

Bi-Annual Newsletter
November 2016



COBEC

Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation

IN THIS ISSUE

COBEC Award Details.....1

UNF/Belize program:
30 Years and Counting.....2

Galen Gears Up for the
2017 Winter Conference.....3

VSU Ethnographic Field School
in Belize.....4

Samantha Muniz:
Belize Internship.....5

Empowering Belizian Youth
Through Photovoice.....6

BSU Graduate Students’
Reflections.....7

College of Coastal Georgia Partnering
with Three Belize Colleges.....8

IPDS Continues its Development
at Kuxlin Ha.....8

From UB to UNF.....9

UWI Open Campus Partners
with Supreme Court of Belize.....9

SUNY-Cortland/Belize
Internship Program.....10



COBEC AWARD NOMINATIONS

All COBEC members are invited to submit nominations for COBEC honor award recipients. The deadline to submit nominations is Monday, June 23, 2017.

Nominations are to be submitted to John Kemppainen, COBEC Awards Committee Chair, at jkemppai@unf.edu.

Criteria/Eligibility

Honor award recipients should have served COBEC in one of the following ways:

1. Served as a founding member of COBEC.
2. Served with distinction as an officer of COBEC.
3. Provided distinguished or special service to COBEC.

Recipients may be members or non-members.

Learn more here:

<http://www.cobec.org/documents/call-for-cobec-award-nominations.pdf>

UNF/Belize program: 30 YEARS and counting

The Fall 2016 issue of the University of North Florida Journal is dedicated to Betty Flinchum, founding member of the Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation (COBEC). The centerfold article provides a look at the thirty-year partnership between the university and the nation of Belize. The collaboration includes everything from study abroad opportunities for student interns to countless students from Belize studying on UNF's campus.

It all began in 1985, when Betty Flinchum, an emeritus professor in UNF's College of Education, first applied for a University Affiliation Grant through the United States Information Agency for an exchange program between UNF and Belize. The relationship has yielded symbiotic benefits, lifelong friendships and many successes.



Read the full article here or scan the QR code to the left:
<http://bit.ly/2ebRfQR>



“When you have UNF graduates who are the top leaders in schools, in government, in business, **YOU’VE GOT TO HAVE AN IMPACT** on the country, ...”
-Dr. Betty Flinchum

“The longevity of the program can largely be attributed to the **MOTIVATION AND DEDICATION** of its stewards. ‘The individuals behind it have had the passion to champion it. I think we’re just **REALLY COMMITTED** to it.’”
-John Kemppainen

“Dr. Pritchly Smith oversaw the master’s degree program in Belize for more than 10 years before retiring from UNF five years ago, and said, ‘I think we really did help **TRANSFORM THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM** in Belize.’”

“UNF professors helped found the Consortium on Belize Educational Cooperation (COBEC) which continues to enable more students to come to the U.S. to advance their studies at higher learning institutions. ‘That consortium has **HELPED BELIZE’S DEVELOPMENT TREMENDOUSLY,**’ said Patrick Faber.”

GALEN GEARS UP FOR THE 2017 WINTER CONFERENCE: 1 FEB. - 3 FEB.



Galen University is eagerly making plans for the 2017 Winter Conference under the theme “Higher Education for Sustainable Development”. Plans are under way for an invigorating day of panel presentations by key policy makers from the Government of Belize and the UNDP on Belize’s Sustainable Development plans, our long-term development strategy, and the role of higher education in realizing these. We hope that the presentations by these carefully selected panellists will be followed by discussions and a plenary among members on COBEC’s potential role in the development strategy.

A truly Western Cayo district welcome is being planned for our COBEC friends and partners at “The Rolson Hotel Sky Terrace” --- a welcome consisting of gastronomic delights, beverages (of course!), and music (and dancing) from the Marimba Youth Orchestra from Benque Viejo del Carmen.

After the Business Meeting on Friday, we will take everyone to visit Xunantunich for a personal tour of the ruins, where we can view the exciting new finds which shed new light on Maya Civilization. The first discovery came from Dr Jaime Awe’s (Northern Arizona University) excavations on one of the central pyramidal structures in the site’s core. Two panels, with hieroglyphic texts, and one of the largest tombs in Belize were found at the base of the structure. What is so exciting about these panels is that they say nothing about Xunan, but rather reference Caracol (a site to the south of Xunan) and Calakmul (a site in Mexico), as well as the great Snake Dynasty. The second find came from Dr Kat Brown’s (UT San Antonio) excavations on El Castillo, the 30 metre structure dominating the south-eastern site core. A secret stairway was exposed which led to a room covered with images on the walls. It has been recognized as a scribal room,

perhaps part of a Maya scribal academy. Both of these discoveries are exposing not just the story of Xunan, but of the greater region. It tells us of political intrigue and it gives us a glimpse into the life of scribes, and the teaching of this sacred, highly revered profession. We hope you will join us for a special tour led by Dr John Morris, Director of the Institute of Archaeology, and Associate Professor (Adjunct) at Galen.

We urge you to plan your departure from Belize on Saturday, February 4 so you do not miss out on this wonderful opportunity.

Finally, we have secured some excellent hotels. All hotels have committed to providing discounts – please indicate that you are booking for the COBEC Conference to secure these discounts, and book early! Feel free to write Virginia Vasquez, my assistant, at vvasquez@galen.edu.bz for help in securing rooms.

Virginia has viewed all rooms to assure your comfort. We will be forwarding registration information shortly, and we look forward to hosting you in Western Cayo.

SEE BELOW FOR LINKS TO THE HOTELS:

Rolson Hotel: www.rolson.com
(They are offering double rooms at US\$65.00.)

Martha’s Guesthouse and Restaurant:
<http://www.marthabelize.com>

Midas Resort: www.midasbelize.com

The San Ignacio Resort Hotel:
<http://www.sanignaciobelize.com>
(A 15% discount given when you say “COBEC”).

Submitted by
 Dr. Eve Aird
 Provost
 Galen University



VSU ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD SCHOOL IN BELIZE



Dr. Matthew Richard of Valdosta State University's Sociology and Anthropology Department conducts a one-month ethnographic field school in Belize's Toledo District every year in the month of June. He takes a group of five to ten mainly anthropology majors to a small Maya community where they reside and do research on a topic of their choice under his supervision. The trip is preceded by a month of reviewing the literature and methodological planning. The program has been in existence since 1999, providing participants with a wonderful opportunity to learn about and apply anthropological techniques and to develop the writing skills needed for the practice of cultural anthropology.

The VSU Ethnographic Field School in Belize is designed to familiarize students with local beliefs and practices, as well as with issues of the broader global political economy impacting Belize and the surrounding region. In other words, the program explores issues at both the micro and macro scale of social organization. Participants lodge in a rustic Maya-style house and take their meals with the villagers who are members of the Toledo Ecotourism Association (TEA). Thus, the VSU Maya Field School constitutes a wonderful collaboration between American college students with a strong desire to understand culture and our local hosts who are eager to teach VSU students about their culture and learn about ours while simultaneously supplementing their incomes.



Submitted by
 Dr. Matthew, J. Richard



SAMANTHA MUNIZ:**A DEAF INTERN SHARING HER EXPERIENCE WHILE INTERNING IN BELIZE**

I was a Deaf teacher candidate who was given the opportunity to have a brief stay in San Pedro, Belize in the spring of 2014; little did I know it was going to be one of the best life experiences I would ever have. I had the amazing chance to go to the Cayo School for the Deaf where I got to meet some precious Deaf students. It was an educational experience as well because it was a school founded by Jesuits (if I remember correctly) and seeing their place of learning as well as being exposed to the culture/attire. It felt like I was constantly doing something and I loved every minute of it.



During the second part of my stay in Belize, I was to go to the island of San Pedro which could only be accessible by plane or a water taxi. After I arrived in San Pedro I got to see the place I would be staying for the duration of my stay. I then got a tour of the school, La Isla Bonita Elementary School, where I would be having my internship at. I have to add the fact that, since I was on an island, I would walk to and from the school on the beach!! I felt so glad I could say oh, I go to “work” by walking on the beach, it was so serene and relaxing. There was nary a time I felt agitated or stressed because I was on the beach! I could open the door walk five minutes then there’s the beach! The cool, clear, blue Caribbean was breathtaking! The sunsets there was always different each day. There was

to be one Deaf female student, who was incredibly shy at first. She had minimal language and the language she knew were home signs and gestures. I noticed her involvement in the classroom where she would tell on her fellow classmates when they were misbehaving to the teacher. However, she had a clear idea of how a classroom functioned, she would raise her hand and mimic speaking as if she was answering a question the teacher was asking. For that reason, it was clear to see she was quite bright, given that she had no language, to think if she was given the language access, such as sign language, she would soar. Now, I was tasked with determining what she knew and what she did not know so I tested her on a picture book of animals, She knew what each animal were but when she was given the name of the animal with no pictures, she did not recognize the word without picture assistance. She did not have any understanding of numbers as well. I helped her with that by including her classmates and teaching them in sign language, “What Does A Fox Say” song by Ylvis. I could see she was feeling very special in the classroom because her classmates were so excited to learn a language that she could use to communicate with others if she had the continuous language exposure. I also helped her be more aware of her classmates by giving her classmates name signs which would help her identify who was who. Since I taught her class the signs for “What Does A Fox Say”, they had a school performance and the student was the star of the performance. It was a great way to end my internship at Belize! This experience made me realize it wasn’t a job for me, it was me doing what I love. If I was given the opportunity, I would go back in a heartbeat! I was and still am grateful for having this opportunity!

*Submitted by
Dr. Nanci Scheetz,*

Professor & Program Coordinator

Deaf Education & Deaf Studies

Valdosta State University



EMPOWERING BELIZEAN YOUTH THROUGH PHOTOVOICE

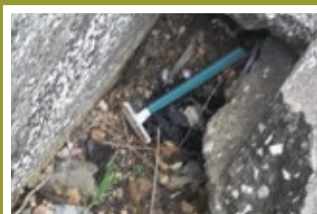
Today's youth are faced with a number of different "roadblocks" on their way to becoming successful adults. Navigating adolescence is often difficult in its own right, but many youths have to deal with issues such as, poverty, unsafe neighborhoods and schools, drug/alcohol addiction, and disjointed homes to name a few. Although not all youth are faced with the same obstacles, these abovementioned obstacles can detract youth from becoming socially productive. Using Photovoice, a process by which participants identify, represent and enhance their community using a specific photographic technique, this study connected Belizean youth from St. John's Anglican Primary School to their community through the process of identifying and taking photos of community strengths and weaknesses. After completing shared data analysis, the photos and a description of the meanings behind the photos were presented to a number of dignitaries in the community. The main themes presented were Responsibility and Support. This presentation gave youths voice in their community and allowed them to discuss strategies on how to increase community strengths as a way to reduce community weaknesses. Upon completion of the presentation, the dignitaries answered questions posed by the youth and offered collaborative strategies on how to promote social change.

Submitted by
Dr. Daniel Chase
Professor
Bridgewater State University



PHOTOVOICE:

A process by which participants identify, represent and enhance their community using a specific photographic technique



REFLECTIONS FROM PAUL NORALEZ: A BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDENT

My name is Paul Noralez and I am from the beautiful country of Belize. I have been teaching for the past six (6) years at Gwen Lizarraga High School Day and Evening Division. Currently, I am a graduate student at Bridgewater State University (BSU) pursuing a Master's Degree in Education (Prek-12 Educators in a Non-US setting). The experiences I have had while here at BSU can be summarized into one word 'family'. The people I have come in contact with have been warm, informative, respectful, forgiving and friendly. The professors have been supportive, engaging and provide you with great feedback and academic advice. The access to technology and its use in the classrooms have been instrumental in my journey to becoming the best teacher I can be. I believe that the students that I teach are my educational achievements and so, coming to BSU I am able to nurture

the leader I can be in the education profession. BSU's motto 'Expect more. Achieve more' is a true testament to the core values that supports my educational philosophy.



Submitted by
Mr. Paul NoraLez
Current Graduate Student
Bridgewater State University

Pictured: Paul & Odelia



REFLECTIONS FROM ODELIA CALIZ: A BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDENT

I have always heard about BSU and I also had the privilege in meeting many wonderful people from BSU about five years ago. I said to myself that one day I hope to attend BSU and be a part of the graduate group of Belizeans who have shared great BSU experiences. You see, since I was a child growing up in a remote village in southern Belize, I have always dreamt about studying in the US. Since I work with the Ministry of Education, I learned about the partnership between the Ministry and the University and thought maybe I would one day be fortunate to be selected as a prospective student too. Well, I must admit that dreams can come true because here I am at this great University. I must admit that it has been emotionally, financially and physically difficult; I know I will get through and the sacrifices will be worth it. The benefits will help me to grow personally and professionally, as well as allow me to also improve education within my community and my country. It is these goals that has given me the determination and courage to push ahead even when it seems so hard.

In addition, all the great people at BSU have definitely helped to make my transition easier from a country with different cultures and traditions to a whole new world. From the first day I arrived at BSU, I have been checked on, asked several times if I need any help and meeting many new Professors, Deans and faculty members who just want to get to know me and lend out a helping hand. This is so emotional and something I deeply admire about the culture among everyone at this institution.

At this point, all seems to be going great with my classes. They were the right match for my career path and areas of interests. I also enjoy going to South Shore Collaborative Education School in Hingham which is a new experience for me seeing that in Belize we are far from such level in Special Education. I feel honored to be given this opportunity by Professor Carter. It feels like these professors have known us for a long time and they see something in us that we do not even recognize. Another great discovery of BSU. This institution makes students feel empowered and that they have the potential to achieve anything as long as they have an interest in it.

I wish that the scholarship lasted at least three semesters so I could give back to the institution by sharing and contributing in extra curricular activities. However, with the many courses per semester it is very challenging to find the time to do more; but, in the meantime I plan to volunteer my time at an elementary school. I must thank the University for planning two calendar activities, especially for international students. These trips also engaged us in the history, experiences and teach us about the United States. IF I had to share the experience so far with anyone, it would be difficult because it seems like a dream which is too good to come true. *They would have to live it to believe it. For this I remain grateful.*

Submitted by
Ms. Odelia Caliz
Current Graduate Student
Bridgewater State University



COLLEGE OF COASTAL GEORGIA PARTNERING WITH THREE BELIZE COLLEGES

The College of Coastal Georgia was honored and privileged to host Mrs. Rocio Carballo and Mr. Fermin Magana, President and Dean, respectively, of Sacred Heart Junior College in San Ignacio, along with their colleagues from Independence Junior College (Dean Marie Scott-Young) and Ecumenical Junior College (Dean Karen Martinez and Mr. Gaspar Martinez, chairman of the EJC Board of Governors) last July to discuss potential international partnering initiatives.

The opportunity for the Belize contingent to meet with a cross-section of CCGA representatives helped identify ways to cultivate potential partnerships between the respective institutions. Among the joint exchange topics discussed included the provision of short-term study abroad program to accommodate students who cannot afford to study abroad for a full semester – creating a service-focused, two-week trip in contrast to an academic focused semester-long trip; encouraging short-term faculty exchanges with a suitable program for utilizing faculty members' expertise and an opportunity to focus on specialized research and/or offering lectures or short courses; and creating cross-institutional, short-term study abroad programs – for CCGA students this

might include programs focused on learning about the complex ecosystems that support Belize's coral reef systems; studying tropical rainforest ecology, and learning about health issues related to living in a tropical climate.

Currently, there is discussion to establish an institutional exchange whereby faculty are paired with their corresponding counterparts in various disciplines (e.g., culinary arts, education, and nursing) to teach in a class setting, engage in class observations, help design curriculum, and conduct course assessment.



Submitted by
James (Jim) Lynch, EdD, MFA
Director of Institutional Effectiveness
Interim Director of International Education
College of Coastal Georgia

IPDS CONTINUES ITS DEVELOPMENT AT KUXLIN HA

The International Professional Development School being developed in Belize in collaboration with the University of Belize and the Ministry of Education made great strides this fall as Drs. Susan Syverud and Betty Bennett conducted separate workshops for the faculty at the University of Belize and teachers at KuxLin Ha Primary Government School. As the State of Florida requires that all faculty and directing teachers for all pre-service intern possess the Clinical Educator training (CET) Dr. Betty Bennett, a CET Trainer from UNF, conducted CET training for approximately 20 participants from the University of Belize and Galen University. By completing this training they will receive and be recognized as having the Clinical Educator Training. This certification will greatly assist UNF student interns being placed at KuxLin Ha and other primary and secondary schools in Belize as these educators are now qualified to supervise Florida interns to meet state requirements.



Submitted by
John P. Kempainen, Ph.D.
Director of Academic Advising
College of Education and Human Services
University of North Florida

Pictured: Dr. Betty Bennett with the CET training class.

FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BELIZE TO UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

In April 2016, Catherine Wade and five other Belizean educators traveled to the University of North Florida (UNF) as a follow up to the ongoing International Professional Development School being established by UNF, University of Belize (UB) and the Ministry of Education in Belize at KuxLin Ha Primary Government School. The purpose of the visit was to provide greater exposure to the UNF Urban Professional Development Schools and to assure that as the school was developing, the nine standards for professional development schools along with the Belizean standards and culture would be properly integrated. Little did Catherine know that the trip may have significantly changed her professional life forever. In addition to learning more about the Professional Development Schools, Catherine also learned more about UNF and after meeting with several faculty, decided to pursue her doctorate at UNF. What followed was a series of email exchanges and her decision to move forward with her application. The application process was strenuous and included written evaluations, skype interviews and a close scrutiny of her academic credentials in order to be accepted.

Following in the paths of many Belizeans before her, Catherine received the great news in early summer that she had been accepted and leaving her position as a lecturer and coordinator of field experiences at UB was a very difficult decision for her to make. There were many issues to consider but in the end, on August

19th, Catherine arrived in Jacksonville, Florida to begin her doctoral studies at UNF. Drs. Susan Syverud and John Kempainen were there to assist and shortly after meeting faculty and chairs, Catherine was offered a part-time Assistantship in the Leadership, School Counseling and Sports Management Department. She also received the Latin American Caribbean Scholarship, which in effect reduces her tuition from out-of-state to in-state tuition and was also awarded the Sir Colville Young Scholarship.

Catherine has wasted no time in getting to know the faculty and staff at UNF and UNF is very pleased to have her among us. Dr. Susan Syverud has been providing meaningful academic guidance so in the not too distant future, Catherine will take her place among the many who have gone before to continue the great work of her fellow Belizeans in developing and providing for a high quality educational system in Belize.



*Submitted by
John P. Kempainen, Ph.D.
Director of Academic Advising
College of Education and Human Services
University of North Florida*

UWI OPEN CAMPUS PARTNERS WITH SUPREME COURT OF BELIZE

The Supreme Court of Belize and the University of the West Indies, Open Campus Belize are partnering to implement a Court-connected Arbitration facility which will open early next year and be the first of its kind in the Caribbean Region.

In preparation, the Supreme Court and UWI, Open Campus facilitated an intensive, four-day, certification training and capacity building programme for eighteen lawyers, which incorporated a Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb) Accelerated Route to Membership component. After implementation of the new arbitration facility, persons who file civil claims in the Supreme Court will be able to opt into having their

disputes determined by an Arbitrator chosen from the Court Roster.

The training programme being undertaken will continue with a cohort of non-lawyers in January 2017. Those who become certified will be added to the Court Roster, and will have equal opportunity to serve as Court-connected arbitrators. (Summarized from a Supreme Court of Belize Press Release)

*Submitted by
Dr. Sharmayne Saunders
Program Officer
University of the West Indies,
Open Campus Belize*



SUNY-CORTLAND / BELIZE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In 1993 SUNY-Cortland began plans for an internship program in Belize and on March 2, 1994, the Belize Development Internships Program was approved, the first internship program in a developing country approved for the State University of New York (SUNY) system. The locations of the program at the time of approval were Belize City, Belmopan and San Ignacio. Sister Mercy Cervantes, Dean of St John's Junior College in Belize City; Julio Fernandez, Professor Political Science, SUNY Cortland; and John Ogden, Director of International Programs were the impetus behind the program. Sister Mercy served as the first Cortland Field Representative for the program. In part Belize was chosen because Prof. Fernandez was from Belize.

The first semester of study in Belize was Fall 1994. The program started with 6 interns and settled into 1-3 interns per semester for the 1990s and 2000s. About 2008, David Gomez became the Cortland Belize Internship Coordinator, followed by Dr. Nancy Adamson in 2011. Since 2011, almost 100 interns from across the SUNY system have been placed in Belize through the Cortland program. Interns work in a local agency and stay with host families from a minimum of 3 weeks to a maximum of a full semester. The goal of the program is to gain work experience in an international setting for the students and to have the students assist the agency in delivering its ongoing work. Interns have been placed in a variety of areas – business, health, education, animal science, environmental NGOs, social services, hospitality, recreation and journalism.

SUNY-Cortland has been an active member of COBEC for almost two decades.



SUNY-Cortland 2015 Summer Interns – At Orientation



2016 Summer Interns at Xunantunich



*Submitted by
Nancy L. Adamson, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Center for Engaged Learning Abroad (CELA-Belize)
Belize Internship Coordinator, State University of New York (SUNY)*



STAY CONNECTED

Visit www.COBEC.org to stay connected with news, updates, and events.

Contact Dr. Rick Bateman, Jr. at rbateman@bpcc.edu for news-related events, questions, or concerns.