

## Civic Action Plan: Applied Learning = Economic Benefits

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### Individual Highlights

Imagining in 3 D 2

ICE: Building Capacity 2

The Impact of Mentoring 3

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



Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification in Community Engagement



**Audience members listen to the speakers at the November 2 Community Roundtable presentation on SUNY Cortland's Civic Action Plan.**

On a rainy November 2nd morning, an audience rallied to enjoy a **Community Roundtable on SUNY Cortland's Civic Action Plan.**

Five presenters, including four members of the Plan's Advisory Panel, described the Plan's goals: First, identify ways in which the county and college gain indirect economic benefit from applied learning courses, and second, "capitalize" on those ways so as to improve and sustain applied learning projects and their benefits.

One presenter, John Suarez (director, Institute for Civic Engagement), said that "capitalizing" in this case means that the college could

- Spend less money on recruitment by increasing student- and faculty-retention rates (because both groups want applied learning opportunities).
- Use new applied learning data to apply for external grants.
- Realize economic "splash-back" from improved quality of living in the county.

Suarez explained that, in an applied learning course, students use classroom learning in real-life,

authentic situations and then reflect on their learning from both settings.

Through reflection, students create their own lessons by comparing field experiences with academic courses, news articles, personal experiences, and their own preconceptions.

Examples of applied learning include study abroad, internships, student teaching, undergraduate research, entrepreneurship, clinical placements, and service learning.

Different kinds of applied learning carry certain kinds of risk, from physical to financial. However, SUNY Cortland's Risk Management Officer (and an Advisory Panel member), William Veit, (**photo below**) emphasized the importance of valuing risk:



## Coming Events

Thursday, Dec. 7, noon to 1:00 in Jacobus: ***I Learned by Doing*** Sandwich Seminar. Four students describe their applied learning-based lessons in

- *Therapeutic Recreation*
- *Political Science*
- *Physical Education*
- *Communications Disorders and Sciences*

Friday, Dec. 22: Due-date for the name of a Campus Compact ***Newman Civic Fellowship*** nominee.

<https://compact.org/initiatives/awards-programs/the-frank-newman-leadership-award/>

Send name and short summary to [john.suarez@cortland.edu](mailto:john.suarez@cortland.edu)

## Imagining in 3D

Imagine taking a course in which you were motivated to create 3D-printed educational games for children. How would you make the game creative? What analogies would you use? These questions were the challenges tackled by Professor Janet Ochs' *Computers in Society* (CAP104) students.

A little over one year ago, SUNY Cortland acquired its first 3D-printer. Ochs, a Senior Assistant Librarian and Computer Applications Instructor, envisioned a course in which students learned about and produced things with the 3D printer. The 3D-printer melts plastic, called "filament," into models designated by the operator.

To use the printer, a person must learn how to navigate a particular program and be familiar with how the machine operates. Using the printer, students can create miniature buildings, dice for playing games, and other small items that they devise.



The 3-D Printer located in the library.



Students posing with the game they created.

Students in CAP104 visited St. Mary's School in Cortland on November 3rd to teach children educational games related to computing. The 5th and 6th grade students rotated through 12 different stations. Later in the month, the CAP104 students met on-campus with a group of junior high girls who are part of a YWCA program.

One game that CAP104 students created involved a 3D-printed maze. As marbles rolled through the maze and reached the end of the course, SUNY Cortland students explained to the children that the marbles were like Internet packets, which travel through the network to deliver messages.

Other games involve teaching binary coding, components of a safe password, computer history, networking, HTML, computer types, software applications and robotics.

Ochs says that "the games challenge students to think about computing, and they can open students' eyes to different STEM careers."

## ICE: Building Capacity with Internship Opportunities

The Institute for Civic Engagement plans to build capacity by recruiting interns for four activity areas:

- *SUNY Cortland Cupboard* Internship, especially for a Sociology or Economics major.
- Voter Education Internships, especially appropriate for Political Science majors.

- Publicity Internship for one or more Professional Writing majors.
- Promotion and Professional Development Internship for a Communication Studies major

To help coordinate the work of these interns, the Institute is also recruiting an *Assistant to the*

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## The Impact of Mentoring An Enriching Experience

Caitie Sidebottom pioneers a program that causes young students to be 130% more likely to hold leadership positions, 37% less likely to skip class, and 55% more likely to enroll in college. Sidebottom, a Field Experience Coordinator for the School of Education, facilitates a mentorship program between the Cortland Expanded School District and SUNY Cortland. The statistics, gathered from the National Mentoring Partnership, show the impact that mentoring has on youth. Sidebottom says the results are tangible and exciting.

Eight SUNY Cortland faculty and staff are paired with children in the community. Adult mentors include the Director of Residence Life and Housing, custodial staff, the Vice President of Student Affairs, and professors. One mentor said, “It’s fun to spend time with funny, interesting kids and adults each week.”

The program is part of the New York State Mentorship Program, which focuses on building positive social relationships.

“We try to ask the kids what they want to do and make it about them. As adults we have ideas about what should be done, but sometimes we forget to ask the kids what they want to do. They want to play games and do what interests them,” Sidebottom said. Children often spend the hour playing board games and building with Legos, while conversing with their mentors about topics such as family, school, interests, and goals.

Mentors meet with the students for one hour a week at Barry Elementary School. There are no other commitments, as the site coordinator Sidebottom plans for the events each week. “What you can gain from this as an individual, and what you can give back to the community... I think it’s worth it,” Sidebottom said.



Caitie Sidebottom

New mentors will begin the program during the Fall 2018 semester.

If you’re a faculty or staff member who is interested in becoming a mentor, you can email [caitie.sidebottom@cortland.edu](mailto:caitie.sidebottom@cortland.edu)

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### ICE: Building Capacity *continued from page 2*

Director Internship. The individual in this position would act as a Project Coordinator, reporting directly to the Institute’s director.

Cyndi Guy, the Institute’s *Community Outreach Coordinator*, emphasized the importance of these internships: “They help us create more campus to community collaborations while helping students professionally,” she said.

The Institute’s current *Promotions Intern*, Laura Barnstead, is happy that her ICE colleagues have valued her ideas, saying that “My suggestions – like *Humans of Engagement* and ideas about the Cupboard and about political engagement – are already in place.”

Any interested junior, senior, or graduate student should email his/her cover letter and résumé to John Suarez at [john.suarez@cortland.edu](mailto:john.suarez@cortland.edu).

## Civic Action Plan *continued from page 1*

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“Given that risk is integral to the pursuit of value, strategic-minded project leaders do not strive to eliminate or even minimize risk – they aim to incur just the right amount of risk.”

Some of that balancing for the “right amount of risk” was evident in the other panelists’ messages, which also served as case studies for the kinds of learning and activities that the Civic Action Plan aims to nurture.

Brandy Strauf, Family Development Director of the Cortland County Community Action Program (CAPCO), sent a message that echoed the findings of other agency directors and program coordinators who responded to a survey by the Institute’s Community Outreach Coordinator, Cynthia Guy:

Strauf noted that collaboration with SUNY Cortland has greatly increased CAPCO’s capacity to improve people’s quality of life.

Alex Cicero, an International Studies and Communication Studies dual major, described her many applied learning activities, including study abroad in Romania, her NYPIRG voter registration project, and her Student Coordinator role in the development of the SUNY Cortland Cupboard.

Cicero confessed that she came to college uncertain of what she wanted to do with her life, but that her applied learning experiences have inspired her and given her focus.



**Alex Cicero (middle) setting up the SUNY Cortland Cupboard with Connor Vick and Melissa Lee.**



**John Suarez, Director, Institute for Civic Engagement, lists the benefits of Applied Learning**

Special Projects Officer Catherine Cullen’s ideas built on Cicero’s message: Cullen believes that, in addition to preparing students for jobs, we should also encourage students to be engaged global citizens and moral beings.

Drawing on a specific applied learning project that included activities in education with the YWCA, Head Start, and K-12 schools, Cullen emphasized the importance of measuring applied learning’s results, and in particular requiring reflection from all partners – students and partnering agencies.

Assistant Professor Ben Wilson (Economics) described a grant that he is working on with TC3, Cornell Law, and Seven Valleys Health Coalition to combat “food deserts” in Cortland County. They are developing a year-round farmers’ market to help people buy healthier foods.

Wilson mentioned another grant that would allow students to use electronic currency to access healthy foods at new locations.

The Civic Action Plan is the college’s initiative to meet President Bitterbaum’s recommitment to the public purpose of higher education, which is to engage students in creative and collaborative problem-solving of authentic problems.

The plan aims to develop applied learning’s sustainability so that SUNY Cortland can continue meeting its public purpose.