Connecting the Classroom to the World

By Corey Jenkins Schaut

ew Century College students and alumni are just about everywhere. Sitting on stage behind a presidential candidate. Chatting with a Supreme Court justice. Talking to a reporter about conservation research. Leading the fight for human rights and social justice.

The visibility of the New Century College community has much to do with its emphasis on crossing disciplines and experiential learning. According to Mason professor John O’Connor, the college’s founding dean, it was all part of the program’s initial design.

“The idea was to see education as more than a collection of classes,” O’Connor says.

What Is Past Is Prologue

New Century College, or NCC as it is known on campus, was Mason’s response to the 1990 Case for Change report from the Virginia General Assembly-appointed Commission on the University of the 21st Century. Then-governor Gerald Baliles charged the commission with developing a vision for the commonwealth’s higher education system that would meet changing workforce needs at the turn of the century.

O’Connor says that various public universities had different takes on the mandate, with Mason seeking to invent what was termed a “zero-based curriculum.” Through the initiative, Mason faculty sought to discover what undergraduate curriculum might look like if starting from zero. It was a two-year process of brown-bag lunches, colloquia, and visits to other universities doing experimental or alternative education programs and included close to 100 people on campus, as well as corporate partners. In the end, the bones of NCC and the Integrative Studies major were formed.

“We coalesced around the idea of a more pragmatic liberal arts, a liberal arts education that would get you a job,” he says.

The curriculum was designed to cross disciplines and offer real-world experience. The college sought to bring faculty from different departments together to look at subjects with an emphasis on getting students out of the classroom.

With the program’s different course structure—some classes were 6 or 9 credits, some were six or eight weeks long—it took a great deal of collaboration to make the courses work in the overall university academic structure and recruit students to be a part of the uncharted new program.

In the end, O’Connor says support grew for the program because it filled an important void for nontraditional learners, those who sought a more challenging academic...
Dear Friends of New Century College:

Welcome to the 2013 edition of the New Century College (NCC) newsletter, *Keeping the Connection*. Inside, you will find exciting news about our alumni, students, faculty, and staff, as well as information about upcoming events.

Since its founding in 1995, NCC has maintained a tradition of “Connecting the Classroom to the World,” providing integrative and transformative experiential learning opportunities for our students. NCC students and alumni continue to impress us as engaged, well-rounded scholars and leaders—“changemakers” who are committed to serving and making a difference in their communities.

Currently, NCC offers several unique programs of study, including the integrative studies BA or BS degree, and Mason Cornerstones, a first-year experience for select, high-achieving freshmen. In addition, NCC offers a BA in environmental and sustainability studies in partnership with Mason’s Department of Environmental Science and Policy within the College of Science. Integrative studies majors may design individualized concentrations or choose from one of the following: advertising, childhood studies, conservation studies, education, international studies, legal studies, life sciences, organizational administration, and social justice. NCC also offers minors in childhood studies, consciousness and transformation, leadership, multimedia, nonprofit studies, social justice, and sustainability. These degrees, concentrations, and minors prepare students to address pressing social questions and global challenges through innovative and sustainable means.

This past year, NCC students dazzled us with their academic achievements. Seventy-two of our first-year students received the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Freshman Academic Achievement Award, which recognizes academically talented freshmen. Three of our students received the Freshman Academic Achievement Scholarship, and seven NCC students were inducted into Mason’s inaugural Omicron of Virginia Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society chapter (Phi Beta Kappa is the nation’s oldest and most prestigious academic honor society). Six students received grants from the Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research, whose grants provide funding and opportunities for students to gain experience conducting real-world research alongside faculty mentors.

Our outstanding alumni also amazed us with the many ways they are enriching the world we share, transforming their degrees into meaningful real-world applications. Two of our alumni were recently honored by the George Mason University Alumni Association: Matthew Bruno received Mason’s 2013 Distinguished Lambda Alumni Award, and Jacob R. Jenkins was honored with the New Century College Distinguished Alumni Award. You’ll find much more information about our exceptional alumni in the pages that follow.

This year, NCC is fortunate to serve as the home of a Mason endowed professorship, made possible through a generous donation by Shari Arison of the Arison Group. Gregory Unruh, who previously was an associate professor of global business at the Thunderbird School of Global Management, was appointed the Arison endowed professor. Unruh, who brings a dynamic agenda of public scholarship and breadth of interdisciplinary teaching experiences to NCC, will focus on the application of fundamental human values to global business and a strong global moral economy.

Finally, as you will see throughout this newsletter, NCC’s centers—the Center for Consciousness and Transformation, the Center for Field Studies, and the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement—are engaged in many remarkable activities. Notably, NCC is especially proud to launch the George Mason University Honey Bee Initiative. Through hands-on, experiential learning activities, students learn sustainable beekeeping, while taking an integral role in the sustainability of local, national, and international food supplies. NCC’s own German Perilla will be on hand October 5 from 4 to 6 p.m. in Dewberry Hall during the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Alumni Weekend to offer information and honey samples from the NCC honey bee field station.

Most cordially,
Lisa M. Gring-Pemble

On January 10, 2013, New Century College welcomed Lisa M. Gring-Pemble, PhD, as its new associate dean. Gring-Pemble is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of St. Olaf College and holds an MA and a PhD in rhetoric from the University of Maryland. She joined the NCC faculty in 2000 and later served as the college’s assistant dean. Gring-Pemble brings a passion for undergraduate teaching and scholarship that centers on political communication, public policy, and social movements. A special thank you goes to outgoing associate dean Nance Lucas for her leadership and service over the past seven years.

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experience. The program quickly took off through word-of-mouth, as well as some heavy admissions-fair marketing.

Those early students turned out to be leaders, another great marketing point for NCC. Over the years, many NCC students have headed student government, student media, and student life organizations.

“We hadn’t thought of it as a leadership program, but one of the common studies on coterie education—where you bring people together and keep them together—is that you develop leaders,” O’Connor says. “That’s, very strikingly, what happened.”

However, not everyone was sold on NCC in the early days. With a substantial amount of time and credits allocated to outside-the-classroom learning, questions arose about the program’s rigor. The political climate in Virginia at the time didn’t help matters, with liberal arts programs at universities across the commonwealth under scrutiny.

In the end, O’Connor says faculty, students, parents, and members of the local business community came together to advocate for the program and vouch for its value, including writing letters to Mason’s Board of Visitors. NCC survived and, in 2000, merged with what was then the College of Arts and Sciences.

Since the early years, with the support of university administrators, the college has evolved to meet the changing needs of students and expanded its reach across campus. NCC’s academic programs continue to address students’ career aspirations, now including concentrations in conservation studies, elementary education, social justice, and international studies. NCC’s first-year program, originally developed as a cohort-style introduction to college for its students, has now expanded into Cornerstones. As the university’s residential population grew, the college was among the first to form Living Learning Communities (LLCs). About 200 students now live in four college-sponsored LLCs.

“The idea of being the experimental lab, trying to work on faculty development, trying to work on curricular change, I think it’s still a good mission for the program,” O’Connor says. He notes that early members of the NCC faculty continue to shepherd these ideals elsewhere at the university, including from the Provost’s Office.

New Century in the New Century

Nance Lucas, who served as the college’s associate dean from 2005 until January 2013 and is now executive director of NCC’s Center for Consciousness and Transformation, identifies today’s typical NCC student as someone who seeks challenges.

“They want to be engaged in learning and help create their learning environment,” she says. “That has been true from the moment the college was created.”

Lucas notes that NCC’s interdisciplinary nature is still critical to the program’s success. “No one single discipline or field can solve society’s most complex pressing problems,” she says. “The real value of an integrative studies degree program is that students are making connections among a wide range of fields and disciplines.”

The emphasis on building competencies in critical thinking, global understanding, communication, and civic engagement also make program graduates appealing to employers, Lucas says.

“Our graduates come to them with competencies that employers say they cannot teach college graduates,” Lucas says. “They can teach them technical domain knowledge, but they can’t teach them how to be critical thinkers or how to be good leaders or collaborators.”

Keeping the college and its offerings relevant as the student population and employment market shift is a priority for NCC administrators. As new associate dean and associate professor Lisa Gring-Pemble starts her tenure, she is thinking about NCC’s future. At a time when the university is crafting its vision, she plans for NCC to do the same.

“This is such a critical time in the university’s future,” Gring-Pemble says. “It really is an opportune moment for us to come together collectively and reflect on who we are as a college, who we want to become, and how we can best serve our students, alumni, and university.”

Alumni are a key part of that future. Both Lucas and Gring-Pemble note the eagerness of college alumni to give back to NCC through student mentoring, speaking in classrooms, and reinvigorating the college’s alumni group. It’s part of the college’s ethos, according to Gring-Pemble.

“Students come out of our program and see themselves as agents of change,” she says. “They see themselves not only as agents of change, but as having a responsibility to transform the communities they are living in. And they go out and do that.”

This article originally appeared in a slightly different form in the spring 2013 Mason Spirit magazine.
Student and Alumni News

Kendall Bilbrey, BS ‘12, is an intern at the Chengdu Panda Base in Chengdu, China, where she conducts behavioral research on the red panda and endangered species. She studied at the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation as part of her degree program with NCC.

Adrienne Blaylock, BA ’06, earned her master of education, elementary education, from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2012.

Matthew B. Bruno, BA ’05, MAIS ’08, received the 2013 Distinguished Lambda Alumni award at the Mason Alumni Association Celebration of Distinction. He was cochair of Mason’s LGBT Lambda Alumni Chapter from 2009 to 2012 and is currently the coordinator of LGBTQ programming for the Center for Diversity and Inclusion at American University.

Sarmad Butt, sophomore, BS with a concentration in life sciences, received the Freshman Academic Achievement Scholarship from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. He was inducted into the Alpha Lambda Delta honor society in 2013. Butt is also involved in volunteer work with Inova Fairfax Hospital and the American Red Cross.

Charles Coats, BA ’13, was featured in Mason News “Stories from the Class of 2013.” The article highlighted Coats’s dedication to environmental and social justice causes, as well as his contributions to NCC and the Mason community. He currently works as a development intern at Invisible Children.

Kristen Culp, BS ’08, started working for the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose, Texas, in 2009. She is currently a keeper and a materials organizer for the AZA accreditation process. Culp was part of the inaugural group of NCC students who participated in the Smithsonian-Mason summer program.

Meredith Forbes, BA ’10, was inducted into the Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education in 2012. She completed her master’s in curriculum and instruction from Mason’s College of Education and Human Development, with a concentration in elementary education, in 2013. She is now a first-grade teacher with Alexandria City Public Schools starting fall 2013.

Raquel Friedmann, sophomore, ESS, and a 2012–13 Cornerstones student, received the Freshman Academic Achievement Scholarship from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. She also served as an NCC Envoy and a Patriot Leader, and was inducted into Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity. Friedmann interned at Environment America this past summer.

Logan Greenwood, BA ’11, started her own business in 2012, as a makeup artist and has been published with Relapse Magazine, Need Supply Co., nTelos Wireless, and Walmart. She also worked at New York Fashion Week in 2013. Greenwood’s work can be seen on her website, www.logangreenwood.com.

Natasha Hudgins, BA ’08, is attending law school at the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law. She serves as the treasurer of the Student Bar Association, as well as the mid-Atlantic director of the Washington, D.C./Maryland sub-region for the National Black Law Students Association.

Jamie Konstas, BS ’00, was the guest speaker at the spring 2013 New Century College vocation ceremony. Konstas is an intelligence analyst with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation where she serves as a critical information link between law enforcement agencies and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Molly O’Rourke, BA ’13 was selected for a one-year internship with the International Justice Mission, working with orphans, widows, and victims of trafficking in Cambodia.

Tameka Parker, sophomore, psychology, and a 2012–13 Cornerstones student, received the Freshman Academic Achievement Scholarship from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. She was inducted into the Alpha Lambda Delta National Honor Society and received a certificate for academic excellence from Mason’s Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education. Parker collaborated with fellow Cornerstones student, Rachel Steiner, on an article, “The Cornerstones Connection,” for Mason’s Freshman Focus magazine.

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When you hear the phrase “well-being university,” what images come to your mind? I hope one of those images is George Mason University. The Center for Consciousness and Transformation (CCT) is leading the Well-Being University Initiative at Mason with a collaborative learning community comprising faculty experts and senior leaders who represent a wide range of expertise and university units, including our newest senior scholar, Beth Cabrera. Our vision is to position Mason to evolve as a well-being university where everyone thrives together. That’s just one of our exciting projects under way.

We recently completed a strategic planning process that resulted in a new mission statement: CCT exists to catalyze human well-being. We are inventing a new model of education that creates conditions in organizations and communities where people thrive together. Our vision is to impact the well-being of 10 million people by 2019, and we are well on our way to achieving this goal.

Our spring 2013 Leading to Well-Being conference, cosponsored with Mason Leads, sold out again with nearly 400 participants and a program featuring Dan Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence, and Annie McKee, author of Primal Leadership.

Mark your calendars on April 11 for our 2014 conference at the Mason Inn.

CCT launched a new certificate program on the Well-Being Foundations of Personal Transformation led by Mary Elizabeth Lynch, an expert in conflict transformation and personal transformation and president of the Personal Transformation and Courage Institute, and Mark Thurston, CCT senior fellow. This highly engaging and life-transforming program will be offered again in March 2014. Our plan is to continue to advance new certificate programs such as this one that inspire excellence resulting in human flourishing. Brandice Rogers has assumed a new role in CCT as our director of educational programs.

Our existing programs are expanding and continue to be popular among students at Mason, including our Mindful Living residential learning community, our academic minor in consciousness and transformation, and new undergraduate courses focused on well-being and personal and organizational transformations. Todd Kashdan, CCT’s senior scientist, is leading a new research and intervention team with Mason’s Athletic Department, focusing on student-athletes and mindfulness practices as part of our well-being university team.

There are many more exciting initiatives under way that I hope you will experience with us as we thrive together. Please visit our website at cct.gmu.edu for more information.

From Cornerstones Student to Global Scholar

By Alex Amland

My journey of exploring the New Century College (NCC) integrative studies program, Cornerstones, began in 2009, during my freshman year. After completing the first-year program, I decided to pursue an integrative studies degree. While in Cornerstones, I fell in love with the interdisciplinary courses and unique teaching style. Cornerstones provided interaction between professors and students, and encouraged collaborative, reflective learning.

One of the last courses I completed during my year in Cornerstones was called Inquiry to Action, Facilitating Change. During the course, we focused on a semester-long action research project called New Media Literacy. Throughout the course, we examined different texts and research, developed surveys for the surrounding community, and prepared an analysis of the generation gap within technology. The course allowed me to take a leadership role in the project, helping to guide and organize my fellow classmates toward our project goals. At the end of the project, we created a video, which we shared during our final project presentation. The project and video together demonstrated learning as an active process; we were a group of diverse learners that was able to successfully work together toward a mutual goal.

The interdisciplinary learning experience provided through Cornerstones opened my eyes to global interdependencies and helped me develop new perspectives and values. For me, the essence of integrative studies is truly the exposure to multiple disciplines and drawing connections across those disciplines. Integrative studies promotes learning in action and places value on the application of skills outside the classroom.

Since completing the Cornerstones program, I have gone on to study the flow and organization of global information. Recognizing that we live in a rapidly changing environment full of emerging technologies, vast collections of data, and information has led me to create my own concentration, global information management.
Student and Alumni News continued from page 4

Michelle Pineiro, BA ’12, expects to graduate from the Communication, Culture, and Technology graduate program at Georgetown University in December 2013. She also has earned a certificate in digital media production.

Jessica Ray-Mendoza, BA ’01, is the director of Latinas y Niños Center, a program of Casa Esperanza Inc. The Latinas y Niños Center is a dual-diagnosis mental health rehabilitation center for homeless Latina women. Ray-Mendoza is also an advocate for Latino health, promoting stronger integrative health services.

DeeAnn Resk, BA ’04, became the associate director for civic development at Prescott College in Arizona. Resk earned a master’s degree in education from UCLA.

Lela Ross, senior, integrative studies, minor- ing in conflict analysis and resolution, spoke at the Turkish American National Leadership Conference in spring 2013. Ross is a student analyst with the State Department in the Office of Information Programs and Services. She received an OSCAR grant through Mason’s Undergraduate Research Scholars Program for her fall 2013 project, Assessing the Conflict Resolution Skills of First and Fifth Graders in Fairfax County Public Elementary Schools.

Kendra Smyth, BS ’09, earned a master’s in animal science from the University of Maryland and has begun studies toward a PhD at Duke University. Her research focuses on endocrine-immune interactions in wild meerkats. She recently returned from her first field season in South Africa’s Kalahari Desert.

Emelia Solomon, BS ’11, entered her third year of medical school at Lincoln Memorial University-Debusk College of Osteopathic Medicine. She recently traveled to the Dominican Republic and Haiti on her first medical mission trip.

Megan Teesdale, BA ’06, began working for the Office of the District Attorney, Bronx County, New York, in 2012. In 2013, she became the assistant district attorney in the Child Abuse/Sex Crimes Bureau.

James David Williams II, BA ’13, was the student speaker at NCC’s spring 2013 convoca- tion ceremony.

NCC Convocation Award Winners

Charles Coats, BA ’13; Heather Edmondson, BA ’13; Tyler English, BA ’13; Miranda Lambourne, BA ’13; and Lisa Overberg, BA ’13, received the New Century College Academic Excellence Award. Giulia Manno, BS ’13, received the New Century College Outstanding Graduate Award. Lauren Melde, BA ’13, received the New Century College Student Envoy Award.

Mason OSCAR Grant Winners

The Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (OSCAR) provides students the opportunity to apply for research grants through the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program. NCC students Karin Swazya (Professor Sylvia Vitazkova), Jennifer Souther (Professor Sylvia Vitazkova), Lela Ross (Professor Al Fuertes), Melissa Joe (Associate Dean Lisa Gring-Pemble), Ariel Smith (Professor Duhita Mahatmya), and Elizabeth Bolt (Professor Pamela Garner) received OSCAR grants this year to conduct research alongside their faculty mentors.

Fund-Raising Drive Creates Leadership Scholarship

By Corey Jenkins-Schaut

After more than seven years as associate dean for New Century College (NCC), Nance Lucas stepped down from that position in January and became director of the college’s Center for Consciousness and Transformation. To honor her tenure, NCC’s external advisory board has launched an effort to endow a scholarship in her name.

Lucas, who created the advisory board at the start of her tenure, is humbled by the gesture. “I know there are many students working full time or part time and struggling to stay in school,” she says. “If this scholarship can, in some way, make a difference to them in the same way [a similar scholarship from Penn State, my undergraduate alma mater] did for me, I think that’s really important.”

For more information on the initiative, please contact Kelly McCaskill, director of development for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, at kmccaski@gmu.edu or 703-993-8706.

This article originally appeared in a slightly different form in Mason Spirit magazine.
Professor Kimberly Eby Sees Her Leap of Faith Rewarded

By Luke Huffman

For the students of Kimberly Eby, it may be difficult to imagine George Mason University’s New Century College (NCC) without her. And for good reason—she’s been fundamental to making the program what it is today.

Eby, the current director of George Mason’s Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence and associate provost for faculty development, built her career studying the dynamics of learning communities and innovations in teaching and learning, in addition to researching violence and gender issues. Prior to Mason, her experience included supervising students in community-based work, team-teaching, and a multidisciplinary research and publishing background. John O’Connor, NCC dean at that time, was hoping to add a broadly trained social scientist with community-based research interests and teaching experiences to his groundbreaking team.

“We were looking for imaginative, innovative, collaborative faculty—and that’s Kim,” O’Connor says.

When Eby accepted her position as assistant professor at NCC in spring 1997, she climbed on board an entirely unproven vessel. The very first group of faculty had done its research and modeled the core components of NCC by weaving together a college that adopted the best of various successful innovations. But success on one campus does not necessarily translate to success on another, and the new, innovative college stood almost entirely on the founders’ bedrock faith that this was the best way to serve students as it moved into the 21st century. There were no alumni to testify on how critical a role NCC played in their careers. There was no track record to speak of. But for Eby, the founding vision was clear, and it was enough.

Eby thrived in NCC’s collaborative experimental atmosphere during those early days. She worked with colleagues to develop interdisciplinary curricula, such as NCLC 140: Self as Citizen, which combined arts, literature, and social science. But NCC represented more than simply a space for academic cross-pollination. The faculty saw how the traditional model of silent, passive, memorization-based learning would be incongruous with its goals.

Eby, along with her colleagues, began to view NCC as a most important opportunity to redesign the student learning and development process from the ground up.

As a community psychologist and from her study of student learning, Eby knew just how much “learning is a social activity.” Her experience gave her a unique perspective on how to accomplish the founding faculty’s goals of creating and supporting a new kind of educational experience. “Historians will tell you about the tremendous power of storytelling—so it makes sense to put people together in a community of learners,” she says.

An emphasis on collaborative learning, a competency within the college, was a hallmark of NCLC 110: Community of Learners, a course designed to start freshmen on the path of both academic and personal exploration. Constructed to help classmates bond by experiencing moments of growth together, students are urged to figure out the who, how, and why of their learning identities. Students are actively encouraged to go down an epistemological rabbit hole by asking, “How do I know what I know?” Eby remarked of the course. “By helping students develop these competencies or skills as habits of mind, you gain the foundation for developing critical thinkers.”

With her NCC colleagues, Eby significantly revised and refined the First-Year Experience for freshmen, a precursor for today’s Mason’s Cornerstones.

As Eby watched the fruits of her labor grow, she knew something special was happening: students were thriving. With each passing year, she watched campus leadership positions and student councils fill up with NCC students. NCC seniors were going out into the world with job opportunities already lined up because these students were not only more driven, they were also better able to articulate what skills and competencies they could bring to employers.

“Professor Eby was pivotal in my education, my profession, as a woman and a Latina,” says Jessica Ray-Mendoza, BAIS Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies ’01. “She helped me see and understand my potential and my strengths.”

More than a decade later, Eby is still a full-time faculty member at the college. Her leap of faith and investment of incalculable effort have left an indelible mark on NCC. Eby’s unique perspective and expertise have changed the lives of countless students, enriched the school’s culture, and ensured NCC’s enduring place in the larger Mason community.

Luke Huffman is pursuing a master of fine arts degree in creative writing from Mason. He works as a writer for NCC’s Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement.
Mason’s Honey Bees Give Students a Sweet Opportunity
By Tara Laskowski

At George Mason University, German Perilla and his students regularly mix with royalty. Their goal is to create the ideal queen. Queen bee, that is.

This past spring, Perilla led a group of 12 students in the first-ever Beekeeping and Sustainability course, a class that had them suiting up and getting up close and personal with hundreds of honey bees in the new apiary on top of the Rappahannock River Parking Deck.

In teams, students managed the hives throughout the semester, monitoring the strength and vitality of each colony. In addition to the hands-on experience, students also learned about bee communication, reproduction, threats, and challenges to the honey bee, and the importance of bees to the general environment.

“Ever since I was a kid, I have been fascinated with bees,” says Emily Guagliardi, an integrative studies major with a focus in elementary education. “When I heard about how bees are disappearing and that they are in danger, my interest began to pique.”

“Bees are so important to the ecosystem,” says Lora Sharkey, an environmental and sustainability studies major who assisted Perilla during the course. “I thought it would be useful to have practical experience working with bees to understand the challenges of beekeepers [who make a living from] the products and services bees provide.”

The course, which had a waiting list of nearly 100 students, is just one component of New Century College’s Honey Bee Initiative.

In 2012, Kathleen Curtis, executive assistant to the dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, used funds from the Patriot Green Fund to start an apiary in the grassy area between the Shenandoah Parking Deck and Patriot Circle. Since then, another apiary—primarily instructional—has been constructed on the Rappahannock River Parking Deck, and the first apiary mainly has become a demonstration station for community members.

“I am thrilled that the initial bee project was well received and that many have caught the vision of what could be,” says Curtis, who is also a member of the Beekeepers Association of Northern Virginia. “Clearly, the Patriot Green Fund project not only served as a catalyst to classes that benefit the student community, but also served to open the door to wonderful opportunities for future classes and research that will benefit students, as well as the local community and beyond.”

Honey bees are the perfect integrative vehicle for teaching conservation, community sustainable development, social entrepreneurship, and environmental justice.

From local Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops in Fairfax to isolated communities in South America, many different people have been touched in some way by the Mason honey bees. Perilla, a world-renowned master beekeeper and sustainable development expert, regularly travels around the world—most lately to the Peruvian Amazon—to help communities learn about beekeeping and create their own sustainable businesses around this practice.

The apiaries also provide an educational tool closer to home. Mason has invited local schools, organizations, and groups to the apiary to learn more about the importance of the bees.

“There is such potential for educational opportunities here,” says Lisa Gring-Pemble, dean of New Century College. “Almost any discipline from economics to biology can learn from these apiaries. Honey bees are the perfect integrative vehicle for teaching conservation, community sustainable development, social entrepreneurship, and environmental justice.”

NCC professor German Perilla helps students into protective gear before entering the bee apiary located on the Fairfax Campus.
Guagliardi, whose focus at Mason is elementary education, sees an enormous potential in using bees to educate young children. “As a future teacher, I’d like to teach my students the importance of honey bees and how they do so much more than make honey,” she says.

Indeed, even small apiaries such as the one at Mason can assist in the overall health and well-being of honey bees. Considering the tremendous loss of bee colonies in the wild and backyard and commercial apiaries over the past years, the introduction of managed hives, such as the ones at Mason, helps rebuild the local population.

In addition to population building and strengthening, managed hives provide bees that improve the landscape surrounding the locale where they live, says Curtis. With a greater abundance of pollinators, plants become stronger and more firmly established, which contributes to soil stability and water conservation.

Another tangible benefit of all this work is, of course, the sweet reward of honey. Recently, Perilla, Gring-Pemble, Curtis, and other Mason folks extracted more than 85 pounds of honey from the campus hives. Although there are no plans to sell the honey, Gring-Pemble says that the Mason community will have opportunities to taste it at future Mason special programs and events.

New Century College is working with Sweet Virginia, a local beekeeping cooperative that seeks to spark children’s curiosity for conservation through honey bee activities. The organization has provided support for honey bee research at Mason and currently has two Mason interns helping with its educational and marketing components.

All those involved with the apiaries hope that the “buzz” continues to grow. “We hope to use the honey bee as a catalyst for something much larger,” says Gring-Pemble.
Meet the Center for Consciousness and Transformation’s New Senior Scholar, Beth Cabrera

By Penny Gilchrist

Beth Cabrera loves her job and wants you to love yours, too.

An expert in organizational behavior and positive psychology, Cabrera works with organizations to maximize workplace positivity. Now at George Mason University, she is committed to helping the Center for Consciousness and Transformation (CCT) propel Mason’s new Well-Being University Initiative.

Cabrera came to Mason last summer as its new first lady—the wife of recently hired President Ángel Cabrera. When Nance Lucas, PhD, CCT’s executive director, learned that Cabrera was moving to Fairfax, she said, “With her background, Beth Cabrera just belongs at CCT.” Lucas invited Cabrera to speak at the CCT and Mason Leads annual Leading to Well-Being Conference—her first professional appearance at Mason—and soon after, Cabrera found a home at Mason as a CCT senior scholar.

Although Cabrera views many of the varied twists along her career path as lucky opportunities, she says, “Self-knowledge guides me toward where I want to go.” She believes in following a purpose while considering personal strengths, interests, and the opportunities that arise in life. She encourages those on a career path to ask themselves, “What problems do you see that you could help solve? How could you use your strengths to make a difference in something about which you care deeply?”

Cabrera feels strongly about the importance of lifelong learning—a passion instilled by her parents, who taught her to read and solve long division math problems at a young age. She has always loved to teach. “At the age of seven, I wanted to be just like my second-grade teacher,” she says.

By the time she reached college, Cabrera had decided to pursue a business major; however, after taking an introductory psychology class, she became fascinated by the intersection of psychology and business. Close to graduation and interviewing for bank jobs, Cabrera instinctively knew that she was meant to help people in a more personal way. A talk with her career counselor led her to realize, “I wanted her job!” Cabrera decided to pursue a master’s in counseling psychology at the University of Memphis.

It was at that point that her interests really started to converge. Becoming fascinated with business organizations, “I dreamed of inventing my own field combining organizational behavior, leadership, group dynamics, and motivation. Then I found out this field—organizational psychology—already existed,” she says.

Faculty News and Achievements

Announcements

A team of faculty members from New Century College (NCC) attended the Institute on Integrative Learning and the Departments at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, July 10–14, 2013. This event was one of three Association of American Colleges and Universities Summer Institutes on General Education and Assessment General Education. NCC faculty attending the institute included Julie Owen, Lesley Smith, Kristin Scott, and Wendy Wagner.

Patricia Mathison, BA ’04, MA ’08, joined NCC as the associate director of the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement.

Brandice Rogers, BA ’01, MA ’05, became the director of education programs for the Center of Consciousness and Transformation. Rogers has been with the center since 2011 and previously served as program coordinator.

Craig Zaccaro, BS ’07, joined NCC full time as the information technology coordinator. Zaccaro joined NCC in 2012 as a web designer.

Al Fuertes, PhD, assistant professor, NCC, won a Faculty Teaching Development Fund award to support his work in the Philippines and associated areas gathering data on refugees and the role of governments and other organizations in addressing the problems of refugees and displaced persons. Fuertes presented papers at the 2012 International Peace Research Association Conference and the International Conference on Restorative Justice, Human Rights, and Peace Education.

Michael Randy Gabel, PhD, associate professor, NCC, was a featured speaker at Mason’s second annual TEDx Conference. Gabel’s presentation, “The Nature of Mathematics,” explored how people are taught mathematics in K–12 education, specifically high school, and how this impacts their conceptual understanding of the subject.

Pamela Garner, PhD, associate professor, NCC, along with B. Waajid, had an article published in the Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, titled “Emotional Knowledge and Self-Regulation as Predictors of Preschoolers’ Cognitive Ability, Classroom Behavior, and Social Competence: Direct, Additive, and Meditational Associations.”

Joan Marie Giampa, PhD, instructor, NCC, released her latest art exhibition, “Anagrama,” which featured 13 new paintings at the re-opening of the Red Caboose Gallery.

Paul Gorski, PhD, associate professor, NCC, received the Mason Teaching Excellence Award for 2012–13 from the Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence. Gorski published the book, Cultivating Social Justice Teachers:
While working on her master’s thesis, she discovered a passion for research and writing. “I’d never considered myself a writer before,” she admits, “but my passion for the subject had turned me into a writer.” Since then, Cabrera has published more than 30 articles in academic and professional journals. She also maintains a popular blog on her website.

While obtaining a PhD in psychology at the Georgia Institute of Technology, she met Ángel Cabrera. He was from Madrid, Spain, in Georgia on a Fulbright scholarship. “Something told me that I’d better learn Spanish,” she says.

But auditing a few Spanish classes did not prepare her for the total immersion in the Spanish language and culture she experienced once they married and moved to Madrid. She took more Spanish classes and became a professor at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

Teaching an introductory business class completely in Spanish was a challenge, but her students appeared to be enjoying the class, often bringing friends to sit in. One day she told her husband, “They laugh a lot, even when I’m not trying to be funny.” “Give me an example,” he said.

She told him about something she’d said that day, and, in between peals of laughter, Ángel explained that “while I thought I was telling them they were really good workers, I really told them that they were hot. I can laugh about it now,” she says ruefully.

She eventually learned Spanish well enough to eradicate the malapropisms and enjoy teaching at the college level for the rest of the family’s nine years in Spain. “Every experience helps you learn what you like—and don’t like—to do,” she says.

In 2004, the couple and their two children moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, when Ángel accepted a job as president of Thunderbird University. Cabrera found teaching positions at Arizona State University, focusing on leadership and organizational behavior. She became fascinated with the study of positivity in the workplace. Her research indicated that many mothers, frustrated by inflexibility in their workplace, “opt out” by either slowing down or halting their career plans. Going with her sense of purpose, she decided to start her own company, Cabrera Insights, so that, through leadership workshops and talks, she could help organizations create and maintain positive workplace environments.

Using her strengths in synthesizing, simplifying, and communicating, Cabrera bridges the research and practice gap, helping managers put new positive workplace processes into place, sometimes producing changes as quickly as the next day. She asks them, “What can we do to create an environment where faculty and staff thrive?”

Of her goal to make a difference at Mason, she says, “Being known as a well-being university will help Mason attract talented students, faculty, and staff. It’s a win-win situation. When you improve individuals’ lives, you improve the university itself.”

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**Nance Lucas**, PhD, executive director of the Center for Consciousness and Transformation and associate professor, was a co-author of the third edition of *Exploring Leadership: For College Students Who Want to Make a Difference*.

**Duhita Mahatmya**, PhD, NCC assistant professor, along with M. P. Schnurr and R. Basche, had an article published in the *Psychology of Violence research journal*, titled “The Role of Dominance and Cyber Aggression Perpetration, and Gender on Emerging Adults’ Perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence.”


**Teri Slick**, MA, NCC director of student services, published an article in *Academic Advising Today*, titled “I’m a New Advising Director—Now What? How to Lead Faculty and Staff Advisors in Harmony.”

**Sylvia Vitazkova**, PhD, assistant professor, NCC, traveled to Belize with students Jennifer Souther and Karen Swazy to conduct research on howler monkey acoustics and participate in citizen science research. Vitazkova also spoke at the 2013 Earth 2100 Conference held at Mason.

**Wendy Wagner**, PhD, director of the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement and assistant professor, NCC, was a co-author of the *Student Workbook and Facilitation and Activity Guide for Exploring Leadership: For College Students Who Want to Make a Difference*.

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NCC’s New Nonprofit Fellows Program

During the fall 2013 semester, New Century College and the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement will introduce a single-semester immersion experience, the Nonprofit Fellows program. Nonprofit Fellows are select students who earn a minor in nonprofit studies through a combination of academic course work and experiential learning in the form of an internship and experiential learning credits associated with each course. The program emphasizes personal attention from faculty, experiential learning, integrated learning, and a community of highly motivated learners. For more information on the Nonprofit Fellows program, contact Wendy Wagner, at wwagner4@gmu.edu or visit clce.gmu.edu/students/nonprofit-fellows.
Most college students who travel to Jamaica over a break do so to laze around the pool or splash around in the Caribbean. Not so for 12 George Mason University students. Their trip meant making a difference in the lives of some of the island’s youngest inhabitants, and it gave them an experience they cherished beyond any visit to a palm-treed resort.

For the past three years, New Century College professor and Center for Leadership Engagement (CLCE) director Wendy Wagner, PhD, has led a group of students on the Jamaican Alternative Break trip. Undertaken in collaboration with the Volunteer in Jamaica Opportunity Network, the trip offers Mason students a chance to effect positive change, expand teamwork and leadership skills, and develop sustained partnerships with the community organizations they serve.

“The principle that CLCE holds across the board is the development of relationships instead of ‘drive-by service,’ jumping in and out of peoples’ lives,” says Wagner. “We encourage students to do more than just show up.”

For the 2013 trip, the Jamaican Alternative Break students spent five days working with the children of Hope Basic, a preschool for children 3 to 6 years old in the rural Treasure Beach area on the southwestern coast of the island. Before the trip, the students discussed international development strategies: What services could they provide, and how could they ensure a lasting impact? What are the assets of the people they want to help, and how can the students continue to provide help even after they have left the island?

Rhonda Singleton, a bachelor of individualized studies junior majoring in early childhood education and psychology, found the Jamaican children “happy, smart, and eager to learn.” Singleton, who works as a preschool teacher, took along teaching materials, including a colorful poster that read, “Be Thankful.” When she was working with the Hope Basic children, they said they were thankful for family and friends. Singleton says, “They didn’t have fancy things to be thankful for. I was reminded that you don’t need fancy things in order to be happy”—a concept Singleton says she understands as she works her way through college.

It was Singleton who helped the other Mason students—some of whom had never worked with young children—adapt to the challenges. The most surprising lesson her teammates learned? “Patience,” Singleton says.

The children quickly attached themselves to the Mason students. Along with words of thanks, Hope Basic’s teacher, the children’s parents, and other residents showed their appreciation with gifts of fresh fruit and vegetables, and offers of transportation.

The expressions of appreciation were themselves appreciated by the Mason students, who undertook the trip committed to fully immersing themselves in the local community. This also meant, though, that they slept in open-air bamboo structures, had no running water or electricity, and used makeshift outdoor showers. Their meals consisted of local staples: salt fish, jerk chicken, and guava and mangoes picked from the tree.

“The food was delicious,” says trip leader Maia Wise, BAIS Pre-physical therapy. “And although living conditions were much different from what we were used to, the looks on the children’s faces when we arrived at the school each morning made it all worthwhile.”

Just a few steps from the student’s shelters, the Caribbean Ocean splashed onto the beach. The Mason students said that the endless expanse of water took on a new meaning for them as they realized that the Hope Basic schoolchildren have no fresh water to drink and rely on juice boxes at snack time and water ladled from a bucket to wash their hands.

“On the first day, when the children saw us drinking from the water bottles we’d bought at the little local store, they got so excited that the rest of the week we brought extra bottles of water to pour into their mouths at snack time. It was such a treat for them,” says Wise.

Mason students Sunzhe Cao and Priyanka Debroy play with Hope Basic students on playground equipment built by 2012 Jamaican Alternative Break students.
“Throughout my years at Mason, I have been searching for my passion, something that makes me feel complete,” Wise continues. “This trip helped pinpoint what I want to do with my life: travel overseas and help with health education.” She has since applied to the Peace Corps.

But Wise’s decision is not the only evidence of change the trip brought about for the Mason students. Melita Wongus, senior, global community health, was sad to learn that many of the local elementary-age children did not have textbooks in their classrooms. “Young children are so excited about learning, and it’s important to make those early years count,” she says. So, this fall, Wongus is launching the Fund Raising for Education Initiative to collect new and gently used textbooks from the Mason community to send where they are needed.

“Our greatest success is not our college achievements or future career,” says Wongus. “It’s what we give back.”
The Impact of the Cornerstones Program and New Century College on Students

By Bethlehem Addis

The Mason Cornerstones program gives students a foundation for their education by providing them an opportunity to take core academic requirements. But what else does this program do? For some students, this program can be the “cornerstone” of their future. The way I see it, the Cornerstones program has the ability to mold students into active and conscientious citizens.

When I came to New Century College (NCC) in 2008, the program was then called the First-Year Experience. Later, the name was changed to “Cornerstones,” and I completely understand why. Cornerstones provides a foundation not only for education in the form of fulfilling general education requirements, but also for life in general because of its celebration of diversity and identity, which I established during my first year of NCC. Having an appreciation for diversity and an understanding of myself, I was able to learn the biggest lesson of my college experience: what I am passionate about and how I want to affect the world.

Now an NCC alumnus, I take great pride in my job as a graduate assistant for Cornerstones. I can definitely relate with the current NCC students with whom I work and try to pass on what I have gained from my time in NCC.

Several current students and alumni were eager to share how they found Cornerstones and NCC faculty and programs welcoming to diverse student populations. Lily Asadullina, a Cornerstones freshman, says, “I have learned more about the identities of the people who are from all over the world. Cornerstones has taught me how unique each person really is.”

This notion of understanding is a common theme among NCC students. Another common element that many walk away with is self-realization and the wonders it provides them. Saxon Henderson, BAIS ’12, says, “I came into the first-year program not knowing what to expect, but I walked away with a better idea of who I am and where I am going.”

Besides the component of learning from one’s identity, NCC allows students to

Reflections from Kristy Kilgallen

As told to New Century College Professor Cindy Smith

I entered the Mason Cornerstones program as a freshman and absolutely loved it. The second day of class, we all boarded the Metro and headed to the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. It was so much fun!

Instead of just sitting in a lecture hall, as did my friends in other departments, we were immersed in exactly what we were learning. Our professors asked us to observe, touch, and think, actively making connections to readings and discussions. By experiencing all these different ways of learning, I found it easy to formulate and share opinions because they were based on what I actually saw, touched, and read.

I chose to stay within the New Century College (NCC) community, working toward a bachelor of arts in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in elementary education. Close student and faculty connections helped me make this informed decision. Having specific hands-on course work throughout my degree program, rather than just during my junior or senior year, made me more comfortable presenting in a classroom, which is ideal because I want to become a teacher. The learning community nature of my NCLC courses helped me create an elementary-age science-art-math program, which I’ve directed for the past two summers. NCC professor Cindy Smith provided me an awesome outdoor opportunity through Mason’s Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center, teaching watershed ecology to thousands of middle school students in local parks. These hands-on experiences and NCC’s integrated subject approach helped me land a two-year position with Teach for America.

Teaching and Learning in the Sciences (NCLC 375) students. NCC professor Cindy Smith far left, Kristy Kilgallen third from left.
A Passion for Change: New Century College Professor Cher Chen

By Lela Ross

As human rights issues multiply every year around the world, thousands of people respond through activism, offering hope to the distressed and strengthening the voices of victims who refuse to be silenced. I discovered in April that George Mason University has its own human rights activist, Cher Chen, PhD, an assistant professor of international studies for New Century College (NCC).

Her infectious passion for human rights was immediately apparent on sitting down with her for our interview. With an educational background in law and East Asian studies and a PhD in comparative politics, public law, and human rights, Chen was attracted to NCC’s interdisciplinary nature. She has taught for the college for the past two years and told me that she loves it. Chen is especially intrigued by NCC’s interdisciplinary nature. She has taught for the college for the past two years and told me that she loves it. Chen is especially intrigued by the cutting-edge concentrations, the diverse disciplines of the faculty, and the collaborative, student-oriented environment that NCC offers.

The rights of women, children, and indigenous groups are the focus of her research. Her first book was Compliance and Compromise: The Jurisprudence of Gender Pay Equity (Brill/Martinus Nijhoff, 2011). She is now working on her second book, a comparative analysis of women workers’ rights in the United States and China. Chen has also collaborated with NCC faculty on projects focused on human rights issues, including gender pay equity in the United States with associate dean Lisa Gring-Pemble, PhD; indigenous rights with Michael Gilmore; and children’s rights with Pamela Garner.

Chen’s compassion for underprivileged groups extends to the International Human Rights course she currently teaches. While Chen doesn’t expect her students to remember all the theories and laws taught in her class, she hopes they develop research, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills. When her students read an article, they should be able to ask questions and apply skills from class to address issues. These skills “will go a long way for my students,” Chen says. More important, “I want them to develop a passion for human rights and compassion for others that would serve them well if someday they are in a position to make a change.”

From addressing human rights issues and encouraging her students to become active in the field to fostering their growth as learners and future leaders, Chen’s activism encourages the change needed to sustain humanity for underprivileged groups. “It is my hope that my students can develop their own passion for human rights while still in college.”

Lela Ross is a senior majoring in integrative studies and minoring in conflict analysis and resolution.
Upcoming Events

Leadership Conference in April

The Center for Consciousness and Transformation’s sixth annual leadership conference is scheduled for Friday, April 11, 2014, at the Mason Inn Conference Center and Hotel. Visit cct.gmu.edu for more information.

CHSS Beer and Honey Tasting on October 5, 2013

We encourage all alumni to attend the College of Humanities and Social Sciences third annual beer tasting on Saturday, October 5, from 4 to 6 p.m. in Dewberry Hall, held in conjunction with Mason’s Alumni Weekend (October 4 through 6). NCC’s own German Perilla will be on hand to offer information and honey samples from the NCC-sponsored honey bee field station.

Visit alumniweekend.gmu.edu for more information.

Fall for the Book Festival Events

Please join us for the following Fall for the Book Festival events: Shane Lopez discusses his book, Making Hope Happen, on Wednesday, September 25, 4 p.m. reception, 4:30 formal presentation, Grand Tier III, Center for the Arts (sponsored by CCT); Michael O’Brien discusses his book, We Shall Not Be Moved, on Thursday, September 26, 10:30 a.m., JC Cinema (sponsored by NCC); Zainab Salbi discusses her book, If You Knew Me You Would Care, on Friday, September 27, 11 a.m., Center for the Arts Lobby (sponsored by NCC and African and African American Studies); and NCC’s own Social Justice program coordinator, Paul Gorski discusses his book, Cultivating Social Justice Teachers: How Teacher Educators Have Helped Students Overcome Cognitive Bottlenecks and Learn Critical Social Justice Concepts, on Wednesday, September 25, at 10:30 a.m., Festival Tent.

Please follow our Twitter feed (@NCC_Mason).

Join our Facebook group for Cornerstones students (Cornerstones at George Mason University) and our Facebook page (New Century College at George Mason University).

Visit our website at ncc.gmu.edu for news and NCC program information.