Welcome to the Summer 2019 issue of The Public Servant, the official newsletter of the Augusta University Master of Public Administration program. The students, alumni, and faculty of our MPA program continue to enjoy success in their careers. Due to these contributions, our program is being noticed. In April, we learned that our MPA program is the only graduate program on the Summerville Campus to be recognized by U.S. News & World Report’s ranking of best graduate programs. While we are excited about this recognition, it simply reaffirms what we already know about our program and its impact on our community.

This issue highlights that impact by discussing the work of our excellent faculty, caring community partners, and passionate students. In Program Evaluation, our capstone class, these three groups come together each semester to complete evaluations for local public agencies and nonprofits. This spring semester, one group of students worked with Aiken County's Emergency Management Department by helping officials construct a succession plan to ensure continued service of the county's informational technology during an emergency. Students also helped the MPA program by surveying our stakeholders to learn their viewpoints about the program's current mission statement. The newsletter also includes profiles of our alumni. For instance, we talked with Todd Glover, City Administrator of North Augusta, South Carolina, about his experience guiding the city’s large mix-use development project that includes a minor league baseball stadium, a hotel, apartments, and restaurants. Lastly, we provide an update of the research and community outreach being done by our faculty, who are recognized nationally in their areas of expertise.

As summer starts and we end another academic year, it is bittersweet that we recognize the retirement of Dr. Saundra Ribando, who is the longest serving director of the MPA program and still a huge part of our work. I hope you enjoy this issue of The Public Servant, and be on the lookout for more updates in the future. As always, please note that our successes are only possible because of the continued support from our students, alumni, and community partners. I look forward to working together on our shared mission of transforming careers and communities.

Please keep in touch!
Will Hatcher, PhD

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Adam Mestres is a double Alumnus from Augusta University. He earned his MPA (10) and BA in Political Science (08) and is this year’s Pamplin Young Alumni Award recipient. Currently, Adam is the County Manager of Morgan County. Additionally, he serves as a member on the ICMA Government Affairs Policy Committee and NACOG Justice and Public Safety Committee, and on a number of state and county wide committees. Prior to becoming County Manager in Morgan County, Adam served as County Administrator to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners following his graduation from the MPA program.

How has Augusta University MPA impacted you?

The MPA program at AU not only benefited my career, it changed my whole way of thinking about the future. As a result of my MPA, I was able to immediately secure an upper-level management job in local government. My MPA, coupled with my years of working experience prior to graduation, allowed me to quickly move to the highest appointed position in local government – County Administrator.

Challenges?

Time management. I was admitted as a non-traditional student (having entered college 10 years after graduation from high school), was married, and worked full-time. It was tough to find the right balance of work, school, and home-life. There were many times where I would spend my weekends at the media center sitting at a cubical, usually the only one in the room, working on one of many long papers that were due the following week. It did require a commitment, but it was a commitment I was willing to make.

Any Advice?

Be committed, get involved, and hold your head high. The MPA program is not a “cake-walk”! It requires time and you must take the program seriously in order to achieve your end-goal of graduation and meaningful job placement. Have time to get involved — join the student chapter of ICMA, get involved in GCCMA, attend meetings, present your research, most importantly talk to people and let them know about who you are and what you plan to do after earning your MPA. Finally, hold your head high! The program is meant to challenge you on every level. There will be days that you feel you have failed, but just remember why you embarked on the MPA journey. Upon graduation, you may not get job placement immediately; it’s okay! Stay involved, keep meeting people, put yourself out there, and your day will come sooner than you think.

How has the program benefited your career?

The coursework in my particular track allowed me to immerse myself in all issues within local government from organizational theory, to public budgeting, to emergency management...the list goes on. However, one of the biggest benefits is the fact that I learned how to more effectively communicate and network through presenting at various events/conferences and meetings.

MPA Alumni Profile

Adam Mestres, MPA
MPA Alumni Profile
Todd Glover, MPA

Alumnus Todd Glover, a graduate of our program’s first class, in 1998, is the City Administrator for North Augusta, SC. After graduating from our program, Todd became the Director of Managed Services for Columbia County. His career continued when he became the Assistant County Administrator for Aiken county in 2018 and became City Administrator for North Augusta in 2012. We asked Todd about his experience with the MPA program and the current development projects going on in his city.

How has the Augusta University MPA impacted you?
The comradery with my fellow classmates is one that has not faded. A lot of us still keep in touch. Because we were from so many varied career tracks, it is helpful to be able to pick up the phone and call a former classmate who may have experience in an area that you do not.

Challenges?
Dr. Raymond Whiting’s constitutional law class was by far the toughest.

Any Advice?
Expose yourself to as many different programs and departments as possible. Those in the MPA field typically have to be knowledgeable in a number of different areas.

“The comradery with my fellow classmates is one that has not faded.”

How has the program benefited your career?
The MPA degree opens doors in my field. In most cases, any position of City or County Administration requires it. I would not have advanced this far in my career without it. It is tough while you are in school, but I have never regretted my time spent in the program.

What are your main goals for the Riverside Village project going forward?
To finish the construction of the remaining components is the immediate goal. Hopefully that will occur sometime in 2020. We feel that we have established Riverside Village as a destination. A longer term goal is to continue the entertainment and dining offerings to make it the premier destination in the region.

Can you talk about any connections between what you learned in your MPA studies and your successful development work?
The MPA curriculum regarding planning and urban form was the most helpful. I can remember discussing in Dr. Ralph Walker’s Urban Planning class about how density provides more tax revenue to cities rather than urban sprawl.

Riverside Village is an example of what long term vision and proper planning can become. Our council, staff, and developers all bought into the vision and worked together to see it to fruition.
MPA Students At GCCMA

Where success has no boundaries.

"I am so glad that I attended the Georgia City-County Manager Association conference this past March. It was a great opportunity to network and meet a lot of amazing people who currently serve as city or county managers. They offered great advice for navigating a career in public service and were happy to help MPA students, in particular.

After getting to know a group of people, I was presented with a job opportunity that I am currently pursuing, and I still keep in touch with the people I met there.

It was such a great experience, and I would strongly recommend students go to this conference, especially if they are interested in a career in local government. Take a friend or go alone. You will not regret it!"

- Julianne Harper

"The Georgia City-County Management Association meeting was a great event we attended in March.

Throughout the conference, I sat in different talks about new and exciting things that are happening in Georgia municipalities. I heard about Envision Athens, an organization that aims to bring the Athens community under one vision. I also heard about the film industry in Georgia and how that affects local communities.

Networking was also a huge part of the annual meeting. I got to meet all kinds of people, from city/county managers to department heads, and hear about what is happening in their community.

Overall, it was a great experience that I would highly recommend any MPA student attend, if only to learn more about what is happening in different places around our state."

- Emily Hardaway
**Town & Gown**

**MPA Program in the Press**

**The Washington Post**
Dr. Lizotte was interviewed by The Washington Post about the habitual effects of language use. Dr. Lizotte discusses how politically correct language has been shown to affect peoples' behavior and how they view others. Read the interview here: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/05/19/why-political-correctness-skeptics-so-bad-after-all/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/05/19/why-political-correctness-skeptics-so-bad-after-all/)

**WRDW**
Dr. Hatcher was interviewed by WRDW about Augusta's predicted cyber growth and its naming as a cyber capital. Watch the interview here: [https://www.wrdw.com/content/news/Augusta-named-one-of-the-capitals-for-cybersecurity50571081.html](https://www.wrdw.com/content/news/Augusta-named-one-of-the-capitals-for-cybersecurity50571081.html)

**The Augusta Chronicle**
Dr. Hatcher was interviewed about Special Project Local Option Sales Taxes (SPLOST), the voting process, and which SPLOST are currently up for vote. Read the article here: [https://www.augustachronicle.com/news/2019/04/16/sales-taxes-keep-augusta-area-government-projects-moving/](https://www.augustachronicle.com/news/2019/04/16/sales-taxes-keep-augusta-area-government-projects-moving/)

**Business Insider**
Dr. Lizotte was interviewed about what female candidates running for president in 2020 can expect from the media and political opinion. Read the article here: [https://www.businessinsider.com/what-female-presidential-candidates-expect-2019-17?r=US&IR=T&fbclid=IwAR1-IKeC_FPAKzhr-CFH5ouXzEdf5eaFapNHD9ry72ZdLMnTecUYSNV0cHw](https://www.businessinsider.com/what-female-presidential-candidates-expect-2019-17?r=US&IR=T&fbclid=IwAR1-IKeC_FPAKzhr-CFH5ouXzEdf5eaFapNHD9ry72ZdLMnTecUYSNV0cHw)

**Vox**
Dr. Lizotte was interviewed by Vox about her research findings on gender gap and political opinion. Dr. Lizotte explained why it is interesting that there is little to no gender gap on abortion. Read the article here: [https://www.vox.com/2019/5/20/18625644/abortion-gender-gap-public-opinion](https://www.vox.com/2019/5/20/18625644/abortion-gender-gap-public-opinion)

**Spring Town & Gown**
This spring, our guest speaker was Dr. Laura Meadows, the Director of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia. Dr. Meadows' expertise is in government administration and management, community and economic development, and government training. Prior to the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, Dr. Meadows served as the Associate VP for Economic Development for the University of Georgia; the Assistant Secretary of State for The Office of the Secretary of State, the Commissioner for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and the Executive Director of The OneGeorgia Authority, the State Director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Program, and the Legislative Director of the Georgia Farm Bureau. Dr. Meadows led the audience through her extensive career in public service, explaining what she felt were her greatest challenges and rewards from her many years of experience. She encouraged all the students and professionals in the room to remember what they can learn from challenges. Sometimes, they can be the best thing to happen in your career. Today, working at the Carl Vincent Institute, Dr. Meadows gets to combine her experience working for government in various positions and the research they provide to assist public servants in providing better services.

Dr. Meadows said she was drawn to the Master of Public Administration Program because it was the most accessible master’s program to her at the time. However, she stuck with the degree and fell in love with public service because of the course material. Since graduating, the MPA has helped her throughout her career. For advice, Dr. Meadows offered that the ability to shift, move, and adapt to the environment in which you are is key in public service. She is passionately committed to public service and very interested to see what the future public servants in the audience would accomplish over their own careers.

**E-Governance Training Modules**
Augusta University’s MPA program is dedicated to providing innovative training to nonprofits and public agencies in the state of Georgia. As part of this effort, and through a generous grant from Augusta University Cyber Institute, the MPA program has developed an online training program focusing on e-government and cybersecurity training. The program is provided through the Instruction Canvas learning management system. The modules provide an overview of e-government, social media for public agencies, and cybersecurity. If you’re interested in completing the training modules, please contact Dr. William Hatcher at whatcher@augusta.edu.
This semester, our faculty continued to produce impactful research and to serve our community. Dr. Melissa Bemiller was awarded $263,825 to study non-accidental childhood trauma. The grant is the largest one awarded to faculty throughout the history of our program. The research will help children in the Augusta community. Dr. Allison Foley continues her meaningful work to the Augusta community through serving as the internship coordinator for the Department of Social Sciences and the Director of the Center for Social Science Research. Under her leadership, the Center of Social Science Research recently started a fellowship program to support faculty in their research efforts. Dr. Martha Ginn completed her excellent service as Pamplin College’s Associate Dean to return to her passion of teaching. In our MPA program, she will teach PADM 6050: Constitutional and Administrative Law in Fall 2019. Recently, Dr. Ginn published articles in Global Policy and European Political Science. Dr. Augustine Hammond, along with Dr. Craig Albert, published an article in the Journal of Public Science Education on the experiential learning benefits of the university’s Model United Nations simulation. Dr. William Hatcher published articles this past semester in the Journal of Mental Health, Teaching Public Administration, the Journal of Public Affairs Education, and Public Integrity. In addition to his work as MPA Director, Dr. Hatcher continues to serve as Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Public Affairs Education and is the Chair of Small MPA Programs Council of the Network of School of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), which is the accrediting body of public affairs programs. Dr. John Hesien was recently recognized as the “Reserve Faculty of the Quarter” at the National Intelligence University. Currently, he is working with Drs. Hatcher and Meares on a nationwide survey of the cybersecurity policies and practices of municipalities. Dr. Mary-Kate Lizotte continues to produce impactful research in areas of gender and politics. Recently, her work has been published in the Journal of Women, Politics, & Policy and the Journal of Mental Health. Her research has been recognized throughout the nation. For example, she has been interviewed in recent months by the Washington Post, Business Insider, Washington Examiner, Fatherly, and Vox. She also presented her research at the Southern Political Science Association’s annual meeting, and was invited to speak on two panels at the “2019 John Breaux Symposium: Politicking While Female” at the LSU Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs. Additionally, she was awarded one of the Center for Social Science Research’s inaugural fellowships this upcoming academic year. Dr. Wesley Meares recently had two big life events. First, he will be tenured this upcoming August. Second, and more importantly, he and his wife welcomed their second child, Logan, to their family. Recently, Dr. Meares was published in Housing and Society and the Journal of Mental Health.

Recent MPA Research:


PADM 6750: Program Evaluation

This semester, we had 22 students in the PADM 6750: Program Evaluation course. The course capstone projects evaluated the mission statement for the Master of Public Administration Program at Augusta University and the Continuity of Operations Plan for Aiken County. We spoke with a few of them about their projects.

MPA program mission statement:
To measure the success of any academic program, a hierarchy of visions, strategies, and statements must be implemented and followed to ensure continuity and unity in accomplishing a goal. A mission statement is a way to describe strategies used to accomplish the program’s vision. Our evaluation report provided the outcome of an analysis of Augusta University’s Master of Public Administration (MPA) mission statement. The recommendations are as follows:

- The MPA mission statement should be made easier to find on the program website.
- The MPA mission statement should include clear articulation of career goals.
- The MPA mission statement should be written to include the words “diversity and inclusion.”

“Even though our survey participants were selected as part of particular groups, the response rates were low. The student response rate was positive, but it would have been encouraging to have more engagement from current MPA students. Due to the low response rate, we were limited on significant suggestions for improvement. We used common responses from text-box answers to expand the analysis.”

“The MPA Mission Statement Evaluation project was a challenge, as we actively applied principles from the MPA program while dealing with real-world obstacles such as timelines, communications, and varying expectations. Working within a group, often in a somewhat virtual environment, was a challenge, but necessary with differing work schedules and commitments. We had to work through these obstacles just as practitioners might do on a daily basis.”

- Wade Caldwell & Patsy Davis

COOP—Aiken County
While Aiken County does have an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and remains prepared for and aware of any emergency events, there is a continuous threat of possible operations failure due to one of these emergencies. Therefore, it is imperative that the county have a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) in addition to the EOP. At the request of the Director of the Aiken County Emergency Management Department, the Program Evaluation class in Augusta University’s Master of Public Administration program has created the following non-technical COOP for Aiken County’s Information Technology (IT) Department. This COOP will ensure the IT Department’s ability to perform its essential functions if a human-made or natural disaster strikes the county. This COOP will help the IT Department not only continue to operate its essential functions during the event, but also recover and restore its normal operations following the disaster. In addition to providing the COOP, we recommend the county consider the following:

- Creation of a COOP for each government unit within the county.
- Updating the COOP annually.
- Maintaining a record of changes to the COOP.
- Purchasing a backup generator for all locations.
- Conducting an analysis of all servers and ranking them in order of importance.
- Purchasing a third facility with full IT capabilities, and
- Purchasing backup IT equipment.

The best part of this project was our team. This is my first success story from a group project in college. Usually, it tends to be one or two people doing all of the work, but that was not the case here. Every single team member contributed and gave this project their all. Everyone was willing to help each other, and everything
PADM 6700 cont.

went so smoothly. At times, I thought it was too good to be true, but it wasn’t! Lastly, we could not have asked for a better team leader in Arthur.

- Megan Drake

The project was a chance to participate in a critical project for Aiken’s future safety and continuity. The major challenge was balancing the final product to meet stakeholder expectations while also not allowing ourselves to be distracted by each demand.

- Deonte Screven

More hands make for lighter work, and this was certainly the case for our group as we had lighter, happier work with a group as fantastic as ours. We all learned collaboration and good feedback skills through our discussions led by our effective group leader, Arthur. By each of us utilizing our skills, we had a mostly stress-free experience as each of our members were accountable and responsible. It was a great note to end on as I graduated.

- Leslie Dodson

For starters, I could not have asked to be part of a better team. Every single person in our team did what they were supposed to do and did it on time. We worked really well together and made a challenging project easy and enjoyable. Working with our clients from the Emergency Management and IT Departments in Aiken County was also a great experience and great way to learn by doing.

- Arthur Takahashi

Dr. Saundra Ribando

After over 20 years of service to the MPA program and Augusta University, Dr. Ribando retired this past May. She will be deeply missed. During her tenure, Dr. Saundra Ribando made a difference and bettered our program, university, and the Augusta community. Below are just a few examples of her many achievements.

- Being the longest serving director of our MPA program.
- Guiding the program during its initial NASPAA accreditation in 2008 and helping secure reaccreditation in 2016.
- Publishing over 20 impactful articles.
- Conducting numerous community research projects that helped improve local governments and nonprofits in the CSRA.
- Teaching hundreds of undergraduate and MPA students.

Dr. Ribando’s former students are using her lessons to manage nonprofits, cities and counties, and other public agencies, and, in turn, making a difference in their communities.

We hope Dr. Ribando will enjoy her well-deserved retirement!

MPA students at the Spring Commencement. Left to Right, Top to Bottom: Kasey LaFrance, Jermaine Evans, Aaron Hutton, Marcus Pajer, Laura Lewis, Julianne Harper, Jaime Killough, Karli Stone, Karleigh King, and Kait Fruecht.

DID WE MISS SOMETHING?

Any content you wished to see in the newsletter? Stuff you would like to hear more about? We love feedback and updates about your lives.

SHARE WITH US! MPA_PROGRAM@AUGUSTA.EDU
You can support your MPA program by pledging your donation to the:

Social Sciences Discretionary fund (291120)

Dr. Ralph Walker Scholarship Endowment (392000)

MPA Program Discretionary fund (291160)

Dr. Gwen Wood Book Scholarship (291030)

Donations help us continue our excellent work of educating public servants. As a donor, you determine where your gift goes. You can pledge your donation by going to the following website: http://giving.augusta.edu/

Questions?

Feel free to contact our Department about our MPA program, or its community involvement.

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