

## Important Carolina Initiative: Culture of Innovation

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Chancellor Thorp has made it clear that Carolina's "to-do list is nothing less than the greatest problems of our time . . . ." According to Holden, "[w]e know we must translate new knowledge into more practical applications, to create ideas, transform them, and ensure that they are applied for profound impact." He has created [the Innovation Circle—a group of distinguished alumni and friends](#)—he also has appointed Judith Cone (Special Assistant for Innovation and Entrepreneurship) to "lead a strategic process that will culminate in a roadmap for systematic innovation and entrepreneurship at Carolina." The roadmap is scheduled to be released on University Day, October 12, 2010.

[A working report titled \*Innovation@Carolina\*](#) provides a conceptual framework for this initiative and states that it seeks to answer the following question: "**What would it take for Carolina to have the greatest ongoing impact on the world?**" Does the impact language sound familiar? "The challenge is to bridge the gap between knowing and doing" through "a culture of systematic innovation and entrepreneurship . . . ." That means encouraging innovation across all three of Carolina's missions—teaching, research, and public service. Innovation means more than "a novel, valuable idea." "Only at the point of [an idea] being sufficiently implemented [does] it qualify for our definition of innovation." If implementation is a critical component of innovation, Carolina must provide "the necessary translational pathways to move new ideas to action." The report naturally recognizes that the innovation process includes basic research, but it also includes "problem-based discovery" or applied research, that "engages in research targeted toward immediate applicability." "Calling upon university groups to drive toward impact beyond the



traditional outputs of publication and teaching will require new ways of thinking, new resources, new knowledge, and alignment across the university.”

What does all of this mean for the School of Government? We have created a culture here that applies our research in ways that make a difference in the world. Albert Coates created the Institute of Government to “bridge the gap” between knowledge in the books and government in practice. The School has created different “translational pathways” for getting information to practitioners who take action based on our applied research. The School always has focused on making a practical difference, and our strategic planning has emphasized more strongly than ever the idea of having the greatest possible impact. Except for talking about our work as public service and engagement rather than innovation, it is striking how closely our culture and day-to-day work tracks with the ideas contained in *Innovation@Carolina*. Throughout our history, the School has found ways to implement faculty research so that it has an enduring impact on government in North Carolina.

The working report has a section on the tradition of innovation and entrepreneurship at Carolina. The School is one of the featured examples. “Carolina’s deeply rooted tradition of public service generates its own brand of entrepreneurial and civic spirit. The School of Government is an example of academic innovation with positive public impact.” I completely agree. We have lots of experience in bringing academic knowledge to bear on real-world problems, and I hope that we find ways in the coming months to share that experience with our colleagues on campus. The overlap between the academic planning process and the innovation initiative offers the School an opportunity to help Carolina navigate the challenges of implementing research in ways that have a major impact. I will write more about this in a future blog post. In the meantime, do you have ideas about what role, if any, the School should play in helping Carolina become more engaged and innovative?