News and Events

Professor Steve French Talks About Recent Projects, Interests

Dr. French is the Director of the Center for Geographic Information Systems (CGIS) at Georgia Tech

Steven P. French has been a professor at Georgia Tech since January 2, 1992. He came to Tech as Director of the City & Regional Planning Program and held that position until August 15, 1999, when Dr. Cheryl Contant assumed the position. Since 1997 he has been director at the CGIS. The CGIS moved from the Georgia Tech Research Institute in 1997, where it had been since 1989, to the College of Architecture, where it still resides today.

French says that over the years he’s seen a lot of changes in the student body at Tech. “The incoming students have gotten brighter academically,” French said, “and they live in a world where all kinds of information is readily available. Most have never seen a card catalog! These changes have given them a wider range of information for their courses and research.”

Dr. French has over 25 years of research experience with natural hazards. Currently he’s interested in using advanced technology to create building inventories for earthquake risk analysis and building models of social and economic consequences of earthquakes and other natural disasters.

As the director of the CGIS, French is an ace with geographic information systems software. “I have taught five completely different GIS systems over the last 25 years,” French said. “I’m less interested in the exact command sequence but prefer to explore innovative ways of using GIS. For example, PhD candidate Sugie Lee and I developed a technique to forecast the amount of impervious surface in 5-year increments to 2025 for an urban heat island project with National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR).”

Despite the interest in natural hazards, French says land use planning continues to excite him. “My first passion in planning is land use planning,” French said. “I’m still active in that. I’ve developed a land parcel database for the metro Atlanta area. In the studio class, we’ve been implementing urban SIM that model land use change and urban growth for the Atlanta region.”

French also likes to get away to the great outdoors when he has the time. His favorite vacation was canoeing the white cliff section of the Missouri River in Montana with his family and camping at sites used by explorers, Lewis and Clark.

And though he loves City and Regional Planning, he says the best job he ever had was being a “ski bum” in Snow, Vermont. “I worked at a ski lodge there,” he said, “and in exchange for manual labor around the lodge (chopping firewood, cleaning, making pizzas, etc.) I earned $100 per week, plus room and board and ski passes. I skied six days a week.”
Students at Georgia Tech worked feverishly in February to piece together submittals for the Urban Land Institute’s (ULI’s) Urban Design Competition. This year Tech had four teams vying for a place in the nationwide contest—one of those teams won Honorable Mention in the competition. The team includes team leader Chirayu Bhatt (MCRP), Sean Brady (MCRP, MBA) and Jeff Williams (MCRP, March), Jimmy Amichandwala (MArch), and Huzefa Rangwala (MArch). Tech joined three other teams that received honorable mention—two from Harvard and one from MIT. The announcement was made Monday, February 28th. Four finalist teams from Harvard, Columbia, Univ. of Texas at Austin and the Univ. of Colorado will advance to the next round. The winner for the entire competition won’t be chosen until April.

The multi-disciplinary teams had one week to put together a redevelopment proposal for a site picked by the ULI. This year’s competition broke from the norm, focusing on two large greenfield sites in suburban Salt Lake City.

Submittals for the site contained information sheets about context and analysis, a master plan, and development schedule and finances.

City and Regional Planning Professor and Director at the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD), Dr. Catherine Ross advised one of the teams from Tech.

The team includes Heather Cook (MArch), Chris Hauk (MArch), Ikroop Kaur (MCRP and Engineering), Karen Leone de Nie (MCRP), and Paul Norton (Business Administration and MCRP).

Urban Connections: What challenges did the site your team chose present?

Dr. Ross: “The real challenge is defining what it is, what is the economic base, how does it fit with what citizens in Utah who’ve already defined their relationship, what their vision is. And they have a real preference for sort of outdoors, pretty high focus on quality of life. But there's some needs that they have, employment needs and so we have to define the way in which this site will relate to the region in terms of meeting needs that the region has that are unmet.”

Urban Connections: How did the lack of a landscape architecture program at Tech affect the team?

Dr. Ross: “We actually had someone on our team who had at least a year plus of landscape architecture. Our person did everything but finish the degree in landscape architecture - so this was actually very prevalent on our team.”

Urban Connections: Was it hard to plan for sustainable development in a site so removed from urban areas?

Dr. Ross: “It really presented some interesting opportunities because one of the things they tried to do was to look at water, the use of water and reconnecting that water as a way of minimizing the need for the provision of water through usual means. So that was one of our sustainability features as a matter of fact, which I thought worked very well and that was because we had a landscape architect on our team. So they did a lot in that regard.”

Urban Connections: Did the planners bring any particular viewpoints to the project?

Dr. Ross: “Well you walked in and you could tell who was the planner. This was a planning exercise, so they were in their element. Another thing that I was really pleased about, our real estate person on the team who was responsible for that - really there was a lot of dialog between him and the planners on the team. There’s a tremendous amount of dialog and input that went into the final design that really reflected the coming together of the disciplines.”

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Art Campbell Reflects on Career, Ga. Tech

Beginning with a undergraduate degree in Architecture, the CRP alum went on to work for the Carter and Clinton administrations and now works for the Federal Home Loan Bank in Atlanta

By: Stephen Conschafter, (MCRP ’06)

Campbell now works for the Federal Home Loan Bank in Atlanta. In 2000 he was appointed as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development. He was the main adviser to former Commerce Secretary Norman Y. Mineta on economic development issues in the U.S.

Throughout the mid-1990s until his appointment in 2000, Campbell served as deputy undersecretary for Rural Development at the Department of Agriculture. He worked on development policy with officials in all 50 states and spearheaded an evaluation of national rural policy.

This position came out of restructuring the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture in the mid-1990s.

“We were looking at how to work more closely with local communities,” Campbell said, “and local governments in order to get things developed and built.”

Campbell oversaw the coordination between the Washington D.C. office and communities across the U.S. “We had offices in most of the states,” Campbell said. “We had state offices and county offices and what we call district offices.”

Georgia’s state office is in Athens. Most of the counties in Georgia have a county office with a small staff that coordinates housing or farm loans for the local communities.

Campbell said his office also dealt with the unintended consequences of the then recently implemented North American Free Trade Agreement.

“We were delivering resources to areas that had been heavily impacted by the trade agreement - companies had picked up and left. So we were identifying counties that were adversely impacted.” Campbell’s office would offer loans to those communities.

In 1993 he worked on the Clinton-Gore transition team, where his responsibilities included briefing the then Secretary-designate Mike Espy and reviewing anticipated issues involving the then Farmers Home Administration.

The Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta

Campbell is currently in charge of economic development for the Federal Home Loan Bank in Atlanta. There are 12 FHLBs across the country and all are private organizations with various federal mandates to, for example, fund affordable housing programs.

“I just didn’t think attorney generals cared anything about, for the most part during that time, small towns, rural issues. Particularly small black towns.”

— Art Campbell

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CRP Graduate Steve Foran Now at HOK, Atlanta

By: Steve Foran (MCRP ’02)

I received both my Bachelor of Science (1997) and Master of City Planning (2002) from the College of Architecture at Georgia Tech. Currently I am preparing for the Architectural Record Exam and will be pursuing AICP and LEED Certification.

I started the New Year as a consultant with HOK Advance Strategies in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to this, I worked with Lord, Aeck and Sargent Architects’ Historic Preservation Studio, also in Atlanta, Georgia, for nearly seven years. After receiving my MCRP, I was looking for a change. Though architecture is a very exciting and dynamic profession, I was interested in something with more of an analytical edge to it. I began searching for a position outside of the traditional architectural roles.

The projects at HOK are very dynamic, ranging from the assessment of existing facilities to real estate portfolio analysis to workplace behavior and change management studies. These projects have drawn from every aspect of my experience. Our work is highly analytical and dependent on statistics, economics, demographics and real estate finance. Having knowledge of architecture and construction is instrumental, as well. Combining and presenting complex data in a clear and concise manner is critical to our work.

The program of study at Tech was pivotal in my development as a professional. The course I have chosen is not typical of a Planning graduate, but I believe it shows that the skill set developed is valid in a broad range of professions.

CRP Graduate Steve Stine Working at Savannah River Site

By: Steve Stine (MCP ’73)

Greetings fellow alums! Presently I’m employed at a place called Savannah River Site or SRS, a nuclear production facility, southeast of Augusta, Georgia, but located in South Carolina. The facility is operated by the U.S. Department of Energy; my employer is the U.S. Forest Service. The U.S.F.S. manages about 80 percent of the 200,000 SRS acres for natural resources, including wildlife, timber harvesting, ecological research, and an outreach education program for local schools and Historically Black Colleges.

I have received my unfair share of “What’s a community planner doing in this organization?” questions from foresters. I’ve never been completely sure how to answer that question. It has been an interesting, yet, at times, frustrating, planning journey. The role for community planning types has increased in the U.S.F.S., particularly as urban uses push against national forest boundaries, as wildland fire threatens rural subdivisions, and as traditional economic pursuits (e.g., logging) diminish.

Organizationally, as one former Secretary of Agriculture said, “The U.S. Forest Service is a cross between the Catholic Church and the U.S. Marine Corps”. The analogy is not far off, but there have been big changes in the agency’s culture in the last 20 years.

I spent some time overseas with the Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations) in Rome, Italy and came away realizing that North Americans do not have all the answers, but also realizing how much I appreciated the convenience of Wal-Mart. I’ve worked a bunch of wildfires out West, one with two fatalities in Idaho, and experienced walking down subdivision streets in California where wildfire left nothing intact but chimneys and bathtubs. My experiences have been interesting but I’m looking forward to retiring to something else.

Hope I run into some of you along the way. All the best in your journeys.

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the competition?

Dr. Ross: “I’m excited because Tech had four entries. I became a ULI fellow just this past year. And I came back full of enthusiasm...and talked with a number of my colleagues who shared that [enthusiasm], and we would have at least one submittal. Well it turns out we had four teams, which was phenomenal. To have our name listed as an institution that participated...is very positive.”
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Features

Georgia Tech’s campus continues to grow. These stories highlight some of the most recent projects.

College of Computing
Construction Underway

The Christopher W. Klaus Advanced Computing Building will feature new 3-D Digital Technology

The Christopher W. Klaus Advanced Computing Building is taking shape near the north side of the Architecture building. When the project is completed in February 2006, students and faculty will be able to once again use the walkway underneath the bridge to the new architecture building.

The building is being constructed to comply with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. Over 50 percent of the site will be preserved as green space. Also, recyclable and biodegradable materials are being used in the construction of the building.

For now, construction is on schedule – despite delays from land ownership issues and rainy weather.

Part of the funding for the building comes from a $15 million donation from alumnus Christopher W. Klaus.

The College of Computing and the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering will be located in the building.

For more information on the building, log on to: www.cc.gatech.edu/projects/klaus/

10th and Home Now Open for Students

The new building is opening in stages, with all units available by March

Georgia Tech’s new student apartments, 10th and Home, is now open to graduate students. Married and single graduate (for a certain time) students are able to apply for rooms in the new building.

Thirty-four two-bedroom apartments opened up for residents in January. Students could begin renting one-bedroom apartments in March.

The Department of Housing is considering opening the apartments to temporary renters, like visiting faculty, in order to fill the space.

According to the Department of Housing, eventually only married students will be able rent in the building. The building was originally designed for married students - in order to help offer more housing opportunities for graduate students at Tech.

10th and Home will stop considering single graduate applicants starting in the fall semester of 2005.

The building was designed by Atlanta-based architecture firm, Cooper Cary.

For more information, log on to: http://tenthandhome.housing.gatech.edu/main.cfm
The FHLBs are what’s called “government supported enterprises” - private, non-profit organizations that receive tax exemptions from the federal government. The banks are essentially private organizations with public purposes.

Campbell has been with the FHLB in Atlanta for four years. “There’s a perception that [the banks] have the full faith and credit of the government when they issue bonds and so on,” Campbell said, “but they really don’t. Our stockholders are [member] banks.”

The FHLB Atlanta has around 1,200 member banks. They’re customers of the bank as well. Unlike a regular bank, the FHLB has no physical vaults; their money is in the loans they provide to member banks. Campbell works specifically with providing loans to member banks so they can finance projects in areas of low to medium income.

“Someone might want to do a daycare center,” Campbell said. “A church in Alabama needed a daycare and the [FHLB member] bank made a loan to them.”

Many rural parts of the South have been left out of the Sunbelt economic expansion of the late 20th century. Without assistance from the FHLB, many impoverished areas in the Southeast might be even worse off than they are today.

Campbell said the bank plans to put $24 to $25 million in affordable housing in 2005. Yet problems still remain. “However you define it there are a number of counties within our district that are persistently poor,” Campbell said, “where the poverty rates are 20% or higher over the last three decades. So when we say they’re persistently poor, we’re talking about three decades, 30-plus years where nothing has changed very much.”

Campbell said the bank is focusing on developing partnerships in these poor regions in the South. According to Campbell the Atlanta FHLB has initiated more programs on a voluntary basis than other banks in the system.

After Georgia Tech and City Planning

After graduating with his MCP, Campbell went to work for the Southern Regional Council (SRC). “[It was] kind of a unique organization,” he said, “more of a human rights organization that was trying to get development in lower income communities and dealing with the problems of race relations and so on.”

When Campbell was at the SRC he worked with the Voter Education Project, which was run by Vernon Jordan, an attorney from Atlanta who would later be known as a close friend and advisor to Bill Clinton.

Campbell left the SRC to work for the Housing Assistance Council - a non-profit based in Washington, D.C. There he started a Small Town Assistance Project to help spur economic development in towns across the country.

“I was working with small towns with black mayors,” Campbell said, “because blacks had started to get elected to office and started to participate, but were having difficulty really delivering the goods and services in these local towns.”

Campbell’s job at the Housing Assistance Council took him to Madison, Arkansas. There he met, then attorney general Bill Clinton. Clinton contacted Campbell about offering his services to the HAC in respect to a dispute between Madison and HUD.

“So I remember being very surprised to get a letter from the attorney general of a Southern State,” Campbell said. “I just didn’t think attorney generals cared anything about, for the most part during that time, small towns, rural issues. Particularly small black towns.”

Clinton was running for governor of Arkansas at the time he and Campbell first met. “The most striking thing I can remember,” Campbell said, “was that, okay this guy is not just running for the governor, he’s probably running for president.”

The Georgia Tech Experience

Campbell said his time at Georgia Tech was instrumental for his later career. “I think it made a huge difference,” he said. “I think it opened up possibilities, ways of seeing the world that I hadn’t [anticipated].”

Campbell did his summer internship with a program organized by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The program received funding from the Carnegie Foundation to look at the impact of state planning and state programming in various states.

“An experience like that opened up possibilities and contacts,” he said.

Those possibilities would later lead Campbell to the nation’s capital. In his work with the FHLB Atlanta, Campbell continues to fight for positive change. Campbell is concerned that the current budget proposal from the Bush administration could roll back progress - eliminating Community Development Block Grants.

“Money is not the total problem in terms of a lot of these communities,” he said. “A lot of it is about clarity of where local places want to go and leadership and getting clear plans for what they want to do. But there is just a basic need for additional affordable housing.”

Campbell has two daughters. One attended college at UNC-Chapel Hill and the other at Duke University. Both are now lawyers - one in Atlanta and the other in Detroit. Nedra Campbell, who lives in Detroit, is the author of the book More Justice More Peace.