

# The PA Nexus

Spring 2009

**Annual Newsletter of the Master of Public Administration Program**

**From the Chair, Political Science and Criminal Justice Department**



Dr. Julie Kunselman

It was so nice to see many of you at the MPA Alumni Fall Reception in October. We enjoyed another great turnout for the reception, including a visit from Drs. Kevin Corcoran and Sam Zachary, Dean and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as Dr. Peg Griffin, Director of the Graduate School. Their attendance, as well as the attendance of all MPA faculty, recognizes your (and our) collective work in building a quality MPA Program; it is

certainly an exciting time to be part of the Public Administration program at NKU!

New research opportunities have developed with the addition of new faculty within the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice. Faculty are conducting applied research with local governments, non-profit organizations, and public agencies; they are developing regional coalitions, needs assessments, writing grants, and often including students or student philanthropy as the focus of their manuscripts. Check out what they're doing on our department website and contact them directly to get involved or seek their assistance.

Interested in a teaching assistantship? MPA graduates and current students are shar-

ing their expertise with undergraduate PA students and in weekend non-credit seminar courses. The program now offers multiple graduate assistantships, allowing MPA students interested in full-time coursework, options for teaching and research assistantships. As the department brings online a research institute in Spring 2009, research and graduate assistant opportunities will increase for Public Administration students.

As I challenged those of us attending the Fall Reception—now is the time to move out of the confinement of our current interests, boundaries, and traditional ways of thinking—and extend our approaches to defining and discovering new knowledge and new learning opportunities.

It is my pleasure to bring to you our spring 2009 MPA newsletter. Once again, this is possible due to the support of our Chair, students, alumni, faculty and many others. My special thanks go to Tricia Dorman (our graduate assistant) for the numerous hours she has put on this endeavor. We wish you a wonderful and productive year. Enjoy the newsletter!

**Dr. Shamima Ahmed,**  
**Director, MPA Program**

## A Warm Welcome to Our Newest Faculty Member

**Dr. Jayce Farmer** joined the MPA program this fall. He has over seven years of practical experience in local government finances having worked in city governments throughout Florida. His experience supplements his teaching interests, which are public budgeting and finance, organizational theory and behavior and policy studies. He earned

both his Master of Public Administration degree and Ph.D. from the Reubin O.D. Askew School of Public Administration and Policy at Florida State University.

Dr. Farmer presented a paper at the Southeastern Conference on Public Administration. He is currently serving as a planning committee member for the 2009 SECoPA



meeting, which is set to be held in Louisville. His current research explores local governments' usage of special districts.

## MPA Faculty Accomplishments

From the first class in 1990 through the December 2008 graduates, NKU has awarded 336 MPAs. Our graduates can be found in 18 states ranging from California to New York and Washington to Florida.

**Dr. Shamima Ahmed** has



published a paper titled, *E-mail Policies of the 50 States: A Content Analysis* in Public Personnel Management. She has presented papers at the American Society for Public Administration and the International Industrial Relations and Human Resources Conferences. This past spring, Dr. Ahmed participated in a NASPAA Site Visit Team to review the MPA program at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. She also was a member of the SECoPA 2008 Kline Award Committee.

of Independence's Strategic Action Committee subcommittee on Urban design and Historic Preservation Standards for Commercial Development, and the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce subcommittee on Tax Re-Alignment Policy Group.

**Dr. Julie Raines** has been working with a Regional Mental



Health Court Project that just received \$162,000 in implementation funding from the Greater Cincinnati Health Foundation. This program will divert from jail individuals who suffer from persistent mental illness.

**Dr. Julie Olberding** is currently serving as the faculty director of NKU's Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project. In addition, Dr. Olberding presented at three academic conferences during the past year,



including the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) and the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM). Also, the *International Journal of Public Administration* recently accepted her manuscript on the performance of regional partnerships for economic development in the United States.



**Dr. Hongmei Wang** made three presentations at the 15th Annual Kentucky GIS Conference. She has one paper, *GeoDialogue: A Software Agent Enabling Collaborative Dialogues between a User and a Conversational GIS*, to appear in 20th IEEE Int'l Conference on Tools with Artificial Intelligence (ICTAI 2008), Dayton, OH, USA. In addition, as a Co-PI, she received a grant from Duke Energy, Inc., named Electrical Load 3D Display and Animation.

**Dr. Ed Kwon** presented papers at the American Political Science Association and the International Studies Association. Dr. Kwon, co-advisor of the Model United Nations, also participated at two national and regional Model United Nations conferences.



**Dr. Gary Mattson** conducted a workshop for KY Planning Commissioners and Town Officials on "Community Fiscal Asset Analysis—A Tool to Determine the Appropriate Tax Incentives for Your Town's Workforce Set Skills". He presented a paper at the Western Social Science Association Conference. Dr. Mattson was appointed to serve on McGraw-Hills Publishing Urban Series Editorial Board, the City



## Student Projects Benefit Local Government and Nonprofits

Bobby Wince, Dale Edmondson and Eric Seibel conducted an internal survey for the Covington Police Department to assess officers' satisfaction on internal policies and processes. Under Dr. Ahmed's guidance, they designed and administered a survey instrument to all sworn police officers in the department. The findings of the survey were presented to the Police Chief and staff.

Emily Leising and Dr. Ahmed worked with the Campbell County Police Department to write the application for the IACP/SAIC Outstanding Achievement in Law Enforcement Volunteer Programs Award.

At the request of Karen Zerhusen, executive director of NKU Foundation, students in Dr. Ahmed's Managing Nonprofit Organizations class completed a research on Best Practices of Nonprofit Foundation Boards. The research project included an online survey for

foundation board members. The goal of the survey was to assess the NKU Foundation Board's practices and policies compared to best practices.

During the past three semesters, Dr. Olberding incorporated the "indirect giving" model of student philanthropy in her Resource Acquisition and Management classes. For this project, students reviewed and evaluated grant proposals submitted by nonprofit organizations to Citi's regional office in Florence, Kentucky, and made funding recommendations to Citi's board. Her other classes have been involved in service-learning projects, including the development of volunteer management strategies for Cinderella's Closet and WNKU.

The Summer 2008 Grants Writing Course experienced what it is like to research, prepare and submit a grant proposal when approached by Girls on the Run,

Inc (GOTR). GOTR representatives provided financial, programmatic and strategic information and each student prepared a proposal. Professor Jacqueline Potts provided guidance for the project. As she explains, "When you are able to provide a class with a real-life application of what they are learning, the students always benefit – and in this case the organization benefits as well." All proposals were submitted to GOTR with plans to submit these to two funders.

Jennifer Millisor conducted and analyzed a survey of candidates for the 2008 Covington City Commission and Mayoral races. The questionnaire was created in partnership with The Emergency Cold Shelter of Northern Kentucky Advisory Committee. The purpose was to educate the general public on each candidate's view of human services, particularly in establishing a Cold Shelter in Covington.

*100% of MPA/NPM students rate faculty knowledge of subject matter as excellent or good.*  
*80% of MPA/NPM students are full time employees. 53% work for a government agency and 31% work for a nonprofit agency.*  
*- 2006/07 Student Survey*

## Public Administration Student Society Paints the Town

Over the Summer PASS participated in their first annual service project. Give Back Cincinnati's *Paint the Town* was the perfect opportunity for PASS to give back to Northern Kentucky. PASS members Glenn Laws, Evelyn Sears, Cassie Ruhlman and Justin Otto volunteered their time painting a home in Covington, KY. A total of 47 homes in Covington were painted during the one-day event.

Last April PASS also hosted their first annual speaker series. Boone County Administrator Jeff Earlywine and attorney and former Boone County Administrator Jim Parsons made presentations. Thirty students and faculty attended the discussion focused on labor negotiations in the public sector.



**Evelyn Sears, Cassie Ruhlman and Justin Otto Paint the Town**

## Alumnus Finds Career Passion in Local Government

By Ed Meece , NKU '97  
City Manager  
Livingston, Montana



*Action, drama, and variety* may seem more descriptive of the latest *Raiders*' movie, than a career in local government. However, I have found that these terms portray the very elements that I most enjoy about a local government career.

Holding my first chief executive position at the age of 26 (CAO, Taylor Mill KY), I was placed closer to the *action*, and with a bigger role in the outcomes, far quicker than would have happened in other government or private sector positions. It's true that I learned a lot of lessons as the protagonist

of my own case studies, however, in doing so, I became a better leader, a better City Manager, and a better person.

Looking for *drama*? How about helping to bring new jobs and economic prosperity to a community? It is in situations like that, when I know that my efforts are impacting the individuals and families, with which I work, shop, live, and play – shoulder to shoulder. Likewise, personal ethics and accountability are values that have to be lived out daily to maintain the confidence and trust of those same friends and neighbors. Yes, drama can be entertaining, and local government often is. But when it results in an improvement to the quality of someone's life, it becomes rewarding.

If too much *variety* scares you, choose a specialty like Human Resources, Finance, Public Safety, or Economic Development. Just don't ever expect a 'normal' day. Inevitably, the unannounced, unexpected,

actions of one unit will start a ripple that results in a tidal wave of success (or controversy) that hits the entire organization. This challenge of blending varied operations (say, Police Departments and Water Utilities), and expectations into a single, harmonious, result will require skill, creativity, and expertise equal to anything Steven Spielberg can send to the box office. Not to mention that his movie sets are usually pretty limited. For instance, in my own career, the backdrops have recently switched from Big City (Louisville, KY) to Big Sky (Livingston, MT).

I consider it a blessing to have the opportunity to participate daily in the lives of entire communities, and share both their achievements and struggles. For me it is a passion surpassed only by faith and family. I encourage you to explore a career in local government, and see if you're ready for one of the most challenging roles you'll ever play.

92% of alumni rate their satisfaction with the MPA/NPM program as very satisfied or satisfied.

- 2007/08

Alumni Survey

## MPA/NPM Alumni Achievements

Congratulations to the following alumni on their recent career moves:

- David Moore (2006), *Fire Chief*, City of Glendale
- Rebecca Volpe (2006), *Business Relations and Recruitment Specialist*, City of Covington
- Mike Yeager (2006), *Assistant City Engineer*, City of Covington
- Allison Adams (2008), *Public Health Director*, Buffalo Trace District Health Department
- Dan Groth (1990), *City Administrator*, Independence

Alumni achievements are included in each annual newsletter. Please send your updates to: [mpa@nku.edu](mailto:mpa@nku.edu) so we can celebrate your success!

## Alumni Association Offers Social, Professional Opportunities

By **Joanne Centa, MPA '07**  
**Alumni Association President**

The MPA Alumni Association is a group that promotes professional, intellectual and social activities for the entire NKU MPA community. Beginning in 2008, the MPA Alumni Association entered a new, more active and organized phase.

New activities and organizational elements continue to focus on professional development, as well as intellectual and social pursuits. In order to facilitate more 'connectivity' among graduates and friends of the program, the NKU MPA Alumni Association has also established itself on

www.linkedin.com, "the FaceBook for professionals." Please visit, register (it takes 5 minutes or less), and join our fast-growing group.

The MPA Alumni Association has also been more sociable than ever. Two events held in the

past year included a spring cookout for all graduates, and an all-inclusive "Social" held at the York Street Cafe in February, 2008, with MPA Alum David Elmer's band "The Comforts" providing live entertainment. The social included over \$300 worth of 'door prizes' in the form of gift certificates and tickets donated by local venues.



**Alumnus TJ White and student Nick Vorholt at the Fall 2008 MPA Reception.**

Students, faculty and friends attended and all agreed this was a very fun event.

If you would like to promote an event that the MPA community would be interested in—social, charitable, professional or otherwise—please contact us and post it on LinkedIn.

## NPM Student Creates New Career Through Certificate Program

By **Barbara Bonney**

I just wanted to let you know what an impact the Certificate of Nonprofit Management program has had on my life! I began my studies in the summer of 2007, with the intention of broadening my skills as a manager of a library.

Instead, I was introduced to a whole new world. In Volunteer Management, I thought maybe it was something I'd want to pursue. Then in Resource Acquisition, I got excited about grant writing, and when Dr. Olberding brought in guest speakers, I was able to go to lunch with one later and talk more about the field of fundraising. That person got me in touch with another person and so I felt like what had started in

class was carrying over to the real world. It also thrilled me to think that at age 52, there was the potential to start another meaningful career that builds upon my experience as a Branch Manager of a public library.

Meanwhile, I spoke with a board member of the Wood Hudson Cancer Research Lab and mentioned wanting to do some grant writing. He said I should call the Executive Director. I did and ended up getting a co-op job helping them prepare grant proposals. After just a month on this job, I was asked if I wanted to do it full time. We worked out the details and I started there June 2 as Director of Communications!

Even though I'll be learning on the job, I'd have never been

prepared for even entry level without the certificate program. Now I know what I'm doing enough to tackle it and find out how my education translates to the real world. The classes I've taken have given me a great deal of information I can use for my new job. I've also learned from the other students in classes and from the openness of the professors to share solutions and suggestions.

I look forward to my final class this fall, knowing I will learn much. I wanted you to know that this program has enabled me to change my career path when I thought I was trapped forever. Freedom, choices, and knowledge were the gifts I needed. Thanks.

*56% of alumni are employed in public administration, 24% are employed in nonprofit administration and 13% are the CEO of their organization.*  
- 2007/08  
Alumni Survey

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*Making a difference in the classroom and beyond*

**Mark Your Calendar!**

**MPA Spring Banquet**

**April 29, 2009**



*Spring 2008 Graduates*

**Stay in Touch! Connect at:**

**[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)**

## **2008-2009 MPA External Advisory Board**

**Melanie Bates**

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