A Message from the Director

Although the phrase “May you live in interesting times” is probably not an ancient Chinese curse as it is purported to be, it still captures the environment that our faculty, staff, and students at the College of Charleston have been experiencing this past academic year. The College has made national headlines, and not for the reasons we would hope. Our state legislators have expressed their displeasure with the book chosen for the College’s freshman reading program (Fun Home by Alison Bechdel) by proposing to eliminate the budget for the program. Some in the legislature objected to the book’s gay characters and themes. Many faculty and staff have vigorously protested what they see as a threat to academic freedom, if not a significant challenge to our values of diversity and inclusion, and to the academy itself.

The College’s Board of Trustees then voted to hire South Carolina Lt. Governor Glenn McConnell as President, despite the fact that Mr. McConnell was not one of five candidates selected by the search committee the Board appointed. Many students, faculty and staff have strongly protested the hire, with some objecting to what they viewed as the Board succumbing to SC legislative pressure. Many who disagreed with the hire say the Board failed to follow the process it had set in place. Both the faculty senate and the undergraduate student government association have passed “No Confidence” resolutions against the Board.

Finally, assuming Mr. McConnell does become the College’s 22nd President, he will have to build bridges with the academic community and the wider community of those concerned about his selection. Local NAACP leaders have responded to the Board’s presidential choice by indicating they strongly oppose him and will work to inform potential students nationwide about what they see as Mr. McConnell’s connection to Confederate causes and support of the Confederate battle flag flying on the Statehouse grounds.

Interesting times, indeed.

No doubt there are some lessons to be learned for those preparing to lead public organizations, and I suspect some of our faculty may use these recent events as a springboard to lively class discussions about the importance of administrative process and about leadership under fire. The MPA program

By Jo Ann Ewalt,
MPA Program Director

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The College of Charleston, and its Urban and Regional Planning certificate program, is emerging as a recognized center of urban policy and planning. There is a vibrant community of students interested in urban issues, a growing regional reputation, and tremendous opportunity for future professional development amongst the students and faculty.

First, the Graduate Urban Studies club has co-sponsored with the undergraduate students a series of successful events this spring. The large attendance of students at these events signals the vibrancy of urban life here at the College. In January, the students held a well-attended presentation on sustainable urbanism, which was led by Eleni Glekas who will be teaching a course on the topic in the fall. Eleni is currently a development associate at CC&T Real Estate Services, and brings a wealth of professional and academic knowledge to the College. The students also held a presentation on "ethical places," which was led by practicing local attorney Christopher Inglese. The semester was capped with a presentation by John Knott, the visionary of the Noisette Project in North Charleston. (Noisette is a "sustainable, master-planned community.) Mr. Knott is currently the founder and CEO of CityCraft Ventures—an organization focused on improving the building industry’s environmental and health performance. The recent programming co-sponsored by the graduate students is only the latest in a long line of such active engagement and expression of intellectual and professional community here at the College of Charleston.

Second, the College of Charleston recently hosted the Winter 2014 conference of the South Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association. Planners from around the state descended upon the Stern Center Ballroom to hear presentations on topics such as ”Innovative Public Engagement” and “Eco Districts.” Several graduate students attended this local conference, and several more are traveling to the national conference which is being held in Atlanta this year. The presence of the state’s accredited planners at the conference in Stern Center created an invaluable opportunity to showcase to professionals the urban planning community that exists at the College.

Finally, the urban and regional planning certificate continues to generate interest amongst both current and prospective students. This interest attests to the program’s continued utility for adding a competitive edge to our students’ resumes in an ever-changing and accelerating job market. There are currently eleven students enrolled in the certificate program, four who will receive the certificate at this spring’s commencement, and eighteen prospective students interested in the program. To add to the program’s useful course offerings, Nick Pergakes, a senior planner at the Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments will join the program as an instructor for PUBA 617 “Urban Transportation Policy” in fall 2014. Nick has extensive experience dealing with transportation and environmental planning issues; our students will benefit from the diversity of his experiences! Please join me in welcoming him to the campus, and celebrating another great semester for the Urban and Regional Planning certificate program!
The Riley Center has been working on several exciting projects this year. Research was completed in order to compare housing affordability within cities in Charleston and also between other similar metro areas in the Southeast. The data was provided to the Lowcountry Housing Trust and the Charleston Realtor’s Association for publication in SC Biz News in order to address how Charleston will be able to handle projected population growth in the future. The research is expected to be published in late May and presented at the Lowcountry Housing Summit this June.

The Riley Center has continued to work with the Charleston Promise Neighborhood, providing data management and analysis for their continued work improving schools in Charleston. They are currently piloting a program to increase parental engagement within the Charleston County School District. Work has also continued with Mount Pleasant Water Works in conducting their monthly customer service surveys and analysis. In addition, the Riley Center is expanding their efforts with the Commission of Higher Education’s Foundation on looking influencing attitudes towards higher education in the state.

The Riley Center has also made some significant strides in working with the local food movement thanks to faculty member Olivia Thompson and her Farm-to-School grant. This project is in partnership with a number of local groups including The Green Heart Project. The goal is to bring fresh local produce into schools by certifying local farmers to sell to schools and through development of a school garden and supplemental classroom curriculum. Graduate Assistant Ali Littke-Smith has been working with the non-profit to plan their annual fundraiser, the Harvest Dinner, which will take place on May 1st. More info on the event can be found on Facebook.

The non-profit continues to expand thanks to a generous grant from Boeing Corporation. More about the Farm to School project can be found at on YouTube (featuring MPA alumnus Mary Pat Twomey).

Additional information about the Riley Center can be found at http://riley.cofc.edu.
It has been yet another busy semester for the Community Assistance Program (CAP). The CAP graduate assistants, Chris Gerwig, Julianah Marie, Caroline Herlong, and Matt Priester, have worked with nonprofits from across the Lowcountry this semester to help CAP fulfill its mission of strengthening the public and nonprofit sectors in the Charleston area. In February, the CAP graduate assistants were joined by Nick Bowman, MPA graduate assistant, to facilitate and analyze session evaluations at the South Carolina Nonprofit Association’s (SCANPO) annual Nonprofit Summit. The Summit drew nonprofit executives and representatives from across the state to Charleston for a three-day conference on important issues facing organizations today. The analysis and results of the Summit evaluations were submitted to SCANPO and will be used to continue to strengthen the planning of future Summits.

For more than 10 years, CAP has assisted with the annual board election for the Kiawah Island Community Association every spring. The process begins in early February when ballots are sent to homeowners on Kiawah and concludes with the Annual Meeting in early March. This year, our students were introduced to new voter input software. The new technology was implemented successfully and greatly increased the efficiency of the election process.

CAP staff has spent much of this semester working with East Cooper Meals on Wheels (ECMOW)—one of our local Meals on Wheels affiliates, located in the Town of Mt. Pleasant. A former MPA graduate assistant, Adrian Wieland, serves as ECMOW’s Program and Volunteer Manager and recommended our services to their board of directors and executive director, George Roberts. Specifically, ECMOW was interested in assessing its volunteer program in order to inform its strategic planning process, which is scheduled to initiate this year. ECMOW boasts an impressive volunteer base that help to carry out the heart of its mission of serving those in need. Understanding the needs, motivation, and perspective of these integral assets to the organization is, therefore, essential. ECMOW commissioned CAP staff to develop a volunteer survey designed to assess, among other things, program effectiveness, volunteer experience, and mission knowledge and achievement. Surveys were sent via mail to the more than 400 volunteers in ECMOW’s database. Analysis of these results is wrapping up currently, and we hope to have the findings presented to ECMOW’s board in mid-May. (Continued on page 8.)
MPA Public Service Resume Workshop

By Sean Bath
MPASA Professional Development Chair

This semester, the MPA Student Association (MPASA) hosted a public service resume workshop. There were two phases to this event. First, students submitted their resumes to the MPA Office. Drs. Ewalt, Key, and Stewart dedicated their time to provide a constructive critique of each student resume. Second, on Thursday April 10, MPASA hosted a panel of local professionals to review best practices on job applications.

MPASA is extremely thankful for the participation of the panelists. They included Meghan Kelly, Dan Burger, Sabrina Madore, and Sabra Jewell. They have each provided a vital service to our professional development. Meghan Kelly came to the table with at least 17 years of experience in human resources, most of it with local government. Dan Burger is currently the Director for Coastal Services at S.C. DHEC. Dan brings the state perspective, but also the manager’s perspective on framing job skills. Sabrina Madore is a current MPA student who works for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. She did an excellent job reviewing the federal application process and identifying where an applicant should focus their efforts to best effect. Sabra Jewell is the Development Office at Trident United Way. She brought great experience in nonprofits and the private sector.

The panel discussed best practices for all phases of the application process. Personally, this was the most valuable hour I have ever spent discussing the topic. There were several tips that I had never considered before, like how important it may be to name a resume file appropriately, include formal body text in an e-mail, or even the simple impact of a hand-written thank you letter. Panelists urged us to view the application process from the perspective of the human resources (HR) officer. Applicants must demonstrate the specific job qualifications advertised by the organization when hundreds of competitors will be doing the same. Resumes and cover letters must demonstrate experience with these qualifications using specific examples and metrics.

Tailoring a resume is a skill that is applicable to any industry. It’s a skill that we may not have time to think about during grad school, but we must prepare ourselves for these post-graduation job applications. We have the skills; we merely need to present it right. Our guests taught us how to do this so that we are ready to hit the ground running.

Message from MPASA President Julianah Marie

This term has been exciting for us all between the snow days and impending changes at the College of Charleston. A big thanks to everyone who came out for our happy hours and volunteer events! As we prepare for finals (and some for graduation!) the MPASA is here to enhance the student’s experience by facilitating networking and outreach opportunities.
Volunteering In The Community

By Bekah Cantwell
MPASA Volunteer Coordinator

On February 9, the Masters of Public Administration Student Association volunteered for the Masters of Environmental Studies Student Association’s annual 8K on Folly Beach. This year the proceeds benefited Water Missions International, an international nonprofit dedicated to clean water solutions, headquartered in North Charleston.

MPASA assisted with many aspects of the race: provided coffee and donuts for runners and volunteers, kept runners on the correct race course, helped with set up and break down, and aided with the silent auction. Volunteer turnout was great and made the wet, cold race day fun and smooth. And to make a great day even better, the race winner was Chris Bailey, a MPA-MES dual student who won for the second year in a row in 26 minutes and 10 seconds.

MPASA are looking forward to another great year of volunteering. If you have a special interest or just want to get involved please contact MPASA Volunteer Coordinator, Bekah Cantwell, cantwellrm@g.cofc.edu.

Pictured (left to right): MPA students Aaron Holly, Sean Bath, Bekah Cantwell, Melanie Campos, Alex Braud, and Megan Shiverdecker.
has also been touched by these events. In our site visit for reaccreditation, our visitors reflected on the standards we are required to uphold in the area of diversity and a climate of inclusion. In their official report, which was otherwise very positive, they noted that the College’s history and legacy in this area has the potential to hurt MPA student diversity. In our response, we acknowledged that we share the site visitors’ concern, but remain fully committed to our goal of enhancing diversity and maintaining an inclusive and welcoming learning environment. We will receive official notification about reaccreditation later this summer. Our thanks to all the students, alumni, Advisory Board members, and faculty who met with the site visitors and represented the program.

This spring we celebrate the graduation of eleven MPA students, including three students in the dual MPA-MES program. In addition, nine students have earned the right through their highest academic performance to induction in the Public Administration Honor Society, Pi Alpha Alpha. We are proud of these inductees and of all our graduating students. In spite of the turmoil of these “interesting times,” or maybe because of it, the MPA program faculty believe that our mission of public service is more important than ever.
(Continued from page 4)

Also this semester, CAP staff has assisted the MPA Program with its analysis of Point-in-Time Homelessness data from the Lowcountry Homeless Coalition (LHC). Point-in-Time (PIT) Counts are one-night counts of both sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations. The one-night counts are conducted by Continuums of Care nationwide, and occur during the last week in January of each year. CAP graduate assistants joined MPA staff in analyzing the results from the PIT count conducted by LHC on the night of January 24, 2013. The LHC’s service area includes Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton, and Jasper counties. This analysis is currently being developed into an annual report that LHC staff will share with local representatives, nonprofit organizations, and public stakeholders in order to increase understanding of the extent and needs of the homeless population in the Lowcountry.

Finally, as we look toward the Summer and Fall terms, we are excited to be providing assistance to Charleston Waterkeeper with its annual gala, the Water Ball, which will be held May 22. Charleston Waterkeeper is a nonprofit organization that addresses water quality issues in coastal areas, and the Water Ball is its largest annual fundraising event.

If you work or volunteer for a local government or nonprofit organization that could use our assistance, please contact us at keyj@cofc.edu or call the MPA office at 843-953-6690.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

When our students present research at conferences their participation is funded in part through the MPA program’s Foundation Account. If you are interested in donating to this account you can make a contribution either online, by phone, or through the mail. Checks should be made out to the College of Charleston Foundation, with MPA Fund (R-251) noted in the memo line. Please mail your contribution to the MPA Program at 66 George Street, Charleston, SC 29424. Online contributions can be made by going to College of Charleston - Giving. Underneath the “Designation” field select “Other” and specify the MPA fund (R-251) in the “Other” box. In addition, a credit card donation can be made over the phone by contacting the Foundation Office at 843-953-3130. Again, please be sure to let them know that your contribution is for the MPA fund. Thank you for your continued support!
Congratulations to all of our spring graduates!

Melanie Campos (MPA/MES Dual Program)
  Angela Chvarak
  Morgan Furr
  Christopher Gerwig
  Madison Kingery
  James Kingston
  Alison Litke-Smith
  Sabrina Madore
  James Bradley Terrell (MPA/MES Dual Program)
  Rebecca Varner
  Lina Wayman