STAC Faculty Research Retreat
May 13-16, 2002

FINAL REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

The STAC Faculty Research Retreat held at Holiday Hills Conference Center in Pawling, NY, began with the following intention articulated in the mission statement as follows:

The purpose of this retreat is to bring STAC faculty together in a setting removed from the College campus for 2 to 4 days to share current research interests in a casual setting. The objectives in doing this are:

(1) To foster a community of scholars who can contribute to one another’s research in stimulating, constructive ways;

(2) To provide a setting in which STAC faculty can experience academic and social fellowship outside the official confines of the College;

(3) To use this event as a means to deepen an atmosphere of collegiality and collaboration. STAC’s visibility could be augmented if this event assists the faculty in producing new research for publication or other forms of dissemination.

While we want this event to be available to a broad range of faculty, participation in the retreat is contingent upon attendees presenting, singly or in collaboration with one another, current research or areas of scholarly investigation in which they are engaged. (This excludes work already published or accepted for publication.) These presentations would take place in organized sessions spread over 2 or 4 days in which all attendees would participate but in which the presenters would provide an organizing framework for seminar-like discussion of their project(s).

II. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The College generously provided full funding for this endeavor. The Retreat received encouragement from all levels of faculty and administration in the planning stages. We are especially grateful to the following for their enthusiasm and backing: Lee Badgett, Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Faculty Development Committee and its chair Maureen Kelleher, and Joseph Coyne, Chair of the Division of Social Sciences.

It was helpful that financing was approved from sources separate from funds allocated to individual faculty members for conference and other scholarly expenses. This made it possible for faculty to attend without depleting financing for attending conferences. In fact, having presented new research as opposed to work already published or accepted for publication, it is all the more possible for faculty to bring their work to conferences. This provides enhanced visibility to both the College and its faculty at the regional and national levels.
III. FACILITY

The Retreat was held at Holiday Hills YMCA Conference Center in Pawling, New York. The semi-rural setting, plentiful food, comfortable private rooms, and extensive nature paths for relaxing walks between sessions made for an ideal atmosphere and encouraged faculty who ordinarily do not encounter one another during the busy semester schedule to meet as people and as scholars.

We are strongly considering utilizing Holiday Hills again for the 2003 Retreat.

IV. PRESENTERS AND ATTENDEES

The following is a list of presenters and their session titles:

(1) Linda Levine Madori
    “Cognitive Functioning in Alzheimer’s Patients”

(2) Jack Roberts
    “Emerson and the Origins of a Pragmatist Theory of Language”

(3) C.J. Churchill
    “Identity Formation in Mass Society”

(4) Neerja Chaturvedi
    “Globalization & Culture”

(5) Florette Koffler
    “Exile in Literature”

(6) Stacy Sewell
    “Corporate Social Responsibility & Affirmative Action: 1945-1960”

(7) Barbara Donn
    “Arthur Anderson & Ethics”

(8) Robert Schelin
    “Presidential Elections & Conventions”

Also present as attendees were Joseph Coyne, Barbara Klein, David Keppler, and Robert Trawick. It was vital that faculty who were not presenting research also attended because they contributed to the variety of perspectives on individual projects and made for a more energetic extended conversation.
In all, the faculty represented diverse fields of study and brought a multiplicity of approaches to each discussion. From the pool of projects presented, we identified the connecting theme to be “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Self” and within that overarching theme we explored “Identity and Self” and “Self in Economy and Society.” We considered both theoretical perspectives and empirical analyses.

V. OUTCOMES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Written and oral responses of Retreat attendees at the conclusion of the event, were enthusiastic. The group not only succeeded in energetically sharing current projects but also tapped into a vein of collegiality which will extend into the coming academic year. The gathering of junior and senior faculty at the Retreat, as mentioned by one participant in written comments “…continues to add immeasurably to each group’s sense of what its academic community is and to everyone’s feeling of belonging, and of growth.”

The following excerpts are selected from attendees’ written comments:

“Expected a good experience but my expectations were far surpassed. Definitely do again. [Add] other central concepts, not just research perhaps globalization, diversity etc.”

“This has been a very valuable experience, not only from an intellectual point of view, but also because of our interactions, exchanges of opinions, questioning of assumptions, all in a new and appealing setting. I believe one reason for our success has been the location – away from the campus, ‘liberated from other demands and unessential concerns,’ we could focus on ideas, free expression, and why not say it, friendship….it would also be useful to engage other/more faculty members. It is ‘good for the life of the mind.’ ”

“The Retreat was a great experience from beginning to end. I was exposed to work which was new to me, but I believe I was able to contribute to the discussion. I also gained new insights into my own work. The site and accommodation were very conducive to a relaxed atmosphere where real sharing occurred….Invite more faculty from other divisions.”

“It was a great experience to discuss very different (i.e. not classroom) aspects of our academic pursuits and I think brought us closer together (that as well as the long walks, coffee breaks, etc.). And it was a treat to hear of others’ research and the passion they brought to it….Can this be broadened? Would ‘non-researching’ faculty want to come?”

The faculty was rigorous in their presentations, and the discussions were lively and informative. In addition to scholarly exchange for works-in-progress, the retreat was useful in providing new approaches to teaching and designing courses.
The intimate size of the gathering proved pivotal to establishing a sense of dedication to a common goal and cohesiveness among faculty in attendance. For this reason, we feel it is vital that future research retreats not exceed 15 to 17 attendees. As was done this year, future retreats will be widely publicized as open to all divisions of the College. We fully intend to do this again in May 2003.