



EXPLORE.

ENGAGE.  
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Academic Service-Learning & Engaged Scholarship

December 2011

## A Note From the Director

*We build too many walls and not enough bridges.—Issac Newton*



This year the *Office of AS-L and Engaged Scholarship* is embarking on a new program. We selected two local organizations and are working to ensure through service-learning, internships, and practicums, we can meet their needs. In this time of tenuous funding for universities non-profits and community programs, our goal was to really direct our core and consistent commodity, people, to fulfill direct needs of the community. This year our two 'highlighted' organizations are 826michigan and Parkridge Community Center. 826michigan coordinates an after-school writing program at Ypsilanti Middle School. To help with programming we have a graduate student who is in charge of recruiting and overseeing volunteers as well as programming. At Parkridge we are working to provide some infrastructure to a homework club as well as assist in providing support to various projects from installment of a kitchen sink, to a website and a holiday play.

-Jessica "Decky" Alexander

**College Positive Volunteers (CPV)** is a program in consultation with Michigan Campus Compact and Michigan College Access Network. CPVs are those college students and their administrators who are aware of how they impact the college enthusiasm and readiness of the K-12 youth they interact with as they volunteer in local communities.

As a college access program, CPV reflects efforts to increase the college enrollment and success for all students, and especially underrepresented students, by providing them with support and information about college preparation, paying for college, career selection, financial resources, etc.

EMU's CPV Training is unique in that it frames college access under the 5 Core College Conversations. These Conversations are a result of focus groups and meetings with EMU students and staff dedicated to college access programming as well community partners focused on college access. Our goal is create a common language, information and resource directory for all University college access programs.



Michigan | Campus Compact

## CONTENTS

1	A Note From the Director
1	College Positive Volunteers (CPVs)
2	Faculty Fellows: Where are They Now?
3	CAS-L Grant Winners
4	City Year
5	CTT News
5	B.Side Updates
6	Upcoming Events

### Those participating in CPV training will:

- Evaluate their own college journey
- Be provided mapping and personal inventory tools to adapt or modify for their own communities
- Be introduced to the Michigan College Access Portal and its immense value as a resource for students, parents, mentors, and school counselors in accessing post-secondary opportunities within Michigan.
- Be presented with CPV developed specialty forms such as post-secondary opportunities for students with disabilities or military options and contracts etc.
- Develop a plan of how CPV resources can be used in your own programming.

**For more information or to set up a CPV Training contact:** Jessica 'Decky' Alexander, [jalexande1@emich.edu](mailto:jalexande1@emich.edu) or Darius Fowlkes at [dfowlke1@emich.edu](mailto:dfowlke1@emich.edu).



## CAS-L Grant Winners—Some Tales from the front

### What is a CAS-L Grant?

A CAS-L grant provides mini-grants to assist faculty in implementing service-learning courses or community engaged scholarship or creative activity.

Anita Rich, Professor,  
Interpretation/Performance Studies.  
AS-L Faculty Fellow, Fall 1998



Anita Rich

**“Performing With/In Prison: A Service-Learning Partnership”** is a collaboration between Eastern Michigan University and the Woodland Center Correctional Facility (WCC), a high security mental health correctional institution. Aided by a generous grant from EMU’s Academic Service-Learning office, a group of five graduate students and affiliates led by faculty member Dr.

Anita Rich made weekly trips this past winter 2011 to facilitate theatre workshops with a group of inmates.

The first sessions focused heavily on building trust and community through the use of games and exercises. In subsequent sessions the inmates were introduced to some short forms of Playback Theatre as well as Image Theatre, adaptations of literature, and additional dramatic activities. An interesting challenge was that the inmates were not allowed to make any physical contact with the visiting facilitators and they were only allowed to make minimal contact with one another. As such, Dr. Rich and her team modified activities so that objectives were met while still following the rules. Working with prisoners who did not know each other very well and had varying levels of mental functionality, it was powerful to witness the increases in self-confidence and also the growing patience and understanding for one

another that the men developed over the weeks.

The semester’s workshops culminated in a performance offered by the inmates for correction officers, the warden, staff, and administrators. This original piece of theatre included adaptations of two Langston Hughes poems which were woven together with the experiences of the men who participated in the workshops. Several of the men also gave readings of original poetry and the entire group engaged the audience in some fluid sculptures, one of the short forms in Playback Theater. The inmates had a great understanding of fluid sculptures. They were able to improvisationally express emotions with body and voice in a way that is normally a challenge due to “flat affect”, the inability to show a range of emotion, which is a common symptom of mental illness.

Following the performance, Dr. Rich and company conducted a “cooling through” session with the men to reflect on the experience of attending the workshops and of participating in the performance. One inmate said of the experience, “Interacting with the other men and with Dr. Rich and the students was great. It was positive to get out of the rut and express yourself, it was nice to know that there were people visiting every single week.” Another noted that “theater group” was a “safe place to act and have fun” because normally “fluid sculptures and stuff like that is risky and you don’t want to get labeled as soft.”

The staff at WCC was pleased at the professionalism, organization, and commitment of the Eastern Michigan University team and requested that workshops resume in fall 2011. As a result the work has resumed this semester and EMU continues their collaboration visiting biweekly to offer performative explorations. The attendance has increased and the rich community partnership and the positive reactions from the men remains strong.