

## Session One

*Jessica Chenault Whitehead, Ph.D.*



Jessica Whitehead is the Chief Resilience Officer with the NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency. As Chief Resilience Officer, she leads an innovative team that will build out the state's initiative to help storm-impacted communities rebuild smarter and stronger in the face of future natural disasters and long-term climate change. This team will improve collaboration between governments, non-profits, the private sector, and academia, with a goal of developing solutions that enhance the resilience of communities and the natural environment while creating safe and affordable housing solutions. Whitehead earned her Doctor of Philosophy in geography

and Master of Science degree in meteorology from The Pennsylvania State University. She also earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physics with a concentration in meteorology from the College of Charleston.

Prior to beginning with NCORR in June 2019, Whitehead was the coastal communities' hazards adaptation specialist for North Carolina Sea Grant, where she assisted coastal users with integrating information about resilience to coastal weather and climate hazards into their decision-making processes. Recent past projects included: documenting lessons learned from business disaster recovery on Hatteras Island, assisting the Town of Nags Head with prioritizing infrastructure adaptation priorities for sea level rise in the FOCUS Nags Head comprehensive plan, exploring the intersection of water, wastewater, and public health risks of storms in Morehead City, developing a future land use map and climate conservation priorities in the Town of Swansboro, and providing the science interpretation content for the RISING exhibition, which paired fine art photography with oral histories of coastal change in North Carolina.

As a co-creator of the Vulnerability, Consequences and Adaptation Planning Scenarios (VCAPS) process, Whitehead facilitated numerous participatory diagramming exercises for stakeholders to improve their resilience to coastal hazards and climate change. So far, this process has helped over 25 communities throughout the United States develop and implement adaptation options to increase community resilience.

Whitehead recently began a term on the American Meteorological Society's Board of Outreach and Pre-College Education. She is a former co-chair of the co-chairs the Science and Technical Advisory Committee of the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership. She was a member of the Independent Advisory Committee on Applied Climate, which recently published its recommendations on how to bring local and state governments and business perspectives to the process of identifying, documenting and improving the quality, relevance and utility of climate information for decision making, as well as the Sustained National Assessment Federal Advisory Committee.

## **This Session will include:**

- "Building a more resilient North Carolina: Foundations for community success."
  - How can North Carolina's communities build their hazard resilience? Becoming stronger and better equipped to withstand the impacts of hazards starts long before a risk assessment is published, or a project ribbon gets cut by paying careful attention to collaboration in communities. This presentation will provide an introduction to the new North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency's Natural Hazards Resilience: A Quick Start Guide for North Carolina Communities, the first installment in an ongoing effort by NCORR's team of experts to define what it means to plan for and build resilience in communities while integrating those measures into the work local governments do every day. At the end of this training, attendees will understand how careful attention to collaboration can improve creative thinking about key characteristics of resilient communities, like local preparedness, connectedness, and adaptability. Attendees will come away with ideas for action steps to take in their communities that lay the foundation for later successful resilience project identification, prioritization, and implementation.

## **Session Two**



## **Gavin Smith, PhD, AICP**

- Gavin Smith, NC State University-
  - bio- Dr. Smith joined the Department of Landscape Architecture at North Carolina State University in January 2019. He holds three degrees from Texas A&M University including a Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning, a Master's degree in Sociology and an undergraduate degree in Sociology.

Smith teaches courses focused on natural hazards, disasters and climate change adaptation as part of a new certificate program located in the College of Design. In addition, he will help to coordinate a university cluster focused on coastal resilience to

include identifying interdisciplinary partnerships to undertake research, teaching and engagement initiatives. Prior to joining the faculty in the College of Design, Smith was a Research Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning and Director of the Coastal Resilience Center of Excellence, a consortium of more than 25 universities located at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. During his ten years at Chapel Hill, Smith also created and led a 10-credit hour Graduate Certificate in Natural Hazards Resilience and taught at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Venice International University and served as a guest lecturer at numerous universities in the United States and abroad, including Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Indonesia, and Hong Kong.

Smith's career has emphasized blending practice, applied research, community engagement, and education. Previous work includes serving as an Assistant Director in the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management where he led the acquisition and relocation of more than 5,000 flood-prone homes, developed a state-wide hazard mitigation planning program that ultimately informed the creation of the national Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and served as an advisor to Governor Hunt on policies and programs associated with long-term recovery in North Carolina.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Dr. Smith worked in the Mississippi Office of the Governor, serving as the Director of the Office of Recovery and Renewal. While in this position, he led the development of the concept and wrote policy guidance associated with the 400 million-dollar Alternative Housing Pilot Program, an initiative intended to test the construction and deployment of improved emergency housing alternatives following Hurricane Katrina.

Dr. Smith was appointed as a Senior Recovery Advisor to Governor Cooper and the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management following Hurricane Matthew. In this role, he led the Hurricane Matthew Disaster Recovery and Resilience Initiative, a team comprised of faculty and students from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University focused on assisting six hard-hit rural communities to tackle planning and design challenges that are not traditionally addressed by federal and state agencies.

### **This session will include**

- "Dr Smith will discuss his current research which focuses on an international comparative assessment of the buyout of hazard-prone housing in the US and New Zealand. Emphasis will be placed on the comparison of national programs and case studies of communities in both countries, including lessons that can be used to improve the process."