

CHARLES F. BONSER
Dean Emeritus
Ameritech Professor Emeritus
Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs

Dr. Charles F. Bonser was born in Youngstown, Ohio, and graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1950. Dr. Bonser received his undergraduate degree from Bowling Green State University in 1954, majoring in political science and economics. He entered the U.S. Air Force in the fall of 1954 and served five years as a pilot, spending most of his time as part of the 622 Air Refueling Squadron. He was promoted to captain before leaving the military to begin his graduate studies at Indiana University, though he remained in the Air Force Reserve until 1963. Dr. Bonser completed his Master of Business Administration from Indiana University in 1961 and his Doctorate in Business Administration in 1965.

Dr. Bonser first joined the faculty of the Indiana University School of Business (now the Kelley School) in 1961 as a lecturer. Following a period of government service from 1963-1965, he rejoined Indiana University as assistant professor and associate director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research. He was appointed associate dean of the School of Business in 1969 and promoted to full professor in 1971.

In the fall of 1971, Dr. Bonser was appointed special assistant to the president of Indiana University. In this assignment, he prepared the plan for the new School of Public and Environmental Affairs (now the O'Neill School) and was appointed the first dean of the School in 1972. During Dr. Bonser's 17-year tenure as dean, the School developed into one of the largest and most highly rated public affairs schools in the U.S. Now, the O'Neill School has more than 4,000 students on the Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses of Indiana University, as well as over 35,000 alumni around the world.

After stepping down as dean in 1988, Dr. Bonser was appointed the director of the School's Institute for Development Strategies, an organization focused on economic development and regional and national programming. In March of 1992, Dr. Bonser was appointed Ameritech Professor of Economic Development, an endowed chair awarded by the Ameritech Foundation to Indiana University. He retired from full-time academic service in 1998, although he continued an active agenda with the University on a part-time basis. In July 2002, he was called back to part-time duty as director of the Indiana University Graduate Program in Arts Administration, which became part of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs later that summer.

Dr. Bonser has a long history of service in public administration and public policy. From 2000-2012, Dr. Bonser served as chairman of the newly organized Transatlantic Policy Consortium, which is an association of over 30 U.S. and European Union university and government training programs focusing on public policy and public administration. Dr. Bonser also held many governmental and public service posts during his career. Among the most prominent are: director of the Indiana State Tax and Financing Policy Commission (1963-1965), director of the Intergovernmental Personnel Program for the State of Indiana (1973-1983), chairman of the Great Lakes Intergovernmental Personnel Council (1973-1983), and special assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Otis Bowen (1985).

He has been a consultant to the Brookings Institution, the U.S. Civil Service Commission, and the Offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor of the State of Indiana. His experience in consultation and advising extends to the international arena where he has worked with USAID and several foreign governments. In addition, he has initiated and directed educational programs in Venezuela, Egypt, Nigeria, Spain, France, the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates, and Great Britain.

Dr. Bonser has served extensively in several professional associations. He was president of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration and vice president of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration. He has received special awards for his public service, including two commendations from the U.S. Civil Service Commission, and special recognition through a joint resolution of the Indiana General Assembly. He received a presidential citation from the president of Indiana University upon his retirement from the deanship in 1988. He is a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and completed six years on its Board of Trustees in 1997. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of NSF International, a public health standards developer and third-party certifier located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, from 1984-2018. In April 2002, he was named the recipient of the Indiana University Distinguished Service Award. Dr. Bonser was awarded the Indiana Bicentennial Medal in 2020.

Dr. Bonser has also enjoyed volunteering in the communities in which he lived. He volunteered to run the “Bloomington Tomorrow” project for the late Mayor Frank McCloskey and the “Safe and Civil City” project for Mayor John Fernandez in Bloomington. On Sanibel Island, Florida, Dr. Bonser served as president of Big Arts (Barrier Island for the Arts) and led a strategic planning committee for his church, the Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ. Dr. Bonser was married for 58 years to his late wife, Nancy, and has two children (Catherine and Andrew) and four grandchildren.