Future CUNY Facility on Governors Island
Jointly Announced by Governor and Mayor

The local Canarsee Indians called it Pagganock. In 1637, when the Dutch governor general Wouter van Twiller bought it for two axe heads, a string of beads, and some iron nails, the name was changed to Nooten Eylandt. The British later called it Nutten Island, eventually reserving it for the “benefit and accommodation of His Majesty’s governors.”

Consistent with an announcement on April 1 by Governor George E. Pataki and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, historic Governors Island may also become known as CUNY Island. The Governor and the Mayor informed happy New Yorkers—and even more enthusiastic New York City students and educators—that President George W. Bush had embraced their proposal to turn the 172-acre former military base into a major campus within the City University consortium.

“This is a very big idea,” Chancellor Matthew Goldstein said later at a Governors Island press conference with the Governor and the Mayor on April 2. “We will need a thoughtful, comprehensive academic plan to help realize its potential.”

According to the State and City executives involved—which is a half-mile from Lower Manhattan and a mere three-minute ferry ride from Brooklyn across Buttermilk Channel—will be turned over to the City and State for a nominal sum.

New York City Board of Education and CUNY leaders expressed their delight at the opportunities afforded by the vast array of capital facilities on Governors Island. Many of these officials, several CUNY college presidents, and a contingent of CUNY students were present at the press conference, at which the Governor and Mayor offered a glimpse of a fantasy island for teachers, and especially the teachers of future teachers.

Calling it “a great day for college kids, high school kids, the future of our city,” Pataki told his audience that Governors Island has “the potential to be one of the great campuses anywhere in America. It is an absolutely magnificent facility that has classroom buildings already intact.”

The former military buildings, he added, “have the potential to house thousands of students and hundreds of teachers. Mayor Bloomberg and I are committed to making this one of the flagship entities of the City University.”

Agreeing with that optimism, Bloomberg ventured, “I don’t know of any Ivy League school that has a nicer campus”—a boast underscored by the Island’s rich history as a Revolution-ary War battlefield, its storied Fort Jay and Castle Williams, and its service during the Civil War as a recruiting depot and prison for Confederate captives.

Looking to the future, Bloomberg emphasized how the new campus will “give us the ability to move programs here, to free up space on City University campuses in all five boroughs.”

Noting that CUNY already has 12 campuses with public high schools on them, the Mayor also expressed his hope that a CUNY-Governors Island would nurture even more extensive CUNY-Board of Education collaboration. “This is do-able, this is something affordable, this is something that absolutely needs to be done. It addresses the number one problem we have in this city, which is that not all of our kids are getting the good education everybody wants.”

Pataki agreed. “By moving some CUNY operations here, we will be able to free up space on CUNY campuses across the city, so that we can have those new high schools, new middle schools, new elementary schools.” He indicated that “all education benefits” from the transfer of Governors Island.

Chancellor Goldstein made clear at the conference that planning was already under way. “We have already started the process of thinking of appropriate educators and staff to work with the Governor and the Mayor to develop an academic plan. This is on a very fast track for us, because I want our students and our facility to get here as quickly as possible.”

Calling the Island a “bucolic place to study,” Goldstein observed, “We don’t have anything like this in the CUNY system now.”

The Chancellor expressed hope that Governors Island might see students as early as this summer. “We have a big summer school, and if we can get some of these facilities ready, I would much rather our students come to an idyllic setting like this.”

Pataki also expressed his pleasure that “the buildings have been so well maintained, and they are already facilities totally appropriate for a campus.” These include a mess hall that could become, Pataki said, “a spectacular dining hall,” a “magnificent gymnasium,” and military quarters that can be converted to dorm space “at minimal cost.” The Governor said he also expected the State’s $1 billion budget for upgrading CUNY capital facilities would figure in the transformation.

Appreciation was enthusiastically expressed. Thanking President Bush, the Governor promised, “we’re going to make sure we take this opportunity and do it right.” Applauding “the vision of the education president and the education governor,” Bloomberg also singled out former New York Senator Patrick Moynihan for his early efforts to transfer the Island to public use.

At the press conference, Pataki told of being shown around the island by the Mayor on a stealth visit the week before: “Mike asked me, ‘When you see this, what do you think of?’ We couldn’t help but agree that this was going to be one of the great college campuses in the country.”

Governors Island could become that rarity, a campus of the “Subway University” without a local stop. Still, there is a major subway connection with the island: beginning in 1901, it was enlarged with earth excavated during construction of the 4th Avenue (now Lexington Avenue) subway line; half the island’s acres are subway and Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel landfill.

For more information on Governors Island and plans for its future, log on to the CUNY web site: www.cuny.edu.
Rajen Persaud is the first to admit he was not a very good student in high school. ‘Intelectual embarrassment—that’s like one of the worst things that can happen to you in life. You are sitting in class and the teacher asks a question, then points to you. And you don’t know the answer!’

Persaud’s cluelessness in his Bryant High School classes in Long Island City made him a model ‘D’ student. ‘I failed a ton of classes— that’s why I didn’t want to go on to college. I just didn’t want to fail again.’

He then reminisces about interesting walks he took with his cousin Eric through some of the city’s most blighted neighborhoods in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. “This is what happens when you don’t have an education,” he told Persaud. Then Eric suggested he try coming to his school, Kingsborough Community College.

“So I signed up, did the liberal arts thing, and took a ton of remedial courses.”

With his cousin’s help, Persaud began to do something unheard of: “I just paid attention. I just did what I was supposed to do in high school: paid attention, went to class, did my homework.”

Then the Guyana native, who came to the U.S. at the age of eight, decided to ‘do’ Baruch College, which he found very user-friendly. “It was like going down South to a family reunion. Everybody was ready to help. Baruch really does provide a homey environment. Even if you are from out of town you can connect with someone at CUNY.”

Persaud’s experience inspired him so much that he decided to write a book that would help other students make the most of their college experience. “In about four or five months I had a complete, edited manuscript.”

Making It Through College: Your Passport to the Information Age appeared earlier this year and has already been given out to freshmen at their orientation at Baruch. It’s also been ordered for students at Bronx and Borough of Manhattan Community Colleges.

“Last there be any doubt that the book’s 200 pages and 42 chapters are written from a student perspective, Persaud’s preface begins: America’s youth are adrift in an educational sea of adult cynicism. We teach them the value of academic attainment then we cut funding to basic educational programs.”

Persaud has organized his book in sections on: Things to Know (among them “Losing Your Ethnicity” and “Choosing Classes”), Cautions (on such topics as “Bigotry and Intolerance,” “Sexual Harassment,” and “Counseling”), The College Game (“Changing Majors and Transferring” and “Paying for College,” for example), and Taking Responsibility (which tackles such topics as “Exams” and “Classroom Etiquette”). Persaud ends with several chapters on Keeping Your Sanity. “Making It Through College is not lacking in humor. It comes with a ‘Warning’ to ‘Keep Well in Reach of Children.’ The last of his acknowledgments is ‘to Moms, hey thanks for that whole birth thing, babe!’ The sub-head for a chapter on ‘Time Management reads, ‘Time flies when you are wasting it.’ On the very last page, to inspire even the most laggard of potential college students, Persaud’s high school transcript is arrayed in full glory detail.

The humor is no accident. Since graduating in 1992 with a B.A. in Political Science, Persaud has earned some of his keep in stand-up comedy (it also paid off some of his Baruch tuition). Though now involved in the writing, producing, and directing of films, he is still planning to hit the books again—law books.

Persaud’s stylish, desktop-published book makes clear his entrepreneurial knack (it has its own website: www.makingitthroughcollege.com). On the back cover Persaud defines the word universally despised at CUNY—attrition—with a shrilled acronym that explains why he turned author: Absence of Thorough Timely Realistic Information To Inspire Or Nurture

Speaking generally about Making It, Persaud says he hopes readers “will get out of it the fact that they can be and do anything they want. It may sound trite, but it’s just that simple... CUNY is a huge, huge collective of colleges that can take you anywhere you want to go. By all means, come to CUNY, do your thing.” Then the author shrewdly adds, “and get my book to help you out!”

The City University Attracts Talent from Near and Far

The following is adapted from an op-ed article by Chancellor Matthew Goldstein

Sylvia Rangelova emigrated from Bulgaria with her family in 1997, knowing no English. Two years later, she scored a perfect 5 on the American History Advanced Placement exam. Thanks to a Peter F. Vallone Scholarship, she is now a pre-law student at Brooklyn College and a member of its prestigious Honors Academy.

David Fischbein grew up on Long Island. His father is a physicist, his mother holds a master’s degree, and both his brothers graduated from Queens College. At Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway, David took A.P. courses, won the Nassau County Mathletes Award in 2000, and was admitted to the French National Honors Society in the same year. He is now enrolled in the new CUNY Honors College at Queens College.

Mark Rodriguez, who lives with his family in East Harlem, was a chemistry major at Brooklyn Technical High School, where he was an award-winning writer of essays, poetry and fiction, a biology tutor, and a volunteer for Family Dynamics and the Children’s Defense Fund. He is now a CUNY Honors College student attending City College and planning a career as an epidemiologist.

Three different students—three very different backgrounds. What they have in common is that they are among the very brightest and most promising young people you will find anywhere in the world—and they are studying at CUNY.

Three years ago, we began the phase-in of strengthened admissions standards and the elimination of remedial instruction at our senior colleges. Some critics voiced concerns that such higher standards would drive away potential applicants, including minority students.

Others expressed the view that greater expectations would enhance CUNY’s attractiveness to prospective students. The available data shows that the doors to educational opportunity continue to be open to all New Yorkers. CUNY is attracting more students than at any time in its history. Enrollment increased last fall by 6% in the freshman class and nearly 7% in transfer students. This spring, freshman enrollment at our senior colleges surged by more than 23%. Amid these increases, the ethnic composition of our student body has remained essentially the same, embracing almost 200 nationalities and 160 different languages.

The University’s higher academic standards are paying extraordinary dividends. We are attracting high achievers like Sylvia, David and Mark from around the world and in our own back yard. Through programs such as our Honors College and the more broadly available Vallone Scholarships (there have been more than 18,000 to date), CUNY is recruiting and keeping our best and brightest young people right here as New York City rebuilds. As negotiations begin on the city budget, Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council should restore the $7 million needed to fund the Vallone Scholarships.

Last year, the new CUNY Honors College enrolled its inaugural class of more than 200 academically talented students at five of our senior colleges. They are receiving full scholarships and an array of academic perquisites. Small wonder that we have received 2,500 applications (1,000 more than last year) to become next year’s Honors freshmen.

Our campuses proudly stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the City in the aftermath of 9/11. CUNY will rebuild for an even brighter future. CUNY is dedicating itself anew to safeguarding our single most precious resource: the bright, talent-ed students from all walks of life who will comprise the next generation of New Yorkers, students like David, Mark and Sylvia. They should not have to leave New York City to receive the benefits of a top-quality higher education.
A Diaspora of CUNY Students into Halls of Power

Afer coming to the United States as a political refugee in 1986, at the age of 14, Marie Adam-Ovide attended Tilden High School in Brooklyn and then headed for City College with the hope of studying architecture. But after spending several years out of school to help her cancer-stricken mother, she returned to campus with interests that had shifted to politics.

While working toward her CCNY B.A. in Political Science, Marie heard about the CUNY Internship Program and applied. Little did she realize this would lead her, in a few short years, to a full-time position in one of the most important offices of the New York City Council. She now manages the calendar of newly elected City Councilman David I. Weprin, chair of the Council’s Finance Committee, which has become all-important as the Bloomberg administration and City legislators face the challenge of the 9/11 aftermath and the simultaneous economic downturn.

Marie’s Fall 2000 internship was with Weprin in his position as leader in a north-east Queens district that encompassed parts of Hollis, Queens Village, and Fresh Meadows. “I learned all about its community boards and police precincts, and became familiar with the people in the constituency.” After the internship, Marie worked with Weprin’s predecessor in City Council District 23, Sheldon Silver, then in subsequent months as a volunteer on Weprin’s own campaign for the office.

On the jubilant evening of Weprin’s election, he popped the question: would Marie like to join his staff full-time. As Weprin explains, “I was so impressed with Marie’s energy during the internship, and then, afterward, when she went above and beyond the call of duty and volunteered to work on the campaign. She never said ‘no’ and was really performing so many of the functions of a legislative assistant.”

Having become hooked on “knowing what’s going on in government from the inside,” Marie accepted the offer with delight, and now she is honing her diplomatic skills in Weprin’s chambers. Asked if she might be tempted into public service herself, Marie, “Oh, yes! But not any time soon.” Referring to her two-year-old, Patrick, she explains, “My son wouldn’t have a mother! I have seen how much time running for and holding elective office demands—all the functions and long hours. That leaves very little time for family life.” For 34 years, since 1968, the CUNY Internship Program has been ushering students like Marie Adam-Ovide into the halls of power throughout the five boroughs, at City Hall, in Albany, and on Long Island.

The name was officially changed last year to the Edward T. Rogowsky Internship Program in Government and Public Affairs, in honor of its late, greatly admired director from 1995 to 2001. One of Rogowsky’s former Brooklyn College interns, Anthony Alexis, was so inspired by the experience that he actually ran for City Council himself last fall in Brooklyn’s District 41. Though he lost in the primary, Alexis’ campaign proved so impressive that the eventual winner, Tracy Boyland, hired him as her full-time chief of staff.

According to the present director, Anthony J. Maniscalco, in a typical year about 300 CUNY students, mostly juniors and seniors, become interns. They may serve in district attorney offices, with advocacy groups like the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), in the offices of local and state government officials, or those of Congressmen like Gary Ackerman, Major Owens, and Vito Fossella.

Every summer 12 Rogowsky interns head down to Washington for a two-month tour of duty, and this year, Maniscalco says, “there is a banner number of 26 spring interns serving in the State Legislature in Albany.” He is also pleased that Rogowsky interns are becoming emanating from CUNY’s community college campuses. Borough of Manhattan Community College became the first to come onboard in Fall 2001, and efforts are under way to bring the other community colleges into the fold.

All interns enroll in a three-to-six-credit weekly seminar course in Political Science or Public Affairs on their home campus, while agreeing to work 10 to 15 hours a week in their assigned office. More than a third of these students exercise the option to register for a second internship in a succeeding semester. For Rogowsky interns, the highest praise is the offer of a full-time job, and Maniscalco says with pleasure that examples of this happy segue “occur all over the place.”

He notes, for example, the full-time hire of Jennifer Horn, a former York College intern, in the district office of Democratic Representative Nydia Velazquez, then tells of a current intern, Rasheeda Smith, also from York College. Smith must have made a very good impression on New District 27 Councilman Leroy G. Comrie, because in mid-internship he offered—and she accepted—a full-time position in his Queens office (Smith will continue her York course work).

In 2001, three Washington interns remained in their assigned offices as full-time employees. Two others were offered full-time positions but decided to return to New York to complete their studies. For the Rogowsky Internships, the highest compliment is the government official, legislator or executive who comes back for more. Councilman Weprin has fallen eagerly into this category. “It’s a great program, and I’d love to see it expanded,” he says. “What with limited full-time staff capacity, my office at 250 Broadway simply could not function without them, and my new responsibilities as Chair of the Finance Committee make their presence even more valuable.”

Now helping to keep Weprin’s Broadway office functioning is Christine Falbe, a confirmed lover of the city who arrived from Cincinnati at age 17 to study jewelry design. Restless after earning her Fashion Institute degree in that field, Christine moved on to Baruch College, where she is a junior majoring in Finance and Investment. She has clearly landed in the right office.

Weprin has just gained a second Rogowsky intern, one of the pioneers from BMCC, Damien Noel. Damien, who arrived from Trinidad just eight months ago, is a Business Management student on the Chambers Street campus. His prospective area of interest is finance; he, too, has clearly landed in the right office. Just completing an internship with Weprin is yet another Rogowsky intern, Hemraj Singh, a native of Guyana who is graduating this June in Political Science from York College. Singh, who plans to work after graduation and then hit the law books, earlier interned with Queens State Assemblyman Michael Cohen.

Falbe and Noel are among the approximately 50 CUNY students working for City Councilmen this spring. In addition, the Internship Program placed CUNY students with each of the five Borough Presidents, as well as the office of Betsy Gotbaum, New York City’s new Public Advocate.●

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The City University and CUNY’s Professional Staff Congress announced in a joint statement on March 8 that they reached a contract settlement, pending approval by the CUNY Board of Trustees and ratification by the PSC membership. Details of the settlement will be released after preliminary agreements are secured and final costings of the proposed contract are calculated by New York City and New York State officials.

The contract includes a total economic package equivalent to a 9% increase, compounded over 27 months, for the period August 1, 2000 through October 31, 2002. It also includes salary increases for all titles, advances in professionalism and pay for part-time faculty, other enhancements of terms and conditions of employment, and opportunities for research and professional development for faculty and staff.

“This landmark agreement is a major step forward in fulfilling the University’s goal, outlined in our Master Plan, of securing a place among the top public research universities in the nation,” said Chancellor Matthew Goldstein. “In recognizing the imperatives of realizing this goal—chief among them the need to attract and sustain the finest faculty and staff—the agreement is testimony to the spirit of cooperation in which we have worked,” Goldstein also said. “I want to thank Vice Chancellor Brenda Malone and her negotiating team for their dedication, and for the hard work that brought us to a successful conclusion.”

PSC President Barbara Bowen characterized the agreement as “a break-through contract for the PSC. Our goal coming into the negotiating was to use collective bargaining to rebuild CUNY as a nationally pre-eminent institution… We have succeeded despite a very difficult economic climate.”

“There are great things here for our members, our students, and the University itself—not only were we able to secure significant salary increases, but we also addressed historic inequities in salaries and made structural changes that will strengthen the University.” Bowen added.●

CUNY, PSC Announce Agreement on a New Contract

City Council Finance Committee Chair David Weprin, seated, conferring with intern Damien Noel, left, former intern Marie Adam-Ovide, and intern Hemraj Singh in his Queens district office. Photo, Rob Klein.

College intern, in the district office of Democratic Representative Nydia Velazquez, then tells of a current intern, Rasheeda Smith, also from York College. Smith must have made a very good impression on New District 27 Councilman Leroy G. Comrie, because in mid-internship he offered—and she accepted—a full-time position in his Queens office (Smith will continue her York course work).

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Chancellor Goldstein Initiates New Efficiencies, Greater Student Access to Learning Technology

There are “tremendous opportunities to operate our campuses in a more efficient way,” CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, who recently advised the Board of Trustees. He praised the efforts in the fall of 2001 of the Fiscal Affairs Committee of the CUNY Council of Presidents, chaired by College of Staten Island President Marlene Springer, in canvassing for ways to improve in this area. “We have received wonderful ideas from the presidents for ways of using Web-based technology on our campuses, managing energy and procurement more efficiently, and managing the central administration more efficiently.” A formal set of proposals was endorsed by the Board of Trustees Committee on Financial Affairs, chaired by Trustee Joseph Lhota. Goldstein noted in particular, in his report to the Board of Trustees at its January 28 meeting, the importance of delivering technological resources as cost-effectively as possible. “It is a terrible tragedy that on some of our campuses students are not getting access to the basic technology they will need to compete” in the current economy. “Unless we can give campuses dollars to support more of the backbone of computing, more opportunities to hire lab technicians for computing labs, we are not going to see these campuses move forward.”

With the first, brainstorming stage well underway, Goldstein promised a second stage, in the process of implementing efficiencies, to be generated and supervised by Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Louise Mirrer and Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer Allan Dobrin. The proposals were presented to the Board of Trustees at its February 25 meeting, following a public hearing well-attended by students, faculty, staff, and alumni. They were unanimously approved under the rubric, “Proposals to enhance administrative efficiency, generate cost savings, and provide additional revenue in support of the University’s core academic mission.”

Among the measures contemplated is the integration of college administrative services, particularly where geographically appropriate. Senior Vice Chancellor Dobrin, for example, has been working with such neighboring campuses as Bronx and Hostos Community Colleges and Lehman College in the Bronx, and Queens College and the CUNY Law School in Queens, to identify areas of replication. Ways to streamline operations of the Central Office are also being explored.

Telecommunications costs are being analyzed to recoup overpayments, develop a University-wide standard for cell-phone use, and establish more cost-effective local and long-distance options, including a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP). Also planned is a CUNY-wide mail services protocol aimed at reducing “snail mail” in favor of e-mail. Web-based technology is being explored to develop a new portal to allow for CUNY-wide functioning by Web in several major areas: application, registration, academic advising, and publication of catalogs and bulletins. A new University-wide energy management program is being planned to allow decentralized use of energy budgets directly to the individual campuses and to identify and exploit cost-reducing new technologies. Another major focus of streamlining efforts will be the University’s procurement practices and contract protocols, notably in such areas as advertising, travel, and information systems.

At the February meeting a unanimous Board of Trustees approved three resolutions intended to generate income for the core academic mission on CUNY campuses. It established a $75-per-semester technology fee for full-time students ($37.50 for part-time). The funds will be retained by each college to improve computer services. The fee can be waived in cases of hardship. This move is expected to raise $22.5 million yearly.

The Board also rescinded the “last semester free” program that had been in place since 1992. (Students who entered under the program and graduate by January 2004 will still qualify for the benefit.) By 2004, this change will generate $9 million more in income.

The Board also voted to increase enrollment in winter intersession and summer session enrollments, with the additional tuition income being retained by the colleges and redeployed to improve academic programs.

In a memorandum to all the college presidents in early March, the Chancellor called these actions “critically important to the University,” and he cited the “full and swift implementation” of these changes as a “top priority.” Underlining the importance of advice and feedback as the Technology Fee is established, Goldstein asked each president to constitute an advisory committee. “This committee should include a minimum of two students and two faculty members, nominated by the appropriate governing body” on each campus.

Pulitzer Prize to Louis Menand

The Graduate Center’s recently appointed Distinguished Professor of English Louis Menand has just crossed disciplines to stellar effect, winning the 2002 Pulitzer Prize in history for The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America. This study, widely acclaimed when it appeared in 2001, examines the lives and work of four major American thinkers, William James, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., Charles Sanders Pierce, and a late-comer, Thomas Dewey. The club referred to in the title was a conventional salon formed in 1872 by young intellectuals in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Though it lasted only a brief time, Menand establishes it as being crucial to the later development of existentialist, pragmatist, existential American philosophy, pragmatism.

Executive Leadership Program Inaugurated

On March 7 the first “class” of the CUNY Executive Leadership Program commenced its 10-week-long seminar. A total of 15 outstanding administrators from 12 of the campuses and six from the Central Office are participating in this initiative designed to nurture talented and motivated leaders within the University’s own ranks.

One impetus for the Executive Leadership Program (ELP) is concern about the significant turnover anticipated in leadership positions at CUNY in the relatively near term. The first wave of baby boomers is now in their mid-50s, and many of them in high-level positions are eligible for retirement. ELP will create an expectation of continuing learning for executives and will foster excellence in administration and customer service.

Targeted for nomination and selection to take part in the program were senior CUNY managers and key professionals who are already regarded as highly effective.

Nominations for the program—typically one from each campus—are made by the college president. Nominees must be serving at least at the rank of assistant vice president or its equivalent. Among the titles represented in the first 21 ELP participants are a Dean for Finance and Administration, a Dean for Student Life, a Director of Financial Aid, a Dean of Humanities & Social Sciences, and a Manager of LAN & Communications.

Participation in the once-a-week sessions is in addition to current college responsibilities. A “reality-based” program requirement will be the design of a project dealing with institutional assessment and emphasizing the measurement of institutional outcomes. Among the skill/competency areas ELP covers are ethical administration in the public service, communication, the management of change, systems management, institutional assessment, professional networking, and leadership.
First Betty Shabazz Chair Appointed at Medgar Evers College

President Edison O. Jackson announced that the inaugural holder of the Dr. Betty Shabazz Distinguished Chair in Social Justice at Medgar Evers College will be Dr. Andrée-Nicola McLaughlin. Those charged with filling the chair—which commemorates the widow of Malcolm X (Malik Shabazz) and long-time Medgar Evers Director of Public Relations—did not have to look far for a prominent occupant. Professor McLaughlin, a scholar of world studies, has been on the MEC faculty since 1974, and for two decades she has taught, lectured, written, and traveled worldwide as an advocate for human rights, indigenous rights, educational equity, and other social justice goals.

As founding coordinator of the 15-year-old International Cross-Cultural Black Women’s Studies Institute, based at the College, McLaughlin has organized and convened eight world conferences on a variety of social justice issues. For many years MEC students have earned college credit for study abroad and student exchanges in collaboration with the Institute.

This spring McLaughlin is launching a series of “Shabazz Conversations” on social justice issues at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Among her first guests will be Grammy-winning writer and CCNY alum Walter Mosley, syndicated columnist Dr. Julianne Malveaux, and Cornell University scholar James Turner.

A native of White Plains, New York, McLaughlin earned her B.A. at Cornell, and her M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Massachusetts.

City University Retains New Fundraising Consultant

The City University has retained the Community Counselling Service Company (CCS), a professional fundraising/public relations firm based in Manhattan, to assist in undertaking a Development Assessment on every college campus. Chancellor Goldstein announced the move in a March 27 letter to all college presidents, observing that “competing demands on the University’s limited resources make it imperative for us to secure external monies.”

During early spring, colleges will complete surveys prepared by CCS, and its staff will then conduct interviews with campus leaders and chief advancement officers. The goal will be to evaluate the level of individual campus development programs and explore opportunities for increased fundraising efficiency, innovation, and growth.

Chancellor Goldstein reiterated the high priority of fundraising in his administration when he raised the subject at the January meeting of the Board of Trustees. While expressing his delight at getting “weekly calls from our presidents about major gifts,” he acknowledged that the concerted focus on raising funds from alumni and extramural sources “is a relatively new phenomenon” at CUNY.

The Chancellor urged the board to take the requested action when he raised the subject at the January meeting of the Board of Trustees. While expressing his delight at getting “weekly calls from our presidents about major gifts,” he acknowledged that the concerted focus on raising funds from alumni and extramural sources “is a relatively new phenomenon” at CUNY.

Enthusiastically accepting the challenge, Schmidt acknowledged that, from his first days on the Board, he had thought it a “great lost opportunity at this University in the area of attracting private gifts and eleemosynary contributions. … In my previous experience, the responsibility of university trustees has included a stewardship of the development effort;” Schmidt stated, “and I think there is every reason to believe that CUNY would benefit from moving very strongly in this direction.”

Promising to move a planning effort “into high gear this spring” aimed at creating an “oversight and support mechanism” on the Board for University-wide fundraising, Schmidt voiced his conviction that there is “no reason why CUNY should not be the most successful public university in the U.S. at drawing private support.”

Major CCNY Grant for Remote Sensing

A consortium of universities led by City College has just received a $7.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to establish a Center for Remote Sensing Science and Technology. The funds will support programs aimed at atmospheric, environmental, and oceanic sciences. Remote sensing is the art of obtaining information about atmospheric or environmental phenomena from optical devices placed on satellite or land-based platforms.

One example of potential remote sensing applications offered by the consortium’s director, CCNY engineering professor Reza Khanbilvardi, is the study of optical properties of turbidity, algae, and other suspended inorganic matter in coastal waters. More generally, remote sensing will permit the development of algorithms for satellite sensors monitoring atmospheric gases, clouds, and aerosols.

City Tech Scholarship For All Four Seasons

After graduating from New York City Technical College in 1953, Paul Kovi went on to become one of the city’s legendary restaurateurs, presiding over the power-lunchers and diners at the Four Seasons. Now, Kovi, who died in 1998, is being honored by a scholarship in Hospitality Management in his name at the College. Kicking off the endowment for the scholarship with a pledge of $180,000 was Kovi’s long-time colleague and co-owner at the Four Seasons, Tom Margittai.

In March the first holder of the Paul Kovi Scholarship, East Flushing resident Nerissa Charles, was announced. Charles’s advisor, Professor Julia Jordan, noted on the occasion the aptness of the award: “While they came from very different worlds, Paul Kovi and Nerissa Charles shared something very fundamental: both were immigrants who came here to pursue their dreams.”

Charles emigrated from Grenada in 1996, joining her father in New York but leaving her mother and sister behind. “The scholarship allows me to follow the path that I want to—I want to pursue my dreams,” Charles says.

Student Development, Enrollment Conference

On May 10, the Office of Student Development and Enrollment Management, in conjunction with the Chief Student Affairs Officers Council, will host a conference at Baruch College on “The Educational Pyramid in Changing Times: Academic Success, New Baruch, Development and Institutional Leadership.”

The conference will address strategies to assist University faculty, student services personnel, chief student affairs, and chief academic affairs officers in identifying new methods and techniques of nurturing student success. Two highlights of the conference, planned to run from 8:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M., will be a panel of CUNY college presidents to be moderated by Medgar Evers College President Edison O. Jackson, and a keynote presentation by renowned University of Michigan scholar Michael Nettles, an expert on educational access and assessment.

For additional information, contact the CUNY Office of Student Development and Enrollment Management (212-794-5473) or Vincent Banrey, Vice President for Student Affairs at Medgar Evers College (718-270-6046). The fee for the conference is $20.00 and includes a continental breakfast and lunch. The event will be held at the new Baruch College vertical campus conference facilities on Friday, May 10, 2002, from 8:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M.
A View to a Krill: Antarctic Expedition by College

By Kenneth T. Bach and Terry Mares, College of Staten Island

This last December, an intrepid band of College of Staten Island researchers headed south for the summer. Yes, the summer. These scientists and their graduate and undergraduate CUNY students were headed far, far south—all the way to Antarctica, where the summer sun is a pretty steady customer. Their mission: to study small, shrimp-like crustaceans known as krill and the birds that feast on them.

Unfamiliar to most Americans, krill are one of the most important planktonic (floating or weakly swimming) crustaceans in the Southern Oceans. They feed upon phytoplankton (planktonic plant life) and, since krill are high in protein, are an important food source for almost all larger organisms in Antarctica, such as mussels, fish, seals, baleen whales, penguins, and other birds. Although Antarctic krill are small, they are also abundant. And just they might be a valuable potential source of protein for human and live-stock consumption. How would wide-scale commercial krill harvesting affect the delicate and protected Antarctic ecosystem? That is what the research team from CSI is hoping to predict, with the aid of advanced computer modeling.

The team from CSI was headed by biology professor Richard Veit, who was awarded an NSF CAREER Grant for the project. Veit, a bird ecologist and biostatistician, also served as primary researcher. He knows the territory—this was his eleventh trip to the frozen continent. He was joined by mathematicians and physics professor Bala Sundaram and seven CSI students. Richard Heil, an ornithologist from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service accompanied them as they collected data in an attempt to predict how large-scale krill harvesting might affect indigenous sea-bird populations of cape petrels and albatross.

They spent a month near Elephant Island, off the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, not only observing large gatherings of krill, but also recording in detail the feeding behavior of birds in the same vicinity.

The expedition was funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs, which required the trip to combine research and teaching. This provided the perfect opportunity for Veit to engage CSI students in the project. They were required to enroll in a series of courses to help them fully understand the procedures, problems and protocols that such a research project would demand.

At Punta Arenas, Chile, the researchers boarded the NSF research vessel Laurence M. Gould and headed for Antarctica. Summer there translates as temperatures that hover near 30º Fahrenheit, winds that can gust up to 75 mph, and 40-foot-plus ocean swells vaulting over the ship’s deck. The Gould needed to deliver supplies to resident research scientists at Palmer Station before sailing on to Elephant Island and commencing around-the-clock data collection.

The researchers towed an echo-sounder behind the ship, which was their window to the underwater world of Antarctica. This echo-sounder, which works similarly to equipment used by deep-sea fishermen, was used to locate and study large gatherings of krill, called swarms, which tend to ride along on the easterly-flowing current through Drake Passage, which separates South America and Antarctica.

As the Gould navigated northward along six different 25-mile, north-south paths called transects, details of the krill swarms were recorded, including their location, density and depth. Southward bound, they recorded data on the water’s conductivity and temperature at varying depths. The ship’s location was recorded via a Global Positioning System (GPS) every 12 seconds.

One swarm they encountered was approximately 6 miles long and 80 meters thick. Krill swarms could involve thousand of tons of krill and have a density as high as 10,000 organisms per cubic meter. Why the krill congregate in swarms is unknown; speculation about this has focused on temperature, ocean salinity, nutrient deposits, and the behavior of ocean currents.

As they tracked the location of krill, the researchers also recorded the species and number of birds along the transect lines and details of their behavior. They record-ed data on the birds 24 hours a day (twilight lasts only from 12:30 to 3:00 A.M. at this time of year). Working in 12-hour shifts, the students stood on the ocean-tossed deck of the ship in wind-chills that often dipped below zero degrees Fahrenheit.

To create a valid database, each bird had to be continuously observed for a minimum of two minutes. The observers tracked the birds, which could fly at nearly 40 miles per hour, while team members recorded their behavioral data (where they fly, turning patterns, water dives, sitting on the water surface, etc.) This information was entered into laptop computers and personal digital assistants (PDAs) building a thorough database to more accurately generate a bird distribution and behavior map.

Veit says that a final goal of this project is to construct mathematical models to determine how birds may behave depending on the presence or absence of krill in a given location. Another goal is eventually to discover how the birds locate krill swarms (for example, visual or olfactory cues or the behavior of other birds or...
of Staten Island Scientists

mammals) and how the birds behave when they detect the prey, as well as how much krill needs to be present and how close to the ocean surface the crustaceans need to be for the birds to become interested.

Since a substantial portion of the computer modeling involves mathematics, Sundaram, who, like Veit, arrived on the CSI campus in 1996, was asked to join the expedition. His first-hand accounting of how the data is collected and what kind of data is available helped shape the acquisition models to facilitate data correlation and improve the accuracy of the projection model.

Sundaram also put together a computer presentation of the research work in Antarctica for his daughter’s grade school class. “Children love penguins,” Sundaram commented, “so I included some photos and facts for them. But more than just the penguins, the presentation opened up the world of science and mathematics and its possibilities to them, awaking their imagination.” He hopes they will carry them the understanding of how penguins, birds, krill and the entire Antarctic ecosystem are so closely intertwined with mathematics.

Word of the excitement their presentation created soon spread, and Veit and Sundaram were invited to visit other classrooms. Their dynamic and engaging presentations, replete with living examples of Antarctic krill and inflatable penguin images, have served to instill a sense of the long-lasting and profound effects of interdisciplinary scientific study.

Back in his CSI office, Sundaram, assisted by Ph.D. student Jarrod Santora, faces the monumental task of correlating the 20 gigabytes of data they collected at sea. Each database—krill population, bird population and behavior, and water conditions—has been compiled using dedicated software packages. These individual databases have been cleaned up and are currently being compiled and synchronized to the same 12 second intervals recorded by the GPS system. “Jarrod is really earning his Ph.D. with this one,” Veit says, “and once the data is synchronized we can move onto analyzing it.”

What do they hope to accomplish by running this data in a real-time model? To find an algorithm, or set of rules, to describe how the birds behave in the presence of large swarms of krill. “We want to build a model,” Sundaram explains, “that would have these birds flying around on a computer… looking for krill.”

If krill eventually become a target of commercial fishermen, whether to provide krill as a delicacy or as chicken feed, scientists will have a computer model to estimate the impact that mass harvests of krill might have on the Antarctic ecosystem. At present, only a small amount of krill harvesting—approximately 400,000 tons per year—is taking place because it is an expensive proposition. Norwegians consume krill in the form of a high protein paste and the Japanese enjoy them cooked and peeled, much like shrimp.

Currently, there is no supply route or transportation infrastructure in place to move harvested krill to destinations worldwide. Veit recalls that the Soviets used to send factory trawlers, idle during the harsh Russian winters, to harvest krill. Although it was a large-scale operation with 10 to 12 factory-sized trawlers, the Soviets never made a profit. Once the former Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, the new Russian government abandoned the harvests for economic reasons.

However, once the logistical problems have been sorted out regarding the mass harvesting of krill, commercial fishermen may turn to krill as a new protein source in feeding human and livestock populations. The data collected and the models developed by the researchers at CSI may aid in the formulation of international policy as we feed our world and protect the delicately balanced Antarctic ecosystem.

As for Veit, he plans to head back to Antarctica again at the end of this year to conduct further research. His current NSF grant, which provides $85,000 per year for four years, ends in 2004. College of Staten Island students with a taste for adventure and who don’t mind the heavily layered look will once again be able to join him. Together, they will help to decide whether the future of planet earth just might include krill-burgers.

Mathematically Modeling the Antarctic Ecosystem

Professors Richard Veit and Bala Sundaram describe the science of their project.

Over the past few years, we have applied recent mathematical developments to the description of spatio-temporal dynamics to modeling the foraging habits of birds. One goal of this research is to learn how seabirds respond to changes in the abundance and distribution of their principle prey, Antarctic krill, Euphausia superba.

Krill abundance distribution is affected by physical oceanographic processes such as shear fronts and current boundaries. Thus, models of krill and its predators involve the interplay of Eulerian and Lagrangian dynamics. One novel approach we have been exploring is “agent-based” modeling, in which seabird and krill dynamics are considered independently and “local” rules of engagement constructed for their interplay.

The rules themselves can be derived from observational data, for example, by contrasting bird behavior in the vicinity of krill swarms to that in areas lacking krill. In turn, the foraging models will make predictions about the dispersion of birds under differing levels of krill abundance. Our long-term goal is to forecast the impact on seabirds of changes in krill stocks. Changes in krill stocks now seem inevitable, due both to changes in climate and future commercial harvesting.

For several consecutive December, groups of undergraduate and graduate students will help to survey the insular shelf north of Elephant Island, recording the abundance, distribution and behavior of seabirds. Krill abundance is recorded using echo-sounders and corroborated by net hauls and visual sampling. Physical oceanographic characteristics are recorded at the same time. Assessing the correlation between these voluminous sets of spatio-temporal data takes considerable effort, and we expect the job will take about four months. The primary objective will be to quantify the linkage between prey abundance and bird behavior.

Our teaching goals are, first, to introduce urban college students to a spectacular and economically important ecosystem. Through their work on an oceanographic research vessel, students will be exposed to a diverse research topics and methodologies, ranging from behavioral ecology to physical oceanography. On this recent trip, for example, a number of our students assisted a research group from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute with their experiments on plankton larvae.

Second, back at our campus, students will participate in our development of the models for analyzing and describing the data. This is facilitated by the requirement that all students selected for the trips are required to take courses in mathematical and statistical modeling prior to being selected.

Our December expedition culminates several years of collaboration in research and teaching, notably team-taught courses in Mathematical Biology at the undergraduate and graduate level. One such course will be offered in the Biology Program at the Graduate Center this fall. For more information about these courses, contact us at veit@postbox.csi.cuny.edu (for Veit) or bs@math.csi.cuny.edu (for Sundaram).
Greeting the more than 500 attendees at a Graduate Center conference on “Attack Mentality: A Student Conference & Survival Guide on Journalism, Media, Internships & Jobs in the Age of 9/11,” Chancellor Matthew Goldstein remarked that the event “forcefully demonstrated we have a diverse student body with some of the brightest future professionals you will find anywhere: hundreds of student newspaper editors, radio station managers, web publishers, video producers, and students enrolled in journalism and media courses across CUNY’s six community and 11 senior colleges.” Convincing evidence for the proud boast was immediately forthcoming, when the Chancellor turned to introduce the conference’s keynote speaker, Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Oreskes of the New York Times.

Oreskes—who has risen during his 20-year career at the Times from metropolitan reporter to assistant managing editor and director of electronic news—began his journalistic career as a prodigious reporter on the CCNY campus and editor of the college paper, the Campus. While there Oreskes won a Newspaper Fund scholarship, interned at the Wall Street Journal and contributed to the Daily News as the campus “stringer” (he graduated in 1975).

Recognizing Oreskes’ distinguished career and his loyalty to the University, Goldstein surprised him and the audience in the Proshanksy Auditorium with the conferral of the Chancellor’s Alumni Achievement Award in Journalism.

In his address at the March 1 event, Oreskes recalled his days as an undergraduate, and reminded the students assembled that they share in a unique tradition—students graduating in 1975). During his 20-year career at the Times, Oreskes has reported on methods of generating and delivering information.

Correspondents described their experiences in a panel on “War Stories: From CUNY to Covering the Middle East and Afghanistan,” while war stories of a professional kind were offered by the panel on “Hard Knocks: Lessons from the Job World.” The art of interviewing was addressed by a panel wittily titled “Velvet Gloves, Rubber Mallets and Other Useful Techniques.” Other panels considered “Journalism and the Law,” “Big Sports on Campus: How to Cover Your Team,” “WebDesign/ Newspaper Design: The Look, the Feel, the Message,” and “Crisis on Campus: How Two Student Journalists Responded to 9/11.”

University journalism professors moderated many panels, and panels were open to students and faculty in the audience.

Among the city’s leading professionals in television, print and web media were

- Joseph Calderone, Daily News investigations editor, former CNN general counsel Eve Burton, NY1 political analyst and co-host Dominic Carter,
- NewsChannel 4 reporter Ti-Hua Chiang,
- New York Times columnist (and CCNY ’66 grad) Clyde Haberman,
- Newsday assistant managing editor, Clem Richardson, Daily News columnist;
- Nelson Wong, Sony New Music Lab senior director, and former New York UPI bureau chief (and current assistant to Chancellor Goldstein) Judith Watson.

Burton, nationally recognized for her work in defense of the First Amendment and a frequent lecturer at journalism graduate schools, was struck by the intensity—and diversity—of her audience. “The newsrooms need you in print and broadcast,” she said. “One of things missing in my view is people of all different backgrounds reporting from all different perspectives. I urge you not to give up on your desires. Go forward into the mainstream newsrooms in our country.”

The number of student journalists attending two student journalists attended a nearly five-fold increase from the previous media conference. Of particular interest to them was a mid-day Job Fair held in the Graduate Center Concours. Representatives from 25 organizations, including major newspapers, several TV stations and magazines, were there to speak about employment opportunities.

A lively special session of the CUNY Forum was also taped at CUNY-TV. Hosted by Bob Lif, journalists from the Village Voice, the Washington Post and El Diario-La Prensa debated how New York is coping with the event of September 11 and fielded questions from students.

By Glenn Corbett

While it is well known that terrorists commandeered two passenger planes and flew them into the twin towers, it is not exactly clear what series of events and conditions caused the towers to collapse. What elements (if any) of the design, construction, and maintenance of the structures played a role in their demise? How did the towers themselves affect the evacuation and firefighting efforts?

In order to put these crucial questions in context, consider these facts. First, the twin towers were the first total collapses of burning high-rise buildings in U.S. history.

Second, this disaster was the biggest structural failure in the recorded history of the world. With this in mind, you would think that large amounts of personnel and financial resources would be put in place to study and learn from the collapse.

Unfortunately, you would be wrong.

To date, very little money has been spent on gathering and analyzing data. A study of the collapse is under way, but the finished report will apparently be limited to providing a compilation of data and a proposal of several theories to explain the collapse—hardly a definitive or exhaustive study.

McMonagle himself has already been scrapped, effectively destroying it as potentially valuable evidence. Without evidence, the theories of collapse may remain just that—theories. Preliminary building evacuation research is currently being conducted by a group of volunteers, although they are looking for federal funding for a comprehensive study.

What is needed is a fully resourced and coordinated effort to study and learn from the World Trade Center disaster, which killed three times as many firefighters as are lost in the entire United States in a typical year.

Areas of study should include an analysis of the structural design, collapse, building evacuation, firefighting efforts, and the search-and-rescue operations.

Doubtless, from such a study would emerge significant and valuable proposals for improving building codes and emergency procedures.

Several members of the fire service, academia, and relatives of victims have called upon the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to take the lead role in ensuring that the World Trade Center disaster will be thoroughly studied and that steps will be taken to enhance the safety of individuals working and living in high-rise buildings as well as provide a permanent legacy for the many victims of this terrible tragedy.

Glenn Corbett is Professor of Fire Science at John Jay College, a captain in the Waldick, New Jersey, Fire Department, and technical editor for Fire Engineering magazine.

By Sheila Rule

Sheila Rule, left, of the New York Times offers career advice at the Job Fair. More than 25 media recruiters attended.
Life Resumes 500 Feet from Ground Zero

Frederick Kaufman, professor of English and journalism at the College of Staten Island, describes finding disaster and media fame in his back yard.

It took eight men in white jumpsuits and respirators five days to clean our apartment. Cost: $8,500. The bill for dry cleaning came to $16,500.

I live with my wife and two children just 500 feet from Ground Zero, in the closest residential building currently re-certified for occupation. I stood on my balcony and watched the buildings burn. I was on the street when they came down. I was blown out of my house for the following three months, but nothing had paralyzed me until that dry cleaning came back.

There was every tie and towel and shirt and sheet and belt and bikini we owned, each on its own wire hanger, encased in plastic. I couldn’t do anything but look at it all lying in piles on the beds, transparent agency of active verbs.

A galvanized student newspaper sought to articulate what our lives had become through articles ranging from thoughtful commentaries about loss to furious polemics about U.S. foreign policy to a flattening profile of the President of CSI’s Muslim Student Association.

In the meantime I was gaining a new perspective on the art of the interview—what it feels like to answer rather than ask all the questions. Every day, more reporters called. First it was USA Today (we made the cover), then New York Newsday (a feature), then the New York Times (front page, below the fold). The Associated Press placed a shot of the family in local papers from Florida to Oregon. We said yes to German Public Radio, yes to the Amsterdam News, MSNBC, CBS, C-SPAN, NY1.

We said no to Inside Edition, no to CNN, no to ABC. It got to be too much, but the calls, like the crowds that surged around our building, kept coming. At one point I was tempted to agree with Gerson Borrero (editor of El Diario/La Prensa), who declared at last month’s CUNY Media Conference that he was sick of the whole story. It had made the front page too many times. It was dead.

I wish it were so. I wish it was yesterday’s news, but it isn’t. At our most recent co-op board meeting, six months to the day after the events the El Diario/La Prensa editor has grown so tired of hearing about, we were treated to an hour-and-a-half lecture about the impending threat of low-micron lead particulates, pulverized glass, vaporized mercury, and rampant mold.

It isn’t that the City’s Department of Environmental Protection wouldn’t tell us if pollutants have exceeded standards, it turns out there are no residential standards for indoor air.

So our household prepares for the next spate of expulsions. Out go all the couches, all the shades and drapes and window treatments. Every single upholstered barstool and ottoman must hit the sidewalk, everything but the floors. Should they go, too?

For those of us who live downtown the story continues. Only the clothes have been put in the closet.

Lens Craft on the Terrible Day

As soon as the Twin Towers were hit, John Montalvo Jr.’s photographer’s instincts kicked in. He grabbed his Nikon and began a marathon photo shoot, walking from the Bronx down to Ground Zero, sometimes deftly skirting checkpoints. One angry police sergeant caught him and confiscated four precious rolls. The powerful results have given the Queensborough Community College major in photography and fine arts—he’s also taking some City College photography courses—some well-deserved exposure: a spread in the Queens Courier and a show in Jersey City. Seen here are images captured on Montalvo’s 9/11 trek: a policeman with bullhorn near City Hall, two firemen across the street from Ground Zero, and a crane already at work at Ground Zero late in the afternoon.
New City College Biomedical Engineering Department

This first new department in City College’s School of Engineering since 1968 and the first new CCNY engineering department since 1937 was approved in January by the Board of Trustees. The Biomedical Engineering Department will offer an undergraduate degree, as well as the Ph.D. and M.S. programs that had already been approved by New York State in 1999 and 2000, respectively.

The Trustees’ approval was the culmination of eight years’ effort by CUNY Distinguished Professors Sheldon Weinsbaum and Stephen Covin, both members of CCNY’s Department of Mechanical Engineering.

Funds for the creation of the new department and degree program were largely obtained from $3.7 million in external infrastructure grants received since last fall from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Whitaker and Sloan Foundations, and the U.S. Department of Education. The largest of the grants, a $2.2 million award from NIH for a project on the heart, was one of only two such awards nationally.

An NIH review of the proposal for this new department called it “outstanding in every respect. A major strength is that it builds on a foundation of faculty commitment and existing hospital partnerships with research institutions in the area.” These partnerships, which were first begun in 1994, were forged by the New York Center for Biomedical Engineering (NYCBE), a CUNY Research Institute that involves CCNY faculty in the School of Engineering and Science Division and faculty at seven of the premier health care institutions in New York City.

The NIH review also noted that “the faculty and research mentors are, without exception, outstanding scientists, with on-going funded projects.” CUNY Distinguished Professor Sheldon Weinsbaum of CCNY’s Department of Mechanical Engineering said that “no other biomedical engineering program in the U.S. has access to such a diverse group of world-class medical institutions.”

The undergraduate program will admit its first freshman class this coming fall. Many of these 25 students will receive full-tuition scholarships provided by the NIH and Whitaker grants and the new CUNY Honors College Program. A unique feature awaiting these new majors will be grant funding of $17,000 per student to support hands-on research projects in the research laboratories at City College or one of the seven hospital partners of NYCBE during their junior and senior years. The $17,000 will include stipends to avoid the need to work after school and funds for research supplies and travel. In addition to the student research awards, the five-year NIH grant will provide for 60 full-tuition scholarships for minority students, seed money for the development of the instructional laboratories, and courses for the new undergraduate degree program in biomedical engineering, while also greatly enhancing an existing summer outreach program for inner-city high schools. When the new Ph.D. program was reviewed for State accreditation in 1999 by prominent external evaluators, it was cited “as the single most effective program for the education of minority Ph.D.s in the U.S.” in the field.

Weinsbaum notes that the grants will “provide entree for New York City high school students into a dramatically growing field that many believe will be the basis of a revolution between biology and engineering in the 21st century.” Until recently, he added, “students from underrepresentated groups had been largely excluded from careers in this field because most biomedical engineering programs were at costly private universities.”

Plans for the new department include the development of four new undergraduate instructional laboratories: a cell, tissue, and molecular engineering laboratory; a biomechanics and design laboratory; a data acquisition and bio-instrumentation laboratory; and a computer laboratory. An animal research laboratory is also planned. The Whitaker Foundation grant calls for the recruitment of two new faculty and an associate hire in bioinformatics in the Department of Computer Science; they will join the six core faculty who will found the department.

The New York Center for Biomedical Engineering was founded in 1994 with a $750,000 Whitaker Special Opportunity Award, and its faculty and graduate students have received many prestigious honors and awards. This includes an NSF Career Award to Bingmei Fu, American Heart Association Fellowships to Peter Butler and Jie Song, and several Biomedical Engineering Society student research awards.

Biomedical Engineering faculty have received numerous awards and honors, including two Melville Medals (the highest award of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers for an original research paper), the Research Award of the European Society of Biomechanics, and two additional $1,600,000 Whitaker Special Opportunity awards.

A special event in CCNY’s Great Hall on March 22 celebrating the new department brought together assistant principals of science and college advisors from more than 200 New York City high schools. For more information about the NYCBE, visit www.ccny.cuny.edu/nycbe.

“Trailer Heroes” of BMCC Build at CCNY

Judith Berke, a CUNY Project Coordinator based at City College, reports on the construction of a “blink of the eye” temporary campus for Lower Manhattan students in Morningside Heights.

When Miles and Shirley Fiterman presented 30 West Broadway to Borough of Manhattan Community College in 1993, history was made: it was the largest capital gift ever given to a United States community college. When Tower 7 came crashing down on it on 9/11, the bad news was just as historic. Renovation of Fiterman Hall (as it was later renamed) was nearly completion, and the building’s 82,550 square feet of much-needed classroom space was about to come fully “online.” Much of Fiterman was already in use, and replacing those classrooms became an instant necessity. With downtown space at a premium and much of the neighboring area in chaos, it was impossible to find appropriate temporary classroom space quickly.

CUNY Vice Chancellor for Facilities Emma Macari issued an all-points plea for immediate assistance from within CUNY and the extended educational community (donations of furniture and equipment came as far away as Michigan).

Temporary structures were investigated, and, with the help of Chancellor Goldstein, six trailers first moved to the City College site. The Board of Education were immediately delivered to 199 Chambers Street, allowing classes to resume there on October 1.

Within six days of the disaster, CUNY planners had investigated various sites and other campuses for additional temporary structures, and City College was identified as the strongest possibility because of its location in the same borough and the availability of outdoor space in CCNY parking lots.

Enter the “Trailer Heroes,” commanded by Joanna Pestka, director of CUNY’s Department of Design, Construction, and Management. With many prospective obstacles when they arose.

The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) was able to move on the project immediately because it had a slate of pre-qualified consultants and contractors on call. Helpen Architects and Lakhani & Jordan Engineers quickly prepared contract documents according to the scope of work and obtained expedient approval of the entire project from all the relevant government offices.

Then Tom Zakarian (the DASNY project manager), TDX Construction, and the contractors—Bveys Construction, Kulman Industries, Lund Fire Products, Siemens, and 3L Electric—swung into action to meet the January 27 deadline, the first day of Spring Semester. The challenge: pour 800 concrete piers, install trailers to accommodate 840 students and faculty, and lay out 14,000 square feet of decking, stairs, and ramps between the trailers. The contractors cooperated on a level not often experienced in the industry, working long hours seven days a week. They kept their eyes on the goal and met that date. As the trailers were connected to electric, water and heat, everyone began to sense that the first day of classes was really going to be the first day of classes. It took just six weeks to get the trailers installed—the fastest 30,300 square foot installation CUNY has ever experienced.

Of course, CUNY and BMCC made sure there was a “topping off” party where the “trailer heroes” were fed, thanked, and applauded.
Imagine Laura Bridgman, deaf, dumb, and blind. Picture her in 1837, just before Samuel Gridley Howe, the director of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, found her in a New Hampshire farmhouse and brought her to Boston to be educated. She is seven years old, a pretty, delicate, sprightly child, appealing in looks and manner. Five years have passed since scarlet fever raged through her family, killing her two older sisters and leaving her parents pat her head to show approval and tap her cheek to reprimand her, but there is no other way to let her know that she is a being—a person—to whom others respond.

Because she had two developmentally normal years before her devastating illness, Laura has perhaps maintained an innocence of the human mind with ideas. By learning to read raised print, to write intelligently, and to "talk" using the finger alphabet, Laura established that even the most sensorially deprived person could gain access to language and, through language, to the world of human culture.

Laura was 21.

Five years later, this pitiful little girl had become the most celebrated child in America. Although today she is virtually unknown, the Boston Evening Transcript of June 14, 1851, ventured that, with the exception only of Queen Victoria, Laura Bridgman was the most famous female in the entire world. The first deaf-blind person ever to be educated, she became not only the subject of scientific and pedagogical research, but a universal darling.

To Laura Bridgman

Be thine the task, O! Generous Howe, to guide The imprisoned guest, through Nature's ample fields To draw the curtain of her wealth aside, And show the pleasure that true science yields;
The imprisoned guest, through Nature's ample fields To tread the path by learning seldom trod, To draw the curtain of her wealth aside, And show the pleasure that true science yields; To tread the path by learning seldom trod, And show the pleasure that true science yields;

Laura was the ideal subject for investigation of the nature and origin of language and ideas. Scientists of the period imagined language as a tabula rasa, to be written on by each individual. The infant Laura however asserted her right to make her own meaning; to create a language of her own.

To Laura Bridgman

To tread the path by learning seldom trod, And show the pleasure that true science yields;

Laura was the perfect Victorian victim-heroine: small, pleasing to look at, innocent, and frail, a paragon of cheerful suffering. Scores of articles and poems in religious tracts and women's magazines glorified her as a redemptive angel whose plight would touch the most hardened hearts, whose instinctive innocence and purity were exemplary, and whose rescue from spiritual imprisonment movingly reenacted the Christian drama. Born and educated 50 years before Helen Keller, Laura was the valiant little victim of her own day. And, like Keller, she was an intellectual phenomenon, a kind of genius.

From the beginning, the world judged Bridgman and Keller as if they were contemporaries in a deaf-blind Miss America pageant. Laura was the outdated prototype, inferior in beauty and accomplishments and deficient in congeniality; Keller was the almost normal winner, talented, charming, altruistic, good-looking, even sexy. Laura was quaint and old-fashioned, a relic of the 19th century; Keller was the latest improvement, a talking, socialable, active disabled celebrity.

Such comparisons do justice to neither woman. Keller became the success she was because at her side she had Anne Sullivan, the selfless, smart, loving teacher-companion that Laura always thought she wanted. Her teacher's devotion made Keller's life as a beloved public figure possible, but also exacted a price. Even if she rebelled inwardly at Sullivan's "merciless" expectation, Keller had to appear to embrace them. Except in her German dreams, she suppressed the pain and rage she must at times have felt: "I demand that the world be good," she wrote, "and to obey it. I proclaim the world good, and facts range themselves to prove my proclamation overwhelmingly true."

Compared to Keller, Laura led a dull, dependent existence. She was born too soon to benefit from Braille. Her sharp, inquisitive mind probably did not develop to its full potential. Although she longed for intimacy, she never again found it after her early teacher-companion Sarah Wight left the Perkins Institute in 1850, when Laura was 21.

Yet Laura achieved a kind of freedom. Because she felt no compulsion to please, she could choose her own friends and make demands upon them. Malleable only up to a point, she stubbornly asserted her right to make her own decisions. Despite Sullivan's "deaf" noises. She was no more generous, noble, or altruistic than the rest of us, and she never pretended to suffer fools gladly. Defying Howe, she converted to the religion that suited her. And through all her sorrows and disappointments, Laura managed to remain her unalterable self: witty, erratic, curious, demanding, and, in her way, brilliant.
Baruch Orients City Council Freshmen

The city University of New York

Though enormous—13’ x 19’ x 3’—"Dove of Tanna" spreads as a gift from the family of Victor W. Ganz in his memory.

Exotic Bird Alights at The Graduate Center

Visitors to the Dining Commons at the Graduate Center now have a choice—not a gustatory choice (there have always been plenty of those) but a visual one. They can stand at the east end, look skyward, and take in the Empire State Building. Or they can stand on the west end of the Commons, look up, and tie their eyes around Frank Stella’s exuberant and monumental ‘Dove of Tanna,’ created in 1977.

The brilliantly colorful work, in mixed media on aluminum, was recently installed on long-term loan from the Whitney Museum of American Art, which received it in 1990 as a gift from the family of Victor W. Ganz in his memory. Though enormous—13’ x 19’ x 3’—"Dove of Tanna" spreads its wings comfortably in the monumental space of the Commons, and the vast skylight allows access to what every big bird needs.

Stella, long associated with New York City’s art scene, grew up in Malden, Massachusetts, studied at Princeton, then achieved his first local recognition in the 1960s as part of the color-field and hard-edge movements. Initially, he worked with a monochromatic palette and adhered to rigid shapes and parallel lines. "Dove of Tanna," part of Stella’s exotic bird series, typifies his later work, which breaks away from two-dimensional painting and employs vibrant color and sculptural form.