MPA Degree Useful for Career in Politics

by Brian A. Farkas ’13

The Carolina MPA program prepares public service leaders. For most alumni, this means helping state, local, and non-profit organizations solve public problems by serving in appointive, nonpartisan positions, free from political affiliation or designation. However, for a relative few, the route to public service has been through elective office.

Parker Wiseman ’05, mayor of Starkville, Mississippi, since 2009, considers it an honor to serve the city in which he was born and raised. He regards his MPA education as a critical part of his success and credits the program with helping him more effectively navigate the “minefield of human relationships” to get things done. Wiseman regularly incorporates many MPA principles into his vision for Starkville as he advocates for strategic planning, capital improvement, and performance measurement.

“The biggest thing the MPA program taught me,” he says, “is that clean and lean government processes can accomplish what needs to be accomplished while maintaining public trust.”

Richard Y. Stevens ’74 represented the 17th District in the North Carolina State Senate from 2002–2012. Formerly Wake County manager, Stevens was elected to five consecutive terms. He co-chaired the Senate Appropriations Committee and served as a budget leader under both Republican and Democratic majorities. Before leaving the General Assembly in 2012, Stevens was ranked as the Senate’s third most effective member, according to a survey by the nonpartisan North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research.

Stevens credits the MPA program with equipping him with the skills necessary to be effective. “There is a steep learning curve for new legislators,” he says.

—Dr. Seuss

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One of my favorite responsibilities as MPA director is providing leadership for the recruitment and selection of new students. We have just finalized our new cohort of 27 residential and 20 online students who will begin the program this fall. This annual process gives my colleagues and me the opportunity to talk with applicants about our goals of preparing public service leaders, our curriculum, our current students, and the careers of our alumni who are putting our mission of leadership into practice.

Our graduates pursue careers in a broad range of governmental and nonprofit organizations. In recognition of these varied career paths and in response to changes in our accreditation standards, we have worked over the past two years to update our curriculum to ensure that our graduates possess the required leadership competencies to advance the program’s mission and reach their professional goals.

This critical alignment of mission and outcome has become a major recruitment tool. Our faculty can demonstrate to applicants exactly how a Carolina MPA can advance their career goals. We are one of the few MPA programs, for example, that requires a course on professional communication and a course on law for public administration. We understand that effective leaders must be able to communicate effectively with stakeholders and must recognize the impact of the law on public sector decisions.

Our alumni are serving in every level of government and in organizations that support the public interest, and our program is having an impact far and wide.

Recently I showed a group of alumni a map (below) illustrating our leadership impact across the state of North Carolina. One alumnus declared that our goal should be to shade the entire map Carolina blue. Another said, “This illustrates why I am proud of my Carolina MPA.” Wherever you are serving, please know that we, too, are proud of the impact you bring to your community and your state or country.

William C. Rivenbark
MPA Program Director
Professor of Public Administration and Government

Alumni by Sector

Areas of North Carolina Where Alumni Serve as Local Government Managers

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.
“Coupled with my prior work experience and law degree, the MPA experience helped tremendously in overcoming the initial transition.” Stevens’ tenure on the Senate’s State and Local Government Committee provided an opportunity for him to serve as a bridge between the two levels of government.

Verla Insko ’90 earned her MPA while working as a program administrator for the UNC Sickle Cell Program. A former member of both the Carrboro-Chapel Hill Board of Education and Orange County Board of Commissioners, Insko was elected to her first term in the North Carolina House of Representatives in 1998, representing the 56th District of Orange County.

“As a legislator,” says Insko, “my MPA education helps me ask the right questions.” She points to statistical analysis classes as particularly helpful in sharpening her own analytical skills and recognizing the difference between reliable and questionable data. She also credits the program with her ability to use group organizational development skills to stay on track, reach consensus, and solve problems.

Traversing the waters of the political arena is no easy task. For those serving in an elected capacity, balancing the needs of individual constituencies with the needs of a larger society can be a major challenge. The MPA degree serves as a valuable tool in navigating the complex relationships and structures associated with governing while maintaining public trust and confidence.

Carolina MPA Alumni Making a Difference Nationwide

In addition to the states highlighted here, Carolina MPA alumni also live and work in Canada, China, Germany, South Korea, and in six undisclosed military locations.
Congratulations to the 2013 MPA Graduates

Daniel Paul Baird
Dayne Drake Batten
Meghan Eileen Boyd
Benjamin Henry Chambers
Anne Berry Davis
Wren Hurrle Davisson

Brian A. Farkas
Jason Kyle Haney
Renisha Gail Howard
Allison Hayley Hutchins
Sana Afshan Khan
Mark Robert Mallon

Davena Mgbeokwere
Allison May Moore
Kathryn Rose Paulson
Ebony Lajoyce Perkins
Timothy Ray Reavis
Martha Susan Stevens

Capstone Awards Presented to Mattie Stevens and Daniel Baird

Capstone projects, which for many years have been required of all second-year students, are intended to draw on the cumulative lessons of the graduate experience.

Capstone projects, which for many years have been required of all second-year students, are intended to draw on the cumulative lessons of the graduate experience.

Mattie Stevens received the Deil S. Wright Capstone Paper Award for "The Facebook Question: Social Media and Your HR Department." Her research examines how local government human resources departments across three states are using social media in recruiting, hiring, monitoring, and disciplining their employees. Her capstone paper also offers recommendations for instituting effective social media policies. The winning paper is chosen annually based on how well an issue is researched and addressed and whether it contains meaningful and persuasive conclusions. Judges for this award included School of Government Librarian Alex Hess, committee chair; faculty member Julie Brenman; and Michael Williamson ’78. Stevens’ capstone advisory committee was composed of faculty members Willow Jacobson, chair; Shannon Tufts; and Christopher McLaughlin.

Daniel Baird received the Nanette V. Mengel Communication Award for the presentation of his capstone paper titled, “During the Recession of 2007–2011, How Did Local Governments Change Their Fund Balance?” The study investigates what factors affect fund balance during times of recession in order to help local governments prepare for future recessions and tough fiscal times. The award is given annually by the MPA Alumni Association to a student who displays exceptional oral communication skills in the presentation of his or her research paper. Judges for this award included Candy Terrell-Galke ’95, Joy Jackson ’09, and Christopher Sherman ’07. The capstone committee was composed of faculty members Dale Roenigk, chair; Karl Smith; and Whitney Afonso.

All capstone papers can be viewed at www.mpa.unc.edu/node/30.
In his address to the 2013 graduates on May 11, Chris Morrill said, “You have a whole support network that wants you to succeed, to find a good job, to experience a meaningful career, and to make a real difference in our communities and in the world. When I look back at critical points in my career, in nearly every instance an MPA connection—faculty, staff, or fellow alumni—made the difference.”

The Carolina Connection
Morrill’s first job after earning his MPA degree was as a budget analyst with Catawba County Manager Tom Lundy ’77. He next followed a lead from MPA faculty member Gordon Whitaker to the City of Savannah, Georgia, where he spent 20 years, rising to the position of assistant city manager. Previously, Morrill spent two years in South Africa developing a local government finance system, assisted by Dan Goetz ’80, a leader at RTI International, the consulting firm that then hired Morrill as senior municipal finance advisor. Later, faculty member Jack Vogt invited him to apply to serve on a Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) committee, and then Pat Pate ’86 encouraged him to apply to the executive board and the presidency of GFOA, a position Morrill now holds.

During his commencement remarks, Morrill made it clear that MPA graduates will need this network to succeed in an increasingly tough job market. “I hate to tell you,” he said, “but the public sector is probably still years away from full recovery, and the new normal you’ve been hearing about is probably closer to ongoing not normal.”

The Long Accomplishment
“We need you to be successful,” he said. “Your generation has skills, experiences, and a fresh perspective that is desperately needed in our cities, counties, nonprofits, and universities.”

Morrill stressed, however, that the graduates should take time to build themselves into true leaders. “I have found that the people who bring real and sustained improvement to an organization or community, who achieve ‘long accomplishment,’ are more often the unassuming, steady, and focused leaders. These leaders have a bold vision, but recognize that to achieve it takes hard and constant work, day after day after day. They are selfless, focus on developing others, and listen deeply to those around them. These leaders build communities for the long term. As public administrators, we are not focused on the next election or quarterly profit-loss statement; instead, we should judge our success by the improvements we’ve made to give future generations a better life.”

Chris Morrill is city manager of Roanoke, Virginia. He is currently president of the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. Prior to being appointed Roanoke’s manager in 2010, Morrill served as assistant city manager in Savannah, Georgia. Previously, he served as senior municipal finance advisor for the Research Triangle Institute (now RTI International), where he advised the South African National Treasury on local government finance reform; was a fellow of the Kellogg National Leadership Program; and was research and budget director for the City of Savannah. He also worked as a US Peace Corps Volunteer in Lviv, Ukraine.
TRUE CAROLINA BLUE: RYAN REGAN ’14

by Brian A. Farkas ’13

Ryan Regan spent his youth in Robeson County, North Carolina, and in Montgomery County, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, DC. Sixty-eight percent of Robeson County’s population is composed of American Indian, African American, and Latino residents. The area is among the 10 percent of counties in the United States identified as “majority-minority.” Robeson is historically one of the poorest counties in North Carolina and stands in stark contrast to Montgomery County, Maryland, one of the highest income areas in the United States.

“My early exposure to these different economic environments fueled a long-term interest in economic development, especially when it comes to defining the appropriate role for government in the process,” said Regan.

Public service is not new to the Regan family. Regan’s father worked for the federal government for more than 10 years and served on the staffs of both a former North Carolina governor and a US congressman. His mother is a strong advocate for issues relating to human rights and public education. She worked on environmental advocacy at the United Methodist Church and in an elementary school system supporting students learning English as a second language.

Following graduation, Regan worked for US Senator Kay Hagan of North Carolina, where he saw firsthand the challenges and opportunities that the state’s economy faces. Once heavily dependent on textiles and traditional manufacturing, the region now relies on emerging industries such as biotechnology, green energy, and information technology.

After completing his MPA in 2014, Regan hopes to find a career with an organization immersed in North Carolina economic development. He looks forward to contributing his unique skill set toward the development of North Carolina communities.

“The state offers some of the best assets in the country,” he says. “I want to help advance economic development efforts that improve the quality of life for our state’s residents.”
Professional Work Experience:
The Employers’ Perspective
by Susan Austin, MPA Career Services Director

In the past, I’ve written about the value of the MPA students’ summer professional work experience from the perspective of the MPA program. This year, I asked the employers who have supervised our students during the summer of 2012 to provide their perspective. Below are some of their responses:

**What do you think students gain from this experience?**

- An opportunity to try out different work situations and determine where their passion might really lie, and their best career fit
- A chance to improve and develop competencies such as written/oral communication and teamwork skills in a real-world setting
- An opportunity to build a network of professionals who can be of assistance when the intern is ready to secure a full-time position
- The chance to see how something described in theory evolves when applied and implemented
- The chance to be part of a team doing research on pressing topics with live data, meeting with important players in our field, and attending professional conferences
- Contributions on multiple levels: serving on subcommittees, improving evaluation tools, and making presentations to strengthen human resources organizationally
- Quality research and fresh ideas from dedicated researchers with the time to dive into pressing topics

Many thanks to contributors Sharon Laisure ’76, who served as interim human resource director in Orange County, North Carolina, during the summer of 2012; Elizabeth Levene, program director, Communities in Schools of Durham; and Eric Moore ’08, fiscal analyst, and Kayla Siler, policy and planning analyst, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, for their insight.

**What value do MPA student interns bring to an organization?**

- Another resource to assist with important research that doesn’t always make the urgent/important quadrant, but really needs to be done
- Familiarity with technological tools that improve the quality of documents or reports using features such as links, videos, and images
- A new perspective to our thinking about civic engagement and benefits programs for a new generation of residents and employees
- The opportunity to “try out” before we recruit entry-level management talent, saving time and preventing employee selections that don’t work out
- Contributions on multiple levels: serving on subcommittees, improving evaluation tools, and making presentations to strengthen human resources organizationally
- Quality research and fresh ideas from dedicated researchers with the time to dive into pressing topics

MPA students blog about their professional work experiences. Follow their posts at sogmpa.web.unc.edu.

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Room Named in Honor of Patricia Wright

On Saturday, April 27, the Wright family and friends gathered at the School of Government to dedicate an MPA office in honor of Patricia J. Wright, in recognition of her loving and unwavering support of them and their father, Deil S. Wright. MPA Director Bill Rivenbark said, “We are pleased to accept this gift in honor of Patricia, and to thank David, Mark, Lois, and Matthew for their ongoing support of the MPA program. Without question, Patricia’s support of Deil allowed him to devote his career to the mentorship of those around him.”

Patricia Wright (center), surrounded by her children (left to right) David C. Wright, Matthew Deil Wright, Lois L. Wright, and Mark W. Wright, at the April 27 dedication of an MPA room in her honor.
Save the Date: November 7–8, 2013
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE
School of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill

Conference Program
This year’s speakers will bring a balance of professional perspectives—urban and rural, government and nonprofit, organizations large and small—to the discussions. The closing session will feature Thomas W. Ross, president of the 17-campus University of North Carolina system.

View the complete agenda at www.mpa.unc.edu and follow along on Twitter at #UNCPAC13.

Concurrent Tracks
• Economic development
• Workforce management
• Civic engagement

Session topics include the following:
• Changing local food policy
• Case study of the City of Bell, California
• Innovative uses of social media to communicate with donors, citizens, and program participants

Pre-Conference Session
“Engaging Women in Public Administration”
November 7, 9:30 a.m.–12 p.m.
This event will focus on highlighting and maximizing the contributions of women to public sector organizations.

MPA faculty members Leisha DeHart-Davis and Margaret Henderson will touch on the topics of “leaning in,” taken from the title of Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg’s recent book, and the role of North Carolina women in government.

Marilu Goodyear, former chief information officer at the University of Kansas (KU) and current director of the KU School of Public Affairs and Administration, will speak on the importance of mentoring women into leadership roles in the public sector. The session is for MPA alumni—both women and men—interested in encouraging greater gender diversity in the upper echelons of public administration.

Test your knowledge of women in North Carolina history.*

A. How many times are women mentioned in the 1776 constitution of North Carolina?
B. When were women first allowed to vote in North Carolina?
C. What percentage of Carolina MPA alumni are women?

* Answers: A-zero, B-1920, C-45 percent
Keynote Event
“The Case for Change”
Sharon Allred Decker, Commerce Secretary, State of North Carolina
November 7, 1:30–2:30 p.m.
North Carolina Commerce Secretary Sharon Allred Decker was appointed to office in January 2013. Decker spent more than 17 years with Duke Power, becoming the youngest and first female vice president in the company’s history. She was the founding president of The Lynnwood Foundation, and while there, served as chair of the Charlotte Chamber. She was named Charlotte Woman of the Year in 1998. She subsequently served as president of the Doncaster division of Tanner Companies. She founded and served as CEO of the nonprofit Tapestry Group. Decker has served on the boards of three Fortune 500 companies.

Deil S. Wright Lecture
The Honorable Ray LaHood, Former US Secretary of Transportation
November 7, 3–4 p.m.
As the US Secretary of Transportation from 2009–2013, Ray LaHood led an agency with more than 55,000 employees and a $70 billion budget that oversees air, maritime, and surface transportation missions. In nominating LaHood, President-elect Obama said, “Few understand our infrastructure challenge better than the outstanding public servant that I’m asking to lead the Department of Transportation.”

Prior to his cabinet appointment in January 2009, LaHood represented the 18th District of Illinois in the US House of Representatives for 14 years, from 1995 to 2009, serving on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Appropriations Committee. Before that time, he was chief of staff to US Congressman Robert Michel, whom he succeeded in representing the 18th District, and as district administrative assistant to Congressman Thomas Railsback. He also served in the Illinois State Legislature.

LaHood was also a junior high school teacher, director of the Rock Island County Youth Services Bureau and chief planner for the Bi-States Metropolitan Planning Commission in Illinois. He received an undergraduate degree from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois.

MPA Reunion Night
November 8, 6 p.m.
It has been 47 years since the first class entered the Carolina MPA program in 1966. Join us in celebrating this occasion with a dinner following the Public Administration Conference. You will hear more details from your class representatives, but you may also e-mail Jean Coble for more information at coble@sog.unc.edu.

At the Reunion Night, we will honor the following classes:

- 1968
- 1973
- 1978
- 1983
- 1988
- 1995
- 1998
- 2003
- 2008
Life Events

On the Move

Dayne Batten ’13 is a member of the research and evaluation team in the Labor and Economic Analysis Division at the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

Janelle A. Beverly ’09 is regional coordinator with the National Community Reinvestment Coalition in Washington, DC.

Laura Biediger ’12 is program manager with the Neighborhood Improvement Services Department for the City of Durham, North Carolina.

Meghan Boyd ’13 will attend the School of Law at UNC-Chapel Hill beginning this fall.

Sean Brandon ’99 is the management services bureau chief for the City of Savannah, Georgia.

Eve Cantral ’77 serves as chief legislative analyst for the Florida Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice in Tallahassee.

Ben Chambers ’13 has joined the City of San Antonio, Texas, as a management fellow.

Victoria Cunningham ’07 is a contracting officer for the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland.

Anne Davis ’13 joined Self Help in Durham, North Carolina, as a member of the secondary market team.

Brian Farkas ’13 is working with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in Durham, North Carolina.

Emily Williamson Gangi ’01 recently accepted a position as associate director for the Carolina Center for Public Service at UNC-Chapel Hill. She was previously director of strategic planning for the North Carolina Community College system.

Richard Grogan ’04 is regional manager for the New Hampshire Small Business Development Center in Keene.

Julie Hochsztein ’09 is a research analyst with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners in Raleigh.

Allison Hutchins ’13 has accepted a position as senior advisor in the Office of the Fiscal Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the US Department of the Treasury.

Carolyn Hutchinson ’86 will retire October 1 as police chief for the Town of Carrboro, North Carolina.

John King ’77 now lives in retirement on the coast of Mozambique, about four hours from the capital, Maputo. John reports the nearest town is Xai-Xai, 52 kilometers (32.3 miles) away.

Katie Loovis ’00 is director of US community partnerships and stakeholder engagement at GlaxoSmithKline in Washington, DC.

Mark Mallon ’13 will pursue a PhD in business administration at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

Ashley Martin ’08 is serving as the human resources manager for the Engineering and Property Management Department with the City of Charlotte, North Carolina.

Davena Mgbeokwere ’13 is joining Charlotte Family Housing in North Carolina.
Alison Moore ’13 joined ACI Worldwide as a technical writer in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Katie Paulson ’13 is an outreach program manager with Donate Life North Carolina in Durham.

Albert Richardson ’92 is a vice president with PNC Financial Services Group Inc. in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Valerie Riecke Smith ’01 is a management analyst for the Office of Inspector General for the US General Services Administration Office of Audit Services in Atlanta, Georgia.

Susan Robertson ’81 began serving as the city administrator of Sun Valley, Idaho, in January 2013.

Rochelle Small-Toney ’78 is deputy city manager for Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Jesse Springer ’04 is a Medicaid special projects manager with the Wyoming Department of Health.

Mattie Sue Stevens ’13 is an ICMA Local Government Management Fellow with the City and County of Durham, North Carolina.

Megan Wright ’09 is a special projects manager with the City Center Development Office in San Antonio, Texas.

Accomplishments

Ed Kitchen ’74 is the new president of the School of Government Foundation Board of Directors.

Erin Schwie Langston ’03 and Rebecca Wyhof ’02 graduated in May 2013 from Leadership North Carolina.

New Arrivals

Ann Roper Bowen ’12 and her husband, Byers, are the proud parents of twins Hannah Lee and Grant Byers, born March 26, 2013.

Sonya Smith Hohlt ’98 and her husband, Michael, announced the birth of Henry August Hohlt on November 16, 2012.

Marc Nelson ’03 and his wife, Sunny, announced the birth of Lucy Elizabeth Nelson on May 18, 2013.

The Power of the Carolina MPA Bond

I am writing to relay a very sweet School of Government story. One day in 2007, when I was working at my desk at the School, a young man in the MPA program knocked on my door and asked to talk with me about a future in higher education. It seemed a onetime event that happens regularly in a university. I forgot all about it. But he did not.

This spring I interviewed Philip Rogers ’05 to be my chief of staff. In the intervening years, he worked for Steve Ballard, chancellor at East Carolina University, most recently as chief of staff. He recently defended his dissertation (with distinction) in the higher education program at the University of Pennsylvania. In July, he joined me at ACE as vice president and chief of staff.

A very happy story!

Molly Corbett Broad
President
American Council on Education
Save the Date

November 7–8, 2013

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE
School of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill
Register now at pac.unc.edu.

November 7
Pre-Conference Session: “Engaging Women in Public Administration”
Marilu Goodyear, Director, School of Public Affairs and Administration, University of Kansas, and School of Government faculty members Leisha DeHart-Davis and Margaret Henderson

Keynote Address: “The Case for Change”
Sharon Allred Decker, Commerce Secretary, State of North Carolina

Deil S. Wright Lecture
The Honorable Ray LaHood, Former US Secretary of Transportation

Closing Session
Thomas W. Ross, President, University of North Carolina

November 8
Carolina MPA Reunion Night