



# The Service-Learner

*The Voice of Students, Faculty, and Community*

QUEENSBOROUGH  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE **CUNY**

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## Looking Back... and Forward

In Fall 2011, over 30 faculty members incorporated a service-learning experience for over 600 students enrolled in 45 classes spanning 14 different academic departments! This accomplishment is a testament to faculty who incorporate service-learning pedagogy, which integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection, thus enriching the learning experience, teaching civic responsibility and strengthening communities. Some of the many projects from the past semester are showcased in this newsletter. The Office of Academic Service-Learning thanks all faculty who included service-learning pedagogy in their courses this past semester.

A *Community Partnerships* breakfast, sponsored by Con Edison, was held on November 4, 2011. Over 60 representatives

from community-based organizations and QCC faculty met to explore service-learning opportunities; read more on page 4.

Looking toward Spring 2012, a service-learning project headed by the Basic Skills Department faculty is planned. Students will conduct research on the hidden human trafficking of women occurring within our local communities and will conduct an awareness campaign on campus. In addition, an Earth Day celebration and a QCC Family Day at the Queens County Farm Museum are scheduled.

Finally, we continue to compile evidence of the effectiveness of service-learning. In Fall 2011, 14 faculty participated in an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved research study, *Service-Learning across the Disciplines*,

which measures the impact of service-learning on students' education, career interests, attitudes, and interest in community service. Faculty who wish to join the protocol should contact Dr. Sharon Ellerton for more information. We are also assessing the impact of service-learning in career and technical classes on students' attainment of work readiness skills. In Spring 2012, the Office of Service-Learning will use a new IRB-approved protocol, *Fostering Career/Job Readiness Skills through Service-Learning*.

We look forward to a successful Spring 2012 semester and to continued support of service-learning at QCC. Please feel free to contact the Office of Academic Service-Learning regarding any questions you have about service-learning or any of the information found in this newsletter.

## Picture Me in College

Professor Elizabeth DiGiorgio's Drawing I class and children from the Saratoga Family Inn collaborate each fall on a project to advance QCC students' drawing skills and to use portraiture to create a positive self-image for the Saratoga children.

Saratoga Family Inn is a transitional housing facility in Queens, operated by Homes for the Homeless. In Fall 2010 and Fall 2011, art students were paired with middle-school children residing at Saratoga. During their meetings, the QCC students drew the Saratoga children in poses that promoted a positive self-image, while the young people discussed their interests and hobbies. Afterwards, the art students

embellished the portraits in ways that reflected the children's positive qualities.

The empowering images drawn by the QCC students were each affixed to a wooden keepsake box and given to the Saratoga children at an end-of-semester celebration. Each young person was also given an encouraging personal poem, note or quotation selected by the QCC students.

One testament to the success of the project last fall was the subsequent decision by the Saratoga children to participate in their own service project with residents of a local senior living facility.

Professor DiGiorgio presented the project at the New York Metro Area Partnership for Service-Learning (NYMAPS) Third Annual Symposium on March 23, 2011. Her article, *An Analysis of the Implementation of "Picture Me in College"*

*A Portrait Project with Homeless Children and Teens*" was recently published in the *Issues in Engaged Scholarship* Working Paper Series of the Colin L. Powell Center for Leadership and Service. The article is available at [www.qcc.cuny.edu/ServiceLearning](http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/ServiceLearning).



Professor Liz DiGiorgio and a Saratoga keepsake box

## Faculty Tips: Reflection

The **Faculty Tips** segment presents a topic of interest to service-learning practitioners. This issue highlights student reflection. For more reflection resources visit the QCC service-learning website: <http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/servicelearning/resources.html>.

Reflection, a critical component of service-learning, helps students make connections between their service and the course content. Reflection is an opportunity for students to share their thoughts about the experience as well as identify the knowledge and skills they gained through the process.

Faculty should emphasize that reflection demonstrates learning, and that the grade students receive on the service-learning activity is based on documented reflection, rather than the service itself. This can be a tricky line to walk, but with some guidelines, the whole process can proceed smoothly.

Opportunities for reflection should be provided throughout the course—before, during, and after the service activity. Reflection can be done in a variety of ways; faculty should choose the approach that aligns best with their service-learning activity. Reflection methods include: classroom discussion, three-part journals (description, analysis, and reflection), short papers, and oral presentations.

The following prompts may help students in considering their service-learning experience:

- Describe some of your interactions with people at the service site.
- Name three things that you remembered in your mind about the service experience.
- Were you different when you left the service location compared to when you entered? If so, how?
- What did your service provide to the partner organization?
- What connections do you see between this experience and what you've learned in your course?
- How did the service experience help you learn material from your course more effectively?
- What workplace skills did you learn during the experience (e.g., working as part of a team, meeting deadlines, respecting diverse opinions, problem-solving, planning and making decisions, writing clearly, taking initiative, making presentations, etc.)?
- How has your service contributed to your growth in any of these areas: civic responsibility, political consciousness, professional development, social understanding and intellectual pursuit?

## Student Spotlights

Students who enter into service-learning may not know what to expect, but many of them walk out of the experience with a new perspective on both service-learning and their own identities as students and citizens. Here are some of the stories to emerge from service-learning this past year.



**Monique McKenzie**

**Ms. Monique McKenzie**, a sociology student in Professor Marcia Coulton-Morrison's class, said that her experience working with an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) student from the QCC Adult Literacy Program taught her to be more open-minded about people and what they can offer. She is now more willing to "think outside the box," meet new people, and knows, through this experience, that every person's story has value. She also has learned to better self-direct her own education.

On December 2, 2011, Ms. McKenzie's sociology class came together with ESOL students in Ms. Audrey Cohen's class to

make presentations on their project. This strengthened the language skills of the literacy students while showing sociology in action.



**Naudeine Bristol**

In her post-service reflection, student **Ms. Naudeine Bristol** said that she felt her experience was exciting and interesting because it allowed her to do something she had never done before, that is, perform in front of people. As part of Professor Rosanne Vogel's service-learning Speech class, she performed in a play about the historically important Lawrence Family of Bayside. The play, written by Ms. Denise Johnson of the Bayside Historical Society, was performed at the Lawrence Family Cemetery for students of Sacred Heart School and Holy Martyr's Armenian Day School. Service-learning not only sparked Ms. Bristol's interest in acting, but it also gave her a sense of the larger world and the social context in which all art is made and performed.



**Murtaza Akbar**

**Mr. Murtaza Akbar**, a QCC student who graduated in December 2011 and plans to attend Queens College for a BA in Linguistics, agreed that service-learning was a "transformative experience." His service-learning experience was in Professor Beth Counihan's English class and involved tutoring GED students. He tutored an older woman learning English, which he said was empowering because it gave him a feeling that he could change people's lives for the better, "regardless of age or circumstance."

After this experience, he became a tutor for the QCC College Discovery program as well as the QCC Student Learning Center. He said service-learning gave him the confidence to tutor regularly. For him, it was "a great experience" he would do again because, as he said, his tutee taught him things "you can't learn in classrooms, like virtues, that you have to practice." Mr. Akbar's experience is the epitome of the real, reciprocal, and reflective values on which service-learning is based.

## Service-Learners at Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center and Archives

Professor Jilani Warsi's Basic Skills students researched the problem of genocide in the modern world and presented their findings to Professor Jennifer Maloy's Basic Skills English as a Second Language class. The event, held at the *Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center and Archives* on the evening of Wednesday, November 30, 2011, featured speeches, slides, writings, video, and a thorough Q-and-A with the attendees.

The event helped the two classes improve their language and presenting skills while educating them on how people struggle with or refuse to grasp the hatred, greed, fear, and indifference that resulted in these unparalleled tragedies and others like them.

These students used what they learned in the classroom to solve real-life problems, helping inform a new generations about the ramifications of unbridled prejudice, racism and stereotyping.

To help prepare for this event, Professor Warsi's students met with Ms. Zarmine Boghosian, Principal of Holy Martyr's Armenian Day School, and Professor Marge Tellalian-Kyrkostas, Professor Emeritus and Director of

the Anthropology Museum of the People of New York, to learn about the Armenian Genocide. They also met with Mr. Arthur Flug, Executive Director of the Holocaust Resource Center, to learn about the Holocaust. During the event, Ms. Hannah Liebmann and Ms. Esther Katz, volunteers at the Holocaust Resource Center, shared their knowledge and personal experiences of genocide with the students. Their stories made the issue real for the students.

### CALL FOR PAPERS: SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE HUMANITIES

The Fall 2012 issue of the journal, *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, will be a special issue on service-learning in the humanities. The editors welcome submissions of articles, essays, and reflective pieces on service-learning from various points of view. More detailed information on submission guidelines can be found at: [http://www.h-e-r-a.org/hera\\_call.htm](http://www.h-e-r-a.org/hera_call.htm)

## Service-Learning Information Takes Shape

*In Spring 2007, nine classes participated in service-learning projects. This academic year, over 80 classes will participate. The Office of Service-Learning is using new tools to manage these activities.*

- An **online project form** for faculty members provides an opportunity for faculty to consider all aspects of their project, including course and general education objectives, community partner, and reflection method. All service-learning faculty members should enter a project description for each project completed in Fall 2011 or planned for Spring 2012 at: <https://www2.qcc.cuny.edu/servicelearning/projects>.

- A **new database**, developed by the OCC Department of Information Technology, integrates information about projects, faculty, professional development, students, and community partners.

*These tools will assist in tracking projects for reporting purposes and will help increase the visibility of service-learning at OCC.*

## Spring 2012 Outlook

### The Garden at Saratoga Family Inn

Since 2007, OCC faculty have teamed up with the Saratoga Family Inn after-school program on academic service-learning projects. This coming spring, several service-learning projects will be built around Saratoga's vegetable garden.

**Basic Skills** students will work with the Saratoga kids to create a newsletter on the garden; **Science** students will design hands-on lab activities that demonstrate the scientific method; and **Nutrition** students will teach the children how to choose and prepare healthy foods.

### OCC Day at the Farm

The Saratoga Family Inn (SFI) and OCC communities will come together to learn about and celebrate gardening, good nutrition, environmental stewardship, and

service-learning at a four-hour festival, "OCC Day at the Farm," on **Saturday, March 31, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**, at the Queens County Farm Museum.

Farm Museum educators will explain composting, garden planning, companion planting, and other topics and will lead tours of the fields, greenhouses, and farm animals. The day will also include lunch and informal activities for family members of all ages.

The day will enrich faculty, students, and families from OCC and Saratoga as they plan and carry out this year's service-learning projects at the SFI garden.

### OCC Earth Day 2012

The Offices of Service-Learning and Student Activities are co-sponsoring **Earth Day at OCC on Wednesday, April 25**, on the upper floor of the Student Union, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Service-learning students and OCC club members will make presentations on environmental issues to the OCC community.





## Networking Breakfast Yields Partnerships

Representatives from sixteen local community based organizations (CBOs) attended QCC's fourth Community Partners Networking Breakfast on November 4, 2011. Representatives from K-12 schools, senior centers, social service providers, and cultural and veterans organizations came to discuss their needs



and explore the potential for service-learning partnerships.

QCC's Interim President, *Dr. Diane Call*, welcomed the audience and affirmed that service-learning is an effective way to engage students. *"It goes certainly beyond volunteerism...it brings to life those things that we hope to see in students—that the theory is applied [and] values are developed that engage students."*

Service-Learning Project Director, *Ms. Josephine Pantaleo*, then acknowledged the many partners in attendance. She noted that CBOs are "community leaders who are not only experts in [their] fields, but [they] are also advocates for improving the quality of life for those members of society who face challenges and hurdles and who are often faceless and voiceless in their struggles."

Ms. Pantaleo impelled her audience: *"Academic service-learning cannot occur*

*without your involvement. The college values and appreciates your interest in exploring service-learning with it, and the college's goal is to maintain reciprocity with you."*

QCC faculty and CBO representatives met in pairs and small groups to exchange ideas and discuss needs. As a result, several service-learning projects are planned for this Spring.

Among the participants was *Mr. Gerald Martori*, Cardozo High School Principal. He observed, *"In these times of dwindling finances, whether you're with the department of education, or Queensborough, or any organization, we're all short money, and we'd love to be able to ask for money but that's not what's available. What's available is resource and the human resource of students helping students is just awesome."*

## QCC Presents Service-Learning at Campus Compact Conference

The New York State office of Campus Compact (NYCC)\* held a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference on October 28, 2011. QCC presented a multi-faceted vision of the college's academic service-learning program. The seven panelists represented many perspectives: faculty, community partners, students, administration, and support offices. Each described how key tenets of reciprocity, mutual respect, and open communication have sustained the program by developing and maintaining robust community partnerships.

The audience saw collaboration in action as Professor Liz DiGiorgio of the Department of Art and Design shared observations and reflections with her service-learning community partner Ms. Dona Anderson of Homes for the Homeless. (Read more about this project on page 1.) The nuances and constraints of evaluation were highlighted when Mr. Victor Fichera, Principal Investigator for Academy Assessment Protocol, QCC Office of Institutional Research, responded to the comments of Mr. Murtaza Akbar, a QCC student who discussed the meaning of his service-learning experience. (Read Mr. Akbar's reflections on his project on page 2.) While Mr. Akbar's experience helped him decide on a career path, Mr. Fichera acknowledged the difficulty of capturing such qualitative effects in program evaluation.

The QCC session highlighted the college's commitment to excellence in its academic service-learning program, creating a synergy that was appreciated by the audience. Several participants noted that the panelists' various perspectives resulted in an especially rich presentation.

*\*The New York State office of Campus Compact (NYCC) is hosted by Cornell University in Ithaca and presently has 85 member campuses throughout the state, including QCC.*

*Campus Compact is a national membership association of college and university presidents committed to promoting "active citizenship as an aim of higher education." Campus Compact promotes civic engagement, campus/community partnerships and service-learning by advocating for, supporting, and increasing student involvement in academic and co-curricular based public service.*

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