



Expanding Upon a Legacy of Learning

"The mind that is not baffled is not employed."

– Wendell Berry

OVER THE COURSE of my career, I've had the opportunity to teach in many different places and contexts, from a vocational high school on the South Shore of Massachusetts to undergraduate and graduate classrooms in New York, North Carolina, England, Italy, and Russia. Though the students and subjects have differed, one thread has emerged: teaching is the best way to learn.

There's no better way to discover the gaps in your own knowledge than by trying to convey that knowledge to someone else; no better way to understand how people absorb and act upon information than by actively engaging in that process with them. This isn't a novel concept: the Latin phrase *docendo discimus*, often attributed to Seneca, means "by teaching, we learn"; the Germans promulgated a pedagogical approach called *Lernen durch Lehren*, or "learning by teaching."

What you learn by teaching, first and foremost, is that teaching is more than a "sage on stage" waltzing into a classroom to deliver information from on high. Yes, it requires command of your subject, but it also requires being mindful and present—with an open mind, willing to experiment, and most importantly, listening in order to reframe the discussion when your words aren't landing well.

Those qualities abounded in our founder, John C. Lincoln. From the earliest days of the Lincoln Foundation, he made education and experimentation a priority. Lincoln was motivated by a fervent belief that the value of land belongs

to the community and should be used for the community's benefit, a concept he first encountered at a lecture by the political economist and author Henry George. He disseminated this idea through his own prolific writing—pamphlets, articles, even a monthly "Lincoln Letter"—and by funding educational institutions.

In 1949, just three years after establishing the Lincoln Foundation, Lincoln penned a letter on behalf of the Henry George School—whose work he funded and whose board he chaired for 17 years—to promote a 10-week discussion course based on George's work. "The course offers no ready-made panaceas or medicine-man formulas," Lincoln cautioned. "It attempts, through open discussion and stimulating analysis, to make clear the underlying causes of the problems that face the modern world and to discover the means for solving them."

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That commitment to discussing problems and discovering solutions remains central to our mission. Though we face global challenges John Lincoln could not have foreseen, from climate change to COVID, some of the problems of his era

are all too familiar: economic inequality, soaring housing costs, social injustice, and overuse or abuse of natural resources, to name a few.

After John Lincoln's death in 1959, David Lincoln took the helm of the family foundation. It didn't take long for David to expand his father's commitment to education, providing grants to the Claremont Men's College in California, the University of Virginia, New York University, the University of Chicago, and the Urban Land Institute. A decade later, the Lincoln Foundation established the Land Reform Training Institute in Taipei, now called the International Center for Land Policy Studies and Training and still a partner of the Lincoln Institute. David and his wife, Joan, were also generous supporters of Arizona State University and other institutions.

Even as he supported education in other venues, David dreamed of establishing a freestanding organization that could conduct its own research on land policy—a place that could develop and deliver courses in partnership with like-minded institutions without being in thrall to them. The establishment of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in 1974 represented a bold step, a foray into the active pedagogy that powers our work today and that would, in turn, accelerate our own learning.

In the nearly five decades since David Lincoln took that leap, we have taught—and learned from—students around the world, from undergraduates grappling with the basics to seasoned

urban practitioners eager to expand their skills. We've delivered courses about land value capture and land markets in Latin America; about valuation and the property tax in Eastern Europe and Africa; about municipal finance and conservation in the United States and China; and much more. During the past decade, our courses and trainings have reached nearly 20,000 participants.

Along the way, we've learned a few important lessons. We learned, for instance, that when it comes to land policy education, critical gaps exist. As we prepared to launch a municipal fiscal health campaign in 2015, we conducted a straw poll with the American Planning Association to determine the number of graduate planning schools that required students to take public finance courses. The answer? None. To address this puzzling oversight, we developed a curriculum on public finance for planners, which we have since delivered in Beijing, Chicago, Dallas, Taipei, and Boston, in formats ranging from a three-day professional certificate program to a full-semester course for graduate students.

We've also learned that professionals working on land policy have a huge appetite for practical training, and we've learned how much people value credentialed courses. As the pandemic set in last year, our staff tried out some new virtual approaches that heightened participation and engagement. These ranged from prerecording presentations that could be viewed prior to live sessions to spreading what would have been a



The Lincoln Institute is launching its first degree-granting program, delivered in partnership with Claremont Lincoln University (CLU), an online graduate university with a focus on socially conscious education. At left, CLU's Claremont, California, headquarters. Credit: CLU.

tightly packed, in-person schedule across multiple days. In some cases, we reached more people; a virtual seminar on taxation in Eastern Europe, for example, reached 500 people instead of the 40 who would have attended in person. In other cases, we reached a more geographically diverse pool while intentionally keeping enrollment low to foster engagement and active learning. Even as we begin making plans to return to in-person learning, we have become more adept at leveraging the possibilities afforded by virtual instruction and look forward to enhancing those offerings.

This year, building on what we've learned and honoring the Lincoln family tradition of taking leaps, we're launching our first degree-granting program in partnership with Claremont Lincoln University (CLU), a nonprofit, online graduate university dedicated to socially conscious education. Together we've created online, affordable Master in Public Administration and Master in Sustainability Leadership programs, and we are working on a third option—the first Master in Land Policy in the United States—which we hope will follow soon.

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These degree programs, which can be completed in 13 to 20 months, represent a way of rethinking advanced education from the ground up. They are specifically designed for working professionals who need to gain practical skills they can implement in their daily lives, while they do their jobs. They are both comprehensive and streamlined. Lincoln Institute staff will design and deliver several courses, using real-world case studies and cross-sector analyses to tackle topics ranging from public finance to civic engagement. This fall, I'll teach a course on Urban Sustainability, helping students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to diagnose urban challenges, design interventions to make cities sustainable, and mobilize resources to implement those solutions—and I have no doubt that I'll learn a great deal along the way.

The students who enroll at CLU won't be there simply to get an advanced degree; they'll be there to explore issues, discover solutions, and become part of a national movement of lifelong learners. With the climate crisis bearing down in alarming new ways, infrastructure crumbling, and affordable housing an increasingly endangered species, public officials are facing seemingly insurmountable challenges with fewer resources at their disposal. This program will build a growing network of informed, hands-on problem solvers who can use land policy to address our thorniest environmental, economic, and social challenges.

At the Lincoln Institute, we are intent on “finding answers in land.” We don't claim to have all the answers. We are committed to finding them through our research and through collaborations with partners around the world. Through initiatives like our new CLU partnership, we will continue to teach, to learn, and to experiment—and we will seek to shed, as John Lincoln wrote in 1949, “some new, searching light on the vital questions that concern us all.” □

Learn more about the Claremont Lincoln University–Lincoln Institute of Land Policy partnership and current fellowship opportunities by visiting www.claremontlincoln.edu/lincolninstitute75.