APPLIED LEARNING AT SUNY:
A Collection of Narratives Highlighting Student Experiences and their Impact

At SUNY, Applied Learning refers to an educational approach whereby students learn by engaging in direct application of skills, theories and models. Students apply knowledge and skills gained from traditional classroom learning to hands-on and/or real-world settings, creative projects or independent or directed research, and in turn apply what is gained from the applied experience to academic learning. The applied learning activity can occur outside of the traditional classroom experience and/or be embedded as part of a course. In order to be considered Applied Learning, the experiences must meet criteria that are based on national standards in experiential education.

“No matter what field a student decides to go into, you can bet that social networking, communications skills, and critical thinking will be required. So we will emphasize these adaptive skills in all we do. We also will give them the enormous advantage of entering the workplace having learned through experiences—with internships, apprenticeships, research projects, and other out of the classroom experiences that prepare them for their unique futures”, said Chancellor Kristina Johnson.

Applied learning experiences strengthen the academic performance of students, increase student retention, and improve employment outcomes post-graduation.

In addition, Chancellor Johnson has set the goal for SUNY to at least "double all measures of increasing cross-disciplinary research, scholarly work, entrepreneurship, and our outreach, including expanding opportunities offered to students for research in emerging disciplines—and internships with innovators and entrepreneurs in fields that are changing our world.”

Throughout the year, the Applied Learning Office compiles stories of the wonderful applied learning activities happening across the State University of New York for our quarterly newsletter The Umbrella. We know, from their own words, that SUNY students value the opportunity to turn theory into action through applied learning experiences and that applied learning helps them develop their soft skills and refine their career goals. Students grow their networks and many feel a sense of community on campus through their applied learning experiences.

This document is a collection of stories of students engaging in a variety of applied learning activities—undergraduate research, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, study abroad, and internships—originally shared in The Umbrella (April 2018-April 2019). While the experiences are different, the common tie that binds them is the impact they have on the students involved, their learning, and often the partners who support them.

Enjoy!
The Applied Learning Team
The cultural and linguistic mismatch between those preparing to become teachers and the public school children they will serve is widely discussed and cited. At SUNY Buffalo State our teacher education program and the schools with whom we partner reflect the national educational context of a teaching force that is largely white, female, and monolingual while classrooms are increasingly culturally diverse and multilingual. To respond to this mismatch, the School of Education has established International Professional Development Schools (IPDS) partnerships across the globe.

In 2011, Hibajene Shandomo, associate professor of elementary education and reading, traveled to Zambia to determine how Buffalo State might establish an IPDS site in Lusaka. The response from the Zambian schools was so overwhelming that Buffalo State established one major partner school, Libala Primary, as well as four minor partner schools. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was written to include the University of Zambia as an important collaborator to orient Buffalo State students prior to their participation in Zambian schools where the participants would observe, teach and collect data.

During the years 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2016, a total of 39 teacher candidates and four professors from SUNY Buffalo State have traveled to Zambia to participate in this unique international/cross-cultural experience. Twelve teacher candidates have been selected to travel to Zambia in June of 2018. During the departmental interview — a process that all teacher candidates complete before being selected into a program — students were asked why they wanted to go to Zambia, and nearly all of them stated that Africa was special to them. While they felt that they could not in their wildest imagination travel to Zambia on their own, they believed that the IPDS program provided the right guidance and support. IPDS allowed them to learn much of a culture that does not seem to be similar to theirs and opened opportunities for them to build on their growth as educators through interactions with children and teachers. They knew this was something not to be missed. Students were quick to add that they also wanted to give as much as they could to Zambia and bring back what they could to the USA!

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Some of the benefits of an effective international experience can be summarized by this teacher candidate who, three years after the international experience in Zambia wrote:

I am writing to let you know that I’ve been offered an assistant professor of literacy position at SUNY Cortland for the 2018-2019 school year, and I have accepted it! I wanted to thank you for all of your mentoring and providing the most phenomenal experience of research during our time in Lusaka back in 2013. It literally changed the course of my career as an educator and researcher, and perhaps more importantly, it helped me become more reflective and take up a more critical stance about not only education but about life and society in general. I asked many questions about doing research abroad in my interview, and it was so wonderful to relive those memories. I know that without your encouragement and support, when I was a Master’s student, I wouldn’t be where I am today. Thank you so much for everything that you’ve done and continue to do — I am sure we will continue to keep in touch.

This international experience to Zambia is a necessary “Window of the World”!
A group of SUNY Oswego students came to understand India as a land of hope after traveling for two weeks during the college’s winter break to learn from people living in Kolkata (Calcutta), West Bengal, India.

Through the “Practicum in International Development” course, eight students andChristy Huynh, associate director of career services, joined human development faculty member Dr. Mamta Saxena touring Indian cultural sites and villages, and speaking with people in the Kolkata region in connection with a program of St. Xavier’s College.

The purpose of St. Xavier’s. Adopt a Village and Cultural Program is “for students to have a meaningful interaction” with the rural and minority community members of Kolkata, Saxena said, and to learn about the social, historical and architectural aspects of the country, and to contribute to community-defined projects. Any students were welcome to take part, not just human development majors.

St. Xavier’s students taught the SUNY Oswego visitors about dance, drama, peace building and Jesuit values applied to the people of Kolkata. “It really helped my students immerse in Indian culture and understand its richness,” said Saxena.

SUNY Oswego has had a relationship with Kolkata’s St. Xavier’s College since 2013, encouraging student, faculty and staff exchanges for semester abroad programs, cultural exchanges and art opportunities and professional development.

The trip featured a visit to Seva Kendra, an agency in Kolkata for excellence in education, health care, environment and climate, food security, social justice and women empowerment initiatives. The SUNY Oswego visitors spoke with members of a youth self-help group that works for these causes to understand their strategies and goals.

“Wonderful, meaningful,” the group visited two villages, Nusrirshadchowk — “adopted” by St. Xavier’s College — and Kalmi Khali, an hour’s drive from Kolkata. Students of St. Xavier’s work with the residents of these two villages and empower them to become financially independent and facilitate connections with city resources. The Oswego team played and sang songs with children, and learned about life in the villages.

“Theseprojects that St. Xavier’s has committed to,” said Dr. Joshua McKewon, SUNY Oswego’s associate provost for international education and programs. “Their own students are working on them, too. We wanted our students to be part of something wonderful and meaningful.”

One of the purposes of the program in Nusrirshadchowk is to bring young children to a church to make them feel wanted, having connections and to know that this is a good world to live in, said Saxena, who was born in India and has close family there.

The Kalmi Khali project works for women’s empowerment, teaching women how to save money and sell products, leading them to self-sufficiency. The women raise fish for commercial use, cultivate and harvest rice, and save money in local banks, Saxena said.

The village women spoke about how the empowerment group affected them as well as what they have achieved. “Women are more financially independent, have basic literacy and are involved in coordinating and training other women and their children to achieve independence,” Saxena said.

The class also helps lay groundwork for potential future Oswego students’ involvement with getting villages fresh water in reflection of the college’s Grand Challenge project, “Fresh Water for All,” McKewon said.

Welcoming interactions

Justine Ochs, a senior majoring in human resource management and in communications and social interaction, found it interesting to talk with the women and the Indian students from St. Xavier’s who live and do things differently than she does. One of the first things that struck Ochs was the hostel in which they stayed had no showers. Instead, they bathed with basins of water. The lack of access to health necessities such as a flu shot made Ochs feel guilty for taking things for granted back in the United States.

Ochs found the poverty stunning, with children as young as 5 taking care of their younger siblings and not having proper clothes, she said. However, Ochs and the rest of the group noticed how happy and welcoming the residents of Kolkata and the villages are. They saw big smiles of people who were more than happy to feed them their local food and teach them about their culture. “The people are economically poor,” Saxena said. “But they are not poor in terms of love, in terms of life, in terms of talent.”

Having been a part of the beginning stages of brainstorming the trip two years earlier, Career Services’ Huynh has seen how successful the trip became and how interactive it was for the students. The students found the experience so memorable that Huynh spoke with multiple students who said they want to do something impactful and meaningful with their lives.

“As a career coach, I help them explore their options,” Huynh said. The students saw firsthand the meaning of the popular Indian saying, “Guests are next to God,” because of the villagers’ hospitality and willingness to share their stories with strangers visiting their land. “I don’t think that’s something I’ll ever forget,” Ochs said.

Ochs has already been broadcasting the program to friends. “I wish everyone could see the difference it made,” she said. For more on study-and-travel opportunities at SUNY Oswego, visit oswego.edu/international, email intled@oswego.edu or call 315-312-2118.

New York State agencies like the Department of Health and Department of Environmental Conservation need to buy many things for their operations so they can provide services to people. So, do cities, towns, villages, schools, law enforcement and not-for-profit organizations. “Just about anything you can name - from playground equipment, computers, and road salt to complex technology services and cleaning crew - can be obtained from one of over 1,500 centralized contracts created by OGS valued at $26.6 billion. These contracts are researched, written in just one way to try it out,” OGS Commissioner RosAnn Destito said. “As someone who has spent nearly 30 years helping make a difference in people’s lives, through legislation, policy, and actions, I can tell you that the work is both challenging and rewarding,” Destito continued. “As State government offices compete with the private sector for valuable talent in procurement and other areas, internships can be the stepping stones to viable, fulfilling, and rewarding careers.”

Nicole spent her summer helping update the OGS procurement division’s process for improving customer service when vendors or contract users are having problems with a contract. “This involved a close look at how problems come into the agency, what happens once a complaint has been received and how to improve communications to resolve an issue. “I’m getting a unique inside perspective on what procurement contracting is all about. I’m excited to apply what I have learned about procurement throughout my college experience in a real-world setting. It is also interesting to see how procurement is evolving and a career in this discipline is a greater opportunity than I had imagined,” she said.

Once a contract has been awarded, the people who use it buy goods and services need to have a clear understanding of how to use that contract. To help make that easier, Cole took a deep dive into how managing contracts and created a guidebook to be used by procurement staff at OGS and other New York State agencies. “This internship is proving to be a meaningful experience for me. The people I’m working with are true professionals and are treating me as an integral part of the team, which makes me excited to come to work every day. I’ve learned so much about government procurement in the first month. I’m grateful to New York State and NASPO for giving me this opportunity to explore a career in public service,” he said.

Olivia Hegg Froy, NASPO’s Academic Affairs Manager, said “NASPO’s internship program is in its second iteration this summer, with eight participating states and 14 Supply Chain Management student interns from academic partner schools. We have had great feedback from these students and their supervisors, and look forward to continuing our internship program. The New York Leaders Student Intern Program offers opportunities in all fields during the summer, fall and spring semesters. Students can fill out an easy online application.

SUNY Plattsburgh seniors Nicole Casale and Cole Reiss, Supply Chain Management majors, are getting a true understanding about how New York State helps state and local governments buy goods and services. They had paid internships during the summer with the State Office of General Services (OGS) in the procurement division as part of the New York Leaders Student Intern Program. New York is one of eight states to receive grant funding from the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) to hire students who are attending partner universities around the country.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

PLATTSBURGH

SUNY Plattsburgh Interns Bring Their Supply Chain Management Skills to State Government Purchasing
UAlbany Pilots SPEED Summer Internship Program

Author: Debra Gelinas, UAlbany Assistant Vice Provost for Applied Learning

This summer, the University at Albany piloted a SUNY-wide internship program, called the SUNY Program for Experiential and Entrepreneurship Development (SPEED). The program provided students an opportunity to gain professional experience at a START-UP NY or Innovate 518 company. All internships took place in the Albany, NY-area, and the program was open to students who were currently enrolled at any SUNY institution.

Participants interned for a minimum of 150 hours during the summer term, and they enrolled in a 3-credit UAlbany online internship course, titled “Advanced Applied Learning Internship.” In addition to internship hours and course assignments, SPEED students were expected to attend bi-weekly leadership and entrepreneurship workshops on campus.

Both START-UP NY and Innovate 518 are programs administered by Empire State Development aimed at assisting early-stage to growth stage companies with a technology or innovation focus to grow and prosper in New York State. These companies can offer a unique type of internship experience, allowing students to see firsthand the work entailed to scale an emerging industry venture and to be part of a formalized public-private partnership. This is an ideal internship for students exploring entrepreneurship or wishing to experience what it is like to work for a technology-based startup.

Six students participated in the Summer 2018 SPEED pilot program. Five are students at UAlbany and one is from Binghamton University. They interned at Nowigence, Innovation Hot Spot, and Case Window and Door (a Hudson Valley START-UP NY partner). The six internships were all paid and two UAlbany students received tuition scholarships sponsored by the UAlbany Office of the Provost. According to intern Cortney Alleyne, “Despite me knowing my interests, I wasn’t sure what path to pursue with my career. I was in the search of an internship that could give me a clearer understanding of what I would like to do with my life. I found that the SPEED program offered what I was looking for, technology and entrepreneurship inspired internships.”

For more information, please visit https://www.albany.edu/experientiallearning/84071.php or email the UAlbany Center for Experiential Education at experientiallearning@albany.edu.

Applications for the Summer 2019 program will be available in the fall semester and due in January 2019.

Amazing Teen Entrepreneurs!

SUNY Broome Community College collaborated with several local organizations to offer an Amazing Teen Entrepreneurs program this summer. The new Koffman Southern Tier Incubator in Binghamton. At Amazing Teen Entrepreneurs, youth spent a week becoming an entrepreneur. During this action-packed week, they developed their entrepreneurial skills with experts in the field and met entrepreneurs incubating their businesses at the Koffman Southern Tier Incubator.

Youth ages 15-18 spent a week learning the following:
- What it takes to be a successful entrepreneur
- How to identify, develop and test your business idea
- How to organize and manage your business
- How to research and market your business
- How to determine the feasibility of your business
- How to understand your financials
- How and where to get funding for your business concept
- The importance of networking with other entrepreneurs

This collaborative initiative was made possible by bringing together experts from the SUNY Broome Entrepreneurial Assistance Program, Koffman Southern Tier Incubator, Binghamton University, Southern Tier Startup Alliance, The Greater Binghamton Chamber, the Greater Binghamton Educating Outreach Program, and The Agency.
Oakes and Scofield went through six doctoral student in neurobiology and Nathan Oakes, a doctoral student in minimizing colony losses for large colonies, he said. "And, that doesn't about $80 million per year due to the competition. $5,000 was Combplex, which hosts Celebration. "Students are the quality is always going to be a demonstration, embodied the spirit of entrepreneurship. More than 100 students, who participated in finding out what customers actually need. "It's not about persisting in selling the product, who has now sold 5,000 bags of sweet and savory granola and is being sold on Amazon Prime, selling out on their first day of launch." And, Antithesis launched a Kickstarter campaign for their Grabanzos, a chocolate-covered chickpea snack. The founders of Dexter, a product to help people understand and monitor their digital footprint, described how they discovered there wasn't a need for their product – and how they are now exploring a completely different idea. "It's not about persisting in selling the product that you want to sell, it's about persisting in finding out what customers actually want," said Tom Schryver, executive director of Cornell's Center for Regional Economic Advancement and an eLab entrepreneur. "When all these companies are pushing the wrong product, stop at the right time and find the right thing to do, that's just as worth celebrating as every successful team you'll see here today." More than 100 students, who participated in three business competitions and a demonstration, embodied the spirit of entrepreneurship at the annual Celebration conference at Cornell this past April. "The quality is always going up," said Zach Shulman '17, J.D., '90, director of Entrepreneurship at Cornell, which hosts Celebration. "Students are studying about companies earlier, so they tend to be better prepared." Winning the Student Business of the Year competition and $5,000 was Complex, which provides real-time remote monitoring and minimal diagnostics for honeybee colonies. Beekeepers lose about $80 million per year due to the death of their colonies. "That's not about selling beekeepers," said Nathan Oakes, a doctoral student in beekeeping. "That's not about missing 30 percent of honey bees, or affects one in six males in their lifetime," speaks for itself. Prostate cancer (PCa) affects one in six males in their lifetime, and it is the second leading cause of cancer death in men in the U.S. The five-year survival rate is 29% in the United States, with prostate cancer metastatic disease. The study of Hexim1 functions in different pathological conditions has further established the critical function that Hexim1 modifications play in cancer progression. Our studies have shown that phosphorylated Hexim1 is present in high Gleason Score human prostate cancer. Furthermore, our studies have discovered that Hexim1's protein is phosphorylated by JAK2 kinase. (Susan Ramirez, Sameha Taraj, Yujuan Singh). Recent results show that DU145 cells overexpressing mutant YXXL motifs were not able to form tumor-like spheroids as compared to wild type DU145 cells. (Nabil Hebard, Hansa Awa, Soha Sadik, David Korn, Kristelle Pierre) Small Molecules targeting Hexim1 have been identified using Bioinformatic approaches and tested for effect on cancer cell migration. Indeed, mouse xenografts using the DU145 cell line and human prostate tumor cell lines (DU145) have marked reduction in their ability to migrate across a matrix barrier in the presence of these molecules (Richa Shah, Joseph Park, Paisy Naik, Sameha Hakeem, Jennifer McCusker, and Michael Oates). The explorations have led to connections between Hexim1 expression and obesity and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease,
Students have several options for undergraduate research at Columbia-Greene Community College, including the summer course River Ecology. This intensive 8-day course takes students to the Hudson River Field Station and other related ecosystems and waterways.

After devising a research question and gathering data, the students prepare scientific posters and presentations for the grand finale Science Symposium. This Symposium is advertised to the local community as well as the student body.

This year, Professor Rebecca Pinder partnered with Kelly Ann Radzik, Director of Applied Learning and Job Development, to provide students with an additional level of feedback regarding their research projects. Several local organizations were consulted, and a panel of environmental professionals was established. This panel provided one-on-one feedback to each research team, asking questions such as “Based on your results, what additional research is needed in this area?” and “What changes would you make in your experimental design?”

“I was very impressed with the students, the River Ecology class, and all that CGCC has to offer in the way of Environmental Studies,” said panelist Herdi Bock. Bock is the Stewardship and Education Manager for the Columbia Land Conservancy. Also in attendance were representatives from Mohonk Preserve, New York State Sea Grant, and Oakdale Lake (Hudson Department of Youth).

Student research projects covered a wide array of topics, including: Nitrates and Crayfish Species Diversity, Water Quality and Spring Salamander Abundance, and The Effect of Dissolved Oxygen Levels on Blacknose Dace and Brook Trout Communities. Research sites from around the Catskill Mountain and Hudson River region included: Ten Mile Creek, Catskill Creek, Becker Hollow and Roaring Kill.

“The panel was an exciting new feature for the students,” said Professor Pinder. “It was incredibly valuable for them to receive feedback from respected professionals from the field. This is something we plan to continue, and look forward to new partnerships, with organizations like Hudsonia and the Carey Institute for Ecosystem Studies.”

Undergraduate Research at Farmingdale State College

There are applied learning opportunities, and then there are applied learning opportunities! Such is the case for Nida Rajput and Bingying Xia, bioscience physics research students at Farmingdale State College.

What makes their project so special is that not only are they working on developing new and faster ways to discover materials that will contribute to the next generation of energy sources, but are working alongside scientists from Stony Brook and Columbia universities, Brookhaven National Laboratory, and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Nida and Bingying are working at the GENESIS Center, a multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary research center housed at Stony Brook University and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. They were selected for the program by Dr. Jack Simonson, assistant professor of physics at Farmingdale, after they approached him about joining the project. Both had previous research experience, and that caught Dr. Simonson’s eye.

“The best part of my job is working with these students,” Dr. Simonson said. “Participating in undergraduate research showed me the path that led to my career, and I hope it does the same for them. Can you imagine being 18-22 years old and discovering an entirely new material, never before known to man? These students have already done just that.”

And they have been stretched in the process.

“I’ve always wanted to pursue a career in science,” said Bingying. “However, I didn’t know what direction to go and the GENESIS project allowed me to have a laboratory environment to work on a project with fellow collaborators.”

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“We had to step away from our comfort zone in growing crystals using traditional methods we were comfortable with, and had to integrate concepts from other scientific disciplines to become closer to attaining our goal. This is inevitable in the learning process,” Nida said. “The GENESIS Project has helped me realize how much goes into conducting scientific research, and that failures are inevitable in the learning process.”

What won’t be a failure, said Rena Varghese, executive director of Farmingdale’s Nexus Center for Applied Learning and Career Development, will be the students’ efforts to turn their research experience into rewarding careers.

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Between 2012 and 2016, Binghamton University made a coordinated effort to help students understand and exercise their voting rights. This effort was part of the University’s overall mission to develop active, engaged citizens who are committed to civic engagement. The CCE’s focus on voter engagement is an important part of the University’s broader commitment to civic education and turnout efforts. This focus has led to a significant increase in student interest in participating in local, state, and national elections.

Today’s college students are increasingly interested in participating in local, state, and federal elections, as evidenced by a dramatic increase in youth voting last November, which saw the highest youth participation in a midterm election in twenty-five years, according to the Center For Information & Research on Civic Learning And Engagement (CIRCLE). Recognizing this upswing in youth voter engagement, Binghamton University has committed to taking an institutional approach to reducing barriers and improving access to the polls for its students. Led by the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE), a voter engagement coordination team comprised of student leaders, University faculty and staff members, and representatives from the local county board of elections and League of Women Voters coordinates campus-wide voter registration, education, and turnout efforts. This focus on voter engagement is an important part of the University’s broader commitment to civic engagement and the CCE’s mission to develop active, engaged citizens who have a positive impact on their community, from local to global levels.

This coordinated effort to help students understand and exercise their voting rights has produced impressive results. Between 2012 and 2016, Binghamton University’s overall student voting rate increased 10 percentage points to 46.8%, according to the 2016 National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement from Tufts University. This was one of the largest increases in the country, with the national average being an increase of 3.5 percentage points. Leading up to the 2018 midterm election, the CCE and on-campus partners registered over 2,000 students to vote and assisted over 750 students with absentee ballot requests — results on par with campus registration numbers leading up to the 2016 presidential election. Participation on Election Day was also up in 2018, with the number of students who voted at the on-campus polling place four times higher than in the previous midterm election. In addition to partnerships on campus and in the local community, much of the team’s work is made possible through the support of the Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF), a national nonprofit organization supporting youth leadership development, voting accessibility, and social justice initiatives on campuses across the country. Through its Vote Everywhere program, the AGF funds three student ambassadors on Binghamton’s campus each year, providing them with a stipend, programming funds and access to a network of students across the country who are committed to civic engagement.

"Binghamton University is a senior partner and leader in the Andrew Goodman Foundation’s Vote Everywhere network," says Taryn Dwyer, AGF Vote Everywhere program manager. “The University and their Center for Civic Engagement model promising practices for voter registration, education, and engagement, showing a true commitment to student civic engagement. We are excited to continue collaborating with them to make young voices and votes a powerful force in democracy.”

The student ambassadors work with staff in the CCE to host voter registration drives, provide nonpartisan information about candidates running for federal, state and local office, help run the on-campus poll site, and host Passion to Action events that give their peers the tools they need to create positive social change. These ambassadors consistently report their involvement with AGF and the CCE as an important and impactful learning experience.

"I am so grateful to be a part of AGF and the CCE," says Sophia Geringwald, a junior political science major and current Vote Everywhere Ambassador, “because I work towards bettering my community and making change as a member of a motivated team. I have learned about what it means to be an effective advocate for students through this program and will use the organization and project management skills that being an AGF ambassador has taught me throughout my life.”

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Fredonia held its second annual "Four Years Out" residency, in which four successful alumni from the Class of 2014 returned to campus to discuss their post-graduation career paths and share tips about professional writing, especially social media, as part of Writers@Work. An Alumni Writers-in-Residence Series in collaboration with the Convocation Committee. Over three days filled with talks, class visits, a hands-on workshop and informal conversation, Erin Dorzynski, management development program coordinator at GEICO in Buffalo, Sylvana Dussan, social media coordinator at the National Governors Association in Washington, D.C.; CourtneyGroer, coordinator of public relations, marketing and communication projects at Elderwood Administrative Services, Buffalo; and Patrick Kennedy, communications director for a New York State Assembly Member, shared their post-graduation journeys.

This program is made possible by a cross-disciplinary partnership between the departments of Business, Communication, English, and History and the offices of Alumni Affairs and Career Development. The program is sponsored by the Fredonia Alumni Association, Fredonia College Foundation, Fredonia College Foundation’s Carnahan Jackson Humanities Fund, Department of History, the Mary Louise White Fund, and the Faculty Student Association.

This year’s alumni contingent reflects the broadest range of majors and careers in the history of the Writers@Work series, which was established in 2016.
What are we doing about homelessness?” was Terry Cahill’s question at an Institute for Civic Engagement meeting in April 2018. Terry, SUNY Cortland’s Director of Migrant Education Tutorial and Support Services Program, raised an issue that was usually hidden from view, but Callie Klasek, an Action Team intern with the Institute, volunteered to help address the issue.

She organized a dialogue in October so that the campus could learn about steps that local organizations are taking to help people who are homeless. Among the 18 participants were guest speaker Andrew Lunetta, who described his Tiny Homes for Good Program in Syracuse, NY, and Rebecca Rathmell, Continuum of Care Coordinator for the Southern Tier Homeless Coalition.

Rebecca’s Point-in-Time count in January 2017 revealed that at least 1,711 people, including children, were homeless in the Delaware, Otsego, Tioga, Broome, Chenango, and Cortland county region.

After the dialogue, Callie offered to take part in the next Point-in-Time count. On January 30 at the Salvation Army in Cortland, she and the Institute’s director, John Suarez, participated in this count by interviewing people who are homeless. Callie reflected on her experience, saying that, “as an Economics major, these interviews made me think about how information is collected. The information in these surveys goes to HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) so it can make policy. But some people didn’t want to answer some of the questions, so some surveys are incomplete. And a couple of people weren’t sure about their answers, so statistics have to be phrased carefully."

Callie decided to help the people behind those statistics by conducting a one-week Homelessness Items Donations Drive, Engaging Neighbors (HIDDEN) campaign. She worked with the YWCA, Catholic Charities, and the Southern Tier Homeless Coalition to learn the items that people who are homeless need. During that week, faculty, staff, and students donated 732 items, including clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, soaps, and comfort products.

Reflecting on her Homelessness deliberative dialogue and HIDDEN campaign, Callie said, “I’ve learned that homelessness can hurt a child’s ability to learn, and that can hurt his earnings potential. But it also means that the child’s quality of life suffers, even as an adult. I want to change that.”

At Geneseo’s Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Leadership and Service on January 24, over 100 people including SUNY Geneseo students, faculty, and staff, seniors from the Foster Grandparent program and Livingston County Office for the Aging, and high school students from Geneseo Central’s Leadership and Service class came together to work on service projects to benefit local and national organizations and charities. The projects included making fleece blankets to be donated to the local Veterans Association and assembling and decorating Winter Care Bags for residents of Morgan Estates Nursing Home. Activist, musician, and attorney Danielle Ponder, Esq., a former Monroe County public defender, delivered the keynote, “For the Love of Justice,” and a cappella versions of original songs. Her talk and songs emphasized championing love over hate and good over evil as a way to move the legacy of Dr. King forward.

Additionally, SUNY Geneseo launched Engage Geneseo, an online service that connects the local community and the College by matching students, staff and faculty with businesses and organizations seeking volunteers, interns, employees, and experts. Via two forms, it allows students to identify their experience working with community organizations as well as where they would like to gain additional skills and knowledge. It also allows new and existing community partners to share projects and the specific campus contributions that could help them. The online forms help Geneseo’s many community-facing offices across divisions - including the Center for Integrative Learning, Office of Student Volunteerism, and Career Development - to seamlessly share information and collaborate on civic engagement projects.