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First Lady Michelle Obama and Salutatorian Orubba Almansouri, a SEEK student, provided remarks at the City College of New York Commencement ceremony. See page 24 to learn more.
On behalf of the City University of New York (CUNY) Office of Special Programs (OSP) and the CUNY SEEK and College Discovery Community, I am honored to present this Annual Report for academic year 2015–2016. This year was special, in that it marked a milestone in the history of the Percy Ellis Sutton Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge. The name is a mouthful, but is a fitting moniker for a program that has meant so much to so many. In 2016, SEEK celebrated its 50th birthday, thus joining College Discovery which reached the same landmark in 2014.

Since the 60s, other programs that target low income students have emerged and increased the support provided to a variety of subpopulations, some first generation college goers, some with STEM aspirations, others with military, foster care, or disabilities backgrounds. Only SEEK/CD and other state funded opportunity programs like EOP, HEOP, the EOF in New Jersey, and ACT101 in Pennsylvania require the second criteria of academic inadmissibility or low academic achievement in high school. Thus the challenge that SEEK and College Discovery face goes beyond closing the income gap and includes closing the academic performance gap that existed at admissions for each student entering our programs. It's a mission and a challenge that we embrace.

Our customary year-end review is a time for reflection. Typically, it's a time filled with pride as we celebrate the achievements of our students and professional staff. Sometimes it's tinged with disappointment on those occasions when our outcomes don't meet our targets. However, one constant is the excitement and anticipation we experience as we set new goals and plan evidence-based student support initiatives for the coming year.

Since inception, an abiding characteristic of SEEK and College Discovery has been our commitment to improving on our successes and finding better ways to serve our students. It is that focus on supporting students that engendered pre-freshman summer boot camps, learning communities, and freshman seminars, programs that are now standard fare in colleges across the nation. On these pages you find descriptions of newer activities like: Family and Friends Day, Civic Scholars, Chi Alpha Epsilon, the Student Leadership Academy, and Finish in Two. Intrigued? Read on!

As you read these pages recounting highlights from 2015–2016 at our 17 CUNY SEEK and College Discovery programs, I hope you will become inspired, encouraged, and come to believe that the future of our city and state is in good hands. Most importantly, I hope that you commit to doing what you can to expand higher education opportunity to all who seek it. Never has the need been greater!

Warmly,

Cheryl N. Williams
University Associate Dean of Special Programs

CUNY Office of Special Programs

Cheryl Williams, University Associate Dean of Special Programs
Mavis Hall, Office of Special Programs Director
Starla Braswell, Project Director
Akilah Bryan, Program Assistant
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Phil Gordon, Research and Assessment Associate
Frances Kingston, Program Associate for Financial Affairs
Shirley de Peña, Youth Matter Program Director
Arlenis Perez, Program Assistant
SEEK and College Discovery History

According to its mission, the City University of New York (CUNY) should “…continue to maintain and expand its commitment to academic excellence and to the provision of equal access and opportunity for students, faculty, and staff from all ethnic and racial groups and from both sexes. The City University is of vital importance as a vehicle for upward mobility of the disadvantaged in the City of New York.”

If CUNY is the vehicle of upward mobility, the Percy Ellis Sutton Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) and the College Discovery (CD) programs are its engine. Both programs resulted from the fight for Civil Rights in the 1960s. CD was established by the Board of Higher Education in 1964 to demonstrate that students who had been excluded from the University in the past could thrive in college if they received the proper support.

In 1965, the precursor to SEEK was born as the Pre-Baccalaureate program at the City College of New York. The following year, a coalition of social activists and progressive politicians lobbied New York State to establish the program across the CUNY senior colleges. The SEEK program would provide access to CUNY for lower-income students, then largely African American and Puerto Rican, who graduated from high schools that had not prepared them for the rigors of a four-year college. SEEK was signed into law in 1966. In 2010, SEEK was renamed the “Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program” to honor Percy Sutton’s role in signing this groundbreaking program into law.

The creation of the SEEK and CD programs signaled a nationwide sea change for higher education. In response to the needs of the new college student, SEEK and CD pioneered activities like pre-freshman summer programs, freshman seminars, and learning communities that are now considered the gold standard for enabling student success.

SEEK and CD play such a critical role for CUNY, its students, and New York, that they too are included in the CUNY mission. The mission states, “The pioneering efforts of the SEEK and College Discovery programs must not be diminished as a result of greater state financial responsibility.”

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

#### SEEK
- No previous college experience;
- Family income less than 185% of the federal poverty line;
- High school academic profile is lower than what is usually accepted by the college; and,
- New York State resident.

#### COLLEGE DISCOVERY
- No previous college experience;
- Family income less than 185% of the federal poverty line;
- High school average less than 80; and,
- New York City resident.

Over the past 50 years, SEEK and CD have changed the definition of who is “college material.” They have opened the doors to a CUNY education for hundreds of thousands of students who were less likely to attend college because they do not come from a wealthy family or because they did not perform up to their potential in high school. SEEK and CD students demonstrate that your past need not determine your future.

The pioneering efforts of the programs must not be diminished as a result of greater state financial responsibility.
SEEK and College Discovery Supports and Campuses

SEEK and CD do more than enable students to enter college who might not have been able to do so without these programs. Both programs provide students with comprehensive supports that allow them to succeed in college despite the barriers they face. SEEK and CD supports include:

Help paying for college
SEEK and CD students are eligible for additional semesters of New York State Tuition Assistance. Students also receive student activity fee waivers and book stipends each semester.

Extra academic support
Before they matriculate to CUNY, SEEK and CD students participate in rigorous pre-freshman summer programs designed to prepare them for college. Students have access to academic support resources solely for SEEK and CD students once classes begin.

College success counseling
SEEK and CD students have access to professional counselors who are able to help navigate the transition to college, academic requirements, and any personal issues that come between students and their educational goals.

SEEK programs at eleven CUNY senior colleges give students the opportunity to pursue a four-year degree while receiving comprehensive counseling, enhanced academic support, and financial assistance that can make the difference for students pursuing bachelor's degrees. CD provides similar supports for students who matriculate at six of the seven community colleges in the CUNY system.

### CUNY Colleges with SEEK or College Discovery Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEEK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baruch College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brooklyn College</td>
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<tr>
<td>City College of New York (CCNY)</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of Staten Island (CSI)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunter College</td>
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<td>Lehman College</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Jay College of Criminal Justice (John Jay)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medgar Evers College (MEC)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York City College of Technology (NYCCT)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queens College</td>
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<td>York College</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLLEGE DISCOVERY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bronx Community College (BCC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hostos Community College (HCC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kingsborough Community College (KCC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LaGuardia Community College (LGCC)</td>
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<td>Queensborough Community College (QBCC)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Colleges where associates and bachelor’s degrees are offered.

SEEK and CD students have a household income of about $20,000/year on average.
Who are SEEK and College Discovery Students?

Every year, almost 11,000 students across 17 colleges participate in SEEK or CD programs at CUNY. Enrollment varies from campus to campus, from the smallest CD program at Hostos Community College to the largest SEEK program at NYCCT.

SEEK and CD students represent the ethnic and cultural diversity of New York City. SEEK and CD comprise two of the most diverse student programs at the University. Students in these programs speak dozens of languages and their families come from across the globe.

Importantly, SEEK and CD students are among the least affluent in New York. SEEK and CD students come from households that earn significantly less than their non-SEEK/CD peers. According to FAFSA data, SEEK and CD students have a household income of about $20,000/year on average. Non-SEEK/CD student household incomes are closer to $33,000/year on average.
Student Success by the Numbers

SEEK students achieve staggeringly successful outcomes, particularly when you consider that these students would not be able to attend their enrolling college without SEEK. SEEK students consistently have GPAs greater than 2.0 after one semester at similar rates to non-SEEK students. In fall 2014, SEEK freshmen became more likely than non-SEEK to meet this threshold, an impressive milestone. Moreover, SEEK students are more likely to return for their sophomore year than their non-SEEK peers.

CD students’ achievements are equally impressive. CD students regularly outperform their non-CD peers who are pursuing associates degrees. CD students are more likely to return for their second year of college as demonstrated by their one-year retention rates. Importantly, CD students also graduate with associates degrees at higher rates than non-CD students. After they graduate, CD students are also more likely to transfer to a bachelor’s degree program within one year than their non-CD peers.

These successes and this report are a testament to the difference that SEEK and CD programs have made for New York City and State since their inception. We look forward to seeing where our programs and our students will go in the next 50 years.
Did You Know?

- Students who graduate from College Discovery can transfer into a SEEK program at a CUNY senior college.

- CD and SEEK students are eligible to participate in special leadership development activities like the annual Student Leadership Academy (SLA) and the United Leaders of CUNY (ULC), an intercampus student organization.

- CD program alumni include Robert Hill, the former Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh, Gregory Hunt, an attorney and MBA, Milga Morales, the Vice President for Student Affairs at Brooklyn College, and Ndigo Washington, Legislative Director and CUNY Liaison for NYC Councilmember Inez Barron.

- SEEK program alumni include Oscar Hijuelos, the first Latino to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction, Tony-winner Lilias White, labor leader Henry Garrido, and Dr. Oheneba Boachie-Adjei, an orthopedic surgeon who headed the Scoliosis Unit at New York’s Hospital for Special Surgery, and Elias Alcantara, who served under President Obama as Senior Associate Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

I am thankful for the College Discovery Program because of the great resources they provide for incoming students (CD tutoring center, counseling, etc.). The program and its counselors provide the blueprint and confidence for students to succeed throughout their college career.

- VICKY CHAN, Queensborough Community College, June 2016 Graduate, Recipient of College Discovery Outstanding Graduating Scholar Award

Every time I had an issue, whether it was dropping a class or questions regarding school policies, my counselor didn’t care how menial it was, he would be there like a white knight always willing to listen. SEEK has given me the courage and support I need to achieve a brighter future.

- MUHAMMAD QURESHI, NYCCT, Freshman, Computer Information Systems Major

The SEEK Program has helped me in so many ways throughout my college career. As a first generation college student, I was very concerned about how I was going to make it through college when I started as a freshman. It was difficult for me to know what to expect and how to best prepare myself for that great journey. However, the SEEK Program took me by the hand from the moment I started college until the day I graduated.

- FABIENNE MONDELUS, Medgar Evers College, 2016 Graduate

Every time I had an issue, whether it was dropping a class or questions regarding school policies, my counselor didn’t care how menial it was, he would be there like a white knight always willing to listen. SEEK has given me the courage and support I need to achieve a brighter future.

- MUHAMMAD QURESHI, NYCCT, Freshman, Computer Information Systems Major
SEEK Celebrates 50 Years of Student Success

The Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK program celebrated its 50-year anniversary in 2016. For five decades, SEEK has connected talented individuals to CUNY senior colleges that can help them achieve their dreams. In honor of this milestone, spring 2016 marked a series of celebrations of the SEEK program and the lives that it has touched.

The celebration began in February 2016 at the 45th Annual New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus in Albany. The University honored the SEEK program during a luncheon attended by members of the CUNY Board of Trustees, CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken, and CUNY college presidents, in addition to SEEK staff, students, and alumni.

In April 2016, the CUNY Office of Special Programs hosted Sharing What Works: Student Success in an Urban Setting (SWW) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. SWW showcased more than 40 CUNY student support programs that provide access and support to high school graduates who aspire to earn a college degree. Many of the featured programs have continued to build upon the SEEK program’s five decades of innovation to expand opportunities to high-potential students who may need additional support to succeed in college.

SEEK concluded its 50th anniversary celebrations with its SEEK Program Awards Night in May 2016. This event was hosted by City College of New York (CCNY), where the precursor to the SEEK program was first conceived and implemented. As the CCNY jazz ensemble set the tone, hundreds of attendees were greeted by Chancellor Milliken. Tony Award-winning singer and CCNY SEEK alumna, Lillias White, hosted for the evening and sang beautiful renditions of the “Cockeyed Optimist” and “The Power of One.”

Several individuals received acknowledgment for their support of SEEK programs. City College President Lisa Coico presented the Presidential Medal to Henry Garrido, a CCNY SEEK alumnus who now serves as Executive Director of the District Council 37 labor union. Professor Allen B. Ballard, the Honorable David Dinkins, former Mayor of New York City, and Congressman Charles Rangel were honored for their vision and leadership that led to the creation of the SEEK program in 1966.

The ceremony continued with Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson receiving the Julius Edelstein Award for his unrelenting support of SEEK and College Discovery. Judge Carmen Velasquez and Henry Garrido received the Outstanding Alumni Awards for their accomplishments as SEEK alumni. Finally, the Honorable Carl E. Heastie received the SEEK award for his unwavering commitment to Higher Education Opportunity Programs in New York State.
SEEK
Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge
SEEK/CD Performance Highlights
SEEK and CD programs improve the lives of their students in many ways. It may well be impossible to quantify all the ways SEEK and CD encourage good choices, and nurture innate skills that improve the quality of life for young men and women whose formative years were spent in underresourced communities. But, like legendary three-time mayor Ed Koch, educators and counselors need regular feedback to the question, “How are we doin’?” Measurements such as enrollment percentages and retention rates provide at least a broad-brush sense of how these programs are going, and where they might improve. Importantly, SEEK and CD programs are continuously developing new ways to collect, analyze, and use data to improve how they serve their students. Here are a few highlights from the 2015–16 year at various CUNY colleges.

During the 2015–16 academic year, Baruch College celebrated SEEK’s 50th Anniversary, while respectfully observing the retirement of Angela Anselmo. Anselmo, who received her Ph.D. in bilingual developmental psychology from Yeshiva University, is an ordained interfaith minister, and was Director of the SEEK Program at Baruch College in New York City until the end of 2015. In addition to numerous articles in professional journals within the fields of sociology of language and multicultural education, she co-authored On Becoming Nuyoricans (Counterpoints, 2004) with her sister and fellow CUNY faculty member Alma Rubal-Lopez. At the start of the spring 2016 semester, Kristy Perez, Program Director of the Percy E. Sutton Urban Male Leadership Program at Baruch, began also serving as Interim SEEK Director.

In 2014, President Mitch Wallerstein directed Baruch’s enrollment management unit to collaborate with SEEK, and ensure that SEEK’s incoming class contained 90 percent Black and Latino students. SEEK, in collaboration with Enrollment Management, Admissions, the CUNY Welcome Center, and the Office of Financial Aid, has made great progress toward this goal, as shown for the 135 first-year SEEK students for 2015 arranged by ethnicity in the figure opposite.

Throughout the academic year, SEEK met monthly with Baruch’s SEEK Enrollment Management Team to ensure continuation of the increase in the number of underrepresented students in the SEEK program. Communication, outreach, recruitment, and enrollment efforts among the whole team have been more inclusive, collaborative, organized, and data driven.

At Queensborough Community College, the program placed enhanced focus during 2015–16 on freshmen getting through remediation in their first year. Math showed slight gains over non-CD students for the period (39 percent for College Discovery students, 38.9 percent for non-CD students). This represents a modest 4 percentage point
increase over fall 2014 (fall ’14: 35 percent for CD students; fall ’15: 39 percent for non-CD students). This gain can also be attributed to the tracking of students by the counseling staff and the increase in the number of math tutors over the previous year. Writing skills enjoyed the largest gain, with CD students boasting a 14 percentage point increase over non-CD students. The CD program itself demonstrated a strong two-year retention rate of 55 percent, up from 51.5 percent the previous year, and higher than the 46 percent one-year retention rate for non-CD students at Queensborough. The two-year rate clearly shows students are staying with the program once they have completed the first year while remaining in good academic standing.

The Kingsborough Community College (KCC) CD program continues to foster one-year and two-year retention rates and a three-year graduation rate higher than non-CD Kingsborough students and the average of all students in a CD program. The most recent three-year graduation rate was 38.4 percent—12.9 percentage points higher than the rate at which other KCC students graduate (25.5 percent). Part of the program’s success in guiding students toward graduation may be the consistently high average number of credits earned. In 2015, the incoming CD freshmen cohort earned an average of 12.1 credits by the end of the fall semester. This trend persists throughout students’ time in the program, as evidenced by an average of 49.6 credits earned by the end of second year spring semester (2013 cohort). With this rate of forward progress, students are close to the attainment of the 60-credit requirement for graduation by the end of their second year. The Kingsborough program does its best to get students on the fast track to graduation, so that they can continue to strive for a bigger and brighter future.

Not only are KCC CD students earning more credits, they are performing well in their courses. Out of the 120 freshmen who enrolled in fall 2015, 40 percent earned a GPA of 3.0 or higher in their first year, as compared to 37.7 percent of the rest of Kingsborough freshmen.

The program does its best to get students on the fast track to graduation so that they can continue to strive for a bigger and brighter future.
The SEEK program at Lehman College serves about 855 full-time undergraduates, including an average of 225 freshmen each year; 73 percent are Latino. Lehman College’s SEEK program was honored for its achievements in ensuring the success of Latino college students by ¡Excelencia in Education!, a national Latino educational advocacy organization.

At John Jay College, 95 percent of continuing SEEK students are in good academic standing, while 83 percent of SEEK transfer students are in good standing. In comparison, 81 percent of John Jay non-SEEK transfer students are in good academic standing. SEEK students earned 50.2 credits by the end of their second year. The average for the preceding four years was 43.8 credits during this time.

Hostos Community College’s CD program reported increases in the three-year graduation rate, which climbed from 13 percent in 2007 to 22.4 percent in 2011. The three-year graduation rate then jumped another ten percentage points in 2012 to 33.3 percent. A total of 70.7 percent were in good academic standing (meaning a GPA greater than or equal to 2.0), compared to 63.3 percent of non-CD Hostos students.

SEEK has been an enormous help to me since I started at Brooklyn College. Whenever I need help deciding what class I need for my schedule, I can speak to my SEEK counselor for assistance. Whenever I am struggling in a class I make sure to attend SEEK tutoring, which has been very influential on the high grades I have received. SEEK is a very safe and comfortable environment for all students. Lastly, every year when I have to figure out financial issues I speak to Gregory Williams who is my SEEK financial aid advisor; he is a great help.

— BAZZIL KAMARA, Brooklyn College
Graduating Senior, spring 2017, Health and Nutrition Sciences
Brooklyn College's SEEK first-time freshmen have been steadily increasing the number of credits earned by the end of their first semester. The average credits earned increased from 12 credits in 2011 to 15.9 credits in 2015.

Brooklyn College's retention rates for full-time, first-time freshmen and its retention rates for black and Hispanic SEEK students far surpass those of non-SEEK students at Brooklyn College.

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<tr>
<th>BROOKLYN COLLEGE BLACK STUDENT RETENTION RATES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2011 one-year retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEEK 92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NON-SEEK 76%</td>
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<td>Fall 2012 one-year retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEEK 100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NON-SEEK 84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2013 one-year retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEK 90%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Fall 2014 two-year retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEEK 92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NON-SEEK 78%</td>
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Two-year retention rates for black SEEK students show steady/higher rates than non-SEEK students from fall 2011 to fall 2014, culminating with retention rates for non-SEEK students at 78% vs. SEEK students at 92%.

Hispanic SEEK students’ one-year retention rate from fall 2011 to fall 2014 continued to steadily surpass non-SEEK students, culminating with retention rates for non-SEEK students at 77% vs SEEK students at 90%.

Equally impressive, the one-year retention rate of SEEK full-time, first-time freshmen of all ethnicities has, since 2011, been steadily surpassing non-SEEK students as well, culminating in 2014 with retention rates for non-SEEK students at 86% vs SEEK students at 92%.

College of Staten Island (CSI) set a spring 2016 target of 50 degrees awarded to SEEK students. CSI far exceeded this goal, conferring 80 degrees to SEEK students. The degrees awarded were 28 associates degrees, 51 baccalaureate degrees, and one master's degree to a SEEK program alumnus.

CSI awarded 80 degrees to SEEK students in spring 2016

SEEK and CD students demonstrate that your past need not determine your future.
At Medgar Evers College, SEEK students continue to outperform non-SEEK students, averaging 10 percentage points higher one-year retention rates at both the associate and bachelor levels. Student one-year retention showed steady improvement, with associate students retained at a 70 percent rate and bachelor students at an 80 percent rate. Of significant promise is the retention rate of Latino students, who were retained at a rate of 100 percent (bachelor) and 88.9 percent (associate). This trend will be closely monitored, since the program has recognized that over the last five years the Latino student population has significantly increased.

At New York City College of Technology, scheduled and walk-in tutoring increased significantly over the previous academic year. In fall 2015, the NYCCT SEEK Resource Center (SRC) had 3,562 visits, compared to the 3,007 visits in fall 2014—an 18.7 percent increase. In spring 2016 the increase in visits was even larger—2,134 visits versus 1,692 in spring 2015—an increase of 26 percent.

These increases were positively influenced by more rigorous academic requirements implemented during the 2015–16 academic year. For instance, at the beginning of the fall 2015 semester, all remedial and probation students were required to complete ten tutoring sessions (excluding coaching) in remedial math courses, and to complete six online learning modules. This new requirement applied equally to CUNY Math certified students.

However, during academic year 2016–2017, requirements have been modified to include more choices for students’ academic support services. The new service model offers SEEK students a wider array of options that fulfill program participation mandates. One significant change is an increase in the required participation hours from 10 to 12 hours each semester. The outcome of these changes will be assessed to discern the impact on students’ progress.

SEEK has been paramount in my college career, and I wouldn’t have it any other way.

— CHEVON KELLY, NYCCT, Sophomore, Computer Information Systems Major

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**MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE ONE-YEAR SYSTEM RETENTION RATES OF FRESHMEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FALL 2014</th>
<th>SEEK Associates (%)</th>
<th>Non-SEEK Associates (%)</th>
<th>SEEK Bachelors (%)</th>
<th>Non-SEEK Bachelors (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Freshmen</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>64.6</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>100 *</td>
<td>100 *</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>66.7 *</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>100 *</td>
<td>87.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*N of 5 or fewer students

**MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE HISPANIC SEEK STUDENT RETENTION RATE**

100% Bachelor 88.9% Associate

**NYCCT SEEK RESOURCE CENTER VISITS**

increased

26% ♦️

spring 2015 to spring 2016
On-Campus Special Events
On-Campus Special Events

The proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” is so widespread in Africa that variations are found in most African languages—for example, “One hand does not nurse a child” in Swahili. In the industrialized West, the saying is understood to evoke the necessity of community and cooperation. In SEEK and CD programs, the excellence and achievement of the individual student is paramount—yet none of this happens without the vision and ongoing effort that goes on within a complex human infrastructure. And it is as gratifying as it is essential to pause every so often and celebrate successes, while exploring areas in which we can do even better in years to come. Following are a few such commemorative and informative events that took place during the 2015–16 academic year.

On May 11, 2016, Brooklyn College hosted their Percy E. Sutton SEEK Program 50th Anniversary Celebration. Diane Forte, the Brooklyn SEEK Director, worked in coordination with the President’s Office to host a sit-down dinner and program of speakers. Brooklyn College hosted the celebration in a beautifully prepared room in the Student Center where they lauded the successes of SEEK students, staff, and alumni. In addition, the anniversary event celebrated the support of campus-wide staff, legislators, and administrators. Among the 160-plus individuals in attendance were SEEK alumni, staff previously employed by SEEK, and the current SEEK community. The evening was marked by reminiscences, laughter, warm conversation among past colleagues, fellow students, and friends, all while celebrating the success of Brooklyn College’s SEEK students.

John Jay College also commemorated SEEK’s 50th Anniversary with a SEEK Awards night honoring 183 graduating seniors and 200 honor students on May 12, 2016. The nearly 300 attendees included faculty, staff, students, families, and special guests, and followed a “Generations of Success” theme, embracing the program’s history and honoring those who fought to pass SEEK legislation and have carried out its mission over the past 50 years.

Giving up may have been an option for me, but it was an option I avoided because of the support of the SEEK family.

– LADIFATOUN SAMBARE, Medgar Evers College
At Hunter College, the second annual Holiday Potluck provided SEEK participants, faculty, staff, and faculty an opportunity to interact as a community while highlighting the diversity of student heritage and culture. Guests were encouraged to bring their favorite dish, and many students chose to personally prepare a dish that celebrated their culture. Students described their dishes to one another, opening communication about the importance of a diverse community coming together and sharing.

With over 100 attendees, the event had the highest attendance of all Hunter's SEEK workshops and events for the academic year.

The SEEK Program Family and Friends Day at York College provided an opportunity for students to bring their children/younger siblings to campus to share in bonding activities. Embracing Tinto's model of student retention, the program recognizes the importance of family involvement in students' success. Activities included watching movies, playing games, Zumba, arts and crafts, popcorn, and cotton candy. The program also hosted a Dinner With The Director, in which families of all incoming freshmen were invited to campus to have dinner with the SEEK Director. The purpose of this initiative was to build a relationship with SEEK students' support system. Additionally, York hosted SEEK Alumni Night, an effort to maintain a relationship with SEEK program alums. At a special reception, alumni were provided with updates about the SEEK program, and the Office of Career Services provided resources for those seeking employment. Following this event, the SEEK program at York initiated an alumni database that will be invaluable in planning future events and services.

Ever since I joined the SEEK program, I have seen myself improve in my studies due to the talented and committed tutors who have spent countless hours to make sure I understand the material. There is one tutor in particular who is committed to students in and out of the classroom. His name is David Lightcap, and he is passionate about ensuring that SEEK students do well. In my last math course, I got an A—thanks to David encouraging me to push myself.

– VICTOR RAMIREZ, College of Staten Island

My experience as a CD student has truly been a remarkable one. The encouragements that I’ve received while in the program are numerous. They exceed my expectations. As a 38-year-old single mother who hasn’t been in school for a while, to go to college and start a career was nerve-wracking.

Luckily, this program answered every question I had . . . [The tutors] had the patience and the tolerance to deal with me, and they encouraged me not to give up. They believed in me when I felt I couldn’t do it. They pushed me while feeding me all this strength that today I have. To me this is not just a program—it’s a family that I will always look to for my best interests.

– ROSEMARY TAVERAS, Bronx Community College

I have been a Peer Mentor in the SEEK Brooklyn Brothers and Sisters Program of Brooklyn College since February 2016. As a Peer Mentor, I talked to students if they needed any help and provided guidance in terms of college expectations.

I have been a Member of the Islamic Student Organization (ISO) from fall 2015 to the present. I attended events and helped out at bake sales.

I have been a Member of the Hispanic Society since my freshman year in 2012 to present, and I have been in charge of managing social media ever since I joined the club.

– SHAIL MOMIN, Brooklyn College

Senior, Psychology Major, achieved Dean’s List two semesters, earned spring 2016 GPA of 3.51
College of Staten Island (CSI) held a well-attended Career Workshop for SEEK students. Richard Krysztoforski, the Career Center Assistant Director, provided insights regarding the difference between a job and a career, and encouraged students to think in terms of long-term career goals. It is well established that students show greater persistence when they have clear goals in sight and feel that they are working toward concrete aims. For these reasons, the SEEK program at CSI puts high priority on career counseling and development. SEEK at CSI also hosted a public speaking event entitled “How to Conquer Your Public Speaking Jitters and Give an Awesome Speech!” The event addressed the difficulty many students have being comfortable speaking before an audience, whether in a classroom, a club meeting, or some other venue. Tips and strategies for confronting “stage fright” and developing effective presentations can be essential tools for students throughout their educational and career paths.

In May 2016, College Discovery at Kingsborough Community College (KCC) held its 36th Annual Graduation and Academic Achievement Awards Ceremony. During the event, the program recognized its graduates and high achievers (continuing students who maintain a 3.0 or higher GPA). For 2016, KCC was proud to recognize 107 students in total, including graduating students and students on the CD high achievers list. KCC recognized its 2016 Valedictorian, Chanel Pegeron, a CD student who graduated with 3.93 GPA in Fine Arts, and their Salutatorian, Ronald Watson, a CD student who graduated with a 3.90 GPA in Accounting.

Queensborough Community College hosted its annual Meet and Greet session for freshmen, providing incoming students with an opportunity to meet other freshmen and some continuing students who serve as peer mentors or tutors. The event attracted over 60 prospective students to the Academic Support Center, where they were also encouraged to register for tutoring and interact with program staff and other students.

The CD program at LaGuardia Community College received a $13,100 grant award from LaGuardia’s Retention and Graduation Innovation Fund to create the CD Civic Scholars Program. This effort was led by Kyoko Toyoma, a Professor in the Counseling Department. The CD Program also held its annual Honors Night in May to celebrate student achievements. Students who were recognized for their achievements included: Elicienne Lemelle-Corterz, who received the leadership award for her exemplary service and leadership within the College Discovery Program; Rafny DeJesus and Andy Moria, who received the academic persistence award for their hard work and serving as role models for other students; and Jessica Chauca, who received the academic achievement award for earning a perfect 4.0 GPA for 3 consecutive semesters and graduating with an overall cumulative GPA of 3.82. The program also honored one of its most successful graduates, Morgan Kollarus, with the Alumni award.

The SEEK program at Medgar Evers College filled the 2015–16 academic year with many special events designed to commemorate SEEK’s 50th Anniversary.

...this is not just a program—it’s a family.
The year began with the annual SEEK Student Assembly in October, which hosted professionals from the United Nations, NAACP, and John Jay College SEEK Program discussing the topic: “You’ve Got to Live and Learn: Race, Gender and the Road to Success.”

In December, the MEC SEEK program hosted its second annual Student Assembly retrospective. The event featured a vibrant display of student engagement, including posters highlighting student research, community service, internships, and the products of student entrepreneurs. Students also performed dances, songs, and spoken word. Omari Pearson of Operation HOPE (Washington, DC) facilitated a discussion of financial literacy and student responsibility. In recognition of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday in January, the SEEK Director and two students participated in a local community commemorative event for children. Student volunteers read to children and assisted with arts and crafts events.

For Black History Month in February, the program hosted a lively student panel discussion that focused on the topic of diversity and answered the question “Who am I?” in which students discussed their racial, ethnic, and cultural differences and similarities, and how they experience and challenge stereotypes. Finally, in March, the program launched the POWWER!™ series, a celebration of outstanding and powerful women in the community. The inaugural activity was an intimate discussion about women in higher education and featured Brenda Greene, Chair of the Medgar Evers College English Department and Director

I knew the folks in the SEEK Program cared when they openly cried tears of joy when I received my score. Their care and support motivated me.

– LADIFATOUN SAMBARE, Medgar Evers College

SEEK has done more for me than fulfill my academic needs. SEEK has introduced me to a different kind of lifestyle that has made me more equipped for the world and many greater opportunities. SEEK opened up their doors to me, both academically and personally. I have learned to be a good leader; I have also learned independence; and I have learned that it doesn’t matter if you started off weak—because there’s always room to grow and become successful. I would like to thank my school for giving me this opportunity to stand among all of you today and share with you the wonderful things that SEEK, and the College of Staten Island, have done for me.

– DAMELSA HATMILL, College of Staten Island
of the Center for Black Literature. Dr. Greene started her career in higher education as an English faculty member in the SEEK Department during the early 1980s.

Lehman College alumnus and Bronx native Elias Alcantara came in at #10 in the Huffington Post’s “40 Under 40: Latinos in American Politics.” Elias served as Senior Associate Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House under President Obama. Previously, he served as a U.S. Fellow for the Organization of American States, and resided in Santiago, Chile for two years. While in Chile, he completed coursework for a Master of Arts in International Studies at the Universidad de Chile’s Institute of International Studies.

At Lehman, Elias majored in both Political Science and Philosophy. He was elected student government president during his senior year, earned induction into the Golden Key Honor Society, as well as the political science honor society, and became involved with the Herbert H. Lehman College Public Service Leadership Institute as a mentor. He also took part in a study-abroad program through City College, spending a semester at London Metropolitan University.

Carlos Ortiz, a class of 1979 Lehman College SEEK graduate and currently Vice President and General Counsel of Goya Foods, was honored on February 13th in Albany with a Distinguished Alumnus award. The New York State Assembly’s Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus sponsored the event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of CUNY’s SEEK program. “SEEK played an enormous role in my success,” said the 59-year-old Ortiz. “I came from a very poor family, and SEEK provided me with financial aid, counseling, and academic services. It allowed us to grow and develop as students. It’s really an all-around good program. I don’t know where I’d be without SEEK.”

In many ways, I was destined not to attend college. My mother did not complete high school. We were an extremely low income family who contended with bouts of homelessness during my high school career. And I personally am the proud mother of a wonderful three-year-old. But SEEK saw potential where others saw risk ...

– ALYSSA LYONS, Lehman College

The services that the SEEK Program offers allows for a student to be able to flourish and dedicate their time to the pursuit of internship, volunteer opportunities, or simply getting to know the person they have the potential to become. This is all possible through the fountain of information that SEEK provides through counseling.

– JUSMINE SORIANO, Hunter College, spring 2017 expected graduation

I came from a very poor family, and SEEK provided me with financial aid, counseling, and academic services. It allowed us to grow and develop as students. It’s really an all-around good program. I don’t know where I’d be without SEEK.

– CARLOS ORTIZ, Lehman College
Student Accomplishments
Student Accomplishments

Sometimes an individual success story can mean more than statistics or demographics. One of the greatest rewards for SEEK and College Discovery educators and administrators comes from seeing their students blossom into positive, goal-oriented professionals through the academic and co-curricular programming made available through SEEK and CD. Following are a few examples of student successes from across CUNY’s SEEK and College Discovery programs.

**Brooklyn College** noted with pleasure a strong increase in the number of students inducted into the Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) honor society. In spring 2016, Brooklyn College SEEK programs inducted 29 new members into XAE, including 27 students and two college members. The 27 students inducted represent a significant increase in yearly membership compared to the previous three years: In 2015, 12 students were inducted; in 2014, 15 students were inducted; and in 2013, 19 students were inducted.

**YORK COLLEGE SEEK DEAN’S LIST RECIPIENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2016</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of graduating SEEK students at Brooklyn College is also increasing. In summer 2015, 11 students graduated; in fall 2015, 50 students graduated; and in spring 2016, 92 students graduated for a total of 153 graduates.

The SEEK program at **York College** celebrated the academic successes of 55 students in the fall 2015 semester and 42 students in the spring 2016 semester for making the Dean’s List. The program hosted a graduation reception immediately following commencement for 87 SEEK graduates, their families, and supporters.

College Discovery students at **LaGuardia Community College** achieved a 74 percent fall-to-fall system retention rate for the 2014–15 academic year. This figure is particularly encouraging as it is nine percentage points higher than the retention rate for the general college population who entered in fall 2013 (65.1 percent).

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**Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE)** is a national honors society that acknowledges the academic achievements of students who are admitted to colleges and universities through non-traditional criteria, including those of educational opportunity programs like SEEK and College Discovery. Many CUNY colleges host their own chapters of XAE. These chapters promote the accomplishments of SEEK and College Discovery students and others.

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**Brooklyn College SEEK CHI ALPHA EPSILON (XAE) HONOR SOCIETY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>27 XAE</td>
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**BROOKLYN COLLEGE SEEK GRADUATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Summer 2015</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2016</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE)**

Chi Alpha Epsilon is a national honors society that acknowledges the academic achievements of students who are admitted to colleges and universities through non-traditional criteria, including those of educational opportunity programs like SEEK and College Discovery. Many CUNY colleges host their own chapters of XAE. These chapters promote the accomplishments of SEEK and College Discovery students and others.
Exceptional students include Mildred Guzman, who made the Dean’s List for all four semesters she attended LaGuardia Community College. Guzman graduated in spring 2016 with an overall cumulative GPA of 3.615 and she is currently continuing her studies at Medgar Evers College. Another outstanding scholar is Lidia Sabia, who graduated in spring 2016 and is continuing her studies at Stony Brook University. During her three years at LaGuardia, Sabia served as a CD Ambassador, was inducted into the XAE Honor Society, and engaged in advocacy and research as a CD Civic Scholar. Andy Moria also graduated in spring 2016 and, like Sabia, has moved on to Stony Brook. During his time in College Discovery, Moria was a member and treasurer of the CD Club, a member of the Finance Club, a member of the President’s Society, and participated in the Student Leadership Academy. He also made the Dean’s List for several semesters, and was inducted into the XAE Honor Society. Summing up his own time in the program, Moria said, “With the help of College Discovery, I managed to find out who I am and what I want to achieve—and how to get it.”

Another KCC CD student who has shown tremendous growth and accomplishment is Ayomide Gbadamosi, known to friends as “Ayo.” From his early days as a quiet, shy freshman, Gbadamosi blossomed into a confident leader. He was President of the College Discovery Club, an officer of the XAE Club, and a member of the XAE Honor Society. Within the CD program, Gbadamosi was a CD Peer Mentor, and represented the program at the 2016 Sharing What Works Conference. He was on the Dean’s List every academic year. He developed the XAE’s Delta Pi Chapter’s website at KCC in 2015. He provided testimony on the impact the College Discovery program has had on

continued on page 25
Orubba Almansouri, a Yemeni immigrant and SEEK student, presented welcoming remarks as the 2016 Salutatorian at the City College of New York’s 170th Commencement Exercises on June 3rd. Present in the audience of dignitaries was First Lady Michelle Obama, in her final appearance at a college commencement in this role. Both speeches are available on YouTube.

An English Honors student, Almansouri, who majored in both English and history, had an overall GPA of 3.97. She will begin her Master’s in Near Eastern Studies at NYU. Upon completion, she will attend the University of Michigan’s PhD program. Orubba Almansouri’s numerous accolades include the Colin Powell, Mellon Mays, CUNY Graduate Pipeline, and Josh and Judy Weston fellowships.

As a political science student here at Queens College, I am able to question before I reach a conclusion because of the opportunities that SEEK has provided me, through its academic support, counseling services, diversity and the love and care of a faculty and staff that is dedicated and looks out for you not only on your bad days but also your best days.

–CARMINE COULOUTE, Queens College, Sophomore, Political Science Major, SEEK Generation 18 Vice-President, 2016 Queens College Peace Award Winner

I dropped out of high school for three years after my freshman year. The academic world felt too intimidating. I decided to get my GED and apply for college. The GED process is different from other academic settings, so I didn’t realize how overwhelming college life would be. I was out of school for so long that the intimidation of college was even stronger than high school. However, SEEK appointed me an amazing counselor who guides me through every hurdle that I face.

–MUHAMMAD QURESHI, NYCCT, Freshman Computer Information Systems Major
his life to the New York City Council. Gbadamosi is now continuing his studies in website development at SUNY Oswego, where he matriculated in fall 2016.

The College Discovery program at Kingsborough places special emphasis on hard work and determination, and cites Shareen Thomas as an exemplar of these values. Thomas is an Education Studies major, and loves working with children. She plans in the future to improve her community's education and childcare by opening a daycare center in Brooklyn. Thomas is a single mother, and is fully engaged in the KCC campus community. While maintaining full-time student status, she finds time to be President of the Education Club and a member of the National Society for Leadership and Success project. She takes part in the Student Leadership Academy, and remains on the Dean's List. She hopes to serve as a Student Ambassador for the CD program in 2017, and also plans to add Peer Mentoring to her resume, to become a member of XAE Honor Society and Phi Theta Kappa, as well as actively engage in various honors programs.

**College of Staten Island** reports with pride that Mays Jumah, a 2015 SEEK graduate with a BS in biology, completed her Master’s of Science in Biology in spring 2016. Jumah is a former Jeanette K. Watson Fellow, and is one of three CSI SEEK students to earn this award in recent years. Pierre Ovales, another recent SEEK graduate with a bachelor's degree in Modern Languages and History (2012), completed his Master's in Education this June, and also holds a Certificate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

**Borough of Manhattan Community College** offers scholarships to students who achieve a 3.0 GPA, with 12 or more credits who demonstrate willingness to participate in community service. Seven CD students were selected for these scholarships during fall 2015 and spring 2016.

BMCC College Discovery program has recently started a new “Finish in Two!” campaign. Finish in Two! challenges incoming students to finish their associates degree in two years or less. This message is
sent to prospective students, then re-emphasized during Freshmen Year Experience workshops. One CD student who got the message and then some was Jonathan Intrigio, who completed his associates degree in less than two years. Intrigio was given a special award during the CD program’s Graduation and Awards Program for completing his degree in just 1.5 years. He was accepted to John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and has begun his program in the Cadet Corp.

Also notable among CD students is Alexandria Pack, who has successfully completed two full-time semesters at BMCC, while earning a perfect 4.0 GPA. Pack’s achievement is even more impressive because she is also working full-time. Pack is 28, and attending college for the first time. Prior to entering BMCC she spent three years in Guatemala volunteering with an after-school program for youth in an area known for gang violence. In addition to working and maintaining her stellar GPA, Pack volunteers with the organization Women for Afghan Women in Queens, NY. Her goal is to transfer to Hunter College to study Nursing.

At Hostos Community College, 47 freshmen and continuing students were awarded certificates of academic excellence. The rigorous criteria required to receive this award include a GPA of 3.0 and above, no WU’s, W’s, It’s, or F’s, and passing two remedial courses.

Many Baruch College SEEK students are interested in, and know the benefits of, studying/working abroad. For students who are able to afford the expense of studying abroad, this can be a life-changing experience. SEEK works closely with the Baruch study abroad office to offers a workshop where SEEK students share their study
abroad experiences with interested students. Among SEEK students who were able to study abroad, two notable examples are:

Gagandeep Kaur taught English in Ukraine through a program sponsored by the United Nations.

Winnie Lau taught English in Hungary through AISEC (a non-profit that provides volunteer opportunities and internships abroad). She credits this “bold decision,” coupled with her experiences tutoring math in the SEEK program, as being instrumental in helping her find her passion for teaching. As of fall 2016, Winnie is pursuing an M.S. in Math Education.

John Jay College reported happily that 127 SEEK students were Dean’s List recipients for the 2014–15 academic year, and 101 for the fall 2015 semester. Notable recent graduates include:

Monique Clark, Class of 2016, a Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Scholar and recipient of the Carl Williams Service Award and the Prince and Evelyn Whaley Richardson Academic Achievement Scholarship. Clark was accepted into the CUNY Counseling Assistanceship Program, and enrolled in a Master’s program at Brooklyn College in fall 2016.

Fatoumata Ceesay, a John Jay Dean’s List and SEEK student, and a member of the XAE Honor Society, is also a Ronald E. McNair Scholar interested in research on education policies and their impact on juvenile delinquency. Accepted into the Pinkerton Fellowship Initiative, she was placed at the Center for Court Innovation’s Save Our Streets (S.O.S.) South Bronx project, which aims to prevent gun violence by mediating potentially dangerous conflicts. Ceesay plans to pursue an M.A./Ph.D. in Education and Social Policy Analysis.

During the spring 2016 semester, two New York College of Technology counselors and a SEEK Resource Center (SRC) Coordinator created and facilitated a workshop entitled “Exploring Emotions Through Art.” The workshop took place bi-weekly and was developed to help students interpret the raw feelings that often inspire creativity. Participants had the opportunity to create a work of art out of their own deep feelings, and to share their artwork and experiences with fellow workshop members, publish their artwork in SEEK’s literary magazine, SEEK ink, and to share their finished work with the larger SEEK community at the NYCCT SEEK ink Launch Party.

At Medgar Evers College, SEEK students engaged with faculty and participated in conferences to present their research throughout 2015–16. SEEK student Joel Strothers, contributed to a paper on environmental research entitled “Reactions and Catalytic Species in the Pyrolysis of Brown Grease.” Two other students, Ruth Opoku and Greshawna Clement, were accepted into the Research Internship and Science Education (RISE) Program which allows them to be mentored and conduct undergraduate scientific research.
The SEEK Student Association at Medgar Evers College sought to engage in community service by giving back to those less fortunate. After discussing the homelessness epidemic in New York City, the students decided to give back to homeless individuals and families located in Brooklyn. The students chose to provide items necessary for personal hygiene and items most effective in helping to protect others from illness. On March 30, 2016, the SEEK student association hosted a charity bake sale and raised over $700. The funds were used to purchase items for hygiene-care packages that included toothbrush and toothpaste kits, bar soap, hand sanitizer, lip balm, a wash cloth, lotion, anti-bacterial wet wipes, deodorant, Kleenex tissue, and a pair of white unisex socks. On June 6, 2016, students created 100 hygiene-care packages and donated them to the CAMBA Flagstone Family Center, a family homeless shelter located in Brownsville. Students were also involved in the March of Dimes, Lupus, and Breast Cancer events and drives.

Lastly, the program at Medgar Evers wants to especially highlight two students who demonstrated community leadership, both on- and off-campus:

Donnley Castello-Edwards and Shaunakay Morgan co-founded a not-for-profit organization, Exploring Minds Creating Dreams, which focuses on promoting childhood literacy. Their organization partnered with a local elementary school and provided the opportunity for college students to read to kindergartners and to participate in arts and crafts activities. The organization fundraised and planned a small 2016 summer program in Guyana, Castello-Edwards’ home country.

Castello-Edwards also participated in the prestigious CUNY Caucus Scholars Program, which affords a select group of CUNY students to intern with a New York State Assembly legislator. She interned with Assemblywoman Diana Richardson of the 43rd District in Brooklyn.

The SEEK Program at Hunter College is what allowed me to be successful in college. The program provides community, support, guidance, academic resources, and leadership opportunities. As a SEEK student, I never felt alone or felt like I was lost in a new phase of my life. The counselors are always open to answering questions and concerns. There have been moments when I’ve thought of leaving college, but I never dropped out because I had the support of SEEK staff and students. I spend more of my time with the people I know in college than my own family, and so their familiar faces made Hunter College a second home.

– JUSMINE SORIANO, Hunter College, spring 2017 expected graduation

As a student, information is the most essential element to have. Being a SEEK student provided me with that information, which allowed me to better navigate my time in college. With the resources allotted to me, I was able to avoid certain stresses other students end up experiencing.

The SEEK/CD Program allows students to be better prepared for their future. They provide a helpful amount of tools that enlighten us and motivate us to achieve great things.

– JABARI BERNARD, Hunter College, spring 2016 graduate

I often utilized the SEEK Pantry, which is open to all SEEK students in need of food. There were times when I had no food at all, and the food pantry was there for me. I also met with the SEEK Counseling Team at least once per week to ensure that I continued on the right path, and to take advantage of all the resources available to me. Simply put, SEEK kept me from giving up . . . Thanks to CSI, I look forward to teaching and looking beyond.

– PIERRE OVALLES, College of Staten Island
Faculty and Staff Accomplishments

SEEK and College Discovery are focused on providing students with access and opportunities to complete a college degree. However, the programs rely on dedicated staff and faculty to support their students. SEEK and College Discovery teams regularly go above and beyond the call of duty to create transformative experiences for students. Part of the commitment of SEEK and College Discovery professionals to students is demonstrated through their dedication to their own professional development. Here are a few of the awards and achievements that SEEK and College Discovery staff and faculty earned in the 2015–16 academic year at CUNY.

During Brooklyn College’s SEEK 50th Anniversary Celebration, William Herrera was presented the SEEK Counselor Award by SEEK Director Diane Forte. Herrera earned this recognition in honor of the thousands of students he counseled during his 47 years of service in the SEEK program. In his own college years, Herrera earned two Master’s degrees, one in Secondary Education and one in Counseling. Karen L. Gould, President of Brooklyn College, provided remarks commending the success of the SEEK program, staff, students, and alumni during the Celebration.

Annette Hernandez, SEEK Director at Lehman College, was appointed to the Lehman College Enrollment Management (EM) Division Committee on Assessment in preparation for Middle States Evaluation of EM’s 14 offices, including Admissions, SEEK, Freshman Year Initiative, and others. Hernandez was also appointed to the Lehman Advisory Board to develop a new advisement model for the college. Hernandez serves as Chair of the Council of SEEK/CD Directors, and was a member of the CUNY OSP 50th Anniversary Planning Committee.

Pedro Luna was appointed as the new Coordinator for SEEK Advisement and as a Counselor at Lehman College. He was also appointed to the Lehman Advisement Model Committee, tasked with developing a new advisement model for the college. Luna was co-presenter at the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Conference in spring 2016. He presented on “Identifying and Developing Strategic Learners to Improve Academic Performance and Retention of Students Enrolled in an Educational Opportunity Program.” Luna is also the founder of C.A.F.E.: Counseling and Advising Forum for Excellence, and started the Mental Health certificate program at Lehman.

The entire SEEK team at Medgar Evers, under the new leadership of Interim Director Sherrill-Ann Mason, is to be commended for keeping the program afloat during the leadership transition and the loss of key staff members. It was particularly important for the newly appointed team to work together as a well-oiled machine, because celebrating the SEEK 50th Anniversary was of paramount importance. All program staff, including counselors and college assistants, worked to ensure that anniversary activities were well organized and executed.

Alicia Cesar, Tutor Coordinator at York College, attended the Region II National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) conference. Following her attendance, Cesar started creating alternative methods for delivery of academic support for the fall semester. Tracey Ellis serves as the voice of the SEEK Program in the York College senate. She also advocates for SEEK students.

My first counselor, Dr. Siu-Ping Ma, was a model of success for Chinese Americans. She was an inspiration for me and other Chinese students. My English professor Dr. Cicely Rodway, whom I admire, became my mentor. I am thankful to the SEEK Program for helping me to understand that with passion and hard work dreams can come true.

– YE LI, Queens College,
2016 Graduate, History Major, accepted into St. Johns University for MA in History)
as a representative of the curriculum committee. Robin Mayers-Anselm advocates for SEEK students as a member of the Committee on Academic Standards. Mayers-Anselm additionally serves as a liaison on York College mental health committee.

**JOHN JAY SEEK 2015–16 OUTSTANDING STAFF MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS**

**Monika Son, Counseling Coordinator**

- Assisted in revitalizing student engagement through the creation of SEEK Society, our student club, and efforts including co-presenting with SEEK students at the Chi Alpha Epsilon National Conference helped to increase membership in this honor society
- Served as a member and John Jay representative from SEEK Counseling on the Central Office, Office of Special Programs Counseling Coordinator Council for SEEK and CD
- Assigned to coordinate the Peer Mentoring Program in the fall of 2014. She planned and created an assessment of what SEEK students need the most in their freshman year and created a unique group of SEEK student leaders that were trained in student engagement

**Chevy Alford**

- Restructured 501(C)3 documents for the XAE Honor Society
- Supported the induction of more than 75 chapters throughout the nation (approximately 900 new members and upgrades)
- Presented a lecture on SEEK History for Medgar Evers incoming students

**Mark Francis, Academic Support Manager**

- Coordinated the academic component of the Summer Academy
- Coordinated SEEKFest
- Served on the Learning Centers Directors Committee
- Served on the search committee for a counseling position
- Served as Master of Ceremony at SEEK Awards
- Served on the Academic Support Coordinators Council

The SEEK program at Baruch College made special mention of two especially active staff members. Betty DuVerger provides academic and personal counseling and teaches freshman seminar classes. She also coordinates the peer mentoring program and is involved with the Academic Survival Program for students who are on academic probation. She teaches a two-credit course in leadership, serves on the Office of Special Programs (OSP) Student Leadership Academy committee and is a client facilitator for *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and College Students*. Recently DuVerger became faculty advisor to the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA), an award-winning student organization, and chair of the SEEK Scholarship and Award Committee. DuVerger has presented at local and regional conferences on the topics of academic probation and student leadership. She previously served on the OSP Counseling Council and Baruch’s Joint Committee on Academic Standing.

Kristy Clementina Perez serves as Baruch’s Interim SEEK Director. In addition to the responsibility of administering the functions and services vested in the SEEK Program, she is responsible for monitoring all SEEK funds and for advocacy and representation of the SEEK students from admission to graduation. Perez considers herself a social justice educator and actively...

...the programs rely on dedicated staff and faculty to support their students.
works with students in defining their passions and voicing their points of view. She is certified in Reuven Bar-On Emotional Intelligence EQ-I (Emotional Quotient Inventory).

The table below marks some highlights of the busy 2015–16 academic year these two dedicated educators experienced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BARUCH SEEK 2015–16 OUTSTANDING STAFF MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Betty DuVerger</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Attended NABA’s National Convention spring 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Participated in a “Women of NABA Plenary on Diversity in the Workplace”</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Led SEEK 50th Alumni Committee events and programming</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kristy Perez</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Received the Bernard M. Baruch College Alumni Association Incorporated 2016 Faculty Service Award in spring 2016</td>
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</tbody>
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**City College** SEEK Director Maudette Brownlee received the President’s Award for Outstanding Faculty Service, as well as the CCNY Alumni Association Faculty Service Award. Marie Nazon, a SEEK counselor, served as a panelist on the Parliament of the World’s Religion Conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah. Nazon is a social worker by profession and was one of 13 people awarded a 2010–11 Fulbright research grant to the African Regional Research Program. She spent that year in Dakar, Senegal, conducting a research study titled, “Women Helping Women: Understanding the Role of Empowerment in Women Self-Help Groups in Senegal.” During the 2015–16 academic year, Nazon was also Faculty Advisor to the XAE Honor Society, and a Coordinator of the SEEK Day of Service.

Despite personnel changes in the CD program at Kingsborough Community College during the 2015–16 year, the program’s Supplemental Instruction (SI) team continued to offer academic workshops and information sessions that covered a variety of topics including reading, writing, and math exam preparation, MLA research writing, Reading with A Purpose, college study skills, and many others. In the same manner, the SI component increased the number of tutoring contacts, yielding positive student outcomes. Kevin Gayle, KCC’s Counseling Coordinator, worked with the counseling team to create excellent workshops and activities for the CD students. Gayle held monthly meetings with his colleagues to discuss and improve student services, course advisement, and innovations in CD counseling services.

KCC Faculty Advisor Reina Prestia guided two of her students to publish papers in the Antheon Journal of the Arts 2016.

Finally, during the past year the CD Director, Brenda Vargas, has regularly met with other programs and offices on campus to promote College Discovery. She advocated for CD students and staff to gain access to other college resources through the Office of Student Affairs. Vargas has been working closely with KCC’s Admissions and Enrollment Office, Financial Aid Office,
Information Technology Office, Office of Communications and Government Relations, and many others. This collaboration has yielded exceptional opportunities for CD students. Vargas has not only advocated for College Discovery at KCC, but in spring 2016 she brought three CD students to speak at City Hall to advocate on behalf of the College Discovery Program to the New York City Council. Vargas is now working to recruit students for the new CD Student Ambassador Program. CD Student Ambassadors will receive training to help in CD's recruitment of prospective students and on how to become effective advocates for the program.

Leidy Pichardo, Academic Support Coordinator at Bronx Community College (BCC), presented at the CUNY Office of Special Programs Academic Support Coordinators Council on the work done throughout the year with Critical Inquiry and the CD Scholars. She also wrote an article entitled “SEEK/CD Collaboration Yields Higher Critical Thinking,” which was published in Soar Magazine by the CUNY Office of Special Programs. Also at BCC, Cassandra Bellabe partnered with D. Nelson Reynosa from General Counseling in recruiting XAE students to participate in his grant project “Raising Yourself Up,” creating video documentaries for first-generation students.

Miriam Perez-Lai is a SEEK Program Counselor at the College of Staten Island (CSI) who has served the program for over 17 years. Besides her duties as counselor, Perez-Lai plays a critical role as liaison with college areas such as: Center for Career and Professional Development, College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment (COPE), and The Division of Institutional Advancement and External Affairs. In addition, she represents the program in the CSI Petrie Committee and the Faculty/Staff Disciplinary Committee.
In 2016, the SEEK Program honored CSI SEEK Counselor Steven James for Outstanding Contributions to SEEK, BMI and other student success initiatives. James demonstrates a special commitment to assisting students by helping them determine their own educational goals. Having clear goals helps to set students up for success during their college years and beyond. A big proponent of campus involvement, James pioneered the Men of Excellence group at SEEK, as well as encouraging students to participate in internships and apply for scholarships.

As a prominent member of the CSI SEEK team, Counseling Coordinator Fran Fassman has represented SEEK on many occasions across the CSI campus, garnering support for the program by highlighting its impact on students. As a result, this year she was honored as an “Outstanding Administrator, Faculty, or Staff” at the 2016 Student Leadership Awards ceremony, sponsored by the College of Staten Island’s student government. This award is presented each year by Student Government to a member of the CSI campus community who has shown exemplary extracurricular service to the students.

On Friday, February 26th, 2016 at the NYC Parks & Recreation Banquet, the Queens College SEEK program received the following awards:

**QUEENS COLLEGE SEEK 2015–16 OUTSTANDING STAFF MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS**

- Volunteer Group of the Year Award: Issued by the City of New York Parks & Recreation, from Mayor Bill de Blasio and FAICP Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver.
- Recognition by Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.
- Citation by New York State Assembly Member Mike Miller
- Citation by City Council Member Eric A. Ulrich
- Citation for QC SEEK Program by City Council Member Rafael L. Espinal Jr.

Beryl Duncan Wilson has been a member of the BMCC counseling faculty for more than 30 years. She received her license as a New York State Mental Health Counselor in 2006. She also holds an adjunct position with the Social Science Department, where she teaches psychology. Some of Wilson’s college-wide service includes serving as a member of the Vassar Summer Experience. A number of BMCC CD students have been selected for this program over the past several years.

Hostos Community College Counselor Eric Rodriguez acquired his license to practice Social Work in December 2014. Rodriguez is now officially a licensed master social worker (LMSW). He is working in collaboration with other SEEK and College Discovery counselors on a publication entitled “Creating an Environment Conducive to Intern Success.” Rodriguez has presented on two occasions, once at John Jay College, and at a conference for independent (private) schools. At John Jay he served on a panel that focused on professional development for SEEK students and the Black Student Union. At the independent schools conference, the topic was environmental power—understanding students of color in the private school setting.

At LaGuardia Community College (LGCC), Professor Marianne Kaukiainen Russo completed three courses: Language and Literacy in Childhood Education, Personality Evaluation I, and Learning and Instructional Strategies Toward a Graduate Degree. Kyoko Toyama, Counselor, College Discovery Program and Coordinator, Graduate Intern Training Program, attended the American Counseling Association (ACA) conference in Montreal.
SEEK and CD have opened the doors to a CUNY education for hundreds of thousands of students who were less likely to attend college...

I hit a major road bump when I had difficulty exiting my reading remedial course. There were no more courses I could take until I passed that remedial course. I was forced to take some time off from school. It seemed like doors were closing in around me, but I tried to stay positive . . . , I participated in SEEK workshops, I pushed myself because I had struggled ever since high school and I knew giving up was not what I do.

– LADIFATOUN SAMBARE, Medgar Evers College

SEEK provided a window of opportunity for students who thought opportunity precluded them.

– ALYSSA LYONS, Lehman College

As a student leader in the Generation 18 Leadership Cohort, I have learned the importance of advocacy. Listening to my peers, serving as a channel for sharing their needs and concerns, and also sharing the concerns of the program leadership to my peers is a humbling experience. I have learned a lot about negotiation and arriving at a win-win solution.

– CARMINE COULOUTE, Queens College, Sophomore, Political Science Major, SEEK Generation 18 Vice-President, 2016 Queens College Peace Award Winner

I graduated as a SEEK Student in spring 2016, with a major in Psychology and a minor in Public Administration. I plan on pursuing my graduate studies at John Jay with the goal of opening my own nonprofit organization focused on helping teenage parents.

– SHAUNAKAY MORGAN, Medgar Evers College, 2016 Graduate

The CD Program has been very helpful to me. Their staff and tutors gave me the best advice at the moment that I felt lost and frustrated. I remember my second semester when many problems came to me at the same time, which kept me unfocused and my midterm grade was horrible. I was desperate, but my tutors and advisor worked hard with me so at the end I got an excellent grade in all my classes. In addition, I am more than grateful with the CD program because I feel secure.

– ISAIRA ALMONTE, Bronx Community College, Freshman

SEEK helped me prepare for what’s to come in the near future.

– YEIKY RIVERA, Brooklyn College, Dean’s List one semester, earned spring 2016 semester GPA of 3.66, and cumulative GPA of 3.23