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OVCS Newsletter May 2015

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COMMUNITY LEARNING

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

OVCS NEWSLETTER MAY 2015

WOMEN IN SCIENCES

Jocelyn M. Reaves '15



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 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 under-represented 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 ladies spent the day immersed in lab activities hosted by Conn's very own students and professors. A diverse range of experiences were offered, as the girls studied computer science with Professor Parker and Professor

Winters-Hilt, got a taste of chemistry by witnessing 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, to name a few.

The second day of the forum consisted of an interactive panel discussion between the students of the high school and STEM field professionals. Among those present were Conn's very own Professors Barnes, Grahn, and Schneider, as well as students Calli Reynolds, C.J. Robinson, Eleanor Hardy, Elizabeth Stone, and myself to speak about the experience of succeeding as an under-represented group in the sciences, and the significance that one's own voice has in the field. This was succeeded by a career and majors fair that promoted one-on-one discovery and learning.

As a current 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- the youth. Through the hard work of OVCS and community partners, the young ladies learned 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 knowledge.

A PROM NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Bridget Horan '17

Not everyone gets to have two senior proms. Thanks to our Holleran Center PICA community project, the three of us got to throw our very own senior prom a few weeks ago. Shameesha Pryor, Melinda Messeck, Sarah Rosadini, and I were placed in the Sages & Seekers group at the start of this semester. Sages & Seekers is a program, brought to Conn and New London by PICA junior Alek Chandra, which aims to bridge the generational gap between two of our country's most vulnerable populations: the youth and elderly. Each "seeker" (student, from Conn or New London Youth Affairs) was paired with a "sage" (a member of the senior center) and we all quickly formed incredibly deep connections. As a form of tribute for the amazing people we met over the course of the program, we threw them a senior prom.



At the start of our planning process, we only had a vague idea of who our sages were and what they might like, but as our relationships grew, so did our ideas for the prom. It soon occurred to us that these were not the kind of seniors that the media portrays as being slow and boring (and this realization of dispelling ageism was part of the point of the program, after all). These men and women weren't going to want some low-key event; they wanted a real party. So we started planning for a DJ, dancing, goodie bags, and catered dinner. Then Shameesha insisted we have a theme: A Golden Night. Soon it was all gold everything: napkins, center pieces, plates, streamers, and cups were all black and gold.

When we finally reached prom night, the event was a great success. We were overwhelmed by the amount of PICA scholars



and directors, OVCS staff, and community members in attendance. An employee from the senior center picked up seniors who needed rides, and OVCS drivers brought Conn students. I had a great time taking pictures for (and posing in) the photo booth, and hitting the dancefloor with fellow scholars, seniors, and my sage, Karen. But perhaps the best part about planning this prom and attending it was getting to know my fellow PICA scholars, Sarah, Shameesha, and Melinda. Through trips to Party City, the Cake Lady, and the Dollar Store, long nights of communicating via Google Docs, and endless time spent collaborating in Wednesday afternoon class, we built such special relationships with each other. And of course, where would we have been without our fearless leader, Alek? It was this collaboration within our little community that made it a truly golden night.

A MESSAGE FROM OVCS.....

OVCS has award winning community service and learning programs because of the sustained involvement of dedicated Connecticut College students. They recruit, train and organize college students to engage with the challenging issues of our communities. They strengthen tutorial and mentor programs and education partnerships with the New London Public Schools. They guide teams of college students who build relationships with children and youth and contribute to improved academics, increased physical fitness, and better self-esteem. They teach about making healthy choices, conflict resolution, and foster the expression of youth voices. They inspire girls and women to connect with sciences and technology. They work with local and state educators to inspire children and youth and make them feel welcome on our college campus. They work for improved immigration policy and more equitable health care. They engage with the judicial system and explore how to stop the school to prison pipeline. They assist with responding to the numerous requests OVCS receives from the community for student volunteers. They learn the sites of the local schools, hospitals, museums, and community-based organizations and insure that Connecticut College students get safely to and from these community learning sites each day of the week including Saturdays and Sundays. They manage with staff the OVCS operations from 8:00 am to 6:30 pm daily, welcoming and guiding students, community partners, faculty and staff. Each dimension of these operations is essential to the vast network that engages Connecticut College students in putting the liberal arts into action in our local community. The Connecticut College OVCS and its partner organizations value and recognize the contributions. We also commend the students for being open to learning in new ways and to new experiences in a changing world. Students are recognizing their rights and responsibilities and they are developing their knowledge, character and skills to work within diverse communities. They are recognizing that the best decisions arise from the interplay of diverse experiences and viewpoints. They are learning to be the active citizenry necessary to grow and make more just our systems and communities.

BUILD COMMUNITY. MAKE CHANGE.



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OVCS END OF YEAR RECOGNITION



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