

FROM COLLEGE TO CAREER: *Farmingdale State College Builds on Applied Learning Successes to Prepare Students for a Competitive Work Environment*

With more than 100 years of experience engaging students in applied learning activities, Farmingdale State College is poised to create even more real-world opportunities for future students.

In March 2017, Farmingdale's governance body overwhelmingly approved a resolution requiring each graduating student to have at least one applied learning experience. According to Acting Assistant Provost and leader of the Applied Learning initiative Allison Puff, "these are the experiences that students remember and point to as transformative even years after their graduation. There is nothing better to prepare them for their future careers or graduate programs than the hands-on application of what they have learned in the classroom."

Proof of this is in the success of their graduates. A recent survey indicated that 91% of Farmingdale graduates with a bachelor's degree were employed within six months of graduation, 83% of them full-time. Internships and applied learning activities were directly related to the ability of these recent graduates to find meaningful employment, and a place in graduate school.

Currently, 90% of baccalaureate programs require an Applied Learning experience before graduation, which is an important factor in the high graduate employment rate. "As we move toward a phased implementation of the Applied Learning graduation requirement, we expect to see the employment numbers increase for graduates within their chosen field of employment," says Professor Puff.

These student outcomes have also been the catalyst for the development of an exciting new venture, the NEXUS Center for Applied

Learning and Career Development. This initiative will bring together two directly related areas - each vital to the success of students - that have until now functioned as separate and unconnected units: The Career Development Center, based in Student Affairs, and Applied Learning within Academic Affairs.

The vision for the NEXUS Center is to cultivate relationships with external partners; provide more and better applied learning opportunities for students; increase the number of graduates employed in a field related to their degree; and expand the number of students who obtain employment before graduation.

In order to do this, the NEXUS Center will capitalize on the critical role the College plays in the regional economy, providing education and training for the future workforce and developing academic curricula that prepares students to meet industry needs. Farmingdale recently partnered with National Grid to train the next generation of clean-energy workers in a program that will be rolled out across the state.

"The partnership between Farmingdale State College and National Grid is exactly the kind of relationship higher education and industry must forge - for the benefit of students, the industries that drive our economy, our academic institutions, and the communities in which we live. This is a model that is already paying dividends, with these students now in well-paying jobs and National Grid enjoying an influx of highly motivated, expertly trained employees. This pairing of intensive classroom preparation and hands-on experience is a perfect representation of the value of applied learning that SUNY has made one of its top initiatives," says Farmingdale State

College President John S. Nader.

There is no better way to judge the impact of applied learning than to go directly to the students who have participated in events such as "Give Kids a Smile" (Dental Hygienists); just flew their first solo flight (Aviation majors); or presented their research at an international conference (Visual Communications students). In the words of Nicholas King, a recent graduate of the Farmingdale State College Sport Management program and a former intern with the New York Yankees: "I felt like every time I walked into the office I was working my dream job... The internship was a life- and career-changing experience for me. I came out of my shell and developed skills I never thought I had - communications skills, interpersonal skills, and organizational skills, to name a few."



*Nicholas King,
Farmingdale State
College Graduate*

Nicholas now works for the New York Mets. There can be no better endorsement of the College or the experiential learning that took him to this new level. See other student experiences and further information about Applied Learning at Farmingdale State College at www.farmingdale.edu/applied-learning.

Contributor: Allison Puff, Acting Assistant Provost, Visual Communications Professor, Farmingdale State College

☆ Student Spotlight ☆



Vashti Ma'at

Graduate Student, Empire State College

Vashti's curious nature and innate desire to learn allowed her to traverse many paths that helped her to discover and better understand human relationships. As an adult learner, her academic focus was in the area of Sociocultural Anthropology. This field allowed her to study different aspects of societies, cultures, philosophies, and religions that are part of the fabric of human relationships. She worked at SUNY Empire State College, on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and other grant related activities, such as Professional Learning Evaluations (PLE) in connection with TAACCCT grant. She is certain that she will continue to be a lifelong learner, and is currently pursuing her graduate degree in Adult Learning that focuses on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) for social justice.

A personal essay from Vashti Ma'at

I am a first-generation college student, who came into academia as an adult learner. My curiosity for learning and the encouragement of my partner was central to the beginning of my college academic journey. Shortly after I begun the application process, I realized that I was not aware of the opportunities and choices that were available. My thinking prior to this was, I would charge each course-credit to my credit card; finish paying off that charge by the end of the semester before beginning the process again. However, I quickly learned that financing my college education was not as simple.

I recalled being given a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application and was instructed to complete it. The application was several pages long and I found it not to be straightforward. I relied on previous self-taught experiences such as computer skills and my informal research experience, which helped me find the FAFSA website, navigate the resources and begun the online application process.

The overall process was cumbersome, but I tapped into my informal knowledge base that guided me through the completion of the application. I imagined this process could be overwhelming for adult learners who, unlike high school students who might have had the support of their high school guidance services, or learners who may be starting from a disadvantaged place. Such as first-generation college prospects, immigrants or non-English speaking learners.

The next phase after receiving my FAFSA approval was registration and enrollment at Schenectady County Community College (SCCC). Although SCCC is a traditional institution with structured programs, I was deliberate in the types of elective courses that I selected. My interest was sociocultural anthropology, and my informal learning informed the types of elective courses that I chose for the humanity and social science program. To maximize my informal and applied learnings, by choosing courses that helped me expand my applied knowledge as well as develop my theoretical knowledge base.

Expanding the breadth and depth of my academic experiences was important. I believed that I would be able to take advantage of different job opportunities, while still learning about human experiences, within the context of sociocultural anthropology. I was deliberate in the type of elective courses that I selected, and took courses such as children literature, that met the general education English requirement for the humanity and social science program and the certificate program. It was one of my courses that had an applied learning component. The requirement was to interview a children's Librarian, create a children story and present it, the research finding and final product to your peers.

I continued my undergraduate studies at SUNY Empire State College because it offered learners the opportunity to maximize their experiences and develop a program that aligns with the learner's interest and or professional goals. It offered me choices, and I was able to develop

and design a program based on my needs and academic desires. During my undergraduate studies, I worked as a work study student. This opportunity allowed me to use my prior experiences, and my undergraduate studies to refine my skills and develop new ones that connected my theoretical and practical knowledge.

My informal learning, along with the lessons and values that I gained from attending a traditional and non-traditional college, led me to different opportunities. One of these opportunities was the path of my current academic studies as a graduate student in the Adult Learning program at SUNY Empire State College. I hope to focus my research on prior learning assessment (PLA) as a tool to bridge the non-traditional learners to institutions of higher learning.

I believe that some of the challenges or issues that prevent some people from attending college can be mitigated if institutions of higher learning use PLA to evaluate experiential, informal, non-traditional and self-directed learning for college-level education. PLA has the potential to offer non-traditional learners opportunity and choices to be on the path towards a college education. Having a college education has been linked to a person's economic mobility, and bridging a learner's applied learning experience and theoretical knowledge can enhance a person's earning potential, and it may also make them an attractive candidate because their learning curve will be abbreviated within an organization.

◆ Campus Stories ◆



Ilgu Ozler, Associate Professor Political Science brings the United Nations Semester students for a visit at the United Nations Development Program with Jessica Faieta Director of Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean and Claiane Rojas (both SUNY New Paltz alumni and Claiane Rojas a SUNY Global Engagement Program alumni).



THE UNITED NATIONS SEMESTER AT SUNY NEW PALTZ

For the past 35 years, the SUNY New Paltz Political Science and International Relations Department has been offering the UN semester course. This six-credit course consists of two components: one, an academic one focusing on the study of international organization in general and the history, institutional structure, thematic issues, and dilemmas of the UN in particular;

and two, a practical field experience component that is facilitated by 10 weekly trips to the United Nations in New York City where students participate in a series of scheduled briefings by UN officials, NGO representatives, and Permanent Missions of Member States. Students get 30 briefings from officials at the UN and have a chance to reflect on their experiences.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Ilgu Ozler, Associate Professor Political Science and International Relations, Director SUNY Global Engagement Program in New York City, SUNY New Paltz

Yolanda Diaz, Graduate Assistant, SUNY New Paltz

The SUNY Global Engagement Program provides students with the opportunity to spend a semester immersed in international affairs in the world's most important global city, New York City. Enrolled students complete an internship with an international not-for-profit organization while enrolled in an integrated seminar and research colloquium at the SUNY Global Center. This program is open to all majors with global interests from any SUNY school.

Beyond the coursework and internship, the Global Engagement Program (GEP) provides students with opportunities to network with top officials and staff members from a host of international organizations through events, conferences, and panel discussions. During the Fall 2016 semester, GEP continued to offer joint programming with the Foreign Policy Association (FPA) and the United Nations Association (UNA-USA). One event that stood out for the students included a panel discussion on bringing awareness to the worst refugee crisis since World War II. This was held in conjunction with the United Nations Day celebrations of the UNA-USA at the SUNY Global Center. The GEP also inaugurated a speaker series in cooperation with the FPA with a lecture titled, "Sexual Violence as a Tactic of War and Terrorism: a 21st Century Threat," delivered by Madame Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

It is through their internships and events like these that GEP students get the chance to fully immerse themselves in global affairs in NYC. At the end of the program, many students express that they have had a transformative experience. Fall 2016 alumnus Claiane Rojas describes her experience as "demanding, but it prepared me for my work environment and empowers me to continually push myself." Claiane Rojas has been offered a position as a Junior Consultant for Latin America and the Caribbean at the United Nations Development Programme as a result of her internship with the program. Another recent GEP student, Martina Nadeau, entered the program wanting to learn more about herself and a potential career path. As the program was ending, she said "lesson learned: always go after things." She took a leap of faith and applied for a full-time position where she did her GEP internship. Martina is now a Legal Assistant for Asia, Capacity Building, and Institutional Projects at the Center for Reproductive Rights. The Global Engagement Program has been effective at enabling students to live up to their full potential and to understand the spectrum of opportunities that a career in international affairs has to offer.

For more information, visit www.newpaltz.edu/gep or email gep@newpaltz.edu.



SUNY Global Engagement Program students with Ilgu Ozler, Director SUNY GEP; Noel Lateef, President of the Foreign Policy Association; and Madame Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.