

# Master of Health Administration

## Transitions



Welcome to the Fall 2011 edition of the UNC Charlotte MHA Program newsletter!

As many of you learned over the summer, Dr. Sarah Laditka transitioned back to the faculty to devote more time to her research and

mentoring of students. Dr. Laditka led the MHA program through its successful implementation of the St. Louis University Competency Model and CAHME reaccreditation, among many other efforts that strengthened the MHA program and ensured its continued success.

In July of this year, I added the duties of MHA coordinator to my ongoing responsibility for the department's CEPH (Council on Accreditation for Public Health) accredited MSPH program.

My undergraduate training was in biology (with a pre-med focus) followed by a master's degree in emergency health services with an emphasis on administration, policy & planning. After working at the National Study Center for Trauma and EMS (affiliated with the University of Maryland's Shock Trauma system), I moved to the MPH Program Office at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. At Hopkins I helped

facilitate the strategic reassessment and competency-based refinement of the MPH curriculum while pursuing my DrPH in health services research and evaluation on a part-time basis.

I joined UNC Charlotte as MSPH Coordinator in 2005. I have worked closely with Dr. Laditka in aligning our programs' respective approaches to accreditation and assessment mandates and related policies and procedures. My willingness to lead two related yet distinct programs was predicated upon the solid foundation that Dr. Laditka had established (the program is now ranked among *US News & World Report's* top 50 MHA programs) and the addition of Melissa Smith as MHA Administrator (see below).

As you will read in this issue, our MHA program continues to evolve and our students and alumni continue to impress and amaze. We need your support and engagement to continue this trajectory of excellence. Please get connected and stay involved.

Cheers,



Michael E. Thompson, MS, DrPH  
Associate Professor  
Coordinator, Graduate Public Health Programs

## Welcoming Melissa Smith, MHA Administrator

By Kelsey McEvoy



The department welcomed Melissa Smith, MSPH, as the new part-time MHA Program Administrator. Melissa, still continuing in her role as a part-time faculty member, has been working with the MHA program since August and is enjoying the experience.

Melissa, a UNC Charlotte alumna twice over, has a great connection to the university and the College of Health and Human Services. She graduated in 2008 with a BA in psychology and a minor in interdisciplinary health studies (now public

health). Melissa enjoyed her experience so much that she decided to pursue a graduate degree in public health in order to apply what she had learned about psychology to population health issues. With her MSPH, Melissa began delivering undergraduate health promotion classes on a part-time basis. Her new role expanded her contributions to include supporting all facets of MHA Program operations.

Melissa finds it rewarding to work with students who are considering or have already begun this same path to improvement. She stated, "I love UNC Charlotte and I feel that my life was greatly improved by the undergraduate and graduate education I received."

## Summer Interns



Devonda Gomez

*"During the summer of 2011, I was fortunate to complete my internship with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council. I worked directly with the Executive Board on projects directing the strategic plan and creating sustainability. My Preceptor provided me with support, encouraged creative thinking, and mentored me throughout."*

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## Summer Interns



Nancy Vendley

*“Amazing and valuable are words that describe my internship at CHS over the summer. Spending time with administrators was very informative, but working next to providers was life altering! My Friday in the Emergency Room was exhausting but exhilarating as I watched teams of providers help several patients with gunshot wounds. I was pleased to learn days later, that they all survived.”*

## AUPHA Foster G. McGaw Scholarship Recipients

By Philip Mullinax

Each year the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) awards the Foster G McGaw Scholarship to outstanding first year health management students who are nominated by their university. Foster G. McGaw established the scholarship through an endowment fund in 1975. McGaw was the founder of the American Hospital Supply Corporation and recognized the importance of health administration education and AUPHA’s contribution to the field. The three UNC Charlotte recipients for the 2011 Foster G. McGaw Scholarship are Karina Agopian, Lindsey Caldwell, and Philip Mullinax.

Karina Agopian received her undergraduate degree in biological sciences from the University of South Carolina. Her areas of interest are practice management and hospital administration. One fun fact about Karina is she is a huge South Carolina Gamecock football fan.

Lindsey Caldwell received her undergraduate degree from UNC Wilmington in business administration with a concentration in management and leadership. Her areas of interest are healthcare

management, healthcare policy, and children’s hospital administration. Lindsey is the first person in her family to receive a bachelor’s degree and will be the first to receive a master’s degree.

Philip Mullinax received his undergraduate degree from Catawba College in recreation therapy with a minor in psychology. His areas of interest are emergency management, practice management, and organizational structure. Philip served in the Marine Corps for five years and has aspirations of returning to the military as a healthcare administrator.



Philip Mullinax, Karina Agopian, and Lindsey Caldwell receive their McGaw scholarship checks from Dr. Michael Thompson

## Remembering Dr. Robert Barber



This past spring, Dr. Robert L. Barber, a leading healthcare executive, community leader, retired US Air Force Colonel, part-time MHA faculty member, and devoted family man, had his life tragically cut short.

As an executive at Carolinas HealthCare System, Dr. Barber was known for his exceptional leadership, creativity, innovation, and integrity.

At UNC Charlotte and several other universities, Dr. Barber taught healthcare finance, but—more importantly—dedicated significant portions of his ‘free’ time to educate and mentor students.

Dr. Barber was a stalwart advocate for and friend of the UNC Charlotte MHA program, where he also served as an internship preceptor, mentor, and advisory board member. His commitment to education often led him to teach for multiple institutions in the same semester in addition to his ongoing executive responsibilities.

Throughout his life and career, Dr. Barber employed his unique talents for the betterment of Carolinas HealthCare System, the MHA program, and the community.

Dr. Barber will be missed, but his contributions to UNC Charlotte and the Charlotte community will never be forgotten.

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## The New Center City Campus

By Philip Mullinax

Situated at East Ninth and Brevard Streets, the Center City Campus is UNC Charlotte’s newest facility, offering a permanent presence in the heart of Charlotte. From the outside, views of the distinctive building are awe-inspiring. The unique cantilevered design suggests a stack of books on their side. The glass paned window walls complete the building’s frame.

The building has twelve floors with three passenger elevators and two staircases. The first three floors provide public space with the first floor containing a bagel and coffee shop, the campus bookstore, and an art gallery with a creative mural that captivates even returning visitors.



Center City mural, “Here’s Hoping It Rhymes for a Reason”

Accessible from the second and third floors are two auditoriums each with stadium seating perfect for lectures, presentations, and performances. The remaining nine floors contain a combination of classrooms and faculty offices and, on alternating floors, student lounges.



The unique architecture of the Center City building stands out in the uptown skyline

Currently the campus houses masters and doctoral level courses for the College of Education, the Belk College of Business, the College of Health and Human Services, and the College of Arts and Architecture. The building is adjacent to the blue line light rail tracks that –when extended in the near future—will provide a convenient connection to the main University city campus.

## Kickoff of the CHESO Mentoring Program

By Kelsey McEvoy

During the first CHESO meeting of the academic year, students brainstormed ways to help each other network, and promote each other’s career goals. To accomplish this, CHESO members developed a mentoring program between first year students and experienced students. The program matched those with similar experiences and career interests.

The new students have career interests ranging from practice manage-

ment to long-term care. Their mentors will help them delve further into those areas.



CHESO mentors and mentees after a night of bowling

Experienced students and alumni of the UNC Charlotte MHA program are excellent resources for newer students as they develop career paths and search for internship opportunities. The mentor program kicked off with a mentor-mentee social event at Strike City, where students bowled and bonded with their mentors.

## Summer Interns



Kelsey McEvoy

“My internship experience with Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center allowed me to understand administration in such a wide scope. I worked closely with Human Resources, Risk Management, and Patient-Family Centered Care, writing a system-wide policy on disruptive patient behavior. The experience truly enhanced my academic experience, and has led me to pursue a career that will allow me to be an advocate for patients.”

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# Summer Interns



Sharita Gathers

*"I truly enjoyed my internship at Carolina Neurosurgery and Spine Associates because I was able to observe the practical application of concepts learned in the MHA program. Also, this experience allowed me to consider other avenues of healthcare that I had been unaware of. This summer experience equipped me with valuable skills that will make me a more effective healthcare manager."*

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## Alumni Spotlight: Anna Lowe

By Philip Mullinax

Anna Lowe is a recent MHA graduate and the first MHA student from UNC Charlotte to receive a fellowship offer after graduation. A fellowship is a paid training opportunity to rotate through various departments within a healthcare organization to learn the business from the inside while maintaining the role of a constant learner.

Many organizations reward successful fellows with the offer a high-level position following the fellowship. Thus, fellowships are highly sought after and highly competitive.

Anna is completing her fellowship at the University of Utah Hospitals and Clinics (UUHC). She has completed rotations through the Pharmacy, Quality & Patient Safety department, Surgery, Information Technology Services, Medical Groups, Human Resources, and the Emergency Department.

Anna's favorite experiences so far are working with the senior leadership and learning from their different leadership styles and perspectives. She states, "They are so inspirational and diverse and they are



Anna Lowe, 2011 MHA Graduate

always pulling me into interesting meetings and welcoming my involvement."



University of Utah Hospital

Her advice to future MHA students is, "Have professors, friends, and/or the Career Center proofread all of your application materials! Do not state that you want to be CEO one day—it is not impressive to most administrators." Above all, "Every MHA student should at least consider an administrative fellowship (or residency). There is no other experience that will allow you to continue to be a "student" of health care administration, while interfacing with executives, working on projects, testing out your skills, gaining broad exposure to operations and departments, and getting paid!" We are very proud of Anna and look forward to seeing what the future holds for her.

## NCPHA Annual Education Conference

By Kelsey McEvoy

In September, Dr. Elena Platonova and MHA Program Administrator Melissa Smith represented UNC Charlotte Public Health Sciences at the North Carolina Public Health Association (NCPHA) 2011 Annual Educational Conference. They presented our newly designed and well-received display that featured student photos and program information with the central theme of 'picture yourself here.'

Charlotte Hilton University Place hosted the event. Public health professionals from all over the state of North Carolina attended the conference to discuss a range of public health and health systems administration issues.



MHA Program Administrator Melissa Smith