

Top health consultant thanks School for “ticket” to success



Deniese Chaney

As a teenager, Deniese Chaney worked summers. Instead of flipping burgers at a fast food restaurant or ringing up purchases at a shoe store, she typed, filed and kept patient records at a medical diagnostics clinic. Her aunt was an employee at DukeHealth and had urged her to give the health care field a try. Chaney did—and liked it so much she has remained in health care for 35 years.

“It’s a constantly evolving field. You’re constantly learning, and there are always new challenges,” she says. “Over time, it becomes a way of life. You know more about it than you do about anything else.”

Chaney now has a master’s in health policy and administration from Carolina’s School of Public Health, highly regarded expertise in medical imaging, and an executive position at Accenture LLC in the Health and Life Sciences

practice. She has come a long way from her clerical summer job. Now, she wants to give something back to the school that contributed significantly to her professional growth.

Chaney hopes that the \$25,000 gift she gave to the School of Public Health to help fund the graduate education of a student in health policy and administration will afford other people the chance to step out of the box and expand their horizons.

“Anybody who has lived through what I’ve lived through, who has experienced a certain plateau in their career such that they couldn’t move forward, will appreciate what a master’s education can do. It opens doors. It’s a ticket. I want other people to have that ticket,” says Chaney, who serves on the School’s Public Health Foundation Board of Directors.

For three years in the late 1980s, Chaney balanced the demands of graduate school with a full-time job. Employed by the UNC School of Medicine at the time, she worked at MacNider Hall on the Carolina campus from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., walked across the street to the School of Public Health’s Rosenau Hall to take classes, walked back to the Radiology Department at noon, and stayed there until evening.

Chaney says that while such a schedule was difficult to manage, it enabled her to fund the part of her education that wasn’t covered by the UNC-Chapel Hill employee tuition program.

“If I hadn’t been allowed to take classes while working full time, I wouldn’t have gotten that piece of my education, and I wouldn’t have had the growth opportunities I’ve had,” she says. “I feel immensely grateful to the School, and I want other students there to have similar opportunities.”

— By Margarita De Pano