

DISTINGUISHED TRANSPORTATION EDUCATOR AWARD IN HONOR OF WILBUR S. SMITH

Dr. Michael Knodler, Jr.



ITE—A Community of Transportation Professionals is proud to recognize **Dr. Michael A. Knodler, Jr.** as the recipient of the [2026 ITE Distinguished Transportation Educator Award in Honor of Wilbur S. Smith.](#)

The ITE Distinguished Transportation Educator Award in Honor of Wilbur S. Smith recognizes an educator who has made an outstanding contribution to the transportation profession by relating academic studies to the actual practice of transportation. Dr. Knodler exemplifies this purpose through more than two decades of teaching, mentorship, applied research, and professional service that have helped students connect with practicing professionals and become active participants in ITE and the broader profession.

Dr. Knodler is the William W. Boyer Endowed Professor of Engineering and Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he also serves as Director of the UMass Transportation Center. His career has consistently bridged classroom learning, applied research, and professional engagement, preparing students to be both technically strong and professionally grounded.

A defining feature of Dr. Knodler's educational philosophy is his integration of transportation practice into academic instruction. His courses incorporate applied projects, practitioner guest lectures, real data, safety challenges, and policy and implementation issues faced by agencies at all levels. Beyond the classroom, he has created meaningful pathways for students to engage with professional practice through internships, summer employment, and research assistantships.

Dr. Knodler's long-standing service as faculty advisor to the UMass Amherst ITE Student Chapter further demonstrates his commitment to experiential learning and professional engagement. For more than 20 years, he has encouraged student participation in district and international ITE activities, research presentations, conference attendance, and leadership development.

His impact is reflected in the success of the students he has mentored. Dr. Knodler has chaired or co-chaired numerous master's theses and doctoral dissertations, and many of his former students now serve in leadership roles across academia, consulting, public agencies, and professional organizations.

Dr. Knodler's commitment to advancing the profession is equally distinguished. His involvement with ITE spans student engagement, faculty leadership, and national service, including service as past Chair of the ITE Transportation Education Council. His extensive ITE leadership also includes roles with the New England Section and Northeastern District, the Student Member Committee, the Technical Program Committee, and service as University of Massachusetts Student Chapter Advisor since 2005.

Through an extensive portfolio of applied research, Dr. Knodler has helped agencies translate academic inquiry into practice. Over his career, he has secured more than \$53 million in external research funding as Principal Investigator, with additional funding as Co-Principal Investigator, from organizations including state departments of transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. He is also Director of the Region 1 University Transportation Center, the New England UTC.

His academic and professional achievements include the Outstanding Senior Faculty Award from the College of Engineering, the ADVANCE Faculty Peer Mentor Award, the James L. Tighe Distinguished Teaching Award, the College of Engineering Outstanding Teacher Award, New England ITE Transportation Engineer of the Year, and multiple UMass ASCE Teacher of the Year honors.

Dr. Knodler is widely recognized for combining educator, mentor, researcher, and professional leader into a career dedicated to public good. His work in driving simulation, human factors, transportation safety, traffic control devices, and data-driven safety analysis has advanced practice while giving students direct exposure to emerging technologies and applied problem-solving.

Through exceptional teaching, sustained mentorship, applied research, professional leadership, and deep commitment to ITE, Dr. Michael A. Knodler Jr. embodies the ideals of the Wilbur S. Smith Distinguished Transportation Educator Award. ITE congratulates Dr. Knodler on this well-deserved recognition and celebrates his outstanding contributions to transportation education, student development, and the advancement of the profession.

Learn more about [ITE's Awards Program](#).