Research Interests:

- Family Foundation boards—structure, function and motivation
- Ethical issues in foundation philanthropy
- Family philanthropy

Research Methodologies:

- Survey
- Interview
- Archival Review

Tentative Dissertation Title: Mission and Family: An Exploration of the Dual Purpose of Family Foundations

Primary Advisor: Dr. Leslie Lenkowsky

Research Statement:

Practitioners note that both mission focus and family focus are important in any family-oriented philanthropy. For example, Blanchard asserts that “…family foundations have two purposes (or goals): social impact and family unity.” In a summary of donor intentions for creating family foundations, Flather et al. note that donors create family foundations not only for “…formalizing charitable giving…” but also for “[t]eaching subsequent generations of the family to carry on the family’s tradition of giving,…[p]roviding a[n]…opportunity for parents to reinforce the value of philanthropic activity and the responsibilities of privilege…[and]….p]romoting family unity…” Scholars acknowledge that both are at least relevant. Do family foundation boards actually differ in terms of the degree to which one focus is emphasized over the other? What implications for grantmaking, board membership and structure does this difference represent? I am using concepts from agency theory and institutional theory to examine these questions.

Personal Info:

Joe Palus has spent his pre-academy career in community development, with over nine years at Local Initiatives Support Corporation (a financial intermediary that makes loans and grants in support of community development projects and programs). Joe also spent six years with the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority, where most recently he worked with community stakeholders to develop and launch a statewide nonprofit community development financial institution (an organization that facilitates the flow of capital into underserved communities and for underserved borrowers). To date, the organization has $700,000 in capital under management and has closed or will soon close $540,000 in loans.