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## OVCS Newsletter October 2014

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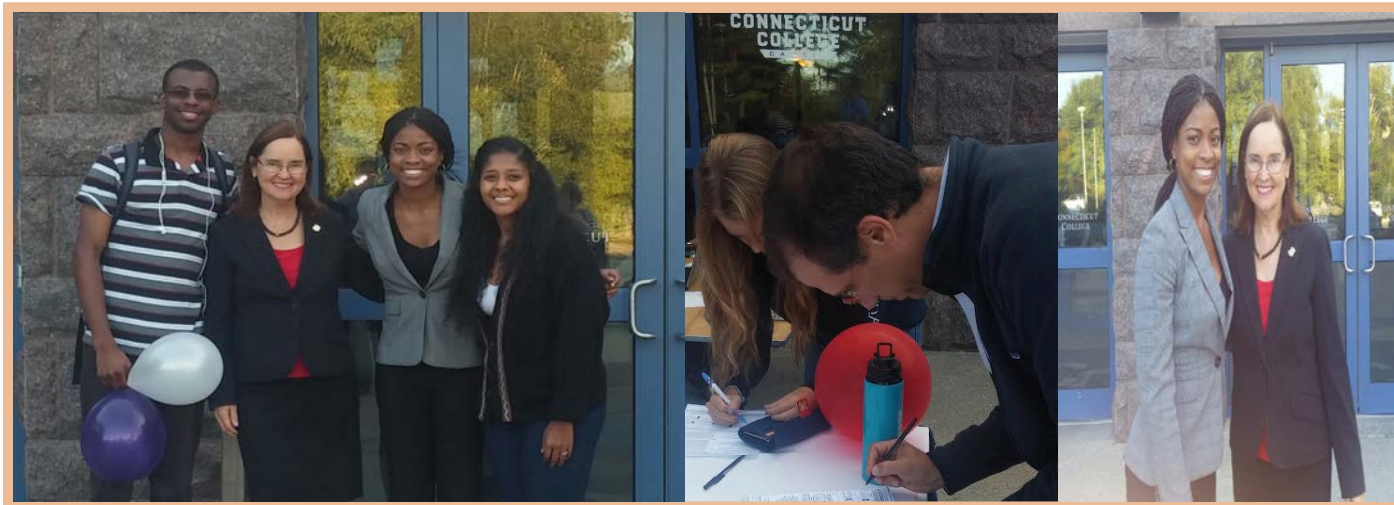
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The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

# COMMUNITY LEARNING

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

OVCS NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2014



## 2014 National Voter Registration Day

Chakena Sims '16

Voter suppression is not new. Being a history major, I am watching history repeat itself all over again. Law makers are finding new ways to cover their tracks with the same intention in mind: to give certain people political advantages while disenfranchising others. The 2008 presidential election was the epitome of solidarity. Our communities demonstrated what 'power in numbers' truly means. I know how powerful our communities can be; therefore I want more people to vote during the midterm elections.

In preparation for midterm elections on November 4th, I organized a voter registration drive for National Voter Registration Day, September 23rd. Secretary of State Denise Merrill and her campaign team attended this event. My friends were my backbone during this event. They helped decorate the area with balloons and confetti, register new voters, distribute Krispy Kreme donuts to newly-registered voters, and greet guests. Several faculty and staff members also stopped by to show support. At one point of the event, Secretary of State Merrill and I stepped back, smiled, and watched Connecticut College students, clipboard in hand, move one step closer to exercising their constitutional right to vote.

People always ask me: "Why is voter registration so important to you? My vote would not matter anyways." I always respond by saying: If voting wasn't important, it wouldn't be so hard for people to vote. If voting wasn't a threat to the political landscape, archaic voter-ID laws would not exist. If voting wasn't powerful, Supreme Court members would not try to eliminate early voting, and felon disenfranchisement laws would not be in place. If our voices didn't matter, state legislators would not find new methods to disenfranchise people of color, the elderly, the poor and young people – their biggest threats. Aren't we tired of politicians who are more concerned about re-election than serving the people? Isn't it disturbing that many politicians reject legislation that attempt to help elevate poverty-stricken communities? Why are we okay with politicians that attempt to take away women's autonomy and reproductive rights? Politicians are supposed to represent us. I will continue to advocate the importance of voting until the local and national political realm is an accurate representation of what our communities need. I want my activism - and yours - to create a ripple effect across campus – inspiring Connecticut College students to hold our peers accountable and get out to vote!



## The People's Climate March in New York City

Tim Harthorn '14

The People's Climate March in New York City took place on Sunday, September 21. The event, organized by 350.org, was meant to act as one final show of strength and solidarity among climate activists before the United Nations Climate Summit, which occurred on September 23. Organizers estimate that attendance exceeded 400,000 marchers, making the effort a spectacular success.

The march began at 11:30 AM, at which point protestors converged at Central Park West between 86th and 65th street. The marchers arranged themselves in accordance with six "themes" which consisted of: community and neighborhood organizations (including LGBTQ groups); scientists and members of interfaith organizations; anti-corporate campaigners; renewable energy, water justice, and sustainable farming representatives; laborers, students and families; and members of frontline indigenous communities, by whom the march was led. Often absent from

mainstream media coverage is the manner in which climate change, specifically the ecological destruction that occurs as a result of large-scale pipeline projects and fracking, disproportionately affects indigenous populations. On September 21, the members of these populations finally had their voices heard.

Among the most memorable of my own experiences during The People's Climate March was that of watching indigenous community representatives commence the protest at Columbus Circle. I had the opportunity to see these individuals walk past the towering statue of a man who, in many ways, represents not only the pain and oppression that indigenous people in the Americas have been forced to endure for centuries, but also the continuing refusal of certain institutions and political leaders to fully acknowledge their role in this plight. To see the marchers, many of whom were adorned in headdresses and other forms of indigenous attire, chanting as they passed through the circle was greatly uplifting. At this moment, it seemed as if the march, which sought to bring

public and political attention to an issue threatening the futures of people worldwide, was reminding both participants and observers of the price that the many have already paid for ignorance and repression.

My friends and I chose to march in the student section of the protest. We met individuals currently enrolled in colleges from a number of states, many of which are quite distant from New York, and were encouraged by the fact that so many young people bear a passion for climate justice. It was while marching in this section that we participated in a moment of silence for individuals who have already lost their lives as a consequence of climate change. Following this pause, during which the streets of New York were unnervingly quiet, was a "moment of clamor." Beginning with the community groups at the tail-end of the march, protestors began to roar as loudly as they could. The result was a wave of noise that rushed down twenty blocks. It was one of the most potent exhibitions of unity among protestors that I have ever experienced.



# CASS Program

Rocio Tinoco '17

College Access and Success Series (CASS) is a program designed by the Connecticut College Office of Volunteers for Community Service (OVCS) and the Science and Technology Magnet High School. The program is intended to make the seniors comfortable with the transition from high school to college. Staff and Connecticut College student volunteers from OVCS meet with 65 seniors 4 times throughout their senior year on campus.

For our first session with these students, I felt it went well with introducing the idea of what college is. We focused on time management and college essays. We broke off into 4 different sections. Each section received a real syllabus from a 100-level class at Connecticut College and a calendar that was broken up by the hour. They were asked to read over the syllabus and block-off their class times and other time commitments outside the classroom.

After each individual group looked over their own syllabus, each group shared aloud what information they had so that the other groups could have the information to cross off their calendar. At the end they had a full "college schedule" where they set time aside for 4 classes, homework, sports, dinner, community learning placements, extracurricular activities or clubs, and anything else that would require some time commitment. At the end of the activity they came to realize that they didn't have as much time as they thought they did and realized time management was key to

success in college.

The second part of the workshop included looking at a couple of "essays that work". In other words, essays from admitted students at Connecticut College that were exceptionally good. The students had a chance to read each essay and discuss why that particular essay worked. This sparked some interest in the students since their homework assignment is to write an essay for the Common Application.

In my high school experience, I had a similar program like CASS, however it was more of a one-on-one mentorship with a college student from DePaul University in Chicago. In this program we met once a month for a full year while working on college applications, essays, and scholarships. This kind of mentorship helped me a lot especially since I am the first in my family to go off to college. A program like the one back in my high school and like the one with the STEM students helps students succeed with the transition into college. Many students don't have an older sibling or parent to talk about college and may feel they are on their own. A program like this helps answer any questions they may have about college or the application process. It gives them confidence and to some degree motivates them further to go to college. Overall, the first meeting of the Connecticut College OVCS and Science and Technology Magnet High School CASS Program went well and I'm looking forward for the next workshop in November.

## *Dancing for Degrees*

November 22, 6:00pm  
1962 Room College Center

Support our community partner Higher Edge  
Tickets available at OVCS



Connecticut College staff and students support the Dr. King Scholarship Fund

## Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Award Dinner

Georbina DaRosa '17

More than 50 years after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, his inspirational words and unforgettable leadership during the Civil Rights Movement still reign in the lives of Americans today. Dr. King is a testimony that [we] students of color can prosper even when racism, discrimination, family issues and financial struggles try to knock us down. "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward"—Dr. King. The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship recipients from New London County high schools exemplify how youth should live inspired by the words of Dr. King. These six brilliant students achieve academic honors throughout their high school years and create huge impacts in their communities. Their success stories are like many of our stories. They've failed, were disappointed at times by these failures, but still continue to work towards greatness. Some of the recipients are fatherless, deal with a disability, and even one had his home burned down to ashes. Yet they all managed to do remarkable things. These youth refuse to have the world judge them by the "color of their skin, but by the content of their character". After all, "...Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education" says, Dr. King. The six Dr.

King Scholarship recipients have taken full advantage of their educational opportunities and have understood that in the world we live in today, education is the only way to reach success. As high school students they already are describing their plans to improve the educational and health care systems and face social injustices. How are you investing in your education and going to make it matter?

## Tunnel of Oppression

*November 6 & 7  
12 pm - 7 pm*

**Morrisson Basement**  
(take elevator down in Morrisson  
common room)

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