Before completing her degree in international affairs, Rachel Miller (‘11), made the decision her sophomore year that her passion was to contribute and succeed in the nonprofit world. So, she talked to her adviser and added a nonprofit studies minor and set out to gain experience within the nonprofit arena as an undergraduate. Along with her roommate, she applied for volunteer positions with Project HOPE and both students earned placements in the nonprofit’s development department. “I worked hard to prove myself and became an intern, then a temp, then a full-time employee,” says Miller.

As coordinator in conference and sales for Project HOPE, Miller has consistently been reminded why she so desired being a part of the organization in the first place. Project HOPE, founded in 1958, seeks to improve healthcare worldwide. With its headquarters located 20 minutes from Miller’s parents’ house in the Shenandoah Valley, the nonprofit organization is not only close to home, but it is also a convenient way to touch lives internationally. While the organization hosts events for similar nonprofit associations, Miller is in charge of the marketing and advertising of the conference center. The Winchester, Va., native also coordinates all events held at the conference center and, the most important task, creating and maintaining a budget.

After her JMU courses and professors helped her establish her personal career goals, Miller sought Project HOPE to help her accomplish them. While networking herself through the organization, she was introduced to the South Africa country director. Her individual development plan was to work on becoming a program officer for one of Project HOPE’s field programs. The Project HOPE South Africa country director then led Miller to a program called Village Savings and Loans, which was similar to the microfinance institution she was initially seeking.

‘If you have a goal, find out who the players are that can help you get there, and ask for their guidance.’

— RACHEL MILLER (‘11)

For four months, Miller created and completed a Village Savings and Loans training manual and then flew to South Africa. Project HOPE’s clinic, located in Zandspruit, South Africa, focused on two serious issues within the slum community. With diabetes and hypertension at a high rate, Miller was sent to launch the VSL program. She says, “Every week, members contribute to a “pot of money” and can take out loans from that pot. They are charged interest, which helps the fund grow. Essentially, it acts as a bank, which is extremely important for communities such as Zandspruit, which do not have access to formal financial services. The loans are intended to promote entrepreneurial activity and act as a form of insurance in times of need. At the end of a cycle

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**Engaged with the Valley, the USA and the world**

**BY CHARLES H. BLAKE**

Engagement is central to JMU’s new vision statement and has long been a focus of the political science department’s students, graduate and undergraduate faculty. This newsletter illustrates a mix of engaged learning, civic engagement and community engagement. In fall 2013, Amanda Cleveland and Lili Peaslee received a new U.S. Department of Justice grant to extend their collaboration with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Autumn Place to Taylor. A funded-study on military families. Both of these faculty projects involve undergraduate and graduate students as well as in their work. Tim LaPira’s research on lobbying is drawing increasing national attention while providing additional opportunities for undergraduate research. In this issue Tom Culligan and Rachel Miller also share their commitments to civic and community engagement following their graduation from JMU. These and other forms of engagement were celebrated at the School of Public and International Affairs’ Fall 2013 symposium, as discussed by Rob Alexander.

Alumni energy helps fuel our department’s efforts to support JMU students. We count on your willingness to share your professional experiences and advice with current students and fellow alumni. David Jones discusses the various ways in which your generosity of time and spirit helps current students. In turn, Elaine Chiskie details a new career Peer Advising program in which current students help others to connect with JMU graduates.

As this newsletter went to press, our department received the welcome news of a new endowment supporting student internships and career development in public service. The generosity of the McLexey Family Foundation will fund the creation of the Barry DuVal Virginia Public Service Fellowship. Once this program is launched, our department will select one rising senior to pursue an internship and career development in public service and government. The endowment honors Barry DuVal — a 1981 JMU graduate who has been president of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce since 2010. He has served as Virginia Secretary of Commerce & Trade (2003-2005) and a past mayor of Newport News (1996-1998). Barry has kindly agreed to liaise with each fellow to set up shadowing and networking opportunities.

Keith Grant and Kristin Wylie are the newest members of our 50-person faculty. During the 2012-2013 school year, faculty published two books, 11 articles, and three book chapters; two new book projects under contract; and presented at professional conferences. In spring 2013, John Shenpreep received the Provost’s Award for Excellence in International Education. Hakeem Lee received the Provost’s Award for Excellence in Academic Advising; and Melinda Adams received JMU’s Woman of Distinction award. In mid-2013, Lili Peaslee was one of seven national finalists for the Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement for Early Career Faculty. In fall 2013, Ronnie Kassler received the Madison Scholar Award for the College of Arts & Letters, while in February 2014 Amanda Cleveland received JMU’s Hull-Goodman Award as Dean’s Early Career Faculty.

In August 2013, Robin Teske will retire after 27 years of service in many capacities in which she contributed to our university and its community. As this newsletter went to press, our department received the welcome news of a new endowment supporting student internships and career development in public service and government. The endowment honors Barry DuVal — a 1981 JMU graduate who has been president of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce since 2010. He has served as Virginia Secretary of Commerce & Trade (2003-2005) and a past mayor of Newport News (1996-1998). Barry has kindly agreed to liaise with each fellow to set up shadowing and networking opportunities.

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Big Impacts

Political science professors work with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America to improve mentoring practices and hold at-risk youth

By Amanda Cleveland and Lilee Pelosi

If you had asked me a year and a half ago, if you had ever considered pursuing a career in political science research, I might never have realized my goals. Without the resources and direction of some political science giants, some of whom are personal idols of mine. After presenting my work in front of all those political scientists and receiving their feedback and suggestions, I knew that this was the road I wanted to be on. I feel that research is the best way that I can affect change. Without these resources and direction of JMU's Political Science Department, I might never have realized my goals.

Student Research Corner

By Genna Beckenhaup (’14)

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Reflections from Retiring Professor Robin Teske

Political Currents: You will be retiring from the political science department this spring after 25 years of service. What did you enjoy most about working in the department?

Teske: That’s an easy one. Definitely the best thing has been my students and my colleagues. JMU students are special. There’s usually a critical mass of students in every class who are motivated, work hard, are eager to engage with each other and the material they are studying, and are willing to take the time to think deeply and critically. I hope that the next five to ten years my students will have learned a few things from me, but I know that I’ve learned a great deal from them.

One of the things that makes this department unique is that my colleagues and I have been able to develop and maintain a real sense of community among the department faculty and staff. We all genuinely like, respect and enjoy one another. It’s truly a gift and a blessing to have had a job where, after 25 years, it continues to be fun to come to work.

PC: How has the political science department changed since you first arrived? Have you seen the university and students change?

Teske: Both the department and the university are much bigger now than they were 25 years ago. When I arrived in Harrisonburg in August 1989, JMU had fewer than 10,000 students and I (along with only two other people) was the 12th or 13th faculty member in the department (and the second woman). In the intervening years both the university and the department have more than doubled in size.

One of the most important commitments that the “old” department faculty had during this period was integrating many new young professors into the department in a way that retained a sense of community. They built a department atmosphere where everyone feels their voices are heard and taken seriously. I hope that we have done this, but it will probably let the younger faculty speak for themselves on this issue.

But this sense of community as a whole, during my time at JMU there has been a major change in the amount of monetary support the university received from the state per full-time student (in real dollars) as it received in 2012. Over the years tuition increases have replaced some but not all the money pulled back by the state. This makes it very difficult for JMU and other public universities to do our work. The heart of any university is its faculty, and the core mission of JMU is fine teaching. I hope as JMU moves into the future it will have the resources to make sure the faculty gets the support it needs, and that academics remain strong.

PC: What were some of your favorite courses to teach and why?

Teske: The courses I taught the most are international law and introduction to international relations. But perhaps my most memorable course was a short-lived class in International Law II. The students in one of those classes were on a mission to educate and explain to the country as a whole how important international law really was. The students decided the best way to do this was to go on Oprah, and to talk to the president. Oprah at the time had a context where she asked her guests to propose and plan an episode of her show, and she would then give the winning proposal national attention by airing the winning episode. The students believed that what would make the course a perfect way to give international law the national attention it deserved. They also believed that if they were able to talk as a class with the president (yes – the U.S. President, who at the time was President Clinton), then some con- victionation with the president would give added legitimacy and credibility to international law, and so a foreign policy based on international law. The students told me they would work on the Oprah side, and that it was my job to arrange the meeting for them with the president. Needless to say we made it to the Oprah studios in Chicago and not to the Oval office in Washington, but it was interesting.

PC: How do you plan to spend your retirement?

Teske: As everything, my plans for “retire- ment” are a work in progress. I like political philosopher Hannah Arendt’s definition of politics. Arendt defined politics as the human capacity for action, the ability to begin something new whose outcome is uncertain. For example, in 1987 the university received approximately twice the amount of state sup- port per full-time student (in real dollars) as it received in 2012. Over the years tuition
Changing public policies for veterans
Research that makes a difference in lives of military families

Jennifer A. Taylor, JMU assistant professor of political science, knows firsthand the hardships that military families endure — the long deployments, multiple relocations, emotional and financial stress, and the uncertainty. As a Navy wife, Taylor moved 15 times over the course of her husband’s 25-year career, often forced to start over in a new town with no real job prospect, a limited social network and three young children to reassemble.

“Everywhere we went I kept seeing the same issues coming up with other military families,” she says. “It seemed like there ought to be a better way to build connections among these families that wasn’t command-driven. As military families, we’re conditioned to provide help, not to ask for help. And when you’re constantly moving someplace new and you have to develop a support system, it’s very challenging.”

Despite her family’s obligations and the constantly changing scenery, Taylor managed to carve out a career as a development officer and executive in the arts, social services and education. But along the way she experienced what she refers to as employer discrimination. “As a military spouse, your resume starts to look like Swiss cheese.”

The family’s last duty station was Norfolk, Va., where Taylor enrolled in a Ph.D. program in public administration. There she met Vivian Grenier, co-founder and director of research and policy for Blue Star Families, a nonpartisan organization that advocates for military families on the national level. Taylor was looking to transition from the nonprofit world to teaching and research, and her experience as a member of the military community endeared her to the upstart organization. “We began thinking about how we could use our research skills to influence the national conversation and change public policies for veterans, service members and their families,” she says.

Taylor joined the Blue Star Families research team as a lead investigator in 2011. The organization surveys military families on an annual basis to identify their needs and concerns and then analyzes and reports the findings to lawmakers and the administration at a hearing on Capitol Hill hosted by the Joint Military Family Caucus. “It’s a wonderful opportunity for our research to make a difference,” Taylor says. And it has. The Blue Star Families organization has helped shape public policy like the proposed Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which is designed to remove barriers to educational success due to frequent moves and deployments, and portable teacher licensure for military spouses. The group has also been active with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Small Business Administration in developing opportunities for virtual employment and transferable businesses. “Military spouse unemployment rates are not tracked by the Department of Defense. More than one million service members will be transitioning to civilian life in the next few years,” Taylor says. “Along with the challenges of reintegration and transition like finding employment, pursuing additional education and job training, many military families will also lose their health benefits. Veterans retain their health benefits as they separate, but families will lose theirs.”

In addition, Blue Star Families has been instrumental in shedding light on the fact that military spouses and dependents are at an incrementally higher risk for suicide than service members and veterans, and yet programs and services for military family members are minimal and suicide rates are not tracked by the Department of Defense.

One of the findings that most concerns Taylor is the index measuring whether military families would recommend military service to others. On a scale of -100 to 100, the 2013 respondents’ score ranged from -28 percent for service members to -38.8 percent for military spouses. “We’re an all-volunteer military,” Taylor says. “What does that mean for the future?”

Taylor notes that her students Vanja Basratic (’13M) and Collene Taylor (’14) were of invaluable assistance on the 2013 Survey Research Team. Basratic, a research assistant, designed survey instruments, conducted data analysis and literature review, and developed presentation materials. Taylor did her public policy and administration internship on the research and was involved in team meeting management, communications, coproducing, survey design and analysis.

“Riding the military-civilian divide is vital. There are things that civilian families can do to support military families in their community, whether it’s making and delivering a meal, mowing the lawn, or watching the children while the spouse goes to the grocery store. All of these simple things can make a difference.”
My first JMU semester
Faculty fellow lauds student participation

BY ANTA SANE, JMU PREPARING FUTURE FACULTY FELLOW

It has been a wonderful experience to be a Preparing Future Faculty Fellow at JMU. I really loved it and enjoyed teaching the African Politics course during the Fall 2013 semester. I had a very good group of students who were engaged and prepared in each class. It was a pleasure teaching the class and, yes, I looked forward to teaching every Tuesday and Thursday. We had good class discussions and the one I enjoyed the most, among many, was the discussion that followed a documentary by Dambisa Moyo, a Zambian economist, about foreign aid in Africa. Class time was not enough to keep up with the students’ discussions, arguments and positions about the impact, or lack thereof, of foreign aid in Africa. These are memories and moments that I will miss and will be with me throughout my academic career. One of my students put a big smile on my face when he told me that this was the best class he’d taken that semester. Another one asked me which class I would be teaching in the spring semester so he could take it. Yet another hugged me on the last day of class and thanked me for all she learned throughout the semester.

One student expressed the wish that I had put a big smile on my face, which was only highlights. These comments, feedback and positive attitudes really made a difference in my first semester fellowship at JMU. I found Harrisonburg to be a very nice community as well. I loved being able to go from place to place without using my GPS. I am enjoying another fruitful semester, teaching Global Politics, and I enjoy the students’ discussions on all aspects of globalization and international relations.

About the Author
Anta Sane is to the JMU Preparing Future Faculty Fellow, and she teaches African Politics and Global Politics. Sane is a native of Senegal, West Africa, and a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Howard University. Her areas of concentration are public policy/public administration, international relations, and comparative politics. Her areas of interest are women in politics; gender and governance; and economic development. Her dissertation, “Gender Inequities in the Process of Public Governance: The Case of the Senegalese Parliament,” evaluates the role of Senegalese women parliamentarians in reducing gender disparities in three policy areas: citizenship, family law, and women’s healthcare. Her study is intended to draw attention to the impact and effect of these policy areas, as well as the obstacles Senegalese women are facing in advocating for the aforementioned policies.

The JMU Department of Political Science offers two master’s degree programs:

- **Public Administration and Political Science** with a concentration in European Union policy studies.

To learn more about these degree programs, go to: [www.jmu.edu/mpa](http://www.jmu.edu/mpa) or [www.jmu.edu/eupolicystudies](http://www.jmu.edu/eupolicystudies).

Alumni give students insight and inspiration

BY DAVID JONES

T he political science department has long recognized that alumni serve as sources of inspiration and insight for its students. Former students of Tony Eksterowicz’s U.S. Congress class may recall visits by Dan- nie Traupel (’99), Mike Swansburg (’00) and Brian Stor (’99), who regaled students with stories from Capitol Hill. Connecting JMU graduates with current students has since been the focus of the department’s alumni outreach efforts. Much of this outreach happens through JMU Politicians, an organization for alumni working in politics, policy and related fields. Through a series of Politicians-led programs, alumni have helped students make connections, secure internships, sort out potential career paths and take other steps toward launching careers in public service. As alumni have worked together on these efforts to help students, they have strengthened their connections with each other.

Each spring since 2006, a group of alumni has returned to the JMU campus for a career workshop for departmental majors. In addition to introductory panel discussions, this event features break-out sessions during which students get face-to-face advice on pursuing their particular interests as well as feedback on their resumes. This workshop format has been employed by the JMU Washington Semester program for 15 years. Each June, recent graduates and current students are invited to participate in an alumni-led workshop focused on careers in the Washington, D.C., area. This program was inspired by Tom Calligan (’95), who presided the department to develop programming for recent graduates seeking help with the transition from JMU to D.C. For this program, each student is paired with an alumus working in a field that matches his or her interests. It also features an alumni-led panel discussion on “Living and Working in D.C.” Last year, the D.C. workshop was capped off by a reception on Capitol Hill hosted by President Jonathan R. Alger.

Recent efforts have turned toward more intimate dinner events that foster informal interaction between alumni and students. In February, students participating in the Global Affairs Washington Semester program communed over Sichuan hot pot with alumni who share an interest in international affairs. In Richmond, alumni talked politics with students of Hon. Pete Graves’s state and local government class and Dr. Lili Pradel’s public policy seminar at the end of their day-long trip to the capital. Graves heard remarks by several lawmakers, including Senators Emmett Haenger (‘71, ’79M), Secretary of the Commonwealth Levar Stoney (’94), and Delegates R. P. “Dickie” Bell (’88) and Scott Surovell (’93).

In addition to providing career advice, alumni enrich classroom learning by serving as guest speakers on campus. Under the leadership of Catherine Hill (’99), the department’s alumni board is building a list of alumni who are willing to speak to classes about their areas of substantive expertise. So far the list includes elected officials, foreign service officers, attorneys, lobbyists, Capitol Hill staffers, law enforcement officers and policy analysts.

Alumni interested in getting involved in these student outreach efforts should complete the department’s alumni survey and check the appropriate boxes: [www.jmu.edu/polisci/alumni.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/polisci/alumni.shtml). Potential guest speakers should email Catherine Hill at CCHill@oag.state.va.us. The JMU Department of Political Science’s alumni survey and check the appropriate boxes: [www.jmu.edu/polisci/alumni.shtml](http://www.jmu.edu/polisci/alumni.shtml). Potential guest speakers should email Catherine Hill at CCHill@oag.state.va.us.
Panel presentations and round table discussions engage symposium participants in such complex arenas of civic engagement as cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and addressing climate change. One panel examined the interaction between civic engagement and environmental science, addressing how ‘citizen scientists’ should contribute to increasingly complex problem-solving areas such as cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay or addressing climate change. Panelists and participants agreed that, while citizens have an important role to play, civic engagement can enhance economic development effort.

New Career Peer Advisers Program Launches
BY ELAINE CHICKER

A new pilot program inspired by Liz Hamm’s ’13 helps students navigate the daunting task of looking for summer internships and thinking about opportunities after graduation. A variety of career paths are available to our majors and learning about them helps students select courses and internships that put them in the best position to achieve their goals. Kicking off the new pilot program is the first group of CPAs. Genna Beckenhauer, Emily Fay, Matthew Ferrammosa, Danielle Rosati, Lauren Scannelli and Patrick Shea. These students participated in weekly training sessions focusing on topics such as resources in the university and in the department, internship requirements, networking and interviewing. The CPAs opened their doors for weekly office hours in October 2013. Plans for the spring semester include conducting workshops and offering mock interviews. Each adviser is also charged with conducting research into a particular career path, developing lists of resources that will assist students in learning more about that path and working to identify alumni in that field. The CPAs will publish their results on the department’s website. Though this effort the program will develop a library of articles that can be used as a resource for new majors.

Transforming communities
Public affairs symposium focuses on civic engagement
BY ROB ALEXANDER

Using fall 2013 the School of Public and International Affairs sponsored its third-annual public affairs symposium, focusing on civic engagement. Previous symposiums focused on the future of American society from the perspective of the 2012 elections and a 10-year retrospective of the domestic and international effects of Sept. 11, 2001. The 2013 forum, “From Volunteerism to Engagement: Transforming Our Community and Beyond,” involved a series of roundtable discussions, panel presentations, films and visiting scholar lectures considering multiple dimensions of civic engagement: its meaning, understanding civic engagement and the surrounding communities. Overall, several hundred participants engaged in discussion and debate regarding such diverse topics such as the impacts of civic engagement on students and organizations, citizen engagement and political change in Tunisia, and how civic engagement can enhance economic development effort.

Facility publications, presentations and projects

Continued on page 14
NEWFACULTY

Kristin N. Wylie earned a Ph.D. from the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin, with specializations in comparative politics and methodology. She also earned a B.A. in political science from Louisiana State University and a Master’s in Latin American Studies from the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas. Prior to joining the JMU faculty in 2013, Grant served as a visiting professor at Bucknell University and senior political scientist with Guardian Six Consulting. Grant specializes in violent interstate conflict and international institutions. He is also interested in applications of social network analysis to international affairs. His previous research has been published in International Studies Quarterly, Conflict Management and Peace Science, and the Journal of Peace Research. He was the co-editor of Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics (Palgrave, Macmillan, 2010). His current research focuses on participation in international governmental organizations, alliance portfolio composition and management, and feedback loops in international behavior. At JMU, Grant teaches courses in American foreign policy, research methods, international organizations and conflict.

Keith Grant earned a B.A. in international relations and French in 2004 from Bucknell University. In 2010, he completed his Ph.D. in political science at the University of Arizona, where he specialized in international relations and research methodology. Prior to joining the JMU faculty in 2013, Grant served as a visiting professor at Bucknell University and senior political scientist with Guardian Six Consulting.

Class Notes & Alumni News

Dannie Diego (’99), a congressional liaison ofﬁcer at the United States Agency for International Development, married James Western on July 4, 2013. Fellow JMU Westminster alumnus Mollie Daughtrey Poland (99) were members of the bridal party. Diego, Nelson, and Poland form one of the participants on the 1998 JMU Westminster Seniors program.

Joan Spence (’00) was a company-wide Excellence in Execution award for a project involving the Federal Reserve of Defense.

Gary Con II (’06, WMH) will begin as program manager in the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in September 2016. Con will oversee conventional weapons destruction programs within a regional portfolio. Previously, Con worked at the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU. He will continue as a doctoral student at the School of Strategic Leadership Studies at JMU with an anticipated graduation date in December 2016. Kristen Fallon (’96) graduated from Columbia Business School in 2013 and now serves as an economic policy advisor to U.S. Sen. Jeff Flake.

Jenyss Kilchen (’07) earned a J.D. from the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law in 2013.

After earning a J.D. and an M.A. from the George Mason University School of Law in 2013, Lauren Brice (’98) clerked for the judges of the Arlington Circuit Court. Josh Linds (’08) earned an M.A. in Democracy and Governance from Georgetown University in 2013.

Amanda Cleveland and Leliokasni Peaked and Nicholas Swartz published Virginia Governance: Institutions and Policy in CQ Press in Fall 2014. Anderson says, “In Northern Virginia, and specifically in Fairfax County and other wealthy counties in Northern Virginia, people don’t think about poverty and homelessness … don’t understand that there is a real need in our area.” She further explains, “A lot of folks are the working poor, and you know, we want them in our community as well.”

Josh, “In Northern Virginia, and speciﬁcally in Fairfax County and other wealthy counties in Northern Virginia, people don’t think about poverty and homelessness … don’t understand that there is a real need in our area.” She further explains, “A lot of folks are the working poor, and you know, we want them in our community as well.”

When JMU joins the ranks of the “new Ivy League” schools in 2013, the school will have the potential to attract more students from the top of the Ivy League. It will be interesting to see if the school can attract more students from the Ivy League in the future.

Amanda Cleveland and Leliokasni Peaked and Nicholas Swartz are currently working on a book about Virginia Governance: Institutions and Policy. The book is expected to be published in Fall 2014.

Breaking the cycle of poverty – by Natalie Karr, Reprinted with permission, Northern Virginia Magazine, June 2012

Amanda Cleveland and Leliokasni Peaked and Nicholas Swartz are currently working on a book about Virginia Governance: Institutions and Policy. The book is expected to be published in Fall 2014.
Virginia’s Secretary of the Commonwealth

Levar Stoney (’04), the first African-American man to lead student government at JMU, is Virginia’s new Secretary of the Commonwealth. In his position, one of the most influential in state government, Levar brings a personal civility that is desperately needed, along with expertise honed during a career in politics and government. Previously Levar served as the deputy director of the McAuliffe Gubernatorial Transition, and was the deputy campaign manager of McAuliffe’s 2013 campaign for Governor. While serving as executive director of Virginia’s Democratic Party, he was one of the youngest state Democratic Party executive directors in the United States. Levar is known for his ability to bring people together. In doing so, he is changing the temperament of government from animus to accord, and bringing President Madison’s belief in civil discourse to the highest levels of government in the commonwealth.

‘I came to JMU knowing that I wanted to get involved in politics. I just didn’t know whether or not JMU was going to provide me the launch pad. It has done that more than I ever thought it would.’

— LEVAR STONEY (‘04)
public policy and administration major

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAELE WHITE, COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA