Prestigious Awards Followed by Copious Praise

I have been an award-winning, headline-grabbing spring term for The University. First, David Bauer, a student at CUNY’s famed Hunter College High School in Manhattan, beat out 1,600 entrants to win the $100,000 national Intel Science Talent Search contest. Then he promptly declared he would attend CUNY Honors College at City College.

Less than two weeks later, City College student Charles Claudio Simpkins was named a Truman Scholar, and yet another CUNY student, Philip A. Nyula, was awarded a prestigious Goldwater Scholarship.

All this came as The University was still enjoying the announcement of late last year that two CUNY students would attend England’s Oxford University as Rhodes Scholars.

“More and more students are confirming the value of a CUNY education,” Chancellor Matthew Goldstein said. “All of us at The City University of New York take great pride in the panoply of major awards.”

The New York media – from The New York Times to the New York Post – picked up on the stories and glowing editorials and congratulated CUNY on its return to academic excellence under Goldstein.

The 17-year-old Bauer, the city’s first winner of the nation’s coveted high school science prize in eight years, stunned the press by telling reporters that he was stunning the Ivy Leagues for City College, where he worked in the bio-organic chemistry lab on his winning project, which involved inventing ways to detect neurotoxins in the body. The research, he said, was inspired by 9/11 and the threat of future bioterrorism attacks.

“Brainiac Picks CUNY Over Ivy,” blared a Daily News editorial.

Bauer says he got his first exposure to science when he began working as a volunteer at the science lab at City College, where Prof. Valeria Balogh-Nair became his mentor. The professors and students there “didn’t meet my stereotype of a science geek at all,” he told Newsday. They were very normal. I said, ‘I could do this.’ And here I am.”

City College junior Charles Claudio Simpkins, an honors student with a 3.8 grade-point-average, was one of only 75 students in the country and the only one in New York City to be named a Truman Scholar, which carries a $30,000 scholarship. The 20-year-old Simpkins is majoring in political science and philosophy and would like to work at a think tank.

Philip A. Nyula, another City College student, received a Goldwater Scholarship, the premier national award for outstanding math, science and engineering students. The award covers tuition, fees, books and room and board to a maximum of $7,500 per year.

CUNY’s two 2005 Rhodes scholars – Lev Svarivod of City College and Eugene Shenderov of Brooklyn College – join the ranks of only three other CUNY students to win the scholarship, the world’s oldest and most prestigious –

Hostos Rebounds, on and off the Court

Hostos Community College has had no shortage of news during the past three years. Its enrollment has soared and its campus has blossomed, Cinderella-like, from the fire factory that was its South Bronx birthplace 35 years ago.

But the college’s basketball history will be unique in itself for years to come.

Just three years after the Men’s Basketball Team was founded at the college, the Caimmes are national champs, following their defeat of Joliet Junior College of Illinois, 73-71, on March 19 at the 2005 NJCAA Men’s Division III National Championship held at upstate SUNY-Delhi.

It was, notably, the first time a CUNY school has won a national basketball title since City College took both the NCAA and NIT titles in 1951. “This is a mark of history that I will never forget,” says Dr. Ben Corpus, Vice President of Student Affairs at Hostos.

“We worked incredibly hard over the past three years to assemble a quality program that reflects the potential of our community and students.”

The game that was designed to become a chapter in CUNY history was fiercely contested from the beginning. Hostos Guard Wayne Taylor, who scored a team high 15 points, made a crucial lay-up and foul shot in the game’s final minutes. Then a sophomore forward, Paul Mercier, later named the tournament’s MVP, hit the game-winning three-point shot with 32.4 seconds left.

“I feel humbled and blessed,” said Hostos Head Coach Robert Holford, 48, who received both National Coach of the Year and District Coach of the Year honors after the tournament. “This is a once-in-a-lifetime achievement and it feels really good.”

As marvelous as it was, the fairy-tale story of the Men’s Basketball program was, in effect, a double feature, together with that of the college’s women’s team, which has won the CUNY conference championships in each of its two years of play.

College officials feel the achievement of the men’s team is, like the college itself, something to be savored, enjoyed and remembered by the wider Bronx community.

“The support from the community, the South Bronx, the City University of New York and the students has been unbelievable,” Dr. Corpus reflected.

“Although there were a number of people involved in getting us to this level, Coach Holford and his staff are the best I’ve ever seen at what they do.”

In September, 1970, 623 students were admitted into the charter class, but the number grew rapidly and within four years there were 2,000 students. It now has 4,500 students.

And as enrollment grew, so did the campus, which now has six buildings, including science and other labs, as well as physical education facilities and two theaters.

“At a Glance

Opera Lovers Around Globe Join CUNY Discussion Group

Bob Kosovsky, opera buff with a CUNY doctorate in music, is the driving force behind Opera-I, a University-affiliated on-line discussion group in which devotes discuss fine points of the art form. See page 4.

University Creates ‘Early College High Schools’

Hundreds of public high school students are enrolled in ‘Early College High Schools’ operated by CUNY together with the New York City Department of Education, thanks to a generous grant from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. See pages 6 and 7.

Vets Return to College After Service in Iraq

Adelroy Lucas and other Brooklyn College students who served in the Iraq war attended a ‘welcome back’ evening at the student center, and spoke of war and their return to a life of study. See page 8.

DC 37 Overwhelmingly Approves New Four-Year Contract

Agreement provides for wage increases of 8.50 percent and bonus in lieu of wage freeze for first year. Fringe benefits include welfare fund and tuition assistance. The union endorsed the proposal by a mail vote of 3084 to 111, it was reported. See page 5.
For Whom the Pell Tolls

For many students, the ability to seek and complete a college degree depends greatly on the availability of financial aid. CUNY students know this better than most. Last year, more than $184,000 of our students received some form of financial aid.

That’s why I am particularly concerned about recent reports concerning Pell Grant funding, a form of federal financial aid for higher education determined by family income. In 2003-04, more than 90% of CUNY students received Pell Grant funding. But a change to the Pell Grant eligibility formula makes funding available to far fewer students. The result is that thousands of CUNY students will lose all or part of their critical Pell funding.

In December, the U.S. Department of Education announced a change to federal financial aid formulas. That formula, which decides who gets Pell Grants, is based on family income. It allows families to deduct some of their state and local tax payments to determine how much income is available to pay for college. The new formula, made possible when Congress approved a sweeping budget bill in December, significantly reduces the amount that can be deducted. This inflates the level of available family income—thereby decreasing the number of eligible students and the amount of individual grants.

According to an analysis by the American Council on Education, about 1.3 million students and their families will see a drop in financial aid eligibility. Almost 900,000 students could be denied funding from receiving grants altogether. At CUNY, we estimate that about 2,200 students will lose their entire Pell Grant, and another 44,000 will lose part of it. The change will cost our students $8.4 million in Pell funding for 2005-06.

Students in New York and 20 other states will be most affected, because the reduction in the allowance rate for state taxes is greater there. New York’s sharper reduction in allowances (three percent) is mostly attributable to a relatively high state income tax not accurately reflected in IRS data from tax returns.

In short, the change in the eligibility formula hurts the people Pell Grants are supposed to help: lower-middle income students making progress toward college degrees.

Currently, eligible students can receive a minimum of $400 and a maximum of $4,050 a year in Pell funding. Recently, President Bush announced he wants to raise the amount of the maximum grant and close the financial aid program’s “loophole.” The president’s proposal—countered by pro- posals in both houses of Congress—would raise the maximum amount by $100 in each of the next five years, to reach $4,550. That’s good news for those students who remain eligible for full Pell funding. For others, the grant amounts still fall short of actual college costs at most institutions. To make up the difference, many students also work and/or borrow money for their education. Next year’s grant reductions will necessitate working even more hours, taking fewer credits, and borrowing more money. This increased burden hardly encourages working students to finish college—and I believe that enabling students to complete their degrees ought to be a priority.

The reduction in financial aid is particularly telling, as the last several years have seen dwindling public support—and, as a consequence, record tuition increases—for public higher education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 1990s, increases in tuition outpaced both inflation and growth in median family income. Grant aid also grew, but not enough to offset tuition increases. The Center for American Progress estimates that even if the maximum Pell Grant increased by $500 over the next five years, the gap between college costs and the maximum grant will still have grown wider. That puts the best vehicle to personal advancement and economic development—a college education—further out of reach.

While the idea of increasing the maximum Pell Grant and reducing the deficit is laudable, doing so at the cost of existing grants is shortsighted. The CUNY community can help by letting legislators know the importance of the grants to its students. In the House of Representatives, a bill that would forestall the formula change has been introduced, and in the Senate, Sen. John Corzine of New Jersey has offered legislation ensuring no student sees a reduction in, or loses, Pell assistance as a result of the revised tax table. With the adoption of these or other alternatives, Congress could take action that makes access to college a priority. Our hard-working students deserve nothing less.

50 Years Ago Alumnus Jonas Salk

Several figures in medicine, or any other field, have received the acclaim and impec- sioned gratitude accorded the late Jonas Salk. From the White House, to schools, to households throughout America, he has been hailed as one of humanity’s greatest benefactors, one who has improved the lives of thousands.

In 1955 Dr. Salk’s vaccine was found to be effective against the polio virus that had crippled tens of thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of others worldwide. Salk never patented his vaccine, nor did he earn money from it, preferring instead to see it distributed as widely as possible.

When New York City offered him a tick-tape parade he turned down the honor, asking that the funds be used for scholarships instead.

Now, 50 years later, a total of more than 400 Salk Scholars from CUNY cam- puses across the city have received scholarships to help them pay for medical school. Another 300 have been named Honorary Salk Scholars.

At an emotional event in April, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein joined former Salk Scholars, University Chairman Beno Conisch, acting city Health and Hospital president Alan Avelis, and Jonas Salk’s son, Dr. Jonathan D. Salk, to pay tribute to a great man and the scholarship he started.

From all accounts, Jonas Salk would have been immensely pleased at the announcement of a new fund-raising campaign to increase the amount of scholarship money awarded to each Salk Scholar.

It was also announced that the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, the renowned research facility in California, will begin accepting CUNY Salk Scholars as summer interns. Those CUNY students will have the chance to work at an institu- tion where five of their own have gone on to receive the Nobel Prize, and where six students who trained there also went on to win the prize.

For the Institute, it’s a wonderful opportunity to benefit from the talented young people who are being trained at CUNY, and hopefully for these young people it would be a wonderful opportunity to deepen their own knowledge of biology and human diseases,” said Dr. Richard A. Murphy, president of the Salk Institute, in a videotaped message from California.

Regarding the effort to increase the scholarship money, those at the event in early April said it was overdue; given the soaring cost of medical school.

“The total scholarships total $6,000 per student and CUNY is launching the Salk Scholarship Fund Campaign to ensure that Future Salk Scholars receive larger stipends toward the cost of medical school,” said Dr. Arnold Melman, President of the Society of Salk Scholars, speaking to scores of offi- cials and guests that evening at the Alumni Club of CUNY.

Big Apple Fair is the Place to F

Situated up and proffering polished resumes, thousands of CUNY students and graduates streamed through the Javits Center April 7 for the University’s annual Big Apple Job Fair, the pinnacle of the University’s career-fair season. They were greeted by more than 100 recruiters rep- resenting top employers in the private and public sectors.

The recruiters — from indus- try, nonprofits and government — sought applicants from the nation’s largest public urban university for full- and part-time positions as well as internships. “I am here to gain some experience because I don’t have much,” said Sarah Zapata, 20, a forensic science major from John Jay College.

She added, “There was a lot of space and not very long lines . . . But most important, I got to learn how to market myself, present myself and see how others act in this type of environment. It was cer- tainly an eye-opener for me.”

Jason Lazarus, an accounting major at Kingsborough Community College, said, “The vendors thoroughly explained their policies and what they expect from an employee.”

In its 16-year history, the Big Apple Fair has drawn top employers searching for a competitive, widely diverse applicant pool. Participants included Bear Stearns, the Internal Revenue Service, Metro-North Railroad, Nielsen Media Research, medical centers and city, state and federal government agencies.

The fair, open to students and alumni of CUNY’s colleges, has a strong track record. “We’ve always had a hard-core group that keeps coming back [to the Fair] because they get what they’re look- ing for,” said Big Apple organizer Pat Gray. CUNY’s director of corporate relations and special events.

“We know for a fact that students get jobs from this,” Gray added. “There are other things that happen. Just the networking alone — they get experience speaking to recruiters. They learn how to

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Articles in this and previous issues are available at cuny.edu/matters. Letters or suggestions for future stories may be sent to the Editor by Email at Matters@mail.cuny.edu. Changes of address should be made through your campus personnel office.

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This award is in recognition of high ability and scholarship, sound character, interest in research and...originality. "That provides a lot of moral support. That you cannot imagine."

Chairman Schmidt noted that before the Salk vaccine was developed in 1955, there had been an average of over 45,000 polo cases in the U.S. By 1962, that number had dropped to 910. Schmidt recalled the moment in his childhood when his mother told him about the Salk vaccine, and that they recognized longer have to worry about polo. "Polo was the most terrifying disease, especially for children," he said.

Chancellor Goldstein described the Salk vaccine as one of history's greatest medical milestones, saying, "Many of the victims of polo were children, which made the disease especially feared, and the image of the iron lung cast a dark shadow across our world."

After Schmidt and Goldstein spoke, city health official Avises read a proclamation from Mayor Bloomberg making April, 2005 "Jonas E. Salk Month." Those attending the evening at the Grad Center were pleased to hear the news about the partnership between CUNY and the Salk Institute in California.

"Salk Scholars will advance and deepen their knowledge of biology and human diseases through the research they conduct during summer internships at the Institute," said Dr. Murphy, the Salk Institute president, in his taped message.

CUNY's students will be in a reclusive atmosphere of scientific research at the institute in La Jolla, California.

"In the history of our Institute, five of our scientists have received the Nobel Prize and six students who trained here themselves have gone on to win the Nobel Prize," Murphy said.

The Institute, which began its research activities in 1963, was the fulfillment of a dream for Jonas Salk, who according to the institute's website wanted to "create an institute that would serve as a 'cradle of creativity' to pursue questions about the basic principles of life."

According to the institute, Salk "wanted biologists and others to work together to explore the wider implications of their discoveries for the future of humanity."

Budget Creates Largest Capital Program in History

"Sometimes when I get back from the lab and I feel a little down I read the words of that citation," he said. "It says: Present Jobs, Internships

In addition to being able to go to the Fair, students and alumni have access to the CUNY Big Apple Job Fair Website, which provides links to participating companies and organizations, allowing further research into potential employers and the positions they seek to fill. The website also lists events for job hunting and tips on managing your job search.

This is part of the CUNY Matters - May 2005 issue.
Lovers of Opera Around the World Join CUNY Discussion Group

T
de e-mail messages arrive from around the globe, and the several thou-
sand fervently opinionated writers and subscribers to Opera-L, the University-
hosted discussion group, know that a single note in panissimo can often
spark a passionate crescendo.

Today’s topic: “Artistic purity. Please take your seats.

‘Art,’ offers one writer to the
Opera-L post,” is what Jon Vickers
did with every single word of every
single phrase that he ever sang. The
man refused — REFUSED — to record an aria album. It was against
his conscience to extract a melody from its context.”

Subscriber Neil Rubins responds:
‘Right now I’m looking at an RCA LP
(LSC-2741) of Italian arias, conduct-
ed by Tullio Serafin, dated from 1964. It looks to me like a bunch of melodies
taken out of context... as it is a
matter of public... er... record, that
he said it was against his conscience? For
the record. Off the record.”

Within short order the discussion
some might say predictably, turns to
Callas as perfectionist. ‘She left the
stage entrance swathéd in chinchilla,’
writes Patrick Byrne, ‘not some slight-
ly worn coat purchased at a shop for
pre-owned petals (which was frequent-
ed by several famous but frugal divas).
She is laughing at all the endless chipping
at her legend, which like Ghibraltr, will last far beyond
her detractors’ life spans.”

if they knew of these battles,” muses
Opera-L subscriber Daniel Pardo, “would
they care? Or did they laugh all the way
to the bank?”

And so it goes—and goes—for more
than a decade. In March, these 2,500 or so
opera lovers hailing from more than 50
countries celebrated Opera-L’s tenth
anniversary with CUNY, which hosts
the discussion group.

People all over the world have heard of CUNY because of
this list,” notes CUNY email administrator Bill Gruber.

Before the CUNY connection, a smaller
Opera-L had been managed by Dema
Getshko, of Rio de Janeiro. Buffs
soon came to see the list as a place to learn and to
participate.

Then came the moment a
decade ago that opened the
doors to CUNY. A piece in the
Opera News detailed some of
Opera-L’s more eclectically posts-
ings, such as the reaction after one
subscriber had created an
opera for a Girl Scout troop
about the feud between ice
skaters Tonya Harding and
Nancy Kerrigan. The article
led to so many people join-
ing the list that Getshko’s
computer couldn’t handle the
traffic.

That was when Bob Kosovsky, a student at the Graduate
Center back then, approached Gruber, who saved the
day by agreeing to allow
CUNY.edu to host. Kosovsky became Opera-
L’s owner, administrator, and driving
force—and earned a PhD in music in
2000. Today he is a curator at the Music
Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Kosovsky says that among those keying in the letters C-U-N-Y daily are famous
open world professionals. He fiercely
guards their privacy.

Bill Fregosi, technical coordinator of
MIT’s Theatre Arts Program, is known for
his expertise in scenic design. He has
worked closely with such notables as
composer John Harbo, whose operatic ver-
sion of “The Great Gatsby” was produced at
the Metropolitan Opera. “Singers really
respect this audience. They feel terrible
if people pass on Opera-L,” he says.

Some consider Opera-L a “must visit”
website for major developments in the
world. Robert Tagg, the
Metropolitan Opera’s archivist, went to
Opera-L first to break the news about
the Met’s publicly accessible database of infor-
mation about the company’s perform-
ances.

Concluding that passionate art
lovers like those on Opera-L needed a brand,
New Yorker Ed Strein’s designed a red “L”
on a pin that subscribers wear.

The subscribers have become a veri-
table society within a society. “We meet
at a certain pole during intermission or
afterwards... I’ve made so many friends through these gatherings,”
explains recently retired history
teacher Linda Cantor. Cantor calls herself
a “double CUNY alumnus,” with a B.A. from
Brooklyn College and a Master of Library Science
from Queens College.

In the weeks after 9/11, it became clear
that Opera-L had grown into a world
community, Kosovsky says. On that
dreadful day, tenor Michael Brevini emailed from
Milan that the cab driver taking him to
rehearsals at La Scala was near tears when he
heard the news. Subscribers logged in
that week from Japan, New Zealand,
South America, Poland, Portugal, Mexico,
Canada and throughout the United States
in the quest to inquire about their New York online
pal papa.

The largest number of subscribers is
from the U.S. Some of the regulars are:
Baruch graduate student Steve Herz, earn-
ing his Master of Public Administration
degree; retired CUNY Economics Professor
Marvin Krutstein, and former Kingsborough
Community College and Queens College
faculty member Joann Krieg, now a litera-
ture professor at Hofstra University.

Not everyone who posts is an expert.
Many of the listers are musicking fans and
even outright “newbies.” New Yorker Linda
Cantar Tagg, “I was the type ‘real opera
people’ hate,” referring to a snobbish speech she said some buffs exhibit.

She had seen “The Three Tenors” on
Channel 13 and enjoyed the performance.
“Insiders view them as overly popularizing
their work,” she says. “Still, that got me
started attending operas and wanting to
learn more.”

Cantar says she was truly impressed
when she posed to the list a question she
felt was unlikely to be answered. “Right
after college... I’d seen my only opera,
‘Aida’... I gave the approximate date and
place and asked if anyone knew who the
singers were. A few people pinpointed
the exact production and gave me every
detail. I was amazed...”

That’s what led her to looking for the
red “L” pin and meeting fellow subscribers as
they attended more and more operas at
the Met. “I go to around 20 a year now.
This is a big part of my life. Personally I
want to say thank you to CUNY for host-
ing this very worthwhile list.”

Or as some from this very discriminat-
ing audience might say, “Bravo!”
Tracking Pollutants
In an Age of Terrorism

In the event of an accident or attack involving toxic chemicals or radiological contamination, the ability to track the resulting dispersal of pollutants will be a top priority for emergency management officials.

To address this challenge, a team of scientists—including Dr. Reginald Blake, assistant professor of physical and biological sciences at New York City College of Technology—recently participated in a Department of Homeland Security project to collect atmospheric data in and around New York City.

“By working with Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island, our college becomes part of an important data collection network,” explained Blake, a climatologist, hydro-meteorologist and physical oceanographer who studies air pollution.

Blake was co-leader for a team of 34 students from City Tech and Medgar Evers College, who assisted the scientists in the efforts to understand how air flow disperses pollutants in urban centers like New York City.

“The aim of this project,” says Dr. Blake, a Mill Basin resident, “is to understand how atmospheric dispersion occurs in a densely, highly developed, urbanized area like New York City. This understanding will enhance the city’s emergency capabilities for responding to potential airborne releases of harmful contaminants such as may occur from the detonation of a dirty bomb.”

Recovering From 9/11:
BMCC’s New Commons

Nearly four years ago, Borough of Manhattan Community College was devastated by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. It was the only college in America to lose a building on that day, when World Trade Center collapsed upon BMCC’s Fordham Hall.

The college was unable to use its main campus for three weeks because of its proximity to “Ground Zero.” And as a result of ongoing displacement, the college’s nearly 20,000 students went for a long stretch of time with no place to relax, socialize, and sit for lunch.

But now, as of April 13, BMCC has a new Student Commons, complete with a 300-foot ribbon wall overlooking the Hudson River. JPMorgan Chase and Merrill Lynch made lead gifts of $500,000 each toward the $1.5 million phase one part of the project. Their gifts, combined with those of others in the private sector, enabled the College to proceed.

“The faith and commitment of JPMorgan Chase, Merrill Lynch and our other good friends on Wall Street and in the business community shows the high regard in which they hold BMCC and their belief in our critically important mission,” said Dr. Antonio Pérez, BMCC’s President.

CCNY Student is a Winner in Everything She Does

Ersa Vettenranta speaks several languages, is a wonderful singer, gets high grades across the board and—oh yes—is one of the greatest athletes ever to have played for City College.

Vettenranta, a native of Finland and a star volleyball player recently learned she was one of 28 recipients of the 2005 NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship Grant. The CUNY Athletic Conference says of Vettenranta, “Ersa is one of the greatest athletes in the illustrious history of CCNY team sports, and the preeminent volleyball player of all women and men who ever wore the lavender and black of the Beavers.”

Vettenranta’s 4.0 grade point average, double majoring in English-Spanish Literature, earned her a spot on the 2003-04 academic All District I Women’s Volleyball Team. She graduated in February, but is still at CCNY working toward a master’s degree in Spanish.

Mentored, the scholar-athlete held down three tutoring jobs as she pursued a singing career during her undergraduate years. She performed Finnish folk songs as a member of the group Kauko, and was a member of the campus-based choir, Las Sirenas. Much of her singing has been in the subways, where, from pleased riders, she has earned money to offset tuition.

Vettenranta came to the United States a little less than six years ago, after majoring in English philology at the University of Helsinki. She settled in Washington Heights and decided to resume her college studies.

Why did she choose CCNY? For one thing, it was located nearby. But even more important was that “I like the diversity of the people.” She added, “I guess it’s the reason I like New York, too.”

Speaking of her decision to study Spanish literature, she said, “When I enrolled at CCNY, I wasn’t sure whether to continue in English or perhaps study art. It was the chair of the Foreign Languages and Literature Department, Dr. Juan Carlos Mercado, who encouraged me to pursue a double major [in English and Spanish Literature].”

Publish, Don’t Perish

To find a publisher that for all-important book or article, the best person to consult is the colleague down the hall who recently published. So said panelists at the Faculty Fellowship Publication Program sponsored by the Office of Faculty and Staff Relations/Oice of Compliance and Diversity.

Panelists at the recent event recommended that would-be authors seek out everyone they know who is connected to the publishing business, in order to obtain referrals.

The words of wisdom from the panelists included hints on conducting research in specific disciplines, developing a writing timetable, and compiling a proposal that is pithy and will spark interest by editors in the subject of the book or article.

On the panel were editors from major publishing houses, including Rutgers University Press and Oxford University Press.

The Faculty Fellowship Publication Program is designed to assist full-time untenured faculty in the design and execution of scholarly writing projects. Applications are accepted in the fall semester with announcements announced later in the term.

FDA-York College Collaboration

York College has been encouraging scientists at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to teach as adjuncts in the natural sciences department. Each semester several of the scientists bring real world experiences to science classrooms and laboratories.

“Our FDA scientists have enjoyed teaching classes at York College,” said Diana Kolaritis, regional director of the FDA. “I believe it has been beneficial for both sides.”

At a recent meeting the college and the federal agency reviewed the state of their four-year relationship and said they would like to expand their activities together. Dr. Marcia V. Keiza, president of York College, requested the meeting.

“I am very grateful to be with the strong program of workshops planned” for the future, the president said.

Each semester, 10 York College chemistry and biology students are involved in internships with the FDA. Alumni who have been through the internships have pursued graduate degrees and have been employed by agencies such as the New York City Department of Health and the FDA.

CUNY Center Opens In Washington Heights

CUNY in the Heights,” a new higher education center in Washington Heights—Inwood, celebrated its official launch recently with an Open House and special ceremony led by Assemblyman Adriano Espaillat, who presented a $250,000 grant in the support of the center.

The Center, a collaboration between Hostos and Borough of Manhattan Community Colleges, offers continuing education courses, including SPAN, and ESL, and certificate programs, including medical billing and real estate. Degree granting programs are also available.

In February, more than 500 students enrolled in English, psychology, and computer information systems courses.

Classes in hair styling and skin care are expected to be especially popular.

Espaillat, a graduate of Queens College, is a long time advocate for public higher education in New York City.

“CUNY in the Heights offers a wide variety of courses that will appeal to diverse groups of students,” said Chancellor Matthew Goldstein.

Offering classes in guitar and many other area, the center is at 108 Cooper St. near 207th Street and Broadway next to the Good Shepherd Church.

CUNY also operates community educational centers in the Bronx on the Grand Concourse and in Flushing. For more information, call 212-567-7132 or 718-319-7939 or 1-800-CUNY-YES.

CUNY Matters — May 2005
Campuses Partner With Gates Foundation; Create 'Early

Sixteen-year-old Jayson Jones is thinking of a career in engineering. Fifteen-year-old Nueka Meredith has her heart set on being an obstetrician/gynecologist. And 16-year-old Melinda Vargas still hasn’t made up her mind — she is, she says confidently, leaning toward a profession that involves scientific research or the environment — but she knows for sure she wants to be the first person in her family to graduate from college.

Although their goals are very different, these three 10th graders have found common ground at the Science, Technology And Research High School at Erasmus, one of CUNY’s new “early college high schools” that allow students like them not only to earn high school diplomas but also college credits and even associate’s degrees.

STAR at Erasmus, in partnership with Brooklyn College, is part of a family of innovative schools that will expand to 13 early college high schools funded by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

A leader in educational innovation, the Foundation, with an endowment of $28.8 million, has noted that nearly a third of public high school students and nearly half of African-American and Hispanic students never obtain high school diplomas, and added: “For our country to remain competitive and to meet our obligations as a democratic society, all children must be educated to high standards.”

The Foundation has provided grants totaling $7 million in support of CUNY’s early college initiatives. The University provides additional resources, as do two other sponsoring intermediaries—the National Urban League and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. All of the early college schools and public schools and are being developed collaboratively with the New York City Department of Education.

At CUNY, planning and oversight are provided by Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Selma Botman and by Senior Dean for Academic Affairs John Magnosci.

Nationally, the Foundation and its philanthropic partners—Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and others—have provided more than $120 million for early college start-ups. That goal is to have more than 68,000 students enrolled in early colleges across the nation by 2012.

If testimonies of students are an indication, the schools are accomplishing their goal of instilling a passion for academic achievement.

“Erasmus is gearing us up not only for college but also for life in general,” says Jayson, the teenage would-be engineer, speaking of STAR High School at Erasmus and its association with Brooklyn College.

“The maturity level was an important fact in my choosing to go here. In other city schools, they let the kids run wild. Here, we get independence, and we know what to do with that responsibility,” he said.

Unlike many enrichment programs, early college high schools do not target high-achievers. They are designed to increase high school graduation and college-readiness rates, particularly among minority and low-income youth, many of whom come from families where college traditionally has not been an option. And, most important, they are set up to engage the minds of students, regardless of their academic levels, to challenge them and keep them interested in their studies throughout their high school years.

“These schools are intended to enable students who might not be college-bound and who would otherwise struggle in college,” says Cass Conrad, Director of CUNY’s Early College Initiative. “Early colleges allow them to begin their college career in a more supported environment.”

CUNY’s involvement in the early college high school can be traced back to 1974, when it and the city Board of Education established Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College. It wasn’t technically an early college high school but it showed the way.

Three years ago, when it started getting financing from the Gates Foundation, Middle College began offering students the chance to earn two-year associate degrees.

In addition to STAR High School at Erasmus, other such CUNY-affiliated schools or programs include: Project EXCEL at LaGuardia Community College, which draws students from Middle College High School and International High School, Manhattan Hunter Science High School; and Hunter College and Hostos Community College.

This coming September, two more schools will open: The City College Academy of Arts, and the Queens School of Inquiry (connected to Queens College). In September of 2006, the York Early College Academy will open its doors on the campus of York College in Jamaica, Queens.

The CUNY-sponsored early college high schools, which are being designed to eventually house students in grades 6 through 12, will offer a variety of college-related options, everything from seminars at CUNY colleges run by CUNY professors to college courses taught by high school teachers who are certified by college departments. They will also offer full enrollment in college courses with college students on CUNY campuses, where even the professors might not know which students are high school students. CUNY faculty members and high school teachers will work together to develop curricula that seamlessly mesh the high school/college experience.

At STAR High School at Erasmus, which opened in fall 2003 and where there are 187 9th and 10th graders, students like Jayson, Nueka and Melinda have taken seminars that teach them to use Brooklyn College’s state-of-the-art library for research and chemistry courses that give them hands-on access to the college’s laboratories, among other enrichments.

“We have a wonderful partnership with Brooklyn College,” says Principal Henrietta Courney, adding that the college seminars cover a range of topics, including aquatic studies, computer information science, human anatomy and anthropology. “Our students are engaged in the idea that they are college-bound from day one. They have the opportunity to realize their dreams to go to college from day one. They have the opportunity to achieve great things in high school and get immersed immediately in college.”

Students also have access to programs and resources offered through the City College-based Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education, which since 1986 has provided thousands of low-income and minority students in New York City public schools with unique opportunities to prepare for careers in medicine, engineering, and other science-related fields.

One of the highlights for Jayson, Nueka and Melinda was a summer seminar offered through Brooklyn College that featured an archeological dig on the Erasmus grounds. Working alongside college students, who served as mentors and tutors, the trio dug trenches and uncovered bits of school history—an old bottle, ancient nails and bricks and even a 14-
College’ Schools’ That Introduce Youngsters to Higher Ed

The CUNY-Harvard Link at STAR High School

When Philip Jeffery looks out over his classrooms filled with 9th- and 10-graders, he sees bright-eyed high school students yearning to learn, but beyond those eyes he sees mountains of potential.

Jeffery is the math teacher at the new Science, Technology and Research Early College High School, called STAR High School, located at Erasmus High School in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.

He is one of the gems in the ocean of public education. Jeffery is a graduate of Harvard Medical School and has taught at New York University Medical School, having received his undergraduate degree from Brooklyn College. On top of all that, he is pursuing a master’s degree in mathematics at Brooklyn.

In collaboration with The City University of New York, he spends his weekdays turning out students he hopes will go on to study math and science in college.

“Very few . . . students [in the United States] study math and science at the college level, and many of them who do are foreign students,” he says. “It is my goal to interest these students in these subjects and to make them more skilled to pursue these subjects at higher levels.”

Jeffery believes he is on his way to accomplishing his mission.

Although Erasmus has been an Early College Initiative High School only since the fall 2003, not long enough to track the progress of a graduating class, Jeffery says the program has made a tremendous difference: “The students are better prepared, many are on grade level, and 90 percent of my students have passed the Math Regents,” he says.

“They are curious and interested; they are more motivated and their parents are supportive.”

Jeffery’s route to his current post was circuitous, though also, in the end, fortuitous.

The 40-year-old Jeffery had always wanted to be a teacher, but in the early 1980s, when he did finally get the chance to stand up in a classroom, he immediately became disenfranchised. “I was disappointed with the way city high schools were being run,” he says, adding that he left his chalk and blackboards behind in the early 1990s to go to Harvard Medical School, where he began a career in academic medicine.

He later joined the faculty of the New York University School of Medicine, where he worked with middle-school students from the Salk School of Science, a public school in Manhattan. It was that experience that persuaded him to return to classroom teaching. “I’m in my second year of teaching for the city this time,” he says. “My first year was at a different high school that was not an Early College Initiative school, and the Early College Initiative at Erasmus really made a difference for me.”

Erasmus is the ideal setting, he says, for teachers and students to learn together. “We are a small school with only [187] students. Everyone knows all the students and the students know all the teachers,” he says. “We’re a community.”

Founder in 1787, Erasmus is the oldest public high school in the state and the second oldest in the country.

STAR High School’s Early College partner has been Brooklyn College. STAR students have attended seminars there, and are exposed to programs designed to stimulate interest in disciplines they may later study in college. Some, for example, went on a Brooklyn College-sponsored archeological dig.

Although Jeffery’s 9th and 10-graders still are taking high-school-level courses, next year Jeffery and other teachers at his school will partner with Brooklyn College faculty to develop college-level courses.

“The high school faculty get to help develop the courses – I’ll probably be teaching chemistry and math next year,” he says. “The college faculty are interested because it provides them with more successful applicants,” he says. “We learn from each other.”

The Erasmus environment, Jeffery says, supports and nurtures students no matter what their goals, something that he himself didn’t experience as a student in the city school system. “I didn’t take AP courses when I was in high school, and I didn’t think much about college, but I knew I was going because my parents were college-educated,” he says. “But many of the students at Erasmus are not from families with college-educated parents who are role models for them.”

Jeffery says that teaching at Erasmus has expanded his horizons. “I’ve always been curious,” he says. “I want to learn more and more about as many things as possible and share what I’m learning with the kids. I like being in a school where I also can work with other teachers. I’ve taught in four schools besides medical school and this is far and away the best experience I’ve had.”

Brooklyn College, students (left to right) Melinda Vargas, from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CUNY is establishing students to succeed in college-level studies.

Dr Philip Jeffery, pictured here at Erasmus High School in Brooklyn, is a Harvard Medical School graduate but found his calling teaching “early college” students.

CUNY MATTERS — May 2005
Iraq Veterans Gather to Remember and Forget

As a somber March 22 evening at Brooklyn College with a background of placid song-calling on a higher power to give them comfort and courage, students honored their brothers and sisters who had journeyed to hell and back.

"When you were out there, we were suffering with you," kinder Riley told about a dozen students who had served in naval years and returned to Brooklyn College to finish their studies.

"I just want to say, thank you for serving your country. Thank you for coming home!" Riley, an ex-Marine, is the new president of the organization of veterans at Brooklyn College, and she joined other student veterans and women who inter-rapplied their academic and personal lives to put themselves, literally, on the front line.

Veteran reservists and Guardsmen showed up in their uniforms and spoke of their shock at leaving them being called up for duty in Iraq, and of their months of anxiety in a strange land with the every-hurking possibility of death.

Scdin Etenne, a sergeant, recalled the day he received his letter telling him he was being sent to Iraq. He remembered saying to himself, "What the hell is this? I can’t believe this!"

But he did, and he was there for 360 days. "The first time we saw action was on Easter. We were driving and, boom. Our vehicle shook. We got out, got prone. The insurgents were trying to get into a compound. He and his buddies survived that encounter.

Etenne said there were others who were daily exposed to more danger than he. One of them was Sgt. Ariel Luna, another Brooklyn College student who had just returned to New York from active duty the day before the March 22 gathering. Luna was a gunner. He sat in the center of an armored vehicle, weapon at the ready, as his unit transported materials and down Iraq supplies to other troops.

When Luna arrived at the student center that evening, everyone slapped "Sgt. Luna’s in the house!" Etenne shouted. "Welcome back!"

Clearly fatigued, Luna explained to the gathering of about 30 students and relatives that he had no regrets about what he had done. "Unfortunately we lost one," he said, referring to a friend who was killed. "It was overwhelming," he said, speaking at the microphone. "It was a long tough year … I got back yesterday around two o’clock. I’m just trying to adjust."

Claudette Guinn, coordinator of student affairs and veterans services at Brooklyn College, was in the audience as Luna and the others spoke. "I would safely say that 50 or so that are from Brooklyn College have served in Iraq," she said in an interview that evening. "I’m grateful to God that … I have not lost any of them. That has been my greatest fear."

She said that those returning from Iraq should receive counseling, or at least should have someone to talk to about intimate subjects like life and death and courage and fear.

"We do have vets with post-traumatic stress disorder," Guinn said. "If I have a counselor I can call for them."

Like most of the other veterans present that evening, Shawnell Moore has returned to Brooklyn College to continue her studies.

"You go through trauma. You’re in situations where you fear for your life," she said, speaking in a conversation several days after the tribute to the veterans.

"It was a very big adjustment," she said of her return to college and normal life. "Coming from a situation where you’re constantly on alert, coming back to society, I think, yes, people need to talk, to get it out." Moore spoke to a counselor at a veterans center, she said.

In Iraq, Moore was an acctwined reservist, and performed the duties of "traffic management coordinator," determining the safest routes for other soldiers and allies who had to travel through the country.

Perhaps her happiest day in Iraq was when she and other non-citizen serving in the US military took their oaths of citizenship, right there in Baghdad, last October.

Moore was born in Guyana.

Today Moore is studying business management and finance. As with the others, her tuition is paid by the federal government.

Looking back on her decision to join the military, she says she has no regrets whatsoever.

"Speaking about her orders to go to Iraq, she said, "I was a little afraid, but at no point did I think, ‘I’m not going to go,’" she said.

The "Welcome Back" evening at Brooklyn College was organized by Seeds of Hope, an organization formed after September 11, 2001. To "bridge the gap" between students of different backgrounds, said the group’s president, student Vanessa Taylor.

A lot of young brothers and sisters are being killed and a lot of people object to it. But they are trying to do their jobs every day," Adelayos Lucas, who was in his Marine uniform, said.

Etenne said, "I can honestly say I didn’t like it, but it made me grow up. It made me a better man."
Putting Gotham’s Past on a Timeline, and Enjoying It

By Gary Shmigal

Jeffrey A. Kroessler has a sense of humor. For his serendipitous browser’s feast, New York Year by Year: A Chronology of the Great Metropolis, published by New York University Press, he has chosen an epigram by the ill-fated printer, editor and writer Elbert Hubbard: “Life is just one damn thing after another.” Kroessler, a historian in the Archives and Special Collections of the College of Staten Island, goes on to explain: “What Elbert Hubbard said about life surely applies to history. So relentless is the march of events that the historical record finally blurs into ‘one damn thing after another.’ Perhaps Hubbard (who detested the word) has epigram as he sailed from New York on May 1, 1915, aboard the Lusitania.” We learn on p. 187 of Kroessler’s compendium that six days later a German U-boat torpedoed the ship.

Hubbard’s unforgettable aperçu certainly captures the organizing principle of New York Year by Year, which is simply to offer in chronological order, beginning in 1524, a sampling of the most notable events that have occurred in the city. Kroessler’s pace is snappy; rarely is an entry more than 200 words, and a large portion are under 50.

The first entry finds the Tuscan sea- farer Giovanni da Verrono parking his ship in the narrows that would later bear his name and writing in his journal of “a mighty deep- mounded river” running into the sea and of natives “clad in feathers of owls of divers hues.” The final entry—which follows by just three months the end of the World Trade Center’s short life—provides a more comforting example of longevity in our mercu- rial metropolis: “On December 16, for the 21st consecutive year, Handel’s Messiah was perfor- med at Trinity Church.”

Reading the 360-page book straight through (but please, not all at once!) provides a highly compressed panorama of the basic history of the city. Especially notable, and sometimes surprising, are the numerous “firsts” Kroessler points out. The first prison was erected in 1653, just after the city, then called New Amsterdam, received its charter. On February 1565, “the West India Company granted permission for Jews to live and trade” in the city.

The next September brought the first slave ship into New York Harbor, deliver- ing 300 Africans to the city. Most of them were bought by English settlers in the Chesapeake. The first auto show in the country was presented at Madison Square Garden in 1900. In 1930 Muriel Siebert became the first woman to buy a seat on the N.Y. Stock Exchange.

The year 1895 was quite an annus mirabilis in the life of the city. The N.Y. Zoological Society was chartered on April 26 (it became the Wildlife Conservation Society in 1993). The N.Y. Public Library was founded on May 23, com- bining the Astor and Lenox Foundations and the Tilden Trust. On the recreational front in 1895: Coney Island got its first amusement park, Captain Paul Boyton’s Sea Lion Park; the nation’s first public golf course opened in Van Cortlandt Park; and Verdi’s last opera, Falstaff, made its U.S. debut at the Metropolitan Opera.

This compilation will equip us readers with the wherewithal for winning countless bar bets and stunning one’s companions with jaw- dropping trivia queries. Did you know Studebakers were once manufactured at 48th and Broadway? Did you know the world’s first steam ferry ran from Hoboken to Manhattan? In 1811, Name of Juliana, in case you need to know. Did you know the only fatality during a major-league baseball game occurred in 1920, when a Yankee pitcher beamed a Cleveland batter? Happily, Kroessler, who is also the author of Lighting the Way: The Queens Borough Public Library, 1896-1996, knows there’s a place for the wacky in the relent- less march of one damn fascinating thing after another. In 1901, he notes that a Dr. John Girder published a study called New Yorkskits. The symptoms of this disease include “haste, rudeness, restlessness, arrage- ment, consciousness, excitability, anxiety, pursuit of novelty and of grandeur, pretensions of omniscience, and therefore prescience, which of course undermines any pleasure taken in novelty.”

For the year 1897, Kroessler includes the editorial letter to Virginia O’Hara, residing at 115 West 95th Street, from the New York Sun confirming the existence of Santa Claus. “No surprise that Kroessler writes, ‘another reason to produce a chronology of the city is because it is fun.’ New Yorkers, he adds, ‘have an attitude that sets the city apart from other American places. As Lauren Bacall put it in a 1996 inter- view in the New York Times, ’I spent my childhood in New York, riding the subways and bases. And you know what you learn if you’re a New Yorker? The world doesn’t owe you a damn thing.’”

More seriously Kroessler warns in his introduction that we must not confuse chronology with causation. “One event following another does not establish a causal link.” In 1847 the Chinese junk Keying sailed into New York harbor. The next year, the first baseball game was played by a New York club in Hoboken, and the year after that, John Jacob Astor dies. Can any rational soul believe causality is at play?”

Still, Kroessler defends the value of chronologies. “History remains the record of human affairs, and to understand this dimension of human experience, we begin by comprehending past events in chrono- logical order. Otherwise we will be like the Japanese high school student who, when asked by a National Public Radio reporter whether he thought it was right for Japan to have bombed Pearl Harbor, replied, ‘Yes. We had to retaliate for the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.’”

In Einstein’s universe space is curved, but time? Kroessler’s timeline is decidedly straight.

Some Famous New York City Firsts

1726 First municipal hospital, ancestor of Bellevue, founded to care for lunatics and paupers.
1783 Chamber of Commerce founded on April 5 at Fraunces Tavern
1814 New-York Historical Society founded on November 20
1824 N.Y. Philharmonic gives its first concert on Manhattan’s then-nascent Schermerhorn’s Fifth Symphony made its U.S. debut
1831 The New York Daily Times (the Daily Times later vanished) first appeared on September 18, costing one penny.
1839 The police department hired its first female officers to serve as prison matrons.
1840 The first air-conditioned taxi hit the streets.
1850 The Dow Jones closed at 1,003.16 on November 14, breaking 1,000 for the first time.
1858 The last Brooklyn trolley line closed.
1869 The 911 emergency telephone system went into operation.
1899 The New York Philharmonic gave its 13,000th concert on February 18, broadcast over WQXR.

BOOK TALK OF THE CITY

A Behavior Guide for Children

Written by Thomas McIntyre, profes- sor of special education at Hunter College, the book explains how to pre- vent BD from disrupting one’s life.

The Behavior Survival Guide suggests strategies to handle feelings engendered by BD, offering inspiring stories from children diagnosed with the disorder.

McIntyre is the author of numerous books and articles on behavior. He is host of a website www.BehaviorAdvisors.com.

Puerto Ricans in New York
Boricuas in Gotham: Puerto Ricans in the Making of Modern New York City is a “new and important” collection of essays about the city’s Puerto Rican community, beginning with the “great migration” after World War II.

The book is based primarily on schol- arly presentations at a symposium on Puerto Ricans held at the CUNY Graduate Center in 2000.

Published by Mark Piener, Boricuas was compiled and edited by Professor Gabriel Hidago-Viera of City College, Professor Felix Matus Rodriguez of Hunter College, and Angelo Falcon, senior poli- cy executive at the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. Antonio Pujol, who was an influential activist, Boricuas seeks to enlighten readers about the culture, language and politics of the Puerto Rican community.

The Midwest Book Review called Boricuas “a seminal and important scholarly and a welcome contribution to Latino Studies.”

1800s Mariner of Color

As a career mariner, Benson was well acquainted with the tribulations of life at sea. But as a black man, he faced even greater challenges. What makes Benson distinctive is the detailed diary he kept, a fascinating narrative that doc- ument his experiences and feelings.

Sokolow’s book is published by the University of Massachusetts Press.

“I know of no other book that does such a good job of representing what life was actually like for thousands of nineteenth-century Americans who made their living on the seas,” wrote James M. O’Toole, author of Paving for White: Race, Religion, and the Healy Family. 12/18/99 commenting on Sokolow’s book.

CUNY MATTERS — May 2005 19
Remembering the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, the Voice and 

By Paul Moses

When the subway opened a century ago with an inaugural trip from City Hall up to 145th Street, the New York papers celebrated with all the ingenuity they could muster. The edition of the World even arranged for a signal to be flashed to the roof of the towering Pulitzer Building on Park Row at the moment the first trip began. From there, the American flag would be raised, celebratory shots fired and the message sent to tugs in the harbor where boats would toast a melody of joy.

But a dissonant note sounded across the East River, where the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, editorialized that “the right course” would have been to start the first subway in Brooklyn and build it toward Manhattan. Instead, Brooklyn was treated as an “afterthought,” the paper wrote in an editorial titled “Brooklyn Must Wait—and Should Remember!” Mayor George B. McClellan, Jr., evidently took note; at points through the day, he spoke of how eager he was to extend the subway to Brooklyn.

March marks the 50th anniversary of the Eagle’s demise, and in many ways the city’s most-prolific borough carries the scars of that loss. With its dying breath, the Eagle shouted in a final editorial that Without a daily newspaper to give voice to community concerns, Brooklyn would be evermore cast in Manhattan’s shadow. Fifty years later, the anniversary of the Eagle’s closing serves as a reminder that the difficulty of attracting the attention of a Manhattan-centric media is still part of the cost of doing business in the four larger boroughs.

According to public relations executive Bob Liff, who covered Brooklyn and City Hall beats as a reporter and columnist for New York Newsday and the Daily News, “it’s just a lot easier to pitch Manhattan-based stories.” “It’s clear that the Manhattan bias in the city is such that absent a paper whose existence is predicated on covering Brooklyn, you’re not going to get the [same] kind of coverage,” Liff says. “If there are issues that happen in Manhattan, that gets huge coverage, but I can’t get it if it happens in Brooklyn.”

Staten Island has its Advance to raise local issues and Queens has had the Long Island Press and then Newsday. The Eagle has paid more attention to boroughs outside Manhattan in recent years and the Post set up a Brooklyn bureau, but only the Daily News provides daily, comprehensive coverage of Brooklyn—albeit in a zoned edition, which means that often enough, important Brooklyn stories don’t get city-wide attention. In the broadcast world, only New York 1 covers news from all the boroughs regularly.

For Brooklynites, nothing comes close to matching the days when the Eagle kept an eye on their interests. The breadth of its crusades sometimes were over a small matter of civic pride, as in 1938, when the paper battled Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia to make sure that hero aviator Douglas “Wrong Way” Corrigan was greeted first in Brooklyn rather than in Manhattan upon his return from Ireland—flying, the Eagle argued, because he took off from Brooklyn. As Raymond A. Schroth recounts in his 1974 book, The Eagle and Brooklyn: A Community Newspaper, 1841-1955, the paper also had a vision for the borough. It created the Eagle Plan, pushing City Hall for more schools and a civic center, and continuing extensions of the transit system.

Today, the city’s mayor and, for that matter, the news media, are much more likely to bring up putting tolls on the Brooklyn Bridge than to raise the subject of extending a new transit line to Brooklyn.

Those interested in the “Better Transit for Brooklyn,” a study released in 2003 by Brooklyn-based Community Consulting Services, assigned a fraction of the cost addressed this issue. They note that the Second Avenue subway plan’s only nod to Brooklyn is a new courthouse and jail, a civic center, and continuing downtown Brooklyn is to leave an 85-foot hole in the ground at lower Manhattan’s Hanover Square that might someday allow for an extension.

Newspapers Tell a Community Who They Are and Where They Have Been

At a forum sponsored by the Center for the Study of Brooklyn, writer/scholar Raymond A. Schroth regaled the audience with stories of the old Brooklyn Eagle. He concluded his half-hour presentation with thoughtful words on why newspapers are important.

“For me,” he said, “a newspaper is a community’s means of public remembering. Without a newspaper’s steady re-presentation to its readers of who they are and where they have been, an urban community is a little better than an amnesiac who has been told his name but has no idea what the name connotes and symbolizes and, therefore, little sense of his true talents and possibility.”

Center director and Brooklyn College journalism professor Paul Moses has organized the symposium to examine whether Brooklyn is being treated fairly today by the major daily newspapers.

Moses clearly believes the answer is no. Schroth, while not accusing the city dailies of bias against Brooklyn, said that communities need newspapers that speak to and for their readers. Newspapers worth the name are thus like the egos and super egos of their readers.

Of his declaration that a newspaper is the public’s memory, Schroth added: “If there are reporters, publishers, or professors within the sound of my voice or the reach of my words, please remember this when you doubt the worth of what you are trying to do.”

New Journalism School Responds to ‘Very Clear Need’

Pounded by web-based news sites, blogs and other new technologies, newspapers and broadcast news outlets are facing uncertainty, some say extinction. But when Steven Shepard looks to the future and the

Steven Shepard, dean of CUNY’s new graduate school of journalism, holds framed copy of the Vector, a student publication he edited while attending City College.

numbering array of new media news choices, he sees opportunities for the product he is producing.

That product is good journalism.

“Why are we starting this school?” Shepard, dean of the new CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, asked rhetorically as he spoke to hundreds of interested students gathered at the University’s annual journalism conference in March at the CUNY Graduate Center.

“The answer is, because there is a very clear need for this kind of school.” Shepard, who recently retired as Editor-in-Chief of Business Week to take his new post, said there is strong student interest in studying journalism but the choices are limited—and prohibitively expensive for most students.

“At the moment there are only three master’s degree programs in journalism in New York State. There are Columbia, NYU and Syracuse. They are all private universities,” he noted. Columbia, which is now offering a two-year program, estimates annual tuition and fees to be $36,813, excluding books and living expenses, according to its website. Shepard said that CUNY’s tuition for the estimated fifty students in its inaugural class in Fall, 2006, will be a fraction of what the private institutions charge.

Those interested in journalism will want to study at CUNY because CUNY is going to build a faculty and curriculum that will compete with those of the private universities, at a fraction of the cost, Shepard said. CUNY’s program will run a year and a half, and is eventually expected to enroll up to 150 students per class.

An exciting feature of CUNY’s new journalism program, Shepard pointed out, is that it will be housed in the faded Herald Tribune building on the West Side of Manhattan. The old Herald Tribune, Shepard said, “was one of the world’s great newspapers’ before it published its last edition on April 24, 1966. Also, the building is next door to the future home of The New York Times, a proximity that will afford considerable advantages to students and faculty of the new graduate school, the dean said.

In addition to his distinguished career in journalism, Shepard has something in his background that made him additionally appealing as a leader of the new CUNY graduate school: He is a 1961 graduate of CCNY, with a degree in engineering.

At the March journalism conference, Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson presented Shepard with a framed front page of the Vector, a student magazine that Shepard edited while at City College. His college experience as an editor “clinched my determination to be a journalist,” Shepard said.

Carolyn Knollheim, who worked on the study, says it’s been difficult to get any appeal in the news media. “This is so frustrating because there’s no coverage,” she says. “Brooklyn is so important to the entire region.” Her study reported that Bruce Chubet generates the most transit ridership in the MTA region, nearly a third, and that the borough is shortchanged on capital funding.

Brian Ketcham, the executive director of Community Consulting Services, said he appreciates the coverage Brooklyn’s weekly newspapers provide, but that “to make a
real difference, you need the citywide publications." He adds, "I don’t think the mayor or reads the Brooklyn weeklies."

Tom Schroth, the Eagle’s last managing editor, chuckled a bit when asked in a phone interview at his home in Sedgwick, Maine, about how the Eagle would have responded to Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s effort to put tolls on the East River bridge.

"The Brooklyn Eagle would have raised hell, and that would’ve been a fun story," he says. "We were kind of craving about things like that—big things and little things. And that would be a big thing." Similarly, he says, the Eagle would have pushed for the Second Avenue subway to be built directly to Brooklyn—"lots of page one stories pushing it."

Schroth said the paper also would have "raised hell" over the decision to move the headquarters of the city education department from Brooklyn to Manhattan’s Tweed Courthouse. "As I remember, the Eagle was proud to have that big city office in Brooklyn," he says.

The Eagle owned by Schroth’s family, officially closed on March 16, 1955, after failing to publish for 47 days during a strike. Author Raymond A. Schroth says the paper always saw itself as a champion of Brooklyn and sought to create civic improvement through political campaigns for parks published in its pages.

"I think that’s a style of journalism that’s been lost," says Schroth, Jesuit professor of the humanities at St. Peter’s College and a nephew of the paper’s final publisher, Frank D. Schroth. He sees an echo of it in the trend toward civic journalism—which the Pew Center for Civic Journalism defines as based in "a belief that journalism has an obligation to public life—an obligation that goes beyond just telling the news or uploading lots of facts."

From battling Manhattan over control of East River trackage in the 1840s to fighting into the 1950s for the creation of a downtown Brooklyn civic center, the Eagle was always a feisty defender of Brooklyn against what it regarded as overbearing Manhattan interests. Its last edition, on January 28, 1855, lamented, "the borough has been a stepchild in government services, charity, social activities, and indeed in every phase of community life."

It warned that its death would silence "the last voice that is purely Brooklyn" and that "the borough seems doomed to be cast in Manhattan’s shadow!"

Asked if he thought that turned out to be the case, Tom Schroth recalled a conversation his father, the paper’s publisher, had with Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley. "I always felt that if [closing the Eagle] would hurt Brooklyn badly, and I associated it with the departure of the Dodgers shortly after that," he says. "I understand Walter O’Malley told my father that if the Eagle were there, they wouldn’t have gone to Los Angeles—the Eagle helped to fire up the local fans. I believe one reason they moved was that they believed they needed more local support."

Even though plenty of news organizations make some effort to cover Brooklyn, without the Eagle around it’s possible for an important Brooklyn story to get little play in citywide media. That happened last October when a task force created by Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz released a detailed report showing how to lower the borough’s car insurance costs, which the report said were the highest in the nation.

The announcement had plenty of elements to make it newsworthy. Car insurance is a pocketbook issue. Several million people were affected by outrageously high rates simply because they live in Brooklyn. The report showed how crime rings were making the system by staining accidents on an enormous scale and running hundreds of phony medical claims. It also suggested new steps to combat the problem, including the idea of stopping the no-fault program in Brooklyn.

The result was that The News ran a 351-word story inside its Brooklyn section and the First published a 233-word article on page 23. Nothing appeared in Newsday or the Times. Among broadcasters, Channel 11 News at 10 covered the story.

The minimal coverage contrasts sharply with the way the same issue is handled in New Jersey, where the Star-Ledger of Newark has played the high cost of car insurance on the front page for years. As a result, the issue always gets close attention in the New Jersey statehouse and in political campaigns; in New York, it’s barely mentioned.

The Eagle would no doubt have played the story on page 1 and followed up on it constantly.

Another example of a contemporary Eagle story in the making: AIDS policy. Chris Norwood, who helped start the 718 AIDS Coalition in the 1990s to press AIDS funding for agencies in the city’s most populous area code, contends the city just doesn’t shape its AIDS policy in a way that adequately addresses the 70 percent of AIDS cases that are outside Manhattan.

Norwood, executive director of Bronx-based Health People: Community Preventive Health Institute, said the membership of a year-old city policy panel, the New York City Commission on AIDS, is heavily weighted toward toward Manhattan (23 of the 25 members last Manhattan addresses, according to a list provided by the city Health Department). Such numbers “would certainly receive more attention” from a newspaper based outside Manhattan, he says.

The same could be said for the simmering conflicts over alleged favoritism shown to Manhattan in many other areas such as funding for tourism, parks maintenance, economic development, police staffing, district attorneys, culture and rebuilding subway stations—potential Eagle stories all.

Even a half-century after the Eagle’s closing, there remains in the city a streak of Brooklyn’s sentiment regarding Brooklyn and the media based there.

The local things that get coverage in Brooklyn are the things that the New York newspapers like," says Frank Macchiara, president of Brooklyn Heights-based St. Francis College and former city schools chancellor. "If five people from Manhattan like a restaurant on Smith Street, it gets coverage. Events don’t get to be important because Brooklynites find them and spread the word. It’s important because the media in Manhattan found them.”

Paul Moses, a former city editor at Newsday, teaches journalism at Brooklyn College, where he is director of the Center for the Study of Brooklyn.

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CUNY Recalls Einstein’s ‘Miracle Year’ and His Life

In 1905, the scientist whose name would come to connote genius published a series of papers that overturned long-held theories about physics.

Indeed, Albert Einstein’s achievements in 1905 were remarkable, especially when you consider that he was only 26. For within one year, not only did this lowly patent clerk come up with the special theory of relativity made famous by the E=mc² equation, but he also explained the Brownian movement of molecules. It was his groundbreaking work on the photoelectric effect, published that same year, that won him the Nobel Prize.

“It was an extraordinary year that obviously turned physics upside down, and the world has not been the same,” said Chancellor Matthew Goldstein. The chancellor recently hosted a discussion on Einstein for CUNY-TV with two men who knew the scientist and gave first-hand accounts of their encounters with him – William T. Golden, chairman emeritus of the American Museum of Natural History, and Frederick Seitz, president emeritus of Rockefeller University.

What emerged was a portrait of a man of supreme intellect who loved, laughed, played the violin and sailed. A declared pacifist, he nevertheless did his part in World War II, becoming an advisor to the U.S. Navy and playing musical concerts to raise money for the troops. But he had his quirks, too. He reveled in his celebrity, cultivating his disheveled “mad scientist” appearance, which bordered on the theatrical.

In this centennial of Einstein’s “annus mirabilis,” or “miracle year” in which he published his landmark papers, the Chancellor’s TV program was not the only CUNY event reexamining and reflecting on Einstein’s life and his work.

“Einstein – the man and the scientist – continues to fascinate people, and CUNY has been illuminating various aspects of his life in our annual Science & Arts series,” said Adrienne Klein, director of special projects for The Graduate Center. “This is the first time that we at CUNY have devoted an entire semester in our series to one subject, but Einstein deserved the credit.”

On Einstein’s birthdate in March, a retired restaurant owner replied to a call for Einstein look-alikes, made the day festive and helped blow out the candles of a birthday cake. Latif Rashidzada looked “exactly as Einstein might have had he, too, been born in Kabul, Afghanistan,” the New York Times’ Clyde Haberman opined in a column the following day.

City College – where Einstein activities included a special opportunity for students in the sciences to present their research – claims a notable connection to Einstein. On April 7, 1921, Einstein lectured at City College on general relativity, his first such scientific lecture on a college campus in the United States, where he was reported to have said: “I never realized that so many Americans were interested in tensor analysis.”

Seitz, an eminent physicist who came to know Einstein when they were both colleagues at Princeton University in the mid-1930s, recalled that Einstein “had an inner strength and modesty that allowed him to do things few other people could have done. He was a modest man, but he knew he was great.”

Indeed, so confident of his abilities was Einstein that he promised his first wife that he would win his first Nobel for her.

Yet, the man who was “regarded as a great scientist on matters not understandable to the general public or even other scientists” could be extraordinarily kind and down-to-earth. Golden, an early archivist of American science policy, said he was “impressed with [Einstein’s] warmth and depth of feeling and human kindness.”

Although Golden had the opportunity to spend only part of one day with Einstein, it was an experience he will never forget. In June 1947, Golden, who was on the newly formed Atomic Energy Commission and who was a science adviser to Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Truman, was invited to visit Einstein at his Princeton home to discuss what the scientist called an urgent matter. Over afternoon tea, Einstein warned that the world was on the brink of nuclear war and proposed the formation of a world government, complete with a world military, that would be headed by the United States.

“He said the war would come within two to ten years and that it would result in the destruction of civilization as we know it. That’s where the great Einstein was wrong,” Golden said. “Many of the things he said were unrealistic politically.”

For his part, Seitz fondly remembered the time he and wife took a Cub Scout pack through the university’s physics department, and Einstein took the time “to pat each child on the head, which I’m sure each of them remembered for the rest of their lives.”

As the years went by, Einstein became isolated from the scientific community that had once so enthusiastically embraced his theories and became so involved in politics that after World War II he was offered the presidency of the newly established State of Israel, a post he politely declined. Seitz attributed the estrangement and lack of interest in teaching in great part to the recurring illness, an abdominal aortic aneurysm that eventually killed him in 1955. “His peers revered him and encouraged him to continue, but they didn’t feel he was in the mainstream as they were,” Seitz said.

His peers may have lost interest in him, but, today, 100 years after Einstein produced his most significant work, the world is still hungry for details about the most celebrated scientist of modern times. “As a scientific figure, he is so vivid in our minds that there are films, plays and books about him,” Klein said. “It is our hope that the CUNY programs have brought to life this most fascinating, idiosyncratic figure who changed the history of not only physics but also the world as we know it.”

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Office of University Relations
The City University of New York
535 East 80th St.
New York, NY 10021

Retired restauranteur Latif Rashidzada, judged an Einstein look-alike, is pictured here on the 120th birth date of the E=mc² genius.

Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, standing, hosted a CUNY-TV program on the life of Albert Einstein and interviewed two Einstein associates – Frederick Seitz (left), president emeritus of Rockefeller University, and William T. Golden, chairman emeritus of the American Museum of Natural History.