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## Fearless Friday: Erin O'Connor

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## Fearless Friday: Erin O'Connor

### **Abstract**

For fearless Friday, Surge would like to commend Silent Leader Award recipient, Erin O'Connor. The Silent Leader Award was given this year in memory of [Emily Silverstein '11](#), a passionate member of the campus community and a fervent advocate for peace at yesterday's Fall Convocation. [*excerpt*]

### **Keywords**

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Silent Leader Award, service, social change

### **Disciplines**

Civic and Community Engagement | Community-Based Learning | Community-Based Research | Educational Sociology | Race and Ethnicity | Service Learning | Social Work

### **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

# SURGE

[ VERB ] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

## FEARLESS FRIDAY: ERIN O'CONNOR

November 14, 2014

For fearless Friday, Surge would like to commend Silent Leader Award recipient, Erin O'Connor. The Silent Leader Award was given this year in memory of [Emily Silverstein '11](#), a passionate member of the campus community and a fervent advocate for peace at yesterday's Fall Convocation.

The Silent Leader Award is presented annually to a student who demonstrates exceptional and sustained dedication to enacting change through service. The recipient of this award does not accept the world as it stands, but rather actively challenges ideological, societal constructions in an incessant pursuit of equity. In doing so, this person's work is broad reaching and engages the campus, the community, and often the world at large. This year's recipient overwhelmingly satisfied all these selection criteria.



A member of the Class of 2015, Erin O'Connor is described as an individual who dedicates herself to enacting social change through education, and she received multiple nominations from peers and professors alike for the award. In their recommendations, they described her as a conscientious, passionate student who has worked tirelessly to serve and learn about others. One even asserted that, "we need to clone her as soon as possible!"

Throughout her years on campus, Erin has demonstrated her leadership abilities several times over as a Diversity Peer Educator, a Heston Intern, a CPS program coordinator, a leader of an upcoming immersion trip, and as an executive board member of several campus organizations. Erin's continued work at the Center for Public Service reflects her sustained commitment to social justice in both the local and global communities. She has been a program coordinator for several years and worked in migrant education as a Heston Intern this summer. As both a summer 2014 Heston Intern working with the Migrant Education program and as the program coordinator for Head Start, she has worked with community members to

ensure that all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, receive a quality education. Such work exemplifies her efforts to build bridges between our campus and the surrounding community.

She is a regular participant in eRace discussions. She is also the student leader for the immersion trip to Morocco in January. Prior to her work with CPS, she worked in a program that provided meals to children in her hometown. As a PLA, she inspires other students and frequently finds constructive and positive ways to challenge their thinking. She is tireless in her efforts for social change

In addition, Her passion for the pursuit of social justice through education is of such strength that she even developed her own major, titled Diversity and Development in Education, which has led her to Trinidad, Denmark, and back. Her studies in Denmark reflected her commitment to understanding and respecting diverse perspectives. In each setting, her coursework focused on diversity in, and access to, education, and her knowledge of such global issues will undoubtedly serve her well as she pursues a career in school counseling.

In her four years here she has worked tirelessly, and often without acclaim of any kind, to educate herself about the lives of people in our larger community as she dedicates herself to pursuing a career in school counseling—a career path she wants to follow precisely because it will enable her to use her experience to serve others. Along the way she has volunteered in various capacities in and around Gettysburg, always with an eye toward promoting equity and social justice one step at a time. Her persistence, good humor, sensitivity to the needs of others, and her service ethic is admired by both professors and students. She is a genuine role model for other students and richly deserves to be recognized for the work she's done.

In the midst of all this, Erin also found the time to pursue her passion for music through participation in college choir and wind symphony. She is a well-rounded, compassionate student who thinks, and acts, locally and globally. Erin is Gettysburg Great.

In addition, Erin was presented a financial award to carry forward Emily's dream of a more just and peaceful world. Funding for the financial award was raised by Emily's friends and family to honor her life and commitment to enacting meaningful change. This award will enable Erin to continue to act on, and to pursue further education about critical social justice issues.

Congratulations on being presented this year's Silent Leader Award Erin O'Connor!