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

We are Here for You!
Sherri Nevius  
Associate Dean

Responsibilities: Provides leadership of the Student Services team – Durham and Duke Marine Lab. The Student Services team provides the administrative foundation for the quality educational services provided at the Nicholas School. We foster an engaged, inclusive school community, promote career and professional readiness, inspire environmental leadership, and encourage lifelong learning for all students, as defined by the Duke University Mission. Student Services consists of professional masters recruiting and admissions, student administration, career and professional development, and PhD and undergraduate programs.

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 (environmental consultant) focusing on environmental management systems, program development, and environmental compliance and conformance. 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 cheese head! Sherri is married, has two boys, 3 dogs, a turtle, and fish – and finds sanity in biking (all kinds!), 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 has worked at Duke for 40 years in several different schools and offices including the Law School, the Sanford School and the Graduate School. She has been with the Nicholas School since December of 2000. Cindy is a native 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 and an equally proud Duke fan. Outside of work, Cindy likes to read, do crossword puzzles, play cards and spend time with friends and family.
Responsibilities: Allison provides strategic direction for a comprehensive and integrated professional development center including Career Services for NSOE professional students and Executive Education (non-degree short courses) for environmental professionals. Primary duties include supporting client/employer relations and new program development for both programs, and coaching professional students in career exploration.

Bio: Allison has over 20 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.
Nikki Smith  
Assistant Director/Senior Career Counselor

Responsibilities: Provide career coaching to MEM and MF students. Develop professional preparation programs to engage students in career readiness. Advise student organizations. Offer insight on information related to international students, career assessments, the federal job search, and internship and job searching.

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 and MFs. 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 places to eat in Durham and run/walks on the American Tobacco Trail. She also enjoys reading, thrift shopping, all cats and dogs, NPR, and (not calmly) discussing politics.
Ben Spain
Associate Director of Enrollment Services

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.
Laura Lipps
Assistant Director, 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.
Amy Kirkland
Undergraduate Program Coordinator

Responsibilities: Responsible for undergraduate course scheduling and student records; recruit undergraduates to the Nicholas School; serve as initial point of contact for major, minor and certificate students; provide administrative support for the undergraduate Sustainability Engagement Certificate; Manage Graduation with Distinction program, and honors programs; plan and participate in special events including Graduation, Majors Fair, etc.; update websites.

Bio: Amy has worked at Duke for 11 years, and joined the Nicholas School in December 2014. She recently relocated back to Durham after spending 3 years in the Beaufort area, while working at the Duke Marine Lab. She attended Piedmont Community College with a major in Accounting. Amy enjoys traveling and spending time with friends and family.
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.
Julie Moushon
Assistant Director, Admissions and Recruitment

Responsibilities: Julie meets and recruits prospective students for the professional master’s programs at NSOE. Creates the communications and 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: 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. A native Houstonian and faithful fan of her World Champion Astros, she lived in Illinois and New York before moving to North Carolina. She and her husband Dan have three sons, Blake, Chad and Kellen.

Season ticket holder to DPAC Broadway series, Burlington Royals baseball, Duke football and Jordan High School soccer.
Moriah Carleton
Program Specialist, Career and Professional Development

Responsibilities: Moriah assists with administrative tasks for staff, faculty, and students. Assists in managing and supporting Nicholas School Executive Education courses and trainings. Supports CPDC staff by assisting with projects and events.

Bio: Moriah Carleton is a recent graduate from North Carolina State University with a B.A. in International Studies with a concentration in Global Relations, as well as a minor in Linguistics. Moriah has interned with DCID for the past two summers as a staff assistant, working with foreign diplomats. She has been with the Nicholas School since August 2018. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling to different places, and spending time with her family. She has spent time in China, Jordan, and Israel. She hopes to continue her involvement in the field of education and international development.
Melissa Hunter
Assistant Director, Career and Professional Development

Responsibilities: Provide career coaching to MEM/MF students. Research and engage with employers. Serve as Program Coordinator for the Stanback Internship program. Compile and analyze data for student internships/employment.

Bio: Melissa Hunter joined the Career and Professional Development Center in April 2018. Melissa holds a BA in Social Work from Salisbury University and a MA in Student Affairs in Higher Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She comes from D.C. where she worked at a non-profit aimed at helping students transition from college to career through teaching a career-readiness curriculum based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) competencies. She is passionate about utilizing her background to help students identify, develop, and accomplish their professional goals. In her spare time, Melissa enjoys being active outdoors, eating gluten-free foods, planning (read: stressing about) her May 2019 wedding, and cheering on the Pittsburgh Steelers!
Park Watson
Assistant Director of Admissions & CEM Lead

Responsibilities: Park meets and recruits prospective students for Nicholas’ professional masters programs. Based at the Marine Lab in Beaufort, Park also coordinates the Coastal Environmental Management concentration of the MEM degree.

Bio: Park enjoys hiking, watching old movies, and working on various unfinished woodworking projects (most recent: a side-table...two years under construction).
Responsible for:

- Providing administrative support to key professional and undergraduate student and program functions as part of the Duke University Marine Lab and Student Services team.
- Supporting, planning, coordinating, and administering activities and selecting programming.
- Serving as registrar for Duke University Marine Laboratory undergraduate and CEM students; scheduling ML courses; managing application and admissions processes for non-Duke students; administering course evaluations for ML; processing visa paperwork for international scholars, students, and visitors.

Biography:

Gwendolyn Womble is originally from Henderson, NC but has lived in Carteret County for more than a decade. She acquired a BS in Horticulture Science from NC State University in 2003. For 12 years, Gwendy was the Conservation Horticulturist at the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, where she worked designing and maintaining interior and exterior habitats, providing outreach to community groups and individuals, and working alongside other agencies to promote native plants in coastal communities. She also spent time in a high school classroom teaching Agriscience and Horticulture. Gwendy has no free time as she is the mom of 2 boys who keep her running around outside, jumping on trampolines and swimming in the sound. She enjoys reading, gardening, and eating ice cream.
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: 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.
Danielle Wiggins  
Assistant Director, PhD Programs

Responsibilities: Danielle directly administers and manages academic, operational, and financial activities for four of the six NSOE PhD programs (ENV, EOS, UPEP, UPE). She serves as the liaison for NSOE’s business office and the other two PhD programs (MSC and UPEH) as well as Duke Graduate School. Danielle is an essential advocate for NSOE PhD programs and students.

Bio: Prior to joining the Nicholas School in 2015, Danielle served as Logistics Manager at Duke’s National Evolutionary Synthesis Center (NESCent) for seven years where she managed logistics for over 60 meetings and events with 1500 visitors annually to the center. She received her BS in Business Administration from Gardner-Webb University in 2008 and became a Certified Meeting Planner in 2014. Danielle is currently working on a master’s in higher education concentrating on educational leadership. In her spare time, Danielle enjoys traveling, community service, and spending time with her family and friends.
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.
Melissa A. Kotačka
Assistant Director of Admissions

Responsibilities: Melissa recruits prospective students for the professional master’s programs at the Nicholas School, and serves as a member of our Admissions team to evaluate and recommend candidates for admission. She travels to graduate fairs, college campuses, and professional conferences to meet bright, talented, and ambitious individuals whom we hope will find their next intellectual home here at NSOE.

Bio: Melissa joined the Student Services team in July 2019, and brings over a decade of admissions experience to the NSOE. She served as a one-woman college office at a Carolina Friends School; spent seven years with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and previously worked with the Visiting International Faculty Program. She maintains a fiercely student-centered approach to her work, and has presented at state, regional, and national conferences on best practices of admissions and college counseling.

She is a Nationally Certified Counselor and Certified Thanatologist who holds a M.A. in Career Counseling and Placement with an additional concentration in grief and bereavement from North Carolina Central University. She also holds a B.A. in Russian and Interdepartmental Studies from the University of Iowa and a M.A. in Slavic Languages and Literature from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. When not helping students explore and discern the next steps of their educational and professional journey, she’s most likely catering to the whims of her rescue dog, volunteering with Duke Hospice, or curled up with her nose in a book.
Katie Wood  
Assistant Director, Undergraduate & Marine Lab Programs

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.
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