

The art of civic life

A dual degree from IUPUI helps Melynn Klaus transform strategies for philanthropic organizations.

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Transcript

[M. Klaus] Philanthropy can be used to describe so many things in giving back and improving the community. Philanthropy can be--of course, the most commonly recognized form of philanthropy is financial contributions. And of course, financial contributions and supporting the nonprofit sector is vital. But philanthropy, and giving back, can mean so much more. It can mean giving time and talents, as well as treasure, and being a good corporate citizen, a good community citizen, and a good neighbor. Philanthropy supports that. It's taking part--you can easily become overwhelmed with the problems that exist in our community, nationally, and worldwide. But, if we allow that overwhelmed feeling to stop us from action, philanthropy is a way that we can all contribute in whatever way that we can and make the world a better place.

I am very proud to have gotten my start through an internship with the Center on Philanthropy working with Christel House International. I worked in many different capacities and was able to help the children through different projects and fundraising initiatives, and then when the opportunity came available at the Foundation, it was an honor to be asked to support the work of the Board in financially supporting local nonprofits.

The model of Christel House International is holistic and it's to break the cycle of poverty, which is, I think, an emerging part of the study itself in understanding what is charity and what is giving to current and present problems and needs, and then the strategic area in which philanthropy can be helpful and break the cycle of poverty--break the cycle and actually make long term impacts. I was very proud to work in an organization where the Foundation is trying to provide support to local organizations that support long term benefits to the community. Christel House International is on a worldwide scope, and in the five Learning Centers, one here and the four abroad, trying to make that long term lasting change. Well, the dual degree program with the Center on Philanthropy and SPEA--School of Public and Environmental Affairs--offered a great dual master's degree program that offered both the practical aspects of nonprofit management, and the theoretical aspect of the nonprofit sector through the Liberal Arts program, so it provided both the academic, theoretical overview of the sector, and then the practical, which was a great combination and it really appealed to me, as well as the placement. Indianapolis is a wonderful city to live in, and the partnerships with local organizations, the internship opportunities. Internships are an invaluable way of showing students in a practical way what life is like in a nonprofit, how it's multi-dimensional. You're always doing something new, working on and how important fundraising and having the financial resources to allow these great missions to be accomplished and to be fulfilled. Without financial resources, organizations in the sector cannot perform the great work that they do. And the internship allows you to work side by side with professionals and in partnership, and I think the Center does a really good job of placing interns in areas where their interests lie. The Center on Philanthropy I think, really powerfully combines the academic studies through its research, Giving USA, and many other resources that really inform the sector and professionals in the sector, as well as its practical and its involvement in the community as a resource. For example, the fundraising school provides a tangible and an easily-assessable part of the program to individuals who maybe aren't involved in the entire academic program, through the master's program, but who can attend specific courses for two, three, or five days that really inform and enhance their current work.