



OUTREACH

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MARRIOTT SCHOOL | ROMNEY INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC SERVICE & ETHICS | FALL 2019

Chiefs of the **BYU EMPA Program**

Being a police chief is a challenging position to hold, but the Romney Institute of Public Service & Ethics helped prepare Darren Paul, Chad Soffe, and Chris Autry to serve the communities they love. The skills, lessons, and experience these police chiefs gained in the EMPA program provided the tools they needed to be successful in their jobs.

As the son of a police chief, Paul grew up watching his father help the community, which inspired him to do the same. After serving as a police officer in Lehi, Utah, for eighteen years, Paul decided to pursue a master's degree and was referred to the BYU Marriott EMPA program by his city manager, who was an alum.

"Going through the program taught me how to look at issues from a different perspective," says Paul. "The professors were enthusiastic and passed along their passion for public service to their students." After graduating in 2014, Paul became the police chief in Lehi, Utah.

Like Paul, Soffe felt a pull towards public service because of a family member's example. Soffe's grandfather was the

mayor of Murray, Utah, and helped his impressionable grandson gain experiences in the community.

"I distinctly remember when the Murray Fashion Place Mall collapsed after a heavy snowfall in 1972, and my grandfather took me to the site," says Soffe. "I saw the police officers and firefighters there, and it influenced me at a young age to get involved with public service." During high school, Soffe became a police cadet, which marked the beginning of his career in public service.

With the goal of becoming a police chief in mind, Soffe recognized the need for a master's degree and enrolled in the BYU Marriott EMPA program. He graduated in 2016 and currently serves the Woods Cross, Utah, community as its police chief. "The satisfaction of helping others is the reason I have stayed in public service for thirty-one years."

Growing up in a home focused on service helped another police chief discover his love for helping the community. Whether he was at church, visiting a neighbor, or assisting a stranger, Autry felt the need to help and protect those around him.



As an undergrad at BYU, Autry took a job as a security officer at the BYU Museum of Art. In this role, Autry became aware of the BYU police department and felt the desire to enter

the police academy. "Being a police officer seemed to fit my personality," says Autry. "Although being a police officer is extremely challenging, it is one of the most noble professions."

At twenty-eight years old, Autry chose to earn a master's degree. "I knew getting an EMPA would put another arrow in my quiver and make me more marketable in the future," he says.

Autry transferred from the Midvale, Utah, precinct to the BYU police department and began taking EMPA classes at night. He continued working for BYU after graduating in 2003 and is currently the BYU police chief.

As police chiefs, Paul, Soffe, and Autry have been shaped by their experiences in the EMPA program and are committed to protecting the communities in which they serve. "I love being part of the community," says Paul. "Helping and serving others is the most rewarding aspect of my job."



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From the Associate Director



The education gained while earning an MPA degree helps public servants from many different fields improve their capacities and effectiveness. For example, this newsletter highlights three different police chiefs who have gone through our program. These

exemplary alumni are representative of the many police officers and other first responders in cities and towns across the country who perform vital services around-the-clock that help make our communities safer.

These public servants have difficult jobs that often require making split-second decisions that impact the lives of those in the communities in which they serve as well as their own lives and the lives of their families. Police officers and other first responders who care deeply about their work are modern-day heroes.

This fall I'm feeling an extra measure of gratitude for police officers, firefighters, and first responders as well as the staff that support their work. As we consider our gratitude for public servants, most of us don't have to think hard to remember a time in our own lives when we either observed or were even the direct recipients of the service these men and women perform. Accidents, fires, shootings—regardless of the situation, these individuals do all they can to help others. And while some of these

tragedies make headlines, the vast majority of this service is performed—by first responders and their support staff—behind the scenes, without recognition or honor.

As students of public administration, we are more aware than most of the organization and effort it takes to support the success of these efforts. It is valuable for us to think about—and talk about—all it takes to keep us safe and advance our national interest. In addition to the more noticeable roles of police officers and firefighters, think about those who work in food safety, water safety, air safety, infrastructure support and safety, and local, state, and federal governments.

Recently in a public meeting I heard “bashing on government” comments. I had to speak up. I hear daily of successes in government, and I both appreciate and admire our public-service professionals. I invite you to join me in remembering, thanking, and talking about the benefits citizens experience daily thanks to competent public professionals. And to each of us reading this newsletter, may we continue to increase our capacity and effectiveness in our public-service work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CJC'.

Catherine Cooper
Associate Director

Romney Institute of Public Service & Ethics

GAG TIME

BY ARIE VAN DE GRAAFF, CLASS OF '01



OUTREACH FALL 2019 ISSUE

Publisher Lori Wadsworth
Managing Editor Vicki Okerlund
Editor Kellene Ricks Adams
Graphic Designer Nina Whitehead
Student Writers Nikaela Smith and Anne Wallace

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Alumni News

Inside the Suit



The roar was deafening as Ken Driggs ran out on the field. He smiled under the mask; a familiar rush coursed through his body. Earlier that day he was just Ken, BYU Marriott MPA student, but now he is Cosmo, BYU's most beloved cougar.

In 1965, Driggs was in his second year of graduate school. He dedicated his days to developing relationships with his fellow classmates and staying on top of his difficult class load. However, as the sun went down, Driggs hid his identity as he pulled on the cougar suit and transformed into Cosmo. "It was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life because no one knew who I was," Driggs says. "I could act a little crazy without being self-conscious. It was a blast."

Driggs's experience taking on the role of Cosmo led to once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and fond memories. He clearly recalls a football game where a man brought a tame cougar into the stadium. "Student Relations thought it would be a good idea for the cougar and Cosmo to get acquainted," Driggs remembers. "I won't forget the night Cosmo met a real cougar and survived!"

Driggs also had a front-row seat to every BYU game, courtesy of the cougar suit. He remembers a particularly memorable basketball game against BYU's rival, the University of Utah. With seconds left in the game, one of the BYU players drove down the court and made a game-winning basket, putting BYU ahead by one point. "I ran to the free-throw line and wrapped my arms around one of the players,"

says Driggs. "Everyone was ecstatic."

Though being Cosmo kept him busy, Driggs made sure the MPA program was his priority. "I loved my graduate classes," Driggs says. As one of the first students in the MPA program, Driggs saw the future possibilities of working in public service. "A whole new arena was opening up for students like me," he says. Driggs graduated in 1966, the second graduating class of the MPA program.

The lessons Driggs learned from his experience as Cosmo and from the MPA program helped him feel prepared for unexpected career opportunities. After work-

ing in California for a few years, Driggs made the transition to what would become the Phoenix Valley Metro Regional Public Transit Authority. While there, he played an instrumental role in establishing public transportation throughout the Phoenix area. His MPA background helped Driggs take on the unknown world of transit by teaching him how to handle difficult situations. In 2005, after a successful career in public transportation, Driggs retired in Mesa, Arizona, and was asked to be a guest writer for *Deseret News* covering BYU sports. His time as Cosmo, coupled with his knowledge of BYU sporting events, made Driggs the perfect informant. "Writing for *Deseret News* has been a fun hobby," he says.

Driggs will never forget the opportunities Cosmo and the MPA program provided and the lasting impact his time at BYU Marriott had on his life. His experience juggling classes and making it to every sporting event made his last year at BYU unforgettable, something he isn't afraid to talk about. "Being labeled as a former Cosmo is one of the best conversation pieces," says Driggs.

FOND FAREWELLS, EXCITING HELLOS



This will be the last Romney Institute newsletter. Beginning next year, BYU Marriott's MPA program and the Romney Institute of Public Service & Ethics will be publishing an annual report. The first report is tentatively scheduled to be mailed by Fall 2020 and will include news from our 2019-2020 school year. We look forward to this new way of sharing and communicating with you.

Institute News

MPA Faculty Promotions

BYU Marriott congratulates three MPA professors as they receive promotions. The well-deserved promotions were awarded to Rob Christensen, Jeff Thompson, and Chris Silvia.

Christensen, who received continuing faculty status as well as a promotion to full professor, is enthusiastic about the direction the school is headed. “I love working for BYU Marriott. It’s been a rewarding experience to rub shoulders with incredible faculty and staff members,” says Christensen. “This promotion has given me the confidence and space to do more independent research that will contribute to the vision of the Romney Institute of Public Service & Ethics.”



Thompson was also promoted to full professor in the MPA program and hopes to continue helping BYU Marriott succeed. “I’m grateful to be part of such a wonderful school, and I am delighted to feel that what I’m doing provides value,” he says. “This promotion has made me feel a strong desire to be innovative in my research and teaching.”



Silvia was given continuing status and was promoted to associate professor. As a graduate of the BYU Marriott MPA program himself, Silvia feels at home. “I have found a supportive research cul-



ture, a teaching environment that allows me to work with students in both a professional and religious setting, and a collegial department where I feel I can make a difference,” says Silvia. “My promotion means that I get to stay and continue working with such great people.”

As professors in the BYU Marriott MPA program, Christensen, Thompson, and Silvia help their students develop unique skill sets that benefit individuals as they serve and lead in their communities and beyond.

Finding Your Calling in Life



Panelists Dale Hull (executive director at Neuroworx), Anthony Bates (director of student leadership), Kena Mathews (community services manager for City of Orem), and moderator Jeff Thompson enlighten and inspire students at Romney Institute’s “Finding Your Calling in Life” fireside, held 19 August. Find out what they had to say at <https://bit.ly/33KAKDf>.

Catherine Cooper Receives President's Appreciation Award

Catherine Cooper, associate director for the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics, is one of four administrative recipients of the 2019 President's Appreciation Award. The award was presented at BYU's annual conference on 27 August and is given to employees who demonstrate exceptional commitment to the university and the values of competency, integrity, teamwork, respect, innovation, and accountability.

Before the announcement at the university conference, the Administrative Advisory Council sent a letter to be read during a Romney Institute department meeting to inform Cooper and her colleagues of her selection.

The letter describes Cooper as "the heart of the MPA program and the lifeblood of our curriculum" and "exemplar of ministering to the one." The letter continues by saying Cooper is "truly motivated by her love for each student and her desire to see that they get the very best possible."

The multiple letters submitted to nominate Cooper for the award highlight

the unique trust she builds with each student and how deeply and personally she cares for them. One nomination stated it well: "People don't fall through the cracks in our department because Catherine is always watching out for them."

Cooper was initially shocked upon realizing the person described in the announcement was her. She looked around the room at her colleagues and began to cry with appreciation.

Cooper has been working at BYU for eighteen years as a student administrator and says she is a better person thanks to the opportunity to work with her colleagues and the students in BYU Marriott's MPA program. "An MPA degree provides students with increased confidence, competence, and connections," she says of her work. "Our goal is to meet student needs, respond with a 'yes' whenever possible, and assist students to reach the milestone of a successful graduation."

She enjoys caring for the nearly 250 students enrolled in the MPA program at any given moment and says the sweetest

part of her work at BYU has been the opportunity to receive divine help in guiding them. "The BYU MPA program is one part of an incredible collage of BYU pieces doing its part to bring light and knowledge to the sphere of public service and ethics," Cooper says.

BYU President Kevin J. Worthen perfectly expressed this sentiment during his 10 September devotional, says Cooper. "You are not here by accident," Worthen said. "You have been gathered here by God." In her almost two decades at BYU, Cooper says she has experienced the truth of Worthen's words firsthand.

"We are cogs in the BYU education wheel, but what a grand wheel to be a cog in, for we are influencing people for eternity," she says. "This wheel matters, and I'm so glad to be a part of this whole."



Refer a Friend: Get a Bag

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or MPA
program

If they submit an application by

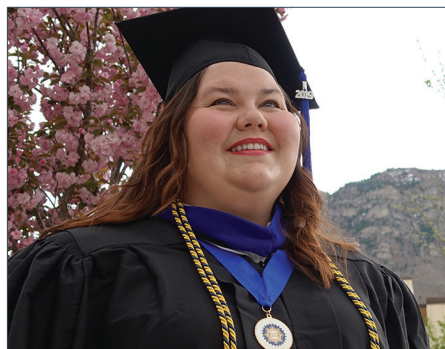
15 Jan 2020 (MPA) or **1 May 2020** (EMPA)

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Student News

Jump-Start to a PhD



Kathleen Nugent

Two BYU Marriott MPA graduates became recipients of the Rumsfeld Foundation Fellowship and received \$10,000 along with priceless networking opportunities. Kathleen Nugent from New Paltz, New York, and Megdalynn Fisher from Spanish Fork, Utah, were nominated for the fellowship by their professor, Rob Christensen, and became two of twenty Rumsfeld recipients in 2019.

The Rumsfeld Foundation Fellowship has helped these two BYU Marriott students move toward their PhD degrees. Nugent will be attending the University of Georgia to study public administration and policy with a focus in organizational theory. Fisher will be at Indiana University studying public affairs with an emphasis in health policy.

Before attending BYU Marriott, Nugent taught high school chemistry. After teaching for twelve years, she decided to get an MPA. Though leaving the classroom was a sacrifice, Nugent saw it as an opportunity to help even more students through policy change. “It was in the classroom I realized there are so many influences in a person’s life outside the educa-

tional arena,” says Nugent. “Once I decided to make the sacrifice to leave the classroom for a greater cause, my view on what I could accomplish got bigger and bigger.”

Fisher’s motivation to reform the healthcare system began when her husband couldn’t find residency after medical school. Her interest deepened after she was diagnosed with and battled breast cancer. These combined experiences opened her eyes to the strengths and weaknesses of the healthcare system and ultimately guided her decision to study it. “I would love to help change health policy in the United States,” says Fisher. “I want to be a part of the solution to health disparities among nationalities, races, and genders.”

As one of twenty-four advisors for the Rumsfeld Foundation, Christensen was able to recommend Nugent and Fisher. Advisors help the foundation identify candidates of outstanding intellectual ability, integrity, moral character, and leadership potential. “In both cases, the members of the foundation said they absolutely agreed that these two were deserving scholars with compelling stories and passions,” says Christensen.

The fellowship provides \$10,000 in financial support to students pursuing a doctorate

degree, and organizes opportunities for recipients to build a professional network. Twice a year, the fellows gather in Washington, DC, to meet with influential policy makers. “These trips help the fellows see how their work in a particular area might fit into the bigger public-policy and public-management picture,” says Christensen.

The Rumsfeld Foundation Fellowship has made the transition from graduate student to PhD student easier for Nugent and Fisher.

“The Rumsfeld Foundation grant allows me to focus on my studies and absorb everything I can from my professors instead of worrying about finances,” says Nugent.

“The Rumsfeld Foundation grant is an answer to my prayers,” says Fisher. “I was trying to see if I could pick up a side job while getting my PhD because financially it was going to be tight. The grant makes getting my PhD possible.”

The future is bright for Nugent and Fisher as they leave BYU Marriott. After receiving their doctorate degrees, Nugent and Fisher hope to become professors at top research universities.



Megdalynn Fisher, third from left

Sherpa Aids in Climb through MPA Program

The frigid wind whips around the young sherpa as he guides a group of climbers through the vast mountain ranges of the Himalayas, heading for the summit. Just as the sherpas in Nepal assist mountaineers, BYU Marriott's MPA sherpa program helps first-year students on their climb through the MPA program.

Since 2009, the MPA sherpa program has encouraged MPA students to expand their skills and progress in their careers. Selected second-year students serve as sherpas to the first-year students, otherwise known as climbers, helping them navigate part of the internship search process.

Developing valuable skills through the sherpa program leads to internships, a top priority for new MPA students. "It's been helpful to partner with our second-year students in teaching these skills," says Tanya Harmon, who leads BYU Marriott's MPA career services efforts. "It has freed me up to focus on developing relations with employers and other responsibilities."

The MPA sherpas play a vital role in the hunt for internships, encouraging climbers in the networking process and internship search. Sherpas help teach climbers how to write a résumé and cover letter, master a pitch, and answer tough interview questions. In addition, sherpas share their recent internship experiences and help climbers gear up for their own internship by providing firsthand insights.

During their time working together, second-year sherpas get to know their climbers well, allowing them to help in a personal and meaningful way. "My sherpa was a leader, example, and

friend," says 2019 MPA alum Malissa Richardson, who found an internship at the United Way of Utah County working in donor relations. "It was nice to have a second-year student who knew the ropes that I could always ask questions without feeling judged."

Climbers have seen the benefit and value of working with more experienced sherpas as their specific needs have been met. "My sherpa quickly recognized my unique desire for career discussions and adapted our time based on what was helpful for me rather than focusing on a checklist," says 2019 MPA alum Megdalynn Fisher, who is currently pursuing a PhD in Bloomington, Indiana, at Indiana University.

As sherpas, second-year students are fulfilling part of the mission of the BYU Marriott MPA program, which

prepares leaders of exceptional capability and integrity who are committed to serving their communities. "Sherpas gain a lot from mentoring first-years," says Harmon. "They hone in on their own skills and gain leadership experience that is important when entering the workforce."

The sherpa program prepares both the sherpa and climber for a future in public service as they help each other reach personal peaks. "Doing well in your classes is important, but using your time in the graduate program to help navigate and even recalibrate your career is equally important," says 2016 MPA alum Mark Ireland, who currently resides in Alexandria, Virginia, working as a consultant at Deloitte. "The MPA sherpa program is the ultimate way to do this."





"There is no substitute for one human being who cares enough about another human being to get out and help him." —George W. Romney

MPA.BYU.EDU

An Example to the World

On a recent trip to South Africa, Bob Parsons was able to finally cross off his bucket list to visit all seven continents. Traveling is just one of the many adventures he and his wife, Connie, have experienced since he retired as the director of the Romney Institute and a BYU Marriott faculty member in 2005.

Soon after retiring, Parsons and his wife served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Washington, DC. While there, they developed relationships with other missionaries as they proselyted and worked in the mission office. Being a missionary helped Parsons prepare for other roles.

Currently, Parsons serves in the church as a Primary teacher, a calling he has held for five years. "It has been the sweetest calling I have ever had," he says. "I love learning the gospel by teaching basic principles to young children."

In between serving a mission and staying busy with church callings, the Parsons enjoy visiting their five children and their families. "We have been active in going to track meets, basketball, soccer, and football games to watch our grand-kids," says Parsons.

Parsons discovered his love for traveling while working at BYU Marriott. He was able to experience other cultures through the MPA program as he led students to countries such as China and Singapore.

Throughout Parson's retirement, he has continued to travel. His travel highlights include his recent trip to South Africa as well as visiting Antarctica. "I thought we were just going to look at ice cubes on our trip to Antarctica, but it turned out to be one of my favorites," he says. The trip included a guest speaker who told participants about the history of the area and the discovery of the South Pole.



As Parsons looks back at his time at BYU Marriott, his mind is filled with fond memories of students and faculty. His message to MPA students is to care about others and be kind. "Being examples to the world is important for the integrity of our program," he says. "Keep the relationships you formed in the MPA program and remember who you are."