# Speaking Up and Speaking Out: Call for Future Conference

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I cannot wait for next year, because I will surely be registering for the IU Community Engagement Unconference again. I believe the four assignment topics did a superb job at asking a diverse array of questions to get the voice and opinion of the participants that attended the conference as it relates to how their work is, and can be, applicable to community engagement. I resonated with prompt 2 and prompt 4 the most but see the value in prompt 1 and prompt 3.

Prompt 2 asked for participants to highlight a best practice or model that they have personally implemented regarding community engagement that has proven successful. I found this to be a real beard-scratcher because as a social worker there are many things that I have done regarding community engagement. Yet, of those things, which would I consider successful is dependent upon how success is defined. Consequently, I had to operantly define success to myself before I was able to continue. Deciding to respond to this prompt was monumental for me because I typically just go through the motions of things, believing action is enough. Prompt 2 helped me to realize that action and its resounding affect is to be valued.

Prompt 4 inquired upon participants to give their general thoughts about the Unconference, which includes the speakers, the interactions, the networking, etc.

Because this was my first time attending I did not know what to expect, so having the opportunity to simply reflect and give my feedback about the experience was helpful. I got to experience something new during my attendance. I had never seen the Mentimeter app used, which was a remarkable way to get engagement from the audience while relaying their anonymous opinions about the topic being asked in real-time across the presenting screen for everyone to see. That alone was amazing to me because the conference was centered around how to engage the community, and they exhibited an assortment of ways to engage the attendees at the conference, while also promoting what can be done outside of the conference.

Prompt 1 asked participants how they see their work advancing community engagement, which is like Prompt 2 but with one key difference. Prompt 1 is asking what could be done, and Prompt 2 is asking what has been done. I found Prompt 2 easier than Prompt 1 because there are countless ways I feel like my work can advance community engagement, but it is all dependent upon and limited to the resources and funds I have available. Consequently, I favor Prompt 2 because I know all the things I have done and could put them on a Likert scale of how successful they were. I see the value in being able to think about the future and what could be done to improve it, but my mind finds it hard to put limiters on future prospects about how things could be done, or what could be done.

Prompt 3 probed participants to think about how does the IU system-wide effort, like the Unconference and other engagements, enable institution and network building to be better, together. This is a great prompt to get people's thoughts about how they think IU and things like it encourage growth in the institution and the networks that they are comprised up. Some people may feel very strongly that institutions are doing a lot to foster network building, while others may feel just as strongly that institutions are not doing enough. This prompt allows for a disconnect to be addressed if it exists somewhere. Otherwise, it allows people to highlight the actions of things being done so that people in places where it is not being done can become aware that it may be something that should be having done.

All the topics held value, and I am grateful for the opportunity to attend the spring 2024 Unconference to learn and foster connections with professors and individuals of like minds. I am sure next year will be just as good if not better. I would jump at the chance if there was an opportunity to help in the development of future Unconferences.