UConn Recognized Individuals and Programs for Their Public Engagement Efforts

By: Mariel Smith

Ten individuals and programs that exemplify the University’s public engagement efforts were recognized Nov. 13 with a Provost’s Award for Excellence in Public Engagement, at the annual program hosted by the Provost’s Office of Public Engagement.

The awards ceremony began with a small gathering at the Alumni Museum for the winners, their guests, and various prominent faculty and staff members, including Provost Mun Choi and Vice Provost Robert McCarthy. A larger gathering held in the Alumni Center, and open to the general public, followed. During this time, the awards were formally distributed. Posters showcasing the winners’ projects provided an opportunity for those in attendance to discuss the works with the winners.

Broken down into seven categories, awards were given to the following individuals and programs:

- Extension Master Gardener Program, Program Award
- Student Support Services, Program Award
- Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry, Program Award
- Zato and Leonille Kadambaya, Alumni Award
- Thomas Dean, Early Career Faculty Award
- Charles Yarish, Faculty Award
- Devra K. Dang, Faculty Award
- Susana (Rosa) Coleman, Staff Award
- Ailton Santonio Coleman, Advanced Degree Award
- Courtney Beyers, Undergraduate Award

Nominations for these awards came from throughout the University and were carefully reviewed by members of the Public Engagement Forum Award Committee. The selection committee was chaired by Peter Tyczkowski and Susana Ulloa and included three additional members—Joy Erickson, Karen Filchak and David Garvey—who worked in tandem to score the various nominations and select individuals and programs that met the elevated standards of the Provost’s Awards for Excellence in Public Engagement.

“We received a number of interesting nominations,” said Committee Co-Chair Peter Tyczkowski, “and there is probably a lot more going on that we aren’t aware of. The fact that we were able to select 10 winners is both exciting and sad. There is still a lot of great work being done that isn’t being recognized.”

Beyers, a senior working toward her bachelor’s of science in Nursing Honors with a minor in gerontology, was awarded the Undergraduate Award for her extensive public engagement work through the School of Nursing. “It’s such a privilege to have a combination of all my undergraduate work recognized. I am really grateful for having had the opportunity at UConn to develop my skills,” she said.

Ailton Santonio Coleman, who received the Advanced Degree Award for his work in Public Health, said: “I think what is most important is that the University is so invested in creating well-rounded researchers that focus not only on expanding knowledge, but also on giving back to the community. I am truly grateful to receive this honor.”

Tyczkowski noted that those like Coleman and Beyers involved in these projects make sacrifices to perform them: “By being recognized for their work, they are receiving recognition for these sacrifices, providing them with an opportunity to showcase their projects.”

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Tyczkowski noted that those like Coleman and Beyers involved in these projects make sacrifices to perform them: “By being recognized for their work, they are receiving recognition for these sacrifices, providing them with an opportunity to showcase their projects.”
Since beginning his career at the University of Connecticut in 2001, Vice Provost for Public Engagement Robert McCarthy has played an active role in public engagement. Upon accepting the position as dean of the School of Pharmacy in 2002, he became highly involved in the various public service opportunities conducted by the pharmacy program.

“The University is obligated to be engaged with communities and work toward the benefit of all,” said McCarthy, adding that involvement in campus-wide public engagement efforts was a natural fit with his experience and interest.

McCarthy was, in fact, one of the first people former Provost Peter Nicholls sought out when looking to expand UConn’s engagement efforts. Since then, McCarthy has played an active role in the Provost Commission, as well as the development of UConn’s Office of Public Engagement, located in Rowe 210, Center of Undergraduate Education. He accepted the position of director of public engagement and, in February 2012, was named vice provost of public engagement.

“It was important to have senior leadership for engagement activities, who people could look to for advice and input regarding the initiative,” McCarthy said.

“Over the past decade, we have seen tremendous growth in regard to the University’s approach to engagement,” he continued. “As a land-grant university, outreach, extension, and engagement are a crucial part of what we do. The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources has always understood this, but there seems to be a greater realization—outside of extension, outside of Agriculture—of the importance of public engagement, which we need to grow.”

Toward this end, one of his first goals is to increase campus-wide knowledge of the Office of Public Engagement. Greater education about the initiative will help ensure faculty, staff and all on campus understand the priority the president and provost have placed on public engagement. This will be promoted through various programs lead by the Public Engagement Forum, Spring Symposium, Fall Colloquia, and Office of Public Engagement newsletter.

To further involve faculty and staff in public engagement opportunities, McCarthy plans to approach the Senate about the possibility of including “Engaged Scholarship” as an aspect of the promotion and tenure review process.

McCarthy has also proposed a plan to further interweave service-learning into the University’s overall curriculum, making it more readily available to students. To accomplish this, he aims to create a service-learning (SL) designation for courses. This would not only provide support for faculty who wish to incorporate service-learning into their curriculum, but also allow students to easily identify courses in which service-learning plays an integral part.

“We are seeing a slow trend toward appreciating and understanding the fact that we have an obligation to partake in public engagement,” McCarthy said, though added that making it an everyday part of campus culture will take time. “You need to take incremental steps. First, think about what we can accomplish today, then what can we accomplish this week, this month. Then, when we look back at the past year, we see that we’ve accomplished a great deal.”

Save the Date:
2013 Public Engagement Symposium, highlighting UConn’s Engagement and Initiatives in Urban Connecticut
April 3 1:00 – 3:30 PM in Rome Ballroom

Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Mike O’Neill, Associate Dean for Extension and Outreach and Associate Director of the Cooperative Extension System
ConnectiKids Connects With UConn

By: Alyssa Rametta

UConn student volunteers tutored – for a third school year in a row -- fifth- and sixth-graders from MD Fox School in Hartford. As part of a partnership with the non-profit ConnectiKids, these elementary students traveled to UConn's Greater Hartford campus once a week to interact with, and a learn from, UConn undergrads. “This year was great,” said ConnectiKids Executive Director John Prescod. “We had 20 tutors at the Greater Hartford site.”

UConn’s Office of Service-learning, which provides students with meaningful academic and social learning opportunities that also benefit the community, coordinated each tutoring session.

“ConnectiKids and the Office of Service-learning created and maintained what has become an extremely beneficial relationship for both of us,” said Greater Hartford campus Director Michael Menard, PhD. “It’s a privilege for us to give back to the community and help these pretty terrific kids.”

Trinity College and the University of Saint Joseph also volunteered with ConnectiKids. Through the volunteer service of these two schools and UConn, close to 330 Hartford elementary and middle school students received academic tutoring last year, Prescod said.

Other area organizations and agencies that gave their time and talents to ConnectiKids, which also provides inner-city youths with arts and enrichment programs, include Aetna, The Hartford, Asylum Hill Boys and Girls Club, Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Connecticut’s Departments of Public Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Developmental Services, and the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

“We would love to expand the services we are able to provide,” Prescod said, “and increase the quality of what we are able to offer.”

Preston Britner Provides Leadership for Public Engagement Forum

By: Mariel Smith

Preston Britner, a Department of Human Development and Family Studies faculty member, recently stepped down after four years of service as co-chair of the University of Connecticut Public Engagement Forum. Made up of faculty and staff from throughout the University, the Forum is committed to fostering a connection between the research conducted across UConn campuses and the local communities, as well as to helping resolve pressing social issues.

“I personally have always done applied research that strives to make a difference in communities,” explains Britner, whose work primarily centers around child welfare agencies and ways to prevent abuse and neglect. “These sorts of things lend themselves to research that’s out in communities, with state agencies trying to test the theories we think will work. It’s not the kind of science one does in a laboratory.”

For Britner, joining the Public Engagement Forum provided an opportunity to “share examples, collaborate with others, and make sure the University was supporting public engagement research and improvement efforts.” It’s the latest of numerous public engagement projects he’s been involved in since joining the University of Connecticut in 1997. These projects include a partnership with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Connections Incorporated, a community-based agency working to integrate housing and child welfare services.

Since undertaking this project to develop the state’s first Intensive House Support for Families program, Britner has been joined by his colleague, Anne Farrell, as well as a number of masters and doctoral students. “By virtue of working in conjunction with our community partners and slowly building up this relationship, we’ve been able to impact families who really need the help,” explained Britner, who has served thousands of families over the past decade.

Recognized for the great impact this program has had, Britner and Farrell recently received a $5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services extending both the scope and impact of the program. It was one of only five programs in the United States to receive this selective award. Due to the recent grant award and need to focus on the initiative, Britner stepped down as co-chair of the Forum, but still serves as an active member. Ted Yungclas, assistant dean of the School of Fine Arts succeeded him as co-chair.
Cheryl Parks Appointed Co-Chair of Public Engagement Forum

By: Mariel Smith

Since beginning her involvement with the Public Engagement Forum in 2008, Cheryl Parks has played an extensive role in further developing public engagement across the University, and has recently been appointed co-chair of the Public Engagement Forum. Parks is currently the associate dean for research at UConn’s School of Social Work, located on the Greater Hartford campus.

“As a social worker, our whole mission and value system is based around engaging with the community and working with people, agencies and clients, so it was a natural fit professionally to be involved with public engagement,” Parks explained.

Now in their second year service with the three-year Strategic Plan for the Public Engagement Forum, members like Parks have been assigned to different committees responsible for addressing various objectives and goals within the strategic plan. The committees include Communications, Development, Engaged Scholarship, Events, Metrics and Evaluation, Programs and Partnerships, Service-Learning and Year of Public Engagement.

“The enthusiasm and commitment of the people involved—as well as the things they’re doing across campus involving students, the community, and faculty and staff—is really energizing and exciting,” said Parks, adding that the impact of public engagement in the 2009-2014 Academic Plan is “immense.”

“In a document that is subscribed to by the entire University, it states that public engagement is one of five major areas of attention,” explained Parks. “It’s huge.”

Parks expressed great hopes for the Public Engagement Forum throughout the coming year.

“This year is going to be a real-action packed year,” Parks said. “Last year involved a lot of restructuring, but this year we'll have more of a growing impact in terms of the influence of the Forum and the presence and visibility of the Public Engagement Forum as a focus of the University.”

“Terms of Engagement” Glossary of Public Engagement Terms

By: Mariel Smith

*The following definitions have been adopted by the University of Connecticut from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

- **Action Research Studies** - a way of generating research about a social system while simultaneously attempting to change that system. While conventional social science aims at producing knowledge about social systems (some of which may eventually prove useful to those wishing to affect change), action research seeks both to understand and to alter the problems generated by the social systems. *

- **Applied Research** - designed to solve practical problems of the modern world, rather than to acquire knowledge for knowledge’s sake (basic research). Unlike community based-research, it is not necessarily conducted in partnership with those affected. *

- **Community Partnership** - a key aspect of service-learning. University students are paired with members of the community who have a specific need that students can fulfill. These partnerships also provide students with a unique opportunity to learn about themselves and the world.

- **Community Service** - the engagement of students in activities that primarily focus on the service being provided, as well as the benefits the service has on recipients (Campus Compact, Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit).

- **Engaged Scholarship** - a method of teaching, providing service and conducting research; involves a mutually beneficial partnership between the faculty and the community, in an attempt to utilize research to help solve various issues adversely affecting the community.

- **Field Education** - provides students with co-curricular service opportunities related to, but not fully integrated with, their formal academic studies. Students perform the service as part of a program designed to both enhance students’ knowledge in the field and increase their understanding of the need for the service being provided (Campus Compact, Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit).

Continued on page 5
UConn’s Campus Change; Will it Impact Service Opportunities?

By: Alyssa Rametta

The recent news from President Susan Herbst that UConn is proposing to move its Greater Hartford campus from West Hartford to downtown Hartford has the Office of Service-Learning looking for new opportunities that will benefit both students and the community.

As its name suggests, the Office of Service-Learning oversees programs that provide both meaningful service to the community and learning opportunities to students. Office of Service-Learning Director Julia Yakovich, who operates out of the Greater Hartford campus, coordinates and seeks out these opportunities, as well as serves as a liaison between UConn and its community partners.

One of these partners is the Hartford non-profit ConnectiKids, which relies on UConn students to provide academic tutoring to local schoolchildren. Each year since 2010, UConn students have tutored approximately 20 fifth- and sixth-graders. ConnectiKids buses students to the Greater Hartford campus.

ConnectiKids Executive Director John Prescod said he hopes the move to downtown Hartford will only make the partnership better and stronger—something Herbst said will absolutely occur.

“Moving the Greater Hartford campus back to the city, where it began and belongs, will better enable the campus to fulfill its academic mission, provide a major boost for downtown Hartford and save the university millions in the process,” Herbst said.

University officials are still considering on the campus’ exact downtown location. Prescod said one of the several benefits of a downtown location is the exposure and understanding students will receive as to what it’s like to live, learn and work in an urban area.

Ideally, Prescod added, it will also lead to UConn and ConnectiKids developing more creative ways to collaborate, as well as continue to provide much-needed outreach.

He’s also excited about how having UConn in Hartford schoolchildren’s “backyard” might excite them about their futures: “My belief is that this visual reminder will create a greater spark, fuel their desire to achieve, and make the dream of attending UConn become a tangible reality,” Prescod said.

“Terms of Engagement” Continued from page 4

-Internship- engages students in service activities primary for the purpose of gaining hands-on experiences that enhance learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study (Campus Compact, Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit).

-Public Engagement- often referred to as Community Engagement, describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. *

-Public Engagement Forum- started in 2003, the Forum is a collaboration of various faculty, staff, and administration members that come together to further public engagement efforts across the University. The Forum is divided into eight committees, including: Communications, Development, Engaged Scholarship, Events, Metrics and Evaluation, Programs and Partnerships, Service-Learning, and Year of Public Engagement.

-Public Service- the free activities and entities the University has made accessible to various constituencies.

-Service-Learning- a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. *

-University Resources- activities and entities the University has made accessible to various constituencies, though some of these resources may require payment of some sort to access.

-Volunteerism- the engagement of students in activities where the primary emphasis is on the service being produced and intended service beneficiary recipient (Campus Compact, Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit).

*For more information regarding the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching definitions visit: http://www.ods.usf.edu/Committee/Carnegie/Engagement/Carnegie-project-definitions.pdf

Enrique A. Zepeda, vice president for international affairs at the largest private school in Mexico, visited the University of Connecticut Oct. 17 to present his extraordinary work with public engagement and service-learning. Invited by UConn Public Engagement Forum member Anne Gebelein, Zepeda explained how students at Tecnológico de Monterrey based in Monterrey, Mexico, are required to perform volunteer work designed to not just enrich lives, but significantly improve them.

At least half of Tecnológico students’ mandated 480 hours of community service must be spent building houses, teaching nutrition education, improving water management or alternative energy use, or performing other services that help both those being served and the students themselves.

“We want students to understand the realities of the inequalities in Mexico,” Zepeda said. “If we don’t do that, we are not fulfilling our responsibility (as educators).”

Working with community groups and social service organizations near the Tecnológico de Monterrey’s 31 campuses, which are located in diverse communities, students take part in opportunities that allow them to “apply what they learn in the classroom to solve the problems of the community,” Zepeda explained.

Students can then choose how to spend their remaining 240 service hours. Some intern for local companies, tutor with educational programs or consult in their field of expertise, while others continue to affect change in areas identified as social priorities.

To date, Tecnológico de Monterrey students have given a total of 1.25 million accredited service hours. Most years, roughly 14,000 students participate in the program, Zepeda said.

Also, to enhance and improve the lives of low-income and in-need Latinos both in Mexico and throughout the world, Tecnológico de Monterrey provides academic and hands-on learning through a network of community learning centers. Located in communities throughout Mexico, the United States and Latin America, the centers serve as a bridge to deliver education to “communities left behind by modern life,” providing free, online access to training and job opportunities in information technology, business, public administration, education and other areas of need.

“For many communities, these centers are the only opportunities for education,” Zepeda added.

A 60-year-old private lottery that earns as much as $35 million a year funds most of Tecnológico de Monterrey’s public engagement programs. Half of those lottery dollars are also used to fund various scholarship programs, with the rest invested in strategic programs.

UConn’s recent acceptance into the global Universitas 21 network of 24 research-intensive universities dedicated to fostering global citizenship and advancing institutional innovation will allow UConn staff to develop closer working relationships with those at Tecnológico de Monterrey and other member universities, opening the potential for an exchange of ideas and knowledge that might otherwise have not occurred.

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**Provost’s Awards for Excellence in Public Engagement Celebration**

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One of the many benefits of UConn’s service-learning initiative is the professional development opportunities it offers students like William Tootle.

A first-year Ph.D. student, Tootle used his education, background and interest in health and medical anthropology to help the Hartford non-profit Family Life Education (FLE) develop programs for children affected by HIV/AIDS and substance abuse.

He learned about the non-profit dedicated to improving and strengthening the lives of families in underserved populations after enrolling in Applied Anthropology for Graduates, taught by Merrill Singer, Ph.D.

“FLE works with youths, emergent adults and young families to build a healthy community, enhance family stability, and promote the health and well-being of children and youths through direct, culturally appropriate, community-based services,” explained Dr. Singer, a cultural and medical anthropologist with a dual appointment at UConn as both a professor in the Department of Anthropology and a senior research scientist at the Center for Health, Intervention, and Prevention.

Tootle was one of seven graduate students in Singer’s course to work with FLE for that semester, with a goal of helping to reverse and prevent childhood obesity by teaching exercise and good nutrition habits to families. The experience was so rewarding to Tootle—who is particularly interested in improving the health of marginalized populations—that he stayed on at FLE to perform an internship, which led to work focused on helping ensure children affected by HIV/AIDS and substance abuse grow up as emotionally and physically healthy as possible.

It was work “even more applicable to my own research and professional interests,” Tootle said, and included him not just developing HIV/AIDS and substance abuse programs for FLE, but writing a grant proposal for FLE to receive U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funding.

“The idea was to develop services that ensure substance abuse or HIV in families doesn’t disrupt a child’s normal development, their social skills, their social relationships in their school or home, and will protect them from entering any type of foster care,” Tootle said.

Although the internship period is over, Tootle said he plans to continue to volunteer at FLE: “I’d like this relationship to endure. As long as I’m useful to them, I’m hopeful we will sustain the relationship.”

He also hopes to see the programs he wrote the grant proposal for become a reality: “I was involved in the beginning and middle of the process, so it would be great to see the end stage as well. So long as they’re happy with my assistance, I hope they’ll let me tag along the whole way,” Tootle said.
“We developed a good model and have been able to disseminate it. It's getting recognized, and now we are also thinking about how we might be able to do even more with rolling this out nationally,” Britner said.

As a continuing member of the Forum, he plans to put the same kind of energy and enthusiasm into UConn’s first Strategic Plan for Public Engagement, which was created with Vice Provost McCarthy’s leadership.

Britner said he, along with new Co-Chair Ted Yungclas, and fellow Forum Co-Chair Cheryl Parks are most committed to moving the plan forward: “We see ourselves in a facilitative role, working with the chairs of committees to support them in whatever they need to best do their work.”

Effectively illustrating to faculty and staff the true value of public engagement is also a crucial aspect of his team’s role.

“Part of our job this year is to make it clear that public engagement works in social work and in English, in agriculture and in engineering. The illustrations are going to be different, but Public Engagement can—and should—be incorporated into every field,” Britner said.

Members of the Community Advisory Board:

Wanda Correa: Leadership Greater Hartford
Grace Damio: Hispanic Health Council
Peter DeBiasi: Access Agency
Sarah DiMeo: Synergistic Marketing and Main Street Waterbury
Martin Estey: Hartford Consortium for Higher Education
Kristina Newman-Scott: City of Hartford
Susan Rigano: Stamford Public Education Foundation
Jason Rojas: 9th District, Representative of the General Assembly and Trinity College
Tara Spain: Travelers and Travelers Foundation
Lyle Wray: Capitol Region Council of Governments
Amy Wynn: Northwest Connecticut Arts Council
Nancy Bulkeley: Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce
Jennifer Bruening: UConn Husky Sport, UConn Neag School of Education
Robert McCarthy, vice provost of engagement, Julia M. Yakovich, director of service-learning and Matthew Farley, chair of the service-learning committee (internal) and associate director of community outreach also serve on the Advisory Board as university representatives.

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Friday, March 8
Forum Meeting 2:30–4:00 p.m.
Featured speaker: Jeffrey Ogbar, Vice Provost for Diversity
CT State Museum of Natural History, UConn Campus
2nd Floor Meeting Room

Friday, April 5
Informational Meeting 2 – 2:30 p.m.
A conversation with Forum members about Public Engagement at UConn Forum Meeting 2:30 – 4:00 p.m.
Featured speaker: Mike O’Neill, Associate Dean College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Associate Director, CT Cooperative Extension System
Library Building, Greater Hartford Campus, W. Hartford, room 308

Friday, May 3
Forum Meeting 2:30–4:00 p.m.
CT State Museum of Natural History, UConn Campus
2nd Floor Meeting Room

For more information, contact engagement@uconn.edu.