Words to live by

Professor’s research spawns life-altering writing workshop

Camps connect grandparents to grandkids

Professor studies sustainable cities

Social media fosters civic engagement
When you hear the word “research,” what comes to mind? Do you think of scientists in white lab coats? Microscopes and beakers? The College of Community and Public Affairs might not have any germ-free laboratories, but our faculty engage in groundbreaking research year-round—and this research is making a real impact.

Take, for instance, Assistant Professor of Social Work Youjung Lee, who conducts research with grandparents raising grandchildren in the Binghamton region. Through interviews, she found that both grandparents and grandchildren in this situation deal with some very critical issues. To address these issues, she developed a series of interventions and is now developing a model to guide professionals working with grandparents raising grandchildren in other parts of the United States and the world. You can find out more about this story on page 6.

Lee’s work is just one example of the kind of applied research taking place at CCPA. Whether it’s addressing sustainability (page 9), our faculty are making critical contributions in their respective disciplines and in transdisciplinary areas, and are making a difference in the local community, the nation and the world.

Along with innovative research, CCPA continues to make great strides both locally and globally—from our continued growth of the local Promise Zone program to work in other parts of the United States as well as multiple efforts on each of the continents of Africa, South America and Asia.

We hope you enjoy the second issue of CCPA’s official magazine, Confluence. You’ll see that not only do we teach about leadership and civic engagement—our faculty, staff and students are actually changing the world!

Laura R. Bronstein
Dean, College of Community and Public Affairs

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Youjung Lee’s research inspired a series of helpful “camps” for grandparents raising grandchildren.

9 Urban endurance
A former public radio producer is researching sustainable practices across America—including Binghamton, N.Y.

12 Social crusader
For David Campbell, social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are a means for change.

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Myra Sabir’s narrative intervention workshop is changing lives for the better.

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CCPA launches official blog

The Greater Good, CCPA’s official blog, launched in fall 2014. Aimed at creating a dialogue between CCPA, community partners and students, The Greater Good spotlights important faculty research and noteworthy developments taking place at the college and in the community. The blog is managed by doctoral student Stephanie Malmberg, ‘12, MS ’14, who thinks it is a great tool to demystify the type of research and other activities taking place at CCPA for students, local constituents and people around the world.

“There is so much great research going on in CCPA that there is always something interesting and innovative to blog about,” Malmberg says.

Read an excerpt from the blog written by Elizabeth Mellin, director of CCPA’s doctoral program, on page 21.

DID YOU KNOW?

Assistant Professor of Public Administration Susan Appe’s grandfather Robert Appe was one of Binghamton’s earliest graduates. Robert graduated from Triple Cities College, the earliest incarnation of Binghamton University, in 1949.

DID YOU KNOW?

Read more in the Binghamton University Magazine: bit.ly/appefamily

Campbell featured in Wall Street Journal

David Campbell, professor of public administration, was interviewed for a Wall Street Journal story about philanthropy courses that teach students how to give wisely.

MOYLAN EVALUATOR ON $975,000 GRANT

Assistant Professor of Social Work Carrie Moylan will serve as the evaluator on a $975,000, five-year grant as part of an initiative to fund regional centers for sexual violence prevention in six designated high-risk areas of New York state.

APPE SELECTED FOR FULBRIGHT GRANT TO ECUADOR

Assistant Professor of Public Administration Susan Appe has been selected for a 2015-16 Fulbright U.S. scholar grant. Her research examines civil society networks as key instruments used by non-governmental organizations to shape the sector in Latin America. In Ecuador, she will explore the responsibility networks have assumed to meet the demands for organizational and sector-level capacity building.

CHAUDHRY RECEIVES GRANT TO STUDY EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Lubna Chaudhry, chair and associate professor of human development, has received a research grant from the Spencer Foundation to support a project titled “Narratives on Education from Swat Valley, Pakistan: A Gendered, Classed, and Ethnicity-Based Analysis.”
Home improvement in Peru

Associate Professor of Public Administration Nadia Rubaii, Assistant Professor of Public Administration Susan Appe and a group of students worked alongside the women of the Alto Los Incas Comedor Popular — a grassroots women’s kitchen that feeds nutritious lunches to a community on the outskirts of Cusco, Peru — to demolish an old adobe structure that was collapsing and replace it with a new brick structure.

CCPA builds bonds in Malawi, Africa

Dean Laura Bronstein, Assistant Professor of Social Work Lisa Blitz and Binghamton native Steven Koffman spent their winter working with children, many orphaned and living in extreme poverty, in partnership with the Malawi Children’s Mission (MCM), which provides nutrition, education, healthcare, and emotional support to children near Blantyre, Malawi. Bronstein and Blitz are in the early planning stages of developing an academic opportunity, in conjunction with the University of Malawi and MCM, that hopes to send transdisciplinary teams of students and faculty researchers into rural Malawi to create an asset-based community development assessment and to support the goals and vision of Malawians for their next generation of leaders.

New to CCPA

Elizabeth Melin joined the PhD program in Community and Public Affairs in September 2014 as director and associate professor. Her scholarly interests focus on exploring the role of community in promoting mental health among youth including: multiparty collaborations, expanded school mental health and alternative school discipline approaches for students with emotional or behavioral needs. Previously, she was a faculty member at the Pennsylvania State University and a community mental health counselor in Atlanta, GA.

Alana Gunn

Alana Gunn joins the Department of Social Work as an assistant professor in August. After earning her PhD at the University of Chicago, she worked as a postdoctoral behavioral scientist at the National Development and Research Institutes, Inc. Her research focuses on how women who have experienced incarceration and substance abuse experiences manage multiple stigmas as they reintegrate back into their communities and families.

Nadine Mastroleo

Nadine Mastroleo is an assistant professor at Brown University and the Center for Alcohol and Addictions Studies. Her primary area of research is the examination of brief interventions aimed at reducing alcohol use and HIV-risk behaviors in high-risk populations (college students, emergency department patients). She will join CCPA in the fall.

University welcomes school officials from Shenzhen, China

A delegation of leaders from Shenzhen University visited Binghamton from Sept. 28 through Oct. 9. The group came to learn about American higher education — specifically in regard to assessment, classroom management, and balancing research and teaching. “I believe that it’s going to create partnerships and opportunities for students on both sides,” says Stacy Marrow, coordinator of career and international programs.

Bronstein shares vision for “Binghamton in 5”

Dean Laura Bronstein shared her vision for a “Binghamton in 5” in the Press & Sun-Bulletin, Binghamton’s daily newspaper. “In five years, we hope that the efforts of CCPA’s growing student body, faculty and staff contribute to making Binghamton a place where increasing numbers of people choose to live and work,” Bronstein says.

Chancellor’s Award Recipients

Dina Maramba, Department of Student Affairs Administration

Nadia Rubaii, Department of Public Administration

Tammy Behonick, dean’s office

Amy Edwards, Department of Social Work

Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching

Dina Maramba, Department of Student Affairs Administration

Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Faculty Service

Nadia Rubaii, Department of Public Administration

Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Professional Service

Tammy Behonick, dean’s office

Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Classified Service

Amy Edwards, Department of Social Work
A surprising statistic caught the attention of Assistant Professor of Social Work Youjung Lee while she was conducting referral interviews for counseling at Binghamton West Middle School in fall 2010. “Of the eight students I interviewed, five or six of them lived with their grandparents,” Lee says. “My radar went up.”

Through a series of interviews with 23 of these non-traditional parents, conducted from spring 2012 through fall 2013, Lee uncovered three major themes: Family trauma has multigenerational impact, custodial grandparents contend with multiple stressors, and family resiliency can promote healing and growth.

Grandparents most often step in as caregivers following traumatic events, such as family violence, abuse, death or incarceration of a parent. They may not have the resources — either financial, social or medical — to resume parenting duties, but are forced back into that role. However, this “second chance” provides them an opportunity to correct any previous child-rearing mistakes and also enjoy a loving, rewarding relationship with their grandchildren.

Michelle Gray-Smith characterizes each one of Lee’s findings. This 53-year-old grandmother became the guardian of her 9-year-old grandson, Camron, when a social worker intervened shortly after his birth. At that time, Gray-Smith was a full-time commercial bus driver and part-time student. She tried to maintain her previous routine while caring for then 3-month-old Camron.

“I felt like I was losing my mind. Getting up three times a night with an infant was too difficult, so I quit that job and school,” says Gray-Smith, who started a full-time job last October as a teacher’s aide at East Middle School in Binghamton.

Gray-Smith says her relationship with Camron is close and affectionate. “He’s so special, just perfect. He’s my third child.”

“This winter, he wanted me to go outside and make snow angels with him,” she adds. “That keeps me young.”

Sadly, Lee found that non-traditional families such as these often fall outside the scope of the helping professionals in schools. “These grandparents have needs — everything from lack of transportation to their relationship with the schools — that aren’t being met,” Lee says. “Family engagement is not the primary goal of the school; education is. But without it, there is no success,” she adds.

Gray-Smith agrees that schools don’t understand nontraditional families headed by grandparents. They may not realize the best way to communicate is by telephone and not by e-mail, for example.

Lee learned through her custodial grandparent interviews that they wanted more meaningful interaction with their grandchildren, and they also wanted activities that would help grandchildren meet their peers. Her solution was to develop a series of themed “camps” for both children and grandparents, which debuted on campus in winter 2014. This collaborative effort with the Decker School of Nursing, Harpur College and the Graduate School of Education, in conjunction with the Broome County Promise Zone initiative, resulted in hands-on activities that focused on science, mathematics and general education, as well as an information-gathering forum for the grandparents. The program is supported by local public schools through the Promise Zone initiative to develop and support community schools.

“These activities are the vehicles that address the family’s well-being. The goal is to address the mental health issues they face,” Lee says. Three weekly science-based camps were followed by mathematics and health-studies camps. Between 15 and 20 children attended each hour-long camp with about 10 grandparents over five months. Nearly three-quarters of the 2015 contingent of campers and grandparents are repeat participants from last year.

“Education students must deepen their understanding that children develop in multiple contexts. This setting outside school provides that...
INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPOSURE

Grandparents and their custodial grandchildren are not the only ones to benefit from hands-on learning at Assistant Professor of Social Work Youjung Lee’s camp program.

“As an educator, I teach the young professionals who will work with multigenerational families. My focus is on mental health, but there is an interdisciplinary team that addresses the whole family,” Lee says.

Ashley AuPont, a second-year graduate student in the joint Social Work and Public Administration program, is interested in seeing the education that future teachers are getting regarding the social-emotional understanding for their potential students and their families. There is a real give and take between the future educators and their response to students’ needs,” AuPont says.

She has contributed to this exchange by showing her counterparts in education the best approaches to dealing with children, she adds.

The education students broadened their thinking by exposure to all three peer groups—social work, science (physics) and nursing, says Elizabeth Anderson, assistant professor in the Graduate School of Education.

“They learned how the grandparents’ health could impact their children’s education, and what the psychosocial problems are, from the social-work students. They also learned more science content and, in turn, showed science students how to teach or engage the children,” she adds.

Opportunity,” says Elizabeth Anderson, an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Education who holds a joint title in CCPA’s Department of Social Work.

“The social work orientation Dr. Lee provides is helpful because she recognizes the strength in all families, traditional or not,” she adds.

Anderson’s graduate students helped create math activities using low-cost household materials and also provided grandparents with a list of the terms now used in schools for math instruction.

“The grandparents told us they wanted to understand what their grandchildren were learning, especially Common Core math,” she says.

“Common Core math has thrown all the children into a new way of learning, and one with a learning disability (like mine) goes into a tailspin,” says Mary Patrillo, 64, who has raised her 15-year-old granddaughter, Kendra, for the past eight years.

“The camp not only has helped her understand the math better, but it’s been a huge help for the grandchildren, who often feel like they don’t fit in to the traditional school environment,” Patrillo says.

While creating experiments to demonstrate the conservation of mass or exploring light optics problems, both grandparents and children were fully engaged, says Bonggu Shim, assistant professor of physics.

“The adults had a good knowledge of science even though they didn’t think they did,” he adds.

This hands-on activity showed the grandparents their children were enthused about science even if they had only limited exposure to it.

“Camron was so excited that he could do something with a laser,” Gray-Smith says. “I realized there is a possibility he could become a scientist.”

Other presentations for grandparents focused on issues of health in aging, disease prevention or side effects of medications. Grandparents also learned about helpful social services available to them, such as Family Enrichment Network grants.

The mutual emotional support is as important as the information on daycare, Gray-Smith says.

“It helped me tremendously to meet other grandparents. They understand why you sacrifice and why you’re doing it all over again,” she says.

Lee hopes this increased confidence that the camp experience has built in the grandparents will develop their greater involvement in the schools.

“They have more confidence in helping grand- children now that they have been involved in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities, and they have a sense of connection and support from the same age cohort,” she says.

For her future research, Lee wants to compare the data with national findings on custodial grandparent mental health, since it has a major impact on their grandchildren’s success. Locally, she hopes grandparents use their newfound confidence to attend Board of Education meetings and speak up for themselves and their grandchildren.

“There should be grandparent-lead Parent-Teacher Associations in each school district,” she adds.

By Rebecca Kahn

George Homoy is on his third career. He was a producer for public radio, a city planner in upstate New York and is currently an assistant professor of public administration at the College of Community and Public Affairs. Homoy’s positions, however, have not been a collection of random interests. His passion is sustainable communities, and his professional career trajec- tory is a direct reflection of that.

Homoy started out as a journalist with an interest in environmental issues. He helped start a show for public radio called “Living on Earth,” focusing on environmental protections, and then another show called “The Cultivated Garden.” After earning his master’s degree in city and regional planning at Cornell University, he worked as a planner in upstate New York for five years, working largely on environmental protec- tion and economic development issues.

“I went back to Cornell for my PhD and thought after graduation that I would have to be willing to go anywhere for a tenure-track job,” Homoy says.

“Little did I know Binghamton was trying to start a sustainable communities program. I got hired not even 60 miles down the road!”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has recog- nized Homoy’s expertise on sustainability issues, awarding him a $150,000 research grant in 2014 to study rural sustainability. His project will examine how rural municipalities balance economic develop- ment and environmental protection, how local

By Jonathan Cohen

George Homsy is on his third career. He was a producer for public radio, a city planner in upstate New York and is currently an assistant professor of public administration at the College of Community and Public Affairs. Homsy’s expertise on sustainability issues, awarding him a $150,000 research grant in 2014 to study rural sustainability. His project will examine how rural municipalities balance economic development and environmental protection, how local...
economic development policy has shifted since the recession, as well as how rural communities have responded to climate change.

“We’ve already done an economic development survey that includes questions about environmental protection and social equity,” Homsy says. “And we’re also going to be doing case studies research around the idea of what drives officials of local governments to worry about climate change. It’s interesting theoretically in terms of urban policy, but it’s also important practically because it will inform municipal policy makers about best practices.”

Homsy’s students are fortunate to have the opportunity to try to answer some of those questions.

“One of the first things we wrestle with in class is trying to figure out what sustainability means, because it means different things to different people,” he says. “In my opinion, the simplest definition of sustainability is the ability to protect future generations without depriving the current generation.”

To analyze what that means on the local level, Homsy’s students take advantage of a resource just a few steps outside their classroom door: downtown Binghamton.

“In every class, we always have some way of practicing or observing,” Homsy says. “In my Planning Sustainable Cities and Regions class, we take a walk to the VINES urban farm, and on that walk we talk about what we are seeing. Do we see buses? Cars? Are people walking? Does it feel safe? When we get to the urban farm, we talk about the role of food in a neighborhood and in society, as well as its role in producing carbon emissions. This past semester, students would go out in groups and spend part of the class examining the city from different perspectives – transportation, walkability, green infrastructure and economic viability. It allows the students to see on the ground what they read about in class.”

This experiential learning helped Sabrina Scull learn more than she would have grasped in the classroom alone.

“The opportunity to analyze sustainability within the local community really brought what we were learning in the classroom to life,” says Scull, a senior majoring in environmental studies.

Many local governments are starting to balance the issues of the economy and the environment, Homsy says. And governments that are doing so reap the benefits.

“Many cities recognize sustainability as an economic development tool. Often, the companies that local leaders want to attract, as well as the employees of those companies, put a high value on being green. It’s a quality-of-life issue. If a place feels greener, if it’s walkable, if there’s green infrastructure – these are the things that make communities more attractive to people, especially people who want to invest in a city’s future.”

Homsy enjoys focusing his research on smaller cities such as Binghamton. And Binghamton seems to be making progress, he says.

“Binghamton’s done a great job in terms of livening up our downtown,” he says. “Now we need to work on attracting more professionals downtown. There’s a growing number of us who live downtown, and it’s because we like that we can walk out of our apartments to eat and shop. I can walk to work at the Downtown Center and easily take a bus to the main campus. More and more businesses will open downtown if there are people living there. There are ways to get around the tension between the environment and the economy, and the good news is local governments are getting better at figuring it out.”

“If a place feels greener, if it’s walkable, if there’s green infrastructure – these are the things that make communities more attractive to people.”

–George Homsy

George Homsy doesn’t just study sustainability; he lives a sustainable life. From his apartment in downtown Binghamton, he can easily walk to his job, gym, entertainment and good eats, leaving a smaller footprint on the planet.
By Brian Crawford

#CiviMedia

Public administrators must teach about the value of social media.

According to an article in Public Administration Review, by the College of Public Administration professor David Campbell, the use of social media can teach an organization about the public it serves.

In an article that will soon appear in Public Administration Review, Campbell and Lambright show that social media is underutilized among regional agencies.

"Most organizations don't have a strategy. Most just do it because they think it is what everyone else does," Lambright says. "They base it more on intuition rather than a thoughtful approach to engaging with the communities they care about.

"Organizations tend to have a narrow view regarding their use of social media," Campbell says. "They tend to use social media as a way of saying, 'Here's what we do,' rather than as a means of establishing two-way communication with clients, donors and the interested public.

Campbell suggests that there is a lack of good social media examples in the Binghamton area. "Our region is semi-rural, and I think that the adoption rate is different here than you'd find in a larger city," he says. In addition, organizations often lack resources to keep their media outreach current, and governmental agencies, in particular, tend to follow "command and control management structures," that limit their use of social media.

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Wet writing — because so many cry when sharing their stories.

By John Brhel

Tim Williams hadn’t gardened a day in his life. But last summer, at the age of 50, he grew a slew of fresh vegetables in his back yard – collard greens, kale, broccoli, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers and more.

Just what prompted Williams to discover he had a green thumb? Expressive writing.

Williams took part in a narrative intervention known as Lifewriting, an eight-week program in which participants work through unresolved experiences in their lives through intensive written and oral exercises.

For Williams, it was working through his difficult teenage years. Forced to watch over his 14 younger brothers and sisters, he had little time to pursue his own interests. At the age of 15, he reached a breaking point, dropped out of high school and left home. The experience left a bitter taste in his mouth. But he’s moved in with his dad in New York City. The event left a lasting influence on the psyche, she says.

“If you’re convinced that you aren’t worthy of love, for example, you’re going to interpret situations from that perspective … You bring that to every encounter.”

Last spring, Sabir recruited 24 participants, including Williams, from three community organizations in Binghamton: Trinity AME Zion Church, Broome County YMCA and Volunteers of America. Of the 24 participants, 17 completed a questionnaire before and after the workshop.

These kinds of results are nothing new for Sabir; more than 25 years of research has shown the benefits of expressive writing. But she doesn’t want to merely replicate her research. She wants to expand it and discover the ways in which participants actually begin to change their lives and impact their communities.

Reliving a moment

Lifewriting is more than glorified journal writing. Participants dig deep into their past and “relive” their unresolved experiences.

“You’re actually reproducing a moment ... It’s the only way to work through an impactful experience,” Sabir says. “Because if you stay in your head, reporting it, it stays the same; you don’t change the impact of it. You’ve got to relive it, and this time, do something differently with it than you did before.”

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Sabir notes that no one has looked beyond the psychological and physical health benefits of expressive writing to study the impact it has on one’s life. “What does it mean in terms of your personal life and the way you interact with other people?” Sabir says. “Now that you’re healthy, what does that mean for your local community and for society at large?”

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From street life to family life

For “Don” (a parolee who wishes to remain anonymous), Lifewriting couldn’t have come at a better time. At the time he learned of the program, he was estranged from his wife and three sons, and was ready to “let it out.”

“In a way, it saved my life, thus far,” he says. “Now that he can see things for what they are, he says he’s leaving the street life behind and is focusing on being a good husband and father. “This course helped me get a lot of things out that I wasn’t paying attention to, that were factors in a lot of my failures or difficulties,” Don says. “Once a lot of that stuff came out, everything just seemed easier.”

While he says that his life hasn’t changed overnight, for the time being he is focused on the good. He recommends the course to others; he even refers to it as “www.getyourlifetogether.com.”

“Myra Sabir, assistant professor of human development, leads a group of men through a Lifewriting workshop at the YMCA in downtown Binghamton.

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**Tanairy Carbo: Agent of Change**

**Social Work Student Aims to Make an Impact**

Change is what propels Tanairy Carbo “14 forward in life. You don’t have to stay this one, stagnant person,” says Carbo, a Bronx, N.Y., native and first-year graduate student at the College of Community and Public Affairs.

One change that she experienced was transitioning from majoring in human development as an undergraduate to majoring in social work as a graduate student.

“I’m always open to everything because social work is such a diverse major and career,” she says. “You never stop learning, so I really enjoy that aspect.”

Carbo’s love for learning does not go unnoticed by Carrie Moylan, assistant professor of social work. She finds Carbo to be a bright and vibrant student.

“(Tanairy) is a pleasure to have in class — always actively participating, with a warm, joyful demeanor that fellow students appreciate,” Moylan says.

In addition to her role as a student, Carbo is also a graduate assistant in the Department of Social Work. Her responsibilities include working in recruitment for the social work program and providing administrative support.

“It feels like I’m kind of part of the faculty, which is good,” Carbo says. “I think that’s my way to contribute back to the school, by promoting such a great program to people.”

Before assuming her graduate assistantship, Carbo worked as a peer counselor for Binghamton University’s Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the Department of Human Development. As an EOP student herself, Carbo has a personal connection to the program and is motivated to help others.

“EOP was such a diverse major and career,” she says. “I’m always open to everything because social work is such a diverse major and career.”

Carbo says her work as an undergraduate student solidified her desire to become a social worker, and she hopes to go into gerontology.

“I always wanted to be a person who can be an agent of change … (CCPA) is giving me the skills that I need.”

—Tanairy Carbo
In case of emergency

MPA grads turn passion for public safety into career

Robert Cohen ’12, MPA ’14, became interested in emergency medical services when he volunteered at his hometown’s fire department during high school.

“I loved it,” the 24-year-old Katonah, NY., native says. “I met many friends and mentors and community leaders, and I think, most importantly, I learned what teamwork really was — individual people, with their own varied experiences and distinct perspectives and skills, working toward a common goal.”

Cohen’s volunteer firefighter experience led the political science and history major to join Binghamton University’s student-run ambulance service, Harpur’s Ferry. Among his many unforgettable memories as an emergency medical technician for Harpur’s Ferry is working during the flood caused by Tropical Storm Lee in September 2011.

“I served at the Events Center shelter as EMS group supervisor and was involved in planning and coordinating our response to the medical emergencies that arose,” he says. The Events Center sheltered 1,800 people at the height of evacuations in Broome County.

Cohen says his experience with the 2011 flood gave him an appreciation for the field of emergency services and emergency management. His undergraduate work led him to the College of Community and Public Affairs’ Master of Public Administration program.

“I had a great experience (in the program),” says Cohen, who is now an inter-agency after-action report coordinator for the New York City Office of Emergency Management. “My classes enabled me to focus on different aspects; in some classes I looked at flood planning for rural or small urban communities, in others I looked at how emergency management offices are staffed and led, and how they fit in with other governments in other cities and counties.”

Associate Professor David Campbell, chair of the Department of Public Administration, understands why Harpur’s Ferry volunteers such as Cohen are attracted to the graduate program.

“The Harpur’s Ferry people are just delightfully motivated,” Campbell says. “(They are) people who have a singular interest in emergency services, and they see the MPA program as the place to develop that career. A number of students who are graduates of our program have gone on to very solid careers in emergency service.”

Michael Ponticiello ’07, MPA ’09, also got started in the fire department in his hometown of Nissequogue, NY. He says Binghamton University helped refine his interest in the management side of emergency services.

“I wanted to expand my involvement in EMS at college,” Ponticiello, 29, says. “Harpur’s Ferry was a natural fit for me to do so.”

Ponticiello, now a disaster preparedness coordinator at the Broome County Office of Emergency Services, became curious about the MPA program because of his mentor — David Hubeny, the University’s emergency manager. Ponticiello says that after talking with MPA faculty members, he believed the program would enable him to take a broader approach to emergency management and give him the skill set to run an emergency management program within local government.

“I felt that [the MPA program] challenged me to expand my thinking and embrace new ideas and concepts,” Ponticiello says. “I also feel that it did an exceptional job at teaching me how to apply theory to practice.”

Campbell urges students to consider the MPA program. He says it will prepare them for lives of active citizenship.

“If you want to make a difference, if you want to be someone who says at the end of his or her life, ‘I changed the world in a meaningful way,’ then an MPA degree is a sure way to set you on that path,” he says. —Terasa Yu

“[Having a small department] means students get to work directly with our faculty members,” Campbell says, “and in collaboration with either local government or local community-based nonprofit organizations as part of the degree program.”

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More than a checkbox

Students affairs professor gives voice to marginalized Asian-American students

“...and you’ll see that most institutions of higher education lump Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) ethnic groups into one broad category. That’s one small checkbox for one incredibly large group. For Dina Maramba, associate professor of student affairs administration, the AAPI option is an over-simplified misnomer that makes no distinction between Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino and the many other AAPI subpopulations. To aggregate every Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic subgroup within one huge category leads to gross misrepresentation of the ethnic groups within the AAPI category, she says. “However, when you critically analyze this number, you see that the ethnic groups are disproportionate.”

As a Filipina American who also works as a student affairs professional for more than 10 years, Maramba has always worked toward increasing the success of underrepresented students. Her personal background, professional experience and students continue to inspire her research.

“The point of my research is to help higher education institutions create more conducive and effective learning environments for all students, and allow voices from usually marginalized places to be heard,” she says. “Their stories need to be told and institutions need to pay attention.”
Alice Sounthala '11, MSW '14, was well-prepared for her position as a crisis counselor at nonprofit agency The Neighborhood Center, thanks to the combination of classroom instruction and field-service training offered by Binghamton University’s College of Community and Public Affairs. “My experience in the field gave me the opportunity to work with real clients in real-life situations, while my courses gave me a general understanding of the mental health population as well as taught me both specific therapeutic techniques and how to interact with clients in particular situations.”

New York state support and tuition cover a fraction of Sounthala’s education. Help others like her prepare for impactful careers. Give to the Binghamton Fund for CCPA at binghamton.edu/giving.