

THE COLUMN

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of Government

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The Local Government Manager

Who will be the new generation?

SAM SEELEY

The author is the 2006-07 Wallerstein Fellow at the University of Virginia. This article is based on a project she completed in fulfilling the terms of the fellowship.

Local government managers may be facing a bigger crisis than even *they* realize, and its dimensions are twofold. Bob O'Neill, executive director of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) aptly summed up one aspect of the problem: "With the coming wave of retirements, the city management profession is about to undergo its largest transition in 30 years. We are facing a tsunami. Today the average age of a city manager in the U.S. is over 50. Thirty years ago, fewer than 10 percent were in this age group." The second (and perhaps under appreciated) issue is the difficulty in attracting enough qualified replacements for those about to leave the profession.

WHO WILL REPLACE RETIRING MANAGERS?

Are college students interested in local government careers? Why or why not? What can be done to attract bright people into the profession?

In an attempt to answer these questions, a survey of undergraduate politics students was conducted at the University of Virginia in fall 2007. A total of 123 students participated in this survey. Since nearly two-thirds of respondents were born and/or raised in Virginia, many may be predisposed to staying in state after graduating. Nearly half of respondents indicated they will seek employment after graduation rather than continue their educations immediately.

TABLE 1

Student Career Preferences

Career	As a First Choice	As a Second Choice
Federal Government	44%	26%
Legal	35%	26%
Professional & Business	21%	25%
Information, e.g., publishing & communications	21%	32%
State Government	18%	36%
Finance	16%	13%
Education	15%	25%
Local Government	14%	22%

This group, therefore, represents a potential employee pool for Virginia state and local government.

WHICH CAREERS MIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE CONSIDER?

Almost half of those surveyed place working for the Federal Government in the First Choice category (*see Table 1*). Legal and Professional & Business are the next most highly regarded occupations. Of the careers shown here (out of 19 listed on the survey), Local Government trails with the lowest number of responses, 14 percent. Local Government does a little better when the First and Second Choice ratings are combined. But even this is hardly encouraging.

However, when *only* state and local government are considered in comparison with the private sector, the responses give cause for hope. When asked if respondents would consider working for state or local government *knowing that salaries might be less than those in the private sector*, nearly two-thirds reported affirmatively.

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“There are several questions we have to ask:

- How are we representing ourselves to attract young people into the profession?
- How can we dispel their negative image of local government as boring, hierarchical, slow?
- The vast majority of managers in the past 25 years have MPAs. What skill sets will the new generation bring?
- Do they share the old values, like ethics and efficiency? Or do they come with new ones?”

BOB O’NEILL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ICMA

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WHY WORK IN GOVERNMENT?

When asked why they would consider working in state or local government, the students’ overwhelming feedback points to the importance of “making a difference.” Nearly half of those expressing an interest in government careers reported that they are motivated to help others (*see Table 2*). One person explained: “I want to feel like my job is helping other people.” Another said: “I would do this because non-profit organizations work from a set of principles and mores instead of the pursuit of money.” And from a third: “... If I’m being paid less in a job that ... I feel is important, I don’t care how much money I make as long as I can support my family ...” Generally this group of respondents indicated a lack of interest in high “CEO-like” salaries.

WHY NOT?

Conversely, those interested in non-government careers were concerned with salary levels and questioned the efficacy of non-profits, as evident in the following statements: “I could see myself going in the non-profit direction after I’ve saved some money from working a more profitable job for a few years.” • “I don’t think that non-profit organizations are very efficient and for the most part find their causes to be unexciting.” • “I would consider working for a non-profit only if it was run efficiently like a business.” One respondent viewed government work as “... maybe great training for a future position or job.” This is an unfortunate but interesting notion that government employment is not an end goal, but might be considered as an interim position.

WHAT DOES THE SURVEY TELL US?

The desire to make a difference and give back to the community, as expressed by many respondents, seems consistent with a growing tendency among large segments of this age group. As columnist David Brooks confirmed recently: “The respect for institutions prevalent during the early ‘60s is prevalent with the young again ... The earnest industriousness that was common then is back today. The awareness that we are ... parts of networks ... and communities ... is back ...” (*New York Times, 1/29/08*).

Echoing another trend is the respondents’ concern with benefits and job security. A 1999 study by the National Association of

Colleges and Employers (NACE) compares job motivators of the 1960s and early 1970s with those of Generations X and Y.* The study shows the greatest difference is that the two earlier generations saw “respect for me as a person” as a key factor in pursuing jobs, while Gens X and Y considered “steady employment” as the critical job motivator (not surprising in view of the country’s changing economy and employment patterns).

TABLE 2

Reasons that students give for considering work in state or local government

Helping/doing something beneficial/making a difference	45%
Duty or personal obligation	18%
Taking a job that is interesting	13%
Taking a job that has good benefits	13%
Job Security	11%

The NACE study suggests that in boom times when good salaries and benefit packages are assumed, people are more concerned with such work issues as “freedom and flexibility.” When the economy tightens and the workforce is streamlined, people focus more on the basics — “good pay” and “steady employment.”

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

O’Neill says that there are several questions we have to ask: “How are we representing ourselves to attract young people into the profession? How can we dispel their negative image of local government as boring, hierarchical, slow? The vast majority of managers in the past 25 years have MPAs. What skill sets will the new generation bring? Do they share the old values, like ethics and efficiency? Or do they come with new ones?”

Communication and outreach are key

The message to students and new graduates should appeal to their impulse to do good works while promoting job security and livable salaries. Local government must create new outlets of communication and outreach and take advantage of those that already exist. Promoting careers in local government management to students should be done on their own turf—at universities and colleges; and in middle and high schools.

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*Gens X and Y include those born from about 1965 to 1997.

VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

CSS is quickly becoming a valued tool for local governments across the state. Attracting localities from under-represented regions is a priority: The larger the number of participating localities, the greater the information on the system; the more information on the system, the more valuable it is to every user.



How is EBIS different from an electronic bulletin board?

With EBIS, an informed administrator reviews all inquiries and responses. EBIS offers complete anonymity to its users: inquiries are posted under the name of the Institute rather than the requesting locality. All responses are catalogued for future reference.

Who may use EBIS?

EBIS is available to the staffs and elected officials of localities that are Institute members.

Recent topics of inquiry sent to EBIS

- Employee work hours – automated tracking systems
- Police and sheriff – maintenance standards for patrol vehicles
- EMS – policies, ordinances and controls; using private providers
- Parks and recreation – outsourcing programs
- Telecommuting – 2008 policies

CSS

Our Compensation Survey System is in its third year. The 135 current subscribers seem satisfied with its value, based on the lack of negative feedback during the last several months. (They are not shy about commenting when things do not operate as expected.)

The Virginia Municipal League, one of the program’s partners, promotes the program at its annual town meetings around the state. The CSS already has a good number of subscribing towns; however, we are always interested in expanding our membership to provide a broader selection for comparing benefits and compensation packages based on localities’ geographic region and size.



EBIS

The Institute’s Email Broadcast Information Service remains the premier source for providing Institute members with answers to their questions quickly and easily.

During the first few months of 2008, EBIS has been busy, driven in part by localities’ cost containment efforts in this tough economic climate. By the end of May, inquiries had been posted on 114 new topics; many additional inquiries received responses from our library of information. EBIS has information on over 2,700 local government topics in its database representing approximately 30,000 responses.

The Institute continues to assist the Virginia Association of Counties and Virginia Municipal League in responding, upon request, to inquiries received from their members.

The popularity of this unique service continues to grow as more officials and staff become aware of its potential benefit to their organizations.

For CSS and EBIS contact Tedd Povar at 804/371-0202 or tep3e@virginia.edu.

Compensation Survey System Subscribers, FY2008

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CITIES Bedford Charlottesville Chesapeake Colonial Heights Covington Danville Emporia Franklin Fredericksburg Galax Hampton Harrisonburg Hopewell Lexington Lynchburg Manassas Park Martinsville Newport News Norfolk Norton Poquoson Portsmouth Radford Richmond Roanoke Salem Staunton Suffolk Virginia Beach Waynesboro Winchester | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COUNTIES Accomack Albemarle Alleghany Amherst Augusta Bedford Botetourt Buckingham Campbell Charles City Chesterfield Culpeper Dinwiddie Fairfax Fauquier Floyd Fluvanna Franklin Frederick Giles Gloucester Goochland Greensville Halifax Hanover Henrico Henry Isle of Wight James City King George King William | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loudoun Mathews Middlesex Montgomery Nelson New Kent Northampton Powhatan Prince Edward Prince George Pulaski Rappahannock Roanoke Rockbridge Rockingham Smyth Southampton Spotsylvania Stafford Sussex Tazewell Washington Westmoreland Wise York | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridgewater Broadway Cape Charles Christiansburg Clifton Forge Colonial Beach Culpeper Dumfries Front Royal Gordonsville Halifax Haymarket Herndon Hillsville Hurt Independence Leesburg Mount Jackson New Market Orange Pennington Gap Purcellville Remington Rocky Mount Smithfield South Boston South Hill Stanley Vinton Warrenton West Point Windsor Woodstock | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OTHER ENTITIES Alexandria Sanitation Authority Augusta County Service Authority Chesterfield County Public Schools District 19 Community Services Board Hampton Road Sanitary District Hanover County Public Schools JLARC Prince William County Park Authority Southeastern Public Service Authority Virginia’s Region 2000 Local Government Council Western Virginia Water Authority Williamsburg Regional Library York/Poquoson Social Services |
|---|--|--|---|--|

Did You Know ...

- Institute members make annual contributions based on population. The Institute has not increased these fees since its inception in 1994.
- Employees of Institute-member localities may attend the Cooper Center's LEAD and SEI programs at a 10 percent discount.
- Almost 7500 local and state employees have attended Institute-sponsored programs since 1995.
- The Institute has collaborated with many organizations, including
 - City of Norfolk
 - City of Williamsburg
 - Commissioners of the Revenue Association
 - Cooper Center for Public Service
 - Department of Environmental Quality
 - Germananna Community College
 - Innovation Group
 - James City County
 - Local Government Attorneys of Virginia, Inc.
 - Loudon County
 - National Association of Partners in Education
 - Office of the Clerk-House of Delegates
 - Treasurers' Association of Virginia
 - Virginia Association of Counties
 - Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions
 - Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Public Policy
 - Virginia Economic Development Partnership
 - Virginia Highlands Community College
 - Virginia Local Government Management Association
 - Virginia Municipal League
 - Virginia State University
 - Virginia Tech

VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT MEMBERSHIP, FY2008

• **CITIES**

- Bedford
- Buena Vista
- Charlottesville
- Chesapeake
- Colonial Heights
- Covington
- Danville
- Emporia
- Fairfax
- Falls Church
- Franklin
- Fredericksburg
- Galax
- Hampton
- Harrisonburg
- Hopewell
- Lexington
- Lynchburg
- Manassas Park
- Martinsville
- Newport News
- Norfolk
- Petersburg
- Poquoson
- Portsmouth
- Radford
- Richmond
- Staunton
- Suffolk
- Virginia Beach
- Waynesboro
- Williamsburg
- Winchester

• **COUNTIES**

- Accomack
- Albemarle
- Alleghany
- Amherst
- Arlington
- Augusta
- Bath
- Bedford
- Botetourt
- Brunswick
- Buckingham
- Campbell
- Caroline
- Charles City
- Chesterfield
- Clarke
- Craig
- Culpeper
- Cumberland
- Dickenson
- Dinwiddie

- Fairfax
- Fauquier
- Fluvanna
- Franklin
- Giles
- Gloucester
- Goochland
- Greene
- Greensville
- Halifax
- Hanover
- Henrico
- Henry
- Highland
- Isle of Wight
- James City
- King George
- King William
- Loudoun
- Mathews
- Middlesex
- Montgomery
- Nelson
- New Kent
- Northampton
- Nottoway
- Orange
- Patrick
- Pittsylvania
- Powhatan
- Prince Edward
- Prince George
- Prince William
- Pulaski
- Rappahannock
- Richmond
- Roanoke
- Rockbridge
- Rockingham
- Southampton
- Spotsylvania
- Stafford
- Sussex
- Warren
- Washington
- Westmoreland
- Wise
- York

• **TOWNS**

- Abingdon
- Accomac
- Alberta
- Altavista
- Amherst
- Appomattox
- Ashland

- Belle Haven
- Berryville
- Big Stone Gap
- Blacksburg
- Bloxom
- Bluefield
- Boones Mill
- Bowling Green
- Boyce
- Boykins
- Branchville
- Broadway
- Brookneal
- Burkeville
- Cape Charles
- Capron
- Chase City
- Cheriton
- Christiansburg
- Clarksville
- Clifton
- Clifton Forge
- Clinchco
- Clintwood
- Clover
- Coeburn
- Colonial Beach
- Columbia
- Craigsville
- Culpeper
- Damascus
- Dayton
- Dillwyn
- Dumfries
- Eastville
- Farmville
- Fincastle
- Glen Lyn
- Goshen
- Halifax
- Hallwood
- Hamilton
- Haymarket
- Haysi
- Herndon
- Hillsboro
- Hillsville
- Iron Gate
- Ivor
- Jarratt
- Keller
- Kilmarnock
- Lawrenceville
- Lebanon
- Leesburg
- Louisa
- Lovettsville

- Marion
- McKenney
- Melfa
- Middleburg
- Monterey
- Montross
- Mount Crawford
- Mount Jackson
- Nassawadox
- New Castle
- New Market
- Newsoms
- Occoquan
- Onancock
- Onley
- Orange
- Painter
- Pamplin
- Parksley
- Pearisburg
- Port Royal
- Pound
- Pulaski
- Purcellville
- Quantico
- Remington
- Rich Creek
- Richlands
- Ridgeway
- Rocky Mount
- Round Hill
- Saxis
- Scottsburg
- Scottsville
- Smithfield
- South Boston
- South Hill
- Standardsville
- Stony Creek
- Stuart
- Tangier
- The Plains
- Troutville
- Urbanna
- Vinton
- Virgilina
- Wachapreague
- Warrenton
- Warsaw
- Washington
- West Point
- Windsor
- Woodstock
- Wytheville



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**WELDON COOPER
CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**
University of Virginia

VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS

**SECOND WEDNESDAY
SUPERVISOR SERIES**

In partnership with Chesterfield County

Classes are held at UVA's Richmond Center from 8:30 am–3:30 pm. Registration fee: \$100 per person. Lunch and materials included. Discount: for every three registrants from the same organization, the fourth person can attend at no cost (all registrations must be submitted together for the same class).

Contact Jessica Smith at (804) 371-0202 or jessicasmith@virginia.edu, or visit www.VaInstituteofGovernment.org.

Coaching & Mentoring

SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

For supervisors, team leaders, managers, or directors

THIS SEMINAR WILL HELP YOU TO

- define coaching and mentoring
- explore and compare components of coaching and mentoring
- develop skills through practice exercises and group activities

Strategic Planning

OCTOBER 8, 2008

For supervisors, team leaders, managers or directors

AFTER COMPLETING THIS SEMINAR, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO

- analyze a strategic plan development/deployment model
- define the components of strategic planning
- demonstrate how to develop good performance measures
- illustrate the relationship between a strategic plan, department performance plans, and the budget process

Managing Conflict

NOVEMBER 12, 2008

For supervisors, team leaders, managers, or directors

THIS SEMINAR WILL HELP YOU TO

- identify potential sources of conflict
- analyze various supervisory skills used in effective conflict resolution
- develop skills through practice and group activities

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACADEMIES

Community Colleges and Local Governments Working Together

The Institute has worked with several community colleges to offer classes for local government employees and officials in their regions. If you think there is potential for a similar program in your community, contact Billie Easton at bee2u@virginia.edu or 804/371-0202.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACADEMY AT
LORD FAIRFAX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Customer Service for the Public Employee,

8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 19—Luray Page County Center

OCTOBER 17—Fauquier Campus

NOVEMBER 14—Middletown Campus

**Peer Today, Boss Tomorrow,
Noon–4 p.m.**

SEPTEMBER 26—Middletown Campus

OCTOBER 17—Fauquier Campus

Contact Bill Pence at bpence@lfcc.edu or 540/868-7061. To download brochure, visit www.lfccworkforce.com/schedule.cfm

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACADEMY AT
GERMANNA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

In partnership with Germanna Community College, Rappahannock Area Development Commission, town of Culpeper, and counties of Henrico and Chesterfield

2008 Fall Semester

Schedule coming soon. Classes held on the Fredericksburg campus of GCC.

Contact Susan Brown at sbrown@gcc.vccs.edu, or 540/891-3012, or visit www.germanna.edu/workforce/



**UPCOMING
SEMINARS
FALL 2008**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ACADEMIES**

Germanna

Community College

Contact Susan Brown at
540/891-3012 or
Sbrown@germanna.edu

Lord Fairfax

Community College

Contact Bill Pence at
540/868-7061 or
bpence@lfcc.edu



**Second Wednesday
Supervisor Series**

Contact Jessica Smith at
804/371-0202 or
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More details on page 5

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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGER

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Some marketing suggestions are

- Send local government representatives and exhibits to career fairs.
- Organize a speakers' bureau.
- Place articles and interviews with local managers in college newspapers.
- Establish relationships with academic department heads, professors, program directors, and career-center staff.
- Create internships, which are "key," according to Bob O'Neill. "If we can get someone as an intern in a manager's office, that person usually stays."
- Develop a local government component for public administration programs, like the current VLGMA/Virginia Tech initiative to create a Local Government Management Certification within Tech's MPA program.

Many Virginia localities, along with their professional associations — VLGMA, VACo, and VML — are already doing some of the

above. However, facing the imminent "tsunami" effectively will involve a coordinated effort by *all* professional and elected local government officials. Given the state of the economy and the attitude of many young people, there exists an opportunity to make a meaningful impact on students' career choices. It is important to follow the lead of private industry and take recruiting as a serious business.

As an aid for managers in preparing for their replacements, the ICMA has published a 65-page resource book—*Preparing the Next Generation: A Guide for Current and Future Local Government Managers* — which can be downloaded from the e-Library at icma.org.



The author is a graduate student at the University of Virginia in the Department of Politics. Contact her at mss3n@virginia.edu. For more findings of her survey, visit VaInstituteofGovernment.org.