

Student Stories Project: Teresa Santos

Audio version available at: <http://www.alumni.indiana.edu/profiles/students/santos.shtml>

[IU fight song]

Welcome to the Indiana University Student Stories Project, a production of the IU Alumni Association. I'm your host, Alana Salata. In this series, you'll get an insight into what it takes to be a student leader here at IU, from the perks –

“The Alumni Association here at South Bend had selected me to go to IU Bloomington’s annual LeaderShape training program for a week.”

– to the hard work –

“Time management: it’s hard because I love the group so much and I just – I want to volunteer for everything and I want to do everything.”

– to the memories that will last a lifetime.

“I’ve met so many people that have touched my life in so many ways.”

Join me on this journey through the lives of IU student leaders.

[IU fight song]

SALATA: Today we’re at IU South Bend speaking with Teresa Santos of the Student Government Association.

SANTOS: Hi, my name is Teresa. I am a third-year junior – I guess I’m going on to my senior year here at IU South Bend. I live in Mishawaka, Indiana. My major is in the fine arts. I currently serve as the secretary for the Student Government Association for this year. In the past I’ve served as a senator with it. With the Student Alumni Association I serve as the vice president for the upcoming year. I have a lot of interests; they are actually quite wide-ranging. I am involved in about six to eight clubs and organizations around the campus. In the community, I do a lot of fundraising for different causes, mainly for sick or injured children. I also like to work with the art program here at IU South Bend to get the word out about Raclin School of the Arts and about the art gallery that we have to promote the work of the faculty, the students, as well as our alumni members within the art school.

Why did you choose to attend IU South Bend?

Mainly there were a couple of reasons. I had always intended to come here when my husband and I first moved here about 20-something-odd years ago. [laughter] I was actually attending Bethel College and had wanted to come to the art program at Indiana University South Bend. But

then life happened and we had children, so we needed to put them first before we continued on with our own dreams – we wanted to make sure they had a healthy start for theirs.

Tell me about a meaningful or enjoyable experience you have had at IU South Bend.

I'm really proud of being the founder of the Indiana University South Bend Arts League. I founded that organization to do the work of promoting the visual arts department – it is actually the IU South Bend Visual Arts League. I helped with the Spanish Club when I came back from one of my study-abroad trips to Cuernavaca in Mexico. I was president of the Spanish Club for a year, I believe, and we had a really good experience there. It's still thriving today and they have plenty of members. And I guess also one of the things I'm most proud of is that the organizations I do lead, I've really pushed the "let's become self-funded as much as possible." It's very rare that my organizations will come to the Student Government Association for club funds or anything like that. If we do, it's mainly sponsorship money for an event or something like that.

What advice would you give to incoming freshmen and other students just starting out at IU South Bend?

I know that a lot of people tell incoming students to get involved right away in student clubs and organizations. I don't know if maybe it's just because I'm older coming into Indiana University, but I say, take your time. Focus on your academics. Take the year to look around the campus, because it takes time to get to know it. You may have a club or an activity that you would like to get involved in – join it as a member or participate in the activities without joining, and just check it out for a year or so and do some research before you decide where you want to get in and start pitching in at. You can always change your mind. But the focus is on your academics and getting yourself off to a good grounding.

Tell me a little about the Student Government Association at IU South Bend.

The Student Government Association at South Bend – we are focused on many of the student-life programs. We try to get involved all over the campus. We like to help students find their way around the campus. We do have a good-sized budget of the student activity fees that we disperse on an annual basis, as well as money that is left for clubs and organizations, as well as students, to come and request for projects or for club events that they're having. I would say that we like to let the students know that we're here to help them in any way possible – any concerns they have, questions they have, help them find a way to get into the activities, if they're having problems, help them find someone on campus, get them in touch with someone who can help them, and just offer them an overall great campus experience while they're here at the university.

How did you find out about the Student Government Association, and why did you decide to become a member?

I had taken my first year just to study things out. I came back into school after close to 25 years. I had been out in the business world; I'd raised my family. I came back to school – I'd never intended to, but I came back to school because I had a debilitating injury that left me without a job. The particular company that I was working for had to let me go because it was harming

them economically for me not to be there, and I just could not function in any of the other types of positions that I had skills in. So I decided that I would focus on what I enjoyed in life, and that was the arts and fundraising, community work, community service, and things. I had took my time on campus just studying things out, and there were some issues that I had concerns about going on within the particular program that I'm involved in, the arts department, and I had come to speak with the president at that time, Mike Renfrow, and we had sat and talked about them and he was able to help me resolve quite a little bit of them, but some of them had to go to the Student Government Association, and they started taking action. He and Marcus Vehill and a couple of other members of the SGA had started talking to me then about becoming involved with this. By the time I did come and join the SGA and run as a senator, I had already been heavily involved on the campus in just a leadership position. You don't need to serve as part of an SGA or anything in leadership in an office to *be* a leader. And so it was just a natural progression that I came to see what I could do with it.

Tell me about a Student Government Association event or program that you were involved in that you are particularly proud of.

I think one of the programs that I am very proud of is the fact that the SGA works heavily with the Student Alumni Association. Each year the Hoosiers for Higher Education sponsors an event to go downstate for all students of all eight campuses to lobby the legislature for funding for Indiana University. This past year – well, the last couple of years – I was involved with helping get people, get students “on the bus” and get faculty members to go. And this year, as in the past several years, Indiana University South Bend sent the largest contingent of students downstate. I believe – you would have to double-check the figures with Cyndy Searfoss, but I know we had – I want to say a ballpark figure of around 150 people. And I had worked in the halls for several days, just getting students and faculty members to work with us and get students there, and I was told that I actually had received a nice little gift certificate for getting the most students downstate. We did get our initiative: we are going to be having the renovation of the Associates Building, which is going to contain the fine arts department; it's going to house nursing, dental. And the education building, it's getting a complete renovation. It's something that the chancellor has been working for for many years, and the university community has pretty much backed her up on that.

What challenges have you faced during your participation in the Student Government Association?

One of the larger challenges is, for anyone, making a clear distinction between your personal involvement, your personal feelings, your friendships, and that of business; and a lot of times I see many people bring their personal feelings and their friendships – can't seem to disassociate the two things. If you disagree and you have a heated discussion in an SGA meeting, it kind of carries over into the friendship a lot of times, and there's just really no place for it. You have to realize, and I think it comes with maturity, that you have to realize that there is business to carry on and that has to be separated from your personal life. And when you do have those disagreements, take time to get away from it and then get back together as friends.

How have your leadership skills developed over the course of your participation in the Student Government Association?

I think that I have a broader view. I think I've worked very hard. One of the things that I have been very fortunate with is that the alumni association here at South Bend had selected me to go to IU Bloomington's annual LeaderShape training program for a week over holiday break. I have focused a lot on my listening skills, on my communication skills; just my life experience alone has given me a scope of broader vision. I can sit down and see both sides of an issue – I can see issues from a student's point of view, I can see them from a staff or faculty member's point of view, I can see them from an administrative point of view – I can see all of that and kind of pick and choose and see what's the best solution to a problem or a concern, maybe, and can kind of get people turned towards that. Sometimes you just have to make the tough decisions and put your head down and do it anyway. But I think that, you know, if people disagree with me and they don't do what I recommend, that's not a problem for me because everyone is capable of thinking for themselves, and when you're in a room of five or 12 or 20 individuals, everyone's going to have a different point of view, but you have to realize you are a collective body and the majority rules.

What other organizations are you a part of here at IU South Bend?

As I stated earlier, I founded the IU Visual Arts League. I'm also part of the Spanish Club, the International Student Organization, the Latino Student Union, and I participate in a lot of different activities around the campus that I may not be members of, but if I have the time, I'm going to pop in and show up just to say hi and give my support, because I believe that everyone needs support, and if being there can help in any way ...

What are your future goals, and how do you think IU South Bend has helped prepare you to meet those goals?

I've got such a wide range of interests – but I hope to be able to go to IU Bloomington to graduate school for their arts administration program. If I can combine it with an art history degree or public administration, I would love to have the opportunity to do something like that. One of my dreams is to – we are really rich here in northern Indiana in that we have quite a lot of universities, colleges, community schools, and things like that. So I would hope to someday be able to get different art leagues, different art clubs, together. I would like to have an art center in the middle of South Bend, down by the river or something, something where there are working studios that students as well as the art faculty from the area universities can come, they can do their work there in the studios, they can display it and sell it out of a gallery, and I'd like to promote the arts a little bit more in our area, something towards that end. This would be something that would help students get out there and get their work shown; it would help them get their name known; it would give them a place to work for a year or two after they graduate, until they can start acquiring their own studio equipment.

What will you miss the most when you graduate?

I don't think I'm ever going to graduate. [laughter] I love school so much, I might be a lifetime student. I may start on a whole other degree. I don't know. I think that just the intellectual discussions – I really enjoy my professors, not only on a teaching level, on a professional level, but on a personal level as well, the friendships that I've made. Working together with other students for common goals to try to resolve problems or to try to make campus life better. And I think that's probably going to be what I miss most of all.

We've been talking with Teresa Santos of IU South Bend's Student Government Association.

[IU fight song]

This series was produced by the Indiana University Alumni Association, with special thanks to the IU Marching Hundred and director Dave Woodley. I'm Alana Salata.

[IU fight song]