

## **Professor of Practice Mike Dobbins receives Innovation and Excellence in Laboratory Instruction Award**

**ATLANTA, Ga.** (March 12, 2015) - School of City and Regional Planning professor Mike Dobbins has been selected by Georgia Tech as the recipient of this year's Innovation and Excellence in Laboratory Instruction Award. The award is open to full-time general faculty of any rank who have excelled in teaching in the laboratory. The "laboratory" can be broadly defined to include both traditional science labs and other formal courses that include experiential learning where students participate in the processes of investigation, analysis, and reflection in order to reach a deeper understanding of course concepts. Dobbins is the first non-scientist in Tech history to receive the award. He will be honored at the 2015 Faculty and Staff Awards Luncheon, 17 April, from noon to 1:30pm in the Georgia Tech Student Center Ballroom.

Dobbins has been teaching community-engaged studio courses, sometimes referred to as CityLabs, for the School of City and Regional Planning annually since 2002. Prior to joining the School, Dobbins served as the Planning Commissioner for the City of Atlanta. His consistently partners with state and local government agencies and nongovernmental organizations and his studio reports have been considered in policy decision and design choice by governments and non-profit organizations frequently over the years.

Bruce Stiftel, chair of the School of City and Regional Planning, writes in his nomination letter, "On three occasions [Dobbins'] projects earned statewide awards from the Georgia Planning Association, and in 2012, Dobbins' students' Action Plan for the Fort McPherson Community received the American Institute of Certified Planners' national Outstanding Student Project Award, only the second time in our school's history that this prestigious national award was brought home to Georgia Tech." The plan proposes to redevelop Fort McPherson in a way that benefits the neighborhoods that surround it, and addresses how future development can complement surrounding community characteristics. Most recently, Dobbins' and his studio members have been working with Atlanta City Council Member Natalyn Archibong to implement the "Imagine Memorial" corridor plan for revitalization along Memorial Drive. This dedication to bettering Atlanta neighborhoods and engaging students in real community issues is articulated clearly in the nomination letters that Dobbins' received from his colleagues for the Innovation and Excellence in Laboratory Instruction Award.

Ellen Dunham-Jones, professor in architecture and urban design at Tech, has worked with Dobbins since he came to Tech. "A naturally generous teacher with wide-ranging knowledge and experience, he has an unparalleled ability to straddle diverse worlds: architecture and planning, academia and practice, democratic ideals and political realities," she writes. "Students emerge from his CityLabs with a profound and ambitious understanding of their ability to lead collaborative change."

These students express just as high a regard for their professor as Dobbin's colleagues do. They laud his engaging and facilitative teaching, vast network of connections, emphasis on collaboration, and his studio's real-world applications. "This studio taught me more than any other class in the program's curriculum about the reality of the planning profession and the various intersections of thought and analysis required," writes Ranjani Prabhakar, a second year MCRP student. "Professor Michael Dobbins is well known for his years of experience working with key City officials and stakeholders, as well as his demeanor and approach to the class as an equal participant in our studio, which mostly acted like a group of consultants on a high-level project. The concept of this studio as a living laboratory within the confines of the City of Atlanta was one of the best experiences within my graduate career."

Stiftel reflected on the values that Dobbins' work has fostered: "Professor of Practice Mike Dobbins is a master of project selection, client relations, planning vision and student mentoring who not only consistently achieves the promise of experiential learning, but whose students leave Georgia Tech ready to overcome the most demanding professional challenges."

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