

MHA MESSENGER

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Letter from the Director

As I sit at my dining room table and reflect about the past 10 months at UF, two words come to mind: *opportunity and adaptability.*

Opportunity brought me to UF. During my job interview, I remember walking out of PHNP, seeing Communicore, North Tower, UF Dental School, MBI and thinking, “wow, there is a lot of healthcare surrounding the college.” Additionally, I learned several program alumni work at UF Health. A past MHA Program Director, Dr. Christy Harris Lemak, stated that program alumni are amazing and are very willing to help. I realized UF has a solid foundation to continue strengthening the MHA program.

Within my first week, I met with several members of the Class of 2020 and then the Class of 2021 at orientation. I realized these are a talented and energetic group of students. My sense told me these students have the potential to become effective healthcare managers and add value to various healthcare organizations. I next turned to meeting program alumni. To me, the strength of any program are the alumni and the outcomes they achieve. So far, I have met or connected via LinkedIn with almost 400 program alumni. The ability to connect with an established and preeminent group is incredible.

One of the first opportunities to engage the alumni with the MHA students came in the second week of the Professional Seminar. In the summer, I met Class of 2017 alum Brandon Peckham and asked if he could get recent alumni to serve on a panel. With his help, we had six alumni share their experiences and offer advice. We also started a new tradition where first year MHA students receive their Gator pin from an MHA Alum. In addition, 2nd year MHA students will showcase their internships in a public venue. The Class of 2020 did a great job of presenting information about their internships in Founder’s Hall in the College of Medicine.



Dr. Keith Benson, PhD, MHA, MBA
MHA Program Director

**“...TWO WORDS CAME TO MIND:
OPPORTUNITY AND
ADAPTABILITY.”**

MHA

Messenger

SUMMER 2020



Dr. Keith Benson at the 2019-2020 New Student Orientation

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Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Classes moved completely online, some internships were cancelled (not those at UF!) and job prospects weakened. We had no choice but to adapt. For example, on March 13, we had a tour of Springhill Medical Complex to learn firsthand about medical group practice from two program alumni. Even though an actual tour was no longer possible, learning must continue. As a result, we had our first seminar zoom meeting: "COVID-19: Lessons from the Front Lines for MHA Students." Later in the semester, we had an UF MHA Town Hall via zoom. Fourteen alumni connected with MHA students, providing words of wisdom and lowering anxiety about the future. Despite the disappointments, the year came with lots of successes.

In closing, my first year has not been what I envisioned or ever imagined. But who did imagine a pandemic changing life in the first few months of 2020? Despite COVID-19, it has been a good year. The administration, faculty, students and alumni have warmly welcomed me to the program. In the past 10 months, I have witnessed the solid foundation the program is built on. There are tremendous opportunities to continue to grow and develop. It will be challenging and require hard work but working together, we can achieve greater success. From where I sit and contemplate the future, I am reminded of a Timbuk 3 song, "The Future's so Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades." Go Gators!

HASA HAPPENINGS

The Health Administration Student Administration (HASA) provides students opportunities for networking, volunteering and leadership, all while building a sense of comradery.

This year, HASA has worked hard to bridge the gap between students and alumni. With events, such as the football tailgates, socials and Instagram takeovers, the organization helped foster a better sense of community. Habitat for Humanity, heart walks and food drives are just a few of the volunteering events that sprinkled the school year. New to this year were the Fall Kickoff, which integrated the new students with current students and HASA's first informational webinar.

UF MHA Alumni Football Tailgate



HASA members at the Alachua County Heart Walk in September 2019.



Fall Kickoff hosted at Lake Wauberg.

Incoming Executive Board



Madeleine Ngo
President



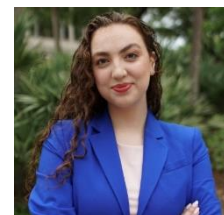
Allison Bates
Executive Vice President



Taylor Floyd
VP of Public Relations



Austin Wynn
VP of Finance



Emma-Louise Austin-Datta
VP of Professional Development

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Lauren Aziz always knew that she had to go to graduate school. She easily picked UF for its most attractive feature: the Alumni Base. "It's such a huge network of gators – not just UF MHAs, but gators in general," she said. And sure enough, she went on to work at Mayo Clinic with two alums as her bosses, as well as another as her coworker.

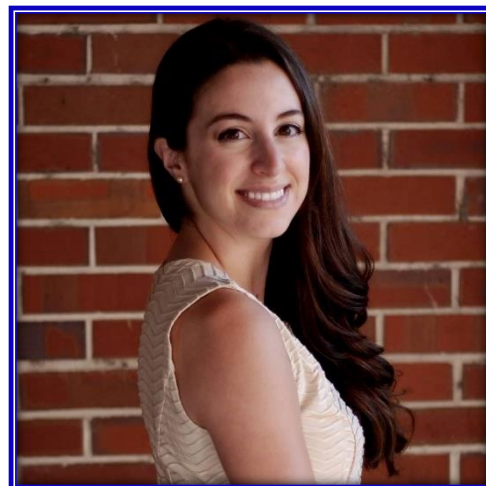
Relationships. Aziz cannot stress it enough. In her opinion, if it were not for the relationships she had built during her fellowship, she would not have been strongly recommended for a permanent position.

"The coursework is something that will get outdated eventually ... but it's really about the people you meet and the relationships you build," she said. She had gotten to do projects in the clinic, in the hospital and in the surgery setting, working with surgeons, instrument processing nurses, infection preventionists and more.

Though choosing not to go to the headquarters in Minnesota, this resulted in her gradual climb to Clinical Operations Manager of the Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology in just three years.

Despite her accomplishments, Aziz wants to let students know not to get caught up in her LinkedIn timeline. "I'm pretty candid about the fact that I would not always recommend people do what I did," she said.

Her advice: make conscious decisions to say no. She had to dig her heels in, be open to trying new things and find a balance in what she valued. Acting as a liaison between providers and the administration at large, she notes that success lies in keeping relationships at the forefront, remaining resourceful, stepping out of her comfort zone and constantly persevering. "You can be perfect at the hard skills, but if you are not mastering the soft skills, you will fail in these types of jobs," she said.



Lauren Aziz

*Operations Manager, Mayo Clinic
Class of 2017*

SUCCESS STORIES



This year, **Jacob Fisher** (Class of 2014) has been recognized as a 2020 Rising Star by *Inweekly*. Each year, the newspaper recognizes 64 professionals that are making great strides in their field and community. With over 200 nominations from different fields, Fischer's work within his community set him apart.



Since 2006, UF has been honoring young alumni for their spectacular work in their industry and community. This year, two MHA alumni were presented with this award: **Stephen "Brint" Carlton** (Class of 2005) and **Ellington Jones** (Class of 2012).

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS



CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2020!!!

Despite having COVID-19 reshape the last leg of their graduate career, the class of 2020 ended the program strongly. Bright minds will be entering the field.

“The biggest disappointment [of the year] is that I will not see the Class of 2020 celebrate their achievement at graduation. I have always enjoyed graduation as a professor. I enjoy seeing hard work pay off.”

—Dr. Keith Benson



2019 FHA ANNUAL MEETING

October 24, 2019 - Orlando, FL

Students had the opportunity to attend Florida Hospital Association’s annual meeting this past Fall. At the meeting, they had gotten the chance to meet Admiral William H. McRaven.

PLACEMENTS

Working resiliently, our students were accepted into reputable fellowships and internships for the summer:

Fellowships

- Trident Health, Charleston, SC (HCA)
- Lexington Medical Center, West Columbia, SC
- UT Southwestern Health System, Dallas, TX
- Atrius Health, Boston MA
- Blake Medical Center, Bradenton, FL
- CJW Hospital, Richmond, VA.
- Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC, NY

Internships

- UF Department of Anesthesiology
- UF Health Physicians
- UF Health Shands Administration
- Orlando Health
- UF College of Medicine
- UF Department of Neurology
- Emory Clinic
- North FL/South GA VHS –
- Malcolm Grow VA Medical Center
- Cleveland Clinic Florida
- UF Department of Surgery