The JEP Newsletter for Spring Semester 2013

JEP Honored at City Hall for Forty Years of Service-Learning

The Joint Educational Project was recognized at City Hall by USC and JEP alumnus, Paul Krekorian

By Tammy Anderson, JEP Executive Director

On Friday, May 3rd, 2013, Councilmember Paul Krekorian and the Los Angeles City Council honored JEP with a resolution in recognition of JEP’s 40-year history of service-learning. Krekorian and his colleague, Councilmember Jan Perry, both participated in JEP while undergraduates at USC.

The Councilmember described JEP as an “international model program” drawing in visitors from around the globe who come to learn about our rich collaborations with community partners, some for 40 years. He spoke about the exciting, educational and often transformational experiences for USC students and the “magnifying effect” of the program, as each JEP student touches so many lives through their service. He told the Council mem-

bers about a JEP alumna who was contacted by her mentee 20 years later via Facebook. Now an adult with children of his own, the mentee reminded his former mentor that she had given him a piece of the Berlin Wall and encouraged him to be the best he could be. He thanked her for believing in him, saying that it helped him to stay out of trouble unlike many of his buddies.

Over the years, JEP has received many accolades, from community groups to national organizations. However, this prestigious recognition was even more meaningful to the JEP staff, as it was initi-

>>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PHOTO CREDIT: MICHAEL QUANT

Councilman Paul Krekorian addresses the Los Angeles City Council while JEP staff and supporters look on.

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 2
• JEP Offers a New Pre-Law Program

PAGE 3
• Celebrating Community Engagement

PAGE 4
• JEP’s First Naming Gift

PAGE 5
• New Financial Literacy Course for At-Risk Youth

PAGE 7
• Calendar of Events

PAGE 8
• Digital Badge Pioneers

PAGE 10
• Boeing’s Grant Funds STEM Initiatives
JEP Offers a Pre-Law Service-Learning Program

BY KELLEY LOWE, Law student and JEP student staff

This semester, JEP launched its newest initiative: the Pre-Law Project. The program was developed with the intention to provide pre-law students and students curious about a career in law with real legal experience. Nearly 20 pre-law students participated in the pilot, and each had the opportunity to work at a public interest firm assisting real clients with their real legal needs.

As a second year law student at USC Law, I wanted to develop a program that would allow students to explore the field of law before making the very substantial investment to attend law school. Coursework is great, and certainly provides students with a theoretical base of knowledge, but there isn’t anything quite like that real-life understanding students can only develop through practical experience.

Nearly half of the volunteers interned at Bet Tzedek, a public interest firm serving 12,000 low-income Angelenos every year, working as intake assistants and legal assistants in the Self-Help Conservatorship Clinic. Many of these students had the unique opportunity to work alongside experienced attorneys and gain valuable insight into the workings of a law firm while providing high-quality legal services to clients in need.

JEP also partnered with Public Counsel, the largest pro bono public interest law firm in the world. Students volunteered with one of the firm’s many programs, Connecting Angelenos to Resources and Essential Services (CARES), dedicated to providing information to families and individuals about affordable housing, family law, benefits eligibility, health resources, and much more. Over the course of the semester, the volunteers participated in four CARES outings at various Department of Public Social Services offices in Los Angeles to work directly with poor and homeless clients to help them navigate the public service system.

For many of the participants, the Pre-Law Project is their first taste of the law, and because of their positive experiences this semester it won’t be their last.
Celebrating Community Engagement Campus-wide

Community and public service has become as much a part of the USC experience as our love for Tommy Trojan and USC Football. Some 60% of our students are engaged in a variety of service programs and projects, both academic and extra-curricular.

This year, Dornsife College, the Division of Student Affairs, USC Civic Engagement, and several professional schools (see list of schools at the article’s end) came together for the USC Community Service Dinner, funded in part by the Estate of Grace Ford and Henry Salvatori, to collectively highlight and recognize the best and most impactful student-led community service happening all across our USC campuses. Community members were also recognized for their service and partnership with student awardees.

Awards were handed out in four categories:

- **Activism and Advocacy** – This award is given to both the student and the community partner organization to recognize outstanding activism and/or advocacy for public policy change. This includes campaigning, lobbying, or community organizing for changes in legislation or policy at any level or branch of government. This form of service is distinct from charity; the focus is on structural social change.

- **Multiple Engagement** – This is given to either a student or a community partner that has been an outstanding role model of service by engaging in multiple partnerships, or in a single partnership in which the outcome extends beyond a single objective or outcome, such as an interdisciplinary or intersectional partnership (i.e., exploring race, class, and gender).

- **Innovation in Service-Learning** – This award seeks to acknowledge both students and community partners that leverage the university’s and/or community’s resources to create innovative approaches to service. This includes (but is not limited to) creating new service-learning programs, using novel technology to engage service-learners, or fostering collaborations between new and existing stakeholders to promote service-learning opportunities.

- **Extraordinary Engagement** – This award acknowledges both the student and the community partner who, together, have demonstrated extraordinary and meaningful service by sharing instruction and reflection that enriched the learning experience, taught civic responsibility and strengthened the community.

Provost Elizabeth Garrett, keynote speaker for the evening, characterized the importance of such student-community collaborations as “further strengthening the bond between our university and our city.”

Dornsife Dean Steve Kay welcomed special guests, City Councilmembers Jan Perry and Paul Krekorian, who came to offer closing remarks. Both spoke poignantly about the value of students’ service not only to the community but to their own education. They were impressed by the honorees many contributions, saying that Los Angeles “needs you” as they thanked them for sharing their talents, creativity, and passion.
JEP’s First Naming Gift: The Tesoriero Family ReadersPlus Library

The Joint Educational Project is excited to receive its first ever naming gift for the ReadersPlus library

By Tina Koneazny, JEP Associate Director

As USC continues to ‘fight on’ in the campaign toward its $6 billion goal, buildings and spaces all across campus are bearing new names in honor of our gracious donors, including our very own Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. This spring, JEP has become the fortunate recipient of its first ever naming gift.

Sharon and John Tesoriero, parents of USC Annenberg student, Ashley, recently designated funds as a gift to help JEP’s USC ReadersPlus program in supporting tutors and the program library housed in the newly renovated JEP House. Now in its 15th year, USC ReadersPlus places USC students in seven of our University’s Family of Schools, providing much-needed literacy and math tutoring assistance to kindergarten through 5th grade students during the school day, and both homework help and academic enrichment programming during after school hours.

The newly named Tesoriero Family ReadersPlus Library holds a wide array of literacy genres including folk and fairy tales which are read to and by children during one-on-one tutoring sessions, science-related non-fiction used in the WonderKids after school curriculum, favorite chapter books and novels ranging from Charlotte’s Web to Harry Potter, fun poetry collections by Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky, and more.

The councilmembers’ presence at the dinner conveyed to all in attendance that public service at USC is important. However, to the JEP staff, their presence was very special, as both are JEP alumni. Perry vividly recalled her assignment as a mentor/tutor helping her mentee with math and Kerkorian explained that he was part of an earth science mini-team. They used words such as “transformative” and “powerful” to describe these experiences that helped to shape their life’s work.

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SCHOOLS/UNITS RECOGNIZING STUDENTS AT THE DINNER:

* Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences
* Marshall School of Business
* Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry
* USC School of Dramatic Arts
* Viterbi School of Engineering
* Gould School of Law
* Division of Occupational Science & Therapy
* USC School of Pharmacy
* Sol Price School of Public Policy
* USC School of Social Work
* USC Office of Religious Life
* USC Division of Student Affairs
* USC Office of Financial Aid
A New Collaboration Brings Financial Lessons to At-Risk Youth

By Jake Peters, JEP Assistant Director of Research and Academic Affairs

At the end of last semester, Vijeta Tandon, JEP’s undergraduate program assistant for economics, talked to me about some ideas to improve our economics mini-courses. We talked about the possibility of undergraduates in economics courses doing financial literacy work outside of traditional classrooms, but it was not until meeting with folk at LIFT, a non-profit based out of Magnolia Place just north of campus, that this idea began to take form.

LIFT works to develop long-term and holistic solutions to end poverty and develop economic stability by serving as a connecting point for a wide variety of services. The partnership that developed with LIFT has been a great collaboration, as we found like-minded folk who care about developing an adaptable, student-based curriculum that meaningfully asks what financial literacy means “Beyond the Bank.”

LIFT introduced us to The RightWay Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works to revolutionize the delivery of career development services for Transitional Age Youth (TAY) who are transitioning out of the foster care system community. This connection, along with a generous donation from Alice Holzman (a USC Dornsife staff member) helped us take our initial exciting conversations and develop a five-week course on financial literacy for youth who were currently taking classes through The RightWay Foundation. The last piece of the partnership was put in place when LIFT connected with Capital Group to bring in experienced volunteer financial experts to every course—which was a very welcome resource for the USC undergraduates who were also in the process of learning about financial literacy.

The first class was a success and as Jason Valdez, a Site Coordinator at LIFT points out, the impact of such a course can go beyond the immediate topic at hand:

“Three days after the [first] class one of the TAY participants came to the LIFT office. He said he was so grateful for the opportunity to learn about banks because he had no idea how those systems worked. He knows how important this information is in his life, and was grateful for the opportunity to learn.

He later started inquiring about about LIFT’s services. After telling him we are a community resource center that connects clients to various resources all the while having a designated volunteer advocate, he wanted to set up a first appointment. He said he wants to surround himself with positive mentors and set long-term goals. He was so excited to be a part of LIFT that he soon brought his girlfriend to the office so she can set up an appointment as well (she is also a Transitional Aged Youth and a participant in the Beyond the Bank series).”

The broader implications of “financial literacy” were also clear during the last class as JEP students led an engaging lesson about inflation and saving options and then along with some welcome expert assistance, they led a lively conversation about ID theft and credit. Several people in the room had experienced forms of identity theft and it turned out to be a great topic for talking about what financial literacy means in the context of people’s actual lives.

In the short graduation ceremony that followed, the JEP students talked about how their economics class was taught in the classroom next to the LIFT classroom being used in VKC, and how the experience has challenged them to apply what they’ve been learning in that course, and how much they learned from the youth attending the class. On an exit survey one of the youth expressed a wish that there

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had been even more time to dedicate to complicated financial issues. One of the financial experts on hand was brought back to discuss what it was like learning economics when he was an undergraduate at USC not too long ago.

As the TAY students headed back to Magnolia Place, I met with folk from LIFT and the RightWay Foundation to reflect on all that we had learned from this pilot and then, totally energized and excited, we began planning the next Beyond the Bank program for the fall.
The Joint Educational Project is fortunate to have fantastic student workers. Many of these accomplished students are graduating.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize:
Drew Matsuda - Linda Huynh - Matt Ackels - Michelle Kwon - Miles du Mosch - Nicole Kohansamad - Rebecca Alonzo - Vivian Breckenridge

Fulbright fellows:
Megan Rilkoff (Laos) - Molly Levine (Thailand) - Travis Glynn (India)

Teach for America fellows:
Ali Walensky (NYC) - Jana Matsuuchi (L.A.) - Marguerite Bowen (Dallas)

Best of luck to you. We couldn’t be more proud!

Thinking of adding a service-learning component to your class?

Let us help!

JEP’s Director and Assistant Director of Research & Academic Affairs, Dr. Susan Harris and Dr. Jake Peters, would be happy to assist you in creating a service-learning element for your course.

They can be reached at:
213.740.1837
scharris@usc.edu
or
jjpeters@usc.edu

Calendar of Events

May 19-21
Campus Compact National Conference: The Engaged Campus: Driving Innovation through Partnerships
Dearborn, MI

May 29-31
12th Annual Conference: Innovative Pedagogy & Course Redesign XII Collaborations for Empowerment and Learning
Fairfield, CT

July 29- August 2
Campus Compact Summer WEST Institute on Service-Learning
Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles

August 2-4
Summer Faculty Institute and Learning Community on Service-Learning
Saint Mary's College of California, Moraga, CA

October 23-25
International Service Learning Summit: Building A Community of Practice
Northwestern University, Chicago
JEP at the Forefront of Educational Technology with Digital Badges

Staff members share the progress they have made in this digital world over the past year

By Susan Harris, JEP Associate Director and Alex Fairman, JEP IT Coordinator

Over the course of the year, JEP staff and students have continued to explore the potential of “digital badges” to engage students who participate in our programs. Digital badges are a 21st century adaptation of the concept underlying Boy and Girl Scout badges. Learners who demonstrate particular skills and competencies earn digital credentials that can be shared online. Digital badge systems typically integrate elements of learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) and video games (e.g., World of Warcraft). They encourage community-building and incentivize participation while also introducing more nuanced ways to assess and recognize learning outcomes.

The development of digital badges has exploded over the last year, fueled in part by funding from the MacArthur Foundation, the Gates Foundation, NSF, and other major grant providers. Institutions such as the Smithsonian, NASA, and the New York City Department of Education are developing digital badges systems. JEP is exploring the use of digital badges for our service-learning students, as well as for the children who participate in JEP-sponsored programs in the community.

This semester JEP is piloting a project with non-credit-earning volunteers to explore the affordances of BadgeStack, one of the first commercial digital badge platforms available. JEP students are posting weekly reflections, contributing to discussion forums about issues relevant to their service-learning experiences, and engaging in various “quests” (activities) that can lead to badges recognizing their work as “Community Scholars,” for example. The screen shot above provides an indication of how students are participating with one another via BadgeStack.

On other fronts, JEP is developing a “life skills” training program for high school students. We believe badges have the potential to engage school-age children in a new way, while also allowing for the certification of competencies gained from an experience with JEP students. JEP part-
nered with the Children Youth and Family Collaborative (CYFC), a non-profit which operates after school programs at Dorsey High School, and sent out a call to veteran JEP students, inviting them to work with us to build the program. Twelve undergraduate students have been meeting weekly to develop curricula, inspired by the question: “What do we wish we were taught in high school?”

The team recognized that many kids graduate from high school without having learned a wide range of life skills, from managing finances, to resume writing, or buying a car. The course created by the USC students addresses these gaps, engaging high school students through a series of in-person interactive lessons and exercises. At the end of each unit, the high school students can receive a digital badge that certifies what they learned about the subject and can also serve as currency for future opportunities or employment (see below).

For the high school project we are using Credly (credly.com), a new web application for issuing digital credentials that allows learners to opt in solely for the purposes of earning badges. This is in contrast to BadgeStack, which delivers curriculum through the digital badge system itself.

Over the coming year, JEP will continue to explore and experiment with emerging digital badge platforms as pioneers in this nascent and rapidly evolving field.

The digital badges created by the USC undergraduate mentors for the high school youth participating in the life skills training program:

- Learn how to use the Google Suite online and set up a gmail
- Know more about yourself, identify your strengths and passions
- Learn to search the Web efficiently for what you need
- Get comfortable engaging in new social situations and presenting
- Write a great resume that will get you opportunities
- Learn Etiquette and skills that will make you a savvy communicator in the world
- Get comfortable putting your best foot forward in an interview
- Learn basics of budgeting and money management
- Learn how to find and buy a good car for you
- Learn how to find a good home and initiate the rental process

PHOTO CREDIT: A. FAIRMAN
Group photo of JEP staff member, Alex Fairman, and the USC students that participated in this year’s pilot program at Dorsey High School.
Boeing’s Grant Funds Multiple STEM Projects

BY TAMMY ANDERSON, JEP’s Executive Director

In 2006, California instituted standardized testing in science for fifth-graders. This gave principals in five JEP partner schools (32nd Street USC MaST, Foshay Learning Center, Mack Elementary, Norwood Elementary, and Weemes Elementary) pause, as up until then, the “Open Court” literacy curriculum had been the emphasis in elementary education. With the addition of the new science test, they asked JEP to increase the number of teacher assistants and tutors that could help 4th and 5th grade teachers offer more science education in preparation for the tests.

The following year, JEP submitted a proposal to the Weingart Foundation and received funding to establish the Young Scientist Program (YSP). YSP’s primary objective is to increase science activities for our neighborhood children as a means to encourage them to consider careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and to apply what they learn in the classroom to the real world. YSP places undergraduate teaching assistants (TAs) from the life, natural, earth, and engineering sciences, who bring passion for education, community service, and of course, science to our schools.

The TAs present hands-on science labs to fourth and fifth grade classrooms and bring scientific laboratory experiences directly to students and their teachers. The goal is to supplement current science instruction, complement LAUSD and state science learning standards, strengthen science literacy, and promote interest in scientific careers.

This spring, JEP was fortunate to receive a grant from the Boeing Charitable Foundation to further YSP’s work. With these funds, Nadine Afari, YSP Coordinator, was able to design and implement STEM Educator Enrichment Workshops for teachers to create a STEM educator enrichment curriculum guide and video, and to design and install five small scale water systems in these schools – fondly coined “the Boeing Water Project.”

The STEM Educator Enrichment Workshops brought together USC faculty and staff, including Professor Jill McNitt Gray-Dornsife Biology department), Larry Lim—Director of Pre-College Programs Center for Engineering Diversity, and Darin Gray—MESA Center for Engineering Diversity (both from Viterbi School of Engineering), and a variety of organizations such as NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), Iridescent Family Science, California Science Center, and the LA Zoo to collaboratively share hands-on science and engineering activities with some 90 local teachers. The workshops were intentionally held on Tuesday afternoons, which for LAUSD are reserved for “professional development” activities. The teachers received a nominal stipend for their participation. Special speakers on the final day of the workshops included representatives from The...
Boeing Company, George Sanchez-Dornsife Vice Dean for Diversity and Strategic Initiatives, Maja Mataric-Viterbi Vice Dean for Research and Professor of Computer Science, and Gisele Ragusa-Research Associate Professor of Education and Engineering. All welcomed, encouraged, praised, and thanked teachers for their work with our children and participation in the workshop.

Teachers were given pre- and post-surveys to measure teachers’ motivation to teach and self-efficacy in teaching science, and potential change after having attended the two workshops.

“The Boeing Water Project” is the design and installation of a permanent, environmentally sustainable, “real life” science exhibit at each of our five schools that provide an easily accessible teaching tool right on the school grounds with which children can interact and engage on a daily basis. Community teachers, equipped with the curriculum guides (developed by JEP staff though this project) are equipped with ready-made lessons to teach children about water conservation, momentum, energy transfer, water cycle, gravity, and geography.

The Boeing Company Water Project provided JEP and its colleagues the amazing opportunity to enhance science education at our partner schools by supporting teachers and engaging students in inspired, inquiry-driven learning and “the exciting process of doing science.” Together, all become more comfortable with probing questions related to their scientific investigations as they participate in the scientific process at its most fundamental level.
The Joint Educational Project (JEP) is one of the oldest and largest service-learning programs in the United States. JEP is based in USC’s Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and works with faculty across the university. The program is designed to connect academic courses with schools and community-based organizations in order to provide students with out-of-classroom experiences that complement and enrich what they are learning in the classroom while simultaneously providing a valued service to the community. Each year, JEP partners with approximately 50 schools and agencies to place nearly 2,000 students in the neighborhood as mentors, “mini-course” instructors, translators, research assistants, teaching assistants, and aides to other helping professionals.

For more information about the services available through JEP, please contact our staff or visit our website at www.usc.edu/jep