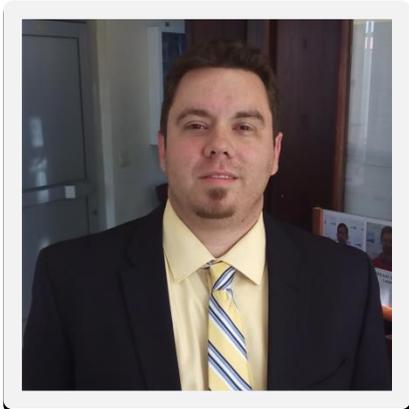


Matthew Z. Graham graduated from UCA's CSPA program in 2007. He came to UCA from the College of Charleston. Since March 2015, Matthew has been serving as the Industry Liaison Officer at the University of Kurdistan Hewler in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Matthew says that the proudest moment in his career so far was "when I got the phone call offering me my current job...mind you it was at like 5:30am (time zones are real). Not for the job itself, but when I realized another country a world away wanted the same type of educational experience for their students as those in the US – and felt I could help them achieve that. It was then I decided that my dedication to education was more important than my comfort zone. I realized I could still use my background in higher education and still have a very interesting and challenging life."



Matthew says that he has just about used everything he learned in the CSPA program in the past semester in Kurdistan. "One thing I think student affairs teaches as a whole is to be ready for anything, to be the most capable person in the room." You have to be able "to see the whole picture, where that picture is hung, all the pictures next to it – and make sure it matches the color of the wall the picture is hanging on." Matthew says it took him a while to find his footing in student affairs and was not sure he felt truly at home in the field until moving to the student services and administration side, where things finally began to click. Matthew said "one of these days, I might even decide what I want to be when I grow up..."

According to Matthew, there is a bit of a humanitarian crisis in the area of the Middle East due to Da'esh (Arabic term people use for ISIS). For Kurdistan that means a lot of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and refugees. This year, Matthew plans to begin volunteering with friends in the area who are working with different NGOs.

Matthew says that he has always wanted to work internationally "ever since in grad school I found out there are American-style colleges starting to pop up around the world; so I always kept an eye out for such a chance." While in graduate school, everyone had student affairs dreams of founding their own college, "we even spent a night mapping out who would run what department. I have amended mine (however,) I now want to start one someplace in the developing world." Matthew says he is still working out the where and how, but aspires to be a part of such a project someday.

You can follow along with Matthew's adventures in Kurdistan through his blog at <https://strangerinerbil.wordpress.com/>

If you are an alum of the CSPA Program, drop us a line at psmith@uca.edu to give us an update on where you are now.

Monelle (Wyman) Wells graduated from the UCA CSPA program in 2004. Having completed her undergraduate education at UCA, Monelle was part of the Hughes Residential Charter Class in 1997-98. She has been employed at Louisiana State University (LSU) for the last twelve years, and for the last two years has served as the Assignments Coordinator for Living Learning Communities. One of Monelle's proudest moments in her career so far is the work she did in the IT Residential College at LSU and receiving a NASPA Excellence Award (Silver Medal) for the program.

Monelle says that it is the critical thinking skills she acquired while in the CSPA program that she utilizes the most. She states that "In my current position, I'm so involved with students and parents and helping make sure that they are well informed about our residential colleges on LSU's campus. My background in working in the halls has helped tremendously when easing a parent's fears about on campus living." Other skills she says she has used includes skills from statistics class-when creating reports on resident occupancy in our halls to report to our Executive Director- and counseling skills, when she was still working as part of the live-in staff.

Monelle is involved with the Louisiana Association of Housing Officers (LAHO), where she served as the "Equipping Resident Assistants" Conference Coordinator this past year. For the conference, she planned and recruited RA staff from institutions across Louisiana to attend the weekend-long conference and receive professional development at the student-staff level.

Monelle is a 7 year mentor in her church's Kids Hope program where she works with others to mentor at-risk students in local elementary schools. "We mentor one child a year for one hour each week, helping with math, reading, and general social skills and also play time!" In the Baton Rouge community, Monelle is also in the Junior League and plays an active role on the "Hollydays" Steering Committee, where she serves as the Tickets Chairman. Hollydays is an annual event that raises over \$500k for the League's community projects. "I love working with this extraordinary group of women leaders."

Monelle is currently looking into starting her PhD in the spring in Human Resource Education. Monelle married her graduate school sweetheart, Mike, in May 2007, and they welcomed their son, Hudson Marlee, in 2013. "We love living in Louisiana, enjoying the food, festivals, and culture! Laissez les bon temps rouler!"

