A Note from the Guest Editor

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One of the more beautiful qualities of community well-being is that it is multifaceted and evolving. It continues to transform as more professionals contribute to the body of knowledge globally. In other words, the well-being of communities has and will continue to be studied, examined, challenged and forged by an international network of multidisciplinary professionals who possess a common passion for local, regional and global communities of place, practice and interest. Since its inception, scholars and field professionals have collaboratively shaped the field by examining the complex components of community well-being including its economic, psychological, social and physical health. Within the past decade, discussions have focused on the contributions of diverse professional fields and academic disciplines which directly or indirectly contribute to community well-being, including Community Development. The correlation between Community Development and community well-being has assisted scholars and community specialists alike in making deeper connections within their practice as they further contemplate the impact of their interactions with community.

While there have been deep connections made between Community Development and community well-being, little is known about the professional training of future and current community development specialists and change agents. This lag in knowledge has large implications for community well-being and begs such questions as; “Which skills, knowledge and values are infused in university-based education for community development students?” “Where are the programs housed within academic institutions and which academic disciplines contribute to the curricula?” “What are the programmatic philosophies, theories and instructional approaches?” and finally, “What structures exist for university/community partnerships?” It is the intended purpose of this special issue to open the conversational door and begin answering these important questions. Contributors to this special issue provide a glimpse of a national movement building solidarity with university educators and community professionals across the United States focusing on university-based community development education.

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We commence with an article that begins unpacking the previously posed questions and reveals opportunities for collaborations among communities, university educators and students. The authors introduce critical dialogue around the common foci of diverse community development educators while accentuating its influence on community well-being.

The following two articles provide deep insight regarding how current higher education institutions are innovatively engaging communities and breaking disciplinary boundaries through collaboration, providing a trans-disciplinary foundation for student training and community collaborations. The next article highlights a synergistic symposium that convened diverse community development educators from across the United States. Its purpose, to examine the current status and future of the field, discuss curricular and instructional implications for student graduates and their impact on correlating communities.

Finally, we conclude with two articles focusing on the theoretical underpinnings of community development education and its influence on communities. The first examines the role of social entrepreneurship and its importance with diverse communities. The second peels back the layers of multi-disciplinary collaborations intended to improve the well-being of our communities. The authors uncover the complexities of interpersonal communications as a result of ascription to varied academic paradigms and propose ways to strengthen collaborative communications. Please enjoy these thought-provoking articles highlighting the important role that university-based community development education plays in enhancing the well-being of our broader communities.

Respectfully,
Bryan Hains
Guest Editor

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