1st Annual NVC Peace and Conflict Studies Summer Workshops
June 10-14, 2013
Northwest Vista College (NVC), San Antonio Texas

Event Summary

Northwest Vista College (NVC) is happy to report that we have successfully concluded our First Annual Peace and Conflict Studies Workshop in collaboration with St. Mary’s University in San Antonio this past June. Over the course of four days, we offered a variety of workshops, collaborative learning activities and keynote speaker presentations from The Corrymeela Community working for peace and social justice in Northern Ireland, Matt Scrimgeour and Aaron Gordon. Mr. Scrimgeour and Mr. Gordon presented at both institutions which were open to the public; they spoke about the peace process in Northern Ireland and non-violent strategies for community involvement. They also conducted an interactive trust-building activity involving the audience and the students were really engaged.

We were able to reach out to 175 students and 8 faculty members from NVC and St. Mary’s University who participated in the workshops and were visibly impacted by the diversity of topics and presenters as shown by student surveys conducted at the end of several workshops. Five workshop/presentation surveys were conducted and rated on a scale of 1-5 with scoring results ranging from 4.59 to 4.88. We were very happy with the turnout, the student participation and how well the students received all of the workshops and speaking presentations. They were left wanting for more and asked us when our next Peace and Conflict event would take place!

In addition to our keynote speakers from Northern Ireland, Brian Flannery from the DEA office in San Diego gave a live webinar about the drug cartels and the violence going on along the border. One of our greatest accomplishments the faculty participation from both institutions who enthusiastically contributed their time and talents as workshop presenters, particularly from NVC, and coming from a wide range of disciplines including the Humanities, Criminal Justice, English, Chemistry, Speech and History. Half the presenters were NVC adjunct faculty! Some the topics covered included: a gang role playing activity; gender and social justice issues in Mexico as they relate to drug violence; immigration as Mexican families escape the violence in Mexico to settle in San Antonio, Texas and social justice through songs.

In addition, we had local community presenters from the Por Vida Academy Charter High School, the Joven Noble group reaching out to at-risk youth and the Family and Community Health Systems from the UT Health Science Center. Members from Joven Noble spoke to students about their experiences with drugs, gangs and violence and how they were able to overcome the challenges they faced and are now working with and for the community. They gave students a different perspective with hope and that drugs and violence can be overcome through peace and respect for one’s community. We hope to continue developing these new community partnerships and also invite high school students from the Por Vida Academy to participate in next year’s summer workshop. This first annual Peace and Conflict Studies Workshop would not have been possible without a grant from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and their International Education program.
Matt Scrimgeour (left) and Aaron Gordon (right) from the Corrymeela Peace Center in Northern Ireland.

Matt Scrimgeour (light blue jacket, center) and Aaron Gordon (black shirt, next to Matt) doing a “trust building” activity with the audience during their presentation at NVC.
During the Joven Noble workshop presentation at NVC: building community!

Joven Noble counselor John Vacca (right) and youth embracing NVC students at the end of their presentation.
Matt Scrimgeour from the Corrymeela Peace Center in Northern Ireland, participating during the *Joven Noble* presentation by singing a traditional Irish chant.

NVC Adjunct Faculty, Luis Rangel-Ortiz during his presentation on new Mexican immigrants in San Antonio escaping the violence of the drug violence in Mexico.
Brian Flannery from the DEA in San Diego giving a webinar at St. Mary’s University.

St. Mary’s University Students at the webinar with Brian Flannery from the DEA.