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## OVCS Newsletter April 2015

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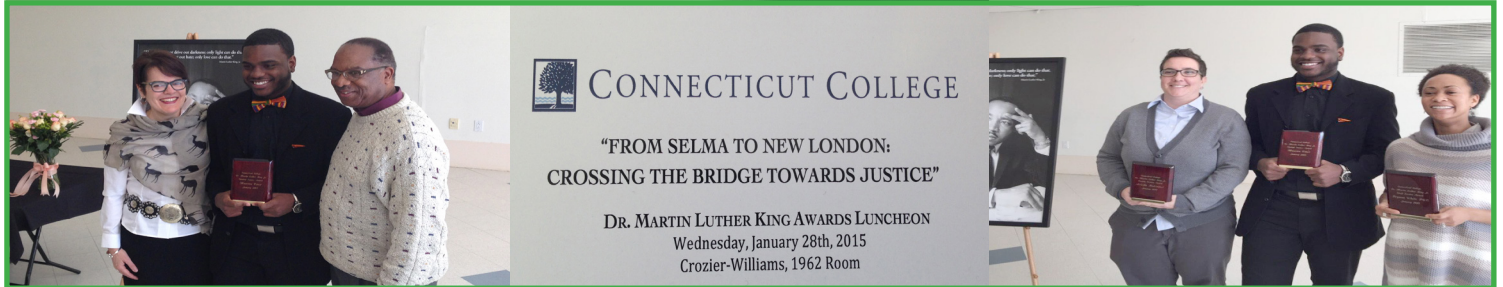
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# COMMUNITY LEARNING CONNECTICUT COLLEGE OVCS NEWSLETTER APRIL 2015



## Gratitude All Around

*Maurice Tiner '17*

After attending my second Posse Plus retreat this year, I can say I am truly honored to be a part of a community that is filled with so many phenomenal individuals. We had the privilege to tackle a very challenging but relevant topic in “Crime and Punishment”. Lately in the media we have been bombarded with pictures, images and stories of police brutality and how it relates to the unjust criminal justice system. It was a great weekend for a community to discuss how this issue impacts our everyday lives on this campus, in our perspective communities and across this country.

Friday always starts out very broad in the subject matter. This allows us to get our feet wet a bit in relation to the subject matter, but more importantly get to know the people that you will spend the weekend with. Once we walked into the room where the discussions took place there were pictures all over the walls that set the tone very quickly. It is hard to describe all of the pictures on the walls but there were over one hundred pictures that addressed issues of crime and punishment. We had the opportunity Friday to take a silent walk through and see crime and punishment expressed throughout this country and all over the world.

Saturday we had a chance to participate in a lot of fun activities as well as serious ones. One of the funnier activities was the “No Talent Show”. We witnessed the real talents of the

people on the retreat. One of the more powerful presentations was a spoken word section where we all read a portion of a poem that we wrote that related to how we have experienced crime and punishment in our lifetime.

Sunday was the icing on the cake. After we had formed many bonds and relationships throughout the weekend, we end with a very inspirational activity. We go around and tap individuals that have a certain quality or characteristic that the trainer calls out. For instance, “who do you look up to”, “who do you admire”, “who makes you laugh”. The twist is the people you tap have their eyes closed so they don’t know who is tapping them. The anonymity of this activity is essential and made the activity even more emotional. As an OVCS student leader, I was pleased to see the OVCS team present; I really enjoyed their input as always!

Lastly, I just want to take this time to thank everyone for their nominations and support as I was honored to be this year’s student MLK service award recipient. People make the comment to me all the time, “Maurice you live in OVCS”. I always laugh at the comment but it is actually quite valid to some extent. This is the office on campus that I identify most with. OVCS is not only an agent for community learning within the New London Community, but it is also the headquarters for individuals like me that live to serve. I was honored to receive the award and I am thankful now that I have this opportunity to publically thank OVCS for giving me a door to open.

# DEVELOPING IMMIGRANT YOUTH

## Building a Culture of Empowerment and Education

Alysia Mattson '15



with highly competitive salaries, but has chosen to follow her passion and invest her time into a cause that she truly cares about: Empowering and guiding immigrant youth through the American legal system.

She briefly made a fascinating comparison between the legal hurdles that immigrant youth must go through with the difficulties of filing taxes. Burke had Connecticut College students imagine filing their taxes without the aid of software such as TurboTax, which would be nearly impossible for most people. Likewise, the American legal system presents many challenges for immigrant youth, who have limited resources to guide them into becoming documented citizens. Atlas: DIY provides a safe haven for these youth, along with legal services, emotional empowerment, language classes, college application assistance, summer camps, and much more to help them breakdown and understand their legal rights so they can reach their fully deserved potential.

The Atlas: DIY mission statement is as follows:

Atlas: DIY, Developing Immigrant Youth, is an incubator of education, empowerment and community for undocumented youth and their allies. Atlas accomplishes our mission by: 1) Collaborating with young people to provide direct services in legal, educational, career and life skills realms, 2) Developing young people's individual strengths and encouraging them to become community agents through a cooperative model and 3) Constructing an online hub of legal information and self-advocacy tools that youth across the United States can easily access and understand.

The work that Lauren Burke and her team have done, and continue to do, is truly inspirational. It is amazing to see how the efforts put forth by one small, non-profit organization have changed the lives of hundreds of undocumented youth immigrants in NYC alone.

You can find more information and details regarding programs, events and resources on their website at <http://www.atlasdiy.org/>. They are always looking for great interns and volunteers!

**O**n Friday February 20th, the Connecticut College East Asian Studies Department sponsored a trip to New York City to celebrate Chinese New Year. However, prior to engaging in traditional Chinese festivities, students had the opportunity to visit a cooperative empowerment center for immigrant youth and their allies in Brooklyn.

This center, called "Atlas: DIY" was founded in 2012 by Lauren Burke, a proud Connecticut College Camel and New York University Law School graduate. In 2012, Forbes also named Burke one of the top 30 lawyers under the age of 30. Aside from being a highly accomplished lawyer, Burke has an incredibly warm and energetic personality. With her social skills, law degree, and unrelenting perseverance, it is no surprise that her non-profit organization is a growing success.

Burke has been offered jobs

# How I See Race and Diversity at Conn

Maxiel Sanchez '17

One would think that in the era we are in today, our country has progressed. Unfortunately, we live in a country where racism is still present. The oppression and discrimination of groups of people who are seen as "other" because of the color of their skin, is apparent in today's society. Human beings are still being degraded today and it happens through police brutality and hate speech. In the last few months it has been shocking to see and hear what is going on in Ferguson, Missouri, where a young black male named Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer. Michael was unarmed in the interaction with the police officer and many across the country and world considered it a hate crime.

Michael's case could be tied to the stop and frisk policies in New York City that often target young males of color. In 2014, 55 percent of people that were stopped and frisked were black and 29 percent were Latino in New York City, according to New York Civil Liberties Union. It is evident that race plays a very important role in our lives and affect

many of us on a daily basis.

Seeing all these cases in the news saddened my friends and me as students of color. What saddened us most was the recent incidents at our institution with the hateful comments posted on Facebook by one of our professors and the graffiti of a derogatory word used to attack students of color, written in the bathrooms in the Crozier-Williams Center. Both of these events happened within a week at a place where all students are supposed to feel safe and at home.

As a minority student at this institution not only am I exhausted, like many of my peers, of educating other people at our college but I am also heartbroken to see the pain in my friend's eyes. I think it's time for Connecticut College to re-evaluate how diversity and race is discussed and how we approach these issues as tools for educating at our institution of higher learning. As a community we need to see more actions, more classes that talk about race and more willingness to work side by side with the students and college community as a whole. We need to see more diver-

sity not only with staff and faculty, but with our students as well. We need to continue these forums where people are challenged to leave their comfort zones and learn. It is time to stop thinking that racism does not exist, and realize the suffering that our peers are going through. It does exist, it is present at our institution and we need to be able to talk about it openly and without fear.

I knew that this moment was coming, the moment when race had to be discussed publicly and with everyone, not just among the same students that are usually having these types of conversations. The discrimination of students of color on this campus is nothing new. We need to come together as a college, not just a student body, to demand more information, talks, and exposure to uncomfortable topics. Others need to know the struggles that minorities face not only on this campus but globally. We need to make our community one that is more welcoming and must be able to educate others on different sensitive topics so that we can educate others outside of our institution.

Apply now to be an  
**AmeriCorps VISTA** with  
OVCS!

OVCS has two AmeriCorps VISTA positions open for the 2015-2016 academic year. The Connecticut College OVCS AmeriCorps VISTAs work closely with the OVCS team and New London Public Schools.

Please contact our current AmeriCorps VISTAs,  
Megan Hulsart '14 and Kyle Ford '13  
for any questions or help with applying.

Email: [mhulsart@conncoll.edu](mailto:mhulsart@conncoll.edu), [kford1@conncoll.edu](mailto:kford1@conncoll.edu)

Interviews will take place on a rolling basis. Apply early! Deadline May 1

**Applications now open for Connecticut Campus Compact's AmeriCorps VISTA Program**

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## PROMOTING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AT CONN

### SEAT Bus

*David Cruz, Community Learning Coordinator*

Since beginning my employment with Connecticut College, I was always curious as to why there was no promotion of public transportation by use of the SEAT (Southeast Area Transit) bus. The SEAT bus is a convenient and affordable way to get off campus and explore New London and its surrounding towns. It shocked me even more when the vast majority of students had no knowledge of any public bus system at all in New London.

Being a native of New London, I often had to take the SEAT Bus to get around town when I could not get a ride and grew too old to ride my bicycle everywhere. The system came natural to me since it was the only public bus system I had ever known at that time in my life, and because of this I knew about the bus route that passed the College on Williams Street. When I began my employment at Connecticut College, students constantly mentioned that they felt isolated on campus and that their options to get off campus were very limited. On top of that, taxis were charging students \$11 for a one-way trip to the downtown train station. Knowing that ride only takes about 5 minutes and that a bus can get you to the same place for a much lower price, I decided to work on an initiative to install a bus stop on Williams Street.

The ultimate goal was not only to put a bench and bus stop pole on Williams Street, but also to promote and educate students about public transportation in New London and encourage them to get off campus. OVCS

collaborated with the Office of Sustainability and together developed a proposal that highlighted the benefits of providing easy access to public transportation and the destinations available to the college community. The proposal was approved in November of 2014 and the bus stop was installed in March of 2015.

The ceremony to unveil the new bus stop showcased the mutual commitment between the City of New London and Connecticut College to further grow its relationship. Ulysses Hammond, President Bergeron, the general manager of SEAT Michael Carroll, Mayor of New London Daryl Finizio, President of New London Board of Education Peg Curtain and I cut the ribbon to commemorate the bus stop. This event was an important step to further integrate the New London community and the College community and we hope to only build from that.

The most important part for promoting this new bus stop is educating students about this particular bus system. Once students familiarize themselves with this local bus system and get comfortable with the way it is managed in New London, I can see it being a reliable option for students. SEAT has also launched a website, [seatbuslive.com](http://seatbuslive.com), that shows a real time GPS map of where the bus is along each route. I hope students take advantage of SEAT and explore what is available to them because although New London is a small city, it has plenty to offer!

For more information, visit the TRANSPORTATION page on [conncoll.edu](http://conncoll.edu) and also visit [seatbuslive.com](http://seatbuslive.com)!

