Event: 2017 UNT MPA Alumni-Student Conference & Lunch  
Topic Theme: Smarter Decision-Making with Smarter Data  
Keynote Speaker: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager for City of Dallas  
Panel Moderator: Andel Koester, Associate Director for What Works Cities  
Panelists: Lynda Johnson, Performance & Budget Director for City of Fort Worth  
Melissa Kraft, Chief Technology Officer for City of Denton  
Melinda Galler, Assistant City Manager for City of Dallas  

Topic  
The University of North Texas’ ICMA Student Chapter worked with the UNT Public Administration Alumni Board to host the 55th Annual Alumni-Student Conference on April 5, 2017. The purpose of this event was to bring together the University of North Texas’ Master of Public Administration alumni, students, faculty, and North Texas local government employees to celebrate local government. Prior to start of the conference, students were provided an opportunity to go through a round of mock interviews with local government professionals. The conference started with a morning panel on the topic of using smarter data and advance tools to make smarter decision-making. During the luncheon, keynote speaker T.C. Broadnax (City Manager for City of Dallas) gave an inspiring speech about his personal experience growing up, finding his passion for public service in local government, and acknowledging the profound work of fellow peers and local government professionals. After the conference and luncheon, the student chapter hosted a dessert reception and networking games to connect students with local government professionals.  
The conference provided an opportunity for networking and educating everyone on improving local governments through the use of new technology and tools to provide smarter data decision-making. The advanced use of smarter data is a progressive form of performance measurement that is highly relevant to local governments. As technology continues to advance, leaders must be knowledgeable in using smarter tools and data to better their municipalities. This is not only an important topic to professionals in the field, but also to students in our chapter. Performance measurement is a major component in the MPA students’ curriculum. By exploring smarter technology and tools with professionals in the field, students are able to gain first-hand experience on how leaders make smart and ethical decisions.  

Involvement  
UNT’s Public Administration Alumni Board and ICMA Student Chapter worked together to put on the 2017 UNT MPA Alumni-Student Conference & Lunch. The Public Administration Alumni Board is led by Ben Thatcher, Assistant City Manager for City of Southlake. The board also consists of fellow UNT MPA alumni: Mario Canizares (Assistant City Manager for City of Denton), Mark Israelson (Deputy City Manager for City of Plano), Kimberly Tolbert (Chief of Staff for City of Dallas), Janet Melancon (Janet Melancon Associates), Rebecca Diviney (Engineer at Freese and Nichols), Alora Waccholz (Economic Development Manager for Town of Flower Mound), John J. Cabrales (Director of Community Affairs for City of Denton), Bob Hart
(City Manager for City of Corinth), Gabe Reaume (Director of Community and Development Services for City of Denison), Jennifer Fadden (Former City Manager for City of Colleyville), and Mark McDaniel (City Manager for City of Kerrville).

The ICMA Student Chapter is led by Kent Souriyasak. Student officers in the chapter include: Sean Jacobson, Jennifer Sims, Alexia Platenburg, LaKebra Mahomes, Kynira Munerly, Queen Ogedegbe, and Kathryn Welch. In addition to putting together the event, the alumni board and student chapter reached out to a large network of alumni, students, and other local government employees in North Texas.

**Impact**

The conference was able to reach many local government employees in North Texas. There were many representatives from various municipalities ranging from large cities to small towns. The topic of using smarter data to make smarter decision-making allowed many employees to truly think about how efficient their local governments are measuring performance and providing services to the public. This conference also allowed students to take real world examples and apply it to their studies. The event was also impactful because it provided an opportunity to students to network with local government employees. Establishing these local government connections is important because it leads to mentorship of young professionals and shaping them into future leaders of public service. The conference and lunch was a major success of 168 attendees, beating the target goal of 150. This was a welcoming mix between alumni, faculty, students, and local government employees. The conference theme and networking opportunities allowed attendees to become truly engaged during the event. This was a successful event to celebrate the milestone 55th Annual UNT MPA Alumni-Student Conference.