



Faculty Lunches with the Dean (No. 2)

Author : Mike Smith

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Last Thursday I had lunch with four faculty members in the first session of the new Faculty Lunches with the Dean. The idea came from the strategic foresight process and I really like the way the first lunch played out. People were really interested in the work of their colleagues and they took away ideas that might apply in their own work. I had promised to blog about the conversations so that more people could learn about everyone's work. I blogged the other day about what was shared by Sara DePasquale and Kirk Boone. This post covers the information shared by Diane Juffras and Adam Lovelady.



Adam Lovelady



Adam Lovelady. Adam talked about the connection between innovation and failure in the two Solutions Forums that he did last year with money from the Innovation Fund. The one-day Forums invited local government leaders from across departments and jurisdictions to come together for a one-day session that combined advanced training and crowd-sourced problem solving. Adam described [a session of the TED Radio Hour](#) that encouraged people to consider failure as an option if you really expect to develop and implement innovative ideas. He also mentioned [Google X](#), which is Google's moonshot factory that looks for "the intersection of a big problem, a radical solution, and breakthrough technology." Google X describes their approach this way: "We want to force ourselves to learn. We actively embrace failure: by making mistakes, we make progress. In this way, our ideas get stronger faster, or we discard them and move on to new ones."

Adam talked about the successful parts of the Solutions Forums, which included getting a good cross-section of cities represented and teams from each place that included a diverse mix of professional positions. He produced a draft report on suburban redevelopment that included extensive research involving real examples from around the country—now the [final report is available as a very useful publication](#). Adam also asked several faculty members to experiment with a fast-paced presentation technique used to cover lots of information quickly—it is called [Pecha Kucha](#) and it worked well.

I attended the Solutions Forum in Charlotte and it was a positive experience—the evaluations were good—but it did not meet Adam's high expectations. He was pushing for something more and I really appreciate that he was willing to take risks to get there. Adam's main disappointment was that he just didn't get deep engagement from the participants. In retrospect a one-day session probably was not enough time for them to establish the rapport needed for that kind of engagement. The Forum was intentionally located in a place where redevelopment is a major issue, and yet the sessions did not take advantage of the location. The training room in the hotel felt like a bunker and it could have been located anywhere. Adam had a tour planned at the end of the day, but by then people were tired and the tour was cancelled. He also had posted the draft report using Google Docs before the sessions and had encouraged the participants to review it and make comments. He got almost no comments on the report before or after the Forums. That kind of advance work on a long report is not the kind of thing officials expect from the School—it may have required more preparation or a different approach.

Adam learned a lot from the Solutions Forums and overall I think they were successful. I appreciate that he is willing to push himself by taking risks with a different and more demanding approach. To the extent he failed to meet his own high expectations, I celebrate that he made the effort and I'm confident it will pay dividends in the future.



Diane Juffras

Diane Juffras. Diane focused on two major projects aimed at helping local governments comply with complicated federal requirements. The first involved compliance by local government officials with the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Diane worked with Bob Joyce in producing a webinar on how to meet the IRS's complicated requirements for showing that local governments have complied with the mandate to offer health insurance to full-time employees. Diane and Bob had allowed webinar participants to email questions for two weeks after the webinar. The result is a comprehensive 21-page question-and-answer document that was distributed to all of the webinar participants. Diane has now completed a short publication titled, *A Public Employers Guide to the Affordable Care Act*, that is receiving the finishing touches in the Publications Division. The plan is to offer a series of webinars on compliance with the ACA requirements that will complement the book.

Diane's other large project was helping local government comply with the coming changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act's (FLSA) overtime regulations. As with the ACA requirements, Diane has combined webinars with written materials—for the FLSA overtime requirements is was a long blog post. The webinar was the highest subscribed single-subject offering by the School. Diane is following up with a series of traveling FLSA workshops now that she has been told program support is available.

The discussion about Diane's work identified a couple of important issues. One is whether there is a way to reach a potential national market for some of our work. The ACA requirements for local governments apply equally to governments across the country, not just in North Carolina. Can we use Diane's book to pilot how we might market some of our materials to a national audience? The other issue is how we expand program support services for programs that are needed and might generate revenue. Is there a way to scale up our program support without always hiring full-time program managers? We can't be in a position where faculty are unable to offer programs that will



have an impact and generate revenue because we don't have capacity to support them in the short term.