

# State University of New York College at Cortland

- A President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Member With Distinction
- Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification in Community Engagement

## Institute for Civic Engagement

[www.cortland.edu/get-involved](http://www.cortland.edu/get-involved)

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## It's Time for Student Voter Registration!

In an effort to give as many students as possible a chance to be a part of the political process, NYPIRG would like to come to your class, club or organization to give a brief three- to five-minute presentation, and register students to vote. If you are interested in this opportunity, please e-mail Amanda Carpenter, NYPIRG Project Coordinator, with your class or club schedule information (name of the class/club, days and times at which the class/club meets, and location), along with the days and times that work best for you, at [acarpenter@nypirg.org](mailto:acarpenter@nypirg.org). If you have any questions, feel free to call (607) 753-4815 and ask for Amanda Carpenter. The deadline for voter registration for the upcoming general election is October 12; the deadline to request an absentee ballot by mail is October 30.

## Deliberative Dialogue About Climate Change

The Institute for Civic Engagement and Sustainable Cortland are hosting a deliberative dialogue about climate change and what our campus can do about it. The forum, entitled "A Campus Conversation About Climate Change," is scheduled for Wednesday, October 3, from 4:00-7:00 p.m. in Brockway Hall's Jacobus Lounge, SUNY Cortland. The organizers of the event hope to recruit at least 75 student participants. Faculty and staff who would like to accompany their classes, clubs, groups, or organizations to the event are also welcome.

In the deliberative dialogue format, participants have an opportunity to learn about the issue and to discuss it with others. Those participating will be pre-surveyed on the issue of climate change; they will then be given balanced background information on the issue.

Those participating will be divided into randomly assigned small discussion groups. After sharing their views in a moderated roundtable setting, group members will have the opportunity to pose questions to a panel of experts.

A post-deliberative survey will show what an

entire community might think if it had the opportunity to learn about an issue, discuss it with others, and consult with experts.

The resource panel will be made up of local experts on the issue of climate change: Larry Klotz, Distinguished Teaching Professor, SUNY Cortland, Biology; David Barclay, Associate Professor, SUNY Cortland, Geology; David Eichorn, Adjunct Professor, SUNY ESF, Meteorology, and meteorologist for WSYR-TV Syracuse for 20 years; Brice Smith, Climate Action Plan Committee member and Associate Professor, SUNY Cortland, Physics, and Gay Nicholson, President and Director of Programs for Sustainable Tompkins.

Organizers hope to engage the campus community on the issue of climate change and encourage students to be informed citizens, aware of their role in this global issue, and what they can do about climate change as members of our campus community.

The event is free of charge, and a local foods dinner will be available at no cost to all participants.

To register or for more information, e-mail [climate.change@cortland.edu](mailto:climate.change@cortland.edu).

## FSA 630, *The Families Course*

An academic course can challenge students and faculty alike. One such course is *The Families Course* (FSA 630), for which a new service-learning project was developed by Associate Professor Judy Bentley (Foundations and Social Advocacy). Through this course, Professor Bentley is looking forward to challenging her students – and herself.

Bentley says that FSA 630 is designed “for teacher candidates who are pursuing a Master’s Degree in Teaching Students with Disabilities. Many are already employed as teachers, and are certified in either general or special education. We also have students who have gone directly into our graduate program from an undergraduate program in education.”

I do make sure my students know how to recognize a blog that offers respectful, positive, accurate and relevant information.”

One of the Cortland community’s resources is Access to Independence, Inc. (ATI), whose mission is to empower people to lead independent lives in their community and open doors to full participation for all.

ATI was founded in 1986. Frances Pizzola - a Cortland graduate who has worked closely with SUNY Cortland faculty, staff, and students - co-founded the organization.

Bentley is on ATI’s Board of Directors and is chair of its

*“In my opinion, there is no textbook that can offer the rich, authentic experience provided by [the community’s own] resources. It is both a challenge and a privilege for me as an educator to help my students reflect upon, apply, and learn from these ‘live’ experiences.”*

For Fall 2012, FSA 630 students have a unique challenge in addition to their 30-hour field experience: Through a new Parent Workshop Project, students will design and conduct five parent workshops to support families in the Cortland area whose children receive special education services.

Those workshops are: Advocating for Your Child and Family, Creating a Literacy-Rich Environment in the Home, Special Education Law for Families, Supporting Your Child Through Life Transitions, and Finding and Using Community Resources for Families.

Community service professionals will collaborate with students in the preparation of the workshops.

FSA 630 students will also “visit” families of children with disabilities through the Blogosphere. Bentley notes that, in contrast to a few years ago, today’s Blogosphere contains many first-hand accounts of and by “parents or siblings of children who write candidly and respectfully, with great love, about the day-to-day experience of a family in which one or more children receives special education services.”

She continues: “I ask my students to find several of these blogs, critique and review them, choose the best examples, and share their findings with the class. Carefully selected blogs are some of the most current and valuable learning tools we can find about the family experience. But

Needs Assessment Task Force. In that latter role, Bentley has been “conducting a county-wide needs assessment for individuals with disabilities: youth, adults, and aging populations.”

Bentley’s own work in the community has helped inform her academic work by providing her with an understanding of complexities in the field, which has allowed her to design thought-provoking prompts for her students’ service-learning reflections.

At the same time, Bentley is pushing her own professional boundaries in FSA 630 by further utilizing family and community environments as instructional resources. The course “demands a high level of professionalism – including resourcefulness, problem solving, and commitment.”

Bentley says that, “in my opinion, there is no textbook that can offer the rich, authentic experience provided by these resources. It is both a challenge and a privilege for me as an educator to help my students reflect upon, apply, and learn from these ‘live’ experiences.”

For further information about FSA 630, the Institute for Disability Studies, or the Social Advocacy and Systems Change Journal, please contact Professor Bentley at [judy.bentley@cortland.edu](mailto:judy.bentley@cortland.edu).

## Weaving Colleges into Communities

*The following excerpt is from Weaving Colleges into Communities by Richard Greenwald, New York Campus Compact Occasional Papers, Vol. 5 Issue 1, December 2011.*

*Richard Greenwald is professor of history and social sciences and dean of St. Joseph's College in New York City, New York. Campus Compact is an association of college and university presidents committed to promoting active citizenship as an aim of higher education.*

I would suggest that we are witnessing a moment in the history of higher education where what we do now will matter intensely for the future.

This is a moment of formation and transformation, where everything seems to be on the table. Some argue that one model for our salvation might lie, in part, in the past, or the particular example of some golden age, as most of the recent books on the crisis in higher education look romantically at the last 50 years as a sort of last hurrah for a sort of education they saw as ideal in many ways.

This is not the time for us to get dewy-eyed over what is being lost. We need to be pragmatic and embrace the new reality, challenges and all, and find a way forward. This is the exact moment we need to end any notions of the university or college as a protected or safe intellectual zone, one separated from the world. We need to embrace the world we inhabit, with all its complex social problems, and break down what are by now artificial barriers between colleges and universities and the

wider world.

Michael Crow, the president at Arizona State University, has challenged all of us to make the “university. . . more than a place.” Crow argues that the university needs to be a “force” for change in the world. Maybe many of our campuses can’t change the world, but they can engage their communities. Imagine if each of our institutions became a force for change locally. The collective effort could reverberate loudly, providing both support and the tools for a better world. But it could also win over legions of fans who see tangible value from the local college. And, all evidence shows, engaged learning is higher learning. So our students benefit, too.

The current crop of critics are right that we need to rethink our mission, and I applaud them for recognizing the need for change.

Universities need to find ways to foster critical introspection and intellectual growth in the midst of a rapidly changing world. But hasn’t that always been the case? Universities are not stagnant institutions. Rather they are organic, breathing in society’s problems and all. Evidence from *Imagining America*, *Campus Compact*, and *Project Pericles*, among others, suggests that knowledge in motion, or civically engaged learning, creates intensive pathways that reinforce knowledge, creating enhanced learning outcomes. In short, it provides better and deeper educational opportunities for students. Part of a college education must require education that is rooted in society -- even the messiness of it -- not apart from it.

## Constitution Day Event

SUNY Cortland and the Institute for Civic Engagement announce this year’s annual Constitution Day event. This year’s lecture, “The Constitution and the Presidential Elections,” will be held in Jacobus Lounge, Brockway Hall on Monday, September 17, 3:00-4:00 p.m.

This year’s event will feature Dr. Judith Best, Distinguished Teaching Professor of Political Science at SUNY Cortland. Dr. Best received her Ph.D. in Political Science from Cornell University. She won the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Teaching in 1977 and was promoted to the rank of Distinguished Teaching Professor in 1984. In addition to her 45 published articles, she has published four books including *The Case Against Direct Election of the President: A Defense of the Electoral College*. At the request of the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, she served on several occasions as an expert witness on the Electoral College system.

During her presentation, Dr. Best will discuss the specifics of the Electoral College including who its members are, how they are chosen, and what role they play in the Presidential election. She will defend our founders’ reasoning and motives for choosing this method of electing the President and explain why it should be maintained.

This event is open to the public and is free of charge. Feel free to bring your class, club, or other organization.

## Spotlight: Intern Roshell Ann Gist

My name is Roshell Ann Gist, I'm currently a senior at SUNY Cortland, double majoring in International Studies with a concentration in Global Economic Systems and Political Science. I will be serving over the fall semester as an intern with the Institute for Civic Engagement.

In my post-undergrad future I hope to work with international non-governmental organizations, possibly committing myself to the United States Peace Corps.

In Spring 2012, I was awarded an Atlantis Mobility Fellowship to study Public Policy and Administration in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, under the terms of an Atlantis Grant.

I also participated in the SUNY Model European Union conference held last January in Exeter, United Kingdom. I, along with other SUNY students, participated in simulated meetings with students around the world on the University at Exeter campus.

Being from Plattsburgh, New York, a small upstate town 50 miles from Canada, these were life changing and extremely rewarding experiences. Having traveled to multiple countries and experiencing different cultures, I am very interested in continuing my travels and learning experiences after I earn my Bachelor's degree from SUNY Cortland.

I'm thrilled to be interning with the Institute for Civic Engagement this year, and I'm looking forward to assisting with this year's annual Constitution Day and Sustainability Week as well as working with NYPIRG on voter registration.

## Spotlight: New AmeriCorps Member

### Matt Whitman

I am the new AmeriCorps Outreach Coordinator for the Institute for Civic Engagement. In 2010, I graduated from Binghamton University with a B.A. in History. I grew up in a small town close to Binghamton, NY. During my time at Binghamton, I spent a semester as a volunteer track coach at a local high school. Following college, I worked at the YMCA in Binghamton coaching youth sports.

This is my second term of service in the AmeriCorps. I previously served a year in the Rural Health Service Corps and worked at the Broome County Office for Aging in Binghamton as a Health Promotion Specialist. One of my main accomplishments was coordinating and promoting a year-long healthy living program for seniors that promoted nutrition and physical activity education. In addition, I was involved in marketing Office for Aging programs by creating brochures, flyers, newsletters, and other written materials.

My experiences have been very rewarding, but after working with children and the senior community for the last two years, I am very excited to be the Outreach Coordinator for the Institute for Civic Engagement working with students closer to my own age. I look forward to learning about SUNY Cortland and the surrounding community, and helping students get more involved in the campus and community.

Following my time in the AmeriCorps, I hope to continue working with non-profit community organizations focusing on outreach.



The activities of the Institute for Civic Engagement and Main Street SUNY Cortland are made possible through the support of the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, the Office of Sponsored Programs, the Faculty Development Committee, the MacDonal Foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Cortland Fund, the Cortland College Foundation, the Division of Institutional Advancement, the Auxiliary Services Corporation, Bringing Theory to Practice, and a Congressionally-directed grant administered through the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education.