Julia Rafal, a special-education teacher earning her master’s at Lehman College, has a clear aim: to open the Bronx’s first all-inclusive charter school.

Ryan Merola, a Brooklyn College junior enrolled in the Honors College, wants to become an assistant district attorney. And Rachel Schnur of Queens College sees her future in cancer research and a university teaching position.

As winners of three highly competitive national scholarships, the students recently took giant steps toward reaching their respective goals. Rafal was named a Marshall Scholar; Merola, a Truman Scholar; and Schnur, a Goldwater Scholar. “CUNY students are once again competing successfully for the most prestigious awards,” said CUNY President John F. DeGennaro. “These awards signify our heightened level of academic achievement,” said Chancellor Matthew Goldstein. “This is a tribute to the students and their families, our dedicated faculty, and the reforms implemented at CUNY over the past several years.”

Britain’s select Marshall Scholarship, which counts U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer among its alumni, was awarded to Rafal and 42 others for 2006. As a Marshall Scholar, she will receive a merit to the highest standards of scholarship and background and an enduring commitment to the highest standards of scholarship and teaching.”

The Chancellor expressed thanks to Mary Lu Bilek, who has served as Interim Dean since May 2005, for “her outstanding dedication and service.” The new Vice Chancellor for Student Development, Dr. Moore, has been Associate Provost and Vice Chancellor for Student Life at East Carolina University since 2002.

An administrator with a strong commitment to helping students succeed, Dr. Moore holds a tenured faculty appointment in East Carolina University’s School of Allied Health. His appointment, like Anderson’s, is effective July 2006.

Chancellor Goldstein said, “Dr. Moore has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to empowering students from diverse backgrounds to become productive college graduates. He brings to the University an impressive range of experiences aimed at strengthening the quality of student life.”

Dr. Moore holds a doctorate in education from North Carolina State University. From modest beginnings as a teacher training school in North Carolina, East Carolina University has grown to become an emerging, national research university with an enrollment of more than 23,000. Speaking of Macari, the retiring Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, the Board noted she has served since 1993 and has overseen an estimated $7.5 billion in planning, design and construction. “The new team of Dr. Moore and Ms. Macari in the roles of President and Vice President will provide CUNY with a strong team as we enter a new era,” said Dr. Goldstein.

Last year’s Goldwater winner was Philipa Njau, who graduates from City College in 2007 and aspires to a career as a research scientist. This year’s CUNY awardee is biology major Rachel Schnur of Hillcrest, Queens, a junior in Queens College’s honors program in mathematics and natural sciences. Schnur wants to earn a doctorate in molecular biology/genetics, and pursue cancer research and university teaching. These days, though, she works with Queens College Professor Timothy Short, studying plants’ responses to their environment. “I’m in the lab all day long, and I love it.”

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Reports at CUNY indicate that the University is meeting these challenges. As reported in this issue of CUNY Matters, the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at Queens College just received a four-year, $19.5 million award from the U.S. Department of Energy to support a research program of early detec-
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These and other awards indicate the high quality of faculty research at CUNY and the lead role faculty play in advancing science at every level within the University. Since 1998, CUNY has added almost 800 new full-time faculty to its ranks, in part by targeting selected areas, including photonics and biosciences, for ongoing cluster hiring. In the last four years alone, more than 400 new full-time faculty have been hired in engineering, math, and science.

Our Decade of Science is moving for-
ward on several other fronts, as well.

We will see a dramatic increase in the construction and modernization of science facilities around the University, most notably the CUNY-wide Advanced Science Research Center—which will concentrate on emerging disciplines such as photonics, nanotechnology, biosensing and remote sensing, structural biology and macromolecular assemblies, and neuroscience—will open in the fall of 2008.

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The most motivated online learners are: "women with small children returning to college, people with physical disabilities or health problems, and those who can’t come regularly to campus because of their job," says Philip Pecorino, a philosophy professor at Queensborough Community College.

Opportunity for Thousands Who Otherwise Could not Attend College

At the same time, because students often file assignments as they finish them, rather than waiting to submit them on the deadline day, Bernhardt marks them as they come in, instead of going through the entire stack in one day. “I tell them, the earlier they do the work, the more attention they’re likely to get,” Bernhardt said.

Deborah Adler of Riverdale, who is also taking Picciano’s graduate research course at Hunter, agrees that online classes leave more time for discussion and thinking. “The first time (we) used Blackboard, I thought, ‘Wow, it’s really a place you can have a discussion.’”

Training is Required

Not being in a physical classroom also may have other unexpected benefits. Pecorino, the Queensborough philosophy professor, recalls one day when a student came by his office and said in broken English, “I just came by to thank you.”

“I asked why?” Pecorino said. The student replied that as an immigrant who spoke English as a second language, he was self-conscious and reluctant to speak up in a regular class. “But in your class,” he said, “I’m like anybody else. We’re all the same.”

While online courses may spur more frequent and fluid communication, they are not easier overall, advocates say. In fact, they usually require more travel, discussion, keep attendance and track grades. Faculty do need to be very organized. Studies by the State University of New York show that faculty spent between 100 and 500 hours (an average of 200 hours) training and preparing before their first day of teaching an online class, Pecorino said.

CUNY offers technical assistance for professors and for students who need to learn Blackboard software, and who may need help when things go wrong. But not everything is different from traditional classes.

For example, in teaching his introductory writing courses, at Staten Island’s Bernhardt uses a tablet computer that allows him to mark essays on the screen, as if they were essays on paper.

CUNY Online B.A. Makes Its Debut

A key aspect of the online degree, according to John Mogulescu, Dean of the School of Professional Studies, is the commitment to student support services, including financial aid, tech support, and personal academic advisors. Along with flexible course schedules, these services are critical to making college more accessible — particularly for students with busy lives and work.

College degree-completion has eluded many students nationwide. In 1986, more than half the students in four-year public institutions completed their degrees, said George Otte, CUNY’s Director of Instructional Technology. Since that time, he said, research shows that the number of students completing their degree has steadily declined across the country, with not much more than a third of students now achieving their degree.

The launch of CUNY’s Online Baccalaureate follows extensive work with online instruction between 2000 and 2004, supported by grants from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. During that time, more than 20,000 students have taken online courses at CUNY, covering almost every discipline, Otte said.

Online instruction has increased dramatically over the last decade.

“There is a strong sense among students that online courses are just as good as face-to-face classes, that there is actually as much or more interaction, student-to-student, and student-to-faculty,” Otte said. Ninety percent of the students surveyed said the experience was “as good as or better” than a similar traditional course, he said.

Those findings were mirrored among the faculty who were surveyed, Otte added. While 90 percent of participating faculty acknowledged that online instruction required more time and work, they wanted to keep doing it. “It’s really developed in a grassroots way,” Otte said. “Now faculty are saying, ‘Let’s begin the work on the building blocks to expand and develop an online degree that maximizes the benefits to the students.’”

Students can come to CUNY and finish what they started. For more information, please visit www.cuny.edu/online or call 212-652-CUNY.
She Changed Careers, Now Studies with Eminent Psychoanalysts

A Hollywood talent agent-turned-City College psychology major has become the first undergraduate student admitted to a prestigious psychoanalytic training program co-sponsored by the Anna Freud Center at University College, London, and Yale University’s Child Study Center.

Jen Lyne, a member of CCNY’s Class of 2007 and a City College Fellow, was one of 12 asked to the Psychoanalytical Research Training Program at Yale in mid-March, a nearly weeklong gathering normally open only to advanced doctoral candidates and other professionals. They attended presentations and had their work critiqued by prominent faculty, including Peter Fonagy, Ph.D., chief executive of the Anna Freud Center.

“It was extraordinary to have the undivided attention of such great faculty, and it was a networking opportunity bar none,” Lyne said. “Everyone else was either in a Ph.D. program or a practicing clinician. I was the only one who didn’t have any patients to talk about.”

A screenwriter for EUE/Screen Gems when not attending CCNY, Lyne sees her decision to study psychoanalysis and child development as a natural extension of her earlier professional life.

She compares her time as a talent agent to “10 years of clinical experience. When you’re someone’s agent, you need to understand where they are emotionally.” She explained. “That’s the same point of departure for a clinical psychologist. To be a good agent or a good clinician you need to be a great listener.”

Lyne, raised in Westport, Conn., became an agent while studying cinematography at New York University. She took a position at the Gersh Agency representing cinematographers, and within a few years was co-heading the firm’s literary division, as well.

An offer to join International Creative Management had her packing for the West Coast. She had a pivotal moment, though, when she read an article in The Atlantic on attachment that was written by Bob Karen, a CCNY graduate student who was working with Professor Arietta Slade at City College. Attachment theory is defined by Wikipedia as “a theory (or group of theories) about the psychological concept of attachment: the tendency to seek close- ness to another person and feel secure when that person is present.”

The topic piqued Lyne’s interest and soon she was devouring everything she could read on the subject, she recalled.

She eventually decided on CCNY for the opportunity to study with Slade, as well as her advisor Robert Elicone, who co-authored the authoritative book on mentalization along with Professor Fonagy.

The difficulty of returning to college study after working in NYU’s support- portive environment, she said. “City has a thorough support system that takes the fear out of returning and worrying that you’ve forgotten too much,” she said. “Also, no matter how much you have learned or experienced, there are brilliant professors who have something new and exciting to teach you.”

Lyne has leveraged her preparation, enthusiasm and experience earned her an important opportunity at the Yale program. Dr. Mayes asked her to join ongoing research on the “Minding the Baby” project, an intervention program for at-risk parents.

Lyne is happy with her evolving and expanding world. “I’m starting to see myself as part of a network of colleagues doing psychological research,” said Lyne, who will apply to Ph.D. programs this fall and is president of CCNY’s Psychology Club, encouraging other undergraduates to pursue advanced degrees.

“IT changes your perspective and approach when you are part of a network of people working toward the same goals.”

Helping Immigrants Become Naturalized

The Daily News and CUNY have teamed up again for “Citizenship Now.”

The University’s immigration experts gathered at the News’ offices for another weeklong round of answering phoned-in questions about becoming an American citizen.

More than 100 immigration experts were available to take calls in English or Spanish during the most recent call-in, between April 18 and 22. Each year some 100,000 permanent residents settle in the city and approximately the same number qualify for naturalization annually, according to Allan Wernick, the Chair of CUNY’s highly regarded Citizenship and Immigration Project and a Professor of Law at Baruch College.

“Those for naturalization assistance is great and growing,” he added, “despite existing federal and state resources assistance is great and growing,” he added, “despite existing federal and state resources for these services.”

A clear indication of the need for such services is the overwhelming response to the CUNY/Daily News Citizenship Now! Effort. Typically during each of the twice yearly sessions, more than 100,000 calls are placed. The University also makes it campuses available, free of charge, for immigrant swearing-in ceremonies. This initiative is led by President Eduardo J. Martí of Queensborough Community College, himself an immigrant.

Dominican Exchange Students at City Tech

“I miss my country, but I’m learning a lot and I do like it here. Our group really has a chance to make a difference — to leave a legacy about the importance of cross-cultural communication.”

So said Jose Heriberto Martinez, one of seven students from the Dominican Republic who are studying at New York City College of Technology (City Tech) as part of the new “Study at The City University of New York (CUNY) Scholarship Program” sponsored by CUNY and the government of the Dominican Republic.

Martinez and the other newly arrived Dominican students have had their transition to life and college in New York eased by the large Hispanic contingent of students enrolled at City Tech. Currently, nearly 28 percent of the student body is Hispanic, with 27 born in the Dominican Republic and 810 indicating they are of Dominican descent. In CUNY as a whole, there are more than 23,000 students of Dominican descent, according to a recent report.

Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Selma Botman, who has spearheaded the project, expressed her appreciation to His Excellency Leonel Fernandez, President of the Dominican Republic, and CUNY Trustee Dr. Hugo Morales for their strong support of the initiation of the program.

She explained that students were chosen in a national competition last spring. They receive full tuition plus a $300 stipend courtesy of their home country and CUNY.
Queensborough Continues Slam Poetry Victory Streak

For the second month in a row, Queensborough Community College students won the Intercollegiate Poetry Slam at the Bovery Poetry Club.

Grace Perez won the $100 prize in March and Gabriel Haulius was the winner in February. Teams from New York City College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, NYU and Westminster College are regular participants in the contest.

Poetry Slam, the competitive art of performance poetry, challenges artists to focus on both their writing and performance. Original works of no more than three minutes and 10 seconds are performed without props, costumes or musical instruments. The judges have included artists, journalists, musicians, and other poets.

“I can’t imagine anything that’s more important than having students write and share their own work. It makes them think about the major issues of our day,” said George H. Guida, Associate Professor of English at City Tech and the co-founder of the competition.

Program Leads to Better Grades, Bigger Pay Checks

Engineering technology courses are rough going, and many students in those classes have been discouraged by low grades they’ve received. But a built-in up in the mind of Elaine Maldonado — the New York City College of Technology’s director of Academics Learning Centers — and she came up with the idea of boosting pass rates by using adjunct professors — rather than student peers — as tutors.

How successful was the effort? Pass rates in an Electrical Circuits course went from 32 percent in fall 2004 to 82 percent in the fall 2005.

The rates for a Circuits Analysis course jumped from 62 percent to 89 percent during the same period.

Maldonado was taking a page from the successful pilot program she had run for freshman composition students in the fall 2003 — in which part-time English faculty were hired to help students with writing and with the complexities of language acquisition.

She applied for, and received, a $500,000 U.S. Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant to expand the writing initiative to City Tech’s School of Technology & Design.

Results show that both students and faculty benefit from what Maldonado has termed the “Adjunct Academy.”

“Students are benefiting from having a tutor who is not only a professor at the college, but also serves as a mentor,” Maldonado explained.

And the adjunct faculty can now supplement their teaching salary by tutoring or conducting study groups before or after class. They are also compensated to help students make connections to the workplace by sponsoring students in design and exhibition competitions.

Grallas and Kupferbergs Give $10 Million to Respective Alma Maters, CCNY and Queens

Larry and Yvette Gralla have pledged $7 million to The City College of New York to expand a scholarship program operating in partnership with selective public high schools. The donation brings the Grallas’ total giving to the college to $10 million.

“Yvette and Larry Gralla are true champions of City College’s mission,” said President Gregory H. Williams.

That gift came as Queens College announced its Golden Center was being renamed the Selma and Max Kupferberg Center for the Visual and Performing Arts. The renaming was in recognition of the Kupferbergs’ recent gift of $10 million, the largest single gift received to date by Queens.

The money will be used to establish an endowment to provide annual programming support for the arts at the college, as well as to provide much-needed support for renovations to the facility.

In a speech announcing the renaming, President James Myskens thanked the Kupferbergs and summarized the career of Max Kupferberg, an alumnus. “After Max graduated from the college with a degree in physics (in 1942), he went to work for the United States Army on the Manhattan Project, conducting nuclear research in Los Alamos, New Mexico,” Myskens noted.

“In 1946, building on their experiences as inventors of power equipment during the war, Max and his three brothers started Kepco, Inc. This internationally known company has been a mainstay of the Flushing business community ever since, and Max continues today as chairman of its board.”

As for City College alumnus Larry Gralla, four years ago he, with some support from fellow CCNY and Stuyvesant High School alumni, launched the Stuyvesant CCNY Scholarship Project, which awards grants to Stuyvesant students who have high SAT scores and are enrolled in honors programs at the college. Last year, Gralla led an effort to establish a similar program for students of the Bronx High School of Science. Later this year the program will be launched at Brooklyn Technical High School, and between eight and 10 additional NYC public high schools are being evaluated as potential future partners in the project.

“City College opens a door of opportunity for people who might not have any other way of obtaining an education,” Gralla said.

With his brother Milton, Gralla established Gralla Publications, which published trade magazines. Larry Gralla (Class of 1951) and Yvette Gralla (’52) met at City 55 years ago, and married soon after.

Lehman Ichthyologist Helps Herring Return to Bronx, after 350-Year Absence

For the first time in 350 years, herring are swimming in the Bronx, and thanks largely to a Lehman College professor who spent years doing research on the river that flows through the borough and bears its name.

“It represents a kind of a culmination phase in all of the restoration activity that’s been going on in the Bronx to restore the Bronx River,” said Professor Joseph W. Rachlin, an ichthyologist and director of Lehman’s Laboratory for Marine and Estuarine Research (La MER).

“My speculation based on research was that the herring probably disappeared from there back in the late 1600s, somewhere around 1639 or thereabouts, because a dam was established near 182nd St. "The dam — built near a flour mill owned by Jonas Brooks, after whom the borough is named — blocked herring from reaching their spawning grounds, Rachlin noted.

Key players in the return of herring to the Bronx were The Wildlife Conservation Society and the office of U.S. Representative Jose E. Serrano.

Serrano has obtained more than $15 million in federal funds for the once-squalid river’s rebirth. He called the plac- ing of more than 200 herring in the river “a historic moment,” adding that there is sweet symbolism in the development. He remembers when Puerto Rican, Jewish, Italian and Irish kids grew up together in the Bronx and became aware that Jewish families appreciated herring.

Every once in a while, Serrano said, he still likes to nosh a wedge of herring out of a jar.

At present, the herring will continue to be blocked by three dams. But the Conservation Society and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which stocks other coastal rivers, are seeking $1 million to construct fish ladders — gently sloping water passageways — to allow returning herring to climb over. If the money does not become available, volunteers with nets will help the spawning fish surmount the dams.

For decades, the eight-mile stretch of river that winds through the Bronx was a virtual dumping ground for automobiles and tires. Owing to cleanup efforts that began in 1997 the river is now a place where canoeists paddle and 45 species of fish, including eel, small-mouth bass and sunfish, thrive. Hopefully, it will be a place where herring multiply also.

Acclaimed Novelist joins Medgar Evers English Dept.

Colin Channer, author of the best-selling novels Waiting in Vain, Satisfy My Soul, and Passing Through, has joined the Medgar Evers College English Department where he will teach Creative Writing.

Born and raised in Jamaica, Channer is a familiar face on the Brooklyn arts scene. After earning a degree in media communication from Hunter College, he began as a freelance writer and also worked as a copyeditor for advertising and design firms.

Channer became co-creative director of Eziba (eziba.com), a leading retailer of global craft, where his redefinition of the firm’s brand identity became a major factor in its international success.

In 2001, he launched the Calabash International Literary Festival Trust, whose mission is “to transform the literary arts in the Caribbean by being the region’s managed producer of workshops, seminars and performances.” The annual festival has attracted authors and visitors from throughout the world.

“I’m influenced by reggae, by the way politics, spirituality, and sensuality intersect and interact in it,” Channer was quoted as saying in a profile two years ago in The Miami Herald.

Colin Channer

Left to right, Dr Tony Pappantoniou, Lehman biology professor; Dr. Barbara Warkeitine, Lehman alumna and professor of Sustaining Marine, and Dr. Joseph Rachlin, Lehman ichthyologist and director of La MER (the Laboratory for Marine and Estuarine Research).
Brooklyn College Turns Out Award-Winning Playwrights

As one of New York’s leading dramatists and a recipient of two OBIES — including one for Lifetime Achievement in 2003 — Mac Wellman knows the sweet sound of applause. But when it comes to his MFA play-writing program at Brooklyn College, he would rather that his students take the bow.

Especially students like Young Jean Lee. “She is a remarkably intelligent and focused young person,” Wellman said about the award-winning young experimental playwright, Lee.

Lee, who graduated from the MFA program last year, won a $20,000 grant in February from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, whose mission is to promote innovation in artistic expression.

Lee said she thanks the stars, as it were, for introducing her to Brooklyn College’s MFA program under Wellman. “I was living in New Haven and I contacted Jeffrey M. Jones, who was teaching play-writing at Yale. He recommended that I go to Mac’s program because he knew that I was interested in doing experimental work, non-linear narratives,” recalled Lee, who writes and directs her own plays.

“Learning from those other pieces, “Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven,” Lee, a Korean-American, writes that it “presents my confused, disturbing and frequently offensive take on my cultural background in all of its romanticized, half-informed, and brutal honesty. that it ‘presents my confused, disturbing and frequently offensive take on my cultural background in all of its romanticized, half-informed, and brutal honesty.”

The show is also about being in love and trying to be happy when you’re so f----- up that all you want to do is destroy everything in your path…”

Those who know Lee say she faces a bright future in playwriting. Wellman says he staked Brooklyn’s playwriting program up against the best in the country. “It’s as strong a program as there is anywhere – Yale or Brown or NYU,” said Wellman, who has taught at Yale, Brown and NYU.

(The program for playwriting is in Brooklyn College’s English Department, not in the Theater Department.)

Wellman has been a prolific playwright for over 30 years. His 97-minute play, “Sincerity Forever,” to then Senator Jesse Helms “for the fine job you are doing of destroying civil liberties.”

After a decade of peripatetic production in rented theaters that strained its budget, the Sackett Group now finds itself with a long-term home in the heart of the vibrant BAM Cultural District, surrounded by other adventurous theaters and the culture-hungry audiences of brownstone Brooklyn. “It’s a dream come true!” Weinstein explained.

Making it come true took many years and a lot of hard work. When they met in 1987 during a Brooklyn Heights Players production of “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” Weinstein was running the light board and Haft was in the cast. But Weinstein wanted to direct, and Haft, along with several other actors in Joseph, shared his vision of an ensemble-based company.

A bond was formed

“We picked plays where no one part stood out and everybody had an equal role,” Haft recalled. The name Sackett Group was chosen in honor of Brooklyn’s Sackett Street, where Haft and his wife owned a house and Weinstein was there tenant. Early productions of the Sackett Group included two contemporary plays and Clifford Odets “Awake and Sing!” Two months after that classic family drama opened in July 1993, artistic director Weinstein and producing director Haft put the Sackett Group on temporary hiatus to enter Brooklyn’s MFA program.

“Our friend Laureen Lefever, who was in ‘Awake and Sing!’ had already started in the program,” Haft said. “She was so excited about it, she kept telling us about what wonderful work they did and how absorbed you put in the theater; she said, ‘You guys gotta come!’”

“I had already been thinking about graduate school,” added Weinstein. Working on a professional production at The Lamb’s in midtown Manhattan, he said with a grin, “it was clear that anyone who was getting a check had a master’s degree. It was something I had to do in order to move my directing career into the arenas I wanted.”

Among the professors he would encounter in the MFA program, Weinstein had a special tenderness for Stephen Langley, the late scholar whose book “Theater Management in America remains a preeminent text in the field. But he added that there were a number of others who were “instrumental in my artistic growth” and gave him “something to reach for, a level of production quality and care and detail that I hadn’t put into my work before…” Weinstein said.

As for Haft, he recalled that while in the MFA program he learned about “speech and diction” and about “the availability of our bodies, how to relax and connect emotionally.”

Haft and Weinstein even carried on as the Sackett Group: John Scheffer, once head of the college’s design program, is the company’s resident set designer and member of the board of directors.

During their two years in the MFA program, Haft and Weinstein solidified their commitment to a professional partnership. They did their thesis production together. “We did ‘Talley’s Folly,’ which is a two-character, 97-minute play with no intermission, so you have to keep the ball in the air the entire time. We already knew we loved working together as actor and director, but that ground base of education really helped things blossom.”

Life beyond the MFA

Haft earned his MFA in May 1995; Weinstein, derailed by his mother’s death in January, completed all the course work but never handed in the written portion of his thesis. They revived the Sackett Group that October by transplanting “Talley’s Folly” to a lower Manhattan theater.

“We went along, doing a production here and a production there,” Weinstein said. “But with the huge increase in real estate costs, we realized that we couldn’t afford to keep rattling around, renting Manhattan theaters for two or three weeks with all those expenses. We started searching for space in places other than Manhattan.”

Brooklyn was the logical place to start. Haft and Weinstein were both born there and still live in the borough, as do many of the Sackett Group’s longtime members. The arts scene was flourishing, as BAM imported some of the world’s finest companies for its famous Next Wave festival, and amateur theater groups and even
Borough of Theater: Various Producers Create a Permanent Theater Company

We invited Borough President Marty Markowitz, just because he's an important person in Brooklyn,” Weinstein said. “To our surprise, he actually showed up. While Dan was enunciating the performance, I sat the borough president down, looked him in the eye and said, ‘We really want to explore moving our company’s operations here.’ I told him that when I was a kid, BAM had a repertory company and produced its own shows; as a public school student I went there almost once a month. It was a big part of Brooklyn’s identity. When BAM changed directions, they brought in unparalleled, high-level outside entertainment, but what they were doing didn’t grow out of the community anymore. It really bothered me that Brooklyn didn’t have its own professional company of its own. And that Hunter, who started a Brooklyn-based theatre company, The Sackett Group, was impressed. The arts, he knew, were one of the driving forces behind the Brooklyn boom, and it was his mission as borough president to keep it booming. At a subsequent meeting, Markowitz and his aides suggested underutilized spaces that might meet the Sackett Group’s needs, among them the Brooklyn Music School’s theater.

The dream came true

Checking it out, Haft and Weinstein liked what they saw. “Companies our size usually get to share a tiny basement,” Weinstein said. “Here we found a beautiful, 266-seat theater that was nothing short of a jewel. It’s got opera-house style acoustics and a wonderful, full proscenium stage—which needs some attention and renovation, but hopefully we can achieve that with both organizations working together.”

Liz Koch of the borough president’s office put Haft and Weinstein in touch with Brooklyn Music School executive director Karen Krieger, and over the next 18 months the two organizations negotiated, reaching an agreement in the spring of 2004. The Music School got technical support for its dance recitals and other performances; and the Sackett Group got the opportunity to produce plays throughout the year, as long as it accommodated the Music School’s schedule.

In August 2004, the Sackett Group opened its first-ever full-scale season with Tennessee Williams’ “Suddenly, Last Summer,” directed by Weinstein. “Women’s Work” followed in October, and Arthur Miller’s seldom-seen “The American Clock” in January. The season will close in April with an original play, “One Big Happy Family,” written and directed by Joe Costanza, who has a background in theater from Queens College.

“We chose American plays because that’s who we are,” Weinstein commented. Regarding the company’s special interest in presenting works by women, Weinstein says the inspiration came from “the talented women we met at Brooklyn College.” The Sackett Group has mounted five separate productions showcasing one-act plays written by women, the most recent in October 2005. Weinstein’s ambitions cover a wide stage. “In the big picture, in the long run, we want to create a theater here in Brooklyn with a national voice,” he said. “And our company’s sensibility fits in nicely among the other theaters here. BAM is mostly an import house. Theatre for a New Audience concentrates on classics. The Irondale Ensemble, which is moving into a gorgeous room in the Presbyterian Church downtown, does very experimental theater. These are organizations with a long history of production, large endowments, built-in audiences for their kind of theater. Fortunately, there was room for us.”

“The exciting thing about having the company producing year-round is that we can grow,” he continued. “Over the years we’ve found some amazing actors, who embrace the kind of ensemble where the only star is the show itself; we’ve had great experiences, and many of them come back to us over and over again.”

Haft interjected, “We didn’t even have auditions for ‘The American Clock.’ Rob just cast people he’d directed before. But none of the actors in our next production have ever worked with us. It’s a widening net.” The partners hope that that widening net will attract more spectators as well.

“Now that we have a permanent home, we don’t have to reorient our audience to another part of town and another street with every production,” Weinstein said. “We can tell them, ‘We’ll always be here. You can come three or four times a year.’ This isn’t just our home; it’s their home for affordable theater.”

The Sackett Group’s 2006-7 season will begin in the fall with “Picasso at the Lapin Agile” by Steve Martin, possibly followed by one of the late August Wilson’s plays. It’s thrilling but exhausting, the partners admit, to be running one season while planning the next.

“Up until now,” said Weinstein, “doing just one production at a time, we had time to save money, to plan, to make all the phone calls. Now we’re perpetually working on several projects at the same time: putting one up on stage, doing preproduction for another, doing post-mortem financial comparisons on another. It’s all so we can move forward toward our goal, which is a full, annual 12-month season. If we’re not working on something every day, we’re not doing the right thing.”
By Curtis Stephen

From the moment John Hope Franklin, 91, became an educator in 1939, one issue has concerned him more than any other—the precarious state of black men in America. “It’s at the top of my mind all the time,” he says.

Currently on a national tour to promote his book, an autobiography entitled Mirror to America—once a Brooklyn College professor, now a professor emeritus at the University of Chicago and Duke University—has had ample cause for alarm as he’s traveled the country.

“I was in San Francisco the other day,” Franklin recalled. “I saw literally hundreds of men standing around, homeless and in need. They were not all black, but largely black. I asked myself, ‘What is this in the richest country in the world?’”

Franklin, who in 1955 became the first African American to head a department at a primarily white university—when he was chair of Brooklyn College’s History Department—was selected as the keynote speaker for a late April, CUNY-sponsored conference on the plight of the black male.

The symposium, titled “Black Male Youth: Creating A Culture For Educational Success,” was held at John Jay College and grew out of CUNY’s Black Male Initiative, a multi-million dollar plan to increase black male enrollment by 25 percent over the next two years.

The initiative was inspired largely by the innovative program that Medgar Evers College established several years ago.

“You can’t save the whole world, but we wanted to engage more young black males to participate in higher education,” said President Edison O. Jackson.

In February, Gerald Jackson, a former professor of Africana Studies at Cornell University, was named executive director of Medgar Evers’ Male Development and Empowerment Center.

For students like 24-year-old Lavar Dowpwell, the attention to black males has been paying off. Born in Harlem, Dowpwell, a sophomore majoring in business management, arrived at Medgar Evers in 2002, after a two-year hiatus following graduation from Washington Irving High School.

“I saw people getting cut in gang fights on a regular basis,” he recalled. “It was so stressful that I couldn’t deal with school anymore.”

Dowpwell joined the workforce and held a number of entry-level jobs before realizing that he “could only go so far” with only a high school diploma. “It’s not just the degree,” said Dowpwell, who aspires to be an advertising executive. “It’s about developing skills that you definitely need in life.”

As recently published studies and news articles have highlighted critical social indicators, such as high incarceration and unemployment rates among black males, the Black Male Initiative is designed to come up with ways of ameliorating the current condition. The main tool is education, especially at the college level.

“We realized very early on that we had to look inwardly and think more broadly about public policy in order to meet this challenge,” said Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Selma Botman, who was chosen by Chancellor Matthew Goldstein in 2004 to oversee planning for the Black Male Initiative. “We concluded that our institution had to become a moral voice in this area by increasing access and success.”

CUNY is working on that goal at its eleven senior and six community colleges with a $2 million grant from the New York City Council. As much as anything else, the University wants to improve the numbers with respect to college attendance and graduation rates.

Nationwide, males in the United States, irrespective of race, trail females in college enrollment and graduation, but the gap between black men and black women is especially high, demographers have said. The gap is distressingly wide among Hispanics also.

At CUNY, for example, only 33 percent of the 58,000 black students are males; 36 percent of the 50,000 Hispanics are males; 42 percent of the 54,000 whites are males; and 47 percent of the 29,000 Asians are males.

But as a chilling article (with the headline: “Piglet Deepens for Black Men”) in the March 20, 2006 issue of The New York Times pointed out, the more alarming data are in the incarceration rates and joblessness rates. In inner cities across the nation, more than half of all black men do not finish high school. And of the black dropouts, 72 percent are jobless, the article noted, and 34 percent are in prison.

The huge pool of poorly educated black men in the United States is “becoming ever more disconnected from the mainstream society, and to a far greater degree than comparable white or Hispanic men,” the Times article stated.

Central to boosting the number of black males at CUNY is an aggressive campaign to strengthen existing pipeline programs, particularly at high schools with a larger concentration of black students. This fall, CUNY plans to launch a Teacher Academy to encourage more black males to teach at New York City public schools, especially in the sciences. There also exist other programs such as CUNY Prep, which provides high school dropouts with a “second chance” to prepare for college and obtain a General Equivalency Diploma. The Black Male Initiative is already receiving an enthusiastic response from Queensborough Community College, through Men Achieving and Leading in Excellence and Success — or MALES — a new program that includes a range of mentoring services in addition to workshops and orientation programs for high school students.

“We want to provide hope by showing them that there is light at the end of the tunnel,” said Queensborough President Eduardo Marti.

John Jay College will play a crucial role in coming up with ways of overcoming conditions that lead to the high rates of incarceration.

“There’s an interplay between education and the criminal justice system,” said John Jay President Jeremy Travis. The college is focusing on strategies for helping young men avoid the path to incarceration and, instead, find the one leading to employment.

“We have a chance to help them get their lives back on track,” Travis said.

According to Franklin, a large-scale, concerted effort can serve as a national model for addressing the crisis of the young black male. “If we confront this problem, we can deal with it successfully,” he said, “and there’s hope in it — since Hope is my middle name.”

John Jay, Hunter Set Scholarships for Murdered Students

Scholarships have been established at John Jay and Hunter colleges for two young female students who were murdered in cases that stood out for the wanton, depraved nature of the killings.

Imette St. Guillen, 24, and a graduate student at John Jay, was killed in February after visiting late night spots in SoHo. Her death was one of the most brutal in recent New York City history, and the case received prominent daily coverage in the local print and broadcast media.

John Jay College and the New York Daily News, together with the Association for a Better New York, recently announced a $250,000 fund-raising drive to endow a scholarship in St. Guillen’s name.

But some critics of the media and police have complained that the 2003 torture-killing of Romona Moore also stood out for its viciousness, and that her case received far less attention.

Hunter College officials say they hope the recent media stories about Moore’s death, though they have been few, will lead to more contributions to a scholarship fund in her name.

Moore’s mother, Elle Carmichael, has publicly complained that race was a factor in the disparate treatment by the media and police. Moore was black. St. Guillen’s race was not highlighted in stories about her, but the establishments she visited the night of her death are popular with a young white college crowd.

“I hope something good comes out of this,” the still-distraught Carmichael said, sitting in the living room of her home in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. “I hope the police come to realize they shouldn’t treat black children as if they are nobody.”

Regarding the more recent murder of St. Guillen, the student’s body was found in a desolate part of Brooklyn. Her feet were bound, her mouth gagged and her head completely wrapped in tape, police said. She had been raped, officials said. A bar bouncer has been arrested.

As the St. Guillen case was developing, the killers of Romona, who was 21, appeared in court to face charges in that three-year-old murder. The city quickly became aware of the similarities — and similarities — in the two killings.

Back when Moore was missing, her family says they could not get police to take the case seriously and had to make up their own missing person fliers.

Moore’s mother says that only recently, in the wake of the St. Guillen case, has the media paid attention to Romona’s murder. In mid-April two men were sentenced to life in prison. The prosecutor, Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi, said, “They tortured her physically, sexually and mentally for hour on hour, not ending until they took her life.

Moore’s mother said she hopes the effort to raise scholarship money in her daughter’s name will raise $5,000 has been raised and scholarships given to two students.

Those wishing to contribute to the Imette St. Guillen Scholarship can make checks payable to the John Jay College Foundation, Imette St. Guillen Scholarship Fund, and mail them to John Jay College Foundation, 509 10th Ave., Room 623T, New York, NY 10018.

Those interested in contributing to the Romona Moore Scholarship should make checks out to The Hunter College Foundation, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10011.
The 19th-Century Women Pursue Financial Independence

By Gary Schmidgall

In 1838, Catherine Grimké published America’s first comprehensive demand for women’s rights, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women. One of her main arguments was on “The Legal Disabilities of Women,” and just how astonishingly disabled women were before the bar of justice in the 19th century—a central focus of a new book by Joyce Warren, professor of American Literature and director of Women’s Studies at Queens College.

Picture it. On marrying, all of a woman’s property became her husband’s. A New York statute of 1828 specifically stated that a married woman could die intestate. A widow was not only responsible for the debts of her husband, but also could inherit only a life interest in a third of her husband’s real property (thus greedy sons could, and did, take the sale of a mother’s home). On a wife’s death, the husband got it all. Married women had to get a male “next friend” to sue in court. Needless to add, women could not become lawyers, judges, or jurors.

One can only roll one’s eyes and recall the immortal words of Charles Dickens’s Mr. Bumble: “If the law supposes that, the law is a ass — a idiot.”

As we learn in Warren’s study, Women, Money and the Law: 19th-Century Fiction, Gender and the Courts (Univ. of Iowa Press), the legal system — then virtually created to keep women financially dependent upon an arrogant patriarchal capitalism — very grudgingly disregarded its controls. In 1848, with the Married Women’s Property Act, New York became one of a few states to allow women to control their own pre-marital property and earnings during marriage. In response, James Fenimore Cooper wrote a whole novel, The Ways of the Hour, condemning the law: if a woman has money of her own, Cooper facetiously opined, she should “reverently pour it into her husband’s lap.”

Hard though the patriarchy labored to incarcerate women within the parlor, kitchen and nursery, Warren is convinced by her wide reading among women writers of the period, both white and African-American, that there was a palpable consciousness of economic dependence among women then, as well as a growing thirst for financial freedom. One finds the book thinking the battle for economic independence even more momentous than the battle for suffrage. Intent on deconstructing “the fiction of women’s purity in financial matters” during the 19th century, Warren became a court-room habitué, and thereby has a good report of collegial serendipity. Back in the 1970s, the New York State Supreme Court was in need of storage space and chose to discard the testimony and supporting records of thousands of cases from the 1800s to 1920 Warren’s colleague at Queens, historian Leo Hershkovitz, intervened and salvaged the documents, thus coining the title to Hofstra University in 1994. This collection has been invaluable, Warren writes, giving her information on “women whose stories were in fact erased from history.”

Focusing on the numerous decades surrounding the Civil War, 1843 to 1875, Warren has found at more than 2,500 cases and found nearly 400, or about 15 percent, in which a woman figured as a litigant: “All but a handful of these cases focus on a monetary dispute.” Warren then sets the dots between ubiquitous financial-legal themes in prominent women’s fiction and the particularities of these real-life cases.

Women, Money and the Law alternates chapters that present narratives of illuminating or typical cases (there’s not a little sordid human drama here) with chapters in which Warren shows how this case law is reflected ubiquitously in women’s fiction of the time. To acclimatize the reader to a legal landscape often intimidating to a woman plaintiff, Warren sets forth in detail the case of Trust v. Trust, a story about a wife by a wealthy husband who left her and several children after 17 years. Mary Trust pursued her rights against her despised husband for 14 years.

Chapter 2, “The Dominant Discourse,” sets forth the social, legal, religious, medical, and commercial premises employed to discourage women from access to and control of their own money. My favorite anecdote: Hetty Green, the most successful woman Wall Street investor of her day who died worth $1.6 billion in today’s money, being chastised as “unfeminine,” a “dollor worshiper” and “the witch of Wall Street.”

The next chapter, “Economics and the American Renaissance Woman,” is conceived as a satiric contrast to F.O. Matthiessen’s 1941 study of five famous male writers who, Warren points out, were by and large totally clueless about or uninterested in money: Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Melville. Warren’s first counterwomen are mostly not so well known — Susan Warner, E.D.E.N. Southworth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Maria Cummings, Fanny Fern — but their astute consciousness of the need for financial smarts Warren makes thoroughly evident.

Chapter 4 returns to court cases in which women were plaintiffs, most frequently with the desire to regain money or property they owned. The next chapter, “The Economics of Race,” fascinatingly explores the special economic preoccupations displayed in the fiction of four African-Americans, notably Harriet Jacobs’s Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) and Harriet Wilson’s Our Nig (1859). Chapter 6 explores the three varieties of suits in which a woman was the defendant: not of Cuba’s political economy in the first half of the Twentieth Century made the island ripe for radical social and economic change.

Taking advantage of recently declassified U.S. and Soviet documents, the professor highlights the fateful convergence of events that introduced the Soviet Union to Cuba, and made it Cuba’s ally and sponsor.

FINANCIAL FACTS OF LIFE FOR 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN

- Upon marriage, all of a woman’s property became her husband’s.
- A New York statute of 1826 specifically stated that a married woman could not write a will.
- Hetty Green, the most successful female Wall Street investor of her day — she died leaving what would be $1.6 billion in today’s money — was chastised as “unfeminine” and “the witch of Wall Street.”

Mexico in Two Worlds

Drawing on more than fifteen years of research, Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants offers a view from globalization, from a very human perspective.

Professor Robert Courtright’s study focuses on Mexicans who move back and forth between New York and their home village in Puebla, Mexico. Smith shows how the immigrants borrow from both communities as they develop new notions of race and politics.

Smith is an associate professor of Sociology, Immigration Studies and Public Affairs at the School of Public Affairs at Baruch College and at the Graduate Center. Mexican New York was published by the University of California Press.

Sex and the Cold War

When Americans talked about politics in the 1950s, they often seemed to be talking about sex — or rather, about the flashing, terning, and strangely beautiful nexus of his life. In his new book — One Hundred Years of Spectacle in Times Square, published this year by Random House — Berman takes readers on a thrilling illustrated tour of that special part of New York City, and of his life.

Berman is a Distinguished Professor of political science at The City College of New York and The Graduate Center.

CUBAN REVOLUTION REVISITED

Samuel Farber, in The Origins of the Cuban Revolution, Reconsidered challenges dominant views of the revolution’s origins and historical trajectory.

A professor of political science at Brooklyn College, Faber argues that the struggle for Cuban national economy in the first half of the Twentieth Century made the island ripe for radical social and economic change.

To scholar and author Richard Fardon, the solution to “the crossroads of the world,” Times Square is a singular phenomenon in modern New York, the place where imagination blends with reality.

Drawing on more than fifteen years of research, Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants offers a view from globalization, from a very human perspective.

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Godfrey — A medical screening program for Y-12 and ORNL workers is needed because selected workers at these facilities have likely had significant beryllium disease. Sexton knew working in a nuclear weapons plant might harm his health, but he was wary of doctors. So he let time pass.

“Then Steven Markowitz, the occupational physician who heads Queens College’s Center for the Biology of Natural Systems, cornered him at a conference. Markowitz offered weapons plant employees federally funded screening for work-related illnesses. Sexton was a union safety rep whose duties included encouraging workers to take these free exams.

How, Markowitz asked bluntly, could Sexton have credibility if he hadn’t been screened himself?

Some weeks later, Markowitz phoned to insist. “He made me commit,” recalled Sexton, 56, who at the time was experiencing bouts of shortness of breath. The screening showed why: chronic beryllium disease.

This rare condition is triggered by sensitivity to beryllium, a metal found in golf clubs, dental crowns and electronics, besides nuclear weapons. Until 1951, it also was used in fluorescent tubes — the kind that were gathering dust at the Portsmouth, Ohio, nuclear weapons plant until the 1970s, when Sexton was directed to smash them in 55-gallon drums for disposal.

Beryllium scars the lungs, impeding proper functioning.

“I used to run. Now if I walk a short distance I have to stop,” he said.

“Sometimes just taking a shower and brushing my teeth I have to sit down and take a rest,” he added.

Sexton is one of hundreds of nuclear weapons plant workers who discovered medical problems or their causes through this unique, federally funded screening program operating out of Queens College. It was born through moral suasion, constituent politics and savvy lobbying by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, now merged into the United Steel Workers of America. In Washington’s corridors, Markowitz not only helped shape the national screening protocol, but with the union also secured one of 11 contracts to put the plan into action. This contract — funded at a total of $20 million from 2000 to 2005 and another $19.5 million recently — accounts for 40 percent of screenings nationally and is the only one using scanning for early-stage lung cancer. Receiving almost $40 million for both contracts, Markowitz is CUNY’s biggest recipient of research grants.

It was a natural fit for the college’s Center for the Biology of Natural Systems. Founded by legendary ecologist Barry Commoner, the center is an environmental and occupational health institute that strives to identify and help rectify environmental threats to human health. Markowitz, soft spoken and with a modest demeanor, credits the union and others who created the program for its success. But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-TN) has no hesitation giving credit where he feels it’s really due: “Under the leadership of Dr. Markowitz, thousands of workers have been screened and dozens of cancers were detected early enough to be treated.”

As the Cold War ended in the late 1980s, pressure built on Congress and the Department of Energy to clean up toxic waste left by the nuclear arms race. The DOE, which still builds and maintains these weapons, has spent billions on decontamination, although much remains to be done. Meanwhile, Portsmouth workers were telling their senator, Democrat John Glenn, that they had been poisoned as well. “They worked with radiation and, what’s less apparent, they worked with a lot of toxic chemicals,” Markowitz said.

Glenn inserted a provision in the Defense Reauthorization Act of 1993 directing DOE to provide retired workers with ongoing medical evaluations, since many occupational diseases don’t show up for as long as 30 years after exposure.

“It was common sense — workers should get evaluations to see if they had problems stemming from their work — and on the other hand it was quite radioactive.

Queens Center Receives $40 Million to...
Track Nuclear Plant Workers

cal, because there is no other industry in the United States for which there are comprehensive occupational health evaluations,” Markowitz said.

In 2000, with bipartisan support, Congress also passed a compensation law that so far has paid $1.2 billion to nuclear weapons workers diagnosed with 22 cancers or other specified work-related illnesses.

“For a number of people, this is a way of making peace with the past, which was a very unkind past,” said Richard D. Miller, a policy analyst with the nonprofit Government Accountability Project, which protects whistleblowers; he played a behind-the-scenes role in securing both laws.

These progressive health-care initiatives are backed by what might appear to be strange conservative bedfellows, including Majority Leader McConnell and Senators Jim Bunning (R-KY), Mike DeWine (R-OH) and George Voinovich (R-OH, who succeeded Glenn in 1998). The legislators all came from states with weapons plants.

The Queens College center started screening at three gaseous diffusion plants in 1998 — K-25 in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Paducah, Kentucky; and Portsmouth, Ohio — and a year later it added Idaho National Laboratory. In the first three of those plants, workers mix uranium ore with chlorine to produce a vapor that is sent down long tubes to separate two isotopes, U-238 and U-235. The former goes into nuclear bombs, the latter is waste called high-level actinides.

Workers and its predecessor unions, says “company doctor,” whom they may not trust. They do not have access to independent physicians with expertise in occupational medicine. Often their only recourse is the workers’ compensation program. Medical analysis is done in Queens.

“Tracking nuclear plant workers is to tell people the truth about their health. Secondary we want to detect disease early and help people,” he said. To boost credibility, the union runs centers staffed by fellow workers, active and retired. There, the union offers a two-hour pre-exam workshop to talk about workplace toxins, and to discuss how to talk to a physician and how the special compensation law works. Medical analysis is done in Queens.

Miller, of the Government Accountability Project, said: “I’ve been in these facilities when they were in full-scale operation — giant windowless buildings, often physically very hot, no windows, very noisy, thick clouds of toxic vapors in the air. You often needed earplugs. These are giant industrial facilities with toxic materials and radioactive substances, or reactor facilities that release neutrons, or industrial processes that generate industrial particulate. They were defined as ultra-hazardous facilities under the Atomic Energy Act.”

So it’s a wonder that Markowitz found only limited rates of workplace-related lung disease among the self-selected group that chose to be tested. As of March, the program had evaluated 12,702 DOE workers, finding that Almost a dozen have hearing loss; 17 percent have chronic bronchitis; 10 percent show lung scarring consistent with significant occupational exposure to asbestos; 4 percent have emphysema, brought on at least in part by powerful lung irritants used in the gaseous diffusion process, like hydrofluoric acid. 3 percent have sensitivity to beryllium. A separate lung-scanning program detected 24 early lung cancers (see sidebar).

“His is not an epidemiological study,” which would track all of the 600,000 people who ever built nuclear weapons, Markowitz said. “But I’m encouraged that we haven’t found large numbers of people who are ill.”

Similar results have been found by other universities screening other weapons plants. DOE last year expanded screening to other plants, resulting in the center’s latest grant. The five recently added plants are in Ohio, Tennessee and — right here in New York — at Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island.

Research into proteins involved in cancer growth is among the projects being funded at City College through the National Science Foundation’s Faculty Early Career Development Program.

Two science faculty members at the college have received grants, Assistant Professor of Chemistry Iban Ubarretxena-Belandia and Assistant Professor of Physics Carlos A. Meriles. Ubarretxena plans to investigate the molecular basis for regulated intra-membrane proteolysis, which is a signal transduction mechanism controlling cell growth and proliferation, in everything from bacteria to humans. He plans to study the biochemistry of intra-membrane proteins and their three-dimensional structures, in order to understand their biochemical properties in atomic detail.

“This mechanism is directly involved in many forms of cancer as well as the pathogenesis of Alzheimer’s disease,” the professor noted. “Understanding its properties at this level could lead to novel therapeutic strategies against cancer and neurodegenerative disorders.”

Authorized funding for Ubarretxena’s project, “Biochemical and Structural Characterization of Intramembrane Proteases,” totals $934,363.

Meriles’ project, “Long-Range Dipolar Fields as a Tool for Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Microscopy” has been authorized for $387,000 over five years. The year one appropriation is $147,000.

His investigation aims to develop techniques for using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to analyze the chemical composition of cells and functions of cellular components. He explained that MRI has been difficult to apply to microscopy because reconstructed MRI images have resolutions no greater than one micron (one thousandth of a millimeter).

Of his project, Meriles said, “If successful, this strategy could be very helpful because it maintains the well-known advantages of MRI to investigate biological matter without sacrificing spatial resolution.”

The NSF awards, which run for five years, are given to support “early career-development activities of those teachers-scholars who most effectively integrate research and education.”

CCNY Professors Receive NSF Grants for Cell Research Projects

Lori Brannon is a Queens College employee but she lives in Charlotte, N.C., and she travels innumerable miles around the country, from one nuclear weapons plant to another, in a huge white truck containing a low-dose helical CT scanner.

Brannon works for the college’s Center for the Biology of Natural Systems, and she performs the scans, checking workers for signs of cancer and other diseases.

“You have to be self-reliant and independent,” she said of the work she does.

Brannon has made the mobile CT suite comfortable, playing soft jazz, creating a sitting area and placing posters on the ceiling over the scanner. Each Sunday she drives or flies to the location of the week and camps out in a motel. Friday she goes home. “It gets old some days, but I have rapport with the patients and feel I’m making a contribution. It’s much more personal than a hospital is, where you never see a patient again.”

Her work has saved lives.

For one example, her scans found an early lung cancer in Sam Ray, who worked in a Portsmouth, Ohio, plant for 41 years and lost his natural voice to laryngeal cancer a dozen years ago.

“There were no real safeguards for the first 30 or 35 years,” he said through an artificial voice box. “There was radiation, all types, penetrating radiation and also airborne. That’s no longer possible, because restrictions today are so much greater.”

In addition to Ray, there was a 47-year-old man with a suspicious lung nodule that Brannon followed for three or four visits; at the appropriate time, he had surgery and today is back working. “Every time I see him he hugs me, saying he would never have gone anywhere else,” Brannon said. “The realization hits you that his kids could be without a father and his wife a widow.”

And then there was the young man whose scan showed an abdominal aortic aneurysm. (The abdominal aorta is a large blood vessel that supplies the abdomen, pelvis and legs; an aneurysm is a blood vessel that expands like a balloon.)

“It was about to rupture, and if it ruptures, you’re going to bleed to death. What hit him was that the way his father died, at about the same age,” Brannon said.

Surgeons fixed the problem.

Said Brannon: “That’s what keeps me going.”

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**Crusading Journalism Lives on with Jack Newfield Professorship**

They met 30 years ago. As longtime colleagues at the Village Voice, the two muckrakers helped hone the weekly into a bruising them in the sides of some of New York’s most powerful, greedy and corrupt. Today, one of them, Jack Newfield, is gone. The other, Wayne Barrett, carries on Newfield’s legacy in a Hunter College classroom.

This semester Barrett, a senior editor at the Voice, is the first to hold the jack Newfield Visiting Professorship in Journalism, named for the crusading investigative journalist and Hunter alumnus who died in December 2004. Guided by Barrett, 12 students are getting an insider’s view of city and state politics — and the media coverage thereof — through guest speakers, reporting projects and assigned reading. They are also stepping into Newfield’s shoes, spending a good chunk of the semester reviving one of his best-known and best-read Voice features: the annual list of New York’s Ten Worst Landlords.

The Voice “has agreed to pay every student and give them bylines, and the 5,000-plus-words cover story will be ‘in honor of Jack and will say that it was inspired by his journalism.’

The Newfield professorship is expected to go to a different distinguished journalist each year, with a faculty committee selecting the fellows, said Hunter spokeswoman Meredith Halpern. At the time of Barrett’s appointment, Hunter President Jennifer Hyatt said they would continue to carry on Jack’s traditions in many ways,” Barrett said. Newfield used to train his sights on the greedy and the corrupt, and would go after them with a seeming fearlessness. It is curious to note today that many city bureaucrats — the very kind who in the past would feed the sting of Newfield’s darts — have adopted his views and even, to a degree, his methods.

The city’s Department of Preservation and Development has “isolated its own list of worst landlords.” In a sign of openness, HPD officials showed Barrett’s class how to use the department’s databases.

“The agency itself now seems to be following in Jack’s footsteps,” Barrett said. “The class’s exposure to media and government movers and shakers has made Hunter senior Taina Borrero consider journalism as a possible career. “Wayne’s class has been an amazing experience. He brings (guests) into almost every class,” said the 22-year-old political science major who has interned with Sen. Hillary Clinton’s press office.

“The fact that (Barrett) brings in people he doesn’t necessarily agree with, I think is great.”

Forty-six years ago, in 1960, Jack Newfield graduated Hunter with a BA in English. He began his journalism career as sports editor of the school newspaper, the Hunter Arrow. At the Voice, his annual lists of Ten Worst Landlords and Ten Worst Judges were widely read, and influential. Barrett, who joined the Voice nearly 30 years ago, was co-author, with Newfield, of City for Sale, about the political corruption scandals during the administration of Mayor Edward I. Koch. Barrett has also written Rudy! An Investigative Biography, about Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, and Trumpy: The Deals and the Downfalls.

Newfield, said Barrett, was “an enormous influence on my life. . . . He was one of the funniest people. We’d talk 10 times a day if we didn’t see each other, and he’d always keep me in stitches.”

Teaching the class at Hunter “keeps me in touch with him,” Barrett said. “I can still hear him talking.”

Village Voice writer Wayne Barrett, who holds the Jack Newfield Visiting Professorship in Journalism at Hunter College. Newfield, inset, was known for his ‘Ten Worst Landlords’ investigative articles in the Voice.