ITRE Hosts Annual Council Meeting & TFF Speaker Series

April 8th, 2010 was an engaging day for ITRE staff, as both the Advisory Council Meeting and the Transportation Founders Fund (TFF) Speaker’s Series were held on Centennial Campus.

The annual Advisory Council Meeting featured a variety of staff presentations and open discussions, as well as an Annual Status Report from ITRE Director Dr. Nagui M. Rouphail. Five presentations in all were heard, on subjects ranging from High Speed Rail in South Korea to logistics work on the North Carolina Ferry System. Dr. Rouphail highlighted individual ITRE department projects and accomplishments during 2009, as well as the institute’s financial expectations for the coming Fiscal Year.

Each Spring, the TFF invites a renowned transportation executive to speak with its members. Eugene A. Conti, Secretary of Transportation for the NCDOT, was this year’s event host.

The TFF Speaker Series featured Walter Kemmsies, Ph.D., Chief Economist at Moffat & Nichols based in New York City. Dr. Kemmsies, who has led or participated in transportation and logistics projects throughout the U.S. and Latin America, delivered a lecture entitled Logistics Infrastructure: The Option to Prosper in a Globalized Economy. To view the entire lecture presentation go to http://itre.ncsu.edu/ITRE/about/TFF/tff.html.

Sarah Ott, a Civil Engineering graduate from Valparaiso University in Indiana, was recognized at the TFF event as the recipient of the eighth annual TFF Graduate Scholarship. Ms. Ott, who was a member of the Civil Engineering Service Learning Project in 2008 as well as a member of Tau Beta Pi (the Engineering Honor Society), began work toward her M.Sc. in Transportation Engineering at NCSU this past fall semester.

For more information on these events, contact Dr. Nagui Rouphail at rouphail@ncsu.edu.

ITRE Team Explores Value of Ports to North Carolina Economy

In collaboration with the North Carolina State Ports Authority and four state universities, an ITRE research team headed by Daniel Findley has since February been conducting a large-scale study of the contribution of the ports system to North Carolina’s economy at the county, regional and state levels.

“It’s a challenging objective, but our job here is to provide the Ports Authority with options they can use to maximize the economic and logistical potential of the state’s ports system,” Mr. Findley said. The study will focus on the ports at Wilmington and Morehead City, analyzing existing port documents and utilizing focus groups comprised of members from port-related fields.

Data in tow, the Ports Authority will then, according to Mr. Findley, have the communicative tools necessary to educate key audiences and stakeholders on the economic value of the state’s ports.

The study was solicited and is being funded by the Ports Authority, and is being conducted with the collaboration of ITRE and UNCW, UNCC, NC A&T and Western Carolina.

Requested partly behind the strength of a similar 2006 project led by Associate Director of ITRE Bob Foyle on the economic contribution of the state’s airports, the project is set to conclude at the end of January 2011.

For more information about this project, email Daniel Findley at daniel_findley@ncsu.edu.
ITRE Submits Ferry System Recommendations to North Carolina State DOT and State Legislatures

In response to budget shortfalls and other challenges, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) recently made a state-wide call for proposals to outline current operations as well as prospects for future improvements within the North Carolina Ferry System (NCFS).

The NCDOT selected a proposal submitted by an ITRE team headed by Jeff Tsai, entitled Benchmarking and Optimization of the North Carolina Ferry System.

The subsequent report laid out various internal and external factors that have challenged ferry operations in the state, along the way providing key institutional suggestions to a “ferry division in need of new ideas,” according to Mr. Tsai.

The team used the report to highlight some of the primary concerns including aging vessels, lack of capital funds for vessel replacement, challenges meeting tighter Coast Guard regulations and dwindling labor pools. The team also conducted level of service surveys among ferry users from the coastal community and visitors.

The report commended North Carolina for its excellent ferry system, which is the second largest in the U.S., while also providing options to overcome some of the budgetary and external pitfalls facing the NCFS.

More state funding, an expansion of tolling, and private partnerships with state agencies to build vessels were among the recommendations.

For more information about this project, email Jeff Tsai at jeff_tsai@ncsu.edu. The report can also be viewed online at http://www.itre.ncsu.edu/ored/news.html.

VAMS Program at ITRE Provides Support to NC State Highway Patrol

Under Program Director Dr. Ron Hughes, the Visual Analytic, Modeling and Simulation (VAMS) area at ITRE provides analysis and day to day support to the NC State Highway Patrol.

Using geographic information systems, ITRE analyzes crash data and various highway behaviors to contribute to the Highway Patrol’s efforts at reducing commercial truck accidents and resulting fatalities. On-line analysis tools and evaluation support are also provided.

Utilizing in-vehicle GPS systems in all motor carrier enforcement vehicles (MCEs), ITRE is able to ‘map’ crash activity and vehicle/driver inspections. This affords the State Highway Patrol a clean and efficient model by which to position and allocate troop resources.

ITRE is also providing an experimental video detection system tracking risky highway behaviors for the State Patrol’s Ticketing Aggressive Cars and Trucks (TACT) program.

For more information about this project, email Dr. Hughes at ron_hughes@ncsu.edu.

Example of real time video detection algorithm at work in detecting instances of vehicles following too close (for TACT program).

You can find out more about the work of VAMS by visiting its website at http://www.itre.ncsu.edu/VAMS/.