

# Action Research Center

The Action Research Center (ARC) coordinates research projects undertaken by Illinois Wesleyan University students, faculty, and staff in partnership with groups in the larger Central Illinois community.

ARC provides students with a set of experiences and skills necessary for applied research projects in the community, and projects are as diverse as Illinois Wesleyan students and the community they serve. Whether students take the seminar, an internship or merely volunteer in an ARC-supported project, they learn to become citizen-scholars and establish the habit of civic leadership.

## The ARC Team

- Dr. James Sikora chaired the Department of Sociology from 1979-1995 at IWU. During that time he worked and continues to work with numerous not-for-profit organizations in the area. In 2003, he and Professor James Simeone established ARC, pairing students and faculty with community partners in not-for-profit organizations. *Contact Professor Sikora at: [jsikora@iwu.edu](mailto:jsikora@iwu.edu)*
- Dr. Jim Simeone supervises interns for the Department of Political Science and leads the 'city internship' program for ARC. His interest in environmental studies led to ARC's river mentoring projects on the Mackinaw River and Kickapoo Creek. Professor Simeone frequently teaches the Action Research Seminar. *Contact Professor Simeone at: [jsimeone@iwu.edu](mailto:jsimeone@iwu.edu)*
- Deborah Halperin is the Coordinator of the Action Research Center. She has over 20 years of experience with not-for-profit organizations. Her resume includes work with the YWCA, Planned Parenthood, the National Runaway Switchboard, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the American Red Cross. She has also worked as a not-for-profit management consultant, grant writer, marketing manager and volunteer coordinator. Deborah is an active citizen in the Bloomington-Normal community, serving as a Board member and volunteer for several local not-for-profits and as a volunteer. *Contact Halperin at: [dhalperi@iwu.edu](mailto:dhalperi@iwu.edu)*

## What Students have Said about ARC...

Jessica Scates took Professor Sikora's Action Research Seminar in the fall of 2006. She was recently hired as a Program Manager at Big Brothers Big Sisters and credits her experience with Dr. Sikora, the seminar, and ARC as a large part of her success. Jessica says, "My ARC experience showed me that there are beginnings to everything, that everyone has failures and those failures aid in shaping programs that actually work. I realized the origin of great movements start with individuals who simply have the passion and desire to make a difference in the world."

—continues



## Ongoing Projects

Spanish-Language Resource Guide

Preschoolers in the Classroom:  
Collecting Data for No Child Left Behind

The Productivity of Organic Farms: Is  
Organic Production More Profitable Per  
Acre?

Illinois and the National 211: Which 211  
Model Should the General Assembly  
Adopt?

From Pioneer Past to Sustainable  
Future: The Spence Farm Promotional  
Video

Foreclosures and Evictions: What is  
Driving the Increase in McLean County?

Bloomington Neighborhoods: Do  
Historic Districts Improve the Quality of  
Life?

Zoning in Normal: What is Form-Based  
Zoning and Does it Work?

Pesticides in the City: What Works in  
Getting Communities to Reduce Pesti-  
cide Use?

Citizen Monitoring of the Mackinaw  
River: Collecting Data on Water Quality

Mentoring in the Community: The  
School Suspension Program at Unity  
Community Center



“ I tell my students that it is not good enough to look at a problem and think, ‘someone should do something about that’. I want them to realize they are

*Melissa Seeborg '13 is spending her summer ARC internship researching budget expansion and working with children at Milestones Early Learning Center and Preschool. ARC internships are unique for providing interactive leadership opportunities in the not-for-profit sector.*



that someone... You want to work in city government? You want to be a part of a neighborhood revitalization project? You want to plant a community garden? You want to work with teen moms or inner-city kids? We can get you there. ARC gives each student the opportunity to create something that wasn't there before.

**Deborah Halperin**

Action Research Center Coordinator

### What Faculty have Said about ARC...

Professor of Hispanic Studies, Carolyn Nadeau, challenges her students to engage in projects with community-based organizations such as the Immigration Project and Professionals Assisting Latino Students (PALS) as part of her Spanish for Social Justice course. Professor Nadeau says, “For students to appreciate the issues discussed in class, they have to get into the community and apply their language skills and their ideas of social justice. ARC makes connections that are positive for everyone, especially the people we directly serve.”

### What Community Partners have Said about ARC...

Community organizations appreciate the quality work performed by IWU students and the youthful energy they bring to a team. Students have coordinated large-scale conferences, studied neighborhood traffic problems, moved houses, and translated early childhood education material into Spanish. Dana David, Executive Director of the Day Care Center of McLean County, needed an ARC intern to assist with a needs assessment, literature review and stakeholder research in order to write a strategic plan for the organization. She says, “Having an ARC intern allowed us to increase the scope of our services. Our intern brings a fresh perspective, an extra set of hands and a lot of enthusiasm to our team. Her work is really making an impact.”

“One of the things I really appreciated about ARC,” according to Karen Zangerle, Executive Director of Providing Access to Help (PATH), “was that its interns came to us with a different mind set about what they wanted to get out of the experience. And IWU staff has invested more responsibility in the interns.... And they were able to do things that we would not ordinarily have been able to get done.... There was the research end of it when we looked at plans across the country... all the way to the end product that looked so readable and professional and something we were proud to hand out to community leaders and funders. It was a dynamite project.”



**For Further Information,  
Write or Call:**

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