

HOW YOUR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY CAN BE ENGAGED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

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By Angela Cain

Imagine this. You're in middle school, around the age of 11 to 13, and you get to attend a free camp where you learn to express yourself through fun projects and start building your voice on community issues. And, here's a special treat. You are learning from college professors and college students – people stepping up to pour into your life, build your confidence, and let you know that your voice and your creativity matter – no matter what your age. Perhaps they also inspire you to pursue a higher education.

This is SlamCamp, a one-week writing and arts day camp for middle schoolers with a goal of connecting kids to the community and helping them tackle real-life issues. Purdue Northwest and the Michigan City Public library co-developed SlamCamp. And, it is one of many college and community partnerships made possible each year through grants from Indiana Campus Compact (ICC).



“Indiana Campus Compact is an invaluable resource and a cornerstone for our camp,” says Bethany Lee, Assistant Professor of English at Purdue Northwest. “ICC gave us the opportunity to engage middle schools around our campus, which are often underserved.”

Lee was among various college faculty presenting breakout sessions at Indiana Campus Compact’s Fall Kick-Off Retreat, on September 21, at the Prindle Institute for Ethics at DePauw University.

Faculty, administrators, and students from 21 campuses attended the retreat. And in some of the sessions, they learned inspiring ways to engage with and impact their communities.

Liza Donovan Blomquist, the Director of Communication and Outreach for Indiana Campus Compact, says, "We believe it's important to bring campuses together statewide to share skill-building ideas and projects that help us dig deeper into the pedagogy of service-learning and community engagement. It's a great way to discover what kind of community engagement campuses are doing, and to lift up their practice."

Blomquist adds, "We hope they go back to their campuses and start a relationship with like-minded people who do the same kind of work."

And, that's at the heart of Indiana Campus Compact's purpose, mission, and vision. It is a convener, communicator, and catalyst for Indiana institutions of higher education to leverage their knowledge, resources, and power for the public good.

Indiana Campus Compact is the nexus of civic engagement and community betterment focused on students, institutions, and community members who are pushing the status quo to create the next generation of changemakers.



Indiana Campus Compact is also unique in its focus on all higher education institutions. It works with public, private, and community colleges to advocate, implement, and improve community engagement efforts. Indiana Campus Compact wants to equip every student in every institution with the competence, confidence, humility, and experience to be well-informed citizens through service engagement.

Brook Regier, an undergrad student at Purdue Northwest, volunteers to work with middle school students at SlamCamp. "I fell in love with the kids," Regier says effusively. "I had written a grant for the camp the year before, so I learned a lot about it. I loved helping kids write and watching the creative process for kids at such a young age."

SlamCamp is also shaping Regier's plans for her future career and community engagement. "It has made me think more about what I want to do in life after college."

In 2018, Indiana Campus Compact funded nearly \$60,000 in grants on college and university campuses across the state, building partnerships and projects that help advance, support, and inspire communities.

“Indiana Campus Compact grants provide an opportunity for higher education to engage in meaningful dialogue with the communities in which they are located,” says Carol Wetherell. She’s the director of the Blumberg Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Special Education at Indiana State University.



Wetherell was another presenter at the Fall Retreat, sharing details of the university’s Indiana Campus Compact’s grant-funded project on “Developing a Community of Support for Autism Spectrum Disorder.”

With Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as the fastest-growing disability in the country, Wetherell says students on the Indiana State University campus in Terre Haute, as well as individuals in the

community, need an array of support to live, learn, and work successfully.

The Indiana Campus Compact funding helped Indiana State University meet with community agencies and individuals that are key stakeholders in the ASD community. “The group identified what success would look like for children with autism and what gets in the way of success,” Wetherell said during her presentation. “The group addressed possible ways to overcome barriers to success,” she said, on both the campus and in the community.

Indiana Campus Compact understands that public, private, and community colleges do not operate in a vacuum. They are formed in communities and pulse with the perspectives and diversity of tens of thousands of people on and around their campuses.

So, the Indiana Campus Compact Fall Retreat showcased a myriad of ways that higher education has an impact on its communities through Indiana Campus Compact grants: “*Food for Thought*,” a series of community-based research breakfasts at the University of Notre Dame where faculty are listening, learning, and transforming communities;

"Creating Meaningful Service," a service-learning program joint venture in which Indiana University and Ivy Tech Bloomington hosted a "Listening to Communities" event with the non-profit and public sectors; and *"Improving Internships and Partnerships,"* an initiative at Indiana University South Bend to connect local organizations with its student interns, or make existing internships better.



Indiana Campus Compact believes that we are better communities when we embrace and serve each other... when we advocate and engage to make our communities better. And, that work starts in places like our homes, our workplaces, and our institutions where millions of young people across our nation build their future: colleges and universities.

Learn more about Indiana Campus Compact grants to help serve your campus community, or find out how your campus can become a partner in the Compact. Indiana Campus Compact has over 40 partner institutions representing 70 campuses statewide.

You can also learn about some exciting projects ahead at ICC including the 9th Annual Service Engagement Summit and Awards Gala featuring a keynote address by Interfaith Youth Core Founder and President [Eboo Patel](#). The Summit and Gala are open to the public.



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