Contemplative Collaborative Report of 2016 activities

Organizational
Held a **mini-retreat** May 9th to share our activities from the school year and to provide members with an opportunity for networking and collaboration.

Organized and staffed “**Short sits,**” short meditations that included a movement practice, sitting meditation, and discussion, occurring several times per week.

**Public Relations:** Created bookmarks introducing the Contemplative Collaborative and Stress Reduction Room to the Syracuse University community and created a Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/sucontemplativecollaborative/.

2016 Brown Bag Series
Continued brownbag series with three events this year:

**For Those Who Can’t Be Here Today: Prison Mindfulness**
Friday, January 29, 12-1:30 p.m., 123 Sims

How can mindfulness and meditation help incarcerated people?

This presentation considers mindfulness as a form of social justice and includes the spoken words of incarcerated people, many of whom are unable to be in this space. Moderated by Bonnie Shoultz, Patrick W. Berry, and Syeisha Byrd.

This event was organized and presented by the Contemplative and SU Humanities Center. Co-sponsors: The Writing Program, Hendricks Chapel, Hendricks Chapel Wellness Fund, and Making a Space, and the Contemplative Collaborative.

**Moving for Social Justice: Putting Your Whole Self In**
Friday, April 1, 12-1:30 p.m., 123 Sims

Although many of us grew up treating our minds and bodies as separate entities, they are actually one. In this highly participatory session, we will explore ways to move our bodies (with music) as part of our work building community, challenging oppression, and creating new visions. Wear comfortable clothes.

Mara Sapon-Shevin, Professor of Inclusive Education, is a specialist in diversity and social justice issues, including full inclusion, anti-racism teaching, bullying and harassment, cooperative learning, and using the arts to teach against oppression. Having written more than 200 books, book chapters, and articles, she coordinates a project called Creating Safe and Peaceful Schools and has just completed (along with teachers) a project called Peaceful at the Core, which uses children’s literature to end bullying and promote positive interpersonal behavior.
This event was organized and presented by the Contemplative Collaborative and SU Humanities Center. Co-sponsors: The Writing Program, Hendricks Chapel, Hendricks Chapel Wellness Fund, and Making a Space, and the Contemplative Collaborative.

**Gratitude in Motion**  
Monday, September 12, 12:30-1:30 p.m., Sims 123

Through an original practice called Dr. T’s Movement Meditation, this session focuses on the energy of gratitude by engaging ways to cultivate, experience, and express appreciation through bodily movement and reflection. Our body work will be informed by a physical listening and present moment sensing practice that fuses Dr. T’s dance background with embodied symbolism and Indigenous insights to nurture balance and wellness.

Dr. T. MacPherson is an artist, educator, and healer. She teaches dance at Syracuse University and specializes in Afro-derived dance forms as expressed in the U.S. She is founding director of the College Preparatory D.A.N.C.E camp at Colgate University and founding director of Dance Dimension Institute—an organization that offers cultural and creative experiences with dance to enable community building, learning, and healthy living. For more information about DDI please visit [www.dancedimensioninstitute.org](http://www.dancedimensioninstitute.org).

This event was organized and presented by the Contemplative Collaborative.

**Healthy Monday Yoga:** Coordinated with Health Promotions to create a very successful Monday afternoon yoga class open to the SU community.

Were able to turn administration of the **Stress Reduction Room** over to Health Promotions

**On the Horizon**
Met with Compassionate Syracuse group to explore future collaboration

Met with development staff to begin fundraising.

We gave input to those planning the Wellness Center and are hoping for a meditation classroom as well as other meditation spaces in the Center.

**Activities of Contemplative Collaborative Members**

**New Contemplative classes created:**
- WRT 114 Writing Culture (a creative nonfiction course themed around mindfulness)  
  (Patrick W. Berry)
- ART 200 Hand Eye Body Mind (Susan D’Amato)
- HNR 200 10% happier? (Margaret Usdansky)
**Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.** Taught by Dr. Joshua Felver through the SU counseling center for SU and SUNY-ESF students during Spring 2016.

**Grants:**
Association for the Contemplative Mind in Higher Education Teaching and Learning Center Grant. ($5,000). August 2015. Assessing the outcomes of contemplative pedagogy. In February 2016 this project included a 2-day workshop and consultation with Dr. Grace Bullock, a contemplative assessment expert. Bron Adam, Diane Grimes, Rachel Razza.

Health Foundation of Western and Central New York ($24,942) 12/01/15-6/31/17. Mindfulness training for preschoolers, their family, and caregivers in high-trauma areas of Syracuse, NY. The goal of this study is to examine the self-regulatory benefits of mindful yoga for at-risk preschoolers and their teachers. PI: Rachel Razza; Co-PIs: Dessa Bergen-Cico, Linda Stone Fish.

Syracuse University Humanities Center Syracuse Symposium ($2000). September 2015. Neural networks. The goal of this project was to bring contemplative neuroscientist Catherine Kerr to Syracuse to give several talks in April 2016—she had to cancel several days before her visit due to illness. Dessa Bergen-Cico & Diane Grimes.

Mind and Life Institute 1440 Award ($15,000). Project title: Evaluation of School-Based Mindfulness Curriculum “Learning to BREATHE”. Youth raised in high poverty neighborhoods are frequently exposed to stressful situations, such as community violence and family conflict that adversely affect their well-being and academic performance. School-based mindfulness programming may support student functioning. The goal of this project is to rigorously assess the impact of a promising intervention on the inner well-being of at-risk high school students. PI: Joshua Felver.

**Publications**


**Conferences**


Grimes, D. S. *Assessing the outcomes of contemplative pedagogy with Syracuse’s TLC* [Teaching and Learning Center]. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, Amherst, MA. October 2016.

Razza, R. A. Mindfulness goes to school: The benefits of practice for children. Research presented at the Mind + Body Symposium, Student Council for Family Relations, Syracuse University. This was an invited presentation from the Graduate Student group. April 2016.

Razza, R. A. Mindfulness goes to school: Exploring the benefits for children’s self-regulation. SUNY Geneseo Psychology Colloquium, Geneseo, NY. This was invited presentation to the Psychology department. September 2016.


Razza, R. A. & Bergen-Cico, D. *Fostering self-regulation in schools through mindfulness-based practice*. Research presented at the research summit for the Yoga in Schools Symposium at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, Stockbridge, MA. This was an invited presentation. February 2016.

Razza, R. A. & Bergen-Cico, D. *Enhancing student wellbeing via mindfulness in the schools*. Research presented at the Inner Strength Teen Program Teacher Training, Philadelphia, PA. We were invited to attend and present at this curriculum-based teacher training. July 2016.


**Progress on Focus Areas** *(we identified 4 groups we wanted to work with: Syracuse schools, veterans, graduate students, athletes)*

**School projects:**

Eight-week *Inside Out* emotional intelligence series with Frazer first graders (here they are showing their Anger drawings and making angry faces).

Yoga at Frazer school: Recruited a volunteer yoga teacher; we are now teaching 20-30 minute yoga classes on Fridays to two first grade classes and a kindergarten class (Diane Grimes).

**Veterans**

Lead meditation monthly for the Syracuse Veterans Writing Group (Diane Grimes)

Member of the Moral Injury Group, which focuses on addressing the traumas associated with war. (Diane Grimes)