Duke
NICHOLAS SCHOOL
of the ENVIRONMENT

Meet the Nicholas School of the Environment's Career and Professional Development Center and Executive Education Team

Office of Student Services

We are Here for You!

Allison Besch
Director, Career and Professional Development and Executive Education

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.

Deanna Knighton
Assistant Director, Career and Professional Development

Responsibilities: Provide career coaching to MEM/MF students. Manage career readiness curriculum. Lead process for internship, enrichment, and student groups' career treks funding.

Bio: Deanna Knighton joined the Career and Professional Development Center in December 2019. Deanna has a Master's degree in Agricultural and Natural Resource Economics from the University of Florida (Go Gators!) and a Master of Education in Higher Education Administration from North Carolina State University. She is a certified Global Career Development Facilitator. She grew up on a farm and has experience in government, a non-profit, and abroad. Deanna enjoys coming alongside and working with students as they seek to determine and achieve their professional goals. When not at work, she likes being outside (hiking, camping, exploring, gardening, etc.), reading, traveling, spending time with people, attending performing arts events, and all things Durham.

Courtney Sullivan
Assistant Director, Career and Professional Development

Responsibilities: Courtney's key responsibilities include career coaching and advising MEM and MF students, as well as a focus on engaging with employers and alumni on behalf of CPDC. In this role, Courtney researches, develops, and fosters potential and existing employer relationships with the end goal of employment and internship opportunities for MEM and MF students. She will also support the Stanback Administrative Team by helping manage relationships with participating employers.

Bio: Courtney joins the CPDC staff after earning a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Taylor University and a Master's degree in Higher Education from Ball State University. Her most recent role was as a Career Counselor and Student Employment Coordinator for Purdue University Fort Wayne in Indiana. Courtney enjoys traveling and trying new things in her free time.

Moriah Carleton
Program Coordinator, Career and Professional Development

Responsibilities: Moriah leads the Stanback Administrative Team and 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.

Emily Bilcik
Program Coordinator, Executive Education

Responsibilities: Emily plans, coordinates, and implements the grant-funded program "Water Innovation and Leadership Development (WILD). This includes preparing and executing high-quality professionally oriented seminars, conferences, workshops, distance-learning sessions, and events. Emily also supports other Executive Education programs and Student Services events.

Bio: Emily started working at Duke in October 2021. Prior to joining the Nicholas School team, she served as the Project Coordinator for the University of North Texas' Green Fund Sustainability Initiative where she coordinated the campus community garden among various other community-based environmental projects ranging from pollinator protection, waste reduction, green energy and beyond. While in North Texas, she served as a volunteer board of directors member for Keep Denton Beautiful. Emily's previous work is focused on environmental education; she served as an educator at the Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities Department and Water Conservation Office, Charlie Elliot Wildlife Center, and the University of Georgia Office of Sustainability. She received a BS in Forest Resources and a Master of Natural Resources from the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. Emily loves bird watching and spending time in the garden.

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 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.

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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*