

Columbia Law School

## Scholarship Archive

---

Center for the Advancement of Public Integrity  
(Inactive)

Research Centers & Programs

---

2016

### Profile in Public Integrity: Cynthia Carrasco

Center for the Advancement of Public Integrity

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/public\\_integrity](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/public_integrity)



Part of the Law Commons

---

## Profile in Public Integrity:

### Cynthia Carrasco

## Inspector General of Indiana

---



Before becoming the Inspector General for the state of Indiana, Cynthia Carrasco was the executive director of the Indiana Ethics Commission. In 2015, she was named one of Indiana's "Forty Under 40" by the [Indianapolis Business Journal](#). A graduate of the Indiana University (IU) Robert H. McKinney School of Law, she serves as a volunteer for the IU Latino Alumni Association and the Indiana University Health Patient-Family Advisory Council.

**Before being appointed Inspector General by Governor Mike Pence, you were Executive Director of the State Ethics Commission. Do these two leadership roles pose different challenges?**

The challenges posed by each role are definitely unique. At the State Ethics Commission, one of the primary challenges we faced was raising the awareness of state workers about the existence of the rules in the Code of Ethics and getting them to think about those rules as they apply in day-to-day situations. An even more difficult challenge, perhaps, was to institute measures to develop a state government culture in which state workers would instinctively take proactive steps when faced with questionable ethical situations, such as seeking ethics advice from our office.

The challenges I face as Inspector General are different. For example, an Inspector General faces challenges related to confidentiality and investigations. Our office has to strike the right balance between respecting the public's right to access information about government actions and ensuring compliance with confidentiality laws governing an investigation, especially in situations involving high-profile cases.

Despite the unique challenges posed by each role, both positions share largely the same overall goal. Specifically, both offices seek to ensure compliance with a set of rules or laws that are intended to promote public confidence in the workforce of its government.

**In 2015, Indiana's state legislature passed ethics reforms proposed by your office, including new legislative oversight measures and disclosure requirements. Do you have any advice for leaders of watchdogs working to pass ethics reforms in other states?**

My advice for leaders of watchdogs working to pass ethics reforms is to conduct an objective and thorough analysis of the current ethics infrastructure under review. Such an analysis will help identify existing practices that are effective in achieving the overall goals of the various stakeholders and highlight those practices that fall short of producing desired results. It is crucial that any such analysis consider a variety of factors, including the effects that any proposed reforms would have on all parties involved (including both citizens and government workers). To be effective, any recommended reforms should strive to strike a balance between any identified competing interests.

**Besides helping to pass important ethics reforms, which of your office's achievements are you most proud of?**

Our office was created in 2005 and compared to most government agencies, is still fairly new. Accordingly, there are many accomplishments that come along with establishing a new office that we can say we are proud of. However, given that the office was created just over 11 years ago, I am most proud of the fact that our 12-person agency has become an essential part of state government that serves a public need and consistently produces savings and revenue captures that exceed our legislative appropriation.

**In Indiana, neither the Office of the Inspector General nor the State Ethics Commission has oversight over officials and employees at the municipal level. Is this a gap in the state oversight system or are municipal government entities adequately safeguarded in other ways?**

Although neither our office nor the State Ethics Commission has oversight over officials and employees at the municipal level, other safeguards are in place to promote integrity in government. For example, the State Board of Accounts is a state agency that has jurisdiction to conduct audits at both the state and local levels of government.

**This work can be thankless at times because a major part of this job is to prevent problems from happening in the first place.**

These audits often reveal problems at the municipal level and can trigger actions by various other entities. Moreover, more and more municipalities throughout the State are beginning to voluntarily institute oversight systems within their jurisdiction. Many are modeled after our statewide office and ethics code. Nevertheless, because awareness of our office and its functions is continually increasing, I do believe that there is a possibility that our office could be tapped to assist in the oversight of local government in Indiana, at some point in the future.

**What advice do you have for lawyers who want to pursue a career in public integrity oversight?**

Lawyers who want to pursue a career in public integrity oversight should recognize that work in this field—while incredibly valuable—can be difficult, slow to have an impact, and often times thankless. My career thus far has focused solely on public integrity oversight, and I can personally attest to the fact that this work can be thankless at times because a major part of this job is to prevent problems from happening in the first place. At the same time, it can also be incredibly rewarding. Knowing that I am a part of making state government more efficient and accountable to its citizens is the driving force that motivates me to continue working in this field.