



Gordon Whitaker to Retire

Author : Mike Smith

Categories : [SOG News](#)

Date : November 9, 2010



I am announcing another transition, and once again I have mixed feelings. Gordon Whitaker has told me that he plans to retire in the summer of 2012. Of course that is wonderful for Gordon, who has earned the right to relax and enjoy retirement. It presents challenges for us, however, because of the many different ways that Gordon contributes to the MPA Program and to the School. He will be extremely difficult to replace. I am pleased that Gordon has given us plenty of lead time to identify and recruit his successor.

For many years Gordon has been critically important to the MPA Program—he has been its heart and soul. He directed the Program in the Political Science Department, and he has shaped how generations of students think about leadership and organizational development. Of course through the good work of former students he has improved governance across North Carolina and beyond. The MPA Program would never have come to the School without Gordon's courage in raising questions publicly about its level of support within Political Science. His comments alerted alumni when campus negotiations about its possible transfer had stalled, and one of them strongly encouraged Chancellor Hooker to transfer the program and provide much-needed resources. A happy bonus for the School was that Gordon moved here with the Program.

Gordon's contributions always have extended beyond the MPA Program. He wrote *Local Government in North Carolina*, a primer that is widely used as a civics text in North Carolina's public schools. Gordon also has been involved from the beginning in planning, creating, and supporting the Civic Education Consortium. His work with Lydian Altman and Margaret Henderson on the intersection between the government, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors was path breaking here and around the country.



In some ways one of Gordon's contributions is less tangible, but it is equally important. In working with others to create new programs and initiatives, Gordon is a wonderful design thinker. His creative contributions have shaped so many of our programs, including the Public Executive Leadership Academy and Strategic Public Leadership.

We will have plenty of time to honor Gordon before he retires in 2012, and I will appoint a committee shortly to develop a position description for his successor. In the meantime, feel free to congratulate Gordon on all that he has accomplished.