Oct 17 Dedication Ceremony


“Our Commonwealth is strong today because of leaders like Dwight Schar,” McAuliffe said before an audience of approximately 300 people on the Arlington Campus. “You have made this not only a better Commonwealth, but a better university and a better country.” Cabrera said the school will “create a new generation of leaders who can make good things happen in our society.” The Schar School educates about 2,000 undergraduate and graduate students each year and has more than 80 faculty and more than 13,000 alumni.
A Dynamic Education for an Evolving World

Welcome to our new identity as the Schar School of Policy and Government, and our new effort to keep you informed about our efforts to expand and build upon our work in the areas of public policy, government, and international affairs. We will be sharing more information regarding our activities, our faculty members, and our alumni on a quarterly basis. Please feel free to share with us your reactions to this effort.

The nature of public policy and government in the 21st century is rapidly evolving. Changing demographics, advances in technology, fiscal constraints at every level of government, a global economy and the rise of public-private partnerships are just some of the factors contributing to this shifting landscape. As the needs of citizens, and the ability of governments to meet those needs, become more complex, the current and next-generation of leaders must be more creative and strategic in finding solutions to the challenges that communities faced domestically and abroad.

We live in a global age where the role of government is more fluid and not as easily defined as in the past. Consulting firms and private companies now offer services that were once funded by the federal government, while programs once funded by the federal government now rely on state, local, or philanthropic funding sources. Such factors have had a major impact on the tools that leaders need to succeed in this new age. They require a relevant, interdisciplinary education—one that offers a national and global perspective while also illuminating the complexities of current research on policymaking and public administration.

The Schar School of Policy and Government is unique in helping students meet these needs. How?

• Located where policy happens, we deliver a bird’s-eye-view of how government really works and how policy is made. Our proximity to the seat of the Federal government allows our students to witness and participate in policy in action and connect to the networking, internships and career opportunities that can only be found in the Nation’s Capital.

schar.gmu.edu
Dwight Schar

As stated in the George Mason University Board of Visitors’ resolution in his honor, Dwight Schar is a “renowned businessman and philanthropist and has been a long-time benefactor of George Mason University and its public policy programs.” Few are aware, however, that Dwight’s commitment to education began early when he was an education major at what is now Ashland University. Beginning his professional life as a junior high school teacher, he also was selling homes on the weekends. This eventually led to his work at Ryan Homes and becoming a home builder himself when he founded his first company, NVHomes. Nearly 30 years ago, he bought Ryan Homes and began NRV, Inc., now a Fortune 500 company and the nation’s third-largest home builder. Dwight currently serves as the company’s Executive Chairman and Chairman of the Executive Committee. He is also part-owner of the Washington Redskins football team.

Over the past decade, Dwight has turned his attention to philanthropy, where his focus has been on three distinct areas: children, education, and health. He began by providing support to both his high school and college alma maters, as well as the alma mater of his children, Elon University. In addition, he and his wife, Martha, have made a major commitment to support cancer research at the INOVA Center for Personalized Health, which will provide a platform for the development and application of advances in cancer treatment and personalized medicine through genomics.

Dwight has been a generous supporter of George Mason University through the years. This has included endowing a chair, supporting the Center for Regional Analysis, and now leading an effort to support the new Fuller Institute for Research on the Washington Region’s Future Economy. In May 2016, it was announced that the George Mason University School of Policy, Government, and International Affairs had received a $10 million gift from Dwight. In recognition of this gift, and Dwight’s many prior contributions to the school, the Board of Visitors approved the naming of the school in his honor. We continue to thank Dwight Schar for all he has done for the school, for the university, and for the region as a whole.

With the generous gift from Dwight Schar, the Schar School is poised at the forefront of innovation and education in helping to shape the policy leaders of tomorrow.
Beyond WMDs: Schar School professor tells UN Security Council about dangers of emerging technologies

In August 2016, Professor Gregory Koblentz warned the United Nations Security Council of the rise of several new technologies that may make it easier for terrorists such as ISIS to acquire and deliver weapons of mass destruction that could devastate large populations around the world.

Following a briefing by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Koblentz detailed chilling emerging technologies and how terrorists could exploit them for their own malicious purposes. Koblentz, who is director of the Biodefense Graduate Programs at the Schar School of Policy and Government, told the council that unmanned aerial vehicles, 3-D printers, and the encrypted Dark Web portion of the Internet represent new tools that terrorists could use to launch chemical, biological and nuclear attacks.

Gene editing also represents a new and significant danger, Koblentz said. “Instead of [altered genes] being used to eliminate disease, they could be used to introduce new diseases into plant or animal populations,” he said. Malicious software could be used to launch a cyberattack on a nuclear facility, he suggested, adding, “We should not be just one click of the mouse away from a cyber Chernobyl.” Secretary General Ban told the member states that emerging technologies “require closer examination and action...The stakes are simply too high to ignore.”

Former Workers are Happier, Healthier After Retirement

It’s a question just about everyone faces at some point: Will I remain healthy and will I be happy after retirement?

The answer, according to a new study co-authored by Schar School Policy and Government professor Sita Nataraj Slavov, is a qualified yes. The information is important for many reasons, for individuals, health care providers and policymakers. Policies that delay retirement to improve fiscal budgets might actually negatively affect well-being. Slavov and Utah State University researchers Aspen Gorry and Devon Gorry spent a year crunching the numbers, analyzing the effects of retirement on physical and mental health, life satisfaction and use of health care.

Their message to policymakers: Be careful when designing public policies that might resolve shortfalls in funding for public retirement programs, such as lengthening the amount of time workers have to stay on the job to be eligible for retirement. Those policies could backfire in hidden or unexpected public costs. Americans tend to retire around ages 62 or 66 because that’s when they can begin to collect Social Security. Other benefits, such as pensions, also have “threshold ages” at which workers tend to retire. And once these ages are reached and work stops, “retirement does seem to make people happier,” says Slavov. “They report higher levels of life satisfaction, and this seems to persist for several years after retirement.”

But don’t expect euphoria to kick in immediately upon retirement, Slavov said.

“In the short run, there is no immediate improvement in health,” she said. “In the long run, more than four years or so after retirement, we do see improvements in health. That’s good news.”
Alumni President Letter

As you have heard by now, 2016 was an incredible year for the Schar School Alumni Chapter. The big news, of course, was Dwight Schar’s gift to the school and our subsequent name change. Dwight’s gift has brought stability and freedom for innovation to the School and our Alumni Chapter. In the past year, the Alumni Chapter has hosted over 20 events and welcomed more than 1,500 new members to our ranks.

Our quarterly happy hours continue to be a great scene for networking and reconnecting with fellow alumni. The annual Capitol Hill Reception, co-hosted with the GMU Law School, remains a mainstay of our efforts to bring alumni into contact with members of Congress, key policy influencers, and other alumni.

Since its inception in 2013, our Speaker Series has provided the Alumni Community with opportunities to dialogue with key leaders across a variety of domains. Speakers have included the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Virginia; the Executive Vice President of OPIC; the CEO of the IFC’s Asset Management Company; and the CEO of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority.

In 2016, our Events Committee kicked off the “Best of” Lecture Series, providing alumni with a venue to hear from a favorite teacher either again or for the first time, without having to repeat the entire class (or pass an exam). Professor Bob Deitz, previously General Counsel to the NSA and Senior Counselor to the Director of the CIA, provided a fascinating overview of law and ethics at play in foreign intelligence gathering for the inaugural lecture.

One of our most popular events remains the wine tasting at Founders’ Hall. We are grateful to the generosity of the embassies of Spain, France, and New Zealand as well as our own local vineyards for providing us selections of their fine wines for our enjoyment over the past several years.

Our annual Awards Gala continues to grow in prominence. Last year our Gala was the most highly attended Alumni Weekend event outside of the Green and Gold Bash. Gala topics have ranged from national security to transportation to energy security. Our 2016 Gala focused on Presidential Transitions with an all-star panel moderated by retired journalist Richard Benedetto and featuring Katy Kale (GSA), David Eagles (Partnership for Public Service), and James Pfiffner (Schar School).

We look forward to working with our alumni to shape what 2017 holds for our school and the plethora of communities it represents.

All the Best,

Kyle D. Green
President, Schar School Alumni Chapter

schar.gmu.edu
Alumni Spotlight

Chris Jones
Schar School Alum Gives Back to Disabled Veterans

Since 2012, Chris Jones and his company, Enterprise Resource Planning, Inc. (ERPi) have provided funds for immediate scholarship assistance for deserving service-disabled veterans who enroll in the Schar School of Policy and Government. A U.S. Army veteran himself, Jones completed his master’s degree in 1999 at what was then Mason’s School of Public Policy. He immediately began looking for a way to help other veterans.

As veterans returned from the Iraq War, ERPi developed a relationship with the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Receiving several calls about veterans struggling to repair their lives after returning home, Jones and his team began raising money to help these veterans.

“There was one story of a woman who had been discharged from the hospital and was living in an apartment receiving treatment as an outpatient,” Jones said. “One night, someone broke into her apartment and took everything. We raised some money, replaced everything in the apartment and even set up a Christmas tree with presents under the tree.”

As others recognized the needs of these returning veterans, organizations such as the Wounded Warrior Project grew and acquired more resources to provide services. “Fortunately for the veterans, they were receiving the support they needed,” he said, “but unfortunately for us, we had all of these resources and didn’t know where to put them.”

That’s when Jones turned to scholarships. While the GI-Bill covers a substantial amount of a veteran’s education, it is not always enough. The ERPi Patriot Scholarship provides recipients with $2,500 per semester and the opportunity for a paid internship, with university credit, for a semester or more. “There are seven scholarship recipients now, but by next semester we hope to have 20, and that’s pretty cool,” said Jones.

To Jones, this scholarship isn’t just about funding a veteran’s education. The goal is to create a self-sustaining network among them - veterans in Virginia who have attended the Schar School and continue to help each other for a long time.

“We hope to expand the scholarship into other colleges within Mason. Nursing, education, and law,” Jones said. “If we can get more companies interested in funding the scholarship then we’d love to see them go to other schools. It means a lot for me to see the veterans come out of the Schar School because that’s where I came from, and I hope that this will help the community, help the country, and help the veterans.”

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 80 full-time faculty, we offer 14 degree programs at the undergraduate, masters, and/or doctoral levels.

schar.gmu.edu