

Building Civic Capacity for Community Connections and Resilience

Mentors: Patti Schmitt, David MacPhee Ph D, Paula Yuma Ph D

Location: Fort Collins (with limited travel around the state)

Internship Opportunity Snapshot:

Join this exciting and innovative CSU Extension co-led effort to build local civic capacity and communities' ability to work together. Join a team of CSU faculty, Extension Specialists and Community Change Makers as we continue to build on our successful newly created and validated civic assessment tool, the Civic Capacity Index. We will use the index to work side by side with communities to understand their civic strengths and the areas that slow collaboration. This internship opportunity will feature opportunities; for hands on experience with implementing the use of the Civic Capacity Index, conducting research and interviews, working with Extension staff to coordinate community meetings, and working behind the scenes with our nationally recognized leadership program, the Family Leadership Training Institute of Colorado. The focus of this internship will be on support strengthening community civic capacity so that more people feel like they belong to a community and are engaged in making communities better for children, youth and families. Central to this work and this position is being community-driven.

What is the Family Leadership Training Institute of Colorado at CSU Extension?

The Family Leadership Training Institute (FLTI) of Colorado at CSU Extension is a one-of-a-kind community training focused on building individual and community capacity for inclusive collaboration and civic engagement by bringing diverse voices to the decision-making table. FLTI of Colorado seeks to bridge the gap between local residents and decision-makers in order to foster the co-creation of programs and policies that reflect multiple community voices. We are particularly focused on underresourced community voices.

FLTI focuses on:

- **Partnering** with adults, youth, and families to increase civic knowledge, develop innovative tools, and create opportunities to practice inclusive leadership.
- **Embracing** a broad diversity of participants, encouraging thoughtful and intentional dialogue that respects the individual and accepts multiple pathways to community health.
- **Building** bridges between traditionally underrepresented individuals and decision makers to foster greater trust, cooperation, and capacity to address pressing local issues.

What is Community-Driven Change?

Historically, civic leadership has been defined in terms of a top-down approach in which public administrators and elected officials define the problem, decide how the problem will be addressed, and assess whether the desired outcomes were achieved. Increasingly, however, foundations, government agencies, and other institutions aspire (at least rhetorically) to support community-driven responses to challenges such as health, education, housing, economic development, and crises that require the community to adapt or to be resilient. Two premises inform this thinking about community-driven change: 1) it is more effective in making lasting progress because a broad range of stakeholders are involved, from defining the problem to taking action to address the problem; and 2) it is more inclusive

and egalitarian, therefore democratic. At its core, then, community-driven change might be defined in terms of shared power between decision makers and community members, multiple perspectives on issues, strong participation from diverse people, a focus on the common good, and decision-making processes that are equitable, authentic, and transparent.

Mentorship Opportunity:

This internship will provide a student with an opportunity to work closely with the FLTI team, community leaders, and our lead research with the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Dr. David MacPhee. Additionally, Dr. Paula Yuma, in the School of Social Work, will provide mentorship for this work and its connection to designing strategies and interventions for community level impacts. Most work will happen on campus, but there will be an opportunity to travel when meeting with communities (if Public Health protocols permit). There is limited budget to cover all travel expenses. Because this internship will be community-driven, interns will have the unique ability to work with multiple stakeholders, across difference. FLTI of Colorado focuses on bringing more diverse voices to the table. Often, these are the voices that have historically been left out of the decision-making process. We will work side by side with community groups, government leaders, nonprofit partners, and CSU faculty to explore strengthening community civic capacity and the Culture of Collaboration in local communities.