



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS™

Department of Government, Public Service, and International Studies (GPI) Newsletter

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Department students participate in May 2026 commencement ceremony

Several students and faculty members from the GPI Department participated in UCA's commencement ceremony at the Farris Center on Friday morning, May 1, 2026. More than 20 GPI students earned bachelor's degrees in political science, public administration, and international studies following the 2026 spring semester. [Read more](#)

Department holds 2026 Pi Sigma Alpha induction ceremony



The GPI Department held its annual induction ceremony for the Alpha Beta Theta Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society, in the Fireplace Room of McCastlain Hall on April 16, 2026. Dr. Mark Mullenbach, the department chair, announced the 2025-2026 inductees, including: Taylor Brewer, Micah Castleberry, Summer Charles, Connor Farmer, Caleb Ferguson, Caroline Fortenberry, Kyla Hinton, Yasmine Kouadio, Max Long, Mary Lyle, Kylie McGraw, Stephany Morales, Kamarion Pickett, Sydney Poe, Ava Walker, Lillian Ward, Kayla Wyatt, and Taya Young. Dr. Joseph Howard and Dr. Aaron Sparks served as faculty advisors for the Pi Sigma Alpha chapter in 2025-2026. [**Read more**](#)

Department honors its 2025-2026 Outstanding Students



During the Pi Sigma Alpha Induction Ceremony held on April 16th, the GPI Department honored its 2025-2026 Outstanding Students: Political Science – Caroline Fortenberry, Katelyn Nees, and Richard Ware; Public Administration – Micah Castleberry and Mitchell Gray; and International Studies – Lillian Ward. The directors of the academic programs in the GPI Department are Dr. Joseph Howard (Political Science), Dr. Kim Hoffman (Public Administration), and Dr. Gizachew Tiruneh (International Studies). **[Read more](#)**

Public Administration Club members attend annual meeting of the ArkPSA



Public Administration (PA) Club members Lillian Ward, Catherine Brewer, Arely Pioquinto, Connor Farmer, Tyler Patterson, Caroline Fortenberry, and Maritsa Rosas attended the annual meeting of the Arkansas Political Science Association (ArkPSA) at Lyon College, March 6-7, 2026. PA Club members attended paper presentations and networked with other college students from across the state. Dr. Kisha Hardwick and Dr. Joseph Howard served as faculty advisors for the PA Club in 2025-2026.

UCA Model UN students participate in 2026 spring conferences



Members of the UCA Model United Nations (MUN) student organization participated in three conferences during the 2026 spring semester: the Midwest Model United Nations (MMUN) conference in St. Louis, Missouri; the Conway High School Invitational Model United Nations conference; and the Ozarks Regional Model Arab League (OZMAL) conference in Springfield, Missouri. The 2025-2026 officers for the UCA MUN student organization included Corbin Williams (president), Hlib Shevchenko (vice-president), Adrian Chavez (secretary), and Gracelynn King (treasurer). Dr. Mark Elrod and Dr. Mark Mullenbach served as faculty advisors for the UCA MUN in 2025-2026. [**Read More**](#)

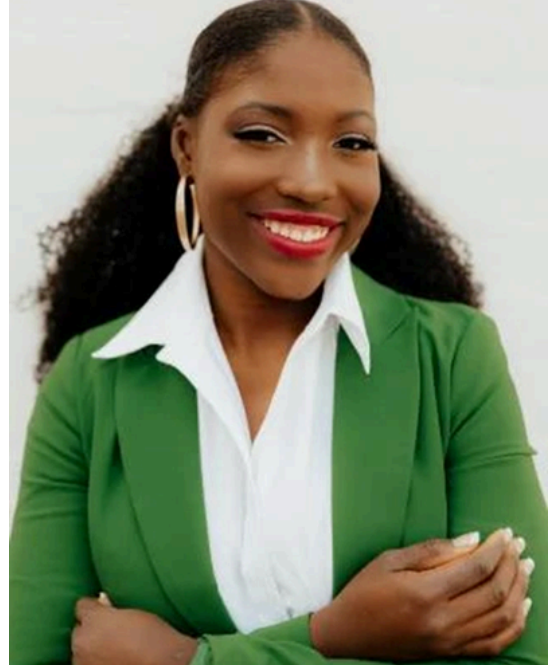
International Studies Club hosts Spring Cultural Event



The GPI Department-affiliated International Studies Club hosted its annual Spring Cultural Event in the UCA Student Center on Tuesday, March 17, 2026. The event, which focused on the country of India, featured a presentation on the history and government of India by club president Ava Walker, as well as a sample of Indian music and food. The other officers of the International Studies Club in 2025-2026 were Lillian Ward (Vice-President), Taya Young (Secretary), Bleu England (Treasurer), and Maritsa Rosas (Membership Chairperson). Dr. Gizachew Tiruneh and Dr. Hyo-Won Shin served as faculty advisors for the International Studies Club in 2025-2026.

STUDENT NEWS

Students to participate in the NextGen Service Corps Summer Policy Academy



Two students pursuing BPA degrees in Public Administration at UCA - Kylie McGraw and Abigail Wells - will be participating in the Next Generation Service Corps Summer Policy Academy in June 2026. The Summer Policy Academy is a fully-funded professional development program designed to empower undergraduate students to explore careers in public service, network with public service professionals, and learn more about specific policy issues. The Summer Policy Academy is funded by the Volcker Alliance. The students will spend one week in Washington DC, including meetings with public service professionals and visits to federal government agencies. Subsequently, Kylie will spend two weeks at the University of California-Berkeley in the Democracy & Law Policy Program, and Abigail will spend two weeks at the University of Washington-Seattle in the Social Policy Program. Both students will receive a \$1,000 stipend upon program completion and will have access to career readiness resources and career mentorship. UCA will be launching its NextGen Service Corps program in 2026-2027. **[Read more](#)**

UCA students participate in Inside Washington Seminar in Washington DC



Fifteen UCA students participated in The Washington Center (TWC) Inside Washington Seminar in Washington DC on January 6-14, 2026. The UCA students, who were instructed by Dr. Bailey Fairbanks from the UCA Department of Government, Public Service, and International Studies (GPI), joined a group of 300 participants from across the country who gathered in person for a unique insider's view into the state of politics, policy, and diplomacy in the national capital. The UCA students – Mary Kate Cain, Maritsa Rosas, Richard Ware, Katelyn Nees, Madelyn White, Alec Williams, Lillian Ward, Caroline Fortenberry, Mitchell Gray, Sydney Poe, Taylor Brewer, Corbin Williams, Connor Farmer, Catherine Brewer, and Taylor Aldana – benefited from financial support from the State of Arkansas and the TWC, as well as Student Experiential Learning Fund (SELF) grants funded by GPI Department alumni, faculty, and other contributors. **[Read more](#)**

FACULTY NEWS

Dr. Kim Hoffman appointed to Advisory Committee of the Arkansas Collegiate Civic Leadership Academy



Dr. Kim Hoffman, Professor of Public Administration in the GPI Department, has been invited to join the Advisory Committee of the Arkansas Collegiate Civic Leadership Academy (ACCLA) at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute in Morrilton, Arkansas. Dr. Hoffman joined the faculty of the Department of Political Science (now GPI Department) in Fall 2001. The ACCLA was founded in 2025 and graduated its first class of 30 students from nine Arkansas colleges and universities, including UCA student Kylie McGraw, in April 2026. The ACCLA is a yearlong program that blends academic instruction, civil discourse, practical training, and service-learning. Participants explore how government works, how communities solve problems, and how leaders can engage responsibly in civic life. **[Read more](#)**

ALUMNI NEWS

Department graduate assists veterans at the Veterans Legal Services Clinic in Little Rock



Madalyn Dowell, a third-year law student at the William H. Bowen School of Law, is using her legal skills to assist veterans in the Veterans Legal Services Clinic in Little Rock. Madalyn graduated from UCA in 2023 with a BA degree in Political Science and a BPA degree in Public Administration. [**Read More**](#)

Department graduate accepted into Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies



Nick Tollison, who graduated from UCA in May 2020 with a BA degree in International Studies, was recently accepted into the Master of Arts in International Relations (MAIR) Program at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington DC starting in Fall 2026. Since May 2021, Nick has worked as a Software Tester for Acxiom Corporation in Conway, Arkansas. Nick is the lead software tester for all of Acxiom's projects in Canada and Mexico, ensuring the "successful delivery of applications across thousands of retail locations." [**Read more**](#)

SAVE THE DATE!

GPI Department to host the Fall 2026 Distinguished Alumni Awards Reception

The GPI Department is planning to host the **Fall 2026 Distinguished Alumni Awards Reception** in Buffalo Alumni Hall on the campus of UCA on **Thursday, October 1, 2026** (5:00pm to 7:00pm). Two distinguished alumni of the department will be honored at the reception. All department alumni are invited to attend the reception and (re)connect with department faculty and current students. An email invitation and RSVP link will be sent to department alumni in early September.

The GPI Department encourages its alumni to update us on their professional honors and accomplishments by submitting the **Alumni Questionnaire** at any time. In addition to the questionnaire, please send your professional photos to Dr. Mark Mullenbach at markm@uca.edu or Rachel Glenn at rglenn1@uca.edu for the department webpage and newsletter.

Please make a contribution!

Department of Government, Public Service, and International Studies (GPI) Fund

The GPI Fund broadly supports the department's academic programs, faculty, and students.

Student Experiential Learning Fund (SELF)

The SELF fund provides small grants to students in the Department of Government, Public Service, and International Studies who are participating in experiential learning activities outside of the traditional classroom.

Simms McClintock (AMUN) Fund

The AMUN Fund, which was established in honor of the founder of the Arkansas Model United Nations (AMUN) program, supports the ongoing AMUN program and the UCA students who participate in Model UN activities at UCA.

Mayor Tab Townsell Scholarship for Public Service

This scholarship, which was established in honor of former Conway Mayor Tab Townsell, provides scholarships for UCA students majoring in political science or public administration.

[Click here for more information about departmental funds.](#)



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