STAC Faculty Research Retreat
May 17-20, 2004

FINAL REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

The STAC Faculty Research Retreat emerged three years ago from the informal observation that the faculty might benefit from sharing ideas and fellowship outside the boundaries of their professional obligations. This past May we met for the third time and enjoyed our highest attendance yet. Including President Fitzpatrick and Vice President for Academic Affairs Durney, a total of 21 faculty members were at the Retreat either as presenters of original research or as active participants. Over these three years, faculty from each of the five divisions of the College have participated. Based on this year’s enthusiasm and the continued growth of the College faculty, we project the Retreat will remain an active and core element of faculty life.

The Jeronimo Resort and Conference Center in Walker Valley, NY, served for the second year in a row as a welcoming and extremely comfortable setting. The Retreat’s statement of purpose which follows below remains unchanged from last year:

The purpose of this retreat is to bring STAC faculty together in a setting removed from the College campus 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 presentation of work in progress and upon participation of non-presenters in scheduled sessions. (Work already published or accepted for publication is excluded.) The presentations will take place in organized sessions in which all attendees will participate but in which the presenters will provide an organizing framework for seminar-like discussion of their projects.

The reason presented material must be in-progress and not already accepted for publication is because the intent of the retreat is to provide constructive criticism by all participants. Presentations are limited to eight or nine so we have maximum time for each person’s ideas to receive full consideration. The purpose of including non-presenting participants in the retreat is to ensure we have the greatest possible diversity of viewpoints represented.
II. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

As was the case in the first two years, the College again provided full support for this endeavor. Funding was generously provided by the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. We are especially grateful to the following for their enthusiasm and backing: Dr. Margaret Fitzpatrick, President, Dr. John Durney, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Dr. Joseph Coyne, Chair of the Division of Social Sciences.

The full financial backing received from the Vice President of Academic Affairs for the Retreat continues to insure that all interested faculty can participate without depleting funds available to them for attending scholarly conferences and events.

III. FACILITY

The Retreat was held at Jeronimo Resort and Conference Center in Walker Valley, NY. The conference facility provided an intimate, relaxing setting for our daily sessions as well as ample and varied space for socializing, taking walks, swimming, and getting to know one another better. Moreover, discussions and debates which originated in the formal conference setting frequently spilled over into these informal settings.

We are strongly considering utilizing Jeronimo again for the 2005 Retreat.

IV. PRESENTERS AND ATTENDEES

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

1. “Crafting a Culturally Sensitive Liberal Arts Curriculum”
   Eileen Cunningham

2. “Can an Eliminative Materialist Make Sense of Human Freedom?”
   Dave Keppler

3. “Maximization of Shareholders’ or Stakeholders’ Wealth”
   Nick Papavlassopulos

4. “Jewish Self-Hatred in the Work of Amy Levy”
   Rebecca Shapiro

   Bruce Bennett & Neerja Chaturvedi
   Florette Koffler

7. “Concentration, Infinity, & Negentropy: Meditation and  
   Funeral Deposits in Ancient India”  
   Jeff Durham

8. Marcuse, Kant, and American Naturalism  
   Bob Murray

9. “Politics and the Media”  
   Robert Schelin

Also present as attendees were Margaret Fitzpatrick, John Durney, Joseph Coyne,  
Barbara Klein, C.J. Churchill, Stacy Sewell, Robert Trawick, Michael Shaw, Ron Smith,  
Helen McGowan, Carl Rattner. 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 “Interpretations: Creating Spaces for Thought and Action.”

V. OUTCOMES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

As was the case last two years, responses from participants at the conclusion of the event  
were enthusiastic. We continued to build on the collegiality which had been established.  
We have determined that this is in fact an experience to which faculty look forward at the  
end of the academic year and which continues to grow and to facilitate cross disciplinary  
connections. Once again both junior and senior faculty came together with a few new  
faces present and several others indicating an active interest in participating in the future.

The following excerpts are selected from attendees’ written comments and are organized  
according to those written by new and returning participants:

**New Participants:**

“My experience was quite positive. The type of interaction, of several types, is so  
difficult to achieve on campus, yet it is so necessary. This experience is perhaps  
the kernel of renewed faculty morale and should be recreated near campus –  
differently – in the fall and spring semesters or perhaps in January. I enjoyed the  
session of creativity and realized that the performing arts added so much to the  
discussion. Continuing with at least one session of this type would be a fine  
addition to future retreats.”
“Simply wonderful. Change nothing. Venue and food excellent.”

“A wonderful experience, provocative presentations, fabulous camaraderie. I wish I could have stayed for the entire retreat. It was a pleasure to get away from ‘stuff’ in order to exercise the mind. Keep on keepin’ on!”

Returning Participants:

“From start to finish, the Retreat proved to be a great time on intellectual discussions and warm fellowship among colleagues. The lodge and meeting facilities are both comfortable and functional. Kudos to the organizers for their outstanding work in coordinating such a successful event for the STAC faculty. It is a delicious end to the academic year. I look forward to returning next year.”

“Again success! Format was again very good. I like that we changed seminar room frequently.”

“Extremely well prepared, informative presentations, nicely presented and well received. Congeniality all around – very needed and welcome. Keep doing it!”

These comments demonstrate that this event is intellectually stimulating and fosters a collegial spirit among faculty who seldom encounter one another during the busy academic year. It also provides a dynamic forum to discuss pedagogical issues. Based on these comments and the interest expressed by many faculty who could not attend this year we fully intend to organize another Retreat for 2005 and to widely publicize it among the faculty in the fall.