Welcome!

Thank you for visiting the second edition of Connectivities, the electronic newsletter of the SUNY Cortland Connections Committee. The Connections Committee mission is to promote to new students and the overall student body positive and meaningful connections to the College. The Committee seeks to encourage and evaluate meaningful connections between our students and the services within the Division of Student Affairs at SUNY Cortland and beyond.

All of us have roles in our personal, college and/or work life such as a student, parent, supervisor, partner/spouse, grandparent and friend. A person can find they have too many roles requiring too much responsibility, which causes good and bad stress. The bad stress can harm us the most, so what can we do about it?

The first thing is to notice changes in your body. Stress can be the cause of headaches, sleep disturbances, difficulty in concentration, short temper, upset stomach, job dissatisfaction, low morale, anxiety, back pain, stiff neck, depression, fatigue, unexpected weight changes, relationship trouble, indigestion, skin problems such as hives, shortness of breath, pounding heart, constipation, diarrhea, decreased sex drive, and high blood pressure. And stress can cause a variety of diseases such as: cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, psychological, suicide, cancer, ulcers and impaired immune function according to, The Encyclopedia of Occupational Safety and Health.

You cannot avoid stress. "People need to start proactively trying to prevent episodes before they have extreme reactions," Still, managing stress or reducing it as much as you can is a smart idea, because constant stress leaves your body flooded with stress hormones, which can increase your risk of heart attack and etc. "Stress causes physical and psychological reactions. It can alter your sleep. It leaves you constantly in fighting-mode and leaves your immune system suppressed. You may get sick a lot," Kalayjian said. There's no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to managing stress." Some things will be right for one person but not for another. Be open, and try things. Give something a try, and if it's not right for you, move on to something else. You'll eventually find something that's right for you," said Evo (October 12, 2006 http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_39702.html.)

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Interview by Marianglea Chandler

When I was asked who we should spotlight in our Connectivities Newsletter, I immediately thought of Bill Hopkins, a seasoned professor of psychology, who retired August 1, 2006. At my interview in June of 1983, Bill embraced me with kindness and impressed me with his enthusiasm for teaching. He has been and will continue to be a mentor for me and hundreds of others, especially students who have had the privilege to take a course from him or be a member of the Psychology club, for which Bill has remained as the faculty advisor.

William Hopkins is a professor of Educational Psychology with an emphasis on special children. He has taught at SUNY Cortland, for 36 years. His teaching specialties have been in educational psychology and psychology of the exceptional child. Overall, his 38 years of professional experience has included work with schools and 20 years of consulting for agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities.

On May 2, 2006, I invited Bill to my office to ask him a few questions concerning his connections to SUNY Cortland personnel and beyond. Following are the questions in BOLD and his responses:

**Why do you think students feel connected to you?**

I have strong memories of how important it had been for me to connect with a faculty member. When I met my mentor professor at a professional conference several years after I graduated, I thanked him profusely for believing in me. He said, “Instead of thanking me, pass it on.” And so it has been. Additionally, I believe that everyone has a story; everyone has triumphed over some obstacle that few others know about. When I connect with students, the story usually comes out, and we are at a person-to-person level, instead of a professor-student relationship. Teaching is a humanistic enterprise, and it is essential to know the person.

**Can you give an example of a memorable connection with a student?**

Yes, about 100, but John H. stands out. He was in my large lecture College Success course (which is now COR 101) and shouted out that he couldn’t stand professors wearing bright yellow sweaters. Which I was! Three days later he came to my and said he wanted to talk, to explain why he was hostile. He then told me that during Fall Break, his house burned to the ground, and his three dogs had died in the fire. “I’m really hurting,” he said, “And I took it out on you.” John and I have been good friends for almost 20 years. I learned the value of listening, not making judgments, and empathizing with others. He taught me that the veneer does not reveal the substance.

**What recommendations do you have for ways others can connect with someone on campus?**

Be genuine. Follow the prescriptions of William Purkey, the father of Invitational Education, who proposes we be both professionally and personally inviting to others. Additionally imagine your own son or daughter connecting with a faculty member. What would you hope for? Provide that to the students with whom you interact.

**Your knack for making connections on campus has recently crossed the border to teachers in Belize. How did you make connections in Belize?**

Through a serendipitous circumstance I learned about the special education needs in Belize. Essentially, in the Fall of 2004 the College was asked if we could be of assistance in terms of sharing our expertise with Belizean teachers.

After an initial visit to the Special Education Unit of Belize, it was apparent that neither additional personnel, nor additional funding were realistic expectations. The project incorporates the principles of interdependence and synergy. This led to two cultures combining their energies to create a facilitating atmosphere of collaboration. The project relies on dedicated, forward thinking people of good values who just need information and skills to bring an improvement in children’s lives.
Student to Student: Barb Gasperetti

Barb Gasperetti will graduate from SUNY Cortland this December with a degree in Physical Education and has decided to continue on for her Master’s degree at the college as well. As an undergraduate, she served as a lieutenant in the Emergency Medical Squad, participated in the Physical Education Club, and was most well-known for her involvement as a dispatcher for University Police, where she continues to work while attending grad classes.

Barb began her undergraduate career not really connected to the college. Freshman year came and went, but she didn’t particularly enjoy her experience that year. However, when she returned to reconnect with her friends sophomore year, and began meeting other people, she began to really enjoy her experience at the college.

She attributes the friendships she developed while at Cortland to having the biggest impact on her life at college. One friendship she developed was with a fellow student who encouraged her to get involved in the EMS. This friend also worked as a student dispatcher for the University Police and helped Barb secure her own position as a student dispatcher. While working for UPD, she continued to expand her connections by getting off campus and meeting other emergency workers and volunteers from the community.

Barb thinks that the most important thing faculty and staff can do to help students have a positive connection to the college is to provide organizations to join and help students get involved in groups that relate to the student’s interests.

Barb’s story is an encouragement to others to get involved and make the most of their college experience. It’s easier than you think! Easy ways to start connecting...

Begin by getting to know your students. Make an effort to find things in common with your student. Talk to them about your experiences and listen to theirs.

Offer assistance and help your students. Ask them how their weekend is going or what has been happening with them. There are many situations that are going on in their lives that you could support them in.

Remember that if you don’t know the answer to their questions then you can help them and educate yourself by assisting them in their search. Then you will know the answer the next time the question is asked of you.

Invite your students to other events that are going on that you are attending. Inform them of educational, cultural, or inspiring programs that you are planning on attending. Give your students the opportunity to experience some of the things that you are involved in and passionate about.

Students don’t forget to visit your professors during their office hours. Be sure to utilize this time that they set aside for you.

Don’t forget to take the time to greet faculty and staff when you see them outside the classroom. It will give you an opportunity to learn more about them and their interests.

Take the opportunity to work as an intern or an office assistant with faculty and/or staff. Internships are extremely beneficial to your Cortland experience and are excellent resume builders.

 Invite professional staff and faculty to join your intramural teams, attend club meetings, or participate in other events. You will find that many of them will enjoy these experiences and you can learn a lot more about them during these interactions.
Rich’s Reflections

Allow me to introduce myself. I am Richard Peagler, interim vice president for student affairs. Prior to becoming the interim vice president, I served the campus and students for over 30 years in varying capacities.

For many years, I was a senior counselor in the Counseling Center during which time I pursued a doctoral degree in Counseling and Human Services which I received in 1993 from Syracuse University. In 1994, I became the director of student support services. After a national search in 1998, I was fortunate enough to become director of counseling and student development with the responsibility for the Counseling Center, Career Services, Student Health Service, Health Promotion, Student Disability Services, and Substance Abuse Prevention.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to connect with many, many students through my work in the Counseling Center. I have had the honor of being invited to graduations, weddings, and other major events in students’ lives. The fact that counseling is so personal, it effects a natural connection. The nature of other offices within Student Development and Student Affairs makes it natural to connect with students as well.

A few years ago, I attended the American College Personnel Conference in Boston, MA. There was a session that caught my attention which focused on efforts by the University of Maryland to retain minority students. An extensive research study attempted to identify areas of the college that might contribute to the retention of minority students. The study examined social activities/events such as college-sponsored parties, intramural sport programs, and students who had work study or temporary service positions in various offices around the campus. The study found that the most significant variable in retaining minority students was their direct connection with various offices. That is, students who were directly connected with an office were more likely to continue at that institution. It appears that the interpersonal connection between students and member of an office help students with their adjustment and, therefore, retention.

Although this study focused on minority students, I believe it had applicability for all students. As I mentioned previously, there are many offices that assist students with personal concerns, and as a result, there is the development of strong relationships. Where there is not that opportunity, establishing relationships with students must be intentional. There has to be a strong desire to connect, especially with ethnic minority students.

I would personally like to challenge all of us who employ students to reach out and make that connection. Taking the initiative benefits both the college community and the lives of our students.

For those of you who took it upon yourselves to reach out and connect with our students, I thank you.

WELCOME! (Continued from page 1)

Assist in your stress management by trying one or more of these suggestions:
- Don’t worry about things that are not in your control
- Prepare for stressful situations
- Positive thinking
- Try to resolve conflicts
- Ask for help
- Set personal and work goals
- Exercise, the body in motion
- Eat nutritious
- Start good sleep habits
- Meditate

- Get away from stressors and get involved in groups, events, hobbies, etc.
- Keeping a journal as writing can act as a release
- Get organized at work and at home

In this issue you will find a "spotlight section" highlighting a faculty member and a student who have made a unique connection to the College. You will also find some information on what is working at other colleges and universities in relation to connecting with students. Dr. Richard C. Peagler, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, is also a contributing writer in the “Rich’s Reflections” section. We encourage you to explore this newsletter and utilize it to assist with your department or personal objectives.

If you have any questions or comments, or if would like to get involved, feel free to contact any of the committee members, listed on the front page.

Sincerely,
The Connections Committee
Connect online via Email Listservs

One of the easiest ways for students to get involved in the SUNY Cortland community and be informed of what is happening on campus is to subscribe to special interest e-mail listservs and get in the habit of scanning your Cortland e-mail on a daily basis. Faculty, staff and student groups use e-mail listservs to advertise programs, provide policy information, and to make announcements for activities, meetings, etc.

If you do not choose to subscribe to campus listservs, you still have a way to see recent messages. You will notice that when you login to WebMail (https://webmail.cortland.edu/secure/), to the left and right of the login prompt are "bulletin boards" that list the most recent messages posted to a campus listserv. You can also click on the "View All Events" link to see the archived lists. On the left-hand side is the Student Government Association listing and on the right is the "All Campus" listing for links to messages posted to any other campus listserv. Keep in mind however, that unless you are subscribed to a list and unless you check the archived list of bulletin board messages daily, you may miss an important message because only the most recent 10-12 messages are visible at the WebMail login screen.

There are many benefits to actually subscribing to lists rather than relying on the bulletin boards. Most messages have informative subject headers, and if the subject is something in which you aren't interested, it is easy to delete messages you don't wish to read. For those messages you really DO want to read, though, you will be glad you are subscribed. For example, if there is a recreational sports club or intramural team you want to join, e-mail from the Recreational Sports listserv is the way you will be notified. If you want to register for Teacher Recruitment Day or learn more about internships at Disney, e-mail from the Career Services listserv is the way you will find out about the informational meeting and important deadlines. In addition to these lists mentioned, there are lists for campus activities, dining services, judicial affairs information, multicultural life, wellness programs and more!

I encourage you to subscribe to the special interest e-mail listservs. Most will not bombard you with "junk mail." If you find a list is sending you messages you rarely read, you can always unsubscribe.

To subscribe to a listserv:

1. Go to WebMail (https://webmail.cortland.edu/secure/)
2. Click on: Manage your mailing list membership
3. Click on: Manage my membership list
4. Login using your WebMail/NetID credentials
5. Subscribe to all the lists you wish by clicking on the link to "subscribe" for each applicable item in the chart of listservs

Please take this step to stay connected to SUNY Cortland! Get involved! Know what is going on!