



Center for Public Administration and Policy

# Praxis

*November 14, 2009*

**CPAP Alexandria**

## **2009 PARTICIPANTS**

### **MPA STUDENTS**

Nathaniel Buss  
Alex Chapple  
Jean Donaldson  
Nicole Engel  
Carolyn Kidd  
Erte Li  
Andy Merkle  
Jack O'Byrne  
Jessi Schmale  
Kelsey Simons  
Georgeta Solomitchi-Lester  
Charlotte Weaver

## **WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2009 SHADOW MENTORS**

### **AND MANY THANKS TO**

**Mary Jo Wills** for serving as the Praxis debrief moderator

**Savannah Crawley, Beth Offenbacher and Irene Jung** for their efforts in matching students and shadow mentors, and making Praxis possible

And to *all* the CPAP alumni who have built and sustained Praxis, year after year, especially

**Gene Bacher, Jane Tatum and Colleen Woodard**

# **A BRIEF HISTORY OF CAPITAL PRAXIS**

by Dr. Gene Bacher

In 1997 the CPAP faculty persuaded students and alumni at the Northern Virginia campus to organize what is known as “Capital Praxis.” The vision was to draw upon the rich administrative and policy experience of students and alumni working in the Washington, DC area to provide students in Blacksburg exposure to the daily activities of administrative and policy-related organizations. In addition, Praxis was to provide an annual event, similar to CPAP’s High Table, to bring together students, alumni, and faculty from both Blacksburg and Alexandria to meet and greet, and to highlight the synergies between theory and practice in public administration and policy. CPAP alumni and students have provided the energy, drive and focus needed to bring these two objectives to fruition with the support of graduate assistants, faculty and staff.

At the core of the Capital Praxis are one-day (Friday) workplace shadowing experiences for each of the Blacksburg graduate students. Generally arranged by Northern Virginia alumni and graduate assistants, these shadowing experiences have included local law enforcement, National Cabinet level agencies, county social service agencies, city government, private consulting firms and non-profits. Friday evening provides a chance for informal dialogue and a chance to experience a little of Capital nightlife. Northern Virginia students and alumni originally provided housing. Today CPAP makes arrangements in commercial facilities.

The Shadow Debrief is held at CPAP on Saturday morning following a Continental breakfast, where the students provide feedback to their sponsors, alumni, and faculty on their experiences: what they observed, the cultural environment, and how it relates to their public administration course work. This year’s debrief will be led by Mary Jo Wills.

The CPAP Round Table on Leadership and Administration will be held at 11am on Saturday. In the spirit of Praxis, the Round Table features an in depth discussion between a scholar and a practicing manager, focused on a specific challenge at the intersection of leadership and administration. This year the focus will be, “Leading Through Oversight: Politics and Administration.” The Honorable Thomas M. Davis III, Director, Deloitte Services, LLP and Former Congressman for the 11th District, Virginia, US Congress will be the featured guest at the Round Table.

A catered lunch follows for all participants before Blacksburg students make the long trip back to Blacksburg. For a number of years, additional events were planned for Saturday afternoon. These included a visit to local points of interest including museums (the Newseum was particularly popular) or other historical points. A dinner sponsored by an alumnus usually followed these visitations. The press of events and transportation arrangements (Tech now provides a van) have prevented these components of the weekend during recent years.

For the twelfth consecutive year, the students and alumni of the Northern Virginia campus welcome the Blacksburg students and hope they enjoy and get as much out of this event as the sponsors do.

# PRAXIS

*November 14, 2009*

**Center for Public Administration and Policy, Alexandria  
School of Public and International Affairs  
Virginia Tech**

*All events on Saturday, November 14 will be held at  
CPAP  
1021 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA*

9:00am (2nd floor, CPAP Common Area)

Welcome

9:15 – 10:30am (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, CPAP Common Area)

MPA Student Shadow Debrief, led by Mary Jo Wills, CPAP PhD Candidate and U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles

11am – 12:15pm (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room)

CPAP Round Table on Leadership and Administration, “Leading Through Oversight: Politics and Administration.” At the table, The Honorable Thomas M. Davis III, Director, Deloitte Services, LLP and Former Congressman for the 11th District, Virginia, US Congress and Dr. Anne Khademian, CPAP Alexandria (*please see flyer on the last page of this package for more information*).

12:15pm (3rd Floor Conference Room)

Special Presentation to The Honorable Thomas M. Davis III, Director, Deloitte Services, LLP and Former Congressman for the 11th District, Virginia, US Congress; Former Virginia State Senator Jeannemarie Davis; and to Mary Jo Wills, CPAP PhD Candidate and U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles

12:00 – 1:00pm (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Library and Conference Room)

Complimentary Lunch, catered by *Bittersweet*

# CAPITAL PRAXIS

## Preparing for the Shadow Debrief

Capital Praxis engages practice and theory to help us better understand the challenges of organizing and managing policies and programs to serve the public interest, and the role research and theory can play in addressing these challenges. Participating students in CPAP's Masters of Public Administration program have the opportunity to shadow a CPAP student or graduate working in the National Capital Region to experience first hand the work of a public or non-profit organization, to relate their graduate studies to their shadow experience, and to reflect back upon the scholarship and discussions of the classroom by drawing upon their day of shadowing.

Below are some questions students might want to consider during their shadow experience. On Saturday morning, a moderated discussion among the participating students that draws upon some of these questions. This Shadow Debrief will provide an opportunity for faculty, students and alumni from Blacksburg and Alexandria to learn about the individual experiences, the student's reflections on the challenges of organizing and managing, and the connections to students' work in the MPA program.

### Practice:

- What are the primary responsibilities or tasks of the organization or agency? If it is a government agency, what mandates guide the work of the organization, or of the office you visited with your Praxis host?
- How is the organization designed? Is it hierarchical and centralized, or decentralized? How is work divided within the organization? Is the work divided along functional lines, for example, or according to geographic region, or both?
- How does communication flow in the organization and what are the communication patterns? Does the work get done in face to face settings, by e-mail, or by memo, for example, and is communication informal or formal?
- How is the work of the organization completed? Does the organization work with other organizations or agencies (public, nonprofit, private contractor) to accomplish the work?
- Does the public play a direct role in the work of the organization? If so, how?
- How would you describe the culture of the organization? Is there a dominant professional group in the organization, or are there dominant values that are held throughout the organization?
- How is the organization held accountable? How does the organization demonstrate accountability?
- How would you describe the work of your shadow host? What are the most challenging aspects of their work?

### Theory:

- What connections might there be between the work you experienced during the shadow experience and your studies in the MPA program to date?
- Identify 2 or more theories that you think apply to the culture, the organization structure, the communication, or management issues that you observed or discussed with your host.

- What are the key policy issues of the organization? Are they being addressed politically, directly through citizen participation, organizational leadership, or some other way?
- Who is doing the work of the organization: permanent staff, contractors, non-profits, other? What impact do you think the mix of players has on the effectiveness of the mission? How should such a mix be managed?
- What did you learn/observe at the job site that is supported by or the opposite of what you have been learning/discussing in your courses?

General:

- What was most memorable about your shadow experience, and why?



# **Roundtable on Leadership & Administration**

**Presents**

**Leading Through Oversight:  
Politics and Administration**

**At the table:**

**The Honorable Thomas M. Davis, III**

**Director, Deloitte Services, LLP**

**Former Congressman for the 11th District, Virginia,  
US Congress**

**Special Honorary Guest:**

**Former Virginia State Senator Jeannemarie Davis**

**November 14, 2009**

**11 am**

**Center for Public Administration & Policy  
School of Public & International Affairs  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute &  
State University**