

## State of Poverty Simulation: “Eye-opening”

April 2018

Volume 11, Issue 7

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



Carnegie Foundation  
Elective Classification in  
Community Engagement



125 participants filled the Corey Union Function room during the State of Poverty Simulation

**By Shannon Hanmer and Nicole Powers**

“This is *crazy*,” a student shouted, “How do people survive like this?!” She was describing her experience in the March 21<sup>st</sup> State of Poverty Simulation.

The Simulation helps participants understand hidden challenges that low-income individuals face. It shows that money is not the only concern – childcare, transportation, healthcare, mortgages, and job stability weigh heavily on the shoulders of low-income families.

The Cortland County Community Action Program (CAPCO) conducts the Simulation. This was the 21<sup>st</sup> at SUNY Cortland in ten years.

The 125 participants included students, staff, and faculty from a variety of academic departments.

Participants also included Department of Social Services staff, a Cortland County legislator, an employee of the Public Defender’s Office, YMCA staff, and the Executive Director of SUNY Oneonta’s Center for Social Responsibility and Community

CAPCO staff served as people at community resources such as a grocery

store, school, police station, pawn shop, employment center, and Department of Social Services.

Institute for Civic Engagement *Action Team* interns Shannon Hanmer and Nicole Powers commented on their experience in the simulation:

Powers: “Personally, it felt so real. It was difficult to get people who were working at the resource tables to help you out or cut you some slack. It was eye-opening to have this experience, to feel the frustration and confusion, to make difficult decisions to pay what I needed to pay, to keep my family afloat. I was running all over the place.”

Hanmer: “The Simulation dove way more in depth than I anticipated. I expected to juggle a lot of money and

*Continued page 3*



Budgeting

## Coming Events

**Monday, April 16**, 4 to 6 p.m.  
Corey Union's Exhibition  
Lounge: *Deliberative Dialogue – Where have all the voters gone?*

**Tuesday, April 17**  
12:30 to 2:30 p.m.  
*North/South Central New York Applied Learning Coalition's Video-Conference.*

One agenda item is "Assessing applied learning beyond students' self-assessment."

The Coalition's 40 members represent 26 campuses from the I-81 corridor to Stony Brook.

The teleconference is open to faculty, staff, students, and community agencies.

To register, contact John Suarez at [john.suarez@cortland.edu](mailto:john.suarez@cortland.edu)

**Thursday, April 26**, noon to 1:00  
in Jacobus Lounge: *An I Learned by Doing* Sandwich Seminar.

The Institute for Civic Engagement's nine *Action Team* Interns will conduct a panel discussion that explores their spring 2018 challenges, successes, and learning.

All of these events are free and open to the public.

## Applied Learning Data Collection

"There's gold in them thar hills!" For SUNY Cortland faculty and staff, some of that "gold" is applied learning information.

SUNY defines "applied learning" as "an educational approach whereby students learn by engaging in direct application of skills, theories and models."

We can call it "Learning by Doing."

Examples include capstone courses, clinical placement, entrepreneurship, fieldwork, internships, service-learning, student-teaching, and undergraduate research.

Applied learning data are "golden" in that they can help faculty and staff

- Measure the extent of applied learning
- Identify trends
- Suggest new opportunities
- Refine methodology
- Compose external grant applications & nominations for national recognition

### A revised data collection instrument

To more accurately understand the extent of this resource, the Institute for Civic Engagement revised its annual survey. Instead of collecting only service-learning data, the fall 2017 survey gathered data on the kinds of applied learning listed above.

Two people provided invaluable help in this revision and in the transition from an emailed instrument to one that is Taskstream-based: Chris Widdall (Childhood Education Associate Professor and Taskstream Coordinator) and her intern, Kaitlyn Stanton.

The survey breaks applied learning into categories that use the Registrar's new applied learning attributes, which, in turn, match SUNY-defined applied learning categories. This alignment should help facilitate our reporting to SUNY.



Survey prompts address topics such as the number of students in applied learning courses, the number of hours donated by each student, names of partnering agencies, and student learning outcomes.

The survey's winter 2017 and spring 2018 prompts will ask respondents to fill-in numbers rather than click on a range, of numbers, so data will be more accurate.

### Survey results

Results from the 50 fall 2017 survey responses show that 1,512 students participated in applied learning courses, taught by 39 faculty, with a total of almost 98,600 applied learning hours.

Through these courses, students sharpened skills such as written and oral communication, advocacy, critical thinking, quantitative analysis, consultative relationship analysis, application of theory, and reflection.

This information helps us understand ways in which students' applied learning projects help students meet SUNY Cortland's four priorities: academic excellence, transformational education, well-being, and maximizing resources.

Economics Professor Ben Wilson, for example, categorized his students' learning in terms of academic excellence and transformational education, noting that students "really appreciate gaining new perspectives and exposure to the lives of others. Service-learning crystalizes the ideas and theories discussed in class."

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CIVIC  
ENGAGEMENT  
PROJECT



Facilitator Training participants (left to right) Alison King (President, Cortland League of Women Voters), Mariah Asencio, Ryann Hudson, Kaley Decker, Kayleen Driscoll. (Right-hand side listed in left-hand column, below.)

## Deliberative Dialogue Training

### A Civil Approach to Civic Decision-Making

#### *Mutual respect and understanding*

Identifying shared values is one step in a process of collaborative decision-making on controversial issues.

One approach to identifying shared values is the Deliberative Dialogue, which uses a combination of small- and large-group discussions that are informed, civil, and facilitated.

(The March Newsletter featured an article on Deliberative Dialogues.)

On March 19, nine people participated in a Facilitator Training.

Here is a list of upcoming Dialogue-related events. To participate, contact John Suarez at [john.suarez@cortland.edu](mailto:john.suarez@cortland.edu).

- Friday, April 6, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. in Old Main #220 – A facilitator training event
- Tuesday, April 10, 11:30 to 1:30 in Corey Union’s Fireplace Lounge – A facilitator practice session. We invite people to serve as dialogue “practice” participants.

**The first Deliberative Dialogue is scheduled for Monday, April 16**  
**4:00 to 6:00 p.m.**  
**Corey Union’s Exhibition Lounge**

**The topic is:**  
***Where have all the voters gone?***

To register, contact John Suarez at [john.suarez@cortland.edu](mailto:john.suarez@cortland.edu)



Professor Lisa Strahley, Facilitator Trainer (SUNY Broome Chair of Teacher Education, Early Childhood Education; Civic Engagement Coordinator); Christopher Badurek, Assistant Professor, Geology, and Co-Director, SUNY Cortland Regional GIS Laboratory; Patrick Schetter, and Austen Johnson, Institute for Civic Engagement Action Team Interns.

#### *State of Poverty Simulation from page 1*

time (which I did), but factors that were out of my control quickly entered the picture – services I needed in order to care for my family simply closed when they were expected to be available, and my children faced “adult” issues (my seventeen-year-old son got a girl pregnant and my fourteen-year-old daughter had to apply for a babysitting job in order to pay for her own school supplies).

“It’s crazy to digest how many obstacles people living in poverty face apart from just searching for a steady, decent-paying job.”

The State of Poverty Simulation sparked a lot of conversation throughout and after this two-hour event.

Shannon and Hanmer asked other students how they were feeling during the simulation. Here are some of the responses:

“This was too much – I couldn’t go to work because I couldn’t leave my child home alone when there was no school.”

“I had no idea how eye-opening this experience was going to be.”

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### *State of Poverty Simulation from page 3*

“It’s one thing to read facts off a page, but to actually get an idea of what it’s like to experience it is so much different and realistic.”

The State of Poverty Simulation is an event that many consider to be life-changing. It showed students that even when you have a set plan, things change that you have to be ready to adapt to.

The simulation provides a peek into the unexpected obstacles faced by lower-income families, demonstrating how hard it can be just to keep your head above the water.



Poverty Simulation participants line up at the Department of Social Services and the pawn shop to gain access to services and funds to make ends meet

To express interest in a fall 2018 Simulation, contact John Suarez at [john.suarez@cortland.edu](mailto:john.suarez@cortland.edu).

### *Applied Learning Data Collection, from page 2*

#### *Academic Alchemy:*

The Institute for Civic Engagement is planning to practice Academic Alchemy by transforming some volunteer projects into intentional “learning by doing” (applied learning) projects.

Such volunteer projects already involve “doing.” Examples from 2017-2018 include March for Our Lives, Relay for Life, the Cortland Halloween Parade, Sweat for a Cure (for the National Breast Cancer Foundation), and the Crop Walk.

Another project, Cru’s Hurricane Harvey Relief project, serves as a dramatic example; During spring break, 14 SUNY Cortland students joined 4,000 others from across the country in a project that helped Houston recover from the hurricane. Cru’s Brooke Wilson reports that students practiced skills in demolition, renovation, and painting.

Faculty and staff can contribute to students’ admirable initiative by building on such projects’ opportunities for learning about geology, geography, history, cross-cultural communication, and civic decision-making.

#### *Other sources of applied learning data:*

1. Community Partner feedback surveys are conducted by Cyndi Guy, the Institute’s Community Outreach Coordinator.
2. Cortland Connects holds the promise of providing information regarding that untapped resource of students’ civic engagement activities.
3. National Assessment of Service and Community Engagement provides a “Percent of Possible Service” score that describes the depth of student engagement along a variety of measures.
4. National Inventory of Institutional Infrastructure for Community Engagement analyzes the extent to which community engagement is integrated into organizational structure.
5. National Survey of Student Engagement.
6. National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement.
7. Offices such as Career Services and International Programs provide valuable information.
8. Student Opinion Survey

The winter 2017/spring 2018 survey will be announced toward the end of April.