



SCUPSO Annual Meeting

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I am in Knoxville, Tennessee for the annual meeting of [SCUPSO](#) (Southern Consortium of University Public Service Organizations). SCUPSO is an organization of centers and institutes that have missions similar to our mission—though we are larger than many of them, and we are the only one that focuses at all on public law. Most of the others emphasize one or more areas of public administration. This year's meeting is hosted by the Institute for Public Service, which administratively is a part of the University of Tennessee System.

I like this meeting because it is fun to learn about what our colleagues are doing in their respective states. The opening session tomorrow is about re-thinking your mission in view of the current economic conditions. I don't expect that we will change our mission, but we certainly might learn something new and useful about how to carry out our existing mission. There is a session on webinars and podcasts, and I'm participating in a separate session on social networking and blogs. A number of you shared information with me about the details behind how you are using blogs, Twitter, and Facebook. Our SCUPSO colleagues will be interested in your innovative work and the positive feedback from North Carolina officials about its impact.

There was a directors' dinner tonight that included a speaker—Dr. Joe Johnson, President Emeritus of the University of Tennessee. He talked about several features of the [University of Tennessee's Institute for Public Service](#) that have made it successful throughout its impressive 60-year history. The Institute does remarkable work in Tennessee. It was created by the state legislature, which



gave it credibility with and support from policymakers. The Institute receives some of its financial support from cities and counties through legislation that allocates a portion of local taxes for its general operations. Tennessee local governments as a result feel like they have a stake in the Institute and they also support its work in other ways. It reminded me of the support we receive through local government membership dues—though I must admit that an automatic funding mechanism from local governments sounds pretty good in these tough economic times. Dr. Johnson emphasized that the Institute has prospered partly because it is the only university-based program in Tennessee dedicated to working with state and local governments.

The main reason for its success, however, has been because of the excellent work of its staff members over the years—working in many different areas of specialization throughout Tennessee. That is the same reason we have been successful in North Carolina.