

## New Environmental Finance Center Focuses on Real-World Issues



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**U**NC–Chapel Hill’s School of Government, in conjunction with the Kenan Center for Private Enterprise, has a new research and assistance center focusing on the real-world problems of environmental finance and management. The Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina, called the *efc@unc* for short, aims to “provide a bridge between students and faculty in the university who work principally on environmental financing, management and planning tools and the governments and businesses whose job it is to use those tools for the public interest,” according to its mission statement.

“Local governments have a diverse set of challenges in the environmental area,” explains Richard Whisnant, director of the center and a faculty member in environmental law at the School of Government. “Among them are providing safe drinking

water, handling and treating wastewater, collecting and disposing of solid wastes, and minimizing the many adverse effects of growth and development.”

The common denominator of these and all other environmental governance challenges, Whisnant says, is that they have costs—and finding the financing to pay these costs is not always as simple as getting a federal grant. “Finance has become a critical, sometimes complicated, requirement of improved environmental management,” he observes.

Started with a planning grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1998, the *efc@unc* has blossomed into an ongoing center with research and assistance projects in a wide variety of environmental areas (see sidebar, opposite). Whisnant and Jeff Hughes, associate director and an international consultant on environmental finance (as well as a former utilities director in Chatham County), are the principal staff. Other faculty members and students work with them on projects.

In addition to its project work, the center is developing partnerships with a wide range of organizations that provide training and assistance to environmental leaders in local government. It also has joined eight other environmental finance centers at universities around the United States to create a network of people working on environmental finance and management problems within academic settings but with a mission to help with real-world issues.

Additional information is available at the center’s Web site, [www.efc.unc.edu](http://www.efc.unc.edu). To learn more about the center’s work or to offer suggestions for projects or research that should be undertaken, contact Whisnant at (919) 962-9320 or [richard\\_whisnant@unc.edu](mailto:richard_whisnant@unc.edu), or Hughes at (919) 843-4956 or [jhughes@unc.edu](mailto:jhughes@unc.edu).

## efc@unc projects

During 2001 the efc@unc

- published a major report on the costs and financing of North Carolina's Million Acres land-conservation initiative;
- began work with several other environmental finance centers on a national pilot project on source-water protection, which is based in Rutherford County; and
- delivered a comprehensive environmental finance curriculum to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other environmental finance centers around the country.

For 2002 the efc@unc has been awarded a grant to develop innovative distance-education modules on environmental finance topics for engineering master's degree students and local government environmental professionals who have had little opportunity for practical environmental finance training. This project is the start of long-term efforts that are central to the strategic plan of the efc@unc: to use information technology as a bridge between environmental finance expertise and government officials (and their consultants and contractors) who most directly need that expertise.

Another of the center's efforts in this regard is a database of state-based environmental financing sources in the Southeast. The database will include grant and loan sources that are funded by state or local governments or other entities that operate primarily within a state or a similar limited geographical area.

## Consortium Builds Bridges Between Government and Youth

**T**he North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, a program of the Institute of Government, has received major grants for several initiatives to help local governments involve young people in issues and programs that concern them and their communities:

- A pilot project funded by the Golden LEAF Foundation will develop youth leadership programs in two rural counties, Bertie and Swain. Initially the consortium will organize model youth councils linked to local governments and create cross-generational teams to explore the economic development challenges facing these counties. In the



LESIE ANDERSON, NORTH CAROLINA CIVIC EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

second phase of the project, the consortium will help other rural communities replicate the most successful elements of the pilot program.

Already the grant has allowed Bertie County to hire a youth coordinator to develop a youth council and build a network of programs that serve or involve young people.

- With a grant channeled through Providence College (in Rhode Island) from funds from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the consortium will develop a network of twenty-four high schools across the state, then work with a team of students at each school to inventory civic involvement opportunities. The teams will lead focus groups of parents, students, teachers, and others to identify these opportunities and to select at least one strategy for their high school to use to improve youth civic involvement. Local governments and school boards will be partners in this effort.

- A Small Grants Program funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation will provide \$1,000 to \$10,000 to outstanding youth involvement programs. The consortium encourages local governments, including school boards, to apply for these grants. Applications for 2002 grants will be available from the consortium office by July 1, 2002. Recipients will be selected by December 1, 2002.
- The consortium also has received a substantial two-year grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to enhance its organizational capacity, including fund development and strategic planning. By improving its internal practices, the consortium will increase its ability to support and expand its most successful programs.

Research shows that giving young people a chance to participate in government decision making is the most effective form of civic education, according to consortium director Debra Henzey. "It fosters lifelong civic interest and involvement."

The consortium's work builds on a tradition going back to the 1940s, when Institute of Government founder Albert Coates involved the Institute in civic education classes for teachers and young people. The original efforts died out during World War II, but local government officials asked the Institute to restore this part of its mission during a long-term planning process in the mid-1990s. Government leaders were increasingly concerned that the quality of public debate on important issues had declined and that fewer people in communities were willing or prepared to assume leadership roles.

The consortium was founded in 1997 with support from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. Enlisting as a partner is free. For more information on the consortium's programs or to send information about local government youth programs, contact Henzey at (919) 962-8273 or [henzey@iogmail.iog.unc.edu](mailto:henzey@iogmail.iog.unc.edu).

## Teleconference Provides Timely, Economical Look at Changes in Law

**O**n December 6, 2001, the North Carolina General Assembly ratified Senate Bill 914, making significant changes in the laws governing public building construction. Most of these changes became effective on January 1, 2002, creating an immediate need for local and state government officials to comply.

The Institute of Government met this need by collaborating with other groups involved in public construction to organize a statewide teleconference, which aired on February 20, 2002, to an estimated 800 viewers. According to Frayda Bluestein, associate professor of public law and government at the Institute and a principal organizer of the conference, the audience's response suggests that the program was successful on many fronts. "It's an example of how we can use technology to communicate useful and timely information at minimal cost," Bluestein said.

The teleconference reached a broad range of people, including local and state government officials, private-sector architects and engineers who work on public projects, and even some construction contractors. Viewers got the technical information they needed in a timely manner. They learned, for example, the new dollar thresholds that trigger the competitive-bidding requirements in public construc-

tion and the new requirements for dispute resolution and minority participation.

By broadcasting to enough sites statewide, organizers sought to ensure that no person had to travel more than 100 miles to view the program. Approximately twenty sites, mostly community colleges and university campuses, hosted the program. Other viewers accessed the program through Web streaming technology, which allowed them to view it on a personal computer.

With the financial support of the North Carolina Department of Administration, the program was offered at no cost to those attending. Other organizations providing input and in-kind support included The University of North Carolina, the Community Colleges System, the North Carolina School Boards Association, the North Carolina Hospitals Association, the North Carolina League of Municipalities, and the Association of County Commissioners. The program was produced by the Agency for Public Telecommunications, which is a part of the N.C. Department of Administration.

Most sites had telephone, e-mail, and fax connections with the studio. Breaks were scheduled so that questions from the sites could be received and then answered during two panel discussions included in the teleconference. Behind the scenes, ex-

perts representing various agencies screened questions to avoid duplication and to make sure that the panel addressed issues of broad interest to the audience.

Materials for the program were made available in advance on a Web site created especially for the program. In most cases, those attending were able to print out the materials.

For information about the substance of the new law, visit <http://ncinfo.iog.unc.edu/pubs/nclegis/nclegis2001/pdfs/Ch21web.pdf> or contact Bluestein at [bluestein@iog.mail.iog.unc.edu](mailto:bluestein@iog.mail.iog.unc.edu). Videos of the conference are available for checkout from the Institute of Government library. Teleconference materials, which include a complete summary of the new legislation, are available at the teleconference Web address: <http://ncinfo.iog.unc.edu/faculty/bluestein/senatebill914/>.

**"Being able to view the program at the office instead of traveling is a wonderful opportunity."**

—Participant

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NORTH CAROLINA AGENCY FOR PUBLIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS

### New Scholarships Available for Institute Classes

**T**he Local Government Federal Credit Union (LGFCU) is offering its members the opportunity to apply for scholarships that will cover tuition for Institute of Government classes, conferences, and seminars. Scholarships will be awarded quarterly. Application deadlines are March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15. Funds are limited, so applications should be sent in as early as possible each quarter.

For more information and an application form, call (800) 344-4846 or e-mail [Info@LGFCU.org](mailto:Info@LGFCU.org). LGFCU plans to put information about the scholarship program on its Web site ([www.LGFCU.org](http://www.LGFCU.org)) in the near future.

## MPA Students Present Results of Practical Research

**H**ow much Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Plan funding did North Carolina lose because Hispanics were undercounted in the 2000 census?

Which community-based programs for delinquent juveniles are most likely to help young people avoid further trouble with the law?

What lessons can be learned from Wake County's solution to local school financing disputes?

These and similar questions are answered in this year's "capstone" papers — reports of practical research conducted each year by students graduating from the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Each MPA student distills his or her capstone project into a five-page summary and presents the findings at the MPA Program's annual Practical Research for Public Officials Conference, held this year on April 19, 2002. The conference is open to the public, and the topics of all the papers are listed on the MPA Web site: [www.iog.nc.edu/uncmpa/students/capstone.html](http://www.iog.nc.edu/uncmpa/students/capstone.html).

For information about the conference or to order papers, contact Jessica Russell at (919) 962-0425 or [mpastaff@iogmail.iog.unc.edu](mailto:mpastaff@iogmail.iog.unc.edu).

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## Listservs Connect Local Governments

**T**he Institute of Government offers a number of listservs that allow local government personnel to share information with their peers and Institute faculty. According to Philip Young, who manages the program, "The lists are wonderful resources for connecting with others doing similar work and for learning about the latest local government issues that a group is facing. All it takes for an individual to use a list is a computer with an Internet connection and an e-mail account."

Listservs collect multiple e-mail addresses under a single e-mail address and allow members to send a message to everyone on the list using that single address—for example, [listservname@listserv.unc.edu](mailto:listservname@listserv.unc.edu).

To join a list or to get more information about how listservs work, contact Young at (919) 962-0592 or [pyoung@imap.unc.edu](mailto:pyoung@imap.unc.edu).

List Name	Group Served	Administrator
buslic	Business Licensing	Philip Young
ccmanagers	City and County Managers	William Rivenbark
cclub	Candidate's Club for Tax Assessors and Administrators	Joseph Hunt
clerks	City and County Clerks	Fleming Bell
dssattorneylist	Department of Social Services Attorneys	Janet Mason and John Saxon
humanresources	Human Resources and Personnel	Diane Juffras
fodg	Facilitation and Organizational Development Group	John Stephens
iogcriminal	Recent North Carolina Criminal Court Decisions	Robert Farb
instofgovpubs	News of Institute of Government Recent Publication Releases	Katrina Hunt
lglaw	Local Government Lawyers	Fleming Bell
ncard	Registers of Deeds	Philip Young
ncfinance	Finance Officers and Directors	Gregory Allison
ncgis	Geographic Information Systems	Philip Young
nclgisa	Local Government Information Systems Associations	Philip Young
nclgba	Local Government Budget Association	Maureen Berner
ncplan	Planners and Planning Departments	David Owens
ncpma	Property Mappers Association	David Owens
ncpublicworks	Public Works	Richard Whisnant
ncpurchasing	Purchasing Agents	Frayda Bluestein
soilconservation	Soil Conservation and Management	Richard Whisnant
ptax	Property Tax Assessors and Administrators	Joseph Hunt
waste	Waste Management	Richard Whisnant