

# **APPLIED RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE**

## **St. Louis University/Southern Illinois University Edwardsville/ University of Missouri-St. Louis**

### **Area's 3 leading research institutions create alliance**

SIUE, SLU, UMSL working together to assist with community improvement efforts

Three major area universities have teamed up to create the Applied Research Collaborative, a regional data service center for local government and nonprofit organizations. ARC is comprised of The Institute for Urban Research at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Public Policy Research Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and RegionWise at Saint Louis University. The initiative will serve as a data clearinghouse, provide regional indicators and perform commissioned research projects, including trend analysis reports.

The collaboration is being undertaken by the universities as a way to provide support for community improvement through greater collaboration and more active engagement in key issues facing the St. Louis bi-state region. ARC will work together with area civic, public and nonprofit agencies that also will use the research generated by the collaborative.

"One of the major challenges in our region is its economic and geographic diversity," said Patrick McKeehan, executive director of the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois. "We have 16 counties across two states that include highly industrialized urban areas, low-density agricultural communities and hundreds of governmental units. It just makes sense to use this alliance of three highly regarded educational institutions to increase our regional understanding, decision-making and connection."

ARC's goal is to work with local governments and nonprofits to ensure community improvement efforts are more informed, better planned and easier to implement. Research from the collaborative will help civic, nonprofit and public decision makers in a variety of ways, including local trend data presentation and analysis, program evaluation and documentation for specific community service needs.

"The St. Louis region has never really used our substantial academic and scholarly resources to help us address complex policy problems in a fact-based, authoritative manner," said Les Sterman, executive director of East-West Gateway Council of Governments, which has already begun working with the collaborative. "ARC is a great idea that couldn't come at a more opportune time and I'm sure that we will soon find ways for them to support our regional decision-making process."

ARC has already started conversations with local government officials and nonprofit leaders to explore how its resources might track and analyze the impact of the current social and economic crises, and how they might be best addressed. As Gary Dollar, executive director of the St. Louis United Way, noted, "Especially under current circumstances, all of us need to identify opportunities to be more efficient and effective. ARC can provide such opportunity for us to access and interpret data to good advantage."

ARC plans to issue several brief reports each year treating relevant regional trends. The collaborative also will hold regular conferences focusing on key issues facing the region, such as affordable workforce housing and strategies for a sustainable St. Louis.

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