

The PA Nexus

Northern Kentucky University
Master Of Public Administration

A Welcome Note: from the Chair

Dear MPA Students,
Alumni, and Community
Partners,

It is an exciting time in the Master of Public Administration program and the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice at NKU! This fall we welcomed three new faculty to our department and we're currently searching for another Criminal Justice and MPA professor! Additionally, the MPA faculty continue to be engaged in new program initiatives and curriculum revisions; these efforts are an extension of your feedback, as well as comments from agencies and organizations within our region.

As a new member of the fac-



ulty, I continue to be amazed at the student and alumni support for our MPA Program and MPA Alumni Club. Thank you!

Please welcome our new MPA Coordinator, Ms. Beth DeVantier. Beth earned an MPA (May 07) from NKU

and offers a substantial amount of personal as well as professional experience to our program. We look forward to having her work with you and our community partners as a representative of *your* MPA Program.

Enjoy this issue of the MPA Newsletter! I look forward to meeting you and please, feel free to contact me at kunselmanj1@nku.edu or at 859-572-1383. Our best wishes to you and thank you, again, for being such wonderful ambassadors of the Master of Public Administration Program at Northern Kentucky University.

Cordially,

*Julie C. Kunselman, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Chair
Department of Political Science
and Criminal Justice*

SPRING 2008

Welcome Once Again!

It is with great pleasure that we present the annual edition of the PA Nexus. Once again, this newsletter is made possible through the support of the MPA faculty, staff, our departmental chair, and the contributors.

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Director's Corner

-Dr. Shamima Ahmed

At the recent National Association for School of Public Affairs & Administration annual conference in Seattle, one of the keynote speakers emphasized the public service dimension of the PA community's identity and urged us to celebrate and take pride on that distinctiveness. As I am writing this piece, I ask myself this question: what do we do, as a group, to maintain our distinct identity? With pride and satisfaction, I say, "we are constantly engaged in public service." The MPA faculty are very engaged and dedicated in their public service mission as you will find under "Faculty Updates" in this edition. Students in several MPA classes have made valuable contributions to different organizations

and the community. Our alums are now everywhere in all different governmental and nonprofit organizations. Last semester, in my capstone class, I invited three speakers – all three highly accomplished in their career. Later on, I realized that they all graduated from our MPA program. It is getting difficult ... to find highly accomplished practitioners in this metropolitan region who are not our alums!

I want to report some of the major developments in our program. We now have a separate **MPA Foundation Account**. The account started with a recent policy that the MPA faculty adopted to request donations from agencies for services that we provide them through faculty and student pro-

jects. Our plan is to use this account to provide support to different student activities (i.e. attending conferences, club activities, etc). This semester, the faculty have worked together to propose some major curriculum revisions to our MPA program. Some of the key changes include: (1) adding a foundation course to our core curriculum; (2) developing two courses from our existing Research Methods (PAD 615) course: Research Methods will cover both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies,

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Faculty Updates

Dr. Julie Olberding

Dr. Olberding presented a paper that she co-authored with Dr. Ahmed at the 2007 Annual Conference of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) in Washington, D.C. A version of this paper - entitled "Can Student Philanthropy Help to Address the Current Nonprofit 'Identity Crisis'? A Case Study of a Multiyear, Multidisciplinary Project at Northern Kentucky University" - was accepted by the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* for publication. Dr. Olberding continues to engage her classes in student philanthropy and service learning. Her Resource Acquisition class in Spring 2007 was part of a pilot project for a new approach to student philanthropy in which students work with Citigroup to review real grant proposals and make funding recommendations to its board. Dr. Olberding was awarded a Summer Fellowship to support her research.



Dr. Julie B. Raines

Dr. Raines' dissertation has been accepted for publication as a book with Jones and Bartlett Publishers - Titled, Fostering Integrity in Police Agencies: Transforming Police Attitudes Towards Peer Misconduct. Dr. Raines presented an article, "EI AI Passenger Profiling Revealed", at the Midwest Political Science Conference in Chicago this past April during a session entitled "International Security and Human Rights." In addition, Dr. Raines has written several grant proposals and two grant pre-proposals this year, and some of these were awarded funding.

*"... for the first time
anywhere in writing
EJ AI security
procedures which are
normally guarded
as secret..."*

Dr. Hongmei Wang

Hongmei Wang, an assistant professor in the Department of Computer Science, started with NKU in 2007. Her teaching focuses on Geographical Information Systems (GIS); She is developing several new GIS courses, which includes Spatial Database and GIS Programming Basics. Dr. Wang brings 10 years of research experience related to GIS development and applications to the program. Her research focuses mainly on GIS, including GIS interface development, context-modeling and uncertainties handling inhuman-GIS communication, spatial analysis using GIS, system evaluation, and applications of GIS and Remote Sensing techniques in various domains. Dr. Wang teaches the MPA GIS courses.



Dr. Shamima Ahmed



Dr. Ahmed presented a paper titled, *Merit Pay in an Unionized Setting: Lessons Learned*, at the SouthEastern Conference for Public Administration. Her co-author is John Downs. John graduated from the MPA program in Spring 07. Dr. Ahmed participated as a moderator at NKU's Asian Summit held this past summer. She is the current faculty advisor for the MPA Student Club.

(Director's Corner— Continued from pg 1)

and Data Analysis will cover both quantitative and qualitative data; (3) developing four concentrations on: nonprofit management, homeland security, metropolitan governance, and general public management. Students will choose one of the concentrations. We are confident that these curriculum revisions will make our program stronger and will prepare our students better to serve the changing needs of public service.

The aim of this newsletter is to maintain a connection with all our stakeholders and to keep all of you informed of the activities within the Program. I hope we have succeeded on that, and that you enjoy this issue of the *PA Nexus*. Thanks for all your support for our program!

Experience From the “Real World”: Alumni Stories

Alum becomes new MPA coordinator

With almost 30 years between degrees, Beth DeVantier (MPA 2007) has taken a variety of paths in her career.

Armed with her BS degree in Journalism Education from Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, in 1978, she worked for several small newspapers before moving into the field of education.

Teaching had always been her dream and she spent 13 years teaching journalism and leadership at Culver Military Academy and Culver Girls Academy, a private boarding school in northern Indiana.

For the past eight years, the native Hoosier has worked at NKU as a prospect researcher in University Development and Advancement Services.

“Moving from being a MPA student to MPA coordinator, I hope my perspective and experience will be an asset to students now and in the future. After all, I can say—been there, done that, and you can too!”

- Beth DeVantier,
MPA Coordinator



Beth's experience as a former MPA student gives her an edge as an adviser to students currently seeking their MPA degrees at NKU.



Life After the MPA Program

By Ginger Cumbee (2006 alum)

Ms. Cumbee has had the unique opportunity to assist in the establishment of Kids Count Inc. as a non profit, including applying for 501c(3) status for the organization. Kids Count Inc. contracts therapists trained in Developmental Intervention, Speech, Physical, and Occupational Therapy and Primary Service Coordination to perform Early Intervention Services with the 0-3 year population in Boone, Campbell, Kenton, Grant and Pendleton counties; through Kentucky's First Steps Program. Kids Count Inc. is recognized by the State of Kentucky as an Accredited Training Organization that serves preschool, daycare and Montessori school teachers throughout Northern Kentucky through monthly training seminars and conferences. The goal of Kids Count is to tailor training to the various learning styles and levels of experience of the participants. “We offer a variety of information on multiple levels, using various learning techniques, so every participant gains valuable information to take back to their centers”.

Kids Count Inc. is growing. The Early Intervention Therapy Program is currently training and certifying new therapists to make it possible to serve more children and families in Northern Kentucky. The Daycare/Preschool Training Program is expanding into Southern Ohio/Cincinnati by the end of 2007. In mid 2008 the organization plans to launch Consultative Daycare/Preschool Training Program. This new program is a holistic approach to training. The program is focused on individual preschools, daycare centers and Montessori schools. The purpose is to evaluate issues unique to each individual setting; to develop effective plans that address the identified concerns and to train the centers to incorporate more effective approaches into their preschool/daycare/Montessori settings.

Ginger Cumbee now works as the Development Director for Kids Count Inc.

“I am blessed to be working with such a mission driven organization. I would not be in my current position had it not been for the encouraging, challenging and knowledgeable professors I was inspired by in the MPA program. Thank you for all of the faith and motivation each of you instilled in me as I worked and studied in the program, it was truly a life changing experience!” - G. Cumbee

Have anything you would like to share with the Program? Want to comment on this issue of the newsletter? Contact us! Let us know what you have been up to and where you are in your career! Have a story idea or want to impart some advice for the current students or other alum? Send it in! As always, this is your program, help keep it that way by staying in touch.

Your feedback is always important to us, so don't be shy!

Broadening the Learning Environment: Student Experiences

Elishia Chamberlain: Ethics and Leadership Conference

On April 24, 2007 Elishia Chamberlain and Travis Crawford (MPA alum, 2007) attended the Third Ethical Leadership Institute Conference held at the Lexington Center in Lexington, KY.

The purpose of this conference was to understand the impact of ethics and values on an organization. The conference was designed to not only educate, but generate ideas on ethical best-practices. Some of the nation's top businesses were represented at the conference with speakers from such companies as Toyota, Starbucks, Lexmark, and UPS.

Attendees were invited to hear a variety of

speakers who shared in their company's experiences and methodologies with business ethics. Several workshops and forums provided for an atmosphere of openness and discussion. Roundtable discussions occurred at intervals throughout the day where graduate students, field experts, educators, and business leaders generated solutions to ethical questions and scenarios.

"During the course of this conference I felt confident to discuss my thoughts on ethical business practices. The MPA program has helped to prepare me for the many emerging ethical dilemmas facing the world of business



whether it is for profit, non profit, and/or government. I also feel that NKU was wise in choosing two MPA students to represent the university as well as MBA students. There were only a handful of students representing the non profit/government sector, and I feel that our perspective on issues was considered a value."

Justin Otto: ASPA National Conference, D.C.

Attending the ASPA convention became attractive to Justin because of the 2007 theme: *Capitalizing on Collaboration*. Justin has always held an interest in homeland security and disaster management and this past year ASPA was particularly concerned with the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina. Large portions of the sessions were devoted to the collaboration of services: public, private, and non-profit in the event of a natural disaster. A highlight of the conference was a speaker discussing a journal article he had written, which Justin had

picked to write a paper about earlier in the semester.

The conference schedule began each day

"I benefited greatly through the knowledge I received at the convention and the resources I took home with me. I strongly recommend becoming a member of ASPA and attending the convention in 2008".

with 90-minute sessions starting at 8:00 a.m. and lasting until 4:30 p.m. The sessions were divided into sections of five professors and specialists who would present their articles of study to the audience. One session that stood out particularly was called *Post-Katrina Changes in the U.S. Emergency Management System*. After 4:30 p.m. each night there were events held for the attendees specifically geared toward networking.



Students, alumni, and faculty had the opportunity to catch up with each other during the Fall Reception on the 29th of October, 2007. Those in attendance enjoyed the chance to develop community and networking with others.

Bridging Theory and Practice

Mentoring Project in Local Government Management

Last spring, Dr. Fred Rhyhart's Local Government Management course (PAD 675) included an experiential component using area local government managers. Each student in the class was assigned a local government manager as a mentor. Students were required to: (1) shadow his or her mentor through a day, (2) attend a local council meeting, and (3) interview the mentor. Melissa Williams (Director of Administration, Campbell County Fiscal Court, and a member of the MPA External Advisory Board) assisted Dr. Rhyhart with this project. At the end of the semester, Dr. Rhyhart sent a survey to all the mentors asking for their feedback on this course component. The majority reported great success and all mentors agreed that they would participate again. Due to the great success, this project will be incorporated in future offerings of this course.

Student Philanthropy Drives the Lessons Home

- Sonya Turner Thielmann

Those who write grants and fundraise dream of one day being on the other side. Imagine having thousands of dollars to give away and the chance to choose the best causes to support! Students in Resource Acquisition and Management got to do just that last spring, with support from the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project. The assignment? To read through a stack of grant applications that had been sent to the Citigroup Foundation and find one or two to recommend for funding.

As the students stared at the thick proposals, suddenly the reason for all those grant writing tips imparted in class became crystal clear. Tip No. 1 – Be concise. Tip No. 2 – Be clear. Most importantly, do not put the grant reader to sleep. The class learned that it is hard to evaluate grants without clear guidelines. Every cause was worthy – the only way to choose was to evaluate which aligned most closely with Citigroup's priorities.

After some debate, the class chose two proposals. Students Barry Thiel and Sonya Turner Thielmann presented the choices to the Citigroup committee. Although Citigroup chose to fund neither of the class' choices, students still learned the most important lesson of all: You can have a worthy cause, write a great proposal and be aligned with a foundation's priorities and *still* not get funded. There is only so much money to go around. Students also developed more understanding for those foundation officers who wade through stacks of proposals and have to make difficult, sometimes agonizing, decisions about which to fund.



Attendees at the Fall Reception listen to a few speakers before the official meet and greet begins (Oct 2007).

Selective Capstone Projects: Class of 2007 fall

Students in Dr. Ahmed's capstone class are required to complete a major project. The project could be a major research or policy paper, action research, program evaluation, review of best practices, etc. Snapshots of some of these projects are:

Deborah Kittner conducted a survey to assess NKU faculty's background, skills, experience, activities, linkages, and interest in internationalizing the campus. She is also a member of the Campus Internationalization Task Force. Under Dr. Ahmed's guidance, she used *survey monkey* to distribute the survey to all full time faculty at NKU. The final report was submitted to the Task Force.

Travis Crawford & Bradley Sayles conducted a citizen satisfaction survey for Boone County residents. The Boone County Fiscal Court had contacted Dr. Ahmed for this project. Travis and Brad decided to complete that project as part of their capstone class requirements. Under the guidance of Jeffrey Earlywine (Boone County Administrator) and Dr. Ahmed, they designed the survey instrument and used random sampling to distribute the survey. At the end of the semester, they presented their findings to the Fiscal Court officials.

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It has been a productive year for the MPA program at NKU, and things are only getting better. From curriculum changes proposed to improve the options for students and the ability to meet the dynamic demands of public administration in the working world, to new faculty and staff members with promising insights and experience to impart to the students! Curious? We thought you would be. Look inside for the details on all that's been happening in your MPA Program at NKU, and learn what the future may hold!

- Dr. Julie Kunselman, Chair
- Dr. Shamima Ahmed, MPA Director
- Beth DeVantier, MPA Coordinator
- Emily C. Leising, Graduate Assistant



**The MPA External Advisory
Board At NKU:**

Deborah Kittner, Director Programs & Education, World's Affairs Council.

Daniel P. Groth, City Administrator, Crestview Hills.

Miles E. Wilson, Non-Profit consultant.

Shiloh Turner, Director, Health Data Improvement, Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati.

Joan Gilmore, MCSA Financial Manager.

Melanie Bates, Development Liaison, Life Center Organ Donor Network.

David Elmer, Administrator, Pierce Township, Cincinnati.

Melissa A. Williams, Director of Administration, Campbell County Fiscal Court.

Anthony P. Ficarra, Chief Optometry Service and Co-Director of the Eye Service, Veterans Affairs Medical Center Cincinnati.

**STUDENT ORGANIZATION
IS A GO!**

Due to the initiative of several enthusiastic students, we now have the MPA Student Club. The mission of this student organization is to promote the program and to build a strong sense of community among MPA students. The Club has been named PASS (Public Administration Student Society) and usually meets once a month. Keep an eye out for the many up-coming club-sponsored initiatives and activities that will be geared toward achieving the mission statement!



(above) Recipients of the Who's Who Among American Colleges and University Award at the Spring Banquet in May 2007. (right) Cheryl Floyd having a good time at the Fall Reception in October 2007.

