The Institute for Civic Engagement

- Community Outreach
- Service-Learning
- Community Research and Economic Development

Affiliated with the American Democracy Project and with the New York Campus Compact

Newsletter, September 2006

The past few months have been productive. The Institute’s Research and Economic Development Office helped establish Main Street SUNY Cortland, a beautiful building with two fully furnished second-floor “smart” classrooms and cubicles for offices on the first floor. SUNY Cortland and the greater Cortland community will soon enjoy a good deal of classroom and community outreach activity. We will hold a Grand Opening soon; details will be forthcoming.

A successful McDonald Foundation Grant proposal, co-directed by Richard Kendrick (Director of the Institute for Civic Engagement - ICE) and Craig Little (Coordinator of the Research and Economic Development Office), has provided the bulk of the resources to create a first-rate teaching, research, and outreach facility on Main Street.

Many faculty members have already approached Professor Little to propose research projects involving their students who might work out of the Main Street facility. We will start to see activities associated with these proposals soon after the facility officially opens. Please contact Professor Little to discuss use of the facility. His phone number is 753-2470.

During the summer of 2006, Professor Little worked with a large group of faculty, administrators and community members to assemble an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant proposal to create the Cortland Center for Economics Education. The project, under the co-directorship of Kathleen Burke and Tim Phillips of the Economics Department, will provide a wide range of educational services to school teachers and the business community of Cortland County, provided it is funded. The prospects look promising.

At present, a group of college and community partners is working on a New York State Music Fund grant proposal that can bring significant resources to the community. That grant, through the Community Outreach Partnership Center of ICE, would bring music to underserved populations, support music-related educational outreach, and support innovative musical presentations by local performing artists.

The Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) is creating additional collaborations. Kathy Gallagher, SUNY Cortland VISTA member and Campus / Community Coordinator, is blending the resources of the college and the community through 3 major projects:

Main Street SUNY Cortland’s Open Door project aims to provide a place for any public or private group that is working to empower individuals to strengthen the Cortland community.

The Projects Project intends to identify at least five community projects that the untapped resources of SUNY Cortland can nurture. Possibilities include:
- An International Fair, which will help introduce our international students to the City of Cortland
- A Science Fair conducted by junior- and senior-high school science students in the renovated (fall 2007) Sperry Building

_The Mentoring Program_ introduces high school students to college life by connecting them to SUNY Cortland students. The high school students learn about the social, financial, and academic aspects of college life. This pilot project’s goal is to match 25 college students with 25 high school students.

To discuss these or other Outreach projects, please contact Kathy at 597-9212 or at gallagherk@cortland.edu.

The Office of Service-Learning is conducting two election-related projects. One is a Voter Registration campaign that is part of a nation-wide, 80-campus study to determine the most effective strategies for convincing students to register to vote, to learn about issues of importance to them, and to vote. This project is funded by a Pew Charitable Grant, and is distributed through the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. Our goal is to register at least 350 students and to convince them to vote.

The other project, which will determine effective ways of recruiting students as poll workers, is supported by a U.S. Elections Commission grant. It aims to recruit 50 students to serve as poll workers in the November 2006 General Election.

As part of our celebration of _Constitution Day_ (this year on September 21), we have invited Michael McMahon to address the campus on a current national issue: Immigration. Mr. McMahon is co-owner of the E-Z Acres dairy farm, which has 12 employees – half of whom are Hispanic. Mr. McMahon currently serves on Program Work Teams for both Field Crops and Hispanic Labor. In December 2005 he traveled to Mexico with a Cornell Study Group, and since then has been speaking on the issue of migrant labor and its impacts on both American and Mexican society. Mr. McMahon’s presentation will explore immigration issues in Cortland County’s agriculture industry.

Mr. McMahon has also been active in community, business, and environmental planning. He personifies the spirit of engagement: through his wide range of activities, he shows students how a single individual can work with others to improve the lives of those in the community. He will address the campus on September 21 at 11:40 in Corey Union’s Exhibition Lounge.

The Cultural and Intellectual Climate Committee is sponsoring our official Constitution Day event: an address by renowned author Martin Marty, one of our themed speakers’ series guests. This year’s theme is "Fundamentally Speaking," and it is very pertinent to Constitutional questions regarding the separation of church and state and, more generally, the role of religion in our society. Join us for Dr. Marty’s speech on Thursday, September 21, at 7:30 in Old Main’s Brown Auditorium, and invite your students to join us at these events, as well.

To more fully describe our election projects, and to update the Cortland campus on the projects’ progress, Service-Learning Coordinator John Suarez will present a Sandwich Seminar in Brockway Hall’s Jacobus Lounge on Wednesday, September 13, from 12:30 to 1:30. Please contact Suarez at 753-4391 or at suarezj@cortland.edu with any questions about the Institute for Civic Engagement’s events and activities.