

A Note from our Executive Director: A New Look and a Renewed Mission

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Volume 2. Issue 1

Bridges are vital for community development, both literally and figuratively. A bridge connects people in new ways, improves the transfer of ideas and resources, and crosses boundaries and barriers. At the same time, a bridge opens up possibilities, creates new ways of thinking, and supports a journey of discovery and personal development.

I am pleased to rejoin the Center for Service Learning (CSL) as Executive Director and proud to once again be a part of this vibrant organization. CSL serves as a **bridge** connecting the campus and community through service. Our new look and logo represents this mission to involve students, faculty, and staff in educationally meaningful service and partnerships with the community. Our goal is to link service and learning in such a way that both the campus and the community are improved and transformed.



There are three fundamental components to every bridge: the supports, the span, and the foundation. CSL is here to provide you with support; whether that is through Service Learning Assistants, departmental consultations, or collaborating on an external grant proposal, we have both expertise and resources that can be leveraged to build upon your ideas.

Perhaps the most important physical bridges in our work to date are the two bridges just west of campus. These bridges, along Michigan Street and New York Street, connect the campus to the Near West community. Through an ongoing, strategic partnership with neighborhood organizations and schools, CSL facilitates the involvement of students, faculty, and staff in a variety of ways.

Next time you drive over the river, take a good look at the urban reforestation that has occurred along the White River, through the leadership of the [Center for Earth and Environmental Science](#) and the many contributions of service learning students over the past 15 years. [George Washington Community High School](#) serves as a hub of activity for service learning classes, community-based research, and service projects. Research through the [Center for Urban and Metropolitan Education](#) indicates that important gains have been made for high school students who interact with college students through IUPUI programs. However, there is much more work to be done.

Community-engaged work builds another kind of bridge, and figuratively, this is a bridge that connects people to new ideas and perspectives, as well as new possibilities and responsibilities. I have seen the enthusiasm and dedication of faculty when they forge new partnerships and identify solutions with community partners. The confirmation that CSL's work matters to improving the quality of life in communities is highly rewarding. For students, this type of community engagement connects real-life experience with classroom learning, and challenges students to see themselves as active contributors to the common good. Service learning builds in students a sense of confidence in their ability to act on behalf of others, and at the same time, clarifies their own goals and career aspirations.

The foundation for civic engagement remains the same. We believe in the public purposes of higher education. As a public, metropolitan university, IUPUI has a unique responsibility to be a steward of place, especially within Central Indiana. We have a strong and well-respected tradition of civic engagement.

Let us know how we can best support your ability to build new bridges in the coming year. The span will be defined by your creative thinking.