



Faculty Lunches with the Dean (Greg Allison)(No. 16)

Author : Mike Smith

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Date : April 2, 2017



This is the next post from the most recent version of Faculty Lunches with the Dean. The group included Dona Lewandowski, Trey Allen, and Mark Botts. Greg Allison was a part of the group, and this post summarizes what he shared about his work.

Greg Allison. Greg runs a certification program for the North Carolina Government Finance Officers' Association, which is something we have done for more than 30 years. The program is one of the oldest in the country. NCGFOA is a volunteer organization without any professional staff and the certification program requires a lot of work. Like the Wizard of Oz, Greg is the person behind the curtain pushing all of the buttons and pulling all of the levers to make the certification happen. The School also charges NCGFOA a modest administrative fee to cover some of Joanne Brewer's time, who also supports for the program.



Greg will use his Faculty Development Assignment to overhaul the program in the coming months. He inherited the certification program from David Lawrence, and the present structure is at least 20 years old. The changes will include updating the four banks of existing test questions related to cash management, governmental accounting, budgeting, and financial management. Finance officers, private investment managers, and other volunteers will help Greg update the test banks.

The demand for the certification program is growing partly due to a wave of retirements and the hiring of many new people. It also turns out that more managers are requiring certification—as a qualification to get a job or to keep a job as a finance officer. Greg offers a week-long governmental accounting class that traditionally has averaged 35 students. Last year there were 45 students in the class, and next week the registration will be 70.



The largely millennial hires, according to Greg, are asking for a more modern approach to certification. The tests have only been offered twice a year—in the east and west—and finance officers proctor the exams and grade the tests. A major part of the overhaul involves moving the exams to an online format—replacing the testing sites, proctoring, and manual grading. Greg expects that the online format will provide better service for the students and save the School a lot of administrative time. The test will be offered four times a year, for example, and students will get their results immediately instead of two months later.

Greg hopes that his experience in putting the certification exam online will be helpful to colleagues who also manage certification programs for their clients. This is important work, but it has not been urgent enough to move ahead of other projects demanding Greg's time. The Faculty Development Assignment—which grew out of our strategic foresight process—has given him the opportunity to set aside the time required to make this needed overhaul. My guess is that certification generally will be more important to our clients in the coming years, and we probably need to think hard about whether and how to do it. Thanks to Greg for his leadership.

