From battleships to battlefields, from foreign lands to the first-floor auditorium, the Schar School expands its mission of higher education by taking students out of the classroom and escorting them into other realms of experience. They learn by engaging with practitioners, they experience where history was made, and they gain insights that inform their own ideas. See Page 5 for more on where we go, what we do, and who we meet.

—Buzz McClain
Letter from the Dean
In the beginning there was the “sage on the stage.”

The traditional pedagogy of the professor imparting his or her wisdom from the front of the room got us this far, didn’t it? But these days, at least at the Schar School, our classrooms are less a stage for a sage than they are landing platforms for elevated discussions. The emphasis, of course, is on critical thinking and self-discovery, as professors impart their insights through a variety of innovative instructional methods.

But we have found that some of the most meaningful learning comes from outside the classroom, in the forms of off-site tours, on-site speakers, after-hours events, and the occasional adventure to far-off, exotic locales.

As you will see on the following pages, we encourage our students to be in the world, learning first-hand from those who are experts in their fields. And when we can’t get outside, we bring those practitioners inside our walls, where students share time with invited speakers and panelists, many of them in leadership positions in government and industry.

In my own experience, a one-week study program for high school seniors during winter break brought me to the Washington, D.C., area for the first time. As it happens, we stayed not far from our Arlington Campus, where my office is today. The people we encountered and the topics that we discussed opened my mind to the idea of studying government and politics, to the point where I immediately registered for a three-week spring internship program on Capitol Hill.

Had we not ventured out of our classroom and into the “real world,” who knows where I would have ended up. I’m happy now, with the help of the faculty and staff of the Schar School, to return that life-altering opportunity to our students.

Mark J. Rozell
Dean, Schar School of Policy and Government
Ruth D. and John T. Hazel Chair in Public Policy
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IN MEMORIAM: DR. ROGER R. STOUGH

Former University Professor and one of the four “founders” of what is now the Schar School, Roger Stough, passed away on September 6 of complications from surgery. He was 79-years-old.

Dr. Stough’s early efforts to attract faculty, students, and research grants were vital to the development of The Institute of Public Policy—then TIPP, now part of the top-ranked Schar School—at a time when state funding was in jeopardy. Dr. Stough was principal investigator for grants and contracts totaling more than $50 million from agencies ranging from NASA and the National Science Foundation to the Department of Justice and the Federal Transit Administration. He was also key to launching many graduate degree programs and establishing influential research centers, including the Schar School’s Center for Regional Analysis.

He was awarded an honorary doctorate from Jönköping University in Sweden in 2006 and, in 2017, Dr. Stough was presented with the Schar School’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

“First and foremost, Roger was a teacher,” said Founding Dean Emeritus Kingsley E. Haynes, who, with Dr. Stough and professors Seymour Martin Lipset and Donald Kash, founded TIPP. “He inspired generations of students over his 40-plus-year academic career. As much as all of us will miss him, we also know that through his students he will continue to live on.”

He is survived by his wife Barbara and sons Brandon and John.

IN MEMORIAM: ANDREW HUGHES HALLETT

“So very sorry to hear of Andrew Hughes Hallett’s passing—he was an accomplished economist, with the finest of intellects and, above all, a thoroughly decent man. My thoughts are with all who loved him.” —Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland

Andrew Hughes Hallett, Schar School University Professor Emeritus of Public Policy and Economics, passed away December 31, 2019, after a seven-year battle with cancer. He was 72.

In addition to a distinguished academic career, Professor Hughes Hallett was a key member of the Scottish independence movement, serving on the Council of Economic Advisers to the government of Scotland and as a Commissioner on the Scottish Fiscal Commission. More recently, he sat on the Scottish Growth Commission for the Scottish government, and was an expert advisor to the Kalman Commission of the UK government on economic governance.

In recognizing Prof. Hughes Hallett’s illustrious career, Schar School Dean Mark J. Rozell noted that he was “one of the most cited macroeconomists in the world, whose work intersected theory and practice. Scholars and government officials worldwide consulted his studies. He embodied what the Schar School represents.”

“Andy was a wonderful graduate student mentor and a wonderfully open personality,” said Kingsley Haynes, the former Schar School dean who recruited the professor in 2007. “We were lucky to have him and we will miss him dearly.”
On a cold mid-spring day, 40 Schar School students and a few faculty members braved the frigid elements—as well as an unspeakably early morning departure time, on a Saturday, no less—to stand in a blustery, field-stone-pocked Pennsylvania pasture to hear a guide talk about the history of the region.

The wind was relentless, but the guide was inspirational, and the students accomplished what they came for: to learn about the Battle of Gettysburg as a national security matter, and to discover what strategic decisions leading up to the three-day fight constituted the successes and failures that led to 8,000 casualties.

The eight-hour tour of Gettysburg National Military Park was hosted by the Schar School’s Center for Security Policy Studies and was just one of several field trips the center organizes for students to explore significant landmarks. Other units within the Schar School offer their own programming that takes students outside the classroom to illuminate, emphasize, and uncover aspects of their fields of study.

“There was a huge benefit to being in the place where the action happened,” said Connor Monie, a Master’s in International Security student of the Gettysburg tour. “It is informative and insightful to bring the war down to a personal level, which you miss in broad classes.”

Most of the Schar School excursions are followed by student-written papers reporting what was learned, but some are just for enlightenment. Others are designed to help students with their studies, such as the fall semester behind-the-scenes visit to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The idea, said Schar School librarian Kim MacVaugh, was to expose students, particularly those from outside the region, to the vast resources available to supplement their studies. The two-hour tour of the world’s largest library included a detailed hour-long clinic on how to locate and reserve academic materials for research purposes.

“I have always wanted to visit the Library of Congress, but with a busy school and work schedule I was not able to plan it,” said Fatiha Tabibipour, a junior Government and International Politics major. “I am very grateful that the school I attend can provide me and my fellow students with such opportunities.”

Sometimes it’s more convenient to bring the out-of-the-classroom experience to campus, which accounts for the robust schedule of guest speakers who meet students at breakfast talks, brown bag luncheons, afternoon sessions, and evening events throughout the fall and spring semesters.

Continued on Page 6
In November, former ambassador Susan Rice and former CIA director David Petraeus drew an audience of about 300 for a conversation addressing civil discourse in politics, moderated by Today Show news anchor Craig Melvin. As a “value-add,” Rice and Petraeus met with selected Schar School students in a private session before the public event to discuss careers in public service.

“This was exceptionally cool,” said sophomore Government and International Politics major Erica Kelly. “One of the reasons I chose George Mason University is its proximity to Washington, D.C., and the connections the faculty have—it’s exciting to see that bear fruit. I’m very proud that the university I attend brings in speakers like this.”

“The fact that our school carries enough weight to bring in members of the federal government with high public profile positions is an asset to us,” said sophomore government major Ian Waite. “It’s a great benefit to students to see first-hand what their experiences are like, and to do it in a question-and-answer, very personal setting was amazing.”

The night before the Rice-Petraeus event, Associate Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan delivered the annual Roger Wilkins Lecture at Mason, in the form of a 70-minute conversation with Schar School Robinson Professor and Pulitzer Prize-winner Steven Pearlstein. The lecture is sponsored by Mason’s Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Program (PPE), directed by Schar School Associate Professor Matthew Scherer.

“The opportunities at Mason exceed my expectations,” said sophomore government major Molly Reed following the meeting with Rice and Petraeus. It was an understatement: Only an evening earlier, Reed was dining with Justice Kagan at a private dinner for students.
Not all the speakers are high-profile, but many of them are leaders in their fields. An afternoon conversation about the balance of nuclear energy and nuclear security brought to campus Brent Park, Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation at the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration, and Mikhail Chudakov, Deputy Director General for Nuclear Energy at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

“Events like these offer an opportunity to gain access to senior leaders that are not frequently available to students,” said biodefense PhD student Laura Denlinger, who attended the discussion. “It stimulates my thinking and gives me new directions, and I build relationships that are very valuable for the future.”

Additional reporting by Dixie Downing.

Other Schar School Opportunities Beyond the Classroom

A tour of the USS John C. Stennis nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the USS Nitze destroyer, and the USS New Hampshire nuclear-powered attack submarine during a visit to Norfolk Naval Base.

Photo by Dixie Downing/Schar School of Policy and Government

Former director of the British Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, Sir John Scarlett, in conversation with Schar School Distinguished Visiting Professor and former Acting Director of the CIA Michael Morell.

Photo by Buzz McClain/Schar School of Policy and Government

Each January, policy-minded Mason students venture to Richmond to advocate for higher education causes in the Statehouse, meeting with elected officials from around the Commonwealth.

Photo by Evan Cantwell/Creative Services
Marisol Maddox: Three Alarming Weeks on an Icebreaker

By Buzz McClain

Marisol Maddox spent three weeks this summer aboard a U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker traveling inside the Arctic Circle. She was prepared for minus-20-with-wind-chill temperatures and brisk 20-plus-hours-a-day sunshine, but the cold temperatures never came. What stood out to her most was something she did not see, even at close to 75-degrees-north.

Ice.

In fact, the region experienced an extraordinary heatwave during the month preceding her journey, with temperatures reaching into the 90s. So much for the minus-20 outfits.

“Marisol Maddox is a pioneer,” said Ellen Laipson, director of the International Security program and the Center for Security Policy Studies at the Schar School. “She has demonstrated a deep commitment to this increasingly critical topic of security implications of climate change. Her exciting adventures outside the classroom will bring some great ground-truth to our classroom discussions.”

Maddox was already familiar with the looming disastrous consequences of the thinning and retreating ice on the indigenous populations of Alaska, including culture-changing consequences for subsistence hunters. The loss of food sources for humans also reduces the food for wildlife, which also finds a diminished livable habitat. In other words, there is less food for anyone or anything in the region.

“And those subsistence hunters,” she added, “are Alaskans. They are Americans. We are talking about a homeland security issue for people who have co-existed with the land for thousands of years.”

Scientists on board “detected the northernmost recorded sample of a harmful algae bloom,” she said. “They were able to use that information to alert local indigenous communities that this was a public health risk and that they should avoid subsistence activities in that area.

“This is a small example of why we need sustained observation in this region,” Maddox said. “We can’t detect it if we aren’t there.”

Healy. This was an excursion to see firsthand the results of a warming ocean on Alaskan soil and the seas surrounding it. What she saw, and didn’t see, were indicative of concerning trends regarding global warming, which acts as a threat multiplier by affecting multiple sectors of society.

“This should not be a partisan issue,” Maddox said. “This is about the need to implement appropriate policy to mitigate massive risk.”
The National Science Foundation has awarded a multi-institutional team led by Northwestern University a $9 million grant to launch the Sage project, a novel cyberinfrastructure created to exploit dramatic improvements in artificial intelligence technology. The end goal is to build a continent-spanning network of smart sensors that will allow scientists to analyze and respond to data almost instantly.

Schar School Professor of Neuroscience James Olds joins a team of researchers from Argonne National Laboratory, the University of Chicago, and the University of California-San Diego that will design and build reusable software components and cyberinfrastructure services to support the new scientific measurement functions. These range from in-situ analysis of high-bandwidth sensor data streams to adaptive system behaviors, such as adjusting the sampling rates and directional settings of LIDAR instruments or high-resolution cameras in order to capture events in more detail.

“This is important because it allows scientists to reconfigure arrays of sensors ‘on the fly’ when something important happens, like a wildfire in Sonoma County or a Derecho moving through Ohio,” said Olds, former head of Biological Sciences Directorate at the National Science Foundation.

The new “distributed infrastructure” will allow scientists to analyze and respond to data almost instantly. From the early detection of wildfire smoke plumes to identifying the ultrasonic calls of bats to the patterns of pedestrians in a busy crosswalk, the artificial intelligence-enabled sensors within Sage will give scientists a new tool for understanding our planet.

“We’ll know when it’s successful when NSF’s largest instruments can adapt in real-time to interesting events ranging from those in the cosmos to those in our urban centers,” said Olds.
By Buzz McClain

By his own admission, Public Policy PhD candidate Muhammad Salar Khan had never ingested marijuana, but in the course of performing a study of the effects of taxes imposed on legal marijuana sales in Oregon, Khan communicated with more than 40 who not only ingest it but use it as a commodity.

“It came as a gentle surprise to find that those in the burgeoning business of legal pot are serious-minded, results-driven professionals attempting to overcome obstacles in a marketplace filled with misconceptions,” Khan wrote in a widely circulated op-ed published by the higher education news service, The Conversation.

The op-ed, which was circulated by the Associated Press, Salon, Reason, Phys.org, and dozens of other outlets, was called, somewhat whimsically, “It’s High Time Someone Studied Marijuana Taxes—So We Did.”

Khan’s findings presented local authorities with a thorough analysis of the economic consequences of taxes on a rapidly expanding billion-dollar industry. Oregon, where recreational pot is taxed at 25 percent and medical marijuana is untaxed, is a compelling case study for other jurisdictions considering the legalization of marijuana.

“Many people shifted to untaxed medical marijuana immediately after marijuana legalization passed in Oregon as you can see by the rise of medical marijuana applications post-taxation,” Khan observed. “Medical marijuana patients may also buy untaxed marijuana for friends and family, further cutting into the revenue raised.”

Cross-border purchasing and consumer response to possible tax changes also require policy consideration by public officials. Khan’s study—less whimsically titled, “Marijuana Tax Incidence, Stockpiling, and Cross-Border Substitution”—offers recommendations supported by rigorous data analysis.

“Medical marijuana patients may also buy untaxed marijuana for friends and family, further cutting into the revenue raised.”

- Muhammad Salar Khan
CBS News’ Gazis Grills Hayden Center’s Morell on His Life in Intelligence

In September, CBS News correspondent Olivia Gazis interviewed former deputy director and acting director of the CIA, Michael Morell, now a Schar School Distinguished Visiting Professor and working with the Michael V. Hayden Center for Intelligence, Policy, and International Security, before a live audience. Morell opened up about one of the fascinating elements of his career when he discussed being present with both President George W. Bush during the September 11th attacks and then with President Barack Obama during the raid that killed Osama bin Laden. He also addressed which historical figure from the past he would like to interview on his podcast (Saddam Hussein!) and provided tips to students in the audience on how to start a career in intelligence.

—Zeqine Korreshi

For the Record: Former Senator, Governor, and Professor Chuck Robb

By Buzz McClain

Earlier this year, former U.S. Senator Charles S. Robb sat for a video interview at his home in McLean, Va., with George Mason University Archivist Robert L. Vay. The 90-minute, wide-ranging conversation is now included in the Mason Libraries’ Oral History Program and is accessible online in the Special Collections Research Center. Robb recalled his relationship with the young university as governor of Virginia and his time in 2001 teaching seminars as Distinguished Professor of Law and Public Policy at what is now the Schar School.

As for the university at large, Robb said he was pleased that “Mason wanted to establish itself as a standout university and help students who really wanted to get an education. They have done that.”
Student Body President, Public Administration Major Camden Layton

By Dixie Downing

On the April day Camden Layton assumed his role as student body president, the campus was gearing up for a major townhall meeting with students and administrators, addressing pressing concerns regarding campus sexual assault and Title IX policies. Things haven’t slowed down since: Layton’s presidency has been filled with additional new challenges—and exciting changes—from the first moment he took office.

In addition to dealing with the daily dilemmas and dramas thrust upon him as Mason’s student body president, Layton plans to improve the school’s relationship with the community, protect minority students, and push the administration to take more rigorous action against sexual assault on campus.

As a senior Public Administration major in the Schar School, Layton has found his calling in higher-education policy. “After taking interim president Anne Holton’s education policy course, I realized my passion for improving the quality of student life and education on campus,” he said.

“Our faculty [in the Schar School] is legendary,” he added. “The professors have taught me so much about how higher education is tied with [legislative government].”

“I was delighted to have Camden in my class and even more delighted to see him in this leadership role at Mason,” Holton said in an email statement. “He will go on to do great things in Ed Policy!”

Layton suggested being a Public Administration major in the Schar School is a benefit to his position as a student leader. “The connections I have gained through the Schar School have been awesome,” he said. “All of the professors are willing to give advice and career help.”
Public Policy PhD candidate Layla M. Hashemi has had a busy year. In addition to doing all the things she needs to do to complete her degree, Hashemi has been invited to participate in several high-profile panel discussions in her area of research: antiquities trafficking and its links to terrorism. She has been working with the Schar School’s Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC) director, Louise Shelley.

In March, Hashemi joined a global three-day conference hosted by NATO, “Building Integrity: Building Capable and Resilient Institutions to Strengthen Our Partnerships.” In addition to Hashemi, panelists included several ministers of defense, thought-leaders in counterterrorism, human trafficking, and international security; and several NATO deputy assistant secretaries general.

Following the NATO conference, she traveled to Vienna, Austria, to participate in a UN Office on Drugs and Crime “expert group” on a related interest, cybercrime. And in January, she co-authored a story for the Washington Post detailing the uptick and nature of tweets in Iran following the killing of Major General Qasem Soleimani.

“The chance to work with a talented group of scholars and researchers dedicated to promoting a gendered perspective of international peace and security issues comes at a perfect time in my doctoral studies,” she said of the WIIS conference. “In addition to attending receptions hosted by ambassadors and meeting with members of WIIS and the broader Washington policy community, I had the opportunity to present and work on my dissertation research and gain feedback from regional and subject matter experts to help connect my work to broader gender and security agendas.”

In October, Hashemi was invited to spend a week at the 2019 Next Generation Symposium hosted by the Washington, D.C.-based Women in International Security (WIIS). The competitive program saw some 500 applicants from around the world apply to be part of the five-day event; one in 20 were selected. Participants tackled a range of security issues, including power politics and competition, arms control and nuclear security issues, and gender equality in the security field.

And as for her “spare” time? “I teach violin and Farsi, political science courses, and belly dance—with swords,” she said, demonstrating how she maintains her diverse interests while moving to the doctoral finish line.
Becca Cooper has traveled the world supporting young refugee girls through after-school sports and education programs. While much of her enthusiasm comes from being surrounded by strong and intelligent women throughout her life and now as an International Security master’s student at the Schar School, Cooper has set her sights on an even more challenging field: the Middle East.

Cooper grew up in rural Alabama before attending college at the University of Mississippi, studying Arabic and Political Science. “At Ole Miss, I studied abroad in Amman, Jordan, to learn Arabic,” she said. “I knew I wanted to continue to improve my language skills, so I ended up going back for a year-and-a-half after graduation.”

Little did she know that her travels in Jordan would lead her to a U.S. based nongovernment organization called “Squash Dreamers.”

“Squash Dreamers specializes in putting refugee girls in sports and English language programs,” she said. “I was the interim country director, so I oversaw the programs, got the nongovernment organization legalized in Jordan, and helped to build the organization...When I started, we had 15 girls, and I expanded the program to 30 girls.”

Cooper aimed to showcase the program on an international scale. “We sent three girls to a squash tournament in Beijing, China,” she said. “This was really hard to do, because they were refugees, so they didn’t have a country or a passport. I am really proud of how the organization was able to pull its resources together for these girls.”

As a student, Cooper works as a graduate professional assistant in the Schar School’s Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, headed by Louise Shelley.

“Becca has been helping to produce our exciting program of events and using her experience in the Middle East to work on the terrorism database,” said Shelley, refereeing the Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center, which, among other duties, provides updates on terroristic activities to Congress.

“Students who have worked on the terrorism database are being snapped up by employers as they have the knowledge and analytical skills necessary for the security community. I am sure that Becca will follow in this job trajectory and find employment that combines her regional expertise and her substantive knowledge.”

“Students who have worked on the terrorism database are being snapped up by employers…”
- Professor Louise Shelley
Tameka Porter’s Affirmative Action Research

As a 2015 Schar School PhD in Public Policy student, Tameka Porter conducted research that uncovered a statistic that seemed counterintuitive: Students with lower academic qualifications who enrolled at more selective colleges showed positive graduation outcomes.

This ran counter to those who considered the opposite to be true, including Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, that students with low academic qualifications—particularly students of color—would be mismatched at elite universities.

In other words, Porter confirmed that affirmative action in academic admissions policies was not a misguided notion. This got the attention of education policy makers.

Porter, now working as a managing consultant with the Denver-based education research and development nonprofit, McREL International, said she “wanted to use statistical methods to derive a definition of affirmative action that was based on academic qualifications and institutional selectivity, and then determine the extent to which mismatch occurs and if affirmative action at elite colleges benefits its intended recipients through higher degree completion rates.”

She credits her professors at the Schar School for inspiring her work: “The public policy program was of particular interest because it integrated theories of economics, statistics, and political science with thorough empirical evaluations of policy implementation in both the public and private sectors.”

David Armor’s School Desegregation Research

By Dixie Downing

Since 1969, Schar School Public Policy Professor Emeritus David Armor has worked on more than 50 cases concerning school desegregation. In the past, his research has shown that busing brings few academic advantages, and his latest work concerning the growing “controlled choice” movement has come to similar conclusions.

While many think the issue has receded into the past, Armor contends “busing is still an issue in some larger [school] districts that have implemented economic integration plans,” including counties in North Carolina and Kentucky, he told PolitiFact this fall. In Minneapolis-St. Paul, opponents have gone to court over desegregation issues.

Armor’s ideas have not changed over time. As an assistant professor at Harvard in 1972, Armor published “The Evidence on Busing,” which was a provocative essay to publish during a time when desegregation was at the forefront of the conversation.

“The Supreme Court ordered busing not because of achievement or benefits, but because it was a remedy to unconstitutional policies in the South that caused segregation,” said Armor. “My essay found that busing was not having positive effects in increasing academic achievement.”

He notes that a mandatory school desegregation program was recently adopted by Howard County, Md., and has drawn strong protests and demonstrations by parents who want to keep their neighborhood schools. It seems the issue never entirely goes away.
Northern Virginia MPA Fellows: A History of Success for Graduates—and the Region

By Buzz McClain

Five Northern Virginia jurisdictions are in the Top 20 of a national poll conducted by the independent business news publication 24/7 Wall Street. Each boast leaders who earned their Master’s in Public Administration degrees in the Schar School’s Northern Virginia Public Service Fellows Program, a competitive, cohort-based program in which the tuition is paid in full or part by the local government.

Some 200 graduates of the 20-year-old Schar School fellowship program serve as executives, administrators, board members, and supervisors of the region’s local governments. Class cohorts are selected by top executives and vetted by human resources departments before being permitted to enroll in the MPA program.

“Many of the county administrators have said explicitly, ‘This is my executive development program,’” said Professor James K. Conant.

Conant arrived at Mason in 1996 to be MPA Director in the Department of Public and International Affairs, now part of the Schar School. He immediately set about creating partnerships with local governments across Northern Virginia. A key part of Conant’s plan was the creation of a fellows program serving the Northern Virginia region. With strong support from the MPA faculty and the county executives from Virginia’s Arlington, Fairfax, and Prince William counties, the first cohort of the Northern Virginia Public Service Fellows Program began meeting in the fall of 2000.

“Many of the county administrators have said explicitly, ‘This is my executive development program.’”

- Professor James K. Conant

Students take classes together, study in groups, and finish the program with hands-on capstone projects. The 20-or-so fellows in each cohort complete the required 36 credit hours in two-and-a-half years. The fellows take all of the same required courses other Schar School MPA students take, but the cohort’s elective courses are focused on the state of Virginia, government in Northern Virginia, and the Washington, D.C., metro area.
Since 2005, Associate Professor James N. Burroughs has provided the faculty leadership for the fellows program and has enhanced its visibility across the Washington, D.C., area. The MPA Fellows’ academic performance is strong, and many are in the top of the Schar School MPA graduating classes. For example, last year’s Cohort No. 13 had seven of the top-20 graduating master’s degree students.

“This is common, given the process where the localities screen and nominate students into the program,” said Burroughs. “It’s always a high-quality group. It is fairly common for there to be a 4.0 grad in the cohort. Three years ago, we had three cohort members graduate with a 4.0.”

The Master’s in Public Administration degree often leads to job promotions or, in the case of Michelle L. Attreed, a major award from peers. Attreed, the Director of Finance for Prince William County, received the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women in Public Finance, Virginia Chapter.

“Earning my Master’s in Public Administration from George Mason through the local government cohort program helped to prepare me for a position of leadership within my organization,” she said. “Mason’s quality program equipped me with the thought processes to effectively deal with public officials and provide creative inputs toward the development of good public policy and sound financial management.”

At the 20-year mark, Burroughs sees a bright future for the cohort program.

“Most of our new cohort students were recommended by or encouraged to apply by our graduates,” he said. At one cohort-recruiting session last spring, 12 graduates came to talk with prospective students. “They were once students and now they are sending us the next generation of local leaders,” he said.

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**By the Numbers**

**$38 Million**

The dollar value of earned media for the early October 2019 *Washington Post*-Schar School polls, according to Mason’s Strategic Communications office. One poll measured Virginia citizens’ attitudes on gun control; the other indicated a majority of Americans endorsed opening House impeachment proceedings. The surveys appeared in some 300 media outlets around the world and the impeachment poll was, at one point, the highest trending topic on Twitter, a first for the Schar School and Mason.
The Fate of Water: Teaching Students Climate Change in the Classroom and in the Field

By Dixie Downing

“I chose to study water sources, because I found the idea to be somewhat novel,” said Todd La Porte. “It’s been interesting to see how all of these different aspects of climate change interact with one another and how the various effects reverberate through society.”

Schar School Associate Professor La Porte is addressing climate change through the lens of community. To do that, La Porte is studying climate change adaption policy inside and outside of the classroom—and he’s taking his undergraduate and graduate students with him to discover the effects of climate change from those directly affected by it.

Originally from the San Francisco Bay area, La Porte has a natural affinity for the Chesapeake Bay, not far from the Schar School campuses. “We're studying how climate change is affecting people around bays, estuaries, and wetlands,” he said. “We want to understand what happens to people who are displaced” by the effects of climate change.

La Porte plans to work with students to create an “atlas” of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. “The idea is to map rising water levels and create a common frame of reference from inside these communities,” he said.

“The climate atlas is a way to reach people,” said La Porte. “We spend too much time looking at data that other people collect. It’s not wrong, but it misses a big part of these issues.”

He hopes to send students into the field to gather first-hand information from community members experiencing these changes.

In the classroom, La Porte is a conversation facilitator and an expert at diffusing the tense situations that sometimes arise. “People sometimes misunderstand the assumptions of their classmates,” he said. “Much like in climate change policy, if we can identify shared values, we can ultimately find common ground.”

Students seem to enjoy his classroom demeanor.

“Dr. La Porte is extremely approachable,” said Leslie Malher, a Master’s in International Commerce and Policy student from Paris, France. “He emphasizes our ideas in conjunction with the readings, and very few professors are able to facilitate discussion the way he does.”

“Teaching energizes me,” said La Porte. “My job is to get the ball rolling, but it is extremely gratifying when students want to express their own ideas and discuss these issues in my classroom.”
Penny Potter’s Coaching Secret: ‘Letting Go of Knowing’

By Dixie Downing

Expanding the minds of students and organization leaders is no easy task, but Schar School adjunct professor and professional coach Penny Potter does not back down from a challenge.

“I decided to go to an ODKM info session. They talked about the marriage of [organization development] with [knowledge management], and it was the perfect bridge with my technology and project management background.”

“After graduation, Penny served as a facilitator for the Group Dynamics and Team Learning course,” Tojo Thatchenkery, director of the program, said. “Penny was always willing to help her classmates. She eventually began teaching in the program after getting her PhD in Organization Development [at Fielding Graduate University]. Overall, she made significant contributions during and after the program.”

After receiving her Schar School master’s degree in 2008, Potter went on to start her own coaching company. Productive Interactions’ mission is to educate leaders on ways to enhance engagement, productivity, and resilience.

Potter uses her knowledge of organizations to ask questions designed to get leaders thinking, realizing every situation is different. She is taking her experience in the field to the classroom, teaching students from the lens of a coaching professional.

“The ODKM program is full of unexpected surprises that will transform you from the inside out and allow you to show up in a more full and productive way within your organization,” she said. “It doesn’t matter where you come from. The ODKM program will help you get an operating system upgrade.”

During the course of her teaching, the students, she said, learn how to coach—which ultimately benefits her own experience.

“One of the things I say to students is that you are becoming a coach,” she said. “I am becoming a coach too.”

But first, what is coaching?

“The coach acts as a facilitator for the leader to answer their own questions, and serves as an accelerator and a thought partner,” said Potter. “Coaches ask questions designed to get leaders to look at their situations from angles that they don’t normally do.

“Coaching is about letting go of knowing,” she said.

Potter has designed a distinctive classroom setting constructed to break students out of their shells.

“Knowing how adults work, I have given the students a lot of experiences meant to leave them comfortable with ambiguity,” she said. “I leave them with that experience—and challenge them to make sense of it.”

Previously, Potter was a project manager at the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland in College Park. In order to advance in her career, she discovered the Master’s in Organization Development and Knowledge Management (ODKM) program that emphasizes leadership skills and creative problem solving.

“I realized that I didn’t know enough about the organizational structures my clients were in,” she said.

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Penny Potter: Creating a safe ‘no-judgment’ learning space.
Letter from the Alumni President

Finding Success Where You Least Expect It

I found what is now called the Schar School through a small advertisement in the Washington Post. It was a very small ad, snipped out with scissors, and sent to me in an appropriately small envelope by my parents, who had an inkling that I shouldn’t go to law school.

Shortly afterwards, I found my way to the admissions office of The International Institute at George Mason University, which was then located in a sleek new office building across from the Ballston Metro. As I skeptically reviewed the Institute’s extremely thin brochure, the ever ebullient and talkative Professor Stuart Malawer bent my ear about the advantages of attending the new Master’s of International Trade and Transaction degree program. Not yet persuaded, I left the building and headed to Catholic University’s Columbus School of Law, where I had been accepted and planned to study international law.

My goal was simple: I would earn a law degree, work overseas in a developing market, make money and, eventually, unravel the Gordian Knot of the Palestine conflict. Standing in Catholic’s law school admissions office, I looked down at the sheaf of documents in my hand and noticed, with what must have been a very sharp and loud intake of breath, the financial debt I would have the moment I graduated. It was a big number. It was so big that I put down my pen, laid the documents on the desk, and walked out—and into the arms of Mason.

The Master of Arts in International Transactions program was young but bustled with enthusiasm. It was inexpensive. We could go to school at night and work during the day. It was located on a Metro line. Its professors were daily practitioners of policy and trade. And it made all the difference in the world for me. I met some of my closest friends studying at Mason, people who also had to hold a job and study, who came from different parts of the world or had a desire to explore different parts of the world. We had all taken a bet on the young program, hoping that it would give us the professional tools we needed at a cost we could afford. We found that, and more, at Mason.

The program has grown exponentially since I received my diploma in 1993. It changed its name and moved into new facilities at what is now Van Metre Hall. While I miss with great fondness the after-class drinks at Jacques’ French restaurant downstairs, in particular the students versus waiters champagne-and-wine-serving races during the Beaujolais Nouveau season (from which we would be disqualified for sticking our fingers in the filled glasses to keep them from falling off the trays), I am thankful to have attended that nascent program, and I am grateful to see its success today. The Gordian Knot of the Middle East remains for another day; perhaps another class.

Colin R. Hart

’93, Master’s in International Commerce and Policy
President, Schar School Alumni Chapter
William Kreamer was not thinking about the inner workings of food policy, the political machinery behind the business of agriculture, or, really, any other aspects of farming when he was a Master’s in Public Policy (MPP) student in 2006 at the Schar School.

His plans changed when the family business, a local produce stand founded by his grandfather and operated by his mother, was closing. Almost a year later, Kreamer decided to “give it a try myself and take it in a whole new direction,” taking over the family business and putting his degree to work in new ways.

Since Kreamer took on reinventing Chesapeake’s Bounty, it has moved to a new location and expanded well beyond the humble produce stand of his grandfather. Today, the St. Leonard, Md., business is a sprawling 40-acre enterprise comprising a roadside market specializing in local produce, fresh-caught seafood, dairy, baked products, and dry goods delivered by vendors with one thing in common: They are all located within a distance of one-day’s walk.

“That’s one full day,” he said with a laugh. “It could take you 20 hours to walk to some of them, but we’re slowly shrinking that, and have been over the last few years.”

A second storefront location launched by Kreamer is 20 minutes away in North Beach, Md. In all, Kreamer’s business supports 15 employees and about 60 local farmers, watermen, and other producers and artisans.

The Chesapeake Bounty land is not a production farm—save for a retail crop of mushrooms, fresh herbs, and a few other items—but an experimental and educational farm emphasizing “participatory agriculture.” Not only can anyone on any day volunteer to work on the farm, classes are taught on beekeeping, permaculture, wild foraging and “earth skills,” as well as “alternative, beyond-organic growing methods” for a variety of produce, Kreamer said.

“It turns out that business has been really, really great,” he added. “It’s pretty amazing how much local food goes through our little store.”

As a food retailer with nontraditional ideas, his degree from the Schar School comes in handy, particularly when he’s served on various boards and commissions related to agriculture. In his spare time—a misnomer: he works 80 to 100 hours a week—he has taught at the College of Southern Maryland, guest lectured at St. Mary’s College of Maryland, and made speaking engagements around the region and on local television.

One of his professors, Schar School Dean Mark J. Rozell, said he is not surprised by Kreamer’s entrepreneurial ambition or his burgeoning academic interests.

“Will was one of the most intellectually curious students I’ve ever taught,” said Rozell. “Policy is everywhere and he sees the connections and applies what he has learned to his career. I am not surprised by his success.”

Kreamer attributes the rigor he experienced in the MPP program for giving him new insights to his own abilities.

“The academic discipline that I learned at [the Schar School] was much, much greater than anything I learned at academic institutions prior,” he said. “That discipline really helped me, for example, when I had to fully understand the Calvert County [Md.] zoning ordinances and health department regulations.”

Navigating the laws and working with state and local leadership was initially a struggle, but Kreamer succeeded. “My policy experience helped me with that,” he said.
Biodefense Alumna Now a Dallas County Epidemiologist

By Saskia Popescu

Tam Dang started in the biology world, earning her Bachelor’s of Science degree from George Mason University in 2008. But it was her course of study in the Master’s in Biodefense program at the Schar School that put her on her present career path.

The degree, she said, “introduced me to the public health field, and offered a unique perspective from a biosecurity and bioterrorism standpoint.”

Today, Dang is an epidemiologist for the Dallas County Department of Health and Human Services in Dallas, Texas. She works in the Acute Communicable Disease Epidemiology Division, helping to lead epidemiological investigations for infectious disease outbreaks or potential bioterrorism events. She monitors local, regional, and state data sources related to infectious diseases, and helps develop outbreak and bioterrorism plans to help support public health preparedness.

Her work is at the intersection of public health and health security, an important field in the modern era.

“I think some significant health security threats we are facing in the U.S. in 2019 are related to the potential for importations or outbreaks of high-consequence emerging infectious diseases, such as Ebola and avian influenza,” she said. “In a metropolitan area like Dallas/Fort Worth, our Public Health Emergency Preparedness division is keenly aware that our proximity to the nation’s 12th busiest airport confers particular risk for international importations of infectious diseases.”

Since joining the epidemiology team, Dang, who has since been joined by fellow Schar School 2019 biodefense master’s degree graduate Stephen Taylor, has found plenty of ways to leverage her biodefense degree. She has developed communicable disease and emergency response plans, facilitated a pandemic influenza exercise for medical students at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, and presented on insider threats in biosafety laboratories to sentinel lab personnel, to name a few.

Her degree from the Schar School’s biodefense program was key to landing her current position, she said.

“It helped me stand out from the pile of applications my supervisor received,” she said. “My biology background and prior employment experiences also played a large part in rounding out my graduate education and narrowing my professional field of interest.

“Overall, past experience and the added education and skills I obtained from the Biodefense program were critical factors in helping me pursue my career goals.”

Additional reporting by Buzz McClain.
The sudden resignation of Bolivian president Evo Morales in November was a positive turn of events for Yasser Aburdene, who had been spending his evenings this fall at the Bolivian embassy in Washington, D.C., along with others protesting Morales’ questionable election victory.

“We celebrated outside the embassy, and while we were there the ambassador also resigned,” Aburdene recalled. “This opened a transition from him to the residents of Bolivia to openly use the embassy until a new ambassador comes.” Aburdene said he intends “to be part of that transition, along with other leaders of this movement, and fight for democracy.”

It should come as no surprise that the politically-minded 24-year-old was in his final semester as a Government and International Politics major in the Schar School and aspires to one day run for elected office in Virginia. While he’s adopted the Commonwealth as his new home—he’s lived in Virginia since emigrating with his father and brother at age 17—he remains passionate about Bolivian freedoms.

“Yasser’s work with the protest movement is a wonderful example of how George Mason University students are able to bridge the divide between classroom education and real-world political action,” said Edward Rhodes, one of Aburdene’s professors at the Schar School of Policy and Government. “His activities are combining his passion and energy, his commitment to the future of Bolivia, and the skills and insights developed here at Mason.”

Aburdene’s time at the Schar School was action-packed. A member of the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity, he’s also a member of Mason’s College Republicans, the Young Americans for Liberty organization, and he volunteers with Americans for Prosperity. After his December graduation, the first-generation college student will look for work in local nonprofits as he gears up to study for a master’s degree. “And eventually a PhD,” he added.
South Africa: An Academically Packed Itinerary Was Just What the Students Wanted

By Buzz McClain

For a global study class, the itinerary was daunting: There were scholarly lectures on migration, health policies, HIV, xenophobia, and a deep dive into the regional “blue economy” based on aquatic and ocean industries. And that was just one day of an 11-day class.

But for the Schar School students who made the trip to Pretoria, South Africa, this summer, the academically-oriented program, titled “Political, Economic, and Social Challenges in South Africa,” was exactly what they wanted. The students said the journey more than lived up to expectations.

“It was an eye-opening experience for me,” said Helen Yu, a Sunnyvale, Calif., native who is studying in the Master’s in Public Administration program with a concentration in Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

“All the lectures were amazing and built on one another,” said Laila Smith, who is in the Master’s in International Security program, the No. 2 program in the country according to 2019 U.S. News & World Report rankings. “The cultural experiences and lectures complemented one another very well.”

That’s the kind of experience students would not get in a typical classroom—and it’s the benefit of global study. “It is important for our students to get ‘in the field’ exposure,” says Thys van Schaik, a co-leader of the program and a native of South Africa, “not only because of the practical nature of the master’s programs, but also because the approaches and content of the programs often challenge their way of thinking and encourage them to see issues from a different perspective.”

While there were presentations on politics, foreign relations, economy, education policy, food safety, international security, development challenges, energy policy, land issues, and other talks presented by regional experts, no visit to South Africa would be complete without a wildlife experience.

The “walk with the lions” also was a learning experience, said Arlington, Va., native Daniel Tiznado, who is also in the Master’s in International Security program.
Early in the spring semester, Schar School Associate Professor and Director of Research Naoru Koizumi traveled to Bangladesh to continue her studies on organ sales and trafficking, specifically kidney harvesting. The National Science Foundation project began earlier in the year when she and Schar School Associate Professor Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera conducted a research trip to study organ trafficking in Costa Rica. The professors are part of a team that includes social scientists, data scientists, medical specialists, and government officials.

The two locales—Bangladesh and Costa Rica—are considered network hubs for illicit organ buying and selling, where kidneys can fetch $2,000 to more than $20,000 on the black market. The National Science Foundation and Schar School joint study will consider possible methods of disruption of this transnational crime.

“My favorite visit was to Ukutula,” the conservation center, “biobank,” and game reserve about an hour northwest of Pretoria, he said. “It was a fun experience to see the wildlife in South Africa and learn about their conservation efforts. The sessions complemented many of my courses—some of the same themes emerged in Public Policy: Introduction to Public Administration, specifically.”

“There was a great mix of classroom time and cultural activities,” said Michelle Artson, a Master’s in Public Administration student, with a focus in International Management. The Woodbridge, Va., native was making her first global study trip.

“Overall, this was truly an amazing learning experience. I highly recommend it,” she said. “The alignment to overall public policy and governance is fascinating, especially in the wake of issues surrounding re-emerging health epidemics. I’m now considering a certificate in this area.”

Naoru Koizumi, center, with students at a school in Kalai, Bangladesh. The village is a hotspot for kidney harvesting.
Early 600 attendees packed two floors of the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C., in early November for a dinner in honor of Gen. Michael V. Hayden. Hayden, the namesake and founding director of the Schar School’s Michael V. Hayden Center for Intelligence, Policy, and International Security, received the Honorable William H. Webster Distinguished Service Award for a career that saw the four-star Air Force general serve as Director of the National Security Agency, Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence, and Director of the CIA. Currently, General Hayden is a Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Schar School’s Security Studies program.

Presenting the award was Webster himself, who made the presentation with former Ambassador John Negroponte, former Director of National Intelligence. CNN’s Wolf Blitzer served as emcee of the event, with George Tenet, former Director of the CIA the keynote speaker. At the event, Spy Museum director Christopher Costa said that General Hayden “has not only set an unflinching example of leadership and personal and professional integrity, he’s left an extraordinary and lasting positive impact on the U.S. Intelligence Community.”

Michael Hayden Given Honorable William Webster Distinguished Service Award
These are some of the 167 Schar School students who donned their mortarboards and gowns at the Winter Graduation celebration on December 19 at EagleBank Arena on George Mason University’s Fairfax Campus. They made their walk across the stage to receive their diplomas before taking flight to make positive contributions in their fields of choice. While the world certainly needs them, we’re missing them already. Look for some 2,000 Schar School graduates-in-waiting to attend the Degree Celebration on Thursday, May 14. See you there!

Photos by Ron Aira/Creative Services.
Say It Isn’t So!

Stephen Fuller, Timothy Conlan, Susan McClure, and Bill Coester retire.

Stephen Fuller announced his “first” retirement in 2014, effective 2017, but clearly that didn’t stick. In January of that year, the Schar School opened the Stephen S. Fuller Institute for Research on the Washington Region’s Future Economy with Fuller at the helm. But this time though, he’s made it official: In December he handed his (literal) crystal ball—used, it is said, for forecasting economic changes—to Deputy Director Jeannette Chapman. It is predicted with all the accuracy of a Fuller Economic Forecast that he will reappear on occasion to provide insights on the region he has studied for more than 50 years.

During Timothy Conlan’s 32-year legacy at Mason he has seen “enormous growth and progress during my tenure here,” he said. “I am pleased to have played roles in establishing our PhD programs in Political Science and Public Policy and enhancing the MPA and undergraduate programs. Most of all I am grateful for having had wonderful colleagues and students throughout my time at Mason. I will miss the people more than anything. Meetings, maybe not so much.” He intends to keep up his award-winning research but will “replace school committees with schools of fish,” as he takes to “anywhere worth traveling to and spending time outdoors.”

Longtime Schar School Executive Assistant to the Dean, Susan McClure, retired at the end of July. Susan began her career at George Mason 26 years ago in various capacities before finding her way in 1999 to The Institute of Public Policy to work for founding dean Kingsley Haynes. It is no understatement that Susan’s contribution was crucial to each one of the milestones in the development of what is now the Schar School.

After more than 20 years at Mason, most of them spent on-boarding TIPP/PIA/SPP/SPGIA/Schar School personnel, Hawaii native Bill Coester finally said “aloha!” and headed off to retirement. More than 80 Schar School faculty and staff members attended his October 16 farewell party. Bill said after a Hawaiian vacation he hopes to volunteer at Baltimore-Washington Airport and the Red Cross as well as spend more time working with his church.

The Schar School offers classes at Mason’s Fairfax and Arlington campuses in Virginia. Both campuses are located within the heart of a dynamic region and close to the nation’s capital. Opportunities for internships, jobs, and research are unequaled, as is access to archives and museums, policymakers and think tanks, and diverse career opportunities. With 90 full-time faculty, we offer 13 degree programs across undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels.

A Dynamic Education for an Evolving World schar.gmu.edu