



SUNY Cortland Institute for Civic Engagement News

The 2020-2021 Year in Review: Resilience and Persistence

Resilience and persistence were two themes for the 2020-2021 academic year for many of us.

For the Institute for Civic Engagement, those themes reflect the work of our Action Team interns and our staff, who launched or participated in actions that addressed COVID-19 and social justice issues.

Resilience regarding –

COVID response

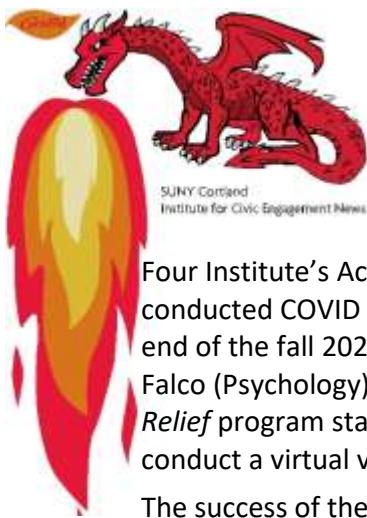
State- and college-wide restrictions that helped us weather the pandemic led to the creation of groups such as SUNY Cortland's Covid Logistics taskforce, which coordinated housing of students who needed to be in either quarantine or isolation (Q&I).

UPD Chief Mark De Paul organized and ran this effort in the fall. In the spring, RHD Kyle Reinhardt and Zach Newswanger (AVP for Facilities Management) recruited a taskforce that included the Institute's *Community Outreach Coordinator*, Cynthia Guy, who worked with a team of volunteers to coordinate delivery of packages to students in Q&I.

(For a more complete list of SUNY Cortland faculty, staff, and students who volunteered in SUNY Cortland's response to COVID, click <https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/leadership-in-civic-engagement-awards/>).



On the academic front, Laura Dunbar, the Institute's Assistant Director, partnered with the Chair of Erie Community College's Visual Communications Technology Department, Roberta Scherer, to design and launch a learning community through which SUNY Cortland professional writing students and their teammates at Erie documented their pandemic experiences and their reactions to those experiences.



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Four Institute's Action Team interns created and conducted COVID stress-related projects. At the end of the fall 2020 semester, for example, Jessica Falco (Psychology) reached-out to the *PAWS for Relief* program staff, offering to work with them to conduct a virtual version of the program.

The success of their fall semester program led to a virtual PAWS spring 2021 semester event.

Psychology /Communications and New Media Studies major Anna Maria Kondili joined Falco and the PAWS staff in the spring semester.

Falco and Kondili also created a bi-weekly email-based Word Puzzles project that offered its subscribers stress-relief and stress-education activities.

In another example, two Physical Education majors, Jenna Kratz and Giovanna Rossi, consulted with counselors and health educators to design and conduct a student-stress survey, which 525 students completed.

They used that survey's results to identify specific concerns. In one case, they recruited health educator Samantha Adams (Program Coordinator, Cortland LGBTQ Center) to conduct a Talk Saves Lives presentation, addressing suicide.



Rossi (seated) and Kratz (red T-shirt)

They also used the survey's results to create and conduct their Treat Yourself Day program, which used a variety of events in the spring semester to offer students opportunities to manage, and learn about, stress.

Kratz and Rossi also shopped for quality prizes at low prices. They submitted their survey results and their plan and budget to Associate Provost Carol Van Der Karr, whose office paid for the prizes.

On the last Tuesday of the spring semester's classes, Kratz and Rossi conducted a "Pop-Up" event outside of Corey Union's Union Station, where they (Photo Above) promoted mental health resources, on and off campus, and they promoted online stress-relief resources for students over the summer.

Toward the end of the semester, Action Team intern Hailie Addison (English) moderated a Zoom-based Panel Q&A session entitled, SUNY Cortland's Covid Response.

At that event, President Erik Bitterbaum, Mayor Brian Tobin, Student Conduct Coordinator Rebecca Nadzadi, and SGA President Callie Humphrey, answered students' questions about the University's COVID response.

BridgeBing, SUNY Binghamton's chapter of BridgeUSA (<https://www.bridgeusa.org/>), hosted the meeting. BridgeUSA is a nation-wide student organization that hosts events that focus on issues of concern to students.

Addison created the BridgeCortland chapter of BridgeUSA.



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Social Justice-related

Beginning in the summer of 2020, Team interns Jade O'Reilly (Communications/Sociology), Chloe Mango (Health Care Management), and Jessica Falco partnered with Lindy Glennon, Executive Director of the Cortland County Community Action Program, on Glennon's Building Resilience project. This project focuses on addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's).

ACE's are a kind of PTSD in children; it hurts their physical, emotional, and mental development.

In October, Glennon, O'Reilly, and Mango hosted the movie, Resilience. Two weeks later, they hosted a presentation by Karen Dudgeon (LCSW), who described the neurological changes and the life-long consequences of ACE's. People from campus and from the greater Cortland community attended both.

Dudgeon's presentation is at
https://youtu.be/ea7QOn203_g

One source of ACE's is child abuse. With that in mind, intern Natalie DiBlasi (Sociology / Criminology) volunteered with the Director of the Child Advocacy Center of Cortland County, Kris Beard, to promote the Center and its work.

DiBlasi and Paige Potter (Sociology/Criminology), who is employed at the Center, assembled 400 Personal Body Safety kits that they distributed to children in the Universal Pre-K programs throughout the county.

They planted 202 blue Pinwheels (a national symbol representing happy, safe, and carefree childhoods) in front of the Courthouse as part of a community awareness event to highlight the number of children in our county who were abused in 2020.

They also sold "Pinwheel Gardens" (packets of 10 pinwheels) for people to plant in their yards. The Child Advocacy Center is using the \$3,000 raised in its work against child abuse.



Pinwheel Garden

DiBlasi also hosted "Our Little Secret: Breaking the Silence on Sexual Abuse, Assault, and Trafficking," a presentation by child abuse survivor Nicole Bromley.

Poster for Child Advocacy Presentation on child abuse.



One often un-acknowledged contributor to ACE's is racism. Continually-experienced micro-aggressions, for example, take their toll on a child.

Among the people helping to address racism was intern Shaneya Simmeljaer, a triple major (Africana Studies, Criminology, and Political Science) who is SUNY Cortland's 2020-2021 Campus Compact Newman Fellow.

Some of the events Simmeljaer hosted were the

- "Youth and Opportunity" public deliberation
- "Our Vote Counts, Too: Disenfranchisement and Voter Suppression in Historically Underrepresented Communities" panel discussion
- Antiracism Workshop.



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Institute staff also contributed to the fight against racism. Suarez collaborated with Kate McCormick (Early Childhood/Childhood Education) and Thomas Frank (Sponsored Programs) to design a Spencer Foundation Grant proposal that helps address racism locally.

The three-year project adds “getting to know you” steps to an established public deliberation model as a way of building participants’ empathy, respect, and trust before they delve into the actual deliberation.

Contributing to the proposal were Christina Knopf (Communications and Media Studies), Mecke Nagel (Philosophy), and City of Cortland Mayor Brian Tobin. Suarez and Knopf serve as co-chairs for the Antiracism Taskforce’s Educational Programming Subcommittee.

Among the subcommittee’s work was the *#StopAAPIHate* event with the *Asian American and Pacific Islanders Student Union*, the *SUNY Cortland Alumni Association*, and the *Anti-racism Task Force’s Educational Programming Subcommittee*.

The event helped people learn about the extent and kinds of violence committed against Asian-Americans, and how to fight hate of Asian-Americans.

Persistence regarding –

The work to stop Hunger

The Institute’s staff and Action Team interns persisted in their “regular” work. For example: Intern Alexis Pascarella (Psychology) served as Student Coordinator for the SUNY Cortland Cupboard. The Cupboard’s Board of Directors (which included Pascarella) promoted the Cupboard and expand the times during which it is open.

The Cupboard is now accessible via a SUNY Cortland student ID card. The card reader does not record students’ identity. The Cupboard is located in the Interfaith Center and is open Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm

The Board’s other members are Carol Costell Corbin (Advisement), Natasha McFadden (Cortland Fund), Heather Moore (Spring 2021 Health Education Intern), Lauren Scagnelli (Chair), and John Suarez.

Hunger and homelessness is one of many issues that we address in various ways, including at the ballot box. Vote-related activities were, of course, prominent this year.

Voter-related actions

Action Team interns such as Kyle Becerra and Shaneya Simmelkjaer partnered with organizations such as NYPIRG to register students to vote.

Interns and NYPIRG also conducted get-out-the-vote messaging, which was complicated because (as a result of pandemic restrictions) many students were no longer in Cortland on Election Day.

Marissa Pappas, the NYPIRG Project Coordinator at SUNY Cortland, was a leader in this effort, and was instrumental in SUNY Cortland earning *Voter Friendly Campus* designation.

The Institute and its interns conducted voter education events, beginning with two in recognition of Constitution Day, September 17th. One was a SUNY-wide public deliberation on the future of voting.

The Institute conducted a second Constitution Day event – a panel discussion, *Should Cortland County Become a Second Amendment Preservation County?*

Panelists were Ann L. Homer (Cortland County Legislator), Gus Wehbe (Town of Truxton Supervisor), Robert Spitzer (Political Science), and Stephen Furlin (Town of Solon Supervisor).

The recording is at

<https://sunycortland.webex.com/webappng/sites/sunycortland/recording/play/26e4973d68f942f68b34a69240d247d1>



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In the spring semester, Addison later organized and moderated a student deliberation with BridgeBing on *Gun Rights/Gun Regulations*.

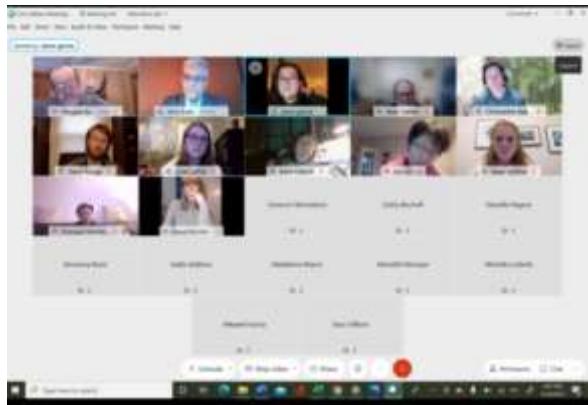
From late September to early November, the Institute hosted discussions on the presidential and vice-presidential debates, as well as Town Hall meetings with 22nd Congressional District candidates Anthony Brindisi and Claudia Tenney.

In spite of the 2020 election being held during a pandemic, Tuft University's *Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement* (CIRCLE) reported that 50% of youth voted in the 2020 election, up from 39% in 2016 (<https://circle.tufts.edu/2020-election-center>). (We do not yet have the figures for Cortland.)

Three interns – Addison, Keliher, and Simmeljaer – trained to become public deliberation moderators and they continued their work after the election.

Keliher organized, promoted, and conducted *The Cost of Health Care* deliberation, in which County Legislator Beau Harbin noted that in 2015 the NYS Assembly approved the New York Health Act. Should this Act become law, it would create a universal, single-payer health plan for the state. Harbin noted that our NYS Assembly Representative, Dr. Anna Kelles, supports this plan. Dr. Kelles has agreed to arrange a fall semester meeting with the campus.

Screen shot of *The Cost of Health Care*, compliments of County Legislator Doug Bentley



Promoting applied learning

Institute staff and interns promoted applied learning in virtual class visits. For example, Keliher, Kondili, and Falco worked with students in sections of *Community Health* classes on mini-service-learning projects.

The Institute also worked with Sandra Wohlleber (Associate Director, Campus Activities), Registrar Thomas Hanford, and Robert Binnall (Associate Director, Residence Life and Housing) to coordinate the campus' participation in the 2020 US Census.

The Institute worked with officials from the City of Cortland, Cortland County, and the Cortland County Community Action Program to compose a proposal for a NYS grant. (When the pandemic arrived, the grant opportunity disappeared.)

Institute staff designed and conducted an applied learning Census project through which 24 students created promotional messages for SUNY Cortland students.

The Institute designed two applied learning-related grant applications. In addition to its extended public deliberation antiracism proposal, the Institute submitted a grant proposal to the American Honda Foundation describing a problem-based-learning STEM project designed in concert with the Seven Valleys New Tech Academy (SVNTA).

In a different collaboration with SVNTA, the Institute recruited 25 SUNY Cortland mentors who have been meeting remotely with SVNTA students and their facilitators on topics such as goal setting, planning for success, making connections between current situations and future situations, organization, and time management.

SVNTA's Principal, Amy Drumluk, wrote that "the mentors have been amazing." Counselor Elizabeth Henrichs also praised the SUNY Cortland mentors, writing that "they all have such good advice and have really been connecting with our students."



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The Cortland Applied Learning Practitioners program

In spring 2018, the Institute used an Institutional Planning and Assessment Committee grant to launch the *Cortland Applied Learning Practitioners* (CALP) program. A SUNY Implementation Grant funded CALP's 2019-2021 academic years.

Through CALP, eighteen Faculty Fellows and six Student Entrepreneurs worked individually or in teams to design and conduct a nineteen new applied learning projects. This year's Faculty Fellows were

- Katherine Ahern (English) and Michael Turner (Writing Center) – *Writing Center Internship*, a collaborative research project.
- Laura Dunbar (English) and Roberta Scherer (Erie C. C.) – *Through the Looking Mask: College Students Narrate Their Experiences with Covid-19*, a two-campus, two-discipline qualitative research project.
- Jeremy Jimenez (Foundations and Social Advocacy) and Szilvia Kadas (Art and Art History) – *Teaching Environmental Awareness through Collaboratively-Created Children's literature books*, a multidisciplinary childhood education project.
- Kent Johnson and Elizabeth Bittel (both Sociology/Anthropology) – *Analyzing and Disrupting Misconceptions about Racialized Groups and Identities*, a two-course investigation of, and a response to, high-school students' perceptions of race.
- Gigi Peterson and Jared McBrady (both History) – *HISSTory Support Network: Assisting Students in the Teaching-Learning Environment*, developing an applied learning Community of Practice among Secondary Education History majors.

Projects in civic engagement such as these can generate scholarship. *The SUNY Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement (JoSE)* is a venue for such scholarship.



Resilience was the over-riding theme for the 2020-2021 academic years for ICE and much of the SUNYY campus

The Institute's Assistant Director, Dr. Laura Dunbar launched JoSE in September 2020, with help from Discovery Services Librarian Jennifer Parker.

JoSE's multi-campus review committee accepted five articles for publication in its upcoming edition, including three from SUNY Cortland faculty and a SUNY Cortland student. You can find those articles at JoSE's home:

<https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/jose/>

Marketing

The Institute and its Action Team interns continued to collaborate on promoting and reporting on their colleagues' events.

For example, Graphic Design and Social Media major Samantha Januszewski guided development of the video for the SUNY Cortland Cupboard; she designed posters for events such as *Our Little Secret* and the PowerPoint for Addison's Community Roundtable, and she proposed this new design for the Institute's newsletter.

Januszewski is composing a new *graphic novel* section for the newsletter, the first series of which will dramatize a progression of "getting-to-know-you" events with people who hold different views on addressing racism.



Januszewski's Graphic Novel



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Addison co-presented with Suarez at a Community Roundtable entitled, *Public Deliberation, Solving Divisive Issues Together*.

The recording is at

https://sunycortland.webex.com/webappng/sites/sunycortland/meeting/postinfo/fa3ba1d44c2e4f35a5dabcbc1c52667b_1_188856338219054371?from_login=true

Professor Kate McCormick (Childhood/Early Childhood Education) and Suarez co-presented "A Seat at the Table" at the SUNY Student Success Summit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPdqBQ2z5AM>

They described their proposed extended public deliberation research project, which is based on their Spencer Foundation grant.

Addison composed all of the articles for the Institute's November and December 2020 issues, and she composed the "Partnering Across Pedagogy, Disciplines, and Cultures at SUNY Cortland" article for the June 2021 issue of SUNY's *Umbrella* publication.

https://sунyedu.workplace.com/work/file_viewer/1109123879566712/?surface=POST_ATTACHMENT

Action Team interns conducted an *I Learned by Doing* Sandwich Seminar at the end of the fall and spring semesters.

Fall:

<https://sunycortland.webex.com/webappng/sites/sunycortland/recording/7f3d2faa658a456fa5d5df63d823cb18/playback>

Spring:

<https://sunycortland.webex.com/webappng/sites/sunycortland/recording/a9fb18220eb14f4a8d8fea42f213c306/playback>

The Institute's Community Outreach Coordinator, Cynthia Guy, organized and conducted an online *Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards*

Recognition event

<https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/leadership-in-civic-engagement-awards/>

One of the awardees was Shaneya Simmeljaer, who is also one of three SUNY Cortland students who earned a SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence. A *Bulletin* article with interviews with all three awardees is at
<https://www2.cortland.edu/news/detail.dot?id=e555fdbb-6da2-4e08-81c8-ee5595a2d4a4>

For 2021-2022

The Institute will continue developing mutually-beneficial civic engagement projects with campus and community.

For example, the Institute's staff are looking forward to partnering with campus and community organizations on antiracism workshops and other events.

Simmeljaer's workshop is now an integral part of the Action Team's Orientation session.

Conducting the workshop will be our new Newman Fellow, Patricia Winston.

The Institute is working with BridgeCortland, NYPIRG, and COR 101 Coordinator David Runge on developing public deliberations and other kinds of events that promote civic participation including – but not limited to – voting and voter education.

Kratz is continuing to build her stress management project, including educational messaging and participatory events.

All in all, the Institute will continue to help people on and off campus do good and learn well.

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