

In Memoriam: Richard N. L. “Pete” Andrews

In May, the Department of Public Policy lost esteemed colleague Professor Emeritus Richard N. L. “Pete” Andrews, a faculty member in the department since 1981.

After graduating from Yale University in 1966, Andrews first came to UNC–Chapel Hill for a master’s degree and Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning. Prior to returning to UNC as a faculty member, he served for nine years on the faculty of the University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources. He also worked as budget examiner in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal.

A pillar of the university and leading scholar on environmental policy, Andrews embodied the interdisciplinarity at the root of public policy as an academic endeavor, committed to tackling public problems—especially environmental challenges—with a variety of methods over the course of a distinguished career. He was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the National Academy of Public Administration.

Even after taking emeritus status in 2015, Andrews revised and updated his classic account of U.S. environmental policy, *Managing the Environment, Managing Ourselves: A History of American Environmental Policy* (Yale University Press). First published in 1999, Andrews produced updated editions in 2006 and in 2020, ensuring that it remains the definitive scholarly work on the historical development of U.S. environmental policy and its relevance for the present. *Managing the Environment, Managing Ourselves* links current environmental policy both to its historical roots as well as its separate origins in natural resource and infrastructure development, conservation, public health, and the larger course of American history and governance. Dan Esty, a Yale University professor of environmental law and policy, calls it, “A magnificent work of scholarship that should be read by anyone interested in how we got to where we are with regard to today’s energy, environmental, and sustainability battles.”

One of the most important lines of Professor Andrews’s work has concerned the history and significance of the National Environmental Policy Act as a unique innovation that provided vastly increased public information about proposed government actions and far broader access to review and challenge them in advance. His first book *Environmental Policy and Administrative Change: The National Environmental Policy Act* (Lexington Books, 1976) highlighted the law’s significance for enunciating a national environmental policy, establishing the environmental impact statement as an “action-forcing mechanism,” and—more fundamentally—opening administrative decision processes to broader public review and participation.

Andrews wrote not only for the academy but also and often for policymakers themselves, hoping to improve the decisions of local, state, and federal policymaking through careful research and analysis. He chaired and served on study committees for the National Research Council, the Science Advisory Board of the Environmental Protection Agency,

the National Academy of Public Administration, and the Office of Technology Assessment of the U.S. Congress. He twice chaired the Section on Societal Impacts of Sciences and Engineering of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and was a member of its Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy. His research was always in service of society.

The overarching questions of his research program—do government policy incentives produce better environmental outcomes, and do requirements for more detailed information and analysis produce better environmental policies—remain core questions for public policymakers and citizens as well as for researchers. In the early 1980s, for example, he conducted a series of research studies comparing state policies for hazardous waste management and facility siting, which produced both scholarly publications and a series of public policy reports for the North Carolina Governor’s Waste Management Board, the North Carolina Board of Science and Technology, and the Commission on the Future of North Carolina. In a conclusion that was novel at the time, he showed that state preemption of local facility siting procedures—advocated by some at the time to overcome local “not in my back yard” opposition—had shown no evident benefits in improving or accelerating the siting process.

Andrews carried his interdisciplinary focus on improving environmental policy into his teaching, with joint appointments in the Department of City and Regional Planning and in the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering of the Gillings School of Global Public Health, the Curriculum for the Environment and Ecology (now the Environment, Ecology, and Energy Program), and the Institute for the Environment. Andrews taught courses in public policy at all degree levels, from freshman seminars to doctoral seminars.

Andrew’s teaching was distinguished by his commitment to challenging students to critically evaluate arguments and recognize the complexities and frequent paradoxes in public policy issues, all while working towards creative and constructive solutions.

Nowhere were these commitments better illustrated than in his response to UNC’s “Nike controversy” beginning in 1997. A group of students challenged UNC for “selling its good name” for athletic contributions to a high-profile company accused of exploitative labor practices in third-world countries, protests that culminated with a South Building sit-in. Andrews responded by creating a seminar course on the economics, ethics, and environmental and labor impacts of globalization, using Nike as a case study and recruiting two faculty colleagues from Anthropology and the Kenan-Flagler Business School to team-teach with him. Students did intensive reading on the complexities of global manufacturing and trade, then had face-to-face discussions with senior Nike managers, with their principal critics in the global arena, with UNC’s senior administrators, and with scholarly experts on key aspects of the issues. The course was featured in a six-minute segment of a nationally televised, hour-long ESPN documentary on the controversy, and for three weeks thereafter the students hosted a national email discussion forum with interested viewers.

By the end of the course, Nike CEO Phil Knight attended the final session to hear the students' recommendations, and in a speech to the National Press Club several weeks later, credited UNC's students with several of the policy changes he was announcing. In the years since, UNC has continued to lead on this issue nationally. It was a testament to Andrews' faith that good policymaking flowed from rigorous and unflinching research, debate, and collaboration.

Deb Gallagher—now a faculty member at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment—worked with Andrews as a graduate student from 1997 to 2001. “Entering a PhD program at 40 with 2 small children was challenging, but Pete welcomed me and my family to his ever-growing circle of good friends,” says Gallagher. “Pete and I shared many connections beyond our love of public policy — being New Englanders at heart, our faith, and our love of singing.”

His former graduate student Evan Johnson, who worked with Andrews from 2011 to 2015, remembers that Andrews invited him to stay at his home as a prospective student. “He was a warm and compassionate human being and paid as much attention to the people he worked with as he did to the subjects of his scholarship,” says Johnson. “A classic ‘old school’ academic and historian, Pete wrote and lectured elegantly and often captivated his students with his wit and expertise. He was no doubt the inspiration for many careers in environmental policy and management.”

Andrews demonstrated his love for the university and state through extensive service. Elected Chair of UNC Faculty, he served in that role from 1997 to 2000. He championed the implementation of the faculty's recommendations on improving UNC's intellectual climate, and the creation of a Priorities and Budget Committee to engage faculty, staff and students as well as administrators in deliberations over budget priorities. He was an effective voice for the faculty both internally and publicly in UNC's transition to a more strongly need-based tuition and financial aid policy, and in persuading the General Assembly to increase financial support for graduate students.

Andrews was critical in the growth of the Department of Public Policy at UNC–Chapel Hill. He held the inaugural Thomas Willis Lambeth Distinguished Chair in Public Policy, and as chair, he led the department's growth from roughly 100 to over 250 undergraduate majors, and from 5 to 14 faculty members, expansion that has continued after the momentum that Andrews established. He was principal environmental staff member for the 1984 “NC 2000” study, chaired by UNC President William Friday, and he also served as a member of North Carolina's Legislative Commission on Global Climate Change.

In 2015, Andrews joined the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, an honor bestowed by the governor of North Carolina for a record of exceptional public service to the people of the state.

“Pete was a mentor to the people he came in contact with—at every level,” says Gail Corrado, an emerita lecturer in the Department of Public Policy who graduated with a Ph.D. in 2003. “Pete listened to everyone’s ideas and tried always to help get things done that had a hope of being something that would make the world just a smidgen better.

“He was a real mensch.”

Andrews’ legacy lives on at Carolina in many ways, including through the Richard N. L. (Pete) Andrews Environmental Policy Fund. The Andrews Fellowship goes annually to a rising senior major in public policy, environmental studies or environmental sciences engaged in research and/or service on solutions to local, state, national and/or global environmental policy challenges.

See Andrews’ [website](#) for more on his work and legacy. If you would like to share stories about Prof. Andrews, please send them to william.goldsmith@unc.edu.

More reflections about Dr. Andrews from former students

Jeremy Firestone, Professor at the University of Delaware in the School of Marine Science and Policy:

I was a Public Policy Analysis PhD student from 1996-2000, in the early days when we were known as the Curriculum in Public Policy, and Pete was my advisor, and had his principal appointment in Engineering, I believe. He did much to grow the Curriculum while I was a student and then helped to facilitate its transition to a department.

I entered my doctoral studies after a 10-year career as a governmental environmental lawyer. Pete helped to make my transition to being a student again easy and supported my desire to design a dissertation based on my individual interests and expertise. He later was a good sounding board as I made my way through academia. I marveled at Pete—he was one of the best read and most knowledgeable individuals on environmental issues I have come to know. The breadth of Pete’s knowledge and his good judgment showed in his wonderful book detailing the history of US environmental policy. He was also a student environmental policy and theory emanating from other parts of the world. Continuing to be a student while being a Professor is something I have tried to emulate.

But I perhaps remember Pete best for his kindness and good cheer. He was a mentee’s mentor.

Sanya Carley, faculty co-director of the Kleinman Center and Presidential Distinguished Professor of Energy Policy and City Planning at the Stuart Weitzman School of Design:

I can still picture Pete on the day that I met him—on the corner of Franklin and Columbia, khaki pants and a short sleeve button down, neatly tucked in, with a huge grin and waiving enthusiastically from across the street at his new doctoral student. It was August, 2006, and well over 100 degrees outside; and my entire outfit was soaked through with sweat after walking a few hills to get to our meet up spot. And the thought of showing up to meet my new advisor drenched in sweat was making me sweat even more.

I had no way of knowing in that moment that I was meeting a lifelong mentor and friend and a beloved “Sweet Pete,” as my husband and I sometimes endearingly referred to him, a “Grampy Pete” as my future children came to know him.

In my years as a doctoral student, Pete was always there to cheer me on. Sure, I could stand to insert a bit more history into my econometric analyses, as Pete routinely suggested. But he also helped me navigate doctoral studies and the eventual job market beautifully. As our relationship matured, he also allowed me to increasingly cheer him on as well—through a medical recovery, as he and Hannah traversed the globe by song, as his grandbabies took their first steps and developed their own personalities, and most recently as he and peers wrote and subsequently performed a comedic musical about aging.

And it is with immense sadness, but also so much simultaneous happiness, that I reflect back on the nearly 20 years of sharing life with Sweet Pete. He was a man of exceptional talent, passion, and love, waiting to embrace me—no matter how I showed up—with a giant smile and bear hug.

Andrew Hutson, Associate Vice President, Climate-Smart Agriculture at Environmental Defense Fund

It’s always fun to say that as a doctoral student, I had the opportunity to work with “the guy who literally wrote the book on American environmental policy.” But, his impact went way beyond his scholarship. His approach to mentorship, and I believe life, is what made him so special and beloved by all who knew Pete. Pete hired me as a research associate the summer before my first year as a doctoral student and gave me the opportunity to present some of that work at a conference just about two months into our work together. What was surprising to me—and spoke volumes about his mentorship—is that he gave me top billing. I was more than a little anxious. I was untested and unknown, but he gave me a big opportunity to prove myself and convinced me that I had it under control. At the time I likened it to the brief tour in the ’60s when Jimi Hendrix opened for The Monkees. I maintain the truthfulness of that analogy.

A few years later when I finished my program and ultimately decided against an academic career, I was a little afraid to let him know. It is common in academic circles to believe a university job is really the only legitimate career option and anything less is a disappointment. Pete never once questioned my decision. He completely supported my

path and encouraged me to be the best at what I chose to do. He continued to be curious about my career and offered guidance and wisdom whenever we spoke.

His warmth and openness were a huge comfort to me for almost my entire adult life. I arrived at UNC as a single guy in his twenties far away from home and family. Pete always made it a point to invite me to celebrate Thanksgiving, Easter, and the occasional Sunday dinner, as he did for so many students over the years. It was a true joy to see that same warmth extended to my wife and two children at our many meals together. I am so grateful they had the chance to know him. We all miss him dearly already.