The CUNY Compact is Entering Its Second Year

The “Decade of Science” initiative developed by Chancellor Matthew Goldstein is “Jeffersonian” in its scope and vision, and it embodies all the elements required for success in an evolving global economy, said John H. Marburger, III, Science Adviser to President George Bush and Director of the U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy. Addressing the November retreat of CUNY’s Council of Presidents, Marburger also said that institutions devoted to scientific research—as the University is—will increasingly have to turn to the private sector for the funding needed to survive and grow in a very competitive environment.

“CUNY’s plans for science development, its Decade of Science, seem to me to fit very well into the evolving societal context,” Marburger said. “These themes of the Advanced Science Research Center, for example—photonic, structural biology, and so forth—they all fall in that area of Jeffersonian science that combines basic and applied research. They all fit priorities of the main sponsors of university-based research, including state and federal agencies, and they appear to draw on regional and traditional strengths in this region of the country... And perhaps as importantly, these areas and areas similar to them are particularly well suited to CUNY’s educational mission.”

He was referring to the University’s mission as a public institution of higher learning devoted to providing the best in the way of human resources and facilities to its student population, many of them immigrants and the first in their families to attend college.

The Advanced Science Research Center to which Marburger referred is a University-wide complex that will house professors and students from the various campuses who are devoted to research in an expansive array of scientific areas. The Center will be constructed on the South Campus of City College and is only one of a number of buildings being planned at different campuses. Groundbreaking is expected to take place in the coming year. In announcing last year the beginning of the Decade of Science, Chancellor Goldstein said, “Modern facilities and equipment are essential to our campuses, not only to accomplish truly innovative research but also to attract the best faculty researchers and to encourage and nurture the best students. That is why we will be investing more than $360 million to build new facilities or modernize existing science buildings at Hunter, Lehman, Queens, and City Colleges over the next few years.”

Before his appointment to the Executive Office of the President, Marburger had been President of the State University of New York at Stony Brook and, prior to that, Chairman of the Physics Department and Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California. He has also been Director of Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island.

When Marburger called CUNY’s Decade of Science plan “Jeffersonian,” he apparently was referring to the decision by President Thomas Jefferson to fund the 1803 expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, who explored the lands that became the western section of the United States of America. Scientists have said that Jefferson, in backing the mission, was visionary in his understanding that government could be a significant sponsor of research.

Marburger said the scientific research at universities will take place outside the realm of shifting national politics. He said that “the Bush administration, which largely embraced science priorities established in the Clinton administration and built on them.” He also told his audience that he is a Democrat, the only one “on the senior staff in the White House.”

Universities will have to be aware in the coming years that the private sector will be the principal source of growth in funding for scientific research, which must be “interdisciplinary,” Marburger said.

“CUNY is seeking to develop its strength in science at a time when science has never been more highly valued by society and it can expect support from society for its endeavor,” he said.

“But sustainable success is going to require a new business model that draws on a mix of private and public funds from a variety of sources...”

“CUNY’s success in its science development venture is exceptionally important and as you proceed you will find many people and organizations west of the Hudson River who will want to help.”

The University is seeking financing for year two of the CUNY Compact—the vehicle developed by Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and approved by the Board of Trustees to finance the University’s Master Plan priorities.

This year’s request has as its central themes The Campaign for Student Success, The Decade of Science, and an Enterprise Resource Planning solution for the University. (Please also see “The Chancellor’s Desk” column on page 2.)

The University is asking the state and city for a total of $2.149 billion for the senior and community colleges. The requested amount for the senior colleges is $1.588 billion, which is a $99.1 million increase over that of FY2006-07; and the amount for the community colleges is $561.3 million, a $31.5 million increase over the previous year.

The University has pledged to raise $10.5 million from philanthropic support and through productivity savings and administrative restructuring.

The Compact developed by Chancellor Goldstein leverages resources from the University’s key stakeholders, asking the state and city to fund the University’s mandatory costs, while calling on other parties, particularly well-heeled alumni and others in the business community, to make philanthropic contributions.

Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance Ernesto Malave has described the Compact as a way in which the state, city, University and outside community (which has a strong interest in CUNY’s success) “leverage” each other by making contributions commensurate with their role.

A main idea of the plan, Chancellor Goldstein said, is to keep tuition at manageable low levels, effectively enhancing the quality of a CUNY education in the form of more full-time faculty members, strengthened student services and stronger programs in the sciences and other areas. At the same time, support for student financial aid will be maintained so that no needy student will be adversely impacted.

“Open the doors to all — let the children of the rich and the poor take their seats together and know of no distinction save that of industry, good conduct, and intellect.”

— Townsend Harris, founder

The University of Diversity Celebrates in Many Ways

Looking over the Events Calendar for December and January, one can see the unique diversity of CUNY, with performances and celebrations emanating from a plethora of cultural traditions.

Believing, Without Seeing

A blind student at New York City College of Technology runs in the New York City marathon and lives her life with confidence and generosity that should inspire others.

Veterans Return Home and to College

An estimated 3,000 students around the University are veterans, with large numbers of them having served in Iraq, living with destruction and death on a daily basis. The campuses are seeking out efforts to help these students.

Is There a Doctor In the (White) House?

Dr. Laurie Zephyrin, a graduate of City College’s Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, just completed a yearlong White House Fellowship, an enormously competitive national program.
Our Compact Has an Impact

This summer, CUNY Matters profiled families with multiple CUNY graduates. I was struck by the story of Norma Smiley, an immigrant from Jamaica who graduated from Medgar Evers College’s licensed practical nurse program in June. Three sons are also CUNY graduates: “City University got me through all this,” she said. “They really pushed me and provided help and support. They do everything they can for you.”

Norma Smiley’s story is a reminder that a great university is a vehicle for aspiration, facilitating learning and discovery and changing students’ futures. It reinforced my belief that for the University to continue to maintain its established role, CUNY must invest in its own future.

That’s why we introduced the CUNY Compact last year, a new approach to funding the University. The goal of the Compact is to finance the academic goals and priorities of the University by leveraging resources from the University’s key stakeholders: New York State and New York City must cover mandatory costs, plus 20 percent of our investment in the University itself; contributing through improved productivity and efficiencies; friends, alumni, and donors, supporting an increased emphasis on philanthropy; and our students, assisting through enrollment growth and modest, predictable tuition increases.

This shared partnership enables us to address the long-term goals developed with our campuses every four years for the state-mandated Master Plan—such as adding full-time faculty, enhancing research, and expanding library resources. The Compact also aims to shift the burden of meeting the University’s operating costs from students to government. Rather than relying on long, unexpected tuition increases during economic downturns, the Compact proposes smaller, periodic tuition increases that do not exceed the rate of inflation. In addition, the maintenance of full student financial aid is required for the success of the plan, so that no student is denied the ability to continue his or her education.

Last year, we proposed the CUNY Compact to the University’s constituencies, including lawmakers, and we have begun to see the results of this fresh approach to financing. Increased funding from both the state and the city for the 2007 fiscal year enabled us to cover all mandatory cost increases—for example, the costs associated with collective bargaining—and to begin an investment program.

These investments include additional money for full-time faculty, libraries, advising and counseling services for students with disabilities, and facility upgrades.

As we look toward the 2008 budget and the second year of the Compact, our goal is to build on these investments and address important University-wide initiatives. Our campuses have indicated the need for strengthened undergraduate and graduate programs, expanded research opportunities, better academic student support, and improved information management systems and facilities. Several new efforts are directed toward these needs, including:

- The Campaign for Student Success: Led by the Office of Academic Affairs, the goal of the campaign is to improve student achievement and to raise graduation rates through innovative curricular and instructional strategies.
- The Decade of Science: The University’s focus on increasing participation and proficiency in science, engineering, math, and technology includes building and modernizing science facilities, investing in faculty and graduate students, and educating students to teach math and science in high-need schools.
- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP): The CUNY ERP project will provide a new, University-wide suite of policies, processes, and information systems in order to streamline current practices and help us become more efficient.
- Through enhanced support from all of the University’s partners—including increased state and city aid, philanthropy, and productivity, and a modest tuition increase, with revenues used solely for programmatic improvements—we will be able to build on last year’s investments. We will also further our goal of shifting the burden of meeting our operating costs from students to government.

In conjunction with the Compact, the 2008 capital budget comprises new buildings, renovations, and upgrades that will allow us to meet our long-term academic initiatives. These include the CUNY-wide Advanced Science Research Center, science facilities at City, Lehman, and Queens colleges, and the replacement of Fiterman Hall at Borough of Manhattan Community College.

Our students and faculty deserve facilities, programs, and services that match their aspirations and abilities. Through the CUNY Compact, we can truly invest in their futures.

Fiterman Will Symbolize the Change

Fiterman Hall, the 15-story building badly damaged in the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center, is set to be transformed into a state-of-the-art vertical campus, under the direction of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners Architects.

The new Fiterman will boast a brick façade with metal and glass inset panels that will serve as a symbol of the rebirth of Lower Manhattan. It will also be an enormously important acquisition for Borough of Manhattan Community College, the CUNY campus that has been mourning Fiterman’s loss over the past five years.

Chancellor Matthew Goldstein said that CUNY and BMCC, led by President Antonio Perez, have been working closely with community groups and government agencies, and will continue to do so. It is hoped that work can begin early in 2007.

“The new Fiterman Hall will greatly enhance the scope and quality of educational, cultural, and community programs offered by the College,” the Chancellor said. It will house 53 classrooms, 21 computer labs, 129 faculty offices and a student lounge.

Goldstein explained that the process, which will begin after the hoped for approval by state and federal oversight agencies, is a long one.

“As we prepare for the remediation and demolition of the existing Fiterman Hall, work is also proceeding on the design of a new building for the site,” the Chancellor said in a statement in November.

“Pei Cobb Freed & Partners recently completed the design development phase and is now preparing construction documents. Construction of the new classroom building is scheduled to begin in 2008. We anticipate a construction period of approximately two years.”

“Remediation” of the existing building refers to its decontamination, removal of any potentially harmful debris or materials. CUNY, together with the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DAS-NY), selected PAL, Environmental Safety Corp. to perform the remediation and deconstruction.

In October, PAL submitted designs for scaffolding erection operations to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for review by the EPA and other regulatory agencies.

Work will begin only after the expected approval of the government agencies.

To keep the community informed about the progress of work at Fiterman, the University and BMCC have launched an e-mail newsletter, “Fiterman News: Keeping Our Community Informed.”

Those interested in that or other aspects of the deconstruction and rebuilding process can visit www.bmcc.cuny.edu/fitermannews.

At the website, visitors can view a slide show of the architect’s renderings of the planned new facility and can keep informed about upcoming events related to the project, as well as read official documents.

Special concern will be taken with respect to the chance that human remains are in the area, a possibility highlighted by the discovery of scores of body parts in areas around Ground Zero in October.

“We are working with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to make diligent efforts to perform new searches,” Goldstein said. “A meeting was held at the site with both the chief Medical Examiner’s Office and the City’s Office of Disaster Management Operations to discuss search plans.

‘Incubator’ at LaGuardia, with Morgan

Sarah Morgan has a good thing going. Her leather handbags, belts and cuffs, all accessories with a New York attitude, are sold at nearly a dozen hip Manhattan and Brooklyn boutiques, and she’s getting orders from around the country.

Sarah Morgan, with her leather bags and other items that she designs. Morgan is one of a number of small entrepreneurs being assisted by LaGuardia’s “incubator program,” called NY Designs.
Rebirth of Ground Zero and of the BMCC Campus

The Chancellor added, ‘The safety and well being of residents, our students and faculty, business and community members, and the families of the 9/11 victims is of paramount importance to the University and the College.’

Located at 30 West Broadway, Fiterman Hall suffered structural damage from the roof to the basement when tons of debris rained down from the 47-story World Trade Center 7 following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The building was just two weeks shy of completing a $64 million renovation, including a state-of-the-art academic center and library when the attacks occurred, heavily damaging its south side.

Miles and Shirley Fiterman donated Fiterman Hall to Manhattan Community College in 1993. Erected in 1959, it was formerly an office building. The project budget is coming from the state and city, the September 11 Fund and a proper-

General education classrooms will be concentrated on the lower floors. The upper floors will house specialized depart-
ments such as accounting, business, computer information system and art and music. A conference center is planned for the top two floors. Fiterman Hall will have two covered entries: one on the corner of Greenwich Street and Park Place, anticipated to be the main entrance, and a second one on Barclay Street, facing a new park in front of 7 World Trade Center. Borough of Manhattan Community College serves more than 19,000 degree-seeking students and an additional 19,000 in continuing and professional education courses.

Assembly Speaker Silver’s Help, Assists Local Businesses

The 31-year-old entrepreneur is set to expand her two-year-old business—she has plans for her bags to take Japan by storm next year—so she signed on as one of the first tenants in NY Designs, the world’s largest ‘incubator’ for designers. With its 12-foot-high ceilings, glass walls and enormous windows, the 34,000-square-foot space at LaGuardia Community College, she says, is the perfect place to nurture her company, which she calls ‘eeNamara.’

And it is here where her business dreams will hatch and then grow.

‘The rent—$550 per month—is negligibly cheap, and I’m not just paying for floor space. I have access to three beautiful conference rooms, and this will help with the image I want to project, and I can’t wait to use the workroom. But it’s more than just the rent. It’s the psychological impact of being here. As a designer, you often exist in a vacuum, and here I have quick access to other designers and other resources.’

Jeff Goodman of GoodDesign, a seven-year-old lighting design company that sells to designers and architects, knows exactly what Morgan means. “There is a sense of community and the encouragement to collaborate,” he says. “Just today I ran into one of my co-tenants and heard about a great idea.”

That synergy, NY Designs is LaGuardia’s latest link to the local business community. The LaGuardia Urban Center for Economic Development provides professional training and business support programs to business-
es in western Queens and its Small Business Development Center offers free business technical assistance to startup and established entrepreneurs.

‘Chancellor Goldstein has established a vision for the City University of New York that uses the intellectual capital present in our colleges to support economic development and job creation,’ says CUNY President Gail Mellow. “This is terrific for our students, our faculty and our community.”

It also is terrific for Morgan, Goodman and the other design tenants who have taken up residence in NY Designs. An enthusiast Morgan says, “I intend to make eeNamara a lifestyle brand. I’m going to introduce chandeliers next. What I really need now are investors.”
Hurdling Obstacles, She Wins Every Single Race

Noria Nodrat completed her sixth New York City Marathon this November, an impressive feat for any 45-year-old woman, let alone one who's totally blind.

In a sense, you could say that Nodrat has been running marathons her entire life. When she receives her associate's degree from the New York City College of Technology at the end of this semester, she will have in hand yet another confirmation of her irrepressible inner spirit.

At 16, back in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, Nodrat entered an arranged marriage with a man 21 years her senior. In her native country, women were expected to be subservient. Nodrat bore two children and learned Braille to assist her husband and eldest brother, both of whom were blind.

But she also joined one of Afghanistan's fledgling women's organizations, founded in the hopeful days when the nation seemed to be modernizing.

"I went door to door in Kabul and talked to women about how important it was to be educated, because most women didn’t have an education. Even when I was in my compound, I wasn't the type of woman to stay behind; I always tried to forward my own education, because most women didn't have an education," Nodrat said, in English that is charmingly idiosyncratic.

"I'm a very independent person," she added. Nooria Nodrat entered all that independence during the painful era of Afghanistan's civil war. Her brother was abducted and executed by Islamic extremists in 1988. Several years later, her husband was killed by a terrorist bomb. She fled to the United States with her parents in 1991, but she had to leave behind her son and daughter, then only nine and six. Five long years passed before she was able to bring them to America.

"Women in my country have to be very, very patient," she said. "I always tried to forward my education."

Then, just three months after her children arrived, came the fateful incident in the subway. Nodrat was attacked by a mentally disturbed teenager, who threw her to the floor and repeatedly punched her in the head. Her retinas, already weakened by glaucoma, were destroyed, and she lost her sight. Her children, themselves grappling with the difficult adjustment to life in a new country, helped her endure five surgeries and the painful adjustment to total blindness.

"They supported me in every way, I am so proud of them," she said. "Now 25 and 22, both are attending college and doing well. The hardest thing for me to live with, their mother said, 'is that I never got to physically see them grow into adults.'"

But Nodrat is not the sort of person who wastes time on regrets. She enrolled at City Tech in 2002. Her initial progress was slow, as she suffered the consequences from the Achilles Track Club, six fellow runners, who helped her to avoid collisions, and find water during the marathon; and the Human Services Department and Student Support office at City Tech, which aids more than 30 students with visual disabilities.

She very much feels the pain the her home country is still suffering. "For more than three generations, the people of Afghanistan have lived with war. We were raised in a very hard situation, so we are very head- strong and stubborn, we try to figure out a way past the obstacles. And people still have hope that one day there will be peace—I am still hoping." Nodrat wants to make a contribution to the well-being of her homeland, particularly its less fortunate citizens. She's working to create a foundation to help blind women and children in Afghanistan.

"My job is to raise my voice," she said. "I hope to encourage sighted people to support organizations that help women and the disabled."

Nodrat was a little disappointed with her time of 7:39:25 in this year's marathon: given the tenacity and courage she's displayed at each twist and turn in her challenging life's road, it seems very likely that she'll eventually achieve this goal. It hardly matters, because in a very real sense Nooria Nodrat has won every race she ever entered.

City Tech student Nooria Nodrat, who is blind and runs marathons, speaking to Karen Matthews, an Associated Press reporter, after Nodrat finished the recent New York marathon.
City Tech Builds Program, and Construction Mavens Come Scaffolding, excava ted lots and construction cranes are as ubiquitous to New York as yellow cabs and street vendors hawking knock off handbags. With construction so crucial to the city’s econ omy, new technologies and safety issues are a major concern.

Enter the new Academy of Construction Education and Safety (ACES), at the Division of Continuing Education at New York City College of Technology. Aimed at developing professionals in construction and general industry, the Academy, with its training partner American Safety Consultants LLC, offers safety and certificate programs, credentials recognized by the industry as well as certi fications in response to new local laws.

Courses at the downtown Brooklyn campus are geared for OSHA (Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration) certifica tions, but can be taken individually by those with specific workforce interests. Health and Safety Plan Development, Fire Safety, and Project Management are among the offerings.

For information visit www.citytech.cuny. edu/academics/conted.html or call 718-552-1170.


In Rochester, murders of young African-American, American-born males plummeted 70 percent. In Boston, homicides of those 24 and younger were cut by two-thirds. In the once drug- and crime-ridden town of High Point, N.C., there wasn’t a gun assault for a year.

Such statistics, brought by the innova tive crime-control strategies of David Kennedy, have elevated the John Jay College criminologist and head of its Center for Crime Prevention and Control to miracle-worker status, and made him one of CUNY’s most sought after experts.

With both the man and his results described as “brilliant,” “stunning” and “cut through,” the New York Times described Kennedy’s work as “a multi disciplinary work based on La Plena, a traditional Puerto Rican musical genre. “I will create a permanent exhibit at Hostos about La Plena and the Dance of Death,” a genre in vogue during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, said Martorell. His work will be a marriage between old and new traditions, an artistic rendering of the vibrant cultural expressions that the New World of the Americas has to offer,” Kennedy said.
Thousands of Veterans Become Students Again, Challenging the Colleges to Find Ways of Helping Them

There are an estimated 3,000 veterans of the United States military attending CUNY colleges, and many of them have served in Iraq, putting their lives at risk in a way that five years ago—before the events of September 11, 2001—seemed almost unimaginable.

Some of them had been college students before putting on their uniforms, and so their presence now on campus is like a homecoming, albeit one with special stresses related to their experiences facing death and violence in a war-ripped country.

University administrators and their counterparts at the campuses have been attempting over the past year to put together special programs for the veterans, recognizing their unique backgrounds and their special needs—financial and psychological—as they attempt to resume a measure of normalcy.

At Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, Dean of Students Norman Toback said he anticipates that many thousands of veterans will be returning to the metropolitan area in the next couple of years. He says that Kingsborough is trying to keep up its counseling and other services for them, as a way of enticing them to come and then helping them to succeed once they are there.

“We anticipate there will be 10,000 returning veterans in the metro area in the next couple of years,” Toback said. “And many of them, we anticipate, will want to avail themselves of the educational benefits that they earned as military. So we’re increasing our recruitment and other services.

Among the special services being developed at Kingsborough is “a complete one-stop service center,” where the vets can receive health screening, personal counseling and advice about their benefits as veterans.

Over at Brooklyn College, Claudette Gunn, Coordinator of Student Affairs and Veterans Services, Brooklyn College, has been especially active in helping students who have returned from military duty. In one of many bonding activities, the vets make annual trips to Washington, D.C. to take part in Memorial Day services there. From time to time they gather for enjoyment and to lend each other emotional support.

Sgt. Ariel Luna, a senior at Brooklyn College, who lives in Starrett City, joined the U.S. Army National Guard in 1999. In 2002, his unit based in Jamaica, Queens was called to active duty and Luna spent 11 months in Iraq.

On his tour, Luna often worked 18 hours a day, 6 days a week, driving trucks to maintain supply routes in and out of Baghdad for three weeks at a time. On the fourth week, he worked guard duty—a break considering it was only a 12-hour time with.

“It was one hell of an experience,” said Luna, a radio and television major. “Every day something happened… But compared to other units, we were lucky. We only lost one guy. We had twenty injured.”

Since his return home, Luna has thrown himself into his work as student, at an internship, and in two part-time jobs.

“Basically, I like to fill my time with some kind of activity,” said the 25-year-old.

“I just have one day off when I sleep—otherwise I like to stay busy.”

Luna said he is grateful that he has been able to cope reasonably well—something he knows other returning soldiers from his unit have had a tough time with. He’s heard stories of soldiers who have drinking or drug problems or simply cannot accept with the law because of domestic battery cases.

“A lot of the guys didn’t come back with a lot of gas,” Luna said. For some of them, I think, the war was the straw that broke the camel’s back.”

Luna said he learned valuable lessons about his own resiliency and his ability to get a lot accomplished in a day. He’s considering going to for a master’s degree, but he said he may just try to get a job after graduation, and go to grad school later.

Meanwhile, either on campus or outside recruiting stations located near the colleges, military recruiters are attempting to entice other students into service, stressing the material benefits, such as pay and tuition assistance, as well as the pride that many members feel in wearing their country’s uniform.

On a recent weekday, a U.S. Army recruiter, Staff Sgt. Rashid Keitt, was at Kingsborough Community College trying to interest students in signing up. Around the country, recruiters have been having a difficult time getting young men and women to enlist, in large part because of the Iraq war and its high death toll, now approaching 3,000 American servicemen and servicewomen.

Keitt conceded that the war has made recruiting tougher and he said he encounters resistance from students and their parents. “They just think if you join the Army you will be sent straight to the war in Iraq.”

Keitt says it’s not true that enlistees will necessarily end up in Iraq or Afghanistan. “I’ve served for seven years and I’ve been to neither,” he said.

But nearby was Jesse Campbell, a 22-year-old student, who was more than a little skeptical.

Campbell, a freshman from Carnarvon, joined the Marines a few months after 9/11, angry over the loss of a friend who was killed in the World Trade Center attack. Campbell remained on active duty from 2002 through this year, and he was never called to Iraq or to Afghanistan during that time. He stayed stateside as part of detail working as HAZMAT responders for the Department of Homeland Security.

And so he was able to enroll at Kingsborough, receiving $1,184 toward his tuition and expenses under the GI bill.

But Campbell said that last month he received an email from the Marines that has been causing him great concern, as it advises him of his continuing obligation to the military.

According to the contract he signed at age 17 he has to serve four years active

The Rev. Rafael Cornelii calls former Borough of Manhattan Community College student Hai Ming Hsia, who was killed in Iraq this summer, as a symbol of multi-cultural New York.

Hsia, serving as an Army Specialist, was on patrol in the Iraq city of Ramadi when his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb. He was 37.

Several years ago Hsia had put his dreams of finishing college on hold, as he enlisted in the military to support his growing family.

Cornelii, a priest at St. James Roman Catholic Church in lower Manhattan, told CUNY Matters that Hsia was “truly-cultural,” and spoke English like a proud New Yorker, but also spoke Spanish and Chinese fluently. His mother was Puerto Rican and his father Chinese.

“IT was like losing the Triborough Bridge,” Cornelii said.

CUNY’s Veterans Affairs website (www.cuny.edu/veterans) tells visitors about Hsia, saying he “was a real New Yorker, a native of lower Manhattan’s Chinatown.” Hsia “tried his hand at college, attending the Borough of Manhattan Community College, just a short walk from his neighborhood.”

Then, in 2002, a year after the fall of the nearby twin towers, Hai Min Hsia’s wife, Yanise, gave him the news that they were going to have a child. Realizing that his security job would not provide for three, he suspended his college goals and enlisted in the U.S. Army, we are told.

The “Fallen Heroes’ link on the website pays homage also to four other former CUNY students previously killed while serving in Iraq. They are: Army Spec. Segun Frederick Akintade (New York City College of Technology); Army Pfc. Francis C. Obaji (College of Staten Island); Army Pfc. James E. Prevete (Queens College); and Army Pfc. Min Soo Choi (John Jay College).
University-wide Push to Recruit and Assist Veterans

The City University of New York has launched several major initiatives aimed at recruiting veterans and assisting them in overcoming educational, financial and other obstacles they face as they begin pondering career options.

- All colleges have appointed veterans affairs coordinators to disseminate information to veterans.
- A new website, www.cuny.edu/veterans, with features and information on admissions, finances, and services available to vets, is in operation. On the website, veterans are able to post comments about matters of concern to their community. The CUNY site is also linked to the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs website at www.nyc.gov.
- Special “one-stop” centers, where veterans receive counseling on benefits, and special help in adapting to their lives as students, have opened or are being planned at the campuses.
- CUNY in November participated in a New York Times-sponsored “Salute to Heroes” Recruitment Day, attended by several thousand veterans and active servicemen and servicewomen. University representatives counseled the attendees on opportunities at the colleges and on career paths.

In a notable symbolic gesture, the University had a float in this November’s New York Veterans Day parade. Chancellor Matthew Goldstein said the University has an obligation to help veterans as they re-enter civilian life and begin pondering career options.

“Veterans Day should be observed all year round. We must ensure that veterans can re-enter civilian life and find success through education,” said Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, speaking of the University’s new initiatives.

“Thousands of young men and women are returning to metropolitan New York from military service, and we believe it is our duty to help them find a path to the success,” the chancellor added.

Robert Ptachik, the University Dean for the Executive Office and Enrollment, has been helping to oversee the expanded efforts for veterans. He’s especially fit to do the job because he’s a veteran who was wounded in the Vietnam War.

Working with him is Christopher Rosa, a 24-year-old student at Brooklyn College who served recently as an army sergeant in Iraq.

For more information, please visit www.cuny.edu/veterans.

Above is an ad created to encourage veterans to come to CUNY’s colleges. In uniform on the Brooklyn College campus in late September were (left, wearing camouflage) former Army Sgt. Ariel J. Luna and former Marine Cpl. David H. Faic (right, in Marine dress uniform). Both are now Brooklyn College students.

“Returning Veterans Choose CUNY”

The University’s coordinator of services to veterans and students with disabilities, Andrea Cohen, a counselor at the college’s counseling center, said that veterans today come equipped with a plethora of skills, but “concerns over growing anti-war sentiment resulting from the U.S. military involvement in Iraq have made some veteran students anxious over how the general school population will receive them.”

City Tech says that Project W.I.N. is designed, in part, to encourage student-veterans “to allay their concerns about openly identifying themselves as veterans.”

Schwartz concludes by saying, “Above all else, we want them to know that they’ll be welcomed at City Tech.”

In the end, it is perhaps precisely that—a nurturing, welcoming attitude—that will make all the difference for veterans, as for other students with special needs. In this regard, the website of CUNY’s Veterans Affairs website (www.cuny.edu/veterans) includes, as personal testimony, a statement from recent Hunter graduate John Byrnes.

“In October of 2003, just a few credits shy of a January graduation, I was mobilized for duty in Iraq. It was fifteen months before I was able to return to college,” Byrnes said.

“The interruptions of schooling caused by my deployments were frustrating, and at times it seemed like no one at school understood the situation. The system wasn’t prepared for military students.”

“Through it all, in spite of the frustrations, Hunter College administrators worked with me…When I graduated in June of 2005, Hunter College President Jennifer Raab made a point of telling my story to everyone in attendance.”

Byrnes concludes saying, “As an alumnus and a veteran currently working with the University to help make CUNY an even friendlier place for veterans.”

CUNY Matters by Andrea Cohen, a counselor at the college’s counseling center, said that veterans today come equipped with a plethora of skills, but “concerns over growing anti-war sentiment resulting from the U.S. military involvement in Iraq have made some veteran students anxious over how the general school population will receive them.”

City Tech says that Project W.I.N. is designed, in part, to encourage student-veterans “to allay their concerns about openly identifying themselves as veterans.”

Schwartz concludes by saying, “Above all else, we want them to know that they’ll be welcomed at City Tech.”

In the end, it is perhaps precisely that—a nurturing, welcoming attitude—that will make all the difference for veterans, as for other students with special needs. In this regard, the website of CUNY’s Veterans Affairs website (www.cuny.edu/veterans) includes, as personal testimony, a statement from recent Hunter graduate John Byrnes.

“In October of 2003, just a few credits shy of a January graduation, I was mobilized for duty in Iraq. It was fifteen months before I was able to return to college,” Byrnes said.

“The interruptions of schooling caused by my deployments were frustrating, and at times it seemed like no one at school understood the situation. The system wasn’t prepared for military students.”

“Through it all, in spite of the frustrations, Hunter College administrators worked with me…When I graduated in June of 2005, Hunter College President Jennifer Raab made a point of telling my story to everyone in attendance.”

Byrnes concludes saying, “As an alumnus and a veteran currently working with the University to help make CUNY an even friendlier place for veterans.”
Sophie Davis Grad Completes White House Fellowship

Dr. Laurie Zephyrin is now immersed in her demanding work at the Columbia University Medical Center, where she’s an Assistant Professor in Obstetrics and Gynecology, and at the Allen Pavilion, where she treats upper-Manhattan patients, large numbers of them on Medicaid.

Dr. Zephyrin, a 1997 graduate of City College’s Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, is still hearty from her experiences at the center of power in Washington, where she spent a year in the country’s most prestigious program for leadership and public service.

The Rand or so apply every year for the White House Fellowship, and about a dozen are selected. Among the approximately 600 alumni over the 42-year history of the program are at least two other CUNY graduates.

The most famous of all Fellows is Colin Powell, who, like Zephyrin, is an alumnus of City College (class of 1958). He was a Fellow in 1972 and 1973, and, of course, went on to become a U.S. Secretary of State.

Another is Eric Holder, who earned his master’s degree from Hunter in 1996 and was in the 2002-2003 group of fellows. Holder, on leave as a New York City Police Department captain during his fellowship, retired from the NYPD last year. He cited to the area right comment.

As for Zephyrin, she started her stint as a White House Fellow on Sept. 1, 2005, as Hurricane Katrina was leaving death, destruction, and despair throughout the Gulf region.

Given her background as a physician and her assignment with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Zephyrin found herself dissecting and distilling the area right comment. “My first couple of days on the job I traveled with the Secretary (Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson) to the Gulf, to see first-hand the impact of Hurricane Katrina,” Zephyrin said.

The Department of Veterans Affairs had the task of making sure veterans were cared for, and that the Department’s medical facilities were made available—as much as possible, given the destruction—to all those in need.

During her White House Fellowship year, the Sophie Davis alumni met and chatted with some of the country’s most powerful officials—including President Bush, CEO’s of corporations, U.S. military commanders. She also met fellow City College alumn Powell.

But Katrina, which took hundreds of lives and crushed many spirits, is the event that will still stand out with special prominence in her memory. “I would say, in a sense, that the Fellowship year was largely defined by Hurricane Katrina,” said Zephyrin, who visited the area twice and worked on various issues related to emergency preparedness.

The goal of the White House Fellowship program is to show brilliant and ambitious young professionals like Zephyrin just how public policy is made at the highest levels. In Zephyrin’s case, she applied to the program hoping to better understand the intersection between medicine and business, and medicine and public policy.

Zephyrin says her life’s ambition is to help deliver quality health care to low-income, underrepresented communities. “How do you improve the delivery of care to the broadest number of people?” she asked rhetorically.

Her humanistic view is traceable to Sophie Davis, where she says Dean Stanford Roman also summarizes his mission with a question: “How do you create a cadre of young people who want to give back to the underserved people of New York State?”

Among those responding to the challenge posed by that query was then-fellow Dr. Jack Geiger, who mentored Zephyrin. Geiger, now retired and a professor emeritus, was the founding chairperson of the School’s Department of Community Health and Medicine.

Dr. Laurie Zephyrin, at the Allen Pavilion in upper Manhattan, where she treats patients. A graduate of CCNY’s Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, she recently finished a year as a White House Fellow.

Sophie Davis is a jewel in the country’s storehouse of medical education. Students pursue pre-med studies for five years, and then they attend (for two years) one of a half dozen participating medical schools. The medical school includes Albany Medical College, Dartmouth Medical School, New York Medical College, New York University School of Medicine, The State University of New York (SUNY) Health Science Center at Brooklyn, and SUNY at Stony Brook School of Medicine. Zephyrin graduated from NYU in 1999. During Zephyrin’s year in Washington, she met scores of Hopefuls like Powell or international and world scene. “We met with about three to four global leaders a week… Essentially the twelve of us would get to sit with them in an intimate setting,” she recalled.

Among those who shared time with the Fellows was President Bush. “He met with us in the Roosevelt Room for two hours, maybe a little bit more,” Zephyrin said of the January session at the White House, where the president answered their questions and spoke broadly of the responsibilities facing public leaders.

The White House Fellowship was designed for promising American men and women in a range of professions. Diverse in their backgrounds and ethnicities, they do share one notable trait. They are all young. It must be said of Zephyrin that she is accustomed to youthful success. At the age of 15, when she was a student at Brooklyn Technical High School, she knew she wanted to be a physician. Later, she accepted into the Sophie Davis program, where students—because of the five-year, two-year arrangement—emerge as very young physicians. Zephyrin received her medical degree at the age of 24.

Besides two trips to the Gulf Coast, Zephyrin traveled during her fellowship year “to Alaska to get a sense of environmental policy,” and also to Panama, Chile, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil “to get a sense of U.S. foreign policy” in Latin America.

Among the others in Zephyrin’s Fellowship class were a Rhodes Scholar, a C.E.O., an investment banker, two lawyers and several with military backgrounds. Before receiving the Fellowship, Zephyrin was a Robert Wood Johnson Scholar at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, where she did clinical work and research on issues such as women with HIV and cervical cancer.

In terms of her development as a person and a professional, the doctor said she owes her greatest debt to her parents, Antonio and Carmela Zephyrin. The Zephyrins emigrated here from Haiti in the 1960s, and they still live in Queens Village, where they raised their children.

“They really focused on their family. They sacrificed everything for us,” Zephyrin said.

Kudos for Sleep Study

Matthew A. Tucker, now completing a Ph.D. program in psychology, led a team of researchers that published an article about sleep in a prestigious journal, Neurobiology of Learning and Memory.

The article was picked up and referred to in a number of other publications in North America and Europe this fall. Tucker and the others to their research at The Laboratory of Cognitive Neuroscience and Sleep, affiliated with the CUNY Graduate Center and located at City College Tucker said.

The researchers found that “sleep wave” sleep—even in small chunks of time and even without the so-called REM (rapid eye movement) activity—helps people perform better on memory tests.

“We found that if subjects get this 45 minutes of sleep, they improve on memory tasks,” Tucker said.

Tucker is slated to defend his dissertation in mid-December.

Submit Honors

Award for Student Exposé

The International Press Association of New York honored Brooklyn College journalism student Claudio Cabrera with a third place award for a story he did while working last winter as an intern for the Amsterdam News.

The story, titled “Punishing Phone Call Tax for Families of Incarcerated,” first appeared in the Amsterdam News on February 8, 2006. It was repurposed the next day in edition 206 of Voices That Must Be Heard, the online newsletter of IPA-New York.

In the story Cabrera exposed how New York State levies a heavy tax on inmates of the state’s Department of Correction prisons and their loved ones by requiring that convicts must call their families collect, using a prison system-operated phone system that marks up calls by as much as 630 percent.

Cabrera received his award at a ceremony held October 27, 2006.

New Board Member

The CUNY Board of Trustees has a new ex-officio member, Robert Ramos, Jr., a Brooklyn College graduate student.

Ramos, who is replacing Carlos Sierra as the student representative and as Chairperson of the University Student Senate.

Having grown up in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn in the new lives in Flatbush, just two blocks from his college—Ramos knows the problems of pre-college public education in New York City.

“I would say one of the main problems is inequitable funding, how some schools get more money than other schools,” said Ramos, who’s going for a master’s degree in childhood education mathematics.

Throughout CUNY, Ramos said, he’d like to see more full-time faculty members involved in the school’s work toward that goal.

The new board member assumed his ex-officio post in late October.

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Colin Powell Recalls Year as White House Fellow (1972-73)

When the Fellows discussed the power of the executive branch, it was then-President Nixon. When we studied the legislative branch, it was the U.S. senators. When the subject was social programs, we talked to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare… The aim of the program was to let us inside the engine room to see the cogs and gears of government grinding away and also to take us up high for the panoramic view. In all the schools of political science, in all the courses in public administration throughout the country, there could be nothing comparable to this education.

...The people I had met during that year were going to shape my future in ways unimaginable to me then…"
A back in 1991, a week before triple-
bypass surgery was scheduled for her,
67-year-old Sala Ganczarcz Kirschner
decided to give up her decades-old
habit. She produced a red
cardboard box and
gave it to her daugh-
ter for safe-keeping,
saying simply, “You
should have this.”
That daughter,
Ann, thought at first
the box might contain
jewelry, but instead it
out poured more than
350 items—letters,
government and war-
related documents,
diary entries, and
photographs—recru-
ating the heroic and
harrowing story of
Sala’s odyssey through
the Nazi labor camps
in Germany, Poland, and
Czechoslovakia
between 1940 and
1945, in her late teens
and early 20’s.

Ann Kirschner,
newly appointed
Dean of the CUNY Honors College, writes
that the cardboard box changed her life,
setting her off on a journey of discovery to
put these materials, written in Polish,
Yiddish, but mostly German, into familial
and historical context. After solving many
puzzles evoked by the trove and numerous
subsequent interviews with Sala and her
one surviving sister, Raizel, as well as many
Holocaust survivors, Kirschner has now
published Sala’s Gift: My Mother’s
Holocaust Story (Free Press).

That the memorabilia—most important-
ly the letters Sala received from family and
friends—survived at all was a miracle.
Perhaps the only good thing about labor
camps was that mail and care packages
were allowed. At great risk of punishment
by her S.S. guards, Sala began to save and
hide her letters. The precious hoard grew
by her S.S. guards, Sala began to save and
hide her letters. The precious hoard grew
and extended family members who died in
the labor camps, including Josef
and his wife Chana.
Sala’s early diary
passages now and
then capture the weight of separation and
all the ambient brutality. Early on, at her
first camp, she records, “The world is mean-
ing, life is terrible, and there is much to
lament... The world is complaining, and
there is a void around us.” But the more
common note is one of determined opti-
mism. Sala boasts, justly, in one letter, “I am
one stubborn girl.” That grit was especially
needed as the Nazis were being pushed
back on the eastern and western fronts in
1944 and as labor camps were closed, their
workers put on trains or death marches to
the gas chambers.

Perhaps the most fascinating character
in Sala’s story (worthy of Hollywood treat-
ment) is a jaunty, charismatic Polish Jew
named Ala Gertner. She happened to be
present when Sala was put on the train to her
first labor camp. An older woman, she
took the frightened teenager under her
wing and made Sala her protégé from her
position of some influence with the Nazis
(she worked for a while in the offices of
Monter Bank). Some of the most poignant
saved letters are from Ala written after the
two were sent to different factories.

Kirschner’s most riveting pages recount
Ala’s heroic end. By mid-1943, her rela-
tively comfortable life by the offices of
labor camps ended, and she was transport-
ed to a factory making explosive devices
adjacent to the Auschwitz crematoria. Ala
joined three other women in the camp’s
underground resistance who were assigned
to the gunpowder room. Their conspiracy
was to save out tiny amounts of powder,
make a bomb of their own, and then blow
up a crematorium. On October 7, 1944,
their plot succeeded.

This so-called Auschwitz Uprising
caused a huge furor and intense investiga-
tion, described in detail by Kirschner. The
conspirators were caught and executed on
January 5, 1945. The last roll call at
Auschwitz was, heartbreakingly, a mere 12
days later. A monument to the four is in
the garden of the Holocaust memorial Yad
Vashem in Jerusalem.

By June of 1946, Sala was settled in
an East Harlem apartment as the bride
of Sidney Kirschner, an American soldier.
“She hid some of the letters,” Dean Kirschner
writes. “She said nothing about them or about
her life during the war for nearly fifty years.”
A few years after Sala’s letters saw the
light, Ann, her parents, and her brothers
Joseph and David paid their only visit back
to Monsey, New York. “But they do winter in
their attic in Staten Island.”

Kirshef reports that her par-
ents are alive and well, living upstate
in Monsey, New York. “But they do winter in
Florida.” Sala’s letters now reside in the
Dorot Jewish Division at the NYPL and
can be found online at www.nypl.org
and www.letterstosala.org.

Science of First Impressions
Typecasting is an ambi-
tous book that chroni-
les the history of the
science of first impression,”
revealing how the work of its creators—early social
scientists—continues to shape how we interact
in our world.

Written by spouses Stuart Even and
Elizabeth Even—he of the CUNY
Graduate Center and the Film and Media
Studies Department at Hunter College,
and she a professor of American Studies at
SUNY Old Westbury—Typecasting was published
by Seven Stories Press.
The authors present a vivid portrait of
terminology and practices that shape
colonialism, mass media and the global economy.

Interviews with Woody Allen
O ver his long filmmak-
ing career, Woody
Allen, who turns 71 in
December, has gained a
reputation as a reluctant,
reticent interviewee.

Happy, there is much to
believe this close-to-the-vest
reputation in Woody Allen
Interviews (University Press of
Mississippi).
The book was edited and
edited by Robert Kapus, Queens College
sociologist, and Kathie Cobolentz of
the New York Public Library.

Among the many priceless Woody
moments in the volume is the boggling
news, in Frank Rich’s lively 1979 inter-
view for Time magazine, that the original
title for Annie Hall was Anderdshria,
the psychological term meaning “incapecapable of experiencing pleasure.”

Impresario Tells All
Max Maretzke is well
known among
acquaintances of New
York City’s musical life for his
two colorful memoirs that
were published in 1882 and
1890.

Now Ruth Henderson, music librarian
at City College, has published
Another Revolution of an Opera Manager in
19th Century New York (Harrassowitz
Press), an informatively introduced and
amusingly annotated third installment of
Maretzke’s memoirs that was left in
manuscript at his death in 1897. (It came to light out of
a Staten Island attic in 1981.)

Among the highlights of the volume are
Maretzke’s description of taking under his wing Clara Louise Kellogg, the
first American singer to enjoy a stellar
European career.

Global Perspectives
Call it a study of intol-
eric and cultural diver-
ity.

Lead, Follow, or Move
Out of the Way: Global
Perspectives in Literature includes works
by well-known writers like James
Baldwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Toni
Morrison and Elie Wiesel, who share
space with lesser-known artists.

The authors—City Tech English
professors Monique Ferrell and Julian
Williams—say they wish to provide
a safe space for their students to learn, express and express a clearer picture
of who they wish to become. Their new
book was published by Kendall/Hunt
Publishing Company.
Professor Elected to Institute of Medicine

Dr. Marthe R. Gold, Chair of Community Health and Social Medicine at The Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, has been elected to the Institute of Medicine. (Institute) members are elected through a highly selective process that recognizes people who have made major contributions to the advancement of the medical sciences, health care and public health,” said Institute President Harvey V. Fineberg.

“Election is considered one of the highest honors in the fields of medicine and health.”

The appointment of Gold, a medical doctor who—in addition to being a department chair—is also Arthur C. Logan Professor at Sophie Davis, was hailed as a tremendous honor for the School by its Dean, Dr. Stanford Roman.

“As a clinician, teacher and policymaker, Marthe Gold has been a tireless champion of the value of preventive care in improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of care provided to members of economically disadvantaged groups,” Roman said.

“The Sophie Davis faculty joins me in saluting this tremendous honor.”

Part of The City College of New York, Sophie Davis’s goal is to train physicians who will provide health care to underserved communities in New York.

The Institute of Medicine, established by the National Academy of Science in 1970, announced its 65 new members this fall, bringing its total active membership to 1,501. The Institute is a nationally recognized resource for independent, scientific analysis and for making recommendations on issues related to human health.

Gold, who joined the Sophie Davis faculty in 1997, previously spent six years as a senior policy advisor in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, working on economic and financing issues for disease prevention and health promotion. She participated in the Clinton 1993 Task Force for Health Care Reform. Also, she directed the work of the Panel on Cost-Effectiveness in Health and Medicine, a non-federal expert group whose final report, issued by the Department of Health and Human Services in 1996, remains an influential guide to cost-effectiveness methodology for academic and policy uses.

Gold received her M.D. with honors from the Tufts University School of Medicine, and completed her training in Family Practice at the University of Rochester, where she served on the faculty from 1983 to 1990. She received her public health training at Columbia University School of Public Health.

Online Social Networks Like MySpace and Facebook

A year ago, James Jackson, Jr. noticed that his sister, LaShawna, always seemed to be logged onto Facebook, the popular social networking Website, talking with friends from high school or college classmates at Temple University.

“I wanted to have the same kind of connection,” said Jackson, a senior at New York City College of Technology. So he registered with Facebook, put up a personal profile, and began assembling his ‘friends’ list.

“Pretty soon, he was spending a lot of time on Facebook—a lot. ‘Once you get in it, it gets addictive,’ said the Brooklyn resident. ‘It’s the new ‘safe drug,’ ” he joked. Later, he also joined MySpace, the wildly popular networking site among both high school and college students. He now has close to 200 friends on Facebook, about 80 from CUNY, and about 500 friends on MySpace.

While he’s no longer constantly logged onto the sites (“I’ve digressed to checking once a day”), he still enjoys browsing through his friends lists, posting comments or messages. ‘I’ll holler at somebody—‘Hey, thinking about you, just wondering how you were doing.”

Jackson is among millions of college students nationwide who now log on every day to social sites like Facebook, MySpace, Friendster and Xanga. MySpace, which was launched in 2003 and is now owned by media magnate Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp., accounts for more than a lion’s share of social networking traffic, with tens of millions of users. Facebook, founded in 2004 by a group of Harvard University students, has fewer users, but initially was known for serving exclusively college students, until it recently decided to expand membership to everyone.

While there is no official count of how many CUNY students are members of such sites—users are not required to put down a college affiliation—it’s clear that they are a ubiquitous part of campus life.

Everyone is Doing It

“The buzz is that if you’re in college, you have a page,” said Ken Bach, director of public relations at College of Staten Island. At CSI, which has about 12,000 students, more than 4,800 people are registered on MySpace, said Bach, but ‘from the students that I’ve spoken to, they’ve said they wouldn’t be surprised if every student is there,’ but for some reason or other did not put down their affiliation.

Most students who use these networks put up profiles that include a array of personal information, from photo albums to favorite movies, books, quotes and social activities. Others join networking groups that reflect particular interests or affiliations. On MySpace, for example, there are CUNY groups for students at Baruch College, Hunter College and John Jay College of Criminal Justice, as well as a separate group, ‘Queer CUNY’ where gay and lesbian students ‘can meet each other, discuss important topics, and share event information” across the university’s 19 campuses.

“It’s fulfilling a demand that students are looking for, whether it’s singular interests or peer levels,” said Brian Cohen, CUNY’s Chief Information Officer. “This gives people another tool to create their own forums.”

Jackson points out that social networking sites can be especially useful in making friends at commuter schools: When Jackson is on campus, ‘it can be hard for people to come up to you and start a conversation,’ he says. But if they see you on Facebook first, it makes it easier to break the ice.”

Networking sites have grown so popular that faculty and administrators at many universities, including CUNY, are exploring ways to use such sites to reach out to students.

“I’m a firm believer in communicating with students in ways that are compatible with how they are living their lives and, these days, their lives are often virtual,” says Alexandra Logue, Special Advisor to the Chancellor of the City University of New York. Logue, who has her own pages on MySpace and Facebook, notes that many students now do all their e-mail through these sites, rather than using traditional e-mail.

By most accounts, the most prominent example of institutional use of networking sites at CUNY has been undertaken by Beth Evans, an electronic services specialist and associate professor at Brooklyn College Library. After being introduced to MySpace a year ago by her then-15-year-old daughter, Nell, Evans decided to launch a Brooklyn College Library MySpace profile last March, with the help of two interns, Frances Keiser and Jonathan Cope. From a pool of more than 5,000 students who identified themselves as affiliated with Brooklyn College, Evans and her interns signed up 1,880 friends of Brooklyn College Library—including several other libraries—who would receive invitations to events, announcements, unsolicited library instruction, and answers to any questions they had about the library. (They later set
Facebook are Transforming the College Experience

up a Facebook profile, too.)

"Initially, we saw ourselves as an announcement tool, another way to bring people information, instruction or just let people know about some event," Evans says. At times, she adds, "we made it an unwritten policy to write back to everyone who commented to us.

Keiser, a senior at Brooklyn College majoring in English, acknowledges that she was "very skeptical" about the MySpace project when it began. "I was surprised by how many students wanted to befriend the library," she says. While there were exceptions, Keiser says, students generally expressed "surprise and delight in the fact that their school library was up on MySpace."

'Accessible and Friendly'

What makes MySpace different from typical library sites, Keiser adds, is that users have so many tools to communicate and gather information about topics that interest them. 'MySpace is very accessible and friendly,' she says. 'The information is individualized—and it's fun.'

Keiser's intern Cope, who was a member of Friendster as an undergraduate at Antioch College—"before MySpace became ubiquitous"—says that such sites are so attractive because they can be easily manipulated by the users. "It's possible that other technologies could usurp MySpace, but one of the things that's made it so successful is that it allows people to change their profiles. While most users agree that socializing with 'friends' is the main attraction of online networks, a growing number of them also say they're exploring ways to use their profiles for business or career advancement.

Nichole Dossous, for example, has two pages on MySpace, 'one for strictly socializing, the other for professional purposes.' Dossous, a Mercy College graduate who has taken courses in journalism and the Internet at Queens College, now has a site she uses to show her media work, including "Subway Confessions," a series of short video interviews she's completed, as well as her blog and online radio show.

"It keeps me busy," says Dossous, a part-time office assistant at an Internet company in Queens. "Plus, I have a network of a million people in New York, and I can communicate with them in these ways—or their communities will simply exist without us."

"Students these days do interact differently than did previous generations...

[We must learn to communicate with them in these ways—or their communities will simply exist without us."

—Alexandra Logue, Special Advisor to the Chancellor and Intern Associate Professor

How to get there...

To visit the page listing these Brooklyn postings, simply go to http://myspace.com; then click the "search" link (the third box on the left-hand side of the page); then (next to the "MySpace" search box), enter the terms "CUNY Brooklyn Clubs"; then click "search" (of course, you can modify your search by entering different terms.)

The CUNY Online Network in Japan

In America, practically every college student knows about Facebook. In Japan, they know about Mixi. And thanks to Mixi, they also know about CUNY.

Like Facebook and MySpace, Mixi is a social networking site popular among Japanese students, where they can meet others with common interests, create profiles, exchange messages, comment on each other's diaries and join online communities.

Among thousands of Mixi communities is one for students interested in CUNY (there are also separate pages for different CUNY colleges). Launched last year by a former CUNY student, the site was created to help friends and prospective students interested in attending CUNY—"including many students already in the U.S. who are considering a transfer to another college in New York City."

"A lot of people ask about CUNY but don't know how to access it," says Kanae Rachi of the New York Japan Student Association.

The biggest problem for Japanese students is, of course, the language barrier. So Mixi's CUNY page enables members to ask questions and solicit advice from Japanese-speaking students who are already familiar with CUNY.

In a sense, the CUNY page has become an accidental recruitment tool for foreign students. It's not clear whether other foreign-language social networking sites, such as Vietspace, Hyves (Netherlands), Lunar Storm (Sweden) and Grono.net (Poland) have similar CUNY groups. But coming after enrollment of international students dropped in the aftermath of 9/11, Mixi's CUNY community highlights the potential for students to create an unusual, organic recruitment device.

Unlike the more open U.S.-based sites, Mixi is an invitation-only network—you can only join if you're invited by a current member. Membership is free, but you must be at least 18 years old. (The word, "Muki," is a combination of "mix" and "I," referring to the concept that the user, I, mixes with others through the network.)

Except for a listing of CUNY colleges, the Mixi page, which has about 450 members, is essentially a blog. Posts by members include questions and answers about transcripts, tuition and information about events like job fairs.

One recent post, for example, noted: "I have heard about the CUNY Admission's Office reputation from my friend. I lived in NYC for a year, and I understand that nothing goes as smoothly as it does here in Japan."

Another student asked about the job prospects in the city for Japanese CUNY graduates. A student who had recently graduated from CUNY responded that he, indeed, gotten a job in New York—but it wasn't easy.
During the December holidays—or maybe we should say “holy days”—many of us take part in religious or cultural celebrations that give the season its special significance of togetherness.

The menorah, the Christmas tree and the candles of Kwanzaa are all symbols of traditions that have retained spiritual meaning even as American society has retained its nominal secularity.

As the variety of our religions has expanded—with Muslims, Buddhists, African ancestral worshipers and Sikhs joining Christians and Jews in the New York mosaic—so has our awareness of the beauty and challenges of this great diversity.

At Hostos Community College on December 18, there will be a Yafaa Cultural Arts event (yafaa meaning ‘beauty’ in Hebrew) offering music and storytelling that celebrates Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and Three Kings.

Meanwhile, over at LaGuardia Community College, a longer view is being taken. This December and January, administrators and faculty are beginning what they call a “Difficult Dialogue” that will assess the implications of having a array of beliefs co-existing in the community.

Robert Kahn, the college’s grants administrator, wrote the “Difficult Dialogues” proposal, receiving $100,000 from the Ford Foundation to study religious diversity.

Project Director Rosemary Talmadge will supervise an effort to bring together students, faculty and community members in “study circles.”

Queens College was also among the 26 colleges nationwide to receive a $100,000 Difficult Dialogues grant. At Queens, they will focus more specifically on the Middle East conflict.