

## Institute Launches Center for Public Technology

**A**s director of social services for the State of North Carolina, Kevin FitzGerald dealt with some of the state's most complex information technology systems. He now is applying this experience at the Institute as planning director for the new Center for Public Technology.

The center's mission is to help North Carolina governments and their partners better understand and use information technology to improve public services and to strengthen their communities. In 1997 the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners commissioned the Institute to evaluate the technology needs and capacity of all 100 counties. According to FitzGerald, "The study clearly defined a set of critical needs and barriers to effective use of information technology. The Center for Public Technology is our direct response to these needs."

The center will use teaching, research, and technical assistance to improve the delivery of public services and to transform citizen involvement with government. As it develops, the center will seek ways of using technology to improve communication within individual governments and between those governments and their many private and public partners.

"We are creating several advisory groups drawn from state and local government, other academic units and institutions, technology companies, and other private companies and nonprofit organizations doing business with government," FitzGerald explains. "These partners



will guide the formation of the center and its operation, help select and participate in demonstration projects, and help generate adequate support and access to specialized technical expertise when it is needed."

The center is in start-up mode. In January, more than 180 local and state government employees attended a training session that offered practical advice on managing and procuring technology projects. Also, information technology training sessions have been added to the Institute's existing course offerings on topics ranging from streamlining government processes to information technology and citizen involvement.

In early February the center went online with a new Web site, [www.cpt.unc.edu](http://www.cpt.unc.edu). The site offers information about the center's services and provides technology resource links for local governments. In the future, FitzGerald says, the site will add an information clearinghouse on public technology issues. Through the clearinghouse, local and state government officials will be able to obtain unbiased, reliable, and helpful information about peers' experiences with new business processes, specific hardware, network and software applications, best practices, and results of demonstration projects.

"We also hope to find funding to establish an 'eGovernment' demonstration lab in the expanded Institute building," FitzGerald adds. "The lab would allow existing software to be demonstrated and new software to be modeled and tested before governmental units make purchase decisions. It would support the creation of better, more serviceable products by enabling governments and various private, public, and nonprofit partners to collaborate on software development."

The center is currently supported by planning funds from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, and the Rural Internet Access Authority and through a demonstration project in rural eastern North Carolina.

For more information on the Center for Public Technology, check the Web site, [www.cpt.unc.edu](http://www.cpt.unc.edu), or contact Kevin FitzGerald, phone (919) 962-4301, e-mail [kfitz@iogmail.iog.unc.edu](mailto:kfitz@iogmail.iog.unc.edu).

—Ann Cary Simpson



## Grantham Joins Institute Faculty

**K**imberly M. Grantham joined the Institute in February as assistant professor of public law and government. She specializes in real and personal property records, property tax collection, state and local taxation, notaries public, and privilege license taxation. All of these areas were formerly handled by Professor William A. Campbell, who began a phased retirement in March.

Before taking a position at the Institute, Grantham was assistant county attorney in Durham County, representing the county in tax assessment and collection matters. From 1994 to 1997, she also served as the assistant general counsel for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, in Raleigh.

Grantham is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, earning her B.A. with distinction in 1991. She received her J.D. from Duke University Law School in 1994. Her professional memberships include the North Carolina State Bar, the American Bar Association, the North Carolina Bar Association, and the North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers. A native of Onslow County, Grantham is married and is the mother of two young daughters.

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