WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL ISSUE OF THE ENGAGED CAMPUS NEWSLETTER

A message from the Director

The purpose of this newsletter is to highlight current community-engaged learning projects, resources, and events for the benefit of faculty and staff. Inside this first issue, you’ll see a brief representation of the ways Community-Engaged Learning has expanded at St. Michael’s College in the past five years. What are some of the key reasons for this growth which contributes so directly to the College’s core commitment to moral responsibility and improving the human condition through socially conscious citizenship? Several of the most significant efforts include:

⇒ The forging of key “signature” campus-community partnerships which faculty can build on and return to semester after semester.
⇒ The momentum of a national movement including a growing body of literature in the field of service-learning/civic engagement and abundant examples of how diverse disciplines are making connections between course content and urgent community issues.
⇒ Faculty willingness to experiment with community-based and learner-centered pedagogies including direct outreach, community-based research, or advocacy work.
⇒ Increased institutional support including funding, training, and infrastructure.

UPCOMING FALL EVENTS...

WHAT’S GOING ON WITH THE COLLEGE’S ORGANIC GARDEN?

Informational/interactive session for anyone in the SMC community who wants to learn about the new garden site and might want to get involved. Co-sponsored by CEL and Sustainability Offices. 9/25, noon, Farrell Room.

CEL COLLEAGUE LUNCH DISCUSSION SERIES:

For the curious, the tentative, and the committed. Each session will feature a co-facilitator (faculty, staff, community partner, or student) intimately familiar with the session’s theme. Hear examples of current or recent CEL projects. Discuss CEL benefits, challenges, and solutions. Learn about available CEL resources. Schedule TBA.

WORK ON PURPOSE SERIES:

Check out the full schedule and dates inside this issue.
A LOOK BACK:

During the 2007-2008 academic year, 15 service-learning courses were offered in 9 disciplines engaging nearly 300 students in 4000 hours of local or international community projects connected to classroom objectives.

TODAY:

In 2013-14, 36 course sections offered a CEL component. Over 500 students in 13 disciplines from math to philosophy to environmental science devoted 10,000+ hours towards their community projects.
Librarians collaborate with faculty to offer students multiple opportunities to develop and hone their research strategies and skills during their four years at Saint Michael’s. We have seen a steady increase in library instruction: over the past five years, faculty requests for research instruction sessions have increased approximately 40%.

One of our challenges is to equip students with the capacity to identify and select reliable sources of information through close evaluation and review. To guide students in these efforts, the librarians have forged a tiered approach. All first-year students become acquainted with the process of screening resources through their First-Year Seminar coursework.

**FIND IT AT THE CEL OFFICE**

**Welcome to Vermont: Four Stories of Resettled Identity**

(65-min. documentary)

Local award-winning filmmaker Mira Niagalova offers a nuanced view of the lives of forcibly displaced people once they have achieved their ultimate desire to resettle in the US and “live the American dream.”

In four vignettes, the film takes us inside the daily lives of families from Bosnia, Somalia, Iraq, and Rwanda who have recently resettled in Vermont, one of the smallest and most homogeneous states in the country. The documentary raises questions about identity, assimilation, and diversity and explores how the adaptation process differs from one ethnic group to another, from one individual to the next.

**WORK ON PURPOSE SERIES, FALL 2014:**

The **Work on Purpose Series** is a new collaboration between the Community-Engaged Learning, MOVE, and Career Development offices geared towards helping students explore future pathways that are personally fulfilling, use their interests and skills, and make a positive impact in the world. The series offers a mixture of activities for students, faculty, and staff.

There will also be **3 student workshops** in October looking at “work on purpose” principles; risk-taking/learning from mistakes; and the differences between doing well and doing good. Please encourage your students to attend!

**OCTOBER 13: FILM SCREENING AND PANEL DISCUSSION**

5:00pm. Farrell Room. Using Your Hands: A film about Farmers and Food in Vermont; directed and produced by Derick Logan,’14 and Chris Magyar,’14. Trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vkurZWWq9I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vkurZWWq9I) Followed by invited speakers talking about choosing a life of purpose in the local food/farming industry.

**OCTOBER 20: LEARN, WORK, AND SERVE EXPO**

11:30am -1:00pm. First floor lounge of the Dion Family Center. 30+ nonprofit organizations for faculty to explore CEL connections and students to explore opportunities in volunteer roles, internships, and post-grad employment or service. **Special focus on food/farming nonprofits.**

**NOVEMBER 7: ECHOING GREEN “WORK ON PURPOSE” TRAINING**

9:00am-4pm. Farrell Room. Open to staff and faculty from campuses across Vermont who advise students about career pathways. Co-sponsored by St. Michael’s College, Vermont Campus Compact, and Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility. Watch for registration information in September.

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PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF BURLINGTON

The Pomerleau Family Boys & Girls Club of Burlington has been serving the youth of the greater Burlington area through afterschool and summer programming since 1942. Seven years ago, the Club embarked on a new program called “Early Promise.” EP is designed to put increased emphasis on academic mentoring and college awareness for its members, many who come from the greatest concentration of low income neighborhoods in Chittenden County, are struggling to stay on grade level, and have little support in planning for their futures beyond school. EP is introduced to students in kindergarten and grows with them all the way up to high school graduation and beyond. It includes many pro-social activities and a suite of tutoring, mentoring, reading, and college positivism efforts.

St. Michael’s College students were among the first to make a substantial commitment to this program when they awarded their $10,000 “Fix it with Five” philanthropy grant to the Club in 2012. Around the same time, a number of SMC professors began integrating academic support for Club members into their coursework during the regular school year (see opposite page). Then, recognizing the need for a teen program to fight the “summer slump” or regression that many struggling students experience, Mary Beth Doyle, Professor of Education, and Dottie Dearborn, the Club’s Education Director, teamed up to pilot two summer programs this past May-June: one aimed at high school students (Real World Problem Solving) and another for middle and high school students (Vermont Robotics Crew). The intention of the programs was to provide an engaging, well-rounded, experiential learning environment. The camps were staffed by six Saint Michael’s College undergraduates from the Education department (Amber Emmell, ’15, Elizabeth Green, ’15, Bonisiwe Luthuli, ’16, Christine Peloquin, ’15, Logan Tracy, ’16, Laura Verville, ’17) who spent the spring term preparing for the camp under the guidance of Dearborn and Doyle along with the aid of AmeriCorps VISTA, Rachael Bowdish.

The Real World Problem Solving camp provided Club members with resources and opportunities related to their lives after high school. Hosting the two-and-a-half week day-camp on campus allowed the students to take advantage of what a college campus has to offer including access to science and computer labs, dining halls, classrooms, and varying offices and departments such as Information Technology, the Biology Department, and the Language Learning Resource Center. For example, students used the college’s iPads to document science experiments and interviews as well as to create a culminating presentation for their teachers at Burlington High School.

Vermont Robotics Crew (VRC). Many people ask, “Why robotics?” and the answer is that when students are faced with the challenge of programming a robot, it gives them a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of science, math and engineering. The programming abilities acquired by the participants allowed them to showcase lego robots that responded to sound and light, followed maps and mazes created by the students, and in one case, wrote the team’s name! In addition to programming robots, students had the opportunity to engage in biology and chemistry experiments, participate in field trips in the greater Burlington area, and use Saint Michael’s campus to the fullest.

Students presented their work programming robots at an ice cream social held at Saint Michael’s College. Those in attendance ranged from family and friends to Saint Michael’s own President Neuhauser. Mary Beth Doyle plans to continue the robotics program, in conjunction with the Boys & Girls Club Early Promise Program, to develop a team that will compete in the University of Vermont’s next annual robotics competition.

-Rachael Bowdish

Summer enrichment program: Science experiments and lessons; outdoor games at SMC; and robot programming at Champlain Valley Union High School.
Courses partnering with the Boys & Girls Club of Burlington

ED 370
TEACHING IN INCLUSIVE MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS
Mary Beth Doyle, Education Department

Students learn to teach youth who are vulnerable on some dimension (e.g., disability, poverty, ELL). Tutoring and academic coaching sessions are held on the St. Michael’s campus twice weekly. Students adapt and modify curriculum materials and assessments to meet the needs of individual students at the Club.

MA 381
MATHEMATICS EDUCATION SEMINAR
George Ashline, Math Department

Students learn about current issues in mathematics education, lesson planning, and working with youth. Students apply what they are learning by tutoring youth in mathematics at the Boys & Girls Club.

CEL 205
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SERVICE
Joan Wagner, Community-Engaged Learning

Students explore how concepts of faith, civic responsibility, volunteerism, philanthropy, charity, advocacy, and social justice inform our participation in and commitment to service activities while engaging in a substantial service commitment at the Club. The aim is to foster college positive awareness, prosocial behaviors, and academic confidence amongst the Club youth.

AMERICORPS VISTA FAREWELL: A RETROSPECTIVE
By Rachael Bowdish, ’13 SMC Liaison to the Boys & Girls Club

When I became aware late last spring of an Ameri*Corps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) position at my alma mater working with the Boys & Girls Club of Burlington, I jumped at the opportunity and was fortunate enough to be selected for the position. Over the course of the year, I helped facilitate a variety of community-engaged learning course projects as well as two new summer programs for middle and high school students that attend the Boys & Girls Club.

The idea for the creation of these programs has been in the making for quite some time. Over the past year, I have been working with Prof. Mary Beth Doyle on the development of Real World Problem-Solving, a program for high school students to help them pursue aspirations for college or in the workforce, and the Vermont Robotics Crew, a program for middle school students to learn how to program and operate Lego Robots. Both programs were primarily hosted at St. Michael’s College this summer, but the groups traveled to other sites as well.

In addition to planning, creating curriculum, securing community partners, and gathering materials for our summer programs, I also worked at the Boys & Girls Club assisting with their afterschool and night teen programs.

Prior to my VISTA year, I had little knowledge of the many issues facing the Old North End community and thus I experienced a monumental shift in perspective related to the work that needs to be done to make change here in our own backyard. Through observing everything from the effect socio-economic status has on educational opportunities to the uneven distribution of wealth and resources in the Old North End to the experience of New Americans living in Burlington, I now have a much better sense of the issues I want to work on here in Vermont and wherever I may find myself in the future.

“I now have a much better sense of the issues I want to work on here in Vermont.”

By supporting local organizations like the Boys & Girls Club, it is possible to increase the quantity and quality of resources available for our youth. During my year of service, there has been a marked increase in support for the club youth through SMC-sponsored programs and classes. It is amazing to see what can be achieved when a community works together for a common cause.

Though many of the issues our community faces may seem daunting, I can say that my experience as a VISTA has bolstered my faith in making change. I am so grateful to have been hosted by Saint Michael’s College, as it is an institution that strongly values community, and carries out its mission with such unwavering conviction.

Rachael has accepted a position working with Champlain Elementary School’s afterschool program in Burlington starting this fall.
DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE, cont.

Having achieved many notable gains in the arena of community-engaged learning, what is the next frontier for this work on the Saint Michael’s campus?

Increasingly important to the integrity of our community work are the following considerations: Ensuring that clear learner objectives are established to frame CEL projects; fostering student preparedness to engage with diverse communities; paying closer attention to the results of our work (e.g., assessing community impacts and student learning); and working more cohesively within and across departments to maximize the connections between CEL and other experiential activities. As educators, we are continually on the lookout for how to move students from affective responses to their engagement to cognitive considerations. How is their community work directly enhancing critical thinking, building transferable skills, altering assumptions, or contributing to a deeper understanding of course concepts?

For those who have led a CEL class, we know that such activity does not run on autopilot! What are the things we can do up front to contribute to a successful experience for both the students and our community partners? How open are we to changing course components or project parameters in response to student or community needs?

At our most recent Pedagogy Day, faculty members shared the following tips for those just starting out with CEL. Thank you for offering this sage advice!

*Start small (e.g., # of partners, # and scope of projects).

*Work with partners who can be directly involved with students.

*Ensure course content (e.g., readings, lectures, discussions) is integrated with the CEL component.

*Think carefully about the purpose and structure of reflection assignments.

EVENT

September 25:
Climate Change Symposium at UVM

What: A day-long Symposium on Climate Change will be held at the University of Vermont. Join faculty from across VT campuses in this statewide conversation. Explore environmentally-focused community-engaged learning pedagogy through presentations by faculty from four Vermont campuses who participated in the NNECC/EPA grant.

Keynote speaker: Dr. Cameron Wake from the University of New Hampshire.

Register: Due to NNECC/EPA grant funding, registration, parking, and meals are free. To Register click here

NNECC/EPA GRANT UPDATE

Last summer, a Northern New England Campus Compact/ Environmental Protections Agency grant enabled four St. Michael’s faculty to integrate hands-on learning to address environmental challenges related to water quality or climate change into the newly redesigned ES program which is experiencing rapid growth. The grant supported faculty training and the development of at least 4 new or redesigned courses with Community-Engaged Learning components during the 2013-14 academic year.

Participants included faculty members Jeffrey Ayres, Peter Hope, Karen Popovich, and Patricia Siplon. Laura Stroup also contributed to grant planning and support, and Kacy Pula joined the training to develop a CEL component in her Human Behavior and the Environment course.

Students in Siplon’s Politics of Water course partnered with the Nature Conservancy to research and write a report on how culvert laws and policies have changed in the state after Hurricane Irene. Students interviewed members of state agencies and civil society. Siplon reported that the benefit to the Nature Conservancy was the ability to commission a report they did not have the staffing to do themselves. Benefits to the students included a chance to do authentic research on an issue that is highly relevant to Vermont. Students identified this work as the most challenging they had ever done, but appreciated having a tangible product of their research work to reference to future employers and graduate schools.

In the final grant report, faculty wrote, “we believe that we have grown awareness about the value of environmental community-engaged learning as well as how to ‘do’ CEL. Students’ awareness about positive local grassroots efforts was heightened and several students became inspired to work in the nonprofit sector on environmental issues.”

This year, ES faculty will continue to explore opportunities to infuse community-engaged learning projects and other environmentally-focused practica throughout students’ course of study.