New Investment Plan Will Fund Master Plan

Taxpayer support for public colleges has been falling sharply in recent years, not only in New York but around the country, and this has lately been causing a great deal of concern among many administrators.

The trend has also led to jolting, unpredictable tuition increases.

But CUNY has developed a long-term plan that could become a national model for the funding of public colleges and keep the University on its current upward course, increasing enrollment and expanding academic offerings.

It is called “Investing in Futures: Financing the CUNY Master Plan” and it offers a way to “self-leverage” the University’s budget, by using private donations along with public funding. The plan will allow the University to continue adding full-time faculty — about 200 in fiscal year 2007 — while paying for needed new academic initiatives and keeping tuition increases to a minimum.

“New Yorkers must begin to see an investment in higher education that will assure that these institutions are healthy and vibrant, and can meet the state’s critical need for a quality system,” Chancellor Matthew Goldstein said in remarks prepared for a recent meeting with budget officials from the campuses.

“We cannot meet New Yorkers’ demand for quality without investment,” the Chancellor continued. “We also cannot just sit by and wait for something to happen. We must be prepared to lead and to propose innovative solutions. I believe our plan is a bold one and I am prepared to lead the effort to secure its passage.”

The Chancellor’s proposal to finance the Master Plan was commended by C. Peter Magath, the president of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, the nation’s oldest higher education association.

“The relatively generous funding public colleges and universities enjoy, say, ten or twenty years ago, will not return,” he said. “Our mission is challenged — unless we adapt and adjust our thinking.”

The plan is benefitting from the very positive attention the University has been receiving, from Nobel Prize-winning alumni to growing numbers of high school seniors choosing CUNY colleges over Ivy League colleges.

An October editorial in the New York Post said, “City University was once known as the poor man’s Harvard — but at the rate it’s going, Harvard may soon be known as the rich man’s CUNY.”

The CUNY Investment Plan, endorsed by the Board of Trustees Committee on Fiscal Affairs, envisions a “compact” involving the state, the city and the University. The state and city would effectively commit to supporting the new Master Plan, which lays out plans for growth over the next several years. The University, in turn, would commit to supporting the plan through continued private fund-raising; productivity and cost-saving initiatives (see page 5); growth in student population; and “very modest” tuition increases averaging $50 a semester.

For the public, the University has put together “Ten Reasons to Support the CUNY Budget Investment Plan.” (Visit www.cuny.edu/Oreasons). Among the top reasons are: that the state needs a well-trained workforce to compete in an increasingly global economy, and that CUNY should be rewarded for its record of boosting student enrollment and performance.

CUNY officials stress that a key goal of the plan is to control excessive tuition increases causing drops in enrollment.

In his recent remarks, the Chancellor said, “If this proposal is adopted, CUNY students will not face huge and unexpected tuition increases like those of the past . . . . The last four senior college tuition increases have averaged 33.3 percent. Under the proposed plan, the average increase over the next four years will be 2.5 percent.”

According to Ernest Maley, Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance, the Master Plan envisions adding 800 full-time faculty by 2010.

$1.2 Billion Campaign is Already Past Half-Way Mark

November marked the first anniversary of the landmark “Invest in CUNY” campaign, which seeks to raise money from private sources, especially alumni who want The University to retain the greatness that has produced a dozen Nobel Prize winners.

Chancellor Matthew Goldstein says the campaign has been going exceedingly well. “I can tell you that we have raised more than $650 million toward our $1.2 billion goal,” he said in remarks prepared for a November (CUNY Month) event.

“I have been deeply gratified by the generosity of our friends and alumni.”

The Chancellor paid special attention to Dr. Andrew Grove, a City College alumnus who gave a record donation of $26 million to the college’s School of Engineering.

Born in Hungary, Grove fled Soviet repression in 1956 and came to the United States at the age of 20.

After graduating from City College in 1960 with a bachelor’s in chemical engineering, he earned his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. He later was a founder of Intel Corporation, the pioneering semiconductor company, that helped usher in the Internet revolution.

A couple of months ago Grove visited the CCNY campus and ran into David Bauer, winner of the 2005 Intel Science Talent Search, America’s oldest and most prestigious high school science competition. Bauer, who would have had his pick of Ivy League colleges, took his $100,000 scholarship and chose CCNY.

In another notable donation, the Graduate School of Journalism received $4 million recently from Marian Heinekef, Ruth Holtberg and Dr. Judith Sulzberger, sisters of retired New York Times publisher Arthur Ochs ‘Punch’ Sulzberger. The new journalism school will open in fall, 2006.

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

— Townsend Harris, founder

NOVEMBER 2005
On Academic Freedom

Earlier this year, the annual Global Colleges of University Presidents was convened, bringing together academic leaders from around the world to explore international public-policy concerns. A distinguished group of 15 presidents signed a statement supporting academic freedom and expressed their universities’ intent to endorse the statement. I have asked that my name be included as a signatory because of my deep belief in the importance of academic freedom around the world and here at The City University of New York.

The principle of academic freedom is so essential to colleges and universities that it could be said to be part of the genetic code of higher education institutions. Indeed, it is a self-evident truth of a university’s constitution. As Thomas Jefferson once said of the University of Virginia, [“]Here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate error so long as it is left free to combat it.”

At CUNY, our commitment to academic freedom is well established and firmly held by the university that guides itself on diversity and access to opportunity, we hold in the highest regard policies and principles that guarantee an open and tolerant academic exchange. That exchange is vigorously protected and defended.

Academic freedom informs the entire academic community. A condition of mutual respect enables the existence of a many-faceted scholarly discourse. As the chairman of CUNY’s Board of Trustees, Bennco C. Schmidt, Jr., has so eloquently explained...” [“]The university, true to its academic ideals, must treat each member of the community as a unique individual worthy of respect, to be judged solely by his or her actions, intellect, and character. A university does not stereotype its members; it does not permit them to be in categories based on suspicion, ignorance or prejudice; it does not deny to any of its members the full rights of academic freedom and engagement.”

The University encourages informed discussion and expects its faculty members to pursue rigorous thinking and debate without restraint. Such an expectation exists for all members of the University community, as well. As faculty express their views, students and administrators must, as well. The former president of the University of Chicago, Robert Maynard Hutchins, offered this description: “Education is a kind of continuing dialogue; and a dialogue assumes different points of view.” Administrators are often confronted with the need to participate in an ongoing debate, responding to strongly expressed opinions. As part of the continuing dialogue, the University supports the right of administrators to take an opposing viewpoint, so long as their stance does not impose punitive action or retribution. The office of a chancellor, president, or other administrator cannot be used to compromise the academic freedom of other members of the University community. Nor can free exchange, so important to the existence of a university, lead to the creation of a hostile environment for students or other participants in the academic community.

Over the years, the term “academic freedom” has been applied to contentious opposition of all kinds. But disagreement alone does not necessarily threaten academic freedom; on the contrary, it is often indicative of an active, and free, exchange of ideas. Of course, the University takes seriously such dissent, as it often coalesces around issues of great concern to the academic and we must ensure that thoughtful opinions on these issues can flourish.

The term “academic freedom” has also been applied to various procedural demands by faculty unions. Although a basic level of procedural fairness is necessary to protect academic freedom, it does not follow that colleges and universities must implement every demand for increased procedural safeguards, many of which would more often do with job security than to the right of free expression in teaching, research, writing or political activities. I believe such matters of labor relations are best dealt with through the process of collective bargaining.

On previous occasions, I have reinforced the University’s commitment to finding ways for all of us to work together in a productive, harmonious, and mutually supportive manner. Today, as then, I believe that is our insistence on academic freedom, which makes possible our ability to work together toward our most difficult and important task: the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Given the extraordinary talent and dedication of CUNY’s faculty, administrators, staff and students, I have every confidence in the continued success of our endeavors.

Aumann Wins Nobel Prize, the...
Students Displaced by Hurricane Katrina

raise funds. Some student leaders went to New Orleans in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity, where they assisted in the rebuilding efforts.

All the help from CUNY has made the struggle easier, Leach says. “In Louisiana, you pay approximately $400 per month for rent,” she said. “Here, I’m paying $1,200 for an apartment in Bay Ridge. My landlady is very motherly, but I’m worried about the rent. I haven’t been able to find a job.”

Earning a living in the Big Easy was a lot easier than it is in the Big Apple.

“I worked as a bartender [in New Orleans],” she said. “But I can’t get a job here doing that because here you have to have a license. What I did part-time was to be a student, people do here as a career, so it’s competitive.”

Edgar J Williams, an engineering major who was evacuated from Dillard University in New Orleans, is ensconced in his old bedroom in Brooklyn, where he grew up.

Williams, who is finishing up City College, said he is impressed with the facilities at his new college, especially the well-equipped computer labs, and grateful for them.

Andrea Floyd was a psychology major/public health minor at Xavier University in New Orleans, and now attends Hunter College. A native of Manhattan’s Harlem community, she feels the pain of two tragedies in the last four years. “I was thinking, ‘This senior year something like this happens,’” she said. This became true when she went to Hunter to attend the senior at A. Philip Randolph High School [in Manhattan] when the World Trade Center was attacked. Now I was a senior in college when this happened. The whole thing is just mind-blowing. It hasn’t sunk in yet.”

While Floyd is quite comfortable living back with her family in their Upper West Side apartment, she is contemplating a return to Xavier to complete her degree when the school reopens in January.

She says that while she has been “greased with open arms” at Hunter, where the chairperson of the psychology department was especially gracious toward her, she misses the Southern, smaller-town environment she was forced to flee.

Christopher Guccione, a sophomore at Loyola University in New Orleans, is enrolled now at City College.

A native of the Gentilly neighborhood, Guccione had relocated to Baton Rouge with his parents to wait out the hurricane. Their home was destroyed by the water, which had run to the roof. After hearing about opportunities at CUNY, and making the right connections, he decided to come here.

A drummer and jazz studies major, he is now staying in Park Slope with friends. He says his experience at City College has been so positive that he’s thought about staying there. Even so, he admits he is painfully drawn to the place where his family remains and where they must deal with the aftermath of Katrina.

“That’s where I was born and raised, and I want to go back and help and see my family as well,” he said.

He says with a kind of martyrdom that fellow students at City College have been kind to him, almost beyond expectation. After he returned to Hunter for fall classes, the students offered him their notes, and asked repeatedly how they could ease the difficulties he faced.

At Queens College, another displaced music student from Louisiana, Romel Brumley-Kerr, is sometimes just glad that he’s alive, aware that he escaped a disaster that took the lives of hundreds of others.

When Katrina struck, Brumley-Kerr, a native of Costa Rica and a vocal opera major, was hoping to ride it out. “I was in the dorm as the storm was hitting that weekend,” he recalled. “Everyone was running away from the dorms and I had no place to go.”

Through a friend, he eventually found safety and lodging in Greenville, Texas, That’s where he began surfing the Internet for another school and discovered that Queens College had a strong music program. He contacted his aunt in Jamaica, Queens, who sent him a plane ticket.

Brumley-Kerr, who was on full scholarship in New Orleans, is enrolled at Queens College tuition-free thanks to the President’s Scholarship Fund at the college.

Like the other evacuees, Brumley-Kerr is especially impressed with the ethnic and cultural diversity of his new college. “I like the openness toward anything different,” he said.

And, like a true tourist of New Orleans, he particularly appreciates that music is taken seriously at Queens College. “The music curriculum is very intense, and I really need a university that can provide me that.”

Katrina Was a Warning, Bronx Experts Say

With gasoline prices sky-high and with global warming fueling city-shattering hurricanes like Katrina, it is imperative that the country develop and embrace alternative fuel technologies quickly, according to a recent daylong conference organized by Bronx Community College’s Center for Sustainable Energy.

“A Road to Energy Independence: New York City’s Alternative Transportation Futures,” drew more than 200 people who listened to panelists and looked under the hood of 16 alternative-energy vehicles that were parked on the Bronx campus.

The conference “made it very clear that the elevated levels of carbon [released by burning coal, oil and natural gas] in the atmosphere are resulting in more intense violent weather incidents . . . such as excessive rainfall in some areas, excessive drought in others and violent weather incidents such as hurricanes,” says Dr. Jim Quigley, director of the center.

In an interview after the conference, Quigley said that lessons must be learned from the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. He said that a solar-powered emergency communications system — like the one on Bronx College’s campus, which could have perhaps saved hundreds of lives, by maintaining police and fire depart-

“Certainly the frequency of aberrant weather patterns is up,” says Dr. James Quigley, director of Bronx Community College’s Center for Sustainable Energy

12th CUNY Grad So Honored

through game-theory analysis.” Game theory explains the choices that competitors make in situations that require strategic thinking.

Aumann, born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1930, has commented that game theory is “ethically neutral.”

“Game theory says nothing about whether the rational way is morally or ethically right,” he said. “It just says what rational — self-interested — entities will do, not what they ‘should’ do, ethically speaking.”

In addition to the 12 Nobel winning alumni, there is a CUNY professor who received the award. That was Baruch College Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Harry Markowitz, a 1950 Nobel Laureate in Economics.

CUNY’s Nobel winning alumni (named prior to Aumann) are:

• Dr. Arthur Karmen, City College, Class of 1937, 1959 award in medicine.
• Dr. Robert Holstadder, City College, Class of 1935, 1961 award in physics.
• Dr. Julian Axelrod, City College, Class of 1933, 1970 award in medicine.
• Dr. Kenneth Arrow, City College, Class of 1940, 1972 award in economics.
• Dr. Rosalyn Yalow, Hunter College, Class of 1941, 1977 award in medicine.
• Dr. Arno A. Penzias, City College, Class of 1954, 1978 award in physics.
• Dr. Herbert A. Hauptman, City College, Class of 1937, 1985 award in chemistry.
• Dr. Jerome Karle, City College, Class of 1937, 1985 award in chemistry.
• Dr. Stanley Cohen, Brooklyn College, Class of 1943, 1986 award in medicine.

Professor Robert J. Aumann

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String Theory Answers Age-Old Questions About Time

There is the timeless question: If you travel back to the past and shoot your father before you are born, will you ever make it to the future? During this, the centennial of Einstein’s theory of relativity, which came wrapped up with a new concept of time, scientists are still puzzling over the answer, probing the paradoxes posed by questions like this one. While Newton saw time as an unerring straight-ahead arrow, Einstein viewed it as a meandering river and Goedel likened it to a circling whirlpool. Roy Kerr introduced the spinning black hole theory that led to hundreds of Alice-in-the-Looking-Glass wormhole solutions. Today, string theory, which connects quantum theory to gravity and maintains that everything in the universe is composed of tiny vibrating strings of energy, has become one of the hotter topics in time travel research.

In one country — indeed, perhaps, the world — have been more sought after and quoted on the subject than Michio Kaku.

“String theory is the leading theory of everything, which must be solved before time travel can be proven possible or not,” said Kaku, the Henry Semat Professor of Physics at City College. He is a co-founder of string field theory and author of Hyperspace and Parallel Worlds. “Einstein chased after this for 30 years — from 1925 to 1955,” the professor added, “because he said he wanted to read God’s thoughts. The theory of everything, Einstein hoped, would explain everything from the Big Bang to the present era.”

Quantum mechanics opens up the idea of parallel universes, which solves, Kaku says, the paradox of what happens if you kill your parents before you are born.

“If you kill your father, you will have killed someone genetically identical to your father in every way but not actually your father. Your own past cannot be changed. You have simply changed the future of an alternate universe, in which a twin of your father has just died.”

“It is a forked river that opens up alternative universes and parallel worlds,” he said. “Your universe’s future will be the same, but in the universe of parallel universes, you were never born. We think there are an infinite number of parallel universes.”

City College physics Professor Dan Greenberger and Professor Karl Svozil of the Technical University of Vienna recently offered a different quantum mechanical view of time travel by inventing a mathematical model that goes into the past as well as the future.

Their answer to the paradoxical shoot father, kill-yourself question? “If you go back with the gun,” said Greenberger, “you won’t shoot your father because the future path has already been determined, so you won’t have changed the future. There is only one predetermined path, but there are other possible paths that interfere with each other. The interference effects cancel each other out, and only one path is going to be taken. In other words, once the future has happened, you aren’t going to change it. This is different from the classical model, which says that when you leave a footprint in the past, you’ve changed the future. That is, if you shoot your father, you wouldn’t be born. This is why most people believe time travel is impossible. But the new theory makes it self-consistent with quantum mechanics.”

Alex Harvey, a retired Queens College professor, weighed in on the time travel question in a recent article in Physics Today, pointing out that in a 1905 paper Einstein could have benefited from time travel. Einstein wrote that because of the Earth’s rotation, clocks would run slower at the Equator than at the Poles. That turned out to be wrong — but Einstein wouldn’t know it until a decade later when general relativity would prove that clocks run slower the more deeply they sit in a gravitational field.

While Greenberger and Kaku disagree on how the present can alter the future, they concur that no one will know for sure until a time machine is built.

And that isn’t going to happen any time soon, they say. “A very advanced civilization may build a time machine,” Kaku said. “To do it, you would need the energy of a star or a black hole to power it, and you would need to prove that the machine is stable and will not destroy itself. So far, although the biggest punch on the planet are working on string theory, no one is smart enough to solve the string equations. String theory, which was discovered back in 1968, is so advanced mathematically that some physicists believe that we were not supposed to discover it for the next hundred years. There is no proof that string theory is correct. It is correct, it’s true, but it will be difficult to prove.”

Which means, in essence, that the future of time travel resides, well, in the future.
Medgar Evers Building Open for Business (School)

A key part of the expansion of Medgar Evers College has been completed with the fall opening of the newly constructed, brick-and-glass School of Business and Student Support Services Building. The three-story, 44,050-square foot structure consolidates business faculty offices and classrooms, a new lecture hall, and Student Affairs services, including the registrar, admissions and recruitment, testing, health services and the bursar.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by city, state, CUNY and business leaders, was held Oct. 21. The 18-month project was a collaboration between the City University of New York and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York.

The building, designed by the architectural firm Gruesen Santam, LLP is located at 1637 Bedford Ave. between Crown and Carroll Streets in Brooklyn. It is the latest symbol of the college’s growth and its ambitions to serve the central Brooklyn community, which is largely of African descent.

The next phase of Medgar Evers’ campus expansion will establish a five-story Academic Complex for the Sciences, which will house the School of Science, Health and Technology. Located on Crown Street, that complex will also feature a two-story glass pavilion-dining hall that will seat 500 and provide alternative space for lectures, concerts, social functions and meetings.

The two buildings will add 258,950 square feet to the Medgar Evers campus, a 76 percent increase over the current space. They will enable the College to increase enrollment by a projected 41 percent. The state and city provided funding for both projects, which cost a total of $155 million.

Trib Building is New Home of Research Foundation

The CUNY Research Foundation — driven from its home at 30 West Broadway by the events of September 11, 2001 — has moved into permanent new headquarters, in the building that once housed the old New York Herald Tribune.

The Research Foundation occupies three floors of the 20-story structure, located in the Times Square area. The building will also be the home of the new CUNY Graduate School of Journalism.

A private, not-for-profit educational corporation chartered by the State of New York in 1963, the Research Foundation uses the latest technology to meet requirements of thousands of awards granted to professors and other professional staff annually.

After leaving its old West Broadway headquarters in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks, the Foundation took up temporary residence in leased quarters at 555 W. 57th Street. Not long afterwards, it concluded that its long-term interests would be served best by purchasing a building that would provide a permanent address.

The Research Foundation purchased the building last year for $60 million and views it as an asset that will increase in value over time. The New York Times is building its new headquarters right next door.

With awards last year exceeding $300 million at the senior and community college levels, the Research Foundation handles details of everything from compliance to payroll, so that grant recipients can concentrate on the programmatic aspects of their awards.

The City University recognizes the importance of basic research that delves into the major questions of our time. The University believes it has an obligation to put that knowledge to the service of mankind.

Solomon Ends Career as CUNY Lawyer

who was unsurpassed in his knowledge and understanding of The City University. He was a fantastic colleague who shared his knowledge in an open and generous way and will be missed immensely.

Ronald Spalter, CUNY’s Deputy Chief Operating Officer, first met Solomon during the stu- dent demonstrations of the 1970s. “I was working at City College and a group of student demonstra- tion had seized the Administration Building, shutting down regis- tration,” recalled Spalter.

Solomon stood in front of its chained doors and used a bullhorn to read an open letter to the stu- dents barricaded inside: “He respected the process and did what was necessary to end the protest, and then reported to the cops.” Spalter said
In CUNY Language Immersion Program, Students can remain in the program for as long as a year.

Valery Fortune, 29, is another of Argodale's students. He came to New York from Haiti in May of 2001 and began working odd jobs. "I find difficulties," he said. "After two-three years I decided to learn something better, because this country offers many opportunities and I don't want to miss them. But when you're in a country and they speak a different language, it's not easy." Fortune works up to 40 hours a week at a security job. He spends another 25 hours in his CLIP class, and counts more hours studying and practicing English. "Sometimes I feel very tired," he said. Fortune is optimistic: he'll soon be ready to pass the so-called ACT reading and writing tests and then go on to take courses toward his associate's degree and then bachelor's degree at City Tech. "Before I could have an idea but I could not know how to write it in English. But . . . Now I understand much more," he said.

CLIP began operating 10 years ago in the Theresa Hotel, the Harlem building that Fidel Castro made his own in 1959 when he stayed there accompanied by live chickens. "I was a teacher in the program the very first night of operation at the Theresa," Hellman, now a CLIP administrator, wrote in an email recently. "I liked to imagine that I was teaching in the Castro Suite!"

The CLIP program expanded steadily, from 663 students at six colleges in 1996, to more than 3,000 a year at nine colleges today.

There are currently CLIP programs at:
- the Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Bronx Community College
- the College of Staten Island
- Hostos Community College
- Kingsborough Community College
- LaGuardia Community College
- The New York City College of Technology
- Queensborough Community College
- York College

The language immersion program technically falls under the broad umbrella of ESL, meaning it is for English Language Learners.

But, at CUNY, ESL is very different from CLIP. While--like CLIP--it is for foreign language students who fail the ACT tests, it is actually more advanced. ESL classes are credit-bearing courses that meet several hours a week. CLIP, though non-credit-bearing, is like a full-time job, with students spending 25 hours a week in the classroom, in addition to homework.

The work that CLIP cannot do is undertaken in any other program, because of the sheer number of contact hours involved, the level of intensity," said Hamid Karzai, director of the CLIP and ESL programs at York College.

In addition to class lectures, discussions and writing assignments, CLIP students spend several hours a week in a computer lab, Khiri explained. "Besides word processing, they do a lot of research, because we want them to become autonomous learners, so that they will be able to compete in the world," Khiri said.

In one of their most ambitious writing projects, students in the spring of 2004 published the language book MoMA at El Museo en CLIP: Writing in Response to Latin American and Caribbean Art. The students wrote the essays after viewing paintings that were owned by the Museum of Modern Art and exhibited at El Museo del Barrio. "It has made for some of the most exciting learning in the history of the program. And some of the most delightful writing," he said, "I liked to imagine that I was teaching in the Castro Suite!"
Learn English the Right Way, the Hard Way

Dramatic Advances in English Proficiency

New York is an immigrant town, and it probably always will be. But statisticians have noticed something interesting about immigrant students coming to CUNY in recent years: Their English proficiency on average is much stronger.

“The (immigrant students from foreign language households) are coming to us with stronger English skills than in the past,” said David Crook, the University Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment.

The apparent reason, say Crook and others, is that there are increasing numbers of immigrants who came to New York at a young age and went to schools here in their pre-teen and teenage years. Sociologists call them “the 1.5 (one-point-five) generation.”

According to University surveys in 1995, 81.1 percent of senior college freshmen said English was their language of comfort, in 2004, following steady increases, the figure was 92.5 percent.

Indeed, Crook and others say that CLIP and other ESL programs deserve much of the credit. They say that, across the country, there has been a stronger focus on the teaching of English to foreign language-speaking students, using tough approaches like the immersion method of CLIP.

Hamid Kheirell, director of the CLIP and ESL programs at York College, agreed that a key factor in the increasing English proficiency is emergence of the “1.5 generation.”

Crook said it was important to note that the number of immigrants coming to CUNY continues to rise. Even as comfort levels in English went from 81.1 percent to 92.5 percent, the number of freshmen from foreign language-speaking households went from 53.8 percent to 59.1 percent, Crook said.

“We’re still able to attract immigrants but they’ve become more comfortable with the English language over time,” Crook said.

I Creole-speaking immigrant from Haiti, and Annie Lui, a Cantonese speaker from Hong Kong, are in class 25 hours a week in a quest to use English well and, one day, earn a college degree.

“Because they pay in dollars,” another replied.

Other questions and answers followed, some of them laced with bitter humor, such as when students referred to corruption they said was rampant in their homelands.

After an hour or so, Darbes told the class to “write a paragraph about the specific situation in your country.” She exhorted them “to group together for a few minutes” to collect their thoughts before beginning to answer their essay.

Tsaha Darbes is a 1993 graduate of Brown University where she majored in comparative literature. She speaks Russian and Spanish, and she holds a master’s degree in anthropology and writing from New School University. Prior to working with CLIP, she taught in Continuing Education classes and at other English as a Second Language programs. She loves CLIP and its content-based approach.

“The best way for me to improve their writing is to improve their knowledge of the world,” Darbes says.

CLIP teachers are driven by the very dreams that motivate their students. Some of them seem all but ingenuous as they try to impart the psychic underpinnings of success.

“Trying into a class — not far from the one where Tsasha Darbes was teaching — a visitor heard the pleasantly hypnotizing voice of CLIP instructor Rhodes Liu. Liu was reading from a book considered by many to be a font of Zen-like wisdom. Paulo Coelho’s The Alchemist.

Liu read from the text, then commented a bit, then asked questions.

“Don’t forget that everything you do is only one thing, and nothing else,” Liu intoned. “You have to prepare yourself each step. You need to be focused. And above all don’t forget to follow your personal legend through to its conclusion.”

Liu is a graduate of Oberlin and holds a master’s degree in ESL from Lehman. As with other CLIP instructors, she is interesting life experiences as well. Liu was once an opera singer. She lived in Holland for 12 years. And just completed a book titled Effective Academic Writing, which will be published next year by Oxford University Press.

With The Alchemist still in her hand, Liu asked the young men and women about their own deeply held dreams. Anny Hernandez offered an answer right away, loudly and clearly. “To become a doctor,” said Hernandez, who emigrated from the Dominican Republic about a year ago.

Liu believes her students have great potential. She said she knows from their homework that they are bursting with energy, the kind that makes dreams come true. When Liu asked the class about the key ingredients in dream making, a young lady answered, “Be optimistic in what’s coming later.”

Optimism surely counts for a bit, but as Liu’s students know, it takes a lot of hard work — and step-by-step planning — to reach one’s goal in life. Surely a reader of The Alchemist knows that. “You can’t leap up and get there,” Liu told her class of voyagers to the American dream. “You have to prepare yourself each step. You need to be focused.”

Programs That Teach English to English Language Learners (ELL’s)

CLIP — intensive English language program for admitted freshmen who need help with their academic reading, writing and oral communication skills. CLIP uses an “immersion” approach requiring students to work on language skills 25 hours a week. The program is low cost, and students stay up to a year.

ESL (English as a Second Language) — traditional non-credit and credit classes for strengthening the language skills of admitted freshmen. ESL classes generally meet fewer hours per week than CLIP and have a range of instructional emphases. ESL classes are part of a student’s program of study and regular tuition applies.

Bi-lingual — the bi-lingual approach, students read, write and speak their native language as they learn English. Proponents say that if students learn to use their first language well, they will learn English more effectively. Hostos Community College is the only bi-lingual public college in the region.

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University and Daily News Jointly Sponsor Dollars for Scholars Phone Call-in

Nearly 140 CUNY financial aid experts—including aid counselors, admissions officers and City University officials—managed banks of phones for a week in October, in a groundbreaking effort to help New Yorkers make college more affordable for their families.

The first-ever Scholar Dollars hotline co-sponsored with the Daily News, fielded questions from more than 2,600 callers trying to understand, access and navigate the financial aid system.

In a mezzanine-level room at the News’ headquarters on W. 33rd Street, CUNY counselors, led by the University’s nationally prominent financial aid director George Chun, took phone calls from Oct. 24-29, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Most of the calls came from parents—even parents of very young children—trying to figure out how to finance their children’s college educations amid escalating costs, changes in federal aid formulas and uncertain times.

“Often the questions were, ‘How do I access the system?’ I have a kid who’s a junior or a senior in high school. How do I apply for aid?’” said William Mack, CUNY’s assistant director of financial aid, as he worked along with two dozen other advisors on the call-in’s last day. Younger parents inquired about tax-exempt “529” college savings programs; undocumented immigrants sought avenues to higher education here; still other callers asked for help with debt, default loans or navigating the application system.

The CUNY advisors, armed with the Federal Student Aid Handbook and many decades of collective experience, were ready for the questions, though the answers weren’t always what callers wanted to hear. Monique Francis, assistant to the director of Citizenship and Immigration, was tapped for an immigration-related question during one of the call-in shifts. The caller, who identified herself as an undocumented immigrant, asked whether there was a way she could obtain a student (F-1) visa or attend a CUNY school while paying in-state tuition fees.

“The answer was ‘no’ to both,’ Francis said. She explained that are eligible for in-state tuition rates only if they graduated from a New York State high school or received a GED in New York State, the caller graduated from high school in Jamaica, in the Caribbean.

Scholar Dollars—believed to be the first-ever working hotline devoted to financial aid—was a clear hit with the 2,627 appreciative New Yorkers who had their calls picked up in an average of 10 seconds and advice dispensed within about five minutes. “The people calling in were very nice,” said Alice Murphy, CUNY’s assistant director of financial aid systems management.

“They went on and on about how appreciative they were that there was someone to answer their call.”

But the CUNY experts on the other end of the 25 phone lines —21 for English, four for Spanish—also got a kick out of their moment in the spotlight.

The Daily News covered Scholar Dollars throughout the week, running several pages of the advisors’ photos and bios in the Sunday paper and then re-running them on the particular day they were scheduled to man the phones.

“I had one caller who asked for me because, in his bio, it said I specialized in federal work-study programs,” said Shannon Cammarano, a supervisor of the one-phone student service center — “The Hub — at the College of Staten Island, from which she graduated in 1997.

“One guy asked for me because he liked my picture,” noted William Mack. “He thought I looked like a young Onora O’Neill. I didn’t know if it was a compliment or not.”

“The people who handled the phones had a good time and enjoyed the experience,” said Chun. Added Murphy: “The Daily News was very supportive. They told us well, made sure we had supplies and gave us papers every day.”

Scholar Dollars is the second public service-oriented CUNY Daily News collaboration—Citizenship Now—the jointly sponsored, and very popular, upstate hotline dispensing free advice on immigration problems — going into its fourth year.

The City University’s commitment to making higher education affordable for all regardless of economic circumstance inspired the Scholar Dollars effort, along with a new, CUNY-Daily News website, Meeting College Costs. The site, at www.cuny.edu/collgecosts, is a virtual resource center with links to all things having to do with financial aid from federal and state loan programs to scholarships.

Chun will continue to dispense advice through Ask George, a website feature focused on how students and families can access the more than $41 billion in government and private aid available annually.

Iraq War Vets Gather at Campuses, as CUNY Official Pledges Help

Veterans of the Iraq conflict gathered at various campuses for Veterans Day celebrations, as the University committed itself to offering a network of services to the young men and women, to ease their transition to student life.

Col. Christine Rosa, CUNY Director of Disability and Veterans Services, told vets gathered at Brooklyn College that he and others are working “methodically” to re-build a comprehensive network of holistic services “for them.”

“It is estimated that hundreds of CUNY students have served, or are now serving, in Iraq. At least four have been killed in Iraq, at least one Brooklyn College veteran who gathered with CUNY official Rosa paid homage to those fallen servicemen. Rosa praised Brooklyn College’s Veterans Students’ Organization, saying its programs for vets were an example that “we hope to replicate throughout CUNY.”

The organization’s president, Ariel Luna, who returned earlier this year from service in Iraq, spoke of his initial shock when his reserve unit was called for duty over there. “I couldn’t believe it,” he said.

But he survived a year of the conflict and now hopes to help others make a healthy transition from active military service to student life.

At Baruch College — on the same day, Nov. 10, that Brooklyn College held its event — President Kathleen Walden met with a number of Baruch vets who had served in Iraq. One of them, Paul Woodcock, a Marine Corps reservist, said in an interview that he especially enjoys the camaraderie of other Baruch students who shared his experiences in the zone of conflict. “Two of them in particular are among his best friends at the college,” he said.

Woodcock said his time transporting POW’s and injured U.S. troops in Iraq made him a stronger person.

“I did what I had to do over there and when I came back, almost immediately I started in school,” Woodcock said.

Woodcock is a senior who hopes to graduate with a degree in finance this spring, and then find a job and apply to graduate schools.
Caring for an Aging Parent with Baggage

By Gary Schmidgall

A perfect demographic storm is brewing on the gerontologists' horizon. First, people 85 or older are the fastest growing segment of the population: 30 percent between 1990 and 2000 (centenarians increased 35 percent). Second, medical advances are increasing life expectancy and transforming many acute illnesses into chronic ones. Third, long-term declines in fertility mean fewer siblings available to care for elderly parents. And fourth, there has been a recent trend toward removing all but the most dependent from nursing homes (those 85 or older in nursing homes declined from 25 to 18 percent between 1990 and 2000).

At the heart in more than one sense of this gathering storm is the caregiver, of which the National Family Caregivers Association estimates there are 25 million in the U.S. That number will soon rise as the huge baby boomer generation confronts the challenge of caring for aging parents. It is no short walk in the park, either: half of all caregivers are on duty between one and four years, while about a fifth provide care for more than five years.

These sobering statistics are offered by Roberta Satow, chair of the Sociology Department at Brooklyn College and a practicing psychoanalyst in New York City, in the opening pages of Doing the Right Thing: Taking Care of Your Elderly Parents Even If They Didn’t Take Care of You (Tarcher/Penguin), which will be of keen interest to certain unhappy campers who are thrust into caregiving responsibilities.

Even in the very best of times, when a lifetime of food nurturing is eagerly returned by a grateful son or daughter at a time of parental need, caregiving is a stressful, exhausting responsibility. But what must it be like when the parent and child bring festering, decades-old "issues" (favoritism, abuse, violence, ethnocentricity, or mere differences in personality) to what Satow chooses to call this "new stage of life"? Human nature being as it is, the number of parent-child caregiving relationships that are deeply conflicted as a result of family history must be in the millions, and is to this potentially large group that Satow has addressed Doing the Right Thing.

She begins her preface, "This book is personal," and indeed it is, being based on a situation when she was 54 and my mother was 86. In the following five years Satow, as the primary caregiver among three siblings, watched her mother slip gradually deeper into senile dementia. At the same time she had to deal with her memories of a mother who "never kissed me ... never put her arms around me." My childhood, "Satow recalls, "was spent in fear of her, hiding from her, avoiding her critical gaze." Satow also notes that not only was the pregnancy that produced her unplanned, but that "my parents wished for a Robert, but got me instead; hence I am Roberta."

Working from her own personal experience and extensive interviews with about 50 caregivers, Satow has written a book designed to help caregivers identify and overcome old, often destructive patterns that may undermine or complicate their efforts for their parents in the here and now. Many pages in the book are devoted to fascinating recreations (with names changed) of her informants’ caregiving experiences.

Part I, titled "The Internal Struggle," offers chapters on setting limits, getting angry and getting over it, and feeling guilty and forgiving yourself. Part II, "Relationships that Offer Support or Create Conflict," contains a chapter each on spouses and siblings. Particularly apropos for CUNY, the multicultural University, Part III, "Ethnicity and Gender," offers three chapters on cultural scripts for caregivers, daughters, and sons that explore how caregiving scenarios are affected by differences in ethnicity and gender (Satow is also the author of Gender and Social Life).

Satow ends her book on the note of peace. First, making “peace with the reality that our parent is going to die.” Then, for the caregiver, “Peace may come from the satisfaction that you can have those conversations with your own children before your life is ending, even if you could not have them with your parents. Peace may come from understanding the historical and intergenerational context of our parents’ way of treating us. Peace may come from knowing and accepting that you are separate.”

Case Histories from the Caregiver Generation

PAULA is 54 and must care for her elderly parents. This task is weightier than one might think. Paula’s father is an alcoholic who, years ago, used the belt too quickly when his children upset him. Paula’s mother carries some baggage also. Mom is oversensitive, even today in her eighties. She has a history of extramarital affairs. Paula is conflicted about her parents. On the one hand, she believes that caring for them — making sure they take their medicine, spending quality time with them, putting up with their selfish demands — is the right thing to do. On the other hand, she feels stressed, angry, and resentful.

In Doing the Right Thing, author Satow offers a number of real life stories like Paula’s — stories that present ethical quandaries painful enough to literally, send a person into therapy. Paula does in fact enter therapy, and finds ways to reduce her anger. She continues as caregiver to her parent — accepting the fact that her siblings don’t help — but she also decides to put distance between herself and her parents simultaneously, giving herself much needed breaks from the hours she spends with them.

SALLY is 41, divorced and the mother of four children, one of whom has cerebral palsy. She also cares for her mother, a diabetic amputee who must be on dialysis three days a week and, what’s more, has dementia. Sally’s mom did not show nearly as much dedication when Sally was growing up. In fact, her mother allowed Sally and her sister to be sexually abused by their father. And her mother never lifted a finger to help Sally in the raising of Sally’s children.

Nevertheless, Sally spends her days working a full-time job, studying to get her degree in nursing and preparing meals for her children — all in addition to the time she devotes to her mother. Acknowledging she feels burdened by all she does, Sally nonetheless believes she has grown spiritually. "I think my character has improved," she tells Satow. While not being hardly judgmental, Satow wonders in print whether Sally is making all the right choices. She suggests Sally’s children might suffer in their emotional development because Sally is diverting so much attention from them.

Satow notes that Sally is an African-American and writes that African-Americans have a “culture of care” for their elderly parents. She points out that in an Ohio study, 62 percent of black nursing home residents lived with their children before going into foster care. For others, the figure was 23.2 percent.

Why Americans Don’t Vote

A disturbing fact about American politics led Ronald Hayduk to write Guardians of the Franchise: Shaping Election Administration in New York, published this year by Northern Illinois University Press.

The fact is this: The number of United States citizens who vote is distressingly low. Barely half of the eligible electorate cast ballots in presidential elections, and even fewer do so in state and local contests. Poorest, minority, and urban communities report even lower numbers, calling into question the reality of American democracy, Hayduk says.

Ronald Hayduk, who teaches at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, assesses the impact of electoral rules on voter participation and electoral outcomes over the past 130 years. He looks at registration procedures and on-the-ground enforcement of the New York’s state and city election boards.

Law Enforcement Encyclopedia

Although there are other multivolume books on criminal justice, the Encyclopedia of Law Enforcement is special because it has an emphasis on the “practice and theory” of policing.

The three-volume set, with over 550 entries by more than 300 scholars and practitioners, is a production of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, with Associate Dean and Chief Librarian Larry E. Sullivan as editor-in-chief.

The Encyclopedia is “a scoping from articles on police procedure to civilian involvement. It also discusses investigative techniques, crime statistics, policing strategies, and minority issues.”

A particular strength of the Encyclopedia is its international coverage. The attention to that area might surprise some experts, since books on criminal justice tend to confine themselves to domestic issues.

Dialogue Overcomes Hatred

The Holocaust was not something English professor Sonnda Perl planned to discuss with the Austrians whom she was sent to teach in 1996, but as a Jew in the land of Hitler’s youth, she had many questions to pose.

On Austrian Soil: Teaching Those I Was Taught to Hate (SUNY Press, 2005) grew out of this discussion between Perl, a professor of English at Lehman College and at the CUNY Graduate Center, and her Austrian students.

Perl believes that her book is a manual on how to engage in dialogue when its subjects are, by the least, emotionally charged.

Clearly the professor found value in the endeavor, because she speaks to ANALYSES and AUSTRIA in Germanic languages and Austria twelve times since that first trip.
Early College High School Program Reaches a Milestone

When she came to America from her native Colombia, International High School student Angela Perez Villa yearned for a college education but never thought she would be able to afford one.

"I was an undocumented alien, so I couldn't get any financial aid," said the 19-year-old Perez Villa.

Money, specifically saving money, was on Middle College High School student Jeremias Torres' mind when he was 18-year-old thinking about furthering his education.

While they were working toward their high school diplomas, Torres and Perez Villa found a way to earn the college degrees that will mold their futures.

Through the City University of New York, they and a select group of others from their two high schools enrolled in the first class of the CUNY Early College High School program.

This fall they and six other students were the very first graduates of the program, walking away with a diploma from their respective high schools — and an associate's degree from LaGuardia.

While at their high schools they had also been taking courses at LaGuardia, which is the innovative idea of the Early College High School Program.

Typically, a student will be in the program for five years, beginning in the ninth grade. The program is designed to help students graduate with 24 credits by the time they graduate from high school.

For Marcia Glick, an associate professor of communications at LaGuardia, working with high school students like Torres and Perez Villa has been "an incredible teaching experience. They rose to the occasion, and they do their work. Two of the Middle College students even took on leadership roles in a group project we were doing."

Torres and Perez Villa say that the transition from high school student to college student was not as difficult as they had thought.

"There was always somebody there to help me," Perez Villa said. "In the seminars, they guided me through the process."

The Early College High School experience, she said, made her a better high school student and turned her into a discerning, disciplined college student. "The college professors were very strict and really criticized my work, and I could apply this to my high school work."

"I am very proud of Asia. I feel that she will succeed in college. I feel that she will succeed as a woman of all states and all traditions."

Angela Perez Villa was among first CUNY Early College High School grads, receiving associate's degree from LaGuardia.

More and More Students Visit China, to Study a Country

The New York Times began a recent article about China with a four-word sentence: Move over, New York.

The story introduced readers to the bustling, skyscraping city of Shanghai, which has come to represent the explosive growth of the Chinese economy. American scholars and business leaders are very much aware of that growth, and of the need to understand nations and cultures of the new global economy.

But increasing numbers of college students, too, are looking at the changing world landscape and are trying to find a place for themselves in it.

Across the University, during the 2004-2005 academic year, a total of 740 students went abroad in various for-credit programs, according to James M. Cherse, CUNY's Coordinator for International Education. Italy has been, over the years, the most popular destination because of the linguistic and artistic importance to the Western world, but "China is definitely becoming more and more popular," Cherse said.

The College of Staten Island, for one, has been taking long strides to word exposing students to the languages and history China.

"China is a hot country because it is the biggest economy in the world, and it's growing rapidly," said Ann Helm, director of the Center for International Service at the College of Staten Island, which manages CUNY's China program.

"Modern China is attracting a lot of attention from students and the press. We know a lot about ancient China, but we have very little knowledge of contemporary China."

The college opened a program in the bustling city of Shanghai in 2001. In that program, held during summer and winter intersessions, students take courses in Chinese "that give students a feel for the language and the city," Helm said.

Students say they benefit greatly from their experiences. "I've been traveling all my life and China is completely different from any other country I've been to," said Valeria Belmonte, a recent College of Staten Island graduate who was in Shanghai this past summer.

"The people of our age have different habits and goals. They are very work-oriented. They respect the rules a lot." Belmonte and her classmates stayed in the foreign student dorm at Shanghai University, where they met other young people and women from colleges around the world.

The College of Staten Island also has a regular semester program, which is held at Nanjing University. Students there study not only Mandarin Chinese but also introductory courses in history, geography, literature, political science and the culture and society of China.

"One of the most beautiful things China gave us is friends," Belmonte said. "I met students from Germany, Korea, France and Russia in the dorm. The members of our own group bonded, and we still get together once a week. You help each other express yourself. You become a better human being.

Students say they learned more than enough Chinese to get by. "I now have a basic knowledge of the Chinese language, I can talk with the Chinese and buy things by myself," said Taivo A. Olusopo, a native of Nigeria, who is working on a master's degree in business management at the College of Staten Island.

Olusopo added, "I wrote a paper on the rapid growth of China's economy creating a demand for steel there. Shanghai is the economic powerhouse of the world. It is developing quickly. Someone like me could get a job in a bank or any of the financial institutions."

Directory of Overseas Programs for Students and Faculty

The University offers a broad range of overseas programs for students, and faculty as well. Programs may be year-long, semester-long or short-term (meaning a summer or a winter inter-session).

Students normally pay tuition through the sponsoring CUNY college, and financial assistance, such as federal student loans and Pell grants, may be available. Financial aid officers can help determine which loans or grants may be suitable.

With money from the Wallace Foundation, CUNY has been operating the STOCS program, which stands for Study/Travel Opportunities for CUNY Students. STOCS offers scholarships to eligible CUNY students for short-term study abroad programs.

Anyone interested in overseas programs should visit the International Programs web directory: It can be reached by going to the CUNY home page (www.cuny.edu), then clicking "Colleges & Academic Programs," and then going to the "Study Abroad" link.

Those interested also can call the University's office of International Programs at (212) 794-5666.
When the Journal of Dental Technology, the official voice of the dental technology industry, went looking for the top ten students in the more than 40 correspond- ing educational programs nationwide, it found two of those students enrolled in the dental laboratory technology program at New York City College of Technology. From the flood of nominations from the 40-plus schools, the journal called the list to those 10 students who stood above the crowd because of their dedication to their chosen profession, their outstanding grades, and their determination never to settle for "good enough." According to the June/July 2005 issue of the Journal, David Barthalid, a resident of Park Slope in Brooklyn, found himself frustrated by the difficulties of earning a decent living from his pottery business, despite the fact that he had been producing work for some of America’s top decora- tors. During his search for a new and more lucrative career, he eventually found himself hankering after a new degree in technology. "Dental technology is fascinating to me," Barthalid told the Journal,"because it integrates a great variety of technical and artistic knowledge. There is a great deal yet for me to learn, but I don’t think I’ll ever grow tired of it."
The journal article went on to report that City Tech was "a perfect fit" for Barthalid, who had earned a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts and has a background in printing, carpentry, cabinet making, pot- tery, painting and drawing.

One of his City Tech instructors, Renata Budny, told the publication that Barthalid "has already mastered many requirements of the dental technology profession, including manual dexterity, design ability, molding and sculpting. Students such as David Barthalid ‘don’t come around often,’ Budny added, "but when they do, they make a lasting impression on everyone — students, faculty and school officials."

Barthalid has a 4.0 grade point average and will graduate in spring 2006. He hopes to work as an in-house technician for a dentist, assisting with patients, gaining experience quickly, and seeing the human results of his efforts.

Beata Reda-Szywala grew up in Communist Poland, where her ambition was to become a dentist, according to the Journal article. But after finishing high school, she was unable to find one of the few dentists spots in a dental school. Instead she became a maid and took psychology courses before eventually relocating to the United States.

"When I moved to the U.S.," she told the publication, "I decided to do something with dentistry because that was always my dream."

Reda-Szywala, who now resides in the Greater section of Brooklyn, overcame language and cultural barriers to eventually enroll as City Tech's dental laboratory technology program. While also working in a den- tist’s office, she maintained a 3.84 grade point average, was an honor student and member of both the College’s Honors Scholars Program and its chapter of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars before graduating in June 2005.

"Beata is the type of student that likes chal- lenges and is willing to take extra responsibili- ties," Budny told the Journal, "not only toward her education but also toward helping other students, our department and even newly neighbors."

Now that Reda-Szywala has graduated, she plans to earn the Certified Dental Technician designation in crown and bridge. She then wants to go on to earn a Master Dental Technician designation.

As a CUNY HONORS College/Barak College student, Darya Kheirzadeh went to China through the STOCS program.

Based on their experiences, a number of travel-abroad students were offered jobs soon after returning to the States. Some received offers while still in China.

"I was actually offered a job teaching English in a Chinese school because I expressed my intention of staying in China. I never started, though, because I got a (job offer from CUNY) right before I was to go to work," said Belenfanti, now assistant director of the Modern Languages Media Center at the College of Staten Island.

While students learn about the cultures of the cities they visit, they also learn much from students from other countries who travel and live with them. The exposure to such cultural exchanges can be life-transforming.

Darya Kheirzadeh, who traveled to China on a STOCS scholarship, said she met the foreign student who was a "proponent of

Master Dental Technician designation.

David Barthalid, who began dental technology studies after experiencing difficulties in his pottery business.

NYCCT Dental Tech Students Are Among Top 10 in Country

CUNY Matters — November 2005
Colleges Focus on Women’s Issues

Women comprised 63 percent of CUNY’s graduating class this past year, but Dr. Gail O. Mellow sees the University not only as a leading educator of women, but as a front-line educator of women’s issues. On Oct. 14, the LaGuardia Community College president saw some of her vision realized with the Women’s Leadership Conference, the kickoff to a series of CUNY initiatives highlighting women, their challenges, achievements and issues. Mellow, who conceived of the conference and co-chaired a key part of the program — the CUNY Women’s Leadership Panel — called it “a day for inspiration for both our speakers and our students...We all laughed and learned of the challenges women leaders confront.”

Gail Collins, editorial page editor of The New York Times and the first woman to hold the post, keynote the daylong conference, which attracted some 300 CUNY student leaders, faculty and staff to New York Academy of Medicine Conference Center on Fifth Ave. at 103rd Street in Manhattan. Collins recalled the tough political and professional struggles American women have waged, and exhorted her audience to “seize the moment and seize the day” as they work to open doors for future generations.

The city and state government officials and businesswomen featured at the conference advised listeners about skills they will need as they aim for leadership roles. There were three panels: Women Leaders Shaping New York City Government, Women Leaders Shaping New York State Government, and Women in Business: Challenges and Opportunities.

The theme was stressed right up to the end of the day, when the CUNY/New York Times Knowledge Network 2008 Women’s Leadership Calendar — spotlighting trailblazing women and watershed moments in the history of women’s suffrage — was distributed. The calendar, featuring photos of the authors of the Times, CUNY colleges and other sources, has a companion website www.cuny.edu/womensleadership.

The conference, calendar and website received support from JP Morgan Chase, The New York Times Knowledge Network, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and TIAA-CREF. Amid strong interest in women’s issues on CUNY campuses, the Women’s Leadership Initiative, led by President Mellow, continues this spring with a training program for women student leaders at LaGuardia.

A policy institute, headed by Hunter College President Jennifer Raah, is also planned, to provide information on how such issues are addressed by the city, state and federal governments. In addition, a new CUNY internship program will give students the opportunity to work on women-related topics in the offices of elected officials and women’s rights organizations.

At Brooklyn College, meanwhile, a $2 million gift from an anonymous donor promises to significantly boost the college’s 31-year-old Women’s Studies Program.

Under the gift’s terms, $1.5 million will fund the first endowed professorship in women’s studies in City University history, which will actually be parcelled into a year-long visiting professorship for distinguished scholars from outside the college, and two-year appointments to the Women’s Studies Program for Brooklyn Faculty temporarily on leave from their departments. The remainder of the donation supports the Shirley Chisholm Center for the Study of Women, the research affiliate of the Women’s Studies Program.

The identity of the donor remains a mystery to program organizers, who have been arranging the gift since early 2004 through the benefactor’s representatives. “We don’t even know whether the donor is a man or a woman,” said Associate Professor of Health and Nutrition Sciences Patrizia Antonioli, director of the Chisholm center.

“Wherever it is, we are completely thankful.”

NY Matters
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