

AAC Alumni Connections

AAC Students give back at CSUnity by Catherine Coduti

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Summer 2012

The AAC took part in CSUnity, an annual campus-wide day of community service organized by Slice, on April 21. The purpose of this event is to encourage all the students to engage with the local community. Slice arranged the event by contacting many organizations in the city to see if they needed help on any projects.

Lucy Paltoo, AAC Retention Specialist, felt that service is an important element because it is an opportunity to give back to the local community. Besides, giving to others helps a person to feel good about themselves. Another benefit of volunteering is how helping others can sometimes set lives in per-

spective.

“You see other people face more challenging things in their life. Suddenly the argument with your room-mate doesn't seem so devastating,” she explained.

AAC members were able to sign up through their Retention Specialist or sign up sheet that was placed in the office. Students could sign up as a group or as individual. The 13 AAC members that participated included freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior students, and all participants were provided a t-shirt and breakfast.

Lucy attributes the good turnout to the organization of the event. She feels that stu-

dents are less likely to be involved if they have to seek out the opportunities to do service for themselves.

The AAC group was assigned to work with Turning Point. This is an organization that works with troubled youth and families by providing some transitional housing for youth and counseling.

Their assigned project was to do some maintenance on one of the properties that housed their young males and paint the outside of one of the buildings. The team also cleaned gutters and picked up litter.

When the team broke for lunch, provided by AAC, they also used the time as a feedback session. Students felt good about what they did and felt that it was a success.

AAC wishes to continue to be involved in this event. While this year had a good turnout, AAC staff members hope that even more students, mentors, and staff will participate. They would also



Colorado State University

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love to see the group include AAC Alumni members in the future. If you are interested in learning more about CSUnity, please contact Jill Putman, AAC Alumni Liaison, at jill.putman@colostate.edu.



AAC students and staff outside of Turning Point home for CSUnity—Spring 2012

Update from annual COE Policy Conference by Catherine Coduti

Although Assistant Director for Retention, Shawanna Kimbrough, and Retention Specialist, Lucy Paltoo, did not major in Political Science, on March 11-13, 2012, they went to Washington DC to advocate with legislators for TRIO programs.

During the Council for Opportunity in Education Policy Conference, they attended a 2-day session on policy seminar, which coordinates the talking points that are brought to the attention of the members of Congress. The session covers what attendees of the conference need to ask Congress to support. It is the goal of the conference that TRIO programs are written into any appropriation so that we would not be written out of the budget.

Partly due to the weak economy, many TRIO programs have been de-funded due to lack of funds. This is because as other new programs come about, existing programs compete for the same pool of funds to continue their programs.

“Even though I tried to go in with no expectations,” shared Lucy, “there is some intimidation because everyone is so busy. We want to have the right words to communicate our info and not be another person just trying to get some money.”

The attendees were broken into groups the following day after the sessions.

Meeting the various congressional aides with her group, Shawanna shared the benefits of the funding and some of the success stories she has come across, besides giving facts and figures. She hoped to put a face to the facts and figure as she met with educational aides. Shawanna and Lucy also asked the people they met if they would be willing to visit a TRIO program. If they do, they could experience how the programs help students for themselves.

Even after the conference, Shawanna shared that they need to continue to follow up with members of Congress on matters that would be coming up.

“Without stepping out of line, we need to continue to advocate for TRIO,” said Shawanna, “and share with our students the importance of TRIO program so they can share it with their parents.”

While Lucy chalks the trip up as a good experience and fun, she acknowledged that the conference has changed her perspective significantly.

“When I deal with my students, I feel that it is the most important thing to me and I want my students to have 100% of me. But going to the Policy Conference helped me realize that unless legislators know how impactful our program is, there might not be funding to have our program,” she explained.

Shawanna agrees.

“The biggest impact [of the conference for me] is knowing that there is still a need to advocate for funding for programs such as ours,” Shawanna said. “Yes the work we do with our students is phenomenal, but there is still work to be done in politics and the government, for them to see the true value of it.”



New alumni profile: Catherine Coduti

Catherine Coduti was introduced to AAC when she transferred to CSU from Front Range Community College.

“I visited the AAC’s booth at the Next Step Orientation and someone explained to me what the AAC was all about. Needless to say, I signed up there and then,” she said.

While studying full-time, Catherine was also working full-time as a billing assistant at a trash hauling company. Even though she had a busy schedule, she felt that she was always at the AAC.

“Besides meeting with my Retention Specialist, Lucy,” she explained, “I was also

there for free tutoring, workshops and to meet with Jill for career help. I seemed to be there at all hours of the day.”

Catherine was selected as AAC’s Student of the Semester in Spring 2011 and graduated with distinction (Cum Laude) in Spring of 2012 with a baccalaureate degree in Journalism and Technical Communication.

As a first-generation college student and with all her family members halfway across the globe, Catherine said she is glad that AAC held her accountable. Catherine’s family was not going to make sure she kept up with her projects or to see if she had studied for her exams. But during their monthly meeting, Lucy always checked to

see how Catherine was keeping up with her studies.

“Through those meeting, I was reminded that I needed a game plan to graduate. I believe that is what helped keep me on track and got my good grades,” she smiled.



New Graduate School Preparation Initiatives for AAC Students by Catherine Coduti

Choosing and preparing for graduate school is not an easy task. Even though there is little funding for graduate school preparation program at CSU, AAC came up with two ways to help students.

In April 2012, AAC arranged for a graduate school site visit to Boulder for students who were considering graduate school. There they met with representatives who could help answer their financial aid and other questions.

Next, AAC used the resources they have to organize a free one-day GRE bootcamp. The event reached out to seniors who intended to go to graduate school in Fall of 2013. The bootcamp also targeted juniors as AAC hoped to help students consider graduate school sooner.

This is because students tend to think about graduate school very late in their college career. Thinking it is similar to registering for undergrad studies; students

don't realize how competitive graduate school registration is or realize the need to add research experience to their resume.

On the morning of the bootcamp, the focus was on general testing strategy and accommodations for the exam. Carmen Gonzalez, Assistant Director for Academics, met with the students to talk about the verbal and analytical sections of the exam while Daniel Hernandez, a doctoral student at CSU, prepared the students in the afternoon for the mathematical portion.

The next bootcamp will again be offered in the spring semester, as students tend to prepare for graduate school over the summer. Learning from the feedback about the bootcamp, AAC decided to split the workshop into at least a two-day process in the future.

“The feedback we got was that having it all on one day was way too intense,” said Jill Putman, Career/ Retention Specialist. “We

also hope to incorporate study groups or a GRE study event, so the students will have a chance to continue to prepare for graduate school.”

As for more graduate school site visits, AAC plans to arrange for three separate visits to graduate school fairs this fall. With different graduate school programs available, AAC plans to go to a fair in Denver that is organized by idealist.org, a non-profit organization, another trip is to the law school fair at University of Colorado-Boulder. The final graduate school fair will be at University of Denver, which will focus specifically on their programs.

Jill hopes to have the GRE bootcamp on an annual basis each spring semester. However, the extent and ability to help these students is dependent on the resources AAC is able to gather. So if you have any skills or knowledge you can provide to the students planning to go to graduate school, please contact Jill at jill.putman@colostate.edu. She will be happy to hear from you!



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The Academic Advancement Center (a Student Support Services Program) has served more than 6,500 students at CSU since its arrival on campus in 1978. The Center is funded by a primary grant from the U.S. Department of Education, with additional funds for operations, tutoring, and direct grants to students from the University. A grant from FirstBank Community Fund of Colorado also allows for enrichment of programs.

As one of the 946 federally funded TRiO Student Support Services programs in the nation, our mission is to help low-income, first-generation college students, foster youth, and students with disabilities to stay in college until they earn their baccalaureate degrees.

Academic ADVANCEMENT CENTER

We Want to Hear From You!

Would you like to be featured in an upcoming issue of *AAC Alumni Connections*? Are you hoping to reconnect with former CSU and AAC classmates? If so, we want to hear from you! In future newsletters, we will be highlighting the stories, accomplishments, and updates of our AAC alumni, and we would love to know what is new with you. Whether it's news about your career, family, or anything else, we want to hear from you!

Send your stories to Jill Putman at Jill.Putman@colostate.edu, or submit them online by completing our "Get Involved" form at <http://www.aac.colostate.edu/get-involved>.

