



Promoting Excellence in Government

THROUGH

RESPONSIVENESS

THROUGH

VISION

THROUGH

COLLABORATION



Promoting Excellence in Government

from the Director

Promoting excellence in government is what we are all about at the Vinson Institute. Every day, in some location, our faculty are helping governments expand the possibilities of what they can achieve for the people of Georgia.

The fast-paced, challenging public environment in which governments must function necessitates that they receive services promptly and in ways that address their specific needs. The Institute responded in 2010 with instructional opportunities for officials and personnel that closely matched their professional development requirements, schedules, and budgets. In addition, customized, practical assistance helped leaders maximize available resources, implement technology, enhance service delivery, and make decisions utilizing objective, data-driven information.

Promoting excellence in government also means that the Institute looks beyond today to ensure that we have the right expertise and resources for serving governments in the times ahead. In 2010, this commitment to continuous improvement was carried out through formal and informal evaluation and discussion with clients that subsequently resulted in the refinement and expansion of various programs and services.

Efficient, effective, and responsive governments contribute significantly to the overall quality of life in our state. The Vinson Institute is dedicated to making the wealth of resources of the University of Georgia (UGA) broadly accessible so that governments can excel. The activities described on the following pages illustrate just some of the expertise and services that the Institute provided in 2010.

Jennifer Frum
Interim Director

Promoting Excellence
in Government
since 1927



Promoting Excellence in Government

THROUGH

RESPONSIVENESS

Backed by more than 80 years of experience working directly with state and local governments, Vinson Institute faculty and staff are ready to respond when governments need customized assistance to help inform decisions and improve operations, and training and development to build leaders at all levels.

When Technical College System of Georgia administrators were charged with developing a statewide strategic plan within a short time frame, the Institute stepped up with the expertise needed to guide a process that could transform ideas into action.

Five teams of Institute faculty facilitated sessions in August 2010 for groups of 20–30 administrators, faculty, and students at each of the system's 26 institutions with the goal of generating ideas for two funding scenarios. Planning sessions then enabled the presidents and board members to create a top-12 list of items for which specific goals, objectives, and performance measures could be set.

Meeting the complex information needs of state elected leaders is the goal of the Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators. A recognized event on the state's political calendar since 1958, the Biennial provides new and veteran lawmakers with valuable time for learning, networking, and exploring critical state issues prior to the upcoming legislative session.

At the request of the General Assembly, the Vinson Institute once again organized the resources and expertise needed to carry out the 27th Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators, held at UGA's Georgia Center for Continuing Education on December 12–14, 2010. In addition to equipping new legislators with the skills required to hit the ground running, the agenda included sessions on the economy, the tri-state water issue, tax reform, health care, ethics regulation, and Georgia's ports. Nathan Deal, then governor-elect, closed the program with a preview of his legislative agenda.

Local governments of all sizes recognize how important it is to operate at maximum efficiency as they manage service delivery obligations within tough economic constraints. Organizational reviews for Brunswick and Rome provided leaders with information summarizing their cities' current situations and offering options for targeting efficiencies. In each instance, the Institute team used an established process that involved gathering and analyzing data from such sources as archival records and interviews, touring facilities, and examining information from Georgia cities of comparable size as well as national best practices literature.

Other highlights:

- **Augusta Commission Retreats to Advance**
- **New Maps Help Wildfire Experts**
- **Report Spotlights Peachtree Corners Incorporation Impacts**
- **New Training Opportunity for Department of Corrections**
- **General Assembly Resolution Recognizes Institute Services**



The Institute team moved this project along in ways we never imagined. We are very pleased with the outcome of this project and excited about implementing the ideas as we move forward.

Ron Jackson
commissioner
Technical College
System of Georgia



Promoting Excellence in Government

THROUGH VISION

The path to excellence in government demands that officials at all levels stay one step ahead of the game. And that applies to the organizations that serve them. The Institute is continually monitoring emerging needs and trends so that it can be in the best position possible to help leaders plan now for tomorrow's challenges.

The Institute bolstered its local government assistance faculty expertise in 2010 to better and more quickly serve clients as they grapple with tough legal and fiscal decisions affecting their communities. The new hires bring extensive experience working with cities and counties of all sizes on such issues as project funding, economic development, intergovernmental agreements, and taxation. In addition, new leadership for the Institute's Financial Management Training Program enhanced its capabilities to meet the changing professional development needs of state and local government financial personnel.

Increasing use of technology continued to enhance the Institute's outreach capabilities in Georgia and beyond. The Institute implemented new and innovative ways of delivering its services and expertise to clients on a range of issues. For example, the Institute's local government faculty produced a video explaining the basic process and considerations involved in city-county consolidation in order to answer some of the most common questions they receive. The Financial Management Training Program developed an online tutorial for the State Accounting Office about advanced functions in spreadsheet software. Additional online training courses were added to meet the schedules and budgets of today's government employees. Institute experts also continued to employ geographic information systems (GIS) remote sensing technologies to develop and maintain digital maps and relevant information for worldwide humanitarian and disaster planning and relief efforts through a long-standing agreement with the United States Agency for International Development.

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Recognizing that state agencies serving thousands of Georgians must be more accountable than ever in assessing the effectiveness of their programming, Institute survey research and evaluation specialists expanded their services in providing objective, data-driven information to be used for decision-making purposes. For example, data collected and evaluated from a survey of state agency officials and information technology providers were used to establish a baseline score for continuing assessment of the privatization of agency information technology services.

Other highlights:

- **MARTA Study Reveals Funding, Ridership Outlook**
- **Online Training Course Options Expand**
- **New Environmental Policy Briefs Summarize Issues**
- **Surveys Help Evaluate Program Success**



For the past five years, the Institute has facilitated our annual retreats with the quantifiably positive outcomes increasing each year. Their passion for improving the operation of local governments is truly impressive.

Deke Copenhaver

mayor
Augusta, Georgia





Promoting Excellence in Government

THROUGH COLLABORATION

Collaborations with governmental and nongovernmental organizations and with the broader university enable the Institute to actively engage students in its work, prepare officials for success, and more effectively address public issues relevant to the quality of life in Georgia and beyond.

Long-standing partnerships between the Vinson Institute, the Association County Commissioners of Georgia, the Georgia Municipal Association, and other entities remained strong in 2010 and resulted in more than 16,000 registrations in hundreds of training and development opportunities at convenient locations throughout the state. A major focus in 2010 was the incorporation of more leadership development throughout the training curriculum. The three-day institute for newly elected county officials was redesigned from start to finish to more closely answer the needs of incoming officials in dynamic times.

The Institute continued to forge partnerships with other UGA units and departments to provide growth opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. The second year of the Vinson Institute Fellows Program introduced seven undergraduate students to the workings of state and local government through semester-long internships. A new partnership between the Vinson Institute, UGA's Honors Program, and its Roosevelt Institute chapter produced the Vinson-Roosevelt Fellows Program, a spring semester internship that selects talented undergraduates from the Roosevelt Scholars course. An inaugural Vinson-Roosevelt Fellow, Matthew Sellers said of his experience in the program, "My internship at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government altered the course of my academic career. My mentor guided me through a project that allowed me to explore my policy interests in local government, and the opportunity to engage with Vinson's expert faculty on issues ranging from demography and environmental policy to local government exposed me to myriad policy issues and solutions." The Institute had eight graduate research assistants working throughout its various divisions and continues to cosponsor UGA's Master of Public Administration Program. In total, 47 undergraduate and graduate students worked at the Vinson Institute in a variety of disciplines and projects.

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For the past decade, the Institute's International Center has been active in the professional development of China's municipal and provincial managers through its China Public Management Program. A special 10-year anniversary event in Beijing in July 2010 called attention to the more than 1,200 participants from seven provinces who have received training in public administration best practices so that they might help build more efficient and responsive governments. The program's mix of in-class instruction in China with site visits to governmental agencies and cultural locations in the United States contributes to greater mutual understanding between the Chinese participants and their American counterparts and instructors as well as the communities that host visiting delegations.

Other highlights:

- **County Officials Cite Economic Concerns in National Survey**
- **10 Years and More for China Public Manager Training**
- **Training Takes Top Billing at City and County Conferences**
- **Leadership Development Helps State Employees Excel**
- **Class for UGA Grad Students Brings Real World Perspective**

Each training opportunity through the Institute and ACCG has helped me understand my role as chairman and develop the skills necessary to better serve my community.

Kathryn Morgan

chairman

Newton County Commission