Don Norris Biography

Donald Norris served for eight years as a Drill Sergeant in the US Army Reserve, posting at Ft. Jackson, Fort Polk, Fort Bliss, and Fort Knox. He began his service after completing his BS in Engineering Mechanics at Virginia Tech in 1970 and working as a co-op student and development engineer at Black and Decker. He subsequently completed an MBA at Tech then attended the Center for the Study of Higher Education at The University of Michigan, receiving his Ph.D. in 1976.

For 12 years Norris served as a planning and institutional research officer at The University of Michigan, The University of Texas at Austin, and The University of Houston. He moved to Northern Virginia to enter consulting practice, working for Advanced Technology (later PRC) and the M&H Group.

Norris founded Strategic Initiatives, Inc. in 1991. Over the next 32 years has consulted with over 200 colleges, universities, and technology companies, including international clients in Europe, Australia, and the Middle East. He enjoyed a 20-year consulting relationship with George Mason University, assisting the development of their concept as a distributed university serving Northern Virginia. He worked with GMU and PWC leadership to establish the Prince William Institute, which has evolved into GMU’s Technology and Innovation Campus of today.

Dr. Norris has written 22 books and monographs on the topic of Orchestrating the Transformation of Higher Education, starting with Transforming Higher Education: A vision for learning in the 21st century (1995). In 2014 the Society for College and University Planning recognized him with a lifetime service award for distinguished contributions to higher education planning. During the Covid pandemic he and his co-authors published Transforming for Turbulent Times: An action agenda for higher education leaders (2022) which provided a roadmap for revolutionizing higher education to comport with the emerging knowledge, work, and learning ecosystem being shaped by: 1) climate change and the transforming global economy, 2) analytics and artificial intelligence, and 3) the need for continuing upskilling over careers spanning 60 years or more. His latest work, Virtualization and AI Are Revolutionizing Planning – Now and in the Future (2023), demonstrates how the combination of virtual engagement environments (combining Zoom, Miro, Analytics and AI) with next-generation, SciFi-grade AI, is revolutionizing the experiences, dynamics, and outcomes achieved by planning processes in the Age of Acceleration and Augmented Intelligence.