Happy Summer from the CommNS!

Greetings, friends and collaborators! Like all of you, we are more than ready for summer! It’s been a long winter and draw-out spring in Wisconsin and we have been working hard. Our spring semester of 2019 brought many exciting developments. We continue to see and nurture possibilities for the way that our Center can better connect the talented undergraduate and graduate students in our programs to the important work happening in Wisconsin and the World. This summer we’ll be refining plans to better operationalize this important theme. We saw our first cohort of SoHE Applied Master’s students present their capstone work at the end of the semester, setting a great example for the way our programs and excellent students can deliver transformative work to community organizations. Our Co-Create initiative can help structure similar opportunities for support for community partners, and some of their work is featured in this edition of our newsletter.

A Recap of our Annual Event!
April 24, 2019, Madison

Thank you to everyone who joined us last month for a day dedicated to the intersection of mission and advocacy to address root causes, systems change, policy, and context. Over 130 practitioners, scholars, students, and activists attended. The event included sessions on advocacy by 501(c)(3)s; storytelling and messaging for mission and advocacy; panel discussions by regional and global leaders; and breakout sessions focusing on mission and advocacy in our seven (7) Focus Areas: sector studies, healthy and sustainable communities, community engaged placemaking, solidarity economy models, food systems, evaluation, and youth development. Through a gallery walk and facilitated small group discussions, we were able to keep collecting perspectives on mission and advocacy from our participants and “the field” and, from that information, craft an initial report and follow up survey which will help us keep collecting and processing information on our event theme throughout the year.

Please take and share the survey! We are so grateful for the opportunity to bring together our network of friends, affiliates, community partners, scholars, and students each year. Keep an eye on our website and Facebook page to see photos from the event, and mark your calendars for next year’s event scheduled for April 9, 2020!
Bright Spots at the CommNS

- In March, we had the pleasure of spending the day learning from and with Tonya Allen, CEO of the Skillman Foundation of Detroit, gaining excellent insights on the role of philanthropy in communities and leadership in the sector.

- The CommNS received two (2) Baldwin Endowment mini-grants -- one to conduct mapping of community outreach units at UW-Madison (A. Hilgendorf, PI) and one to conduct graduate student virtual exchanges with former Mandela Washington fellow partners across the African continent (MB Collins, PI).

- We released our “Funding and Front Lines” summary report, documenting key themes and opportunity areas related to grant-making and funding experiences of nonprofit organizations and funders in Wisconsin. This report and the survey it was based on originated from last year's annual event, focused on “Funding and Social Change”.

- Dr. Jennifer Gaddis, CSCS faculty member and CommNS affiliate, was featured on Wyatt Cenac’s "Problem Areas" on HBO, regarding her work on school lunch and the importance of real food and real jobs in American public schools. We hope to screen this episode for our network, so more to come on this exciting development!

- Our friends from the POWER Collective, a graduate-student-led initiative, successfully conducted their annual cypher events this spring, their biggest and best yet! The POWER Collective also supports the work of Dr. Kendra Alexander, CSCS faculty member and CommNS Affiliate, and colleagues at the School of Education on a “Grand Challenges” grant-funded project that connects youth leaders of color in our community. Congratulations to POWER on their continued and expanding work on campus and in our community.

- CommNS affiliates Dr. Jennifer Gaddis and Dr. Kasey Keefer, along with graduate student Becca Dower, received a UW-Madison “Contemporary Social Problems” award for their project to contribute to an ongoing community-led initiative to support indigenous food sovereignty, focused at a core site in the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana.

- The CommNS continued its coalition building work with campus units that work with community partners including (1) UW Civic Action Plan efforts; (2) the WisNRG - Wisconsin Nonprofit Resources Group (check out our new website https://wisnrg.com/); and (3) the Wisconsin Civic Health Initiative, which is preparing to launch the inaugural Civic Health of Wisconsin Report.

- In late May, we hosted our 25th Annual Fundraising and Development for Nonprofits Conference -- a great success once again! We'll be featuring this event in our next newsletter edition.

Welcome our new Affiliates!

We are thrilled to welcome new Affiliates to the CommNS community!

- Ginny Hughes - Community Groundworks Education Director
- Elizabeth O'Callahan - Editor, Wisconsin Collaborative Education Research Network, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Angela Rose Black - Founder, Mindfulness for the People™ and Mindfulness for the People Academy
- Cynthia Burnson - Senior Researcher, National Council on Crime and Delinquency
- Stephanie Harrison - Chief Executive Officer, Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association
- Shahanna McKinney-Baldon- Coordinator for Midwest Jewish Diversity Collaborative
- Robert Mayer - Professor and Director of the Center for Conservation and Ecological Conservation, Universidad de Puerto Rico en Aguadilla

For more information on becoming a CommNS Affiliate, please contact Sara Ansell, sara.ansell@wisc.edu

What's new at the CommNS? (Cont.)

We continue to be amazed at the momentum we see building through our work and network around our Focus Areas and key inquiries and projects which build strength, knowledge, and support for the civil society and nonprofit sectors. We'll be using the summer as a springboard to plan and connect so our 2019-20 academic year is our most productive yet. Our annual event theme, "Where Mission Meets Advocacy", will be top of mind as we work strategically, in context, to build relationships, support, opportunities, and resources to advance our work for a better third sector in Wisconsin and the World.

Happy Summer and please do stay tuned -- more good things ahead.

- Mary Beth Collins, Executive Director of the CommNS

Co-Create Project Spotlight

This spring, CommNS Co-Create has had the opportunity to work with the Lussier Community Education Center of Madison in program mapping and refinement process for the Neighborhood Organizing Institute (NOI). In two interactive sessions, the Co-Create team guided Lussier staff to backward map the NOI program based on their current experience of it and their highest aspirations for NOI. After describing program “success” in this way, the process then guided Lussier staff in detailing the many activities, staff efforts, and other contributions that make up NOI. From this generative process, the Co-Create team then assisted Lussier staff in designing visualizations of the NOI program for different audiences, and in layering on evaluation plans that will best serve program needs moving forward.