



IMPACT Alumni Newsletter



TESHANEЕ WILLIAMS



WHITNEY AFONSO



KIMBERLY L. NELSON

CARL W. STENBERG III

MPA Faculty Connecting Theory to Practice

The UNC MPA program has long been characterized by both scholarship and practice. Its work rests on the foundations of public administration scholarship and research, a foundation built on bridging theory and practice. Continuing this tradition, MPA faculty use deep connections to the work of practitioners to translate thought and theory into action. When the program undertook a strategic planning process in 2020, it adopted a vision statement: “a nationally recognized leader in engaged scholarship.” Engaged scholarship rests at the heart of the program.

Each year, MPA faculty engage in an array of projects that reflect this vision. From workplace climate and culture, to municipal benchmarking and leadership training, to cybersecurity response, these projects provide unparalleled insight into the on-the-ground challenges facing public leaders. Explore a few of the

projects School faculty are working on that will provide important insight on questions that matter—not just for the field of public administration but also for practitioners and policymakers.

Collaborative Care

Working with two other School faculty members, Teshanee Williams is advising a Cabarrus County-based team that provides treatment to pregnant individuals with substance use disorders. The Substance Use Network (SUN) Project is a collaborative effort between 12 community partners including nonprofits, government agencies, and healthcare providers. In November 2022, UNC Chancellor Kevin M. Guskiewicz invited Williams to present on the project to the University’s Board of Trustees.

The Future of Taxes

Whitney Afonso served on the North Carolina 2050 Project, a committee

commissioned by the North Carolina Economic Development Association Foundation to consider the future of public finance in the state. Afonso authored the project’s report section on local taxes, which presented a range of policy considerations on the topic for North Carolina officials.

Code of Ethics Update

When leadership of the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) decided to undertake a review of its Code of Ethics for diversity, equity, and inclusion principles, it tapped School faculty members Kimberly L. Nelson and Carl W. Stenberg III to assist with the process. Nelson and Stenberg worked with expert James Svava to conduct the project, which included extensive engagement with thousands of members nationwide and will shape the practice of public administration.

From the Director

Willow S. Jacobson, Director • 919.966.4760 • jacobson@sog.unc.edu



In addition to my work in the UNC MPA program for the last decade, I have had the privilege of building and directing the Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU) Fellows program. This is a program

for local government leaders with a focus on individual and organizational leadership. (I have even gotten to see some great MPA alumni participate in the program.)

The program spends time exploring mindfulness and resiliency—important skills for leaders. Alumni of the program are invited to short, five-minute mindfulness meditation sessions a few mornings per week. We started these during the pandemic as a resource and have continued since then. Last week, the reading focused on being present and appreciating the “now,” as our minds so often want to wander to the past or the future. In the MPA program, we have spent a lot of time strategic planning and looking to the future, which we need to do and will continue to do. But as I paused and thought about the “now” of UNC MPA, it made me happy and proud to think of all that is great.

We have amazing students pursuing the degree to join our inspiring alumni living the mission of being public service leaders across sectors, industries, and the world. We have faculty that are truly achieving our vision to be

“a nationally recognized leader in engaged scholarship whose faculty, students, and alumni transform thought, organizations, communities, and lives.” The approach of our MPA program is consistent with the origins of the field of public administration, the mission of the School of Government, and the mission of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: to focus on solving key challenges facing the public sector and improving management and governance while creating real change in organizations and communities. Members of the MPA program faculty produce useable knowledge that improves governance, conducts meaningful research with immediate and lasting impact, and prepares the next generation of leaders. I am proud of the “now” of the MPA program and what we continue to work and strive toward as we move forward.

The commitment and engagement of our alumni across time is a critical reason the program is where it is today. The support of the School, the commitment of the faculty, the dedication and professionalism of our phenomenal staff, and the public service heart of our students continue to help us realize our mission and vision today as we work and learn how to evolve to ensure that we grow into the future.

Thank you to each of you that have built the “now” of the MPA program. We are grateful for your commitment to helping us ensure that all our future “nows” are the best that they can be.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Willow Jacobson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Willow S. Jacobson
Director, UNC MPA

Robert W. Bradshaw Jr. Distinguished Professor of
Public Administration and Government

To support the MPA program, visit GiveToMPA.unc.edu.

Valerie Sauer Receives Fellowship in Guilford County

During the 2021–22 academic year, the UNC MPA program announced the creation of the Jerry E. Cox PWE Local Government Fellowship. The fellowship intends to prepare students for local government careers as they contribute their knowledge and skills to impact the lives of North Carolinians.

Valerie Sauer '24, a dual degree MPA and Master of Social Work student, was the first to receive the fellowship. She spent the summer of the fellowship working in the Guilford County Manager's Office. Sauer's work included researching and providing recommendations for the joint use of school facilities and housing accessibility. However, one of her favorite aspects of the fellowship was the opportunity to shadow department heads in the areas of

budget, public health, social services, juvenile detention, cooperative extension, and the Sheriff's Office. She also learned from staff by attending county commissioners' meetings, work sessions on the budget, American Rescue Plan-funding meetings, and one-on-one meetings with assistant county managers to discuss their roles and work.

"It was interesting having a bird's-eye view from the manager's office while also getting the opportunity to go deep into an issue that I had familiarity with in the Department of Social Services," Sauer said. "I hadn't had the opportunity to think more systemically about balancing the competing priorities a manager deals with."

Sauer applied to the fellowship

because of the local government's power to directly impact residents' lives. The experience also allowed her to make connections, leading to the opportunity to complete her social work practicum in the same organization and community.

"If I want to position myself to impact public health and human services, then counties are where it's at," Sauer said.

Public health and human services are two of the four primary responsibilities of North Carolina counties. Sauer envisions herself embarking on a career in local government once she completes her MPA and MSW programs. Above all, she desires a career that enables her to prioritize the well-being of North Carolinians and to center their experiences.



Sauer's last day at Guilford, after a collaborative design workshop with county staff and community partners.

Alumni Association Update

Deepti Panjabi '14, UNC MPA Alumni Association Board President

Lately, I have been reflecting on how our world has shifted. I have been contemplating the power of community and how remote and hybrid work has changed the way we connect with others. Community has the power to create an exchange for dialogue and learning. Community

also supports us, connects us, and creates a sense of belonging.

When I reminisce on my time as a graduate student, I recall a strong sense of belonging. I was a community member of Chapel Hill, the University, the School of Government, and (of

course) the MPA program. I am incredibly proud to be a part of the MPA alumni community.

We are more than 1,300 alumni strong



Continued on page 7

Fall MPA Immersion

Social Equity in the Public Sector: Self to Systems

On October 6–8, 2022, online and on-campus students gathered at the School of Government for the annual MPA Immersion—*Social Equity in the Public Sector: Self to Systems*, taught by faculty member Kimalee Dickerson. Students kicked off the intensive weekend by attending the annual Deil S. Wright Lecture, where students heard from Frances Berry, Reubin O'D. Askew Eminent Scholar and the Frank Sherwood Professor of Public Administration at Florida State University. Berry spoke on innovation in state and local government.



Fall 2022 Immersion participants in Chapel Hill.

As public service leaders, it is vital to know how to identify social inequities and take steps to create more just workplaces and communities. During the immersion, students explored how to advance social equity at multiple levels, including the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels. In addition, Dickerson provided opportunities for students to explore their identity and biases, the role of government in social equity, building and leading equitable organizations, and working together to transform systems.

Students heard from guest speakers throughout the immersion and participated in interactive activities. Speakers included School of Government faculty member Tyler Mulligan, who spoke on equity issues in development and revitalization; Erika Richmond of the Center for Civil Rights at the UNC School of Law; Kendra Johnson, executive director of EqualityNC; School faculty member Maureen Berner and MPA student Anna Naples, who spoke on food equity; and Debbi Musika, executive director of Montgomery County Partnership for Children. The activities taught students the impact and ways to disrupt implicit biases and microaggressions. Students also created historical timelines of inequities related to race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. The final activity of the immersion involved students developing and presenting mini case studies in groups. Case studies focused on social equity-related challenges in the public sector that students have personally experienced, witnessed, or heard about in their communities.

Dickerson concluded the immersion by asking students how they plan to respond to social inequities and injustices. All individuals can take actions that promote equity and influence others to do the same. Individual actions can include educating oneself, reflecting on personal growth opportunities, as well as influencing and educating loved ones and colleagues.



Congratulations

DECEMBER 2022 GRADUATES

Wayne Vincent Banks Jr.

Morgan Paige Brannon

James Mathew Bunch

Micayla Joanne Costa

Megan A. Dale

Lauren Elizabeth Duncan

Jessica Anne Giles

Linnea Herren

Mudasir Nazar

Joseph Michael Salicco

Ludivina Vasquez Snow

Gregory C. Waugh



Mat Bunch '22 prepares for graduation ceremonies in Chapel Hill. (Photo: Johnny Andrews/UNC-Chapel Hill)

Life Events

On the Move

Fagan Stackhouse '71

Retired from the City of Raleigh, NC

Mike Shealy '81

Director of Statewide Leadership Development, South Carolina Department of Administration, Columbia, SC

Peggy Merriss '82

Executive Director, Georgia City-County Management Association, Atlanta, GA

Col. Ken Woodcock '97

Mobilization Assistant to the Director of Logistics and Engineering, U.S. Air Force General Strike Command, Arlington, VA

Heidi York '99

Manager, Alamance County, NC

Emily Gangi '01

Broadband Policy Director, North Carolina Department of Information Technology, Raleigh

Sharon Paynter '01

Acting Chief Research and Engagement Officer, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC

Malinda Todd '02

Assistant Director, Capital Area Workforce Development, Durham, NC

Kirsten Wyatt '02

Fellow, Georgetown University Beek Center for Social Impact and Innovation, Washington, D.C.

Rebecca Wyhof Salmon '02

Mayor, City of Sanford, NC

Melanie Ranen '03

Interim Chief Development Officer, Prostate Cancer Foundation, Santa Monica, CA

Dan Levine '04

Director of Real Estate, Self-Help Credit Union, Durham, NC

Carrie Cook '07

Community Affairs Officer and Vice

President of Community Development, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, VA

Matt Boyer '08

Director of Business Development Operations and Pipeline Development, GM Defense, Arlington, VA

Kayla Mallon '08

Senior Customer Success Manager, eSpark Learning, Durham, NC

Ashley Lategan '09

Assistant Human Resources Director, Town of Cary, NC

Amy Strecker '09

President, Duke Energy Foundation, Charlotte, NC

Laura Biediger '12

Senior Community Engagement Manager, City of Durham, NC

Neil Dermody '12

Privacy and Compliance Manager, OPTrust, Toronto, ON

John Rible '12

Director of Business Relationship Management, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, New York, NY

Scott Sherrill '12

Planning and Development Manager, City of Concord, NC

Katie Todd Masood '13

Director of Development, UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School

Joseph Beasley '15

Assistant Vice President of Infrastructure and Economic Development, McGuireWoods Consulting, Charlotte, NC

Kasey Chayeb Kane '15

Account Supervisor, Bloom Communications, Asheville, NC

Kelly Kleinkort Montes '15

Executive Director of U.S. Corporate Engagement, Catalyst, Inc., New York, NY

Max Behlke '16

Deputy Executive Director, Institute for State Policy Leaders, Arlington, VA

Pat Madej '16

Research Program Manager, North Carolina League of Municipalities, Raleigh

Corey Petersohn '16

Director of Budget, Innovation and Strategy, Town of Holly Springs, NC

Charles Stevens '16

Senior Manager of Scalable Solutions, Amazon, Plano, TX

David Lambert '17

Project Liaison - Economic Development, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, Raleigh

Bethany Lamolinara '17

Senior Manager of Strategic Communications, TEKsystems, Hanover, MD

Stephanie Olson '17

Chief Operating Officer - Operational Excellence, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Raleigh

Ricky Ruvio '17

Assistant Utilities Director, City of Winston-Salem, NC

Max Taintor '17

Management Analyst, Buncombe County, NC

Josette Ferguson '18

Narrative Coordinator, Progress North Carolina/ProgressNC Action, Greensboro, NC

Matt Hughes '18

Chief of Finance and Operations, Blueprint North Carolina, Hillsborough, NC

Emily Maurer '18

Training Director, Junior Achievement USA, Denver, CO

Tara Nattress '18

Management Analyst, Triangle J Council of Governments, Durham, NC

David Payne '18

Senior Budget and Management Analyst, Guilford County, NC

Stephanie Watkins-Cruz '18

Director of Housing Policy, North Carolina Housing Coalition, Carrboro, NC

Jordan Cansler '19

Legislative Counsel, North Carolina League of Municipalities, Raleigh

Christopher Chavis '19

Executive Director, National Lawyers Guild of Los Angeles, CA

Dan May '19

Company Commander, 6th Ranger Training Battalion, U.S. Army, Destin, FL

Martin Yeager '19

Account Manager, Boston Financial Investment Management, Boston, MA

Annie Alexander '20

Research Analyst, UMass Donahue Institute, Hadley, MA

Jake Levitas '20

Senior Planner, City of Raleigh

Chase Loudermelt '22

Biomedical Services Account Manager, American Red Cross, Charleston, SC

Conor Ryan '22

Planner I, Town of Holly Springs, NC

MaryBeth Spoehr '22

Budget Analyst, Town of Holly Springs, NC

Weddings and New Additions

Catherine Renbarger '08

and Brian Renbarger welcomed Elizabeth Meares Renbarger, August 9, 2022

Katie Fiely '19

married Zac Lawton on October 8, 2022

Amanda Workman '19

married Richard Kay on June 2, 2022

Spotlight

UNC MPA Alumni Albert and Gladys Coates Society

YEAR TWO UPDATE

In 2021, alumni Russell Allen '77, David Cooke '82, and then-MPA Alumni Association Scholarship Chair Kevin FitzGerald '83, invited alumni to join them in making a leadership level gift. By the year's end, 22 alumni were members of the Albert and Gladys Coates Society, having made a cumulative contribution of \$5,000 or more to an MPA-designated fund or funds that year.

As 2022 came to close along with the University's capital campaign, the number of MPA Alumni Coates Society members climbed to 26!

Our special thanks to the alumni who contributed to this effort in one or both of the last two years.

Mal Watlington '69

Tom Lundy '71

Ed Kitchen '74

Richard Stevens '74

Flo Miller '77

J Russell Allen '77

Anthony Fox '77

Roger Stancil '77

**Richard and
Pat Woodcock '77**

Sharon Rothwell '78

Doug Rothwell '78

Michael Williamson '78

Wally Hill '79

Martha Perego '79

Charles Penny '80

Marie Hatem '81

Chris Long '81

Stephanie Fowler Benson '82

David Cooke '82

Peggy Merriss '82

Kevin FitzGerald '83

Larry Davis '85

Chris Morrill '85

Hazen Blodgett '88

Charles Perusse '92

Jim Donnelly '93

Ruffin Hall '93

Lori Victor Feller '95

Chris Riddick '07

Alice Mahood '20

in all sectors across nearly 50 states and 16 countries. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve on the Alumni Association Board since January 2021 and have learned so much through the experience. It has deepened my connection to other alumni and to the program.

Outgoing MPA President Jennifer Fox '19 did an incredible job creating a sustainable vision for intentional and genuine connectivity, regardless of

a student or alumnus's location. As I step into the role of president in January 2023, I hope to build upon this foundation. I see an opportunity to tap into the full potential of the alumni network by strengthening our connections. Since our landscape has changed, our modalities to connect with others also require a shift. Using a human-centered approach, the only way I know how to build community is to co-create it together. The voice of each member of our alumni

network is imperative to tap into our full potential.

My hope is that we build a space where we learn together, collaborate, support one another, and grow. We are excited for the year ahead. Please consider reaching out to a fellow alum, a former classmate, or connect with the board to share ideas.

Go Heels!

Deepti Panjabi '14

Anna Naples Receives Graduate School Impact Award

UNC MPA student Anna Naples received the prestigious Impact Award from The Graduate School at UNC-Chapel Hill in January 2023. The awards recognize significant graduate student research and contributions to the state in the areas of education, economic, physical, social, or cultural well-being.

Naples partnered with the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina for her research, titled "Produce Distributed in Urban and Rural Areas through the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina." In partnership with the Food Bank, Naples focused on the equitable distribution of produce for households under the poverty line.

"UNC MPA students can be a valuable asset for engaged research," faculty member Maureen Berner said. "They are gaining the analytical skills to do research and learning about leadership, organizations, and community needs. Most importantly, they want to make a difference. Anna is not the first of our MPA students who has been recognized with this prestigious campus award, and I'm sure she won't be the last."

Naples was able to use her personal interest in food insecurity and produce access to guide her research project as part of the MPA program.

"The most meaningful part of the project was that I felt my research had a tangible impact on the Food Bank's work," said Naples. "This data can increase produce access for families and help them find fresh foods easily available nearby that they might not know about."

The Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC was seeking information about where they are distributing produce, how well they are meeting the community need, and where there are still gaps in access.

Naples used ArcGIS to create a map of food distribution data. She mapped 1,200 pantries across the Food Bank's 34-county service area, including the amount of produce distributed over six months, urban versus rural distributions, the number of people below the poverty line served, and the amount of produce distributed per person.

Through her research, Naples collected data and created a valuable tool the



Food Bank will use to guide future programming, including where to establish "pop-up" distributions and where to connect food-insecure individuals in hospitals with nearby pantries that have produce.

"The Food Bank is thinking strategically and doing incredible work. Their work and mine shows there's more to be done to increase fresh food access for people in our state," said Naples.

The 2023 Impact Award had 11 recipients. More than 300 individuals have received awards since the program's inception.



**SCHOOL OF
GOVERNMENT**

**THE UNIVERSITY
OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT CHAPEL HILL**

Knapp-Sanders Building
Campus Box 3330
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 177
Chapel Hill, NC

Change Service Requested

Upcoming
EVENTS

Give
UNC
3 · 28 · 23

GiveUNC Returns MARCH 28, 2023!

We hope you will join us to celebrate and support the School of Government by participating in the University's annual day of giving, GiveUNC. Contributions from MPA alumni and friends strengthen our ability to provide teaching and resources that benefit current and future public service leaders in North Carolina and beyond.

Help us reach our goal of having 250 individual donors by making a gift of any size on the day of the event—every contribution enables us to fulfill our public service mission.

LEARN MORE
giveunc.unc.edu

