

IMPACT

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER SPRING • 2019

MPA@UNC: How Far We've Come

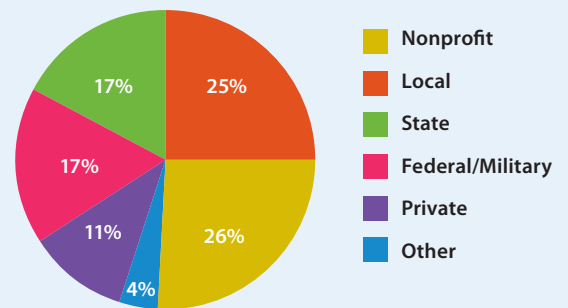
by MPA student Catesby Denison

Since opening its virtual doors in January 2013, MPA@UNC has become a leader in online education in the public administration field. It offers students the flexibility to pursue their MPA from virtually anywhere while still providing access to faculty, small class sizes, and opportunities to visit Chapel Hill. Because of these assets, MPA@UNC has welcomed students who have a wide range of educational backgrounds and experiences.

To date, 186 students have graduated from the online format of the program, and currently 169 students are enrolled, actively pursuing their degree. MPA@UNC students have undergraduate degrees in many disciplines, ranging from art history to zoology. Incoming MPA@UNC students have an average of about nine years in the workplace and more than half of current students are currently employed in the public administration field, enabling them to bring their daily experiences into class discussions.

MPA@UNC ushered in its seventh year this past January and introduced one of the format's largest and most diverse cohorts yet. Incoming students include a FBI agent, a Cirque De Soleil performer, a NOAA officer, and a Cherokee tribe leader. Ten of the students already hold advanced degrees.

Carolina MPA Post-Graduation Employment Sectors



As the program looks to the future, MPA Admissions Director Cara Robinson discussed how the program's staff are reaching out to recruit new students to both formats of the program. "This year, we have really worked to begin marketing the Carolina MPA program as one program with two formats. It allows us to recruit someone who may be unsure about which program is better for them," said Robinson.

Robinson also says there are opportunities for alumni to aid in recruiting new students. She added, "You all are out there working in the field, and you know the types of students this program attracts. If you are a part of something that you think other MPA prospects are a part of, please let us know. We are constantly trying to reach more people strategically."

CONTENTS

- 2 Director's Column:
Bill Rivenbark
- 3 Distinguished Service
Award

Congratulations,
Graduates!
- 4 True Carolina Blue:
Kaitland Finkle
- 5 From the Alumni
Association Board Chair

Advancing Racial Equity
- 6 On the Move
- 8 Upcoming Events

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



Bill Rivenbark
919.962.3707
rivenbark@unc.edu

We are well into our spring semester, and we have some exciting news. *U.S. News & World Report* released its rankings on March 12, and our program improved two positions since last year, tying for 21st in the public affairs category and **ranking second in the nation in the local government specialty area**. This is outstanding news and I wanted to be sure to share it with you, our alumni and friends.

Though we have much to celebrate, our program also faces new challenges: growing competition among all programs for outstanding students, evolving accreditation standards from NASPPA's decision to become an international accreditation body, and *U.S. News* rankings for MPA programs will take place on an annual basis (rather than every four years). With these challenges comes an incredible opportunity, and two very dedicated alumni—Doug and Sharon Rothwell—are helping us seize it. After many discussions about the future challenges of the MPA program, the Rothwells responded with a generous donation that will allow us to conduct a strategic plan. This process will allow us to take a hard look at the program and consider where we want to be in five years.

One area we are focused on is ensuring we are teaching the new skills and abilities needed by our graduates to be competitive in tomorrow's job market, in such areas as governance, leadership, diversity, and technology. Our ability to anticipate these and other needs will allow us to remain competitive in recruitment, ensuring that we can articulate how our curriculum will support the professional goals of our applicants. Looking forward also will allow us to make changes to our program in order to maintain our strong job placement and career

advancement rates, where selected programs are having difficulty demonstrating the value for their respective degrees. This will require flexibility so that our curriculum remains in alignment with the ever-changing needs of your respective organizations and communities.

Another area that we want to plan for is faculty composition, so that we remain competitive among our peers from the standpoint of our rankings. Our rankings are based solely on reputation, so we must continue to recruit and support a diverse faculty who are recognized as thought leaders of engaged scholarship in both the theory and practice of public administration. This is even more important because we are the School of Government, and our faculty are required to advance the literature of our discipline and to meet the needs of our respective clients. Therefore, a critical goal of this planning process will be to identify current strengths and possible areas for improvement to inform future hiring decisions.

We understand that alumni will play a key role in the future of the MPA program and are already helping us look ahead. Last year, we renamed the Diversity in Public Service Scholarship Fund to the Diversity in Public Service Scholarship and Activities Fund, in order to continue to provide scholarships while also providing resources for professional development opportunities around diversity and inclusion. In support of the fund and its expanded purpose, the MPA Alumni Association board has pledged to raise \$50,000 by December—you'll learn more about this effort in board chair Safa Sajadi's column (page 5). The newly expanded fund will help us recruit students and also further our goal of ongoing professional development within our co-curricular approach to graduate education.

Our alumni are fundamental to the future success of the MPA program. I am grateful for the investment and leadership of Doug and Sharon Rothwell as well as the leadership of the Alumni Association Board. This type of leadership is invaluable today and will be invaluable tomorrow.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Rivenbark". The signature is fluid and cursive.

William C. Rivenbark
Professor and Director



Alumni Association Board Awards Distinguished Service Award

At the 2019 North Carolina City and County Management Association Winter Seminar, Peggy Merriss '82 was awarded the Donald Hayman Distinguished Public Service Award. The award requires that the recipient demonstrate a consistently high level of service and concern for others and offer their service without expectation of recognition or reward. Merriss exhibits those qualities and certainly did not expect this recognition.

At the MPA Alumni Breakfast, faculty member David Ammons described why Merriss is a worthy recipient of this award. He said, "To tell you the story of Peggy as a city manager, I would need to tell you about the development of cross-departmental program teams, innovation teams, capital master planning, stormwater improvement, credit rating upgrades, a citizen education program, and much more. I would need to tell you about engaging 1,500 community members in strategic planning. She's

been an outstanding public service leader. During her time as manager, Decatur has been certified as a Platinum-level green community, a silver walk-friendly community, one of the 15 best places to work in Georgia, a Georgia trendsetter (twice), a city of excellence, and a city of ethics."

Merriss also served as president of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) from 2002–03. When her peers elected her as president of ICMA, Merriss became the first woman to lead the world's premier association of local government managers as well as the youngest person to hold the office. In January 2018, Merriss was appointed to serve as chair of ICMA-RC, succeeding fellow alumnus Tom Lundy '71.

Congratulations to Peggy Merriss, recipient of the 2018 Donald Hayman Distinguished Public Service Award.



Peggy Merriss '82, 2018 Donald Hayman Distinguished Public Service Award

To nominate a fellow alumnus or peer for the Donald Hayman Distinguished Public Service Award, submit a two-page narrative describing the candidate's achievements to Susan Austin at austin@sog.unc.edu.

Congratulations, Graduates!

WE CELEBRATED OUR MOST RECENT MPA ALUMNI AT A RECEPTION ON DECEMBER 15, 2018

Summer 2018

Deborah Adams
Zainab Baloch
Brett Berne
Katie Bordeaux
Josette Ferguson
Stacy Guffey
Jillian Jones
Ryan King
Charles Lucas

Mary Frances McClure
Parish Moffitt
David Payne
Allyson Peckins
Joseph Pierce
Camilla Posthill
Johnathan Rosales
Rosemary Stump

Fall 2018

Jeremy Anderson
Christina Belge
Isai Chavez
Anna Cowell
Barbara Cummings-Jackson
Grant Dunham
Andrew Hammett
Daniel Harden

Kelly Harvell
Scott Holcomb
Jason Hyatt
Nallely Manriques
Mariah Matheson
Michelle Mills
William Moseley
Marcus Reamer
Jen Rogers

Kristen Ross
Timothy Sorum
Scott Suter
Catherine Townes
Eli Valsing
Kizito Wenani
Yolanda Williams

TRUE CAROLINA BLUE: KAITLAND FINKLE

by MPA student Catesby Denison

Like many North Carolinians today, Kaitland Finkle wasn't born here but she got here as quickly as she could. Finkle was born in Florida but largely raised in Charlotte. She quickly developed a love of the North Carolina mountains, particularly spending time up at her grandparents' cabin. She is also passionate about sustainable development, and chose to pursue her undergraduate degree at Appalachian State University (ASU) to combine both of these passions. She quickly added a second major in planning after taking an "Urban Design and City Living" seminar her freshman year.

After graduating from ASU, Finkle began her public service career working in planning, public utilities, and zoning for the City of Graham and Davidson County. During her time with the Davidson County Planning Department, she took several continuing education courses taught at the School of Government. She ultimately received her North Carolina Association of Zoning Officials Certification thanks to a scholarship she received from the Local Government Federal Credit Union.

Finkle credits her experiences as a client of the School of Government as one of the reasons she chose to come to UNC-Chapel Hill for her graduate studies. "The courses and the assistance the School of Government

provides to local practitioners in the state of North Carolina is unparalleled," she said, "I knew that the work of professors assisting practitioners would provide real world experiences and case studies for classroom discussions."

After five years working for local government, Finkle chose to come to UNC-Chapel Hill as a dual-degree student working toward both her MPA and her master in city and regional planning. Finkle has a particular interest in serving smaller local governments across North Carolina. She chose to pursue an MPA degree because of the range of topics from finance to human resources that are offered. Finkle explained that, "with less staff and resources, individuals working for smaller municipalities are often tasked with wearing multiple hats and juggling responsibilities that may traditionally be split between many individuals in a larger city." She knew that going to UNC-Chapel Hill for her MPA would be valuable based on her "phenomenal experiences with the School of Government in the past."

Finkle said that "getting to know my fellow classmates has truly been the highlight of the program." She credited the small class size and the cohort experience as one that "instantly bonded every member of our class together." Finkle added, "I value the



unique background and diverse experiences each of my classmates brings to discussions and conversations both in and out of the classroom."

Looking to graduate in 2019, Finkle hopes to find a planning position for a community in North Carolina where she can make a difference. She said, "I feel that public servants are involved in all aspects of a smaller community and therefore get to see firsthand how changing policy can directly impact an individual's quality of life." Finkle said that she finds public service to be fulfilling by making communities into places that serve the needs of all citizens. "I hope to create positive change by better engaging citizens in the planning process."

From the Alumni Association Board Chair

Your alumni association is actively building on the success of the previous year and charting a new path forward. Our three standing committees have continued to develop and serve as incredible centers for action. Alumni engagement has taken on many different forms which has enabled us to reach a larger spectrum of alumni. Lastly, and possibly most rewarding, our association has for the first time undertaken a theme of diversity and committed itself to supporting the Diversity in Public Service Scholarship and Activities Fund.



happy hour hubs that have been scheduled not only throughout North Carolina, but also across the country, including Washington, DC, San Antonio, and Kansas City. The Alumni Mentor program is also in full swing and has served as a tremendous connection point between alumni and current students. Be on the lookout for more engagement opportunities.

Lastly (and most importantly) is our support of the Diversity in Public Service and Scholarship and Activities Fund. For the first time in our association's history,

Our three committees are fully staffed and operating at full steam. The "3 Cs," as outgoing alumni association president Lib Wanner dubbed them, have served as a tremendous engine for brainstorming ideas, vetting options, and making concrete decisions. Our committees have been instrumental in selecting speakers for our PAC Chats (during the Alumni Forum), engaging in discussions surrounding the payment of dues for the alumni association, voting on the Donald Hayman Distinguish Public Service Award recipient, and even developing social media approaches to engaging with alumni. And finally, we are excited to report that non-alumni board members may also serve on committees this year and several have already done so! So, things are really moving!

We have devoted our efforts to a theme of diversity. We have collectively agreed to support the Diversity in Public Service and Scholarship Activities fund in reaching its goal of \$50,000. This task is one that the board took on with determination and commitment by asking some difficult questions like, "what is diversity," "how should it be defined," and "how can we best support the campaign." Our determination and ongoing progress in this area demonstrates the Alumni Association's commitment to our mission statement and goals.

We are excited for the year and welcome all efforts to further connect and develop ideas.

Thank you,
Safa Sajadi '11

Our association has been actively working with the program and fellow alumni on developing and supporting the many ways we engage with alumni. For the past few years, we have supported the program's various alumni

P.S. To learn more about the Board's effort to support the Diversity in Public Service Scholarship and Activities Fund and to join in the effort, visit mpa.unc.edu/you-me-333.

Advancing Racial Equity

This past January, 16 students and two staff members traveled to Charlotte to attend a conference called "Advancing Racial Equity: Building a Movement for Impact Through Local Government Action." The convening, hosted by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, created an opportunity for North Carolina government staff, city and county leaders, and elected officials to learn about and act on advancing racial equity.

This conference was an opportunity for students to both learn about an important topic and to network with current local government leaders. It was also the type of co-curricular offering that is made possible thanks to alumni support of the Diversity in Public Service Scholarship and Activities Fund. Learn more about GARE at racialequityalliance.org.



On the Move

Karen Alexander '99 is program director for BrainFutures in Lutherville, MD.

Justin Amos '06 is business manager of Fleet Management for the City of Charlotte, NC.

Zainab Baloch '18 is member operations specialist for Even Responsible Finance in Raleigh, NC.

Emily Bausch '17 is critical crisis communications specialist at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC.

Stacey Berahzer '03 is CEO at IB Environmental in Marietta, GA.

Brett Berne '18 is assistant public defender for NC Judicial District 15B in Hillsborough, NC.

Janelle Beverly '09 is program director of Enterprise Community Partners in Columbia, MD.

Adam Bruggemann '02 is assistant state budget officer for NC Office of State Budget and Management in Raleigh.

Lukas Brun '07 is a faculty fellow at Duke Sanford World Food Policy Center.

Jennifer Butler '00 is director of public policy at National Alliance on Mental Illness in Arlington, VA.

Steve Buter '06 is financial and performance management analyst for Pierce County in Tacoma, WA.

Jenny Carlberg '17 is manager of Institutional Relations for Grameen Foundation in Washington, DC.

Levi Carter '18 is collection management librarian and mobile services manager for Pamunkey Regional Library in Ashland, VA.

Joanna Cleveland '96 is vice president and university counsel for University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA.

Lee Clyburn '89 is executive vice president at CBRE in Raleigh.

Travis Crayton '18 is community planner for the US Department of Transportation in Cambridge, MA.

Julia Da Silva '18 is programs and scholarships associate for Triangle Community Foundation in Durham.

Delvin Davis '00 is regional policy analyst for Southern Poverty Law Center in Durham.

Sarah Dickson '18 is program coordinator at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business.

Kasey El-Chayeb '15 is marketing and communication manager at Austin Pets Alive! in Austin, TX.

Bobby Fitzjohn '18 is financial services director for the City of High Point, NC.

Douglas Fountain '88 is executive director at Christian Connections for International Health in Sterling, VA.

Laura Gill '86 is CEO for the Special District Risk Management Authority in Sacramento, CA.

Brannon Godfrey '88 is manager for the Town of Hartford in Vermont.

Joyce Gordon '05 is director of Jewish Life at Duke University.

Shelli Grogg '18 is an Emerson National Hunger Fellow for the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the Congressional Hunger Center, University of Arkansas.

Johanna Foster '05 is senior director of academic affairs at the UNC School of Medicine.

Brian Haney '17 is assistant manager for Harnett County, NC.

Christopher Hansard '08 is director of judicial services at the Administrative Office of the Courts in Atlanta, GA.

Joel Harper '86 is business counselor for the Small Business and Technology Development Center in Chapel Hill.

Randy Harrington '98 is manager for the Town of Holly Springs, NC.

Melissa Hidek '94 is a Pritzker Fellow for the Early Childhood Alliance at the Central New York Philanthropy Center in Syracuse, NY.

Janice Hillanbrand '17 is budget and management analyst for Forsyth County, NC.

Libby Hodges '09 is director of planning and development for the City of North Augusta, SC.

Jonathan Holt '18 is Management Fellow for the Loudoun County Government in Virginia.

Matthew Hughes '18 is policy and operations manager for the Leadership Now Project.

Joy Jackson '09 is associate site director at Merit America in Washington, DC.

Alicia James '04 is the policy and program manager for the Institute for Emerging Issues at NC State University.

Ellis Johnson II '18 is business operations and strategy analyst for Washtenaw County, MI.

Alex Jones '18 is special projects coordinator at the UNC-Chapel Hill Friday Center.

Jennifer Jones '02 is legislative analyst for the City of Colorado Springs, CO.

Jillian Jones '18 is workforce program director for Communities in Schools of the Heart of Texas in Waco.

Jacqueline Kannan '16 is development director for Boys and Girls Clubs of Wayne/Johnston Counties in Goldsboro, NC.

Wad Khalafalla '18 is deputy state director at the Virginia chapter of Spread the Vote.

Maia Knox '15 is management analyst for the City of Woodinville, WA.

Bethany Lamolinara '17 is strategic communications manager at TEKsystems in Hanover, MD.

Ashley Lategan '09 is senior HR manager for the Town of Cary, NC.

Alicia LeBeouf '03 is senior vice president of marketing, communications, and culinary operations at Compass Group USA in Charlotte.

Kayla Mallon '08 is account manager at eSpark Learning.

Eric Marsh '17 is strategic initiatives analyst for Durham County.

Emily Maurer '18 is manager of volunteer engagement for Junior Achievement Rocky Mountain in Denver, CO.

Jamie McCall '06 is the vice president for policy and research at Carolina Small Business Development Fund in Raleigh.

Matthew McKirahan '18 is an ICMA Local Government Management Fellow for the City of Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Barron Monroe '09 is manager of Anson County, NC.

John Nemeth '96 is executive director at West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee in El Centro, CA.

Amanda Newton '18 is budget analyst for Union County, NC.

Sarah O'Brien '18 is executive assistant to the manager for the City of Glenwood Springs, CO.

John O'Daniel '15 is administrator for the Town of Williamston, NC.

Chaz Offenburg '16 is budget and management analyst for Orange County, NC.

Stephanie Olson '17 is senior budget and management Analyst for the City of Raleigh.

Matthew Osterhoudt '15 is director for planning and development services in Sarasota County, FL.

Jordan Paschal '16 is strategy and budget analyst for the City of Charlotte.

Renee Paschal '92 has retired as manager of Chatham County, NC.

Leah Price '18 is budget database specialist for the City of Greensboro, NC.

Thomas Rhea '16 is mathematics engagement consultant at National Geographic Learning in Panama City Beach, FL.

John Rible '12 is principal business relations manager for Rockwell Collins in Annapolis, MD.

Jen Rogers '18 is managing director of the Heritage Theater Festival at the University of Virginia.

Zulayka Santiago '99 is founder and creative director of Libe'lula Consulting in Durham.

Lianna Sarkisian '93 is senior project design specialist for USAID in Washington, DC.

Benjamin Scaggs '88 is executive director of Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council in New Orleans, LA.

Libby Seguin '18 is business analyst for Public Consulting Group in Raleigh.

Francine Stefan '16 is deputy director for the Development Finance Initiative at the UNC School of Government.

Mattie Sue Stevens '13 is the information technology business manager for Augusta-Richmond County, GA.

Rosemary Stump '18 is associate community organizer for Charleston Area Justice Ministry in North Charleston, SC.

Kevin Teater '17 is executive director of the Beaverton Downtown Association in Beaverton, OR.

Kari Thomas '04 is national dean of regional leadership programs for Relay Graduate School of Education in New York, NY.

Halley Thompson '16 is personnel coordinator for the Choice Program at University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Toney Thompson '18 is an ICMA Local Government Management Fellow for the City of Durham and Durham County.

Brent Troxell '12 is an MBA candidate at the University of Denver and business development analyst at Venddy.

Rebecca Truluck '18 is an ICMA Local Government Management Fellow for Sarasota County, FL.

Andrew Trump '16 is director of Navy Yard leasing and business development at PIDC in Philadelphia, PA.

Ashley Tucker '18 is assistant project manager at Telesis Corporation in Washington, DC.

Stephanie Watkins-Cruz '18 is policy analyst for Chatham County.

Emily Ward '07 is grants manager for St. Francis College in Brooklyn Heights, NY.

Meghan Ward '13 is research and policy associate for the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission in Raleigh.

Ebony West '18 is programs and engagement associate for Triangle Community Foundation in Durham.



**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

IMPACT

Upcoming Events

Meet, greet, and join your fellow alumni at the School of Government, online, or on the road! For more details, visit mpa.unc.edu/alumni-events.

APRIL 4 | 3:30-4:45 P.M.

Deil S. Wright Lecture: Donald F. Kettl

"States Divided: How the Invention That United the Nation Is Driving It Apart"

School of Government

APRIL 9

GiveUNC

We'll all come together for 24 hours to give back to the program



Learn more at giveunc.unc.edu.



HAPPY HOUR HUBS

Register at give.unc.edu/events/hub

APRIL 4

Tobacco Road Sports Café
CHAPEL HILL

Following the
Deil S. Wright Lecture

*Interested in helping host a Happy Hour Hub in your area?
Contact Brandon Foster at foster@sog.unc.edu.*

MAY 16

Hi-Wire Brewing at Golden Belt
DURHAM

Held in partnership with the
#ELGL19 annual conference

20180875

Visit our website
mpa.unc.edu



@UNCMPA
@MPAatUNC



CarolinaMPA
MPAatUNC



Carolina MPA Alumni



Make a gift online
GiveToMPA.unc.edu