

Make It Happen!

Innovation Grants

FINAL UPDATE

Note: This form is for **APPROVED GRANTS** only! Final updates are a requirement for the grants. The information provided will be posted on the Learning College website.

Directions: Fill out the form and email it to anne.holte@montgomerycollege.edu.

Project Name: Rockville Developmental Writing Program Guest Speakers Series

Project Director: Ellen Olmstead, Professor of English

Final Update: Throughout the semester, I submitted updates of each event sponsored by the MIHG. Faculty teaching developmental courses were sent a schedule of events before the beginning of the semester so that they could build the events into their syllabi. An invitation and all materials designed to complement the events were sent out to all EN and EL faculty, as well as faculty in other disciplines who were teaching courses related to the events. Announcements about events were also posted for at least a full week on MC Online. The student newspaper, *The Advocate*, covered two of the events; student reporters interviewed the guest speakers.

All faculty who attended any of the events were surveyed; the developmental faculty who brought their classes distributed a survey to their students. Comments were altogether favorable, and when asked, faculty and students alike indicated that they would like to see the Program continue to produce a Speakers Series each semester. While the faculty thought the students would be most animated about the guests who work in multimedia, in fact, the students were most enthusiastic about guest speakers who were published writers. So, for our next series, we will invite more writers.

Student engagement and retention were two of the focal points of the project. Attendance was excellent—sometimes, standing room only. Students were attentive, asking questions, speaking with the guests after the session, some event corresponding with the guests via e-mail afterwards. Some developmental faculty designed writing assignments connected to the events. This furthered student engagement, for students prepared before the event by formulating potential questions and theses for their essays and reflected on the event afterwards in writing and revising their essays. In class, many students made connections with the events and stories they read about in the newspaper or saw on television. Some of the faculty shared their students' portfolios at a Developmental Writing Program

Committee meeting. We were in agreement that papers related to the events showed more substance and a stronger effort to think critically about complex issues. It's not clear if the project improved retention, however.

The guest speakers made a point of telling us how they enjoyed coming to MC and speaking with the students. These professionals were generous with their time and attention. Stephanie Allen came to campus two days, February 5 and 6. About 125 people attended each day. Annabel Park, Eric Byler, and Jeff Man also came two days, February 26 and 27. About 150 people attended each day. Rebecca Haile came for one day but spoke twice. About 250 people heard her on March 5. And Michel Martin spoke once to more than 100 people on April 18. One of the professors plans to invite Stephanie Allen back to campus in the fall semester. The Ethiopian Student Club at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus brought Rebecca Haile, after hearing her here in Rockville, to their campus in April. And dozens of faculty and students are participating in Annabel Park et al.'s 9500 Liberty blog. Michel Martin dispensed her business card to students considering a career in broadcast journalism, enticing them with the possibility of a paid internship at National Public Radio.

We hope to continue offering programs like this to our students. Thank you for your support this semester.