



# Technology Tools Increase the School's Impact

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When he founded the Institute of Government more than eighty years ago, Albert Coates could not have imagined the technology tools we use today. He was an innovator, but he was stuck using a typewriter and a land line. When we think of advances in technology, we usually think about how much we depend on our smartphones or how social media connects us with others—for better or worse. At the School, online tools have helped our faculty share their knowledge in ways that are timely and accessible. Those tools have increased our impact, and it is exciting to think about how the next generation of tools might increase our impact even more.

## Blogs

One of our early forays into online media was [the School's blogs](#). Jeff Welty was our pioneer, starting the Criminal Law Blog in 2009, largely as an experiment; his ambition was to post something every day of the work week. Thanks to help from his colleagues in the criminal law field, he has met that goal and the blog has become incredibly popular, boasting more than 5,000 page views per day.



None of us could have predicted the popularity of our blogs. The information and analysis is timely and accessible. Readers forward posts to their colleagues and use them as training tools in staff meetings. Police chiefs have passed out blog posts at roll call and attorneys have taken copies with them to court. Our blogs are often cited in news articles across the state. When I visit with managers and other public officials, many mention the blogs as one of the most important services the School has ever provided.

I love that our blogs involve collaboration from many different contributors and many areas of expertise. [Our books and longer publications](#) certainly have an important place in the daily work of public officials, but clients are pressed for time and they need resources that are short, accessible, and immediate. Responsiveness has long been one of our core values, and the blogs illustrate it perfectly.

### **NC Finance Connect**

It's been two years since Kara Millonzi created the robust online community [NC Finance Connect](#). This free portal allows local and state government professionals to exchange information related to budgeting, financial management, purchasing, taxation, community and economic development, and other topics. Users may ask and answer questions, voice concerns, share resources, advertise open positions, and get peer-to-peer support. In early 2017 she convinced nearly 1,000 users to



join the community, replacing a listserv that was much more limited. Currently, NC Finance Connect has 1,750 active members.

Not surprisingly, Kara hasn't stopped there. She is working with the School's IT team to identify and build NC Finance Connect 2.0 on a new platform that will better support its current features and the School's ability to meet future needs of finance officers across North Carolina.

### **NC Prosecutors' Resource Online**

We recently released our newest technology tool: the NC Prosecutors' Resource Online or [NCPRO](#). Since 1988, the School published the *North Carolina Prosecutors' Trial Manual*, a 950-page manual of legal analysis and practical guidance. Not exactly the easiest resource to lug around to meetings and courtrooms.

In 2017, Jonathan Holbrook joined the School of Government as our first-ever prosecutor educator. A veteran prosecutor, Jonathan was tasked with helping to build a web-based, interactive knowledge base to replace that manual.



In October, Jonathan, Jeff Welty, and Shea Denning, unveiled NCPRO at the prosecutors' annual conference. In one month, nearly half the prosecutors in the state (323) have joined the site. The prosecutors have early praise for the resource:

*"This web-based product is phenomenal. It links and connects so many resources. This will make research a breeze."*

*"Today our office had a question about how to get an out-of-state witness...I was able to figure this out in a matter of minutes using NCPRO, which linked me to the right forms, etc."*

*"NCPRO is the most user-friendly research tool I have ever seen. Better than Lexis and Westlaw for specific NC searches."*

Check out this clever [video](#) by Jonathan and Shea Denning. It explains what the prosecutors are raving about.

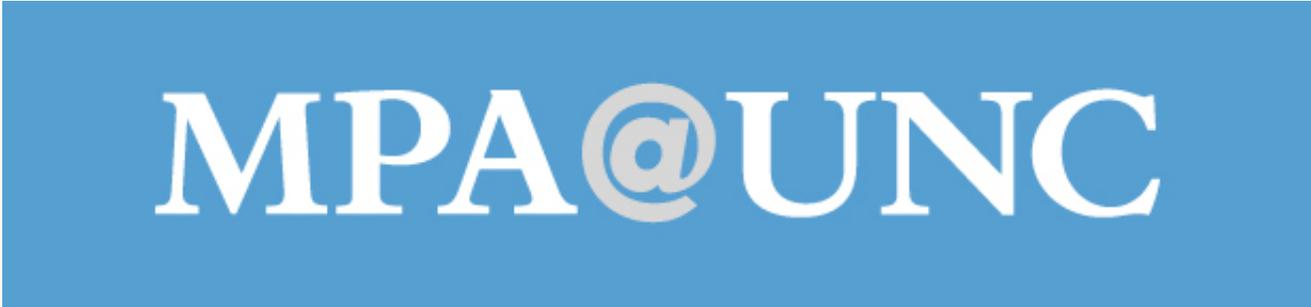
## **MPA@UNC**

When individuals think of technological advances in higher education, most think of online education. In 2013, the School of Government joined the ranks of top universities across the



country offering degrees online. Thanks to our partnership with [2U](#), MPA@UNC employs the same rigorous curriculum and courses as the on-campus master of public administration, and students are held to the same academic standards. Students attend live, face-to-face online classes led by faculty.

In January 2013, there were only 12 students enrolled. This past August, we conferred our 100<sup>th</sup> degree to an online student. And in five years, we've nearly quadrupled the number of master of public administration students served by the School.



MPA@UNC

Our online students are incredibly diverse and rely on the flexibility of an online format in order to continue in their careers. Among them is humanitarian and soccer star [Lorrie Fair Allen](#)—a World Cup champion, Olympic gold and silver medalist, and three-time national champion at UNC-Chapel Hill. There's [Justin Stirewalt](#), a devoted detective with the Surry County Sheriff's Office. And public school teacher and advocate [Ryan Rotundo](#), who launched a business to provide employment and entrepreneurship opportunities to people with disabilities. I absolutely love that the School can support students like Lorrie, Justin, and Ryan through the online format of our MPA program.

As we look to the future, we'll need to continue experimenting with new technologies to reach more of our clients in every corner of the state—and to reach them in ways that from their perspective are even more effective. It is important to recognize that all of our technology innovations have happened because faculty members decided to invest extra time and energy working to create something new. Starting these new initiatives in every case has required substantial extra effort on the part of everyone—faculty and professional staff. Beginning in the near future, we should take more of a School-wide look at how we have used technology, how the use of applications in some areas might be expanded to other areas, and how we might develop new applications to have an even greater impact. Thanks to everyone for all of your good work in making these innovations happen.

