Dear All,

I want to begin by saying a big “Thank You” to all those who participated, either in person or online, in IEI’s landmark 30th Annual Emerging Issues Forum, *Innovation Reconstructed!* We were thrilled to engage with your terrific mix of geography, sector, and perspective.

We opened the Forum with a special video retrospective, and I love its title: “The Forum at 30 – We Are Just Getting Started.” I certainly felt as though we were launching the next 30 years!

Many Forum attendees seemed stunned to learn during the launch of the next 30 years that North Carolina ranks only in the middle tier of states for innovation. At the Forum, we shared a short video on this question, which we produced in collaboration with the NC Dept. of Commerce’s Office of Science, Technology & Innovation using software and technical expertise provided by SAS. Take a look:

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/PF7Avhi0T5M?list=UUZmpvsFngawog9Fd2KXzow" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

(You can find a detailed discussion of the innovation video [here.](#))

Our audience responded with similar surprise to key findings in IEI’s newly-released 2015 North Carolina Civic Health Index, which shows that North Carolina is just average among the states in most measures of civic engagement. As Forum speaker Victor Hwang, author of *The Rainforest: The Secret to Building the Next Silicon*
Valley, pointed out, we likely won’t move the needle on building our innovation economy without paying great attention to the connections that link our people, institutions, and public issues.

Forum participants, perhaps awakening to the critical correlation between strong civic engagement connections and innovation, resolved on the following three strategic priorities as the best approaches for strengthening North Carolina’s innovation capacity:

- Make schools community innovation hubs, incorporating public-private partnerships to promote learning.
- Form public-private leadership groups to drive the development of our innovation ecosystems.
- Teach skills and behaviors that promote innovation, particularly to students and under-represented groups and places.

The Forum agenda recognized that much is already happening to encourage innovation in different parts of the state. The strategic priorities reflect that such efforts are mostly disparate.

Each of us has a critical role to play in driving the coordinated implementation of the three priorities. As a first post-Forum step, please share your reactions to the three consensus priorities via our Emerging Issues Commons. How might these ideas support your work? How might you support the priorities? Additionally, please help us identify prospective stakeholder partners and other key champions for these post-Forum implementation efforts. Our IEI Forum Working Group will convene on March 3, 2015, to map our overall effort to encourage implementation. If you would like to join the working group, please send a brief note to IEI policy manager Sarah Langer (smlanger@ncsu.edu – please include your name, title, affiliation, and county).

We did great work together last week at the Forum! We also had a bunch of fun. You may enjoy checking out the great photos and unprecedented media coverage.

Want a full Forum recap? Visit our ForumNextSteps page, which includes a full set of Forum resources.

Ready? Let’s all get to work building a more innovative and prosperous North Carolina!

Warmly, Anita