

Biographical Sketch for John P. Thomas

Dr. John P. Thomas
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Overview

John is a public sector leader with extensive experience directing university-based, governmental, and non-profit public service organizations. He holds an earned doctorate in public administration from the University of Southern California. He combines pragmatic experience with academic rigor in serving diverse constituencies. He has successfully developed and implemented programs and activities involving public officials, elected and appointed, academic and civic leaders, as well as professionals from the private and non-profit sectors. His responsibilities have included working with local-regional-state-federal-and international officials. His experience focuses on: leadership, education and training, applied research in public settings, creating and enhancing Social Capital, as well as developing and sustaining opportunities for multi-disciplinary collaboration and effectiveness.

Managing Partner, DecideSmart, LLC

DecideSmart is a Richmond-based Management Consulting firm committed to an ethos of public service and to providing clients with real world, cost-effective solutions to the challenges they face.

John is the team lead on civic renewal, non-profit organizations, state and local governance, and projects requiring exceptional facilitation skills. A brief sample of clients includes: Newport News Shipbuilding, Inc., Fort Monroe Authority, Middle Peninsula Airport Authority, CCALS, as well as numerous Virginia local governments; Albemarle, Goochland, Amherst, Chesterfield, Hanover Counties, and Cities as diverse as Newport News, Danville, Franklin, Hopewell, and Covington.

Previous Experience

Director, The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, UVa

John served for twenty years as the Director of the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. The organization embodies the commitment of the University to enhance the quality of public policy and practice in the Commonwealth. The Center serves as a bridge between the University and public life in Virginia. For over eight decades, established in 1931, the Center has been engaged in improving the effectiveness and understanding of government and governance.

The Cooper Center, comprised of sixty employees, provided services through eleven separate “enterprises.” The units differ in operational style, mission, and administrative arrangements. By title they were: Center for Economics and Policy Studies, Demographics Research Group, Center for Survey Research, University Internship Program, Virginia Institute of Government, Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership, Leadership Development Program (for appointed and elected local leaders), Local Elected Leaders Program, Publications, Regional Offices (Richmond and Southwest) and an array of individual Service Agreements with organizations of Virginia local government officials.

Additional Roles

Prior to his time at UVa John served the National Association of Counties for over twenty years. He was the Executive Director for the final ten years. He has served as Executive Director for a number of organizations including the American Society for Public Administration, the Florida Association of Counties, and the Toledo Ohio Metropolitan Area Council of Governments. John began his career as a public school teacher and administrator in Toledo, Ohio.

In Virginia John has been recognized for his significant leadership role in two award-winning organizations – the Council on Virginia’s Future and LEAD VIRGINIA, Inc.

He is an elected Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration NAPA and in 2014 he received the VCU *Excellence in Virginia Government Award for Lifetime Achievement*.

John helped create the award-winning program — LEAD VIRGINIA, Inc. He led the development of the experiential/Social Capital curriculum. He is the founding Curriculum Chair and continues in that role. In addition, he is a member of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

He is also an active Board member of the statewide healthy families organization — Families Forward Virginia. He currently serves as Immediate Past Chair of the Board of Directors.

Education

DPA Public Administration
University of Southern California, 1982

MPA Public Administration
University of Southern California, 1977

MA Political Science
University of Toledo, 1970

BA Political Science
College of Wooster, 1962