



OUTREACH

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MARRIOTT SCHOOL | ROMNEY INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT | FALL 2016

MAKING AN IMPACT: HOW THE BYU MPA EQUIPS ALUMNI TO MAKE **REAL** CHANGE

MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

Use these phrases enough and they start sounding stale. But backed by real results, the work of MPA alumni is proving the skills developed within the walls of the Marriott School can make meaningful—and real—change.

United in their desire to improve world conditions, alumni bring their education into real-world situations. These grads develop lifelong skills that benefit their careers and empower them to influence the world around them.

Six alumni recently shared with us their experiences and the tools that helped them enact real change in their organizations—and beyond.

How have you put your MPA skills to work? Send your story to vicki_o@byu.edu.

BUILDING CONSENSUS

Given the assignment to research the effectiveness of in- vs. out-of-house trash

and recycling collection, Jaysen Christensen, a 2002 grad then doing his MPA internship, researched and prepared models to present to the city council.

“By the end of the summer, I was confident that I had a slam-dunk recommendation,” Christensen says. “I was wrong. Within the first two minutes of my presentation to the city council, I was faced with emotionally charged opposition that I was not prepared for. I realized after my presentation that I should have engaged this city councilman and other stakeholders early in the process.”

Back at school, Christensen enrolled in a management philosophies class, where he learned the management style that best suited his personality was that of a facilitator manager. This particular role works with stakeholders to identify common objectives and build consensus—the opposite, he realized, of what he had done during his internship.

That skill now serves Christensen well. In his position as city administra-



tor for Glendale, Missouri, he facilitated the physical renovation of the city’s fire department, an aging facility in need of upgrades on a small budget. Opinions about what to do—from building a new fire station to partnering with neighboring cities for shared services—

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From the Director



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

At first glance, this may seem a puzzling verse of scripture. Aren't we taught to be humble

and to “let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth” (Matthew 6:3)? Surely we shouldn't go around boasting of all the great things we've done.

The verse makes sense, though, when you think about the motive behind letting one's light shine. The point isn't to celebrate self-glorification; instead it's a reminder that doing good can be contagious. By allowing others to observe the good things we do, we just might bring about more good in the world, sometimes in ways we don't even expect.

This idea has been on my mind of late as we in the BYU MPA program have gone searching for stories about the light our alumni bring to the public sector. We find it takes some coaxing to get our alums to talk about themselves; they are modest about their accomplishments, and when they do share success stories, they tend to downplay their own roles and talk only in generalities. We have had to dig pretty deep to get them to open up.

Modesty is, of course, a virtue. But in the spirit of the verse I quoted above, we have dedicated this issue of the newsletter to

focusing on a handful of our own “shining lights” among both our alumni base and our faculty. There are many, many stories, but space limitations allow us to share only a few. We recognize that all of our alumni have their own stories about how they have shined a light on a problem or issue in their public service, and how they brought forth solutions that their MPA equipped them to contribute.

We love hearing these stories, and we would love to highlight more of them in future newsletters and in our marketing materials. Please share your light by contacting me (jeff_thompson@byu.edu) or Vicki Okerlund (vicki_o@byu.edu) and telling us how your MPA degree prepared you to make a difference.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Thompson

Director

Romney Institute of Public Management

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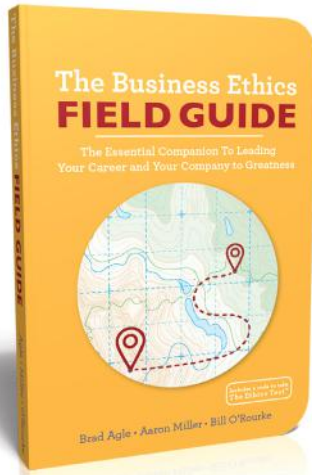
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Institute News

ROMNEY INSTITUTE PROFESSORS EXPLAIN HOW TO MANAGE ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN NEW BOOK



Nathan is a new hire at a small tax practice. After a few months of work, his boss, Frank, calls Nathan into his office to discuss a client's return. The client will need to pay an underpayment penalty of \$50,000 to the state. Frank has a good relationship with the client, and in an effort to save that relationship, he asks Nathan to "fix" the return to show zero underpayment penalties. How should Nathan react?

This is one of the questions Brad Agle, George W. Romney Endowed Professor, and Aaron Miller, assistant teaching professor in the Romney Institute, answer in their new book, *The Business Ethics Field Guide*. The guide, which was completed in

August, shares thirteen common types of ethical dilemmas people face in the workplace and the tools necessary to face them.

Agle taught business ethics classes at the University of Pittsburgh from 1992 to 2009. Each semester, he assigned his MBA and executive MBA students to write about an ethical dilemma they had faced at work. After reading thousands of their responses, he started noticing patterns.

In July 2010, after Agle had been teaching at BYU for a year, he shared with Miller a list of the fundamental ethical controversies his previous students had written about. Miller suggested the research would be a great idea for a book.

"Brad had a really fantastic idea to try to categorize the ethical dilemmas people face," Miller says. "Other people have done similar things, but not quite in the way that he had in mind."

In 2011, with the help of BYU's Wheatley Institution, the five-year journey of researching and writing the ethics guide began. Agle and Miller spent the next two years collecting and categorizing several hundred responses from BYU executive and full-time MBA students. As they read

they found that every response could be categorized into at least one of the thirteen types of ethical dilemmas, including conflict of interest, loyalty, or unfair advantage.

After providing some help with the research, Bill O'Rourke, a retired Alcoa executive who was a frequent guest lecturer in Agle's classes at the University of Pittsburgh and BYU, joined the team as a coauthor of the book. Agle knew O'Rourke's career experience—including his time as the first president of Alcoa Russia—would be a valuable addition to the book. Along with helping write the book, O'Rourke contributed personal examples of ethical dilemmas he had faced in his career.

The authors believe their book stands apart from other works about ethics because it focuses on developing skills and not just on having a "good heart."

"The message of our book is that ethical intentions are necessary but not sufficient; you also need to have ethical skills," Agle says. "This book helps you develop those skills to be an effective ethical agent and leader in organizations."

Christensen, cont. from p. 8

that uses computer mouse deviants as a method of measurement," Christensen says. "I saw this as a great opportunity to solve a dilemma that we experience in the public management world."

Christensen is studying a concept called "public service motivation"—people's intrinsic desire to serve in ways that allow them to exhibit self-sacrifice or compassion. However noble, this motivation is vulnerable to something Christensen calls "social desirability bias," which means respondents to surveys

that measure public service motivation may feel a social pressure to answer questions in the most favorable way—regardless of whether their answer is true. Using the computer mouse deviant measuring method, Christensen and Jenkins hope to discover to what extent public service motivation is inflated due to the social desirability bias.

Aside from conducting research and teaching, Christensen loves to spend time discovering the outdoors with his wife, Flori, and their four daughters. This past summer they took a trip to Henry's Lake in Island Park, Idaho, where Christensen would often go as a child, to fish, waterski, and motorcycle.

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varied among employees, elected officials, neighboring cities, citizens, and even the local media.

After two years of research and meetings, voters overwhelmingly approved the decision to build a new fire station and remodel the police station in city hall.

“Despite the differing opinions and obstacles that typically challenge a public process like this, it was widely recognized that ‘buy-in’ among all of the groups, which was achieved through a collaborative and facilitative approach, was key to the success,” Christensen says.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Many people may groan at group work, but team leadership is a crucial skill. Jolene Jones, a 2014 EMPA grad and Marriott School adjunct professor, learned through hands-on opportunities to lead various teams and student groups while in school.

“As a team leader I had to organize the team’s goals, set and keep deadlines, and most importantly, allow team members to express their individual strengths



while, at the same time, balancing individuality with the project’s ultimate success,” Jones says. “I learned via the MPA program that team leadership wasn’t about me but rather was about the team—how to encourage them, keep them on deadlines, and challenge them to do the best they could do for the project.”

Now a member of the Primary Children’s Hospital Corporate and Community Development Board, Jones works closely with business owners and community leaders to raise awareness and funds for the programs at Primary Children’s Hospital, managing teams—each with different personalities and traditions—through fundraising campaigns and community events.

“Without the training I received in the MPA program, I would not have been nearly as successful nor as confident in my ability to lead such important and diverse teams,” Jones says. “The MPA program gave me the skill set I needed to be an influential member of this board. Having the experience of being a team leader gave me significant real-world experience in team leadership. As an MPA graduate, my way of serving is to offer my knowledge base and experience to organizations such as Primary Children’s Hospital in the hope that the better they function, the more service and opportunity they can render to the community at large.”

THE WRITE SKILLS

It’s hard for 2007 grad Mishael Sedas to identify just one skill the MPA program



helped him develop. Proper HR practices, how to work in effective teams, and an understanding of how nonprofits are organized are all among the knowledge he gained that aided him in his work as a former manager of operations with the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF).

“The process of starting the operations of the Perpetual Education Fund in new countries is very complex due to hundreds of pieces to account for,” Sedas says. “I could not have done it without the knowledge and training I received years before in the MPA program, especially practicing how to effectively work in teams.”

Recalling the various courses he took during the MPA program, Sedas remembers the “reality check” he received from

one of his professors: in the “real world” you have to write a lot. Along with improving his writing skills, he learned how to create effective PowerPoint slides and email communication.

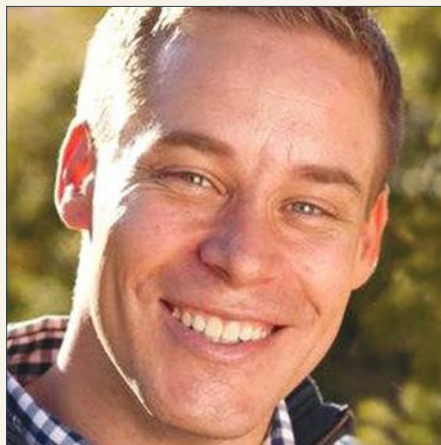
“From day one, the program immerses students in practical, challenging, and relevant projects that train them to enact change,” Sedas says. “The program is well-positioned and leverages its relationships to listen to what the field needs, and then it turns back to the classroom to adapt.”

As he helped organize the operations of the PEF in other parts of the world, Sedas witnessed the impact of his work.

“On my last day working for PEF, my boss and mentor called me from Albania,” recalls Sedas, who left PEF to attend Indiana University, where he is getting a PhD in learning sciences from the School of Education. “He thanked me and our team for working very hard to open Albania for the blessings of the PEF program. I cried with happiness that we could be instruments in bringing this inspired program to Albania. The MPA program definitely equipped me to start my career in nonprofit management with its practical skills and focus on going forth to serve.”

BY THE NUMBERS

Brenn Bybee, a 2008 grad and assistant city manager for the City of Orem, says



if the MPA program had focused only on discussing political theories or case studies in a classroom, he would not have developed the technical skills necessary to produce solutions to real-world problems.

“The BYU MPA program focuses on teaching technical skills you can immediately apply in the workplace,” Bybee says. “I love that the BYU MPA program had more of an emphasis on providing applied knowledge rather than just theoretical knowledge. I believe that without that focus, I wouldn’t have the skill set to more closely manage and implement projects.”

A recent project that required Bybee’s skills was the facilitation of an interlocal agreement between Orem and the Town of Vineyard in providing fire and emergency medical services.

“I was finally able to come up with a charge that was understandable, eliminated any subsidy, was affordable for the Town of Vineyard, and that would still be dynamic and responsive to Vineyard’s and Orem’s future growth,” he says. “I was

also relieved—and validated about the methodology—when the price came in at a better value than what Utah County submitted as a proposal to Vineyard around the same time.”

Bybee says he wouldn’t have been able to facilitate the agreement without the technical calculation and analysis skills he learned in the MPA program.

“I entered the MPA program without much confidence in my Excel and writing ability, but by the time I graduated I felt like I had enough experience to confidently use the skills in the workplace,” he says. “In the public sector, where sometimes decisions can be made primarily based on emotion or political pressure, having strong presentation, writing, and quantitative skills goes a long way to influence more balanced, reasonable, and objective decision-making.”

NO ‘I’ IN ‘TEAM’

A few words can make a huge difference, as Jackie Saumweber, a 2014 grad and senior manager of food sustainability for Walmart, learned through experience.

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Alumni News

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In an effort to reduce food waste and provide clearer information to customers, Saumweber helped convert date label terminology to read “Best If Used By” on private brand food items sold at Walmart and Sam’s Club. The phrasing was found to best convey that the date on a food package refers to quality and freshness—not safety. Surveys revealed a positive response from customers, but they weren’t the only winners: with this small wording change on labels, Saumweber and her team were able to help eliminate an estimated 660 million pounds of food waste and 900,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

How did Saumweber do it? Not alone, she says.

“One of the most exciting parts of the project was working with a very diverse group of key players and pulling together the right people to get the work done,” she says. “A lot of different voices had to be part of the conversation, including store operators, food donation programs, and packaging experts. That level of collaboration is complicated, time-consuming, and sometimes messy, but the scale and significance of the impact on both our customers and the environment was beyond anything we could have done if we’d gone at it alone.”

Saumweber learned a number of important skills in the MPA program but argues that this type of cross-functional collaboration was the most critical to her success.

“The MPA program is very much team-based,” she says, “and we all learned how to identify and leverage our own strengths and those of others, as well as

how to find shared value for everyone at the table.”

Saumweber had originally interned for the Walmart Foundation while midway through the MPA program, an experience she says played a part in her decision to work for Walmart.

“I learned and saw firsthand that I could still work on meaningful social issues in a private sector environment,” she says.

RESPECTING DIFFERENCES

Acknowledging and respecting diverse opinions requires care to minimize conflict. Jared Larrabee’s role as a vice president and general manager at supply chain solutions company Savage Services also requires having the respect and perspective to move change forward.

“We often are developing projects to meet a very important market need but that involve diverse opinions,” says Larrabee, a 2004 grad. “While projects may have a local footprint, they often have a broader regional impact that needs to be considered.”

His latest project is no exception.

“Jared is currently managing the Vancouver Energy project here in Vancouver, Washington,” says his wife, Katherine, who is also a 2004 MPA grad. “It is a joint project with Tesoro, and they are proposing a terminal at the Port of Vancouver USA to receive oil from the Bakken and then ship it to the refineries on the West Coast. It has been quite contro-



versial, and he has often had to deal with politics. The MPA background has been helpful since he has had to work with city officials, state officials, and the media. It has been quite an adventure.”

The MPA program, Jared Larrabee says, taught him to see multiple sides of an issue and to recognize that projects often must be completed with the consideration of many different voices and opinions.

“The MPA program equipped me to look at issues from the perspective of elected officials, public agencies, private companies, nonprofit organizations, and community residents,” he says. “Usually everyone is trying to do what they think is right. It’s important to listen and show respect while working toward a path forward—all principles taught in the MPA program.”

Faculty News

BRAD OWENS, EVA WITESMAN RECEIVE CONTINUING STATUS



Brad Owens and Eva Witesman, associate professors for the Romney Institute of Public Management, were granted continuing status this past year.

“They have done tremendous research and are above and beyond the expectations we have at the Marriott School,” says Jeffery Thompson, director of the MPA program.

Brad Owens has worked as a professor of business ethics for the Romney Institute for three years. He earned an MPA from BYU in 2004, and then a PhD in organizational behavior in 2009 from the University of Washington.

“Brad Owens is a scholar of humility,” Thompson says. “He does outstanding research that has been published in top-notch journals. He has been extremely successful and has a very bright future.”

Owens’s recent paper, “Initiating and Utilizing Shared Leadership in Teams: The Role of Leader Humility,” will be published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* next year. In the study, Owens examined leader humility, which reflects a leader’s willingness to be taught, self-awareness of

strengths and weaknesses, and recognition of others’ contributions.

“Humility is not weakness, but often a source of competitive advantage. Teams that outperform others have members who are willing to learn from each other and dynamically share leadership influence according to individual team member strengths,” Owens says. “Humble team supervisors help to legitimize this kind of team functioning, which leads to better team performance. But humble leadership works best when a team is composed of members with proactive personalities.”

In addition to publishing innovative research, Owens also loves the teaching and mentoring aspect of his job.

“I love teaching BYU students,” Owens says. “They are amazing. Being around them makes me a better person. It is easy to love them.”

Owens enjoys exercising, reading, and hiking with his family. He and his wife, Cathy, have four children.

Eva Witesman earned an MPA in 2004 and a PhD in public policy analysis and public management in 2009, both

from Indiana University. She has been a Marriott School faculty member for eight years.

“This job is incredibly fulfilling,” Witesman says. “I have learned that despite the large-scale impact we are striving to make, it’s the one-on-one moments that make the biggest difference. I feel the most accomplished at work when I am able to help struggling students.”

Witesman has taught a variety of courses for the MPA program, including statistical analysis, nonprofit organization management, and public program evaluation. She will begin teaching new courses in volunteer management and cost-benefit analysis next fall.

“Eva Witesman is masterful in the classroom,” Thompson says. “She brings a lot of wisdom and spiritual insight to the work she does.”

Witesman’s research centers on the differences between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and she looks forward to combining this research with her published work on anticorruption efforts.

“I believe that public, nonprofit, and private sectors have much to learn from each other,” Witesman says. “I’d really like to help solve the issue of corruption in government. I think the culture of each institution affects the way in which we view, practice, or eschew corruption.”

Witesman is an art enthusiast and sports lover. She lives with her husband, Owen, and their four children in a historic home in Springville, where they tend more than three dozen fruit trees and keep chickens.

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

ROMNEY INSTITUTE WELCOMES ROBERT K. CHRISTENSEN AS NEWEST FACULTY MEMBER

The Romney Institute of Public Management welcomed Robert K. Christensen this fall as a new associate professor in the MPA program.

"We were thrilled to get Rob," says Jeffery Thompson, MPA program director. "He has tremendous stature in the field of public administration and is a highly prolific scholar. He brings a tremendous amount of energy and thinks on the cutting edge. I have already seen an impact on the culture of our department because of the strengths that he brings."

Christensen teaches administrative environment, an introductory course for MPA students. He previously held faculty positions at Indiana University, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and the University of Georgia, where he served as director of the PhD program in public administration and policy from 2014 to 2015. Christensen earned an MPA and a JD at BYU in 2000 and a PhD in

public management and public policy at Indiana University in 2007.

Christensen has made many contributions to the realm of public management over the years, with his work appearing in books, law reviews, and academic journals. He is the recipient of the University of Georgia Service-Learning Fellowship, the University of Georgia School of Public and International Affairs Excellence in Teaching Award, and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs Award for Excellence in Doctoral Research. Christensen's research branches into non-profit organizations and public law, but he is most passionate about teaching and researching public management.

"BYU has built an impressive public management program," Christensen says. "This is a place where I am confident I can find like-minded individuals who are as excited about public management research as I am."



His research pursuits now have him working with Jeff Jenkins, assistant professor of information systems, on a project that uses innovative technology to measure the honesty of federal employee responses on public management surveys.

"I had heard from fellow faculty members about a technology Jenkins developed

[Christensen, cont. p. 3](#)