Greetings all,

This summer marked a shift for the programs and this nation. The retirement of our University Dean of Special Programs, Cheryl N. Williams, who served in CUNY for 39 years, called for an introspection and self-analysis of our programs, its mission, vision, and its future. Born out of activism, the CUNY Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) and College Discovery (CD) community provide access and opportunity to students who would not otherwise be members of CUNY.

Our experiential learning opportunities continue to also provide students with the occasion to serve as advocates. They represented us well as they sought to address some of the core concerns that affect our scholars and their dreams. SOMOS el Futuro brought together people, including our very own student leaders, to be a part of the legislative conversation that molds the very neighborhoods in which we reside. CUNY SEEK and CD stand together in support of our most vulnerable student, faculty, and staff members.

Anyone seeking support should connect with CUNY’s resources, including Citizenship Now, for information and guidance on immigration issues.

We are living in challenging times in our country and need to remain steadfast in this journey.

— Mavis Hall

SOMOS EL FUTURO 2017
CONFERENCE

CUNY Percy Ellis Sutton Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) students with New York State Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie

To bring forth change, it is pivotal to include in the legislative process those affected by the laws created. SOMOS el Futuro is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that serves as a platform for legislators, scholars, business and labor leaders to address the concerns of the Hispanic community. The biannual conference took place from March 24 to March 26, 2017 at the Empire State Plaza in Albany New York. State representatives, residents, teachers, and hundreds of students gathered to discuss issues pertaining to their communities.

Continued on Page 2
SOMOS EL FUTURO 2017
Conference Experience

SOMOS el Futuro provides the opportunity for both community members and legislators to discuss not only the issues within their communities, but also the actions legislators take to address those issues from a governmental perspective.

The conference began with a career fair for participants to learn from representatives about their organizations and job opportunities. Concurrently, CUNY students attended the Collegiate Summit in the Hart Theatre where Bronx Borough President, Ruben Diaz, moderated a panel event. Panelist included representatives from various sectors including New York State Assembly members, CUNY Queens College President, NYS Design and Construction Commissioner and other legislators. After introductions and empowering speeches, the floor was open for inquiries, giving students the opportunity to ask thought provoking questions and increase the awareness of the issues concerning their communities. Panelists responded with clarification, possible solutions, and methods for moving forward.

Attended by students, teachers, legislators, and New York residents, the SOMOS Hispanos Unidos Rally (pictured below), led by Assemblyman Marcos A. Crespo, a John Jay SEEK alum, brought together many from the conference to advocate for National Unity. Assemblyman Crespo’s message reminded communities throughout the United States that although many may feel divided, we stand united across the country. The gathering, televised on Telemundo, included CUNY City College SEEK student Ariel Obando shedding light on the concerns of the Hispanic community.

As the event continued, CUNY and SUNY students assembled at the Senate Chamber for a model Senate to vote on a variety of bills debated within present-day parliament. One proposal discussed was the Immigration reform bill, The Dream Act. At the New York State Model Senate, students including Bronx Community College CD scholar Jason Santiago, would each rise to present their argument and voted in favor or against the bill.

At the Legislative Forums, students dispersed into several meeting rooms to speak directly to panelists on a variety of City and State subject matters. The forum participants deliberated over topics such as education, immigration, health, equality, and business development. Sessions included Criminal Justice Reform & the Latino Impact, National Immigration Issues, Ending the School to Prison Pipeline, Protecting Healthcare & Safety Net Services, and Addressing Human Trafficking, Suicide & Its Impact on Latinas and more than a dozen other topics. These forums began an open dialog between policymakers and community members who abide by these laws, steps necessary to continue pushing the envelope in bringing about the change underrepresented communities have worked towards for many years.

SEEK Students with NYS Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC)
Acting President, Dr. Guillermo Linares

SEEK & CD Students and OSP staff with John Jay SEEK Alum, Assemblyman Marcos A. Crespo

The SOMOS Hispanos Unidos Rally
The conference took place at John Jay College from March 31 to April 1, 2017 with the attendance of students, teachers, activists, artists, and community members. Maintaining the theme of hip-hop, the conference included a variety of “cyphers*” challenging the sociopolitical arrangement of the relations between institutions, languages, identities, and power.

At the evening plenary, Lehman College SEEK alum, Dr. Christopher Emdin spoke powerfully giving an overarching message deconstructing systems of oppression interwoven in the history of people of color and modern day urban education. Dr. Emdin discussed the residual effects these systems of oppression have on Black communities and how messages from rap music are forms of empowerment and knowledge to pilot through those oppressive forces.

We next heard from Science Genius Performers, featuring E the EMCEE of the Science Genius B.A.T.T.L.E.S. (an initiative that uses hip-hop music and culture to introduce urban youth to the fascinating world of science). E the EMCEE cleverly entwined the beauty of science into a freestyle that could easily resonate with anyone who is a fan of rap. Dr. Emdin’s talk and E the EMCEE’s freestyle were impactful and compelled an audience member who is a freelance artist, Jean Batista, to share a freestyle rap on his experiences and outlook on past and modern society.

* Ciphers are encoded messages disguised through its manner of writing. Cyphers, on the other hand, is a term coined by the hip-hop culture to represent a style of group freestyle rap. Cypher, in this case, describes the sessions with speakers and participants in the individual meeting rooms.
SEEK and CD academic support and tutoring staff are crucial to the learning experience of SEEK and CD scholars. Tutor Talk X, hosted by the Office of Special Programs on March 24, 2016, recognized the importance of providing solutions to the challenges that supporting/tutoring staff face. This bi-annual professional development conference provides the space for staff to discuss current topics related to their work and share best practices across the CUNY campuses.

In attendance were facilitators from 10 CUNY campuses, members of the Tutor Talk Committee, and representatives including Cheryl Williams, University Associate Dean, Mavis Hall, University Director, Leidy Pichardo, Bronx Community College (BCC), Co-Chair Tutoring/ Academic Support Council, Dean Simone Rodriguez-Dorestant, Associate Dean of Pre-College Programs at BCC, David Rosen, Baruch College, Tutor Talk Conference Co-chair and Mark Francis, John Jay, Co-Chair of the Tutoring/ Academic Support Council.

Mark Francis:

“Dr. Emdin shared ideas on how to be more effective in our efforts to assist SEEK students succeed. In particular, Dr. Emdin passionately encouraged tutors to see students not as deficient, instead view them as scholars who need guidance in using their intelligence to successfully navigate the academic environment. Beginning with creating a welcoming environment, tutors must assist in the development of confident and successful learners by actively listening to students in order to find ways to connect academic studies to their lives. The task is difficult, and requires diligence and professionalism on the part of all tutors.”

Kiely Tracy:

“Dr. Emdin demonstrated how, as educators, our highly reactionary -- and misguided -- perceptions of students have a direct correlation to their learning. Students will not be receptive until we discard any assumptions about them first, not after the fact. We all have been broken at one time, and Dr. Emdin rightfully acknowledged the needle of pedagogy is oftentimes puncturing when it should be mending.”

Participants attended several breakout sessions to discuss the challenges tutoring and academic support staff may encounter when teaching students. Session topics included, When Your Student Just Isn’t Getting It, Encountering Challenging Behaviors, and Accommodating Different Abilities.

Dr. Christopher Emdin (SEEK Lehman College graduate) served as the keynote speaker. Dr. Emdin is an associate professor in the department of Mathematics, Science and Technology – Teachers College, Columbia University and bestselling author of the book “For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood… and the Rest of Y’all Too”.

To the right is an excerpt from Mark Francis and a tutor at BCC, Kiely Tracy, on Dr. Emdin’s presentation.
The Associate for Equality & Excellence in Education (AEEE) held their 40th Anniversary & Scholarship Awards Gala at Fordham University on April 21, 2017. AEEE is an organization dedicated to advancing equal educational access for first generation, low income, and disabled students. Their mission is to provide support and training for the Federal TRiO Program employees within the region and other organization with similar goals and purposes. TRiO programs help low income Americans enter and graduate college. The Anniversary & Scholarship Gala celebrated 40 years of providing support, hope, and opportunity to first generation students. The ceremony also acknowledged student AEEE scholarship awardees who have demonstrated exceptional standings in their educational careers.

The evening began with introductory remarks about AEEE’s history and accomplishments. While recognizing the milestones achieved, AEEE bestowed the Advocate of Distinction Medal of Honor upon AEEE honorees who have championed and made remarkable advances to equal educational opportunity programs. Honorees included President of the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE), Maureen Hoyler, COE President Emeritus, Dr. Arnold Mitchem, COE Chair, Michelle A. Danvers Foust, AEEE Founder, Larry Dais, AEEE Former President, Paula J. Martin, Rhode Island College President, Dr. Frank Sanchez, CUNY Associate Dean of Special Programs, Cheryl Williams, and NJ Congressman Donald Payne.

Former Congressman Charles B. Rangel received the AEEE President’s Circle Medal of Honor. Congressman Rangel, a war hero and celebrated founding member of opportunity programs at CUNY, served 23 terms in the House of Representatives. He was a prime contributor to President Obama’s health care reform law. Throughout his career, Congressman Rangel defended veterans’ rights, boosted incomes of millions of working families, established vital foreign policies, propelled billions into revitalizing communities across the country, and persistently advocated for equal rights and opportunity, including higher education opportunity programs like SEEK.

AEEE continues to bring together distinguished individuals into a community that seeks to broaden student access to higher education and assure their success. The CUNY Office of Special Programs congratulates AEEE for 40 years of unprecedented accomplishments – we wish you many more!
The Tri-State Consortium is a network of educators, administrators, counselors and staff who work in the state supported educational opportunity programs in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The mission of the consortium is to improve the access and quality of higher education for students who are economically disadvantaged and academically underprepared. This year’s conference took place from April 22 through April 26, 2017 in New Jersey. The theme was “Redefining Access and Inclusion” and the emerging practices within higher education throughout the tristate region. At the conference, two of the outstanding alumni were Associate Vice President for Student Services and University Registrar at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Michelle Brown-Nevers and CUNY University Associate Dean of Special Programs, Cheryl Williams.

The following is an excerpt from the “Outstanding Alumni” section within the Tristate Consortium Conference Agenda:

Dr. Brown-Nevers joined Penn in 2008 after progressively increasing roles at Columbia University for 15 years. Some of the roles she held in Columbia University included Associate VP for Student Administrative Services, University Registrar, Assistant VP of Student Financial Services, Executive Director of Student Administrative Services for Columbia’s Medical Center and Director of Student Financial Services at Teachers College. She has also held positions in the Office of Financial Aid at CUNY – New York City Technical College, Pratt Institute, Baruch College, and Union Theological Seminary. Dr. Brown-Nevers worked as a consultant with institutions including Morehouse College, Central State University, New York Law School, and Medgar Evers College.

Dr. Brown-Nevers has worked with organizations on the local, state, and national levels. She has supported national organizations with training initiatives and presentations including the U.S Department of Education, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, and the Middle States Association of Collegiate Registrars and Officers of Admission. Dr. Brown-Nevers has served as both Regional Director and Newsletter Publisher of the New York State Organization of Bursars and Business Administrators. She has worked at the local level by leading college financial aid workshops for high school counselors in New York City. Dr. Brown-Nevers holds an Ed. D. and an Ed. M. degree form Teachers College, Columbia University. She also earned a B.B.A degree and an M.S.Ed. degree from Baruch College (CUNY). Additionally, she completed certificate programs at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education and Columbia’s Business School.

Dr. Brown-Nevers also completed the Leadership at Penn program at the University of Pennsylvania. She was able to develop lifetime relationships that have carried her to the present through her experience in the SEEK program. In particular, Dr. Brown-Nevers states, “there were two counselors that made a huge impact in my life; subsequently, one became my neighbor. He served as my mentor through graduate school and as an adult. Another counselor that I had the privilege of interacting with during those years provided enormous support and guidance in my career choices. These relationships were meaningful and filled with change and important decisions. I was able to build on these friendships and form new connections that were extremely helpful in my academic life and workplace.”
Cheryl N. Williams holds a B.A in Political Science from the State University of New York at Albany and an M.S in Education and Reading form Hunter College. She served as the Associate Dean of Special Programs at the City University of New York and as such, she oversaw the Percy E. Sutton SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge) and College Discovery (CD) programs, federal TRIO Programs, and CUNY Single Stop.

In her role as Associate Dean, she focused on establishing standard policies and procedures across SEEK and CD programs, emphasizing evidence based practices using outcomes assessments, fostering collaboration among student support programs, and increasing intercampus opportunities for students.

As a systems administrator, Ms. Williams has spearheaded initiatives that provide support to low income, first generation CUNY students. She oversaw the Dominican Scholarship for low income Dominicans honors students, and she established the annual Student Leadership Academy (SLA) which provides leadership and soft skills training to students in the SEEK/CD Programs. An outgrowth of the SLA is the United Leaders of CUNY (ULC), an inter-campus SEEK/CD student organization whose mission is to increase program students’ career and personal development.

Williams began her career in higher education at Medgar Evers College where she worked for more than twenty years. During her tenure there, Williams held a number of faculty and administration positons, including Executive Assistant to the Dean of Academic Affairs, Grants Office, and ESL Coordinator which took her to Japan where she taught as a founding faculty member of CUNY Hiroshima.

Williams has served on several University Committees that recommended policy on ESL and developmental education. She has also presented at numerous national conferences and was the principle investigator of a College Access Challenge Grant. The project, College Discovery Scholars, is designed to enhance the academic outcomes of Program students. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs where she is a member of the Leadership Academy team.
I attended the CUNY Career Day meeting at WNET on April 7, 2017. The event was rather small consisting of presentations related to the work WNET fulfills. Some of the presentation topics were television broadcasting, radio broadcasting, and documentary films as outlets used to educate the public. WNET’s work encompasses a wide range of media to empower the public through educational programming as well as web-based materials and modules for teacher and student use.

The inclusive group of approximately 20 CUNY students allowed for both presentations and questions regarding career advice. Despite the compactness of the two-hour conference, WNET employees gave valuable insight on the types of skills students should obtain like writing, speaking, video/photo editing, and social media if they are interested in working for public broadcasting. The underlying message of the conference was that students should acquire career essential skills within or outside of college. Also emphasized throughout the conference was that mobility in location and flexibility in career goals are important abilities for someone to have during the start of their career. In addition, students should not limit themselves to one profession as most of the presenters transitioned from various career paths to work at WNET.

Memorable Ideas Shared

- Find a mentor
- Learn how to tell a story
- Don’t be afraid to stand out
- Network because no one succeeds on their own
- Talk to people who have jobs you are interested in
- The Arts and Culture groups/institutions of New York play a dynamic role in public education and the empowerment of consciousness
- Words have power and the meaning changes depending on the community
- Show passion for your interests and your work
- Learn how to use new technology and how to navigate the changing digital landscape
- Don’t define yourself through one role or by one path
- If you want to succeed, you should take chances and follow your instincts

Alexander Huaylinos
WNET Conference Experience
The Student Leadership Academy (SLA) is an initiative designed to strengthen the leadership abilities of SEEK and CD students. Pre and post conferences are held annually to prepare students for the SLA 3-day conference and to reflect on what was learned at previous conferences. Forums also take place to continue advancing students’ leadership qualities through special guests and presentations from diverse fields. This year’s pre-conference took place at the CUNY School of Law on April 28th. In attendance were about 60 students from 17 CUNY campuses who were eager to learn about SLA and what the conference entails.

The pre-conference began with welcoming introductions and greetings from University Director, Mavis Hall and former University Associate Dean of Special Programs, Cheryl Williams. After Dean Williams shared the purpose of the programs, SEEK: Opening Doors for 50 Years video was shown.

Once the video ended, a familiar face arose from the back of the room. Jeffrey McClellan, a Goldman Sachs Recruiter and Baruch SEEK alum who shared his college journey in the SEEK and CD history video, made his way to the front. His presentation, Branding Yourself Optimizing Uniqueness or “B.Y.O.U”, focused on personal branding and its role in one’s life. He spoke about first impressions and its influence on how others perceive you in the long term. It only takes a few milliseconds for someone to obtain a first impression of you and months or years to change that mental image. Jeffrey continued to share best practices on how to project the most candid version of oneself during first impressions and embed positive thoughts when people remember that experience. Minute soft skills like smiling, eye contact, and being genuinely invested in a conversation can go a long way in guiding your brand in the right direction. Mr. McClellan took it a step further and suggested doing light research on individuals before meeting them to gain a better sense of their work and likings. This would make conversation flow smoother, and connecting on common interest easier.

OSP Research Assistant, Ramon Garcia, then facilitated a dialog on privilege and positionality. There are privileges many of us hold in relation to others. Race, ethnicity, gender, and income are amongst the commonly discussed privileges in our society (all extremely powerful to be conscious of), but what about the uncommonly discussed privileges many hold. Abled body, citizenship, age, and body type are amongst some of the privileges many may not be aware they possess. The discussion allowed students to talk through their identity groups and share past experiences.

During the last session, a team from Baruch College’s SEEK program (Jeanne Person Gray, James Bravo, Digno Melo, and Luis Aquino), gave an interactive presentation on time management. Scholars were given the opportunity to list their daily schedules throughout the week and calculate the time they use for each individual activity. That time was then compared to the total amount of hours within a week and used to better understand time management and areas that could be spent more efficiently.
I am a CUNY SEEK student at New York City College of Technology and the Vice Chairman of Student Success at the United Leaders of CUNY (ULC). I attended the Somos el Futuro Conference (SOMOS) on March 24th in Albany, New York. The moment I stepped into the capitol building I was amazed. Aesthetics aside, the positive energy and excitement that radiated throughout the building was unparalleled to anything I've ever felt in my life. We all joined SOMOS for the same reason; we wanted change. SOMOS is the platform for just that.

My personal experience at the Somos Conference is one I will never forget. On the day of the summit, I stood in front of current Bronx Borough President, Ruben Diaz Jr. and the rest of the panelists including my very own representative, Assembly Member Robert J. Rodriguez, to ask a question. I asked if I could balance a personal STEM career with a government career and the panelists assured me that anything was possible. The next step of my journey led me to the host of SOMOS, John Jay SEEK alum, and Assembly Member, Marcos Crespo's rally where I proudly held up the letter ‘O’ and yelled "Somos Estados Unidos! Somos Hispanos Unidos!" Crespo’s rally cry is one that speaks of unity and equal representation, directly translated to mean “We are the United States! We are united Hispanics!” To conclude Day 1 of my trip, Marcos Crespo joined the ULC in a group picture and thanked us for joining him on his mission. I couldn’t believe he was thanking us for participating in a battle that he’s leading. To be acknowledged by a respected and loved Assemblyman was more than I expected to experience at SOMOS.

The following day my CUNY peers split up to visit different forums. I visited the ART FORUM where two of my representatives, Robert J Rodriguez and Sen. José M. Serrano spoke about my hometown of East Harlem (El Barrio) in Manhattan. They shared information about the local and cultural arts and how crucial they are to the growth and development of both the culture and the economy. Hearing these prominent Hispanic men speak about a place near and dear to me inspired a sense of patriotism in me I didn’t know existed. It left me awestruck, seeing Hispanic men, like myself, fighting for their beliefs to come into fruition. Later, my CUNY peers and I were scheduled to meet with the Speaker of the Assembly, Carl Heastie who is responsible for increasing opportunity program funding. Unfortunately, I could not meet with him at the time and my group separated to different sessions. While a group stayed to meet with Speaker Heastie (with much success), I went to a forum to discuss the Puerto Rican Economic Crisis which resonated deeply within me because of my Puerto Rican heritage. After hearing many inspiring panelists I took a stand at the mic myself. I spoke to the panelists, and to Assemblyman Crespo and what started out as a question became a 5-minute monologue of unfiltered venting. With tears in my eyes I finally ask, “spreading knowledge is important, but how can we spread pride and concern for Puerto Rico?” Assemblyman Crespo looks in my eyes and says, “And this is why I do what I do!” I could no longer bottle my emotions, the people in the audience clapped for me, some hugged me, and some gave me their business cards. At that moment I saw some of my ULC peers also cheering for me, and with a futile attempt at stopping my tears, I wipe my face and embraced them.

SOMOS taught me many things. See, I’m a young man from Harlem who grew up knowing I was being limited; knowing that I have to fight that much harder to overcome poverty and an unequal academic system. SOMOS taught me that all things are possible; that I can be a Hispanic scientist and a politician; that I can serve the world through my studies and my community and nation through my spirit. If there is one major lesson to be learned, it is that people, no matter their physique or point of origin, should endeavor to make their dreams a reality and give back to those in need.
My name is Folashade Olatunde and I just finished my first year as a SEEK student at York College. I am very proud of being accepted into the Student Leadership Academy. I remember when I first received an invitation from Maria Jean asking if I would like to be part of a leadership program. I will be honest, at first, I was not sure if I wanted to be a member of the leadership program because I recently began my first year of college and I was still adjusting to the workload. However, there was a part of me saying, “do it.”

So, with some thought, I decided to submit my application and attend my very first conference, which was on April 28th. Attending the pre conference was a great experience. I learned a lot about time management skills and how to avoid procrastination. We even spoke about social justice issues that we are facing within our communities. I also really enjoyed the former SLA students telling their firsthand experience and listening to their stories made me want to be part of the program even more. Being at the conference helped me better understand what SLA entails and why I should be part of the academy. After attending, I waited several weeks with fingers crossed in hopes that I would get in. Finally, I got an acceptance email; my reaction was priceless.

Fast forward, June 14 - June 16 was the Student Leadership Academy trip. Attending the 3 day conference was a great and emotional experience. We had different workshops that focused on leadership skills and all the different aspects that come with it. I personally enjoy all the workshops because I learned something from all of them. The workshop on Undoing Racism done by Ms. Shirley de Peña, CUNY OSP Youth Matter Director, did an amazing job. I felt like the workshop on Undoing Racism was much needed because a lot of us are not aware of the problems or obstacles we are facing. So, it is important that we talk about them and be the change we want to see.

Before coming on the trip I was extremely excited but also very nervous because I didn’t really know anyone. Attending the leadership trip pushed me to step out my comfort zone. A phrase we continuously heard throughout the trip was, “You have to learn to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.” Now I understand what that means. It is okay to be uncomfortable, you can’t grow if you’re never taking risk or stepping out of your comfort zone. One of the moments that stood out the most was when we all stepped into a circle and expressed our experience on the trip thus far. It got emotional; it is something I will never forget. Waterfalls were flowing from our eyes in there, and after it all, I felt like we all understand one another.

Lastly, another moment that really stood out to me was the workshop “$1,000,000 Dream” by Omari Pearson, Market President, Mid Atlantic Operation HOPE, Inc. The workshop was very inspirational. Omari really opened my eyes and made me realize that I too have my own story to tell. I learned that it is important to make goals for yourself, write your goals down, and carry it with you everywhere you go. Omari’s workshop helped me understand the importance of networking and that it’s okay to not know what you would like to major in, but don’t just sit there and wait for it to come to you. Find your way to it instead. Overall, being accepted into SLA and having the opportunity to attend the conference was an amazing experience. Even though I was a bit shy and emotional on the trip, I absolutely took in every experience. I learned a lot about being a leader and what kind of leader I am. I am so honored to have met everyone who came on the trip, the students and staff really touch my heart. I know that we all will be truly successful. Just like Ms. Mavis Hall says, “We are all what…? Scholars and Leaders!” So, let’s be that change.
Elaine Johnson is CCNY’s 2017 Salutatorian and obtained a BA in CCNY’s Psychology Honors Program with a 3.9 GPA. Looking back at her college career, Elaine won a Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, The Colin Powell Program in Leadership and Service award and recognition from the Chi Alpha Epsilon National Honor Society. She has also received recognition from the psychology international honor society, Psi Chi. Elaine will be researching the resilience in youth at the University of Cambridge in England before pursuing a PhD in clinical psychology.

We are very proud of Elaine and wish her the best in her future.
Helping students transition smoothly from high school to college. The five week SEEK Summer Bridge Program prepares incoming freshmen for their academic years to come. Students are enrolled into English, Mathematics, Writing, and Chemistry to help them build a strong academic foundation before the beginning of their fall semester. Participants attend weekly workshops, tutoring, and cultural events to become familiar with the academic workload, campus environment, and resources.

This year’s Hunter College End of Summer Bridge Ceremony was held on Wednesday, August 9. Pamela Clark, Hunter SEEK Director, opened the event with welcoming remarks and an overview of the summer program, its purpose, and acknowledged the wonderful work SEEK faculty and staff do at Hunter. Students were awarded for their academic success and attendance in the program. As they walked forward to accept their awards, some shared their summer experience and how they felt the program helped prepare them for the rigors of the upcoming fall semester. They will be looking forward to their fruitful college years.
I am a 2013 CUNY BMCC CD graduate with an Associate’s in Liberal Arts and a 2016 Hunter College SEEK graduate with a B.A. in Psychology. The focal point of my Psychology degree is in Developmental and Child Psychology with a focus study in Sociology. During my tenure in CUNY, I began my education advocacy career as a founding member and Vice Chair of College Discovery and Legislative Affairs, United Leaders of CUNY (ULC). Throughout my time in this student-led organization, I traveled to Albany to advocate for the implementation of the CUNY Pathways initiative and educational funding. My passion for education advocacy manifested from my experience with student related challenges and the education system’s bureaucracy in the U.S.

I also collaborated with other educators and was quoted in higher education articles. I was a part of the Drop Knowledge Project known as “Free Werds” by the Deputy Director at the Center for Institutional and Social Change, Dr. Elizabeth Bishop. The project is an open source journal of social justice and cultural studies. One of my accomplishments I am proud of is being mentioned by the Professional Staff Congress in CUNY (PSC-CUNY) in a February 2013 article by Peter Hogness, “Tough Going for Pathways: Fall 2013 Implementation May Be Hard to Reach”. After graduating from Hunter College, I went on to self-publish my first book, Education Reimagined: Changes Required in The U.S. Education System from Students Perspectives. The book is available on www.MarufHossainBooks.com, Amazon, and the Barnes & Noble website.

In addition to promoting my book, I am currently doing a pilot study research in autism evaluating a program that caters to kids who learn differently. I hope to further my education and career when I pursue my masters and/or doctorate in the field of developmental and child psychology. In the future, I want to establish a writing academy and contribute my ideas to the education system and the field of developmental and child psychology.
The following is an excerpt from an article on Medium.com written by a Queens College SEEK student, Kaira Batiz

...Late into the dinner, Anastasia, Stephanie, Kellye, Carol, and I spoke about all of us identifying as black women. Anastasia is currently struggling in her workspace as a black woman. I told Anastasia about my interest in film and how afraid I am to get into film because being a woman in a male-dominated society and being black comes with many disadvantages. Although I know I am passionate in law, my creative side is just as beautiful. Anastasia made it clear to me that I am always going to be challenged everywhere I go: “There will always be a challenge,” she emphasized.

For a brief moment, I took all the joy and laughter in. This past week has been hard for me. I think about home more than ever. However, sitting there around amazing women who are fierce and whose love is immense, reminded me of the importance of Hope Dominos. Over the next two months, I am going to be on the road! Sheryl and I plan to visit different community events and share their experiences through storytelling and through the data we collect using surveys. I will be writing about people’s stories; stories that show the struggle to be an immigrant; stories that highlight their achievements and their ability to persevere in the face of adversity. Stories that show that we are all not so different from one another regardless of the titles we give each other. This work is important to me because we all need a little hope in our lives and I know we need each other to make that possible.

To continue reading, visit Kaira Batiz Listening Tour blog.

Yeiky Rivera’s Summer Internships

At the start of the summer, I interned with CUNY Next Steps and aided them in the closing of the program. The internship had an impact on my academic career by widening my views of the real world. It gave me the opportunity to visit Rikers Island and see the lifestyle of the detainees as well as listen to their stories of what led to their imprisonment. This internship taught me about the consequences of the choices we make. Visiting Rikers Island, meeting the detainees, and viewing the living quarters and their recreation area was a great experience that further reinforces my wishes and motivation to pursue a career in higher education.

Midway through the summer, I interned with the CUNY Creative Arts Team (an extension of the CUNY Next Steps program). Working with CUNY Next Steps was more hands-on helping facilitate workshops, handing out and collecting forms, and talking to detainees. On the other hand, the Creative Arts Team is administrative. With the Creative Arts Team, I am working directly with the people that manage the program and make sure that it is functioning properly. To conclude, working with the CUNY Creative Arts Team has also allowed me to continue to develop my Excel skills. It has allowed me to see the ins and outs of an office job. I am proud to say that with my prior knowledge of Excel, ingenuity and my tech savviness, I improved the time efficiency of tasks in the office. This has surprised my boss and has made my presence in the team valuable.
Chairperson: Maria Jean
Maria is a York College SEEK student who is majoring in Political Science as a rising senior. She currently works in her college’s SEEK program as a college assistant. She was a recipient of the Vice Chancellor’s Excellence in Leadership Award and has interned for both Congressman Gregory Meeks and Assemblymember Alicia Hyndman.

Vice Chair of Public Affairs: Eliel Morales
Eliel is a graduate of the Borough of Manhattan Community College and a current New York City College of Technology SEEK student. He is a veteran member of the United Leaders of CUNY being involved for two academic years as the Vice Chair of Public Affairs for 2016-2017 and the Vice Chair of Event Planning for 2015-2016.

Vice Chair of Event Planning: Alexander Huaylinos
Alexander is a City College of New York SEEK student who is majoring in Anthropology as a rising junior. He is an active member of his SEEK community at City College and a member of his SEEK Club.

Vice Chair of CD Affairs: Cristina Rojas
Cristina is a graduate of the Hostos Community College CD program and a recently accepted SEEK student at John Jay College. She is active in her communities and is an advocate of SEEK and CD across CUNY campuses.

Vice Chair of Legislative Affairs: Nouhaila Terrab
Nouhaila is a Hunter College SEEK student majoring in Human Biology. She is a vocal advocate of the United Leaders of CUNY and the Operation Refugee Child organization. She is currently leading the creation of a SEEK Club at Hunter and is a member of the Epsilon Alpha chapter of the Chi Alpha Epsilon.
Vice Chair of Student Success: **Harold Barreto**

Harold is a New York City College of Technology SEEK student. He is a vocal advocate for the opportunity programs at CUNY who has talked to his elected representatives about his success because of his involvement with SEEK. He is currently teaming up with Vice Chair Mohammad Diakite to create a SEEK Club.

Vice Chair of Ethics: **Pharlande Saint Juste Gaspard**

Pharlande is a College of Staten Island SEEK student. A participant of the Emerging Leaders Program tier 2 and CUNY Service Corps, she also is a Peer Coach. Pharlande presented her research on Haitian American Women in Higher Education this past spring. She currently is an usher at the CSI theatre and interns full time at the Jewish Foundation Women Empowerment at Medgar Evers College.

Vice Chair of SEEK Affairs: **Mohammad Diakite**

Mohammad is a New York City College of New York SEEK student involved in the Chi Alpha Epsilon Honor Society, a foundational member of the future SEEK Club, and an advocate for opportunity programs.

Vice Chair of Fiscal Affairs: **Nyad Roufai**

Nyad is a Bronx Community College CD graduate and a current Lehman College student. She is the president of her Chi Alpha Epsilon Honor Society. An active advocate for the SEEK and CD programs, she works hard to raise awareness of opportunity programs in high schools.

Vice Chair of SEEK Affairs: **Cameron Bryan**

Cameron is a Medgar Evers College SEEK student. He has completed a semester as a Democracy Coach for the Generation Citizen not for profit organization. He is now their first chapter director for Medgar Evers. He is taking part in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) in collaboration with Interfaith Medical Center.
### Upcoming Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 06</td>
<td>12th Annual CUNY Black Male Initiative Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 12</td>
<td>College Access Consortium of New York (CACNY) General Body Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 16</td>
<td>CUNY Board of Trustees Public Hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 20</td>
<td>Student Leadership Academy Post Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 20</td>
<td>United Leaders of CUNY Executive Board Elections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Follow Us

**Contact Us**
Office of Special Programs  
City University of New York  
555 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019  
646-664-8700

**Want To Be Featured?**
Contact the editor, Julio Rodriguez  
Email: Julio.RodriguezGautreaux@cuny.edu

---

**The OSP Team**
Jermaine Wright, Ph.D., Interim University Associate Dean, Special Programs  
Mavis Hall, University Director, Special Programs  
Shawn Best, Associate Director, CUNY Black Male Initiative  
Shirley de Peña, Director, Youth Matter  
Frances Kingston, Program Associate, Financial Affairs  
Starla Braswell, Project Director, College Discovery Scholars  
Akilah Bryan, Program Assistant, Special Programs  
Ramon Garcia, Research Assistant, Special Programs  
Arlenis Perez, Program Assistant, Youth Matter  
Julio Rodriguez, Social Media and Communications Assistant  
Jonathan Lim, United Leaders of CUNY (ULC) Advisor  
Adriana Bertram, Research Analyst, OIRA