Welcome to the first issue of the Center for Civic Leadership newsletter!

As you may know, 2015 was a year of great change for the CCL as we transitioned from four distinct offices to one center with a common mission. This process allowed us to improve our programs for students, deepen our relationships with faculty and community partners, and identify opportunities for growth.

In this first issue of our newsletter, we wish to focus on our work with community partners. The primary goal of the Center for Civic Leadership is to build undergraduates’ capacity for civic leadership and social responsibility through experiential learning. Since the relationships that we foster with partner organizations are integral to the success of our mission, we have sought over the past year to bring greater intentionality to our efforts in order to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes. In this issue, we highlight the critical role that our community partners serve as co-educators in engaging and empowering our students to enact sustainable, positive change from Houston to Sofia, Bulgaria.

We hope you enjoy reading highlights of some of the work accomplished in 2015 through collaboration, and we look forward to working with you in the New Year.

Wishing you a very happy holiday season,

Caroline Quenemoen
Executive Director
Since 2013, the CCL has partnered with Southeast Houston Transformation Alliance (SEHTA), a collaborative, community-based organization that brings together residents and key stakeholders to transform the Southeast Houston area into a healthy, vibrant, and economically stable community. SEHTA grew out of a 2012 National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant, and the organization now serves alongside the Neighborhood Recovery Community Development Corporation (NRCDC) as the steering committee for the OST/South Union GO Neighborhood. SEHTA supports the work of eight Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) GO Teams, which work on a variety of issues and opportunities throughout the neighborhood, from health and wellness to arts, culture, and media.

The SEHTA-CCL partnership began when SEHTA reached out to the CCL after the Houston Chronicle published an article about the METRO bike-bus HART project. Since then, SEHTA and the CCL have collaborated on a number of projects. A Rice HART team worked during Spring of 2014 with SEHTA's Strollin’ and Rollin' GO Team to survey community residents and develop a proposal for complete streets for the area. They presented their findings to community members and other stakeholders, and the team’s findings and recommendations have been included in SEHTA’s efforts to secure funding and support for improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure in OST/South Union.

Last spring, an independent panel of judges selected SEHTA as a winner of the CCL's Civic Innovation Incubator, and awarded funding to SEHTA to hire an intern for the summer. SEHTA selected Rice students Reilly Brooks and Rachel Kagen. Rachel worked on an art project highlighting Houston’s diversity with a special focus on the refugee population, while Reilly worked to develop a program structure for the neighborhood youth population. Both projects were locally publicized and recognized by the City of Houston.
The CCL places great emphasis on developing partnerships with community organizations locally, domestically, and globally. In Houston, partnership development may include CCL staff hosting a lunch meeting or coffee with partners, serving on a local committee to implement an event, or bringing partners to campus to share directly with students about internship, service and research opportunities.

For our international partners, the geographic distance adds some unique challenges to developing and maintaining community partnerships. Our international programs provide a venue for us to explore best practices in this area. One such example is our partnership with the Bulgarian Food Bank. Partnership development began a year before students travelled to Sofia, Bulgaria in the summer of 2015. Conversations about the CCL and Global Foodbanking Network/Bulgarian Food Bank’s mission, programs, and roles of students were the first steps to identifying areas of collaboration.

Through the Global Foodbanking Network Leadership Institute held yearly in Houston, Bulgarian Food Bank (BFB) representatives visited Rice and had in-person meetings with CCL staff and students. Together it was decided that the first collaboration would be sending a Group International Service trip of 12 students to Bulgaria for 3 weeks in May to work on BFB’s 1 kg of GOODNESS Food Drive.

This project helps provide food for people throughout the whole year, especially when access to packed food and hot meals prepared by agencies and soup kitchens may become limited. The students assisted with running the food drive and raising awareness of food insecurities. BFB was extremely impressed with the students and asked them to return again in summer 2016. BFB also identified that having a student to research food insecurities would benefit the organization. Through the Loewenstern Fellowship, the CCL was able to fund a student for summer 2016 to conduct the research.

While geographic distance does limit the ability for year-round collaborations, it by no means deters it. Reflecting on this partnership, the key elements for its success are the ability to communicate via email and Skype on a regular basis, opportunities for in-person communication with CCL staff both in Houston and in Bulgaria, and assessment each year to refine the partnership and identify new areas for growth.
More Than a Completed Task: Reflecting on a Certificate in Civic Leadership Capstone Project

By Anne Wells

Anne Wells is a Weiss College senior pursuing a Certificate in Civic Leadership through the CCL. The Certificate enables students to exercise leadership in a variety of roles. Anne is working with engineering students at Rice and Amigos de las Americas, a Houston-based nonprofit which inspires and builds young leaders through collaborative community development and immersion in cross-cultural experiences, to develop a sustainable training curriculum for international community development projects.

What happens after we leave?

This very question has been the focus of my academic career as a Latin American Studies major specializing in rural/indigenous transculturation in health and society. I believe that sustainable community development was my life’s mission even before I knew the term. But if I am honest, it was not until I had special academic and professional development opportunities as an undergraduate student to learn how to better serve communities. Through coursework, a Loewenstern Fellowship in Peru, study abroad in Chile and now participation in the Civic Leadership Capstone, I have had the incredible opportunity to reflect on how my personal growth and awareness as a global citizen have come full circle as a leader who can now spread knowledge to others.

The focus of my Certificate in Civic Leadership Capstone project is to better serve the service-learning experiences of my fellow students. I have partnered with Amigos de las Americas and engineering students at Rice University to develop a sustainable training curriculum for international community development projects. Students conducting international service projects through organizations like Engineers Without Borders will be able to participate in the training to gain an understanding of international development and service ethics in order to collaborate with communities to build sustainable engineering projects.

From my experiences leading up to the Capstone project, I have learned that a successful project is more than a completed task list, a well-maintained budget or name recognition for the organization. It largely depends on the involvement of the targeted community that is ultimately responsible for ensuring that completed projects are sustained for the foreseeable future.

I am pursuing the goal of service-learning development not despite it being difficult, but because it is difficult. The project’s challenge has been on finding balance between maintaining a community-centered ethic in community development projects and making this a translatable or transdisciplinary endeavor for the diverse stakeholders involved. I am confident that through targeted models for establishing training curriculum and asset-based community development methods, this project will successfully facilitate collaboration among local institutional partners with a shared vision.
2015 Houston Happenings

CCL Partners with IEDA Relief for Houston Human Rights Day Festival

**IEDA Relief** is an international aid organization based in Houston that coordinates refugee camp management as well as local initiatives to support the refugee and immigrant communities of Houston. The CCL's partnership with IEDA was born out of the Urban Immersion program and has evolved into a cross-curricular, multi-programmatic collaborative.

On December 5, the Center for Civic Leadership had the pleasure of fostering that collaborative partnership by acting as co-host for Houston's first annual Houston Human Rights Day Festival alongside IEDA. The event was designed to join communities around the globe in celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the United Nations in 1948 following decades of international strife and the resulting demonstrations of both the best and worst of human nature. According to the Preamble of the Declaration, the proclamation was issued, in part, to affirm and uphold that at the heart of freedom, of justice, of peace was "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family."

The event was an invaluable opportunity to communicate the Center's beliefs to the Houston community and to further develop the partnership between the CCL and IEDA Relief. The CCL is thrilled to count IEDA as a partner and ally in the fight for justice for all.

For more information on IEDA's work in Houston and around the globe, visit their website at [http://iederarelief.org/](http://iederarelief.org/).

HPL-CCL Partnership Fosters Understanding of How Houston Reads

Since the CCL is partnered with the **Houston Public Library (HPL)** to better understand how Houstonians use libraries, HPL can make informed, evidence-based decisions regarding resource allocation for current and future facilities and services.

This past year saw the completion of two important projects. In the summer, a Houston Action Research Team (HART) explored how factors external to the library drive customer usage and the distance customers travel. In the fall, another HART team examined the idea of customer loyalty towards libraries as well as neighborhood versus non-neighborhood library use. Both projects were funded by a 3-year grant from the Friends of the Houston Public Library, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering wider recognition, use and support of the Houston Public Library.
What’s New in Spring 2016

**CCL Houston Internship Program**
CCL Houston internships prepare undergraduates for the professional demands of the 21st century. The project-based internships are paid, co-curricular, applied learning opportunities for students, spanning 10 weeks during the fall or spring semester. Throughout this program, students will be supported through a collaborative effort between the Center for Civic Leadership and their partner organizations. Please contact Jesse Hendrix (jwh12@rice.edu) for more information.

**CCL Partners with Houston Department of Health & Human Services**
In Spring 2016, a Houston Action Research Team (HART) will kick off a new partnership between the CCL and Houston's Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS). A team of 4 undergraduates will work alongside staff from Page/, a local architecture and engineering firm. The HART students' work will inform the master planning collaboration between Page/ and HDHHS by identifying community needs and preferences across Houston and making recommendations for future HDHHS facilities and services.

Upcoming Events

**Tuesday, Jan 26 | 6-8 PM**
**The Brew**
Last year's Brew is back. We'll be hosting an event at Saint Arnold's Brewing Company to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of our faculty and community partners. We'll be in touch with more details!

**Tuesday, Mar 8 | 12-4 PM**
**Nonprofit & Government Career and Internship Expo**
**Rice Memorial Center**
The Career and Internship Expo is a great way to connect Rice students from all majors and years to recruiters from nonprofit and government organizations. For more information, please contact Danika Brown (danika@rice.edu).

**Saturday, Mar 12**
**Leading Edge Workshop: Civic Innovation Incubator**
The Civic Innovation Incubator is a think-tank style event in which teams of Rice undergraduates brainstorm approaches to challenges faced by organizations and pitch their solutions to a panel of judges. Winning organizations receive funding from the CCL to hire a Rice student intern for the summer.

If you are a Houston-based organization interested in generating new solutions to old problems, collaborating to design strategies for projects on the back burner, or striving to evolve through continuous innovation, then this event is for you.

If interested in participating or for more information, please contact Jesse Hendrix (jwh12@rice.edu).