Indiana Campus Compact Well-Represented at International Symposium

Indiana Campus Compact (ICC) was well-represented at a recent symposium at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, on "Service-Learning – Models for the 21st Century: Intercommunity, Interdisciplinary, International." The symposium was jointly sponsored by Stellenbosch University and by the Asian Studies Program of the University of Indianapolis, an active ICC member. This symposium, attracting over 100 participants from four continents, was attended not only by numerous representatives from the University of Indianapolis but also by current or former ICC faculty fellows, Pamala Morris and John Pomery from Purdue University (West Lafayette) and by Mac Bellner, former ICC assistant director for faculty development – several of whom not only made presentations but also acted as moderators. In addition, the recently-published book, "Service-Learning; Intercommunity and Interdisciplinary Explorations," edited by Mac Bellner and John Pomery, published by the University of Indianapolis Press, financially supported by ICC, and featuring reflective and narrative chapters by past ICC faculty fellows, was explicitly promoted in relation to the themes of the symposium.

The symposium was very successful, being very collegial, and informative. The physical setting was magnificent, with Stellenbosch being dominated by towering mountains overlooking vineyards and the Cape Dutch architecture of the town itself, and with the Western Cape region of South Africa offering dramatic scenery, sun-filled skies, low humidity, and excellent cuisine.

South African experience in service-learning and civic engagement in some ways parallels that of the United States, and the member campuses of ICC, but in other respects is very different. South Africa is rebuilding a democratic society, after the trauma of forty years of apartheid with its legacy of huge socioeconomic inequalities and layers of distrust and frustration. In such a society, both among concerned academics and the national government, civic engagement is seen as central to the contribution of higher education to building a more just and prosperous society. The national government audits each institution not only for overall performance but specifically for contributions to national goals in the area of engagement, outreach, and opportunity.

One finds a range of institutions, now in the process of being rationalized in the wake of the elimination of the apartheid structure within higher education. Leading research universities, such as the University of Cape Town or Stellenbosch University, often have clear and powerful, but distinct, approaches to service-learning and engagement. The "technicons" (or technical universities), traditionally second-class citizens to the more "academic" research universities, tend to have long-standing community connections and to be developing innovative grass-roots programs. There was much to be learned on both sides from comparing the US and South African environments for higher education, and the perceptions and approaches being utilized.

The connecting link for much of the Indiana, and ICC-related, side of the symposium came through Phylis Lan Lin, the energetic and resourceful executive director of the University of Indianapolis Press, head of that campus' Asian Studies Program, and co-organizer of the symposium at Stellenbosch. Dr. Lin's vision, combined with ICC sponsorship, led to the book, "Service-learning: Intercommunity and Interdisciplinary Explorations," coming to fruition. The volume, a project conceived and started by the Faculty Fellows class of 2000-2001, contains fourteen chapters written by past ICC Faculty Fellows, reflecting on individual projects and experiences. It highlights the strength and value of the ICC Faculty Fellows Program, as well as illustrating the wide range of different perspectives (on higher education, service-learning, and more) to be found amongst service-learning practitioners. It includes, for example, a chapter by Roger Jarjoura of IUPUI, on his path-breaking approach to reducing recidivism among juvenile offenders in Indiana corrective facilities. It also highlights the powerful approach to community

engagement adopted by the University of Indianapolis, as articulated in a chapter by Tim Maher. The sheer variety of the chapters, and the thought-provoking range of insights and perspectives, makes this a book hard to summarize adequately in one or two sentences. The combination of the ICC-related book and the University of Indianapolis co-sponsorship made the Stellenbosch symposium a memorable experience and yet another sign of the vibrancy of service-learning and civic engagement in the state of Indiana. (A second joint international symposium is planned in Indianapolis in 2007.)

John Pomery, ICC Senior Faculty Fellow (2003-04) and Faculty Fellow (1999-2000).