

## AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. JOHN SCHUH

*John Blanchette*

*The following interview with Dr. John Schuh highlights the current state and future plans for the Department of Residence Life at Indiana University.*

Dr. John Schuh is in his first year as the Director of Residence Life at Indiana University. He began his appointment last year, replacing Dr. David DeCoster, who is now Dean of Students at the University of Nebraska. Dr. Schuh was formerly Assistant Director of Housing at Arizona State University. He is an active member of various professional associations, and is currently serving as the editor of "ACUHO News." After receiving his bachelor's degree in history at the University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh, he completed his master's in counseling and doctorate in higher education at Arizona State University.

Q: Dr. Schuh, how did you first become interested in residence life and who were some of the individuals who influenced you the most?

A: When I was a sophomore in college I was a Resident Assistant, and as a junior and senior, an Assistant Hall Director. I found the work to be quite enjoyable. But, as a matter of fact, a couple of Indiana University grads were probably most instrumental in pointing me toward my career. Bill Ehrich, a CSPA grad, was my supervisor at Wisconsin and Fred Meyer, who is now at South Dakota University was probably the most helpful to me. At Arizona State I had a small hall of 180 students and four R.A.'s. My supervisor there was Dick Rankin, who is now Dean of Students at St. Norbert College in Wisconsin. He was also very influential.

Q: What were some of your considerations when you chose to accept the Residence Life directorship at Indiana University?

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John Blanchette received A.B. and M.A. degrees from Boston College, and M.S. from University College in Dublin, Ireland, and will receive his M.S. in Education in CSPA in May. After working in a variety of positions, he came to Indiana University and is currently interning in Residence Life. He has also done practicum work in Student Activities.

A: I came to Indiana because I thought it would be a particularly good place to work. The Residence Life program here is probably the best in the country. The University has a well developed program with a good deal of institutional support and I've not been disappointed. This is a fine place to be affiliated with and I'm really glad I came. I feel very positive about the situation.

Q: I know that you teach some courses at I.U. Do you enjoy your teaching role?

A: I do. I had taught for four years at Arizona State and one of the things which made this position so attractive was that I could continue on in a limited teaching role.

Q: What are some of the immediate projects that the Department of Residence Life is pursuing?

A: First of all, just getting through the problems of Residence Life on a week by week basis (was my project). But some more significant projects include recruiting for next fall, especially minority recruitment. We're not as well represented by minorities as we should be. We are also trying to upgrade the academic atmosphere in residence halls by encouraging more faculty-student contact. We've just completed an environmental assessment project at the University and a high priority in the department is reacting to student concerns expressed in the assessment.

Q: What are some of these concerns?

A: Well, some are programmatic—more cultural affairs in the halls, and some are academic—a need for more class offerings and faculty contact in the halls.

Q: What are some of your long term projects?

A: Long term we are looking at problems in enrollment and how we react as a department to keep attrition to a minimum. I think we need to continue to work closely with the academic departments of CSPA and Higher Education to make sure we provide quality experiences for graduate students. In a lot of ways the recruitment we do in residence halls will have a lot to do with the enrollment in those two departments. Greater faculty awareness of the concerns we have in the halls and what we can do for students are the kinds of things we have to address.

Q: There was some concern expressed last year by some faculty members about the academic environment in the halls. Is this sort of criticism still prevalent?

A: There is still concern but it is less virulent now. It's been institutionalized. A committee is examining the residence hall environment and I expect their report to be out shortly.

Q: Are you optimistic about the future of the Residence Life field?

A: I see a steady-state situation for Residence Life. For the entering professional, Residence Life, less than other areas, has not been impacted by cuts in professional staff. Essentially we're locked into having a certain number of full time professionals by the number of buildings that are operated. I think the opportunities are pretty good. There does need to be some flexibility in terms of geography and setting, but opportunities in Residence Life are probably better than most areas of student affairs.

Q: In what general direction do you see your own career developing?

A: At this point I don't have any specific long term goals. One of the reasons I came to Indiana University was that I thought it would afford me some flexibility in terms of my next position, whenever that might be. There are a couple of areas that I think I have some interest in. I really don't know which I will pursue or where. Having been here for just a little over six months the thought of moving again seems a little overwhelming. But obviously Student Affairs is a consuming interest. If I had a chance to be assistant to a president in the right setting, I would leap at the opportunity. Academic administration is another area. However, there is certainly less student contact within these positions and I thrive on crisis management—situations which we tend to experience most in Student Affairs.

Q: Thirty or forty years from now when you look back at your career, what kinds of contributions and accomplishments would you like to have made to the field?

A: I would hope I had some impact on graduate students along the way. I have always felt an extreme debt of gratitude to faculty who have influenced my development: Dr. Bill Blaesser, who teaches in the Department of Counselor Education at Arizona State, and Dr. Harry Newburn. I hope that I could give some of myself in some small way as those folks did for me.

Secondly, I hope that I would have written some things that would be of use to people along the way.

And a third thing for which I'd like to be remembered—I feel like I'm giving my epitaph here—I'd like to be remembered as a pretty sharp administrator who was supportive, who worked well with people, treated staff fairly, was open and honest to change and new ideas. I guess these are some of the areas I wouldn't mind seeing chiseled in on my tombstone.

## NEWS FROM 226

As many of you are now aware, I have had my second bout with surgery since November. As this issue of the *Journal* goes to press, I am still in the "convalescence mode" but feeling much, much better. I thank all of you for the cards and letters. They mean so very much.

Drs. Kuh and Shaffer refuse to let me into the School of Education until May. And I'm not sure whether I will be attending the various professional meetings. However, both Dr. Kuh and Dr. Shaffer will be at ACPA and NASPA. Dr. Schuh has arranged for an I.U. reception from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday evening at ACPA. Dr. Herb Smith is coordinating the NASPA reception. Also watch for the NAWDAC dinner on April 6 at 6:00 p.m. Information concerning place will be available at the conventions.

About 50 students will be graduating and seeking placement this spring. A list of those submitting placement information at this time has been included in this *Journal*. Please know we greatly appreciate the support and interest shown by I.U. alumni concerning CSPA graduates. The department counts on the job vacancies and internship announcements you make available to our students. Thanks.

This past year, Dr. Shaffer served as co-editor of an ACPA monograph on legal issues in student affairs and contributed a chapter to a monograph edited by Dr. Kuh concerning evaluation in student affairs. In addition to the evaluation monograph, Dr. Kuh will have several articles dealing with adult learners and characteristics of student personnel graduate students published in various journals during the next six months.

Dr. Schuh continues to work with the ACUHO publications and has recently edited an ACUHO monograph, "Programming and Activities in College and University Residence Halls," and authored an article in the Winter 1978-79 *ACUHO Journal*.

I found time to contribute a chapter in Dr. Shaffer's legal monograph and another chapter to an ACPA publication dealing with the preparation of student personnel professionals.

As the *IUSPA Journal* editors have indicated, your financial and moral support for the *Journal* is needed and appreciated beyond what words can express. As a department, we hope you find the *Journal* informative and thought provoking. As always, we welcome your suggestions for improving our program and the profession. We are particularly interested in hearing from you concerning your present position and responsibilities, continued professional growth, etc. In regard to the latter, please review the summer workshop schedule listed elsewhere in this issue of the *Journal*.

I hope the spring meetings are challenging and rewarding and the summer allows you some time to regenerate the high level of enthusiasm and commitment required for our work in the college community.

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