

# Compass

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development



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## Note from the Director

Our successes this semester have been possible only through caring, true, thoughtful, and reciprocal partnerships, and we are grateful to our students, faculty, alumni, community organizations, and friends. We understand the importance of organizational partnerships, yet we often do not take the time to acknowledge their significance.

This year is the Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. To our mutual benefit, we work closely with Peace Corps in two of our graduate programs - the Peace Corps Master's International Program and the Peace Corps Fellows/USA Program. Our own Applied Community and Economic Development Fellows Program recognizes those with other significant service experiences.

We work with fantastic students from across the country. These students come to Illinois State for the opportunity to work with welcoming, supportive, and nurturing host organizations -- providing service to those organizations along the way. The relationships we have with other units and higher administration of Illinois State University have made us not only sustainable, but also a growing force for community development in central Illinois and beyond. The faculty who teach our students are scholars and mentors. Our undergraduate interns (most recently, Anitra Hines, Katy Murphy, Liz Lovell, and Kati Brei) provide support to the staff and receive training in the process. All we do is in partnership with others.

In short, we value our work with you. Thank you for partnering, collaborating, sharing, and growing with us.

—Frank

## **Current Internships**

Joanna Bossi,  
Habitat for Humanity of Indiana, Indianapolis

Drew Griffin,  
Quality Quest for Health, Peoria, IL

Dana Overman,  
City of Champaign, IL

Jered Ulschmid,  
Corporation for Supportive Housing,  
Chicago, IL

Tessa Zevallos,  
Mikva Challenge, Chicago IL

## **Students and Alumni Serving with Peace Corps**

Tyler Curtis, Togo  
Ted Fischer, St. Vincent

Michael Hotard, Kazakhstan

David Johnson, Panama

Janelle Jones, Peru

Joseph Lauchlan, Costa Rica

Laura Livesay, Senegal

Sasha Miranda, Dominican Republic

Eric Porter, Micronesia

Brad Pribe, Kyrgyz Republic

Nicolette Slagle, Thailand



Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams  
(RPCV Dominican Republic 1967-70) greets  
Associate Director Beverly Beyer  
(RPCV Bulgaria 1997-1999)

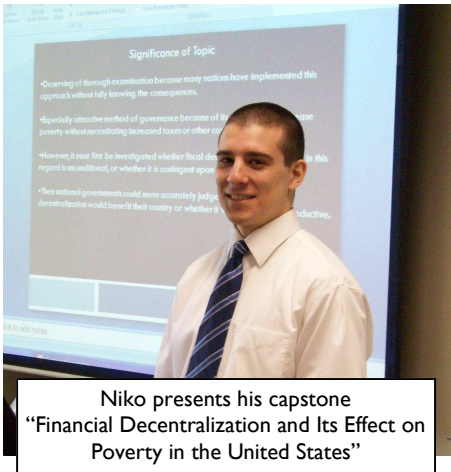
## Peace Corps Director visits Illinois

Associate Director Beverly Beyer had the good fortune to meet Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams on his recent trip to central Illinois. Mr. Williams was in Peoria on February 23<sup>rd</sup> to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peace Corps with a panel discussion entitled "Paths to Global Engagement." He has fond memories of Illinois State University, where he did some recruiting for Peace Corps after returning from the Dominican Republic. The discussion, which included Congressman Aaron Schock and Caterpillar Inc.'s Washington Director for Governmental Affairs William C. Lane, focused on international service (through both public and private ventures) and leadership development. "You find yourself in challenging situations where you have to solve problems for yourself, and you do it in a foreign culture without your normal support system. You become stronger for that," said Williams. "Then you come home and you have this rich experience to use in your career."



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Niko presents his capstone "Financial Decentralization and Its Effect on Poverty in the United States"

## Student Spotlight: Niko Valaris

Niko Valaris, an Applied Community and Economic Development (ACED) Fellow in Applied Economics, looks forward to beginning his professional practice this summer upon the completion of his capstone. Prior to coming to Illinois State University in Fall 2010, Niko had years of community service experience. He began service in high school with his youth group and hasn't stopped since. "It became normal to be involved in community service. I wouldn't have felt right if I wasn't doing some community service regularly," says Niko.

Niko attended Fairfield University in Connecticut where he studied politics and economics and worked with Habitat for Humanity. Niko completed two terms with AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). During the first, Niko worked at Sherman Lake serving as a cabin counselor for middle school students and with the United Way to rebuild homes in Indiana. During his second term in AmeriCorps NCCC, as team leader, Niko went to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina to assist in the cleanup and rebuilding of the Lower 9<sup>th</sup> Ward.

Niko was drawn to the Stevenson Center graduate program because of the opportunity to begin an internship in the second year. "I wanted to put everything I learned into practice and gain more real world experience. The idea of being able to take action so quickly and being around other service-minded people really drew me to the Stevenson Center," Niko states. Niko expresses his gratitude for the Stevenson Center and those affiliated: "I am very grateful to be here and have the opportunity at the Center and Illinois State. It has been a good fit for me here and I have learned so much." In his professional practice with the City of LaSalle, Illinois, Niko will be building on his extensive experience in community service.

## Alumni Spotlight: Jennifer Trost

Jennifer Trost (M.S. 2004, Sociology, ACED Fellows Program Alum) lives in St. Paul, MN with her husband and infant son, Dominic. She is serving as Elementary/Middle School Coordinator for the Get Ready Program. The Get Ready Program, a college access and career center awareness program for first generation college students, is housed in the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and funded by a federal GEAR UP grant. Additionally she is working toward a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development (Higher Education focus) at the University of Minnesota.

Jennifer began as an Education Liaison (EL) at Get Ready for her ACED Fellows Program professional practice and then continued her work full-time after receiving her master's degree. During her professional practice, Jennifer tutored math and reading, coordinated family events, developed relationships with students and their families, and became the college expert in the school. "Working with a very low-income, transitory population helped me to broaden my understanding of poverty and the implications in the United States," says Trost. In June 2006, she and her husband-to-be relocated to Milwaukee, WI where Jennifer worked at Milwaukee School of Engineering in Admissions and Student Life. "This was a wonderful experience for me and helped me to realize how much I love being on a college campus," reports Trost. In 2009, after her husband, Tim, completed his degree they moved back to Minnesota and she began working for the Get Ready Program in a supervisory role.

Jennifer completed her bachelor's degree at the University of St. Thomas, in St. Paul, MN. During her senior year, she knew she wanted to volunteer full-time after graduation. She applied to programs across the country and ended up in Selma, AL as an AmeriCorps Member with the Edmundite Mission Corps (EMC). She chose Selma and the EMC because she wanted to live and work in the same community. With the EMC, she served as teen support coordinator, GED instructor, after-school tutor, emergency outreach assistant, and interim program director. "These years in Selma were foundational to my current vocational and life choices. I learned so much and have a great connection to those I met while in the program. I still regularly see and talk to my Selma friends," says Trost.



Jennifer and Dominic

## Analysis of Employment Security

Through a grant awarded to Professor Daniel Rich of Economics, the Stevenson Center is involved in the evaluation of unemployment insurance claimant outcomes for the State of Illinois. Dr. Rich is linking weekly files of unemployment claimant records to produce analyses of cohort and period effects, benefit exhaustion, employment histories and reemployment outcomes, and the breakdown of each by industry and demographic characteristics. Dr. Beck of the Stevenson Center is responsible for mapping unemployed persons across the state and time by industry, demographic characteristics, and community size. Relationships between firm-level data and the claimant data will be analyzed with Geographic Information Systems technology. Given the size of the project, the team is acquiring increased data storage and processing capacity. Through this project and others, students with quantitative skills and research interests have the opportunity to learn PASW and ArcView. Dr. Beck enjoys working closely with these students, involving them in finding data-driven solutions to complex problems.

## Student Presentations & Awards

**Margaret Anderson, Peace Corps Master's International Program, Political Science** - ISU Sixteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium, April 29, 2011

**Lloyd Banwart, Peace Corps Fellow, Applied Economics** - Honorable Mention, Scott M. Elliot Graduate Scholarship, Department of Economics, April 19, 2011

**Dana Bulba, ACED Fellow, Sociology** - Department Charter Graduate Student Excellence Award, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, April 22, 2011

**Ted Fischer, Peace Corps Master's International Student, Political Science** - Graduate Student Civic Engagement Award, Department of Politics and Government, April 25, 2011

**Tessa Zevallos, Peace Corps Fellow, Sociology** - Illinois State University Graduate Research Symposium, March 25, 2011



Returned Peace Corps Volunteers



### Stevenson Center's Celebration

On March 1, 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10924 formally establishing the Peace Corps. On August 30, 1961, the first group of 51 volunteers arrived in Ghana to serve as teachers. In the fifty years since the

beginning of the Peace Corps, it has grown and evolved to include over 200,000 volunteers serving in 139 countries around the world. Of those 200,000, there are 485 Illinois State University alumni. Currently, there are 8,655 volunteers serving around the world.

The Stevenson Center celebrated its relationship with the Peace Corps on March 30, 2011. As part of the International Seminar Series, the Stevenson Center welcomed Dr. Robert Mazur of Iowa State University. In conjunction with the decided theme of the event, food security, Dr. Mazur presented "Sustainable Livelihoods Capacity Building Approach to Agriculture, Nutrition and Health in Uganda." The event concluded with lively discussion and Dr. Mazur complimented the efforts of the Stevenson Center and the Peace Corps.

At the Peace Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reception, Peace Corps Regional Recruiter Rok Teasley joined the Stevenson Center in thanking returned Peace Corps Volunteers for their dedication and hard work. The event served as a catalyst for volunteers: some of the first groups to serve in the Peace Corps under President Kennedy talked with current Stevenson Center students who recently served or will serve in the near future. "It was inspiring to see returned Volunteers who served in Guatemala or Tanganyika in the 1960s meet others awaiting the challenge," said director Frank Beck. The event also brought together faculty and Illinois State administration with local organizations involved in community and public service. The Stevenson Center honors all current and returned Peace Corps Volunteers.



Frank Beck and Bob Hunt with Guest Speaker Robert Mazur and Semakaleng Labepe-Mazur



Stevenson Center Staff

### ISU Ranked 5th in Nation for Peace Corps Master's International Program

Illinois State University is ranked fifth in the nation as a Peace Corps Master's International school in the 2011 ranking of Peace Corps Master's International and Fellows/USA Graduate Programs. The Peace Corps Master's International Program is facilitated by the Stevenson Center. Our program has been in place since 1997 and pairs a graduate degree in Applied Economics, Political Science, or Sociology with Peace Corps service. Since the beginning efforts of the Center, it has graduated 34 Peace Corps Master's International students.

Beverly Beyer, associate director and a returned Peace Corps Volunteer, manages the Peace Corps Master's International Program. "The Center is proud to be placed fifth in the nation. Our ranking as the fifth largest Peace Corps Master's International Program in the country is quite an honor. Frank, Martha, and I inherited a great program, and we have worked diligently over the last seven years to make it even better. We are continuously in awe of our students: they are amazing people to work with and to know," says Beyer. With continued support and dedication, the Stevenson Center looks forward to preparing more students for Peace Corps service.



## Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Marion Willetts

Dr. Marion Willetts is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Illinois State University. For the past three years, she has held the position of the Sociology Graduate Program Coordinator and Advisor. In the 10 years that Dr. Willetts has been at ISU, she has taught sociology classes ranging from Introduction to Sociology to a course she created herself, Animals and Society. Animals and Society explores societal uses of nonhuman animals for food, clothing, research, entertainment, and companions. The course also explores the connections between the oppression of animals and the oppression of racial/ethnic groups, women, and the poor. In conjunction with the Animals and Society course, her current research involves studying the divide in the animal welfare community regarding the feasibility of no-kill shelter policies.

Thank you, Dr. Willetts, for your dedicated service as Sociology Graduate Coordinator.

Another research interest of Dr. Willetts revolves around family policies, including licensed domestic partnerships, civil unions, same-sex marriage, and covenant marriage. Willetts is most interested in the unconventionality of same-sex couples that defy societal norms and choose not to get married or have children. "I am interested in exploring the relationship quality of these couples; why they choose to live together rather than getting married; why they are bucking

convention and choosing non-traditional methods instead," says Dr. Willetts. Reflecting on one of her more serendipitous discoveries, she notes, "I was surprised to learn some couples' motivation for not getting married. Some straight couples refused to get married because homosexual friends could not get married. This is a notable social stance that I did not expect to see when I started conducting research on this topic in the mid-1990s."

During her three years as Graduate Program Coordinator and Advisor, Dr. Willetts became part of the Stevenson Center Board. After the spring 2011 semester, her graduate coordinator term will end. Though she looks forward to teaching more classes next semester, Dr. Willetts will miss working so closely with everyone at the Stevenson Center. She reflects, "I have relied on Frank Beck and Beverly Beyer so much in the past three years."

## An Easy Gift to Give

How did your experience at Illinois State affect you? How did your professional practice in applied community/economic development (whether an 11-month internship or Peace Corps service) shape your career path? What did you learn that you have continued to build upon?

Perhaps the most important way that you might give back to your graduate program is by helping a current student to have a meaningful professional practice experience. What can you do?

- Talk to your colleagues about how one of our graduate students could assist in your work.
- Send us links to organizations that might be a good fit for our students.
- Share information about the Stevenson Center with others in your network who might be interested.

While financial gifts are always appreciated and needed, helping us place our talented students is a timely and accessible gift. Please contact us at [stevensoncenter@ilstu.edu](mailto:stevensoncenter@ilstu.edu) or 309-438-7090. Thank you for your ongoing support and generosity!

## Give a Gift to the Stevenson Center

We want to serve more communities and more students. Thus, a primary goal is reducing the cost of these services so that more underserved communities can benefit from the great work of our students. Donations reduce that cost. Thank you for your consideration.

Check one or Both:

Student Service to Communities

\$10

\$50

\$15

\$100

Endowment

\$25

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send checks payable to the Stevenson Center or visit us online at [www.stevensoncenter.org](http://www.stevensoncenter.org) to make a donation.



## STEVENSON CENTER

FOR COMMUNITY AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*Illinois State University*

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