

# Thoughts on Professional Practice and Education

Article 1: Faculty Licensure

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This will be the first of several articles giving thought to the topic of professional practice and education.

I have reached the age where I have a great many opinions and have no fear of sharing them. I have no employers that would take umbrage of my opinion. Perhaps some current or past clients might object but they are free to seek others to perform their services should they wish.

If this is the first of several articles I plan to write, I can introduce myself thoroughly in this article and be reticent about an introduction in later articles.

I am retired after 30 years of teaching though I still do contract teaching for surveying and engineering programs. I have also retired from the military where I was a surveyor and engineer for over twenty years. I have been licensed in several states as a surveyor, engineer, and attorney. I still have an active license for each profession in at least one state. I have consulted in a wide variety of roles offering surveying, engineering, and legal services. I have surveyed many miles of boundaries. I was a member of a licensing board at one time. On numerous occasions I have served as an expert witness, trial attorney, appeals attorney, arbitrator, mediator, boundary commissioner, and, of course, a professor and instructor. Old age, experience, and my varied and unique practice I hope gives me a perspective that will generate some thought, no doubt some controversy, and perhaps some changes.

In this missive I will focus on surveying faculty qualifications. I will not and never claim to be among the best faculty. I am sure there are some former students that will claim I am not even a satisfactory faculty for I had hard standards and high expectations that left some students disgruntled and unhappy that I chose to apply these standards to them. As I said, I am too old to change or even give much care to what a young student, lacking experience, may believe. To put it simply, their opinion is seldom my reality. After the graduate has practiced in the surveying profession for fifty years and still wishes to maintain a low opinion of my instruction, I will welcome their thoughts and give them worthy consideration.

The point I wish to make in this missive is to give my opinion on faculty licensing. I do not believe a quality surveying program must require every faculty to be licensed to practice the profession of surveying. However, I do believe a majority of faculty should be licensed to practice the profession. I will offer three reasons for my opinion.

First and most importantly, I am of the firm opinion that no amount of education and research in surveying or 'geomatics' (as some programs prefer to use), allows a faculty to provide the impactful presentation experience allows. Of course, any person wishing to become faculty and claim they have experience outside of academics should have enough experience to be able to qualify and sit for professional exams in at least one state.

I am mindful that some faculty may have experience in areas of surveying practice that their state of residency will not accept toward licensure. Yet, that person will not be prevented from applying and being licensed in some other state that does accept their experience for licensure. (There is no state, by law, that can demand residency in the state before being licensed.) By way of example, I would refer the reader to some states that require a license for and therefore must accept experience in areas of remote sensing and GIS when applying for professional licensing.

Second, I believe it important that faculty set an example that will encourage students to seek professional licensing in the surveying field. This is done most effectively by the faculty themselves being licensed to practice the profession of surveying. I have seen numerous articles in professional magazines that lament the aging of the licensed surveyor population and how few young persons are entering the profession. Many employers lament the difficulty of finding young persons interested in filling employment openings. Young adults are not given a good example by allowing surveying instructors to be unlicensed.

Third, I believe faculty are much more inclined to have been or become active in their state and national professional societies when licensed. I am of the very firm belief that a successful college surveying program must enjoy the support of state surveying societies. To enjoy that support, there must be continuous interaction and familiarity between the academic program and the professional society. The interaction and familiarity are often absent or tenuous at best when faculty are not licensed. Lacking a license, the faculty can't be a full member of the professional society.

I have such a firm opinion on the importance of requiring licensed faculty, that I would demand licensing as a prerequisite for a faculty member even at the sake of academic qualifications. If the only choice to fill a faculty position was between a licensed individual and one with a Ph.D. of similar temperament, I would opt to always take the licensed individual.

Many universities that host surveying programs require a Ph.D. These same surveying programs do not require professional licensing of faculty. For some reason which I cannot comprehend, even after 30 years in college teaching, university administrators think it much more important to hire a Ph.D., without practical experience, often without experience as a resident, to teach surveying topics. The administrator will not accept someone without the Ph.D. that would have many years of relevant experience, relevant license, and familiarity with the residency where a graduate is likely to seek employment.

Having given my opinion, I now offer advice by suggesting ABET and professional societies make strenuous and consistent requests of administrators of surveying programs to demand current faculty become licensed and new faculty to be licensed prior to employment. The line is very clear. If a person wishes to teach in a surveying or geomatics program, they should have a professional license.

† Other books and articles by Knud can be found at <https://umaine.edu/svt/faculty/hermansen-articles/>