

# COMMUNITY LEARNING

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE  
THE OVCS NEWSLETTER

May 2009

## Exodus Program at Unity House Prepares Students By Cherisse Cruz '09

It was four years ago when I stepped onto this campus ready to immerse myself into the culture here at Connecticut College and to explore the endless opportunities available to students. Although I was excited to embark on my new journey, I was wary of the success I was going to achieve and the challenges I was going to be confronted with. As a Latina and from New York City, Connecticut College was much different from what I was used to back home. Although I struggled within the first year of being here, there was one place that was, and still continues to be, a support system for me and many students on this campus. It was Unity House that was my home away from home and the place that guided me throughout my years here.

From transitioning as a freshman, to becoming comfortable with myself on this campus as a sophomore, to finding my voice as a junior, and now graduating as a senior, Unity House has been there every step of the way. Much of who I am today is because of the people at Unity who have helped shape and mold me into the young woman I have become.

Currently I am a senior here at Connecticut College majoring in American Studies with a concentration in comparative race and ethnicity. When I first arrived at the beginning of this year, I was not sure if I was ready to leave Conn. College behind and begin a new life in the real world. Was I going to be prepared? What am I going to do with my life!? I had all these questions and more. It was then that I was introduced to the "Exodus" program at Unity House. Exodus is a support system for underrepresented juniors and seniors who are seeking guidance with their plans after graduation. Through Exodus, you are given a mentor with whom you have one-on-one consultations with throughout the year. In your meetings you discuss your career plans and objectives, apply for jobs, discuss graduate school options, as well as set and adhere to a tentative plan of action in order to fulfill your goals. It was through this program and the meetings with my Unity House mentor that I was able to plan ahead and leave Connecticut College with a



clear sense of what my future career path would look like. What's great about the Exodus program is that it allows students to get a jump start on their goals and allows them to take advantage of amazing career opportunities.

If I could offer any advice to soon-to-be-juniors and seniors it would be to apply and take advantage of this amazing program! If you are unsure of what your plans will be after graduation, or if you are scared of what's to come, then Exodus is right for you. Senior year can be a very stressful and overwhelming time. You have many things happening at once, but having a support system during this time is incredibly important and useful. I now feel confident in my future success and I owe part of this to the help of Unity house, my mentor, and the Exodus program.



### CONTENTS

Exodus Program at Unity House Prepares Students.....	1
PICA Speech: The Power of Community.....	2
OVCS Literary Magazine 2009.....	2

## Holleran Center

### PICA Speech: The Power of Community

Throughout the past four years at Connecticut College, we have been bombarded with waves of information. The theories, data, history, and predictions we learn all contribute to a greater understanding of the ecological and social state of our world. The realities are often grim. And then the question inevitably arises...what can I do? I am one twenty-one year old in a world of almost 7 billion people. Can I really effect global change?

The answer of course, is yes. However, what happens when not only I, but a group of persons orient themselves towards positive change? The result is more profound and widespread than any individual could achieve alone. This is the power of community. These past four years I have seen what a group of persons with a common set of intentions can achieve. From the Federation of Damanhur, one of the largest ecologically and socially responsible communities in the world, to networks of farmers in the most rural areas of Malawi, community offers sources of support and cooperation to its members. These communities not only effect large-scale change, but also provide the opportunity to serve as an example for humanity, an example of a responsible and exciting way of life.

This is why we must work together. This is why we must leave our insecurities, close-mindedness, and selfishness behind, and extend our hand across the table. We must share our stories, resources, and ideas with one another. We must look beyond the materials and egos that so often shade our perceptions of what is truly important in life. We have the power to bring change. This is an honor and a privilege. We must take advantage of it.



As the founder of Damanhur once told the community citizens (to paraphrase): "Why have we come together to form this Federation? Think of each and every-one of us as a candle. When the wind blows, a single candle will easily be extinguished. However, when the wind blows a thousand candles banded together, they will not be put out. We are a shining beckon of hope in the dark of night."

- By Eric Eric Dooley-Feldman '09

## OVCS Literary Magazine 2009

The Office of Volunteers for Community Service (OVCS) is looking for your contributions to the annual OVCS Literary Magazine 2009.

We welcome submissions from students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members in the form of writings, graphics, photos and activism with a direct or indirect reflection of the issues and experiences in the fields of community learning and service. Submissions from previous coursework, projects, and independent studies are welcome.

Introduced in the spring of 2007, the OVCS Literary magazine is an excellent platform that brings together the issues and experiences in the fields of community learning and volunteer-service within and beyond the New London community. We encourage you to share and expand your own ideas and experiences in the community through the literary media.

Please send your creative works to Jennifer Superson at [jesup@conncoll.edu](mailto:jesup@conncoll.edu)

**Community Learning** is published by the Office of Volunteers for Community Service for Connecticut College faculty, staff, and students, and for all members of the greater New London county community.

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