

## OUR PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- > Empire State Diversity Honors Scholarship Program (ESDHSP)
- > Diversity Abroad Honors Scholarship Program (DAHSP)
- > Faculty Diversity Program (FDP)
- > Graduate Diversity Fellowship Program (GDFP)
- > Native American Initiative (NAI)
- > Explorations in Diversity and Academic Excellence (EDAE)
- > Doctoral Diversity Fellowships in STEM (DDF-STEM)
- > Replications (REPLIC)
- > Access to Success (A2S)

### Inside this Issue . . .

- 2 What Works for Diversity? How Can You Tell?
- 3 Innovation Strategy Meets Success at New Paltz
- 5 The W.E.B. DuBois Research Symposium and Conference
- 6 Disabilities and Campus Life
- 7 Turner Fellowship Welcome Dinner
- 8 SUNY Potsdam's Multi-Cultural Weekend
- 10 "Launch" Program Promise, College at Brockport
- 11 Where are we now in Affirmative Action?
- 15 Teaching in Belize

. . . and more!

## What shapes SUNY's diversity programs?

Submitted by Carlos Medina, Chief Diversity Officer and Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, SUNY System Administration

Many of us have used the summer months to renew our commitment to our students and our programs. In the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI), this is also a given. We have revamped guidelines to our existing programs and laid the groundwork for new or

expanded programs. We are excited by the growth and recognition of SUNY programs supporting diverse populations on our campuses and would like to share several of the notable benchmarks that have occurred with our readers. For the fourth year in a row, the SUNY Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has been selected as a recipient of the national Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award (HEED). The award reflects the continuing effort on the part of SUNY and all our campuses to build more inclusive environments promoting excellence in diversity. The past academic year was also studded with firsts – the first system-wide Diversity

Conference, the first year of the Diversity Abroad Honors Scholarship Program and the formation of a Diversity Task Force, sponsorship for a national LGBTQ annual conference and a system-wide Campus Pride conference coordinated by student leadership. ODEI also received a

diversity among students, faculty, and staff and also ensure a supportive, welcoming environment for every member of the SUNY family at both the system and campus levels.

The Task Force examined all relevant data, reviewed best practices in view of system-

wide initiatives and identified strategies as well as challenges in specific areas: "undergraduate and graduate recruitment, admissions,



National Science Foundation Innovation for Learning grant award led by Joseph Skrivanek to help scale and sustain SUNY STEM recruitment and enrollment as an outgrowth of the Replication Project.

A key initiative was led by Provost Alexander Cartwright together with ODEI to guide the formation and work of a Diversity Task Force. This important group of faculty, administrators and campus diversity advocates worked to formulate recommendations in several key areas to help develop policies that increase

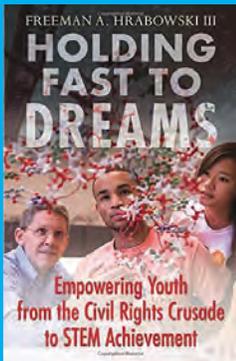
retention, and graduation; recruitment, retention, and support of diverse faculty, staff, and administrators; and development and enhancement of a welcoming campus environment for all."

([www.suny.edu/diversity/taskforce](http://www.suny.edu/diversity/taskforce))

In thinking about the Diversity Abroad Honors Scholarship Program and the learning opportunities we've helped create for students this year, it's hard not to reflect on my own summer experience having had the opportunity of visiting Cuba the week before

*(Continued on page 16)*

Join us for the 4th biennial STEM Conference. Sponsored by ODEI, the conference will explore recruitment, retention, partnerships and high impact practices that engage students in STEM disciplines.



Dr. Hrabowski's new book, *Holding Fast to Dreams: Empowering Youth from the Civil Rights Crusade to STEM Achievement*, published in May 2015, will be available at the conference. The author will be signing copies for our attendees.



Continual Process Improvement

DIVERSITY COUNTS

## STEM Conference: BUILDING PATHWAYS & PARTNERSHIPS in STEM for a Global New York



Keynote Speaker Freeman A. Hrabowski, III

To find out more, please visit our website: [www.suny.edu/stemconference2015](http://www.suny.edu/stemconference2015). We hope to have a great turnout to celebrate the success of STEM initiatives throughout SUNY. Help us spread the word by sharing the Save-the-Date card available on our website.

Our keynote address will be given by Freeman A. Hrabowski, III. Dr. Hrabowski serves as President of The University of Maryland, Baltimore County. His research and publications focus on science and math education, with special emphasis on minority participation and performance. Through his personal lens and the events of the Civil Rights movement, he recognized the need to develop programs promoting educational success in science and technology for African Americans and others. He is passionate about student success and chaired the National Academies' committee which produced the report, *Expanding Underrepresented Minority Participation: America's Science and Technology Talent at the Crossroads*.

## What works for diversity? How can you tell?

Submitted by Thomas Gais,  
Director, Rockefeller Institute  
of Government

SUNY has committed itself to improving its performance on several broad goals, including access, completion, success, inquiry, and engagement. Collecting and tracking data on these criteria are essential first steps, and that is the basic function of SUNY Excels, the performance system recently adopted by the SUNY Board of Trustees.

However, collecting data on how SUNY is faring on these measures is not the same as using the information to improve what we are doing. The data alone offer little guidance. If your campus sees a major drop in minority student enrollments from one year to

another, is it because of staff cuts in the admissions office and fewer high school visits? Or is it due to word of mouth (or more likely, text or phones) between current students at the college about some incident on campus? Or is it due to changes in the racial, ethnic and economic composition of high school seniors in the traditional catchment area of a given campus?

It is hard to answer such questions by looking at changes in outcomes alone. You might get some sense of what is going on if you examine the data in detail and in context. You might find, for instance, that the drop in the diversity of student applicants occurred largely in a highly diverse city where the admissions office (uncharacteristically) failed to

visit last year. Usually, however, it is no simple task to explain changes. Like news anchors who say that the ups or downs of the day's stock market prices are due to something said by Janet Yellen, or new data on the housing market, or uncertainty about Greece's role in the EU, it may be easy to come up with explanations after the fact. Knowing whether you are right, however, is hard.

Businesses face this problem all the time. They often make many changes—in products, marketing, and distribution—and typically they have no idea whether the changes improved or hurt or had no effect on their bottom lines. But a growing number of businesses—such as Google and Walmart—are

*(Continued on page 3)*

## What works for diversity? How can you tell? (cont. from page 2)

trying a different approach. They are running experiments, sometimes thousands of experiments per year, on innovations. Sometimes these innovations are large—such as a new ingredient in a drink—but often they are incremental changes in products, services, marketing, or delivery methods. Rather than rolling out a large and widespread change all at once, a growing number of businesses pilot and rigorously test small changes in what they offer and how.

As Jim Manzi noted in his 2012 book, “Uncontrolled: The Surprising Payoff of Trial-and-Error for Business, Politics, and Society,” before investing in a big idea and risking the business’ future, it often makes sense to test it out on a small scale. Maybe J.C. Penny should

have done this before they reorganized all of their stores (with disastrous results). And how about the late, un-missed “new Coke”? More businesses are finding more opportunities to be innovative by reducing the risks of big failures and testing many more ideas for improvements. Just as Thomas Edison brought rigorous experimentation to the industrial process in Menlo Park, more businesses are doing less central planning and comprehensive strategizing and more small-scale trial and error.

Higher education institutions can do the same, and diversity offices may find the approach particularly useful. There are no grand theories about how to create and sustain a more diverse college or university, and what works in one region,

campus, or discipline may not work in another. In the face of such uncertainty, rigorous trial and error may be the most promising pathway to improvements in performance. There are already some good examples. One experiment addressed “summer melt,” the drop in the number of students from poor or minority families between the number who are admitted to a college and those who actually show up for their first year of college in the fall. The experiment sent a series of text messages to the cell phones of a random sample of prospective students admitted to college. The messages included reminders to the students that they should complete some simple preparations for college. And when the fall

*(Continued on page 12)*

## New Paltz Innovation Strategy Meets Success for Opportunity Program Students

**Submitted by Christian Wilwohl and staff, SUNY New Paltz, Study Abroad Program Director**

The State University of New York at New Paltz is making study abroad a reality for historically underrepresented students in higher education, and these efforts have not gone unrecognized. The Institution of International Education (IIE) recently honored New Paltz with the 2015 Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education for the institution’s success in providing study abroad opportunities to underrepresented students. “At SUNY New Paltz, we pride ourselves on being an institution with an historic commitment to both diversity and to international educational exchange. As a consequence of that commitment, we have been able to develop stellar programs supporting the dual goals of diversity and internationalization,” said Bruce Siller, Dean of International Programs at New Paltz, upon receiving

the award on behalf of the institution. Sillner further stated, “Our Educational Opportunity Program is one of the largest and most successful in the SUNY system. Our Center for International Programs has been a pioneer in internationalization efforts within SUNY, particularly among the comprehensive universities. We have worked together to break down institutional silos and to eliminate barriers that had prevented EOP students from studying abroad.”

Over the years, the Center for International Programs (CIP) and Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) have worked in close collaboration to develop a best practices model for advising underrepresented students for study abroad. Since 2007, more than 150 EOP students have participated in study abroad experiences and have collectively earned over \$200,000 in both national level and institutionally based scholarships to fund their overseas studies.

**How it’s done—Advising, communication and outreach:**

While EOP students face some of the traditional barriers to study abroad participation, often referred to as the 3 Fs (family, fear, and finances), these barriers are often nuanced for EOP students. For example, many EOP students are first-generation immigrants and often act as interpreters and negotiators for their families. For others, just coming to college is a huge accomplishment compared to spending several months studying in a different country. Providing quality advising and encouragement to these students is key to their successful study abroad experiences. “Our student-centered, holistic advising approach with EOP students allows them to flourish and excel in an international setting,” said Clare Kelly-Barra, EOP Study Abroad Liaison and EOP Advisor. Kelly-Barra further remarked, “We provide them with a structured reflec-

*(Continued on page 4)*

### ODEI’s 2014-15 Diversity Abroad Honors Scholarship Program

In the first two rounds, 26 students from a variety of colleges throughout SUNY have received awards for their study abroad experience. The program, introduced in Fall 2014, was created to help underrepresented students, who might not be able to afford the extra costs associated with a study abroad program, to select one of the many SUNY study abroad options including full semester or summer study, faculty-led trips, internships, and international research experiences. The destinations selected are based on students’ academic interests but vary widely. Thus far, countries throughout Central America, Asia, Europe and Africa have been chosen for cultural and language study, but also for business programs and opportunities to pursue research in health and science fields. Today, having an applied learning experience in an international setting as an undergraduate can truly augment a student’s global perspective and, in turn, expand career horizons. ODEI is eager to hear more about the student experiences from its first wave of world travelers!



International education opportunities create a ripple effect. Study abroad internationalizes students. It broadens their perspectives. Our students continue to travel after graduation, and they share with their peers about the value of international study, face to face and through social media.



**-Clare Kelly-Barra**  
EOP Study Abroad Liaison  
and EOP Advisor



Veraluz De Leon, study abroad experience in Argentina

## Innovation Strategy Meets Success at New Paltz for Opportunity Program Students (cont. from page 3)

tion, peer mentoring, social and academic reinforcement, and the positioning of global issues when guiding them with the study abroad process.”

Proactive communication and collaboration are also integral components to supporting EOP students through the study abroad process. Both CIP and EOP have designated staff who work closely together in advising students about financial matters, expectations, cross-cultural adjustment, and scholarship opportunities. Early planning is critical in fostering an EOP study abroad experience. To start the conversation, EOP staff have incorporated study abroad information into EOP students’ first-year student orientation and first-year seminar in which class time, coursework, and a study abroad initiative are devoted to exploring international education and service learning opportunities. As one of their assignments, EOP students develop a four-year academic plan which includes a study abroad experience.

As EOP students move further along in the study abroad process, the identification of EOP study abroad candidates facilitates dialog between CIP and EOP staff. The study abroad application system at New Paltz sends notifications to EOP staff when an EOP student begins a study abroad application. “The notifications let EOP staff know that students have applied to study abroad, and they’re able to advise students about finances and academic requirements. With our application system, CIP and EOP staff can identify EOP applicants and reach out to them directly about scholarship opportunities,” said Christian Wilwohl, Study Abroad Program Director. In addition, CIP staff hold scholarship workshops during the study abroad application process. As the number of scholarship applicants has increased, CIP

hired a writing tutor to assist students with their scholarship essays and provide an additional level of support. “Working with students on their scholarship applications is a rewarding experience. You really get to know the students. It’s very exciting when we receive notifications about scholarship recipients,” Wilwohl remarked.

Peer-to-peer outreach also signals to EOP students that study abroad is a viable option for them. EOP study abroad returnees regularly give presentations and share their experiences with other EOP students throughout the academic year, and this allows EOP students to see themselves abroad. In terms of multimedia, the EOP study abroad webpage also has profiles of EOP study abroad students and an interactive Prezi map highlighting where EOP students have studied abroad.

As noted by Kelly-Barra, “International education opportunities create a ripple effect. Study abroad internationalizes students. It broadens their perspectives. Our students continue to travel after graduation, and they share with their peers about the value of international study, face to face and through social media.” One such student is Jeffrey Cifuentes ’13 (Asian studies/International Business), who studied abroad in Japan and recently returned there to teach English. Cifuentes is profiled on the EOP website and remarks on the importance of receiving scholarships in funding his study abroad experience: “I...received two scholarships, the Gilman Scholarship and the Freeman-ASIA, which helped me a lot to fund this program. It made it so much easier for me to live and have a great experience in Japan. To think all I did was meet with advisers and write some papers, I would get enough money to live comfortably in Japan, is unbelievable.”

Other students’ perspectives also reflect the value of study abroad to their peers. In her online profile, Veraluz De Leon ’13 (Spanish) shares, “Meeting students was a great learning experience because I was able to discuss issues from a more global perspective and enhance my global awareness which is one thing studying abroad will allow many people to do.” Like Cifuentes, De Leon also received a Gilman Scholarship to fund her study abroad experience in Argentina.

### How to fill in the financial gap—New Paltz Global Scholar Program/EOP Travel Grant:

While encouragement, student advising, scholarship application assistance, and outreach are important, CIP and EOP staff realize that finances still remain an obstacle for the students they serve. To ease the financial burden of study abroad for EOP students, New Paltz has developed institutionally-based mechanisms to make study abroad more accessible. For instance, CIP provides funding for travel grants to three EOP students per semester to reduce the cost of transportation to their study abroad destinations. Candidates for these grants are selected by EOP staff through an application process, and 26 EOP students have received a total of \$19,500 in EOP Travel Grants. In addition, EOP students are eligible for the New Paltz Global Scholar Program. This opportunity provides successful applicants a reduced program fee for specific study abroad experiences in the UK, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. To create these affordable study abroad opportunities, CIP leverages exchange placements with partner institutions in these countries. Therefore, Global Scholar Program placements are limited, competitive, and determined by an application process. To date, 19 EOP students have benefited

(Continued on page 9)

# The W.E.B. DuBois Research Symposium and Conference

Submitted by Angela Jones, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Coordinator-Women, Gender, and Sexuality Minor at SUNY Farmingdale

In 2014-15, SUNY Farmingdale initiated a research experience spanning the academic year with support from ODEI's Explorations in Diversity and Academic Excellence initiative to help students experience 1:1 relationships with faculty through research. In their undergraduate research experience, students defined themselves and their abilities as researchers, working side by side with faculty on an active research interest area of a faculty member. Each of the faculty mentor and mentee pairs gained the feeling of doing good and meaningful research. Under the direction of Dr. Lynne B. Elfe, the W.E.B. Du Bois Research Center created opportunities for nine students to reach beyond their books and classes to tackle research on problems facing the world and industry to help solve issues both contemporary and historical.

During the culminating Spring 2015 research symposium held on April 24, 2015, President Hubert Keen emphasized the positive gains students make both in their career and college aspirations as a result of participating in an undergraduate research experience. The afternoon keynote address by Dr. Tim Paglione, from the Department of Astrophysics and Astronomy at York College, also elaborated on the role of mentoring and the importance of developing analytical skills and learning research protocols, such as Methods of Science Research (MSR). Citing several partnerships, Dr. Paglione's mentees have succeeded in paid research opportunities through several notable programs including:

- The AMNH/NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU)—open to all undergraduates for summer research;
- AstroCom NYC—offering multi-year research fellowships and intensive mentoring for undergraduates interested in pursuing graduate work in Astronomy;
- NY Space Grant Community College Partnership Program (NYSG CCPP)—NASA research fellowships and mentoring for community college and technical school students interested in pursuing a STEM degree.

The symposium featured lively conversations enriched by individual poster sessions and in-depth afternoon presentations. One example of the close mentoring relationship was evident in the presentation by Kaitlyna Mackey and her mentor, Dr. Stephen Patnode. Their project created an oral history archive for and about Farmingdale. Kaitlyn, a visual communications major, also chronicled each student project through an active blog and hopes to continue working on the project as a research assistant. Other projects spanned both scientific and sociological issues and disciplines. For instance, one student in engineering, Theophilus Doe and

his mentor, Nazrul Islam, worked on a new encryption program to prevent identity theft using advanced steganography. At the Spring 2015 C-STEP conference, this student earned a prestigious C-STEP award for his research. Another student, Scott McMullan and his mentor, Aaron Howell, examined the choices of younger adults as they exercised independence from their nuclear families according to race and other factors.

The opportunity to work with a mentor on a 1:1 basis was singled out by several students as the hallmark of this Du Bois research experience. With assistance of Director Lynn Elfe, the FSC W.E.B Du Bois Faculty Student Research Program helped students new to the whole idea of independent research commit to a project and overcome numerous barriers to student success. In sum, it was clear that students and faculty committed to high goals in heart, mind and action to define and complete their research. Doing so in addition to hectic academic and family schedules demonstrated the commitment of all to the goals of inclusion and scholarship inherent in the program.



Photo by Lynn Elfe

## Farmingdale State College

...it was clear that students and faculty committed to high goals in heart, mind and action to define and complete their research. Doing so in addition to hectic academic and family schedules demonstrated the commitment of all to the goals of inclusion and scholarship inherent in the program.

Think of each day as another possibility, that something wonderful will make its way... Into your life of constant versatility, Plan for the inevitability that today, will be better than yesterday. Look for the truth in all that you do, and expect that light will absolutely shine through, For you, are an opening for all that is good and sure. Think of each day as a genuine treasure.

Elfe,  
Director, Undergraduate  
Research Programs,  
SUNY Farmingdale



**ADA 25**  
AMERICANS WITH  
DISABILITIES ACT 1990-2015

This year, in honor of the ADA's 25th anniversary, a Freedom Bus, recalling the legacy of the disability movement, is travelling cross-country with interactive exhibits to commemorate the work of those who are disabled and local partnerships that have been formed to advance and celebrate the disability rights movement.

\* Tegler, Eric. (2014). "Shifting the Paradigm," in *Equal Access, Equal Opportunity*. Washington, DC: ADA, p. 72.

\*\* ADA, *Equal Access, Equal Opportunity*. (2014). p. 105.

## Disabilities and Campus Life

Compiled by Elizabeth Carrature, Associate for Research & Development, ODEI

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), and many celebrations are underway to highlight the progress that surrounds the quality of life and achievements of people and organizations serving those with disabilities.

Did you know that the ADA reported that 58 million people have a disability in the United States? The phrase: "A mental or physical impairment that severely restricts a major life activity" provides a broad definition of what constitutes disability, according to the ADA. In university life and beyond the climate for disabled populations is changing, but providing access and equity for the disabled is still challenging.

In 2014, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was strengthened, particularly in the assertion that people with disabilities have the right to be fully integrated into society and into working opportunities to be fully productive members of society. However auspicious this legislation is, there are both economic and employment disparities for the disabled. The United States Department of Labor indicated the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities in 2014 was approximately 14 percent, which is more than twice that of the populations without disabilities. Also, according to one researcher, the average number of disabled holding a job is "the lowest in at least five years."\*

The ADA opens doors for students and employees with disabilities. Kathy Martinez, the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment at the Department of Labor, responds to queries about "What can employers do?" by simply saying: "Hire people with disabilities—actually

include them." Fostering a culture of inclusion on campus can be a starting point to help build a recognition that diversity can create organizations that adapt more readily to different situations and circumstances. Researcher Scott Page summarizes this principle in his book—*The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates, Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies*. In his words, "Diversity trumps ability." Where there is opportunity and self-determination, people can become more independent by contributing skills and talents in a meaningful way. Yet only 1 in 5 adults with a disabling condition works full-time and only 13% work on a part-time basis.\*\*

Our students and our staff with disabilities may face isolating bias that is another barrier to fully integrating into a workplace or campus life. Several campus-based cases have resulted in ameliorating both facilities and workplace accommodations to enable the disabled to participate more fully in learning, living and working in a college. For instance, e-readers and e-books, which have been incorporated into libraries and online courses, must have an audio component or a text-to-speech component to accommodate low-vision or blind students, and enhanced software must be available for text-taking. Accommodations for wheelchair seating with space for a companion need to be imple-

mented as a result of a 2008 case requiring modifications to the stadium/In a different vein, food choice due to allergies or gluten intolerance has become an issue disputed in a case at Lesley College in 2012. The settlement found that food allergens could be considered a disability and focused on providing individualized food and meal plans for those in need. Each of the challenges broadens the services mandated to new and varied forms of disability. Campuses are beginning to respond more readily to situations that require action, and the timeliness of providing support is critical. Reducing the time to convert a print text to a spoken text is one such example.

Another might be providing a note-taker or a course reader within a short time frame to allow a student to better succeed. One motto to think of in response to working to reduce barriers reads: "Life has no limitations, except the ones you make." It seems to be a good reminder that solutions, while not always easy, can be found to facilitate access and success.

This year, in honor of the ADA's 25th anniversary, a Freedom Bus, recalling the legacy of the disability movement, is travelling cross-country with interactive exhibits to commemorate the work of those who are disabled and local partnerships that have been formed to advance and celebrate the disability rights movement.



Photo of Freedom Bus from [www.ada.legacy.com](http://www.ada.legacy.com)

# Stony Brook Recognized New Scholars at Turner Fellowship Welcome Dinner

Submitted by Toni Sperzl,  
Turner Fellowship Program  
Manager, Stony Brook University

Stony Brook University recognized new scholars at the Dr. W. Burghardt Turner Fellowship Welcome Dinner and presented its incoming cohort of Turner Fellows to the campus community. The Turner Fellowship Program, which is coordinated by Stony Brook's Center for Inclusive Education in the Graduate School, has enabled many new graduate students to advance their studies.

This marks the 27th year of the Turner Fellowship, one of 24 Graduate Diversity Fellowship programs funded by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI). As a result of the \$250,000 matching contribution announced by President Stanley at his 2013 State of the University Address, to augment SUNY ODEI funds for Turner Fellowship over the next five years, the program was able to recruit 24 new first-year Fellows and three dissertation fellowship recipients representing 18 of Stony Brook's graduate disciplines, a total of 27 new fellows for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Joyce Turner and retired Geosciences Professor Robert Lieberman took the opportunity to engage the audience in a live interview about Long Island amidst the Civil Rights Movement. They shared poignant memories and recollections of challenges they experienced in the fight against racism and segregation that was being fought across the nation and on Long Island during that time.

They addressed the importance of efforts like those organized by the Center for Inclusive Education and the Geosciences Department that work to increase the number of

underrepresented scholars pursuing graduate degrees and advancing into careers in research and the academy. "The national imperative to increase the number underrepresented scholars in academic, research and leadership roles cannot be understated," noted Joyce Turner in her discussion with Dr. Lieberman. "While improvements in the disparity experienced by underrepresented scholars in pursuit of graduate education have been made since Burg's pursuit of his PhD, the fight is not over. We still have a long ways to go before equity is reached, and our national and state leaders must continue the fight for funding to support these programs and scholars."

Carlos Medina echoed this sentiment in his closing remarks for the evening—giving the Fellows insight into the efforts he and his team at SUNY engage in every year to continue funding the Graduate Diversity Fellowship Program and seeking new ways to further support underrepresented scholars and faculty across SUNY. Carlos stressed the importance of being flexible, understanding the different needs that exist amongst underrepresented scholars, and retaining leaders who think outside the traditional structures of funding and support. "Equality is everyone having a pair of shoes," he said. "Equity, is when each pair of those shoes fits."



*Joyce Turner and Dr. Lieberman*



*New Cohort of GDFP students and GDFP Dinner Invitees at Stony Brook's Turner Celebration*



The Turner Fellowship is one of eight diversity-focused programs managed by the Center for Inclusive Education in the Graduate School. For more information about the Turner Fellowship Program and the Center for Inclusive Education at Stony Brook University, please visit [www.stonybrook.edu/cie](http://www.stonybrook.edu/cie).



### What are the takeaways from Potsdam's experience with MCW?

- Visiting students get a complete picture of life on campus
- Building on diversity year-to-year has helped the college to increase its underrepresented student enrollment by 50%
- Personal contact with students, staff and curriculum at MCW weekend events has proved to have a high impact on student enrollment



## SUNY Potsdam's Multi-Cultural Weekend

Submitted by Susan Stebbins,  
Special Assistant to the President  
for Diversity, SUNY Potsdam

### What makes the Potsdam difference?

Recruiting students is a year-round pursuit, and opportunities to make an impression on college choice can occur in many ways, but Potsdam has a very concrete approach. In 1997, SUNY Potsdam arranged for a van to carry students from the five boroughs of New York City to the North Country for a campus visit. Now many years later, Potsdam arranged for a full bus of 52 high school seniors to visit the campus on April 23-25, 2015 for its annual Multi-Cultural Weekend (MCW).

### What is involved?

The collaboration of many departments supports the events and programs that make the Multi-Cultural Weekend special. Expenses for MCW are shared by the SUNY Center for Recruitment, SUNY Potsdam Office of Admissions and the Center for Diversity. The students tour the campus including the Maxcy Athletic Building which is always a big favorite but also get down to brass tacks. In meetings with advisors from Financial Aid and other offices, they can get the low down on curricula and costs. But the special flavor of Potsdam comes from eating in the dining halls with students, attending classes and special programs that demonstrate how diverse Potsdam has become. This year visiting high school seniors will have sample classes in Intercultural Communication and learn about internship opportunities. Past classes have included Native American Studies, Sociology and Politics.

A highlight of the visit is the President's Lunch, where the visiting students have time to network with current students (many who first came to Potsdam during a prior MCW as a part of their initial campus orientation), and with faculty and staff. The lunch also

includes brief presentations by the Potsdam President and Dean of Students, along with the presidents of various student organizations. There is a lot of variety in the student organizations that attend... the Black Student Alliance, SocoLoca, the Potsdam Association of Native Americans, and the Gender and Sexuality Association are just a few of the prominent associations representing different racial, cultural and gender identity groupings.

### Not Just a T-Shirt and a Tour!

As a recruitment and welcoming event, the multi-cultural weekend experience has been very successful. And while there may be some takeaways, such as a colorful Potsdam MCW T-shirt, the extra effort and work of all the contributors, Potsdam has helped the college double its underrepresented student enrollment in

just five years.

Typically between 75-85% of students attending MCW commit to Potsdam and start attending classes in the fall. Further, during breaks, many MCW students return to their high schools to give presentations about college life and their experiences at SUNY Potsdam. MCW has contributed to SUNY Potsdam increasing its enrollment of students of color from less than 10% to over to 20% in the last five years.

While SUNY Potsdam is proud of its accomplishments in raising the numbers of its students of color, it is also working hard to ensure all "students attending Potsdam experience a welcoming and inclusive environment." The Center for Diversity, the Diversity in Action Coalition, student organizations, and faculty and staff across the campus continue to work towards this goal.

## College at Brockport's "Launch" Program Shows Early Promise

Submitted by Joel Frater,  
Executive Dean, Damon City  
Campus, Monroe Community  
College; Kerlyne Colin, MSW  
Candidate, Graduate Diversity  
Fellow, Jessica Moore, BFA  
Candidate, Graduate Assistant,  
The College at Brockport

Studentmentor.org notes that four out of five low-income college students fail to attain a bachelor's degree by their mid-20s. At the end of 2008, the College Board's Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education issued its action agenda for increasing the proportion of Americans with college credentials. The commission's report, *"Coming to Our Senses: Education and the American Future,"* called for an increase in the proportion of the nation's young adults—those ages 25 to

34—who hold a two- or four-year college degree to 55 percent by 2025. It also identified 10 priority areas across the education spectrum—from dropout prevention to college affordability to dramatically increasing college completion rates.

The extensive body of research on student development suggests that one way to improve the chances that students will be successful in college is to focus on student engagement (Kuh, Zinzie, Schuh & Will, 2005; Cruce et al. 2006; Kuh et al. 2006, Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 602).

Engagement embodies two key components, the first is contingent on student success and the other involves the insti-

(Continued on page 10)

## Innovation Strategy Meets Success at New Paltz for Opportunity Program Students (cont. from page 4)

from this opportunity by participating in a study abroad program at significantly reduced program fee.

### **What's resulted—national level scholarships, faster time to graduation, and increased diversity of study abroad participants:**

There's much more to the narrative than merely having doubled EOP students participation in study abroad. The partnership between CIP and EOP has resulted in EOP students receiving national level awards such as the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship and Boren Scholarship. Since 2009, more than 30 EOP students have received over \$100,000 in Gilman Scholarships. Overall, SUNY New Paltz students, both general admit and EOP, receive more Gilman Scholarships than students at any other public institution in the state of New York. "Success builds on success," said Wilwohl; "The more students that receive scholarships sends a message to students thinking about studying abroad that getting a scholarship is definitely possible."

"Will I graduate on time?" is a question that students (and their parents) often ask. Time to graduation is increasingly becoming a SUNY system-wide imperative. EOP and CIP staff fully understand that carefully planning a student's study abroad experience should not delay a student's graduation, and this message is consistently conveyed to students. In fact, New Paltz institutional data graduation rates for EOP students who study abroad are significantly higher than their non-study abroad counterparts. Kelly- Barra affirmed, "We have also surmised that the sooner EOP students are exposed to study abroad, the sooner they can plan and prepare for their study abroad experiences academically and financially."

**The Power of SUNY:** SUNY in the world calls for increased diversity of study abroad participation, and the close collaboration between CIP and EOP at New Paltz has had a positive effect in this regard. This spirit of inclusion and participation of EOP students in study abroad has boosted the participation rate of underrepresented students by 50%.

### **Who else is involved—it takes a village:**

Providing successful study abroad opportunities for EOP students cannot be the work of EOP and international programs staff only. It requires working closely with other units on campus such as academic departments, Admissions, Financial Aid, the Registrar, and Student Accounts. For example, collaboration with Student Accounts, Financial Aid, and the Registrar resulted in the development of a new policy for study abroad students in which their grades remain "in progress" until their transcripts arrive from overseas. This arrangement now facilitates the disbursement of students' financial aid the semester upon their return from study abroad, even if their grades are not yet issued by their host institution. This policy has benefitted not only EOP students but also other students receiving New York State Tuition Assistance Program aid. Other initiatives have included the development of an international course equivalency database with the Registrar and curriculum integration of study abroad with academic departments.

### **The bigger picture:**

The New Paltz mission statement calls for the development of students as "productive members of their communities and professions and active citizens in a democratic nation and a global society." In addition, the current

Strategic Plan stipulates increased opportunities for students to engage in global learning as a high impact educational practice (Kuh, 2008). The provision of quality and affordable study abroad opportunities for all students aligns with these goals. New Paltz has also joined the Generation Study Abroad initiative sponsored by the Institution of International Education (IIE) in an effort to double the number of American students studying abroad by the end of the decade. New Paltz has set a goal of 30% of New Paltz graduates to complete their undergraduate studies with a study abroad experience by the end of the decade. SUNY as a system has also pledged support for this initiative by increasing study abroad participation system wide by 25% in the next five years. Creating greater access to study abroad will help SUNY as a system and individual Generation Study Abroad campuses reach their goals.

### **Next Steps:**

Now that CIP and EOP staff have achieved positive results through the development of a best practices model for advising underrepresented students for study abroad, staff in both offices are planning to work with other offices and programs on campus that serve underrepresented student populations. These include:

- Alliance for Minority Participation/Collegiate Science and Technology Program; (AMP/C-STEP), which serve underrepresented students in the STEM fields;
- Scholars Mentorship Program (SMP), a networking initiative for talented and high achieving general admission students of color; and
- Honors Program, which is partnering with CIP on international internship and service-learning initiatives.

**The Power of SUNY:** SUNY in the world calls for increased diversity of study abroad participation, and the close collaboration between CIP and EOP at New Paltz has had a positive effect in this regard. This spirit of inclusion and participation of EOP students in study abroad has boosted the participation rate of underrepresented students by 50%.

**IN OUR VISION...**

ODEI aspires to strengthen diversity as an integral component of academic excellence at the State University of New York.

Engagement through inclusion is a core value, and ODEI promotes new partnerships, within the 64-campus SUNY system and beyond, that embrace the inseparable connection between academic excellence and diversity.

## College at Brockport's "Launch" Program Shows Early Promise (cont. from page 8)

tution's efforts to engage the student body. As it pertains to engagement, student success is widely contributed to the amount of time and effort placed on academia and the involvement of additional activities beyond the classroom. The other is contingent on the institution's allocation of human and other resources, along with the organization of learning opportunities and the establishment of services designed to gain the attention of students and ensure that the activities are beneficial to students' success (Kuh, Zinzie, Schuh & Will, 2005).

While these and other purposeful activities are positively connected to successful outcomes for all students, historically underrepresented students and those who are less well prepared tend to benefit even more from such engagement (Cruce et al. 2006; Kuh et al. 2006). Therefore "institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular activities to encourage student engagement" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 602). According to Bowen (2005), "engaged learners are those who complement and interpret what they learn from others with direct knowledge based on personal experience, who develop appropriately complex understandings situated in relevant contexts, and who recognize learning's moral implications and consequences" (p. 2). Data collected from engagement-rich academic programs (Educational Opportunity Program EOP), Collegiate Science & Technology Entry Program (CSTEP)/McNair Honors College and Delta College at The College at Brockport, State University of New York, suggest students

who participate in these programs persist and graduate at a higher rate than students who do not. In response, the Office of Diversity secured an Exploration in Diversity and Academic Excellence grant from the SUNY Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to implement a program that would replicate the engaged practices of the above programs, with the target audience being underrepresented minority students not enrolled in any of those programs.

The Learning and Understanding your New College Home (LAUNCH) program at the College at Brockport, State University of New York, began in fall 2013. The program is designed for first time, full-time incoming freshman underrepresented minority students not enrolled in any other high impact/engagement program at the college. Ninety-two freshman underrepresented minority students were invited via mail to LAUNCH, and twenty-two joined the program which offered:

- Ongoing orientation to the Brockport and Rochester community and a variety of opportunities for academic engagement outside the classroom;
- Immediate connection with professional and peer mentors;
- Structured involvement in peer tutoring;
- Structured involvement in academic and career planning and advisement;
- Regularly scheduled cohort-based meetings;
- Adoption of a learning community model.

Each LAUNCH student is assigned a faculty/staff mentor and a peer mentor based on common interests. A number of social and high impact activ-

ities are provided; examples include trips to theaters in Rochester and Seneca Falls (home of the National Women's History Museum), welcome dinner featuring a motivational speaker and an award ceremony, 1:1 tutoring, and mentoring that helps to connect students with engaged activities across campus.

It is clear that institutions must be purposeful in designing and implement a variety of programs and services to meet the needs of a diverse student body. In addition, institutions must find ways to assess the impact of programs and services. To this end, comparisons were made between LAUNCH students, non-LAUNCH students & EOP minority students during the fall 2014 semester. The results of the analysis showed that:

- The average mid-term GPA was nearly the same for all groups;
- The average final GPA was close to being the same for all groups;
- A much greater proportion of In LAUNCH students earned at least one A than did those in the other two groups;
- A noticeably higher percentage of In LAUNCH students earned at least one B;
- The percentage of students who had at least one C was nearly the same for In LAUNCH and Not in LAUNCH students;
- EOP minority students earned a substantially higher percentage of Cs than did those in the other two programs;
- For In LAUNCH students, 0% withdrew from a course, compared to 14% for Not in LAUNCH and 29% for EOP minority students.

Another measure of student success explored was reten-

(Continued on page 12)

## Where are we now in Affirmative Action?

Submitted by Kingsley Osei, SUNY Associate Counsel and Gloria Lopez, SUNY-wide Affirmative Action Officer, System Administration

In July 2014 President Obama signed Executive Order 13672, amending Executive Order 11246 forbidding federal contractors with new contracts in excess of \$10,000 to unlawfully discriminate based upon sexual orientation and/or gender identity. A final rule implementing this order was issued in December 2014. While Executive Order 13672 does not specifically add protection for transgender individuals, another ruling may be on the horizon to extend protection to this population.

### What does it all mean?

The Office of Federal Contract and Compliance (OFCCP) uses the same definitions for sexual orientation as used by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

- Sexual orientation: homosexuality, bisexuality, or heterosexuality, whether such orientation is actual or perceived, and includes association with another individual of a particular sexual orientation.
- Gender identity: the individual's internal sense of being male or female, which may or not be visible to others.

### What is required?

As of April 8, 2015, employers who are federal contractors will need to take

affirmative action in recruiting and employing individuals without regard to their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, such employers are not required to ask employees or job applicants about their status on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

### Outreach Options?

Outreach and recruitment activities that are reasonably designed to effectively recruit a diverse population, without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity, should be

Equal Employment Opportunity is  
**THE LAW**

implemented. As with other protected classes, a list of resources and a plan of action to address the effectiveness of outreach and recruitment efforts should be in place. Listing job openings with local LGBT advocacy groups, college affinity groups, and postings at LGBT conferences are examples of "actions" supporting the new ruling.

The rule requires federal contractors to modify policies, federal contracts, and subcontracts to include sexual orientation and gender identity within the equal opportunity (EO) clause and job advertisements. In essence, every place/publication in which the protected classes are specified, federal contractors must include the words "sexual

orientation, gender identity." The phrasing that should be used is "All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin."

OFCCP states that federal contractors should modify their job tags and that it is sufficient to use "EOE/AA Employer including Protected Veterans and Individuals with a Disability" in the job tag. But, if the protected classes are specified, the contractor must

ensure that all of the protected classes, including sexual orientation and/or gender identity,

are listed.

EEOC is revising the "EEO is the Law" poster. However, the federal contractor does not need to change the poster until it is updated. When the poster has been revised, applicable federal contractors will be required to post an updated version. The EEO poster can be found at [www1.eeoc.gov/employers/poster.cfm](http://www1.eeoc.gov/employers/poster.cfm).

If you are a federal contractor or sub-contractor, review existing policies, handbooks and contracts, and update them to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories. Advise your recruiters and managers of these changes and ensure that campus practices are aimed at preventing discrimination and harassment on these bases.

As of April 8, 2015, we will need to take affirmative action in recruiting and employing individuals without regard to their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, we are not required to ask our employees or job applicants about their status on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

*The emerging role of academia in commercializing innovation:  
"The university has been slowly changing from ivory tower to economic engine....spinning out new companies, licensing technology to the private sector and even developing their own venture arms to finance commercial development of their discoveries."*

– Sheefral Mehta,  
Nature Biotechnology  
22, 21-24 (2004)



The College at  
**BROCKPORT**  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## *What works for diversity? How can you tell? (cont. from page 3)*

came, a significantly higher proportion of the students who received the messages actually showed up and started college.

Many other questions might be answered with experiments. Will we get just as many minority students if admission criteria and outreach activities target low-income students and communities, regardless of race and ethnicity? How can we better identify students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are most likely to struggle with academics? Once we identify them, which interventions are most effective? At an even more basic level, what types of messages are most effective in getting students to respond?

To do good experiments, the most important first step is to formulate a testable question, and that usually means that managers need to think and learn more about the processes they are using to achieve certain outcomes. For example, are contacts from peers, faculty, or college staff more likely to get a struggling student to begin attending a tutoring ses-

sion? A second step is to formulate a change in services or processes that can be selectively applied to persons whose behavior you are trying to affect. Usually, it is best if the selective application is random. Randomized control trials (RCTs) allow you to make simple comparisons between those who got the new approach and those who received the usual or status quo treatment. By comparing the average outcomes for the treatment and control groups after the new approach is tried, you can estimate with reasonable confidence—and without complicated statistics—the effects of the innovation.

Randomized control trials need not be expensive if you already collect good data on outcomes, such as retention, grades and graduation rates. If the data are available for all students on a regular basis, then an experiment can be implemented by randomly treating some students the new way and tracking how that group fares in comparison to all the other students in similar

circumstances (e.g., same class, backgrounds). Nor does randomization always raise difficult ethical issues. Presumably, what the college does now is acceptable ethically. All you are trying to find out is whether some change can make an improvement. Unless the innovation might hurt someone—and you can avoid trying ideas that run that risk—there can be little downside to trying something new on a small scale.

Of course, there are still many issues in running experiments, including getting informed consent. However, more than any other approach in using data to improve effectiveness, cheap, small-scale RCTs have a lot to offer administrators who want to improve the well-being of the people they are responsible for. Here at the Rockefeller Institute of Government, the policy research center for the State University of New York, we would be happy to talk to people at any campus about the potential applications of this growing and promising management tool.

## *College at Brockport's "Launch" Program Shows Early Promise (cont. from page 10)*

tion. Table 1 shows a fall 2013-fall 2014 retention rate of 91% for In LAUNCH students compared to 74% for non LAUNCH students. As mentioned earlier, we know that students who participate in programs that use engaged strategies persist and graduate at a higher rate than students who do not. More dramatic differences emerge when we examine these students based on under-represented minority status. What has been consistent is that students who are highly engaged are more likely to be retained. The results outlined above could be attributed to the program's emphasis on student engagement. We must

caution however, that no single program can account for all the changes in outcomes of any cohort of students. Never the less, we must build capacity to scale this model across the campus since it is clear that some benefits accrue.

We find that the College at Brockport's student demographic, or what some have called "compositional diversity" (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005, p. 6), has increased significantly in the last three years. Research compiled and summarized for the University of Michigan Supreme Court case documented the benefits that compositional diversity offers, but even more important promoted Brockport's mission-

driven outcomes of academic success and civic engagement. The nature of interaction taking place within and across cohorts of LAUNCH students helps to make our college community vibrant. This is because success of students is predicated on their purposeful engagement not just in curricular activities, but also in a variety of co-curricular activities, each of which require positive, supportive interactions that capitalize on the full range of institutional resources. A feeling of belonging and having support are both positively related to overall satisfaction, which, in turn, can aid in student persistence and success.

# SUNY STEM: How to be an Entrepreneur in Public Higher Education

Submitted by Elizabeth Carrature, ODEI

It is rare to test out learning objectives prior to establishing a new course or program. More than that, deconstructing all aspects of a student experience to improve program components may seem logical, but such evaluation requires time and a systematic look at one's teaching. One must analyze the students and naturally the course modality, be it in a classroom, a blended experience or a virtual channel. While many teaching innovations have

come about by trial and error or economic necessity, the Innovations CORPS for Learning (I-CORPS L), sponsored by the National Science Foundation is offering a more systematic approach to innovations in learning.

This summer, Dr. Joseph Skrivanek, the SUNY Replication Project Director serving as project the principal investigator; Dr. Joanne Russell, a SUNY Provost Fellow serving as a project mentor; and Elizabeth Carrature, an Associate for Research and Development in ODEI, serving as the team's entrepreneurial lead, explored the scalable aspects of the SUNY Replication Project in an effort to impact the STEM pipeline from community colleges to four-year colleges. The process involved creating a set of value propositions and hypotheses, testing them and trying to find a cost-effective way to implement the ones that

are "valued." Just as in business, we learned that an innovation must solve a problem or alleviate a "pain" point for a customer segment.

To have merit, the innovation must not drain revenue and in fact should be self-sustaining. In many ways, the minimum viable product would support an ecosystem where



the multiple stakeholders are served: student, faculty, two-year and four-year institutions, as well as SUNY itself.

Over the eight weeks of summer, SUNY's I-CORPS L team interviewed more than 100 people who could help us to validate the most critical components of a STEM research experience and indicate a willingness to offer a summer program based on a new and more cost-effective prototype. The four key ingredients proved to be mentoring, a cohort-based residential experience, math review and skills development and the completion of a research project.

The benefits of an applied learning experience conceived as a an onsite and online research program were validated through our interviews with campus leaders and students who had previously attended a residential

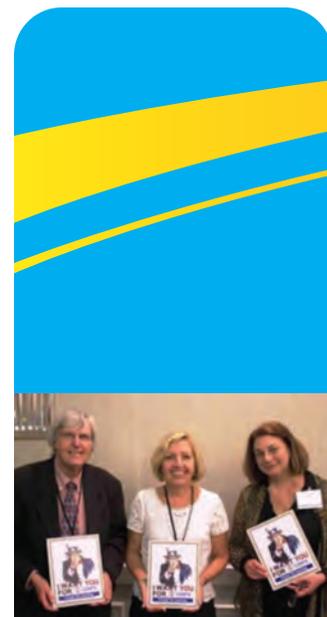
summer bridge research program through Dr. Skrivanek's program (BBCMP) at Purchase College. As a stepping stone to degree completion and college transition to a 4-year campus, the program can be scaled to impact STEM enrollment and retention throughout SUNY. At Purchase College, more than 40% of the students

attending the BBCMP program have transferred to Purchase to complete their degrees. The increased enrollment in STEM and the

increased graduates in SUNY within STEM disciplines is a key value proposition within the innovation model.

While Dr. Skrivanek's BBMCP program has provided important historical data on the high impact of mentoring as combined with a six-week residential research experience in a cohort-based program, the costs associated with the original prototype have relied on outside funding and are difficult to sustain or scale.

The investigation of a viable model with buy-in from community colleges, industry and SUNY itself has given us the opportunity to think "like entrepreneurs"—review what is feasible and set a new course of action. The I-CORPS L team hopes to report its work to date at the SUNY STEM Conference in October, 2015. Stay tuned!



Left, to Right, The Project "SCORE" Team Joseph Skrivanek, Principal Investigator, Joanne Russell, Project Mentor and Elizabeth Carrature, Entrepreneurial Lead.

*“What I have learned in the last few months is how little I really know about the lives and needs—at least in the higher education community—of most of the individuals represented by the LGBTQ+ acronym. As the recently appointed chair of the SUNY University Faculty Senate Adhoc Committee on LGBTQ Matters in SUNY, I saw the Institute as a chance to begin the process of developing the language and background necessary to become an advocate working to make our campuses more equal and inclusive for all members of the SUNY community. The Institute truly provided the opportunity to be surrounded by folks who understand the link between language, equality, and inclusivity and are passionate about their work.”*

– Timothy Gerken,  
Associate Professor at  
SUNY Morrisville

## Inclusive Excellence: Ensuring Inclusive Campuses for LGBTQ Students, Staff and Faculty

Submitted by Courtney D’Allaird, Coordinator, Gender & Sexuality Resource Center, SUNY Albany

Led by UAlbany facilitators as hosts, this one-day conference in June 2015 centered on the topic: “The State of Higher Education for LGBTQ People.” During the first morning session, following welcomes and greetings, the Supreme Court ruled that state bans against marriage equality were unconstitutional. The audience stood, clapped and cheered this decision, setting the stage for a forward-thinking discussion of campus life for LGBTQ concerns throughout the day.

The Institute was a collaboration between the University at Albany, SUNY System Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Consortium of Higher Education for LGBT Professionals. More than 100 higher education professionals and LGBTQ practitioners from across the nation came together to explore current trends in higher education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people. The Institute discussed the needs of LGBTQ students, staff and faculty, and sessions highlighted emerging practices in gender identity inclusion, policy, research and student support.

Tamra Minor, the Chief Diversity Officer and Assistant Vice President for Diversity & Inclusion at SUNY Albany and Carlos Medina, Chief Diversity Officer and Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the State University of New York (SUNY) gave a warm welcome

to participants before the morning plenary. Their presence, words and a spirit of collaboration set the stage for the rest of the day’s sessions which included workshops like Queer Queries: Designing and Analyzing Assessments; Check One Box: Supporting Queer Multiracial Students; Queering Title IX: Questions and Compliance; and I’m Online: LGBT Identity Development in a Social Media Context.

The morning plenary session featured Zaneta Rago, Director of the Rutgers University Center for Social Justice Education & LGBT Communities, as well as Demere Woolway, Co-Chair of the Consortium for Higher Education LGBTQ Professionals and Director, LGBTQ Life, from Johns Hopkins University speaking on trends on student demographics and the intersections of LGBTQ identities in the field of higher education. After a lively working lunch featuring “table topics,” the afternoon transitioned into a panel on the experience of transgender students in education, moderated by Courtney D’Allaird, Assistant Director for Intercultural Student Engagement and Coordinator of the Gender & Sexuality Resource Center at SUNY Albany. The panel featured graduating high school students, current undergraduate and graduate college students, and professionals discussing the matters important to Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) students. The program cen-

tered on choosing a college and thriving in the campus environment. Takeaways from the panel were the need for representation and visibility of transgender and GNC faculty and staff as role models, gender-inclusive facilities and policies across campus from athletics to housing, and the need for inclusive information and examples of “trans” concepts in our curriculums. After a second round of breakout sessions, the event came to a close with a networking session where Consortium Co-Chair Warren Scherer, Director at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Inclusive Excellence Center, summed up the day’s events and the work ahead for those returning to their colleges and universities. He reinforced the need to recognize student voices and lift student voices in university life, to allow people to work collaboratively.

There are many upcoming initiatives that can foster inclusion and learning in the SUNY landscape regarding the needs and interests of LGBTQ students, faculty and staff in curriculum and in campus life. For additional resources, visit Campus Pride’s Transgender Policy Clearing House, as well as its Campus Pride and Sports Indices. You can also visit the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Professionals’ website which has articles, jobs, an active list serve, and promising practices to help jumpstart your campus initiatives. ([www.lgbtcampus.org](http://www.lgbtcampus.org))

# Teaching in Belize

Submitted by Zach Beaudoin, SUNY Fredonia Alumnus

Since my childhood I have wanted to help people from underdeveloped countries, hoping to make a difference. It wasn't until my sophomore year in college that I discovered the Belize trip to work in a school environment and help kids.

I decided it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and as it was January in Fredonia, our team was more than ready to go to Belize.

We had previously collected and sorted the hundreds of dollars of school supplies and clothing to assist a school and work in the classroom with a local teacher. My classroom partner, Allie Marcott, also collected many pairs of sneakers; and they were an important contribution. We could

have used many more pairs of shoes and clothing!

When we arrived in Belize, I couldn't Belize-it. I was there! I was stunned by all of the vegetation, buildings and people. We were greeted by "Uncle Griffith" and his son, Sean, as well as the lush warmth of the Belizean climate. After a brief respite at the hotel, we tried to get to know more about this destination: its food, beer, music and people. I talked to vendors, street people and a ship's crew. The place was so full of culture and soul. I wanted to just absorb everything about

the area, but Monday morning loomed before us. That's when our real work would begin. We were filled with excitement and fear. We weren't sure what Monday would bring or how would the kids react. We asked ourselves so many questions about interacting with the class and the teacher. Needless to say, our worries evaporated with the warm welcome from



the students and staff. We took a tour of the school and were introduced to each room and told of the students' disabilities, which was funny, because I didn't see one kid with a disability. The only thing I saw was a bunch of kids trying to overcome the conditions of their environment and enjoying themselves during the process.

Later in the day, I met Ms. Gentle and Ms. Rose, two very memorable reading teachers. They were great. I will always consider them to be inspirational and close friends. If there was one student to be remembered, it was Avery. Avery is a

child with so much potential, but too tired to keep his head up—a child who was intelligent, but who never applied himself. He shadowed me as I walked and poked his head out from behind the building's pillars. He was certainly the troublemaker of the group, and for the next 12 days, he wouldn't be more than ten feet away from me and

was always up to something.

Day after day, I met more of the children, but none who melted my heart more than Tiwannie, Alex, Theodore and Star. The kids had such genuine souls. I've never seen so many smiles or so much love in one place. I've never felt so welcomed into a family, never so loved, and never so appreciated. From

the fourth day, we started school with hugs, fist pounds all around, and it was a tug-of-war for attention from every direction. These kids all had something to tell me. The camaraderie in the school was just unbelievable.

You could see children taking care of each other every day. No matter who needed help, students ran to each other's aid. I suspect this nature is partly cultural, but also in part due to the curriculum of the school system. In Belize, their focus is on developing "well rounded" students who are happy and fulfilled.

*(Continued on page 16)*



My time in Belize was certainly time well spent, but as they would say "I drank too much of the water." I yearn to be back and think about my kids every day.



Congratulations to Bobbi Hardman, Administrative Assistant in the SUNY Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, recipient of the 2014-2015 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Classified Service! This award is given in recognition of her outstanding and sustained service.



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## Teaching in Belize (cont. from page 15)

They're not just going to read Pablo Neruda, but they are going to feel the poem in their bones. They learn to garden and woodwork; they learn to sew and cook. They learn the life skills that I wish I had learned in school, but with an old-fashioned Belize twist.

One thing I found striking in the curriculum was they address the emphasis on religion with a mandate of science. They require children to know the science of the universe and

climate change; they need to be able to understand the nature of the place they live in.

I returned to Belize a second time to a different experience. We became a family again but respected the fine line between friend and teacher. We rebuilt the chicken coop. We fixed Ms. Foreman's tables and chairs, and we grew trays of seeds to grow in the garden. I wanted to instill as much knowledge into these kids as possible before I left.

## What shapes SUNY's diversity programs? (cont. from page 1)

the U.S. Embassy and diplomatic relations were restored after an official closure in 1961. This cultural exchange was part of a contingent of higher education professionals sponsored by the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE). The visit involved meetings with academics from the University of Havana, government officials, artists, religious leaders and several U.S. students studying at Cuba's International School of Medicine. In fact, one of the medical students was a graduate of SUNY Geneseo. Being able to speak fluent Spanish, coupled with my genuine desire to embrace the Cuban culture, I was able to communicate with many of the local citizens in Havana. In doing so I gained an appreciation of the quality of life in Cuba, as well as race relations, gender equity, health and education.

I believe it is safe to say that most U.S. citizens have an understanding of Cuba that is based largely on the media. Given this perspective, one might expect to see large pockets of poverty, oppression, and homelessness. While there

is a level of poverty that is visible, what I experienced was quite different. I found a resilient, industrious and incredibly talented people full of hope for the future of their country. I was overwhelmed by the warmth and welcoming culture I encountered. I found a country with an exceptionally high literacy rate, and an education system that is cost-free which produces more than twice the physicians per capita than the U.S. Their universal health care system is first-rate and their ground-breaking research has led the country in becoming the first in the world to eliminate the transmission of HIV and syphilis from mother to her child as reported by the World Health Organization.

Additionally, there were no signs of starvation, homelessness or crime. It was interesting to learn that of the 15 provincial governments, 10 are led by women and that the Cuban Parliament is 48% women. Given that Cuba's governance had been historically male, this is a big accomplishment.

I don't want to paint a rose-colored portrait of Cuban

My time in Belize was certainly time well spent, but as they would say "I drank too much of the water." I yearn to be back and think about my kids every day. Whenever I get bad news about a kid, I have to fight the immediate urge to jump on a plane to be with them. I probably left behind over 300 new friends—all with different stories and big Belizean hearts. "Notn saffn di haat moa dahn wahn chails lov."

life, because there are still major economic issues and a decaying infrastructure that will have to be addressed to attract more visitors, should travel restrictions be lifted. The impression I was left with is that there is one identity—being Cuban. Since the revolution in 1959, much has been done to remedy severe social inequities based on race. I encountered respect for all races. The most profound statement regarding race relations was made by an African American student who completed a medical degree in Cuba. During his time there, he recalled feeling "less black and more human."

In closing, my trip to Cuba was a strong reminder to get out of our silos. Most importantly, we need to help our students realize the significance of traveling abroad and becoming immersed in a different culture. There is the very real possibility that a transformative experience may occur. Ultimately, each such opportunity provides a chance to see the world through a very different lens than the one with which we began our journey.