

**Spring 2024 O'Neill School Graduate Student Capstone
(V600/13618) Tues. & Thurs. 1:15-2:30pm)**

Developing the Collaborative Capacities of the IN Office of Community and Rural Affairs

Background and Purposes

This Spring 2024 O'Neill V600 capstone will provide students with the opportunity to work directly with the State of Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. OCRA provides resources and technical assistance to aid Indiana communities in shaping and achieving their vision for community and economic development. To achieve these goals, OCRA has developed and maintains partnerships with local, state, and federal government entities, economic development groups, nonprofits, and private industry.

OCRA works with these partners to successfully leverage dollars from local philanthropic organizations and units of government, as well as with state and federal programs, to make valuable contributions to Hoosier communities. OCRA awards grants to fund public gathering places, fix water/sewer infrastructures, build community facilities, and revitalize commercial districts. These funds help communities improve their quality of life and ensure the health and safety of their citizens.

To help promote community prosperity, OCRA has developed a variety of programs to provide capacity-building solutions and assure ready, marketable, and competitive communities for economic growth. These programs fall under four key competencies: Infrastructure, Capacity Building, Quality of Place, and Economic Development. OCRA encourages all Hoosier communities "to think and act regionally to create economic success on a larger scale." OCRA has six Community Liaison (CL) staff members who are strategically located throughout Indiana. These staff understand their respective regions and proactively work to identify appropriate funding and other resources for local and regional community and economic development.

Capstone research will help the Office of Community and Rural Affairs to ensure that Indiana communities are receiving the maximum benefit from its CL positions and that OCRA itself is benefitting throughout the organization from the "boots on the ground" information and knowledge to which the CL staff have access. Through its research and recommendations, this capstone will support OCRA to optimally align its vision and mission with its organizational design and practices, with a specific focus on the agency's CL staff positions.

Present OCRA Executive Director Denny Spinner and Chief Operating Officer Megan Zarazee will both serve as client representatives for this O'Neill Capstone.

It is anticipated that capstone research may include the following: a) research into staff positions, with purposes similar to OCRA Community Liaisons, within the agencies of other states; b) survey and interview research in Indiana (including with OCRA, with a representative sample of local Indiana communities served by OCRA, and as appropriate with selected OCRA partners; and c) a literature review and a compilation of informational documents and sources relevant to community liaison-like position purposes and activities. It is also possible that case stories may

be prepared that will highlight OCRA services in Indiana and the roles of its Community Liaisons.

Capstone Faculty

Lisa Blomgren Amsler is Distinguished Professor and Keller-Runden Professor of Public Service at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and Saltman Senior Scholar, University of Nevada Las Vegas William S. Boyd School of Law. A graduate of Smith College (B.A. in Philosophy and Classical Greek 1976) and the University of Connecticut School of Law (J.D. 1979); she is a former law partner of Shipman & Goodwin, Hartford, Connecticut. Her research addresses collaborative governance, dispute resolution, and dispute system design. A National Academy of Public Administration Fellow, Amsler co-edited three books with University of Kansas Distinguished Professor Rosemary O'Leary on collaborative public management and environmental conflict resolution and has published over 140 articles or book chapters. Her most recent book is *Dispute System Design: Preventing, Managing, and Resolving Conflict*, coauthored with Janet Martinez and Stephanie Smith (Stanford University Press 2020); it received the 2022 Outstanding Book Award from the International Association for Conflict Management. ()

Terry Amsler is an Adjunct Lecturer with the O'Neill School and has taught undergraduate public engagement courses and led graduate student capstones at O'Neill for eight years. He holds a BA in Political Science from the State University of New York at New Paltz and a MPA from the University of San Francisco. For nine years Terry was the Program Director of the Public Engagement Program of the League of California Cities' Institute for Local Government. Terry has also served as program director for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's conflict resolution funding area, and as the executive director of the Oregon Dispute Resolution Commission. Terry is currently a member of the University Network for Collaborative Governance (UNCG) Steering Committee as well a member of the ABA Cornerstones of Democracy Commission. He has recently completed service as a selected member of the Community Members/Public Engagement/Tech & Social Media Working Group of the National Civic League's Model City Charter Review project. Terry is an ICMA and ASPA member.

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