

## **PA-PAC Questionnaire for Candidates for City Council Appointment 2018**

*When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with each question numbered and organized as it appears here. Type your responses in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Please do not use colors. Please try to confine your responses to the word limits set for each question. They should be generous. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question.*

**Please return the completed form with your resume or personal history describing your education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by December 22, 2017, at the latest.**

**You may e-mail your responses to Tom Miller at [tom-miller1@nc.rr.com](mailto:tom-miller1@nc.rr.com) or you may send a printed copy of your responses to Durham PA-PAC c/o Tom Miller 1110 Virginia Avenue, Durham, NC 27705-3262**

**Please note that following the December 22 deadline, the Durham People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.**

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.**

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### **Government and the Public Good**

*1. Of all the issues confronting city government, which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if elected? Please limit your answer to 300 words.*

Inequity in the economic development of Durham is the city government's most critical issue, because of its complex and profound effect on our city's residents. This issue is reflected in myriad ways; it can be viewed through the lens of income inequality, of health disparities, or seen in the unjust distribution of critical services, such as education.

Durham's government has made progress in addressing the acute symptoms these inequities, through policies such as doubling the penny for housing, investing in the Fayette Park property in Historic Hayti, and by investing local money into our schools.

Despite this, out of the 49 schools within the Durham Public School System that received a grade for the 2016-2017 school year, 30 received a "D" or "F" grade, while only 12 schools achieved an "A" or "B" grade. Durham continues to have teacher and principal turnover rates higher than the state average, and needs to improve the percentage of teachers that are fully licensed and/or National Board Certified.

Durham has the technology, personnel, and resources to help all of Durham's children succeed. The resources have to be distributed and utilized in a more equitable way, and the city government must incentivize teaching positions at its schools by providing affordable housing and competitive pay for teachers. City council-members must strengthen our public schools further by:

- creating universal access to preschool;
- ensuring student access to technology-- including internet access-- outside of schools;
- creating partnerships to provide internships and apprenticeships with the many startups, universities, health-related and technological companies in the area-- especially for underrepresented minorities;
- moving away from "zero-tolerance" policies that remove students educational settings;
- expanding public transportation;
- continuing to increase access to affordable housing for families;

Through these actions, I would address the inequitable economic development in Durham by sustaining and furthering the recent work of the City Council, and by focusing on providing better and more equitable allocation of our city's educational resources.

*2. What can the city do to lift the wages of the lowest paid workers in Durham and reduce growing income inequality in our community? Where in our community do you see opportunities for city government to address the racial wealth gap? Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

In 2016, nearly one in every five Durhamites were living in poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. At the same time, the Durham Chamber of Commerce oversaw investments totalling \$875.8 million, and the creation of nearly 5,000 new jobs, as announced in the Chamber's 2016 Annual Economic Development Report. This is the reality of two Durhams-- or a singular Durham that is neglecting and pushing out many of its most vulnerable residents.

Recent job creation in Durham has been focused on creating highly technical and degree-requiring jobs. Our city has grown unsustainably, however, due to the prioritization given to providing tax incentives to corporate job-creators, who are often hiring workers who then move to Durham. While this is a boon to the city, the resulting revenue was not then channeled into helping those that already resided within the city, but to further provide more incentives for companies and revitalization projects.

This must be amended, and the city has taken steps towards doing so, by promising a \$15 minimum wage for city employees, and by providing public support and leadership in the Living Wage Project's certification program. As other employers in the city follow suit, Durham's leaders mustn't rest on their laurels. It is important to recognize that this move is largely symbolic; and while state laws restrict some of what can be done at a local municipal level, Durham can still strive to enact bolder policies that will raise wages, and reduce income inequality and joblessness within the city.

One way to do this would be through hiring programs, where the city itself trains and hires those that may otherwise be left out of the workforce, such as returning prisoners. Educational and vocational programs in the prison system, followed by immediate employment by the city would greatly reduce recidivism and homelessness in our city.

To erase the racial wealth gap, we need to improve our education system, and ensure that these jobs which are being created by corporations in Durham are being filled by highly skilled Durham residents. This is possible through investment in education-- from K-12 to retraining and vocational programs for adults. As Durham has become an increasingly desirable place to live and work, the city government must leverage this attractiveness to the good of ALL Durhamites.

*3. How should the city measure the benefits and costs of incentives to promote development especially as those benefits and costs affect low-income residents of Durham? How would you use these measurements when deciding to vote for or against a proposed incentive? Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

In making development decisions, especially those that affect vulnerable populations, the city should take a holistic approach in measuring the costs, benefits and risks associated with incentives providing development, considering not only the economic costs and benefits, but also the social and cultural costs and benefits-- as well as the possible externalities, as

incentives often have a ripple effect, causing unforeseen consequences. For example, the health-related, economic, and educational disparities seen between communities in Durham today did not come from happenstance, they are the result of policy. Gentrification is a result of imprudent promotion of development, where incoming companies and money are valued more than the residents that already exist in an area.

Any proposed project should only receive incentives if they will generate both economic and fiscal benefits that will weigh out the costs, with attention to the downstream effects to ALL stakeholders, not just economic stakeholders.

Finally, short-term benefits should not be incentivised over the long-term health and prosperity of the city and its residents.

*4. What actions should the city take to expand job creation and job quality? In your answer, please comment on the city's potential involvement in entrepreneurship, worker-owned cooperatives, and union organizing. Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

Durham should aggressively work to empower marginalized communities and provide them the opportunities that many privileged community members have been able to take advantage of already. The county government has already taken the initial steps towards doing so, by setting a goal of having a fourth of the contracts signed be awarded to minority- and women-owned business. Although the city has not reached its goal yet, it saw the percentage of contracts with minority- and women-owned business grow from 6% to 22%. There are areas of improvement still, as most of these contracts are in construction, and a diversification of the contracts assigned to minority- and women-owned businesses would allow for greater and more accurate representation of these groups.

Raising the minimum wage of city workers has increased the quality of city jobs. Many marginalized populations are still left out from these positions now, however, such as the disabled and ex-convicts re-entering society. Utilizing the skill sets and talents of these untapped and overlooked populations could help ensure that Durham offers opportunities to all of its residents.

The city of Durham needs to collaborate with unions and ensure that employers are providing the best quality work environment and compensation. In order to continue being a center of development Durham needs to set an example for future corporations and businesses that wish to move to our city that we are an equal opportunity city. This means we must provide entrepreneurial support to underrepresented groups.

Durham has also had excellent success in establishing itself as an entrepreneurial hub, with projects like the American Underground, Duke Innovation and Entrepreneurship, many

minority-owned and managed startups, and a burgeoning partnership with startup organizations to improve the city's efficiency.

## **Housing, City Planning, and Neighborhoods**

*5. What does “gentrification” mean to you? What, if anything, should be done about it? How, if at all, is the issue of gentrification implicated in the Planning Department’s current review of zoning in East Durham, the proposed creation of an Alston Avenue Design District, and the redevelopment of the former Fayette Place property? Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

Gentrification is often mistakenly assumed to be synonymous with growth. While growth is purely additive to a community, however, gentrification instead replaces historically working-class or poorer communities with wealthier individuals. When areas have been historically neglected are suddenly highlighted as “rejuvenation projects”, incentives encourage investment, and as money pours in, long-time residents are booted out. Gentrification is undesirable even as it brings about renovations and economic growth to a neglected sector, due to the fact that it doesn't really solve the issues regarding poverty or crime, but just shunts them elsewhere. Furthermore, gentrification causes increased tensions amongst communities-- and may be correlated with an increase in policing and an increased enforcement of nuisance laws as well.

In Durham, specifically, the areas of disinvestment are starkly different from those areas which have experienced growth, in tree-lining, in their locations, and in their racial composition. The areas which have been neglected are those that were red-lined by banks throughout the early to mid 1900's, and are historically African American communities.

As seen in the less-than-positive response from the community in response to the Planning Department’s review of zoning in East Durham, this causes a lot of distrust and anxiety for those who live in these communities. It is not unreasonable to be worried that these neighborhoods may go down the same path as other, similar areas, where the residents will be turned out of their homes due to skyrocketing rents, unless better policies are implemented to preserve these communities.

It is strengthening to know that our Mayor, Steve Schewel, is aware of and working to avoid the hazards surrounding potential new investments, utilizing density requirements in conjunction with upzoning requests. Encouragingly, Mayor Schewel has also stated that that it

is the goal of the city to ensure sustainable, diverse development of Fayette Place, so that it accurately reflects the community that has historically represented the area.

*6. What should the city seek to accomplish through its power to stimulate and regulate growth? What principles and considerations will guide your decisions in zoning cases and other development issues? Illustrate your answer with a recent controversial zoning case. Did the city decide the case correctly? Please limit your answer to 500 words.*

The city should seek to impose regulations on and/or stimulate growth in three cases:

1. To correct for market failures , which include:
  - a. externalities- unintended and unforeseen consequences arising from an action, that have an impact on society, without imposing a cost on those that caused the impact
  - b. information asymmetries- gaps between the distribution of information between parties
  - c. moral hazards- situations where those who are taking risks are protected from the consequences of those risks
2. For the sake of public health- to ensure that the health of the community or the best interests of the society are not compromised.
3. To implement distributive justice

Failures occur through unregulated or mismanaged growth, resulting in inefficient and undesirable outcomes, must then be addressed through corrective regulation, in order to implement distributive justice.

To observe these issues, I find it helpful to use a modified version of Kass' Ethical Framework for Public Health. In this framework, policy can be analyzed to ensure that the intended fiscal and economic goals are met, without imposing unforeseen costs, or causing downstream externalities.

This modified framework policy maker to address the following six main questions:

1. What are the end-goals of the proposed policy?
2. What is the logic behind this policy?
3. What are the risks of this policy, and who are they to?

4. Are the risks minimized, and is the least risky approach being utilized, with a contingency plan for dealing with the risk?
5. Is this policy implemented fairly and equitably?
6. Are the benefits and burdens of this policy fairly balanced, and appropriate in this situation?

In the case of the North River Village Zoning controversy, land at the corner of Guess and Latta road was to be rezoned, with the 30 acre lot in the middle of residentially zoned land being zoned for mixed use, with part of it being used for commercial buildings and the rest for residential structures. In this case, were I on the city council, I would examine whether or not it met one of the three criteria that would make action appropriate, and finding that it did not meet one of those three criteria, I would consider the six questions in the ethical framework. In light of my knowledge of the evidence presented to the city council, I do believe that they made the right decision in not permitting the rezoning to move forward.

*7. Under what circumstances would you vote to approve a rezoning that does not include commitments to meet the city's affordable housing goal? If you answered yes, how would you ensure that the city meet its goal? Please illustrate your answer with a recent case. Please limit your answer to 500 words.*

Under state law the city of Durham is prohibited from enforcing inclusionary zoning. The city can, however, incentivize developers to include affordable units, or even implement fee-first linkage fees program. The fees would require developers pay an upfront fee or build on-site units in lieu of the required fee. This program is similar to inclusionary housing but is a work around to the current state law.

## **City Finances, Capital Improvements, Transportation, and City Services**

*8. If the city needs more revenue for a basic public service, do you, in general, favor a new or increased user fee or a property tax increase? Residential trash pickup is an example of a basic service. Please limit your answer to 250 words.*

In general, I would support a property tax increase over new or increased user fees. This is due to the fact that usage fees disproportionately affect the lowest income families the most. Basic services should continue to be funded by property taxes which are far less regressive than usage fees.

*9. Do you support or oppose Durham's plans for rail-based transit? If federal funding for the project is denied, what must Durham do about transportation, urban planning, housing, taxes, and infrastructure? Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I support Durham's plans for rail-based transit. With Durham's growing population and the necessity of at least one car per household the effects on traffic and the environment will be detrimental to the growth of the City. We will be facing highway gridlocks which will significantly affect commute times and traffic safety.

The cities lack of a rail-based transit is also a deterring factor for future developers and corporations. Corporations like Amazon which would bring a large number of construction jobs as well as tech jobs to the city are seeking cities that have established or the intention to establish rail-based transit systems.

*10. Does the city's investment in bus transportation reach the population that needs it most? What else can be done to improve bus transportation access and affordability? Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

Currently, the City of Durham has done a great job of providing low-fare bus rides to the populations that rely on public transit. GoDurham still has work to do, however, and among the first priorities should be to improve the quality and number of bus stops throughout the city. It is imperative that bus stops are sheltered and protecting citizens from inclement weather during their wait, and it is unfortunate that currently only 20% of stops are covered.

Making the bus fare-free would truly make the bus transportation program accessible and beneficial for the city in the long run, especially as the new electric buses are put into service.

*11. Would you support a property tax relief program, for example, a circuit breaker, to reduce the tax burden on homeowners with limited resources and help them stay in their homes? If your answer is yes, please describe the program or programs you would support. If your answer is no, please explain. Please limit your answer to 300 words.*

I would support a property tax relief program to reduce the tax burden on homeowners with limited resources. To maintain our identity Durham must protect its most vulnerable residents, a circuit breaker takes into consideration multiple factors such as health, income and age. A circuit breaker program will slow the progress of gentrification by assisting residents who qualify with assistance to reduce their stress and fear of losing their housing.



*12. What is the city's most pressing capital improvement priority? Please limit your answer to 300 words.*

Durham's most urgent capital improvement priority is improving the technology and methods used to evaluate, analyze, and communicate the economic, fiscal, social, and cultural costs, benefits, and risks of policy to the community. This should be done by investing in a dynamic, regional, economic, and policy modeling system application, such as the REMI Policy Insight.

As I've observed-- through several contentious debates regarding rezoning low-income communities, and heard-- through enlightening conversations with Viridiana Martinez of Alerta Migratoria; much of the Durham community, especially those amongst the vulnerable, largely distrust the city council, and government and authority as a whole. They fear that when the council is making policy decisions, these decisions are not for their benefit. These fears are not undue, as historically, these communities have been exploited time and time again, for the sake of economic benefits. However, with this new, progressive council and mayor, it is an opportunity to turn a new page, and establish a new level of transparency and trust between our government and those that it works for.

While the most critical issue facing Durham may be the inequity we see today, and providing better education and access to opportunities may be the solution to that issue, this cannot be addressed without first establishing trust, by making the best, most informed decisions we can, and being accountable for those decisions.

*13. What would you push for in the city's upcoming budget? Please limit your answer to 300 words.*

To follow up on my last answer, I would push for investment in a dynamic regional economic-and-policy modeling system application, such as the REMI Policy Insight.

An application such as this one will allow for invaluable information to help guide the city council's decision-making process. This can model complex effects of policy, and can help identify concerns or benefits regarding implementation of specific policies. These decisions are often very difficult to make, and having the best information to not only make a decision, but to track it-- and evaluate the policy's effectiveness, and the impact it had on society-- would greatly behoove the city council.

Without investing in this dynamic regional economic and policy modeling system technology, we may unintentionally perpetuate the misguided policies which caused the inequalities evident in our society today in the first place.

When combined with the council's exemplary dedication to ethical decision-making, Durham residents could feel reassured that they were being served in the best possible manner, and that their interests were being addressed.

Communicating and publishing the details of the decision-making process would also play a role in developing the trust of the community-- without which, the government will continue to experience less than ideal success in implementing its policies, and inefficient use of its money.

## **Policing and Public Safety**

*14. Is there a trust problem between the people of Durham and the police department? Are you satisfied with the department's responses to issues of use of force, racial profiling, deployment of personnel, searches, and communication with the public? Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

There is absolutely a trust problem embedded in the relationship between the people of Durham and the police department that is due to systematic racism. In order to mend this relationship Durham police must utilize body cameras that are required to be properly turned on and used at all times. It cannot be up to the discretion of the officer, when a camera can be turned off. We must also invest in officer training for de-escalation techniques. We should set an example for surrounding cities by decreasing deaths and injuries from excessive force.

I support Chief Davis' decision to cease traffic checkpoints which created tension in the relationship between the police department and Durham's immigrant population. I believe this is a step in the right direction towards mediating relationships.

I believe that continued increases in transparency and communication will be of benefit in mending the relationship between the public and the police.

*15. To what degree, if any, should the city cooperate with U.S. Department of Immigration & Customs Enforcement? Should the city become a sanctuary city? If your answer is yes, for whom should the city provide sanctuary and by what means should sanctuary be provided? If your answer is no, please explain your reasons. In either case, please be specific. Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

There is a large mistrust amongst the Latinx community and the Durham city police that is built on recent racial profiling and detainments of Durham residents.

I strongly support sanctuary cities, and would love to see Durham achieve such status. It will take in depth conversations with residents and the federal government to ensure that Durham is able to continue providing the necessary resources to all it's residents as well providing an asylum for its most disenfranchised residents. If we are not able to achieve a status of sanctuary city, I believe in encouraging places of worship to declare themselves sanctuaries, and provide protection to those whom need it.

Federal officials must rely on local police to help enforce federal immigration laws, but the law doesn't require local authorities to detain undocumented immigrants just because their federal counterparts make a request. In fact, federal courts across the country have found complying with the requests is voluntary. Durham city police under the protection of the wording of this law are in no shape or form required to detain undocumented immigrants nor should they. We need to guarantee our city is a safe and welcoming city for all its members and incoming cities. Families should not be living in fear of a traffic stop turning into a deportation.

*16. Should the city allocate more, less, or about the same money to policing? Please explain your answer. If your answer is less, would you allocate more money to other services to improve public safety? Again, please explain. Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

The city should allocate more money towards public safety; including money towards decreasing recidivism and crime through better access to opportunities, instead of consistent increases in police surveillance.

Police officers must also be paid more, in order to offer a competitive salary and ensure consistency from highly trained officers. Better training for police officers must include training in de-escalation techniques. We have lost too many citizens from avoidable usage of excessive force. We must work with citizens who are the most affected by institutional racism, Black, Latinx, and facilitate conversations with the police force on racial profiling.

Communities with contentious relationships with police, such as the McDougald Terrace neighborhood, are not responding to current strategies, and shootings continue to be a near-daily issue in certain areas of Durham. A new strategy must be implemented.

The city must also actively recruit members of the Latinx and Black communities to enroll in the police force to ensure equal representation and minimize the chances of discriminatory action.

## **Civil Rights**

*17. Name one issue in Durham that directly impacts, or is directly impacted by, race inequality and how can the city incorporate a race equity framework in addressing this issue? Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

Affordable housing an issue that strongly related to race inequality in Durham; with the impact of redlined districts from the Jim Crow era still being felt today. These racial issues and issues regarding inequity are at the forefront of public consciousness due to the increased living costs associated with gentrification. Durham needs to protect its vulnerable, marginalized, and minority residents from losing their homes and livelihood by ensuring that the city is growing and developing in a sustainable manner. As the economy profits, the council must ensure that Durham's people, those whose roots are embedded in the minority working class residents who have built this city from the ground up, benefit as well.

We must invest more in affordable housing to not just provide support to residents but to ensure that their housing is livable and meets the standards to raise a family. With plans for new affordable housing complexes, we must budget accordingly to provide enough opportunities for our residents to expand to the developing and flourishing areas of Durham and utilize the same amenities and resources that other residents are able to enjoy.

*18. If the city could adopt an ordinance concerning the civil rights of members of the LGBTQ community, what provisions should that ordinance contain? Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

A city ordinance should be adopted to protect the civil liberties and human rights of LGBTQ+ citizens. In order to ensure Durham is a safe and welcoming city for all we need to fight for the inequities of each individual minority group.

1. Employers should be prohibited from enacting discriminatory hiring and employment policies against LGBTQ+ people

2. All LGBTQ+ should legally be allowed to marry, and cannot be denied such rights
3. LGBTQ+ people should be protected to use their preferred pronouns and the public facilities of their choice

## **Personal and Political**

*19. What would you bring to the city council that is not already represented by the members who are currently serving? You may wish to consider your background, education, experience, and set of skills when responding to this question. Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

My experiences as an immigrant and Muslim woman bring to the table a new, underrepresented perspective that isn't currently there. Being an immigrant and having witnessed the citizenship process firsthand, I know the difficulty and stress that lies within it. As part of the growing immigrant population within Durham I understand the struggles of learning to become a part of new communities.

My undergraduate degree in sustainability has given me an in depth understanding of green technologies and clean industrial engineering. I am able to lead city of Durham into the future by ensuring it exists for future generations.

My activism organizing skills displays my ability to organize constituents around issues and policies that are affecting their everyday lives; and being able to drive change that positively affects as many citizens as possible.

As a millennial I also bring your understanding of new and developing technologies. We have to harness these new technologies and utilize them to the best of our ability to reach communities across the city with effective messaging.

*20. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence other than a minor traffic offense? If your answer to this question is yes, please describe the charge or charges, the circumstances, and the outcome. Please limit your answer to 250 words.*

No, I haven't.

*21. For whom did you vote in the 2012 and 2016 presidential and gubernatorial elections? For whom did you vote in the 2014 U. S. Senate election? Please limit your answer to 75 words.*

2012: Obama, Dalton

2016: Clinton, Cooper

2014: Hagan

**Please don't forget to provide us with a resume or personal history.**

# NIDA ALLAM

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**OBJECTIVE:** To utilize my passion and drive for problem solving in a political position, and critically analyze and communicate opportunities for growth and improvement to help lead communities to reach their goals

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## WORK EXPERIENCE:

- North Carolina Democratic Party, **3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair**, North Carolina 2016 – Present
- Establish & build partnerships with minority groups across the state
    - Initiate dialogue between elected officials and community leaders to discuss issues across the state and how the Democratic Party can assist
  - Outreach to Millennials across the state, encourage grassroots activism and mobilizing
  - Recruit candidates to run for office at all levels of government
    - Assist candidates with training and outreach to constituents
- MetLife, **Project Analyst**, Cary, NC 2016 – Present
- Lead role for a communication & engagement effort focused on data collection from associates
    - Selected focus groups by analyzing data to ensure appropriate representation of each segment of the organization based on multiple demographics
    - Compared survey questions to demographic groups and led the team in identifying meaningful additional areas of data analysis
    - Centrally collected & formatted data for final report from multiple sources/stakeholders
- Bernie 2018, **Political Director**, SC, NC, NY, NJ 2015 – 2016
- Analyzed population demographics and developed maps for targeted messaging across several states
  - Developed strategy for targeted outreach across several states
  - Implemented statewide GOTV campaigns
- CNanoz Inc., **Laboratory Intern**, Raleigh, NC 2015
- Facilitated and oversaw chemical production processes, ensuring optimum quality and safety
  - Managed and organized company books and financial records
  - Placed purchase orders for lab equipment and supplies
  - Learned and mastered principles of R&D, marketing, and supply chain
- Triangle Health Fair, **Event Director**, Raleigh, NC 2006 – 2016
- Event Director (2013-2016) Vendor Coordinator (2011-2013) Volunteer (2006-2011)
  - Supervised financial, locational, and organizational logistics associated with the event
  - Strategically created committees to accomplish various logistical milestones
  - Oversaw marketing, advertising, and outreach efforts
- Capitol Leadership Academy, **Counselor**, Washington D.C. 2014
- Taught leadership, debate, and public speaking skills to high school students
  - Coordinated meetings between high school students and Congressmen to help them further learn political views, processes, and etiquette
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## EDUCATION:

**North Carolina State University**, Raleigh, NC 8/2011 – 12/2015  
B.S. Sustainable Materials and Technology GPA 3.1

## Awards & Accolades:

- Roy M. Carter Endowed Scholarship – Fall 2014 – Spring 2015
  - BioResources Scholarship – Spring 2014
  - Dean's List – Spring 2014
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## SKILLS AND PROFICIENCIES:

- Critical Thinking & Evaluation
- Problem Solving
- Effective Communication
- Logistics, Organization and Analytics
- Microsoft Office Suite
- Networking

**RECOMMENDATIONS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**