

We're in the "quiet" space between our Martin Luther King weekend activities in mid-January and the Annual Conference in February. These are two of the most important and visible programs at UWC-USA offered by our Bartos Institute for the Constructive Engagement of Conflict. They challenge us to look back, look at where we are today, and look ahead with intention.

As many of you know, CEC is central to our work at UWC-USA. Our encounter with the other isn't limited to the national boundaries we cross to come together, or even the cultural, social and economic boundaries. It is an encounter with otherness that includes the Southwest and the ways it challenges mindsets and expectations. We aim toward understanding to be sure. But we also aim beyond understanding to something more akin to love.

CEC serves as a catalyst for all of us to recognize that understanding, and even love, can't happen unless we truly engage the differences that too often divide us. This kind of engagement takes skills that combine intellectual engagement with engagement that comes from the heart. And the face to face matters, too. When our students engage constructively, they learn about leadership, about how to listen and communicate effectively across differences, and about how to work together -- especially when they don't agree. And they learn about themselves in ways that allow them to look ahead with intention.

CEC gives our students time and space to focus on our UWC values in real settings -- in town doing community service or on campus with each other -- so that they are prepared to make a difference wherever they end up.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Bartos Institute and CEC, I look forward to the ways this program will continue to grow and challenge us in the future.

Looking forward,

Victoria