



Eastern Connecticut State University

NEWS

March 12, 2008

For Immediate Release

Contact: Dwight Bachman

Public Relations Officer

(860) 465-5114 or Bachman@easternct.edu

Edward Osborn, Director of University Relations

(860) 465-5043 or Osborne@easternct.edu

Timothy Talley, Public Relations Assistant

(860) 465-0686 or talleyt@stu.easternct.edu

Eastern to Host Focus Group Meetings on Artists with Disabilities

Willimantic, Conn. – On March 18, Eastern Connecticut State University will host the first of two focus group meetings designed to invite input from Connecticut organizations and artists with disabilities in preparation for a statewide forum on the topic in November. The meeting will be held from 9:30 a.m. - noon in the Betty R. Tipton Room and Room 219 of the Student Center.

The meeting will be composed of approximately 40 people, including 10 members of a statewide advisory committee on disabilities; the Conveners' representatives, and invitees from the arts and disabilities communities in the region. The focus group will use videoconferencing capability, making it possible for attendees from Southern Connecticut State University to participate. Eastern's Executive Vice President Michael Pernal will open the meeting with a welcoming address.

“The arts, including all creative endeavors, have the enormous and powerful ability to uplift and define who we are as individuals, and as a culture,” said Terri Lennox, assistant professor of digital art and design at Eastern. “Arts heal; arts connect us all; arts even extend our lives.”

Since 2001, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has worked with the National Arts and Disability Center (NADC) in Los Angeles to award grants to state arts

agencies for statewide forums. The long-term goal is to establish arts and disability networks and partnerships across the nation so that ongoing programs and services can be provided for artists with disabilities. To date, 20 states have participated.

“Over the next few months, Connecticut artists with disabilities, people with disabilities who aspire to careers in the arts, and members of Connecticut’s arts community will be invited to share stories of achievements and to identify barriers that they have experienced,” said Lennox. “We will learn from their example, the true fortitude of the human spirit. We will be both humbled and amazed by the efforts demonstrated by individuals in their quest to be active, productive citizens of Connecticut. Disability touches us all at some time in our lives — ourselves, our family, and our friends. If we can shift our cultural awareness to think inclusively in our communities, we will all benefit.”

On April 1, from 9:30 a.m. - noon, The America School for the Deaf will host the second focus group on its campus in West Hartford, CT.

For information about the focus groups, contact Judith Mortensen, VSA arts program manager, Young Audiences of Connecticut at (203) 230-8101 x15, or email jmortensen@yaconn.org or call Susan Docker, senior program associate, Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, at (860) 256-2721; email susan.docker@ct.gov .

###

Eastern Connecticut State University is part of the Connecticut State University (CSU) system and is the state's public liberal arts university. ECSU serves more than 5,000 students each year on its Willimantic campus.

It is the policy of Eastern Connecticut State University to ensure equal access to its events. If you are an individual with a disability and will need accommodations for this event, please contact the Office of University Relations at (860) 465-5735.

#