

Susan Coady Kemnitzer



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Ms. Kemnitzer recently retired from a long career in leadership positions in science, engineering and natural resource management. Most recently she served as Deputy Director of the Chemical, Bioengineering, Environmental and Transport System Division of the National Science Foundation Directorate for Engineering. As a member of the Senior Executive Service, Ms. Kemnitzer managed the award of \$400 million of new grants each year which explore the most innovative multidisciplinary research and education. Her goal has always been to discover new knowledge but more importantly to develop the next generation of engineering researchers, inventors, innovators and entrepreneurs. She strove to accomplish these same goals when serving as the Deputy Director of two other divisions of the Directorate for Engineering, namely the Division of Electrical, Communications and Cyber Systems and the Division of Engineering Education and Centers.

In addition, Ms. Kemnitzer established the first programs at NSF for research into how students learn engineering and how these research findings could be translated into practice. She also started new programs to attract veterans to study engineering using the Post 9/11 GI bill. Her colleagues across NSF quickly adopted her program so that now all science and engineering fields supported by NSF provide incentives for veterans to participate. Likewise she instigated the creation of the NSF I-Corps program which develops entrepreneurial knowledge and skills in engineering students and faculty. In partnership with VentureWell and the Lemelson Foundation, there now is a nationwide network that helps NSF researchers, both faculty and students, to translate their promising technologies to market. The American Society for Engineering Education elected Ms. Kemnitzer to the rank of Fellow in recognition of these accomplishments.

Early in her career under Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter, Ms. Kemnitzer served in the Executive Office of the President in the White House as a Budget Examiner in the Office of Management and Budget. She formulated budget and legislative policy for the science and natural resource agencies, prepared the President's annual budget request to the Congress and negotiated the Administration's position on legislation. Most notably she led the administration's efforts to establish 140 million acres of new parks, wildlife refuges and wilderness areas in Alaska. The Secretary of the Interior, Cecil D. Andrus, invited her to join the Department of the Interior as his Special Assistant to carry through on these Administration policies and to complete implementation of the Alaska Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Ms. Kemnitzer also accomplishes much through her volunteer work, especially in her adopted state of West Virginia. For twenty years, she has been Chair of the Board of the Shepherdstown Water Authority. She served on the Board of Directors of the nationally recognized Contemporary American Theater Festival (catf.org) for nine years including several years as chair of the finance committee. Ms. Kemnitzer is currently a member of the Board of Directors and Treasurer of SkyTruth (skytruth.org), a non-profit organization based in Shepherdstown which uses state of the art remote sensing and mapping for environmental awareness.

Ms. Kemnitzer supports the local college, Shepherd University by sponsoring the Annual Musical Showcase for Scholarships, and by providing pro bono advice to faculty on Federal government and private foundation funding opportunities for research projects and student support. In 2018, she proposed an activity to bring Shepherd students and Shepherdstown community members together – “Dinner with Strangers.” Distinguished members of the Shepherdstown community host Shepherd students for dinner and camaraderie in their homes. Students and hosts are matched by disciplines, thereby helping the conversation to flow easily and enthusiastically. “Dinner with Strangers” is a tradition which Ms. Kemnitzer established at her undergraduate school, UCLA, in 1968. It grew exponentially there and celebrated 50 years of success last year.

Ms. Kemnitzer received her bachelor's degree from UCLA in 1970 after serving as a student leader and member of the UCLA Women's golf team. She attended George Washington University on a James B. Webb NASA Graduate Fellowship in Science and Technology Policy and earned a Master's degree in 1973.
