



The Common Good News
Regis University Institute on the Common Good

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



In light of the revolutions around the world today, many of them largely peaceful, one might ask the question “why dialogue,” and why not just “action.” And, indeed, there is a time to take to the streets with clear heart for a common purpose. There are times to seize the moment and silence the tongue. But once the dust clears, once the exhilaration of the moment is past, once the initial work is done, true dialogue must emerge or the old patterns will resurface, the old ways with new names will return. This is true in our minor revolutions as well, one party triumphing over the next, a change in management. In true dialogue, in the deep listening and the heartfelt speaking, new ways of seeing and thinking emerge, and thus new ways of acting in the world. Without that courage, and true dialogue is courageous, there can be no real revolution.

~ Paul Alexander, Ph.D.

WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD

by Wendy Serrano

Robert J. Kibbee once said: “The quality of a university is measured more by the kind of student it turns out than by the kind it takes in.” If this is the standard by which the value of a college experience is measured, then the Institute on the Common Good has proven to be a wonderful addition to my Jesuit education at Regis University. Learning at a Jesuit university, certain concepts and values are stressed in a wide variety of classes. One of these concepts is the common good, which even appeared in a discussion for biology lab. This concept is central to the work of the Institute on the Common Good, evidenced by its name.

Working in promotion of the common good is something I feel privileged to do. I began my semester of work by reading about the history and work of the Institute. I also read about the common good itself. The concept of the common good is well rooted in the principles of Catholic social teaching, as is in the best interest of most of the people in a community. Because the common good refers to the interests of a community, the Institute on the Common Good is heavily involved in the Denver community. One of the undertakings of the Institute this year for the Denver community was collaboration with Denver Public Schools to form the Northwest Community Committee (NWCC). The purpose of the NWCC is to initiate change in the education system of Denver. Investing in the education of children is to invest in their future, thus it serves the common good to improve the education system.

I was given the opportunity to be involved in this project by helping to assemble individual binders for meetings and translating documents from English to Spanish, considering the prevalence of Spanish-speaking parents in the Denver Public School system. I found this to be the most challenging duty as a work-study student, due to the fact that many of the educational terms have not arisen organically in my experience speaking the language. Needless to say, I spent a good amount of time rifling through an English-Spanish dictionary and consulting online sources.

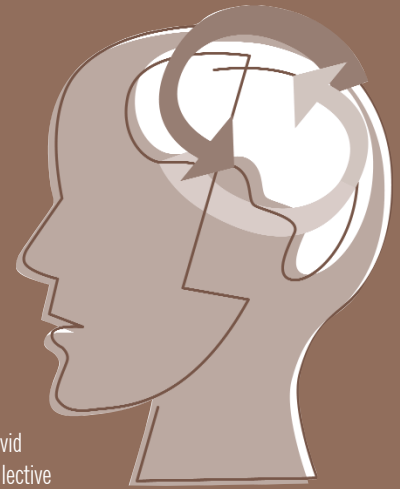
My work for this project also forced me to do one of the job descriptions I was least looking forward to: calling strangers on the phone. I do not like dialing a stranger’s phone number and beginning a conversation in English, much less in Spanish. However, I am glad I was given the opportunity to learn Spanish educational terms and initiate conversations with strangers over the telephone. Not only did it give me an added experience with the language, I was participating in a project that benefited the Northwest Denver community. I was working for the common good. I felt a part of the Institute, whose efforts have made and will continue to make a difference in the communities with which it collaborates.

Wendy Serrano, a Regis College freshman from Denver, has been a work-study student in the ICG since September. She plans to keep working for the common good while earning her bachelor’s degree in Bio Chemistry.

DIALOGUE TIP

Canada's Philia Dialogue offers a website (www.philia.ca) featuring a global perspective on the dialogue surrounding caring citizenship. With roots in the disability community, Philia Dialogue shares thoughts and tips regarding dialogue. Here are a few highlights:

- Dialogue seeks common ground. The goal of dialogue is not to convince, persuade or score points, but to achieve mutual understanding, trust and respect. In dialogue we listen not to find flaws and make counter-arguments, but to understand and find a basis for agreement.
- Dialogue is collaborative. It recognizes that no single person has the whole answer but rather that everyone has something important to contribute – that each person's thinking can be enriched by the thoughts and perspectives of others.
- Dialogue encourages us to suspend judgment and re-examine all points of view, seeking strengths and value in the positions of others.
- Dialogue is not concerned with deliberately trying to change behavior or to move participants toward a predetermined goal. It is more about opening up new possibilities, opportunities and meanings, leading to what David Bohm describes as “a new kind of coherent, collective intelligence.”



DIALOGUE RESOURCE

ICG works with Regis University and various community groups to host dialogue events on matters of interest using the same guidelines discussed on the Philia Web site. An event may be a single dialogue session or a series of dialogues around a common topic led by trained facilitators. Participants come to understand the value of conversation as they share ideas and work toward conclusions on issues of common good.

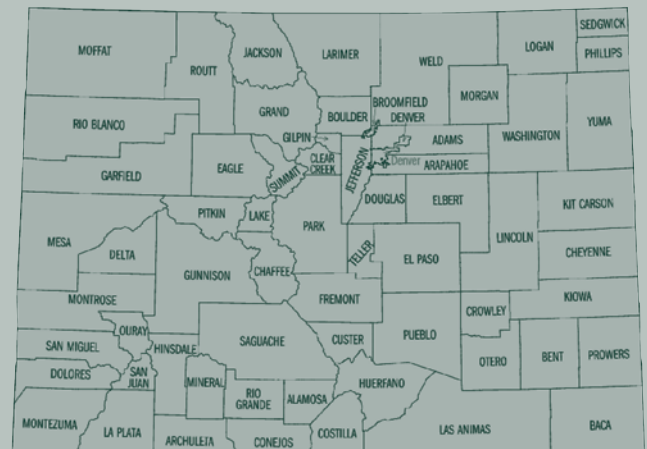
AROUND THE STATE

The Colorado Legacy Foundation and The New Teacher Project are two groups joining together with the Colorado Department of Education to try and improve teacher effectiveness throughout Colorado. This project, funded by the Rose Foundation as well as private donors, will use \$1 million in order to complete a two-year project that will help the CDE create a way to help school districts find, prepare, continuously support and keep teachers and principals who prove to be effective. There are several other projects under way with the same goals in mind, and this project will stand as a way to organize all of the research being done. The other projects include: State Council for Educator Effectiveness, P-3 Professional Development Task Force, School Leadership Academy Board and the Quality Teachers Commission.

The Colorado Department of Education's website outlines some expectations for this two-year period. According to those expectations, by the end of this project the CDE can be expected to have adopted measurable state-level goals related to increasing the number of highly effective educators statewide and, given that goal, also decreasing the number of ineffective educators statewide. They also will have addressed the equal distribution of effective educators around Colorado.

The Colorado Legacy Foundation, another key member in this project, has some expectations to fulfill as well. Those expectations are “Publish one or more best practices guides related to evidence-based practices of effective educators, implement up to three initiatives to increase the preparation, recruitment, retention, and support of effective educators in identified areas of unmet need and recognize the accomplishments of Colorado's most effective educators.”

The Colorado Department of Education's website also includes a timeline for this project as well as a link to more efforts similar to this one. For more information, go to www.cde.state.co.us and search: Improving Educator Effectiveness.



Become an ICG Sponsored Community!

Each year the Institute on the Common Good selects communities for full and partial sponsorship. If your community has a concern, opportunity, or problem which could be resolved through dialogue, community collaboration, or community conflict transformation, please contact us. Working closely with you, we will assess whether we might be of help. With full sponsorship there is no charge to you or your community.

ICG HIGHLIGHTS

What is happening at the Institute on the Common Good?



Institute on the Common Good welcomes new staff member

The Institute on the Common Good welcomes Peggy M. Tran as special projects coordinator, with responsibilities that include support and coordination of special projects for a variety of dialogue and collaborative events. She has been at Regis University for almost ten years. Previously, Peggy was administrative coordinator for the vice president of Academic Affairs, where she chaired the Staff Advisory Council, was the Alpha Sigma Nu coordinator, and was one of the founding members of the Regis University's Retirement Investment Committee.

Peggy has a BA in Sociology from the University of Northern Colorado, an MA in Liberal Studies and a graduate certificate in Social Justice, Peace & Reconciliation from Regis University. She currently is enrolled in the Master of Arts in Counseling program. The native of Colorado is married to Drake Tran, also a Regis employee, and has a new baby daughter and a step-daughter. In her free time, she enjoys family outings to the zoo, mountains and parks. She also is a volunteer gymnastics coach with the Special Olympics.

Contact Peggy at ptran@regis.edu or 303-964-5717

Other Highlights:

NORTHWEST DENVER COMMUNITY COMMITTEE FORMED ICG PARTNERS WITH DENVER SCHOOLS TO DEFINE COMMUNITY GOALS

The Institute on the Common Good at Regis University (ICG) and Denver Public Schools (DPS) have announced the formation of the Northwest Denver Community Committee (NWCC). The committee is charged with defining the community's goals and expectations for performance of its schools.

ICG Director Paul Alexander and DPS Superintendent Tom Boasberg appointed the committee chairs: Ramon del Castillo, associate professor and chair of the Chicana/Chicano Studies Department at Metropolitan State College; and Suzanne Leff, a DPS Parent Forum member representing Edison Elementary and an attorney at Winzenburg, Leff, Purvis and Payne, LLP.

The ICG received more than 101 applications for participation on the committee, which will examine a variety of challenges facing Northwest Denver and make recommendations to: improve academic performance; establish clear ECE-12 feeder patterns; support and inform the long-term future options at North High School; address school capacity, facility utilization and continuity of programs; address program offerings at existing schools, including high school configuration; consider options for new schools; and review strategies to meet the needs of English language learners and students with special needs.

Approximately 70 committee members representing the majority of schools in the Northwest Denver region of the district, teachers, school administrators, principals, students, parents and neighborhood organizations have attended committee meetings. The December meeting provided background information about the process and expectations for the future. The January meeting focused on the core outcomes and deliverables as well as the creation of three subcommittees. Monthly committee meetings are scheduled the second Wednesday of each month. All meetings are open to the public.

For more information about the NWCC, please visit the website at www.nwdenverschools.org or contact Fredricka Brown at fbrown@regis.edu.

BUILDING A BETTER COLORADO THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Ballot reform and review of the Colorado Constitution have been the recent focus of conversations undertaken by community leaders around the state, under the auspices of Colorado's Future and its partner organizations, including the Institute on the Common Good.

Over the past year, more than 1,000 community leaders have come together in their own communities to discuss how often the state's constitution should be modified, how often it had been modified over the past 30 years and offer suggestions for the future. The Colorado's Future website outlines the results of past meetings.

Colorado's Future is a coalition of individuals and partner organizations committed to overcoming the obstacles of disjointed fiscal policy, the weakening of representative government, and the erosion of public trust in government. Over the past year, the Institute and Colorado's Future tested a program called "Build a Better Colorado through Civic Engagement" in several communities across the state to identify and engage local civic leaders in dialogue discussions on public policy challenges, with the goal of developing unbiased solutions for Colorado.

Additional communities will be participating over the next several months and, with the Institute's guidance, will continue to work on several proposed legislative bills that are being developed.

So far, the Institute and Colorado's Future have worked to identify solutions concerning statewide fiscal matters and the establishment of support networks that can be relied upon in times of legislative change. These meetings brought in participants and created a diplomatic process with an emphasis on participation.

The Civic Engagement Project hopes to continue building trust and respect within communities through use of models that focus on positive problem solving and by never underestimating the power of citizen initiatives, therefore creating a greater Colorado.

The Institute supports the Civic Engagement Project in a variety of ways, including offering expertise on practices of deliberative and collaborative democracy, and political processes.

For additional information visit the project's website at www.coloradosfuture.org



MARK YOUR CALENDARS Upcoming Events

Regis University's Institute on the Common Good is partnering with the Department of Religious Studies in Regis College to present a new Interfaith Dialogue course, co-facilitated by Dr. Paul Alexander, director of the Institute, and Dr. Thomas B. Leininger, Religious Studies chair. Students will gain the skills necessary for engaging in rich but often difficult conversations between people of different faiths and cultures. By understanding both the commonalities and differences among faiths, they will learn to appreciate the rich diversity in the world's faith community.

"One of the major roles of the Institute is serving the community by promoting the common good and providing a safe place for community dialogue, communal discernment and public deliberation," Alexander said. "Interfaith dialogues afford the opportunity for our students and the community to learn and understand the commonalities and difference among faiths. By doing so we will learn to appreciate the rich diversity in the world's faith community."

The course includes a series of speakers who will share their personal experiences of organizing interaction and cooperation between people of different faith backgrounds. The general public is invited to join Regis students in this series. Each two-hour presentation begins at 6 p.m.

Topics and Speakers schedule

March 14 - Immigration Dialogue: Guest speaker Jeremy Shaver, Interfaith Alliance of Colorado (Mountain View Room located in the Adult Learning Center)

March 21 - Intra-Judaism Dialogue: Guest speaker Rabbi Stephen Booth-Nadav (Adult Learning Center Room 310)

March 28 - Intra-Islam Dialogue: Guest speaker Ismail Demirken: Mosaic Foundation and Mohamed Lotfy: College for Professional Studies, Regis University (Mountain View Room located in the Adult Learning Center)

For more information, please contact Peggy Tran at ptran@regis.edu.



Regis Diversity Dialogues

The Institute on the Common Good and the Office of Diversity offered several dialogues this winter. January's dialogue focused on the creation of a "beloved community" at Regis University. February's dialogue focused on diversity and whether it unifies or divides people. Both dialogues were well attended and allowed students and staff to share their experiences. In March we will offer a follow-up dialogue to allow participants to once again look at whether diversity is divisive. The date and location are yet to be determined.

All members of the Regis community are invited to participate in these dialogues. For more information, please check our Upcoming Events section at www.icgregis.org or contact Peggy Tran at ptran@regis.edu.

For more information regarding any of the upcoming events or for a list of other future events, visit our website at www.icgregis.org or contact Fredricka Brown at 303-458-4967.

Need Help?

If you believe you may be in need of the collaborative dialogue resources of the Institute please do not hesitate to call Fredricka Brown at 303-458-4967, e-mail us at icg@regis.edu, or visit our website at www.icgregis.org.

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE INSTITUTE ON THE COMMON GOOD

The Institute on the Common Good at Regis University serves the community at-large by promoting the common good and providing a safe and effective space for community dialogue, communal discernment, and public deliberation.



Institute on the
Common Good

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