



Building Bridges

Learning, Scholarship, and Service

UMass Office of Community Service Learning
at Commonwealth College
2005-2006 Annual Report



At the Office of Community Service Learning (OCSL) we have been building bridges since 1999. However, the bridge metaphor is especially pertinent to our work over the past year. During the 2005-2006 academic year we have sponsored and supported many forms of innovative teaching, learning, and research that have connected classrooms and communities in profound and important ways.

I like the bridge metaphor because it emphasizes the multidirectional nature of Community Service Learning: bridges allow traffic in more than one direction. Our CSL courses and projects offer a path to new experiences for our students, but don't stop there: instead, in the creative collaborations between UMass and the surrounding communities, the benefits of the service, learning, and research reach all parties involved. Finally, bridges—and the partnerships they symbolize—are lasting structures for future scholars, leaders, and community members to traverse and build upon.

As this annual report was being completed, OCSL finished the first phase of a challenging strategic planning process. Our new strategic plan is our bridge to the future, and we have identified four main goals for the coming years, each leading to many specific strategies. The main goals are to:

1. Enhance the infrastructure for community service learning at UMass Amherst.
2. Enhance community service learning in the curriculum and improve student learning.
3. Enhance collaborations and support strategic community service learning partnerships.
4. Promote community service learning as a tool for faculty professional and personal development.

As you review this annual report, you will notice that we are already hard at work on many of these goals. Over the past year we have strengthened our programs and positioned the office to better serve faculty, students, and the local community. Each bridge we build helps UMass fulfill its academic and civic purposes, fostering new knowledge and understanding that serves the people of the Commonwealth, the country, and the world.

The successes we've seen could not have happened without the passion and creativity of our students, the courage and patience of our faculty, the tireless work of our staff, and the willingness of our partners in community organizations to have us cross our boundaries and join them in their work.

John Reiff, Director

The 2005-2006 academic year was one of tremendous growth in both the quality and the quantity of community service learning at UMass Amherst. This growth was made possible by the strong foundation we have built through the annual events and projects that consistently introduce new people to community service learning and help forge new partnerships.

In the past year UMass CSL courses and OCSL programs served more than 80 non-profit organizations in the local community.

Through these events and our various community service learning programs, OCSL has developed a ladder of service and scholarship that enables students to develop their leadership skills by taking on increasing responsibility within local non-profits and in the administration of CSL programs on campus.

In the past year more than 3000 students and faculty participated in CSL courses, events, and programs.

Our support for student leadership is complemented by faculty grants and a development program that helps faculty build service into all aspects of their teaching and research. OCSL has created opportunities for students and faculty at all levels and across all corners of campus.

In the past year more than 60 CSL courses were offered in 14 departments across campus.

From staffing a rape crisis hotline to tutoring young people working toward a GED to providing relief to hurricane-stricken communities, UMass students are making positive change in people's lives.

In the past year UMass students have provided more than 30,000 hours of service, worth over \$500,000 to the community.

Read on for the inspirational stories behind these powerful numbers.

For Ana Lua Fontes IMPACT! Hits Home



For some students, the bridges between campus and community are short and well-traveled. Ana Lua Fontes grew up in Amherst with the UMass campus at her doorstep. Between high school and college Ana Lua served with City Year, a national community service and leadership development program. This experience inspired her to find a college where she could continue to serve her community. IMPACT!, OCSL's first-year living and learning community provided just that opportunity.

As a member of IMPACT! Ana Lua spent her first year at UMass living, learning, and serving—applying the knowledge she gained in the classroom to issues and organizations in her hometown. As she developed a community in her dorm, she came to see her childhood community in new ways.

In her second semester, Ana Lua took Grassroots Community Development, taught by her high school cross country coach and long time service learning faculty member, Art Keene, and she participated in an Alternative Spring Break service project.

In these programs Ana Lua found new ways of understanding and acting on her passion for education and the arts. She believes, "Using the arts is one way to give people a voice and create change in their communities." Whether she is building bridges between art and education or classrooms and communities, Ana Lua has made a profound impact on UMass and her hometown of Amherst.



About IMPACT!

Over the past year OCSL's IMPACT! program has served as an important vehicle for first-year students to learn how their lives at college can integrate service and academic work. During the 2005-2006 academic year, IMPACT! students worked in Head Start and after-school programs, in adult literacy programs, and on a diverse set of other issues in communities throughout the Pioneer Valley. IMPACT! is a year-long living and learning community dedicated to community service. IMPACT! encourages intellectual curiosity and promotes students' civic spirit through shared academic, social and service experiences.

"Joining IMPACT! was one of the first decisions I made when I came to school and it's probably the best decision I've made all year."

~Catherine Scott, '09



In this, its seventh year, the program has become vital to OCSL's integrated approach to student civic development because it serves as an entry point for students who come from a variety of experiences of service and volunteerism, and it channels their energy to support the local community. Further, the program encourages students to think critically about who they are and how their life experiences and social identity impact their work in the classroom and the community. Because this program is a full academic year, it gives students and community organizations the chance to get to know each other on a deeper level. IMPACT! sets the stage for students' civic and academic careers at UMass and beyond. Students come away with a deeper understanding of who they are and what they want to do with the rest of their time at UMass.

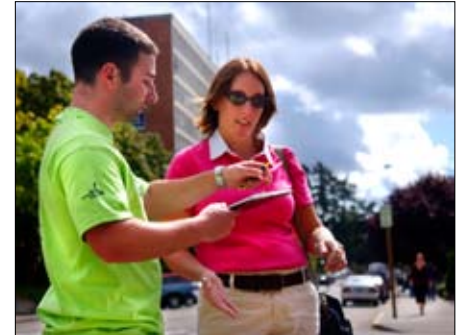
Sarah Krill Listens to the Language of War



What does literature have to do with politics? What does writing have to do with social justice? Sarah Krill has spent her four years at UMass asking just these questions. Sarah, who graduated in 2006, was an English major and a member of the Citizen Scholars Program. Sarah's community work and research focused on the controversial and contradictory narratives of combat. She studied combat veterans' stories and compared them to public discourses surrounding the war in Iraq. At the same time, she worked to organize a support network for military families in Western Massachusetts.

This was not just a project for academic credit, but one imbued with personal meaning as well.

Her brother is currently serving his third tour in Iraq. She believes that it was thanks to the Citizen Scholars Program that she was able to really examine and employ her "personal experience as a sister of a U.S. marine trapped between conflicting narratives about what I should believe, as a tool to explore the social world around me and what the politics of language around war really is." Based on her accumulated research, service, and learning, Sarah completed a powerful interdisciplinary project entitled "The Language of Combat," which included an art installation on the language, social impacts and perceptions of war. After graduation Sarah entered Teach for America and will be spending the next two years teaching in a high need school in New York City.



About the Citizen Scholars Program

The nationally recognized Citizen Scholars Program (CSP) continued in its evolution toward excellence during the 2005-2006 school year. Each year the program finds new ways, and builds on old ways, of bringing students and community organizations together. Honored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, CSP offers students an environment where they can think critically about social issues and act creatively to produce change.



This year, the program implemented a new participatory governance structure through a steering committee made up of students, faculty, and staff. This new mode of program management gives all stakeholders a voice in the shape and development of the program and offers students further opportunities to build their organizational leadership skills. The program also adopted Town Meetings and launched a Women's Caucus to offer more ways of involving diverse voices at all levels. All of these changes have served to help CSP model the kind of democratic participatory community that students are studying while consistently improving the curriculum and the service provided to local communities.

Each year the Citizen Scholars Program honors a faculty or community scholar who has championed civic engagement, democratic education, and service learning. This year the program recognized Marshall Ganz as the 2006 Distinguished Citizen Scholar. Marshall Ganz has been a community organizer for over 40 years and has worked in the civil rights movement, with the United Farm Workers, and with a broad range of electoral campaigns and grassroots organizations. His graduate-level course on organizing at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government was a model for the capstone course for the Citizen Scholars Program at UMass Amherst. While on campus he met with faculty and students and gave a public talk entitled "Knowledge of How to Combine: Reclaiming the Democratic Process." The Distinguished Citizen Scholar event provides the UMass community the opportunity to learn from someone who has worked to advance the common good and contributed insightfully to public discourse about the issues we face as a society.



Faculty Fellows Bridge the Digital Divide



When faculty structure courses specifically to maximize CSL's potential for integrative learning and positive community change, they can bridge the widest divides. Craig Nicolson of Forestry and Wildlife Management, Glenn Caffery from Resource Economics, Mari Castañeda from Communication and Graham Gal from the School of Management saw the potential of CSL when they began planning for a new minor degree program in Information Technology. This team was awarded a planning grant by the Provost's Committee on Service Learning to help them find ways to make community-based learning a focal point of their capstone course. They then received a unit implementation grant to put their plan into action.

The year-long Information Technology Capstone course was taught for the first time during the 2005-2006 academic year. Students consulted with four organizations in Holyoke and Athol, assessing their technology needs and helping develop websites for the non-profits. The class taught concrete skills such as project assessment, website development, and teamwork. At the same time, it provided UMass students with a hands-on appreciation of the impact of the digital divide in our society and offered them a concrete opportunity to help bridge that gap. One student noted, "My eyes were opened to the digital divide. Of course everyone knows about it, but when you actually experience it, your perspective changes completely." After only one year, the IT minor was recognized for its teaching by Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft, who announced that UMass would serve as Microsoft's first Showcase School.

About the Faculty Fellows Program

During the past year the Office of Community Service Learning dramatically strengthened its commitment to faculty development. The office created a new staff position to focus on faculty support, increased the number of trainings it offered, and introduced new funding to support course assistants for CSL Faculty Fellows. Through this new grant program, OCSL provides resources, training and support for undergraduates to assist UMass faculty with creating partnerships, evaluating impact, and other CSL course needs. This program offers opportunities for leadership development for students with CSL experience; at the same time, students provide invaluable support to faculty.

The Faculty Fellows program has helped to build a strong and committed core of faculty who teach innovative courses, facilitate service learning and develop mutually-beneficial and responsible partnerships with organizations in communities across the Pioneer Valley. The program's diverse streams of funding have provided opportunities for both experienced faculty and those new to community service learning to share ideas and to foster a commitment to service and outreach in all areas of the UMass curriculum and their own research.

During the 2005-2006 academic year, OCSL supported 12 Faculty Fellows who taught eight new service learning courses, in which more than 180 students participated. OCSL and the Provost's Committee on Service Learning distributed \$22,000 to eight departments: History; Psychology; Natural Resources Conservation; Resource Economics; Art and Architecture; Communication; Plant, Soil and Insect Science; and Sport Management.

"I love the 'real world' learning that CSL provides, and watching students navigating both the teamwork and the cross-cultural experience at the same time was a richly rewarding experience for me as an instructor. I can easily think of three of my students whose lives I think will take a different course because of their experiences in Holyoke, and that's a very satisfying outcome to walk away with."

~Craig Nicolson,
Associate Professor,
Forestry and Wildlife
Management



Kristen Bouley Sees a Hopeful Future in the Past

As a History and Education double major, Kristen Bouley was always interested in building bridges to the past. However, through her service and coursework she has also built strong bridges to the future.

After taking a mentoring course through the Office of Community Service Learning, she was hooked. Kristen worked with OCSL's director to design a new partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County. After helping to launch the program, she served as a recruiter, coordinator, and course assistant. Kristen worked with the program for two years before she graduated.

For her senior honors project Kristen wanted to use the organizing and program management skills she gained in developing the Big Brothers Big Sisters partnership to help make history come alive for area students. At about this time she was connected with a high school teacher from Worcester, Massachusetts, who wanted to introduce her students to college by visiting UMass. Kristen leveraged her connections with service groups on campus to create a day-long conference for the forty Worcester students.



The Leave a Legacy Conference used a curriculum that Kristen designed and included sample college coursework, workshops on preparing for and applying to college, and informative sessions on opportunities for service and leadership at UMass. Kristen raised all the funding to support this event, including grants from mtvU and the UMass Alumni Association. Kristen graduated from UMass in 2006, and is earning her Masters in Education through the 180 Days in Springfield program at the UMass School of Education; she hopes to continue to be a "Big Sister."

"I am truly passionate about student leadership. I feel that as a teacher, I can empower students to make a difference in their school and community by being a mentor and role model. My role at the Office of Community Service Learning really helped me get involved in my community."

~Kristen Bouley, '06

About the Big Brothers Big Sisters Partnership

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County has been helping to train and provide mentors to local children since 1975. Two years ago OCSL and Big Brothers Big Sisters piloted a new partnership to encourage more UMass students to volunteer as mentors and to expand the training students receive. This program was developed to meet an immediate need for new mentors in the Ware public school system. The 2005-2006 school year marked the first full year of the program, which has engaged more than 20 students as "Big Brothers" and "Big Sisters."



When UMass students sign up with Big Brothers Big Sisters, they can also enroll in an academic course on mentoring and youth development. The combination of coursework and community service has helped students be more effective mentors and has strengthened students' commitment to the youth they work with. Students must commit to work with Big Brothers Big Sisters for at least a year, but already we are seeing people remain invested well past the scope of the course. The course has been so successful that it is being expanded in the coming year.

In the fall of 2005 Big Brothers Big Sisters honored OCSL as one of its Most Valued Partners. This recognition attests to the power and potential of community partnerships that connect academics and community engagement.

Commonwealth Essay Contest

In every department on campus, students are helping UMass fulfill its civic mission to serve the people of the Commonwealth. Established in 2006, the Commonwealth Essay Contest serves to highlight the diverse ways in which students combine their academic work with community service. The essay contest asked students to reflect on how their work with local non-profits has deepened and expanded their learning. Students wrote about the academic, civic, and personal lessons they learned connecting theory with action. These essays speak to the powerful commitment UMass students have made to learning with their communities. This year's winners were Nelson Santos and Catherine Scott. The runners-up were Jean Capone and Jena Verrocchi. Below is an excerpt from Jean Capone's essay.



"Climbing Trees" by Jean Capone

Most college students would be sleeping in their dorms during this snowy nine a.m. hour, but we congregate joyfully to prepare for a journey into the wilderness with our young protégés: The Heron Homeschoolers. These six to nine year olds will soon arrive, mittens full of snow balls, mouths full of animal tales, and lessons to teach us... I enjoy my community service placement as an immersion in experiential education, where learning is hands-on, multi-dimensional and adaptive. I reflect on the Hampshire College course in Experiential Education that provided the inspiration and theoretical framework to engage in this work. A passion for teaching is developing in me. I dream of opening the door of an elementary school and letting the children learn "outside the box." I remember The Good Society, the first Citizen Scholars course I took, which encouraged me to dream, to imagine the world I wanted to be part of. I sometimes feel like The Heron Home School Program is that dream. It is the blueprint for the learning community that children need to develop their passions and their social skills.

Of course, we aren't in a dream. The children don't live in a utopia, and they bring the pain of the real-world with them to every class. Only once in a while, however, do they give me the privilege of sharing that pain. "My Grandfather's in jail," a little boy tells me. He wonders if he'll ever see him outside a prison cell... "My parents are getting a divorce," a girl whispers to me. I want to tell her that she'll be fine: my parents were divorced and I'm okay! But I pause and honor her feelings, her uncertainty, her embarrassment. Deep in this timeless forest, the crises of our times beg to be addressed.



Every Friday, I bundle up and brave the many landscapes that I see in the children I mentor. I see their new ideas like buds on a tree, their comfort in routine like deep, secure roots. The mentors in their lives are like the water that helps them grow! In the year since I began volunteering here, I have seen them soar to new heights. I have seen children who failed to thrive in public school emerge as group leaders. All they needed was to be brought out into the sun!

Five College Events

To best serve the communities of the Pioneer Valley, OCSL has been working in close collaboration with its counterparts in the Five Colleges to leverage the combined resources of each of our campuses. For the second year, OCSL hosted an AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteer in Service To America) to coordinate this work with the Five College Committee for Community Based Learning. Three events over the course of the last year supported faculty and helped develop students' ability to engage with diverse communities.

October 20, 2005

"Five College Community-Based Learning and Community Service Workshop"

January 27, 2006

"Western Massachusetts Faculty Workshop on Community-Based Learning and Civic Engagement"

February 21, 2006

"Effectively Engaging in Your Community: A Five College Workshop on Community Involvement"

Stephanie Aines Puts Politics in its Place

Stephanie Aines is the 2006 Frank and Helen DiGiammarino Citizen Scholarship Fund recipient. Stephanie's interests and experiences are rich and varied, and she sees her role as building bridges between them. Stephanie has worked on a wealth of interconnected issues from monitoring water quality with MassPIRG's Community Water Watch to addressing issues of hunger and homelessness with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and Habitat for Humanity. She credits the Citizen Scholars Program for helping her build theoretical and practical bridges between these diverse causes. "The importance of the Citizen Scholars Program for me," Stephanie says, "is to have a structured community that supports my social justice work."

Stephanie spent the summer of 2006 as an intern in the office of Massachusetts State Representative Ellen Story thanks to the support of the Frank and Helen DiGiammarino Citizen Scholarship Fund. Stephanie reports, "The support from the DiGiammarino family has enabled me to learn more about community service learning and social justice work through my summer internship at the State House. I have been involved with grassroots organizing before, but this is my chance to learn about the political process."

"We created the Citizen Scholarship Fund to support the University in its mission to develop the next generation of civic leaders. We find it personally rewarding to know that our dollars help even just a few young people to realize and develop their own potential to make positive change in the world."

~Peter DiGiammarino and Peg Owen DiGiammarino



The Frank and Helen DiGiammarino Citizen Scholarship Fund

The Frank and Helen DiGiammarino Citizen Scholarship Fund was established by the DiGiammarino family in honor of their parents' commitment to the greater community throughout their lifetimes. Since then, many friends and family have continued contributing to the fund, reaching \$75,000. This past year, Peter DiGiammarino '75 and Peg Owen DiGiammarino '75 made a generous five-year commitment to more than double the fund. Their support will dramatically expand OCSL's ability to support Citizen Scholars pursuing community service learning through summer internships and through service placements during the academic year, making these experiences more powerful and potentially transformative. Peter and Peg see this as an investment that has an impact at many levels. "To honor our parents, we wanted to fund something that would reflect their strong values of education, community service, and leadership, as well as directly benefit both the student recipients and the local communities in which they live and work." The fund has already supported seven students in summer internships, and is poised to make an even greater impact in the future.

Campus Partners and Supporters

The Office of Community Service Learning is housed in Commonwealth College, the honors college at UMass Amherst. Our work is supported by Commonwealth College and the Office of University Outreach at UMass. Their support of community service learning has made it possible for thousands of UMass students and their faculty to serve their communities in ways that improve learning and support positive social change. Our work depends on these supporters and the dedicated partners we work with across Western Massachusetts.



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