

In Review - ATLE Luncheon
October 20th, 2016
The Role of the Urban Metropolitan University

What happened today?

During our October 20th event, ATLE hosted Dr. Kristin Norris from Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis. Dr. Norris, Director of Assessment for IUPUI's Community Engagement Office, was on campus for two days of presentations, and materials from her visit are available in this [shared Google Drive folder](#). Her lunch and learn session was a presentation on the role of urban metropolitan universities today.

What We Know About Community Engagement and Urban Metropolitan Universities

Dr. Norris began by describing the information that her university and community generally ask for-- the "fabulous five" numbers of students and faculty in service learning or community-engaged courses, as well as the numbers of courses, service hours, and community partners. However, she stated that we must go beyond this surface-level examination of community engagement to change the way metropolitan universities think about community engagement.

A New Narrative

Instead, what Dr. Norris proposed is that we use a new narrative: *Community engagement is a strategy through which we achieve our institutional mission and goals*. At IUPUI, community engagement is one of the goals of the university's strategic plan, and all units must demonstrate yearly how they make it a priority. Instead of this being a burden, it is an opportunity. Student enrollment and retention go up when students participate in civic engagement activities. Fundraising and government relations are easier when a university is directly engaged in serving its community. Faculty can apply their research to community issues to make sustainable change. Ultimately, community engagement contributes to one of the most important missions of institutions of higher learning: to contribute to vibrant, thinking communities.

How Do We Get There?

Dr. Norris suggested that we need to work with faculty, staff, alumni, students & the local community to place community engagement at the center of conversations about institutional goals, so that we can create a culture that cultivates research, teaching, and service to, with, and for the community. We also need to identify good questions that inform our strategies for monitoring, measuring, and evaluating community engagement, so we can learn how best to refine and improve our efforts. Barriers to this often exist - we must begin by taking inventory of existing partnerships, initiatives, and community engagement courses and programs, then carefully look at them, and connect faculty across campus with partners in the community to leverage resources and time more effectively. Too often, we operate in silos and communication is difficult.

Dr. Norris continued her conversations on Thursday afternoon, with a session on measuring engagement.

For more information about past events, visit our At-A-Glance recaps at [ATLE At-A-Glance Reviews](#)