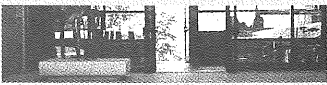


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Spring 1998

The Heller Graduate School Alumni Newsletter

- 
- 1 Message from the Dean
 - 1 Alumni Corner
 - 2 Class Notes
 - 3 Substance Abuse
 - 4 Looking Under the Hood
 - 5 Boston to Bosnia

The Center for Human Resources And The Scholarship of Practice

"Our ultimate goal is to have a positive impact on the human condition through the knowledge that we create, the education that our students receive, the accomplishments of our alumni, and the extent to which our work transcends the boundaries between academia and the broader society."

From the Mission of the Heller School

Transcending the traditional boundaries between the Academy and the Community can be tricky business for a university, yet it has often defined work at Heller Research Centers. Throughout its history the Center for Human Resources has been a laboratory for scholarship and public engagement at Heller and has become an advocate for what is now known as the "Scholarship of Practice."

Using Research to Prepare and Support People to Manage Change: The Scholarship of Practice

Susan P. Curman

For more and more Americans, young and old alike, the opportunity structure is collapsing under their feet. Access to and participation in effective education and training programs seem limited to the most prepared. De-industrialization has cut the rungs out of the ladder to a middle-class life for most lower income Americans. Global forces are causing the labor market to buckle and shift. Demands increase for heightened skill sets, thereby widening the gap between the haves and have-nots. The knowledge industry and information age promise no end to these high demands.

Community change agents are looking to universities not only for credentials and knowledge development but also for help in understanding these changes so they can provide the best possible services. In the non-profit sector, the challenge to manage this change is enormous. Informal partnerships and "coordinated services" are giving way to highly structured collaboration, consolidations, mergers and acquisitions as well as the outright dismantling of some organizations.

A kind of organizational Darwinism has emerged, forcing managers to accelerate organizational transformation, restructure jobs and construct new systems to assure a balance of quality and accountability. A "new professional competence" requires steep and ongoing learning and astute "systems thinking" embedded in strategic planning, partnership development, and performance management.

As strategic allies with community agencies in evaluation, the Center negotiates relationships that are dialogic and reciprocal. We respect different voices, different ways of knowing. Our role is to de-mystify, democratize and disseminate expertise through a productive academy-community relationship. As partners in capacity-building for management and leadership development, the Center's challenge is to continue to enrich research-based youth development practice with findings on risk and resilience, motivation, learning styles, developmentally appropriate intervention, state-of-the-art management strategies and adult-learning theory.

In short, the Scholarship of Practice requires us to collaborate with communities, to find solutions together, to combine theory and practice. Because of the Heller Graduate School's commitment to working at the intersections of the academy, community and polity, we have the opportunity to break down the intellectual apartheid that has long separated the academy from the community. Our vision is to have a global network of academy-community partnerships where theory and practice come together in order to improve quality of life for children, youth and families. Just imagine-places where shared prosperity, success and well-being is facilitated by shared knowledge.

Susan P. Curman is the Director of the Center for Human Resources, Associate Human Services Management Professor and Co-Chair of the Master of the Management Concentration in Child, Youth and Family Services.

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