New Beginnings

It has been a pleasure for me to return, after a faculty sabbatical, to campus and to the Center for Civic Engagement. I am happy to share in leadership with Dr. Amy Howard, now serving as director of the CCE. We are all enthusiastic about working with our new president, Dr. Edward L. Ayers, in his stated mission to build new and stronger relationships with the metropolitan Richmond community. Much good work lies ahead for all of us.

Each fall, each of us has the opportunity to start again, to renew old commitments and to make new ones. Whether we are staff, faculty, students, or friends of UR, we are full of good intentions—to engage in community service, to learn more about Richmond’s history, to read more about current events, or to work on a political campaign.

Then reality sets in. We are deluged with opportunities on campus—to join another organization or to serve on another committee. These can be good things. But if you are like me, you sometimes find yourself spending your time on activities that do not correspond to your deepest commitments.

I invite you to take a few moments, before your fall calendar fills up, to consider which activities will allow you to pursue the values you hold most important. And say no to the other opportunities. I respectfully suggest that community-oriented activities, whether volunteering, studying, or campaigning, are worth your time to consider.

If you are a student interested in taking a course with a community-based component, drop into the CCE, if you want to become part of our ongoing Build It community initiative in the Highland Park neighborhood. If you are a faculty or staff member who wants to provide our students with educational opportunities related to civic engagement or social issues, contact me or Amy Howard. Or drop in to the CCE if you want to become part of our ongoing Build It community initiative in the Highland Park neighborhood.

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From the executive director

Center Grows to Include Bonner Scholars Program and Richmond Families Initiative

The Center for Civic Engagement begins its fourth year of operation with two major program additions. The Bonner Scholars Program (BSP) and the new Richmond Families Initiative (RFI) will both enrich current program offerings and expand the scope of the CCE’s work.

The BSP—formerly housed in the University Chaplaincy—connects students, institutions of higher education, and their communities through service and other learning opportunities. Supported by the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation, which also provides major funding to the CCE, the BSP offers four-year scholarship awards to students with a sustained record of service and a high level of financial need. A diverse group of approximately 100 students are currently involved in BSP at the University of Richmond, making it the largest of the 27 programs across the country. BSP is designed to enhance these students’ education, as well as their commitment to social justice and civic engagement, by involving them in

Research and Civic Fellows Address Social Issues in Metro Richmond and Beyond

Summer 2007 ushered in a new class of CCE fellows pursuing research and full-time community involvement in Richmond and other cities across the nation.

After receiving a record number of applications, the CCE partnered with the Richmond Quest to provide financial support to two student-faculty collaborative teams conducting research into contemporary social issues over a ten-week period this summer. Dr. Andy Litteral, Professor of Management, and Neil Slotterback, a Business Administration major, used interdisciplinary methods to investigate the scientific, historical, social, and political issues that govern the voting methodologies and equipment used in elections in the United States. The researchers also examined voting technologies in Richmond, including those planned for the November 2008 presidential election, to understand the impact of voting methods on local elections. Law professor Benjamin Spencer, along with Law students Lesley McCall and Capri Miller, researched the “impending judicial

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B-School Projects a Model for Community-Based Learning

Statistics classrooms aren’t usually thought of as hotbed of innovative teaching methods. But that’s exactly where Dr. Andy Litteral, in effect, beats the curve.

Litteral’s statistics classes in the Robins School of Business are a model for what is known as community-based learning. The term encompasses a broad set of teaching and learning strategies that help students build their knowledge of academic concepts through experiences focused outside of the classroom. In Litteral’s case, this has meant asking his undergraduate and graduate students to complete statistical analysis projects for Richmond-area nonprofit organizations.
The CCE also awarded four David D. Burhans Civic Fellowships to students completing academically grounded internships at nonprofit or government organizations. Rhetoric and Communication Studies major Kristin Hurley worked at the Henrico County Victim/Witness Assistance Program, based in the Commonwealth’s Attorneys Office in Richmond. While working to assist victims of violent crime, she also explored the rhetoric of violence with her faculty mentor, Dr. Angela Swanson. Jason Levinn, an Environmental Studies and Leadership Studies double major, worked at the Chesapeake Climate Action Network in Richmond while putting together an environmental action plan for the University with faculty mentor Steve Nash. Brendan Regan drew on his Latin American and Iberian Studies major while working with Mexican migrant workers through the Chester County 4-H Program of Pennsylvania as well as the nonprofit COSECHA. Readings assigned by his faculty mentor, Dr. Aurora Hermida-Ruiz, helped him build a greater understanding of the struggles facing immigrant and migrant workers. Mariela Rich, an Environmental Studies major, connected theory and practice working for the Sustainable Communities Network in Lexington, Kentucky, while studying sustainability with her faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Finley-Book. The Burhans Civic Fellows will report on their experiences at CCE symposium on Sept. 19.

Like many of the other CCE fellows, Jason Levinn is now working to translate the products of his summer experience into more long-term goals. For him, that means working with others to develop an on-campus action plan for the student group RENEW (Richmond Environmental Network for Economic Willpower), and linking RENEW members to local and regional environmental groups. “There are many more issues besides recycling,” said Levinn. “Global warming, mountaintop removal, green building on campus…” His new organizing skills will be put to good use.
And if you are a local community member, I hope you will contact the CCE to explore ways we might collaborate with you to improve the Richmond region.

I admit that I am feeling particularly refreshed after a sabbatical. Yet I know I am not alone in experiencing the fall as a time of new beginnings. May it also be a time for deepened commitments.

In the summer of 2006, Litteral worked with the Center for Civic Engagement to forge relationships with the Virginia Dental Association, the City of Richmond’s Hispanic Liaison Office, the Virginia Childcare Resource and Referral Network (VCRRN), the Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV), Hanover County Social Services, and Chesterfield County. During the academic year, student groups met with each of the agencies to learn about their mission, client base, and reporting needs. Students then examined raw data collected by the agencies and transformed it into a variety of statistical reports, including methodology, conclusions and specific recommendations.

The process allowed students to not only gain understanding of statistical concepts but also to learn how to apply them in "real-world" situations.

“They are working on the project throughout the semester, so they are building knowledge as they go,” Litteral said. “While the main focus is not always on the statistical analysis, they are analyzing problems, moving the data, and identifying some solutions.”

The benefits for the agencies were significant as well. “I was especially pleased that after [the students] listened to who we are, what we do, and what we hoped they could assist us with, they took the initiative to say we can do that for you, but we can also take it a step further,” said Tanya Gonzalez, manager of the City of Richmond’s Hispanic Liaison Office. “They not only analyzed our most recent data, but compared year one data to year two data, which was above and beyond what I expected.”

These results affirm Litteral’s decision to make a major shift in the teaching strategies he had embraced for nearly 30 years. “I had held on to the old-fashioned idea that if I am not up there teaching, I’m not working,” Litteral said. “But this project has been so effective for engaging the students.”

For more information about the reports produced by Litteral’s classes, or to find out how you can get involved in community-based learning, please contact the Center for Civic Engagement at 484-1600 or ahoward3@richmond.edu.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

2006–2007 marked the second year of the Build It initiative’s collaborative efforts in Richmond’s Northside. Here are some highlights:

- Connected more than 200 students to weekly volunteer opportunities at seven community partner sites
- Worked with six faculty members in various department to incorporate community-based learning in their courses
- Organized the first-ever Build It Campus-Community Fair in partnership with more than 40 campus and community groups. Offered youth and adult services, educational activities, music, dancing, food and an education-themed raffle to the more than 300 community members in attendance
- Developed a variety of educational programs on campus and in the community, including orientation for all volunteers
- Coordinated day-long campus visits by more than 600 9th graders from Richmond Public Schools.
- Launched the development of a Street Law program in conjunction with UR law students

For more information about Build It, visit buildit.richmond.edu
Information about additional fall semester programs is available at engage.richmond.edu

Bonner Center for Civic Engagement
University of Richmond
28 Westhampton Way
Richmond, VA 23173
university of richmond

Bonner Center for Civic Engagement
9/7 Resistance and Reconciliation
Ms. Ana Edwards, Communications Director, Homeward
Co-sponsored by the Weinstein Fellows Program

9/14 So Much Promise, So Little Leadership: The Nation-State System of the Richmond Metropolis
Dr. John Moeser, Professor Emeritus, Urban Studies & Planning, VCU and Visiting Fellow, Center for Civic Engagement

9/21 Bringing the Chesapeake Bay to 5th Graders in Richmond Schools
Dr. Malcolm Hill, Biology

10/5 Gender and Social Development in South Asia
Dr. Jennifer Solotaroff, Social Development Specialist, World Bank

10/9 No Discouragement Stopped Them: African-American Women Voters in the Jim Crow South
Dr. Lori Schuyler, Chief of Staff, Office of the President

10/19 Taking on the Big Boys: Or Why Feminism is Good for Families, Business, and the Nation
Dr. Jennifer Erkulwater, Political Science

10/26 Theatre for Social Change
An interactive program conducted by Mr. Chuck Mike, Theatre, and University of Richmond students
Location to be announced

11/2 Connecting Communities
Partners in the Build It community engagement initiative

11/9 In the Beginning, There Was Inequality ... : Education and American Social Welfare Politics
Dr. Jennifer Erkulwater, Political Science

11/16 Racism, History, and Lessons for White People
Dr. Eric Yellin, History
Co-sponsored by the Office of Common Ground

11/26 Theatre for Social Change
An interactive program conducted by Mr. Chuck Mike, Theatre, and University of Richmond students
Location to be announced

**Pizza is provided at all Brown Bag Discussions — please bring your own drink

Preparing for Engagement

ccce brown bag discussion series
Fridays, 12:30-1:25 p.m. in the Think Tank, 2nd Floor Commons

Information about additional fall semester programs is available at engage.richmond.edu