



Stockton's 'Activist in Residence' Offers Tools for Social Change in Community

Public Invited to Free 'Weekend Warrior' Sessions on Oct. 12 and Oct. 19

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Galloway Township , NJ- Interested in community activism? Want to change the world? Erin O'Hanlon, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey's first activist in residence, is holding "Weekend Warrior" training sessions on two upcoming Saturdays: Oct. 12 and Oct. 19.

O'Hanlon, a Stockton graduate who is coordinator of community initiatives at The Women's Center of Atlantic County, said: "This training will support passionate people in transforming their ideas into strategies. It will use hands-on experiential activities, including group activities and thoughtful dialogue, to identify potential areas of social change. Community mapping, resource allocation, consensus building and coalition development will all be addressed."

"By the end of this two-day training, the participants will have a better understanding of community organizing and mobilization," said O'Hanlon. "We will follow a popular education model, starting with recognizing what experiences participants have had themselves."

The training will be held from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. both Saturdays in Room 126 of the B-Wing on the college's main campus. Students must attend both dates to receive Service-Learning and Ultra credit from the school. Ultra credit, part of a national movement among colleges, reflects a student's extra-curricular learning and becomes part of the official transcript.

Members of the community are welcome to attend the free sessions, where refreshments will be provided.

The activist-in-residence program launched this fall is part of Stockton's commitment to community engagement and Service-Learning. The Service-Learning program integrates

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students' classroom learning with work in the community, such as volunteering at a food bank, helping victims of Superstorm Sandy clean up property damage, or doing grant-writing and other research to benefit others.

"It's a huge asset for our students and faculty members to have a community activist here on campus part-time," said Daniel Fidalgo Tome, assistant director of Service-Learning, who helped initiate the activist-in-residence program.

"Having Erin here is practicing what we preach about creating social change," he said.

O'Hanlon is working with Stockton's Center for Community Engagement and the School of General Studies as well as the Office of Service-Learning in designing and implementing community engagement training and projects for the year.

O'Hanlon, who graduated in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in Literature and Language, with a concentration in Communications, returned in 2006 to get a Master's of Arts in Instructional Technology.

She said her Master's "focused on adult learning and really helped me in the field, getting people activated and working with communities that had been marginalized."

O'Hanlon said she has met with Stockton professors of Biology, Sociology, Women's Studies and Anthropology and will be working on integrating classroom work and community activism during both semesters this year.

"Stockton comes from a long tradition of activism, community engagement and strong voices," she said. "Part of my job is to point out the path in the 21st century," and help students "connect with the social responsibility of their actions."

For example, an Economics class taught by Professor Melaku Lakew is raising funds for Books Without Borders. The project goes beyond just acquiring the books, because shipping the books to other countries is very expensive, O'Hanlon said. When Lakew took books from Stockton to his native Ethiopia in 2012, the cost was \$7,000 per shipping container.

"They learn about the economic theory of supply and demand firsthand," while O'Hanlon teaches them about how to "create your own market," she said. Donated course books can be sold to raise the money to ship other books, she explained.

For more information about the Oct. 12 and Oct. 19 activism-training sessions, contact O'Hanlon at 609-652-4256 or email: erin.ohanlon@stockton.edu

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