

Healthcare Administration Newsletter

Department of Public Health
College of Health and Human Services



Dr. William Mkanta, Professor

It is with a great sense of gratitude and renewed excitement that I reflect on the eight years I served as Chair of the Department of Public Health. The opportunity to work alongside dedicated colleagues, support the success of our students, and help strengthen the departmental and institutional missions has been one of the greatest privileges of my professional life. I am deeply thankful for the trust placed in me and for the collaboration and support that made our achievements possible.

Following my decision to step down from the chair role, I was happy to spend the Fall 2025 semester on sabbatical. This was both a restorative and meaningful period of my time away from the office routine. My travels across Europe and Africa allowed me to reconnect with cultures and histories that continue to shape my worldview. This time away also provided the space to make significant progress on my two book projects very close to my heart. One is a compilation of my mother's poems and the other is a narrative exploration of my life's journey that traces the confluence of family and community beginnings on one side of the world with the unfolding of a professional path nearly 7,000 miles away from the place I called home.

Looking ahead, I am encouraged by the opportunity to channel my passion for international education into new forms of service. As I have done for so many years, I am committed to supporting students and faculty in pursuing global learning experiences. In addition, I expect to contribute my time into the development of curricula and programs that expand our international engagement and to help create pathways that encourage broader perspectives, cross cultural understanding, and a rich sense of global citizenship as a way of supporting our institutional strategic planning

ACHE 2026 Congress on Healthcare Leadership

MHA and BSHCA students at WKU, along with Dr. Gregory Ellis-Griffith, attended the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) 2026 Congress on Healthcare Leadership in Houston, TX. This conference provides tailored education for leaders at all career stages, including specialized sessions for CEOs and early-careerists. Students and faculty representing our program have been attending for over 20 years!

Sydney Alley, MHA, shares about her experience: *"I've had the privilege of attending three ACHE Congresses in my academic career, once in Chicago and twice in Houston. Honestly, the first time I attended ACHE Congress, I was in my second semester of college and didn't really know what was going on most of the time. I was just trying to take it all in. By the next year, I had learned more in the classroom and started looking for real-life application and ways to build connections. This year, I went with a completely different mindset. I was focused on networking, exploring different career paths, and learning more about things like multigenerational leadership while also trying to figure out what a game plan looks like for someone as early in their career as I am. I left the trip realizing that there isn't one perfect path. Anything can happen and sometimes the most important thing you can do is just start conversations and put yourself out there. I felt encouraged, supported, and like this is where I am meant to be!"*

Partial funding of this opportunity was provided by the [Healthcare Administration Foundation](#).
Pictured (L to R): B. Rowe, R. Mullins, S. Alley, C. Covington, Dr. Ellis-Griffith



Congratulations to Dr. Michelle Reece and Dr. Gregory Ellis-Griffith, along with Dr. Carol Campbell of Tennessee State University, for their abstract and session proposal acceptance, "Navigating New Legislative Landscapes: Impact on Competency-based Health Care Administration Education," at the upcoming Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA!

Newsletter Ads, Announcements, or Comments? Contact Melanie.Eaton@wku.edu

Healthcare Administration Newsletter

Rajah Mills, Health Care Administration (HCA), Undergraduate Student Spotlight

Hello, my name is Rajah Mills. I am currently a full-time student at Western Kentucky University working toward my master's degree, and I am very focused on building a strong future in healthcare administration. Outside of school, I stay busy with both personal and professional responsibilities that have shaped who I am. I enjoy building custom cars in my free time, which has taught me patience, attention to detail, and problem-solving skills. I also take care of my 91-year-old grandmother, an experience that has strengthened my sense of responsibility, compassion, and understanding of the importance of quality care. Professionally, I am interning at my mom's telehealth company, where I am gaining hands-on experience in areas like scheduling, billing, and healthcare operations. This internship has helped me connect what I am learning in school to real-world applications. My goal after graduating is to continue working with the telehealth company full-time and grow within the organization, while contributing to improving access to care through telehealth services.



Kimberly Robbins, Health Care Administration (HCA), Undergraduate Student Spotlight

My name is Kimberly Robbins, and I am currently completing my degree in Healthcare Administration, with plans to graduate in May. I am a wife and a proud mom of three children, and much of my time outside of school and work is centered around my family and the hay farm that I own and operate. Professionally, I serve as a Business Office Manager in a long-term care facility, and I have been working in the healthcare field for approximately 20 years. This experience has given me a strong understanding of both the clinical and administrative sides of healthcare. My faith is also an important part of who I am, guiding both my personal life and professional values.

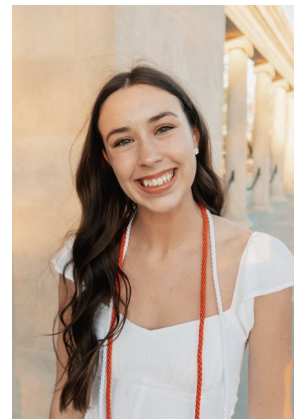


Through the HCA program, I am continuing to build my knowledge and leadership skills in preparation for my next step—earning my Licensed Nursing Home Administrator (LNHA) credential. My goal is to continue growing within long-term care, where I can make a meaningful difference in the lives of the elderly population by ensuring quality care and strong operational leadership. I am also passionate about mentoring and guiding future business office and administrative professionals in long-term care, helping them develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed in this field.

Zoi Phillips, Master of Health Administration (MHA), Graduate Student Spotlight

I am currently pursuing my MHA after earning my B.S. in Finance in 2024. My interests lie in the balance of healthcare operations, finance, and patient-centered care. I currently work as a Resident Care Specialist at Arcadia Senior Living, where I support residents with daily living activities and help create a safe, compassionate environment. This past fall, I also completed my Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training and now work with Logan County EMS, gaining valuable hands-on clinical experience. Previously, I worked with the FDIC as a Financial Analyst and Risk Management Intern, where I developed skills in regulatory compliance, risk assessment, and financial analysis.

In addition to my academic and professional experiences, I am actively involved in organizations that support my passion for healthcare leadership and service. I serve on the Kentucky Hospital Association Youth Advisory Board and participate as an AHEC Scholar, both of which have strengthened my understanding of healthcare systems and access. I also volunteer with Hope Harbor, where I have dedicated over 60 hours to serving the community through crisis hotline support, emergency advocacy, and administrative work. I plan to apply to medical school next year and aspire to become a Neurologist. Ultimately, I hope to combine my background in healthcare administration with clinical practice to improve patient outcomes and healthcare systems in Kentucky.



Juliana Hawkins, MBA, MHA, CPC

HCA Advisory Committee Member, WKU MHA/HCA Alum, Part-time HCA Faculty

Juliana Hawkins is a proud graduate of Western Kentucky University's Healthcare Administration programs (Class of 2014 and 2016), and later completing her MBA at Western Governors University in 2022. She began her healthcare career in 2012 in billing and coding, building a strong foundation in revenue cycle operations before transitioning into physician practice management. Over the next several years, Juliana gained experience across family medicine, internal medicine, and hematology/oncology settings, followed by five years as a Value-Based Care Enablement Consultant. She currently serves as the Executive Director of Singh Medical Associates, an independent physician practice in Russellville, Kentucky, where she focuses on operational excellence, strategic growth, and sustaining independent healthcare in rural communities.



Since 2016, Juliana has also served as an Adjunct Instructor in WKU's Healthcare Administration programs and a member of the WKU HCA Advisory Board, where she is passionate about mentoring the next generation of healthcare leaders. She is especially committed to helping students discover career paths that align with their strengths, values, and calling within the healthcare field. Outside of her professional roles, Juliana serves as the Worship and Creative Ministry Leader at Lakeview Fellowship in Bowling Green. In the summer you will find her on the lake, fishing, gardening and canning. She also enjoys sewing and quilting in her spare time. Juliana and her husband, Jacob enjoy making BG their home with their two beloved dogs, Beaudreaux Ulysses and Isabella Jane.

Are you a **Health Sciences** major? Or a **Health Care Administration** student?

JUMP Program... Did you know you can earn up to 12 graduate course credits toward the completion of your Master of Health Administration graduate degree at WKU, for the cost of undergraduate tuition rates, WHILE you are still an undergraduate student in the Health Care Administration or Health Sciences programs??? *Well you can!*

For more information, visit:

<https://catalog.wku.edu/graduate/health-human-services/public-health/mha/#programadmissiontext> OR contact your designated program advisor or

MHA Program Coordinator Dr. Ellis-Griffith at Gregory.Ellis-Griffith@wku.edu today!

Study Abroad in Zanzibar!

Date: December 27, 2026 – January 10, 2027

Subjects: Public Health and related areas



Program Cost: \$3,550 + airfare

Deadline to Apply:

Aug1: *Apply Early & Save \$100,*

Sept 15: *Regular Deadline*

What's Included?

3 Credit Hours

Group Flight (Required)

Airport Transfers in Zanzibar

Accommodations

2 Meals per Day

Group Excursions & Transport

Security Evacuation Protection

Medical Insurance

Program Director & Faculty on-site 24/7



For more information, contact Dr. William Mkanta at William.Mkanta@wku.edu

Events

ACHE 2026 CONGRESS

March 1-5

HCA Advisory Committee, Spring Meeting

March 26

ACHCA Annual Convention and Expo

April 20-23

KHA ANNUAL CONVENTION

May 19-20

NAB ANNUAL MEETING

June 9-13

AUPHA ANNUAL MEETING

June 9-11

THA ANNUAL MEETING

September 23-25

- Graduate Program Updates -

Graduate Certificate options, 9 credit hours each:

- Global Health Administration
- **NEW!** Sustainability Practices in Health Leadership*
- **NEW!** Health Policy and Systems Management*
- **NEW!** Digital Health and Data Management*

*available July 1, 2026

The **Master of Health Administration (MHA)** at WKU is a fully online, 36-hour program with four (4) different culminating experience options to choose from, allowing flexibility and a program that best meets your needs and professional goals! With core courses in decision-making, informatics, finance and global health, and elective courses that cover a wide variety of options such as sustainability, leadership and post-acute care, our program will prepare you for the rapidly changing environment of healthcare operations and management! **Visit: www.wku.edu/mha**

Chelsea Connor, MBA, LNHA —Alumni Spotlight

Chelsea Connor has been named a Rising Star in the McKnight's Women of Distinction Awards. Connor is a 2017 graduate of the NAB accredited Health Care Administration with Long-Term Care Administration Certificate Program at WKU. She is currently Administrator at Fair Oaks Health and Rehab in Jamestown, KY.



"To be named a Rising Star by McKnight's Long Term Care News is both humbling and empowering. I'm incredibly grateful—and a little shocked—to be recognized at this level, and it only fuels me to keep pushing forward for my team and the residents we serve. This accomplishment would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my husband and our four children, as well as the education and guidance I received from Western Kentucky University where I discovered my passion for long-term care."

Connor will be recognized on May 4th at the seventh annual McKnight's Women of Distinction Forum in Chicago. For more information, visit <https://www.mcknights.com/news/12-rising-stars-announced-for-mcknights-women-of-distinction-class-of-2026/>.

Congratulations to Nadia Khan, Instructor and Undergraduate Program Coordinator (HCA), for successfully defending her doctoral dissertation in the Education Leadership Doctoral Program at WKU!

GA Spotlight

Hello! My name is Sydney and I am an MHA student hoping to graduate this December! I work full time at Graves Gilbert Clinic as a Business Manager and in my free time I like to take walks, craft, and hang out with my cat Nova! - *Syndey*



I'm a last semester MHA candidate with a passion for health equity, global health, and a love for new experiences. My time studying abroad in Zanzibar inspired me to keep exploring different cultures and perspectives wherever I can. Outside of the classroom I enjoy spending time with family, friends, and most of all, my Rottweiler Nova. - *Cori*

Meet Emily Reynolds—I recently started working full-time as a Client Associate – Commercial Lines at Houchens Insurance Group, and I could not be more excited to grow and learn through such an amazing agency. A fun personal note about me is that I'm also a certified dog trainer. - *Emily*

