



Center for State Policy & Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD

The Centerpiece

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to 2021! In reflection, there are so many circulating “feelings” around 2020 and the impact of the pandemic: “let’s get 2021 started”, “look at 2020 in the rearview mirror”, “we made it”, “leave 2020 in the dust”, “kickstart 2021” and so on. As the saying for the month of March typically goes, 2020 entered like a lamb and exited like a lion...but with light, hope and opportunity for 2021. We at the Center of State Policy and Leadership (CSPL) demonstrated adaptability and sustainability with many learned lessons. 2020 made CSPL stronger operationally and innovatively, and 2021 will maintain those building blocks to move forward, evolve and grow to meet the needs of you in this ever-changing, challenging landscape. We’ll be hugging onto the learning and doing of 2020 and using it to be better in 2021. Join us on our journey.

With the start of 2021, CSPL enthusiastically joins in partnership with the College of Public Affairs and Administration (CPAA) to administer and connect with you via The Capitol Connection Blog (thank you CPAA!). One goal for CSPL is to communicate, connect and collaborate more to build awareness and increase public value of CSPL. Many years ago, CSPL released a monthly newsletter called *The Centerpiece*. Built on great history, *The Centerpiece* will serve as the identifying monthly blog entry for CSPL.

As the new(er) Executive Director, assuming my role in June 2020, I have learned quickly that there is work to do to ensure YOU know CSPL – who we are, what we do, how and why. I am proud of CSPL and its accomplishments this past year and am privileged to serve in this role following my predecessor, Dr. David Racine. The richness and gems I have uncovered in a short six months need to be revealed to you, if you are not a lucky one to know them already. In January and beyond, we’ll be concentrating on telling you who we are, what we do and how we do it, along keeping you updated on our latest work.

What is CSPL, and what is its focus?

CSPL was established over 40 years ago at UIS, then Sangamon State University (SSU) which identified as “the public affairs university” in 1970. Although CSPL has had different names over the years and some programming areas have changed, CSPL has focused on applied research, experiential learning and public engagement in policy and politics. Integrating academic and practical approaches with interdisciplinary faculty, staff and students and between UIS and government, community and non-profits, CSPL has changed and evolved to remain relevant, carry out its vision and support UIS’ public affairs identify. CSPL organizationally resides in Academic Affairs alongside the Colleges at UIS and operates with an advisory board that advises the Executive Director and Unit Directors and brings forward an external, systematic perspective.

CSPL *helps the public make informed decisions*. The current published mission of CSPL is: to promote evidence-based policy and practice in the public sector. Strategic functions are: (1) research that

informs public decisions and understanding, (2) student internships, training programs and professional experiential learning, (3) applied problem solving that strengthens public leadership, and (4) digital media and journalism that educates and engages citizens in public affairs. We want to connect people and inspire change.



Who are WE (CSPL)?

Our “what” is accomplished through several units that operate under the umbrella of the Office of Executive Director: Child Protection Training Academy, Illinois Innocence Project, Illinois Institute for Public Finance, Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies, Innovate Springfield, Office of Electronic Media, Office of Graduate Public Service Internships, and National Public Radio (NPR) Illinois. You may find more on each unit by visiting the CSPL’s webpage www.uis.edu/cspl. Tune into The Capitol Connection in January for more from each of the units on their purpose and what they can do for you.



What can you anticipate in future releases of The Centerpiece or The Capitol Connection from CSPL?

- 2021 Priorities and Strategic Planning – the CSPL is under going a strategic management process that will build on great strengths and capabilities, align with UIS’ strategic compass and Interim Chancellor’s goals, allow focus on strategic issues and reshape and reset where necessary to meet the needs of UIS and YOU.
- Meet the Team – CSPL has skill, knowledge and abilities in its staff. CSPL is what it is because of its first-rate people! We’ll be highlighting a staff member or two. In the meantime, you may learn more about the CSPL team at www.uis.edu/cspl/units.

- Annual Report – CSPL releases an annual report. 2020’s will be the “pandemic playbook” to share our 2020 story.
- Updates and General Information – CSPL wants to keep you apprised of the cutting-edge work being conducted, data collected and analyzed, training, success stories, best practices, learning, emerging issues, key projects, any contextual history, training programs, so on. We’ll use and incorporate our tools and resources, like digital media (videos).
- Message from Executive Director
- Partnerships and Engagement
- Events, Webinars and Other Forums
- And Much More

What can YOU do?

- Tune into The Capitol Connection.
- Share The Capitol Connection subscription link to advocate others to subscribe and tell others about CSPL. (<https://blogs.uofi.uis.edu/publicSubscribe?blogId=8598>)
- Like CSPL on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/UISCSPL/>).
- Give us input (a formal avenue will be provided in February but you may email at mehle01s@uis.edu).
- Keep journeying with us through 2021 and beyond.
- Think of CSPL and reach out to CSPL to meet your needs; we’re here to help!

Thank you for your attention, and **WE** look forward to serving **YOU** in 2021.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Molly Jo Lamb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Molly Jo Lamb
Executive Director, CSPL
mehle01s@uis.edu