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Stephanie C. Kelly '04 Excels on the Job and in Professional Organization

Despite having 13 years of experience in her field, Stephanie Carouthers Kelly of Waxhaw, N.C., couldn't advance in her career because she didn't have a Master of Business Administration (MBA). She didn't want to get passed over for the next promotion, so when Gardner-Webb University offered an MBA program near her, she enrolled.

The classes were offered to employees of the city of Shelby and Cleveland County, N.C. "I valued the personal touch provided by Dr. (Anthony) Negbenebor and the other professors who participated in this pilot program," asserted Kelly, a native of Shelby. "The classes were small, so we were able to have more one-on-one interactions with the professors. I also was privileged to be in classes with some of my co-workers and friends who were also balancing work and graduate school at the same time."

After earning her degree in 2004, Kelly completed 20 years of service with the city of Shelby and then joined the city of Charlotte as deputy city clerk. She was appointed clerk for the city of Charlotte in 2008. As the head of the department, her office is responsible for providing support to the mayor and city council by maintaining the recorded history of all governmental actions and assisting citizens who wish to address city council during meetings.

She also serves as president of the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC), a non-profit organization with more than 14,000 members worldwide who represent municipalities with populations of 1,000 to more than 8 million. "I am deeply honored and humbled to have been elected by my peers to lead IIMC for the next year," Kelly related. "With my theme of 'Together, WE can!', I am committed to promoting IIMC's purpose of providing education and professional development programs and opportunities for its members. This is truly an opportunity of a lifetime for which I am grateful."

Stephanie Carouthers Kelly is sworn in as president of the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, an organization with more than 14,000 members. Kelly worked as clerk in her hometown of Shelby, N.C., for 20 years and has been city clerk in Charlotte since 2008. She received her Master of Business Administration from Gardner-Webb University in 2004.

A member of IIMC since 1996, Kelly served on the board of directors from 2007 to 2010, as well as earned its Master Municipal Clerk designation. She was among the first class of 106 North Carolina clerks in 2012 to receive the new designation of North Carolina Certified Municipal Clerk from the UNC School of Government and the North Carolina Association of Municipal Clerks (NCAMC). She has also served as president of the NCAMC.

Kelly believes her classes at Gardner-Webb led to her success on the job and in her roles with the IIMC. “The classes strengthened my leadership skills, enhanced my ability to solve problems and make strategic decisions,” Kelly observed. “I was prepared to advance to a larger organization—city of Charlotte—where my experience and graduate degree are frequently put to use. I often find myself using what I learned as a student in the MBA program. An especially useful tool is the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis.”

Kelly adds that the MBA program requires a lot of work, but the experience is “well worth the effort if you want to seek any kind of career advancement,” she assessed. “The relationships established with fellow students are valuable during the classes and beyond. The dedicated and knowledgeable professors are experts in their fields and will help motivate you to excel during the learning experience.”