

Hands on the Pulse, Eyes on the Future

John B. Stephens, Editor



In August 2006, Ann Simpson, associate director for development, and I organized a roundtable discussion by selected School faculty members (see the sidebar on this page). We were seeking their wisdom and reflection on the topic “The School of Government: Past and Future.” Sitting in on the discussion were numerous other faculty members and School leaders, several of whom asked questions or made comments (see the sidebar). Following are the highlights of the discussion.

Richard B. Whisnant: Seventy-five years ago, Albert and Gladys Coates brought into being Albert’s vision of an Institute of Government that would improve the lives of North Carolinians. D. G. Martin, a distinguished journalist and political observer in North Carolina, recently listed the founding of the Institute of Government as one of the defining events in North Carolina history. In 2001 the University administration showed its support and appreciation of the work of the Institute by elevating it

to a full School of Government. In 2006 much of the United States world of higher education, led in significant part by our administration at UNC at Chapel Hill, acknowledged the engaged university as the model toward which American higher education should work.

Today, through this dialogue, we want to gain faculty perspective on the needs of North Carolina citizens: how those needs have changed over time, how we as a faculty are responding to the changing needs, and what we need

The Cast (in order of appearance)

Panel Moderator and Members

Richard B. Whisnant, moderator: faculty member since 1998; specialist in environmental protection and natural resources management, and administrative law.

A. John “Jack” Vogt: faculty member, 1973–2006; specialist in public finance. Entered phased retirement in 2006.

Robert L. Farb: faculty member since 1976; specialist in criminal law and procedure.

Shea Riggsbee Denning: faculty member since 2003; specialist in local taxation (2003–7) and courts and criminal law (2007–).

David M. Lawrence: faculty member since 1968; specialist in local government law and local government finance.

Anita R. Brown-Graham: faculty member, 1995–2007; specialist in community and economic development. Director of the Institute for Emerging Issues, North Carolina State University, since January 2007.

Contributors from the Audience

A. Fleming Bell, II: faculty member since 1982; specialist in local government law, parliamentary and board procedure, and government ethics.

Michael R. Smith: faculty member since 1978; Institute of Government director, 1992–2001; School of Government dean, 2001–.

John L. Sanders: faculty member, 1956–92; Institute director, 1962–73 and 1979–92.

Janet Mason: faculty member since 1982; specialist in juvenile law, social services law, adoption, and marriage law.

David N. Ammons: faculty member since 1996; director of the MPA Program, 2001–6; specialist in productivity improvement in local government, performance measurement, and benchmarking.

Frayda S. Bluestein: faculty member since 1991; associate dean for programs, 2006–.

Jill D. Moore: faculty member since 1997; specialist in public health law.

Maureen M. Berner: faculty member since 1998; specialist in program evaluation, and research methods and survey methodology.



Whisnant



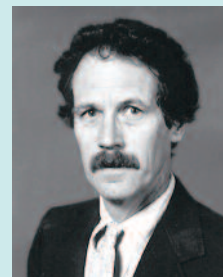
Vogt



Farb



Denning



Lawrence



Brown-Graham

to do to prepare for the challenges coming at the state in the future.

Constancy and Change in Clients' Needs

Whisnant: Think about the needs of the people you serve regularly: How have they remained constant, and how have they changed over the time you've been working at the Institute and the School?

A. John "Jack" Vogt: One thing that has stayed the same is that clients—city and county officials—are calling us and asking, "What is the proper way to follow this law?" or "How would you interpret this law?" and we continue to answer those types of questions.

Robert L. Farb: Criminal law and procedure, among all the areas of law, is probably the most dynamic: It can change on a dime. The United States Supreme Court can issue a decision that causes people in all fifty states, including North Carolina, to change their practice—immediately. The same with the North Carolina appellate courts. It happens less often, but it does happen. In the time I've been in North Carolina, we've been under three sentencing systems.

The law has always been dynamic, but it's gotten more complex over the years, responding to different interests from the prosecution and the defense.

Because the law can change on a dime, we have to respond very quickly to get the word out.

Shea Riggsbee Denning: It's my perception that, in the last ten years or so, our local governments are becoming even more sophisticated and more creative, and the transactions into which they're entering are becoming more complex. One of the things that I've noticed, particularly from the tax collectors, is that they're now dealing with legal issues beyond those associated with the collection of property taxes. For example, they must now collect all kinds of fees and other sorts of taxes with which they didn't largely concern themselves for many years.

Another example is the frequency with which people in North Carolina file for bankruptcy. So our tax collectors are not only expected to know about

the local laws that govern collection of property taxes, but they also have to know "How do I handle this situation, and how do I interact with these federal laws, federal judges, and federal procedures?" when a particular taxpayer has filed an application for bankruptcy.

David M. Lawrence: A lot of the greater complexity has to do with the educational level of people in local government. I've worked with city attorneys and county attorneys since 1968, and obviously they've always had graduate degrees. But formerly a lot of local government officials were high school graduates. Over time we've seen more and more college graduates. In finance we now see significant numbers of CPAs with, in many cases, graduate degrees. That means they're much more willing to try more complicated sorts of initiatives.

I've been working in bond financing for thirty years. When I started, most bond financing was what bond attorneys call "plain vanilla financing"—general obligation bond financing. You have a referendum, you issue the bonds. Less than half the bonds issued these days are done that way. Rather, local governments use much more complicated kinds of financing. GASB—the Government Accounting Standards Board—didn't exist fifteen years ago. There was a more rudimentary organization that occasionally issued governmental accounting pronouncements, but it didn't have anything like the agenda that GASB does. So the work that we do in accounting is very different.

The demographics of the people we work with have changed too. When I started, there was one female county attorney. If there were any female city attorneys, I didn't know who they were. I was in a law school class that had 500 people, and only about 20 were women. That's changed dramatically. Minority participation in our programs and among our clients has changed a lot, and I've noticed over the years that our clients get younger all the time.

Anita R. Brown-Graham: The theme of increased complexity is certainly at the core of change in community and economic development. Twenty years ago, most local governments weren't very active in economic development. In

community development, their responsibility was mainly to implement federal grants. The federal government played a dominant role in the field: there was very little to do other than implement those grants.

Today, global forces, the evolution of the federal government, and a different role taken by North Carolina's state government necessarily mean that local governments are where the rubber hits the road in community and economic development. As a result, our local government clients are becoming more sophisticated, much more innovative, in their work.

Ten years ago a call from a local government would be a very technical question: "How do I do this out of the community development block grant?" Now I rarely get questions like that. In fact, what's different about my work today is that for most of the questions I get, I really can't give a simple answer. That's because in many ways, they're not calling for the kind of expertise that is common in the work that Shea and Bob are doing. Instead, they're looking for a role from us much more like a facilitator. They call me and say, "How do we put together a public or private partnership that will work?" Part of my job is to ask them lots of questions to make sure I can ascertain their interest, and then point them in many directions so that they can see lots of different examples of how a partnership has worked.

Speed of Response: Phone and Computer versus Letter

Farb: In 1976, when I came here, I was given an IBM Selectric typewriter, a telephone with no voice mail, and some white-out to change any of the mistakes I made when I typed. Today when appellate cases are decided, I send summaries out to our listserv of about 1,900 people on the day of the decision or shortly thereafter. That is a big difference from years ago. Then you might wait two or three weeks to get a copy of a United States Supreme Court opinion. Today you get it the same day, and you send it out. So the speed in getting things out, and people relying on you to get the word to them, put more pressure on you to get your job done. You have to

Faculty member Vaughn Upshaw, standing, leads a program for city and county elected officials and their managers on manager evaluation and board self-assessment.



Michael Zirkle

write without editing, make sure you analyze an opinion correctly in a neutral fashion, and get it out.

Lawrence: Jack said that when he started, people called him with lots of questions. I don't think that's true. People *wrote* us with lots of questions, up through the 1970s. We weren't on the phone that much. I think a lot of the clients thought that calling long distance was too expensive, so most of my contacts with clients were by letter. People would write a letter, and I would write one back. It was, in a lot of ways, a much more leisurely process than it is today, when they write me an e-mail and expect to get something back very quickly.

Interaction with the Private Sector

A. Fleming Bell, II: How would each of you view our role in dealing with what's called "the private sector"? How has that changed in your fields?

Vogt: Twenty-five to thirty years ago, local government finance officers' conferences and meetings were composed almost entirely of local government officials. Now investment bankers, representatives from public accounting firms, and other private-firm persons may account for as many as a quarter of the

total attendance at these conferences and meetings.

Lawrence: Most city and county attorneys are in private practice, so we've been working with those kinds of private-sector professionals for a long time. I also get lots of telephone calls from attorneys representing people interacting with local governments. I think we've generally felt comfortable talking with them.

One model of advising government people and private-sector folks was the approach used by Phil Green [faculty member, 1949–89; specialist in law of planning, zoning, building codes, and land development]. Phil used to have conversations with lawyers on both sides of an issue—say, a zoning litigation issue—and he would arrange a conference call and talk to both of them at the same time. We've frequently worked with the private sector in that way.

Brown-Graham: I see a lot of private-sector clients in my work. I try to define my clients as "whoever is carrying out the function for the local government." Increasingly in community and economic development, it's either a private not-for-profit corporation or even a for-profit corporation.

Denning: In the tax field there's a fair amount of involvement by the private

sector, both on their own behalf and in carrying out functions that the local government isn't staffed to carry out. In many of the classes I teach, there are appraisers for private appraisal firms that are carrying out revaluation work for counties, essentially performing a county function. Just yesterday I was on the phone with private attorneys representing a taxpayer, asking about my view on a particular legal issue that I discussed separately with both the assessor and the private attorneys.

Whisnant: Across the Institute, we don't make sharp distinctions between private sector and public sector in many of the things we do. In the environmental field, we've been running a yearlong class on stormwater management, which we marketed to local government officials. But without our trying to bring them in, we got so much demand from the consulting engineering world and other folks who do contract work with local governments that we just decided to open it up to them as well.

Lawrence: I'll add another example of that: The law requires that local governments have their books audited every year by CPAs. So for many years, we have—Greg Allison [faculty member since 1997; specialist in governmental accounting and financial reporting] has done this particularly—trained CPAs in

governmental accounting so that they can do that work better.

Interaction with the Media

Whisnant: How have the media played a role during your time as a faculty member?

Farb: Reporters often call me about pending trials. I don't comment on pending trials. I've made it a practice because I don't think it's appropriate. I don't know the facts. And if I do comment, I say, "The Institute says x, y, and z," and it's based on facts presented by the questioner.

The other day a *Raleigh News & Observer* reporter called. I've known this reporter long enough, and I realized she was just asking for background. So I assisted her in understanding the law that related to the issue she was inquiring about. I try to assist reporters because I know they're trying to write a story.

Bell: Do you help them understand new laws that have been passed?

Farb: I would, but I generally don't get those kinds of calls. The reporters who call me are more interested in a particular case that's pending, a particular charge that's been brought. That's the story they have, and they have to write it tomorrow.

Lawrence: We get a lot of calls from local government reporters where the local government has done something and they want to know, "Is that 'something'—fill in the blank—legal?" You don't want to say, based on the information the reporter has given you, "Clearly the local government has done something illegal." But you don't want to protect a local government that's gone off and done something fairly awful. You try to explain what the law is, and let the reporter apply the law as you've stated it to the facts that the reporter may have. It's a very delicate balance to maintain.

Denning: You want to make sure that you're very careful in answering the question and drawing the balance. It's important to do that because in essence they're a representative of the public. In some ways, that's the only way the public gets its explanation of a particular law. One of my most recent and most pleasant encounters was with a

reporter with whom I spent about twenty minutes on the telephone. I picked up the newspaper the next morning with my eyes closed, practically saying, "What did he say I said, or what did I say?" To my delight, my name was nowhere in the story.

Vogt: The School of Government has conducted workshops for local government reporters. One I was involved with was organized by Gordon Whitaker [faculty member since 1997; specialist in public administration], and it took place over on campus. I've also made presentations at School of Journalism workshops for reporters who cover government. My role was to point to some of the issues in local budgeting and finance that are important and deserve coverage. Our teaching or training of reporters or aspiring reporters about finance and other issues can help public officials carry out their roles in the long term.

Whisnant: The environmental area is like the tax area in some respects. The calls that I get from reporters tend to be more wandering. They're trying to understand the background of a complicated, often technical, problem. I don't believe our media people are very savvy in the environmental area. There's not a developed environmental-journalism sector, as there may be in criminal law or even local government reporting. I do think it's important to give them information as much background information as possible.

Assessment of Demand and Needs

Whisnant: How do you assess demand—clients' needs? Is it just a subjective sense—based on the phone calls coming in or the other ways you keep your finger on the pulse?

Farb: I consider answering phone calls and e-mails to be a very important part of a faculty member's job. Phone calls and e-mails inform me what I might need to teach at the next conference or what I might need to write or consult about.

Brown-Graham: That's right: our ongoing interactions with our clients give us a lot of insight into trends, what they're experiencing, what they need from us, how that might look different

from what we have in our current frame of reference. And once the trends begin to emerge, we need to be much more proactive in engaging clients and asking them explicitly how we can support them, sometimes asking them the difficult question "What things shall we not do, in order to do more of the things that you tell us are emergent needs?"

Lawrence: The School has had specific processes of planning for the future. The most recent one was three or four years ago. We divided into large faculty groups and came up with proposals for expansion. I recall a few earlier efforts when we used formal structures to come up with ideas for faculty and program expansion.

Michael R. Smith: One of our core values is responsiveness. Faculty are on the front lines in a variety of ways: telephone, e-mail, and class sessions. That helps them learn what public officials need. The greatest challenge is finding a balance between existing needs and emerging issues separate from what our clients are requesting.

I think we've had success identifying new needs and fields. The Future Search process [in 1994] brought forty carefully selected, representative clients into the room with all of us for about three days to ask, "Where should we be going?" They identified some new themes that we've followed, like public technology needs and civic education. A great challenge is that public officials can imagine new areas of work, but they're not nearly as good at deciding how we should free up resources. It will always be a challenge to balance the things we add, with the things we stop because officials are more sophisticated and might not have the same needs.

John L. Sanders: One characteristic of this organization is that it has always been responsive to clients in their fields of interest and has adapted its programs to meet those needs and interests, rather than the Institute or the School prescribing areas of responsibility and concern and then hoping that someone would find them useful. The primary stimuli come from the field: faculty respond to requests as they see fit, in light of their professional judgment. Clients' needs, as this

During a School-sponsored course, Darlene Yudell (left), of Guilford County (N.C.), Alexias Anderson (center), of Clemson (S.C.), and Wilmer Melton, of Kannapolis (N.C.), discuss the role of information technology in local government.



Michael Zirkle

organization finds them, have been the driving force. It isn't a very tidy, orderly way to go about program planning, but it has generally worked.

Vogt: When I first came to the Institute, Jake Wicker [faculty member, 1955–91, who served in retirement until 2004; specialist in local government law] said, "I want you to go out and meet some local government officials, including local government managers." I went to Salisbury and met the city manager and several of his staff members, and I met the Iredell county manager. There were many other trips, after that. A couple of us had a term to describe such trips: "bloodstreaming."¹ Because of more limited phone service then, we didn't have the constant contact with clients by phone and e-mail, so I think it was more important. Jake kept telling me, "You need to get familiar with some of the interests of local government officials."

Farb: It's also important to keep in mind whether we should continue a program. In the criminal law field, we could have a large staff and be teaching basic law enforcement if we wanted to, but other institutions have undertaken that responsibility.

Janet Mason: In the courts group [about eight faculty members who work

with officials in the judicial branch], we meet as a group at least once a month. That way we have a better, more regular sense of what our clients' needs are and also what each of us is doing and whether that fits together and is responsive.

Lawrence: Jack's right: bloodstreaming was a value when both of us came here a long time ago, and that's continued over time. I was glad to see a new colleague, Kara Millonzi [faculty member since 2006; specialist in municipal and county finance law], going out to a number of local governments in the last four or five months.

Denning: I spent a week in the Forsyth County tax office shortly after I arrived, at the invitation of the tax assessor there. The perspective you gain when you see what's happening in a particular county or city is quite different from anything you can get in any other way. The resulting relationship is important, too.

Brown-Graham: Bloodstreaming is incredibly important to our understanding the external context—equally important to our understanding this institution. And I would advise young, new faculty members to be intentional about engaging with School of Government colleagues who might be in fields completely separate from their own. In many ways the very complexity of the

issues that our clients face forces us to have to rely on each other—to go outside of our fields to try to find some of the answers that our clients may be seeking.

The MPA Program and the School: Preparation of Future North Carolina Government Workers and Institute Clients

Whisnant: One important development at the School has been the arrival of the Master of Public Administration Program [in 1997]. It's changed the flavor of the School in a lot of ways, both in the faculty and in the students. What opportunities has the MPA Program given you to do your traditional Institute work in a different way, and what are your thoughts on the Institute and the MPA Program evolving together over the next ten years or so?

Vogt: I look on the MPA Program as preparing future public leaders and administrators for North Carolina state and local government, as well as government beyond the state. We can point to the county manager of Mecklenburg County, the city manager of Raleigh, the county manager of Wake County, the county manager of Durham County—all alumni of our program. The program has also done a good job in preparing entry-level people, young people who

Listservs

The School of Government manages more than thirty listservs primarily for local government officials and employees. The listserv technology is supported by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a public institution, so all listservs are open for viewing by any visitor. For more information, see www.sog.unc.edu/listservs.htm.

take jobs as budget analysts and other positions in local government. Our MPA Program has made a valuable contribution to the state.

Lawrence: One time during the 1980s, I taught a local government law course in the MPA Program when it was administratively in the Political Science Department. Today I teach occasionally in someone else's courses, so for me, its being here [administratively] hasn't really made a difference. I would echo what Jack said, though: Many of the students I taught in the 1980s have gone into city and county management. Our having had them as students creates connections that are valuable professionally later on when they're working in government. I think it's a plus for the Institute and the School that the MPA Program is here.

Brown-Graham: I've had a chance to get to know a lot of the students. I'm always appreciative when they come seeking professional and personal advice because it makes me look more together than I really am. I find that I have ongoing relationships with many of those students long after they leave the School of Government. So even for faculty who don't play a more formal role in the MPA Program, there continue to be significant benefits to having it in this building.

Lawrence: This and other MPA programs have had a big impact on the nature of the kinds of people who become city and county managers. When I started, many managers were engineers who had risen from engineering or public works departments. Now many more come out of public administration programs.

David N. Ammons: I think the interaction between Institute teaching and MPA Program teaching is good, and we do well in recruiting students

who share the interests of the faculty in the School of Government. In fact, the mission of the MPA Program has been revised to ensure that it is consistent with that of the School. That suggests a very positive relationship, with great promise for the future.

Teaching, Now and in the Future

Whisnant: How has your teaching changed, and how has it remained the same?

Farb: PowerPoint [presentation software] has made all the difference in the world. PowerPoint directs me to be more organized in preparing my presentations, and that's been very helpful.

The other change is the size of the audiences I teach. They have grown enormously. When I came here, there were 174 prosecutors, which are my primary group. As of January 1, 2007, there were 580 prosecutors. I used to teach to about 75 at their largest conference each year. In June 2006 there were 385 in the audience. So it's more difficult. I still take questions, but when I hear a voice, I have to look out and try to find the person who is asking the question.

Lawrence: When I came here, the standard teaching method was lecturing: you stood up and you talked. Those of us who had been to law school maybe brought some Socratic methods into it, but it wasn't the interactive teaching that we do today. In the 1980s and 1990s, we started paying much more attention to the principles of adult education. The importance we place on teaching today reflects the sort of development we've had.

Advising on Short- and Long-Term Projects

Whisnant: What about advising? Bob's already mentioned that communications technology has changed at least the pace

and maybe the volume of advising. Is there anything else you would observe on how advising has changed or stayed the same?

Lawrence: We do a whole lot less of it. In the summer of 1969, I was assigned to be part of the staff for a city and county consolidation effort in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, along with Jake Wicker, who was staff director, and Rud Turnbull [faculty member, 1969–80; specialist in local government law, elections law, and mental health law]. For almost a year and a half, we did little else but work with the study commission.

At the same time, Joe Ferrell [faculty member since 1964; specialist in property tax and county government] was staffing the local government study commission, which over six years rewrote the fundamental legislation for cities and counties. And concurrently, John Sanders was helping draft the revised N.C. Constitution.

We continued doing a lot of that sort of work into the 1970s because the legislature at the time had no staff whatsoever. Since the creation and expansion of the legislative staff, however, we have had much less experience of that sort of extended consulting.

Vogt: I think there are fewer opportunities for that type of large-scale, long-term advising because the staffs of the General Assembly, state agencies, and local governments are much more sophisticated today. We do a lot of training of these staffs, and we do a lot of one-on-one advising of them on specific issues or questions, especially for local governments. Now and then I've become involved in major projects. To undertake a major project, we have to pull back from what we're doing on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis to make the time needed. Perhaps the General Assembly's upcoming study of state and local government fiscal relationships will involve several School faculty in a significant way.

Brown-Graham: Our advising activity is probably much more field-specific than our teaching, research, and writing. In community and economic development, a lot of the advising is around long-term engagement with state government or a local government

Students in the School of Government's Master of Public Administration Program listen attentively as faculty member Jonathan Morgan makes a point.



Michael Zirkle

or a number of local governments that comprise a region, and there is never any dearth of opportunities to engage in that kind of activity. The real struggle is figuring out where to draw the line because it can go on for years.

Whisnant: You're right, Anita, that it's field-specific. Your experience matches mine. I've been involved in several multi-year, certainly multimonth research projects. I think what we have across the School and Institute is a mixed picture: people who are dedicating most of their time to daily in-and-out, short-term problem solving versus those who are engaging in the longer-term, research-related, advising kind of effort.

Bringing People Together through Listservs

Frayda S. Bluestein: Technology has helped us continue Albert Coates's original idea about public officials coming to the Institute as a physical place to learn from each other. School-managed listservs (see the sidebar on page 48) have created an opportunity for people to come together electronically in a way that's much more efficient for folks. That has improved the nature of advising for some of us who are working with client groups that have listservs. Best practices and

experiences can be responded to and shared so easily. It's so true to the original idea of what the Institute would do, and technology has made it so much easier.

Research and Writing: Learning from and Serving Clients

Whisnant: I'd like to turn to research and writing and tie in to the comments made earlier that our clients are more sophisticated and the transactions are more complicated. Does that mean research and writing demands are more complicated, or are we still doing much the same work now that we were doing twenty or thirty years ago?

Denning: What you need to write about, you learn from talking to the clients, and what you think you might need to write about when you first get here is not necessarily what you ultimately figure out you need to write about. For instance, Bill Campbell [faculty member, 1965–2005; specialist in property tax and environmental protection] wrote a very extensive book about property tax collection. One of the chapters in that book is on collection of taxes and bankruptcy. You might skim over that chapter, thinking the topic's not going to come up very much. Then after you're here

for a couple of years, you realize that clients have all sorts of pretty sophisticated questions about bankruptcy that either they're not willing to ask their county attorney or the county attorney is not a bankruptcy expert and can't answer.

Farb: One of the issues we have and will continue to have is finding the time to write. It's become increasingly more difficult over the years because once you start writing publications, it generates more e-mail and more phone calls. It's a good idea for faculty to take a leave for a few months to get a chance to write, in order to get away from the constant e-mails and phone calls. You just can't write for ten minutes, and then answer phone calls and e-mails, and then go back to writing. My prediction for new faculty is that after six months and after you've written your first publication, you're going to find it more difficult to find time to write because people are going to be attracted to you as a source of information. They'll know you're there.

Vogt: There was a consensus among faculty here for many years—at least as long as I've been here—that the audience for our publications is the public officials of North Carolina and the profes-

sional organizations to which those officials belong. But the younger faculty members, especially those associated with the MPA Program, have to reach that audience and also other audiences. *A Local Government Finance Bulletin* that Shea and Bill Rivenbark [faculty member since 1999; specialist in local government administration] prepared on a revenue-neutral tax rate is a publication addressed primarily to North Carolina public officials and those with whom they work. Bill and Maureen Berner and Willow Jacobson [faculty member since 2003; specialist in human resource management] have to write not only for that audience but also for an academic audience located mainly beyond North Carolina.

I notice younger faculty members writing in different ways to reach different audiences. For example, they'll write something on citizen participation for *Popular Government* and then prepare another version of it for a public administration national journal.

Lawrence: For the lawyers, the kinds of things we write about haven't changed very much. The substance has changed, though, because the law is pretty dynamic. So even in the same field, there will be changes in the law. Also, the presentation of our publications has gotten much more professional in the time I've been here. When I started, a lot of the books were basically bound typescripts. We had one editor. Now we have a full staff in the publications area, and what they put out looks very good, very professional. That's been the big change in the way we do things in publications.

Jill D. Moore: The increased complexity in our work, and the faster pace we have discussed, affect our clients as well. They face increased complexity in what's regulating them and a faster pace of happenings to which they have to respond. So one of the things I'm thinking about when I'm deciding what to write and when I'm going to find the time to write it, is what do they need to read and when are they going to find time to read it? More and more of my writing is in the form of outlines, or questions and answers. I think these "skimmable" formats are more likely to be useful to them.

Brown-Graham: I agree. For each publication I've done, I've put together an ad hoc group of clients to help advise me on what they need to know and how I need to present it in a way that's easily accessible to them.

Maureen M. Berner: The question of how much time we spend writing for academic journals versus how much time we work on projects with local government officials is a very odd question. It should not be considered a separation, or division, of time and effort. If you view it as serving two different masters, two different audiences, you'll never satisfy either one. You have to come up with an approach that integrates those activities and goals. For me it's taken years, but I feel much more comfortable now than I did five or six years ago.

Future Needs and Challenges

Whisnant: What do you anticipate will be the big needs and challenges for North Carolina government officials?

Vogt: Public law, government leadership, and public service have been at the core of this institution since its inception and continue to be uppermost in the minds of us who work here today. We've got to keep our eyes on this set of values. As the state grows, as it becomes more diverse demographically, politically, and so forth, it's important for us to continue trying to contribute to the effectiveness of government.

Farb: I think in the next 10–20 years, we need to deliver information in a way that someone can get it at their computer, at their desk or at home, if they want to. Live teaching will always be important, but people's lives are busier and will become more complex, and we have to give them the opportunity to take a course by sitting at their computer. I may be dead wrong, but I don't see them having a choice of coming to a live conference. Many of them are going to have to get it where they are.

Denning: Another specific challenge for the future, given the growth of the School, is figuring out the best way for us all to complement one another in what we're doing.

Brown-Graham: For me the challenge in continually assessing the relevance and value of my work lies in my ability to see my work in a broader environmental context—the environmental context in which our clients operate. That requires us to continually ask them about their environment.

It's also a changed environmental context in terms of other service providers who are doing things similar to what the Institute is doing. Over the next ten years, we'll have to spend a lot more time figuring out who our potential collaborators are and who our potential competitors are. And we'll have to make sure that our work is filling a unique niche for our clients, and be willing to work with others who can provide some other services.

Lawrence: When you get to be my age or Jack's or Bob's, it's more fun to reminisce about the past than to think about the future. One of the things I've seen in almost forty years at the Institute is the amazing growth of North Carolina. There are a lot more people in North Carolina than there were forty years ago, and there are a lot more government officials. For that reason alone, it's gotten much more difficult for us to reach all of our clients through regular classes. So I think that Bob is absolutely right: over time we're going to have to develop new ways to educate people, whether it's through the Internet or through other kinds of distance learning.

Notes

Ann and I thank Richard Whisnant for moderating the discussion; Jack Vogt, Bob Farb, Shea Denning, David Lawrence, and Anita Brown-Graham for serving as discussants; Ray Hockaday for recording the discussion; and Bev Howarth for transcribing it.

1. The term may have originated with Albert Coates, who "encouraged faculty members to go out and 'crawl through the bloodstream'—by which he meant visit government offices, talk with officials about their concerns, learn their practices and customs, and understand deeply their day-to-day work." "Teaching North Carolina Government," *Popular Government*, Fall 2006, p. 48.