
HOLLERAN CENTER ALUMNI IN ACTION

HC Fall Newsletter 2015

Holleran Center Director awarded William T. Grant Foundation Distinguished Fellowship to research educational policymaking



Jennifer Fredricks, professor of human development at Connecticut College, has been awarded a \$141,103 Distinguished Fellowship from the William T. Grant Foundation to deepen her understanding of educational policymaking through a long-term residency at a Connecticut advocacy organization.

Fredricks is an internationally renowned expert on the operationalization and measurement of student engagement. Educators and policymakers are increasingly focused on student engagement as a key to addressing low achievement, high dropout rates, student alienation and inequalities in youth outcomes. With the support of the fellowship, Fredricks will undertake a 17-month residency at Connecticut Voices for Children, a leading legislative and advocacy organization. Fredricks will experience policy work in areas related to student engagement, such as inequities in educational funding, community schools, and

extended learning time programs. She will also write reports and fact sheets for public officials and the media, and testify at legislative hearings in Hartford. "As someone who cares deeply about creating more engaging schools, I am increasingly concerned about how little educational research is considered in policy decisions," Fredricks said. "My goal in this fellowship is to learn more about the policymaking process and how legislators use research evidence. I can then write research that is more accessible and influential to policymakers."

The William T. Grant Foundation supports the production of high-quality social science research, with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of children and young people. Distinguished Fellowships allow influential, mid-career scholars to immerse themselves in policy or practice settings, gaining knowledge and experience to inform their future research.

The Foundation awards approximately four Distinguished Fellowships each year through a highly competitive process, typically to scholars at large research universities. The award to Fredricks is the first Distinguished Fellowship ever to go to a researcher based at a liberal arts college.

Fredricks, who joined Connecticut College in 2000, recently received a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation to develop a measure of student engagement in math and science in middle and high school students. In 2011, she was appointed director of Connecticut College's Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy, a multidisciplinary academic center that advances teaching, learning, research, and community collaboration.

ENTREPRENEUR ALEXANDRIA GOMES COOLEY '04 SHARES HER EXCITING ENDEAVORS

I was recently appointed to serve as the North and South Carolina State Program Director with the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Federal grant-making agency that administers AmeriCorps VISTA and other National Service projects. Through this role, I support the funding, management and technical assistance of over 65 grantees focused on anti-poverty projects throughout the two states. In addition, I support a staff of four Program Officers and oversee an annual budget of over \$6 million in grants and resources. It's my plan to develop innovation VISTA projects and other grants that will address the systemic roots of poverty head-on. In addition to this new role, I recently launched a handmade line of natural skincare products called Bedford Botanics; my line of products includes lotions, body oils, body scrubs, lip balms and cold process soaps. This venture was inspired by my family, my love for natural products, and my overall upbringing. My family always promoted natural Haitian remedies and foods and I saw this as a vehicle to pay homage to my upbringing and heritage. The name Bedford Botanics is also a tribute to my childhood. I grew up on Bedford Avenue in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and many major life events such as my first job and high school graduation occurred at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens.

I'm thankful for my PICA experience because it allowed me to channel my personal experiences into an academic setting and interdisciplinary environment which as a result, supported my development into a well-rounded, hard-working and creative professional who's able to work alongside a diverse group of community members, stakeholders and colleagues. PICA taught me that it's okay to view the world through the lens of various experiences that make me the woman that I am today. PICA validated my authentic desire and need to lead from my heart, while using my knowledge base as a social scientist and practitioner. Lastly, PICA allowed me to be bold, dream big and believe that my idealism wasn't simply youthful enthusiasm. The best part of being a PICA scholar was having a dedicated group of faculty, staff, and administrators to support myself and the other scholars through our journey. My best piece of advice to current PICA scholars is to find strong mentors who accept you for the individual you are and for the professional who you desire to become; these individuals will provide invaluable direction as you venture into an uncertain future.

In terms of the future, my goal is to continue the balancing act of being a wife, mom, professional, entrepreneur and community member. I currently serve as a Board Member with two local nonprofits in Chapel Hill, NC; these roles enable me to share my academic, professional and personal knowledge of community building in order to support students, young girls, and families who may experience academic and personal challenges. I feel committed to ensuring that other young people receive the same opportunities that my family sought out for me, and that my husband and I seek out for our own daughter. I look forward to continuing this journey of service.

Attention Students!

Apply for the Holleran Center's Social Entrepreneurship Initiative (SEI). Grants of up to \$500 are given out to students or student groups looking to fund innovative solutions to campus and community challenges. For more info, visit <http://holleran.conncoll.edu>

Applications are due **Friday, October 30**

Bettina Weiss '15 continues her advocacy work with Green Dot after college



Bettina Weiss '15 (left) and Jessica Peacock, the Bystander Intervention Facilitator at Bergen Community College working at a table for Green Dot.

I am the Prevention Coordinator with healingSPACE, a sexual violence resource center with the YWCA Bergen County, NJ. I was approached about this position after becoming a confidential sexual violence advocate for a hotline that is run through healingSPACE. My main responsibilities include meeting with groups of high school students to talk about media literacy and bystander intervention, and I am also contracted to help implement Green Dot at Bergen Community College.

Meanwhile, I am also a gun violence reporter for Generation Progress. In this position, I write weekly blogs and monthly features about issues pertaining to gun violence. In August, I was approached to write a feature for the anniversary of Michael Brown's death, for which I interviewed family members of victims of police brutality.

In addition, I volunteer as a crisis counselor on the Crisis Text Line, a 24/7 texting hotline. This experience has been incredible and allows me to explore the world of crisis intervention outside the confines of sexual violence.

PICA shaped my current work and worldview by teaching me that there isn't one way to go about helping a community. My work as a Prevention Coordinator is truly hands-on in one specific community, while my reporting with Generation Progress is providing a larger community with information. Both kinds of work are fulfilling to me and I am thankful for the opportunity to do both.

In the future, I would like to continue my education. I am exploring options and leaning toward the public policy route while another part of me is really enjoying working in human services. Either way I need to take the GRE so that's probably next on my list of things to do!

My favorite part about being in PICA was working with such strong-willed people. I miss the opportunity to sit in a room with my PICA class and hear about everyone's interests and endeavors. I am definitely looking forward to hearing updates from everyone!

Don't put yourself in a box. Of course, you are focused on a specific topic, but allow yourself to explore other areas while you're working on your SIP. Your interests don't exist independently of one another; find how they connect and go for that! You will be happiest if you are doing something that leaves you feeling fulfilled at the end of the day.

SAVE THE DATE!

**The Holleran Center for Community Action
and Public Policy**
cordially invites you to its

20th Anniversary Celebration

Friday, April 8, 2016

Time: TBA

Crozier Williams, 1962 Room

Dinner and cocktails will be served

Contact Penney Jade Beaubrun '11 at
pbeaubru@conncoll.edu for any questions

LEAH SWINSON '15, CURRENT FELLOW AT THE BOSTON CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

As a member of the PICA Class of 2015, it still feels strange to be a college graduate and to no longer be on campus surrounded by my friends and peers. That's one of the reasons I was excited to attend the Holleran Center's Boston Networking Event in June – to once again be connected with members of a familiar community. Not only did that mean reconnecting with friends and staff of the Holleran Center I hadn't seen since graduation, but also establishing connections with recent alumni. It was so valuable to connect with alumni from the last five and ten years and see how their PICA experiences had prepared them for post-grad life, even if what they're doing now is completely different from their PICA interests. It was comforting to hear that not everyone ended up where they expected to – at least, not right away.

In the weeks since the Boston Networking Event, I recently accepted a paid fellowship at the Boston Children's Museum in Visitor Experience and Education. Over the next ten months, I will be working in BCM's numerous exhibits and attending weekly professional development trainings focused on museum education, visitor services, and community engagement. My PICA area of interest began in education, and after three years working in museums and volunteering in public schools, I'm excited to connect these interests at the Boston Children's Museum – one of the city's many organizations dedicated to community learning.

What I've always valued most about PICA is the shared sense of community I feel transcends each individual class and radiates through the entire center. As students, faculty, and staff, our interests ranged from education equity and health care access to racial justice and sustainable food. Nevertheless, we all seemed united by a shared determination to make a positive impact on the world around us and to confront injustice in its many forms with thoughtful, practical, and sometimes radical solutions. This shared sense of passion and idealism made me realize that no matter what I do in my professional life, I have to work in this type of community, where people feel compelled to act and know that their actions have meaning.

Now that I'm officially an alumna, my advice to current PICA scholars is to take advantage of the many opportunities that Conn has to offer (especially that new library). It's a rare thing to be constantly surrounded by hundreds of people who are not only at the same place in life as you are, but also so actively involved in so many clubs, organizations, and activities. Four years really isn't a lot of time in hindsight, so make the most of it while you can!



Calendar 2015-2016

Saturday, October 10

Time: 4-5 p.m.
Holleran Center Fall Weekend
Gathering for alumni, students,
families, faculty and staff
Olin Lounge

Friday, October 30

Social Entrepreneurship
Initiative grants due to the
Holleran Center

Friday, April 8

Holleran Center 20th
Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, April 9

Time: 2:00 p.m.
Holleran Center PICA Class of
2016
Conference and Banquet
Crozier Williams

Sunday, April 24

Time: 2:00 p.m.
9th Annual Walk to End
Homelessness and Health Fair
New London Homeless
Hospitality Shelter

Saturday, May 21

Time: 1:00 p.m.
Holleran Center PICA
Certificate Ceremony
1941 Room, Crozier Williams

Saturday, June 4

Holleran Center Reunion
Dinner

Miriam Rubin '08 updates us on her post-college experiences



I am currently working as Director of Programs at Big Sister Association of Greater Boston where I oversee a community-based mentoring program for women and girls. Before that, I worked in the field of college access and success first doing direct service and then managing programs at an organization called Bottom Line. As I moved into management, I realized that I wanted to take some time to really develop my skills in this area which led me to get an MBA in Non-Profit Management at Brandeis University's Heller School (a place I urge all of you PICA students to check out!).

As I was growing up and thinking about how I wanted to make an impact on the world, I always knew that I wanted to work with youth in Boston. However, what I didn't know was how exactly I wanted to go about doing that. Through PICA, I was able to develop this interest by participating in different volunteer

opportunities working with New London students, completing two CELS internships in local, education non-profits in Boston, and writing a final thesis focused on improving college access and success for urban youth. Being part of a community of students in PICA who were so focused on wanting to make a difference in the world was truly inspiring and one of the major highlights of my experience at Connecticut College. I have three pieces of advice to future PICA students. 1. Take advantage of every opportunity the program has to offer. 2. Think beyond what has been done in the past and take control of shaping your own path and 3. Invest time into building strong, meaningful and reciprocal relationships with fellow students, staff, professors, community members, PICA alumni, and everyone else with whom you cross paths – these are the people that you will work with to help change the world!

Lisa Warren '07 tells us about her career position and PICA's influence on her life experiences



Lisa Warren (middle) with LeighAnn Mesiti and Sophia Shrand at the LEAD (Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability) Conference in DC.

I have turned my PICA project—'Museum access for underserved populations' into my life's work in my new role as the Accessibility Coordinator for the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston. There, I help to ensure that at MFA, Art is for everyone, irrespective of ability or disability. Under the guidance of Hannah Goodwin, Manager of Accessibility, I run an interpretation program that offers Access Tours for visitors with a variety of special needs.

I credit the foundations of my PICA classwork, experience of my funded internship, and guidance of Education and Museum Studies Professors like Peggy Sheridan and Christopher Steiner for helping to lay the intellectual groundwork for my further academic pursuits, an M.A. in Museum Studies from John's Hopkins University, and subsequent career in Museum Education and Access.

Looking back, I think that the most important thing I gleaned from my participation in the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy is the understanding that effective social change is only possible when civic action is viewed not as a lofty goal, or a cause worthy of support, but a personal choice one needs to make and remake each and every day.

I try my best to live my life by a motto taught to me during the program: 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'

--Margaret Meade

David Cruz, OVCS Community Learning Coordinator Thoughts on the Boston Networking Event



David Cruz (second to right) with alumni Miriam Rubin '08 (far left) and Melanie Joubanian '10 (second to left) and Staff Administrator Kiesha Henry (far right) at the Boston Networking Event

I had the honor to attend the Connecticut College Holleran Center Alumni Networking Event in Boston, Massachusetts that was held on Saturday June 13, 2015. I was invited by members of the Holleran Center staff, and of course I jumped at the chance to attend an event where I would be able to meet alumni of the College and more specifically, Holleran Center activists. In total, there were around 25 alumni present. Many were living or/and working in the New England area. A few traveled as far away as Maryland and California but were able to attend the event because fortunately, they happened to be in Boston that weekend. Also, a wide range of class years were represented as well where I had the chance to speak to an alumnus who graduated recently in 2015 and another in 2002!

The event was at a location named Emerald Lounge. The gathering took place at a beautiful private section in the lounge attached to the Revere Hotel in the heart of Boston. An open bar and appetizers made for a friendly environment that welcomed all that were there to greet and meet each other. Many Holleran staff members that were present have worked at the Holleran Center for over a decade so it was very nice to see them catch up with former students that now have families or are managing businesses. Other staff members, such as myself, have only been at the College for a few years and therefore did not know many of the Holleran alumni that attended the event.

For me, it was a great experience to meet alumni who have done so much since their time at Connecticut College. I met someone who has traveled the world doing research on indigenous communities and also met someone who has started his own consulting and soft skills training business. It was encouraging to see alumni who were around the same age as me who were so successful in their respective fields. I do not doubt that the work done by the Holleran Center over the years has played a role in the professional development of the alumni I met that day. I really enjoyed the event and I hope all those who attended were able to enjoy themselves as well and feel good about seeing so many fellow alumni involved in so many impactful projects!

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Internship

By Taryn Kitchen '16



A butterfly mural was made after the conference to represent the 65,000 MA residents who would benefit from Obama's administrative relief.

Last summer, I interned at the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition. It is a coalition with over 130 member organizations that works to promote immigrant rights and integration through policy advocacy, organizing, trainings, citizenship assistance, and more throughout the state.

I really loved working there, both because the Coalition's mission was very closely aligned with my personal and academic interests, and because there was a really positive and collaborative work environment among the staff and interns.

My advice for upcoming juniors would be to think broadly about the sorts of positions you could do. I applied for the Communications Internship at

MIRA on a whim, even though I haven't taken any classes related to communications, and have found that I loved working there and learned a lot of new skills that I wouldn't have learned had I chosen a position in another department. If you just find an organization you love, our liberal arts skills will help you adapt to any tasks.

Ciara Beaulieu '16 interns with the Department of Justice this summer



I interned with the Department of Justice at the Office on Violence Against Women. Specifically, I worked in the Legal Assistance for Victims unit, under the supervision of a grant-maker.

The Office on Violence Against Women provides federal grants to non-profits with the goal of enhancing the national capacity to reduce violence against women and administer justice for victims and survivors of sexual assault, domestic/dating violence and stalking.

My internship allowed me to understand how policy gets transformed into federal funding, and then is administered on a local level. As my PICA area of interest focuses on women's movements countering violence, in the future I would love the opportunity to do policy-related work in this field. Every day I got to feel surrounded by people who are incredibly passionate about working towards a gender-just world, and it made me feel hopeful.

The one piece of advice I would give to upcoming juniors, is that you should never be afraid to ask for help from those around you. My internship search was hard. Even after getting accepted at the Department of Justice, it took me three months to pass a basic security clearance. From asking Chris Terry to extend my CELS deadline to calling my Congressman, I used every relevant connection that I have made at Connecticut College in order to make my dream internship a reality. As someone who likes to do things on her own, I know that asking for help is not always easy. Yet, the Holleran Center provides so many important connections, and it would be silly not to take advantage of that!

