



Mary Jo Griffin, MCC Director of Outreach and Development.

Paul H. Sullivan Leadership Institute

Empowers Students to Assume Leadership Roles

A diverse group of Middlesex students are “in training” right now to become dynamic leaders of tomorrow. They are the Fellows of The Paul H. Sullivan Leadership Institute, which was launched last year to identify and develop leadership potential. The Sullivan Institute is named in honor of the late Paul H. Sullivan, a popular radio talk-show host, political editor of the Lowell Sun, television news commentator, and long-time adjunct professor of journalism at Middlesex. It is led by Mary Jo Griffin, Sullivan’s widow and MCC director of outreach and development. Before he died in 2007, Sullivan met with Middlesex President Carole Cowan to discuss a program he envisioned that would cultivate new community leaders from the college’s student population.

“Paul really wanted to make a difference in kids’ lives and wanted the program available to any student willing to be challenged when presented with leadership opportunities,” said Griffin. “This program is not just for students who have already assumed leadership roles at the college, but also for students who may not have considered being leaders but are recommended by faculty or advisors who see their potential.”

Through lectures, programs, intensive on-campus workshops, and off-site social and community events, Sullivan Institute Fellows develop skills in leadership, communication, conflict resolution, ethics, etiquette training, and problem-solving. Students also commit to the responsibility of community service and can participate in meaningful internships, if they choose. Program components are facilitated by volunteers from government, business, nonprofit organizations, and media outlets, as well as by Middlesex staff.

“My role,” said Griffin, “is to administer all details of the institute and to bring the community into the program with a variety of workshops, site visits and other programs. We hope to reach both within and beyond Greater Lowell for workplaces that will offer practical experience and advice, as well as internship and job possibilities. We are fortunate that business and community leaders have been very responsive and eager to participate. We want the students to work with business and civic leaders to see real leadership in action.”

At a recent meeting of this year’s Sullivan Institute Fellows held in MCC’s Federal Building, Patricia Crane, retired vice president for administration and external affairs at Lowell General Hospital, facilitated a highly interactive, three-hour Leadership Workshop. The workshop was the second half of a six-hour intensive program created especially for the institute.

Crane’s workshop focused on educating the students in appropriate leadership skills and communication techniques to effectively translate their visions of leadership into action. Students discussed articulating a vision, persuasion, listening skills and communications tools, and reviewed a variety of leadership styles. They also identified real and practical opportunities to develop and practice leadership.

Other Sullivan Institute programs this year have included a presentation by small-business owners who are very active in the community; a workshop on “self-branding,” and a visit to Lowell City Hall for an activity workshop facilitated by the city manager about the workings of local government. Next month, the group will visit the Lowell Sun for a panel discussion with editors, reporters and Sun employees from various departments. The final off-site meeting this year will be at Ironstone Farm, a horse farm that provides therapy for people with a wide range of physical, emotional and cognitive disabilities. They will learn about the farm’s programs, and work with farm staff as well as volunteers.

Sullivan Institute Fellows have volunteered to work at the Mayor’s Ball in Lowell and will work at MCC’s Celebrity Forum fundraiser in June. They also recently went on a group-shopping trip to get appropriate clothes to wear in the business world.

“Our skill-building workshops and conversations with community and business leaders connect students with role models who are leaders. We want to go beyond the classroom to show them how to become leaders in the real world of business, government and community. To do this properly, they also need to know how to dress and act in social and business settings,” said Griffin.

Leadership Institute candidates are nominated primarily by members of the Middlesex faculty and staff. Candidates are chosen by a selection committee, consisting of representatives from Middlesex and the Paul H. Sullivan Leadership Institute Advisory Board. Fellowship applicants must have completed at least one year at MCC, have a minimum 2.0 GPA, and be willing to commit to approximately four hours per month for one year. Formal sessions occur monthly, and additional time is spent attending community and college events, off-site summits, and other activities.

“Participating in the Leadership Institute opens many doors for our students and offers opportunities they may never find elsewhere. It is rewarding for all of us,” said Griffin.

- Deborah Kearney

“We want to go beyond the classroom to show them how to become leaders in the real world of business, government and community.”

- Mary Jo Griffin
MCC’s Director of Outreach & Development

