Greetings, Friends of the CommNS!

We have had a busy and productive Fall Semester! It's been a time of expanding our reach, digging in more on parts of our mission and vision, and looking ahead to a next phase of growth and sustainability. Our collaborations and partnerships -- with faculty affiliates doing cutting-edge research, instructors and students, coalition and community partners, advisors, and practitioners whose "front-lines" experience informs what we do and teach -- remain the essential building blocks of our work.

The end of 2019 also marks the end of an era during which we had a large community-engaged research grant with partners across campus, which supported communities in collaborative and grassroots-led efforts to change policies, systems and environments to support health (the Obesity Prevention Initiative). We learned a lot from this special project and thank our funder, the Wisconsin Partnership Program, for this amazing opportunity. We are inspired by the work our community partners developed during this project and will continue to do into the future.

Many of you have been a part of our work this past semester, and we extend our deepest gratitude for that. Whatever your level of involvement with the CommNS to date, we encourage you to connect with us more in the new year. And, we wish you all a very happy close to 2019 and a prosperous, positive, and productive 2020.

Forward!
Mary Beth Collins, J.D., M.A.
Executive Director

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Fall "CommUniversity" Events: A Great Success!

Our Fall Series of 2019 CommUniversity Sessions explored:
-- overview reporting and data on the nonprofit and philanthropic sector in Wisconsin,
-- elected officials’ perspectives on the intersection of government and the "third sector",
-- Wisconsin nonprofit executives’ career journeys and experiences leading organizations, and
-- Wisconsin researchers’ scholarship on the nonprofit sector.

We all learned a lot and got great feedback from students and collaborators who were able to benefit from these learning opportunities (and the Ian’s pizza was a bonus!). A big thanks to all the speakers and attendees!

If you missed these excellent sessions, please note that some of these talks were captured on Facebook Live and remain available on our Facebook page.

Annual Event 2020
REGISTER NOW
April 9, 2020, Madison, WI

Register now for our annual event this year focused on the theme ‘Getting the Work Done: How To’s for Community and Nonprofit Efforts’! Our keynote speaker is Dr. Shariq Siddiqui, the former Executive Director of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), and current Assistant Professor and Director of the Muslim Philanthropy Initiative at Indiana University’s Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. Scholarships are available.

CommNS Co-Create

It's been a busy fall for Co-Create! CommNS staff and SoHE graduate students have been hard at work in various projects with partners in the nonprofit, philanthropic, education, and government sectors, and ranging from program evaluations and applied research projects to strategic planning and professional development workshops. Associate Director Amy Hilgendorf also had the opportunity to present on "#EvalHacks and Evaluative Thinking" at the Madison Nonprofit Day on October 31, 2019. The presentation offered tips and tricks for nonprofits to integrate evaluation into what they already do and bring the benefits of evaluation into their day-to-day work! Find the slides [here](#).
CommNS Advisory Board formed

We are delighted to announce that the CommNS has formed its first external Advisory Board, comprised of a dozen leaders in the "third sector" who will serve as ambassadors for the CommNS, and advise us on student experiences and career-readiness, trends in the sector, and awareness-building about and sustainability of our Center. The new Advisory Board held its inaugural meeting in Madison during UW Homecoming week and was able to participate in the Chancellor's Breakfast in addition to doing some great work to form some initial goals. Our website will feature more information about our Advisory Board. We are delighted and grateful to have this significant support from such an impressive group of experts.

CommNS in the Classroom

This fall semester, the CommNS has had more opportunity than ever to support student learning experiences in the classroom. Through our supportive role of the Civil Society and Community Studies ("CSCS") Department and its Community and Nonprofit Leadership undergraduate major, and the Human Ecology Master's Degree Program, we are able to leverage our network to offer "real world" experiences to students and classrooms.

Our CSCS course offerings are already rich with community-engaged elements, from our Philanthropy Lab course, capstone service-learning projects, communications planning for local organizations, and more! The CommNS has been able to add to these efforts by connecting undergraduate students to grant-writing activities to benefit area nonprofit organizations; leading a Board Leadership service learning class; and hosting a range of guest speakers, site visits and in-the-field opportunities in graduate “Professional Skills” courses.

We also supported various independent study options designed to help prepare graduate students for their particular "front lines" social change and nonprofit leadership goals. The CommNS hopes to continue to support the expansion of community-engaged experiences for students' optimal preparation to be thoughtful, critical, prepared change agents in the field! Watch this space!

CommNS on the road!

This fall, several of our staff and students had a great time presenting, learning, and networking at the following regional and national conferences:

-- ARNOVA (the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Actions)
-- American Evaluation Association
-- Madison Nonprofit Day
-- UW-Stevens Point Center for the Small City Annual Conference

Wisco+World

The CommNS also refined the way it collaborates with global partners this fall. We've been fortunate over the years to have been approached by and collaborated with amazing global partners in Latin America, Europe, and Africa. This fall we also had the opportunity to collaborate with and learn from visiting fellow Acacio de Silva Sarmento, a Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative fellow from Mercy Corps.

In Timor-Leste Acacio helped to inform students and staff about the nature of NGO work in his region and convene some of our global advisors to refine guidelines for CommNS collaboration with global partners.

Our Wisco+World efforts aim to conduct bidirectional ideas exchange with a few key global partners. We hope that by sharing across contexts, our students and partners can gain insight as to local-to-global dynamics in the third sector and be better prepared as change agents in a complex, codependent, and connected world.

In Spring of 2020, the CommNS will also be offering a graduate level independent study which will allow UW-Madison students to conduct virtual service learning and exchange with former Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Fellows across the African continent. We are excited to learn from and exchange with our global partners as our Wisco+World relationships strengthen and develop.

Stay in touch with the CommNS!

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