CLASP on the Move in 2016

New Courses

CLASP hosted a special topics course in the spring of 2016 entitled “Partnering for Citizenship.” The course came about as a partnership between CLASP, Cornell HR, and the New American Workforce Initiative which was offering free legal services to Cornell employees who were seeking United States citizenship. As part of the course requirements, students worked in pairs to lead a four-part civics short course open to Cornell employees. The course focused on preparing individuals for the civics portion of the exam which consists of ten out of a possible one hundred questions on US history, politics, and culture. The reviews of the course were positive. One employee who attended the course, Mukles Haddad, wrote, “I want to thank you (all) for all the effort you put into the civic classes that I found helpful in many ways, one of them is making me feel at ease when thinking about the whole process of applying for the citizenship, the interview and the test.” Another employee, Michele Draiss, who had her oath taking ceremony in August here in Tompkins County noted, “Cornell’s generosity in supporting the process of naturalization is not to be taken for granted, and I will always be grateful.” CLASP was happy to be part of such an important initiative here on campus to help individuals achieve their dreams of becoming US citizens!

This fall we are enjoying staff participation in two CLASP courses. Christine Johnson (Statler UAW Zone Representative) is auditing the special topics course, Leading/Learning/Justice/Film. Two other staff members are participating this semester in EDUC 2210, Methods and Contexts of Adult Learning. Brad Stock (Cornell Catering) and
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Ed Stinchcomb (Cornell Dining) are contributing valuable experience and knowledge to the class.

In addition, CLASP will be offering a new special topics course in the spring of 2017, EDUC 4940: Introduction to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The offering of this course corresponds with an increase in employees who apply to CLASP for help with their English skills; 62% of CLASP employee applicants in 2016 were English language learners. This course is intended to better prepare students to work with these employees.

New Location

CLASP has literally been “on the move” this year as we prepare for an early 2017 relocation to the third floor of Kennedy Hall to be part of the new Engaged Cornell Hub. In the meantime, we have temporarily set-up shop in room 105 in CALS Surge Facility, 525 Tower Road. Stop by and visit us there!

Moving on Up with CLASP

By Andy Granger

My name is Andy Granger from Elmira, NY, and I am employed in Cornell Building Care. I am excited to take part in the CLASP Program as an Administrative Assistant, giving a helping hand to Maria Vargas (Program Assistant) and Annalisa Raymer (Director) with numerous tasks and projects as they assist employees achieve their personal and professional goals here at beautiful Big Red. I decided to pursue this unique opportunity to seek out new challenges, to broaden and strengthen my skills, to assist with various computer programs, and to provide excellent customer service. Having a steady eye in photography and experience working with digital software, Annalisa and Maria have assigned me to work special projects including the CLASP newsletter and department website. I am very excited to meet many employees working here at Cornell from diverse backgrounds. I have learned that Cornell has many resources and programs for students and employees which makes me feel that there is something for everyone to take part in. I hope my assignment in the professional development internal position at CLASP will be a positive opportunity and will guide me to pursue fulfilling career opportunities at Cornell in the future.

Need Help Figuring Out Your Cornell Benefits?

Lesley Finch, UAW Benefits Liaison, is available to help Cornell employees learn about their various benefits. Lesley can be reached at 255-6185 or lf19@cornell.edu.
I recently had the opportunity to interview Cornell’s Facilities Vice President Ben Kuo about the CLASP internal rotational position and his views on the CLASP program here at Cornell University.

AG: What has been your history with CLASP?

(BK: “I will admit I knew nothing about CLASP before I came into Facilities Management. I want to thank Steve Devlin (Associate Director Building Care) because he’s had a long standing relationship with the CLASP program. [My appointment at Facilities Management] coincided with a change in directorship at CLASP right when Annalisa Raymer (Director, CLASP) was coming on board. And so it was a great time for us to sit down and talk because she was new to the program, and I was new to my position...And so that was kind of the start of the conversation, and I can tell you that I am a firm believer. I think it’s an outstanding program. It’s a two-way street. You know we all work for an educational facility and I think this is one of the best marriages of both administrative staff as well as students being able to work together and actually help each other out. Each party is gaining from the overall experience. [CLASP] epitomizes what Cornell is really about.”

AG: Do you know of any employees who have been tutored in CLASP that have benefited from the program?

BK: Absolutely. I mean, I think there’s too many to even name...The nice thing is whenever I get to meet each year’s CLASP [participants] as they come through, you can just see the difference it’s made in our staff...It gives them the ability to learn more skills and feel more comfortable, whether they learn things for work or things that help them out in their lives. It’s also really nice to see our Cornell students...in the CLASP program and how much they benefit and how much they gain from it as well.”

AG: Why are you promoting this Facilities/Rotational Administration position that I was hired for at CLASP?

BK: “We talked about my beginning relationship with CLASP two years ago [and one of the things that came up was how] CLASP, like many programs, is facing economic challenges in having enough resources to effectively achieve their mission. As [Annalisa and I] talked through this, we thought about how this [assignment] was a further step forward for CLASP to not only get a rotational opportunity that helps one of our employees learn different skills, but also provides CLASP with administrative support. It’s a total win-win...An employee may have aspirations to do something different than custodial services, and so this is a way to gain some of those skills and experiences. It’s like one of those mirrors within a mirror: we are helping you, but in helping you, we are helping ourselves.”

Ben Kuo
Associate VP of Facilities Management

AG: What advice can you give current Cornell facility

 Friend of CLASP
Ben Kuo
By Andy Granger
employees who are looking into internal rotational positions?

BK: “The first part is that career development starts with yourself. It’s important that you, as an individual, have the motivation to want to do something different… Knowing you want to do something different can drive you to get to know other departments and how they work, and I think that’s the first part. What we [at Facilities Management] want to try to do is to provide different opportunities for people. There’s no guarantees though; you have to interview, and you have to compete for these positions… You need to stack the deck in your favor and get many skills and experiences that will make you successful.”

AG: What do you see happening with the internal administrative position in the future?

BK: “Again, we see that there’s such a great benefit both for employees and the CLASP program… I am hoping that you will be one of the people who will really benefit from this program. Certainly, I think we [Facilities Management] have a commitment that we would like to keep this [assignment] going and maintain ongoing support for the CLASP program.”

Robin Aguirre, Building Care, has worked with CLASP for many years. For the last three semesters, Robin has been working with junior Tim Kim in a variety of areas including career development skills and Skillsoft training. Robin notes that she and Tim “naturally cliqued” and that, “he just knows what I need.” When asked what being involved in CLASP has meant to her, Robin noted that “[CLASP has] broadened my knowledge about different things.” Robin said she would definitely recommend CLASP to others as “a really great program to help better yourself.” (Robin Aguirre was interviewed by Maria Vargas on October 13, 2016.)

Robin Aguirre, Custodian, and Tim Kim, student

Tim Kim, a junior at the School of Hotel Administration, has worked with CLASP for over a year. He was first intrigued by CLASP because of the community service aspect of the course where students have opportunities to directly interact with university employees. Tim is a big fan of Robin and her biggest supporter. Tim notes that Robin is that “mother figure” at Cornell. When asked what's most rewarding about CLASP, Tim said, "Watching Robin getting better and better on the computer and in her career development skills are the most rewarding moments in my Cornell career. I truly want to do what’s best for her because not only are we learning partners, but also lifelong friends.” Tim has a passion for education, and he plans to contribute to CLASP throughout the rest of his Cornell career.

We are now accepting applications for the spring 2017 semester! Applications can be found on the CLASP website at: clasp.education.cornell.edu

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