



IMPACT Alumni Newsletter



Nicholas (Nick) Dula '06

Katherine (K.C.) Tydgat '07

Jess Aylor '05

Lori Victor Feller '95

Marcus Reamer '18

How UNC MPA Supports You Through Life's Labyrinth

A UNC MPA degree supports various careers in federal, state, and local government, nonprofits, and the private sector. Several alumni shared with us the twists and turns their careers have taken and how getting an MPA helped them.

Nick Dula '06

**Compliance and Planning Manager
at the City of Raleigh Housing and
Neighborhoods Department**

What path got you where you are now?

The path to my current position has sometimes been unconventional and involved twists and turns. After graduating with my MPA in 2008, I moved to Sycamore, Illinois, to join my wife for her final year of study at Northern Illinois University. Facing a challenging job market amidst the Great Recession, I explored public and private sector opportunities. I eventually returned to North Carolina and worked as a database manager with BTA Associates, a public relations firm in Raleigh. My next job was a management analyst position with the State of North Carolina Government in the Office of Economic Recovery and Investment. Subsequent positions included city planning in Lenoir, where I eventually became the downtown development director, and economic development planning in Harnett County. Presently,

as the compliance and planning manager with the City of Raleigh, I oversee strategic planning and federal compliance for the Community and Small Business Development Division.

The MPA program and alumni network have been consistently present with me and have given me much support along my career journey. I encourage current students and recent graduates to stay connected with your cohort and use the amazing alumni network as much as possible.

How did the MPA program prepare you for future work experiences?

I most frequently use things I learned during the program about leadership, management, strategic planning, budgeting, human resources, and professional communications. The training I received has shaped who I am as a professional.

What goals have you achieved since graduating?

I have been able to fulfill several goals I set while in the MPA program, including having a career in economic and community development, having

a positive impact on my hometown of Lenoir and other rural communities, and working in a large city.

K.C. Tydgat '07

**Director, Planning and Finance
Division, Office of Chief Counsel,
Internal Revenue Service**

What path got you where you are now?

After graduating with a bachelor's in public policy, I wanted to focus more on "action," so I joined the MPA program. During my time at UNC, I had the opportunity to work for the Fiscal Research Division of the North Carolina Legislature with a program alumnus who was a fantastic boss and mentor. With tightening state budgets (and a long-standing love for all things federal government), I got a job through the Federal Career Internship Program (now called "Pathways"). I've been with the Office of Chief Counsel at the IRS for 15 years, working my way up from intern to financial management branch chief to my current role as division director.

From the Director



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

We recently celebrated another spring graduation, welcoming 35 graduates to our family of alumni. Graduation is a wonderful time to

honor a huge accomplishment, a culmination of many steps along the way.

Anyone who knows me well knows that grading is not one of my favorite things to do. As I turned in my grades (and did a small happy dance) I hoped that the students would also have taken a moment to celebrate submitting the paper, finishing the exam, completing the class, and finishing the semester. All these steps are important throughout the process of getting an MPA, and they can get lost when moving to the next paper, exam, or getting ready for the next semester.

My hope is that our students and alumni have the chance to reflect on all the big and little wins that make up the journey. It is easy when life is busy to move from one task or project to another and fail to pause and recognize the steps and wins as they come.

Currently, our MPA program has lots to celebrate, including a fantastic graduating class, amazing current students, phenomenal alumni (including the life events highlighted in the following pages), committed and talented faculty and staff, and continued support from the School of Government. I hope you make a point to pause and honor your accomplishments and progress, no matter how big or small.

Sincerely,

Willow S. Jacobson

Director, UNC MPA

Associate Dean for Graduate Studies

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

Continued from "How UNC MPA Supports You..." page 1

How did the MPA program prepare you for future work experiences?

The MPA program helped me manage the 'in-between' of policies and implementing them. It helped me balance an appreciation of thorough analysis with a need to decide and move forward. Additionally, it helped me appreciate what decision makers at all levels of an organization need to do their jobs well and work to anticipate/prepare for that.

What goals have you achieved since graduating?

One goal I had was to thrive as a generalist. I wanted to use what I consider an MPA superpower—the ability to connect the dots from budget to law to human resources, which helps me understand how to build and manage the right teams to get things done.

I've met a lot of colleagues with MPAs and other related degrees. The most unique experience by far is the greatest gift of the MPA program—the cohort. Working alongside my classmates gave me a family who has been with me through losses, moves, and weddings. They're aunts, uncles, and godparents to my children. They motivate, support, and impress me every day with their achievements. We would never have met if not for the amazing community—with a shared passion for public service—that is the UNC MPA program.

Lori Victor Feller '95

Managing Director, Ernst & Young, Government and Public Sector

What path got you where you are now?

Before the MPA program, I worked for a national foundation and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. I started my consulting career right out of the MPA program. I have worked in various consulting roles, including large-scale, complex business and technology transformations.

How did the MPA program prepare you for future work experiences?

The program gave me a variety of

experiences in the classroom and with local governments during my school years. I learned the necessity of negotiation and stakeholder facilitation to affect change in government. There are so many ways to solve problems. If you pause, ask good questions, and listen, you find that the people around you have amazing ideas, and they make the solutions even stronger than if you did them yourself.

What goals have you achieved since graduating?

I wanted to impact positive change in our communities. I've done that by leveraging technologies to make government work better and more citizen-focused and by building programs that benefit the world around us.

Jess Aylor '05

Executive Director of Library Development, UNC University Libraries

What path got you where you are now?

After majoring in music at University of Virginia, I embarked on a seven-year journey in nonprofit fundraising within the performing arts in Richmond and Washington, DC. Returning to North Carolina, I transitioned to higher education fundraising at North Carolina State University, where mentorship led me to the UNC MPA program. I navigated roles in arts/economic development, leadership transitions at a rape crisis center, and philanthropy at Triangle Community Foundation for 13 years. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, I balanced parenting and consulting before returning to higher education fundraising. I now serve as executive director of Library Development at UNC, driven by a passion for community impact and collaboration.

How did the MPA program prepare you for future work experiences?

I still draw on strategic thinking taught in all my MPA classes. I learned about people management, networks in North Carolina and the

South, cross-sector partnerships, and, most of all, a growth mindset. Being open to change and embracing it as an opportunity for improvement has been extremely helpful.

What advice do you have for others in the MPA program?

I have enjoyed mentoring and hiring incredible MPA students and alumni and recruiting others to serve on boards or as volunteers. I encourage other MPA alumni to stay involved and connected.

Marcus Reamer '18

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Environmental Science and Policy at Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric, and Earth Science, University of Miami

What path got you where you are now?

The MPA program inspired me to explore the idea of a doctoral degree, which I will finish this fall. I worked in marine conservation before I started the MPA program (and while I was enrolled), and I will stay in the field once I earn my doctorate.

How did the MPA program prepare you for future work experiences?

Getting my MPA helped me understand how to bridge theory and practice, which has been hugely helpful to me in an interdisciplinary PhD program. I also study marine social science with an emphasis on whale and dolphin conservation, which requires many policy processes at different levels. Understanding the structure and function of different organizations has been helpful.

I also shared what I learned from the MPA program with others by creating a course focused on environmental organizations and careers for undergraduate students. Many of the core concepts, like organization theory and collaborative governance, came from the MPA curriculum. I also often look to materials from MPA as I prepare professional development seminars and mentor our students for their internship and career searches.

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

ASPA Recognizes Outstanding UNC MPA Contributors to the Public Personnel Field

At the 2024 American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) Conference, two UNC Master of Public Administration leaders took home honors for their scholarship in the public personnel field.

Given by the ASPA Section on Personnel and Labor Relations (SPALR), MPA Director Willow S. Jacobson and alumnus Fagan Stackhouse '71 won awards for their outstanding contributions to public personnel administration. Jacobson was honored with the Jonathan P. West Outstanding Scholar Award, and Stackhouse won the Outstanding Practitioner Award.

Jacobson was recognized for her prolific and significant scholarly contributions to the public human resource management (HRM) field, which has spanned more than two decades and included journal articles, book chapters, and professional reports.

Nominated by a group of her scholarly peers in public administration who represent schools nationwide, the group sought to celebrate Jacobson's academic contributions to the public personnel field—scholarly pursuits they view as distinctive, informative, and practical for tangible implementation.

"Professor Jacobson's work is notable for several reasons," they wrote in their nomination.

"First, her scholarship examines HRM issues at the local level, which is an essential but often neglected context. Second, she utilizes mixed methodological

approaches to best address questions of interest. Third, she effectively connects enduring ideas with contemporary reality to critically analyze HRM developments. Fourth, her work seamlessly bridges the theory-practice divide."

The group said Jacobson's academic record exemplifies the scholarly ideals the award seeks to elevate.

"We believe Professor Jacobson embodies the spirit of this award's namesake. Professor West was a supportive and kind colleague whose work elevated the study and practice of public HRM. Like West, Jacobson is known for the excellence, professionalism, and humanity of her work."

Fagan Stackhouse, Outstanding Practitioner Award winner, has led a public service career spanning nearly five decades across many states. He served in a variety of public administration positions in multiple local government units, mostly in the human resources field. Stackhouse served as the human resources director for the cities of Raleigh and Virginia Beach, deputy human resources director for the City of Milwaukee, assistant to the county manager and chief human resources officer for Charleston County in South Carolina, and public administration positions in Michigan and North Carolina. He served as president of IPMA-HR and as an instructor and guest lecturer at universities nationwide. Stackhouse currently works as a manager for Evergreen Solutions LLC.

His skillsets within the human resources field include talent acquisition, workforce development, employee engagement, equity and diversity development, classification and compensation, talent development and management, employee relations, benefits administration, well-being initiatives, and strategic visioning and implementation.

In recognition of his honor, Stackhouse expressed gratitude for his predecessors who helped pave the way for his ability to effect lasting change in the public human resources sector.

"The ASPA SPALR award is a tremendously significant capstone for me. It represents many collective efforts of leader support, spousal support, excellent mentors, community advocates, and a deep caring for the workforce," Stackhouse said.

"This—coupled with fundamentally knowing that quality employees equate to successful organizational outcomes—means one of the highest priorities for public sector organization leaders should be its employees," added Stackhouse. "This is effectively demonstrated by creating trust and unwavering commitment to them."

Jacobson nominated Stackhouse for the award with the assistance of Ruffin Hall '93. Like Stackhouse, Hall is a UNC MPA alumnus and former Raleigh city manager. The two jointly celebrated his dedication to strengthening public organizations. They said his development of creative strategies and best practices ensures improved employee experiences and is a



Willow S. Jacobson, Jonathan P. West Outstanding Scholar Award winner and Fagan Stackhouse, Outstanding Practitioner Award winner

model public personnel professionals should aim to emulate.

"Fagan is the epitome of outstanding contribution to the field of public personnel administration throughout this long and distinguished career," Jacobson wrote in her nomination. "In each position he has served, he demonstrated calm, thoughtful, effective thinking to solve difficult human resource and organizational problems. In short, Mr. Stackhouse is an excellent example of the best of our profession and deserves recognition."

Fagan Stackhouse has received several other public service awards, including the Warner Stockberger Achievement Award, Swain Award, and Trailblazer Award. He earned a master's degree in public administration from UNC-Chapel Hill and maintains certifications in IPMA-SCP and SHRM-SCP.

MPA Diversity Committee Workshop

Inclusive Behaviors: How to Help Others Feel Valued, Respected, and Heard

by Micah McRea

On April 19, the MPA Diversity Committee hosted its final event of the Spring 2024 semester, a workshop entitled, *Inclusive Behaviors: How to Help Others Feel Valued, Respected, and Heard*. MPA students, faculty, and staff at the School of Government attended the workshop led by DEI practitioner Sertrice Shipley, CEO and owner of Plan to Action LLC.

Shipley guided both in-person and virtual attendees through a presentation and discussion to emphasize the power of inclusion. She began by discussing how DEI can positively impact organizational

performance through increased innovation, improved decision-making, and a better exchange of information. A recurring theme was the importance of establishing a true sense of belonging and why it was essential for everyone to feel respected and heard. Shipley also led discussions on combating exclusion, eliminating individual bias, and reducing microaggressions.

Attendees engaged in deep, active conversations that continued past the workshop's end.

Matthew Sutton, president of the MPA Diversity Committee and second-year on-campus student, and Brianna Beadle, vice president of the MPA Diversity Committee and first-year on-campus student, organized and hosted the event. The committee hopes to continue hosting similar workshops for the UNC MPA program.



DEI practitioner Sertrice Shipley



UNC MPA Celebrates Spring 2024 Graduation

by Andy Bradshaw

The UNC MPA class of 2024 gathered with faculty, family, friends, and staff on May 11 to celebrate their graduation from the program. The ceremony, held at the Frank Porter Graham Student Union, honored 52 on-campus and online graduates who completed the program in Summer 2023, Fall 2023, and Spring 2024, respectively.

UNC MPA Director Willow S. Jacobson and School of Government Dean Aimee N. Wall welcomed and congratulated graduates for their achievements.

Carl W. Stenberg, James E. Holshouser Jr. Distinguished Professor of Public Administration and Government, presented the annual Wright Research Paper Award, honoring the legacy of its namesake—former faculty member and public administration visionary Deil S. Wright.

Stenberg presented the 2024 honor to Jonathan Douglas Hill for his paper on “Evaluating the Organizational Location of Keep America Beautiful Affiliates.”

In his address, graduation speaker Dean Emeritus Michael R. Smith remarked upon the challenges that the future public service leaders of UNC MPA will face in their roles—challenges in the public sphere that are increasingly multifaceted and complex on multiple organizational and sectoral levels—and necessary to aim to solve.

“For complicated decisions, you are never going to have enough information because—wait for it—you cannot predict the future,” he advised the graduates before him.

“You have to find ways to be comfortable and get other people comfortable with recommendations and decisions based on the information you have at the time.”

“We need you to take bold action as public service leaders. There are lots of headwinds today that make it harder than ever to take bold action, but we need public service leaders who will push through those headwinds.”

Before the hooding and pinning ceremony of the graduates, Jacobson wished her former students and future public service leaders well in their careers—and urged them to harness the values they learned in the program as they effect positive change.

“As you take on leadership positions, it will take courage to face challenges, uncertainty, and hard choices,” she said. “At those moments, I hope you will draw on your public service values and your ethics as you approach them and know that you can do remarkable things. Your commitment and courage will continue to have a lasting impact on the world around you and the issues you care about.”

The School of Government and UNC MPA program extend their congratulations and warm wishes to all graduates of the class of 2024.

“

***There are lots of headwinds today
that make it harder than ever
to take bold action, but we need
public service leaders who will
push through those headwinds.***

— Michael R. Smith
Dean Emeritus, UNC School of Government

GRADUATES

Ashland Chase Barnhill
Kinsey Catheryn Beauclair
Jasmine Billings
Rosemarie Teresa Blewitt
Chandler Rose Briggs
Devin Browning
Mariah Krista Pearl Canup
Shane Digan
Marshall Gregory Grayson
Brian Richard Guth
Daniel Stephen Hall
Rebecca Lynn Hawke
Jamie Arlegui Mendoza Kanburoglu
Dania Khan
Shelby Elizabeth Lamm
Manzi Nicholas Masozera
Shirrell Annette McNeil-Williams
Madhuri Vinay Mohan
Anna Rebecca Naples
James Richard Onorevole
Scott Powell
John Carter Roberson
Merrill Grace Robinson
Charles William Rocci
Hannah Elisabeth Salinas
Valerie Christine Sauer
Hannah Lynch Somerville
Samantha Reilly Stahl
Matthew Everett Sutton
Jennifer Taylor-Monteagudo Mora
Sophia Rose Trentacosta
Mallory Verez
Wendy Michelle Welsh
Lauren Wilcox
Elizabeth Francina Wilkes

Celebrating GiveUNC 2024

March 26, 2024, was GiveUNC, the University-wide day of giving. In its seventh year participating in the event, this was the School of Government's most successful day ever. We are deeply appreciative of the support shown by UNC MPA alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends.

Highlights from the School of Government

Amount Raised A record-breaking \$313,000	Number of Donors 301	Rank across campus in most gifts and funds raised 4th	
Designations	School of Government \$147,000	MPA \$167,000	
MPA Giving	135 MPA alumni contributed \$158,446	58 donors contributed \$14,551 to the UNC MPA Director's Innovation Endowment Fund	\$166,813 contributed to MPA designations, including a planned gift

Challenges Unlocked		
All three challenges issued by the Foundation Board, MPA Alumni Coates Society, and the MPA Alumni Association Board were met!		
The Board gave:	MPA Alumni Coates Society members gave:	The MPA Alumni Association Board contributed:
\$40,000 when 250 donors made gifts to the School	\$40,000 when 20 donors contributed	\$50 for every gift, up to \$1,600

Thank you to everyone who participated. We are grateful for your support and for helping make this GiveUNC our best yet!

212 STUDENTS

152 online
60 on campus

94% ONLINE STUDENTS WORKING FULL OR PART TIME



55 GRADUATES



2023–24 MPA by the numbers



87 SECTIONS
36 on campus
51 online



1,398 ALUMNI

84 SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT COURSES TAUGHT BY MPA FACULTY
48 on campus
33 online
3 hyflex

86 ALUMNI TAKING COURSES

WORK SECTORS

Government	Military 17
Local 313	Nonprofit 220
State 102	Higher ed. 88
Federal 122	Private 308
	Other 11

LOCATIONS

47 U.S. States · 7 countries

Life Events

On the Move

Cindy Holmes '84

Founder, Sustain Triangle, LLC

Teresa Derrick-Mills '90

Senior Research Fellow, Urban Institute

Charlie Perusse '92

Interim Vice President for Finance and Administration, University of Louisville

Daniel Teachey '95

Customer Communications Lead, SAS

Elaine Mejia '96

Executive Director, Think Big Alliance

Jim Klingler '99

Finance Lead, Disaster Management Division, CDBG-DR, International Coaching Federation

B.J. Collins '01

Acting Deputy Director, Office of Resources Management, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Ariel Novick '03

Associate Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League Pacific Northwest Region

Josh Edwards '05

Manager, York County, SC

Mary Tiger '07

Director of Administration, Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA)

Ashleigh Martin Price '08

Deputy Director, City of Charlotte, NC

Fred Thomas '08

Deputy Director for Management, Operations, Communications, and Policy, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Danielle Peacock '09

Executive Director, LinkB5, University of Virginia

Janelle Scott '09

Director of Policy, Compass Working Capital

Gus Carvalho '12

Financial Data and Analytics Manager, Arlington County, VA

Nicholas A. Geis '12

Assistant Manager, City of Lexington, NC

Emily Guhde '12

Confidential Assistant, Library of Congress

Jake Pflpson '12

Superintendent III (Chief Ranger), California State Parks

Ryan Regan '14

Senior Development Associate, Matrix Renewables

Emily Edmonds Adair '15

Program Grants Director, Rural Grants Program, Hometown Strong

Brittany Clark '15

Agent, Choice Residential Real Estate

Lena Geraghty '15

Founder and Principal, Data Spark Consulting

Sarah Richardson '15

Program Manager, U.S. Coast Guard

Lauren Brune '16

Internal Audit Program Manager, City of Asheville, NC

Sarah Manning Henricks '16

Grants Specialist, Rural Grants Program, Hometown Strong

Thomas Rhea '16

Core Curriculum Advisor, Imagine Learning

Alex Gottschalk '17

Deputy Administrator, Mecklenburg County, VA

Paul Moon '17

Conference and Events Director, Grantmakers for Education

Zainab Baloch '18

Field Organizer, Down Home NC

Tina Belge '18

Founder and Principal, Catalyst Community Consulting

Mariah Matheson '18

Grants Specialist, Rural Grants Program, Hometown Strong

Libby Seguin '18

Business Development Senior Specialist, Latham & Watkins LLP

Becca Truluck '18

Budget and Management Analyst, Wake County, NC

Christopher Chavis '19

Policy Analyst, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians

Andrew Cutler '19

Region 8 Recovery Coordinator, Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience, U.S. Small Business Administration

Amanda Kostusiak '19

Budget Officer, New Hanover County, NC

Richard Carey '20

Contract and Grant Account Technician, UNC School of Medicine

Jaime DiLauro Barber '20

Performance Analyst II, Office of Strategic Initiatives and Programs, North Carolina Department of Transportation

Ross Hatton '20

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Harvard Medical School and Pilgrim Health Care Institute

Brian Murphy '20

Data and Analytics Analyst, Town of Chapel Hill

Thomas Bates '21

Senior Administrative Officer, Charlotte Water

Kathryn Paquet '21

Social Media Specialist, Center for Energy and Environment

Shakera Vaughan '21

Community Engagement Strategist, City of Raleigh, NC

Noah Johnson '22

Budget and Performance Analyst, Town of Apex, NC

Gregory Waugh '22

Chief of Response and Chief Pilot, U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Diego

Retirements

Kenneth P. Woodcock '97

Retired as Colonel from the U.S. Air Force in May 2024

Emily Gardiner '98

Retired from the U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of the Inspector General, in March 2024

Faith Brodie '03

Retired from the Town of Chapel Hill in March 2024

Nuptials

Jaime DiLauro Barber '20

married Sam Barber on November 11, 2024

Ross Hatton '20

married Cedric Al Kazzi on April 20, 2024

New Addition

James Varnado '97

and Jessica Varnado welcomed Henry Lou Varnado on March 12, 2024

An Update from the UNC MPA Alumni Association

Toney Thompson '16

Alumni Association Board President

The UNC MPA Alumni Association Board is working on several initiatives across our three committees to foster connection, deepen engagement, and improve our internal processes.

Our Community Committee is working to create a meaningful and impactful Alumni Day of Service to kick off our annual Alumni Picnic in the fall (scheduled for August 24—mark your calendar)! The committee is working to find a service project close to the School in hopes of having a strong turnout. In addition, this committee is working closely with the MPA program to expand the alumni mentorship program and organize a local government field trip for current MPA students to see how alumni impact their community.

Our Contribution Committee is organizing a new giving circle opportunity for MPA alumni and is working with the MPA program to identify where these resources would be best directed to have the greatest, immediate impact.

Our Governance Committee is reviewing several internal alumni board processes around board recruitment, transitions, managing and storing key documents in a shared and secure space, and updating board by-laws.

The Alumni Association Board exists to support the alumni community. If you have thoughts, concerns, or questions, please reach out at mpa_board_president@sog.unc.edu.





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OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT CHAPEL HILL**

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Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Upcoming **EVENTS**

REGISTER NOW

UNC MPA Alumni Picnic

August 24, 2024 • 5–7 p.m.

UNC School of Government

Join students, alumni, faculty, staff, friends, and family as we kick off the academic year at the annual picnic hosted by the UNC MPA Alumni Association!

To register, scan the QR code or visit give.unc.edu/sog/events/mpa-kickoff.



SAVE THE DATE

Deil S. Wright Public Service Forum and MPA Alumni Reception

October 25, 2024 • 4–5:30 p.m.

UNC School of Government

This year's forum will explore the intersection of artificial intelligence and public administration, immediately followed by the annual UNC MPA Alumni Reception.

Registration details to come.