



**Michele Walfred**

Greetings fellow MALS students!

One of the luckiest days of my life was being hired by the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension in Georgetown, Delaware. When my husband and I relocated from Wilmington to Sussex County, we left our old jobs and moved down not really knowing what we would be doing. It was a big risk, but one that paid off.

I obtained a support staff position at the Extension office. I was thrilled because I had a 19-year old college bound daughter and UD benefits provided the tuition. I never thought I would end up taking classes too – and she will kill me for saying this, but I actually beat her to a bachelor's degree by one course! I love working for the University – and being a UD alumni and graduate student is a profound honor.

When I first came to the University, I did so with a strong interest in Russian and English history and literature. But working in Extension, I formalized a love of gardening by taking horticulture and plant science courses – and I discovered how enriching it is to learn something completely new – and the challenge taking on new ideas and disciplines is exhilarating! Anytime a semester or course ended, I felt like a fish out of water if I didn't have a book in my hand.

So when I put away my last undergraduate book, the MALS program was a natural progression. Many of my co-workers had gone through the program and effusively praised it. The kudos are well-warranted! Each course I take and each fellow student I meet sparks another journey towards discovery. The small classes are perfect for that – and the exchanges among students and faculty are the most thought-provoking discussions I have ever had.

In Extension, we refer to ourselves as one big family. The same feeling exists in the MALS program – and it is truly an environment for learning. If you get the chance to join us – please do!