Noted Economist Delivers 2021 Hehir Memorial Lecture

For the second year in a row since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Rev. Martin A. Hehir C.S.Sp. Memorial Lecture was presented virtually. The March 16th event featured Dr. Lucie Lapovsky, a highly sought-after economist who specializes in issues concerning higher education. Lapovsky earned her master’s degree and Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Maryland at College Park and has held pivotal positions in the past such as President of Mercy College and treasurer of the White House Project. Additionally, she is the co-editor and/or author of several books and articles including pieces for Forbes magazine. In her presentation, “Changing Landscapes, Fiscal Implications, and Emerging Models: The Current State and Future Trajectory of Higher Education,” Lapovsky explored the past, present, and future of American higher education from a financial perspective.

After providing a brief historical overview of higher education in America, Lapovsky proceeded to discuss a series of pressing issues in the contemporary academy, such as diversity, falling enrollment numbers, college debt, inefficient department administration, and the forced, rapid integration of technology into the classroom brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking into the future of higher education, she presented the challenges and changes that could emerge from the current landscape. Lapovsky pointed out recent trends that require institutions to either adapt in a rapidly changing society run more and more by technology or ignore the winds of change and face extinction. She noted that students are looking for a direct correlation between their major and the demands of today’s job market, because employers are now “expecting students to hit the ground running.” She closed the presentation with suggestions for how administrators and leaders can help their institutions move forward by offering what students want in their education—experience, flexibility, access, and success.

Caitlyn Bengele, an administrator at Chatham University and future member of the Fall 2021 cohort, found Lapovsky’s presentation to be “informative and thorough, grounded in decades of experience in enrollment management, finance, and governance. I will use the insight gained from Dr. Lapovsky as a guidepost for my own efforts to increase accessibility and efficiency in transfer student on-boarding processes.” In the afternoon, Lapovsky held a separate discussion session for administrators serving in nearby colleges and universities. Dr. Mary Lou Kennedy, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management at the Community College of Allegheny County, appreciated that the event “offered participants a chance to consider the strains placed on institutions of higher education as a result of COVID-19 and to discuss with local colleagues what an eventual return to campus might look like.”

The fourth annual Hehir Memorial Lecture will be held in March of 2022. As with past installments of the series, the event will be free and open to the public, with additional details posted to www.duq.edu/highered in January 2022.
Outstanding MSHEA Faculty Honored with Inaugural McCool Award

Drs. Lauren G. Germain and Jessica L. Mann have been named the 2020 and 2021 recipients of the Fr. Naos McCool C.S.Sp. Award, an honor bestowed upon scholar practitioners who have made outstanding contributions to Duquesne University’s Master of Science Program in Higher Education Administration. The award was established to recognize adjunct faculty and professional mentors who exemplify the “Duquesne Difference” of cultivating academic excellence with a personal touch. The award is named after Fr. Naos McCool, a Spiritan priest who served as Assistant Dean for Student Formation in the School of Education and was widely regarded for his embodiment of the Spiritan Tradition of Care.

Dr. Germain serves as Director of Evaluation, Assessment, and Research at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, NY. She holds the distinction of being the program’s first adjunct instructor and regularly teaches GHEA 501: Foundations of American Higher Education and GHEA 502: Data-Driven Decision Making in Higher Education. Fall 2020 cohort member Mandy Curnow noted that “Dr. Germain is a dedicated and engaging teacher who cares about her students and the material she teaches. Even in a virtual environment, she still goes out of her way to make personal connections with each of her students.” Brenna Burke, a member of the Fall 2019 cohort, concurred, stating that “As my first professor in the MSHEA program, Dr. Germain instilled a confidence in me that I could complete my master’s degree successfully while working full-time. I firmly believe that her guidance and feedback greatly improved my writing and research skills and made me the well-rounded student I am today.”

Dr. Mann is Assistant Vice President of Community Engagement at Duquesne University. Early in the program’s development, she co-designed three courses—GHEA 523: Legal Issues in Higher Education, GHEA 525: Managing External Relations in Higher Education, and GHEA 526: Leadership in Higher Education—and has taught a variety of courses and also served as a professional mentor to students completing GHEA 551: Administrative Practicum. Tia Mayo, a member of the Fall 2019 cohort, remarked that “Dr. Mann has far exceeded my expectations of what a ‘professor’ should be; she has a depth of presence that transcends the online experience. I always knew I could count on feedback that would promote self-reflection, understanding of the subject matter, and direction toward improvement. I am a better student because of Dr. Mann’s gentle approach toward personal growth.” Fall 2020 cohort member Olivia Cerniglia agreed, noting that she was “amazed by Dr. Mann’s dedication to the coursework and her students. She is kind, candid about her experiences in higher education, and enjoys mentoring outside of the classroom—her impact on the MSHEA program is significant.”

MSHEA Program Director Dr. P. Jesse Rine praised the outstanding contributions made by Drs. Germain and Mann. “A high-quality student experience depends largely upon two interrelated factors: the professional expertise and the personal character of faculty members. As accomplished scholar practitioners who currently serve in full-time administrative capacities, Drs. Germain and Mann bring a wealth of insight into the effective application of administrative principles within the context of higher education. But what makes their contributions to the MSHEA Program most remarkable is their personal commitment to giving back to the field by investing in the development of early to mid-career postsecondary professionals both in the classroom and beyond. I am deeply grateful to call them colleagues and applaud their exceptional dedication to their students, the MSHEA Program, and the wider practice of administrative leadership in postsecondary contexts.”
Current Student Spotlight: Darian Reynolds

Why did you choose Duquesne’s MSHEA program?
When searching for a higher education program, I noted that Duquesne offered a well-rounded program that didn’t focus too much on one experience or facet of higher education and gave a pretty holistic view of things that apply anywhere. In addition, I saw the program’s progression over the years and had some friends who spoke to their program experiences, which only affirmed my initial sentiments about the program. Finally, even before being admitted to the program, I had the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the Program Director, which eased any doubts or concerns that I may have had at the time. The MSHEA program staff has been nothing but helpful throughout the entire process, even now as a current student.

What is your current professional role?
Currently, I serve as the Housing Operations Coordinator at Carnegie Mellon University and the Graduate Coordinator of Student Life at Duquesne University. At CMU, I lead the Housing Department in all aspects of student employment, including supervising all Desk Staff, Managers, and a Graduate Coordinator. At Duquesne, I oversee evening student organization programming and assist with Student Union operations and general student organization services through the Center for Student Involvement. I also support the Office of Greek Life and the Center for Excellence in Diversity and Student Inclusion, and currently serve as the Advisor for the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), the governing body for the nine black fraternity and sorority organizations. Finally, I was President of the Black Student Union (BSU) at Duquesne during the 2020-21 academic year.

What lessons from our program have you applied to your current context?
One immediate thing that I valued early in the program was a case study we completed to get people’s feedback on how they viewed my leadership style. Through this process, I discovered so much about myself, including my more task-oriented nature, my independent thinking and active engagement as a follower, and the internalized moral perspective that guides my decision-making. Being able to apply what I am learning in my courses in real-time through my work has been personally rewarding.

What do you hope to accomplish professionally in the next few years?
In the next few years, I would like to work a position within Student Affairs where I would support and advocate for students. As a former student who needed someone to push me to want more for myself during a challenging undergraduate experience, I want to make sure that more black and brown students get adequate resources and assistance that they need to be successful in school and beyond graduation.

What advice would you give someone considering a career in higher education?
Everyone who serves in a college or university can make a lasting impact on students, but sometimes working in higher education can be a thankless job. Why do you want to work in higher education? Once you have a clear answer to that question, my advice would be to push through the tough times, be intentional in your efforts, and be open-minded to the things that may not necessarily relate to or affect you.
Alumni Spotlight: Debra Conaway

What is your current professional role?
I am a Program Coordinator for the Office of the University Registrar at West Virginia University. I am in newly created role where I provide direct service to WVU’s prospective and admitted transfer students in relation to their transfer coursework. I assist in the articulation of the student’s credit as well as the mitigation of the credit evaluation process, and I provide academic guidance in relation to program admission requirements and estimated timeline to graduation. I also assist in the management and growth of WVU’s transfer credit database, along with academic partnerships with other institutions.

How has the MSHEA degree helped you in your career?
To progress professionally in higher education, you need education and experience. The Master of Science in Higher Education Administration degree has given me the level of education I need and has taught me additional skills and perspectives I need to advance in a competitive market.

What program lessons have you applied most often in your work?
The courses I have taken have each added a more in-depth understanding of the “how and whys” in differing levels of administrative processes and decision-making. I use this knowledge and skills in my own interactions, whether it be with students, staff, or faculty, to navigate the political waters of academia so I can support our office team, serve our students, and advance institutional goals.

What do you hope to accomplish professionally in the next few years?
I wish to continue to advance in higher education, both academically and professionally. I am currently researching doctoral programs to find one that meets my needs in flexibility and focus. As I continue my education, I plan to advance in the transfer profession to a senior role so I can be on the front lines of implementing new ideas and processes to better serve students, the university, and its constituents.

What advice would you give someone considering a career in higher education?
Higher education is an intricate field, constantly changing yet the same. Working in this environment requires you to have a variety of skills to succeed, such as adaptability, flexibility, and spirit. The most challenging and rewarding part of working in a complex organization is its people. Remember that it is people who turn dreams into success stories. It will always be worth your time to take a minute and connect with your people, appreciate them, support them, and watch your team blossom.
MSHEA Program Achieves Milestones, Embraces Growth

This spring, Duquesne’s Master of Science Program in Higher Education Administration will celebrate its third birthday. Founded in the summer of 2018, the program has experienced tremendous growth marked by student success and expansion on multiple fronts. An inaugural cohort of eleven students completed the program’s first course, GHEA 501: Foundations of American Higher Education, in the fall of 2018. At present, a total of 55 students from ten different states—Florida, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia—plus Washington, DC, have enrolled in the program.

Intended to provide a broad, holistic, and integrated perspective on postsecondary administration that produces institutional leaders that “see the whole picture,” the MSHEA program has attracted a diverse student population of full-time working adults. In addition to hailing from a diversity of locations, MSHEA students have also represented a wide range of functional areas in higher education, such as academic affairs, student life, operations, and external affairs. Students commonly take courses with classmates serving in campus offices spanning academic advising to athletics, research administration to residence life, and major gifts to marketing and communications.

In just three short years, the program has achieved a number of important milestones. Early returns on the program’s outcomes indicate a high degree of academic quality and student success, including an 87% student retention rate. In addition, program graduates—and even many current students—have landed plum administrative appointments or promotions at an impressive array of postsecondary institutions, including Carlow University, the Community College of Allegheny County, Duquesne University, Florida State University, La Roche University, Michigan State University, the Ohio State University, Penn State University Greater Allegheny, Point Park University, Robert Morris University, South University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Pittsburgh, Washington & Jefferson College, and West Virginia University.

Other significant developments include the establishment of annual events and publications. The program holds two major events each year. In the fall, the program hosts the Administrative Leadership Series, an annual webinar that brings current students into conversation with an accomplished scholar practitioner in the field. Each spring, the program sponsors the Rev. Martin A. Hehir C.S.Sp. Memorial Lecture, a free and public event which features an eminent scholar of higher education and convenes multiple campus constituencies as well as various administrators from local college and universities. The program also publishes Higher Ed Horizons, a quarterly newsletter, and Issues & Insights, a quarterly white paper series that explores key challenges across various institutional types and functional areas in higher education.

This summer, the MSHEA program will enter a season of transition as founding personnel begin new chapters. Program Assistant Darlene Beck will retire this summer, while Program Director and Associate Professor Dr. P. Jesse Rine will join North Greenville University (SC) as Professor of Education and Director of the Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership. Expressing his appreciation for Ms. Beck’s outstanding service to the MSHEA Program, Dr. Rine stated, “I am delighted that Darlene has the opportunity to enjoy the blessings of retirement after rendering invaluable support to the MSHEA Program. As the first point of contact for students these past three years, she has ensured a positive student experience from the start and helped to facilitate excellent program outcomes over time.” He also expressed enthusiasm about the program’s trajectory. “In partnership with a remarkable student body,
Darlene and I have been able to lay a solid foundation for the MSHEA Program, one that should provide steady support for years to come. However, any growth process requires change. So, while I am honored and humbled to have played a role in launching the MSHEA Program, I am even more eager to watch how it matures in the years to come. I am confident that Duquesne graduates will continue to make a significant and lasting contribution to the field of higher education in Western PA and beyond.”

**News & Notes**

**Torben Breitkopf (FA20)** will begin serving as Student Affairs Intern at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, PA, this summer. In this role, he will work with 36 undergraduate student ambassadors during the 2021 and 2022 summer orientation seasons.

**Mandy Curnow (FA20)** recently became a Research Assistant in the Center for Community Engaged Learning at Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI.

**Divine Davenport (FA19)** has been accepted into the Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership at Cabrini University, a Catholic liberal arts university located just outside Philadelphia, PA.

**Benjamin Fiorina (FA21)** will serve as a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Disability Services at Duquesne University during the 2021–22 academic year.

**Erin Kennedy (SP20)** was recently selected to serve as Chair of the Government Relations Committee of the Pennsylvania Association of College Admission Counseling (PACAC).

**Kathryn Koller (FA19)** recently joined the Admission & Enrollment Staff at Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, PA, as Visitor Services Coordinator.

**Taryn Linder (FA19)** has been hired by the University of Pittsburgh (PA) to serve as a Financial Aid Counselor. Taryn will advise students about the financial aid process, administer various aid programs, and educate students regarding the importance of good financial management.

**Jamie Mathew (FA18)** now serves as Administrative Coordinator and Career Coach in the Office of Advising and Career Services at Penn State University Greater Allegheny. Jamie provides academic and career counseling and maintains advising records for the student body.

**Terrell Nelson (SP20)** began working in the Georgetown University Summer Program Office as Parent and Student Services Advisor. He also serves as an Academic Advisor for the College of Health and Human Sciences at Florida State University.

**Komal Rizvi (SP20)** recently received a Staff Leadership Award from the Duquesne University School of Education and also presented “More than Meets the Eye: Advising beyond First Generation Identity” to the National Academic Advising Association with Gerron Scott.

**HIGHER Ed HORIZONS** is the newsletter of Duquesne University’s Master of Science Program in Higher Education Administration. This 30-credit, online program is designed to offer a broad, holistic, and integrated understanding of university structures and operational areas. For more information, please visit: [www.duq.edu/highered](http://www.duq.edu/highered)

If you are interested in learning more about postsecondary leadership that sees the whole picture, please contact the Director of the Master of Science Program in Higher Education Administration, Dr. P. Jesse Rine: [rinepj@duq.edu](mailto:rinepj@duq.edu)