

DU Undergraduate Research Journal Archive

Volume 4 | Issue 1

Article 7

2-24-2023

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Recommended Citation

Schubert, Ayanna (2023) "Dr. Andrew Goetz," *DU Undergraduate Research Journal Archive*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/duurj/vol4/iss1/7>

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Dr. Andrew Goetz

Abstract

This interview with Dr. Andrew Goetz was conducted by the DUURJ Editor At Large.

Keywords

Dr. Andrew Goetz, Interview, Biography, Career

Publication Statement

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Dr. Andrew Goetz

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1 TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF, SUCH AS WHERE YOU WENT TO SCHOOL, HOW YOU BECAME INTERESTED IN YOUR MAJOR RESEARCH AREAS, AND HOW YOU FOUND YOUR WAY TO DU.

I'm from Cleveland, Ohio, born and raised there in the city itself. I, from an early age, had an interest in geography and maps, cities, and transportation. I had the opportunity to go to Northwestern University for my undergraduate degree in Geography. For my master's, I went to Kent State University. For my Ph.D., I went to Ohio State University, where I specialized mostly in transportation and in urban studies. When I came to Denver, I had been expanding my interests in those areas, with applications in different contexts. I originally became interested in these research areas at an early age, just growing up in the city and seeing how different

forms of transportation work in urban environments; it was always something I was really fascinated by. I was very interested in maps as a kid. I was very curious about how new forms of transportation were being developed in cities and how it made it easier for people to be able to get around and access things that they need.

2 DESCRIBE YOUR CAREER TRAJECTORY AND ANY ZIGZAGS YOU ENCOUNTERED.

When I was in graduate school, my main area of interest was looking at how transportation affects cities. How it affects urban form. And so, my master's thesis was looking at the effect of rail transit on city development, population, and employment patterns within cities. At that time—this was quite a number of years ago—there really wasn't much that was going on in terms of the effect of rail transit on urban form, because most U.S. cities were really influenced to a much larger degree by cars and highways. That was really having a major influence. So, I felt in some ways, like I was looking at a topic that hadn't yet really emerged as an important area. I felt like I wasn't really finding much there, and maybe that's something that I would have to wait for another time to revisit.

When I went on for my doctoral degree dissertation, my advisor encouraged me to look more at air transportation, rather than rail transportation; that's what led me in my early years of teaching here at DU, to focus more on air transport, and what was happening in the airline industry. Specifically, I was looking at the effects of policies like deregulation, and what effect that was having in terms of patterns of air service to different places around the country. So that's kind of how I got started in air transport.

But when I came to Denver, one of the things happening here was the decision about whether we should be building a new airport. So, I got very heavily involved in studying airport planning in the case of Denver International Airport.

The other development that occurred when I was here in the 1990s, is that the University of Denver started the Intermodal Transportation Institute. And

I became quite heavily involved with that group. Today, it's known as the Transportation and Supply Chain Institute. In those early years, we were really focused on different modes of transportation and how they connect to each other. So that became more of an interest of mine.

After that, my interest started to shift more in the direction of public transit, because of what was happening in Denver, and that was the decision to expand the transit network here as part of the Fast Tracks program. And so, a lot of what I was interested in sort of moved into the transit area. I then came full circle, because I also realized that not only was the rail transit being built here, but there was a fair amount of development happening around the transit stations, and it was influencing urban form. So, I went right back to what I had been doing when I was in my master's program; I came full circle in terms of coming back to what I had originally been most interested in.

3 WHAT ARE YOUR TEACHING INTERESTS? WHAT IS YOUR "TEACHING PHILOSOPHY"?

I teach a course on urban landscapes, which is an Urban Studies course—an introduction to cities really—which I love to teach. It's been one of my favorite courses. I also teach a course on urban and regional planning which focuses on how planning can be used to make cities better places. In transportation, I teach an urban transportation planning class, and I teach a sustainability and transportation class. More recently, I've been teaching a course on air transportation, high-speed rail, and tourism. It's been really fun to teach that because it does relate directly to my research interests and is an opportunity to be able to share some of that with the students. I also have taught a first-year seminar about metropolitan Denver. It is all about the city of Denver, the metropolitan area of Denver, its geography, and how it's grown and changed over time.

In terms of philosophy and my approach to teaching, I try to be very open and very interactive with students. What I really enjoy, and I hope that the students do too, is an opportunity to just exchange ideas. Often, I present some background information, then pose some questions, and just listen to what students think about some of these key concepts, theories, and approaches in the fields of Urban Studies and in Transportation Studies. I'm curious to hear from students, what they think about a lot of things that are going on in cities today, what we could do to try to make cities better places to live, and how we can improve our transportation systems to make them more sustainable. So, I value having that input coming from students and getting their perceptions and perspectives on a lot of these issues that I am very interested in.

4 WHY DID YOU BECOME A SCIENTIST? WHAT DREW YOU TO GEOGRAPHY? WHAT MAKES YOU GET UP IN THE MORNING?

I never really thought of myself as being a physical scientist, like a natural scientist. I do, however, consider myself to be a social scientist. I've always been drawn to the human side of science, to the study of social groups. So, to me, fields like geography, history, political science, economics, and sociology are subjects that I've naturally been drawn to.

I've always been fascinated by the nature of human societies, and in particular, the geographic expression of human societies. Just looking at maps, and seeing how places are displayed in map form; that's always been something that I've been very interested in. If you talk to a lot of people who wind up studying geography, a lot of them will tell you that what drew them to the field was their interest in maps.

For example, if you get a roomful of geographers and you put a map out, they are going to be very interested in whatever spatial patterns that the map displays. I certainly would consider myself to be a part of that group.

As for what makes me get up in the morning, well I love what I do, and I'm not planning on retiring anytime soon because I love what I do. I love being able to come here, teach my classes, and be involved in research projects in which I have a very strong interest.

5 WHAT IS THE MOST FRUSTRATING, AND MOST REWARDING ACTIVITY, RESPECTIVELY, IN YOUR DAY-TO-DAY WORK?

I love having the opportunity to study the subjects that I enjoy, and to be able to share that with students and with other professionals who are also very interested in these subjects. I love going to conferences, presenting research, and listening to what my colleagues are presenting about, and their research. These things really drive me. Whenever I go to a conference, I come away with many, many ideas that are generated from those interactions with my colleagues. The same thing happens in the classroom. I love seeing students get new ideas and gain curiosity. When they start to ask questions and go out and do research, I am happy to help and advise students in their research.

I tend not to dwell on the frustrating parts, but I do remember that, as chair of our department for several years, the administrative aspects tended to be frustrating. Those aspects are not necessarily the reason I wanted to be in academia. However, it's one of those things that I realized was an important service that we need to do. And so, I was happy to step in and help, but it's not what drives me. It wasn't really what got me up

in the morning, for the most part.

6 WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE TO IMPROVE HOW WORK IN YOUR FIELD IS DONE? IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT LEGISLATION MIGHT YOU PASS OR WHAT POLICIES WOULD YOU CHANGE AND WHY?

First, I would suggest that we think about what kinds of policies or plans that could be enacted to try to make transportation more sustainable, to make it more robust, a better, more efficient operation. What can we do to try to make cities better places in which to live?

For me, more of the emphasis needs to be directed toward what we can do to try to improve on the topics that I study regularly. For instance, in terms of sustainable transportation, asking questions such as: how can we continue to support transport systems that consist of biking and walking in cities? How do we create environments where it becomes much easier to be able to walk and bike and take transit, and not be as heavily reliant upon cars, especially internal combustion engine cars? How do we help in terms of making that transition to more electric vehicles, and using more renewable fuels to supply our electricity? How do we get that transition to go faster? Those are the topics that I'm more concerned about in terms of the future and trying to make a change.

In the academic area, I feel like there are problems associated with not providing enough support for colleges and universities, this is particularly true on the public side, but even so on the private side.

I have also seen a trend of expert viewpoints being disregarded in the political arena, not for good reasons. We sometimes tend to be quick to dismiss the facts that knowledgeable people are finding and sharing with us. It seems that the public, at large, seems very quick to dismiss a lot of what is being generated in terms of knowledge production, and I find that to be troubling. I'm not sure if there's any legislation that could solve that, but it is a troubling development. I would hope that we could, once again, restore the importance of science, scientific knowledge, and expertise in general, to the position where it once was and where it was valued, to a much greater extent.

7 IF YOU COULD GO BACK IN TIME AND GIVE ADVICE TO YOURSELF BEFORE YOU BEGAN YOUR CAREER, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

To stick with it and not be too discouraged by whatever setbacks may occur. There were times in the past when things didn't go the way that I was hoping and you begin to question if what you are doing is the right path for you or not. My advice would be to stick with what

you feel is the right way to go, to not give up, and to not be too dismissive of setbacks that might be happening. Keep progressing based on what you really believe and what you think is the right thing to do.