MPA CAREERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT
by Ben Eisner

This article is the last of a two-part series on the career paths of UNC MPA alumni. Part I focused on alumni with careers outside of local government. This installment focuses on six alumni who have careers in varying levels of local government.

Erin Schwie Langston '03
Management Assistant, Dallas, TX

Steve Raper '74
City Manager, Rocky Mount, NC

Paul Spruill '95
Manager, Beaufort County, NC

Gwen Harvey '76
Assistant Manager, Orange County, NC

Marchell Adams-David '92
City Manager, Hamlet, NC

Matt Bronson '97
Administrative Analyst, Marin County, CA

What role did public service play in choosing your career path?

Langston: Growing up, I was always interested in community service and politics/government. In high school, I served on the Youth Commission for my town. We worked directly with the assistant city manager—my first look at local government. After undergrad, my first career goal was to work in international public service, like an NGO or the Foreign Service. After serving in the Peace Corps, I switched my focus to domestic service. While in the MPA Program, I chose the local government path over nonprofits or other levels of government.

Raper: I developed an intellectual and academic interest in government in high school and majored in political science as an undergraduate. While serving in the U.S. Navy after college, I was fortunate to be able to run a division and then a department onboard ships for four years, thereby developing a practical interest in management and administration in the public arena. Public service in some form was really my only serious career interest. I elected to pursue public administration (rather than the law) and entered the UNC MPA Program after completing my naval service. City management became my logical public service career choice, based on my management and governmental interests and experience, and the belief that I could best make a demonstrable impact on the organizations and citizens that I served at the local level. A thirty-year career in city management has enabled me to function in a meaningful and responsible leadership and management capacity, and to make, I hope, a difference for those with whom I work and for whom I work. Despite normal ups and downs, I do not second-guess or regret my career decisions or direction. It was right for me.

Spruill: Work in the public sector inherently offers an opportunity to impact organizations and communities diverse in size, demographic make-up, and geographic location. Like any public sector professional, I am motivated by the excitement of public issues, the public process, and the associated challenges, but the grand slam sales pitch for choosing this career path was the opportunity to work in smaller communities throughout the state rather than the traditional urban employment centers.

Harvey: I suppose I always intuitively understood what the poet Maya Angelou meant when she said “Service is the rent we pay for the time we take up and the space we occupy.”

Adams-David: Public service played a major role in my choice of professional careers. I have always known that I wanted to be in a profession where I would be able to help improve the conditions of my community, aid in the development of the community’s vision, and implement that vision into a viable plan of action. For that reason, I chose a career in public service. I would argue that there is no other profession that allows you to touch the lives of people in the manner that being

continued on page 4
With the approaching completion of my five-year term as MPA director, Dean Mike Smith has named Carl Stenberg as my successor. Carl will begin serving as director in the fall. What a great choice!

Carl joined the faculty in 2003 as a professor of public administration and government. In three short years, he already has made impressive contributions to the School of Government and to this state. Carl is the lead faculty member for the Public Executive Leadership Academy (PELA); the lead faculty member for the Essentials of Municipal Government and Essentials of County Government courses that help orient newly elected local government officials and provide new insights for veteran officials; and he serves as faculty liaison with city and county managers across the state. In addition, Carl teaches the capstone course in the MPA Program.

Carl is well known and respected in public administration circles across the country. He has served as president of the American Society for Public Administration and chair of the board of directors of the prestigious National Academy of Public Administration. His appointment as Carolina’s MPA director will be noticed and applauded by our national counterparts.

Carl’s experience includes brief stints as an intern in the city manager’s office in Troy, New York, and as a research assistant in the budget office of the State of New York; much longer service on the staff of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations; and six years as executive director of the Council of State Governments. Academic appointments prior to coming to Chapel Hill include serving as director of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia and as dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Baltimore. Carl’s expertise in local government and intergovernmental relations has served him well with Institute of Government clients and MPA students. His administrative experience and academic connections will be of great value in his new role as MPA director.

Carl is spending this spring handling his usual assignments, learning the ropes for the new ones coming up, and wrapping up some writing he has been squeezing in here and there. For instance, he is editing a book in ICMA’s “green book” series that is titled Managing Local Government Services: A Practical Guide, and he hopes to have that finished before the school year rolls around. Some of his current assignments, such as his role with PELA and the city and county managers, will continue; others will be shed as he enters his new role.

We are lucky to have Carl on our faculty, and to have his wife Kirstin and son Kaam as part of our MPA family. When the time comes a few months from now, I will be proud to pass the baton to him. He will be an excellent director.

Yours truly,

David N. Ammons
P.S. I want to express my gratitude to the MPA Alumni Association for the Charlotte Bobcats tickets presented to me at the Alumni Conference in November. Cindy and I had a wonderful time. Thanks so much.

I am very pleased to serve my fellow MPA friends and colleagues as your Alumni Board president for 2006. We can all take great pride in the past achievements of our program and the exciting efforts and initiatives currently underway. This year, fifty-six first- and second-year students representing fifteen states and the District of Columbia are preparing themselves to continue the tradition of stellar public service that began over forty years ago.

As you make plans to support the communities and organizations that mean the most to you, I hope you will include the MPA Program on that list. The volunteer opportunities are many; there is something to meet almost anyone’s skill or comfort level, and your participation really does determine the program’s success. Annual events such as the Capstone Conference and the Student Assessment Center simply don’t happen without alumni volunteers. Of course, the MPA Program has just embarked on a ten-year effort to dramatically increase funds for future student scholarships. So your continued financial gifts are crucial to reaching our long-range scholarship goals.

The 2006 MPA Alumni Board wants to work hard and effectively in supporting the MPA Program in its mission—preparing public service leaders. We represent various generations of alumni and current students, and we will rely on that diverse experience in carrying out our duties throughout the year. We’d like to engage you as alumni partners in this process. We exist to provide service and support to the program as a whole but particularly to alumni. Please feel free to contact me with comments and suggestions on what you believe the mission and goals of the alumni association should be and what services the association could provide that you would find most relevant.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the MPA Program. Best wishes for personal and professional joy in 2006.
From Dean Mike Smith:

It is so great to have you here—our alumni, our current students, and our faculty. This is a wonderful public service family.

Let me tell you a story. Ten years ago I knew almost nothing about the MPA program. Here is the little that I knew then. I knew it was a program in the Political Science Department. I knew that a handful of Institute of Government faculty members taught one MPA course each year. I knew Donald Hayman somehow was involved in its creation. That was about it.

I had not yet learned that Donald was known to some as “The Godfather.” (The nickname predated the movie, but I understand that Don often made students job offers they couldn’t refuse.) I knew of Deil Wright, but I had not yet learned about his friend, Angus, or Deil’s passion for golf.

Then one day I got a call from the political science faculty member who was directing the MPA program—inviting me to lunch. (I like lunch, so I accepted.) He suggested that the program would be a better match for the Institute because the Political Science Department budget constraints had kept it from being adequately supported and because it would be even less likely to have adequate support in the future. He also indicated that the MPA program was too applied, too practical for the Political Science Department. Over dinner I asked him a question—“What have I ever said or ever done to make you think I would be interested in a program that was seriously under-funded and under-supported?”

Here is what I learned about the MPA program as we explored its possible transfer. The program had a strong foundation of dedicated faculty and staff. Against all odds, it was a nationally ranked program. Those long odds had been overcome by a small group of dedicated people—Deil Wright, Gordon Whitaker, Jean Cole, and Donald Hayman.

It had impressive alumni who were devoted to the program, and year-in-year-out it recruited exceptional students. A number of those alumni followed closely the deliberations that occurred over whether the program should be transferred and under what terms—Richard Stevens, Cal Horton, Ed Kitchen, Dempsey Benton, Steve Raper, and others.

It became clear to everyone that the Institute of Government was the best home for the MPA program, and it became clear to everyone that the program desperately needed additional resources. Not surprisingly, there was disagreement about where those resources should come from.

In 1997 Chancellor Michael Hooker, with some prompting from a few well-placed alumni, transferred the program to the Institute—along with two faculty positions from Political Science, and with new funding from the Provost’s Office—including significant money for student financial aid.

Here is what I know now. We have the best educational model in the country for any MPA program. Period. The School’s faculty members are engaged scholars—they are working at the convergence of scholarship and practice. They understand their academic subjects deeply and theoretically, and they help North Carolina public officials respond to their most pressing practical challenges. They know about best practices because they help develop those best practices. And then they bring that knowledge—from books and from practice—into the MPA classroom for their students. It is a wonderful model for professional education in public administration.

Consider these examples:

1. **David Ammons** teaches benchmarking and performance measurement, and he draws on his experience helping public officials apply those concepts in North Carolina and across the country.
2. **Jack Vogt** teaches capital budgeting, and he literally has written the book on capital budgeting—it is published by ICMA and it draws on real-world examples from across the country.
3. **Maureen Berner** helps government officials and nonprofit leaders develop innovative ways to evaluate their various programs, and that work informs her teaching and her research.
4. **Gordon Whitaker**, along with **Margaret Henderson** and **Lydian Altman-Sauer**, are working with nonprofits and local governments to understand the issues around their increasing collaboration. They are leading the way nationally in learning about the intersection between government and nonprofits—and our students benefit.

And the list goes on and on. Here is what else I know.

The program continues to have dedicated faculty and staff—my colleagues here have embraced this program. There are roughly fifteen faculty members at the School teaching in the program today who would not be teaching if it had remained in the Political Science Department.

The program continues to have first-rate students—they bring so much to the program, and they benefit from faculty members who bring the real world into the classroom—which creates opportunities for projects, internships, and future job opportunities.

And the program continues to have impressive alumni, who are improving public leadership across North Carolina and the country. You give back to the program in many ways—as speakers, student mentors, and as donors. We are grateful for your involvement in whatever way you choose to participate.

This MPA Program is good, and in many ways it is very good. As we approach its 40th anniversary, I invite you to reflect on the following question—How do we make it a great program? Jim Collins wrote a book that examined why some businesses make the leap from good to great, while others in the same industry do not. How do we make that leap in the MPA program? One last thing I know for sure. We will not go from good to great, and it will be hard to remain good, without the continued commitment of our wonderful alumni. Thank you for all that you have done for this program, and for everything that you will do. All of us here tonight have been moved by the spirit of public service. We are grateful for your friendship, partnership, and support in preparing future leaders to serve our communities.

Thank you.
FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

- **David Ammons** conducted a session on “Analytical Tools for Decision Making” for the Texas City Management Association in October. He also conducted a seminar on “Measuring for Results and Benchmarking in Local Government” for the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in Washington, D.C., in November, as part of IDB’s Regional Course on Development Effectiveness.

- **Michelle Hoyman** and Micah Weinberg, a Ph.D. student in political science, co-wrote an article titled, “The Process of Policy Innovation: Prison Sitings in Rural North Carolina,” which is featured in the February issue of *Policy Studies Journal*.

- **Jonathan Morgan** has agreed to serve a three-year term on the editorial board of *State and Local Government Review*.

- **Jack Vogt** conducted a half-day workshop on “Local Government Capital Planning and Finance” at the national Congress of Cities conference in Charlotte in December. More than 100 municipal elected officials from across the country attended the workshop. Jack also conducted a workshop on “Economic Development Financing” for local government finance officers at four locations around the state in December and January. This half-day workshop was sponsored by the North Carolina Capital Management Trust.

- An article written by **Deil S. Wright**, titled “How did intergovernmental relations fail in the USA after Hurricane Katrina?” was featured in the November 2005 issue of *Federations: What’s New in Federalism Worldwide*.

**STENBERG TO LEAD MPA PROGRAM**

Dean Michael R. Smith recently announced that faculty member Carl W. Stenberg will become director of the School’s Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program beginning in September 2006. Stenberg will succeed David Ammons, who is completing a five-year term.

In making the announcement, Smith said, “Carl has extensive experience as a successful administrator in higher education and is recognized as a national leader in the field of public administration. In addition to working with North Carolina public officials in the leadership field, he has become an active and effective member of the MPA faculty since his arrival at the School.” Smith noted that David Ammons will continue as director until September, and he said, “David has set a high standard to follow. I am grateful to him for his hard work, commitment, and creativity in leading the program.”

For additional information on Stenberg’s professional background, please see the MPA Program director’s column on page 2.

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a public servant does. The decisions we make are often driven by both our heads and our hearts. We (public servants) aim to improve the quality of life for all of the citizens that we serve. Public service is a commitment to one’s community. I am just blessed that I am able to be in a career that I am committed to and passionate about.

**Bronson**: Working in public service has been my calling since I was a child. Growing up, I was drawn to activities that helped people in different ways, whether it was organizing student events or cleaning up a neighborhood park. In addition to an innate interest in helping people, I discovered a knack for working with, and leading, others who shared a similar calling. I loved the feeling of working together for a common purpose that involved helping somebody. After spending my childhood serving in student government, 4-H, and other groups, it was natural that I’d pursue public service as a career. When combined with a lifelong fascination of cities, towns, and communities, my passion for public service led to a desire to work in local government management. I enjoy seeing the impact that contributions have in my community and knowing that my work directly benefits those who live and work in the community.

**How has your MPA from UNC aided you in your career?**

**Langston**: I know that it has helped tremendously, but it’s hard to say exactly how. The single biggest factor is probably that I refined my analytical skills in grad school. Also, I work directly with an assistant city manager who oversees performance measures and strategic planning, so I constantly use information I learned from Productivity Improvement.

**Raper**: The UNC MPA program and degree provided me with the academic concepts and foundations to successfully pursue a career in city management. The program taught valuable general organizational and administrative skills, provided familiarization with specialized professional subjects, helped me to better analyze and solve problems and communicate, and informed and educated me with respect to dealing with ethical issues and professional and organizational behavior. Further, through the assistance of MPA faculty I was able to enter the profession by securing an internship and then a full-time position in municipal gov-

**HIRE OUR STUDENTS**

Every year we have MPA students who are looking for both internships and full-time employment. If you are interested, please take a minute to look at student resumes on our Web site: [http://www.mpa.unc.edu/Students/resumes](http://www.mpa.unc.edu/Students/resumes). The log-in is mpa-resumes; the password is 2tarheel2. Thank you!
ernment. Finally, I formed close personal and professional friendships with my classmates and with many students in other classes. This network has remained close over the years, and it functions as an effective means of comparing notes and sharing ideas, concerns, frustrations, and challenges as we move along in our careers.

Spruill: The UNC MPA experience has been much more than a career aid. An MPA of any kind is essential for finding the right position among a competitive pool of applicants. An MPA from UNC, however, offers the student a familiarity with the workings of the School of Government that hiring elected bodies view with great value. And after receiving an appointment, the UNC MPA allows you to enter an organization with the confidence of knowing that you have a personal relationship with North Carolina’s experts in local government management.

Harvey: Immensely. People recognize and respect the UNC MPA “brand” instantly. It’s opened doors of opportunity for me from coast to coast. But nowhere is the camaraderie and connectivity among grads as powerful as here in the home state.

Adams-David: My MPA has afforded me membership in the greatest fraternity, network, society, or club in the State of North Carolina and the greater U.S.—public managers. I am often impressed at the degree of respect that is automatically correlated with the MPA from UNC-Chapel Hill. Professionally, my degree has made it possible for me to take my career and professional goals and put them into action. The network is vast and the reputation and respect are second to none. Personally, the MPA has opened doors for me that were not easily accessible for women. A great deal of my professional and personal success can be attributed to the wonderful program at UNC. I was selected as the Region N-Lumber River Council of Governments Manager of the Year in November 2005. This honor would not have been possible had I not received the great education and training at UNC that has ultimately allowed me to fulfill my goals.

Bronson: The MPA degree from UNC has greatly expanded my horizons and opened many doors over the years. After receiving an undergraduate degree in environmental policy analysis (I am from California, after all), I wanted to pursue additional education in leading and managing in the public sector, particularly in local government. UNC provided a laboratory of knowledge that helped me understand not only specific subjects such as performance measurement and budgeting, but also the overall challenges and opportunities of working in the public sector. I benefited tremendously from every facet of the MPA Program, from the insights of the faculty to the camaraderie of my classmates to the close-knit network of alumni. The value and support I’ve received from meeting and working with MPA alumni throughout my career is immeasurable. Even though I’m now back in California, I feel a close kinship with other alumni around the country, despite the distance. I enjoy giving back to the program and helping current students just as I benefited as a student.

What advice would you offer for others who wish to follow in your footsteps?

Langston: If you are interested in local government, take Productivity Improvement and the City/County Management classes. Pay attention in Statistics and Evaluation Methods—they are skill sets that are very much in demand. I did not take Capital Budgeting, but many in my cohort have said that it’s very useful.

Also, take advantage of the alumni network. When I had my summer internship, I scheduled appointments with alums who worked in the City of Charlotte. I gained so much more insight about local government and leadership than my direct supervisor (a non-UNC MPA alum) was able to provide. Before I moved to Dallas, I also e-mailed alumni in the area to see if they had any advice or contacts for jobs in the area.

Finally, pay attention to “hot topics” in whatever field you want to work in, and contact faculty/staff at the SOG or across UNC’s campus who are working on those topics. If you can’t get involved directly with a project as a capstone or assistantship, at least ask them for resources. This could give you a “leg up” on the competition when you are applying for jobs.

Raper: First of all, I would highly recommend city management as a career. For those students with an interest in local government, I would encourage them to seek internships and first jobs in organizations and positions that first and foremost provide a professional learning experience with as much exposure as possible to all the activities and functions of the unit of government. Second, students should attempt to find a position where they will be able to observe and learn from an experienced and successful manager or practi-
NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

The MPA Alumni Association seeks nominations for the Distinguished Public Service Award (DPSA). This award will be given to those persons who exemplify high standards of service to the public and to the organizations for which they work. Recognition includes a plaque and a $250 scholarship awarded by the MPA Alumni Association to a current student for which they work. Recognition includes a plaque and a $250 scholarship awarded by the MPA Alumni Association to a current student for which they work.

- How to Nominate: A nomination should be submitted by someone who has detailed knowledge of the activities and career of the nominee. Nominations shall consist of no more than a two-page narrative describing the candidate’s achievements and must be received by September 1. Please send nominations to President Larry Davis at larry.davis@ci.greensboro.nc.us.

- Qualifications of Candidates: The award is designed to recognize consistent service and concern for others, rather than a single act or short-term project. In particular, the recipient of the award should have given of himself/herself unstintingly and without expectation of recognition or reward; the purpose of the award is to provide such recognition and appreciation. Nominees need not be alumni of the UNC-Chapel Hill MPA Program, nor must they be North Carolina residents.

- Frequency of Award: The award is presented only on those occasions that a candidate truly exemplifies unusual achievements in the vocation of serving others. It has been awarded only three times since 1993. The selected nominee will normally be notified by October 1, to enable him/her to attend the annual conference if possible. The award will be presented at the annual November meeting of the Association.

A PASSING

One of the original architects of the MPA program, Professor Frederic Cleaveland, passed away on December 21, 2005, at the age of 90. Fred Cleaveland came to Chapel Hill as a political science professor and was named a department chair and chair of the faculty during his tenure. He was both a mentor and friend to students during the turbulent times of the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1965, along with Professor Donald Hayman and John Sanders (then head of the Institute of Government), he helped lay the groundwork for a Master of Public Administration program. Forty years later, the MPA Program continues to educate and inspire public servants. Professor Deil Wright, who joined the UNC faculty in 1967, remembered Professor Cleaveland as a “remarkable individual who was always cool, calm, and collected.”

At Cleaveland’s memorial service, retired UNC Law School Professor Daniel Pollitt said, “Fred walked hand in hand with Barbara [his wife, who passed away in August 2005] through a lifetime of efforts to leave the world a better place. They strove for excellence in all things, often against the wind, across the tide but always steady on with joyful zeal. Their like will not be repeated. They will be missed.”

LIFE EVENTS

On the Move…

Gary Hicks ’83 received the 2005 Spirit of the Economy Award from the Gaston Chamber of Commerce. He was also chosen by the Gaston Gazette as the 2005 Person of the Year. Ed Kitchen ’74 has begun his second career as vice president of the Joseph M. Bryan Foundation in Greensboro. Stacey Mewborn ’03 was recently elected to the board of the Community Music School in Raleigh. Alicia Middleton Stephens ’00 has started working with the Public Finance Group at Moody’s Investors Service in New York City. Zulayka Santiago ’93 has continued her work with the City of Fayetteville as the Customer Focus director. Lianna Vanoyan ’93 is the new associate director of the Program Operations Support Unit of Family Health International Institute for HIV/AIDS in Arlington, Virginia.

New Arrivals…

Kyle Gray ’95 and his wife, Liz, are the proud parents of Allegra Gray, who was born December 6, 2005, and weighed 7 lbs. 11 oz.

Ursula Hairston ’94 and her husband, Jerry, announce the birth of Sabe Alexander Hairston, who was born December 19, 2005, and weighed 8 lbs. 4 oz.

Weddings…

Brodi Fontenot ’99 married Yvette Shenouda on February 18, 2006, at Saint Sophia’s Greek Orthodox Church in Washington, D.C.

Deborah Long ’02 married UNC alumnus Jonathon Goldberg on February 18, 2006, in Raleigh.

Alicia Middleton ’00 married fellow UNC alumnus Jon Stephens on June 25, 2005, in Maui, Hawaii. Chelsea Kenny Gurkin ’00 was a bridesmaid for this Tar Heel wedding.

HAVE UPDATES?

Go to www.mpa.unc.edu and look for “Contact Us” at the bottom left of the screen. Send us an e-mail, and we will update your information and include your “life events” in the next issue of iMPAct.

Changes to Impact!

We’ve given Impact a facelift and have added some new features. To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the MPA Program, we’ve added the official anniversary seal; this seal will be seen on all MPA correspondence during 2006. We’ve also added a quotation to the front page. If you have a quotation to suggest for a future issue, please e-mail it to mpara@sog.unc.edu.
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We gratefully acknowledge those alumni and friends who have supported MPA Program students and special projects during 2005. Your generosity allows us to continue to offer valuable aid and services to our MPA students. Donors are distinguished in two advanced categories of giving. The “A” Honor Roll recognizes donors whose cumulative giving has crossed a threshold of $5,000. “Sustained Givers” honors alumni whose cumulative giving has reached a threshold of $500.

The “A” Honor Roll

Members of the 2005 “A” Honor Roll have taken a leadership role in supporting the MPA Program by advancing its mission to prepare students for leadership careers in public service. Joining the group this year are Doug and Sharon Rothwell and Betsy Ross Howe Stafford. Their names will be added to the “A” Honor Roll plaque located in the MPA Program suite.

Sustained Giving

Our thanks and appreciation go to those individuals who give consistently to the MPA Program. The donors listed below join a group of 143 prior donors listed on the “Sustained Givers” plaque located in the MPA Program suite.

Your Gift Matters

We acknowledge everyone who made a gift to the MPA Program during 2005. Each gift is important and demonstrates a commitment to providing a quality graduate education to future public service leaders. Thank you for your continued support.
TO THE MPA ALUMNI FAMILY

It has been a year since I became the MPA Program Manager, and what a year of firsts. Almost as quickly as the Class of 2003 graduated, I said hello to the Class of 2005. While it was sad to say goodbye to the students I had just begun to know, the summer provided time to reflect upon all the exciting aspects of the MPA Program that I had assisted with during the spring. I experienced my first MPA capstone conference, banquet and graduation—all within four short weeks!

During the fall I watched my first Alumni Picnic unfold on the grass outside the School of Government and also attended my first MPA conference on public administration, where I was able to meet many of you. After the holidays, I participated in my first MPA assessment center and watched in awe at the number of alumni who volunteered their time to help with this important training event.

It’s hard to believe my first year has gone by so quickly. Thanks to each of you for welcoming me so warmly and for your patience as I learned my role within MPA. I look forward to continuing to see you more in 2006.

—Sharon Pickard