

THE STOCKTON CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE-LEARNING

The SCCESL Fall 2021 Newsletter



Carmen Rios, pictured with certificate, is the 27th graduate of the SCCESL Naturalization Classes. She is pictured here with the Stockton student tutors that she credits with her success.

SCCESL Student Leadership Programs Continue to Grow

With the start of a new school year, the SCCESL welcomes back returning student leaders and recruits more who want to engage in civic and community-focused work. The SCCESL has two student leadership programs, the Bonner Leaders and the Student Fellows.

Bonner Leaders focus on specific issue areas and organize students through service-learning classes, clubs and organizations to be part of the solution. Bonner Leaders are part of a national cohort of Bonner Leaders and Scholars, supported through The Bonner Foundation, based in Princeton, NJ.

Student Fellows are the leaders of our homegrown community programs. They are undergraduate or graduate students working in direct service with excellent organizational skills, and a desire to serve and explore a specific community and/or issues more intensely. They examine the underlying causes of social issues and work with the Center to try to adapt our programming to address the need. Student Fellows also collect and, with the support of the Community Projects Coordinator, analyze data about our programs so that we can best direct our efforts.

Visit our website www.stockton.edu/engagement to learn more.

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**VOTER REGISTRATION,
COMMUNITY FOOD
DISTRIBUTION, THE MIGHTY
WRITERS AND MORE!**



Stockton students Isabella Johnson and Lance London work with two youth at the Buzby Homes Village Homework Completion Program

Homework Completion Programs

The Homework Completion Program returned to the community in September. Programs were held at Stanley Holmes Village, Buzby Homes Village, and the Pleasantville Public Library, and 66 youth were supported by 88 Stockton students and many police officers over all the programs.

The youth were able to enjoy a holiday party in December, before the school break and we look forward to returning to the community on January 31, 2022

Information Retrieval Workshops

The Information Retrieval workshops, funded by the Schwartz-Creed Foundation, resumed in November of 2021 and 10 community members participated regularly. Many topics were covered in the workshops including communication disorders and a presentation by a representative from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services. The classes will resume on Tuesday, January 25, 2022.

Naturalization Classes

The Naturalization Class resumed in-person sessions this fall and saw its 29th graduate. Pictured on our cover, Carmen Rios passed her Naturalization exam. 15 community members attended the classes in the fall. The classes will resume on Tuesday, January 25, 2022.

Food Distribution at the Westminster Christian Worship Center of Atlantic City

Patricia Collins, Shawn Cooper, Stockton students which include Bonner Leaders and MSW interns have supported the operation of the monthly food distribution events of the Westminster Christian Worship Center of Atlantic City, NJ, managed by their minister, Dr. Thelma Witherspoon. The distributions took place on the 4th Wednesday of June through December 2021. The experience has been rewarding for the Stockton staff and volunteers and we look forward to continuing to support the Westminster Christian Worship Center in 2022.



Pictured above: Desiree Robinson, Shawn Cooper, Patricia Collins, Maria Castenada, and Dr. Thelma Witherspoon



*Anthony Disсен, MPH, MA, RDN, CPH
SCESL Faculty Fellow 2021 - 2022*

Anthony Disсен's Faculty Fellow project is focused on strengthening the bonds of connection between students and community partners by mentoring students in the process of conducting community-based research. Anthony will be leading a pilot group of students in the Spring 2022 term who are enrolled in a Community-Based Research Independent Study. Here, students will learn how community-based research is conducted, how to design and develop a community-based research scholarly project proposals, and form new or strengthen current relationships with community partners in the local area.

By aiding students in building a self-identity as a community-based scholar, not only will students learn how to conduct community-based research, but they will also foster the leadership skills and confidence necessary to be actively involved in their respective fields of study. Additionally, this will allow for more meaningful and long-lasting relationships between Stockton University's undergraduate student population and members of the local community.

SCCESL Faculty Fellows

In the fall of 2021, **Dr. Connie Tang** accomplished quite a few things. The first was to follow up on the peer-reviewing process of the article entitled "Homework Completion Program in Atlantic County, NJ: The First Five Years," co-written with Dr. Merydawilda Colon and Ms. Heather Swenson Brilla. Dr. Tang and her co-authors submitted the manuscript to *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice, and Principles*. Dr. Tang will continue to follow up and, given the opportunity will revise and resubmit the manuscript until its publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Dr. Tang also drafted an improved version of the Homework Completion Program survey to children. Modifications that were proposed included changes to the header to improve longitudinal tracking, the types of emotional reactions toward police officers would now use emotional faces from the same artist, and the police job responsibility of "serving" and an associated picture were added, a picture was changed so that all multiple choices for all questions now have unique pictures. Finally, captions were placed underneath all pictures to make things clearer to children. Dr. Tang will continue to work on improving the survey in consultation with Dr. Merydawilda Colon, Ms. Heather Swenson Brilla, and other colleagues.

Dr. Tang assisted with designing a performance-based assessment task as a learning outcome for Service-Learning students. The task addresses the topic of "generating ideas and recognizing opportunities." The specific outcome to address was "I can generate different ideas to explain a social condition." Ms. Heather Swenson Brilla and Dr. Merydawilda Colon have since spearheaded this by drafting the question as: "America is one of the richest countries in the world but, in 2019, 10.5% of households experienced food insecurity. In your opinion, what are some of the protentional causes of this condition?"

Finally, Dr. Tang continued her participation in the workgroup led by Dr. Christina Jackson to develop the Community Leadership and Social Change (CLSC) minor at the university by sending out an interest survey to current students.



*Dr. Connie Tang, PhD
SCCESL Faculty Fellow
2020 - 2021 and 2021 - 2022*

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week

November 15 - November 19, 2021

The SCCESL sponsored Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week on campus from November 15, 2021, to November 19, 2021. Activities included the Oxfam Hunger Banquet, Project Clean Plate in partnership with Chartwells Dining Services, Hats for the Homeless knitting workshop, a drop-off shoe drive, Spent the Game, and a SNAP Challenge. The activities were open to all students, faculty, and staff and were well-attended.

One Student Fellow, Sydney Bazilian, who participated in the SNAP Challenge, an exercise in trying to eat for one day on the budget allotted to SNAP recipients, gave their reflection at right.

Click the photo below to learn how to do your own SNAP Challenge!



"I participated in the SNAP challenge twice in high school and did it again this week to remind myself to think of the challenges of others and learn through more than reading a textbook or story online. I would say it was to "walk in someone else's shoes," however I don't think one day of making this small change can truly encompass another's experience.

I decided to shop for my meals at the dollar store to see what kinds of food I could get, and because I thought it may be similar to stores that are accessible in food deserts. I spent a while there, bought pre-made meals, and found myself looking for packages with the most ounces that would keep me full. It was not the quality of food that I normally eat, and while I didn't count calories or nutrients closely, I noticed that I got little protein and vegetables, and a lot of sodium. I ended up being hungry at the end of the day and just didn't feel great.

Another thing to consider is the impact that food insecurity might have in social situations. I was invited to dinner which I turned down, and at first, I didn't want to explain that I was doing the SNAP challenge. I guess because it felt like a lot to explain. I ended up telling a group about it and hopefully they were able to think about the impact of food insecurity as well. It just reminded me of how large a part food plays in social situations.

I tend to cook my meals on a tight budget on a typical day, so I think this would have been more accurate if I bought my foods for the week using the weekly SNAP budget and it would have been similar to my normal diet. The major difference is that I don't have to worry about buying food on-campus or out with friends on a typical day, which obviously cannot be done for under \$4.50 per day. I know that Stockton has two Food Pantries and occasional food from the farm, but I would love to see more affordable options on-campus!

This challenge can provide a good way for someone who doesn't receive SNAP to think about what it is like to rely on the program, but I think it's also a good time to consider how the program is doing and if NJ SNAP can be improved. It's about a lot more than buying some snacks at the dollar store; I found it to be a reflection about how state government supports citizens, the importance of nutrition, privilege, poverty, and how all these factors (and others) can interact."

- Sydney Bazilian, SCCESL Student Fellow

Maureen Bugdon, the Superintendent of Elections & Commissioner of Registration for Atlantic County, New Jersey participated in the Stockton University Fall Get Involved Fair. She and a colleague brought a voting booth to introduce students to how they function, and students were able to register to vote.

In her own words, Maureen says,

“The right to vote is an important civil right as well as a civic privilege and responsibility.”



In November 2021, the children enrolled in the Stanley Holmes Homework Completion Program had the opportunity to engage in a rap writing activity hosted by Paige Vaccaro, Outreach Manager from Mighty Writers. The children also had the opportunity to listen to the song "Atlantic City" by Atlantic City native Shawn Rock. Leila Crawford, Mighty Writer's Director of New Jersey Operations also joined the activity. We are grateful for our collaboration with Mighty Writers.

Bonner Leader Program at Stockton University

This fall, the SCCESL had 33 Bonner leaders working on many different projects in the community. The following agencies represent a sample of the types of partnerships they created and the areas of service they addressed.

- 4H of Atlantic County
- Narenji Tree Foundation
- Masjid Al-Taqwa
- Girl Scouts of America
- Arc of Atlantic County
- Viet Lead
- Westminster Christian Worship Center Food Distribution
- Stories of Atlantic City
- Salvation Army of Atlantic City
- Eastern Service Workers Association
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Gloucester County
- HR Recovery Initiative
- Torch Academy
- Volunteers in Medicine – Atlantic County
- New Jersey Organizing Project
- Atlantic County ACES (Hockey Club)

SCCESL Staff



Dr. Merydawilda Colón, PhD, LSW
*Executive Director of the Stockton Center for
Community Engagement and Service-Learning
and Tenured Professor of Social Work*



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