Introduction

My journey at Virginia Tech began in 1986 when I visited campus as a student in Virginia's Governor's School. Prior to that, I had visited campus - specifically Newman Library - with my father, who never attended college. His one goal for me was to become a college graduate, an opportunity he never had. Those conversations remain with me and inspire me to continue learning at every opportunity. Over the course of my career, learning and teaching have been a natural extension of each job or role I've undertaken. Prior to 2012, my education was largely professional in nature - informal in the truest academic sense despite the jobs being technical and complex I worked diligently to complete my Bachelor's degree in 2014, and working at Virginia Tech provided an opening to continue my formal education. This portfolio documents the first three years of my journey into graduate studies here at Virginia Tech.

My journey has been rewarding personally, intellectually and professionally. In my personal statement as an applicant to this program I called the opportunity to attend Graduate School "the culmination of a journey". Today, I realize that the journey itself is far more important. There are certainly waypoints such as an earned degree or change in status, but the ability to do research, have meaningful discourse with my peers, and contribute to my profession is a responsibility without end. I am hopeful to continue this journey into the doctoral program within CPAP. While completing the MPA program is an important milestone, I remain determined to complete a doctoral degree and actively participate in both instruction and research.

I entered the MPA program as a practicing professional, with a role in both Virginia Tech's Environmental Health & Safety group and in Montgomery County's volunteer emergency services. Those two endeavors afforded me numerous opportunities to apply public administration concepts immediately. Rather than describe artifacts in great detail, this narrative is designed to help you understand how I have grown through my work in the program.

Performance Objective 1: Communication

The ability to communicate ideas effectively across cultural and educational boundaries is critical to the long-term success of a public administrator. My tenure within the MPA program has afforded me a number of opportunities to grow and develop additional communications-related skills. Specifically, my growth occurred in three areas: visualization, memo writing, and publishing.

Most importantly, I have greatly improved my data visualization skills and learned how to use Tableau, Google Data Studio and Stimulsoft Reports. These tools greatly improved my ability to spot trends and outliers in complex data sets and communicate complex data in simple, visual form. Second, although I have taught procedural classes in memo-writing, the MPA courses required significant change in my memo-writing style. MPA policy memos are at a much higher level and refer to more complex topics than simple operational memos. The audience is also very different– public administration peers at an equal or higher level, which means the type and scope of information presented was very different from my typical writings. Finally, as someone who has made writing for publication a secondary career, many concepts such as peer review and revise-resubmit were well-known to me. In working with Dr. Jordan while part of the program, I had the opportunity to extend those skills into the academic authoring process. The academic writing style is much more objective and rigid, although the authoring process itself actually allows for more curiosity and freedom.

I selected a total of four artifact sets to demonstrate my meeting the MPA program's objectives and help you understand how participation in the MPA program helped evolve those skills. These artifacts include:

- Artifact 1, *Student Toolkit for Career Technical Education,* with Dr. Grant B. Goold;
- Artifact 2, a Health and Safety Policy Recommendation;
- Artifact 3, a PowerPoint presentation prepared for PAPA 6514 (Inquiry) on the Mens' Basketball Team compliance with Coach Buzz Williams' expectations; and
- Artifact 4, a research paper co-authored with Dr. Sara Jordan titled *Examining Readability in Regulatory Comments: A Digital Chasm;*

Artifact 1 represents my sixth book, this one published through Kona Publishing with my frequent co-author Dr. Grant B. Goold of American River College. During the authoring process, we focused on many concepts not normally found in a technical education text. This focus was the result of our experiences with students failing to negotiate the transition into public employment.   Because of my experiences in the MPA program, I authored sections on emotional intelligence and critical thinking (pp. 7-23), as well as a section on ethics (pp. 125-129). Dr. Goold and I split authoring by individual sections, with each of us writing half the text. Authoring a book requires an understanding of the specific audience and providing meaningful information; the book's purchaser is motivated to buy the book only when that content is of value to them. Writing for mass publication requires sensitivity to the many viewpoints that make up your intended audience - in this case students entering a career or technical education

program. The ability to clearly communicate a message worthy of a college student's investment speaks to my attainment of the required objective.

The second artifact was created as part of Dr. Adam Eckerd's course. As an employee charged with helping implement Virginia Tech Health & Safety Policy 1005, the course provided an opportunity to evaluate the policy and how that policy is administered. The memo represents a format for communicating policy known as *PEST* (Problem, Evaluation, Solutions, Threats). The evaluation process required an analysis of the policy problem, the development of potential solutions, an thorough review of those alternatives including a cost-benefit analysis, and communicating a recommendation based on the analysis. The memo recommended that the current policy and mechanisms of execution remain unchanged; the memo was shared with and discussed by the leadership of my department.

The third artifact is the result of a team project including MPA graduates Will Gipe and Jeff Zumwalt while completing PAPA 6514. My role in the project, aside from participation in the research activity, was to prepare the graphics relative to our findings. These graphics appear on a number of slides (10, 11, 15, 16). A big part of creating the graphics was learning to use Tableau Public and other visual tools.

Finally, the fourth artifact is an original work currently pending submission to *Policy and Internet*. Arising from my work with Dr. Sara Jordan, this document represents my first foray into the world of academic penmanship. In addition to writing for a specific audience, this paper also required the creation of graphics to support my contention that the readability of proposed regulations matter, and that there is information on regulatory participation to be gleaned from the readability of submitted comments on those proposed regulations. I authored the majority of this manuscript, with Dr. Jordan contributing significantly to the theoretical sections and providing oversight of my data and methods.

Performance Objective 2: Presentation

The MPA program's current presentation objective is straightforward. Each instructor has incorporated a presentation component into their syllabus. These are sometimes videotaped or captured, and are almost always accompanied by statements that the ability to deliver such a presentation is a key artifact. I fully support that position; the ability to prepare and deliver a formal presentation is key to many public administration roles.

My concern with this specific outcome is that everyone tends to focus on the PowerPoint-centric, prepared presentation style. Herein lies a recommendation for the leadership of the MPA program. More than simply preparing and delivering a presentation, public administrators must develop a wider range of

public speaking skills. Extemporaneous speaking, argumentative dialogue and debate, and delivering media statements are each very different skills that fall under the umbrella of the first two objectives. To that extent, some faculty incorporate simulations and similar role-playing activities; I strongly recommend expanding on and possibly formalizing that element. As an alternative, encourage completion of a public speaking course as an elective or pre-requisite. Stephen A. Lucas' *The Art of Public Speaking* is an outstanding text and I would highly recommend any public administration student work through his material. Public speaking in this sense is as much an an extension of Objective 1, Communication as it is an element of Objective 2, Presentation. A clearly developed message is essential, but also must incorporate a savvy, functional knowledge of the audience and environment. Public administrators often present to three distinct audiences: elected officials, the citizenry, and their peers. Each type of audience presents significantly different challenges. Elected officials may want the significantly abbreviated version with more details on possible action items; the public may want significant detail on impacts; while peers may want granular details about the decision-making process. Similarly, presenting to a community group at a local event is very different than making a public statement to the media or arguing a policy position during a staff meeting. Closing those voids will further prepare graduates for positions within the public sector.

Even with my background, I found the MPA program very helpful. I have a much deeper appreciation for the unique audiences associated with public administration and the need to deliberately consider a much wider, more diverse set of lenses when preparing content. Second, I'm much more aware of how technology and distance alters the interaction among a group significantly (i.e., the Thomas Conner House IT challenge). Attending multiple Polycom/remote classes helped me appreciate the challenges of instructing and facilitating these types of courses. Finally, participation in Normative Foundations motivated me to return to the speaking circuit within the public safety community..

In support of my attainment of Performance Objective Two, I have selected three distinct artifact sets:

- Artifact 6, which is the presentation of a case study on communication;
- Artifact 7, is a controversial presentation on Ethics associated with attendance at a specific public safety convention; and
- Links 1 and 2, to online presentations prepared as part of two elective courses.

Artifact 6 was prepared for PAPA 5315; during the course we had to prepare a presentation on one of the core elements of behavioral skills. I selected communication skills. The first nine slides are a summary of the basic communication principles covered in the class. Concepts are conveyed in a graphical form

appropriate for a review session with this peer audience. The second part of the presentation is a 13-slide case study of a communication failure resulting the death of a San Francisco Police Department officer. At the conclusion of the presentation I conducted a simulation assigning fellow students roles such as police chief, attorney for the officer's family, local business owner, local television reporter, and police union spokesperson. Each role was tasked with making a public statement about the event that was described. Ultimately, a number of my student peers opened a larger discussion in the arena of American policing and public harm. Although not intended as part of the participation, the policy discussion that resulted involved "how to protect the citizenry from harm by law enforcement during pursuits." This clearly demonstrates how the audience can react to a public administrator's presentation in an unintended but informative and constructive way. The discussion that followed the presentation was excellent; even though there were no conclusions reached a number of new and valuable perspectives were raised. The ability to create and build on these discussions specifically addresses the second presentation criteria.

Artifact 7 was prepared as summary of my takeaways from PAPA 6414, Normative Foundations. At the time it was authored, I had just returned from the Virginia statewide emergency medical services conference. Normative foundations had the most profound impact of any course I completed during my tenure in the MPA program. For the majority of my professional career, any discussion of ethics focused on specific situations such as patient consent or "Do Not Resuscitate" orders – purely situational ethics with no discussion of the larger ethical lens. PAPA 6414 caused me to view many conference activities in a different light. My new ethical lens is reflected in the presentation. One of the critical underpinnings of the course lies in understanding your professional norms; many of the behaviors I accepted as normal prior to the course I now view as unacceptable. To that end, this presentation has been modified and presented on four different occasions, most recently in February 2018 at Charlotte, NC as part of *EMS Today*, the national EMS trade show. Variations of the presentation are slated for the New York State Fire Chiefs' Conference and Exposition, the West Virginia EMS Conference, and the Virginia EMS Symposium in 2018. The presentation and associated conversations have been instrumental in starting a larger, difficult conversation within our profession about ethics. This artifact is supportive of both criteria; it uses real-time examples to communicate the core ideas and simultaneously generates the critical discussions necessary to fulfill the second criteria for the Objective.

The third item included to the portfolio is slightly different; within the item are links directly to presentations prepared for Dr. Jeffrey Glick's course PAPA 6264, Response. A key part of developing and delivering a presentation is to understand the presentation audience and environment, and use appropriate tools to deliver your message. Logistical issues between Thomas Conner House and other

course sites are almost legendary and ensured that traditional PowerPoint was impractical. Therefore, Adobe Captivate was used to create the presentation; after design the presentations were deployed on a Virginia Tech server so that anyone with the URL could access the material. This technique was used several times throughout the course. The first link is to a comprehensive analysis of the National Weather Service's forecasting of the June 2012 derecho. As required by the first criteria, this presentation was prepared for a general audience and deconstructed the complex issues associated with the storm into a digestible form. The second presentation dissects how the federal government responds to disasters and large-scale events under the National Response Framework (NRF). Both presentations are followed with brief interactive games developed to reinforce key takeaways.

The ability to develop and deliver presentations that build upon the basic communications skills required for a public administration professional is something I take great personal satisfaction from. Rarely is a good presentation the end of a conversation; good presentations should spark open, honest communication and generate questions and ideas. Good presentations spur your audiences – no matter who they may be – to further action and foster curiosity. The artifacts submitted have shown they can do that, even when presented within the limited scope of the MPA program.

Performance Objective 3: Research

An important step in my journey has been a transition from being a consumer of research to being a creator of research. In the past I would dig into a topic by formulating a question, then seek information from appropriate sources to synthesize opinions or recommendations. I rarely had to develop my own data or perform original research. The MPA Program taught me how to formulate higher-level questions and perform both qualitative and quantitative research acceptable to the academic community.

The benefit of using qualitative and quantitative research as a tool for public administration underpins the inclusion of this objective in the portfolio requirements. However, any discussion of qualitative and quantitative research is immutably tied to both communication and the emerging field of data visualization. As my artifacts illustrate, any research must present the resultant information in a manner that the intended audience can understand. Low or no cost, readily available data visualization tools can facilitate that communication. Data visualization is a critical analysis tool in and of itself, revealing patterns and outliers that simply attaining the mean and mode cannot. Most artifacts submitted that demonstrate my research capacity originate from PAPA 6514, completed in Spring Semester 2016 under the tutelage of Dr. Sara Jordan. I highly recommend the program incorporate data visualization in a number of ways. Within the research objective, understanding how to use data visualization to reveal

patterns, outliers, and provide an insight that traditional data tables cannot is extremely useful as a research tool. In Artifact 4, below, the visual data triggered a deeper evaluation of comments submitted in response the VA's proposed rule - there were multiple peaks visible that suggested a grouping that simply would not have been identified otherwise. Data visualization is already considered in communication criteria at the general level. With the wealth of information available, any additional skills built in this arena will future program graduates well.

Under the umbrella of this objective, my journey through the MPA program helped me transition from a consumer of research to a creator of research as mentioned above. The program resulted in my development of a new personal skill set, specifically data visualization. These skills have proven exceptionally useful in almost every aspect of my professional life since participating in PAPA 6514. The program also pushed me to refine the logical thinking necessary to analyze data in response to a much more specific, formal research question and provide that analysis in the academic writing style.

Artifacts I selected to illustrate my growth in this area include:

- Artifact 4, a paper currently in the revise and resubmit process, co-authored with Dr. Jordan, titled *Examining Readability in Regulatory Comments: A Digital Chasm*;
- Artifact 8, components of a PAPA 6514 group project;
- Artifact 9, a presentation prepared as part of PAPA 6514's first exam; and
- Artifact 10, work done in conjunction with Dr. Jordan as a guest instructor for the Spring 2017 PAPA 6514 class.

One of the most exciting aspects of participating in the MPA program was the opportunity to actively participate in Dr. Jordan's research. The original research question she promoted centered on conspiracy theory as it related to comments on the Regulations.Gov site. During the research process, that expanded to no less than four distinct research projects which resulted in three manuscript submissions.

Artifact 4 has special significance for me; it is the first academic manuscript I have submitted for publication. While discussing research centered on Regulations.Gov with Dr. Jordan, I asked the simple question "I wonder whether running any of this through a readability scoring engine would tell us anything interesting?" As we gathered the data to support her research, I found myself returning to that question. Ultimately I identified three areas to explore: the readability of the proposed regulatory action, the relationship between readability of the proposed action and the public comments, and readability as a characteristic of the citizen participant. Exploration of this question drew upon all the skills learned in

PAPA 6514, Inquiry. Although readability has been studied as an element of government publications and websites, there is a very limited body of work on readability as it relates to the interaction between the government and citizenry. The data and methods section (pp. 4-23) describes a clear, logical and repeatable approach to analyzing the data.

A group project in Inquiry led to the creation of the elements of Artifact 8. The group project focused on answering the question "*Do Virginia Tech men's basketball team players demonstrate better or worse behavior during the national anthem than their peers?*" The group, consisting of Will Gip and Jeff Zumwalt, utilized photographs of the Virginia Tech Men's Basketball team during the performance of the national anthem to answer the question. The human behaviors displayed in the photographs were coded and analyzed to answer the basic research question. I have attached the data and methods statement, which I wrote, outlining the specific process used. I have also included the actual Code Book used with the data, and the final presentation describing our findings. With over 500 photos to evaluate, establishing clear methods for coding and analysis were critical to having a reliable answer to the research question.

Artifact 9 was prepared in response to Dr. Jordan's third exam in PAPA 6514. We are expected to clearly link a decision to accumulated evidence and knowledge. The exam prompt established that a contract research organization (CRO) had executed a telephone survey I had prepared, and asked for an evaluation of the data returned by that entity. I determined that the data set was unsatisfactory. I outlined the factual elements that led to that determination, and also clearly outlined the course of action that needed to be taken based on the unsatisfactory data. This short presentation provides basic background, identifies the issues with the data, and provides the framework for my decision to reject the CRO data. The idea that "your research is only as good as your data" was a key tenet of Dr. Jordan's presentation of the class; the ability to identify and act on bad data is as critical as acting on valid data.

The stated purpose of including this outcome in the MPA program is to ensure students can ask and answer questions using appropriate data while performing in the public administration field. Artifact 10 speaks to not only my ability to do that, but to help others develop those skills as well. As a result of my work in PAPA 6514 and while supporting her research into Regulations.Gov, Dr. Jordan asked me to speak to the Spring 2017 section of her Inquiry course. She allowed me to lead two course sessions to discuss the role of data visualization in public administration, introduce the tools that are available, and work through a scenario involving a 500-item data set. The scenario provided the basic research question: "Is there a response time problem?" After allowing two students to showcase their work, I demonstrated how using Tableau provided a completely different insight into the question. The ability to

create and deliver this class session demonstrates a clear link to the required ability to reason clearly and logically, to link a decision to the evidence, and use a variety of tools to answer the basic research question.

Performance Objective 4: Theory

Public Administration theory was by far my weakest area entering the Virginia Tech MPA program. Over the course of my career, I certainly learned what would or would not work in certain arenas. I was missing both the "why" certain approaches worked and the larger lens associated with public administration. The MPA program filled in both voids quickly. Four areas of public administration theory provided deep insight into areas of special interest to me: organizational theory with Dr. Lemaire; leadership theory with Dr. Khademian; policy development with Dr. Eckerd, and normative foundations with Drs. Rees and Jordan. In each of these areas, I was able to bridge between my practical experience and public administration theory easily. Other courses provided theoretical depth in practical aspects of public administration, specifically Dr. Birdsall's personnel class and Stephanie Davis' budgeting course.

I am including four artifacts in support of this performance objective:

- Artifact 5, a review of the Montgomery County, Virginia 2018 Budget;
- Artifact 11, a sequence of current event memos from PAPA 5014;
- Artifact 12, the midterm essay exam from PAPA 5316; and
- Artifact 13, a paper co-authored with Dr. Sara Jordan on Gormley's typology.

Budgeting is an area where my knowledge and experience prior to attending the MPA program was limited. I had prepared agency-level and project budgets; I also had a basic understanding of funding mechanisms. The larger picture, and the theories behind governmental funding mechanisms, were always someone else's purview. As part of the Budgeting course, we were required to blend theoretical principles into the analysis of an actual budget. The analysis also included reviewing the budget against the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Presentation award criteria. The coursework allowed the Radio Working Group I lead to save nearly $200 thousand in taxpayer funds.

The sequence of essays from Dr. Adam Eckerd's *Concepts* class serves as evidence of compliance with both performance criteria. Each two-page essay connects a core public administration concept directly with a current event. The first two pages connect emergency declarations to the Friedrich-Finer debate. The second memo introduces Gormley in the context of how the Virginia State Police chose to generate

interest in their budgetary crisis. The final two pages discuss the concept of "muddling through" and how it contributed to the current economic state in southside Virginia.

Dr. Lemaire's coursework in PAPA 5316 provided an opportunity to explore organizational theory. The midterm exam provided here as Artifact 12 provided an opportunity to discuss some relevant theories in the context of Longshop McCoy Fire Rescue, of which I am an officer. The first exam question discussed the various approaches to determining organizational effectiveness. I used the theoretical knowledge to explain the benefits and pitfalls of each approach if applied to my organization. Longshop McCoy Fire Rescue's quality improvement program is centered on theories discussed in this response, and utilizes a variety of evaluation methods as part of maintaining licensure as a public safety agency. The answer to the second question builds off the first, and dives deeper into the goal approach. Prior to Dr. Lemaire's course, I could only quantify my reasoning as "wanting to get a whole picture of the organization." As the essay exam shows, I know have a much deeper understanding of how to measure organizational effectiveness.

Finally, I have included Artifact 13, a manuscript that lives squarely at the intersection of public administration theory and practice. As already discussed, I had the opportunity to support Dr. Jordan's authoring of multiple papers on e-governance. I was able to contribute sufficiently that Dr. Jordan granted me co-author status on a number of those papers. On March 16th, 2018 we were notified that *Reexamining Rulemaking in an era of Internet Enabled Participation* has been accepted for publication by Public Performance and Management Review (PPMR). The work of Gormley has framed discussions about the actors who participate in the policymaking process for nearly 30 years. Changes in technology have given potential actors greater access to proposed policy; this paper looks specifically at how Gormley's typology is impacted by e-rulemaking. The regular and irregular actors who engaged with five dockets on Regulations.Gov were analyzed to determine whether Gormley's groupings remain relevant. We also identified a concept called "manufactured salience" in which an external group motivates irregulars within its sphere of influence to act in a specific manner. This manuscript has been accepted by *Public Performance and Management Review* for publication and we have completed the revise and resubmit process.

As I entered the MPA program, I felt like gaining a working knowledge of theory would be the most difficult part of the coursework. I was seriously concerned that my professional experiences would conflict in some way with the literature or academic viewpoints. As we reach the conclusion of the program, I must say that the opposite was in fact the case. The coursework in public administration theory coupled with the independent work with Dr. Jordan actually validated and added depth and breadth

to many professional opinions formed over my career. Gormley's work on the regular and irregular actors illustrates perfectly the dynamics I've seen play out in real life at the local and state level. Theories of leadership, specifically those of Heifitz, provided a deep understanding of why certain public administrator's I've encountered succeeded where others failed.

As the program progressed, I was able to start putting information from the various courses to work. Perhaps nowhere was this more relevant than in taking a leadership role within the Montgomery County emergency services community..

Performance Objective 5: Leadership

Over the course of my career I have often been appointed to leadership positions. I use that term intentionally, because rarely have I been given management positions. During my journey I reached a much deeper awareness of where I succeeded and failed in these roles. I can identify three major areas that I was able to take information from the MPA program and place it into almost immediate practice. First was the recognition and development of emotional intelligence as an essential skill for all layers of public administrator. Second, being part of such a diverse cohort helped me refine my ability to view events through multiple, diverse lenses. Finally, armed with a much deeper understanding of the theoretical basis for leadership, and fully appreciate the distinction between leading and managing.

There are three artifact groupings offered to show my work in this area:

- Artifact 14, covering my participation in the Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Commission, as part of leading the Radio Working Group;
- Artifact 15, outlining work done in PAPA 6214 on mandatory evacuation; and
- Artifact 16, a research paper on retirement benefits and the public sector.

The Radio Working Group (RWG) was constituted in late 2017 to address ongoing issues with the public safety radio system in Montgomery County. The issue had been brought to the attention of the Board of Supervisors and was subsequently referred to the Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Commission, of which I am a voting member. At the request of that commission's members, I agreed to serve on the RWG and was subsequently appointed co-chair. The RWG was tasked with resolving communication issues with three public safety agencies; the Board of Supervisors insisted on a proposed resolution on or before April 2018. Over the course of 90 days, I led over twenty formal and informal meetings as the RWG heard requests and proposals totaling over $650 thousand dollars. We identified over 100 individual concerns that needed to be addressed. Ultimately, through teamwork and collaboration, the

group was able to resolve the majority of the concerns and propose a solution to the Board for just under $350 thousand that will be complete within 180 days. The policy memo I authored, along with the March 19, 2018 Montgomery County Board of Supervisors meeting agenda and both proposed resolutions are provided. My participation and leadership of the RWG supports all four criteria in a real-world experience. MPA coursework in PAPA 6214, PAPA 6224 and PAPA 5315 was instrumental in achieving the consensus and support of the affected parties, local government administration, and local elected officials.

As part of the coursework in PAPA 6214, I elected to focus on mandatory evacuation policy. My decision to use this topical area was based on the impact of Hurricane Irma to my extended family. In performing research on the topic, I realized that there was no policy governing evacuations along the New River in Montgomery County. Through my relationships on the Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Commission, I was able to appear as a citizen and participate fully in the policy development process. The full sequence of memos is attached, as is the current draft version of the County's plan. As with the RWG, my ability to identify a policy issue and lead others to a reasonable, achievable solution is demonstrative of all the necessary performance criteria for this objective.

Finally, I have included a research paper on the impact to state and local governments of pension and retirement programs. During the portfolio development process, one of my reviewers asked why I selected this particular paper for inclusion in the leadership section. After a moment, I asked this much-younger peer whether he had begun planning for his retirement from public service. He laughed and said "no, I'm still thinking about my first real job." I told him that was exactly the reason I selected this topic for Dr. Birdsall's personnel course; in addition to the paper we were required to develop a non-PowerPoint presentation and deliver it to the class. As the paper points out, the public sector retirement system is facing challenging times. Given the youth of the members of the class, I felt like it was an opportunity to exhibit leadership within the cohort. I used loose change to show how state governments typically fund defined benefit and defined contribution plans, in hopes of spurring some of my classmates to take ownership of their long-term financial well-being.

Performance Objective 6: Normative Foundations

The concepts associated with normative foundations have been tightly woven into my professional career. As a veteran emergency medical services provider, ethical behavior was largely defined in terms of situational ethics. For example, ethics meant understanding how to react when the parent of an ill child refuses medically necessary treatment; ethics was the difference between a shoddily written patient care

report and an excellent one. Within the first several weeks of Dr. Rees' course, my view on what constitutes ethical behavior was completely redefined. Prior to participating in PAPA 6414, the only time I was engaged with my professional code of ethics was when writing an EMS textbook in 1998. I found it very humbling as we explored the realm of professional ethics.

Perhaps more than any other course, PAPA 6414 had an emotional impact. Realizing that my ethical framework was just part of the equation, and that I had contributed to the normalization of deviance was simultaneously devastating and motivating. For nearly 30 years, I have strived to provide the best emergency medical care possible and I truly believed that was sufficient. Dr. Rees' course helped me realize that through inaction, I was tacitly endorsing the aberrant behaviors in my profession. I realized that simply being a good medical provider did not make me an ethical one; managing my own actions was not good enough. I accepted that many of my peers had substance abuse or mental health issues arising from the nature of public safety, and believed that those were distinct and separate from their ability to care for others. On September 1, 2015 my godson Mykael Fjestad committed suicide. I dismissed the comments my own daughter made about Mykael's behavior as normal for a young EMS professional; his behaviors were consistent with what his father and I did at the point in our own careers. Normative foundations, coupled with events over the course of the semester, completely reframed my ethical perspective.

The MPA program has provided me with a much deeper understanding of the ethical theories that influence many actions within the day-to-day operations as a professional. The program also helped me recognize that the mere presence of a professional code of ethics is insufficient; the code must be a part of both my personal culture and that of my profession. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the program gave me a sincere motivation to adopt a much stronger code of personal ethics and to influence others in my profession to do the same.

To document my growth in this area, I am providing three primary artifacts:

- Artifact 7, the original presentation for PAPA 6414, *An Ethical Journey through the Virginia EMS Symposium;*
- Artifact 17, A derivative presentation and the lecture notes for *An Ethical Journey in EMS;* and
- Artifact 1, A section within Chapter 5 of the book *Student Toolkit for Career Technical Education.*

While enrolled in PAPA 6414, I had the opportunity to attend the Virginia Emergency Medical Services Symposium in Norfolk, Virginia. To be blunt, the combination of the course and conference resulted in a completely different ethical view of my profession. I summarized my journey in the capstone presentation for the course. In short, I found much of my peer group's conduct at the conference abhorrent when viewed through the lens of the public or the public administrator. Some examples:

- The routine mention and general acceptance of alcohol abuse as a professional norm; one conference presenter actually was handing out mini-bottles of alcohol during his presentation;
- Sexual harassment that, if occurring at Virginia Tech, would result in disciplinary or criminal action; statements by recognized leaders that "Symposium is a MILF's dream and married man's nightmare";
- Encouragement of these behaviors by individuals in positions of authority, such as physicians and state agency leaders.

The behaviors and general environment of the conference moved me to action. First, I was absolutely honest in my evaluations of the sessions and encouraged action by others. I was ostracized by certain parties for almost a year as a result. However, there was action by the Virginia Office of EMS – a number of presenters were banned from the following year's conference and new guidelines for speaker conduct introduced. Second, I was determined to take personal action. I took the presentation developed for PAPA 6414 and have continued to expand and develop the material. Since January 2016, I have presented this material on six occasions at a local or regional level, and am slated to be delivered four more times at state and national conferences in 2018. One of the hallmarks of the material is a call to action.

The journey through my portfolio leaves you with a return to the first artifact I presented. I was profoundly moved by PAPA 6414 and my adventures at public safety conferences. At the same time, each month a quick Google search of "paramedic arrested" returns far too many results. Arrests for violating patients, sexual misconduct, and other offenses both large and small are frequent. Dr. Goold, as the director of a paramedic program providing primary education for entry-level professionals, attributes these behaviors to a number of causes, but agreed that a lack of preparation in ethical conduct plays a role. To that end, we crafted a section on ethics that begins to address ethics in the larger scope. This section of the text clearly reflects my growth as a result within the MPA program, and both a personal commitment to and a deep understanding of the key issues facing my profession.

In Closing

My journey through the MPA program is rapidly approaching an end, but it has also created many opportunities. I am now planning to continue my journey with CPAP as a doctoral student; my hope is to continue research into either the realm of terrorism and public assemblage or the intersection of e-government and public participation. I have learned that contributing to the next generation of public employees through education and research is not just a personal goal, but a professional responsibility.

Ultimately, the MPA program has given me a much larger, diverse lens through which to view my own work and a more extensive set of tools to use as I move forward. Being a part-time student allowed me to participate with three separate cohorts and many different faculty members. Each impacted my journey, and for that I am forever thankful.

My father, who is now 77 years old, will be present for graduation on May 11th. Words cannot adequately express what that moment will mean to me. Even though I have been professionally successful, my father first set me on this journey as a young man. Graduation will be his first opportunity to share in my academic success. Beyond all the coursework, friendships, and personal growth within the CPAP community, I am most looking forward to sharing that day with him.