



New Fellow Spotlight

Edward (Ned) Hill

Edward (Ned) Hill is Professor of Economic Development in The Ohio State University's John Glenn College of Public Affairs and a member of the College of Engineering's Ohio Manufacturing Institute. He teaches economic development, state and local public policy, and public economics. His current research focuses on the impact of digital manufacturing on corporate investment and public sector workforce strategies with his colleagues at the Ohio Manufacturing Institute. Ned continues his research on regional economic resilience, regional economic development, and community development at OSU's John Glenn

College of Public Affairs and City and Regional Planning program. He co-authored *Coping with Adversity: Regional Economic Resilience and Public Policy*, (Cornell University Press 2017) with NAPA Fellow Hal Wolman and two others. Hill is a former Non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Institute (2000-2015), editor of *Economic Development Quarterly* (1994-2005), chair and member of the advisory board of NIST's Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) (2007-2014). He is currently a board member of the MEP's Northeast Ohio affiliate, MAGNET (2009 to present).

Ohio Governors Taft, Strickland, Kasich, and DeWine have appointed Hill to commissions and boards. The Cuyahoga County Mayors and Managers Association recognized Ned's service to the communities of Northeast Ohio in 2016 with its George V. Voinovich Municipal Service Award. And, the Ohio Manufacturers Association's Board of Directors presented Ned with its Legacy Award in 2005 and again in 2016 for his work on behalf of Ohio's manufacturers.

Before coming to OSU in 2015 Hill was Dean of the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University and Professor and Distinguished Scholar of Economic Development. Ned earned his Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning and Economics from MIT (1981).

What are you most looking forward to as a NAPA Fellow?

There are two aspects of being named a NAPA Fellow that are intriguing, and I think I share these two thoughts with my colleagues. The first is to be in a position to help strengthen, and in some cases, rebuild the public institutions that are essential to our democracy. The second is to meet people who share a passion for our nation's civic infrastructure.

What inspires you during these challenging times?

I have acquired many new heroes over the past year. All are civil servants and public servants who risked their careers and opened themselves up to personal abuse to do their jobs, defend the values of their institutions and professions, tell the truth, and protect democracy. Unfortunately, the list is a long one stretching from Ohio's state capitol to Washington, D.C.

Who or what inspired you to work in public service?

Change came rapidly to the mill towns east of New Haven, Connecticut, in the 1970s. I was a junior in high school in 1969, and I knew that I wanted to learn how cities' economies evolved. It's fifty-two years later, and I do not have an easy answer. Today I spend more time thinking about the role of cities and the public sector in building more resilient regional economies. My interest in evolutionary economics grew in part due to the abrupt changes that took place during 1970. A recession was on, and the unemployment rate in the industrial Valley moved above 10 percent and did not go below that number for five years and a follow-on recession. The war was winding down, and with it, fewer helicopters were built down the river by Sikorski, and with the decline in cartridge brass plants up-river closed. In 1974 B.F. Goodrich sold its sponge rubber mattress factory—flipping mattresses in their molds in July had to be the worse job in the Valley, in a leveraged buyout to an Ohioan, Charles Moeller. Moeller hired the Reverend David Bubar as the water quality consultant for Sponge Rubber Products. The next year, explosion and fire destroyed the plant, costing 900 people their jobs. The blast took a good chunk of the main street with it. It turned out that Moeller's self-described Baptist, clairvoyant, spiritual adviser was a torch. Moeller never collected the insurance money. It was an introduction to economic transition, leveraged buyouts in a declining industry, and gave bombast a new meaning. More importantly, I learned the lesson of loss in economic shifts.

What is your favorite class you have ever taught and why?

My favorite course is Introduction to Public Affairs because it is a civic engagement course combined with an introduction to public administration and public policy. My favorite class was two days after the 2016 election. The students who worked for Hillary Clinton were crushed, devastated. I spent the first ten minutes processing their anger and anguish. But I knew that there were Trump supporters in the room, and I was desperate to get a conversation going. That is when a white first-year student from a rural Northeast Ohio county raised her hand. She asked if she could tell the room why she, and her family, voted for now-President Trump. She mentioned how she came from a rural high school that was so poor that they did not have A.P. classes and college-going was rare. How several fathers of her classmates died over her four years in that school. It was clear that work, or lack of work, played a role in how the Democratic candidate and the Democratic party did not speak to her family. “I think that they do not like us,” she said.

From the back of the room came the voice of a 40-something African American woman who opened her arms and said with warmth, “I am sending you hugs,” mentioning the first student’s name with affection. That did it. The class took over. A male from Urbana echoed the first woman and talked about his former factory-town as a place of decline and that the vision of America put forward by the Clinton campaign did not include his town. He and his family voted for Trump. Next up was a young African American woman who grew up less than 50 miles away in a different world from the first student. She worked in her church’s food pantry in the most impoverished suburb in Ohio, and her mother was the mayor in a lower-income working suburb of Cleveland. She said, “we (meaning African Americans) are going to lose everything that we worked for!” What moved this conversation to a positive conclusion was the growing realization that they witnessed political campaigns made up of wedge issues designed by both parties to divide the class and not unite them.

Some cried. All were exhausted — including the teacher. All learned. And, most walked out of the room talking. I was proud of those kids. The courage of the young, white, Trump-voter in the front of the room and the warmth of a mature African American in the back created the best day of teaching and learning that I experienced.

Which of the Academy's Grand Challenges resonate most with you?

My interest in regional and community development and public finance cuts across five of the Grand Challenges: (1) reinvigorating public service, (2) resilient communities, (3) long-run fiscal health of the intergovernmental fiscal system, (4) preparing for meaningful work, and (5) social equity. What is consistent is my focus on state and local government and intergovernmental fiscal relationships. My research and practice connect most closely to five of the challenges:

What advice can you give to folks beginning careers in public service?

Norm Krumholz, the father of equity planning, must have channeled Congressman Lewis because he would ask his students if they had caused any trouble and then advised them to “pack light.” I’ll offer other advice. A well-developed ethical compass will show you where to go. Steer with a deep and true rudder built from pragmatism—that will get you to the destination. Get rid of the barnacles that come with age—you have to scrape them off to regain speed. Two other practices that will help build a career in public service: servant leadership and the power of weak-link social capital.

What is the first concert you ever attended?

The Grateful Dead in Yale Bowl. What is memorable is the unique mixture of smells.