Thank You to Our Community Partners!

Our community partners make it possible for us to give students the opportunity to encounter issues and questions as they arise in the real world. In Vassar-speak, they allow our students to "go to the source." As co-teachers, our community partners present solutions to issues and questions to our students. These solutions take various forms as they are articulated by governmental agencies, not-for-profits, businesses or grassroots movements. This allows our students to explore concepts learned in the classroom and deepens classroom learning.

By welcoming our students who come from across the country and the globe into their offices and meetings, our community partners allow our students to be more than tourists or passersby in the community that they live in through their college careers. They show pathways through which students can take ownership of, and connect and belong to, the place where they live. By doing this, our partners help to create a template for an engaged life. It is our hope that by virtue of these experiences Vassar students will be emboldened to belong wherever they find themselves and to participate in the life of government, non-profits, or community organizations, no matter how they earn their living. Many thanks to our community partners and faculty sponsors who have made the 2017-2018 year a truly memorable one for our students.

Lisa R. Kaul, Director
likaul@vassar.edu
Awards Celebrating Student Engagement with the Community

Miringoff Awardees

The Helen Miringoff Award was established in 1984 by Helen Miringoff to honor a student whose field work project or community involvement made a substantial contribution to the agency or community.

Many thanks to our partners for nominating our students to receive the Helen Miringoff Award. We received 21 nominations and made five awards to:

Marc Milone ’20
Poughkeepsie Youth Theatre

Gabriela Escober ’19
Rural and Migrant Ministry

Gabriel Quinones ’19
E.P.I.C.

Eli Schwamm ’19
Exodus Transitional Community.

Setse Bush ’19 (pictured below): HRH Care Community Health

Three awards celebrate student engagement with the community: The Helen Miringoff Award, the Wendy Rae Breslau Award, and the Frances Aaron Hess ’53 award. The Wendy Breslau prize is given to one or more sophomores who have distinguished themselves in their commitment to the betterment of the collective life of the college and community. Pictured above are the recipients of this years Breslau awardees with President Bradley: Janrey Serapio, Dasanae P. Davis, and Maya R. Sterling.

The Frances Aaron Hess ’53 award is made possible by an alumna and is given to one or more students who have been tireless volunteers in the community. The Award includes a financial contribution to the organization of the recipient’s choosing. Patrick Young was honored for his work with the Mid-Hudson Refugee Solidarity Alliance and Lily Kitifield-Vernon was honored for her work with Hunger Action. Patrick donated his prize money to Hudson River Housing, while Lily donated her prize money to Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson.
Family Services

“Family Services is a non-profit organization that supports local families, as well as victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. However, what I do as an intern is not directly related to the mission of the organization. I was given the dataset of employees which contains information such as salary, promotion, hours of work, FLSA code, race, gender, age etc. and my responsibility is to identify the most influential factors that result in worker turnover. I am performing exploratory data analysis to reveal hidden insights about employees and also using various machine learning algorithms such as logistic regression and support vector machines to predict which employees may potentially quit within a few years. Additionally, I sit in the HR manual review sessions and learn about the daily operations of the HR Department. I am glad I am able to get hands-on experience in data analytics, work with welcoming supervisors and add value to the organization.”

~ Seungjun Kim ’20

Mid-Hudson Heritage Center

Diana Guerra ’18 and her faculty sponsor, Prof. Offutt, at Glebe House where Diana curated an exhibition entitled, “Latinxs in Poughkeepsie: forging a diverse community” in collaboration with the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center.
Health Quest Division of Clinical Research

At Health Quest’s Division of Clinical Research, Frida Velcani ’19 is engaged as a writer for the Crisis Response Journal. She contributes blog articles that share global research and knowledge on disaster risk reduction, crisis management, resilience and continuity (CRJ). Her pieces have evolved from looking at technology that could help reduce the prevalence of infectious disease in poorly-resourced countries (click here to read) to examining interconnected communication and navigation systems that empower communities during times of disaster (click here to read).

Barnes and Noble

Jingyu Chen and Simone Johnson worked with Barnes and Noble to engage with educators and students of the Poughkeepsie area. They helped to develop new ways of integrating cognitive science into activities that are fun and meaningful. Their goal was to inspire young people to become engaged in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering Arts and Math). They are pictured here demonstrating the workings of ozobots.

Hudson River HealthCare

“Over the course of the year, I worked in the Poughkeepsie Family Partnership location of Hudson River HealthCare (HRHCare), a community health center located across New York to increase access to comprehensive primary care and to improve the health status of the community (and especially for the underserved population). For most of my time, I worked closely with Melania Fontanez, RN and Certified Diabetes Educator, to create an algorithm that the primary care providers and nurses of HRHCare could follow when they come across a diabetic or pre-diabetic patient. By researching databases such as the American Diabetes Association and discussing with Melania on the limitations of HRHCare’s scope of practice, I was able to put together a detailed protocol. After many revisions and a
submission to the chief medical director, the protocol is up and running. Currently, its effectiveness is being studied at the Peekskill location, and I will be quantifying its efficiency by looking into patient's blood glucose levels over time, cases of complications and patients’ personal satisfaction with their progress. This experience has given me valuable experience with working in a healthcare setting. I had the opportunity to interact with a variety of patients and experience how medicine is carried out in a primary care setting, learning all about its challenges and future goals.”

~ Kyungyoon Yoo ‘20

Vassar Brothers Medical Center

“Volunteering at VBMC was not necessarily what I expected. So I turned my focus to the patients and how they could benefit from having me as a volunteer. I did this because I believed that was the most important thing I should do as a volunteer—caring for the patients. The four-hour shifts were long, that’s unquestionable, but I still felt considerably accomplished after each shift. Out of a floor of perhaps 20+ surgical inpatients, I would be able to at least connect with two or three patients who really appreciated having someone chat with them and get to know their stories. Through them, I learned so much more about the humanistic side of medicine, and it definitely helped shape and mold my bedside manners. Volunteering here was a great way for me to see if I could still appreciate the more humanistic and labor-intensive aspects of medicine, which will inevitably be a crucial facet of a doctor’s duties. And whenever I questioned my decision to volunteer (particularly when I was in the middle of a very dull shift), I just tried to remind myself why I chose to volunteer at VBMC in the first place: to help the patients, not just to help myself get into medical school.”

- Tyler Wen ‘18

Edited and typeset by Jamie Greer, Office Assistant

Lisa R. Kaul, Director likaul@vassar.edu Main N- 165