

**Courses, Certificates, and Credentials:  
New Graduate Distance Professional Development Resources  
for Volunteer Resource Managers**

R. Dale Safrit, Ed.D.

Professor, Director of Graduate Programs, & Extension Specialist, 4-H Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences

North Carolina State University

NCSU Box 7606, Raleigh, NC, 27695-7606

Tel. 919-513-0306 \* FAX 919-515-2786 \* E-mail: dale\_safrit@ncsu.edu

Harriett C. Edwards, Ed.D.

Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist, 4-H Continuing Volunteer Education (CVE)

Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences

North Carolina State University

NCSU Box 7606, Raleigh, NC, 27695-7606

Tel. 919-515-9548 \* FAX: 919-515-2786 \* E-mail: harriett\_edwards@ncsu.edu

**Abstract**

*The authors describe three new distance-based graduate academic program opportunities recently implemented by North Carolina State University that are professional development resources available to any volunteer resource manager (VRM). First, five 3-credit graduate courses are described addressing critical VRM professional competencies, that may be taken for personal/professional development. Secondly, a university-based 12-credit graduate Certificate in Volunteer Management and Administration is offered that strengthens a VRM's current competencies or professional resume. Thirdly, distance Master's Programs in Family Life and Youth Development with both thesis (36 credits) and non-thesis (30 credits) options allow a student to further concentrate in volunteer management and administration. Important application requirements and procedures are described for each opportunity.*

**Key Words:**

volunteer resource management, courses, certificate, credentials,  
professional development, distance education

**Introduction**

As early as 1983, Agnello stated that "The need for competent, professional volunteer administrators is increasing, however, the supply of trained volunteer administrators is critically less than the demand" (p. 29). For more than 35 years, academic coursework, programs, and credentialing targeted toward volunteer resource managers (VRMs) have been discussed (Agnello, 1984; Anderson &

Dougans, 1973; Callahan, Gaston, & Hoover, 2002; Miller & Rittenberg, 1983; Walker & Smith, 1977). Until the past decade, VRMs were often limited in their access to such university-based professional development opportunities due to barriers of time, access, and distance.

However, using distance education technologies, North Carolina State University (NC State) in Raleigh has recently implemented three new distance

education graduate (i.e., post baccalaureate) programs targeted to VRMs, especially those working with community-based youth and family programs. As a land-grant university, NC State's mission includes the extension of its academic and research programs into communities, helping to address societal needs and strengthen community capacity. These three new distance academic programs seek to actively engage and strengthen VRMs working in our nation's communities while connecting them to the teaching, research and Extension resources of NC State's Raleigh campus.

The new programs are administered by the Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences as part of the larger graduate program in Family Life and Youth Development (FYD) and are designed to meet the needs of each individual student. For a VRM, new opportunities exist to:

- 1) Take graduate courses for personal/professional development or continuing professional education purposes;
- 2) Become certified by NC State in Volunteer Management and Administration; and/or
- 3) Pursue a Master's degree in Family Life and Youth Development with a concentration in Volunteer Management and Administration.

All FYD courses are taught via distance education. While the majority of courses are currently taught via synchronous distance (i.e., students and instructor online at the same time) using a webinar program (Elluminate), some are currently taught asynchronously via the Internet. However, within the next year, all FYD courses will be taught asynchronously (i.e., available 24/7 with limited/no required synchronous student/instructor interaction).

All FYD courses are based in contemporary theory, but have very applied

academic objectives and course requirements. All FYD course graduate professors have extensive real-life experience working in youth and family settings, and constantly seek to make their courses relevant and meaningful for practitioners in the field.

A visit to the Department's web site at [go.ncsu.edu/fcsprogram](http://go.ncsu.edu/fcsprogram) provides complete information. However, following are brief descriptions of three different academic and professional development opportunities provided by the FYD Program especially targeted for VRMs.

### **Graduate Courses in VRM for Personal/Professional Development**

The holistic graduate program in FYD consists of 22 credit courses offered during 15-week semesters. All but three of these courses are taught using distance technologies. Two graduate FYD courses are especially relevant for current and future VRMs:

1) FYD 590: *Special Topics in FYD: Volunteerism in Youth and Family Settings* is taught during spring semesters (i.e., 15 weeks from January through May) in even-numbered years by Dr. Harriett Edwards. This asynchronous distance course is designed to prepare current and future VRMs to better engage volunteers in local program service delivery. Specific foci include volunteerism as a social phenomenon; volunteer program management; new forms of volunteerism; and future trends in volunteerism.

2) FYD 590: *Special Topics in FYD: Contemporary Issues in Volunteer Resource Management* is also taught by Dr. Edwards in fall semesters (i.e., 15 weeks from August through December) in even-numbered years. This asynchronous distance course explores current issues and trends impacting volunteer involvement in community-based organizations. Students examine

contemporary research related to trends, evaluate historical and current social phenomena to understand their impact upon volunteer involvement, and proactively engage in assessments to consider future challenges for volunteer administration.

Other FYD courses are also very applicable to VRM professional competencies as defined by Seel (2010) and the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA) including:

- 1) FYD 550: *Youth and Family Professionals as Leaders* taught each fall semester. This synchronous distance course examines the application of classic and contemporary theories and models of leadership to the work of community-based organizations, including those engaging volunteers. Students examine leadership from diverse perspectives; then analyze the strengths and weaknesses of leadership theories and models when applied to organizational development of community-based systems.
- 2) FYD 552: *Program Development and Evaluation in Youth and Family Settings* taught by Dr. R. Dale Safrit each spring semester. This synchronous distance course explores historical and contemporary foundations of program development and evaluation in non-formal, community-based settings including theory, research, and three holistic program development constructs: 1) planning; 2) design and implementation; 3) impact evaluation and accountability. The course content is especially viable for contemporary volunteer-based programs and organizations.
- 3) FYD 554: *Collaborations and Partnerships in Youth and Family*

*Settings* taught by Dr. Mitzi Downing in fall semesters of even-number years. This synchronous course would help VRMs better establish, lead, and manage collaborations and partnerships involving volunteer-based organizations. Specific foci include types and levels of partnerships; environmental scanning and socio-organizational linkage; contextual factors affecting community collaborations; leadership factors affecting community collaborations; and human, financial and programmatic management in collaborations.

- 4) FYD 559: *Administration and Supervision of Youth and Family Programs* taught each spring semester by Dr. Kim Allen. This asynchronous distance course addresses fundamental concepts and theories of administration and management with emphasis given to organizing and managing human resources and including business operations, planning, decision-making, organizing, staffing, communicating, motivating, leading, and controlling.

Anyone with a bachelor's degree may enroll in any FYD course as a Non Degree Studies (NDS) student. Students may enroll in courses as NDS students without being formally accepted into the program as degree students. NDS students register through NC State's Office of Continuing Education; for more information, please visit <http://www.ncsu.edu/nds/index.html> Tuition rates for distance courses at NC State are based upon credit hour enrollment and may be found at <http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/cashier/tuition/de.asp>

### **Specialized Graduate Certificate in Volunteer Management and Administration**

As one of seven total distance-based graduate FYD certificate programs, the Department offers a Graduate Certificate in Volunteer Management and Administration. This Certificate is an excellent professional development opportunity for VRMs currently holding either a Bachelor's or a Master's degree, yet seeking to expand or refresh her/his professional competence or strengthen her/his resume in volunteer resource management.

The Certificate requires 12 hours (i.e., four three-hour courses) of graduate coursework including three required FYD courses (9 credits) and one elective FYD course (3 credits). The required courses include the two described previously as well as FYD 556: *Organizational Systems in Youth and Family Settings* that is taught by Dr. Edwards in fall semesters in odd-numbered years.

Applicants must meet at least one of the three following requirements to apply to a FYD graduate Certificate program: 1) Be a graduate of an accredited four-year college or university, and have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.75 at the time of graduation; 2) Be a degree student in good standing in a NC State University graduate program; or 3) Currently have a master's degree. Students accepted to the Volunteer Management and Administration Certificate program must submit official transcripts prior to full acceptance. Transfer credit from other programs is not allowed for these certificate programs. Students must have a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 on all certificate course work completed as part of the Certificate. The minimum grade to receive credit for a Certificate course taken is "C" (2.0). All certificate requirements must be completed within four calendar years, beginning with

the date the student commences the first course toward the certificate.

Prospective students apply online, submit a personal statement, and pay a \$25 application fee. Please visit either the NC State Graduate School web site (<http://www.ncsu.edu/applygrad>) or NC State Distance Education web site (<http://distance.ncsu.edu/programs/graduate-certificate-programs.php>) to access an online Certificate program application. For more detailed information and application procedures regarding the Certificate programs, please see <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/4hfcs/academics/cert/index.html>

### **Graduate Credentials Concentrating in Volunteer Administration and Management**

In addition to the graduate Certificate programs, the Department also offers two distance-based graduate programs leading to a Master's degree credential in Family Life and Youth Development. The Master of Science in Family Life and Youth Development (M.S. in FYD) requires 36 total credit hours of course work, including a culminating thesis and oral examination. An M.S. degree would allow a student to continue in his/her academic career to pursue a doctoral or professional degree some time in the future. For details regarding the M.S. program, please see <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/4hfcs/academics/Dale/MS%20in%20FYD.html>. The Master of Family Life and Youth Development (M.R. FYD) requires only 30 hours of course work and a culminating oral exam and capstone experience/project. The M.R. is deemed a terminal degree (i.e., the students does not plan to pursue a doctoral or professional degree in the future). For detailed information please see <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/4hfcs/academics/Dale/MR%20in%20FYD.html>.

In both Master's options, a current or future VRM could concentrate in Volunteer Management and Administration. As with the Certificate program, the concentration would involve 9-12 hours of course work as described previously counting toward the required minimum hours to graduate.

Individuals apply through NC State via the normal NC State University Graduate School admissions procedures. Applications for both degree programs are reviewed by the Department twice each year on March 15 and October 15. The NC State Graduate School requires a minimum of a 3.00 GPA (on a 4.00 scale) in the undergraduate program to apply to a graduate program. In addition to the required Graduate Application and application fee, the Graduate School requires three academic references and a 500-800 word Statement of Current/Future Career Goals. The Department requires GRE scores not more than five years old and prefers a cumulative GRE score of at least 1000 (under the system current as of 2010). However, exceptions to the minimum grade point average and lower-than-desired GRE scores may be made for students with special backgrounds, abilities, circumstances, and interests.

For general NC State Graduate School applications and admissions policies/information, please see <http://www.ncsu.edu/grad/handbook/applications-and-admissions.html> For more information regarding the Master's programs offered in FYD please see [go.ncsu.edu/fcsprogram](http://go.ncsu.edu/fcsprogram) . For specific questions not addressed by these web pages, feel free to contact the Department's Director of Graduate programs, Dr. R. Dale Safrit.

---

## References

- Agnello, J. (1984). Continuing professional education for volunteer administrators. *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, *II*(3), 29-38.
- Anderson, J.C., & Dougans, R.B. (1973, June). The development of a training program for coordinators of volunteer programs. *Volunteer Administration*, *VII*(2-4), 1-9.
- Callahan, J., Gaston, N., & Hoover, R. (2002). A report on the Association for Volunteer Administration's 2001 professional credential pilot study. *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, *20*(1), 15-24.
- Miller, E.H., & Rittenberg, T.L. (1983). Continuing education for today's volunteer leader. *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, *I*(4), 44-49.
- Seel, K. (Ed.) (2010). *Volunteer administration: Professional practice*. Markham, Ontario, Canada: LexisNexis Canada Inc. and the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration.
- Walker, J.M., & Smith, D.H. (1977). Higher education programs for administrators of volunteer programs. *Volunteer Administration*, *X*(3), 1-9.

### **About the Authors**

R. Dale Safrit, Ed.D. is a Professor, Director of Graduate Programs, and Extension Specialist for 4-H Continuing Professional Education (CPE) in the Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences at North Carolina State University. Dr. Safrit has established an international reputation as a noted scholar, visionary leader and motivational educator focused in community-based volunteer and professional development. Currently serving as Editor of *The IJOVA*, he has co-authored one academic text and 38 articles in scholarly journals and has presented invited sessions in 38 of the 50 United States, four Canadian provinces, and 16 other.

Harriett C. Edwards, Ed.D. is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist for Continuing Volunteer Education (CVE) in the Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences at North Carolina State University. Dr. Edwards' doctoral research focused on episodic volunteerism and organizational readiness. She serves on the board of *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration*. With more than 15 years of experience in the field of volunteer administration, she is an active member of the board of the Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (AL!VE), and has presented nationally and internationally on various volunteer related topics.