

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Office of Communications and Public Affairs

Press Release

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**Ramapo College Celebrates Constitution Day with Series of Events through December
Including Visit by Executive Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference
October 9**

(MAHWAH, NJ) – Ramapo College is celebrating Constitution Day on September 17 with the launch of a series of observations and discussions of critically important issue facing Americans today, from marriage equality to racial justice, the Voting Rights Act and including a visit from an alumnus and the Executive Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Constitution Day (or Citizenship Day) is an American federal holiday that recognizes the ratification of the United States Constitution. It is observed on September 17, the day the U.S. Constitutional Convention signed the Constitution in 1787. The College's celebration is a joint effort led by The Civic and Community Engagement Center and supported by a collection of units across campus.

On Constitution Day, Tuesday, September 17, join students at the Arch from noon to 2 p.m. to sign a giant version of the United States Constitution. Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers, will be in attendance and deliver a special address. The Civic and Community Engagement Center and the Law and Society Faculty Convening Group will officially kick off the Fall 2013 Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) Discussion Series. Participants will discuss the series, why it is important and how you can participate in upcoming events scheduled through December. Ramapo will also launch its own Turbo Vote website where students, faculty and staff can easily register to vote, apply for vote-by-mail, and sign up for text and/or e-mail information regarding upcoming elections and candidates.

On Wednesday, October 9 join Ramapo College alumnus **Damien A. Conners '06**, the Executive Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the venerable civil rights organization founded by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and others, as he discusses the events leading up to the recent 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington. Conners, along with others, organized the Anniversary March and will also discuss the recent Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court. The event is open to Ramapo College students and invited guests. Media coverage is welcome. The program begins at 11:15 a.m. in the Berrie Center's Sharp Theater.

The **SCOTUS Discussion Series** begins **Thursday, October 10** with an appearance by pioneers for marriage equality in New Jersey, Cindy Meneghin and Maureen Kilian, who will share their

story about their decade-long battle. Professor Jillian Weiss will present the history leading up to the Defense of Marriage Act, *Windsor v. U.S.*; and California Ballot Measure (Proposition 8): *Hollingsworth v. Perry* and lead a discussion about the implications of the Supreme Court's deeming DOMA unconstitutional. Friends Hall (SC-219), 1 to 2 p.m.

On **Monday, November 4** come out and discuss the **Voting Rights Act**, *Shelby County Alabama v. Holder*; *Nix v. Holder* and the "preclearance" provisions of the Voting Rights act that may have a significant impact especially on minority voters on Election Day November 5. The Voting Rights Act has many problems that both Congress and SCOTUS will continue to wrestle with in the years ahead. The conversation will be led by Professor Sanghamitra Padhy. Friends Hall (SC-219), 1 to 2 p.m.

On Thursday, December 5 the topic is **Affirmative Action** and *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*. While many anticipated a 5-4 conservative decision, the SCOTUS sent this issue back down to a lower court. While this case has a significant impact on colleges and universities, not much changed in terms of practice. What does this mean moving forward? Professor Mihaela Serban will continue this conversation initiated last spring by the Diversity Action Committee and American Democracy Project. Friends Hall (SC-219), 1 to 2 p.m.

For more information about Constitution Day events, contact Brandon Martin at the Civic and Community Engagement Center at 201-684-7223. Members of the media interested in attending any of the events may contact Anna Farneski at 201-684-6844.

Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as sixth in the Best Regional Universities North category for public institutions, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes mistaken for a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of approximately 6,008 students and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers six graduate programs as well as articulated programs with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.