

## Annual Report, 2021-2022: Institute for Civic Engagement

[The Institute for Civic Engagement](#) is a **Division of Academic Affairs** resource for faculty, staff, students, and the greater Cortland community as they develop, conduct, and assess mutually-beneficial applied (experiential) learning projects. These learn-by-doing projects help students strengthen their understanding of course content, sharpen career readiness skills, and develop a disposition of applying their skills to civic decision-making activities, including government-related activities (democratic engagement).

The Institute's (unofficial) motto is *Do Good; Learn Well*. The Institute is *not* a "volunteer" opportunity agency; rather, it focuses on intentional learning through guided experience.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Developed Cortland Votes – Increasingly, the Institute is focusing on using applied learning as a way of helping students develop competencies and dispositions for democratic engagement. This effort includes work with faculty/staff, students, and the greater Cortland community.

The Institute's internships and partnerships led to an increase in SUNY Cortland students' voter registration and turnout rates from 2016 to 2020 ([NSLVE](#)).

*Much of the Institute's democratic engagement work involves voter education. To that end, the Institute*

- Organized presentations
  - Assemblymember Anna Kelles' presentation, [The NY Health Act](#), February 4.
  - Documentary & discussion with producer and documentary participant – *Utica: The Last Refuge*, April 11.
- Conducted deliberative dialogues
  - *Voting: How should we safeguard and improve our elections?* September 16.
  - [Election Security and Access](#), October 7.
  - [The Cost of Health Care](#), How can we bring down costs while getting the care we need? October 13.
  - [Climate Choices: How should we meet the challenges of a changing climate?](#) November 17.
  - [The New York Health Act](#), with Assembly Member Dr. Anna Kelles, co-organized and -conducted by an intern. February 24.
- Worked with BridgeCortland (SGA club) to
  - Conduct *Women in Politics*, March 9.
  - Lead, unintentionally, to BridgeCortland president, Hailie Addison (also an Action Team intern) being [interviewed](#) by WXHC-FM's Brad Smith regarding BridgeCortland's move to recruit Republicans.
- Created the Freedom of Speech Team, November 2021.
  - At first, a SUNY Cortland team. One member, Lorraine Lopez-Janov, lead the effort to invite the late Dr. Cerri Banks (Vice President and Deputy to the Senior Vice President) and Mr. [Allen Groves](#) (Senior Vice President and Chief Student Experience Officer, both at Syracuse University) to conduct a participatory event: *Freedom of speech on the public college campus*, on April 14.
  - In January, recruited applied learning colleagues from two other SUNY campuses, Plattsburgh and Nassau, to join the team. We have been planning a four-part participatory Constitution Day

entitled, *The First Amendment and Your Vote*. The event will be held on September 20, National Voter Registration Day; it will include a voter registration drive.

- Co-founded, with Mayor Steve, the Town/Gown Project in April 2022. Sandy Wohlleber has taken a leadership role in this project.
  - This project includes a wide representation of interests from on- and off-campus

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Eric Mulvihill, Cortland County Business Development Corporation</li> <li>– Kathryn Silliman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward Alderman</li> <li>– Patricia Lane, 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman</li> <li>– Scott Steve, Mayor</li> <li>– Tom Michales, 8<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Armani Ortiz, Action Team intern</li> <li>– Fred Pierce</li> <li>– John Suarez</li> <li>– Kevin Pristash</li> <li>– Sandra Wohlleber</li> <li>– Sean Campbell, Action Team intern</li> </ul>
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- Two Action Team interns will collaborate with government officials on a multi-pronged project that focuses on developing strong interpersonal relationships between students and long-term City of Cortland residents. It also has the potential for generating additional mutually-beneficial civic engagement and democratic engagement projects.
- Formed a team to develop applied learning projects for two *Seals of Civic Readiness*, April 2022.
  - One project would be a component of the Cortland Expanded School District’s [NYS Seal of Civic Readiness](#) program, which recognizes high school students’ learning – through applied learning – about ways in which governments work. This project would offer the possibility of applied learning opportunities for SUNY Cortland Secondary Education History students as they work with high school students who are working toward earning this Seal.
  - The other project would be a SUNY Cortland Seal of Civic Readiness, possibly in the form of a micro-credential.
  - The Institute has been working with these individuals
    - Katrina Campbell, Registrar, TC3.
    - Donald Chu, City of Cortland School Board member.
    - Kathryn Daughton, Director of Educational Programs, OCM-BOCES.
    - Jared McBrady, Coordinator of SUNY Cortland’s Secondary Education History Program.
    - Dr. Amanda Viel, Curriculum Coordinator, the Cortland Expanded School District.
- Submitted SUNY Cortland’s [All In Campus Democracy Challenge](#) Action Plan on June 23. Instead of being returned with suggestions for revision (as is the routine), our Plan earned a “Highly Established Action Seal,” one of [82 campuses](#) nation-wide to earn this recognition. Noted in an [article](#) in All In’s *Forbes* BrandVoice Channel.
- *Washington Monthly* chose SUNY Cortland as one of 205 colleges “doing the most to turn students into citizens.”

2. Supported faculty and performs service to the institution –

- Suarez chaired (and continues to chair) the Antiracism Taskforce’s Educational Programming Subcommittee. He co-designed and participated in
  - *Raising BIPOC students’ voting rates*, with the Black Student Union. February 7.
  - *Cortland has a dream*. February 21.
  - *Do we really matter?* February 23.
  - Spoke in the “[Meet the Antiracism Taskforce](#)” video.
- Through the Institute’s Cortland Applied Learning Practitioners (CALP), Suarez mentored Adrienne Raw (PWR), who created and conducted an applied learning project with her students in spring 2022.

- In September 2021, members of the SUNY Applied Learning Community of Practice (CoP) learned that SUNY was dropping its support of the CoP. Suarez and a colleague from Oswego collaborated to guide a year-long discussion regarding the CoP's redesign. Suarez and his colleague are co-chairs.
- The *SUNY Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement* (JoSE) co-managing Editors Dr. Laura Dunbar and John Suarez reviewed submissions and have been exploring the possibility of adding a student-focused component to JoSE.
- In spring 2022, Suarez served on the SUNY Student Success Summit's
  - Planning Committee, as a member.
  - Applied Learning Proposals Review Committee, as a reviewer and chair. Five SUNY Cortland faculty/staff presented; Suarez introduced Prof. Asumah.
- Suarez served on the Learning Center's Search Committee. Spring.
- On the SUNY Consortium of Civically-Engaged Leaders, Suarez served as
  - Member, Planning Committee.
  - Moderator, *Roundtable* events, October 29 and February 18.
- During the spring semester, Suarez assisted with the Ukraine Aid project, led by Kyle Cannon.

### 3. Supported students –

- Cupboard.
  - The Institute's director serves on the Cupboard's board of directors.
  - In the Cupboard's annual report, Lauren Scagnelli (the board's chair) noted a large increase in usage over 2020-2021
    - Statistics include
      - ... In fall 2021, we had 63 unique users and a total of 238 visits.
      - ... In spring 2022, usage more than doubled, with 142 unique users and a total of 448 visits
  - Part of that increase could be due to
    - Improved tracking: We now record individual card-swipes. That said, though, we know that sometimes one person swipes their card, then others enter the Cupboard without doing so.
    - Expanded access, opening from five hours/week to thirty hours/week.
    - Fridge-Filled Fridays, compliments of Cortland Auxiliary Services.
- Action Team interns and Work Study students
  - The Institute had two spring 2022 work study students who replied to bi-weekly reflection prompts, which turned these work study placements into applied learning experiences.
    - One student worked on projects such as creating PowerPoint slides for the Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards virtual reception.
    - The other student worked with an Action Team intern to design and conduct a variety of promotional activities for the Cupboard.
  - The Institute had three interns
    - One worked with a work study student to promote the Cupboard.
    - A second worked on DEI issues and conducted a presentation/discussion entitled, *Toxic masculinity's effects on gun violence* on April 27.
    - Our third intern continued her work with BridgeCortland, an SGA club and chapter of [BridgeUSA](#), which is a nation-wide student-led organization similar to PIRG's. The intern created the chapter last year, and conducted voter education events this year. Suarez is the club's advisor. The now-graduated intern currently works for BridgeUSA as a liaison with campus chapters and as a blogger for the organization.

- An intern who was with the Institute for three years earned a Chancellor’s Award for Student Excellence, in part due to her Action Team project that addressed student stress.
  - Newman Fellowship.
    - Guided the recruitment and nomination process
    - Serve as Mentor for our Newman Fellow
  - SUNY SAIL (Strategic, Academic, and Innovative Leadership) – Suarez promoted, organized applications, and worked with our two SUNY SAIL students. He is SUNY Cortland’s Campus Liaison with SUNY SAIL
  - Mentored a student in International Programs and one in the Honors Program
4. Conducted Promotional projects –
- Organized two reflection sessions for Cortland Applied Learning Practitioners Fellows. The November 19 session was [recorded](#).
  - Collaborated with Nanette Pasquarello to compose a piece that responded to Middle States’ request for additional information regarding applied learning at SUNY Cortland.
  - Chaired the Civic Engagement Scholarships committee. Worked with committee members to review 57 applications. Spring.
  - Conducted class visits, including
    - Four COR 101 classes.
    - One Transfer Students learning community.
    - Five sections of EDE 333, *Teaching, Children, and the Community*. Two included participation by community partners: [one](#) and [two](#).
    - One honors class.
  - Conducted an applied learning session for an Orientation Assistant meeting, June 22.
  - With Michelle LoGerfo’s major help, launched more inviting version of the Institute’s webpage.
  - [Newsletter](#) –
    - Composed seven issues, including a
    - Year-long *Applied Learning in Teacher Education* series.
  - Participated in
    - Open Houses.
    - Career Service’s January 28 *Resource Fair*.
  - Conducted presentations
    - Community Roundtable with an intern co-presenter, *Community Problem-Solving*. April 7.
    - Sandwich Seminar, [Cortland Applied Learning Practitioners](#) – December 8.
    - Sandwich Seminar, *I Learned by Doing* (presented by Action Team interns) – November 17 and [April 21](#).

**DESCRIBE CHALLENGES THAT HAVE AFFECTED YOUR STAFF AND OFFICE WORK THIS PAST YEAR.**

- Assessing the Institute’s effectiveness has been a challenge, given time limitations.
  - With the end of the SUNY Implementation Grant, Cynthia Guy no longer worked with the Institute. She had worked 10 hours/week, tracking the grant’s expenditures, fitting the newsletter’s articles in place so that Suarez could polish each issue, and organizing the Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards data base and creating the Awards’ online recognition event – among other tasks. Suarez took over those roles.
  - Lack of coordination with Admissions re civic engagement scholarships for incoming first-year students. Ideally, this challenge is resolved.
1. *SUMMARY OF STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND SERVICE (e.g. professional development, recognitions, presentations, etc.). This can be in table or bulleted list.* The Institute for Civic Engagement has one employee – its director, John Suarez – so please consider the Institute’s accomplishments his accomplishments.
- Professional development –
    - *Applied Learning Assessment Workshop* with Nicole Childrose, July 28.
    - *How the Word is Passed* book club discussions
    - *Human Resources Training* for the Learning Center’s Search Committee
  - Recognition – Suarez was honored with a Kente stole, spring 2022.

**DEPARTMENT PLANNING and ASSESSMENT**

*What specific programs/functions did your department assess this past year? Remember, you do not need to assess everything every year – you can create a cycle of assessment.*

- *How were the findings discussed and analyzed (e.g., staff meetings, committees) within the department? What evidence of change do you see?*
  - Assessment of interns’ and this year’s CALP mentee’s learning was mainly informal and qualitative. Assessment of interns’ learning was drawn from their bi-weekly responses to tailored, individualized reflection prompts. The mentee’s learning was based on discussion.
  - Assessment of voter registration and turnout rates was based on NSLVE data.
- *What changes, if any, are you considering or have you implemented based on analysis?* I am considering the use of midterm and end-of-semester surveys for interns.
- *What goals/outcomes do you want to assess in the upcoming year? This may be as limited 1-2 outcomes.* I would like to assess the effectiveness of
  - *Voter education events.*
  - *Action Team internships and work study students’ placements, especially regarding disciplinary-based learning and career readiness skills.*
  - *Partnerships with community members.*
  - *Mentoring of CALP mentees.*
- *Please discuss how you might strengthen or sustain planning and assessment in your office and what support would be helpful to you in doing this.* I can reach out to people with expertise at SUNY Cortland and at other institutions, including SUNY Central. Support from the Institute for Civic Engagement’s new *Council* will be helpful.

### **BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

- *What departmental needs (outside of personnel) are not adequately supported by your department's current OTPS budget allocation? (e.g., materials, technology, professional development, etc.)*  
None.
  - *If applicable, describe reasons for additional funds remaining in your OTPS accounts at the end of this fiscal year (e.g., change in plans, staffing not available for programming).* NA
  - *Does your department utilize an IFR account? If yes, describe how the funds were utilized this academic year.* No
2. *ATTACH YOUR MOST RECENT STRATEGIC PLAN with this report. Please not if you have made changes this year.*