

## Recent Master's in Public Policy Graduates Are Making Their Marks in Multiple Sectors

A master's in public policy can open doors to a wide range of careers, as demonstrated by this sample of students who earned an M.P.P. at UMBC.

### ■ NON-PROFIT

#### **Mary Hester, M.P.P. '15**

*Director, Program Administration, Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance*

Undergraduate degree: Dance, UMBC; Accelerated Pathway program

A dance major at UMBC, Mary focused on education policy in her M.P.P. studies. She now plays a role that combines her passions—as program administration director for the Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance, which impacts local and state policies by facilitating improved quality and access to arts education in public schools.

#### **Qubilah Huddleston, M.P.P. '17**

*Manager, Student Recruitment and Retention, CODE in the Schools—Baltimore Corps*

Undergraduate degree: Political science and government, University of North Carolina

Qubilah learned about UMBC and the M.P.P. program while attending a summer program on campus. Her multifaceted experience during her graduate studies included a Shriver RISE fellowship and internships at Baltimore Child Abuse Center, state Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and Exelon Corporation. She now manages recruitment and retention for CODE in the Schools, which brings computer science education to Baltimore City Schools.

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***"The well-rounded coursework and the Urban Track were great backdrops into my career in city government."***

### ■ ASSOCIATION

#### **Alex Bardakh, M.P.P. '12**

*Director, Public Policy & Advocacy, Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine (AMDA)*

Undergraduate degree: Political science, UMBC; Accelerated Pathway program

Alex has drawn on his M.P.P. in his work at the AMDA, the national medical specialty society that represents clinicians practicing in post-acute and long-term care settings, where he is responsible for implementing the organization's extensive legislative and regulatory policy agenda. He previously was the Government Relations and Advocacy Coordinator for the American Urological Association, where he managed the political action committee, spearheaded an advocacy conference, and helped advance the association's policy goals in the areas of physician payment policy as well as prostate cancer treatment.

### ■ MUNICIPAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT

#### **Steven Sharkey, M.P.P. '06**

*Director, Department of General Services, Baltimore City Government*

Undergraduate degree: Political science, Western Maryland College

Steven has worked for Baltimore City since 2005, including positions at Citistat, Special Services and Property Management, and the Police Department, and has led the Department of General Services since 2012. He says that the M.P.P. program had "a very positive impact" on him. "The well-rounded coursework and the Urban Track were great backdrops into my career in city government."

## ■ MUNICIPAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT (con't)

### **Jason Higgins, M.P.P. '10**

*Health Policy Analyst, Maryland Department of Health*

Undergraduate degree: Political science, UMBC;  
Accelerated Pathway program

"It was not necessarily the topics that I remember from the classes," says Jason, "but the methods or processes we used to organize thoughts, design projects/models, and reach evidence-based conclusions." He most values the courses that covered "analytical skills (budgeting, statistical analysis, methods)" and has found that his degree allows him "to work in both non-profit and state organizations." Jason is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in public policy at UMBC.

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## ■ FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

### **Michael Lessmeier, M.P.P. '16**

*Grants Management Specialist, U.S. Department of Labor*

Undergraduate degree: Education,  
Mount Mercy University

Michael came to UMBC after teaching in Zambia with the Peace Corps. In the M.P.P. program, he liked having "the ability to work on several different policy aspects where you had to justify your reasoning and conclusion." He appreciated "how open and accessible the faculty were. They truly wanted us to do well in the program." He also values the degree, which he says "has assisted with getting interviews and showing employers that I have specialized skills that are translatable to many jobs." When asked what kind of student would succeed in the program, he responds, "Someone who is open to new ideas and strong-willed enough to stick to their research."

## ■ ELECTED OFFICIAL

### **Kristerfer Burnett, M.P.P. '11**

*Member, Baltimore City Council*

*Director of Community Organizing, CHAI Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc.*

Undergraduate degree: African-American studies,  
University of Maryland, College Park

While in graduate school, Kristerfer focused on issues of affordable housing policy, urban development, and improving K-12 academic outcomes in low-income communities, and worked as a graduate research assistant at the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Upon earning his M.P.P, he was hired as the lead community organizer for the Service Employee International Union (SEIU1199) "Good Jobs, Better Baltimore" campaign, an advocacy coalition of unions, churches, and community groups. In 2012 he joined CHAI Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc., as the Director of Community Organizing, and was elected to represent District 8 in Baltimore City Council in 2016.

## ■ PRIVATE SECTOR

### **Meaghan E. George, M.P.P. '12**

*Senior Practice Consultant, CareFirst*

Undergraduate degree: Business administration,  
University of Delaware

Meaghan said that the M.P.P. program helped her get an "immediate raise upon graduation and credentials." With a focus on health policy during her master's studies, she was able to serve as part of the team that started up the new Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy at the Brookings Institution. She recently moved to the private sector, taking a position at CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield as a senior practice consultant.

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***A good candidate for the program is "open to new ideas and strong-willed enough to stick to their research."***