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## Diamond Certificate Report: The Ghana Project

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## Diamond Certificate Report: The Ghana Project

Submitted by Jesse Parent, Rejoyce Owusu, and Ben DeGeorge



The report is the pinnacle of the Diamond certificate. Please answer the following questions in your report:

**Name:** Jesse Parent, Rejoyce Owusu, and Ben DeGeorge

**Title of Project:** The Ghana Project

**Dates of Project from beginning to completion or still in progress**

The project began September 20, 2008 and it is an on gain service learning project under the center of community at SUNY Geneseo. The Ghana Project originally started off as a service learning/civic engagement/ volunteering project through the GOLD department. The Ghana Project is focused on spreading Ghanaian culture through cross culture dialogue amongst students that have studies abroad in Ghana and students that are thinking about service learning opportunities on campus.

Through the efforts of SUNY Geneseo students we want to create global awareness on campus. Specifically, we want to create awareness and establish a connection with a University in Ghana. We have successfully had educational programming, community partnerships, fundraising efforts and a GREAT Day presentation every year on campus.

Our main goals for this semester were the cultural dinner, T-shirt advertisement, the 5K race and our Great day performance. All these events were fantastic.

**Inspiration: What was your inspiration for doing your project?**

The Ghana Project was created in Fall 2008; it was born out of GOLD's "Diamond Civic Engagement" certificate. GOLD Mentor Rejoyce Owusu developed the idea as a way to share her homeland of Ghana. Joined by fellow GOLD Mentors Jesse Parent and Ben DeGeorge, the founding members The Ghana Project began working together to establish a group based on civic engagement and service learning, focusing on Ghana and its culture and increasing global awareness. A major long term goal of the project is helping to build or establish a school in Ghana. While the first year of the Project has been about establishing and creating awareness, already raised significant funding and made valuable connections to help in pursuing this goal.

**Funding: Did your project require funding? How did you go about acquiring these funds?**

Major fundraising for The Ghana Project has been sponsored T-Shirts. Thanks to a combined effort with SUNY Geneseo's Educational Department groups – Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Elementary and Secondary Educational Association (ESEA), and The Young Children's Council (YCC) – The Ghana Project has been able to raise over \$1,000 in one week's time.

Upcoming fundraisers also include a Walkathon / 5K race in mid-April. “Geneseo Moves for Ghana” will be another means to raise funding for the long term goal of building a school in Ghana. The Ghana Project has received wide recognition, support, and great publicity. It has appeared in the student-run newspaper, The Lamron, frequently over the course of it’s short existence.

**Community Contacts, Collaborators & Partners: Names of organizations and individuals who you worked with in the community and/or on campus to make your project a reality? Please include contact information for future reference.**

Since the launch of the Ghana Project in the Fall of 2008, we have collaborated with multiple student groups on campus that also concentrate on bringing awareness to the issues in Africa and created a committee to ensure that we are working together and sharing the resources on campus. The amount of people that have been reached through the project is simply amazing. We have a growing facebook group of over 720 people, a mailing list of over 100 people, and we have a partnership with students in the Brockport, Robert Wesleyan, Cornell, Buffalo, and Syracuse campus.

In November ‘08, the Project held its first major event, an educational model about Ghana. Speakers included Dr. Osman Alawiye, Dean of School of Education, Dr. Dennis Showers. Guests from SUNY Brockport shared their stories. March ‘09 was the first ever Ghana Gala. The event included a traditional Ghanaian dinner, dancing, modeling Ghanaian clothing, and other activities. Speakers included Dr. Osman Alawiye,

Prof. Wes Kennison, (International Studies) and Prof. Owusu-Dapaa, from Nkrumah Technical University, Ghana. Special thanks to Wyoming Hall for hosing the event, especially Area Coordinator of Wyoming and Putnam hall, Yolany Gonell.

The Ghana project has had individuals that has help sponsor the project such as Tom Matthews, Leadership Education, Development & Training and David Parfitt, Teaching & Learning Center, Dean of the School of Education, Yolany Gonell, Mark Scott Director of Campus A Services, and all other supporters including GOLD, Res-Life, CAS, CEC, YCC, and ESEA.

On April 21, 2009 The Ghana Project conducted a dance performance in the Union Ballroom Stage introduced by President Christopher Dahl. Our dance was a three and half minute long dance - a combination of African hip hop music. The lyrics of the song are African-French, and the moves will be exciting and energetic. It will be a celebration of African culture. We will be wearing traditional Ghanaian clothing. The members of the team include: Abigail Boateng, Dalia Calix, Deon Edwards, Heather Ford, Kerisha Hawthorne, Theona Hudson, Rejoyce Owusu, Jesse Parent, and Angela Snook

**Timeline: What were the different steps to completing your project?**

The heart and soul of The Ghana Project is sharing Ghanaian culture. From teaching group members the Ghanaian handshake to working on major culture events, the Project seeks to welcome others into warm Ghanaian culture. The project was introduce to the community through educational programming and educating students about our

cause and getting students excited about joining the cause.

Last semester the Ghana Project held an informational program in Wayne Hall and we were happy to have Wes Kennison from the International Studies department, Dr. Alawiye, Dean of Education, and study abroad student Ben De'George present on their experience in Ghana. Members of the Brockport Ghana Project were in attendance along with various community members that had an interest in Ghana.

Recently, the Ghana Project sponsored a Ghana Gala in Wyoming Hall. At the Gala we had Wes Kennison, present on the customs of the Ghanaian people during his visit to Ghana. Dr. Alawiye, and Professor Owusu-Dappa, who teaches in the Faculty of Law at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana were both in attendance and shared some words with the audience about the issues in Ghana. Overall, the Ghana Gala was a fantastic success, with traditional Ghanaian food, music, dancing, clothing, modeling and other decorative display of information of various tribes in Africa. To say the least, the event had full capacity attendance, and many people spoke highly about it. We were even featured in the student newspaper, *The Lamron*.

**Challenges: What challenges did you foresee in executing your project? What challenges did you actually encounter?**

We have encountered many challenges dealing with the direction of the project and combining all three Gold mentors' leadership styles. We also had to deal with working with the college policies, especially in

regards to fundraising at the college. We had to be aware of the student association rules and be careful not to break these since we were not a campus organization. One of the major problems we encounter was the miscommunication between other organizations on campus. We have learned that through a large civic engagement project such as this managing every detail aspect of the project is very important. We had to inform all college officials on campus so the communication was smooth because everyone on campus is concern with activities taking place on campus. Another important thing we learn was learning how to delegate responsibilities to influences students to take upon themselves roles they thought they could have done.

**Benefits: What are the short-term and long-term societal benefits to your project?**

The long term benefit of the project is to establish a partnership in Ghana and to contribute a school building in Ghana. We also hope students would be citizen diplomats across the world and gain more experiences through civic engagement project such as the Ghana Project. We also want to continue to encourage students to try something new and challenge their leadership skill on a different level. We hope that through the GOLD program we could bring enough awareness of the issues in Ghana to build a school in Ghana and have students from Geneseo continue to conduct their internship there.

**Future: How could this project be replicated in the future?**

In the future, we hope this project will be an ongoing service project that students

will be passionate about and continue to expand their knowledge through other countries. This project hopefully will help Geneseo network with the global world and connect students with various internship opportunities. This project can be replicated in many different ways through forming connections with other countries and working towards the goal of doing that nation a service.