The Power of Visionary Leadership
by Brian A. Farkas ’13

United States Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus presented the 2012 Deil S. Wright Lecture, “Leadership in Service,” on November 1. The 75th leader of America’s Navy and Marine Corps, Secretary Mabus is responsible for an annual budget of $160 billion and a workforce of approximately 900,000 people.

Secretary Mabus was clear that one of the most critical components of strong leadership in today’s world is vision. He said, “Vision is about conceiving what could be, while being informed by what has already been.”

A fourth-generation Mississippian, Secretary Mabus grew up in the small town of Ackerman. He received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Mississippi, a master’s degree from Johns Hopkins University, and a law degree from Harvard Law School. His military experience included a two-year tour in the Navy as a lieutenant junior grade aboard the cruiser USS Little Rock. He served as Governor of Mississippi from 1988 to 1992 and as US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 1994 to 1996.

Secretary Mabus emphasized the difference that one person’s leadership can make by providing an example that struck close to home for the audience. He pointed out that in 1960 North Carolina and Mississippi were almost identical in terms of a number of economic and socioeconomic conditions.

“That year,” he continued, “you elected Terry Sanford as your governor, and Mississippi elected Ross Barnett. Barnett stood in the schoolhouse door at Ole Miss

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Thanks to Peter Franzese and Johanna Foster, co-chairs of the conference planning committee, for an outstanding Public Administration Conference held on November 1–2, 2012. The conference is sponsored by the MPA Alumni Association to promote one of its primary goals—hosting and supporting networking and professional development opportunities for MPA alumni and students.

Because alumni engagement is a major goal of mine as director, I am personally committed to strengthening this conference and to pursuing strategies to bring as many alumni back to Chapel Hill and to the School of Government as possible. A productive part of the conference—as noted on the evaluation forms for example—was having the second-year students introduce themselves at the business meeting followed by a networking lunch. I want to thank the alumni who participated in these break-out sessions for their words of wisdom to our students as they prepare to enter the job market and to continue to think about career options. I encourage the 2013 conference planning committee, which will be co-chaired by Heather Drennan and Erin Langston, to expand on these opportunities because of the value-add to networking and professional development.

In addition to outstanding conference sessions, the Wright lecture, and the Dean’s Dinner, conference attendees have an opportunity to reach out to faculty while in Chapel Hill. Several alumni mentioned to me the importance of connecting with Willow Jacobson, Rick Morse, and David Ammons to discuss challenging work situations. Alumni also enjoyed meeting Leisha DeHart-Davis, a new faculty member specializing in human resource management, and attending her conference presentation on “green tape.”

Alumni engagement is a two-way street. It gives faculty members the chance to hear about what is on your front burner and to bring these issues into the classroom and our research. The ongoing relationships among alumni and faculty is a cornerstone of our MPA program.

Please mark your calendar for the next Public Administration Conference on November 7–8, 2013. Why? Conference Co-Chair Johanna Foster articulates it best: “I always say that people come back from conferences, no matter what the subject matter, with renewed energy from hearing new ideas, meeting new people, and reconnecting with colleagues.”

I look forward to seeing you at next year’s conference, or any time you are in Chapel Hill.

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My door is always open. Please visit if you are in Chapel Hill, or contact me anytime with questions or suggestions about our MPA program at rivenbark@sog.unc.edu or 919.962.3707.
to keep some from getting in. Terry Sanford opened those doors wide to let more people in."

Mabus explained that, regardless of political party, North Carolina has since elected a string of good governors. The Tar Heel state now leads in many important economic and socioeconomic categories, while Mississippi continues to trail.

“That’s the difference of one person,” he said. “That’s the difference public service can make.”

Secretary Mabus’ father, who passed away in 1986, inspired him through his management of a local agribusiness. In the last year of his life, his father did not cut down a single tree he had planted. He hoped they would provide for his son, the grandchildren he would never get to meet, and future generations of the family.

Public service leaders, Mabus asserted, maintain visionary ideas similar to those held by his father. “Through visionary leadership,” said Mabus, “you uphold a public trust for the benefit of future generations we will never know.”

There is tremendous power in visionary leadership for public sector organizations. Vision helps an organization harness its energy, understand how everything is connected, and supports individuals as they find their “best fit” in accomplishing a mission. As alumni and students continue to develop as leaders, incorporating the advice of Secretary Mabus to be visionary in our efforts is essential to leaving a lasting and celebrated public service legacy.

“Vision is about conceiving what could be, while being informed by what has already been.”
Harry Jones ’74 Receives 2012 Donald Hayman Distinguished Public Service Award

The MPA Alumni Association awarded its highest honor, the Donald Hayman Distinguished Public Service Award, to Mecklenburg County Manager Harry Jones ’74 during the Dean’s Dinner held on November 1. The award requires that the recipient has demonstrated a “consistently high level of service and concern for others” and has “given of him/herself without expectation of recognition or reward.”

In his nomination, classmate and friend Steve Allred ’74 noted Jones’ 37 years of public service. “Harry Jones has made notable contributions to many communities in North Carolina and Texas,” Allred wrote. “His innovative, collaborative, and responsible stewardship of Mecklenburg County has been widely recognized both by North Carolinians and by the nation. The dedication, tenacity, and integrity Jones exhibits as a public servant, always acting with grace and humor, has inspired countless others to work for the betterment of their communities and to follow the profession of public administration. Jones has made difficult decisions based not on the path of political expediency or the path of least resistance, but rather by asking three questions; What is the ethical thing to do? What will best serve the community? What decision will allow me to hold my head high the next day, knowing I have served my fellow citizens and my Creator to the best of my ability?”

The selection committee consisted of David Vehaun ’88, president of the MPA Alumni Association; MPA Program Director Bill Rivenbark; faculty member David Ammons; and Ellen Liston ’78. Vehaun said, “The MPA family of alumni is honored to recognize someone as worthy of this recognition as Harry Jones.”

Named after Dr. Donald Hayman to honor his work in public service, the award is given to those individuals who exemplify high standards of service to the public and/or organizations they serve.

Donald Hayman was a founding member of the MPA program. His career at the Institute of Government (now the School of Government) began in 1948 and spanned 37 years. Dr. Hayman influenced the lives of thousands through his teaching and work with local government officials. His devotion to those who sought careers in public service is an example to be modeled by the MPA alumni family.
Two New Scholarships Announced at Dean’s Dinner

The MPA Class of ’74 Scholarship: In Their Own Words

The members of the MPA Class of 1974 began our study of public administration in the same month that President Nixon resigned. The faith of the nation in our public institutions was shaken to the core, but we believed that the best way to ensure progress was to work within government at the local, state, and federal level, focused on professionalism and integrity.

Our class reflected the changing face of Carolina, diverse in ethnicity, gender, and political leanings. We learned from the founding fathers of the program, including Ken Howard, Donald Hayman, Deil Wright, and Gordon Whitaker.

As the years went by, our members became city and county managers, directors of nonprofit organizations, leaders of federal agencies, university faculty and administrators, business leaders, authors, musicians, and community leaders. Although we took various professional and personal paths, we remained in touch with each other for continued support and encouragement.

Because the MPA program brought us together, we remain extraordinarily grateful for the instruction, mentorship, and support the faculty provided us. We owe much to the program, and are pleased to have the opportunity to give back.

The MPA Class of ’74 Scholarship provides annual tuition assistance for a student enrolled in the Master of Public Administration Program (MPA) who has distinguished him/herself academically and is interested in a career in government.

The Richard Y. Stevens Scholarship

This scholarship honors the public service career of Richard Y. Stevens ’74. Stevens most recently represented Wake County in the North Carolina Senate from 2002 to 2012. He previously served as Wake County manager for 16 years before retiring in 2000, and he is currently with the Smith Anderson law firm in Raleigh.

Stevens is a recipient of the 1997 Distinguished Public Service Award from the UNC-Chapel Hill MPA Alumni Association, the 2000 National Public Service Award from the American Society for Public Administration and the National Academy of Public Administration, and the 2004 Public Leadership in Technology Award from the NC Technology Association, among many other awards and recognitions. He holds a BA in political science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned a JD from the UNC School of Law prior to completing his MPA degree.

The Richard Y. Stevens Scholarship provides annual tuition assistance for a student enrolled in the MPA program who has distinguished him/herself academically and aspires to enter or continue a career in local or state government.
A Conversation with MPA Faculty Member
Leisha DeHart-Davis

by Brian A. Farkas

Leisha De-Hart Davis joined the MPA program and the School of Government in May 2012. She previously spent 10 years as a faculty member with the University of Kansas School of Public Affairs and Administration, where she also served as doctoral program director.

DeHart-Davis grew up in North Augusta, South Carolina, located on the north bank of the Savannah River. She earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of South Carolina and a PhD in public policy from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Brian Farkas (BF): How did you end up at UNC-Chapel Hill?

Leisha DeHart-Davis (LD): One of the most appealing things about UNC was the School of Government’s interaction with public sector practitioners. While my academic work is important and will continue, the opportunity to engage with practitioners across North Carolina offers an exciting and unique opportunity.

BF: What is your research area?

LD: My research generally focuses on public sector organizational structure with an eye toward understanding and maximizing effectiveness. My studies deal extensively with the idea of “green tape,” which is the term I use to describe effective bureaucratic policies—rules and procedures that contrast with the more universally recognizable notion of “red tape.”

BF: What will you teach in the MPA program?

LD: I will be teaching the human resource management class both on campus and online through MPA@UNC.

BF: What other work will you be doing for the School of Government?

LD: I specialize in employee engagement and workplace climate studies, particularly within local government organizations. This includes conducting organizational structure surveys, which will allow me the opportunity to translate research for public sector practitioners. This unique opportunity hits on three key components—research, teaching, and service—which, ideally, will help public sector employees manage and perform better within their organizations.

BF: What is your favorite thing about teaching? What is the most gratifying thing you can hear from a student?

LD: One of my favorite things about teaching is the opportunity to see students mature intellectually. Humility in the classroom is incredibly important. To witness someone come into the classroom and recognize that there is still a lot to learn is a rewarding process to be a part of. It is especially gratifying to hear a student say, “I never thought about that,” when referring to a particular topic, policy, or solution. That phrase represents a willingness to consider new alternatives and moves a student toward intellectual maturity.

BF: What is your favorite thing about teaching? What is the most gratifying thing you can hear from a student?

LD: I particularly enjoy hearing from students five years after they have graduated. It allows them the time to get away from the academic environment, apply what they have learned in the real world, and return with a better understanding of the impact of their time in my classroom.
TRUE CAROLINA BLUE: JENIFER DELLA VALLE

by Brian A. Farkas

Renowned for both its beautiful scenery and use as a filming location for major motion pictures, the town of Lake Lure, North Carolina, has also played a role in the development of a young public servant’s desire to give back to her community. For first-year student Jenifer Della Valle, engaging with her hometown’s citizens and public administrators set her on a path toward public service and local government management.

Jenifer earned a BA in political science and international studies from UNC. While an undergraduate, she spent a considerable amount of time supporting the efforts of local nonprofit organizations to address hunger-related issues in the community. After graduation, Jenifer returned to Lake Lure and interned for the town government. She soon realized that a career in local government management would offer an opportunity to positively impact the lives of other citizens.

“Local government affects citizens in the most intimate ways because the choices made by public administrators influences their day-to-day lives,” says Jenifer. “Local government officials should work to be ethical and responsive to the distinct story of every person.”

Recognizing that earning a Master of Public Administration degree would equip her with unique tools to understand and address the diverse needs of citizens, Jenifer considered the eight North Carolina graduate schools that offered an MPA. Very quickly, her focus narrowed to the program at UNC-Chapel Hill.

“Local government is my passion,” said Della Valle. “During the admissions process, I realized UNC’s local government emphasis was the best fit for maximizing exposure to local government and developing tangible skills.”

In her first year in the MPA program, Jenifer has come to truly appreciate the cohort experience, developing strong relationships with her 21 peers. Interacting with faculty at the School of Government has been particularly satisfying for her and has resulted in research and mentorship opportunities.

Currently, Jenifer is working with the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) as a research intern to develop surveys that analyze local trends across North Carolina municipalities.

Jenifer’s passion for local government management is genuine. As she moves into the public sector to address real-world problems, she is confident that her UNC MPA education will serve as an asset in offering real-world solutions.

Jenifer is the 2012–2013 recipient of the North Carolina Local Government Scholarship.
The Global Reach of a Carolina MPA Education
by Sean Gallagher ’08, Major, US Army

Five months after graduating with an MPA degree from UNC-Chapel Hill, I found myself in the mountains of Afghanistan. I was serving as the intelligence officer for the 101st Sustainment Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, a logistics brigade responsible for supplying US and NATO forces in northern and eastern Afghanistan during the decisive phase of “the Afghan Surge.”

When I applied to the MPA program at UNC-Chapel Hill’s School of Government in 2008, the idea was to gain knowledge, skills, and experiences that would benefit the last half of a career in the US Army and then in service as a local government leader in a post-military career. I had no idea of the extent, immediacy, and impact that the experiences in the MPA program would have in my very first assignment after graduation—to lead a team of intelligence analysts advising a brigade of 3,500 soldiers on the enemy, the environment, and their impacts on our operations.

The concepts, skills, and resources introduced to me by the Carolina MPA program contributed significantly to shaping our team’s input to our unit’s success and progress in our nation’s mission in Afghanistan. Almost every class taken during the two-year program was brought to bear during our year-long deployment.

On my desk in Bagram Airfield sat *Tools for Decision Making*, a book by faculty member David Ammons, which helped to guide our team’s analytical processes. I had the School of Government webpage bookmarked on my computer to provide reference in guiding our economic development initiatives with trucking companies. Faculty member Chuck Szypszak’s healthy skepticism of definitive answers drove the pursuit for more sources to confirm reports. The bottom line is that my experiences in the MPA program were indispensable to my job in Afghanistan.

I knew I had made an impact when a slide I had prepared for my boss wound up in the General Officer briefing and the term “SWOT analysis” became a buzzword in the Army lexicon. Our brigade was given an economic development mission to build a regional trucking contract for northern Afghanistan in order to move NATO logistics coming in and going out of Afghanistan via an overland transit route called the Northern Distribution Network. Before committing $25 million in taxpayer money to Afghan truckers, we needed to conduct an analysis to ensure that we were developing a sustainable system after the eventual departure of NATO forces. One of the key tasks as an intelligence officer is to analyze and describe the environment to the commander and our staff. Through e-mail contact with faculty member Jonathan Morgan and consulting the School of Government blogs on economic development, the team was able to conduct a SWOT analysis of the regional trucking initiative and develop a collection plan to gather data regarding potential vendors. This enabled us to identify vendors that were well suited to enter into the contract bid process and eliminate those that could not provide the services required.

We used statistical analysis to contribute to our brigade commander’s decision to conduct operations exclusively at night in the summer of 2011. As winter turned to spring in eastern Afghanistan,
insurgent activity increased. Insurgents began a concentrated effort to target our logistics convoys in April and May 2011. In particular, roadside bombs called Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were causing soldiers to be wounded in action and vehicles to become unserviceable. Falling back on the models and concepts from faculty member Maureen Berner’s first semester statistics course and David Ammons’ Tools for Decision Making, our team conducted statistical analyses of data going back over the previous two years. We ran analyses to determine the best date, time, and locations to travel at night and which routes were worth the risk of driving in daylight due to reduced IED activity. Using time charts and mapping tools to visualize the analysis, we came to the conclusion that conducting operations at night reduced risk to our units by 75 percent. The brigade commander made the decision to conduct all of our convoy operations at night. The results were better than imagined. In the final six months during which we conducted night operations exclusively, only one vehicle was damaged by an IED. The number of soldiers wounded in action during the night fell, and the overall number of enemy attacks fell. There were many contributing factors such as coalition targeting of key enemy individuals, Ramadan occurring in July, and an increased difficulty by the enemy to source IEDs. However, from June 1 until our departure in November, our brigade did not lose a single soldier due to enemy action when operating at night.

The reach of the UNC School of Government and the experiences, exposures, and education from the MPA program were critical to our performance in some of the world’s most brutal and ungovernable terrain. My time spent in the MPA program among the faculty and my fellow students opened up different perspectives and triggered new ways of thinking about problems our military faced in Afghanistan. It is very likely I would not have thought that way without my experience in the MPA program.

US Army Major Sean Gallagher (left) discusses issues with fuel contractors near Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, as part of the Host Nation Truck Interview Program.
Life Events

On the Move

Jim Baker ’76, retired October 16, 2012, after 41 years in local and state government, most recently as assistant director of debt management with the North Carolina Department of State Treasurer, State and Local Government Finance Division.

Ashley Barriga ’09 is serving as compensation and human resources information systems analyst in Asheville, North Carolina.

Patricia Boswell ’80 is a student of divinity at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Dwane Brinson ’09 joined Orange County, North Carolina, as tax administrator.

Kevin Bryant ’09 is associate director of recruitment for Uncommon Schools in Brooklyn, New York.

BJ Collins ’01 returned to North Carolina and is serving as program analyst with the Environmental Protection Agency in Research Triangle Park.

Andrew Dollar ’03 is president of FTP Coaching, a triathlon and endurance coaching group in Nashville, Tennessee.

Rich Grogan ’04 accepted a position as regional director of the Small Business Development Center in Keene, New Hampshire.

Randy Harrington ’98 has been appointed budget director for the City of Charlotte, North Carolina.

Gwen Harvey ’76, retired from her position as assistant county manager for Orange County, North Carolina, in December 2012.

Amanda Kaufman ’09 is serving as assistant to the city manager with the City of Marion, Iowa.

Nick Lewin ’96 is serving as special counsel to the FBI Director in Washington, DC.

Taylor Libby ’05 is a human resource consultant for the vice chancellor for research at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Rick McLean ’75 is the new executive director of Back Country Horsemen of America in Graham, Washington.

Terry Moore-Painter ’77 is serving as senior chaplain at the Cone Health Center in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Erik Osborne ’12 has joined the New York City Office of Management and Budget.

David Parrish ’03 is joining the City of Greensboro, North Carolina, as assistant city manager.

Peter Ray ’98 is in Indonesia, where his wife is a member of the Peace Corps at the country headquarters.

Bing Roegnik ’86 is a business officer with UNC-Chapel Hill Procurement Services.

Casselle Smith ’12 is an associate with Ifrah Law in Washington, DC.

Alicia Stephens ’00 is serving as assistant vice president and senior underwriter in the Public Finance Group with PNC Bank in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Senator Richard Stevens ’74 has started a new job with the Smith Anderson law firm in Raleigh, North Carolina.
Faith Thompson ’03 has been appointed as the ombuds for the Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Greg Useem ’03 is chief performance officer for the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

Bob Yow ’79 has left retirement and is interim director of the North Carolina Department of Justice Criminal Justice Standards Division.

Robert Hawkins ’91 was granted tenure at New York University’s Silver School of Social Work, where he holds an endowed chair in poverty studies. He is the only junior faculty member in social work, social policy, or psychology in the country to hold an endowed chair.

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Teresa Derrick-Mills ’90 has earned a PhD in public policy and public administration from George Washington University, where she is a part-time faculty member.


John Gowan ’07 married Marissa Freeman on August 18, 2012.

Mira Schainker ’07 and Marc Kline were married July 5, 2012. Mira will be relocating to Germany for Marc’s work with the US State Department.

Wedge

Randy Harrington ’98 and his wife, Kara, had a baby girl, Harper Spring Harrington, on May 17, 2012.

Ashley Adams Matthews ’97 and her husband, Jamie, welcomed their son, Tyler John Matthews, on October 9, 2012.

Alicia Stephens ’00 and her husband, Jon, welcome Grant Elliot Andrew Stephens on November 7, 2012.

Parker Wiseman ’03 and his wife, Lindsey, welcomed their first child, Amelia Nell Wiseman, on July 19, 2012.

News for the Life Events section, along with comments or suggestions for Impact, should be sent to Jean Coble at coble@sog.unc.edu.
This fall UNC MPA students launched our very own International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Student Chapter, with the help of faculty advisor Carl Stenberg and Orange County Assistant Manager Gwen Harvey ’76, who serves as our ICMA Chapter Mentor.

Members of the student chapter enjoy full membership in ICMA and access to many of its resources, such as online forums. In addition to the academic benefits, MPA students have the opportunity to network with professionals and learn more about careers in local government.

The ICMA Student Chapter is off to a good start. We currently have 16 members, and we helped organize a visit from Bob O’Neill, executive director of ICMA, on September 18, 2012. Listening to Mr. O’Neill was a great learning experience. We look forward to more successful events in our exciting first year!