Friends and Colleagues,

We hope this issue of the newsletter finds all of you safe and well and in a place where the challenges of the moment seem a little less daunting than they were a couple months ago.

Our focus for this newsletter is on co-curricular applied learning experiences, and we started collecting submissions well before the current crisis. In this issue you will find stories in their original form, as well as others that have been updated to discuss how they have virtually moved their programs and work forward - always keeping a focus on students, the community, and the essential role that applied learning activities play in connecting people through shared experience.

All 64 SUNY campuses engage in applied learning opportunities for their students. From SUNY Works, to SUNY Serves to SUNY Discovers, every student has the ability to find an activity that will help them craft their skill and prepare them for their work endeavors. Gathering data on co-curricular experiences remains a challenge, but we are making progress. Several campuses are working toward developing and perfecting processes to track these experiences to ensure they meet our criteria.

While current life is far from normal, we hope you enjoy taking time to read about these amazing experiences that SUNY campuses are providing to their students. Happy Reading!

With much respect,

The Applied Learning Team
Tracking Co-Curricular Applied Learning

While course-based applied learning data collection and reporting remains a priority, according to a fall 2018/spring 2019 survey, a number of campuses are also investigating ways in which to ensure their co-curricular offerings are high-quality and can be tracked and reported.

Some notable developments in this area ...

Farmingdale State College has developed a process for vetting their co-curricular applied learning experiences to ensure they meet the applied learning criteria, putting them through the same rigorous process as course-based experiences. With the help of SUNY Applied Learning Community of Practice Professional Development funding, they are piloting a process for enhancing existing experiences to make them more high-impact and using the funding to create new experiences. Their efforts ensure that FSC students will have many opportunities to fulfill their applied learning graduation requirement.

SUNY Old Westbury and Nassau Community College are developing processes to approve their co-curricular applied learning experiences according to the criteria.

SUNY Canton received funding in 2018 for their two-year “Model Co-Curricular Transcript” project. Below are some highlights taken from their final report.

The initial project objectives were to:

- Develop a co-curricular transcript, scalable across SUNY, which will supplement a larger institutional mission to advance key areas of the College to five years ahead of our competition through innovation and use of technology;
- Capture experiential learning (internships, research, leadership activities, student employment, academic competition teams, global awareness, cultural awareness, and service) in a pre-validated manner;
- Increase student attendance and engagement in campus life, thereby improving retention and graduation rates;
- Increase job placement rates and enhance student marketability in the workforce by demonstrating applied learning.

What were your initial project objectives? How did they relate to recruitment, enrollment, retention, and/or completion?

These objectives specifically addressed matters of retention and completion in that they were intended to increase student engagement and connectedness to the campus. The research shows that students who are engaged with campus life and make positive relationships are more likely to be retained, and the work of encouraging programming and involvement through the co-curricular transcript promoted this. Beyond this, an intended outcome of the implementation of the co-curricular transcript was that students would be able to utilize this resource to elevate their job and graduate school applications, thus making them a more marketable graduate of SUNY Canton.

If your project scope, timeline, and/or goals have been modified since the original proposal, please briefly explain why and describe the modifications made to the project scope/timeline/goals.

Although the scope, goals, and timeline didn’t substantially change, we grew the scope of the project to include a digital badging initiative. This allowed us greater potential impact on our original objectives, and has provided additional retention and completion opportunities for students campus-wide.

Although, functionally, the project is complete in that we do have a co-curricular transcript now that students are actively utilizing, we plan to grow our co-curricular transcript into an e-portfolio format to both embrace advancements in technology and feedback we have received from employers and graduate institutions. This feedback indicated that the preferred methodology for reviewing an applicant’s co-curricular endeavors, including the digital badges, is through electronic means.

Please explain how successful you have been in meeting your project objectives.

We have been successful with the first three objectives, as we were able to develop, implement, market, and grow our co-curricular transcript. This transcript is widely known and understood on campus and is being utilized by students seeking employment and graduate school opportunities. It captures both experiential learning and extracurricular activities and is a living snapshot of student life outside the classroom.

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The objective that we have arguably not met, although this is simply because of timing, is the fourth objective. At this time, the co-curricular transcript has not been in use long enough to collect meaningful data. We look to track this data starting in the Spring of 2020.

Please highlight any and all project successes that you want others to know about.

Through this work, we have increased student engagement by the addition of two digital badges (Cultural Competency and Leadership). More than 600 students have participated in these two badges since the onset in 2018, and the campus has three additional badges in production that we look to open to students by Fall 2020. These badges are reflected on the co-curricular transcript and are highly regarded by employers and graduate admissions offices.

Through this project, one of our larger expenditures was a contract with Campus Labs for a student engagement platform. This platform, which captures the work and engagement opportunities students participate in outside the classroom, has been successful with our students and have allowed them to capture their work to reflect on their co-curricular transcript. This has also grown engagement opportunities for fully online students, as we stream and capture all campus life events and link to them within Campus Labs. Through this, online students have also been able to join clubs and organizations from a distance.

Using qualitative and quantitative measures, please describe the impact your project has had on your campus and describe its potential as a scalable initiative to share with other SUNY campuses and colleagues. What larger implications might this project have for the SUNY system as a whole, the region, and the state?

Qualitatively, this has provided more than 600 students (20% FTE or nearly 50% of the residential population) with engagement opportunities through the digital badging initiative and use of a printed or electronic co-curricular transcript.

Quantitatively, this has changed the way the campus views co-curricular programming in that it lends credibility and tracking to our pre-existing model through use of the co-curricular transcript and digital badging. Students are engaging in cultural and leadership programming at a greater volume than they have in the recent past, and faculty and staff are collaborating to host events and develop additional digital badges because they are excited about the momentum from the co-curricular transcript project.
Leadership development curriculum has an exponential impact on the lives of students throughout their educational careers. With the right support system and access to resources, the sky is not even the limit. However, as students transition out of the classroom and into the professional world, that support and access to resources tends to fade. Often, the focus is on how employees complete their current task at hand, and not on whether they have the skills needed to take on more complex challenges and higher leadership roles.

To address this need, the SUNY SAIL Institute was created. The SUNY SAIL Institute focuses on developing the next generation of leaders in higher education. The Institute is SUNY’s leadership development think tank dedicated to advancing understanding and building human capacity in strategic, academic and innovative leadership. By their own properties, each of these leadership tracks is essential to the functioning and growth of a college campus, as well as equipping leaders with the diverse perspectives they need in order to think beyond the horizon and grow within their organization.

The SAIL Institute offers leadership development programming to all SUNY faculty and staff on campus through signature programs and custom workshops. Signature programs are offered annually and serve different leaders throughout a campus community, from business officers to IT leaders to department chairs. Within the signature academies, participants work on individual applied learning projects throughout the duration of the program, culminating in an end-of-the semester presentation where they present their work to their peers and other higher education leaders. Participants are given a mentor, rubric, and other guidance to assist them with the process. These projects allow participants to critically think about positive change they want to make on their campus and then implement it. SUNY SAIL houses these final projects in an applied learning project library which is accessible on the SUNY SAIL website.

The SAIL Institute also offers inclusive leadership retreats in the summer and winter that are open to all faculty and staff on a SUNY campus. In addition to these signature programs, the SAIL Institute offers custom workshops, monthly webinars, and blogs for professionals on campuses looking to enhance their leadership and communication skills.

While the SAIL Institute provides faculty and staff with leadership development techniques and programming, it does not neglect the core purpose of any institution of higher education: the students. The new SUNY Student Leadership Program is designed by the SAIL Institute to give students the skills and knowledge they need to successfully navigate and unify an increasingly diverse society.

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The SAIL team is supported by two graduate student assistants to ensure that the student perspective is included in the development of all programs. Maya Rudolph, graduating Master of Public Administration candidate from the University at Albany’s Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, has been working with the SAIL Institute since she earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Public Policy & Management from University at Albany in May 2019.

Upon joining the SAIL Team, she played a critical role in assisting with the organization of last year’s student leadership program, known then as the “Global Leader Experience” in June 2019. She worked closely with the SAIL Institute’s Associate Director and Leadership Development Manager to administer the logistics of bringing 65 students from across SUNY to New York City, to ensure that the program went well.

Maya had the opportunity to participate in the program as well, which she says was a “challenging but eye opening experience that gave insight to modern challenges in cities across the world.” The Global Leader Experience provided students with access to industry leaders through workshops and immersion visits that allowed students to get a taste of professional life in New York City. Last year’s challenge question focused on cities specifically, but still encouraged students to collaborate and offer solutions based on their own experiences.

For 2020, the SUNY Student Leadership Program is a semester-long series of webinars to support students through personal and professional development. The program, designed and delivered by professionals from across SUNY, leverages the collective assets of the system to provide a unique learning and networking opportunity for SUNY students. Students will spend the fall semester harnessing a greater understanding of what it means to be a leader, the power of mentorship and more. To learn more about the 2020 SUNY student leadership offerings and other SUNY SAIL Institute resources, visit www.sunysail.org.
The slogan for the New York State Mentoring Program is “Change a Life. Become a Mentor.” In the case of Farmingdale State College student Michael Menjivar ’21, he became a mentor and changed a life.

Menjivar, an Applied Psychology major, mentored 10-year-old Daniel last fall at Cordello Avenue Elementary School in Central Islip, Long Island. They bonded immediately, once they discovered that both their families came from El Salvador. The pair shared stories about visits to their ancestral homeland and chatted about their favorite sports, academic subjects, and more. Daniel, Menjivar says, reminds him of himself in many ways. “Mr. Menjivar, as the students call him, is our sole male mentor to a group of boys who idolize his presence,” says school nurse and mentoring coordinator Kelli Pasha. “The boys come from various socio-economic and educational disparities. The dynamics among the boys and Mr. Menjivar is unique.”

“Not everyone can honestly empathize with our population. He talks to them about family, and the importance of continuing education, and the most valuable tool he encompasses is his whole presence while with the students. Any person can see that his commitment to the students is undeniable. He has not missed one weekly session, and neither have any of the boys. Mr. Menjivar should be recognized among his fellow students/peers as a stellar role model.”

The Mentoring Program was birthed in 1984, by Matilda Raffa Cuomo, wife of former Governor Mario Cuomo, and mother of Governor Andrew Cuomo. It was the country’s first statewide, school-based, one-on-one mentoring program, tasked with helping prevent school dropouts. The state quotes some impressive statistics.

- 59% of mentored teens get better grades than their peers
- 52% of students who meet regularly with a mentor are less likely to skip a school day
- 46% of students who meet regularly with a mentor are less likely to use drugs

Farmingdale State College mentors meet with elementary and middle-school students. Says Dr. Michael Figuccio, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Co-curricular Supervisor, FSC students must complete a developmental psychology course in order to participate. In return, they earn applied-learning credit.

“The mentoring program allows students to apply what they learn in the classroom, and make a positive impact on a child’s life. This has been a fantastic opportunity for our students who plan to pursue a career working with children.”

“My career goal is to become child psychologist, in both a school and private setting,” says Menjivar, who will mentor through the spring 2020 semester. “I prefer working with children because I have a growing family with many nieces and nephews, eight as of right now. I have helped raise these children like they are my own. I love watching them grow and develop into the great young adults they are today. I wish to see this same growth and the impact in the children I hope to help in the future.”

The program has also positively impacted Science, Technology and Society student, Meghan Kaufman, who has not only found it rewarding to work with children, but has enjoyed a benefit that surprised her.

“The mentorship program has been an eye-opening experience. I wanted to find a way to help people and young kids. Believe it or not, these kids have actually helped me. Spending time with these kids is actually a good way to de-stress from all the school work and other stresses of life. It has also made me realize that I enjoy helping people.”

Diane Urso, LMSW, Director of Long Island/Queens, New York State Mentoring Program, enthusiastically concurs, “This is a win, win all around! Too often college students live on autopilot - go to class, study, and work. The ability to mentor and positively impact the life of a young person is a life-changing experience for both mentor and mentee. It is powerful to know you have something to offer another person, and that giving of your time is the biggest gift you can share.”

Rena Varghese, Executive Director of the College’s Nexus Center for Applied Learning and Career Development, and partner with Dr. Figuccio in the program, ties it all together, “Thanks to a grant we received from the SUNY Applied Learning Professional Development Fund, we are pleased to support this community-service partnership that allows students to apply their developmental-psychology studies to real-world interaction with children. This is a wonderful example of co-curricular applied learning, where our students are developing their practical skills while engaging with the community to fulfill an important need.”
Dance at Buffalo State delivers a liberal arts education and embraces a civic and community engagement philosophy in all aspects of the program. In addition to rigorous studio training that enhances the physical experience of the art form, the curriculum is designed to deepen students’ understanding of the cultural, historical, and aesthetic value of dance to our world. Our community-engaged program fulfills our dance students’ distinct aspirations while addressing local and global societal needs through numerous service-learning and advocacy projects. Furthermore, dance performance also provides a unique opportunity for meaningful social commentary.

Buffalo State Dance Theater is a co-curricular student dance company that performs throughout the academic year. Built on the foundation of diversity and creativity, we accept and appreciate all dance forms and invite students from every major to audition for the company. As artistic director, I ensure that our annual spring dance concerts focus on themes that directly connect to the larger community by promoting multiple perspectives, social change, and active citizenship. After I share the overall theme, the choreographers interpret it for their own individual purposes to find their inspiration, reflect on what motivates them, and initiate their personal rehearsal process to bring their convictions to life.

Choreography is a powerful civic tool when the dancers embody critical global issues and move to convey justice. Faculty, students, alumni, and guest artists have presented a wide range of choreography, providing audiences with engaging and time relevant concepts that spark change. Highlighted are four annual dance concerts that emphasized civic engagement and community building, involved students as collaborators in the creative process, and assessed the impact on the audience.

CIRCLE: DANCE IN THE ROUND (2017)

To encourage audience participation and connection, I decided to utilize our intimate 200-seat Flexible Theatre that offers an in-the-round staged perspective. The six performances of Circle: dance in the round began with circle folk dances on the lawn outside the theater. Audience and dancers came together as a community before entering the performance space. The works embodied viewpoints on the circle of life, cultural dance, and the global connection of gamers. The process stretched not only the choreographers but also the designers and technicians. The intimate space allowed the dancers to engage the audience in a special way and the impact on everyone involved is still remembered.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS: DANCE AS ACTIVISM (2018)

Movers and Shakers: dance as activism featured seven dance pieces and marked Buffalo State College’s first completely student-choreographed show that was open to the public. Four faculty mentors encouraged the student choreographers to use dance to convey their perspectives on issues such as gun violence and gender equality & identity. Our hope was to inspire the audience to work toward their own personal activism. Students reached out to local organizations so that we could provide voter registration and information tables before and after each performance. The audience response expressed that the concert was thought provoking and promoted community involvement.

BODIES SPEAK: DANCE IS UNIVERSAL EXPRESSION (2019)

We live in a world of constant chatter, from ubiquitous videos to pundits shouting at one another on TV. A quieter yet powerful form of communication, gestures and body language can express emotions, elicit responses, and impact without words. Bodies Speak: dance is universal expression presented yoga as a path toward harmonious living, American Sign Language as a liberator of deaf people, and community building as a means toward the greater good. The performance engaged the audience to interpret, relate, and empathize; channeling life experiences with all their attendant joys, fears, and hopes into an evening of silent storytelling.

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The World Grooves: dance traditions and explorations asks us to consider our beliefs, values, and practices. Traditions are inherited, established, and customary. Their familiarity and routine contribute to a sense of comfort and security. Traditional dances provide history and culture and for the dancer, foundation and technical proficiency. Often, a choreographer’s curious mind manipulates the established movements through the generation of new methods, breaking free, and finding their own voice that expresses who they are. The newer variations that emerge create a new aesthetic that intrigues and invites the audience to examine their values and traditions and to explore new ways for engagement and exchange. We turned to our alumni who are currently working in the field to submit proposals and five alumni were invited to create on the student dance company.

THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

In the middle of the spring 2020 semester, we were forced to rethink the delivery of two major projects – program wide service-learning experiences and this year’s annual spring dance concert, The World Grooves: dance traditions and explorations. COVID-19 may have changed the process but it did not stop our students’ passion for advancing dance and drama education and engaging our community.

The students in five different dance courses are still collaborating through email and video to create dance and drama activities that meet the needs and program requests of our six community partners. The design considers both the population being served, which ranges from refugee children to adults with special needs, and the content and concepts of each course. Traditionally, the activities are conducted on site, bringing specialized dance and theater education to these diverse populations. Given the current situation, it is impossible for the 55 students to present these activities in person so the goal now is to assemble the students’ lessons to create six guidebooks that introduce some background information on the benefits of dance and drama and offer a series of lessons/activities specific to each community partner’s population. The guidebooks will be distributed to community partners so they can implement them in the future. Students are excited to share their creations.

Although we won’t be presenting The World Grooves this semester, students are reviewing rehearsal videos and choreographers’ notes to then reflect on performance skills so that we keep those choreographed works alive to be reimagined into next year’s mini concerts, The Out of the Box Series: dance in the real world, which will be performed on four internationally recognized days that have a civic engaged focus. In addition, our alumni are doing more than continuing to generously work with our students; these graduates are sharing their artistry with all for the greater good. I couldn’t be prouder!
to patients in need of comfort and reinforced the LIJMC commitment to compassion through quality healthcare. OW students supported medical and emergency units. “Through volunteerism CALL students provide a service to those who need it most.” Lauren Vasquez, Director of Volunteer Services, Long Island Jewish Medical Center.

For biological science majors, Anjoli Persuad (Class of 2022) and Kayla Peter (Class of 2022), their community learning engagement at the Community Church of East Williston, as part of Community Learning (CL2000), engaged them with the church’s predominantly elderly population during the spring 2019 semester. This exposed them to connecting what they learn in class to the real world. During the fall 2019 semester, both renewed their commitment to volunteerism. Anjoli and Kayla began a new community-based learning engagement at NYU/Langone’s Hassenfeld Children’s Hospital as part of the OW’s College, Community and Global Citizenship (CL3000) course. As part of this engagement, they engaged in Neonatology research projects as well as were involved in on-site NICU activities.

At the end of the fall 2019 semester, students from the cohort had the opportunity to showcase their experiences from their community learning engagements to the College community at the CALL Colloquy. The CALL Colloquy inspires students across the OW campus to become involved in on-going community engagement in their communities and beyond. The Keynote Speaker for the fall semester’s CALL Colloquy was Naila Amin. Nalia is a current student at OW. She spoke about her experience as a child bride, the foundation she created for the purpose of helping girls escaping child and forced marriages, and her continuing community engagement to bring awareness to this issue of child and forced marriage.

In the spring 2020, CALL welcomed a new Community Learning cohort of 375 students to serve Long Island across 60 community engagement partner organizations. They were to provide approximately 20,000 hours of community engagement by the end of the semester with 9 faculty leading the spring cohort across 16 sections of the course. On March 16, the world as these OW students had known it was dramatically changed by a global pandemic. Their community-based learning engagements cut-short by the by closure of one community engagement partner organization after another. But, these OW students remained resilient.

Unwavered in the face of unprecedented challenges emerging from a global pandemic, they continued to make purposeful sacrifices in their on-going commitment to serve. They are the embodiment of the 14-year history of the CALL program throughout which students have served their communities through major crises of various types: urban neglect, natural disasters, 9/11, and a recession.

The global pandemic necessitated that spring 2020 cohort of CALL students pivot their deliver of service to their communities from the program’s traditional community-based student learning engagements to engaging in a virtual common community-based student learning experience. This required students to adapt in creative and flexible ways in an ambiguous and complex environment. Under the committed leadership and support of their dedicated Community Learning (CL2000) faculty, students were asked to document and reflect upon the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on themselves, their families, their communities, and their learning as first-year college students.

Reflection prompts included: What has Covid-19 taught them about themselves, their relationships, their communities, American society, public policy, government and/or the meaning of global citizenship? How has Old Westbury’s historic social justice mission, with its emphasis on the values of diversity, equity, access, integrity, compassion, critical thinking and community engagement: “building a more just and sustainable world,” contributed to the way they think about and act in this challenging time? Do they think that the significant disruption of their first year in college by a global pandemic will be an experience that they remember for the rest of their lives?

The common community-based student learning experience created a shared reflective record that documents the events we have witnessed, our fears, concerns and what we have discovered about our response as individuals, communities, a nation and a global society. This in itself is an act of civic engagement from which we, and future generations, can learn. In this spirit, it will serve as a collaborative Applied Learning project between CALL and the Media Innovation Center during the fall 2020 semester, in which reflections, with the consent of the students who created them, will be edited into a 90-minute documentary portraying their personal experiences and those of their families and communities as they confronted the global pandemic. In the absence of a spring CALL Colloquy, this is the legacy of the spring 2020 CALL cohort positively impacting the future learning opportunities of their OW peers.

Innovating learning environments that are different than others they have experienced as students is a best practice of the CALL program, and in the face of a dramatically different learning environment resulting from the global pandemic, CALL students enrolled in Community Learning (CL1000) and College, Community and Global Citizenship (CL3000) responded as their peers enrolled in Community Learning (2000) with resilience to ensure continuity in service to community.

In collaborative programming with the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP), during the spring 2020 semester, CALL and EOP piloted a project in which upper division EOP students continued on next page
enrolled in College, Community and Global Citizen (CL3000) served as peer mentors to First-Year EOP students. Over the summer 2020, continuing from a program piloted during the summer 2019, another collaborative program between CALL and EOP, will enroll incoming EOP students in Community Learning (CL1000).

And, in a time of precarity, high school students enrolled in Community Learning (CL2000) during the spring 2020, through collaborative programming between CALL and the OW Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and Smart Scholars programs, adapted to their new learning environment to continue to engage and be a visible personification in their schools on Long Island and in New York City of OW’s commitment to social justice.

When broken-down to the fundamental component that makes all of this possible, it is the recognition that our students are the heart of CALL, the communities they serve, and the College. The continuity and resilience of all those students adapting and continuing to serve their communities in the face the ubiquity and tumultuousness of a global pandemic is humbling.

In its pursuit to continue to support its students’ commitment to community service, CALL is prioritizing pedagogy, outreach, pathways and well-being with a vision for short-term and long implications in its communication with its community partners to develop realistic and achievable pathways forward to re-engage students physically onsite, virtually and/or under a hybrid approach. Planning is centered around finding a balance between achieving learning outcomes in the presence of physical distancing. Emphasis is on developing community-based engagements/learning experiences that are tailored and sustainable. CALL is grateful for the generous engagement of its community partners in this collaborative pursuit.

In addition, in its ongoing commitment to innovating and modeling best practices, CALL is developing a summer program to engage students, CALL Cares. This program will provide students with the opportunities of participating in Covid-19 contact tracing, Census, or tailoring virtual community engagement projects to their particular motivations. The implication of program is a paradigm shift that would empower students to develop their unique community engagement project. This would expand beyond a programmatic requirement to simply get students involved with community engagement, and instead empower students to develop desirable and positive benefits under their own design.

CALL applauds all the students serving communities through its program and all students across the SUNY-system that are responding to the call from their communities. These students are inspiring and model service in pursuit of a common good. CALL will continue to expand the communities served by their program through the dedication and perseverance of its students. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with other SUNY’s across the state to empower students from all campus to positively impact communities across the state. Inquiries may be sent to Hugh Fox, Associate Director, Community Action, Learning and Leadership (CALL) program – foxh@oldwestbury.edu.

SUNY Brockport Exercise Science Students Learn by Doing

Dr. Elizabeth Lenz and Mr. Eric Sandler

Housed within the Department of Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education at SUNY-Brockport, the Exercise Science major prepares students for entry into all aspects of the fitness field or pursue graduate studies in an allied health professional program. As a pre-requisite to the major-required internship, students complete PEP455, Practicum in Exercise Programming. Students use their knowledge and skills developed over the years to screen, test, and prescribe exercise with a population they see themselves working with after college. Students can choose to spend their time with one of the following practicum location: Faculty and Staff Fitness Training (FAST) Program working with college employees, Gerofit (a program hosted by the Canandaigua-NY VA Hospital) working with retired veterans, Special Olympics Powerlifting Program working with athletes with disabilities, or the Varsity Athletic Weight Room working with student-athletes. By having a variety of practicum experiences, students are able to tailor their time with a population that is most meaningful to them.

The Exercise Science major has approximately 30-40 students per semester enrolled in the Practicum for Exercise Programming course. The students spend a minimum of 30 hours gaining invaluable experience applying their previous coursework in real-life situations. Students state that beyond putting what they have learned into practice, many improve their organizational skills, communication strategies, time...
Nicole Manapol

SUNY Geneseo’s TOGETHER Program - from co-curricular experience to high-impact applied learning experience

SUNY Geneseo’s TOGETHER Program is a college-community learning collaboration launched in 2018 to help students and community members break linguistic barriers and embrace cultural diversity. It brings Spanish-speaking families to campus for adult literacy and pre-K–grade 12 tutoring by Geneseo students. TOGETHER is coordinated through the Department of Language and Literatures’ Center for Language and Cultures, and supported by Career Development. Its reciprocally-beneficial model demonstrates three key elements of applied learning design:

1. TOGETHER meets a strategic community need, responding both to the growing number of Spanish-speaking families as a result of Hurricane Maria’s displacement of thousands of Puerto Ricans and to the increasing reliance on Mexican and Central American farm labor in the significant agricultural counties of Livingston and Wyoming.

2. TOGETHER promotes inclusion and equity of access, functioning free from constraints found in state or federal assistance programs and so able to accept anyone who wants to study English. This support bridges a critical gap in ESL services for Livingston and Wyoming Counties’ growing Hispanic community, employers and local schools. Any student from any discipline at Geneseo can participate in TOGETHER. Finally, students are able to engage in learning outcomes-oriented work and develop cultural competency without leaving campus, which increases participation opportunities.

3. TOGETHER achieves transformational learning, both through students’ encounters with area families and through metacognitive reflection. Emily Cook, a Sophomore Early Childhood Education major who serves as a TOGETHER P-12 tutor, described learning in an Education course about how puppets can engage reserved students. She applied this knowledge to her tutoring, using Milne Library’s animal puppets to teach English animal names. Emily recognized “the overwhelming sense of accomplishment that I felt that day because I could tell that I had positively impacted the lives of my students, which I had dreamed of doing since preschool when I decided that I wanted to be a teacher.”

As higher education institutions grapple with how to provide all students with equitable access to high-impact applied learning opportunities, SUNY Geneseo’s TOGETHER program provides a design model for addressing complex, local challenges while drawing on students’ existing knowledge and fostering their civic and academic development.

An update:
Since this article was written in March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic required SUNY Geneseo to close its campus and move to remote instruction. Undeterred, the TOGETHER program pivoted to online delivery as well, ensuring its tutoring services continued for families and children at a moment when staying connected is vital. So we might add to the list of applied learning design best practice - TOGETHER supports adaptation and resilience.
RKids tutor session

Due to Covid-19, all Alternative Break experiences for the spring 2020 semester were postponed. While, our community partners understood the precautionary measures we had to take to keep our students safe, because of the care we’ve taken to build long-standing partnerships, both our local and national partners, have already agreed to host and engage our students in 2021. We’ve also been able to collaborate and support the efforts of our local organizations during the pandemic by circulating and fulfilling volunteer and donation requests, as well as creating virtual programming where they could speak to an even wider student audience about the mission of their organization.

At Buffalo State College, the student-led Alternative Break program in the Civic and Community Engagement Office is celebrating its 10th year of offering co-curricular service experiences to students during their fall, winter, spring, and summer breaks. Ten years have afforded nearly 300 students
deep and meaningful experiences planning, leading, and participating in service trips focused on community priorities in numerous places, regionally and nationally. Throughout this time, we have come away with four pillars that ring true, no matter the year or generation of students, that can be applied to various civic- and community-engagement initiatives on your campus.

**PILLAR #1 – PARTNERSHIPS MATTER**

A strength of the Alternative Break program at Buffalo State is our on-going work to develop long-term relationships with nonprofit organizations. Doing so provides background information and fewer surprises, while allowing our program to create a legacy with the organization, even in a community that may be hundreds of miles away.

One example of such a partnership is Sky Meadows State Park in Delaplane, Virginia. Since 2014, our program participants have traveled to join forces with the park on several high-impact projects, including tree planting in the riparian zone throughout the park, building new hiking trails, and completing a boundary-marking project around the entire perimeter of the park. This spring break will mark the fourth trip in partnership with the park, and the students will have the opportunity to revisit a project done by Buffalo State students back in 2014!

The group will be removing the plastic tubes that surrounded the tree saplings planted by the original group. Perhaps it is not the most glamorous of projects, but the curricular connection to the first team that explored the partnership in 2014 exemplifies the ways in which partnerships develop and can be maintained over long periods of time and distances.

This year, we are collaborating with our partners to determine how our program and our breakers can support them in other ways beyond the one-week experience, such as engaging in a community service project from a distance or writing a story for their newsletter. We would like to strengthen some of our best partnerships even more.

**PILLAR #2 – LOCAL EXPERIENCES HAVE APPEAL**

For our program’s inaugural service trip in 2010, students and a staff member stayed in a local church and worked with Buffalo nonprofit partners. Each year since then, we have organized a trip focused on relevant social issues in the Buffalo area and collaborated with organizations connected through our office’s other initiatives (service-learning courses, annual community service day, etc.). The social issue focus has varied from housing and homelessness to welcoming our refugees and immigrant neighbors. While there have been concerns that students will not want to “stay” locally for an Alternative Break experience, our student leaders and student participants have highlighted the value of serving the local community and learning about global and nationwide issues from the local lens, saying “I learned so much more than I expected about my city and the people in it since I was exposed to new neighborhoods. We engaged in an experience that opened our eyes to our individual privileges and the barriers that certain vulnerable populations in our city face.” Our local experiences have become an invaluable offering in the Alternative Break program.

**PILLAR #3 – STUDENTS LEADING STUDENTS IS CRITICAL**

We have modified our student leadership model throughout the years, but consistently, the program has adopted the students-leading-students model. Student leaders with past Alternative Break experience are selected to coordinate a trip for the following year. These students are engaged in two full-day trainings and weekly meetings with the assistant director of the Civic and Community Engagement Office as they plot out their plans, communicate with housing and community partners, and organize their “lessons” for pre-trip orientation meetings and on-trip reflection activities. Through this model we have witnessed growth within the program that our staff members may not have initiated, such as the creation of a financial-need scholarship, a formal site leader role, and participant selection process.

**PILLAR #4 – CO-CURRICULAR DOESN’T MEAN LESS IMPACT**

While the knee-jerk reaction might be that a co-curricular experience will have less of an impact on student learning, we discovered the opposite is true. Admittedly, students who choose to apply - and are selected to be the student leaders on a trip - certainly gain additional learning experience. They are often motivated to apply for a site leader position as per their positive experience from a previous trip. One Alternative Break site leader remarked:

“Alternative Break made me aware of what’s going on in the world and how even small actions can make an impact. This encourages me to continue to do all that I can, even when problems seem insurmountable. If I never had the opportunity to practice my leadership skills as a participant and then as a site leader, it would have been a lot harder for me to facilitate meetings between partners and my clients in my career.”

Furthermore, the learning and connection to the community goes beyond the confines of the week-long trip and the college experience. The “alumni” of our Alternative Break program are some of the most community-engaged of Buffalo State’s alumni. They have created and worked in programs focused on mental health, HIV support, and social justice, and many have completed years of service with AmeriCorps and City Year. They frequently support fundraisers for the program, which have yielded more than $2,000 in the last five years. And, the impact of their support, as well as their continued connection to the college, has left a lasting impact on the college and the Alternative Break program.
Black History Month

Stephanie Pough

Black History month proved to be a very busy and successful for SUNY WCC students. While applying their learning, they also engaged in health promotion through service learning and community service. On February 14, nursing students helped dispel myths and raise awareness of heart disease and stroke - the number one killer of women – through a collaboration with the WCC Black History Month Health Committee and the American Red Cross. Then, later in the month, Ossining Extension Health Center students promoted “Your Health Matters” aimed at removing barriers to health care access. Students and vendors alike sought to engage the public in conversation about common health issues and health concerns by performing basic health screenings such as: cholesterol and glucose; weight and height measurements; and pulse, respiration, blood pressure monitoring.

These Applied Learning events addressed an unmet need for no-cost services that target prevention and education among various demographics. Kudos!

University at Buffalo Co-Curricular Projects and the Soft Skills Studio

The UB Experiential Learning Network (ELN) supports academic and professional preparation through its Soft Skills Studio and other Co-curricular Projects. Through the UB Experiential Learning Network, we designed our Project Portal to be both accessible and nimble. We wanted to ensure that any student, regardless of major or life circumstances, could engage in meaningful experiential learning projects without any additional cost or academic constraints.

To accomplish these goals, we designed a co-curricular model and developed a series of digital badges to guide students through the engagement process - helping them to Prepare, Engage, Add value, Reflect, and Leverage (PEARL) their experiences toward deep and lasting impacts.

While our Portal features many research-focused projects, it also emphasizes career preparation and professional development, offering both remote and reflection-based mini projects to support students’ specific needs.

Our Soft Skills Studio project was designed to guide students through their exploration of specific soft skills important to their intended field, or potentially problematic or lacking within their own preparation. Since employers often emphasize perceived gaps and deficits in soft skills, with regard to work force preparedness, we created a flexible space for student exploration and development. We currently have two students engaged in this co-curricular project. And, although they are both pursuing business degrees, they are taking very different approaches. Yijia Pan, featured in this student story, is researching how specific companies in the U.S. and China are managing the evolving Corona pandemic through a leadership, communication and collaborative lens. Another student is focusing on the field of accounting (her academic major) and is leveraging LinkedIn networks to connect with women accountants around the world. These connections have enabled her to gain insight and receive suggestions related to communication, problem solving, and critical thinking, while also confronting her own discomfort with communication via Zoom interviews.

These two student interpretations of the same project highlight the value of a co-curricular approach to high-impact experiential learning. By supporting unique student needs and interests, in ways that enhance and complement coursework and program requirements, we can maximize student engagement while expanding access and impact.
Peter Crescenti

The coronavirus has stopped many events in their tracks – from business conferences to opening day of Major League Baseball – but, it did not deter the Sherwin-Williams Sales Competition 2020 SUNY Challenge. Though it didn’t come off as originally planned, it did happen.

“Sherwin-Williams adapted quickly to offer an innovative virtual format, for the competition to move forward,” says Rena Varghese, executive director of Farmingdale State College’s Nexus Center for Applied Learning and Career Development. “Even in these challenging times, our students had an invaluable opportunity to showcase their hard work.”

The event was an applied-learning entrepreneurship competition, designed to address real-world business issues. Co-sponsored by Farmingdale, it was supported by grants from SUNY Applied Learning Professional Development Funds and SUNY 4Pi, and open to all SUNY undergraduate students. Seven teams, representing three SUNY schools – all on Long Island – participated: Farmingdale, Stony Brook University, and SUNY Old Westbury.

The competition tasked students with developing creative ways to grow a specific segment of Sherwin-Williams’s business – an honor when you think about it, given that Sherwin-Williams is a Fortune 500 company, and a world leader in the development, manufacture, distribution and sale of coatings and related products. Teams had to write detailed executive summaries, and then virtually present them to a five-member panel of Sherwin-Williams district managers and sales reps.

“The competition was great on so many levels,” says Jon Lawniczak, Long Island District Manager. “Students had to make many adaptions to make their presentation work virtually. This is real-life business. It does not always go according to plan. I feel they certainly gained from the experience. Their perspective on our business was insightful and we will be incorporating many of the ideas into our future business plans.”

Recruitment Specialist Elly Deschamps, who coordinated the competition, adds: “Each team did a great job presenting their ideas virtually and answering all questions during the Q&A. Students were able to learn how to present to a virtual audience and sell their ideas well. I’m amazed at how well teams adapted, and I’m incredibly impressed by the work of each team throughout the whole competition!”

In addition to Lawniczak, Sherwin-Williams judges were John Castellane, Long Island/NY District Sales Manager; Jason Hegenbart, Long Island/NY District Sales Manager; Nicole Strella, Sales Representative; and Robert Trepsas, Sales Representative/Residential Repaint.

The Stony Brook team won the competition and a $3,000 prize, for its “Partnering with Paint Program,” a CRM initiative for managing the low-end market, and enhancing a new customer-relations program.

“We got to take a deeper look into the way a real business progresses in its industry, on both the corporate level and local retail level,” says team member Vanessa Luttran. Her partner, Renee Salerno, adds: “It is one thing to sit in a classroom and learn about marketing initiatives, but once you get the opportunity to actually apply them in a real-world setting, that is where you really learn.”

Stony Brook business professor Stacey Finkelstein says: “One of the things I strive for in my courses is to provide students with a chance to practice applying their knowledge to real businesses. Renee and Vanessa worked extremely hard and learned valuable lessons that solidified their experiences in the classroom at SBU.”

Farmingdale placed second ($2,000) and Old Westbury third ($1,000). FSC’s two-person team recommended SEO strategies, a social-media marketing campaign, and website redesign. The team members were Jessica Re (Science, Technology and Society) and Gary Rehg (Business Management). They were mentored by Dr. Heather Kirkwood, assistant professor, business management, and received applied-learning graduation credit for participating.

“Presenting at the sales competition was fun and exhilarating,” says Re. “Using the skills from my business classes prepared me to be confident.” Dr. Kirkwood was equally enthusiastic about participating. “Working with the FSC team was refreshing. I witnessed them demonstrate their dedication and commitment to seeing a project through, regardless of what obstacles were thrown their way. I was able to see first-hand their keen ability to make ‘real-world’ connections and decisions based on theories taught in the classroom.”

Old Westbury team mentor, Dr. Alireza Ebrahimi, associate professor of management, marketing and finance, observed: “It was a unique experience watching how confident the team members were with their proposal, and their will to compete during the COVID-19 outbreaks.”

Sherwin-Williams regularly recruits Farmingdale students and alumni for jobs and internships. It is working with the Nexus Center to host a virtual information session this spring.
Geography and Biology Students Collaborate to Conduct Community Tree Survey

Chris A. Badurek

How can we quantify the value of trees to a community? This was one of the goals of a multi-day community tree survey as part of civic engagement components of two connected SUNY Cortland courses. In fall 2019, students from the Geography Department course Environmental Remote Sensing - led by Chris Badurek - and Biology Department course Tree Biology - led by Steve Broyles - conducted a tree survey for the Village of Homer, NY. They received support from SUNY Cortland’s NSF Common Problems Pedagogy grant, which was led by CAS Dean Mattingly and Village of Homer Mayor, Hal McCabe.

The students collected nearly 1,000 tree data points, using the iTree mobile app and GPS units, over two half-day Saturdays, covering the public right-away area around sidewalks across the entire two-square mile Village of Homer. Mayor McCabe provided t-shirts for the group and made official announcements to inform residents about the survey. The students formed mixed teams to determine a problem to address, with the data, and collaborated with geography students who created maps and conducted image processing on aerial photography.

Students shared their findings with invited guests - including Mayor McCabe and Dean Mattingly - in collaborative final presentations covering the biodiversity, ecosystem services, and trees that cause nuisances to the town in form of sidewalk damage and powerline obstruction. The students found a species distribution greater than 56% maples, with over 25% invasive Norway Maple, along with non-natives such as Callery pear at 3.4% and Norway spruce at 1.7%. Maps and analysis of total species dollar value for ecosystem services of carbon storage, stormwater, aesthetic value, air quality, and energy cost reduction were also presented along with future planting recommendations.

The percent of maples is well above recommended guidelines for healthy urban biodiversity and Mayor McCabe noted the usefulness of this and other information provided by the students. Geography junior Connor Brierton, who participated in the survey in the fall, continued with additional data analysis for the Village in his internship work this past spring. His work was funded by Dr. Badurek’s SUNY IITG grant on Virtual Internships in GIST. Connor shared a poster of his project as part of the virtual Transformations. He will continue to develop a “Virtual 3D Homer” online application and students in Badurek’s fall GIS courses will add additional data analysis with support from the Cortland Applied Learning Practitioner project Communicating the Value of Urban Forests in the Village of Homer using Web GIS Tools.
NASH’s High Impact Practices: An Educator’s Guide

Rebecca Martin

We are excited to announce the launch of NASH’s new free online resource, High Impact Practices: An Educator’s Guide. Over 35 interviews and case stories are included sharing lessons on implementing and scaling equitable HIPs, drawing from NASH’s Taking Student Success to Scale: High Impact Practices project.

Please share these resources broadly with your networks and colleagues. We would appreciate if you would include the modules in your newsletters, listservs, learning communities, faculty meetings etc., and also include the URL (www.hips.nashonline.org) on your webpage. Please reach out if you would like an image from the modules to use in publicity materials.

The modules help provide a scaffold for thinking about HIPs in the larger context of student success efforts, and provide issues to consider for more successful implementation. The 11 modules include the following: Why HIPs Matter; Readiness Assessment; System Vision & Leadership; Goal Setting & Communication; Teaching & Learning; Transparency & Quality Learning; Pedagogy & Equity; Assess & Analyze; Equitable Assessment & Action; Implement & Scale; HIPs Spotlights.

The design is interactive and self-directed allowing learners - both individuals and teams - to create personalized learning experiences. System staff, and campus faculty and administrators who want to learn about implementing, scaling and assessing equitable High Impact Practices can all benefit from these modules. Given the constraints - of time, cost, geography, personnel - of in-person professional development, these modules provide campuses and systems with additional solutions.

We look forward to learning your response to these resources as we build on them to continue to strengthen our efforts on the NASH priorities of improving student success and closing equity gaps.

http://www.hips.nashonline.org

Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic-Engagement

published its final issue this spring. This is North Carolina Campus Compact’s peer-reviewed, online journal, hosted by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

ARTICLES
Science, Technology and the Nightly News: A Service Learning-Based Approach in Teaching Science Communication to Journalism Students
Tom Hallaq, Samuel Chege Mwangi
Leadership Education through Extracurricular Civic Engagement
Rebecca Awuah, Sena Agyepong, Prince Kwarase
Community Engagement Beyond the Buzzwords: Student Internalizations of the Land-

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Grant Mission
Megan Jeanette Myers
Envisioning Critical Social Entrepreneurship Education: Possibilities, Questions, and Guiding Commitments
Mark Joseph Congdon Jr., Liliana Herakova

INVITED ARTICLES
In celebration of p(P)artnership(s)
Lisa K Keyne
An Adventure in Learning about Communication in Partnerships
Rebecca J. Dumlao

BOOK REVIEWS
Building the Field of Higher Education Engagement
Spoma Jovanovic
Educating Teachers and Tomorrow’s Students Through Service Learning Pedagogy
Tempestt Adams
Reconceptualizing Faculty Development in Service - Learning/Community Engagement: Exploring Intersections, Frameworks, and Models of Practice
Candace Chambers
Equity Partnerships: A Culturally Proficient Guide to Family, School, and Community Engagement
Erin Lewis
The managing editors of the SUNY Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement (JoSE) invite you to submit articles for its August and (special) October editions. JoSE is an open-access peer-reviewed journal that focuses on applied learning. It emphasizes rigorous scholarship, pragmatism, and reciprocity. JoSE distinguishes itself from other applied learning journals by focusing on relationships between SUNY-approved learning strategies and students’ readiness for careers and citizenship.

To accommodate the extra work that we are all doing during this tumultuous time, we will publish JoSE’s next edition in early August (instead of June). You can read JoSE’s introductory edition at https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/jose/

We encourage you to submit articles for that edition and for a special edition in mid-October, entitled “Re-Boot Reflections: Transition Teaching in a Time of Crisis.”

In preparation for your article submission in that special edition, we encourage you to record, in a single place, your observations, musings, and revelations. (Forgive us – You’re probably already doing that.) We are interested in articles that can help us all prepare for this era of rapid change by reflecting on, for example,

- Learning in a time of transition
- The nature of learning in a time of crisis.
- Using crises as learning opportunities for students and for faculty
- Reflecting on the role of reflection

Many conditions – environmental and social – have set the stage for additional turbulent times for which we, as educators, should be preparing. This special JoSE edition is intended to help us begin to prepare.

**PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES**

**National Education Association Grants**

Student achievement grants support initiatives that improve academic achievement... Learning and leadership grants support high quality professional development.

**Institute of Education Sciences Grants**

Research that addresses important issues in education and develops solutions that improve school readiness and academic achievement for all students.

**Center for Teaching Grant Funding Resources for Educational Initiatives**
For our next newsletter, we would appreciate submissions on applied learning and STEAM. What creative ways are supporting hands-on experiences in the STEAM disciplines and across the STEAM disciplines? As always, we also welcome submissions on any applied learning topic.

Submissions are due to appliedlearning@suny.edu by August 3, 2020.