

Mark Washburn



AN ADVOCATE'S TALE

M PH STUDENT LOGAN KELLY'S INTEREST IN HEALTHCARE

grew from her work on advocacy campaigns. Now she's ready to help transform care for aging and vulnerable populations.

One thing becomes clear when you first meet Logan Kelly: she is a natural-born advocate.

"Strategy is what makes a campaign successful," she says enthusiastically. "When you're figuring out how to respond to challenging situations, you have to keep your long-term strategy at the forefront."

Kelly's love of advocacy and campaigning is what spurred an interest in healthcare. After graduating with honors from Swarthmore College in 2005, Kelly worked for political and advocacy campaigns. In 2010, she started working at a public affairs consulting firm. In this role, Kelly worked with several healthcare clients, but her work with her home state of Connecticut's healthcare exchange is what catalyzed her interest in healthcare policy.

At the time, the state of Connecticut was gearing up for the launch of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). In preparation, Kelly spent a year working with the state's healthcare exchange to plan and strategize about consumer outreach and engagement.

"Many uninsured residents had been uninsured for a long time," Kelly says. "First, we needed to find them and talk with them in a clear and compelling way about the opportunities available under the ACA. And then we needed to make sure they signed up for coverage."

To do that, Kelly designed a plan for a team of outreach workers to go to beaches, grocery stores, churches, and street fairs—almost anywhere they might be able to begin a dialogue with those who could benefit from the new healthcare law. When open enrollment began, the team opened in-person storefronts to offer assistance to local residents.

Despite the challenges, including the uncertainty following the

shaky rollout of the healthcare.gov website, the launch of the exchange in Connecticut was hailed as a success, with tens of thousands of residents gaining access to health coverage.

"I am deeply grateful to have been able to help improve access to health coverage in my home state—to contribute to something that so profoundly affected people's lives," she says.

While working on ACA implementation, as well as with other clients at the consulting firm, Kelly became increasingly fascinated by big picture questions: How can we make healthcare access and delivery more equitable? How can healthcare stakeholders best work together to improve quality of care, reduce costs, and address the social determinants of health?

This type of "big thinking" about healthcare is exactly what drew Kelly to the Master of Public Health program at The Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice.

"I've long admired the innovative work of The Dartmouth Institute, and I wanted the opportunity to learn from leaders in the field about how to effect change in healthcare systems while strengthening my analytical skills."

As a student in the residential program, Kelly says one of her greatest learning opportunities has come from working alongside her classmates who are on the front lines of care.

"Because there are so many clinicians in the program, I've developed a better understanding of the challenges people face in clinical settings and the unique cultures within healthcare institutions," she says. "It's important to understand these factors when developing effective strategies to improve the delivery of care."

Of particular interest to Kelly is improving care for aging and vulnerable populations.

"The U.S. population is rapidly

aging, but high-need, older adults often experience uncoordinated care across their medical care, long-term services and supports, and behavioral health needs—even though these areas are closely linked," she says. "I'm very interested on working on initiatives that look to transform how we deliver and pay for healthcare for this population. Making progress in this area will have an outsized impact on our healthcare system."

As for working in healthcare policy in what many would call a tumultuous time, Kelly says she is not discouraged.

"I'm inspired by how many people are trying to figure out how to improve the quality of care and lower costs—particularly at the state level," she says. "There's a lot of common ground around the importance of finding creative solutions for the challenges of fragmented care processes and payment systems. And we have a lot to learn from recent innovations in healthcare. That's the exciting part."

PAIGE STEIN

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