

# MPA

2021-22 MPA ANNUAL REPORT ■ BYU MARRIOTT SCHOOL OF BUSINESS





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◀ MPA students prepare to participate in a zip-line activity during fall 2021 new student orientation.

# MPA 2021-22 Year at a Glance



August

## A Welcoming Namaste

During orientation, new MPA students, masked up and socially distanced, participate in chair yoga—an easy mindfulness tool to help manage stress.

November

## A Season of Thanksgiving

Members of the MPA Student Association gather together for a Thanksgiving feast to focus on what this time of year celebrates.



February

## Honoring Heritage

MPA students celebrate and share their heritage through cultural performances, presentations, food samples, and dancing at the MPA Heritage Show and Tell.



March

## A Romney Impact

EMPA students meet for the Winter 2022 iMPact Night to learn about the Romney Institute namesake. Students explore the five pillars of George W. Romney's life, including family/church, business, civil rights, public service, and volunteerism.

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

September

## Crucial Conversations

**Jeff Thompson**, a professor at the Romney Institute, and first-year student **Pheakdey Leng** role-play how to initiate a difficult discussion during an organizational behavior class.



October

## A Conference Cruise

Students join alumni and friends at the International City/County Management Association's conference in Portland. All enjoy a dinner cruise along the Willamette River.

December

## A Woman's Perspective

**Eva Witesman**, an associate professor with the MPA program, hosts an insightful Q&A session with women students in the program.



January

## Arizona Road Trip

Students travel to Phoenix, Arizona, to meet with government and nonprofit organizations. MPA 2008 grads **Joseph** and **Marilyn Pike** host the students for an invaluable networking dinner.

April

## No Fools at the Park

Almost 100 MPA students, faculty, and alumni spend the morning of April Fools' day working together to clean up and beautify Mount Timpanogos Park in Orem.



# CONTRIBUTORS, NOT SPECTATORS

*MPA Alumni as a Worldwide Force for Good*



BY SHIRLEEN M. SAUNDERS



In March 2020, when Italian prime minister Giuseppe Conte announced a countrywide lockdown to slow the spread of COVID-19, 2005 MPA graduate **Ether Simoncini** hunkered down at home with his wife and four young children. As they looked out their apartment windows, their normally bustling neighborhood in Verona seemed abandoned. Feeling alone and unsettled, the family did their best to stay positive by reading, singing, playing board games, and engaging in indoor sports.

Then, several days into the lockdown, something changed. One evening, someone in Simoncini's neighborhood opened their windows and blasted the national anthem, followed by several minutes of upbeat music. It was a small act that gave hope to everyone within hearing distance—and it spread. Soon people across the country were opening their windows every evening at exactly 6 p.m. to share music, wave to neighbors, and chat with new friends.

Seeing the joy that accompanied these interactions got Simoncini thinking. What could he do to help people connect during this time of isolation? As field operations manager for the Europe Area of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he was inspired to offer self-reliance

courses online. He invited members of his stake to participate in a virtual Find a Better Job group; after receiving positive feedback, he enlisted friends to facilitate additional classes and circulated an online invitation to both Church members and their friends. Within a few weeks, more than 1,000 people from all over Italy were participating.

"It wasn't easy at first," recalls Simoncini. "Internet connection wasn't always optimal, video-conference quality wasn't as good as it is today, and some participants struggled with online learning. I had to be creative in solving related issues, but for the most part, people were happy to spend time connecting with others while learning useful concepts and acquiring new skills."



ALESSANDRO CARRARINI (UNSPLASH)

Simoncini's newfound knowledge became invaluable as other countries started their own lockdowns. "Some of the ideas and solutions I found while making my small contribution to ease the stress of the lockdown became tools and resources we use today for the whole Europe Area," he says.

Like Simoncini, many MPA graduates from around the globe return to work in their home countries after finishing their studies. Though their roles and responsibilities vary, each is using the public administration skills and knowledge gained at the Romney Institute to make a difference in the lives of their fellow citizens—creating a force for good that spans continents and cultures.

#### ■ Aiding Refugees



After earning his MPA degree in 2004, **Fernando Souza** from Praia Grande, Brazil, spent 17 years

working for the Church's Welfare Services in Brazil, where he enjoyed helping people further their education, find new jobs, and start new businesses.

In addition to these assignments, Souza was tasked with finding

ways to alleviate the suffering of Venezuelan refugees who were escaping political, social, and economic hardships in their country. Each day, hundreds of Venezuelans arrived in Brazil by bus, and scores of families crossed the border on foot after walking for several days.

The situation was overwhelming at first, remembers Souza. But working in partnership with the Brazilian government, the Catholic Church, the UN, and local officials, Souza's team oversaw a project to turn an abandoned gymnasium into a shelter. They found companies to donate food and other necessities, and they organized the distribution of goods. Later, they located jobs for adults, organized schooling for children, and coordinated refugee resettlement to other parts of Brazil.

#### ■ Advising Organizations to Benefit People

Within the socioeconomic context in Thailand, **Kaneeworn (Pim) Opetagon** of Bangkok continually finds ways to apply her public administration skills. Since graduating in 2010, she has worked for Aon Solutions, a multinational professional services company. She currently leads the human capital advisory team in Thailand



and reports that in addition to the technical knowledge she gained in her classes, "learning to work well

in a team was the best training I received in the MPA program."

In her daily work, Opetagon provides consulting services in organization management and human resources to private, public, and government entities. "My priority is helping organizations improve the well-being of their people, and it is the kind of impact that lasts a long time," she says. "It's fulfilling to help for-profit organizations set goals based on nonfinancial indicators as well so they can benefit their people and the communities around them."

#### ■ Communicating for Understanding



Beijing, China, resident and 2009 MPA graduate **Songjie Li's** dream of helping to build his home-

land recently came to fruition through his work for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics organizing committee. As victory ceremony manager at the Big Air Shougang

*"My priority is helping organizations improve the well-being of their people, and it is the kind of impact that lasts a long time."*

—KANEWORN (PIM) OPETAGON



## PREPARING FOR FUTURE SERVICE

During the 2021–22 school year, students in the BYU MPA program represented 20 countries spanning 6 continents. As they look to the future, these students already recognize how their studies will help them become a force for good in their homelands.

"An MPA degree has wide applicability," reports April 2022 alumna **Alyssa Julia N. Caduada** from Puerto Princesa, Philippines. "I have gained skills that can be applied anywhere—in home, work, and Church settings—and I have learned different ways to think about and approach a topic, problem, or project."

As a current MPA student, **Adriannah Metta** from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, appreciates the hands-on education the Romney Institute offers and enjoys working with mentors in both the academic and professional realms. "Along with communication skills such as negotiating and mediating, I have learned the importance of valuing individuals and their experiences," she says.

Perhaps most important, adds **Cyril Mensah**, a current student from Accra, Ghana, is the way classes are preparing him to be a moral and ethical leader. "BYU Marriott values allow me to lead as the Savior would," he says.

venue, "my sole focus was to present smooth and successful victory ceremonies, not only for the athletes but for audiences around the world," he says.

Li accomplished that in large measure by using communication and management skills, which he considers to be the most important tools in the workplace. "People often think in different ways, even when they are talking about the same things," he states, "so knowing how to listen and understand their thinking is crucial in order to get things done."

Li also believes that the best way to make a difference is to change yourself. "The key to a better future lies within each of us," he says.

#### ■ Mentoring Future Professionals

In Montevideo, Uruguay, 2017 alumnus **Esteban J. Ventura** works as a business developer and



project manager for IDATHA, a company that specializes in artificial intelligence. For the past two years,

IDATHA has sponsored an internship program to help high school students from low-opportunity backgrounds qualify for full-time IT positions when they graduate.

Ventura took on the role of internship coordinator and counselor for some of these students after they were assigned to work on a project he directed. Not only did Ventura help them find success in his project, he also sought out opportunities for them to gain additional IT skills by working with other groups.

"Though it sometimes adds stress and extra work for me, I love being there to help these students," says Ventura. "My mission president taught me that wherever I

was, I should always leave things better. While I went to BYU to learn and obtain my MPA, I came forth to serve—and leave things better because I am here."

#### ■ Creating a Safe Place



As senior executive assistant to the chief administrative officer of the town of Strathmore,

Canada, 2017 alumna **Erika Takahashi** oversees a variety of projects. But one of her most meaningful assignments in this municipality of 14,000 has been helping to create a joint council—made up of city leaders and the local Siksika Nation chief and council—to address racism.

"Many Siksika Nation members live, work, and go to school here," reports Takahashi. "It is important that our town is a safe place for all.



DANI FREEMAN (UNSPLASH)

***“My classes in the Romney Institute have been extremely helpful to the project. I have learned valuable skills in program design, implementation, and evaluation that I have quickly applied to what we are doing.”***

—STEVE K. MUTOMBO

This is one of the first groups like this in the area, and it is exciting to be addressing real issues and contributing to positive change.”

On her own time, Takahashi serves as a wish granter for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. “I love keeping the magic of childhood alive with children who have been forced to grow up too fast and providing much-needed fun for their families who have also been impacted,” she says.

■ **Supporting Education**



MPA student **Steve K. Mutombo** isn’t waiting until he graduates to make a difference. Before coming to

BYU Marriott, Mutombo participated in BYU–Pathway Worldwide in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he quickly noticed how difficult it was for his peers to complete their assignments because they didn’t have access to adequate computers. With the help of donors and friends, Mutombo started The Lord’s Hands, an NGO that obtains refurbished computers and distributes those computers to Pathway students through a needs-based application process.

Since its organization in 2021, The Lord’s Hands has provided

computers to 330 students in 19 African countries, and it hopes to award 500 machines in 2022. Future plans include building and renovating schools across Africa and empowering African entrepreneurs through training and access to capital.

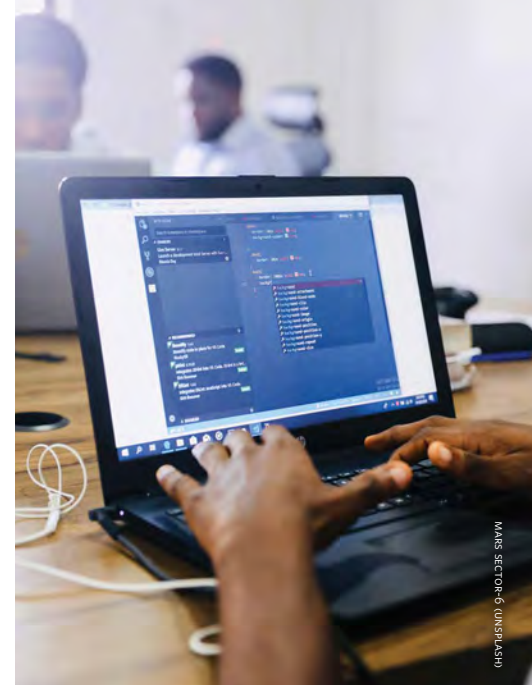
“My classes in the Romney Institute have been extremely helpful to the project,” says Mutombo. “I have learned valuable skills in program design, implementation, and evaluation that I have quickly applied to what we are doing. I have also loved the focus on ethical leadership. Ethical leaders are what the world needs most, and that is what we are becoming through this program.”

■ **Leading in West Africa**



As area support services manager for the Church’s Africa West Area, 2009 alum **Flint E. Mensah** of

Accra, Ghana, plays a significant role in keeping Church operations running smoothly. He supervises six divisional managers with operations in 10 countries who oversee a vast array of functions including travel, information technology, purchasing, and security. His department encompasses hundreds of employees, interns, and



MAIS SECTOR-6 (UNSPASH)

volunteers; 17 missions with 2,400 missionaries; and two operating temples—with an additional temple under construction and five more announced.

“I use skills I learned in the MPA program on a daily basis,” reflects Mensah. “I moved quickly to leadership roles because I was so well prepared.

“It is an honor and privilege to work closely with so many talented men and women who are dedicated to supporting the growth of the Church in West Africa,” he continues. “We see miracles every day. I see the Lord’s hand directing His work as we prepare for the Second Coming of the Savior.”

■ **Creating Innovative Jobs**



California-born **Kenneth Lalagafa’atasi** **Kuaea** was surprised when his grandmother in

American Samoa asked if he would be interested in moving to the territory and serving as a chief in

their clan and village. On reflecting on that conversation, Kuaea felt there was more he could and should be doing for his homeland—and that gaining higher education would be essential to fulfilling those promptings.

Kuaea enrolled at BYU to pursue a joint MPA/JD degree, and after he graduated in 2015, he and his family moved to Mapusaga Fou Village, American Samoa. Since then, he and his wife, Louise (who earned an MBA from BYU Marriott), have been fully invested in serving their people.

One labor of love has been to help American Samoa diversify its fragile economy and establish its footprint in the global business process outsourcing (BPO) industry. When the couple learned in 2018 that the primary telecom provider planned to launch high-speed internet service, they partnered with the American Samoa government and built the US territory’s first contact center. They secured contracts for US hotels and retailers and trained their people to provide customer support remotely. Their company weathered lean months through the COVID-19 pandemic, and they

**ENSIGN TO THE NATIONS SCHOLARSHIP**

One MPA alumni couple that wishes to remain anonymous is leaving a mark by funding a new scholarship dedicated to helping MPA students from countries outside the United States.

The 2021 recipient, **Terrence Dela Peña** from Antipolo City, Philippines, is the first member of his family to earn an undergraduate degree and pursue graduate studies. Dela Peña, his wife, and their two children faced many challenges as they prepared to come to Provo, including meeting requirements pertaining to visas and immigration status.

“During my first semester I wasn’t allowed to work, and my wife was the sole breadwinner to help finance my education and our family’s needs,” says Dela Peña. “We almost gave up because of the financial constraints. We are so blessed by these generous donors who paved the way for me to achieve my dreams so I can give back to my home community someday.”



have now expanded into customer support for US healthcare entities and federal agencies. With the continued support of their partners and the American Samoa government, they aim to generate hundreds—if not thousands—of new jobs for their American Samoan sisters and brothers.

These MPA alumni are living examples of using the skills they gained at the Romney Institute to become

contributors rather than spectators at work, at church, and in family life. MPA alumni the world over are having similar experiences. Aided by their solid foundation in public administration, they are lifting where they stand<sup>1</sup> in both big and small ways. And that is making a world of difference.

■ **Note**

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign*, November 2008.





# *Student Life*

**Kortney Wall Gong** performed on stages in California and England and then spent two decades working in business before she landed on her new career goal to become an executive director of a nonprofit. When she decided grad school was a key part of that goal, she knew the MPA program was where her two worlds of business and nonprofit work could come together. Read more about Gong on page 16.

# Student Report

## Class of 2021-22

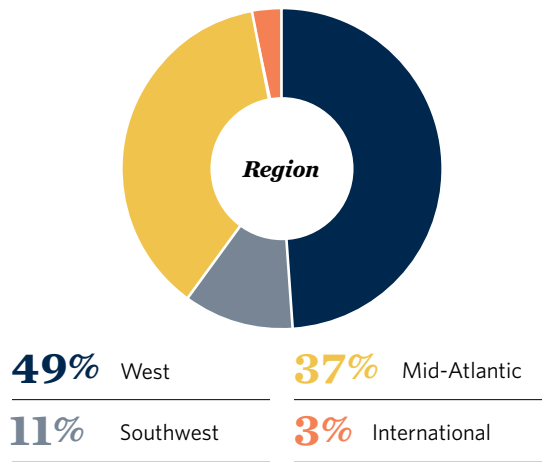
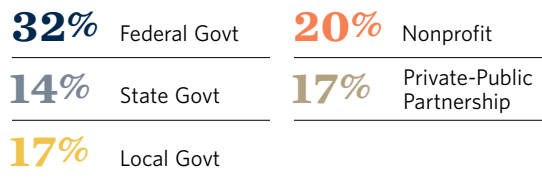
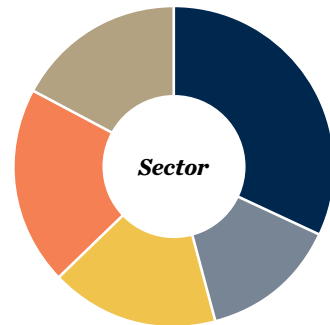
CATEGORY	MPA	EMPA
Students enrolled	104	103
Female	51%	61%
Married	61%	77%
International	36%	0%
Minority	13%	17%
Bilingual	63%	40%
Served mission	79%	40%
Average age	30	42
Average GPA	3.58	3.32

## International Countries Represented

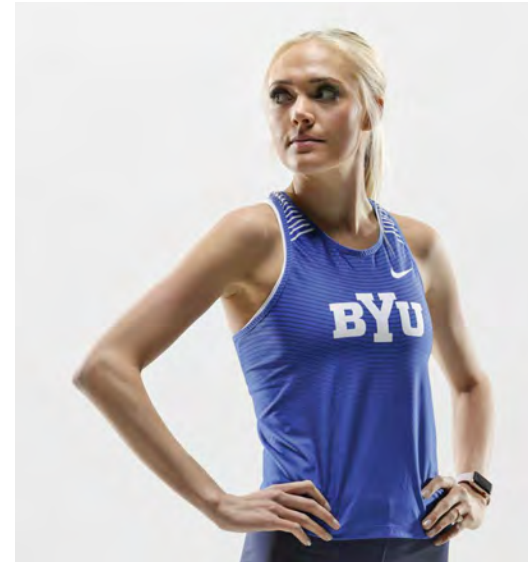
Australia	New Zealand
Cambodia	Nigeria
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	Papua New Guinea
Ecuador	Peru
Ghana	Philippines
Guatemala	Samoa
Hungary	South Africa
India	Tonga
Mexico	Ukraine
Mongolia	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

## Job Placement— Graduation Year 2021

CLASS OF 2022	MPA
Average salary	\$55,676
Placed by 6 months after graduation	95%
Internship converted to job	6%



# A Track Record of Leadership



With her heart pounding, **Olivia Hoj-Simister** anxiously awaited the sound of the buzzer to start the race that would, in the end, crown her a national champion. Running the first leg in the women’s distance medley relay at the 2021 NCAA Division I indoor track and field championships, she helped her teammates emerge victorious and claim BYU’s first national title in the event.

Hoj-Simister’s contribution to her team’s victory accurately reflects her leadership style of staying connected with her teammates. She ran on the BYU women’s track and field and cross-country teams for four years as an undergraduate and during her first year as a graduate student in the MPA program. She was also a captain of both teams for three years. “One crucial lesson I took away from my time as

captain was how to communicate with individuals and cultivate a unique relationship with each person,” she says.

In addition to being team captain, Hoj-Simister, a Holladay, Utah, native and April 2022 MPA grad, also served as copresident of BYU’s Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) for two years as an undergrad. This committee functions as the bridge between student athletes and the BYU administration. As copresident, Hoj-Simister oversaw multiple committees in the SAAC and helped organize initiatives that aimed to improve athlete experiences.

The skills Hoj-Simister learned during her time in these leadership positions carried over to her experiences in BYU Marriott’s MPA program. During the first semester of the program, students work in groups on most assignments. While working within her group, Hoj-Simister set a goal to develop her leadership skills even more.

“Building intentional relationships with each team member is an essential component of leadership and contributes to excellent team performance,” she says. “Intentionally spending time with team members and cultivating unique, individual relationships makes teams stronger.”

The MPA program taught Hoj-Simister how to apply her leadership skills to management positions in the workplace. “My undergraduate leadership roles

offered opportunities to work with a team, but I didn’t have all the necessary skills to successfully manage a team,” she says. “The MPA program showed me how to create quality teams and intentionally apply aspects of team building to my future career. One of my favorite classes was organizational behavior because I developed relationship management and organizational skills while learning how to set effective agendas and lead group meetings.”

Hoj-Simister, who graduated with a bachelor’s degree in public health in 2020, wanted to pursue the MPA program in the Romney Institute because of its strong non-profit emphasis. “I worked with some nonprofits in high school and also served as a director for a local nonprofit called Sunshine Heroes during the senior year of my undergrad,” she says. “The MPA program seemed like the perfect mix of my primary interests—healthcare and nonprofit work.”

Although her time on the BYU cross-country and track and field teams has come to an end, Hoj-Simister hopes to continue being a leader for her future teams in the workplace. “I’m still figuring out what aspect of public administration I’m most interested in,” she admits. “I love fundraising and resource development with nonprofits, but I’m also intrigued by corporate social responsibility. Whatever career I pursue, I know the MPA program has given me skills to flourish.”



## Living and Past Legends



Growing up, **Jared Cuessy** was surrounded by the stories of his ancestors. The story of how his grandfather sacrificed to leave Mexico and bring his family to the United States is particularly dear to Cuessy. As he ponders the many people who came before him and made all that he has today possible, he feels a responsibility to honor his ancestors.

Cuessy, who is from Whittier, California, plans to work in economic policy after he graduates from the MPA program in 2023. Earning his MPA is just one way Cuessy hopes to honor his ancestry and give back. He also plans to use the skills he is learning to examine current economic

policies, identify what is outdated, and find ways to create more benefits for everyone.

Another way Cuessy has honored his ancestors was through participating in Living Legends, a performing arts group at BYU that celebrates cultural heritage through music and dance. Cuessy was a member of the group for four years while earning his undergraduate degree. “My favorite dance to perform was to the song ‘El Son de la Negra,’ which is often referred to as Mexico’s second national anthem,” he explains. “Not only did I have fun, but performances also held special meaning for me because the song is from my own culture. Performing helped me connect to my ancestral heritage.”

Even before graduating with a BS in economics in 2020, Cuessy knew he wanted to pursue a master’s degree so he could be in a better position to affect change. After looking at many programs, he met with an advisor in the Romney Institute, who helped him realize how worthwhile the program could be for him. “I enjoyed my undergraduate experience at BYU, so I knew I could have a similar or even better experience in the MPA program,” he says.

In his MPA studies, Cuessy is focusing on state and federal government. “I just finished my first year, which people describe as ‘drinking water from a fire hydrant’

because you receive a lot of information at once,” he says. “But I love learning new concepts and being able to see a whole new world of perspective and possibility.

“My ancestors worked hard to improve the lives of others, including mine, so that is why I am earning my MPA,” Cuessy continues. “I know making the world a better place sounds like a cliché, but I honestly believe that by helping change policy for others, progress can be accomplished.”

Cuessy’s passion for economic equality is also influenced by his experience with type 1 diabetes. Since being diagnosed at the age of 15, he has struggled to afford medications and diabetic supplies. Facing the financial hardships that accompany the life of a person with diabetes has made Cuessy passionate about working to change the system. “My entire life revolves around my diabetes,” he explains. “I want to find ways to make changes so that people in the future do not have to endure the same financial difficulties.”

Cuessy looks forward to making a difference and discovering more ways to honor his ancestors. “I hope to make my ancestors and family proud by improving the global community,” he says. “I know I can do this by finding better ways to construct policies that are more responsive, efficient, and equitable.”

## Forging Valuable Friendships

Twenty years ago, as a senior in high school, **Craig Hirschi** sat in the cold in Brigham City, Utah, waiting for his turn to pass the Olympic torch as a torch runner for the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Olympics. His friends and family stood on the sidelines, cheering him on. Now as a 2022 EMPA graduate, Hirschi feels the same appreciation for his classmates, who cheered him on in similar ways.

“I was nominated to be an Olympic torch runner by someone in my community,” Hirschi explains. “My family, friends, and classmates came to support me. Someone pushed me in my wheelchair down Main Street while I held the torch. Seeing that support from my community was way cool.”

While he feels grateful for the opportunity to be part of the EMPA program, where he found another supportive community, Hirschi never imagined his life would lead him to BYU. After receiving two bachelor’s degrees from Utah State University—a journalism degree in 2006 and a business degree in 2008—pursuing a master’s degree was the last thing on Hirschi’s mind.

However, in 2018, while working at his current job as a management and program analyst for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), he connected with an old friend who was enrolled in BYU Marriott’s EMPA program. “Every time I talked to her over the following months, she encouraged me to apply,” Hirschi says. “I thought, ‘No, I don’t need a master’s degree for my job.’

“However, I eventually gave in,” he continues. “My grandpa had just died, and he deeply valued education. He challenged his grandkids to receive as much education as possible. After he died, I researched the EMPA program and prayed about applying. I felt prompted to apply, so I did.”

A recent grad of the EMPA program, Hirschi uses principles and skills he learned in each class—such as how to conduct a meeting or create an agenda—to help him succeed in his current position. Hirschi has worked for the FAA for 11 years in various positions.



The aspect of his job he most enjoys is working with people who have taught him important lessons about leadership and management.

“My job is about the people I serve,” Hirschi says. “I help manage pay and benefits for air traffic controllers. If I can help my coworkers not worry about their benefits and just focus on doing their jobs, together we serve our people better.”

Hirschi, who hails from Perry, Utah, also loves the EMPA program because of its people, particularly his fellow students. He and his teammates balance their strengths and weaknesses and bring their various life experiences and backgrounds to the table. Hirschi believes the unity among his peers has improved the quality of their work and has led to the creation of lasting friendships.

“My accomplishments in the EMPA program would not be possible without my teammates,” Hirschi says. “I’ve learned so much from them, and they have helped carry me through this program. I highly value the friendships I’ve formed, and the memories I share with my classmates are what I will cherish most from my time in the program. My fellow EMPA students have always cheered me on and supported me, and I hope I’ve done the same for them.”

# Leaving the Stage for Nonprofit

As a new vocal performance college graduate, **Kortney Wall Gong** dreamed of being on the stage. However, after spending long nights on the stages of England and California, she realized vocal performance was more of a hobby for her than a career.

Now, after spending two decades working in business and as a current second-year student in the executive MPA program, Gong hopes to eventually reach her new career dream: becoming an executive director of a nonprofit organization.

When Gong decided to switch careers, she moved to Utah and started applying for jobs. An offer from a small tech startup based in Salt Lake City sparked her interest in business. While working for the company, Gong moved through different roles. She started as the office manager and then took on HR responsibilities, such as managing payroll and other organizational duties.

During this time, Gong discovered she had a strong interest in people and organizational behavior. After she received her certification in human resources management in 2017, she joined smart-home company Vivint as an HR business partner in the product division. She later worked for London-based Ascential, helping manage its Utah offices in Salt Lake City and

Sandy as well as remotely managing several offices on the East Coast of the United States. Gong's career in business led to an interest in nonprofit, which then landed her in the MPA program at the Romney Institute.

"After I got married in 2020, I decided grad school was the next step," Gong says. "I initially planned to earn my MBA; however, I've recently felt connected to the nonprofit side of business. For the last five years, I've volunteered at the Hope Clinic, where I draw blood and work in the lab.

"During my experiences at the clinic, I felt my two worlds of business and nonprofit work collide," she continues. "Social impact gave my work a unique sense of meaning and purpose, and I wanted to be more involved in that sector. Armed with my business background and desire to work with nonprofit organizations, I entered the MPA program."

Gong, who lives in Salt Lake City, uses skills from her classes in her current position as director of operations for the Sorensen Impact Center, which is housed at the David Eccles School of Business at the University of Utah.

"The EMPA program gives me a more refined skill set to approach management and executive leadership," Gong says. "For example, I use knowledge from my statistics class to decide if the data we



collect at the Sorensen Center is dependable."

Gong's newly acquired skills will help her reach her ultimate career goal of becoming an executive director of a nonprofit organization. "My passions in the nonprofit sector involve providing education and safety for children," she says.

In her free time, Gong likes to stay physically active. She has completed several marathons and enjoys bouldering. Gong looks forward to embracing not only future career opportunities but also new family adventures, as she and her husband welcomed their first child—a baby girl—in March 2022.

# MPA Students Recognized

At the MPA graduation banquet held on April 7, 2022, **Tamsyn Randall** received the Garth N. Jones Writing Award. The award, including a \$1,000 cash prize, was given to Randall by the Romney Institute in recognition of her writing excellence.

Randall's writing was chosen as the winner by a panel of professors in the MPA program. Titled "Refugee Resettlement: How It Works and How Utahns Can Help," Randall's piece outlined the context of refugee resettlement as well as ways Utahns can help.

Randall became personally connected to this topic in 2015 while serving a mission in Indiana for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where she developed close relationships with refugees. Additionally, in summer 2021, Randall worked with the Women of the World organization, which offers employment, mentorship, and English lessons to help forcibly displaced women become more self-reliant.

Randall is honored to receive the award. "Garth Jones led an incredible life and career and had a huge impact on his family members and many others," she says. "I'm grateful to be counted among those who have benefited from his legacy."

The Garth N. Jones Writing Award honors the life and contributions of Dr. Garth N. Jones, who spent nearly five decades building a career in public policy and international development and held visiting faculty positions at several institutions.

The Romney Institute also presented the annual Doyle W. Buckwalter Scholarship to recent MPA graduate **Heather Shurtliff**, who hails from Taylor, British Columbia, Canada. The \$2,000 scholarship recognized Shurtliff's excellent contributions to her internship for the city of Vineyard, Utah.

During her internship, Shurtliff worked closely with the city manager and finance director on a variety of projects, including organizing events and creating the city budget. "My favorite part of my internship was meeting with every department in the city to review their goals for the upcoming year so I could include their goals in the budget," she says. She also organized the city's construction contract

auditing ledger and created a system to catch fraud in Vineyard's financial records.

Honorable mentions, along with \$500, were awarded to two other recent MPA graduates: **Tanner Cox** from Bluffdale, Utah, who was a research analyst intern at Utah's Office of the State Auditor, and **Connor Mason** from Herriman, Utah, who interned as a student analyst for the US Government Accountability Office.

The scholarship is named for Doyle W. Buckwalter, who served as the associate director and internship coordinator at the Romney Institute for 28 years. The scholarship recognizes high-performing MPA interns who also share what they learned with fellow students.



Tamsyn Randall and Drew Jones



Heather Shurtliff



# *Faculty Spotlights*

When she retired as a faculty member at the Romney Institute, **Gloria Wheeler** didn't stop teaching—or serving. Her legacy of completing five missions for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, volunteering in the Fulbright program, and funding a scholarship for MPA students is representative of a life devoted to helping others and a person who recognizes the value of education. Read about Wheeler's efforts on page 22.



# Faculty Involvement

## Selected Faculty Publications

### Brad Agle

- “Pathways in Stakeholder Research,” *Oxford Encyclopedia of Business and Management*

### Rob Christensen

- “Moderating Diversity, Collective Commitment, and Discrimination: The Role of Ethical Leaders in the Public Sector,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*
- “A Systematic Literature Review of City Competitiveness: A 30-Year Assessment and Future Agenda for Public Administration,” *Public Management Review*

### Dan Heist

- “The Philanthropic Poor: Prosocial Behavior in Rural India,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*
- “Understanding the Donor-Advised Fund Giving Process: Insights from Current DAF Users,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*

### David Matkin

- “The Timing of Managerial Responses to Fiscal Stress,” *Public Administration Review*

### Brad Owens

- “An Examination of Whether and How Prevention Climate Alters the Influence of Turnover on Performance,” *Journal of Management*
- “Watching You Descend, I Help Others Rise: The Influence of Leader Humility on Prosocial Motivation,” *Journal of Management & Organization*

### Chris Silvia and Eva Witesman

- “The Enduring Role of Sector: Citizen Preferences in Mixed Markets,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*

### Lori Wadsworth

- “COVID-19 Lockdown: Impact on College Students’ Lives,” *Journal of American College Health*

### Eva Witesman

- “The Social Meanings of the Third Sector: How Action and Purpose Shape Everyday Understandings of ‘Nonprofit,’” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*

## Selected Faculty Citizenship Activities

### Brad Agle

- Board of directors, New England Science and Sailing
- Board of directors, BYU Management Society

### Rob Christensen

- Vice president, Public Management Research Association
- Editorial board member, *Public Administration Review*, *Public Personnel Management*, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, and *International Public Management Journal*

### David Hart

- Provided ethics training for Wasatch County Health
- BYU faculty athletic representative

### Dan Heist

- Board member and cofounder, Hope for Liberia Education Fund
- Review committee, Association for the Research of Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action

### David Matkin

- Editorial board member, *Public Budgeting & Finance*, *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management*, and *Public Performance & Management Review*
- Financial management consultant, Memphis Rox (nonprofit)

### Aaron Miller

- Board member, University Impact and NuSkin Force for Good Foundation
- Associate managing director of the Ballard Center for Social Impact
- Member, Nonprofit Law Section, Utah State Bar

### Chris Silvia

- Editorial board member, *Public Administration Review*
- Associate managing director of the Ballard Center for Social Impact
- Program committee, Public Management Research Conference

### Jeff Thompson

- Provided training for multiple organizations, including Brookings Institution, Lehi City, and AmeriCorps
- Director, BYU’s Sorensen Center for Moral and Ethical Leadership

### Eva Witesman

- Editorial board member, *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Public Administration*
- Program chair, Academy of Management Public and Nonprofit Division



As David Matkin watched his son’s rock-climbing team in a competition nearly six years ago, he was enthralled by the children’s perseverance. This experience motivated Matkin to try climbing himself, and he soon fell in love with the sport. Now, as a professor at the Romney Institute, Matkin teaches his students the same values rock climbing has instilled in him.

Matkin, his wife, and their three children live in Provo, and all rock climb regularly. Matkin finds the sport both compelling and intellectually engaging. In bouldering, a type of climbing that doesn’t use a rope or harness, routes are called “problems.” When Matkin works through a bouldering route, he tries to solve the challenge like an actual problem.

“Usually I can’t finish the problem on my first attempt,” Matkin shares. “However, the sport is all about continual improvement. You push yourself, and you’re not always successful, but you experience the thrill of becoming better.”

In the classroom, Matkin encourages his students to also embrace failure and learn from their mistakes. “Success and excellence come through failure and

# Overcoming Rocky Challenges

disappointment,” he says. “If we could do everything perfectly the first time, we would never grow. I teach subjects, such as budgeting, which are often intimidating to students, but I’m confident they can master the concepts by striving to improve.”

Matkin not only encourages his students to grow, but he also thinks about ways to help nonprofit organizations solve problems. His paper, “The Demise of the Overhead Myth,” which was recently published in *Public Administration Review*, examines issues related to nonprofit administrative spending. “Nonprofits feel substantial pressure to spend little on administrative support,” Matkin explains. “Donors want their money to support programs, not organizational functions such as accounting or general administration.”

However, his study found that nonprofit organizations need to spend a notable amount on these functions. In fact, organizations that spend roughly 40 percent of their total budgets on administrative support are often more financially stable.

Matkin doesn’t limit his efforts to research. Currently, he and several of his students work with a nonprofit community center in Tennessee called Memphis Rox to help enhance its financial management capacity. Two components that drew Matkin to Memphis

Rox were its rock-climbing gym and its community-focused goals. At this gym, anyone can climb, even if they can’t pay. Some gym members pay to support others, and some members volunteer at the community center for five hours a month in exchange for a four-week membership.

Matkin approached leaders of the organization, explaining that he teaches nonprofit financial management courses and asking if they had any needs his students could address. Together, Matkin and the directors of Memphis Rox identified several possible projects for Matkin’s students.

During fall 2021 in Matkin’s nonprofit and governmental budgeting class, he and his students built revenue-forecasting models for Memphis Rox and examined ways to improve the effectiveness and usability of its budget documents. In Matkin’s public financial resource management class, students developed a program budget for the nonprofit’s youth climbing teams.

“I hope to match what my students learn with what we can do to help Memphis Rox,” Matkin says. “Ultimately, I want my students to develop skills and feel like they belong in the profession. In my classes, we work on real problems that directly impact the lives of real people. That is the aspect of my job that I enjoy most.”

## Leading a Life of Service

When she ended her 30-year career at the Romney Institute, emeritus faculty member **Gloria Wheeler** knew she wanted to continue serving others. Since leaving the school in 2008, Wheeler has found countless ways to bless the lives of those around her, including serving five full- or part-time missions for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

But before embarking on years' worth of missions, Wheeler served in another way. As she walked out of a class during her last semester at the Romney Institute, she realized she wasn't ready to be done teaching. Wheeler decided to apply to the Fulbright program, which provides educators with grants and opportunities to teach abroad. However, by the time she submitted her paperwork, only a few locations remained.

"For weeks I debated between applying for Armenia or Mongolia; I wasn't sure which place to choose," Wheeler says. "On the night I needed to make my decision, I retrieved the mail and inside was the December copy of the *Ensign*." The cover advertised a story about members of the Church in Mongolia. "When I saw that story, I thought to myself, 'The Lord is calling me to this place,' so I submitted my application," she recalls.

When Wheeler reached Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, she primarily taught night courses in an MBA program. Since the majority of her students were employed, she taught specific skills, including

how to use Microsoft Excel, which could be useful in their jobs. Wheeler was also active in her local Church branch and became involved with the senior missionaries serving in Ulaanbaatar. "I loved watching the Church grow," she says. "I was present when the first stake in Mongolia was created, which was exciting."

The church-service aspect of Wheeler's time in Mongolia prepared her well for the years that followed. Since returning home from Mongolia, she has served five times, including a service mission with LDS Employment Resource Services in Provo; a mission in Sapporo, Japan; and her current assignment, a service mission for FamilySearch in Provo. She also served two missions with her sister, first in Sacramento, California, and then in Washington, DC.

As part of her assignment in Sacramento, Wheeler worked with a unique congregation: a Hmong branch. "The Hmong were members of a mountain tribe in Southeast Asia who came to the United States as refugees after the Vietnam War," she explains.

Even as a missionary, Wheeler found ways to encourage a love for education in those around her. "I helped one Hmong woman with her PhD dissertation—I spent many hours on the phone helping her with her final draft after I returned to Provo. She was excited to become one of the first Hmong women to ever receive a PhD," Wheeler says.



Assisting this woman reminded Wheeler why she loved her work at the Romney Institute: the opportunities to help students. Since 2008, she has funded a scholarship for MPA students, which she hopes will help support and inspire the recipients to lead lives full of service.

When Wheeler left BYU Marriott 14 years ago, she may have said goodbye to her classroom, but she didn't abandon her love of education or her connections to the Romney Institute. "Preparing students for meaningful careers involving service is truly valuable to me," she says. "I had such a wonderful experience at the Romney Institute, and I try to give back whenever I can."

## Forging Bonds Between Generosity and Religion

A chain of events stretching through five universities and a faith conversion led **Dan Heist** to his research linking religion and philanthropic behavior. Most of Heist's research explores how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints facilitates volunteer behavior—from accepting church callings to volunteering to pray.

"Latter-day Saints are extremely philanthropic," states Heist, the newest faculty member at the Romney Institute. "Studies show we spend more time volunteering in a month than the average person does." Heist saw this trend firsthand after he joined the Church while studying at Pennsylvania State University. During his studies, he became curious about Latter-day Saints' tendencies toward prosocial practices.

Although Heist majored in speech communication at Penn State, where he graduated in 2003, he pivoted his academic emphasis and received his master's degree in philanthropic studies at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy in 2010. After graduating from Indiana University, Heist completed his PhD in social welfare at the University of Pennsylvania in 2019. Three years later, he moved to Utah to teach at the Romney Institute.

At BYU, Heist examines how nonprofit organizations, such as the restored Church of Jesus Christ, help society. "For me, the work I do in understanding nonprofits is directly related to the establishment of Zion," Heist says. Although he previously taught at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, Heist notes that working at BYU is different because of the religious background and motivation of the students.

The nonprofit management and social impact classes that Heist teaches highlight that difference. The courses revolve around providing projects for students to work on that promote the prosocial behavior Heist believes is necessary to create Zion. "My goal at BYU is to help each student achieve their divine potential," he says. "God is an extremely generous Being, and that generosity is part of our divine makeup."

Currently, Heist and his students work with Project Read, a program that provides tutors to illiterate adults, and the Black 14 Philanthropy, which works to educate, feed, and serve underserved communities.

In future semesters, Heist's MPA students will also learn how to establish a nonprofit organization from the ground up. Heist and his wife are in the process of creating a program in Philadelphia to help inner-city children find opportunities for education outside the public school system. "In our inner-city congregation in Philadelphia, my wife and I saw that the youth in public school systems were in a dead end in terms of education. We decided to create an organization that would help them find better education earlier through Catholic schools and other private schools," says Heist.

"Working in the nonprofit sector can be messy," he continues. "Our community-based projects help students experience some of the messiness of the work and learn how to organize and apply the knowledge they gain in class to a real-world situation."

For students who want to learn more about charitable giving, Heist suggests finding an organization that is personally meaningful. "Get involved—try for a leadership position," he urges. In a word, he says, "Volunteer."



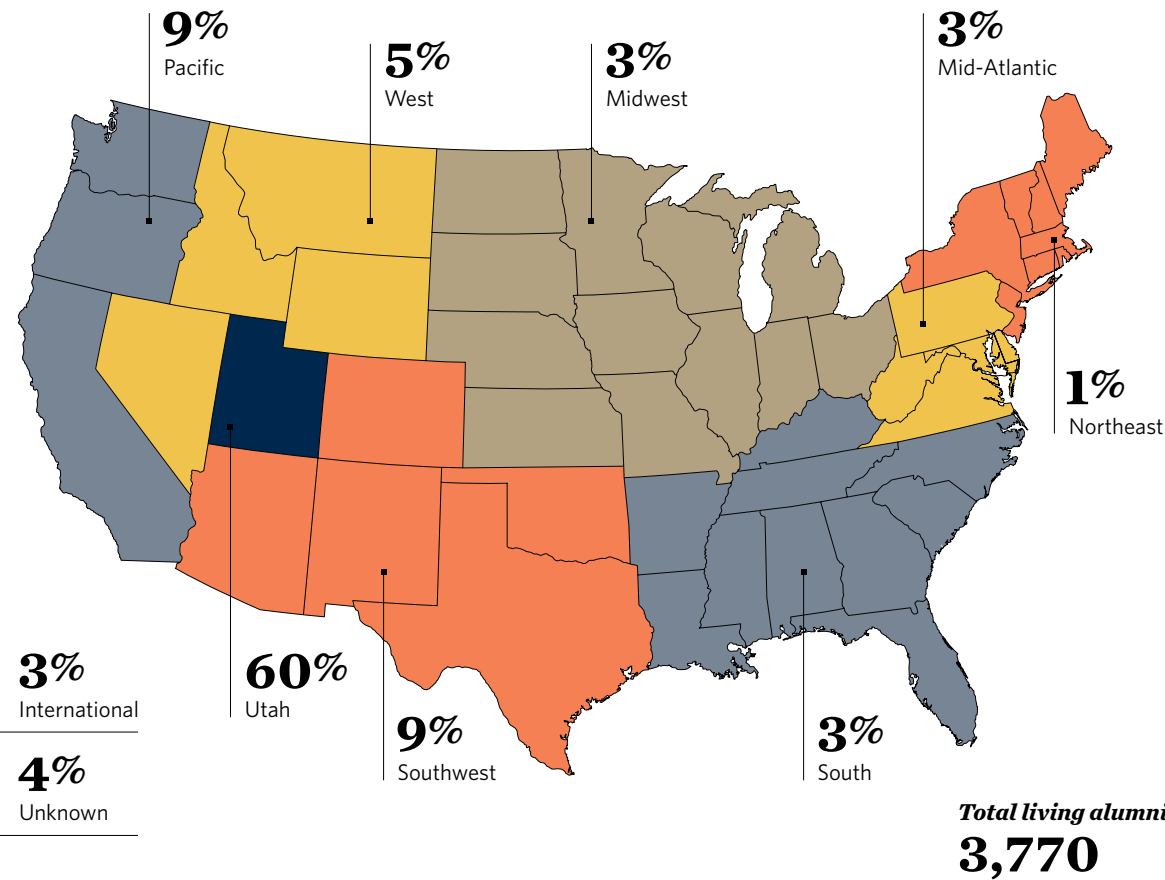


# *Alumni Updates*

BYU Marriott MPA alum **Ana Malafu-Eliesa** learned the importance of education from her father, who taught her that learning was the key to advancing in her career and supporting her family. That was certainly the case for Malafu-Eliesa. Her experience at the Romney Institute gave her the necessary tools and abilities to work toward obtaining her dream job. Read about her journey on page 32.

# Alumni Report

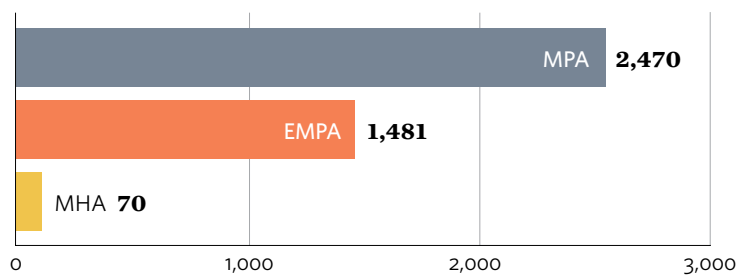
## Where BYU Marriott MPA Alumni Reside



## Top 10 States Where Alumni Reside

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Utah       | 6. Virginia   |
| 2. California | 7. Washington |
| 3. Arizona    | 8. Nevada     |
| 4. Idaho      | 9. Colorado   |
| 5. Texas      | 10. Oregon    |

## Degrees Granted\*



\* Degree numbers may differ slightly from past reports because data sources have been updated.

# MPA Alum Recognized for Extraordinary Career



On November 5, 2021, the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics at the BYU Marriott School of Business presented the 2021 N. Dale Wright Alumnus of the Year award to Dr. **Tamara Sheffield**. She is currently the medical director for community health and prevention at Intermountain Healthcare. Faculty members, alumni, and students from the Romney Institute’s MPA program gathered in the ballroom of BYU’s Harman Continuing Education Building to recognize and support her in this honor.

Sheffield centered her remarks around one of her favorite Bible stories: the story of Esther. “Queen Esther’s brave choice to put her life on the line to save her people was instigated by her uncle Mordecai asking her this question, ‘Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’” Sheffield said, referring to Esther 4:14.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a lot of things into perspective for many of us. During a time of great challenge, I’ve seen people step up and fill roles they never would have expected,” she continued. “And I’ve marveled at the many small miracles put in place over the years that have allowed us to manage and survive in this difficult time. These miracles were brought

about by people who were in the right place at the right time doing the right thing ‘for such a time as this.’”

Sheffield then talked about how she was placed in the right place at the right time to help the state of Utah during the pandemic. A 1989 graduate of the University of Utah School of Medicine, she graduated from BYU Marriott with her MPA in 1991 and started working for Intermountain Healthcare. She has been interested in protecting the community through immunization and chaired the group that developed the Utah Statewide Immunization Information System registry, which she said helped immensely to document vaccinations during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic and the current COVID-19 pandemic.

During her remarks, Sheffield, who currently lives in Provo, also spoke about a course she attended during her time in the MPA program that left a lasting impact: an ethics class from Kirk Hart. “Dr. Hart taught principles that have directed my actions in my career and even in my personal relationships,” she said. “Dr. Hart was here at BYU for ‘such a time’ because I needed his insights.”

Talking to the faculty of the Romney Institute, she continued that theme. “You may well be here for ‘such a time as this,’” she said.

Sheffield then directed the final part of her message to the MPA students in attendance, advising the students that they might not realize at first what purpose they are being prepared for. “I am confident you will be changing the world and am excited for you to have those moments in your life’s work where you might feel that you were put here for ‘such a time as this,’” she added.

The N. Dale Wright Outstanding Alumni award is named after N. Dale Wright, who served as director of the Romney Institute for 11 years. The award is presented annually to an alumnus of the Romney Institute who has demonstrated extraordinary service and leadership in the public and nonprofit sectors, as well as in their community.



## A Facilitator of Big and Small Change

more efficient is by using a strategy that former Utah governor Mike Leavitt taught him: knowing how to move the big gears. Parker recalls Leavitt explaining that although a government organization has thousands of employees, a good leader identifies the big gears that influence change not only at the top of an organization but also at the lower levels.

Strengthening the connection between his employees is an example of how Parker's actions affect change on all levels of his organization. "Some of the big gears are typical key drivers for the economy, such as job creation, citizen engagement, and technology," explains Parker. "However, the big gears can always change, and one big gear we've focused on lately is employee relationships.

"When we first sent employees home to work during the pandemic, they felt isolated and detached," he continues. "I started what we now call the daily update; I send an email to all employees each afternoon and talk about the fun happenings or recent meetings in the office, just to help employees feel connected. The daily update is one of the most beneficial ideas I've had throughout my entire career."

In fact, Parker's daily updates have been so successful that he plans to continue writing them even as his employees return to

the office. When he mentioned that he might stop the updates, his employees responded enthusiastically that they loved the daily updates and wanted them to continue. "At the end of the day, my employees' performance and morale are dependent on the connections they form with their team of coworkers," he says.

Outside of the office, Parker wants to ensure the citizens of Provo also feel a sense of connection and belonging. "A number of years ago, we came up with the tagline Welcome Home for the city of Provo, to communicate the idea of belonging. Provo has been home to untold numbers of people at some point during their lives," Parker says. "I sincerely hope every person who lives here even for a short time views Provo as home, and that each individual knows they are wanted and valued in our community."

Looking back, Parker feels blessed to have chosen a career that allows him to do what he loves on a daily basis. "I love the people I am surrounded by. I hope that I've made a difference in the communities where I've worked by improving the quality of life in small and big ways," he says. However, for Parker, the best is always yet to come. While he feels proud of Provo's past accomplishments, his positive focus for the city remains fixed forward.

## Paving Paths to Higher Education

When **Richard Amon** worked as the chief financial officer for the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE), he had an idea to set up an endowment fund for student support using the student-loan portfolio managed by his office. His work culminated in the passage of SB172 during the 2022 Utah legislative session, which created a \$300 million endowment fund to provide scholarships for Utah students. Amon, who graduated from the MPA program in 2005, continually strives to help students in their pursuit of higher education.

In January 2022 Amon left his position at USHE, and he now works as the vice chancellor of business affairs at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte), where he oversees the institution's finances, budgets, and facilities. "Education is my passion, and even though I took a circuitous path to get here, I love working at a university, being surrounded by students, and finding

ways to promote education and ensure student success," he says.

"I come from a modest family background and attended lower-income public schools in northern Utah," Amon continues. "When I was young, I never thought I would end up where I am today. Higher education was a door opener for me—especially the education I received at BYU."

In 2002 Amon completed the first step on his higher education path by earning his bachelor's degree in statistics from BYU. He worked as an actuarial associate for a year before realizing he wanted to pursue another path. "I've always had a soft spot for political philosophy and trying to solve problems that don't have easy solutions, which prompted me to pursue a degree in public administration," he says.

One problem Amon feels strongly about is barriers to obtaining higher education. He hopes Utah's new endowment fund will lead to life-changing opportunities for prospective Utah students, especially those who don't traditionally have such opportunities. "I love being involved in projects that have the potential to change people's lives," says Amon. "I want to make college more affordable and show people how a higher education can positively influence their lives."

More than a decade after Amon graduated from the MPA program,

higher education continued to impact his own life. In 2019 he received a PhD in political science from the University of Utah. Shortly after graduating, Amon taught a public finance and budgeting class as an adjunct professor in the MPA program at the University of Utah.

Amon enjoys teaching students the same skills he learned during his MPA studies—skills that have been critical for his current position at UNC Charlotte. "Most of my career has dealt with budgets and finances, and now I oversee all of the financial aspects for UNC Charlotte, so gaining a financial background at BYU Marriott was a big help.

"Other components of BYU Marriott's MPA program that have served me well are the oral and written communication skills I learned," he continues. "I have spent countless hours in front of legislative bodies, boards, trustees, and other groups. The ability to clearly articulate a purpose and relay information has helped me significantly in these situations."

However, Amon says the best thing to come out of his time as a student at BYU Marriott was not the skills he learned but his marriage. Amon met his wife, **Becki**, in the MPA program, which she completed in 2006. Now the couple resides in Charlotte, North Carolina, with their two daughters.







1972

During his first year in the MPA program, **John Darrington** took an introduction to public administration class that forever impacted the trajectory of his career. When an alumnus from Chicago visited the class and talked about his career as a city manager, Darrington knew he wanted to take a similar path. Sixteen years after graduating with his MPA in 1972, Darrington completed the senior executive program in state and local government at Harvard University. One of his favorite career projects was helping transform Rawlins, Wyoming, from a mayor-council form of government to a council-manager system. During this process, the city set in motion numerous projects, including the construction of the city's first-ever water treatment plant. He also loved the time he spent as chief administrative officer for the city of Richland, Washington, from 2001–07, where he was responsible for a \$198 million budget and more than 500 full-time employees. Darrington currently resides in Meridian, Idaho, with his wife, Susan. They have seven children.



1982

**Vance Fager** graduated with his MPA in 1982 and began his career as a hospital administrator with Hospital Corporation of America. He is currently the CEO of Americare LLC. He is also an owner of Grove Menus Inc., a web-based menu and foods services system that serves healthcare companies across the United States. Fager also owns Wedgewood Gardens, an assisted living facility in Branson, Missouri, and is on the board of Sunterra Springs, a short-term rehabilitation facility based in Idaho Falls. He loves “fixes,” and some of his proudest accomplishments include creating financial and operational turn-arounds for a rural hospital and a large assisted-living company. Fager lives with his wife, Diane, in Kearney, Missouri. The couple has 5 children and 16 grandchildren. In his free time, Fager enjoys riding bikes, reading, and teaching.



1996

**Cynthia Goodsell** graduated from the executive MPA program in 1996. After staying home with her children for several years, Goodsell joined BYU–Idaho faculty as an adjunct professor in 2010. In 2021 she was promoted to a curriculum-designer position. Now she works with faculty and development teams to design, develop, maintain, and improve online courses for BYU–Pathway Worldwide and BYU–Idaho students. Some of her responsibilities include working on data-driven improvement projects, supervising student design assistants, and working closely with faculty and remote instructors to pilot new courses and revisions. She loves her job and the opportunities she has to help further education for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints around the world. Goodsell currently lives in Rexburg, Idaho, with her husband, Troy. In her free time, she enjoys cooking and playing with her three grandchildren.



1996

As a student in the MPA program, **Leisa Tucker** had no idea that her career would lead her to the field of human resources. Although she took required HR classes while at the Romney Institute, she focused mainly on municipal government. After graduating in 1996, Tucker accepted a management analyst position with the Las Vegas Valley Water District. Her position had a large employee focus and was moved to the HR department during an organizational restructure, which caused her to “fall” into the world of human resources. She now works as a human resources manager for KidsPeace, a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the behavioral and mental health needs of children, families, and communities. Tucker has seven children, including four with special needs whom she and her husband adopted. Her family recently moved to Bangor, Maine, to be closer to extended family, and she is excited for new opportunities.



2008

After giving birth to her first child, a girl, **Barbara Leavitt** decided to pause her career in corporate America and focus on raising her kids. She eventually had three more children—all daughters. Two decades later, Leavitt chose to pursue her executive MPA degree to restart her career. “I realized that an MPA would support my passion for building communities,” she shares. She is currently the vice president of community impact for United Way of Utah County, where she manages the company’s internal programs focused on income, education, and health, as well as develops partnerships and coordinates service efforts. Leavitt is passionate about promoting parent engagement during early childhood. She implemented Help Me Grow Utah, a helpline that links families to information and services related to pregnancy and early childhood development. She finds the most joy in spending time with her family, reading to her grandchildren, cooking, sewing, and doing family history.



2013

**Nick Purse** decided to pursue an MPA from BYU Marriott in 2011, shortly after graduating with his juris doctor from the J. Reuben Clark Law School at BYU. Following his MPA graduation, he worked as a performance audit manager at the Office of the State Auditor in Utah until 2018. One of his proudest accomplishments was successfully identifying software configuration errors that led to the mistaken delivery of ballots during the 2017 special primary election in Utah’s Third Congressional District. His work in data analytics and automation caught the attention of AvalonBay Communities Inc., an equity real estate investment trust based in Arlington, Virginia. AvalonBay recruited Purse, and he now works as the company’s manager of IT governance. He currently resides in Irvine, California, with his wife, Tamara, and their two children. In his free time, he likes to ski, travel, and spend time with his family.



2017

**Hyun Kim** graduated with his executive MPA in 2017 and is currently the city administrator for Gillette, Wyoming. After graduating from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas with his bachelor’s degree in public administration in 2006, he started his career working for the federal government. However, he transitioned to local government in 2007. Before beginning his current job in August 2021, he worked as city manager for the city of Fife, Washington, for four years. Kim embraces the opportunities his career gives him to be a leader and a trailblazer for his teammates, many of whom have succeeded him in past positions. In Gillette, he enjoys working with a “wonderful team of dedicated public servants.” Kim and his wife, April, have four children. In his free time, he enjoys landscaping and gardening but notes that he is still learning how to master both skills.



2019

While **Nathan James** was a student at BYU, he auditioned to be Cosmo, walked in a fashion show, and provided Chinese tutoring to the assistant coach of the NBA’s Los Angeles Lakers. Since graduating with his MPA in 2019, James’s life has not been any less exciting. An internship opportunity he accepted with the Department of Commerce in International Trade while in the MPA program led James to his current career. He now works as an international trade analyst for the International Trade Administration of the US Department of Commerce. He investigates foreign companies and governments suspected of engaging in unfair trade practices, specifically focusing on companies that export and sell their goods in the United States below a fair market value. His proudest accomplishment was being a lead analyst in a pioneering investigation of unfairly subsidized wind towers from Malaysia. Outside of work, James enjoys playing the violin, painting, playing tennis, and, most important, traveling internationally; he has visited more than 30 countries and speaks three languages.

## A Door-Opening Degree

When she learned that a supervisor position would be opening where she worked, **Ana Malafu-Eliesa** decided to enroll in the executive MPA (EMPA) program at the Romney Institute to better qualify for the position. However, shortly before she graduated in 2007, an unexpected event changed her life—and career path—forever.

As a juvenile justice liaison with the Salt Lake County Economic Development department, Malafu-Eliesa's responsibilities involved working with at-risk kids and providing the tools they needed to attend college. She loved her job and knew her supervisor planned to retire within the next few years. However, one of the prerequisites for the supervisor position was a master's degree in public administration.



"I was not thrilled about the idea of going back to school," Malafu-Eliesa admits. "But one of my coworkers received his MPA at BYU Marriott and encouraged me to look into the program. I eventually decided to embrace the challenge of returning to college.

"My dad instilled in me a desire for education," she continues. "He was one of the first Tongans to migrate to Maui, Hawaii, where I was raised, and he always said education was the key to advancement and supporting my family. I wanted to further my education for him, too, so he would know I listened to and trusted his advice."

Unfortunately, when Malafu-Eliesa was in the last year of the EMPA program, her dad had a heart attack. "I had a difficult decision to make. The supervisor position I desperately wanted and had gone to school for was opening soon, but I also knew my dad didn't have much time left," she shares. "I made a decision that I will never regret: I moved back to Maui after I graduated to take care of my dad."

A few months after Malafu-Eliesa returned home, her dad, although still ill, encouraged her to find a job. She started looking and applied for a position as a victim witness counselor for the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney for the County of Maui. She was offered the job and started in 2007. Four years later, her father passed away.

In 2014, the director of her division retired. Luckily,

Malafu-Eliesa met one of the main requirements for the position: having an MPA degree. She applied and was chosen to be the new victim witness division director. During Malafu-Eliesa's time as division director, there were several mass shootings in the area, which prompted her to attend a training for mass violence held in Las Vegas.

While in Nevada, Malafu-Eliesa learned that the victim witness program administrator position for the Clark County District Attorney's office was open. Her dream job is to work for the FBI as a victim specialist supervisor, and she knew that supervising a large area such as Clark County would help her move toward that goal.

"When I heard about this opportunity, I was ready for a change of scenery," she says. She applied for the position and started the job in March 2020.

Malafu-Eliesa feels immensely grateful for her time in the MPA program, which not only opened doors for her career but also gave her the skills to be an effective leader. "People think that to be an administrator, you need to focus mainly on having a good heart and caring about people," she says. "While those are definitely important aspects of my job, I also need to know about policies, procedures, and leading my employees. My MPA degree provided me with the tools and abilities to help not just victims and witnesses but also my staff and administration."

## From Ants to the EPA

Life sometimes has a funny way of helping people find their paths, and in the case of MPA alumna **Shari Grossarth**, her road to the Romney Institute began with ants. While conducting ant research as an undergraduate conservation biology student, she discovered a side of public administration she previously didn't know existed—one that eventually led her to the MPA program.

Years of hiking, camping, and visiting national parks with her family instilled in Grossarth an appreciation for the natural world. Armed with a love for the outdoors and conservation, Grossarth came to BYU, declared herself a conservation biology major, and planned to receive her graduate degree in entomology. However, while working as a research assistant, Grossarth collaborated with a professor from the MPA program who changed the course of her life. "I met BYU professor Don Adolphson while I was doing ant ecology research, and that's how I discovered the connection between environmental management and public administration," says Grossarth.

After receiving her bachelor's degree from BYU in 2000, Grossarth completed her MPA at BYU Marriott in 2004. Following graduation, Grossarth began working for the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is still there today. Her current role as a policy analyst at the EPA's Washington, DC, office involves consulting on new guidelines developed by the EPA.

Although Grossarth didn't end up studying insects under a microscope, her time at the EPA has kept her on her toes as she has filled multiple roles. Initially she felt unqualified for these jobs, but her combined experience from Church service and being a student at the Romney Institute taught her the power of being flexible and open minded. "I feel like I wasn't qualified for many of the things I was asked to do," explains Grossarth. "But because of the gospel and the versatility I gained from the MPA program, I was able to learn."

One notable experience that helped shape Grossarth was her missionary service for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Relocating to Hamburg, Germany, for 18 months to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the German people wasn't easy,



Shari Grossarth (middle left)

but she wouldn't trade the life lessons she gained. "My mission was wonderful, and I love the people of Germany, but missions are hard. A mission taught me resilience and showed me how to do difficult things, endure, and seek guidance," says Grossarth. "Many people didn't initially want to talk about Jesus Christ, so I learned how to share the gospel in creative ways and love all types of people."

Whether she is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the people of Germany, taking on a new role at work, or conducting ant research, Grossarth has learned the importance of being open minded and willing to try new things. "When it comes to life, I've realized it is important to be flexible and open to different ideas, possibilities, and opportunities. I might not have discovered the MPA program if I hadn't been open to Professor Adolphson's ideas and insight while we were researching ants," says Grossarth.

Although a career at the EPA wasn't initially on her radar, she is grateful for the many experiences that have guided her to where she is today. "The work I do can truly make a difference, and I feel a sense of purpose, like I am accomplishing something good," she concludes.



# *Romney Institute Support*

Almost five decades of service in the public sector made Gene Dodaro a natural choice for the Romney Institute's 2022 Administrator of the Year award. Currently serving as the US Comptroller General, Dodaro loves the people he works with, enjoys the opportunity to testify before Congress, and appreciates the ability to give back to his country. Read more about Dodaro and the award he received on page 38.



# Ethics Conference Encourages Business Leaders, Educators to Find Solutions

Business leaders and educators from across the nation recently gathered at the BYU Marriott School of Business for the most recent Partners in Business Ethics Symposium. The 2021 conference marked BYU Marriott's first time hosting the event.

"The design of the conference is to bring together business school deans and corporate executives to discuss what we as educators can do in the classroom to better promote ethical business behavior," says **Brad Agle**, the George W. Romney Endowed Professor of ethics and leadership at the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics at BYU Marriott. "We want to prepare students to enter the workforce as leaders who value integrity."

Faculty members from BYU Marriott who organized the conference wanted to ensure that the sessions were heavily discussion based, inviting everyone to share their ideas for bringing positive change into the classroom. "We designed the conference in a way that encouraged a high level of participation and interaction," Agle explains. "Most sessions had a facilitator and three or four panelists who initiated discussion among the attendees."

BYU Marriott dean **Brigitte Madrian**, Agle, and **Kim Clark**, former dean of Harvard Business School and current NAC Professor of Business at BYU Marriott, were hosts of the symposium. Additionally, several faculty members from the Romney Institute served as facilitators, including professor **Brad Owens**, adjunct professor **Barry Rella**, associate professor **Eva Witesman**, associate teaching professor **Aaron Miller**, and **Jeffery Thompson**, director of the Sorensen Center for Moral and Ethical Leadership at BYU.

Other facilitators included **Lance Bennett**, an MBA prep coach; **Paul Godfrey**, the William and Roceil Low Professor of Business Strategy at BYU Marriott;

and two BYU Marriott faculty members from the Department of Management: assistant professor **Isaac Smith** and professor **Kristen DeTienne**. Panelists included additional faculty from BYU Marriott, deans and professors from other business schools, business executives, and leaders of various organizations.

The conference featured three high-profile speakers, including two corporate whistleblowers: Tyler Shultz, who exposed fraud at Theranos, a blood-testing company, and Sherron Watkins, who found accounting irregularities at Enron, the former energy company.

"Tyler Shultz and Sherron Watkins may be the two biggest corporate whistleblowers ever, and our symposium was their first time being in a room together," Agle says. "They both shared fascinating stories and talked about the challenges that came with exposing ethical issues in their former companies." In addition to speaking to conference attendees, Shultz and Watkins met with BYU Marriott students during a luncheon and spoke about integrity in the workplace.

The third high-profile speaker was Dale Murphy, a former professional baseball player for the Atlanta Braves and two-time National League MVP. Murphy was part of a panel that addressed the subject of business as a profession.

Other symposium panels focused on different topics surrounding the 2021 theme, "Business Education in a World of Stakeholder Capitalism, Black Lives Matter, and the New Association to Advance Collegiate



Schools of Business (AACSB) Accreditation Standards." Agle says this theme aimed to capture some of the biggest changes happening in the world of business.

"We wanted to focus on an idea from a 2019 statement by the Business Roundtable, which is comprised of CEOs from the biggest companies in the country," Agle says. "Their idea was to shift from shareholder capitalism, which is when a company's primary purpose is to make money for shareholders, to stakeholder capitalism, which brings an additional focus to creating employment opportunities and doing good in the community."

"We also wanted to discuss what business schools should be doing to create a better world in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion," Agle continues. "We live in a time of societal changes. We wanted our attendees to discuss what these changes mean for the business world and the classroom."

Symposium participants enjoyed both the interactive nature of the panels and the relevance of the topics that were presented. "The Partners in Business Ethics Symposium was truly educational, inspirational, and enjoyable," says Örn B. Bodvarsson, dean of the Atkinson Graduate School of Management at Willamette University. "I learned a lot over two days, had the pleasure of meeting and interacting with many terrific colleagues, and came away with crystallized ideas about what I want to do at my own institution in the areas of corporate social responsibility, stakeholder capitalism, and related topics."

The conference sessions and panels were held October 14–15, 2021. The first day of the conference

took place at Aspen Grove, a BYU property in Provo Canyon. "We weren't worried about snow before the conference, because who worries about snow in mid-October?" Agle says. "As the day approached, the weather reports predicted snow and the coldest day of the month. Luckily, the weather wasn't bad; we just had a light cover of snow. The setting could not have been more perfect—I felt like I was in a Hallmark movie. Our attendees loved their experience at Aspen Grove."

The second day's sessions were held in the Tanner Building. In total, the symposium had 11 breakout sessions. Conference attendees expressed that the panel topics were thought-provoking and sparked discussions about change. "Since the conference ended, I've had conversations with participants about the subjects presented at the conference," says Agle. "Our symposium prompted attendees to think about different issues in business ethics and how they can address these issues, which was our goal. We hoped attendees would continue talking about these issues outside of the conference. Since that seems to be happening, I would say we accomplished our main goal."

Attendees left the conference looking forward to causing change in the classroom. "The conference prompted me to think about how the next generation of business leaders will value ethics in their organizations," says **McKenzie Rees**, assistant professor of organizational behavior and human resources at BYU Marriott. "The topics we discussed at this conference will hopefully be implemented by business school leaders moving forward and shape the conversation around ethics for years to come."

The Partners in Business Ethics Symposium was first held in 2010 and was cohosted by the Penn State Smeal College of Business and American Express. Each year, a different school is asked to host the symposium. The conference brings together business school deans, thought leaders in business, and corporate leaders who are passionate about ethics.

Faculty from BYU Marriott first attended the symposium in 2018, when the University of Illinois hosted the conference. Madrian and Agle talked to several people at the conference who asked them to host the symposium in the future. "This conference was absolutely fantastic, and I'm so glad that we embraced the chance to participate," Agle says.

## Federal Official Receives 2022 Administrator of the Year Award

U.S. Comptroller General Gene Dodaro recently accepted the Romney Institute's 2022 Administrator of the Year award. This award is presented annually to an individual who has built a noteworthy career in the public or nonprofit sector, and recipients are recognized for both their contributions to their fields and their exemplary leadership qualities.

Dodaro has served in the public sector for 49 years through his work with the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The GAO provides government leaders with valuable nonpartisan data designed to help them make better-informed financial decisions. In 2010 Dodaro was confirmed by the US Senate as the US Comptroller General, which placed him at the head of the GAO. Despite the occasional stress that comes with juggling his many duties, Dodaro says he thoroughly enjoys working with other public servants who are committed to improving the lives of their fellow Americans.

"In the GAO, we have a tremendous workforce of dedicated people who are committed to public service and to doing what will best support Congress and the American people," Dodaro says. "Working in that kind of atmosphere is a wonderful experience.

While the journey has been meaningful, I've enjoyed the people I've met along the way even more."

In addition to loving the people with whom he works, Dodaro relishes opportunities to testify before Congress. "I love chances to interact directly with policy-makers. I can make a difference by giving sound advice on how to improve our government," he says. "Every day I remember why GAO exists—to help our nation's leaders make informed decisions."

Dodaro was drawn to a career in public service because he wanted his personal efforts to make a significant impact on his country. "I started working in the government because I didn't want to be someone who just sat around and complained about what was happening in the country; I wanted to have the ability to positively impact the government," he says. "I believe we are here on earth to help others, and my career has allowed me to do that.

"I've stayed with the GAO for all these years because I love the wide variety of interesting issues we work with," he continues. "In the Government Accountability Office, we are not confined to a particular department or agency. I'm constantly learning."

When he was presented with his award at the Romney Institute's

end-of-year banquet, Dodaro spoke to the 2022 graduating class and MPA faculty members about the importance of pursuing a career in public service. "Public service is a noble profession," he said. "We need good people in government, like you, who have high ethics, integrity, and competence. In your future careers, I hope you take advantage of opportunities to solve many of the problems we see in our world today.

"When you work in the public sector, you can do things that help create a better standard of living and that will benefit your children and grandchildren in the future," he concluded.



## Distinguished Scholars Receive Gary C. Cornia Lecture Series Award

The Romney Institute recently awarded the Gary C. Cornia Lecture Series Award to two notable academics: Sally Wallace and Ram Cnaan.

Wallace, dean of the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University, received the first award on October 28, 2021. Cornia is one of her personal role models, making this award especially meaningful.

During her lecture, Wallace spoke to faculty members from the Romney Institute about current changes in the public sector, the increased need for teaching digital skills in the classroom, and the benefits of community partnership in research. "Partnering with the community is important when conducting research," she said. "We need to shift our mindset from studying communities to studying with communities."

Prior to becoming dean of the Andrew Young School in 2018, Wallace served as the director of the school's Fiscal Research Center for seven years. "At the Fiscal Research Center, we focus on doing meaningful, quality work," she explained. "We present information about complicated public policy issues in ways that legislators understand, which provides opportunities for us as researchers to give back to the community."

Preparing students for the future is a central focus for Wallace. "I encourage students to develop the skills and foresight necessary for success in their careers and in their capacity to do social good," she added.

The second award was given to Ram Cnaan, the director of the Program for Religion and Social Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice.

When he received his award on March 31, 2022, Cnaan shared a presentation about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected nonprofit organizations. "Many nonprofits suffered a sudden blow and had to



Sally Wallace



Ram Cnaan

reorganize themselves," he explained. "Several public nonprofit places closed their doors to the people they relied on—people who previously donated or paid for services. Losing these patrons contributed to financial problems and organizational challenges."

As an example, Cnaan highlighted the Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance (MANNA), an organization based in Philadelphia that experienced these challenges. "Before the pandemic, MANNA had a three-month-long waitlist of volunteers. With an abundance of volunteers available, the leaders of MANNA didn't value their core group, their frequent volunteers, as much as they should have," explained Cnaan. "We suggested that the organization develop a core of loyal volunteers and start cultivating relationships with them. The people in a nonprofit organization are what allow that organization to thrive."

Cnaan expressed similar sentiments to the students with whom he met during his visit to BYU Marriott. "Volunteering keeps our society thriving and makes us happy to be a part of our communities," he said. "If we want to help our communities, we need to help others improve their quality of life."

# New Scholarship Continues the Candy Bomber Legacy



In 1948 a transport pilot in the United States military made numerous trips to the skies of West Berlin, where, in addition to essential foodstuffs and fuel, he dropped parachutes carrying candy, chocolate, and chewing gum to children waiting eagerly on the ground below. As he approached the groups of excited children, the pilot famously wiggled the wings of his plane so they would recognize him.

These candy runs earned Lieutenant Gail S. Halvorsen an affectionate nickname: the Candy Bomber. On February 16, 2022, Halvorsen, who had advanced in rank to become a colonel, passed away, but his memory lives on through a new endowment funded by generous MPA alumni and friends of the Romney Institute.

The idea for the endowment came years ago, when the primary donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, was a student in the MPA program. “I saw many dedicated scholarships given to graduate students who aspired to work in the fields of city management or hospital administration,” the donor explains. “What seemed to be missing were scholarships for students who were headed to federal and state government positions, particularly first-responder positions such as the armed forces.”

The donor had wanted to start an endowment to support such students for a long time, and after meeting Halvorsen at a BYU Marriott MPA luncheon in 2017, the individual knew that the endowment needed to be in Halvorsen’s name. “I could think of no better marquee name for the project than Colonel Halvorsen,” says the donor.

In mid-September 2020, just one month before Halvorsen’s 100th birthday, the donor worked with the Philanthropies department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to set up the endowment.

Thanks to a united effort from many MPA alumni, by March 2022—only 18 months later—the endowment reached the required amount, a mere month after Halvorsen passed away at age 101. Moving forward, the funds

will provide financial assistance to MPA students, continuing Halvorsen’s legacy of giving others hope in times of need.

Halvorsen was born in Salt Lake City and grew up on a small farm in Garland, Utah. At age 19, he entered a civilian pilot program at the Brigham City airport and received his pilot’s license. Two years later, in 1942, he joined the United States Army Air Corps, which became the US Air Force in 1947. After World War II ended, Halvorsen was assigned to fly in the Berlin Airlift, where he and his fellow airmen dropped more than 23 tons of candy, along with other critical supplies, to individuals living in war-torn West Berlin.

After completing his unique and influential role in the Berlin Airlift, Halvorsen continued to contribute to various humanitarian causes throughout the world, including orchestrating more candy drops in countries such as Albania, Bosnia, Guam, Iraq, and Japan. He served multiple missions for the Church with his first wife, Alta, including one in London from 1986 to 1987 and one in St. Petersburg, Russia, from 1995 to 1997. He was also the assistant dean of student life at BYU from 1976 to 1986. Halvorsen’s memory survives through his family, including his second wife, Lorraine, as well as his 5 children, 24 grandchildren, and 69 great-grandchildren.

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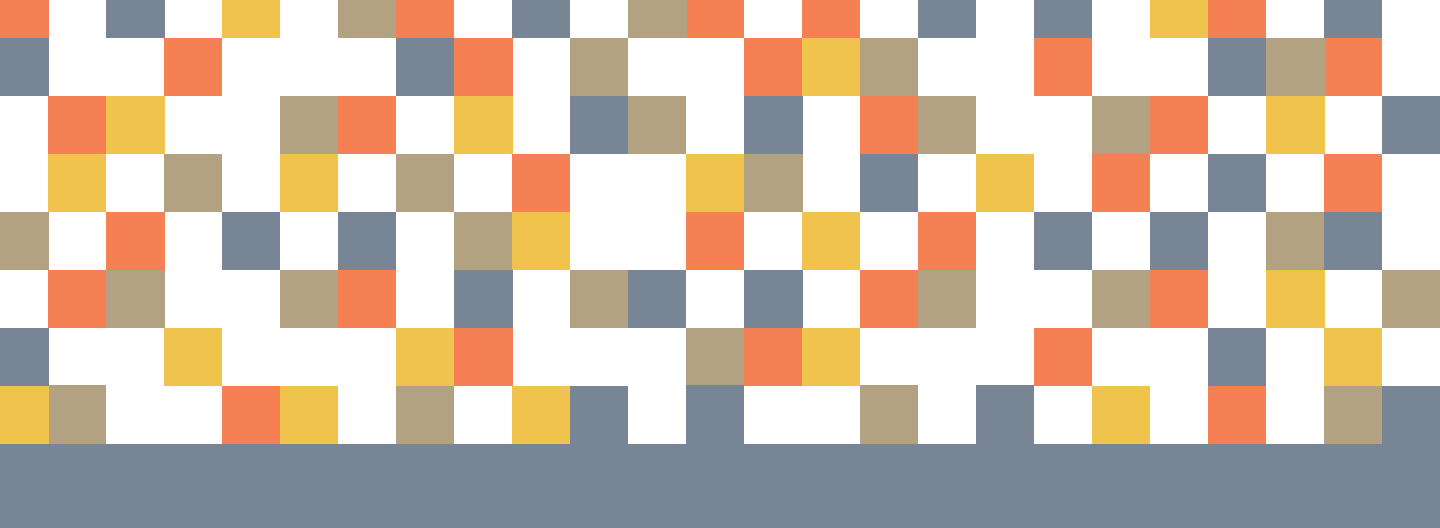


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