

Our History

INVST Community Studies began in 1989 when Scott Myers-Lipton and Cindy Mahrer were inspired by the idea of combining intergenerational activism with academics. They endeavored to create a community on campus, wherein individuals could be supported in becoming critical thinkers who reflect upon society, while preparing to take on the challenges of the 21st century. Myers-Lipton was inspired by Father Ted Hesburgh's call for higher education to create programs that combine activism and academics. Throughout its history, the INVST community has sought to achieve this goal.

In 1989, Myers-Lipton began pursuing a doctorate in Sociology at CU-Boulder where he met Dr. Jim Downton (then professor of Sociology) and Dr. Jim Scarritt (then the Director of Peace and Conflict Studies and a Political Science professor), who joined with Dr. Elizabeth Moen (Sociology), Dr. Gaia Mika (Psychology and Counseling) and a representative from the CU Outdoor Program, Tim Jorgensen, to develop the program. Inspired by the idea that an ethical component needed to be added to higher education in order to strengthen civic responsibility and address social problems, this group of faculty, along with students at CU-Boulder, designed a program that would equip students with the knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The leadership training opportunity was called the International and National Voluntary Service Training (INVST) Program.

The first INVST class began in the fall of 1990 after \$60,000 was raised by the folks named above. Dr. Jim Scarritt was the first Director of INVST. In the early 1990s, Seana Lowe (now Dr. Seana Steffen) applied to CU-Boulder to pursue her Ph.D. in Sociology. At that time, she applied to be the Program Director of INVST, and she held that position until 2006, growing the program with student input and support, consistent with the original vision of the co-founders. In 2000, the mission statement for INVST was re-evaluated and changed through a community-wide process. The current mission statement reads as follows: "We believe in the possibility of a just and sustainable world. We develop community leaders who engage in compassionate action as a lifetime commitment."

From 2001-2003, Dr. Steffen worked with a former Colorado state senator, The Honorable Dorothy Rupert and several INVST students and local educators, to design and pilot the Youth Council for Public Policy. In 2002, Dr. Jim Downton and Dr. Steffen secured a large grant from the Compton Foundation to be used over three years in order to expand our positive impact and help us develop young people as public servants and future leaders. As a result of that support, INVST Community Studies was established as a multidisciplinary academic unit in order to broaden our ability to develop engaged citizens and leaders who work for the benefit of humanity and the environment. Concurrently, we created Community Studies Electives and the Youth Council for Public Policy as additions to our two-year program, which we re-named the INVST Community Leadership Program (CLP).

It was with support from the Compton Foundation that the International & National Voluntary Service Training Program grew to become INVST Community Studies. At this time, a part-time Outreach Coordinator position was created to focus on alumni relations, write two newsletters per year, and promote INVST among undergraduate students on campus. Sabrina Sideris, an INVST alumna, was the first to serve in that position, and she held this role until May of 2005, when Jamie Rezmovits, also an alumna, was hired for the position. Along with the Youth Council for Public Policy, at this time, INVST also developed Community Studies elective courses, offered to the CU undergraduate population

at large, often times for core credit, so that INVST could fulfill its mission by having a positive impact on larger numbers of CU students.

In 2004-2005, the Fundraising and Advisory Board (FAB, originally named the Advising & Fundraising Board or AFB) was developed to support INVST staff in raising sufficient funds for two month-long service-learning experiences per year. That FAB supported and advised Dr. Steffen and cultivated and deepened a partnership between INVST and the CU Foundation, CU's fundraising foundation. At the end of the 2005-2006 academic year, Dr. Steffen created an Executive Committee comprised of Professor Jim Scarritt, Professor Tom Zeiler, Professor Peter Park, and Professor David Brown. The creation of this Executive Committee was proposed to Directors' Committee (DC). INVST's governing board consisting of students and staff, but the proposal did not pass before the academic year ended and DC was dismissed for the summer. As a result, Dr. Steffen created an ad hoc Executive Committee. During the summer of 2006, after a FAB meeting where multiple board members resigned in frustration, the Executive Committee recommended to the Arts & Sciences Dean at that time, Todd Gleeson, that he ask for Dr. Steffen's resignation from INVST Community Studies. Despite the broad support of many satisfied alumni and students, she left INVST Community Studies. At this point, Professor David Brown, who had been INVST's Faculty Advisor, stepped in as Interim Director of INVST. Adam Van Iwaarden, then Administrative Assistant, maintained daily operations and sustained INVST programming. Jamie Rezmovits left her roles as Outreach Coordinator and INVST instructor.

In the summer of 2007, Van Iwaarden invited Sabrina Sideris to return to INVST to train the summer program facilitators for the CLP. Professor Vanessa Baird of Political Science was invited by Professor David Brown to become the INVST Faculty Director, and a staffing re-configuration was chosen by Baird & Brown, with support from then Associate Dean of Social Sciences in the College of A&S, Joyce Nielsen. Baird accepted the position, and invited Sabrina Sideris to be the Program Director in the summer of 2007. At that point, David Meens began as an INVST instructor and Sideris also held the role of part-time instructor. Meens & Sideris were CLP alumni themselves and were able to restore the classic values and priorities of the INVST Community Leadership Program, especially its participatory nature. Economics Professor Keith Maskus replaced Joyce Nielsen as Associate Dean of Social Sciences, with oversight over INVST, and the academic unit received support from multiple part-time Administrative Assistants, including Jordan Brown, Rachna Toshniwal, Jesse Bedirian, and Melissa Rubin.

In the spring and summer of 2008, long-time INVST instructor Elaina Verveer proposed an independent study offering academic credit to CU students for their participation in a national & international service-learning program called Public Achievement. This marked the birth of INVST's fourth program. Now an A&S course worth three credits, INVS 2919 is known as Renewing Democracy in Communities and Schools, and is now cross-listed with Education. Public Achievement has grown every year, serving more and more students across Boulder County, through its unique multi-generational service-learning model.

In 2008, Sideris and Verveer secured a three-year grant from Access Colorado, the Colorado Campus Compact and AmeriCorps, establishing the Inclusivity & Outreach Coordinator's 40-hour per week position and initiating Public Achievement as a collaboration with the CU Institute for Ethical & Civic Engagement (IECE) and Centaurus High School in Lafayette, CO. The Inclusivity and Outreach Coordinator was hired to manage and coordinate Public Achievement, as well as support the outreach activities

formerly fulfilled by Sideris and Rezmovits. Stacey Hammond, CLP alumna, was the first to be hired for this position. INVST then hired Kathleen Wiley for the second year of a three-year federal grant cycle, but half-way through the second year, Wiley decided to resign from the position. This caused AmeriCorps to terminate INVST's award one and a half years early, leaving INVST Community Studies with no paid position for the Inclusivity and Outreach Coordinator. IECE hired Elaina Verveer and a part-time AmeriCorps VISTA member to provide program coordination for Public Achievement, in order to sustain that program.

At various times, budget permitting, experienced and qualified community members have become instructors, offering additional Community Studies electives to the CU student body. For example, former Amnesty International Director Ellen Moore taught an INVST course on human rights for one semester. Also, budget permitting, INVST has offered the Youth Council for Public Policy courses when possible. Originally taught by The Honorable Dorothy Rupert, they were also taught by former State Representative Michael Garcia, an INVST graduate from the CLP class of 1996 and the youngest Latino in the state of Colorado to be elected to this public service position.

In 2009, Professor Vanessa Baird stepped down as Faculty Director. Associate Dean Keith Maskus in the College of Arts & Sciences launched a search, then selected and hired Associate Professor Tim Kuhn from Communication. Due to the track record of the academic unit and the proven commitment of a dedicated staff, along with the satisfaction of several generations of INVST students, the College of Arts & Sciences decided to stabilize funding for INVST. The College of Arts & Sciences committed \$100,000 per year for the academic-year budget of INVST Community Studies. This amounts to almost half of our annual budget, and staff, students and board members continue to fundraise for the remainder, including the funds we need to offer our Summer Service-Learning Experiences to students in the INVST Community Leadership Program.

After more than 23 years of support from the College of Arts & Sciences, in 2013, Anne Heinz, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Outreach and Engagement, led an investigation process that resulted in the decision to change INVST's academic home, moving our academic programs to the School of Education and co-locating INVST Community Studies with other leadership training and service-learning programs for undergraduates. This transition is now in process. The new Center for Civic Engagement or Service-Learning in the CU School of Education will be led by Faculty Director Ben Kirshner, Ph.D. and is set to launch in July, 2014.