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OVCS

October 2015

★ WORDS TO LIVE BY ★

NEWS

"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.



BUILDING A COMMUNITY

A special look at the Office for Community Learning

The OVCS Community Luncheon • Latino Heritage Month Kick-Off •
College Access & Success Series • Enriching Experiences

'Bachelorette's degrees' are not boosting pay

Perhaps it's time to start rebranding bachelor's degrees as "bachelorette's degrees."

For the first time in U.S. history, women are more likely than men to have a four-year college degree: 30.2 percent for all women 25 and older vs. 29.9 percent for men the same age.

It was destined to happen eventually; young women actually surpassed young men in newly awarded diplomas several decades ago. It just took a while for enough cohorts of young women to displace their older, less educated counterparts in population share.

But burning questions remain. Why, exactly, have women been investing so much more heavily in their schooling relative to men, given that women still are much less likely to be in the labor force? And why, when women invest in education, do they seem to choose majors that don't pay off as well financially?

There are, of course, plenty of reasons to go to college other than improving your own earning potential: expanding your mind; raising your social status; increasing your odds of getting married (and, specifically, of marrying someone else with a college degree, who therefore has higher earning potential, too); improving your ability to teach your own children; etc.

Maybe these kinds of payoffs matter more to women than to men.

But it's still a bit strange that women are more likely to spend money on ever-rising tuition when they're not seeing the same financial upside as men.

College-educated women not only earn less than their equally educated male counterparts — such women don't even earn as much as their less educated male counterparts. Median earnings for women whose highest credential is a bachelor's degree were about \$42,000 last year; median earnings for men whose highest credential is an associate degree were about \$46,000.

There are certainly a lot of factors involved in this wage gap, including that women take off more time from their careers to care for children. But one of them is what men and women choose to study.

Don't blame the usual degree scapegoats, such as women's studies and art history. Yes, women are more likely to major in these psychically-but-not-very-financially-rewarding subjects than their male classmates are. But very, very few diplomas are awarded in such disciplines to people of either gender. Out of 1.8 million BAs handed out in 2012-13, only about 1,000 were in women's studies and 3,000 were in art history.

The big disciplinary gap between the genders lies elsewhere. The three fields in which women outnumbered men in the highest numbers are more traditionally utilitarian: health professions (125,000 more women than men), education (61,000) and psychology (60,000).

The majors that had the most men relative to women, by contrast, were engineering (66,000 more men than women) and computer and information sciences (33,000). These also happen to be among the highest-paying majors.

True, they're not funneling into fields that will maximize their earnings, the way college-enrolled men seem keen to do. But women are still studying subjects that sound like they will get them stable jobs. And not just any jobs — jobs that tend to offer more flexible work schedules and lower penalties for rotating in and out of the labor force, such as teaching and nursing. The big, female-dominated majors also tend to offer higher grades, which perhaps tricks students into thinking they're especially good at those subjects and therefore will have better employment prospects upon graduation.

When it comes to the decision to enroll in college, and what to major in, women may view their studies more as an insurance policy, a way to set a floor on their wages. There are, at least for the time being, lots of decent, middle-class jobs predominantly held by men that don't require higher education (such as construction and other trades); comparably paying jobs disparately held by less educated women are few and far between.

Meanwhile, the decline in marriage rates coupled with the rise of no-fault divorce may further encourage women to invest in schooling that will allow them to support themselves and their kids in a pinch — even if they know the subject they're studying probably won't ever make them rich.

When it comes to schooling decisions, perhaps men are more likely to have their eyes on the prize and women on the risks of poverty wages.

"But it's still a bit strange that women are more likely to spend money on ever-rising tuition when they're not seeing the same financial upside as men"

Catherine Rampell
"The Washington Post"

The OVCS Community Luncheon



Connecticut College OVCS works with faculty, staff and students to extend classroom learning into local places. OVCS supports community engagements which are collaborations between Connecticut College and the larger local community for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity

To kick off the 2015 - 2016 academic year OVCS organized a Community Luncheon on campus in the 1962 Room in CRO with four goals:

1. To articulate community priorities from various viewpoints
2. To describe the Connecticut College Curricular Reform Connections - that includes an emphasis on community engagement
3. To articulate possible community/college collaborations
4. To build community and to articulate strategies for on-going community building

Fifty staff, faculty and students attended and fifty community partners attended. Participants sat at 12 tables with 8 people at each table. Each of the tables included community partners, faculty, staff and students.

Tracee Reiser, Associate Dean of Community Learning, introduced the program and the goals, City Councilwoman Erica Richardson said a few words about priorities of the community from her perspective, and Dean of the College Jefferson Singer spoke about the Connecticut College curricular reforms.

"Let's make better policy together"

This was followed by dialogues at each table with people recording responses to the goal prompts: What are some of the priorities of New London from your viewpoint? Are there parts of the College curricular reform that interests you most? What can you imagine as possible community/college collaborations? What are some strategies for continuing community building?

The participants engaged in lively dialogues for half an hour, recording their comments on post-it sheets and pinning them on the wall around the room. Representatives from each table then shared some of the key content of their dialogues with the whole group.

Priorities noted include working towards educational excellence for all the New London schools and strengthening economic development in the City and the region. Priorities connected to collaborations connected to college curricular reform include building on the current college/school partnerships and creating arts and technology partnerships.

Priorities connected to continuing community building included holding quarterly luncheons/meetings and college working with community members on preparing and submitting grants. The post it notes with feedback stated "Fantastic chance to dialogue with a dynamic cross section of the community" "Let's make better policy together" "Good people, great dialogue, good food, inclusive environment" "Let's continue" OVCS organized the information and sent it to all of the participants and will work together with participants on implementing collective actions.

LATINO HERITAGE MONTH KICK OFF

Paolo Sanchez '18

A Celebration of Our Cultures

In the past, I have never been particularly proud of my roots. Why should I be? I have asked for numerous favors from an endless list of people and gave little in return. I would rather hide the fact that I have been homeless and starving than to admit it. Why do I want to be proud of this? After all, no one else shares such stories - why should I? I mean, who is even listening?

As a film major, I am constantly reminded of the importance of sharing stories with an audience. In high school, my film teacher told me something that I will never forget: Sell your story. A story that is unique and honest is simply more interesting than tried-and-true narratives that have dominated Hollywood. As a first generation Peruvian student at a private college in the northeast, I never thought I would relate to other students - but that is because I am not always listening. People share their stories in many different ways. I did not have to be on a panel to share mine. Stories are told through friendly conversations in Harris, club-hosted discussions, or through social media such as Facebook or even YikYak. There are stories being told everywhere around us, but not everyone is listening.

Being on the panel for Latino Heritage Month certainly helped me to share my story in an environment where I was sure that there was at least one person listening. I was conscious of the fact that the participants in the room had taken time out of their day to be there. As an attendee last year, I came to the event to listen to the stories of other students. After every response, I would attempt to relate to the speaker's words, in a rather desperate attempt to seek out someone with a similar background, culture, experience as mine. As a speaker on that panel this year, I was very open and honest with where I come from. Throughout the event, I kept thinking that perhaps there were people who were just like me, when I was in their seat a year ago. People who were seeking comfort in knowing that they are not alone in their experiences.

I would like to think of Latino Heritage Month as a time in which all people (perhaps more specifically Latinos) are listening to the stories that Latinos have to share. However, it would be presumptuous and naive. Instead, I think of it as a period of heightened awareness. I encourage everyone to share their stories but most importantly, listen. Listen to the stories that people tell.



"THERE ARE STORIES
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EVERYONE IS
LISTENING."



Sarah Rosenberg '18



Shameesha Pryor (left) sits with students and talks to them about a variety of expectations for their variety of options for college.

When I agreed to participate in CASS on Friday, October 2nd, I had mixed expectations. I was told that the event was for high school seniors from the Science and Tech Magnet High School in New London; the goal was to prepare the students for college and to give them a platform to raise questions of current college students, college graduates, as well as members of the armed forces.

The event itself seemed well organized and conducive to student learning—it consisted of small groups led by current Conn students, followed by a panel of seven individuals, each with a different perspective on post-high school life. Looking at the events planned, I had high expectations of the event; however, I also knew that the effectiveness of the program depended largely on how interactive the students were willing to be. High school seniors, I knew, might not be willing to talk to strangers about the looming idea of college for two hours on a Friday morning.

The first few moments of CASS met the aforementioned expectations. Ninety- six students filed in, chatting with friends and looking warily around the room. Groups of friends attempted to sit together, and did not make much effort to interact with the Connecticut College students assigned to that table. My table consisted of only three students and a faculty member from the high school, and as I introduced myself and asked the students about themselves it appeared that my instincts had been correct; these kids were here to go through the motions and get this over with as quickly as possible.

However, after the initial introductions and greeting, I began to see a change. The students were asked to write questions that they had about college onto sticky notes and post them on the piece of presentation paper that most accurately fit the category of their question. As the students at my table began brainstorming, questions such as, “How do I pick a college?” and “What is the diversity of Conn?” arose. Through talking with the students, it became clear that they were in fact willing to be open to the process and to ask genuine questions. It didn’t matter that it was a Friday morning or that I was a complete stranger, because to these seniors I had crossed into the “real world” of college, where every day isn’t scheduled for you and you’re not required to take P.E.; I had the ability to quell fears and answer questions that the students weren’t comfortable asking a teacher or admissions person, which made them more likely to write down what they were really curious about.

This proved to be true of all of the students during the next phase of the workshop. One student from each table had the opportunity to walk around the room, choose a question, and ask that question to the panel. The questions asked were very thoughtful, and elicited answers from the panel that were honest and, I believe, insightful for the seniors of the Magnet School. Overall, I thought that CASS was a good way not only to allow high school students to talk to college graduates and adults affiliated with the college, but also to give them an opportunity to talk to current college students and feel more at ease about the college process.

Enriching Experiences

Morgan Rentko '17



Every Thursday at 2:30 p.m., I make my way to the 1973 Room in Harris Refectory. Often dubbed the “antisocial room” by Conn students, the room is anything but antisocial as droves of middle school students excitedly pour in and greet us members of ENRICH, a program that offers academic, extracurricular and leadership guidance to New London youths.

"ENRICH, a program that offers academic, extracurricular and leadership guidance to New London youths"

The students are part of a special leadership program at Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, and despite the seniority of us Conn students, they are often the ones teaching us new ways to think and approach problem-solving. During our last session, we started off with an interview activity. My partner was an ambitious, hard-working sixth-grader who aspired to be “the best student and singer in the world.” Her enthusiasm was contagious, and I found myself wishing I could maintain her level of confidence and energy in my own abilities.

The second hour of the program offers rotating workshops such as keyboarding, singing and songwriting, hip-hop dance, and leadership. My group went into the leadership workshop for the day, where we completed two activities. The first involved making a list of people we recognize as leaders. The middle-schoolers named figures such as George Washington, Gandhi, President Obama and Walt Disney. We then were asked to imagine a scenario where George Washington and Walt Disney would have to work together to raise money for the New London Homeless Hospitality Center. Creative solutions such as a movie screening, a new amusement park and a series of speeches were excitedly discussed and presented.

Our next activity was to make a tower out of straws, but each person would have a limitation: one person could not touch the tape, one person had to build with only one hand and one person couldn't speak.

The room was frenzied for 10 minutes as the students scrambled to assemble the tower, but they ultimately learned to accommodate each other's limitations.

Afterwards, we discussed how these limitations weren't problems, but assets. Everyone could bring a unique set of skills to their group and contribute in their own way. I was impressed with the maturity it took for these middle-schoolers to understand this concept and how much support they provided to their group members to get the task done.

Our day was now coming to a close, and we said our goodbyes until we all met again. Observing the middle-schoolers engage in this program gives me confidence that they will be the leaders we need someday — in college, in our local communities and throughout the world.

"Everyone could bring a unique set of skills to their group and contribute in their own way"



Build Community



Make Change