Sam Miglarese serves as the Deputy Chief Administrator to the Vice President for Durham and Community Affairs and as an adjunct member of the Religious Studies Department and the Program in Education. He holds a Doctorate in Theology, and before coming to Duke spent 28 years as a church administrator in South Carolina. In his years of service, Sam has clearly distinguished himself in the dimensions of selflessness, generosity of service, character, and integrity.

Sam was nominated by the senior team of the Duke Office of Durham and Community Affairs, led by Vice President Stelfanie Williams, as well as by John Burness, former Senior Vice President of Public Affairs and Government Relations; Adam Eigenrauch, Executive Director of the Emily Krzyzewski Center; David Malone, Director of the Duke Service-Learning Program, and Professor Emeritus Tony Brown of the Sanford School. This broad support for Sam’s nomination, representing multiple Duke and Durham initiatives, exemplifies the powerhouse of relationship building that Sam has brought to our community in his decades of service. His nominators emphasized that Sam embodies the “characteristics of heart, mind and conduct as evidence of a spirit of love and helpfulness to other men and women.”

David Malone writes fondly of Sam, “When it comes to commitment to community, Sam finds a way to make things happen.” Sam has an indomitable spirit for service that persuasively invites collaboration. Upon joining the office of Durham and Community Affairs in 1999, he quickly assumed leadership of the newly formed Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership, where he has played an active role for over 20 years. This partnership is just one of many foundational collaborations between Duke and Durham for which he has played an instrumental role in forging meaningful connections and energetically securing institutional support.

Sam’s heart for teaching underscores his tremendous leadership in Duke undergraduate service-learning activities and his tireless efforts to support Durham’s K-12 students. For example, about 12 years ago Sam created The Durham Giving Project, a highly successful service-learning course to foster a spirit of civic engagement and philanthropy among Duke undergrads. He designed and still teaches this course without pay and outside of his regular work. Several years ago, he also responded with urgency to community requests for a spelling bee for Durham children. Despite competing priorities at Duke, Sam recognized this as a high priority for Durham community members, and he made it happen. Sam demonstrates genuine love for both Duke and Durham. His nominators noted that it seems that if something is happening in Durham, Sam is there. For this he is known to many in the surrounding community as the “face of Duke.”

Sam is also devout in his faith and active in his spirituality. He is a longtime member of First Presbyterian Church, where he served as Associate Pastor from 2006 until his retirement in 2019. For years, he taught Sunday morning Faith and Community Class and led the church’s stewardship committee.
These few selected descriptions can only provide an impression of the selfless work Sam has done over the years. He has also advised more than 15 student organizations and social action groups, he co-directed the celebrated Duke Engage-Durham program from 2007 to 2019, served with Walltown Ministries, is a member and past president of the Rotary Club of Durham, and currently serves on the boards of Student U, Bennett Place Historic Site, and The Miracle League of the Triangle. His valuable contributions through service have been formally recognized over the years with a Community Humanitarian Award, Blue Devil of the Week, Outstanding Volunteer Faculty Advisor in 2005, and the Duke Meritorious Service Award in 2012.

As he prepares to retire from Duke at the end of the year, Duke University is immensely honored and proud to recognize Sam Miglarese as the staff recipient of the 2022 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award for his deep commitment to serving the Duke and Durham communities.