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OVCS MAG

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

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“No social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of dedicated Individuals”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Scholar Activists...

How are you working together?



THINK

I'm looking at issues from all angles and want to see the big picture. I am analyzing systems and how they can perpetuate inequities



DO

I am building relationships with a wide range of people, taking risks and working together to create a better future for all of us. I am building more affordable housing.



LEAD

As part of a team, I am creating alternatives and constructing consensus. I am designing my teaching and learning experiences and creating a life of meaning and purpose.

Gratitude and Joy to the Connecticut College scholar Activists!

The Connecticut College OVCS Literary Magazine

Vol. IX Fall 2015

EDITORS:

Tracee Reiser, Associate Dean for Community Learning
David Cruz, Community Learning Coordinator, OVCS
Joey Mercado, Ammerman Selected Scholar 16'

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David Cruz, Community Learning Coordinator, OVCS
Zach Smith, AmeriCorps VISTA



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HISPANIC ALLIANCE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD GALA

By Yasmin Fabian '17



ABOUT THE WRITER

Yasmin Fabian is a junior at Connecticut College and a student coordinator in OVCS. She is also the treasurer for the campus Habitat for Humanity club, an ALANA coordinator, and a floor governor. She is from Albany, New York.

Connecticut College OVCS builds partnerships with the New London community to build on assets and address community issues.

On Friday, June 5th I was invited by OVCS to attend the Hispanic Alliance Scholarship Award Gala at the Crocker House in New London. The mission of the Hispanic Alliance Scholarship is “to assist the Hispanic students to achieve their educational goals; thereby, enhancing their ability to contribute to the community.” The Alliance awards scholarships to local Hispanic and Latino graduating high school seniors and college students who demonstrate strong leadership actions, community service commitment and academic achievements. The purpose of the annual Gala is to celebrate achievement and broader access to post-secondary education and congratulate the scholarship recipients while raising money for next year’s scholarships.

The entertainment at this event was appropriate and extremely impressive. I was amazed at the Peruvian band that preformed, Grupo Tentacion. They kept me dancing all night long both because of the chosen songs and because of how well they performed. The songs represented a wide range of Latin American and Caribbean music such as Bachata, Cumbia, Merengue, Salsa and others. I also enjoyed watching the special entertainers who demonstrated excellent dance techniques on stilts.

Aside from the entertainment, it is imperative to mention the importance of this event to Connecticut College. One of the core values of the college is community engagement and global citizenship. Among the College’s faculty and staff that attended the event were President Burgeron, John Bitters from the Counseling Services, William Wuyke from the Athletics Department, David Cruz and Keisha Henry from OVCS and Penney Jade Beaubrun from the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. In addition to these staff and faculty members other Connecticut College staff and faculty members serve in the selection committee for the Hispanic Alliance Scholarship. Dean Tracee Reiser has chaired the Selection and Allocation



Christine Roundtree '15 and Yasmin Fabian '17 (right) supporting the Hispanic Alliance

Committee for years. Professor Aida Heredia and OVCS Associate Director Kim Sanchez serve on the committee as well as alums Jennifer Blanco and Amanda Klay. Jennifer O’Brien, Program Director at the Community Foundation, Professor Jose Gonzalez from the Coast Guard Academy, Director of Higher Edge Chris Soto, Frank Silva, from Alliance for Living, and Shalimar Wuyke from the New London Public Schools, also serve on the committee. They review about 50-70

applications and allocate between 15-20 scholarships from \$500-4,000.

Connecticut College is an institution committed to working in partnership with local and global organizations and people to improve the quality of life in our communities. The Hispanic Alliance Scholarship Committee is one of those long-term partnerships and I was impressed by the scholarship recipients and the exciting celebration event NOCHE DE GALA.

WOMEN IN SCIENCES

JOCELYN REAVES '15



ABOUT THE WRITER

Jocelyn '15, a recent graduate, coordinated the Women in Science Forum. She was a Science Leader and Posse Scholar. She engaged in the New London community and worked on health initiatives in the area.



The Women in Science Forum is a long standing partnership between Connecticut College's OVCS and the New London Science and Technology Magnet High School, which has promoted the engagement of young female leaders in STEM fields for the past eight years.

I was elated when Kim Sanchez approached me early in the spring semester about coordinating the 2015 Women in Science Forum. Since my days as an eighth grader in the Physician Scientist Training Program, my academic interests have been within the scientific sphere. As a young lady and underrepresented minority, I felt empowered to be pursuing such an interest, however, the lack of diversity within the field was undoubtedly realized. Thus, when the opportunity to facilitate the forum presented itself, I readily became immersed, and immediately began to think of ways to make the forum a unique and innovative experience.

During the first day of this year's forum, the female high school students came to the Connecticut College campus and spent the day immersed in lab activities hosted by the College's students and professors. We offered a diverse range of experiences. The students studied computer science with Professor Parker and Professor Winters-Hilt, got a taste of chemistry and the wonders of liquid nitrogen with Professor Stanton Ching, applied geometry to the art of origami with Zully Jimenez '15, and took a trip to the observatory with Doc Brown to learn about physics through the lens of astronomy.

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undoubtedly realized. Thus, when the opportunity to facilitate the forum presented itself, I readily became immersed, and immediately began to think of ways to make the forum a unique and innovative experience.

The second day of the Women in Science forum took place at the Science & Technology Magnet High School in New London and offered an interactive panel discussion between the students of the high school and STEM field professionals. Connecticut College Professors Phillip Barnes- Biology, Ruth Grahn – Psychology and Neuroscience, and Tanya Schneider-Chemistry participated as members of the panel. Also, I was joined by fellow students Calli Reynolds, C.J. Robinson, Eleanor Hardy, Elizabeth Stone on the panel to speak about the experience of succeeding as an underrepresented group in the sciences and the significance of using one's own voice in the field. This panel was followed by a career and majors fair that provided opportunities for the high school students for one-on-one discovery and learning.

As a senior student and science leader at Connecticut College, I can attest to the significance of early outreach events. In order to create equality in the workforce, we must begin with supporting our future—and that future is our youth. Through the hard work of Connecticut College and community partners, the Women in Sciences Forum is created each year where young women high school students learn not only of the diversity and wealth of opportunities within the STEM track, but that they have the abilities to succeed and surpass any stereotypes or stipulations that may pose a threat to their acquisition of knowledge and the realization of their full potential.



FROM MZUNGU TO BELONGING

Samantha Sgourakes '12

“Please don’t call me Mzungu!”

I passionately reiterated this to chanting school children and passersby throughout the very beginning of my Peace Corps service in Uganda. The fact that I was being addressed by a Swahili word defining me by my whiteness and foreign passport was expected; race and nationality are labels used in the United States that shape one’s perceived identity as well. What bothered me most was a deep-rooted fear that nearly dissuaded me from joining the Peace Corps in the first place. The Women in Science Forum is a long standing partnership between Connecticut College’s OVCS and the New London Science and Technology Magney High School, which has promoted the engagement of young female leaders in STEM fields for the past eight years.

At times, international development agencies appear to be the instruments of neocolonialism. So, as I thought about Peace Corps as a post-graduation option, I was doubtful. Was it just the institutional equivalent of the ugly foreigner? Would my presence in certain host countries simply reinforce power imbalances existent since colonization? Am I even qualified?

Once I checked my own skepticism, I realized that

the Peace Corps shared my sentiments. It emphasized community partnerships and developed intensive trainings to equip its volunteers with the knowledge necessary to both live and work in the country that requests the organization’s presence. And so, though still wary, I began the arduous application process.

I was eventually selected to serve as an education-sector volunteer in Uganda. For the first three months in country, Peace Corps Uganda ensured that I possessed a strong foundation of the country’s cultural heritage and political landscape; underwent school-based training using the curriculum developed by Uganda’s Ministry of Education and Sports; and received site-specific regional histories, community-resource maps, and intensive local language instruction. Peace Corps provided me with the technical skills to navigate Uganda’s education system. But, more importantly, it urged me to feel at home at site and enabled me to do so.

When I finally moved to my placement at Asuret Primary School, I wanted to meet just about every person possible. I spent time with my coworkers and direct neighbors, and then began to familiarize myself with the adjacent villages. I followed footpaths



“The people of Asuret began to accept me because I embodied both the willing learner and active participant”

that snaked through gardens, orange orchards, and multiple-hut compounds. Although the presence of an extremely pale, long-haired woman was understandably startling to some residents (and absolutely horrifying to most children below the age of two), all was at ease with a simple, “Yoga noi! Biaibo?” That simple greeting opened the flood-gates to some of the most welcoming smiles and most genuine acts of kindness I have ever received.

The people of Asuret began to accept me because I embodied both the willing learner and active participant. Among other things, I used the local language, greeted strangers along the road, and ate millet bread every night with the family that virtually adopted me. Sure, I acted a bit strange at times. I wore pants on the weekend, never went to church, ate more mangoes than a five-person family, and introduced controversial topics that a wiser person would have avoided. But, because my neighbors saw my intention, they also accepted me for all of the things that made me strikingly different.

Over the course of two years, we accomplished a great deal in Asuret. Students, teachers, Department of Education heads and I created a phonics manual

to inform literacy instruction in the lower classes; organized the creation and large-scale distribution of a dual-language book of local folktales; developed a school library to institute daily reading hours and sign-outs; and ensured that our pupils improved in areas of phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension.

These projects, as well as many others, did not terminate with my Peace Corps contract. If they did, that would have been telling enough about my experience. Each project endures today because they were never mine. From inception to implementation, the initiatives were always Asuret’s.

With time, the crying babies just saw me as another Auntie. And my neighbors, pupils and friends - with whom I worked, ate, and laughed every day for two years - called me, “Ikilai” (one who belongs). And, as I look back now, I cannot imagine how drastically different my life and work would have been if Mzungu had stuck.



ABOUT THE WRITER

Samantha '12, an alum of Connecticut College, is a former student leader for OVCS.

YEARS OF TRANSFORMATION

Joey Mercado '16

It was Freshman year when I first visited the Women's Center in Burdick-Smith Basement. It's odd that I never heard of the center until halfway through my first semester. After all, I lived 10 feet away in my Burdick Basement room. I didn't think anything of the space originally, except that it was warm and very comfortable.

After becoming a Gender and Women's Studies Major I saw the space in a new light. The potential for the space was amazing and I felt like we could do a lot more to attract more students to the hidden gem called the Women's Center.

My sophomore year I applied and was accepted as a Women's Center Manager. The first semester I helped keep the space clean and invite people to use the space to do work. It was a fantastic job. Little did I know, second semester a Coordinator position opened up and I was chosen for it. In that position I met some of the coolest people I've met at Conn.

We did so much work that year with programming on sexist language in classrooms and women in politics, but we decided the upcoming fall would be very different.

In my Junior Year (2014-2015) I was able to serve with 3 other talented intelligent self proclaimed feminists. We set out to change the history and future of the Women's Center. With programming efforts around race, class and sexuality, we were able to move the center away from second wave feminist politics into an inclusive third wave model.

After a year of extraordinary work, we are passing along our progress to a group of new coordinators and a newly appointed advisor. I'm so glad to see the space continue to thrive and welcome more students each year.



ABOUT THE WRITER



Joey Mercado '16 is a Connecticut College rising senior, Posse Scholar and Ammerman Center Selected Scholar. He is a member of SGA this year hoping to focus on issues related to equity, inclusion and collaboration.



Alexandria Gomes Cooley '04

Former OVCS Student Leader and Holleran Center Scholar, Class of '04, Alexandria Gomes Cooley was selected as the North/South Carolina State Director for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in July. As State Director, Alexandria provides the vision and leadership for the wide range of projects both in North and South Carolina. The mission of CNCS is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service, collaborations and volunteering. As the nation's largest grantmaker for service and volunteering, CNCS plays a critical role in strengthening America's nonprofit sector and addressing our nation's challenges through partnerships and service. CNCS harnesses America's most powerful resource – the energy and talents of our citizens – to build community and address challenges. The Corporation believes that everyone can make a difference and that all of us should try. From grade school through retirement, CNCS empowers Americans and fosters a lifetime of engagement and service. In addition to providing national leadership, Alexandria will be overseeing a wide range of programs: Americorps which includes VISTA (Volunteers in Service for America), NCCC (National

Civilian Community Core), FEMA Corps; Senior Corps which includes Foster Grandparents, RSVP, Senior Companions; Social Innovation Fund and Volunteer Generation Fund. Many graduating Connecticut College graduates begin their professional careers supported by CNCS which funds City Year and Teach for America as well as the aforementioned large scale programs. In addition, the State Director for North and South Carolina oversees the Points of Light program which recognizes outstanding programs making a difference in their communities. Connecticut College OVCS was selected as a Point of Light.

While at Connecticut College Alexandria majored in Sociology and was a scholar in the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. She was an OVCS Student Leader and initiated and led a range of youth serving partnership programs with the New London Public Schools and area non-profits. She and fellow student Tiana Davis Hercules '04 were nominated and selected for the prestigious national Howard R. Student Humanitarian Award. Alexandria was a manager for City Year of New York and completed her Masters of Science in Nonprofit Management at the Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy. She also completed a Public Policy and International Affairs fellowship at the University of Michigan. Alexandria was the Program Director in the College of Education at Georgia State University in Atlanta and became a Program Officer in 2012 for the Corporation for National and Community Service in Raleigh, NC. Just a few short years later, Alexandria is now the State Director for both North and South Carolina. Alexandria has worked throughout her undergraduate years, her graduate school years, and all of her professional positions to advance people and strengthen communities. This is her life's passion and all of the organizations improved under Alexandria's leadership. She has the rare combination of intellectual, personal and professional qualities that lead to powerful results.

Alexandria is married to John Cooley and has an exceptional daughter, Addison. In her spare time she also serves a Board of Director Member for Healthy Girls Save the World and the Chapel Hill Carrboro Youth Forward agency, and is a member of the Junior League of Durham and Orange County. Alexandria also just launched a line of handmade skincare products. Social innovators must never sleep!

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

Zach Smith, AmeriCorps VISTA



AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs) work to combat cycles of poverty, and in a state that has the largest income gap between the top 1% and the other 99%, this role takes on an even greater precedence. This income gap can be seen within New London, as many city residents are burdened by economic hardship. According to data published in 2013, New London has an approximate median household income of \$36,237 (compared to a state median household income of \$67,098) with about 23% of residents living in poverty. Furthermore, poverty is a catalyst for displacement, and as shown through surveys conducted by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, 12% of families experiencing homelessness in Connecticut are located in the Greater New London area. However, for those not living in poverty, making ends meet can still be difficult. The United Way ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed) report shows that 25% of households in Connecticut have income above the federal poverty level but below the state's basic cost-of-living, which is on the rise.

As an AmeriCorps VISTA working with the Connecticut College Office of Volunteers for Community Service I will build on partnerships with New London designed to strengthen literacy, advance college readiness, and cultivate curiosity and a passion for learning.

Nelson Mandela said, "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world", and thus education should be at the core of any plan to reduce and eliminate impacts of poverty. The authentic passion, commitment, and hard work of engaged Connecticut College students can deepen the effectiveness of our partnership programs. I am excited about this year and look forward to working with the Connecticut College and New London students to build community and make change.



ABOUT THE WRITER



Zach Smith is an AmeriCorps VISTA working in the Office of Volunteers for Community Service. He is from Goffstown, New Hampshire and graduated from the University of Connecticut this past May.

Chloe Jones '15 is also serving with Connecticut College OVCS as an AmeriCorps VISTA

THE SEAT BUS: CONNECTICUT COLLEGE BUS STOP

David Cruz
Community Learning Coordinator



During the fall semester of 2012, OVCS collaborated with the Office of Sustainability to work on a project with the ultimate goal being to bring an official public bus stop to Connecticut College.

Over the next two years, some students and other departments got involved in the process, the project was approved by the senior administration and President Bergeron, and during the spring semester of 2015 a bus stop was finally installed on Williams Street near the entrance of the Arboretum.

SEAT, Southeast Area Transit, is New London County's public bus system and has a route that passes by the College on Williams Street. This bus stop we hope will encourage students to get out into the local community and use a transportation system that is available to all members of the campus and local community. From Connecticut College, one can travel affordably to places such as downtown New London, Crystal Mall, Ocean Beach, Mystic, and Mohegan Sun. A one-way fare within one zone (see the College transportation website for more information) is only \$1.50, and that includes a free transfer at the downtown transfer point to another bus route because you hopped on the bus at the College.

This bus system can also be used interchangeably with the Camel Van. Everywhere the Camel Van goes (minus the movies theaters in Waterford) the SEAT Bus goes and once students get familiar with each schedule they will be able to utilize both systems together. On top of that, SEAT recently produced a website, seatbuslive.com, which showcases real time GPS tracking of each bus on each route, which gives students the opportunity to monitor the bus they want to take and make sure they don't miss it!



Being a New London native, I know how valuable this bus system can be when driving a vehicle is not possible. I don't expect this bus stop to solve all the transportation needs of the College, but it does provide students with another option to mobilize around New London County. It is important to become familiar with the specific features of the system and to get comfortable with the way it is managed in New London. Once students get accustomed to it, I can see it being a reliable option. I hope students take advantage of SEAT and explore what is available to them because Southeastern Connecticut has much to offer. Further, public transportation is environmentally sound.

ABOUT THE WRITER



David Cruz is the Community Learning Coordinator in OVCS. He is a New London native and a 2010 graduate of St. John's University in New York City. On campus, he is a member of the Transportation Task Force Team, which was created to address the transportation issues at Connecticut College.

THANK YOU

TO OUR 2014-2015 COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR WORKING TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR COMMUNITY AND PARTNERING WITH CONNECTICUT COLLEGE TO EDUCATE STUDENTS TO PUT THE LIBERAL ARTS INTO ACTION IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY.

- Alliance For Living
- B.P. Learned
- Beech Brook Farm
- Beachwood Rehab Center
- B.P. Learned Mission
- Children's Tree Montessori School
- Covenant Shelter
- Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center
- Drop in Learning Center
- Expressions Cultural Center
- FRESH New London
- Gemma E. Moran Food Bank
- Habitat for Humanity
- Hearing Youth Voices
- High Hopes Therapeutic Riding Center
- Higher Edge- Access to Achieve
- Homeless Hospitality Center
- Humane Society of SECT
- Hygienic Arts
- ISAL (Immigration Advocacy Support Center)
- L&M Hospital
- Ledge Light Health District
- Montville Youth Center
- Mystic Aquarium
- New London Community Health Center
- New London Community Meals
- New London County Historical Society
- New London Day Nursery
- New London Main Street
- New London Music Festival
- New London Office of Youth Affairs
- New London Public Defenders
- New London Public Library
- **New London Public Schools**
- New London Senior Center
- Noank Group Homes & Support Services
- New London Youth Affairs
- CT State Office of Victim Affairs
- OIC
- Pequot Health
- Red Tail Learning Center
- Safe Futures
- Save The Sound
- Sound Community Services
- Thames Valley Council for Community Action
- Waterford County School
- Writer's Block
- Youth Ministry

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

What Are Students Saying?

I have been fortunate enough to work with OVCS for four years. I began as a mentor with REACH during my freshman and sophomore years and then transitioned to the Enrich program as a team leader. From there I went on to a coordinator position with ELT at the Jennings school, which I have done for the past two years. Senior year I decided I wanted to be involved even more and started working at the front desk. I have truly loved my time as a member of the OVCS team and have grown and developed in ways I definitely would not have without the influence of my fellow volunteers, staff, and mentors. OVCS is my school family and definitely what I will miss most about Conn.



- Alexis Mathison '15

Through OVCS I was able to complete my service learning requirement at Winthrop, which was a class requirement for Human Development 111. It was through this placement that I learned about my interest in working with children. I was able to further explore this interest through courses in the Education Department and service learning placements with OVCS, which ultimately led me to seek out a teaching certification



- Zully Jimenez '15

Through OVCS I have been able to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Connecticut, beginning my first semester at Conn. My experiences with Habitat for Humanity have allowed me to explore my interests in non-profit, design, and construction. I am thrilled to continue working with Habitat for Humanity next year in Oakland, California!



- Neta Nakash '15

Build Community



Make Change



LITERARY MAG

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CONNECTICUT COLLEGE