

University of Georgia – Alumni Profiles for NASPAA Marketing Committee

Matt Stevens

1. Where are you currently working?

- I lead the Community & Culture Department at [Creature Comforts Brewing Co.](#), headquartered in Athens, GA. For an overview of what it is my team does, click here to access our [2024 Impact Report](#).

2. What is your job title?

- I am the Senior Director of Community Impact.

3. What inspired you to pursue your MPA degree?

- I was employed by the University of Georgia when I first began my MPA, working as the Athens-based Associate Director of [UGA's research station](#) located in San Luis de Monteverde, Costa Rica.

A portion of my responsibilities was to mirror UGA's [Public Service & Outreach](#) commitment within an international context. And in time, we helped position our students, faculty, and campus infrastructure to more strategically invest in our San Luis community: our students consulted with regional businesses, they ran science camps for local schools, and they painted murals on municipal buildings. We eventually built a relationship with the Latin American headquarters of [Habitat For Humanity](#). It was invigorating work, which prompted a desire to develop my knowledge base for a future career in community development. The fact that UGA's own Master of Public Administration is so highly-regarded and rigorous was serendipitous, to say the least.

4. How has your MPA degree helped you in your career?

- It would be difficult to summarize the many ways this degree has fortified my work in what is today the field of Corporate Social Responsibility. For one thing, UGA's MPA is intensely pragmatic—rarely was an assignment issued that didn't require its students to work alongside local stakeholders to produce a deliverable that could functionally benefit our community. (UGA's Public Service & Outreach once again on display.)

As such, having graduated *and* stayed within the Athens area, I emerged from the MPA not only with a new skill set and diploma, but also a vast

network of local leaders in my rolodex.

Second, I would be remiss if I didn't highlight the extent to which the MPA illuminated for me just how much the three sectors—the public, private, and nonprofit—can learn from one another. As an MPA with his concentration in Nonprofit Administration, I've come to appreciate that my degree has taught me to ask questions—those which are commonplace within, say, the nonprofit or public sectors—that many private companies seldom consider. And vice versa: nonprofit agencies have much they could learn from the private sector. Those distinct and disconnected organizational mindsets, if combined, can create quite the alloy, I've learned.

5. What do you love about being an MPA alumni?

- For one thing, my fellow alumni have scattered widely, and each—according to my LinkedIn—is doing remarkable things to serve the world in far-flung and inspiring ways: from the federal government to city management to academia to, like me, CSR. I absolutely love tracking along with the various career paths into which my fellow MPAs have fallen.

Additionally—and I say this not as a 'humble-brag,' but in all sobering sincerity—I had to hold on for dear life to complete my MPA! The quality and brilliance of our faculty and fellow colleagues was staggering; the social sciences were completely novel to my theretofore humanities-centric brain. I worked harder, *by far*, than any other degree I'd ever managed to obtain, and I am immensely proud to have come out the other side.

6. What advice would you give to persons pursuing a career in public service?

- Go forth, and boldly. The world sorely needs more citizens who are willing to grab an oar and propel their community in a productive direction. And an MPA will position you to contribute substantially to that end.

Additionally, and practically, don't overlook the private sector post-graduation! Business *can* be a force for good in the world. It isn't always, but it can be. And an MPA will set you up for success in that arena as well.