

Center for Youth and Communities Merges with Institute for Economic and Racial Equity

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Maria Madison, ScD, Interim Dean of the Heller School, **Professor Susan P. Curnan, P'21**, director of the Center for Youth and Communities (CYC), and **Professor Lisa M. Lynch, P'17, HHL'17**, Director of the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity (IERE), are pleased to announce the integration of CYC into IERE beginning this summer.

This merger builds a stronger research enterprise at Heller and comes after two years of succession planning with the Dean's Office. In the planning process, we all recognized that CYC and IERE have a shared vision, mission, and values across faculty, staff, and projects. Indeed, research staff are already collaborating on a range of research and evaluation projects aimed at closing the equity gap in education and workforce domains, so formalizing these synergies and interests with this merger is timely. Furthermore, our collective focus on youth is critical at this time as we look at the intractable challenges of growing inequities in access, opportunity, and outcomes in education, work, and civil society more broadly.

We want to underscore our joint commitment to preserving and building upon the CYC's 40-year legacy, national reputation, and relationships for high quality research, capacity building, and policy influence in all spheres of the social determinants of health, especially the role of meaningful work and excellent education.

The CYC will stay intact under the IERE umbrella and the CYC portfolio and staff will be overseen by Sangeeta Tyagi, GSAS PhD'93, senior scientist at CYC and chair of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies concentration within the MPP program. She will also serve as associate director of IERE beginning July 1, 2023. Professor Curnan is stepping down as CYC Director after more than three decades and will return to the research faculty in 2024 after a brief sabbatical.

Upon approving the merger, Interim Dean Madison stated, "This action expands IERE's multidisciplinary and multi-cultural team and increases its capacity to address our nation's chasm of disparities. Organizationally at Heller this move also helps us realize 'strategic frugality' through streamlined staffing and infrastructure while strengthening pre-existing synergies between researchers and practitioners at CYC and IERE. I want to thank Susan and Lisa for their vision and leadership."

Curnan added, "Over the past two years of succession planning, we considered many options for the Center's future. I could not be happier about this landing at IERE. I am confident that both the CYC and IERE will unite and be stronger together with a visionary leader and accomplished scholar at the helm, and a wise, dedicated, and experienced team of practitioners, scholars, and faculty on board – the Center is in very good hands and so is the Heller School."

Lisa Lynch, who succeeded Maria Madison as IERE Director last year, celebrates the merger. “This merger represents an exciting growth strategy for IERE, and we are already at work on proposals together. We aspire to make community-engaged work the cornerstone of IERE, and bringing CYC to the Institute will accelerate our progress as CYC brings a long and deep history with community partners across the country centered on bridging research to policy, action, and practice. We share an asset-based approach to expanding economic, education, and racial equity and are thrilled to join forces to advance our collective work in the coming years.”