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President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Member With Distinction



Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification in Community Engagement



Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards

More than 40 people, including 29 students, were recognized for their community service at SUNY Cortland's Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards Ceremony on Thursday, April 18.

Award recipients included 23 SUNY Cortland students, eight College faculty and staff members, six local residents, and three groups. Additionally, six students completing the 2012-13 Judson Taylor Leadership House Living Learning Community Program were recognized, along with eight scholarship winners for their community service.

Student efforts represent a range of activities related to tutoring and mentoring programs, health and wellness services, and environmental work. The majority of their community service supports Cortland County residents, local schools, and numerous human service organizations.

SUNY Cortland's Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards Ceremony is supported by the College's Institute for Civic Engagement and the divisions of Student Affairs and Institutional Advancement.

Campus Garden Breaks Ground

(Excerpted from an article by Michael Bersani)

On Tuesday, April 23, a group of environmentally conscious campus members gathered on the east side of Neubig Hall to turn the shovel on the College's first campus vegetable and herb garden.

One of many campus events marking Sustainability Month at SUNY Cortland, the gathering was scheduled by the College's Sustainability Committee of the Division of Student Affairs.

The campus garden committee has been planning to turn the earth on the vegetable patch since last fall, and conceived the garden well before that. The campus garden committee is composed of about 20 interested campus and community members, and is chaired by Jeremy Zhe-Heimerman, coordinator of assistive technology and test administration for Student Disability Services.

Successive vegetable and herbal crops cultivated in this small patch of tilled soil will serve as a tool to educate students on what goes into producing the food supply by incorporating the garden into course work for various classes.

The 45-foot by 12-foot garden — sandwiched between Neubig and the service road that runs behind it — will not generate enough food to be used by campus dining facilities. Instead, the produce, harvested in late summer and again during the fall, will help meet local needs.



Garden located on the Eastern Side of Neubig Hall

A Senior's Perspective

By Colleen Honan, Intern for ICE

As my undergraduate career comes to a close, I've been feeling quite nostalgic about the past four years. Lately, I've caught myself saying, "I'm going to miss this," more than I'd like to admit. As a senior about to graduate, I feel pretty sagely, especially when I look back at my eighteen-year-old self. Although I'm only in my early twenties, I've come a long way from my freshman self. It's been a journey of mistakes that I roll my eyes at now, but I know that making those mistakes is what made these past four years a memorable learning experience.

At times, I felt as though I was stumbling through college and getting myself into all kinds of predicaments. I didn't begin my college career at Cortland but rather at a small private school in Vermont. It was a difficult first year of schooling and I honestly believe I was not ready for college. I'd like to point out the ridiculous notion that students are supposed to pick a major when they are eighteen. I was a dual French and International Studies major for a while, with no intention of teaching. Please do not ask why I was adamant about a French major because I could not honestly answer. Nor could I tell you why I took Arabic classes on top of French classes. My GPA did not take kindly to either. But hey, you live and learn, and most of that learning happened outside of the classroom.

For instance, I decided at one point last summer that maybe I should try to be an Air Force officer. I now laugh every time I tell someone that. Why? Well, for one thing I had no prior experience with the military in any shape or form. I met with my recruiter and for some reason I passed the interview and was scheduled to take the Air Force Officer test. I had two weeks to study on top of college courses. I went to Albany for the test, which turned out to be the strangest experience. First of all, I stood out like a sore thumb with my high top Vans and leopard bag. It didn't occur to me that maybe that wasn't the correct attire for a military environment. I was awakened at four in the morning to take a test at eight. I was yelled at, corralled, and processed with fifty other

kids who were off to basic. Four hours later, I finally got around to the test. Needless to say, I failed, which I felt at first to be a slap in the face, but later came to the realization that maybe this was a sign that the military was not for me.

The next week, I did a "180" and decided to apply for the Peace Corps, for which I was also rejected. I didn't even think that was possible. I applied for countless other jobs and the rejection letters kept on coming. I was floored by this and dramatically claimed that I would never, ever, in a trillion years ever, have a career. Obviously I'm prone to dramatizations. Moral of the story: Failure is a part of life and it's crucial for personal growth. I took chances and I take pride in the fact that I tried. Although I'm highlighting my least successful attempts, I believe they were some of the most enlightening moments. I never understood how important it is to fail, and – more importantly – how to recover from those failures.

Another piece of advice I wish I could go back in time and share with young Colleen is the necessity of trying things that force you out of your comfort zone. Fortunately, I did catch onto this once I transferred to Cortland. I played for the varsity soccer team for a while before I decided club soccer was a better fit for me. I have had three different internships and six types of jobs while in school. I've met so many great and helpful people along the way who have contributed to my positive experience here. The internship I currently have is with the Institute for Civic Engagement.

I kind of fell into this internship when I had an end of the semester crisis of "Oh my God, what am I doing with my life?" and frantically searched for openings. I was hesitant to intern here because it wasn't necessarily something I thought would complement my major, but it was an internship after all. To my surprise, it turned out to be a fantastic situation for me because it allowed me to greatly improve my communication skills. I published a few articles in the *Dragon Chronicle*, kept a (continued on page 3)

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weekly blog, helped maintain social media accounts, and wrote press releases, all of which were learning opportunities for me.

This internship has inspired me to be more involved with my community, and has spurred a new interest in working with non-profit organizations.

This summer, I will go to Poland on a month-long service-learning study-abroad trip. I will be taking one class while interning at a non-governmental organization. I'm hoping to be involved in one that focuses on women's issues in Poland. Before I go, I'd like to begin volunteering at a local Planned Parenthood. I've always had an interest in women's issues but was never sure how to pursue a career in it. Volunteerism had never occurred to me as a great way to discover interests and possible

career paths, but it is. Not only are you dedicating your time to help others, you are learning about yourself as well.

All in all, it's been a bumpy ride full of twists and turns, some that I wish I could relive again, and others I'd rather forget. What you get out of an activity is what you put into it, and you somehow "find" yourself along the way. The best moments of undergraduate life resulted from closing my eyes and stepping away from what I knew. More often than not, I was rewarded for choosing to do something that terrified me, and that in itself was exhilarating. So to all my undergraduate peers, a Mark Twain quote seems fitting: "Throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

How Experience Generates Empathy

John Suarez (Coordinator, Office of Service-Learning) has learned that his book chapter, "Empathy, Action, and Intercultural Competence: A Neurological Rationale for Simulation's Effectiveness in Developing Intercultural Competence," was accepted for publication in *The Intercultural Horizons Proceedings*.

This book is a collection of peer-reviewed articles that are based on presentations from the Second Annual Horizons Conference (SUNY Global Center, NY, NY) in October 2012. The conference theme was *Intercultural Strategies in Civic Engagement*.

Suarez built on neuroimaging research and on his experience with simulation as a teaching methodology to argue that simulation's effectiveness in generating empathy comes from the human brain's tendency to reconcile two sets of seemingly incompatible operations: It accepts emotion as cognition, and imagined activity as real.

Suarez defines *simulation* as a form of experiential education, similar to service-learning. He notes that the literature has not explained how experience functions as a

learning tool, especially regarding the development of empathy.

Central to empathy is emotion, which is important because emotion can improve cognitive processes such as memory. Many researchers claim that emotion not only helps, but is integral to, cognition, as evidenced by the way in which the brain processes incoming sensory information.

That information undergoes virtually simultaneous emotional and cognitive processing in various structures and regions of the brain. These structures communicate with each other, and some conduct both cognitive and emotional processing.

One of these structures, the prefrontal cortex, participates in the formation of memory, in the processing of emotion, in decision-making, and in sensorimotor control.

Sensorimotor control is a system of nerves that connects the senses and muscles; it helps integrate sensory information into memory and emotion. (continued on page 4)

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Sensorimotor control is key to our tendency to accept imagined activity as real because, through it, we experience sensations that we might not actually be involved with.

When we hear or see the word “beach,” for example, sensory motor control fires our optical nerves; in a way, we are actually *seeing* a beach.

A component of sensorimotor control is the *mirror neuron system*.

Muscles in this system “fire” neurons, whether the individual performs an action, sees someone perform an action, or sees or hears words that symbolize an action.

Interactions between sensory information, memory, and emotion can lead to physical activity ranging from physiological changes, such as increases in breathing and heart

rates, to the firing of nerves connected to muscles, but without overt movement.

At other times, however, this system causes us to overtly, though unconsciously, mimic (“mirror”) the other person’s movements *and emotions*.

Mirroring is a precursor to empathy.

As a person engages in a simulation, his sensory motor control blends visual, aural, tactile, motion, and memory information to help him experience thoughts and emotions of another individual, such as a person who lives in a culture that is different from the simulation participant’s.

The chapter’s information leads to guidelines for simulation design.

Philanthropy & Civic Engagement

In a ceremony on Tuesday, May 7, sixteen students from the College’s *Philanthropy and Civic Engagement: Teaching Students How to Give* course awarded \$10,000 – from the Learning by Giving Foundation – to four local agencies. Each agency, selected from 16 that applied, was awarded at least \$2,000.

Students in the course, led by Distinguished Service Professor Henry Steck, spent the semester reviewing proposals from local agencies and determining which agencies they would award funds.

SUNY Cortland is one of 32 colleges and universities to receive \$10,000 in funds from the Learning by Giving Foundation.

Philanthropy & Civic Engagement is sponsored and supported by the Learning by Giving Foundation, the Institute for Civic Engagement, and the Political Science Department.

Grant Recipients

Catholic Charities of Cortland County

Summer Lunch Program
Marie Walsh (Executive Director)

Cortland Mental Health Association

Training of Emotionally Disturbed Person Response Team: Partnering with Cortland City Police Department:
Garra Lloyd-Lester (Board Chair)

Lime Hollow Center for Environment & Culture

Acquisition of Environmental Educational Material for the *Discovery Lab and Classroom* in the Nature Center’s new Building.
Glenn Reisweber (Executive Director)

YWCA of Cortland

Bridges for Kids Mentoring Program:
“*Salamanders, Summer, and Support – Oh My!*”
Sara Earl (Program Director)