



Major Gift from the LGFCU

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Once again our friends at the Local Government Federal Credit Union have stepped up to support important work at the School. Last Saturday I received the following email message from Maurice Smith, President of the LGFCU: “*We have work to do. Last night, the Board approved a grant to the SOG for \$1.625 million.*” Here’s the rest of the story

Nine years ago Maurice invited me to have lunch with him—we had never met and I honestly could not imagine what we had in common. I said as much to Maurice early in our conversation (politely of course). In his quiet and earnest way, Maurice pointed out that our missions were the same—to improve the lives of North Carolinians. Okay. We went about it in different ways, he said, but we both worked with local government officials and we were bound to have mutual interests. Maurice said that we could do great things together for North Carolina if we put our minds to it.

In the years since that lunch, the LGFCU has sponsored courses, provided money for scholarships, and funded our new mural. Maurice and his colleagues have been wonderful partners. I invited Maurice to lunch in February. I thanked him for all of his support, especially the funding for the art project. I reminded him about our first lunch and his wish that we do great things. As much as I valued the projects that we had done together, I told Maurice that they didn’t strike me as the kinds of things he originally had in mind. I asked him if he would be willing to consider some proposals that would meet those higher expectations. Maurice responded enthusiastically, and he said the sooner the better.

After a little more conversation about the interests of the LGFCU, I came back and asked a number of folks to develop proposals. We submitted four proposals hoping that they might fund one of them. They ended up funding two.

[Expanding Development Finance in North Carolina.](#) This is a five-year partnership between the



LGFCU and the School to help create new opportunities for economically distressed communities in North Carolina by increasing their access to and use of innovative development finance instruments. Many of those communities go through a process of determining strategic priorities for development, but then they have difficulty obtaining financing to pay for new projects. Through this initiative, the School will work with local governments to increase their capacity to take advantage of complicated development finance products and services. The LGFCU is giving us \$1M for this work, and we will sustain it over time through a combination of contracts and grants. This proposal was developed and will be implemented by Will Lambe, Jonathan Morgan, and Tyler Mulligan.

LGFCU Fellows Executive Development Program. This is a four-year partnership with the LGFCU to create a new executive development fellowship program aimed at local government mid-level managers. It will fill a gap in our management and leadership training—we focus now on basic skills for entry-level managers and how to facilitate community change for experienced executives. Many talented public employees have risen through the ranks to become mid-level managers without much training. This program will give them the skills to develop and manage programs and people, and to build systems and cultures for creative, effective service delivery. In addition to designing the program, the \$625,000 in funding will subsidize the course registration fees for three cohorts of fellows—allowing us to successfully start the program at a time when training and development budgets are being cut. We expect it to become self-sustaining through regular registration fees in the fifth year. This proposal was developed by our public leadership faculty, and it will be directed by Willow Jacobson.



Maurice Smith

These brief descriptions don't do justice to these two projects, and we will share more information as they are developed. All of our folks who developed proposals did a great job, and we will continue seeking support for the others. These two were selected for a variety of reasons, but a key factor was that they would become self-sustaining after the LGFCU's initial investment. This is a model that we are likely to pursue much more often as permanent state funding becomes harder



to find. Special thanks to Ann Simpson for her work in securing this gift.

I am grateful to the LGFCU, and especially to Maurice Smith for his strong vision and his trust in the School. As Maurice said in his email, "Yahoo!"