

Coastal Georgia Center for Service-Learning Seeks to “Bridge the Gap”

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Communicating opportunities and the importance of collaboration were themes that emerged from the panel presentation, “Bridging the Gap: A Community of Networking,” hosted by the College’s Center for Service-Learning on Thursday afternoon, November 6, in the Stembler Theatre.

The panel was moderated by Jeff Clark, community liaison with Safe Harbor, and featured Brunswick Mayor Cornell Harvey, Glynn County Police Chief Matt Doering, County Commissioner Allen Booker, Safe Harbor Executive Director Leslie Hartman, Pinova Human Resources and Public Relations Manager Cedric King and Dr. Elizabeth Wurz, Interim Director of the Center for Service-Learning and Associate Professor of English. Safe Harbor is one of the original community partners for the College’s service-learning program.



Cody Cocchi, Assistant Director of the Center, began the presentations by explain the concept of “bridging the gap” as finding the connecting points to optimize program performance and student engagement.

Clark began the discussion by emphasizing the complex role of the community in raising area youth and the importance of community buy-in to programs such as service-learning. He itemized the different elements of networking necessary to accomplish change, including increasing community awareness and developing responsive networking.

Throughout the 90-minute discussion, the role of networking in building effective partnerships and in facilitating collaboration was repeatedly stressed by the panelists.

Building a better Brunswick, Harvey said, requires narrowing the gap between dream and reality. “Don’t be afraid of that gap. We can use what we have and make it better.” Booker reinforced the importance of collaboration, but also stressed the need to listen to the actual stakeholders when defining issues.

King discussed corporate responsibility, but also touched on the use of service-learning and community engagement as a way for students to discover and develop career interests. He also viewed service-learning as a way to develop and keep talented youth in the community.

Both Doering and Clark hit upon the importance of trust, fairness and respect. “Engagement requires authenticity,” Clark concluded. “As Maya Angelou said, how you make people feel is what they will remember.”