

SUNY Cortland welcomes James A. Felton as our new Chief Diversity Officer



James A. Felton was the inaugural Chief Diversity Officer at Anne Arundel Community College. He joined the college in 2014 after serving as the inaugural Director for the Department of Intercultural Affairs at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC.

A noted leader, educator, mentor and scholar-practitioner in the field of diversity in higher education, Felton has contributed to the development of several diversity and strategic plans including the renowned University of Wisconsin’s *Plan 2008* (Green Bay campus); and he was responsible for managing three major scholarship and mentor programs for underrepresented students at a number of selective private liberal arts colleges and state-system universities across the country. He has also partnered with corporate, nonprofit and federal agencies and NGOs to promote international programs and initiatives on diversity

and social justice. Most recently, he was appointed the project team leader on behalf of Anne Arundel Community College’s participation in the *Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence* initiative sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).

Felton is a founding member of the Pennsylvania Association of Liaisons and Officers for Multicultural Affairs (PALOMA), a statewide organization that provides advocacy, support, best practices, and continual renewal for diversity professionals in the field. He also holds memberships with the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE), Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA), and College Student Educators International (ACPA). He currently serves as a member of the National Advisory Council for the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE), and he is the co-chair of the Maryland Community College Diversity Roundtable

Felton earned a bachelor’s in Psychology and a master’s in Educational Administration from McDaniel College in Westminster, Md. He is currently pursuing his doctorate in Global Leadership with a concentration in Academic Administration from Indiana Tech in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Felton stated, “I am honored and excited to serve as the college’s first full-time Chief Diversity Officer. My career has been deeply rooted in work around diversity, equity and inclusion, and I look forward to collaborating with members of the campus and surrounding community to make SUNY Cortland a model of inclusive excellence.”

Letter from the Director of Multicultural Life and Diversity



After 10 months of serving as Director in the interim role, I am excited to be able to share that I was hired as the Director of Multicultural Life and Diversity this past March. I look forward to continuing to work with the faculty, staff, administrators and students at SUNY Cortland in the ongoing work of making our campus a more inclusive space and educating the campus community about diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice. I would like to give a special thank you to Dana Smith, Lima Stafford, Christine Matos, Diversity Conference committee and Kente committee and all our interns and work study students from this past year (Candice Jaimungal, Nicole Daniel, Jamon Davis, Jason Niehr, Andrea Canale, Kevon Pile, Susan Serunkuuma, Rebecka Lubrano, Bailey Ward, Michael Guity, Tiffany Garzon, Chelsea Campbell, Jacob Wright, Toni Yancey, Monique Curaj, and Jacquelynn Akins); it is

through your dedication, team work and compassion that our office has been able to accomplish what we have. Also, thank you for the support of the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs and all the faculty, staff and students who have supported our office programming in various ways this 2016-2017 academic year. Next year promises to be another year of continued growth. Wishing you all a constructive and enjoyable summer.

Save the dates for Fall-Spring MLDO events:

- Annual Diversity Retreat– September 1-3 at Raquette Lake, NY
- SafeZone training– TBA
- Rethinking Abilities– TBA
- Kente Celebration– Saturday, April 7, 2018
- 9th Annual Student Conference on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice– Saturday, April 14, 2018

NASPA Annual Conference

By Monique Curaj and Toni Yancey

The NASPA Undergraduate Fellowship Program (NUFP) program at SUNY Cortland is supported by the Multicultural Life and Diversity Office (MLDO). We help match underrepresented students up with mentors in higher education and meet regularly as a group and one-on-one as mentors and mentees. We support students in learning more about being a professional in higher education, applying to graduate school, applying to jobs and networking. We also try to bring fellows to the NASPA conference each year. During Spring break MLDO brought three NUFP fellows, Jacob Wright, Monique Curaj and Toni Yancey, to the NASPA Conference in San Antonio, Texas. They shared the following feedback on the conference:

The NASPA Conference really opened my eyes to the community and profession that is student affairs. The thing I loved the most about this trip were the people that I met who work in student affairs and how they all share similar passions, such as, diversity & inclusion, activism, equality, feminism, etc. Because of NUFP, I know where I want to be after I graduate college. I highly recommend this internship to any student who loves being involved on campus, but is unsure of what profession they want to go into.
-Monique Curaj

I thought the conference was great! This is an enriching experience that allowed me to gain better insights on what Higher Education has to offer. The highlight of my experience at the conference was meeting in small groups and having intimate conversations with others who want to enter the field and the routes that they want to take. This provides a diverse array of experiences for me to relate to and allowed me to understand that there is no one way of entering the field. Overall, the experience was great and I would recommend it to anyone who is thinking of entering the realm of Higher Education.
-Toni Yancey



Somos El Futuro Conference



On March 25, 2017, the State University of New York (SUNY) Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI) invited students to a unique and challenging opportunity as a Student Senator to represent SUNY Cortland, during the CUNY/SUNY Model Senate Session. Students participated in a mandatory, intensive training program with a campus mentor to develop leadership skills in a legislative/policy-making setting, emphasizing critical thinking and communication. This year the students voted on the New York State DREAM Act. The Model Senate was held in Albany, New York at the State Capital Senate Chamber in conjunction with the annual state-wide “Somos el Futuro Conference.” A few students shared their experience with the following:

“The Somos El Futuro Senate was an incredible way for me to explore my own home district along with the diversity represented throughout other SUNY and CUNY schools. The invaluable experience and opportunities presented helped me exercise leadership skills, communication and speaking skills, and to expand understanding and diversity along with challenging my personal perspectives.”

- Elizabeth Hradil

“I had a great time this weekend and I would like to thank SUNY and the Multicultural Life and Diversity office in Cortland for helping us take the trip to Albany and join in the Annual Model Senate. It was an amazing experience that very few students get to take part in. Acting as a model state senator opened my eyes to the world of politics and all of the senates inner workings. I also had the pleasure of hearing some inspirational stories from students who would directly benefit from the DREAM Act, and who have faced the many challenges that go along with being an immigrant in the United States. The varying perspectives about the bill were interesting to hear and discuss just like a real senator would. I would recommend this trip to anyone who is interested or might be interested in American politics.”

- Matthew Mavrogian

Blackbird Film Festival

By Jamon Davis



The Blackbird Film Festival was held on April 21-23. It featured more than 140 films by creators ranging from accomplished professionals to first-time filmmakers. Scott Williams '82, the executive producer and lead writer for the hit television show “NCIS” hosted an industry workshop, as will a panel of New York State film and television development officials. Sam Avery, assistant professor of communication studies at SUNY Cortland, is the festival’s founder and director of programming. The festival began four years ago as a forum for student films, became an online film festival in 2015 and found a physical home at SUNY Cortland in 2016.

Kente Celebration

By Lima Stafford



On Saturday, April 1, 2017, Multicultural Life and Diversity hosted their Annual Kente Celebration. The Kente Celebration 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 deep institutional history and is an important experience for our multicultural students. This year 89 students were recognized for their achievements during their time at SUNY Cortland. Five faculty/staff were nominated and recognized with Honorary stoles for contributing and supporting students of color

and their allies on the SUNY Cortland campus. We were honored to present this year's distinguished honorary stoles to Dr. Anne Burns-Thomas, Dr. Lewis Rosengarten, Dr. Susan Rayl, Dr. Mecke Nagel, and Michael Baker, M.A.

The keynote speaker was Ezra P. Scott, who is a SUNY Cortland alumni that graduated in 2010. He is a Council Member for the City of Niagara Falls, NY and currently works at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in the Health Behavior Department.

The kente cloth is a traditional African cloth – the colors and design hold a specific meaning. It is the most popular and best known of all African textiles. Originally, royalty exclusively wore kente but since Ghana's independence from Britain in 1957 kente has become a symbol of national pride. Ordinary citizens wear it for special celebrations. The kente cloth has also become an important symbol for African Americans, people of color in general, and their allies to highlight their achievements and connection to the first learning centers of the world in Africa.



8th Annual Student Conference

By Michael Guity and Bailey Ward

Multicultural Life and Diversity Office hosted their 8th Annual Student Conference on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice on Saturday, April 8, 2017. The theme, “Inspiration, Compassion and Our Shared Humanity,” looked at ways in which students can gain the experience they need to be inspired to make a difference in our world through evoking genuine compassion and empathy in understanding our shared humanity. When we recognize our shared humanity, profound connections can be fostered across cultural divides to promote a more inclusive community. This year, sixteen schools across New York State traveled to experience the conference. The keynote speaker was Hugh Burnam, who talked about his journey from the Onondaga Nation to higher education. Next year’s conference is scheduled for Saturday, April 14, 2018. We asked a few students for feedback on the conference and they shared the following:

The diversity conference was a wonderful experience. I thoroughly enjoyed the presentations I was able to attend and I was more than honored to be the student speaker this year. This conference was such a great way to bring people together to celebrate a big part of our lives. I will forever remember this day and the experience of speaking as the student speaker. Everyone has their own thing that they can bring to the table and this conference is a great way to showcase those amazing qualities.

-Bailey Ward, Student conference speaker

The diversity conference was a great experience. To see 16 different schools all eager to learn about diversity and how it shapes our world was a truly inspiring moment. It was an honor to be the chair for this conference.

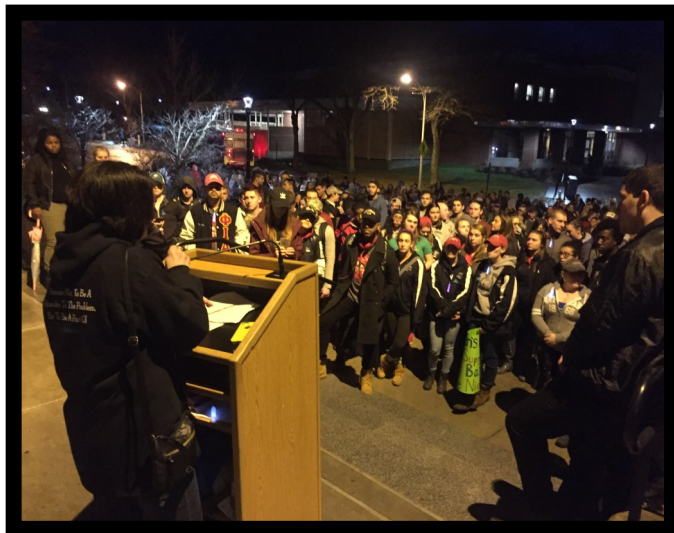
-Michael Guity, Student Conference Chair



Take Back The Night March

By Kaley Clavell

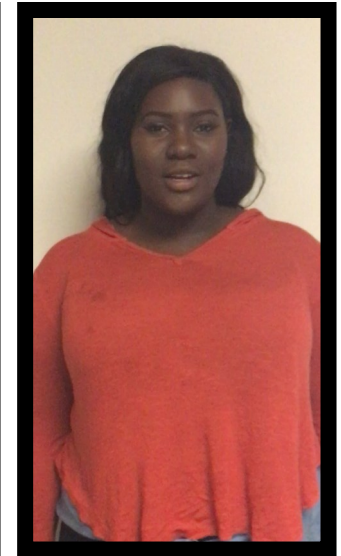
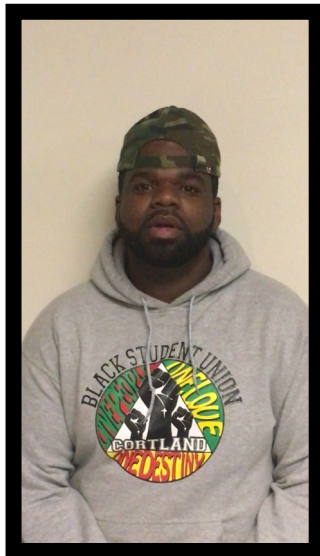
Take Back The Night March was held on Tuesday, April 4, 2017. It is part of a national awareness campaign against sexual violence organized by Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER). I have had the pleasure of taking part in the Take Back the Night March since my freshman year, and I believe this was our most successful march yet. The speakers were leaders from all over campus: our campus President, Title IX coordinator, SGA President, a sexual assault survivor, and two professors. The hundreds that came out to support survivors, regardless of the weather, represented the immense passion our community has to make a change, and their voices were so strongly heard. When the march paused at Aid to Victims of Violence at the YWCA, it reminded the marchers of all of the people in our community that are there to help, and the moment of silence was a strong offer of support to survivors. The number of people that stayed until the end of the march was greater than the past, and it alludes to the unique unity our campus possesses. The night left me feeling prouder than ever to be a Red Dragon.



Public Service Announcement

By Nicole Daniel

In a famous speech by Civil Rights leader Malcolm X, he said, “The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman.” Although this quote came from his speech in 1962, it still applies to our society in 2017. Women of color are unappreciated, undervalued, misrepresented and overlooked. As a woman of color, I want to change the way we are seen which inspired me this semester to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) featuring students at SUNY Cortland, discussing things they valued about women of color between Black History Month in February and Women’s History Month in March. It was amazing to hear these positive and uplifting affirmations by students because it was a reminder that our voices do matter! Women of color have always persevered and broken barriers. In the face of adversity, we have used the strength, resilience and magic engrained in us to prove that we will always deserve to be seen, heard and valued. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to film this PSA and would like to thank everyone who participated in it! Be on the lookout for this video’s release towards the end of this semester!



If you would like to contribute to the MLDO Newsletter, please email lima.stafford@cortland.edu with submissions.

Submissions in any language will be accepted.