

TEACH TAXES, WILL TRAVEL



Walters, third from right, discussing tax policy with business leaders in Bangalore, India.

Professor Larry Walters is spreading the news about property tax in a global way.

At the request of the International Monetary Fund, Walters, a true globe-trotter, travels to countries that want to change their tax system and teaches how to effectively use property tax. But Walters says the long trips and hours of research pay off when he sees the positive impacts from his efforts.

“I’m in this business to make the world a better place,” Walters says. “If I can help governments work more effectively and serve their people better, I will.”

Last summer he was in Italy to help the national government with tax reforms.

The impact of his work there had an immediate effect—the stock market jumped nearly 3 percent the day the report was finished.

But Walters hasn’t just helped in that European nation. He has also worked with senior government officials in Egypt, Latvia, Palestine, and Jamaica. During his first trip to Egypt, Walters and his team recommended sub-

stantial changes to the country’s property tax system.

“We found that 85 percent of the property in Egypt was not on the tax rolls so we created strategies to register the property,” Walters says. “Although the entire change took a couple of years, they now have a more effective property tax. Our work makes a difference.”

Along with his IMF work, Walters annually teaches a class at Erasmus University in the Netherlands for people interested in urban development in Africa, Indonesia, Latin America, Nepal, and India.

The international class creates an eclec-

tic dialogue—especially when students are unfamiliar with property tax or how it could be applied in their country. This sparked an idea for Walters.

“People in different countries don’t think about land and property the same way,” he says. “As I was adapting notes for my class, I was asked by UN-Habitat to write a book as a policy guide for developing countries.”

His writing passion didn’t stop with the first book though. He recently co-edited another book about property tax with Gary Cornia, Marriott School dean, and William McCluskey, a real estate valuation professor at the University of Ulster in Ireland. The book hit the streets last fall, and the feedback from the IMF, World Bank, and United Nations is encouraging.

“Property tax doesn’t get used very much, and even when it does, it’s not used well—I want to fix that,” Walters says. “There’s a role for property tax to improve government services and fund local governments.”



Walters, right, in Egypt with property tax administrators.

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From the Director



We thought you would want to know about recent program changes that are a result of feedback. Feedback from our accrediting bodies (NASPAA and AACSB), exit surveys with students as they leave the program, and alumni surveys all provide information

that guides our evolving improvements.

The first change is a refined focus on our admission process. We are expanding our recruiting efforts to reach further and encourage better prepared students. Grades and test scores will matter more than ever, and more emphasis will be placed on a demonstrated interest in the public service. This will directly result in a more deliberate admissions process. Our goal is to admit students that are prepared, want a career in the public or nonprofit sector, and will benefit from our degree.

A second change is our move from several emphases to a specific focus on government and nonprofit. In short, we are not requiring electives in any areas of emphasis. Students are encouraged to design a course of study that will best meet their career needs, whether it is for local, state, or federal government, financial and management analysis, nonprofit, or a combination of all. We will continue to advise and recommend which classes students take for a particular career track, and at the same time encourage students to customize their program.

The third change is the decrease in the number of elective classes offered. Both NASPAA and AACSB indicated in our last review for accreditation that the percentage of classes taught by adjunct faculty was too high. The Marriott School policy for graduate classes is that enrollment must be fifteen or more or the class is dropped. We have eliminated boutique classes and now encourage students to pick and choose the elective combinations that will be most useful to their future career. Students will now be able to choose the classes they deem most valuable for what they hope to do after they graduate.

These changes will have a positive impact on the MPA program. This will allow us to retrench and provide a high-quality

learning experience with students who have more opportunity for personalized learning and mentoring from full-time faculty. We believe that the result of these changes will help us move to the next level of MPA education. The future is very bright at the Romney Institute, and we hope you continue to support and represent us as you always do!

Sincerely,

DAVID W. HART

David Hart

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GWEN HOLM NAMED 2012 WRIGHT ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR



time in the MPA program.

"I remember teaching Gwen in my econometrics class many years ago," McDonald says. "She had an enthusiasm for learning and was undaunted with difficult material. It's very exciting to see how well she's doing in her profession."

Holm says that making a difference in the organization often requires working together. In the past year, Holm worked with an Air Force counterpart to resolve two major issues. One of these issues involved installing three-way stop signs at a dangerous intersection—a solution that had divided NASA and the Air Force for years. Holm attributes the success of the project to collaborating and developing trust

The Romney Institute of Public Management honored Gwen Holm, director of mission support at NASA's Dryden Flight Center, with its 2012 N. Dale Wright Distinguished Alumni Award.

"Holm embodies the personal and professional qualities expected of our graduates," says David Hart, director of the Romney Institute. "We celebrate her dedication to commitments as well as her years of untiring public service."

The Romney Institute faculty gathers annually to choose a recipient for one of the most esteemed accolades given by the institute. Holm was recognized by her colleagues for her commitment to high standards of excellence and to service at work and in the community. She received the award last fall at a ceremony held in the Hinckley Alumni and Visitors Center.

At the program, Holm was presented with a painting by N. Dale Wright, past Romney Institute director. Several former professors also attended the ceremony, including Dean Gary Cornia, Gloria Wheeler, and James McDonald, a professor from Holm's

with others.

"In tough economic times like these, it is still possible to make bad things good and good things better by working with others and thinking out of the box," Holm says. "Developing good working relationships is always the right thing to do."

The 1983 MPA graduate is responsible for the flight center's offices of acquisition, finance, facilities, and protective services. Holm was selected for senior executive service in December 2000 and assumed her present position of mission support director in 2001. In 2005 and 2010 she received the rank of Meritorious Executive for her accomplishments in NASA programs.

When accepting the award, Holm shared her vision for public service.

"Public service is an honor and a great responsibility—we are stewards of taxpayer dollars," Holm says. "Our jobs may seem thankless at times, but we should take great pride in the knowledge that we can make bad things good and good things better."

FROM MPA TO GAME SHOW

Few Brigham Young University students find themselves on the set of a game show. But in a hushed room, Maria Pedroza Barnett found herself answering the question: “Is that your final answer?”

Barnett, a 2006 MPA graduate, made the best of a bad situation by applying to be on *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire* after getting laid off. The decision paid

off—Barnett walked away with nearly \$64,000.

“Once I started answering questions, I wasn’t nervous anymore,” she says. “I was there to play the game. It was exciting to see what they were going to throw at me.”

Knowing trivia about PETA slogans and Jules Léotard, Barnett blasted through the first ten questions gathering thousands in prize money.

“I was very conservative on where to use my lifeline, but I felt like the game was going exactly as I hoped,” she says.

However, the \$100,000 question ended Barnett’s winning streak. The question stated: “According to the national weather service, more than 80 percent of people who have been struck by lightning are what?” Barnett could choose between elderly, male, overweight, or blondes.

Barnett played it safe and didn’t choose the correct answer of males, but instead walked away with \$63,600 in her pocket.



“Hindsight is always 20-20, but now I know I had the right guess on all the questions I passed on,” Barnett says. “I played a very conservative game.”

Barnett and her husband are planning to keep the money stored away for now. She says she is grateful for the entire experience, and if anything, the money has given her more time to find the right job.

The answers she needed to know didn’t come directly from her MPA degree, but Barnett says she had a flashback at the start of the show. Feeling like she was back in her Excel modeling class, she quickly calculated the net present values.

“I’m just glad I knew the value of the questions and didn’t have to calculate on national television,” Barnett admits.



Make-A-Wish cont. from p. 8

named Charlie, whose wish was to coach the Philadelphia Eagles for a day. As the audience watched the video of Make-A-Wish Foundation fulfilling his dream, emotions ran high.

Williams also spoke on the growing competition in the nonprofit field and the lack of good people to join the cause.

“People believe you don’t have to compete in the nonprofit sector,” he says. “The truth of the matter is we’re competing every day. And the great news is schools like the Romney Institute are educating people specifically for this career.”

HAIRY FEET MAKE THEIR BYU DEBUT



The hugely anticipated film *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* tells the story of courageous Bilbo Baggins—and three Brigham Young University students.

With the goal to become extras in the film, Jonathan Wright, a 2012 MPA graduate now working in San Francisco, partnered with advertising students Mitchel Stevens, from Salt Lake City, and John Storey, from Eden, Utah, to begin an epic quest.

The adventure started in the BYU Ad Lab. After listening to a forum from Zach Canfield, an advertising agency recruiter, Wright was inspired to prove his skills on a large scale.

“He said you can’t wait for the perfect project to come across your desk. You have to go out and make it happen. He inspired me to create something big,” Wright says.

That evening while watching extra features from *The Lord of the Rings* DVDs, he immediately started jotting down notes.

“I started wondering if it was possible to bring Tolkien fans together and influence the movie in some way,” Wright explains. “That’s where the Road to the Shire idea was born.”

The team began campaigning to be featured as extras in the upcoming movie *The Hobbit* by creating videos, taking photos, and developing their web site, road-to-theshire.com. They presented themselves as hobbits who were looking to

return to the Shire for a halfling reunion.

Local and international news stations gained interest. Interviews followed with *The Salt Lake Tribune*, *National Public Radio*, and *The Dominion Post*—one of the largest newspapers in New Zealand.

As media attention increased, the \$10,000 needed to get the hobbits to the Shire began rolling in. The three made it to New Zealand but can’t say more than that due to a non-disclosure agreement. A tell-all documentary is in the making though.

Wright credits much of the success of *Road to the Shire* to his training at the Romney Institute. In fact, he often applied

classroom lessons directly to his quest.

“My MPA classes helped me think differently—to find what was working and wasn’t,” he says. “I also learned I was as professional as the next guy. I just had to get to work.”

At the invitation of a movie theater in Sandy, Utah, the trio watched *The Hobbit* on opening night in December. In full costume, the three took pictures with guests and spoke on KSL radio.

“We definitely wanted to see the film together,” Wright says. “And we were wearing our hobbit ears to the showing no matter what.”



Student News

BEHIND THE SCENES: NONPROFIT CAREER FAIR

While Sheila Mayne and Megan Young were on an MPA trip in Ghana last May, they received a request to serve as co-chairs for the second annual Nonprofit Career Fair and knew the opportunity was too good to pass up.

As soon as they landed in the states, the two got to work. Their goal was to brand the fair as an important event in Utah's nonprofit culture. Jumping off of last year's success, they planned to bring in more organizations and a well-known keynote speaker.

Six months later, the day arrived. Guest speaker David Williams, CEO of Make-A-Wish Foundation, brought insight on the nonprofit field. The fair hosted twenty-one booths—more than double the number of organizations represented the year before. A seminar from the Utah Nonprofits Association rounded out the day's events.

"Megan and Sheila thought outside of the box and put great vision into planning this fair," says Tanya Harmon, MPA career

services director. "Because of their hard work, the nonprofit organizations now know our students better."

Mayne says she saw the students' determination and enthusiasm firsthand at the lunch where David Williams spoke. Though a few organization representatives were running late, students waited to have the chance to talk with them.

"It was really neat to see the students talk to the company they had researched," Mayne says. "To interact with professionals is a great opportunity but to be able to pick their brains is huge."

In addition to helping others find jobs, Mayne and Young are looking for job opportunities of their own. Mayne, a Utah State graduate in speech communications from Kaysville, Utah, is a second-year MPA and is interested in a variety of positions, including working with international nonprofits or post-secondary institutions.

"I'm interested in opportunities within higher education, whether working as a

career counselor or in academic advisement," Mayne says. "In the end, I want to work in an area where people are making a difference."

Young is from Apple Valley, Minnesota, and completed a bachelor of science in history from BYU-Idaho



Megan Young and Sheila Mayne.

before pursuing an MPA at the Marriott School. Her dream job is working as a regional program director for an organization that focuses on women's rights and education in the Middle East and Africa.

"The more I learn about the world, women's opportunities for education and human rights seem like the biggest problem left to solve," Young says. "If you can help women, you can help address public health, education, and poverty."

The duo has worked through the MPA program together where they have learned to collaborate—using their strengths to create something worthwhile.

"Sheila and I have both shown a dedicated interest to the nonprofit sector and especially the nonprofit emphasis in the program," Young says. "The nonprofit track is growing, and we carried that excitement into our positions."

Mayne and Young agree that the fair was a success and should continue to be an annual tradition.

"Hosting this fair helps fulfill the mission of the Romney Institute," Young says. "It builds partnerships with the nonprofit community."



ENJOYING PUBLIC SERVICE

Despite his busy schedule, San Antonio Assistant City Manager Ed Belmares jumped at the chance to relate lessons he has learned from experiences in public service to Brigham Young University's MPA students as part of the Local Government Career Fair.

Sponsored by the Romney Institute, the fair is held each year to help MPA students connect with professionals employed in local government.

"Networking with these professionals gets me more excited about working," says Erin Wells, second-year MPA student from Tooele, Utah, and student chair of the event. "Local government is a place where I can make a big difference."

In addition to networking, students came for job and internship opportunities with local cities, including Park City, Orem, and Sandy. The fair also included a training lecture with David Hart, director of the MPA program, and Belmares' keynote address.

As a professional in the field, Belmares gave advice to the MPA students, telling them to dig deep and get to know the business. For example, Belmares needs to be knowledgeable on a variety of subjects since he oversees the city airport, down-

town operations, the convention and visitors bureau, the cultural affairs department, and sports and entertainment facilities. In San Antonio, a city of 1.4 million residents, Belmares said it's important to understand the needs of the community.

"I've worked hard to fully embrace the role that I'm in, and I enjoy serving the public," he said. "You should always have that drive to move forward."

Talking about the rough parts of the job, he said every person is a critic—even his own mother, who teased him about a delay in installing a traffic light.

But for Belmares, the upsides are plentiful. His mother and father have walked



those projects.

"If you don't have a definitive plan, that's okay. Sometimes you'll get opportunities you didn't expect," he said. "It feels good to have that kind of positive role when you're in local government."

To be a successful employee, Belmares said to always use good judgment, tact, and innovation.

"When you have a project, take it clear to the end. Early in

your career, show that you have initiative," he said. "You'd rather have someone pull you back than push you forward."

"If you don't have a definitive plan,
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hundreds of miles on a trail he helped create, and his children enjoy the playgrounds he was in charge of fixing. He said being flexible allowed him to be a part of



"IT ISN'T A GREAT NATION THAT BREEDS
A GREAT PEOPLE. IT IS A GREAT PEOPLE
THAT BUILD A GREAT NATION."

MAKE-A-WISH FOUNDATION CEO VISITS MPA STUDENTS

David Williams, CEO of Make-A-Wish Foundation, granted the wish of MPA students at Brigham Young University when he came to speak at the second annual Nonprofit Career Fair.



The president of the largest wish-granting organization in the United States was identified by Romney Institute students as a positive influencer in the nonprofit field and spoke to MPA students and local nonprofit leaders about why he loves his job.

Williams told the audience how he changed his life—from an accountant at an oil company to the nonprofit sector. While listening to the radio during a long commute, he heard that 70 percent of all Americans would change their job if they could.

"I thought, 'What a shame,'" Williams says. "It didn't take long for me to figure out that I was part of the 70 percent. That moment led to my current career—something I feel very fortunate to have."

Since that drive home, Williams has worked for the Houston Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity, and Make-A-Wish Foundation. Under his direction, Make-A-Wish Foundation's revenue doubled and distributions to chapters have quadrupled. Williams counseled students to remember why they entered the nonprofit field when challenges arise.

"When I started at the food bank, I could write a book about the things I didn't know how to do," Williams admits. "But as tough as it is, I honestly think people in our field have the greatest jobs in the world."

Williams' demeanor lit up as he listed three reasons why he loves his field. First, the nonprofit sector is a place where success can be measured.

"Our ultimate metric is building houses, granting wishes, or educating people," Williams says. "At our core, we're in the business of changing lives."

Second, he gets to work with wonderful people—individuals who could do a lot of things with their money yet choose to donate it because they love the organization's mission.

Third, he sees people at their best. "About a thousand of the wishes we grant every year are with celebrities," Williams explained. "I'm amazed at the great things those folks do."

He shared a video about a boy

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