



LT. GOV. SHARES LESSONS FROM HIS CAREER

Spencer Cox, recently reelected lieutenant governor of Utah, spoke to BYU MPA students and faculty on 17 January to share his thoughts about what qualities matter most for success in public service.

“His speech inspired me to be more involved in my community, to be more supportive of politicians, and to get to know politicians better by seeing who they are as people,” says Angela Marler, a second-year MPA student from Escondido, California.

Cox began his remarks by sharing his unique career path and his view that people need to follow what they’re impressed to do, even if it’s different from their original plans. Cox shared examples from his life, including his choice to attend Washington and Lee Law School in Virginia instead of BYU; his decision to leave a law practice and move back to his childhood stomping grounds in Fairview, Utah; and how he almost turned down the lieutenant governor position—a dream job for any state politician.

Although becoming lieutenant governor meant a daily two-hundred mile round-trip commute from his home in

Fairview and less time with his family, Cox decided to accept the position when Governor Gary Herbert extended the offer in 2013. In making the decision, Cox says, he followed his dad’s mantra: “You have been blessed. You have a duty to give back. Find out how you can give back the best, and do it. That’s your responsibility.”

Cox said that throughout his service he has focused on doing what he feels is paramount for those he serves, even if it could negatively impact his reelection. He told students that making decisions only to guarantee reelection is not the right way to run a state or a country. Instead, Cox says, he has found that living contrary to this political norm has enabled him to gain the respect of voter groups who may not agree with him.

“I’ve discovered that as a country, as a people, we are dying—we are starving—for people who are genuine, people who are real, even if we disagree with them,” Cox said. “We’re tired of the same old talking points. We’re tired of people who say what they think we want to hear and not what they really think.”



While Cox said he strives to do what he thinks is right when making policy decisions, he also told his audience it’s a shame to think politicians can never change their minds, alter plans, or make improvements.

“Whether you are a politician or you’re in some other service, I want you to be wrong,” Cox said. “And I want you to be wrong often because I think part of the purpose of this life is that we’re supposed to make mistakes and be wrong. Real growth happens when we’re

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From the Alumni Relations Director



In 2011, the Romney Institute decided to expand its advisory board to include a class representative from every MPA and EMPA class since 1965. The objective was to utilize the tight-knit relationships each class forms while

they are students and to help them carry those relationships forward as alumni—thus recreating the MPA lounge feeling through email and social media.

Five years have passed since we launched the new advisory board. How have we done? We have seen many successes—including the MPA classes of 2010, '11, and '12 holding a reunion every summer; the classes of 1971, '72, and '73 chatting back and forth through email; and several classes staying connected via Facebook. In addition, we regularly update our social media pages on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to share with our alumni more of the day-to-day activities of the BYU MPA program.

But even with all of our successes, there is room to improve. At our meetings in November, we explored additional ways we can help our class representatives engage their former classmates and link them back to the MPA program. Two ideas resonated the most strongly with us: 1) share information regularly with class representatives regarding incoming students, career trips, and internship and placement numbers; and 2) post quarterly video

presentations from current faculty to share cutting-edge tools and ideas.

Look for emails from your class reps in March and June sharing information about career trips and the incoming MPA and EMPA classes of 2019 and 2020, as well as a YouTube video from MPA director Jeff Thompson, *Motivation from the Inside Out*. We also encourage each of you to share your career successes and experiences with your class representatives; we are always looking for ways to brag about our alums on our social media pages. Contact information for our class representatives is available at mpa.byu.edu/classreps.

Finally, our expanded advisory board still has several classes without representation: the MPA classes of 1975, '83, '86, '87, '89, and '90; and the EMPA classes of 1984–88, '94, '96, '97, 2000, '01, and '06–08. If your class is missing a representative and you would like to fill the role please email me at vicki_o@byu.edu.

Thank you for being the best group of BYU alumni. It is a pleasure to serve all of you!

Sincerely,

Vicki Okerlund

Vicki Okerlund

Alumni Relations Director

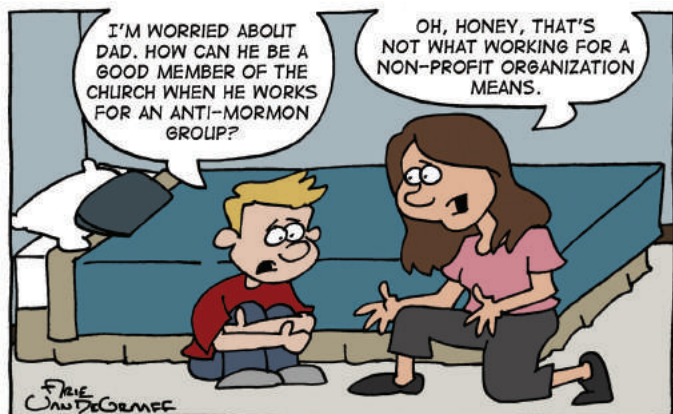
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Institute News

NEW GARY C. CORNIA DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES HONORS SCHOLAR HAL RAINEY



This past fall, the Romney Institute of Public Management kicked off the new Gary C. Cornia Distinguished Lecture Series. The annual honor's inaugural recipient was Hal Rainey, the Alumni Foundation Distinguished Professor in the University of Georgia's Department of Public Administration and Policy. Rainey received the honor and addressed faculty and students at the Marriott School on 22 September 2016.

The series is named in honor of former Romney Institute director and Marriott School dean Gary C. Cornia, whose work and legacy the institute wanted to honor in a meaningful way, and is designed to showcase the efforts of the institute, create networking opportunities, and open

the department to peer institutions. The award aims to honor the brightest and most distinguished scholars in the field of public administration.

Romney Institute associate professor Robert Christensen says Rainey is "one of the leading lights in the field of public management."

Rainey's lecture, titled "Public Administration in the Business Civilization: Pursuing Excellence in Public Management in a General Management Context (and Everywhere Else)," addressed the differences between public and private administration and how a public administration program makes sense in a general school of management.

"It was a great honor to serve as inaugural speaker for a lecture series honoring Gary Cornia for his many important contributions to BYU and to our field," Rainey says. "Gary and I were in graduate school together. Ever since, I have considered Gary to be one of the finest human beings with whom I have ever had the privilege of being associated."

Rainey's visit in September was his first experience at BYU, and he found the campus impressive.

"The Romney Institute has excellent,

highly talented faculty members," he says. "The staff members are very hospitable, efficient, and helpful. I was more than favorably impressed with the Romney Institute and the people there."

Gary C. Cornia served as the director of the Romney Institute from 2004 to 2008 and as Marriott School dean from 2008 to 2013. He earned a PhD in public finance from Ohio State University in 1979 and in 1998 was named a Marriott School Outstanding Faculty Member, the school's highest award. In 2006, he received the prestigious Stephen D. Gold Award from the National Tax Association, for which he served as president from 2002 to 2003.

"Gary Cornia was a phenomenal leader in our program," says Jeffery Thompson, Romney Institute director and associate professor. "As department chair of the Romney Institute, he raised the profile of our program both on campus and in the larger community. He was also the first public administration faculty member to become dean of the Marriott School. He remains a fast friend of the program and a fantastic champion for our MPA students. It made sense to all of us to honor Gary by creating this award in his name."

Thacker, cont. from p. 8

season," Thacker said. "As a city manager, if I am going to truly work with these newly elected officials, I've got to get past that."

Thacker acknowledged the BYU MPA program and some of his associates in public service after accepting the award.

"I'm overwhelmed," Thacker said. "It's truly an honor and I appreciate it. I know of many of my colleagues that deserve it as well, so hopefully I have in some way represented them and the difficult times they deal with."

Thacker's colleague Duane Huffman is grateful for Thacker's

mentorship and example throughout Huffman's career. Huffman worked with Thacker as an intern in 2006 and now works as city administrator for West Bountiful, a neighboring city of Centerville.

"If someone was to ask me what a professional city manager acts like, I would say Steve Thacker," Huffman says. "He is the epitome of professionalism."

Thacker and his wife, Pamela, live in Centerville and have raised six children together. Outside of his professional life, Thacker enjoys fishing, running, camping, singing, and studying American history.

Student News

DOYLE W. BUCKWALTER OUTSTANDING PUBLIC INTERN AWARDS

Three second-year MPA students were recently honored with the prestigious Doyle W. Buckwalter Outstanding Public Intern Award, which is presented each year for outstanding internship performance and includes a cash prize. Ted Jackson was named winner of the Buckwalter Award, and Mackenzie Wood and Kevin Orton received honorable mentions.

The award is named after Doyle Buckwalter, a former faculty member of the Romney Institute of Public Management. Buckwalter served as the associate director of the Romney Institute and as the institute's internship coordinator for twenty-eight years.

The students accepted their awards on 18 November at the Alumnus of the Year luncheon.

TED JACKSON

"I was a little bit surprised," Ted Jackson says of winning the award. "There are a lot of great students in the MPA program, so I felt that any one of us could have won."

Jackson, who is from Gainesville, Virginia, interned with Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), an independent United States foreign aid agency that is helping lead the fight against global poverty. Jackson worked in the monitoring and evaluation division of the Department of Policy and Evaluation.

Jackson's largest contribution during his internship involved a project called the completeness indices, where he helped draft scores for over three hundred projects based on how completely each was thought out. He also designed and presented a focus group methodology and recommended questions to MCC staff, as well as condensed a two-hundred-page report down to a six-page summary for an MCC project.

"Jackson was very professional from day one," says Tristan Lewis, monitoring and evaluation program officer for MCC. "He always had a very good demeanor and was eager to

get to work and get started.... He definitely did high-quality work, and he was great to be around."

Jackson's experience at MCC helped him determine his career path.

"I would love to do more monitoring evaluation," Jackson says. "I feel passionate about helping people in the way that MCC does, and I didn't know that's what I wanted to do until this internship."

MACKENZIE WOOD

Mackenzie Wood, from Farmington, Utah, landed an internship with the City of



From left: Ted Jackson; Rex Facer, award committee cochair; and Kevin Orton. Not pictured Mackenzie Wood.

Centerville, Utah, when she went to interview the city manager, Steve Thacker, for a class project.

“It was a pretty unique situation,” Wood says. “I was doing an informational interview for one of my classes . . . and by the end of the interview he said, ‘I think I have a job for you.’ It was nice to realize that I have skills that people want.”

Wood’s skills are indeed uncommon: she is a certified arborist and has a bachelor’s degree in landscape management. Her background benefited her internship when she walked the entire city (ninety-two miles of sidewalk) and collected information on all of the sidewalks and the trees planted near them.

Her database documented ten thousand locations of defective sidewalk and twenty-five hundred locations where trees

Community Forest Council and Utah Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture recognized Centerville as their Community of the Year.

“Among all the projects I’ve assigned interns, there is no project that has had more significant or benefitting impact than this project,” Thacker says. “It’s going to be useful to us for years to come in guiding our spending of dollars and establishment of trees.”

KEVIN ORTON

Kevin Orton, from Orlando, Florida, interned with the City of South Jordan, Utah. His main projects were simplifying and organizing the city’s utility billing to be more efficient, prioritizing city budgeting, and helping to complete grant applications for a few new parks, including an all-inclu-

classes he took during his first year. Although he used this foundational knowledge when he started the job, he found there was much to learn.

“One of the things I’ve learned is how cities prioritize what they budget and how they analyze policy decisions,” Orton says. “The other is city organization. I’ve already noticed in my second year that I am able to understand more how cities are put together and how they make decisions.”

Orton likes city management because he gets to look at things from a macro level while making decisions that affect people on a personal level.

“City government is where the rubber hits the road—literally,” Orton says. “It affects your neighbors and actual people.”

“City government is where the rubber hits the road—literally. It affects your neighbors and actual people.”

—Kevin Orton

or shrubs were obstructing the sidewalk or roadway. She used statistics and geographic information systems to discover the problems behind the cracks.

Because of Wood’s work, the city council is working to change some city policies, including what types of trees are allowed to be planted and where, as well as the process of fixing sidewalk problems caused by trees. The results of her efforts earned further official recognition in January when the Utah

sive facility for children with disabilities.

“Kevin is outstanding and very on task,” says Don Tingey, strategic services director for the City of South Jordan. “He got in, rolled up his sleeves, and did every project he was assigned.”

To complete these projects, Orton built upon the skills he learned in his first year of the MPA program. He credits organizational behavior, quantitative decision analysis, and communications as the most beneficial

wrong—but only when we’re willing to admit it and move on.”

Cox said he was grateful for the opportunity to advise BYU students, and he spoke highly of the MPA program after concluding his remarks.

“It’s easy to look at the success and rankings of all of the individuals coming out of here, but I think what’s more impressive is the people themselves who have gone through the school, who have graduated from BYU, who have gotten their MPAs here,” Cox says. “Some of the greatest public servants and private servants, and some of the most successful people in the state, come from this area. We are very blessed in the state of Utah to have such high-quality institutions of higher education, and BYU is right there.”

Cox, cont. from p. 1

Student News

FOLLOWING A FEELING: MEET EMPA STUDENT KRISTIN YEE

Kristin Yee stood in a room filled with corporate executives, poised to present on a new project she'd been assigned: a Wii game starring a relatively new character named Hannah Montana.

Yee wore pajamas and pigtails while her coworker sported a pop star outfit. They hit play and began to rock out, modeling the concept of the game with the pajama-clad "player" mimicking the movements of an on-screen "Hannah" while holding a game controller.



The end of their routine was met with complete silence. We're so fired, thought Yee.

But rather than being told to clean out her desk, Yee was flown to Glendale, California, to give a repeat performance to Disney CEO Bob Iger. The game went on to become a huge success.

Before creating a top-selling video game, Yee was a Sacramento-turned-Idaho girl who, at age twelve, moved from "highways and byways to farm fields." She was always drawing and dreamt of someday working for Disney and the LDS Church.

Yee intended to take her artistic talents back to California, but after a short period of time at San Francisco's Academy of Art College, she began to feel she was being called elsewhere.

That feeling took her first to Ricks College in Idaho, then to Florida for an internship with Disney, and eventually to BYU, where she refined her skills in the illustration program before graduating in 2005. Though traditional painting remained her true passion, she accepted a job as a 3D artist with Avalanche Software, a game company later bought by Disney.

Yee's memorable Hannah Montana presentation led to management positions within the company. She wore various hats over the next thirteen years, including out-source manager, art development manager, and senior producer.

"I had never considered that as a pathway," Yee says. "I was an artist. I was going to draw and paint until my dying day. [Then] I realized that I really enjoyed working with people and seeing it all come together."

But then Yee once again got that feeling of being called away.

Though the decision to leave Disney was "heartbreaking," Yee was able to seek balance after what had become a case of career burnout. She found herself painting again.

Yee accepted a job with the LDS Church as a resource manager for the Interactive and Animation team. She was listening to news about refugees when another strong feeling led her to apply to BYU's EMPA program—a week before applications were due.

Yee is now several months into her new job and degree program. Though painting remains her passion—her portraits of Christ will soon be published with Altus Fine Art—she finds time to go backpacking, complete home repairs, travel, spend time with family, and try new restaurants.

"You just never know what's next," says Yee, who hopes to work internationally after the program. "I'd like to be in different cultures and places. If I can expand my skills through this program, perhaps I can be more valuable. Give me real people, real problems, and I'll do my best to help."

Alumni News

MPA ALUMNI WORK WITH THE BALLARD CENTER TO TACKLE THE WORLD'S SOCIAL ISSUES



Saving the people of Uganda from fatal diseases and establishing a worldwide self-reliance system are just a couple of ways MPA students have helped the Ballard Center solve social issues and achieve its focus of “lifelong learning and service.”

Y-PRIZE CHALLENGE SAVES LIVES IN UGANDA

In 2013, former MPA student Rebecca Loveland Ashby helped the Ballard Center kick-start its Y-Prize Challenge, in which students work together to find solutions to global problems. The students come up with creative plans or “challenges” and present them in front of judges, and the winning plan is given resources to help make it a reality. The competition originated as a collaboration with D-Prize, a national competition dedicated to the distribution of healthcare and technological advances that solve world problems.

In the first ever Y-Prize initiative, Ashby helped lead a group to develop a plan for distributing medication to the people of Uganda in order to prevent schistosomiasis, a fatal disease in Africa. Ashby and Katy Sperry, the other group leader, came up with a plan to advertise and attract teams of students, distribute information, and assist and judge the proposals. In the end, one team was picked to make their plans a reality.

“One of the things I think we did to help make a difference was help people recognize that they can come up with a plan and take action,” Ashby says. “It’s always hard to be the first one to start something, but we helped build a foundation for future social entrepreneurs to continue and to improve.”

SELF-RELIANCE HELPS LDS MEMBERS AROUND THE WORLD

Jeff Roberts, a 2015 MPA graduate, managed four major self-reliance projects for the Self-Reliance Services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through the Ballard Center internship program, involving one hundred students over the course of three semesters. Self-Reliance Services focuses on helping members of the LDS Church become temporally and spiritually self-sufficient by helping them learn the doctrines of self-reliance, get a job, start a small business, or obtain an education.

The first and largest project—the financial institution evaluation project—required the efforts of sixty students.

“We did a project to look at small-business lenders around the world that

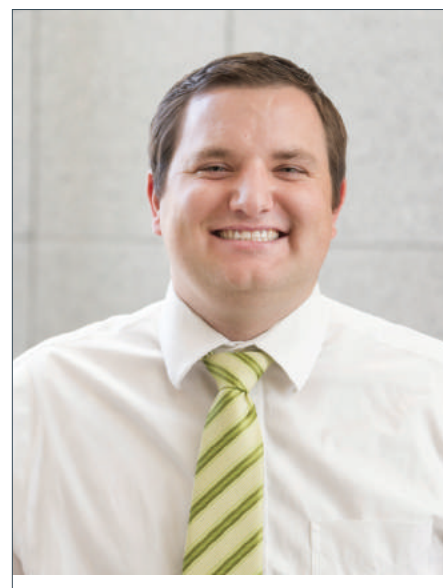
we could recommend to self-reliance services,” Roberts says. “The church would then decide if it wanted to recommend that financial institution as a potential option for members.”

The students, who were recruited to help Roberts talk with business lenders from sixty countries, together spoke more than fifteen different languages. Self-reliance programs were found in eighty countries at the time but are now in 130.

“What we were doing could potentially help thousands of members around the world,” Roberts says. “That was really powerful. The people and our purpose were what I loved best.”

After graduation Roberts was hired by Self-Reliance Services, and he now works on the team that is continuing the efforts he and the students made on the project.

“Being involved in the on-campus projects are what led to my summer internship and then full-time employment,” he says.





*"It isn't a great nation that breeds a great people.
It is a great people that build a great nation."
—George W. Romney*

STEVE THACKER: 2016 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR



In November the Romney Institute of Public Management awarded Steve Thacker, city manager of Centerville, Utah, the 2016 N. Dale Wright Alumnus of the Year award for his legacy of exceptional management

in governmental positions for more than thirty years.

"I want to thank Steve for being an extraordinary mentor," said Jeffery Thompson, director of the Romney Institute, at a luncheon held to honor Thacker. "Steve is truly a giver, and we've been blessed to know him over the years."

A recipient of the Outstanding MPA Graduate award when he completed the BYU MPA program in 1978, Thacker has held various positions including city administrator of Canon City, Colorado; town manager of Snowflake, Arizona; and performance auditor in the Arizona Office of the Auditor General.

"In addition to being an outstanding manager, Steve is also being recognized for his desire and willingness to give back to the BYU MPA program," says Rex Facer, associate professor of finance and public management and cochair of the awards committee. "He is deeply committed to

the success of the program. Every time we have asked for his help, Steve has served willingly, with grace, and with gusto."

Thacker spoke at the luncheon of his vision of successful public service and the qualities he believes impact the governance of organizations.

"My advice to you today is simple: pray for and nurture a charitable heart," Thacker said. "Be slow to judge, quick to forgive, and exercise patience when provoked. Do not be easily offended, avoid arrogance, and seek to truly understand another's point of view."

As a city manager, Thacker follows his own advice because every two years he must adapt to new elected officials—some of whom he agrees with more than others.

"In my opinion the biggest key to success is you have got to learn to put aside those negative feelings or perceptions that may have come up in the campaign

Thacker, cont. p. 3