart. I have always been driven by the desire to help society through public service and to fight for the kind of policies that make our community better.

I am also a Seminole through and through—I am a triple ‘Nole, married to a quadruple ‘Nole! Against that backdrop, for me, a joint law degree (JD) and MPA program at FSU was exactly the right fit.

I knew that whatever direction a career in law would take me, it would be enhanced by the experience a background in public affairs, public management and leadership, and public finance and budgeting would provide.

How has your degree in public administration helped you in your career?

My MPA has enhanced my career beyond measure. I am an attorney and Shareholder at the law firm of Stearns Weaver Miller, PA, in Tallahassee, Florida. I lead its statewide Government & Administrative Law Group, comprised of 28 attorneys and non-lawyer professionals focused on the crossroads of business and local and state government. We represent local government entities, state agencies, non-profit organizations, private companies, and licensed entities and individuals. My work encompasses everything from getting, keeping and defending a Florida license, to obtaining and litigating government contracts, to forming and managing non-profit and trade organizations.

I am also a past president of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers and the Tallahassee Women Lawyers, and currently serve on the Executive Board of the National Association of Women Lawyers. I am a two-term past president of America’s Second Harvest of the Big Bend board of directors, in my second term on the Executive Council of The Florida Bar’s Administrative Law Section, and on the board of Club 25, comprised of Tallahassee’s “25 Women You Need to Know.”

I have been able, as a lawyer and member of the community in the organizations I’ve been lucky enough to serve, to lead effectively precisely because of my training in public management and leadership, public affairs, and public finance and budgeting. My understanding of how to coalition and consensus build with identified stakeholders was borne of my time at The Askew School more than seventeen years ago, and continues to serve me well to this day.

Alumni Continued

The benefits started even prior to law school. The MPA program taught me how to research and study existing law and policy, as well as understand its implications. I graduated top 10% of my law school class and was elected to Order of the Coif in no small part because my MPA coursework prepared me for the rigors of law school.

Both in law school and post-graduation, being a dual-track MPA student enhanced my marketability both to public and private employers, and helped set me apart from the pack.

Once in private practice as an attorney, I found that my MPA degree gave me a personal confidence in the realm of government and administrative law, particularly involving cases in which government contracts or executive agency implementing rules were at issue. Knowing how to manage those contracts and enforce those rules from the perspective of government makes me better able to troubleshoot potential risks and rewards. I found I also had a unique understanding of what the concept of “legislative intent” really meant, and had the tools to look at policy changes where the implementation of a law or policy did not fulfill that intent.

When I represent a client through the legislative or rulemaking process, or to negotiate with regulators, or help a board build a more robust infrastructure around its budgeting process, I can analyze goals, assess costs and benefits, understand budgets, identify stakeholders and potential hurdles, and propose meaningful, palatable policy changes from both the perspective of a lawyer and a policymaker. Because of my MPA degree, I have a value added in everything I do in my professional life. I am a lawyer who can interpret and enforce existing law, and develop and advance better law and policy proposals to effect real change when needed.

What advice would you give to current students?

Possibilities for success, networking, and leadership building are everywhere! Don't delay. Professional reputations take time to build, and community and professional involvement are great ways to hone your leadership and management skills while developing that reputation. Keep your eyes open to those possibilities and grab ahold of them when they fit with your personal and professional goals, and stir something within you that moves you to action. But be careful not to overextend yourself—know your priorities and your limits. Adopt a criteria and stick by it when times get busy. (It also makes saying “no” much easier.) Whatever you take on, be a reliable, positive, prepared, and active member of whatever team you join, and you will rise in that leadership and gain champions who support you on your path to success. The value of the experience rarely comes just from the title, but from the hard work you put into building relationships and leadership skills that help move a shared goal toward success.

STUDENTS AND ALUMNI!

Would you like to see your accomplishments here? We want to hear about them! Now is the time to brag! Send in a summary or article under 500 words and a photograph for consideration!