

# COMMUNITY LEARNING

## CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

### OVCS NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2014



#### A NOTE FROM TWO SENIORS: INTERNING AT THE GARDE

*Alysia Mattson '15 & Tom Redstone '15*

For the past three years, Alysia and Thomas have dedicated much of their time to the Office of Volunteers for Community Service. Alysia has gone from a program assistant and driver to a program coordinator within the office. She has also enjoyed working at the Connecticut College Children's Program and Jennings Elementary School where she mentored students of various ages and backgrounds. Her favorite experience was designing and teaching an interactive Chinese curriculum for the ENRICH mentor program in the spring of 2013. Thomas was a part of the ENRICH program as well where he mentored a group of 15 BDJ students. Through the OVCS, he has worked with New London children at the Drop-In Learning Center, TVCCA, and in the KBA program where he taught the importance of good health and exercise.

This semester, with the help of the OVCS staff, we were able to take our community learning work in a new direction and find a placement with the Garde Arts Center. In working closely with the Executive Director Steve Siegel and Director of Marketing and Development, Jeanne Siegel, we have been introduced to the important skills necessary to enhance a non-profit organization. Steve has

worked patiently in coaching us on how to structure a current operating budget to be utilized during this upcoming fiscal year. Jeanne has assigned us tasks of maintaining and updating the Garde website and has promised to show us effective grant writing techniques! We are so grateful for the knowledge and experience that we have gained through working with the Siegels at the Garde Arts Center.

Additionally, we have been encouraged by Steve and Jeanne to attend many of the Garde events. They showcase many recent films, musicals, and thrilling performances. Alysia was able to bring her friends to the "Masters of Illusion" show this past October, and Tom had the opportunity to work for the Congressional and Gubernatorial Debates. We highly encourage students to check out their website, because they bring the shows right to our doorstep! It is a beautiful facility and the staff is incredibly friendly. We got the complete backstage tour on the first day of our internship!

In coming to the end of our valued time with the OVCS, we would like to thank them and their community partners for helping us develop important lifelong skills. Being a part of this office has truly enhanced our time here at Connecticut College, and the experiences gained will continue to aid our development well into our post-college careers.

# NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH (NAHM)

*Christine Roundtree '15*

When asked the question of where my interest in Native American culture stems from, I automatically think of my ancestors and what they have done. I am Native American Cherokee and even though I am not more than 16% (which would allow myself and other members of my family to be a part of the tribe legally), I still have much respect and appreciation for the tribe as well as other tribes. Hearing all the challenges Native Americans face and knowing the lack of support to address their issues, I believed I could make a difference. I want to inform those who would benefit and take away from my knowledge of Native American tribes as I continued to expand on the culture and politics of the tribes.

The NAHM kick off was put together with the assistance of the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation (EPTN), Unity House staff, and myself. I had developed a strong relationship with the EPTN while I was taking a course with Professor Ronald Flores called *Genocide and Resistance: Examining the Native American Experience Through Participatory Action Research*. This course gave me the opportunity to speak with members of the EPTN and hear their personal experience with sovereignty and the push for Federal Recognition. Federal Recognition would provide access to education, health care, and other human rights. Unity House and I

discussed ways we can educate the Connecticut College community to understand the importance of Native Americans, and their culture, and through that, we formulated an event that encompassed a circular seating arrangement (circles are major symbols within the Native American culture), a soup made by catering that mirrored Native American soups, fancy dance (which is a traditional dance by Native Americans) a panel discussion consisting of Professor Kevin McBride, Associate Professor of Anthropology at UConn and researcher at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum, Brenda Geer, Vice Chairwoman of EPTN, and myself. Thanks to Brenda Geer, and our two keynote speakers; one from the EPTN, Katherine Sebastian, and the other from UMASS Boston, Amy Den Ouden we were able to bring Native American culture and traditions onto our campus.

Students and staff members were able to gain a different perspective through this opportunity to hear from a neighboring tribe and the issues they are currently facing as well as hearing from a researcher and a student who are passionate about the topic and the people. The downturn to the event was that EPTN members who attended the event in regalia outnumbered the Connecticut College community. It leaves an impression that the college community is not as interested or supportive

of Native Americans, which is not true, but actions do speak louder than words and we as a community need to stand by our actions more than by our words.

Another successful Native American Heritage Month event was the opportunity to take students to view the Pow Wow. A Pow Wow is a Native American ceremony that contains traditional dancing, singing, the beating of drums, and food. With the assistance and donations from Student Activities Council (SAC), we were able to bring 17 staff and students to the Mashantucket Pequot Museum to experience the PowWow on November 8th. The students and staff members were able to explore the museum and its plethora of written and performed history of Native Americans and its realistic manikins and structures. The traditional and competitive dances performed created an image of how unique and important dancing and regalia is to Native Americans.

The only thing I would want to change is the attendance of Connecticut College's community to events pertaining to Native American culture. Our understanding and appreciation of our neighboring EPTN as well as other tribes will create the sense of inclusiveness and our effort to make Connecticut College more inviting to Native Americans.



## DANCING FOR DEGREES

*Amanda Klay '13*

On Saturday November 22nd, I arrived at Connecticut College eager to see the culmination of a tremendous effort on the part of dedicated students, community members, and staff alike. However, this would be a night unlike any of the many spent in the 1962 room during my years as a Conn student.

Shortly following my graduation I joined the team at Higher Edge, a New London-based organization that guides low-income and first-generation students through enrollment, retention, and graduation from college. Here, I found an outlet to channel much of what I learned both within and beyond the classroom during my time at Conn. I met incredible students, an extraordinarily dedicated staff, and had wonderful opportunities to become a part of the greater New London community.

Now in its fourth year, the Board of Directors came together with staff and generous community liaisons to put on Higher Edge's first annual fundraising event, Dancing for Degrees. Modeled after the television show *Dancing with the Stars*, Dancing for Degrees was an effort to raise money while simultaneously creating a special experience for our students and engaging the New London community.

Six community members, including Mayor Daryl Finizio, local CPA Susan Jones, City Councilor

and Police Officer Anthony Nolan, BDJMS Teacher Tanya Collins, Executive Director Steve Sigel of the Garde Arts Center, and Dr. Claire Warren, founder of the Plainfield Walk-In Medical Center, were each paired with one of our students. Led by local choreographer Leo Navarro (also a Higher Edge Success Student and R.A. at Eastern Connecticut State University), each couple worked tirelessly on a dance routine to be debuted during the event.

Higher Edge and Connecticut College OVCS have forged a natural partnership due to our aligned missions and commitment to New London. OVCS co-sponsored and hosted the event. Before long, we were welcoming 350 guests to the 1962 room at Connecticut College in support of our programming and the youth of New London.

The night was a success on all fronts. It was incredible to watch our students shine on the dance floor alongside esteemed community members who, in addition to serving as our students' dance partners, have forged invaluable relationships as mentors and friends. The event bridged generational gaps, helped build lifelong networks, showcased the many talents of our students, and celebrated the success and future growth of Higher Edge. It was truly a collaborative effort that brought together students, staff, board members, and community members for a fun evening with a great cause in mind. We exceeded our fundraising goal and are so fortunate to have the support of such a vibrant community!



## MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR 43 MISSING STUDENTS

Heidi Munoz '17

The disappearance of the 43 missing students has caused tremendous uproar in Mexico, as well as around the globe. This situation has encouraged many to fight against the injustices regarding kidnappings, disappearances and corruption. "Enough Is Enough" is a slogan that has gained popularity after the lack of concern for the missing 43 students within the Mexican government's agenda. On Wednesday, December 3rd, Connecticut College declared their solidarity and support to demand justice not only for these 43 students, but for all of the people of Mexico whom are demanding that the priority of the Mexican government be the well being of its citizens. The participation of Conn students in the lighting of the 43 candles during the moment of silence represented the fact that the Conn community recognizes the importance of this issue. We are all Ayotzinapa; we want justice and we want peace.



## BLACK LIVES MATTER

Various Connecticut College organizations and students collaborated in the candlelight vigil on Friday, December 5th, where many shared their frustrations, worries, and hopes regarding the injustices that surround black/brown people. The decision to not indict Darren Wilson in the death of Michael Brown or Daniel Pantaleo in the death of Eric Garner is a representation of the racial discriminations that are still existant within the United States. Various communities, including Conn, have come together in solidarity to say that enough is enough; enough devaluation of black lives, enough police brutality, enough injustice.

## BLACK LIVES DO MATTER!



Thank you to students,  
staff, faculty and  
community partners  
for a great Fall 2014  
semester!!!