



You Are Never Found Wanting

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Whenever I spend time with public officials, it is inevitable that someone will say how valuable they find your work. It happens a lot. For example, it happened last Friday in Concord at the NC Association of County Commissioners Conference. A county commissioner from Guilford County came up to me at the Horn of Plenty dinner (a subject for another blog post) to say how lucky North Carolina is to have the School of Government. At least six other people said something similar throughout the day at the conference. A number of county managers also complimented specific presentations that several of our colleagues made at this year's conference.

A couple of weeks ago I was copied on a letter from Michael Epperson, the City Manager for New Bern. The letter was written to President Tom Ross and copied to Chancellor Holden Thorp,



expressing “what a tremendous asset the University of North Carolina School of Government is.” Last year I visited with Michael to let him know about the School soon after he arrived in New Bern following a 23-year public service career in Columbus, Ohio. He certainly has taken advantage of our services.

His letter describes a workshop about our financial condition analysis tool that Greg Allison and Dale Roenigk offered in Wilmington. After hearing their “excellent” presentation, Michael invited Bill Rivenbark to facilitate a workshop with New Bern’s Board of Aldermen using the tool to analyze the city’s financial condition. “Bill did a tremendous job working with my Board, and this workshop facilitated the adoption of several strategic financial goals for our city.”

Michael also described attending another workshop with his board of aldermen and the county commissioners titled *Saving Money by Doing Business Together*. “Rick Morse and Donna Warner presented this workshop, which has directly led to New Bern and Craven County working together on several initiatives.

“As a graduate of The Ohio State University, it is hard for me to say that I have had more support in the last year from the School of Government than perhaps my entire time in Ohio. Needless to say, this support from the School of Government has helped my transition and proved to be an invaluable resource which I will continue to use during my tenure in North Carolina.”

Bob Joyce recently alerted me to [a blog post](#) about a memo to all employees from the administrator at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy. The letter outlines the historic events that occurred at their hospital over a 48-hour period—the deaths of JFK and Lee Harvey Oswald, the ascendancy of LBJ to the presidency, and serving as the temporary seat of government. In the midst of those events, the hospital had “[c]ontinued to function at close to normal pace as a large charity hospital.”

“What is it that enables an institution to take in stride such a series of history jolting events? Spirit? Dedication? Preparedness? Certainly, all of these are important, but the underlying factor is people. People whose education and training is sound. People whose judgment is calm and perceptive. People whose actions are deliberate and definitive. Our pride is not that we were swept up by the whirlwind of tragic history, but that when we were, we were not found wanting.”

The circumstances surrounding our work may not be as dramatic or history jolting as those in Dallas, but the administrator’s analysis identifies qualities that help to explain why North Carolina officials value the School. It is our people. It is you, and you are never found wanting. Thank you.