

STATE POLITICS AND POLICY CONFERENCE 2025



Connecting Research to Practice

UMass Club, Boston, MA
Wednesday, May 21 - Friday, May 23

Hosted by University of Massachusetts Amherst, University of Massachusetts Boston, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, University of Massachusetts Lowell, and the University of Massachusetts President's Office



Schedule Overview

Wed May 21

Pre-Conference Reception, 6:00-9:00pm
Nigh Shift Brewery – Lovejoy Wharf
1 Lovejoy Wharf, Boston

Thu May 22

Breakfast, 7:30-8:30pm
Amherst Room

Panel Session 1 8:30-10:00am

Panel Session 2 10:15am-11:45pm

Lunch, 12:15-1:30pm
Amherst & Boston Rooms

Panel Session 3 1:45-3:15pm

Panel Session 4 3:30-5:00pm

Poster Session & Cocktail Reception, 5:00-6:30pm
Amherst & Boston Rooms

Dinner, 6:30-8:30
Amherst & Boston Rooms

Fri May 23

Breakfast & Business Meeting, 8:30-9:30am
Amherst Room

Panel Session 5 9:30-11:00am

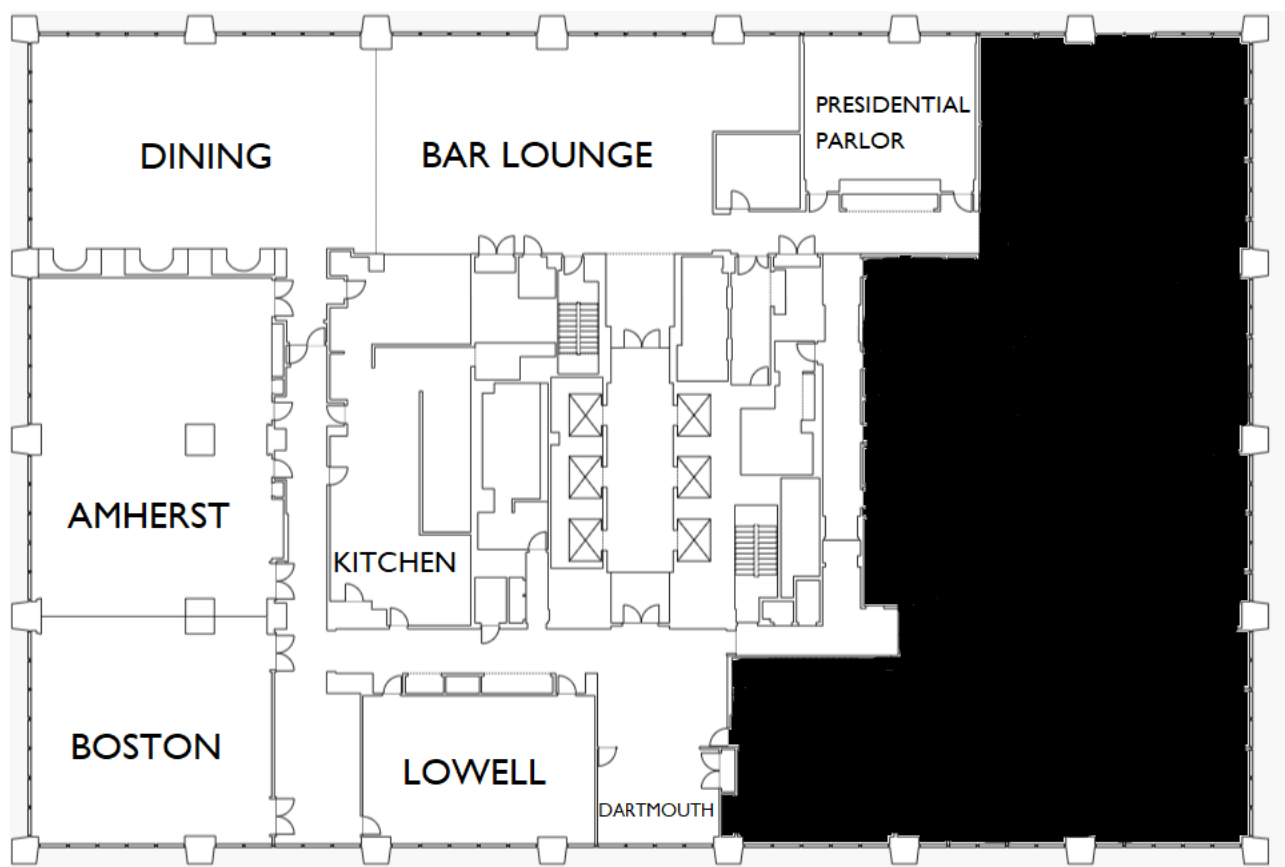
Panel Session 6 11:15am-12:30pm

Freedom Trail Walk, 2:30pm
Boston Common

The UMass Club

The UMass Club is located at 1 Beacon Street in Boston on the 32nd floor. Because the elevators are security-gated, you will need to check in with the security officer when you first arrive to receive a barcoded ticket that you will use to access the elevators for the duration of the conference. Security will have a list of registrants for the conference, so please be aware that only registered individuals will be able to access the UMass Club.

Name badges will be available for pickup at the pre-conference reception Wednesday night and at the UMass Club any time you arrive. If you have any questions, concerns, or issues, please email the conference organizers at SPPC.2025@umassd.edu.



Panel Schedule

PANEL SESSION 1 – THURSDAY, MAY 22 – 8:30-10:00 AM

Election Rules and Processes

Thursday, May 22 – 8:30-10:00am

Room: Lowell

Chair: Christopher Zorn

Discussant: Cassidy Reller

Electoral Integrity and Ranked Choice Voting – An Experiment

Benjamin Melusky - Old Dominion University

Jesse Richman - Old Dominion University

Attempts at Changing State Election Rules: Partisanship, Campaigns, and Voting

Todd Donovan - Western Washington University

Caroline Tolbert - University of Iowa

Pushing the Envelope: The Timing of Returned Vote-by-Mail ballots in Clark County, Nevada

Daniel Smith - University of Florida

Michael Herron - Dartmouth College

Who Says they Voted (but Didn't) in Open or Closed Primary States

Robert Boatright - Clark University

Caroline Tolbert - University of Iowa

Public Opinion and Policy

Thursday, May 22 – 8:30-10:00am

Room: Parlor

Chair: Craig Volden

Discussant: Conor Dowling

The Politics of Private School Vouchers: Evidence from Three Statewide Referenda

Vladimir Kogan - Ohio State University

Michael Hartney - Stanford University

Parker Baxter - University of Colorado Denver

Do Parents Know Their Options? National and State-Level Analyses of School Choice Awareness

John Kristof - EdChoice

Status Quo Bias in Policy Preference: Implications for Policy Diffusion

Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz - University of Maryland

The Heterogeneous Effect of State Ideology on State Policy Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Frederick Boehmke - University of Iowa

Taylor Tokos - University of Iowa

Johabed Olvera - Pennsylvania State University

Bruce A. Desmarais - Pennsylvania State University

Jeffrey Harden - University of Notre Dame

Gender and Race in Legislatures

Thursday, May 22 – 8:30-10:00am

Room: Boston

Chair: Jason Windett

Discussant: Shaniqua Williams

Do Voting Rights Matter? Legislative Consequences of Women's Suffrage

Michael Olson - Washington University in St. Louis

Mirya Holman - University of Houston

Christina Wolbrecht - University of Notre Dame

Better Together: Cohesion and Success Among Minority Legislative Groups

Hunter Rendleman - University of California, Berkeley

Half-Broke Ceilings: Women as Leaders in U.S. State Legislatures

Jordan Butcher - Arkansas State University

PANEL SESSION 2 – THURSDAY, MAY 22 – 10:15AM-11:45am

Legislative Effectiveness

Thursday, May 22 – 10:15am-11:45am

Room: Boston

Chair: Steven Rogers

Discussant: Michael Olson

Lawyers and Legislative Effectiveness

Eric Hansen - Loyola University Chicago

Sarah Treul - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Colleagues and Neighbors? Geographic Patterns of Collaboration and Legislative Effectiveness

Todd Makse - Florida International University

The Impact of Legislative Process on Legislative Effectiveness

Tessa Provins - University of Arizona

Nicholas Howard - Concordia College

Ideology and Effective Lawmaking in American State Legislatures

Craig Volden - University of Virginia

Alan Wiseman - Vanderbilt University

Arjun Vishwanath - Boston University

Partisanship and Political Attitudes

Thursday, May 22 – 10:15am-11:45am

Room: Lowell

Chair: Ray LaRaja

Discussant: Daniel Bowen

Playing for Keeps: One Party Monopolies in the American States

Zoe Nemerever - Auburn University

Janine Parry - University of Arkansas

Dynamics of Nationalization of American Public Opinion

Michael Auslen - University of Texas at Austin

Local News and Political Knowledge

Michael Nelson - Pennsylvania State University

Chris Witko - Pennsylvania State University

Danielle Beavers - Pennsylvania State University

The Structure of Mass Politics within and across American States

Jack Santucci - The George Washington University

Public Policy

Thursday, May 22 – 10:15am-11:45am

Room: Parlor

Chair: Mirya Holman

Discussant: Travis Johnston

The Forgotten Bipartisanship of State-Level Renewable Energy Policymaking: How the Nationalization of Climate Politics Polarized the Issue in the States

Joshua Basseches - Tulane University

The Political Determinants of States' Medicaid Policy Design and Administrative Burden

Tracee Saunders - Pennsylvania State University

The Environmental Race to the Bottom, Revisited
Neal Woods - University of South Carolina
David Konisky - Indiana University

Governors' Attention to Education Policy: An Exploratory Analysis of State-of-the-State Speeches
Jason Windett - University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Samantha Schuermann - University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Jennifer Beightley - University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Erik Torres - University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Mahrukh Maqsood - University of North Carolina at Charlotte

PANEL SESSION 3 – THURSDAY, MAY 22 – 1:45-3:15PM

Gubernatorial and Judicial Politics

Thursday, May 22 – 1:45-3:15pm
Room: Parlor
Chair: Richard Vining
Discussant: Michael Nelson

Are Voters' Preferences Being Ignored by Governors' Agendas?
Dan Butler - Washington University in St. Louis

Redistricting the State Supreme Courts
Meghan Leonard - Illinois State University
Joseph Ross - Florida Gulf Coast University

Gender and the Communication of Executive Policy Agendas
Jason Windett - University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Mirya Holman - University of Houston
Mimosa Khatun - University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Mahrukh Masqood - University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Ideological Contours of Interstate Disputes in the U.S. Supreme Court
Christopher Zorn - Pennsylvania State University

Political Participation

Thursday, May 22 – 1:45-3:15pm

Room: Lowell

Chair: Daniel Smith

Discussant: Kevin Banda

State Election Security and Stop the Steal Protests

Justin Crofoot - Pennsylvania State University

Isaac Pollert - Pennsylvania State University

Voting for the Unicameral: Popular Elections and Ballot Propositions on Adopting a Single Legislative Chamber

James Endersby - University of Missouri

Disenfranchised by Direct Democracy? Ballot Language Complexity and “Don’t Knows”

Jeff Grynawski - Wayne State University

Missouri Referenda: Direct Democracy and Policy Reform in an Age of Polarization

Sidney Milkis - University of Virginia

Robert H. Brehm - University of Virginia

PANEL SESSION 4 – THURSDAY, MAY 22 – 3:30-5:00pm

Attitudes about Government

Thursday, May 22 – 3:30-5:00pm

Room: Parlor

Chair: Janine Parry

Discussant: Michael Auslen

Building State Communities: Identity and Federated Resource Sharing

Emily Sydnor - Syracuse University

Emily Pears - Claremont McKenna College

How They Map It: Citizen Perceptions of their State and Representation

Jonathan Winburn - University of Mississippi

Perceptions of State Government Legitimacy

Jennifer Wolak - Michigan State University

Capable Legislatures or Professional Politicians? Why Americans Dislike the Professionalization of State Legislatures

Daniel Bowen - The College of New Jersey

Agendas

Thursday, May 22 – 3:30-5:00pm

Room: Lowell

Chair: Justin Kirkland

Discussant: Tessa Provins

How State Parties Use Evidence To Advance Their Policy Agendas, 1968-2020

Sarah James - Gonzaga University

The Dynamics and Influence of Fusion Parties in the New York State Legislature

Cassidy Reller - University of Florida

Tabling Debate: How Local Officials Use Agenda Control to Stifle Conflict

Tyler Simko - Princeton University

Mirya Holman - University of Houston

Opening the Gates: Interest Group Influence on Partisan Agenda Control

Michael Kistner - University of Houston

Boris Shor - University of Houston

GRADUATE STUDENT POSTER SESSION & COCKTAIL RECEPTION – 5:00-6:30pm

Amherst & Boston Rooms

Prosecutors, Elections, and Accountability: Competitive Elections as a Safeguard

Mike Lynn - Pennsylvania State University

Discussant: Meghan Leonard

Bias at the Ballot: Partisan Influence Over Direct Democracy

Jordon Newton - Washington University in St. Louis

Discussant: Fred Boehmke

The Gendered Governor: Text Analysis of State of the State Addresses & Policy Issues

Bailey Oates - Michigan State University

Discussant: Dan Butler

Partisan Politics in Local Education: Evidence from Pennsylvania School Boards

Sara Bornstein - The George Washington University

Discussant: Zoe Nemerever

Civic Education and Voter Turnout: Evidence from Nebraska

Ashley Grace Burkholder - Loyola University Chicago

Discussant: Emily Sydnor

Public Opinion, Social Constructions, and Morality Policy Adoption: An Examination of State-Level Anti-Transgender Policy

Brody DeBettignies - University of Iowa

Discussant: Amber Lusvardi

Women's Representation and the Sponsorship of Women's Issue Bills

Emma Schroeder - University of Notre Dame

Discussant: Jordan Butcher

Neighborhood Crime: Language Used and Solutions Identified in a Neighborhood Social Media Group

Breana Stevens - University of Maryland

Discussant: Michelangelo Landgrave

Putting the Time into Transportation Costs

Danielle Beavers - Pennsylvania State University

Discussant: Neal Woods

Strategic Eligibility Criteria Design

Lauren Futter - Columbia University

Discussant: Jonathan Winburn

Selective Reciprocity in Bipartisan Collaboration: How Majority Security Shapes Legislative Success

Mackenzie Dobson - University of Virginia & University of Notre Dame

Discussant: Todd Makse

Economic Inequality and Advocacy: The Role of Interest Groups as Responders to States with High Poverty Rates

Ash Elswick - Pennsylvania State University

Discussant: Jennifer Wolak

The Intersection of Law and Trauma: The Impact of *Torney v. United States* on Forensic Nursing and Sexual Assault Survivor Privacy

Selma Newbill - Duke University

Discussant: Tracee Saunders

External Efficacy in State Politics

Emily Anderson - University of Notre Dame

Discussant: Michael Miller

PANEL SESSION 5 – FRIDAY, MAY 23 – 9:30-11:00am

Abortion Policy

Friday, May 23 – 9:30-11:00am

Room: Parlor

Chair: Tracy Osborn

Discussant: Alixandra Yanus

The 2024 Abortion Referendums: A Precinct-Level Analysis

Adam Myers - Providence College

Nicholas Small - Providence College

Power to the People? How *Dobbs* Failed to Deliver on Democratic Representation

Brian Schaffner - Tufts University

Caroline Soler - Tufts University

Using Texas Birth Data To Analyze The Impact of The Texas Heartbeat Law

Michael New - The Catholic University of America

Party Competition and Polarization

Friday, May 23 – 9:30-11:00am

Room: Boston

Chair: Johanna Dunaway

Discussant: Alex Garlick

New World: The Disappearing Importance of Party Competition for Health, Education and Prosperity in the American States, 1880-2020

Thad Kousser - University of California San Diego

Gerald Gamm - University of Rochester

“Welcome to the Free State of Florida:” In-Migration and Rising Republicanism in the Sunshine State

Daniel Smith - University of Florida

Seth McKee - Oklahoma State University

Olivia Zhang - University of Florida

Adaptation, Replacement, and Polarization in State Legislatures

Nathaniel Birkhead - Kansas State University

Jeffrey Harden - University of Notre Dame

Justin Kirkland - University of Virginia

Jason Windett - University of North Carolina at Charlotte

State Identity, Local News, and Affective Polarization

Emily Sydnor - Syracuse University

Joshua Darr - Syracuse University

Johanna Dunaway - Syracuse University

Representation

Friday, May 23 – 9:30-11:00am

Room: Lowell

Chair: Todd Donovan

Discussant: Eric Hansen

Fraud, Fairness, and Framing: How State Legislators Discuss Elections on Social Media

Bruce A Desmarais - Pennsylvania State University

Political Scandals: A Partisan Motivation Theory Approach

Benjamin Melusky - Old Dominion University

Shawn Donahue - University at Buffalo, SUNY

Public Beliefs about Gender Representation in Legislative Bodies

Christopher Zorn - Pennsylvania State University

Jennie Sweet - Cushman - Chatham University

Rebecca Gill - University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The Theatrics of Representation: Political Identity and Homestyle Among Florida Legislators

Donald Mullins - University of South Florida

Benjamin Melusky - Old Dominion University

PANEL SESSION 6 – FRIDAY MAY 23 – 11:15am-12:30pm

Budgets and Federalism

Friday, May 23 – 11:15am-12:30pm

Room: Parlor

Chair: Neal Woods

Discussant: Adam Myers

Federal Agency Capacity and Effectiveness in the States

Fred Gui - Louisiana State University

Junlong Zhou

Robert Hogan - Louisiana State University

Stuck Between the White House and a Statehouse: Advancing a Conditional Relationship of
Administrator Budgeting Posture in the States
Matthew Uttermark - University of Florida

Pressure on the Dam: What States Can Do About Large Ending Balances
Michael Wales - Clemson University

Voting and Voting Rights

Friday, May 23 –11:15am-12:30pm
Room: Boston
Chair: Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz
Discussant: Hunter Rendleman

Annexations and Vote Dilution After *Shelby County*
Michael Miller - Barnard College
Kevin Morris - Brennan Center for Justice

Before the Nineteenth: Examining Women's Partial Suffrage During the Gilded Age and Progressive
Era
Alixandra Yanus - High Point University
Adam Chamberlain - Coastal Carolina University

Do Symbolic Laws Produce Feedback Effects? The Impact of Second Amendment Sanctuaries on
Voter Turnout
Craig Burnett - Hofstra University
Alexandra Filindra - University of Illinois Chicago
Cassidy Reller - University of Florida

Interest Groups

Friday, May 23 –11:15am-12:30pm
Room: Lowell
Chair: Virginia Gray
Discussant: Fred Gui

Women's Candidate Groups in the US
Abby Matthews - University at Buffalo, SUNY
Tracy Osborn - University of Iowa

The Modern US Feminist Movement: A Measure of Mobilization across the 50 States
Amber Lusvardi - University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Kaitlin Kelly - Thompson - Simon Fraser University

Measuring and Explaining Interest Groups' Choice of Strategy
Connor Phillips - Vanderbilt University

LIST OF REGISTRANTS

Emily	Anderson	University of Notre Dame
Yuko	Aoyama	Clark University
Kwesi	Atuaful Quansah	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Michael	Auslen	University of Texas at Austin
Kevin K.	Banda	States United Democracy Center
Joshua	Basseches	Tulane University
Ryan	Baxter-King	University of California Los Angeles
Danielle	Beavers	Pennsylvania State University
Jennifer L.	Beightley	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Nate	Birkhead	Kansas State University
Frederick J.	Boehmke	University of Iowa
Sara	Bornstein	The George Washington University
Daniel	Bowen	The College of New Jersey
Robert	Brehm	University of Virginia
Kyle	Bule	Wayne State University
Aja	Bullock	Duke University
Ashley Grace	Burkholder	Loyola University Chicago
Craig	Burnett	Hofstra University
Jordan	Butcher	Arkansas State University
Dan	Butler	Washington University in St. Louis
John	Cluverius	University of Massachusetts Lowell
Justin	Crofoot	Pennsylvania State University
Trevor	Culhane	Brown University
Joshua	Darr	Syracuse University
Brody	DeBettignies	University of Iowa
Mackenzie	Dobson	University of Notre Dame
Todd	Donovan	Western Washington University
Conor	Dowling	University at Buffalo, SUNY
Johanna	Dunaway	Syracuse University
Joshua	Dyck	University of Massachusetts Lowell
Ash	Elswick	Pennsylvania State University
James	Endersby	University of Missouri
Jess	Esplin	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Elizabeth	Eyermann	Duke University
Lauren	Futter	Columbia University
Alex	Garlick	University of Vermont
Jake	Garringer	Executive Office of the Governor, State of Idaho
Virginia	Gray	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Jeffrey	Grynaviski	Wayne State University
Fred	Gui	Louisiana State University
Connor	Halloran Phillips	Vanderbilt University
Eric	Hansen	Loyola University Chicago
Kerry L.	Haynie	Duke University
Emily	Hickey	Cengage Group
Mirya	Holman	University of Houston
Sarah E.	James	Gonzaga University
Shannon	Jenkins	University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Travis	Johnston	University of Massachusetts Boston
Kaitlin	Kelly-Thompson	Simon Fraser University
Mimosa	Khatun	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Justin	Kirkland	University of Virginia
Vladimir	Kogan	Ohio State University
Thad	Kousser	UC San Diego
John	Kristof	EdChoice
Olive	Kuester	University of Iowa
Raymond	La Raja	University of Massachusetts Amherst
Michelangelo	Landgrave	University of Colorado Boulder
Meghan	Leonard	Illinois State University
Joseph	Loffredo	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Lucia	Lopez	University of Houston
Amber	Lusvardi	University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Mike	Lynn	Pennsylvania State University
Amber	Mackey	University of Virginia
Todd	Makse	Florida International University
Benjamin	Melusky	Old Dominion University
Michael G.	Miller	Barnard College
Donald	Mullins	University of South Florida
Adam	Myers	Providence College
Michael	Nelson	Pennsylvania State University
Zoe	Nemerever	Auburn University
Michael	New	The Catholic University of America
Selma	Newbill	Duke University
Jordon	Newton	Washington University in St. Louis
Erin	O'Brien	University of Massachusetts Boston
Bailey	Oates	Michigan State University
Michael	Olson	Washington University in St. Louis
Tracy	Osborn	University of Iowa
Kelly	Palacios	Duke University
Janine A.	Parry	University of Arkansas
Shanna	Pearson-Merkowitz	University of Maryland, College Park
Isaac	Pollert	Pennsylvania State University
Tessa	Provins	University of Arizona
Cassidy	Reller	University of Florida
Hunter	Rendleman	University of California Berkeley
Steven	Rogers	Saint Louis University
Doug	Roscoe	University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Jack	Santucci	George Washington University
Tracee	Saunders	Penn State
Dante	Scala	University of New Hampshire
Brian	Schaffner	Tufts University
Boris	Shor	University of Houston
Emma	Schroeder	University of Notre Dame
Samantha	Schuermann	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Katherine	Sevin	University of Colorado Boulder
Libby	Sharrow	University of Massachusetts Amherst
Tyler	Simko	Princeton University
Chelsey	Skalski	Cengage Group

Nicholas	Small	Providence College
Daniel	Smith	University of Florida
Caroline	Soler	Tufts University
Madeleine	Solt	University of Houston
Leah U.	Stein	Harvard University
Breana	Stevens	University of Maryland
Emily	Sydnor	Syracuse University
Lidya	Tadesse	Harvard University
Taylor	Tokos	University of Iowa
Caroline	Tolbert	University of Iowa
Erik	Torres	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Mathhew	Uttermark	University of Florida
Richard	Vining	University of Georgia
Craig	Volden	University of Virginia
Michael	Wales	Clemson University
Audra	White	Suffolk University
Jodi	Whitted	University of Cincinnati
Shaniqua	Williams	West Virginia University
Jonathan	Winburn	University of Mississippi
Jason	Windett	University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Dick	Winters	Dartmouth College
Jennifer	Wolak	Michigan State University
Neal	Woods	University of South Carolina
Alixandra	Yanus	High Point University
Brenda	Zollitsch	University of Southern Maine
Christopher	Zorn	Pennsylvania State University