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February 7, 2024

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Dr. Mike Chandler Retires after 40 years of educating 15,000 Virginians



The [Grace E. Harris Institute](#) within the [L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs](#) congratulates Dr. Mike Chandler on his retirement after 40 years of educating 15,000 Virginians in land use. Dr. Chandler created the [Land Use Education Program](#) (LUEP) in 1984 while serving as a faculty member at Virginia Tech and for nearly forty years, land use education in Virginia has been synonymous with Dr. Mike Chandler.

Over his 43-year career, Dr. Chandler has trained and educated more than 15,000 Virginians in matters involving land use planning and zoning practices. The Wilder School is grateful for all he has done for Virginians, LUEP, and VCU.

Participants from his many classes and workshops note that Dr. Chandler is “an icon in Virginia Planning” who “left a lasting impression on the Commonwealth.” His work “will aid proper planning and growth for decades to come.” A past participant and someone who has worked alongside Mike in her service as a county administrator, city manager, and board of supervisors member, Claire Collins notes, “The imprint and legacy that Mike has left and encouraged throughout the Commonwealth in all its regions is noticeable and has made Virginia a much better place to live, work, and play. Failing to plan is planning to fail!”

Dr. Chandler began his career as a community development specialist and land use planner at the New River Valley Planning District Commission (PDC). He assumed this position after serving as a regional land use planner at the West Piedmont PDC. In 1980, he was promoted to a tenure track position at Virginia Tech as a statewide community development specialist with the rank of assistant professor.

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Over the next 23 years, Dr. Chandler designed and delivered off-campus community development and continuing education programs focused on community planning, land use, and public management issues. In 1984, LUEP was developed in concert with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and is the nation's first structured training program for persons serving on local planning commissions.

In 2018, Dr. Chandler helped LUEP transition to the Wilder School at VCU and served as an advisor. In 2023, Dr. Chandler agreed to serve as the Interim LUEP Director at VCU, retiring in December 2023. Tom Jacobson, the VCU LUEP Education Director commented, "Mike has a tremendous history and knowledge of localities and their issues throughout Virginia. He taught me so much; it was a pleasure working with him."

The Land Use Education Program (LUEP) aims to inform the discretion of Virginians as they make decisions regarding the use of Virginia's land. The specialized programs offered by LUEP help planning commissioners, BZA members, and other community groups such as elected officials, professional planners, engineers, realtors, planning students, and interested citizens make decisions related to land use development and preservation.

LUEP is the home of the nationally recognized Virginia Certified Planning Commissioner Program, which is held several times each year in various parts of the state. Also offered are the Virginia Certified Board of Zoning Appeals Program, annual Legal Seminar, seminars/workshops on special topics, and customized training programs.

The Land Use Education Program is proud to announce that Will Cockrell, AICP is the newly hired Director helping to lead the LUEP programs in 2024 at 6 upcoming programs. His two decades in the field include consulting, public sector, and teaching work. His career started in local government, with Louisa County, before joining the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, where he spent a decade assisting the region's six local governments. Later, he joined EPR, P.C., a planning and engineering firm out of Charlottesville that allows him to help communities across the Commonwealth and the country. In 2013, he began teaching at the University of Virginia, where he continues his adjunct role in the School of Architecture. Will is on the American Planning Association, Virginia Chapter (APA Virginia) Board, and the Rural Planning Caucus Board. In 2018, APA Virginia recognized Will with the President's Award for Leadership.

Early in his career, Will attended Dr. Chandler's Certified Planning Commissioners and Board of Zoning Appeals training programs. Will sees this as a pivotal point in his career. "Mike Chandler inspired me more than he knows. As a young professional, I was amazed by his knowledge, professionalism, and character. From that point on, I aspired to follow his example and dreamed of inspiring others to reach their full potential. He is why I got into teaching, and he sparked my passion for planning. I believe countless others can say the same. The commonwealth owes Dr. Chandler an enormous debt of gratitude."



To read more about LUEP and to attend a course, visit <https://cura.vcu.edu/land-use-education/>.

Thank you, Mike, for your 40 years of dedicated service! You are a true legacy!

Thank You Mike!



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LUEP: LAND USE EDUCATION PROGRAM

1 Certified Planning
Commissioners Program

2 Board of Zoning Appeals
Program



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