Meet the Nicholas School of the Environment’s Student Services Team

We are Here for You!
Sherri Nevius
Associate Dean

Responsibilities: Director of the Student Services team – Durham and Duke Marine Lab. Strategic lead for Student Services and staff supervisor for executive education, recruiting and admissions, career and professional development, and student administration teams.

Bio: Sherri first came to the Nicholas School in 1998 to pursue a Master of Environmental Management (MEM) degree. Prior to coming back to Duke in 2008 in her current position, she worked for URS Corporation as a project manager focusing on projects related to environmental management systems, program development, and compliance. Sherri is a Midwesterner: grew up in Wisconsin and attended Cornell College in Iowa for her undergraduate degree. Though she has made North Carolina her home, she still wears a cheesehead. Sherri loves her crazy family – husband, 2 boys, and 3 dogs – and spends too much time racing bikes, running, gardening, and working on home improvement projects!
Cynthia (Cindy) Peters
Assistant Dean, Student Administration

Responsibilities: Strategic lead for Student Administration including student academic and personal advising, financial aid, registration, academic standards and policies; staff manager for undergraduate programs.

Bio: Cindy came to the Nicholas School almost 17 years ago after having worked in a variety of other schools and offices at Duke in the prior 30+ years. She is a true Floridian: born in Miami, she lived in Florida until the age of 12 when her family moved overseas. She returned to the US to attend college in Atlanta, Georgia and is a proud graduate of Agnes Scott College. Outside of work, Cindy likes to read, do crossword puzzles, play cards and visit with friends and family.
Karen Kirchof
Special Projects Coordinator

Responsibilities: Karen is one of the leading career experts for the environmental and natural resource profession and has been recognized as one of North America’s most outstanding environmental and natural resources career counselors during the 20th Century. She has led career development at the Nicholas School since 1990.

Bio: Her areas of expertise are her knowledge of the environmental career field, employer engagement, alumni networks and student counseling. Outside of work Karen enjoys hiking, golf and eating at diners & dives.
Allison Besch
Director of Executive Education Programs

Responsibilities: Program Management and new course development for the Executive Education programs. Supports new program development and innovation strategy across student services including K-12 outreach.

Bio: Allison has 18 years of experience in science communication and educational program design, including work at National Geographic magazine, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and the North Carolina Maritime Museums. Allison holds a BA in geology and environmental studies from Colgate University, and a Master of Environmental Management degree from Duke University. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, yoga, traveling, and cooking, but not necessarily in that order.
Laura Lipps  
Staff Specialist, Executive Education

Responsibilities: Laura coordinates and supports Nicholas School Executive Education courses, trainings, and events. Coordinates event planning, on-campus and e-learning initiatives; implements the DEL Certificate in Environmental Communications.

Bio: Prior to joining the Nicholas School, Laura’s prior professional positions included policy analyst at the Ecological Society of America and research assistantships at the Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center and the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center. She also served in the U.S. Peace Corps as an Environmental Education Extensionist in El Salvador. Originally from the Washington D.C. area, she holds a B.A. in Biology from Earlham College and a M.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. In her free time, she enjoys wildlife watching, Zen meditation, and shooting the breeze.
Suzanne (Sue) Smith  
Assistant Director of Admissions,  
Communications Lead

Responsibilities: Sue meets and recruits prospective students for the MEM/MF/DEL MEM programs at the Nicholas School. Creates the communications/marketing plan with the purpose of promoting NSOE’s visibility and general recruitment efforts; and assists in Admissions processes, evaluating candidates and making recommendations for admissions. Also responsible for spearheading the Admitted Students Visitation Weekend for admitted students.

Bio: Sue joined the Nicholas School in 2003, and hails originally from the northeast. Prior to her Duke role, she juggled single-parenting and earning an MA in English. She’s had stints teaching at JMU in VA, and has done grant writing and technical recruiting in corporate settings, consulting firms, academia, and social services. Outside of work, she has a passion for traveling, painting, gardening, cooking or relaxing with friends and family.
Ben Spain
Assistant Director of Admissions & Recruiting

Responsibilities: Ben co-manages the planning and implementation of the recruitment and admission process for the MEM, MF and DEL-MEM professional masters programs. He travels to graduate fairs and professional conferences to represent the Nicholas School and to attract talented, driven individuals who want to capitalize on their proven abilities and become environmental leaders of consequence. Ben also collaborates with faculty, staff, and students on a variety of issues and projects pertaining to admissions standards and procedures (including the review of applications), as well as effective recruiting strategies.

Bio: Ben recently joined the Nicholas School after serving as the Assistant Director of Admissions and Recruiting at the University of North Carolina School of Law. Prior to his role at UNC, he served as the Associate Executive Director of an eastern North Carolina assisted living facility. When not working, Ben enjoys golfing, grilling, boating, and watching the Clemson Tigers win football games.
Katie Wood  
Senior Program Coordinator, Duke Marine Lab, Beaufort

Responsibilities: Overall coordination of the undergraduate program at the Marine Lab and academic programs, Marine Science and Conservation Leadership Certificate and the Marine Science and Conservation Concentration within the Environmental Science majors. Marine Lab website, social media, general communications for the Marine Lab. Advising, recruiting, coordination with undergraduate students and student groups.

Bio: Katie started with Duke University at the Marine Lab in 2007. Katie is originally from Batavia, IL and graduated from the University of Illinois in 1997 with a BS in Media Studies. Katie will complete a MA degree in Higher Education Administration from SUNY Stony Brook in December 2017. When not at work you can find Katie out on the boat with her family or in the company of our three dogs (Scout, Luna, Rosco) or at the gym.
Amy Kirkland
Staff Assistant, Duke Marine Lab Beaufort

Responsibilities: Serve as registrar for Duke University Marine Laboratory undergraduate and CEM students; schedule ML courses; manage application and admissions process for non-Duke students; administer course evaluations for ML; process visa paperwork for international scholars, students, and visitors.

Bio: Amy has worked at Duke for more than 9 years, and joined the Nicholas School in December 2014. She is from Durham, and moved to the Beaufort area to work at the Duke Marine Lab. She attended Piedmont Community College with a major in Accounting. Amy loves spending time on the beach, traveling, and being with friends and family. Amy has a Pomeranian named Maddie that she spoils.
Deb Wojcik
Director, Career and Professional Development

Responsibilities: Strategic planning, career and professional development program implementation, and career counseling for the Career & Professional Development Center

Bio: Deb bleeds a deep Duke Blue, having earned undergraduate, master of arts in teaching, and MEM degrees from Duke. Since her time as a Duke student, Deb has worked in the environmental field in various capacities, including four years with the Duke Environmental Leadership (DEL) Program at the Nicholas School. From there, she went back to school and conducted research in southern Africa, earning PhD in natural resource management from the University of Florida. After her PhD, Deb worked at Stanford University, first as a postdoctoral scholar and then as associate director of the Emmett Interdisciplinary Program on Environment and Resources. She returned to the Nicholas School in fall 2015. She loves spending time with her adorable family (bias acknowledged), gardening and doing yard work, dancing like only her preschooler is watching, and exploring all of the fantastic things that have popped up since she last lived in Durham!
Tom Brooks
Staff Assistant Career and Professional Development

Responsibilities: Supports projects across the Nicholas School including budget and financial projects; Nicholas School Executive Education courses; the DEL Certificate in Environmental Communications; Career Services; technical support; and helps with special events.

Bio: Worked for Duke in various roles including software development and program administration. Recently returned after teaching public school. MS in Environmental Studies from Johns Hopkins University. BA from College of William and Mary.
Nikki Smith
Assistant Director/Senior Career Counselor

Responsibilities: Provide career counseling to MEM students, particularly first-year students seeking internships. Develop professional preparation workshops to engage students in career readiness. Serve as program administrator for the Stanback Internship Program.

Bio: Nikki Smith is committed to getting students involved in the discovery and exploration of both themselves and the world. She came to Duke in 2012 as a career counselor supporting undergraduates in the Duke University Career Center, and transitioned to the Nicholas School in December of 2016 to work with MEMs. She has taught career planning and study skills courses, and is energized by coaching Nicholas School students as they navigate the career development process. Nikki earned a B.A. in English from Roanoke College and a M.Ed. in Counseling Psychology with an emphasis in College Student Personnel Administration from James Madison University (Go Dukes!).

Nikki is always excited about North Carolina bbq, running on the American Tobacco Trail, and checking out events in downtown Durham. She also enjoys reading, volunteering, cats and dogs, NPR, and yelling about politics.
Beth Hwang
Career Specialist

Beth Hwang joined the Nicholas School’s Career & Professional Development Center team in August 2017. Her undergraduate degree is in Economics, which was earned at Meredith College. Beth worked in recruiting at SAS and a few other companies before deciding to go back to school. She graduated from NCSU with a Master’s of Education in Counseling, concentration in Career Counseling. Beth completed her graduate internship at Meredith College in the Office of Career Planning. She has experience providing career and professional development through individual coaching appointments, workshops, and presentations. Her desire is to help students find fulfilling and satisfying careers where they can use their strengths to give back the community.

She recently got married in May of 2017 to Michael, a cyclist; the son her parents never had. On the weekends, you will likely find Beth running on the American Tobacco Trail with her dog, Paisley, alongside Michael on his bicycle. Food is her best friend and you will often see her snacking throughout the day.
Julie Moushon
Staff Assistant, Student Services

Responsibilities: Handles incoming phone and email communication; supports special events; works with the Admissions process and the Masters Projects program; and helps with CareerLink accounts and financial processing.

Bio: Julie started with the Nicholas School in early 2016 but previously worked at Duke Law and with the Undergraduate Admissions team.

Prior to the world of academia, she worked in minor league baseball before spending 15 years planning corporate and community marketing events for a regional bank. Born in Houston and ever faithful to her Texas Longhorns, she lived in Illinois and New York before moving to North Carolina in 1992. She and her husband Dan have three sons: Blake is a Tar Heel, Chad starts at UNC Charlotte this week and Kellen is a high school junior.

Season ticket holder to DPAC Broadway series, Burlington Royals baseball, Duke football and Jordan High School soccer. Loves to read on her screened-in porch, no matter the season or the weather.
Ericka Emiliani
Student Administration Program Assistant

Responsibilities: Course registration matters for MEM, MF and DEL-MEMs (such as pass/fail grading, independent study enrollment, overloads, & audit basis requests). Communicate registration requests to university partners/colleagues (as appropriate). Assist in course advising in-person and virtual information sessions. Co-manage/process I-20 requests (on-campus and DEL MEM place-based sessions). Manage language exam course requirements; notify students and advisors of deficiencies. Support social media communications and the general student services team.

Bio: Ericka comes to us from North Carolina State University where she earned a Master of Education with a focus in school counseling. She previously worked at Duke as a Graduate Assistant with the Housing and Residence Life team. While originally from Costa Rica, she spent most of her life in Miami, Florida before moving to North Carolina 3 years ago. In her spare time, Ericka enjoys reading, binge-watching tv, and exploring Durham with her fiancé and her two pups.
Melissa Adragna
Program Coordinator, Student Administration

Responsibilities: Mel supports the MEM, DEL-MEM and MF programs at the Nicholas school. Specifically, she oversees the Masters Project process and symposium, the assistantships process and provides administrative support for the certificate programs. She will also be working with our diversity and inclusion efforts.

Bio: Mel is our most recent addition to the Nicholas School Student Services team, joining us in July 2016. Prior to starting at Duke, she worked at Shaw University in the Office of the President supporting process optimization efforts on campus. Mel has set down roots here in North Carolina and she loves exploring and spending time outdoors with her husband Joe and dog Skyler. Mel comes to Duke with several years of experience in program and student development and is excited to continue this work at the Nicholas School.
Erika Lovelace
Registrar and Associate Director

Responsibilities: Manage and coordinate course scheduling and registration processes, manage and coordinate activities involved in the establishment and maintenance of student records, audit degrees for graduation, student advising, manage the prerequisite status of all students, and leads the new student on-boarding process.

Bio: Erika has worked at Duke since 2002 and at the Nicholas School of the Environment since 2005. Erika’s academic background includes a BA in theatre arts and a MS degree in management with a focus in project management. In her down time, Erika enjoys a competitive game of Scrabble and Words with Friends, reading, card games and she’s a huge fan of professional football. Go Eagles! Erika hails from a big family – she has 4 sisters, 4 brother-in-laws, 5 nieces and nephews, 2 loving parents and her very sweet cat, Olive, whom she loves and adores.
The Student Services team looks forward to meeting you in the fall and interacting with you throughout the next two years and after you graduate.

WELCOME to the Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University and Durham, NC!

Contact us at https://nicholas.duke.edu/people/staff/student-services