

Developing a Career of Servant Leadership

Dennis D. Truax, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, D.WRE, F.NSPE, F.ASCE
ASCE 2022 President

12:30 – 1:30 pm, Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021

Online: <https://ccny.zoom.us/j/85839128635>

Abstract: As author Mark Sanborn suggests, leadership isn't about having a title. It's about helping others grow. A genuine leader acts with purpose, cares about others and listens to them, and looks for impactful ways to encourage and development of others. As civil engineers, we are called to be leaders. We plan, design, construct, and maintain the systems that shape people's lives.

Those in the profession, and those entering it, must accept their servant leadership role; they must become a change agent. It is up to us to provide the foundation for an inclusive socioeconomic platform that is equitable for all. We must accept the responsibility to be environmental stewards in everything we do. We must place others before self as the new ASCE Code of Ethics outlines. As servant leaders we strive to ensure that we do the right project, not just find satisfaction in doing the project right.

Finding one's passion comes as one advances a cause that is greater than themselves, and now is the time for each of us to accept our leadership obligations to improve the quality of life while effecting impactful, positive change. Dr. Truax will speak about his servant leadership journey; as a professional, an academician, and eventually Society leader. This presentation will address the ethics of leadership, the importance of technical competence, and the commitment to make a difference. It will also introduce opportunities and considerations for others to accept this grand challenge to live an impactful life.

Biography: Dr. Truax is professor emeritus of the Richard A. Rula School of Civil and Environmental Eng. at Mississippi State Univ. During his 41 years, he served as school director, department head, and professor. He held the James T. White endowed chair for 15 years and was director or co-director of the Mississippi Transportation Research Institute for 13 years.

Dr. Truax is a licensed professional engineer and holds national certifications as an environmental engineer from the American Academy of Environmental Engineering and Scientists and as a water resources engineer with American Academy of Water Resources Engineers. As a consulting engineer, he has worked on environmental and water resource management systems throughout the world, including the design of over 550 water and wastewater treatments systems.



He was elected fellow of ASCE in 1999 and fellow of the National Society of Professional Engineers in 2016. He is a chapter honor member of the Mississippi State Univ. Chapter of Chi Epsilon. He received the 2020 Edmund Friedman Professional Recognition Award and the 2018 NCEES Distinguished Service Award. Recently, he was the 2020 ASCE Region 5 Wall of Fame Inductee and in 2021 was inducted into the Academy of Distinguished Alumni of the Charles E. Via, Jr. Dept. of Civil and Environmental Eng. at Virginia Tech.

He served on the ASCE Board of Direction, chaired numerous committees and task forces related to Society organization, student activities, diversity, professional development, and technical advancement. He was faculty advisor to the Mississippi State ASCE Student Chapter for 26 years and was the charter faculty advisor for the Mississippi State Chapter of Engineers without Borders having worked with that group for 11 years. He holds or has held national leadership positions and committee appointments with National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying, NSPE, and the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET. He just completed his 13th year on Mississippi's Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors, having served as board president twice, and served 12 years on the state's Onsite Wastewater Advisory Council as chair for most of that time.

During his academic career, he has published over 120 refereed and reference papers and report and made almost 170 papers and poster presentations. Dr. Truax research areas included wastewater treatment, process optimization, management of organic and inorganic hazardous wastes, and modeling of surface waters for TMDL determination. His other areas of research related to transportation and construction engineering and included delineation of roadway systems and NEPA compliance for highways using remotely-sense data, modeling of highway evacuation strategies, predicting pavement performance, evaluating resources and their allocation in the management of waterways, and comparing the economics of transportation management alternatives.

Professionally, he has worked on environmental and water resource management systems throughout the United States as well as Argentina, Canada, China, Mexico, Romania, Tanzania, Turkey and Venezuela. He has consulted for local and international engineering firms, small municipalities and regional authorities, law firms, industry, and federal agencies. Technically, he has helped design over 500 wastewater treatment plants world-wide. He was project engineer for the design, permitting, contract management, and construction of a regional solids waste management system and has worked on almost a dozen county or regional solid waste management plans. He has performed numerous Environmental Assessments, supervised the clean-up of several hazardous waste sites, and provided inspection for hazardous materials management systems throughout Mississippi.