

Feature Interviewee

Lyvier Conss, Executive Director
Community College National Center for Community Engagement



Lyvier Conss has over twenty two years of experience in administration, grants management and fund development. She is the founding executive director of the Community College National Center for Community Engagement which was established in 1990.

Through her leadership, the Center has supported with more than twelve million dollars the pedagogy of service-learning and civic engagement at community, tribal, 2-year and technical colleges throughout the contiguous U.S., Alaska and U.S. Territories. The focuses of the projects have been on increasing academic achievement, critical and reflective thinking, civic responsibility, community involvement and faculty development. On May 26, 2005, under the Bush Administration, Lyvier received the Lifetime President's Call to Service Award for her volunteer work within her community, as well as, an English/Spanish interpreter with medical humanitarian groups providing free surgical and medical assistance in Mexico, Central, and South America (Medical Hands for Healing and Flying Samaritans). To ensure precision in her efforts, Lyvier obtained her certification as a Spanish Medical Interpreter in May 2010. She has also worked as an English/Spanish interpreter with The Village Empowerment Project to bring solar energy to remote villages in Peru. Lyvier also serves as an Advisory Board Member for Paradise Valley National Bank (in org) and for nine years served as a Director-at-Large for the National Wildlife Federation. Lyvier enjoys her humanitarian efforts as well as fresh and salt-water fly-fishing, cooking, hiking, and traveling. Office: 480-461-6281 Fax: 480-461-6284
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Interview:

- 1. Lyvier, you've been the Executive Director of CCNCCE for 16 years. Over the years, how has your own perspective of service and community engagement been sharpened as you've worked with community college presidents, staff, and faculty?**

Lyvier: Colleges have been defining what community means to them, both internally as an institution, and externally as a part of the community. Campuses have applied service learning and civic engagement as it pertains to their individual needs. They are looking at what other colleagues and institutions and doing – things like strategic planning, visioning – and taking best practices and applying them to their local situations. Leadership is also important. Although community college presidents may move from one institution to another, the value has been so incredible, when

they move, they take service learning and civic engagement with them to their new institution. And faculty members have utilized their own creativity to develop projects and inspire students to be involved in civic life beyond the classroom experience.

2. Lyvier, to what do you attribute the overall success of CCNCCE?

Leadership and the support of the host institution, Mesa Community College, President Dr. Larry Christenson, and the Maricopa County Community College District is very valuable. They've been selfless in their support of the Center, in funding, with in-kind contributions, and moral support, especially when a large percentage of the work we do is outside the District. They are to be admired for their support in helping other colleges throughout the country and globally become more involved in service learning and civic engagement. Additionally, the partnerships and relationships we've developed with colleagues in other national organizations are important. Together we've developed a vision for how to best address the needs of community colleges. And staff is vital. Throughout the years, they have been dedicated to and passionate about their work, and the work they've done has made this Center a success.

3. Lyvier, what advice or recommendations do you have for faculty who are interested in participating in service learning with the assistance of CCNCCE?

Think outside the box. Be creative, innovative. Listen to the various voices that are in need or want to provide service as well as recommendations on the projects. Make sure your projects hold true to the academics and scholarship of your work, while allowing new and creative ways to guide your students through your teaching.

4. Lyvier, as an administrator of a national organization, what advice do you have for community college presidents and upper level administrators who are beginning to incorporate service learning and civic engagement into the missions and objectives of their college?

Service learning and civic engagement is the foundation of whole education and therefore their support and guidance to faculty, staff, and the community is vital to the achievement of students' success. And like all good programs at an institution, they have to allow for risk-taking, passion, and creativity to be a source for fueling the projects implemented by their faculty and students.

5. Lyvier, is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you would like to say about service learning and civic engagement and CCNCCE, or in general about service learning or civic engagement?

In order for the Center to continue to grow and expand in both vision and service, it is very important to hear from faculty, staff, and administrators of community colleges. We want you to share your stories, your ideas, and your recommendations about how we can best serve your needs.