

May 2014  
Volume 3, Issue 7

**2014-2015  
Upcoming Events:**

**Welcome Back Picnic**

September 1, 12- 4 p.m.  
Interfaith Center

**Student Diversity Retreat**

September 12-14

**Dean's Unity Celebration**

October 14, 5- 6:30 p.m.  
Corey Union Function Room

**Drag Show**

November 9, 2014

**Student Diversity Conference**

March 28, 2015

**Kente Celebration**

April 11, 2015

For more information  
visit our website  
or contact MLDO at  
**607-753-2336 or**  
**multicultural.life@cortland.edu**



President Bitterbaum

## Addressing Bias: Letter from the President

In the February issue, of the Multicultural Life and Diversity Newsletter, there was a message from President Bitterbaum highlighting SUNY Cortland's commitment to making our campus a place where everyone feels safe, included, and welcome. Recent bias incidents prompted a new letter:

Dear members of the SUNY Cortland community,

I would like to take a moment to reaffirm SUNY Cortland's commitment to diversity, respect and inclusion as core institutional values central to our vision of educational excellence. Expressions of racism, in any form, have absolutely no place at this College. As an educational institution it is part of our mission to help students see the value in diverse backgrounds, cultures and perceptions of the world. Our students need to understand the pain caused by thoughtless comments and mean-spirited "jokes."

I would also like to remind our students to be especially thoughtful in their use of social media. Nothing is ever truly private once it is shared on the Internet and there are no guarantees your comments will be re-posted in the context you intended.

Even if you believe your personal accounts are private, fellow students, future employers, school officials and family members all may eventually view what is there and hold you accountable. A single moment of poor judgment could have devastating and lasting impacts.

When well-meaning students see an offensive posting by a fellow SUNY Cortland student, their immediate instinct may be to respond with angry posts of their own, or to vilify the original commentator and repost their negative comments in an effort to expose or embarrass them.

Both of those reactions are counterproductive. They reduce civility on campus, inflame negative emotions and do nothing to eliminate the ignorance at the root of many racist statements. Instead, I urge you to remove these posts and take a more positive approach toward strengthening the College's culture of civility and inclusion. Unfair, discriminatory or offensive comments should be viewed as opportunities to educate fellow students about the impact and meaning of their statements.

SUNY Cortland is rich in diversity, and that is a source of our strength. We are also a single community that relies on mutual respect and understanding to move us forward toward our individual goals. Please do not allow the ugly and thoughtless comments of some individuals to distract us from the greater mission we share.

All the best,



Erik J. Bitterbaum  
President, SUNY Cortland



LeighMarie Weber,  
President Student  
Government Association

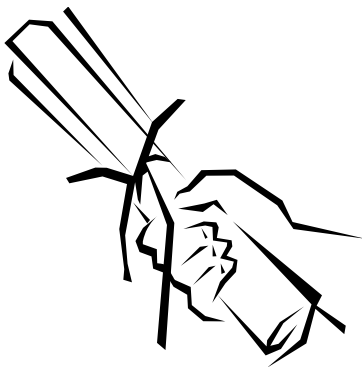
Following his reminder, President Bitterbaum invited all members of our Cortland community to join him for a conversation about the multiple bias related incidents on campus, the responses to those incidents, and strategies to make our community safe, inclusive, and welcoming to all of our current and future campus members.

Part I of the Community Conversation took place April 21, 2014 in Sperry, Room 105. Over 200 faculty, students, and professional staff were in attendance. This was an opportunity for the campus community to voice concerns and experiences with biased and hurtful language at SUNY Cortland and to work together to prevent future incidents of bias, educate our community, and create expectations for future cultural climate and behavior in our community. The next meeting will be held in the fall.

*“It was impactful as student after student, from a diversity of identities and lived experiences, got up and told us the ways in which they have struggled against bias and hurtful language at SUNY Cortland. It left me feeling like, if we could all get in a space like this forum more often, we would start to see that we each have a stake in changing this behavior. The Community Conversation really made me think that such change is possible. I commend the students, faculty, and staff who spoke. I deeply appreciate and respect their bravery. I am proud to work at an institution where the President himself hosts a forum like this. As I understand higher education, it is not something to be taken for granted; but it is something for us to take as an opportunity.”*

- Dr. Noelle Chaddock Paley

## Director Update



Dr. Noelle Chaddock Paley, Director of Multicultural Life and Diversity, has received her Ph.D. in Philosophy Interpretation and Culture from Binghamton University. She would like to thank the SUNY Cortland community for the support you have given.

## Report Bias Incidents

Bias Incidents are harmful expression of opinions of dislike, intolerance, and or hate for individuals or groups based on race, religion, sexual orientation, and ability just to name a few. Please help us stop bias-related incidents. If you are the victim of or witness to bias incidents, remember to speak up and speak out.

You can report incidents to the University Police department (UPD) or the office of Multicultural Life and Diversity (MLDO). Not sure it is bias? When in doubt, report! With your help, bias incidents can be stopped!

## Post Responsibly

Being mindful when posting on social media is important. Here are five ways to post responsibly:

- Pause before posting
- Be sure your post is not addressing an issue with a specific person (keep fights private)
- Say something positive when you most feel like saying something negative
- Consider if your post will be perceived as a bullying message
- Consider if your post include “isms” (racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism...)

## Open House

Multicultural Life and Diversity was on hand to greet future SUNY Cortland Red Dragons at open house on April 5



## EEO Statement Update

Dawn Norcross, the Affirmative Action Officer and Assistant Director of Human Resources, says that a new federal law requires every federal institution to change its EEO statement to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities and persons of veteran status. SUNY Cortland has changed their EEO statement to read:

*The State University of New York College at Cortland is an AA/EEO/ADA employer. The College actively seeks applications from women, veterans, individuals with a disability, members of underrepresented groups or anyone that would enrich the diversity of the College.*

The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) requested the change. The purpose of OFCCP is to enforce, for the benefit of job seekers and wage earners, the contractual promise of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity required of those who do business with the Federal government. According to the OFCCP website, “Affirmative action is necessary to prevent discrimination and to address stereotypical thinking and biases that still impede employment opportunity”. With the efforts of individuals like Dawn Norcross and offices such as Multicultural life and Diversity, SUNY Cortland aims to ensure a welcoming and inclusive campus.

## Student Leadership Awards for Diversity Given

Two new awards for diversity were given at this year’s Leadership Banquet. They are the award for Excellence in Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Student Leadership and the award for Leadership in LGBTQAI Advocacy. They were awarded to students who demonstrated excellence and understanding in all aspects of diversity.

The recipients of this year’s inaugural Excellence in Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Student Leadership are Jahtayshia Davis, President of Black Student Union, and the 2013-2014 Student Government Executive Board. Christopher Conway, President of Spectrum was awarded the inaugural Leadership in LGBTQAI Advocacy.



In addition to celebrating the awards they received at the Leadership Banquet Rashad Williams, executive assistant to the Vice President of Student Government Association; and LeighMarie Weber, President of Student Government Association, MLDO intern, are celebrating their recent acceptance into graduate programs. Rashad will be pursuing a dual degree in policy and student affairs at SUNY Binghamton while LeighMarie will be pursuing a degree in student affairs from New York University. Congratulations to everyone!

## Kente Ceremony 2014

### Queens Inspire Princesses



Women of Color honored women, from the SUNY Cortland campus and community who have been identified, as outstanding.

All of the women were nominated because of academic achievements, athletics, or campus involvement.

Attendees enjoyed a wonderful selection of food catered by ASC. They were asked to dress like royalty to honor the theme and message of the event: Queens Inspire Princesses. The keynote speaker was Tamara Taylor, Assistant Director of Multicultural Life and Diversity.



On April 5, 2014 the Multicultural Life and Diversity office held the annual Kente Celebration. The ceremony symbolizes and commemorates the rite of passage for learners and scholars who are transitioning from institutions of higher learning to the next chapter of their lives. The Kente Celebration has a deep institutional history and is an important experience for our multicultural students. We hope our students proudly wear their stoles to all of their honors inductions, as well as both graduate and undergraduate commencement. Fifty-one students were recognized by their friends, families, and campus community at the ceremony.

In addition to recognizing multicultural student leaders at this event, three Honorary stoles were presented to Andrea La Chance, Dean of Education; Sam Kelley, Distinguished Service Professor in the Communication Department; and Michael Sgro, Executive Director of Alumni Affairs. Congratulations to everyone, especially the students who were recognized during the ceremony. Finally, we would like to thank everyone who attended this important event.



*“Diversity is the one true thing we have in common!”*





## The 5th annual Student Conference on Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice Recap

### Interns Wanted



Know someone interested in gaining experience in programming, assessment, and development around diversity, equity, inclusion access, and social justice? Our office is seeking undergraduate interns for the Fall 2014 semester. Internships are built around students' majors and career goals with the intention of creating globally competitive graduates.

If you are or know someone who is interested in this position, please contact our office via email to schedule an interview. You may submit your resume and letter of interest to:  
[multicultural.life@cortland.edu](mailto:multicultural.life@cortland.edu)  
 with a subject line: **MLDO**  
**Student Internship**

The 5th annual Student Conference on Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice at SUNY Cortland on April 12, 2014 was a huge success. Over 200 students, staff, and faculty members representing 11 institutions including SUNY Cortland, participated in a day of enriching dialogue and sharing of experiences.



Christopher Kuretich, assistant vice president for Student Affairs, served as the opening speaker with a poignant message but it was his surprise performance of two of his original spoken word pieces that left a mark on the audience. Later, keynote speaker, Dr. Sean Massey, of Binghamton University, shared his experiences of speaking out throughout his life. His address was thought-provoking in terms of ways we all can be instrumental in addressing injustices with the power of our voices and understanding of our areas of oppression as well as our areas of privilege.

The conference served as an opportunity for student scholars to work with faculty and staff mentors to develop and nurture skills that will help move them through the next stages of their academic and professional lives while sharing their current research and experiences with their peers, mentors, and supporters. Topics included individual narratives, religion, social change through leadership, race, class, stereotyping, mindful language, bullying, inclusive spaces, differences, and abilities. All presentations addressed the conference theme: Speak up, Speak out.

Silence is the single greatest mechanism that allows hate and intolerance to infect a community. Speaking up and speaking out are brave, strong actions that can change a life, a culture, and maybe even the world. There are many scholarly examples of the impact of speaking up and speaking out. Undergraduates and graduate students were invited to explore this theme across disciplines and produce scholarship, performance, and/or art that has worked through the realities, histories, narratives, and counter narratives of advocacy, activism, and world events connected to speaking up and speaking out.

The conference was a result of the hard work and dedication of Melissa Da Costa Wilson, RHD outside assignment; Miguel Montaz, conference co-chair; and Sally Velasco, conference co-chair. Thank you to all of our supporters, presenters, and participants.

## Conference Presentation

Dr. Noelle Chaddock Paley, chair of the University Faculty Senate Committee on Diversity and Cultural Competence, along with a panel including Dr. Phil Ortiz (System Administration/Empire State College, Dr. Beth Hinderliter (Buffalo State), and Philippe Abraham (UUP/University of Albany), presented the dinner roundtable session on "Diversifying Shared Governance". The roundtable invited conference attendees to think about ways in which behavior, processes, stagnation, lack of intentional planning, and unchallenged biases might be blocking the diversification of their shared governance bodies.

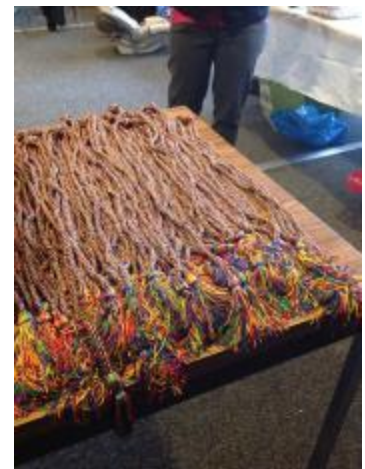
The SUNY VOICES Conference on Shared Governance brings together faculty, students, administrators, trustees and council members, to discuss how systems of shared governance can work toward achieving sustainable and innovative colleges and universities. Participants and presenters considered if and how traditional and emerging models of shared governance can best meet the needs of our institutions, our communities, our students, and our world.

## Spectrum Salutes Their Graduating Seniors



On April 15, 2014 Spectrum honored 34 graduating seniors in a cord presentation ceremony. Spectrum also honored campus community allies and advocates for their good work and support. Dr. Noelle Chaddock Paley was among those recipients. The room was filled with supportive faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members.

The ceremony included a keynote address given by Christopher Conway. In his speech he gave the audience an idea of what his life could have been like in comparison to what it is today because of the things he has pursued and the people who supported him. His main message seemed to be that all victories, no matter when they happen, are important. This was in reference to finally having a way to recognize LGBTQ students and their supporters at graduation ceremonies and at the end of his senior year, having his email address changed to reflect his preferred name. Both events are victories to be valued indeed.



While the event was focused on honoring the seniors it also brought awareness to the importance of the observance of the National Day of Silence. This year the national observance of that day was April 11 and as an addition to its observance the group coordinated a "shout out" during the ceremony. Congratulations to the graduating seniors.



## Hillel: Passover Is a Celebration of Liberation & Freedom

### Chocolate Seder



Hillel members and their guests gathered to observe the Passover with Chocolate Seder on April 8, 2014. This was a fun way to get people involved in the celebration of Passover.

A Chocolate Seder Plate was placed in front of guests and each plate had six chocolate symbols that capture the essence of the story of Passover.

*“For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.*

*-Nelson Mandela*



“Passover is a celebration of liberation and freedom” Michael Weinstein, Advisor of Hillel, explained. Passover is not a religious ceremony but a celebration. Many people attended the Passover celebration hosted by Hillel in the Interfaith Center on April 15, 2014. Faculty, staff, students, community members, and President Bitterbaum came together to share the rich history and culture of the event.

The celebration consisted of a teaching of the meaning of Passover, observance of Passover traditions, dinner, singing, and conversation. Talia Peck, President of Hillel, led guests in traditional Hebrew prayers and other students were called upon to read passages from the Haggadah, is a Jewish text that sets forth the order of the Passover Seder. Reading the Haggadah at the Seder table fulfills the scriptural commandment to each Jew to "tell your son" of the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus in the Torah.

Hillel has several events and new ideas planned for next year. Through regular weekly meetings, lectures, events, field trips, and social functions they promote historical awareness of the Jewish faith and culture throughout the campus community. They are passionate and dedicated to welcoming and educating anyone interested in learning about the Jewish faith and culture. Jon Rosen, Vice President of Hillel, shared his experience of being a student of Jewish faith and culture here at SUNY Cortland (read the story on page 7).





## Community Conversations



As a part of the ongoing Community Conversations initiative, we spoke with Jon Rosen, about his experiences as a Jewish student at SUNY Cortland. His responses have not been edited in any way to maintain integrity of his message.

### Can you share a little about yourself with the campus community?

My name is Jonathan Rosen. I hail from Dix Hills, New York. I am a Communications Major, and a second semester junior. I am a water sign. I can be as gentle as a stream, and as raging as the rapids. My heart is in my work, therefore my work will be great, and most importantly genuine. Granted, this is why Cortland has been such an ideal school for me because it allows me to do these great things in order for me to become a better man.

### What are your thoughts about the campus climate related to being a Jewish student?

Based on Cortland's data, a couple hundred of the thousands of students in Cortland are of Jewish faith. I have experienced people who have poorly stereotyped people of my faith, or have been amazed realizing that people of my faith are "just like them." However, I have learned that my faith is a privilege, and through having that mindset those around me see it as that way too. Thankfully, our school offers a Jewish Studies department, and there is a temple close to campus. Unfortunately, education usually stops at schooling, but in reality it is a constant process, which is within each person. Therefore, students' unwillingness to embrace my faith, class, or sexual identity is a problem and handicap that only they have.

### What advice would you give to the campus to help improve the campus climate around students of Jewish faith and culture?

I would advise more faculty and student leaders to explain to people the importance of not only being Jewish, but also faith itself. Faith, is believing, the belief in oneself, in people, or even in a God or Gods. Faith is important, it contains what each person holds dear to themselves, and by knowing what is important to someone, we can then connect with them. Tolerance is one thing, acceptance is the best thing. Let's aim for the best!

*"I am a water sign. I can be as gentle as a stream, and as raging as the rapids. My heart is in my work, therefore my work will be great, and most importantly genuine."*

- Jonathan Rosen