

Duke®

NICHOLAS SCHOOL  
of the ENVIRONMENT

Student Services Team

*We are Here for You!*

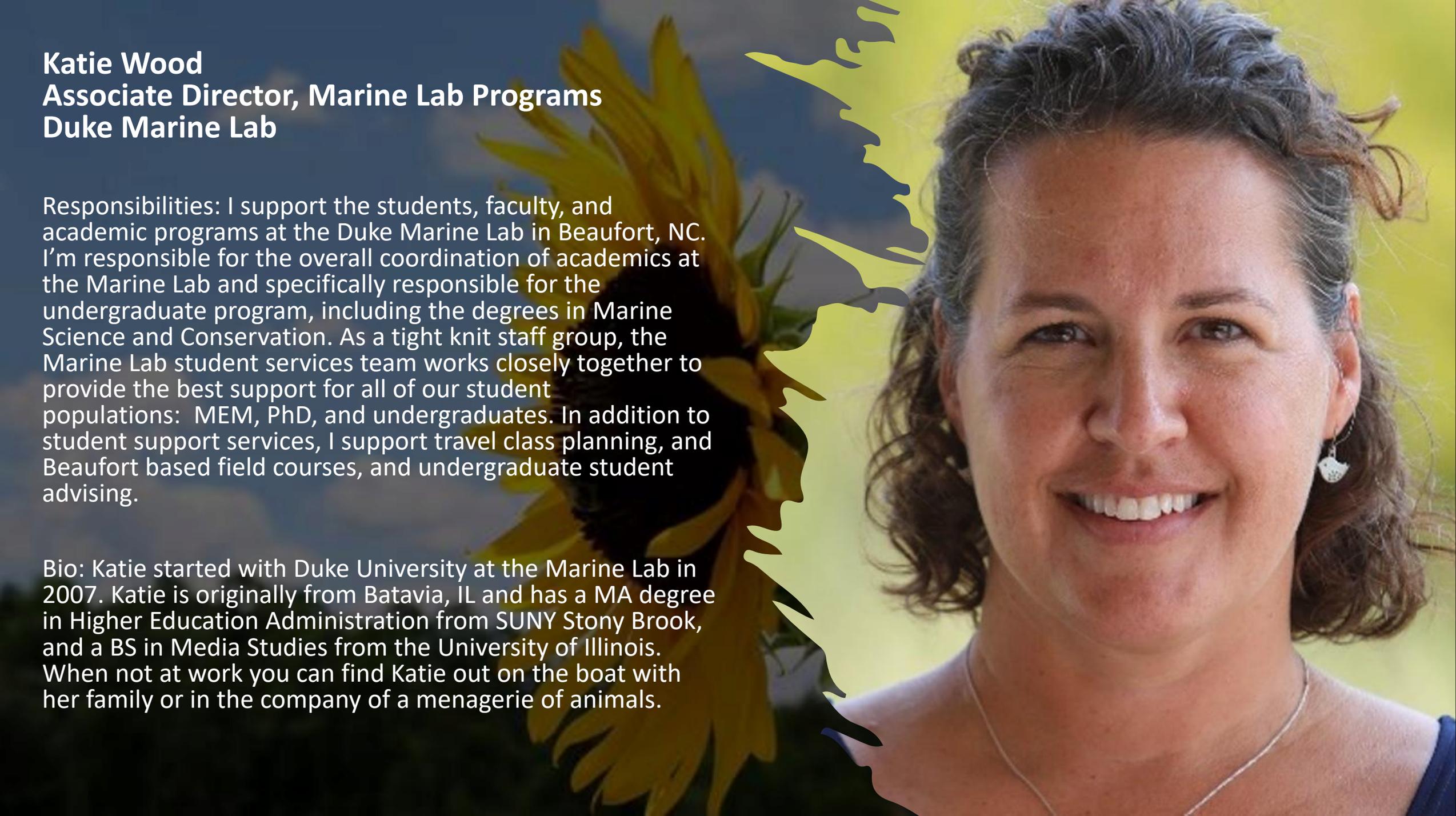


## **Sherri Nevius** **Associate Dean, Student Services**

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, 4 dogs, a turtle, and fish – and finds sanity in biking (all kinds!), running, gardening, and working on home improvement projects.



A portrait of Katie Wood, a woman with dark curly hair, smiling. The background is a bright yellow-green color. A large, semi-transparent sunflower is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the text.

**Katie Wood**  
**Associate Director, Marine Lab Programs**  
**Duke Marine Lab**

Responsibilities: I support the students, faculty, and academic programs at the Duke Marine Lab in Beaufort, NC. I'm responsible for the overall coordination of academics at the Marine Lab and specifically responsible for the undergraduate program, including the degrees in Marine Science and Conservation. As a tight knit staff group, the Marine Lab student services team works closely together to provide the best support for all of our student populations: MEM, PhD, and undergraduates. In addition to student support services, I support travel class planning, and Beaufort based field courses, and undergraduate student advising.

Bio: Katie started with Duke University at the Marine Lab in 2007. Katie is originally from Batavia, IL and has a MA degree in Higher Education Administration from SUNY Stony Brook, and a BS in Media Studies from the University of Illinois. When not at work you can find Katie out on the boat with her family or in the company of a menagerie of animals.

A portrait of Cynthia (Cindy) Peters, a woman with short, wavy, light brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a red textured jacket over a black turtleneck. She is smiling slightly. A large, stylized sunflower graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the text.

## **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 43 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 family and friends.

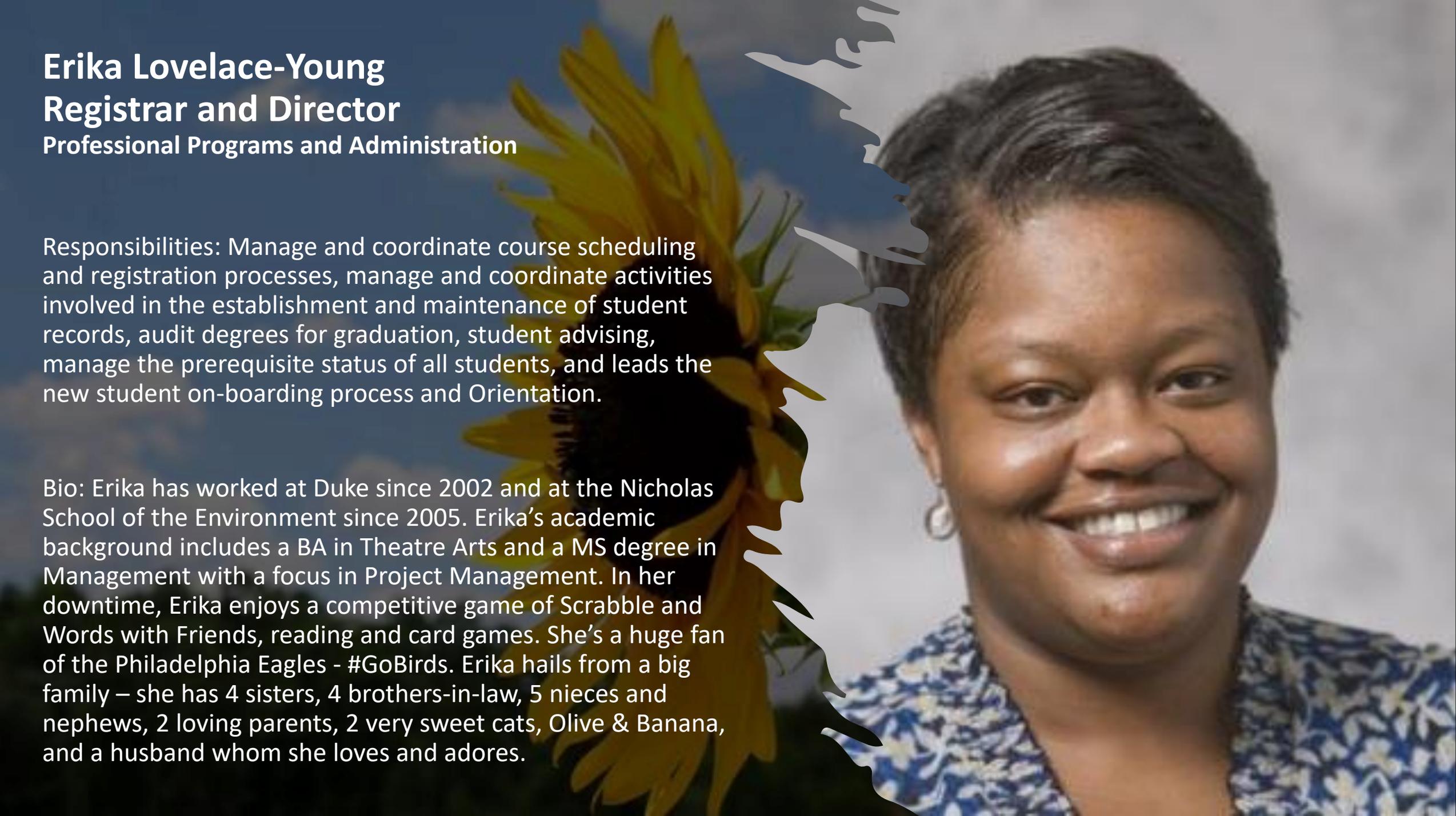
## **Benjamin Pereklita**

### **Director of Admissions**

Responsibilities: Direct and manage all aspects of recruitment and admissions supporting the MEM, MF and DEL-MEM programs. This includes managing a team of admissions officers, creating and supporting a recruitment and admissions strategy, collaborate with faculty leadership, registrar, financial aid, communications, career development and more.

Bio: My name is Ben and I have over 10 years of higher education experience and am most recently joining us from Duke's School of Nursing, where I have been working for 4.5 years in the Office of Admissions. Before Duke, I served in multiple Admissions roles since 2012 at NCSU (processer, recruiter, tech support, etc.). I bring a student-centered mentality, strong Slate and technology skills, faculty engagement, a collaborative spirit, and clear understanding of the work we have ahead of us. I earned my BS in business administration at North Carolina State University. My wife (Allison) and I have two children (Clarke who is 2 ½ years old and Reese who is now 4 months). I love donuts (and will exercise for them! ha). I loves dogs (we have 2 golden retrievers, Wrigley and Harper). I am extremely competitive and active winning several adult league championships in: kickball, softball, and tennis. When I am not working, you will find my family and I in our happiest place: The Mountains (Mostly Asheville but the surrounding areas as well). I love hiking, backpacking and kayaking.



A portrait of Erika Lovelace-Young, a Black woman with short dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a blue patterned top. A large sunflower graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the text.

## Erika Lovelace-Young

### Registrar and Director

#### Professional Programs and Administration

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 and Orientation.

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 downtime, Erika enjoys a competitive game of Scrabble and Words with Friends, reading and card games. She's a huge fan of the Philadelphia Eagles - #GoBirds. Erika hails from a big family – she has 4 sisters, 4 brothers-in-law, 5 nieces and nephews, 2 loving parents, 2 very sweet cats, Olive & Banana, and a husband whom she loves and adores.



**Allison Besch**  
**Director, Career and Professional Development**

**Responsibilities:** Allison provides strategic direction for a comprehensive and integrated professional development center including Career Services for NSOE professional students. 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.



## Ana Bessias

### Undergraduate Program Coordinator

**Responsibilities:** Ana provides overall coordination of the undergraduate program on Durham Campus. Her responsibilities include guiding students through academic planning and program options, program development, event coordination, and budget management. She is also a member of the Stanback Fellowship administrative team.

**Bio:** Ana has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Goucher College in Baltimore. Her prior work experience was focused on project management, data analytics, and educational services. She has worked for public school systems in Boston, MA and Philadelphia, PA, and managed administrative programs in New Hampshire and Los Angeles, CA. Ana has been at the Nicholas School since October 2022, where she supported the Career and Professional Development Center and the Stanback Fellowship Program. In her spare time, she loves visiting museums, watching movies and documentaries, and doing arts and crafts projects.

## Mary Beth Magallanes Staff Assistant, Student Administration

Responsibilities: When a student has a question and is not sure who can help with it, Mary Beth is their first stop. She knows a little bit about what everyone else in Student Services does and directs traffic accordingly, supporting our programs from undergraduate to PhD. She has good relationships with staff assistants throughout NSOE, so she is able to help with the assistance of her network.

Bio: Mary Beth has been with the Nicholas School since September 2018. Prior to working at the Nicholas School, she worked at Duke Health Technology Solutions (DHTS) - the OIT for Duke Health- from 2013 to 2018. One of her reasons for wanting to move out of DHTS was not ever having contact with the patients and knowing how her department's work affected them. Mary Beth's favorite part of her work at the Nicholas School is student contact, and her greatest joy at work is seeing students support and guide each other in tough times. She moved to Carrboro, NC from Islip Terrace, NY in 2010, and it's the best decision she ever made. She now owns a home in Graham, NC. She has a BA in Journalism from Marymount College (Tarrytown, NY), and she loves writing, book discussion groups, cooking, exploring new neighborhoods, and is very happy living with her human, David, and canines, Atticus and Daisy.





**Gwendy Womble**  
**Academic Services Coordinator**  
**Duke Marine Lab**

**Responsibilities:** In my role, I support faculty, staff, and students broadly and function as the Registrar while supporting the academic scheduling for the Marine Lab in Beaufort as well as some of our Durham courses. As the Registrar, I help plan the academic courses for fall, spring and summer term, and manage overall registration process for students including travel logistics for Marine Lab travel courses.. I also support students with visa needs at the Marine Lab and manage the course evaluation process, and the online application portal.

**Bio:** Gwendy 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.

**Kathleen Dunn**  
**CaMS Program Coordinator**  
**Duke Marine Lab**

Responsibilities: CaMS program coordination and student support (Durham & Beaufort); CaMS faculty program chair support; CaMS endowment administration for MKO student enrichment fund and Kathryn Boeckman Howd Travel Award; Assist with CaMS recruitment and application review management, and key organizer for MEM events, seminars, and workshops at the Duke Marine Lab.

Bio: Kathleen joins us from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where she was the Program Coordinator for the Center for Education Innovation and Research for the College of Computing and Informatics. She received her Master of Education Degree (MEd) in Training and Development from North Carolina State University and her BA from Rutgers University in New Jersey. Kathleen enjoys hiking, rowing, skiing, and walks on the beach with her husband, Rodney, and her dog, Remy.





**Amanda Cole**  
**Undergraduate Program Coordinator**  
**Duke Marine Lab**

Responsibilities: Undergraduate student support; undergraduate recruiting & communications; prospective students process and tours; orientation; Marine Sciences Education Consortium coordinator; support assessment efforts; DUML programming & engagement.

Bio: Amanda was born and raised in Raleigh, NC. As a child she loved visiting Topsail Island with family, and that began her love of the marine environment. She has a BS in Marine Biology from the College of Charleston, and an MS in Marine Biology from UNC-Wilmington. She is a scuba diving instructor and is passionate about the underwater world. Prior to coming to Duke, she worked for 5 years as a marine science instructor, dive instructor, and program manager aboard large liveboard sailboats with the program SeaMester, where she sailed over 60,000 nautical miles and completed a full circumnavigation. Amanda now lives in Morehead City with her dog Stella.

**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 employs various channels 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 a range of admissions experience to the NSOE. 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. When not working, she's most likely catering to the whims of her rescue dog or curled up with her nose in a book.





**Nick Lehman**

**Assistant Director of Admissions**

Responsibilities: Nick connects with bright and motivated folks from all over the nation and world who wish to include the Nicholas School in their professional journey. As a member of the admissions team, he evaluates and recommends candidates for the MEM, MF, and DEL-MEM programs and helps guide them through the application process.

Bio: Nick came to the Nicholas School in August 2022, bringing 15 years of experience in secondary and higher education. In previous roles, he has been an undergraduate admissions officer, a cross country and track coach, and a housing coordinator. Nick was born and raised in Durham and holds a bachelor's degree from Davidson College. He enjoys running, camping, hiking, and traveling.

## 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.





## **Bailee Starnes**

### **Assistant Director, Career Development**

Responsibilities: To maintain and implement the Career and Professional Development Center's career readiness curriculum for MEM and MF students, as well as providing valuable career coaching. Bailee also manages the Stanback Fellowship Program.

Bio: Bailee is a recent graduate from East Carolina University with a B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Biology. Bailee's favorite college memory is being Philanthropy Chairman for her sorority, Phi Mu, where she got to support the nonprofit, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. Bailee has been at the Nicholas School since September 2019, where she supported the Stanback Fellowship Program, The Career and Professional Development Center, the DEL-MEM DC Leadership Module, and now the Undergraduate Program and Registrar. In her free time, Bailee enjoys traveling, playing with her dog, Phoebe, and spending time with friends and family!

A portrait of Marcia Crippen, a woman with long brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a light-colored patterned top. The background is a soft-focus green. A large sunflower is partially visible on the left side of the image, overlapping the text area.

**Marcia Crippen**  
**iMEP Program Coordinator**  
**Professional Programming and Administration**

Responsibilities: Marcia provides coordination for all routine program activities, student services and program logistics for the iMEP Program while students are in the US, as well as leading pre-arrival student services, such as visas and course registration, while students are at DKU. Marcia collaborates with the iMEP Faculty Lead, Dr. Jackson Ewing, and a number of DKU-based colleagues to support students prior to and during their time in Durham. Additionally, she assists in the iMEP recruitment and admissions process.

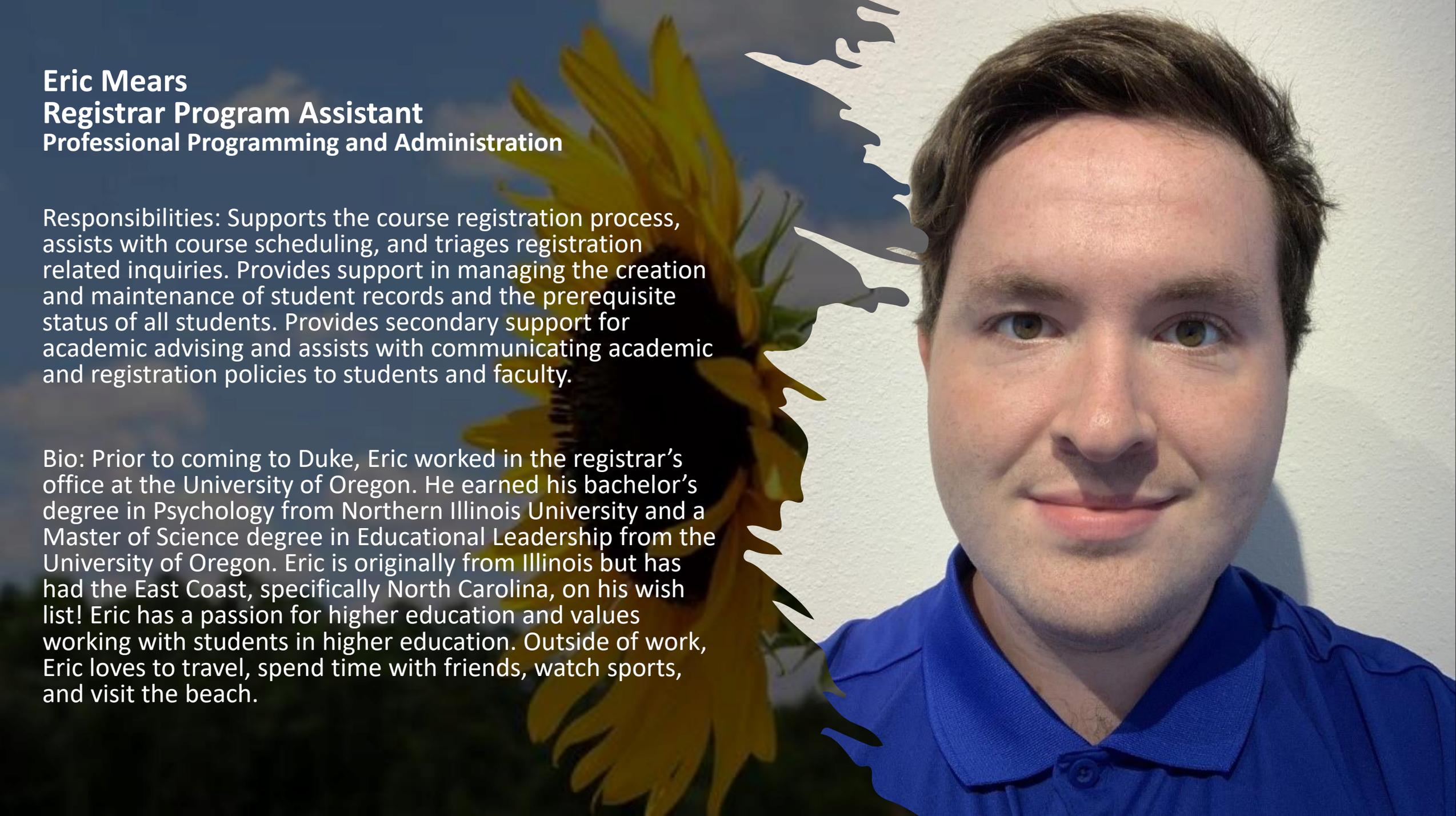
Bio: Prior to starting at Duke in September 2021, Marcia worked as a Study Abroad Advisor at Wake Forest University for four years where she managed and lead community-based global service programs in Thailand, Cambodia, and Ecuador. She holds a M.S.Ed degree in Higher Education from Old Dominion University and is currently pursuing an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at UNC Charlotte. Marcia enjoys exploring new places in the U.S. and abroad while also re-visiting her favorite vacation spots, such as Disney World and the Finger Lakes in Upstate NY.

## **Gladys Mayer** **Program Chairs Assistant** **Professional Programming and Administration**

Responsibilities: Gladys supports the MEM and MF faculty Program Chairs in a variety of administrative duties, program delivery and organizational functions. This role will support various areas related to the professional programs, to include but is not limited to, engaging with faculty program chairs, program-related scheduling, first-level student advising, managing student and program data, support advisory committees, summer on-boarding, internal and external program reviews, coordinate admitted student communications between program chairs and Enrollment Services staff, and supporting special projects.

Bio: Gladys brings to the Nicholas School over 25 years of business administrative experience in both the private sector and the non-profit sector. She first came to Duke University in 2002 to support student services for the Organization for Tropical Studies, which offered graduate and undergraduate study abroad programs in Costa Rica, Peru, Brazil, and South Africa. Previously, she worked in international ecotourism logistics and management. Gladys holds a degree in Business Administration from San Ignacio de Loyola University in Lima, Peru. She is also a Certified Professional Photographer from the Kodak Institute of Lima. In her free time, she enjoys photography, hiking, traveling, and spending time with her husband, two daughters, and two dogs.



A portrait of a man with short brown hair and a slight smile, wearing a blue polo shirt. To his left is a large, stylized sunflower graphic with yellow petals and a dark brown center. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Eric Mears**  
**Registrar Program Assistant**  
**Professional Programming and Administration**

**Responsibilities:** Supports the course registration process, assists with course scheduling, and triages registration related inquiries. Provides support in managing the creation and maintenance of student records and the prerequisite status of all students. Provides secondary support for academic advising and assists with communicating academic and registration policies to students and faculty.

**Bio:** Prior to coming to Duke, Eric worked in the registrar's office at the University of Oregon. He earned his bachelor's degree in Psychology from Northern Illinois University and a Master of Science degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Oregon. Eric is originally from Illinois but has had the East Coast, specifically North Carolina, on his wish list! Eric has a passion for higher education and values working with students in higher education. Outside of work, Eric loves to travel, spend time with friends, watch sports, and visit the beach.



**Abbey Sheehy**  
**Program Coordinator, Professional Programs**  
**Professional Programming and Administration**

Responsibilities: Managing and implementing the master's project process (group and solo projects) for all professional master's students, identifying and coordinating client and faculty-driven group projects, engaging with faculty program chairs, managing the MP evaluations process; keeping the MP digital handbook current; and supporting special projects in the Professional Programs.

Bio: Abbey comes to the Nicholas School with a background in data management, event planning, and veterinary medicine. She earned her bachelor's degree in Theatre from the University of Kentucky and a MA in Animal Behavior and Conservation from Hunter College. Originally from Kentucky, Abbey fell in love with the Triangle Area during her husband's time at Duke and feels like a North Carolina girl at heart! Abbey is so excited to be a part of a program that is dedicated to the education of future environmentalists. Abbey has a passion for animals and is a proud mom to a French bulldog and a silly little black cat. In her free time, she loves taking long walks in nature, trying out new recipes, and is a movie buff!

*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, Beaufort and Durham, NC!*

*Contact us at  
<https://nicholas.duke.edu/people/staff>*

