



March 18, 2019

To: The Faculty and Staff

Dear Colleagues:

For those who could not attend the launch of the Center for Engagement (CE) on March 6, I wanted to share more widely an overview of its development, history, and mission. The CE has been an ongoing project for over four years. While it started as an effort to create a hub for socially engaged faculty at Purchase, it took a long journey through SUNY before finally coming back to our campus.

In 2015, rather than opening a center on campus, a group of us from Purchase, in response to a request from the SUNY Research Foundation (RF), led an effort to start the Network of Excellence in the Arts and Humanities (AaH) which brought together faculty from multiple SUNY campuses. The AaH, like other RF Networks, brought together faculty from across SUNY for joint programs and initiatives. The AaH explored a broad range of problems and questions, ultimately resulting in projects that: contextualized and explained critical social issues, fostered social change, inspired community engagement, contributed to scholarship and creative work, and/or attempted to expand the influence of the arts and humanities in society. While the funding for all RF networks was stopped in 2017, many of the original ideas of AaH are retained in the new mission of the CE.

The Center's mission is to confront urgent issues in contemporary life through an alliance of organizations and programs whose projects inspire community engagement and impact social change. In carrying out its mission, the CE promotes:

- Research that traverses multiple fields of knowledge and disciplines in the arts, humanities, and sciences.
- Activities, organizations, and programs that inspire critical and open dialogue in an effort to promote equitable and inclusive global communities.
- Exploration that encourages experimentation and advocacy through local, national, and international initiatives.

These three activities are central to the CE. The Center is a resource for organizations, offering workspace and administrative support, as well as a resource for faculty, students, and staff who want to conduct research, explore the launch of new organizations or initiatives, or participate in one of the organization's activities.

There are four founding organizations making their home in the Center:

- Casa Purchase, which is led by professor Leandro Benmurgi and focuses on outreach work to the Latinx community.
- For Freedoms, which is co-founded by professor Eric Gottesman, is dedicated to furthering dialogue about civic engagement through the arts.

- Ghana Think Tank, co-founded by professor Christopher Robbins, is an international collective that “develops the first world” by flipping traditional power dynamics, asking the “third world” to intervene into the lives of the people living in the so-called “developed” world.
- Rehabilitation Through the Arts (RTA), founded and led by Katherine Vockins, uses the transformative power of the arts to develop social and cognitive skills that prisoners need for successful reintegration into the community.

The College has been a long-time supporter of RTA. Former Dean Suzanne Kessler is a board member. Many students and faculty members have been involved in RTA productions, and found them to be meaningful experiences.

The means to support the CE comes in three forms. Revenue is generated by charging below market rent to organizations in exchange for knowledge and skill sharing. The money collected is used to support upkeep and maintenance of the building. The building itself (the former Human Resources building), which may have otherwise sat empty, has been provided as the home for the CE. Student workers are hired to run and oversee the building and operations. Each organization supports its own staff and activities.

There are four near-term projects that will make up the work of the CE:

1. Develop programming that can expand the capacity of each of the organizations and launch the work of interested faculty and students.
2. Design with input from across campus the role of a future director through the development of a position description.
3. Recruit new organizations to join the CE.
4. Seek external grants and foundation funding to support the efforts of CE members.

I hope you will consider becoming involved. As we start to make good on the promise to “move ideas and dialogue to action,” please consider contributing your own efforts to the work of the CE. For more information please visit: <https://www.purchase.edu/the-center-for-engagement/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Faculty Spring Colloquiums

Buffer Room on a Wednesday 4:30-6:30pm

March 27, 2019

Usha Reena Rungoo, PhD
Assistant Professor of Language and Culture
Title: Literature, Space and Islands

Ragnhild Utheim, PhD
Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies
Title: Negotiating Power and Inequity in Prison
Combined Classrooms

April 17, 2019

Krystal Perkins, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Title: What It Means to be “One of Us”: Discourses of National Identity in the United States

Melissa Forstrom, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Arts Management
Title: Interpretative Photographs in Islamic Art Exhibition

Faculty Achievement Recognition Reception

Wednesday, April 24, 2019 Library, 2nd flr. 4:00-6:00pm

If you wish to have your materials displayed, please contact Associate Provost, [Peggy De Cooke](#) and/or [Eileen Prager](#) in the Library no later than April 20, 2019.

REMINDERS: Upcoming March Award Deadlines

March 30th faculty applications are due to your directors

- [Peter Fishbein Junior Faculty Research Award](#)
- [Jewish Studies Awards](#)

School of Art + Design:

Visiting Artist Lecture Series: Each semester, weekly visiting artist lectures host noted artists, curators, critics, and historians to share their perspectives, expertise, and current work, and to give insight into contemporary issues facing artists and designers.

Wednesdays at 5:00 pm in the Perception Lab (VA 1016)
(unless stated otherwise)

3/20: [Liz Glynn](#)

3/27: [Byron Kim](#)

4/10: [Judith Linhares](#)

Art Exhibitions:

[MFA Thesis Exhibition Series 2019](#)

Curated by Faye Hirsch and Eleanor King

Richard and Dolly Maass Gallery, Visual Arts Building

Exhibition 1

March 19 – March 28

Opening Reception: March 20, 6:00pm

Monique Boutin, Ian Lewandowski, and Emma Welty

Exhibition 2

April 9 – 18

Opening Reception: April 10, 6:00pm

Emily Culbertson, Jennifer Jones, and Gregory Wharmby

Gallery 1019A Gallery Program features exhibitions by Undergraduate Seniors from the School of Art+Design:

March 11 – 15

Gabriel Adames, Brandy Eby, Casey MC, and Danielle Read: *Humor From a Contemporary Perspective*

March 18 – 22

Briana Owsiany: *Stripes and Polka Dots*

April 8 – 12

Gio Martin and Alannah Sears: *Hardly Lucid*

Natural and Social Sciences Lecture Series:

Tuesday, March 19th, 7:00pm

Red Room, Student Services Building

13th annual Law and Justice Lecture

Gay Rights and the Constitution: Why Gay Rights Change Everything

[David Richards, PhD](#)

Edwin D. Webb Professor of Law

New York University Law School



Among other basic constitutional rights recognized or more fully recognized since World War II, gay rights comes late (in the wake of the impacts on constitutional law of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War and second-wave feminist movements). Yet, it is grounded not only in the constitutional impacts of these movements, but on the oldest and most fundamental constitutional rights, liberty of conscience and free speech. The voice of gay rights both complements and extends both our understanding of basic rights, and our understanding of how

these rights arise through resistance to constitutional evils (racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, and homophobia) that underpin and support patriarchy. The recognition of gay rights enables us to see these connections, including understanding and resisting forms of patriarchal nationalism and imperialism both in the past and resurgent and reactionary forms today.