

Civic Engagement and 21st Century Higher Ed

October 2013
 Volume 6, Issue 2

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



Carnegie Foundation
 Elective Classification in
 Community Engagement



By Dr. Larbi Touaf, Visiting Fulbright
 Scholar, Mohammed I University



As a visiting Fulbright scholar and as a college professor in Morocco, my interest in students’ civic engagement is related to the recent upheavals known as the Arab Spring. Our students protested not only to demand political reforms but also to express a deeper disenchantment with a system of education that failed to deliver on its promise, i.e. social justice. What that meant was that institutions of higher education continued to disseminate knowledge as if in a vacuum.

The objective of my presence at Cortland is to observe and study the organizational and practical aspects of the institute of civic engagement. Now that I’ve been involved with the institute for civic engagement for over a month, I have to admit that I am impressed by the dedication and the work the institute does for students, the community and the college’s reputation. On both sides of the Atlantic, we have this in common: we reached a point where we ask “what kind of citizens are universities producing for their communities?”

Where I come from (North Africa), young people and especially students brought down dictatorial regimes, not as a result of an excess of civic engagement—which was totally absent for that exact reason! -- but under the pressure of their conditions of living that they perceive were not in tune with what the states offered in terms of education, equal opportunity, and social justice. Now we feel that we have to channel that energy towards constructive change in society, towards social justice, gender equality and economic sustainability.

We feel that our students expressed something that universities were unable to give them and that is the chance to become agents of change. Our job is to help them understand the complexities and the needs of their immediate and outlying context so that they can better integrate it. Getting involved is the answer.

While a major mission of college education maybe to produce engineers, doctors, teachers, managers, etc., it is also its duty to produce good citizens, ones who are concerned and who can do something about social, political and economic issues in their communities. While it is no longer necessary to demonstrate that civic engagement helps students learn more and better, it is however necessary to stress that the phrase “civic engagement” does not do justice to the work done in that area. In fact based on the impressive amount of scholarship produced over the past two decades only, “civic engagement” could become the 21st century approach to college education as it may be the best way to fit the curriculum to socioeconomic realities, addressing both employment objectives and the moral imperative of civic responsibility.

AmeriCorps Member Presents on Social Media



On Sunday, October 6, Matt Whitman, the Institute’s AmeriCorps member will present a technology workshop at the Imagining America (IA) National Conference in Syracuse, NY. Imagining America is a consortium of 90 colleges and universities emphasizing the possibilities of humanities, arts, and design in knowledge-generating initiatives. The theme of the IA’s 2013 national conference is “A Call to Action,” and they are seeking to combine information collection, discourse, and analysis to foster individual and collective actions advancing the democratic purposes of higher education.

The topic of Matt Whitman’s presentation is “Increasing Student Engagement Through Social Media.” Social media platforms have dramatically shifted the way students interact and communicate, not only with each other, but the world. In this way, social media can become both a platform for communication and discussion, as well as a pathway to face-to-face modes of interaction. His workshop will focus on the following strategies: talking to your audience to find out where they are and how to reach them, creating engaging content, using social media platforms for interaction, and measuring success.

Using social media platforms as a tool for interaction is the main way higher education can utilize the power of social media. For example, during his presentation Matt will give a few case studies of successful social media campaigns and how these strategies can be applied in higher education. One of these case studies is City Year – an

AmeriCorps program that focuses on education. In order to get the message out about what City Year members do, and the benefits of the program, City Year decided to tell the stories of their members. To do this, they created a Twitter hash-tag – a method of tagging short messages on Twitter and other social media platforms – to help members tell their stories. The hash-tag City Year members use to talk about their service and the experiences they have is #makebetterhappen. How does this apply to higher education? The City Year program is a very similar concept to many of the service-learning courses at SUNY Cortland that place students in local schools to serve as mentors and tutors to students. In addition, reflecting on their service is an important part of what students are required to do as part of service-learning courses. In this way, social media could act as a tool for reflection and discussion for students in service-learning courses. Simply by creating a hash-tag - #CPN102, for example - students could, in real time, reflect and discuss their service. These short messages could then facilitate in class discussion.

For more information about Imagining America and their National Conference, you can visit their website: www.imagingamerica.org. If you are interested in finding out more about Matt’s presentation, you can contact him directly at matthew.whitman02@cortland.edu.

Cross-Cultural (Mis)Communication Panel

The Institute for Civic Engagement and the International Programs Office are hosting a panel discussion on Cross-Cultural Miscommunication on Wednesday, October 30, from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. in Moffett 2125.

Our global economy and our increasingly diverse U.S. population intensify our students' need for skills in navigating the complexities of cross-cultural communication in areas such as the economy, education, and health.

The discussion's first half-hour features five panelists (faculty, staff, and students) who share narratives regarding personal cross-cultural miscommunication experiences. During the rest of the session, the audience will be invited to share their own experiences and to ask questions.

Previous sessions have revealed lessons such as:

- A teacher's ignorance of a culture's traditions can cause a rift between a child's teacher and the child's parents. In some cultures, boys and girls should not walk together, so "Jack and Jill" is a poem that might offend some parents.
- In different countries that use the "same" language, differences in a word's meanings can hurt people's feelings, then lead to a good laugh after the misunderstanding is resolved.

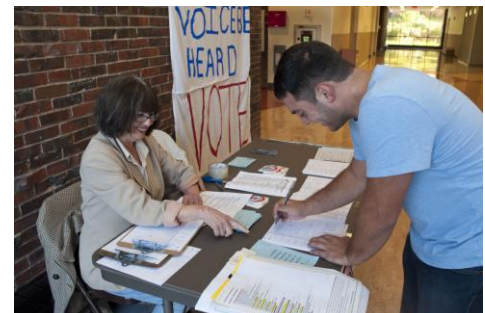
- A lack of knowledge regarding an area's history can lead to disappointment and anger.
- Nonverbal communication, such as tone of voice and body language, can be interpreted differently. For example, we Americans tend to be animated when we talk; people in other cultures have interpreted our behavior as indicating that we are upset.
- Cultures across the globe value mutual respect.

This semester's event includes Visiting Fulbright Scholar Larbi Touaf (Associate Professor and former Chair, English Department, Mohammed I University, Morocco), Terry Netusils (Migrant Education Tutorial and Support Services Program), Sayaka Takeda (an international student from Japan), LeighMarie Weber (President, SGA), and Andrew Ndirangu (a graduate student from Kenya).

The event is free of charge and open to the public. For more information about the event, e-mail John Suarez at john.suarez@cortland.edu.

Students Register to Vote on National Voter Registration Day

On National Voter Registration Day, September 24, 2013, the Institute For Civic Engagement, NYPIRG, and UUP partnered to get students registered to vote. 113 students registered to vote on September 24, and a total of 668 students registered to vote this semester. Contact NYPIRG Coordinate, Jessie Johnnes, at jjohnnes@nypirg.org if you would like her to come to your class, club or organization meeting.



Dr. Karla Alwes registering a student to vote.

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ICE Promotes New Volunteer Recruitment System

The Institute for Civic Engagement is encouraging anyone recruiting students, faculty or staff, or community members, as volunteers to use a new volunteer recruitment system: www.volunteercny.org, which is New York State's regional hub for posting volunteer opportunities. As such, this hub is supported by the State Commission on National and Community Service.

We hope that using this system will make it easier for students and others to find volunteer opportunities and for you – our community partners and anyone else seeking to recruit volunteers – to find volunteers from among SUNY Cortland's students, faculty and staff, or the Cortland community. In fact, we are already providing links to it on the Institute's Web site, www.cortland.edu/get-involved, and the Institute for Civic Engagement will be promoting this system as a resource for students and others on campus to find volunteer opportunities. It is not meant to replace any other methods by which you recruit volunteers, but we think it will be a valuable addition to those other methods. Moreover, if you post your volunteer opportunities at this Web site, they will be available state-wide and even nation-wide to anyone seeking to volunteer. Please help us spread the word about this volunteer opportunity posting system by forwarding this information to others on campus and in the community.

Using the system is fairly straightforward, and we have tested it to make sure that it works.

To use the system you must first create an account for your organization. To do this, go to <http://www.volunteercny.org/> then:

1. Click on not-for-profit partners
2. Click on sign up/registration
3. Fill in the required information
4. You will need your Federal EIN number to complete the registration form.
5. Click Submit
6. You will receive an e-mail within a couple of days verifying that your account has been created and how to log in

Once you have created an account and log in you will be taken to the organization portal (this is where you create and post new volunteer opportunities).

To learn about how to use the system and posting volunteer opportunities click on the partner help tab at the top. This will provide step-by-step instructions on how to use the system.

If you have any questions about creating an account or using the system please contact Matt Whitman, SUNY Cortland's Institute for Civic Engagement Community Outreach Coordinator, at matthew.whitman02@cortland.edu or 607-752-2298.

Upcoming Events

October 10 - Famer's Market on Campus, Neubig Hall, Lobby Hallway, 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

October 14 – "Finding Your Footing in a Fractured Land: the moral and philosophical dilemma of fracking," presented by Seamus McGraw, Sperry Room 106, 7:00 p.m.

October 22 – The Resilient Farm and Homestead, A Lecture by Ben Falk, M.A.L.D, land designer and site developer, Sperry 105, 7:00 p.m.

October 23 – Brooks Museum Lecture Series, "Island Detentions: Migration, Enforcement, and Struggles Over Asylum" by Alison Mountz of Wilfred Laurier University Moffett Center Room 2126, Brooks Museum, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

October 30 – Cross Cultural (Mis)Communication Panel, Moffett 2125 4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

November 7 – Sandwich Seminar, "The Challenges of Women's Full Citizenship in Morocco" presented by Dr. Soumia Boutkhal, Jacobus Lounge, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.