Rising SAT Scores Reflect “Wealth of Talent”

The SAT scores of freshmen admitted to the City University of New York (CUNY) system have hit a new high, nearly doubling those of the seven senior colleges posted yet another gain this
year, now a level better, on average, than the scores achieved by nearly two-thirds of the nation’s college-bound seniors. At the same time, CUNY’s total enrollment continued to grow, increasing 2.3 percent to 217,388 – the highest since 1975. In the senior colleges, the number of first-time freshmen enrolled rose by 7.8 percent over the fall of 2003. Test scores have risen steadily for nearly a decade. In the fall of 1996, the average Scholastic Aptitude Test score for first-time freshmen admitted to the senior colleges was 1027. That has risen to 1116 this year. In the top-tier colleges – Baruch, Brooklyn, City, Hunter and Queens – the mean SAT score this year is 1123. The statewide average for college-bound high school seniors this year is 1007. “This ever-growing wealth of talent and achievement enriches the University and the community it serves,” said Chancellor Mary J. undy University of New York.

New Officials Give CUNY ‘Exceptional Leadership’

Three prominent educators with a wealth of academic and administrative experience have been named to senior leadership posts at The City University of New York.

Dr. Selma Botman, a Harvard University and Oxford University educated scholar specializing in Middle Eastern studies, and former vice president and chief academic officer at the University of Massachusetts, has been named Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Dr. Kathleen M. Waldron, former president of Citybank International and dean of the School of Business, Public Administration and Information Sciences at Long Island University, is the new president of Baruch College.

Curtis L. Kendrick, who has managed library programs at Columbia and Harvard University, is the new University Librarian. Chancellor Matthew Goldstein recommended the appointments to the Board of Trustees following national searches.

“Their outstanding appointments will provide exceptional leadership at both the University and college levels,” said Board of Trustees Chairman Benno C. Schmidt, Jr.

Botman served for seven years as chief academic officer and vice president of the University of Massachusetts system before becoming special assistant to the Chancellor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, where she was also professor of political science. As CUNY’s chief academic officer, Botman is responsible for leading the development, planning and implementation of the University’s policies for its academic programs, including teaching and learning, instructional technology and research.

Waldron is a Fulbright Scholar who received her doctorate in Latin American history from Indiana University. She has held numerous senior management positions at Citybank over a 15-year period, including president of Citybank International in Miami from 1991 to 1996. Baruch College, with 15,000 undergraduates and graduate students, is home to the Zicklin School of Business, the largest college business school in the nation, as well as Schools of Arts and Sciences and Public Affairs. Kendrick was director of the Access Services Division of the Columbia University Libraries from 1998 to 2004. Prior to that he was vice president of Harvard University’s Library for the Harvard Depository. As CUNY’s University Librarian, Kendrick leads a library system with over five million books and other formats and an annual budget of $35 million. He is responsible for integrating the library system with the University’s teaching, learning and research activities and improving access to information resources with other educational and cultural institutions in New York City.
Testing Prepares for Life, Adds Value to Diplomas

Since 2001, 17 of our colleges have been administering what we call the CUNY Proficiency Exam, or CPE. All undergraduates are required to pass this comprehensive test before they can start their third year at our senior colleges or graduate from our community colleges. The University has developed this test as a form of quality assurance, not only to ensure that our students are ready to take the next step in their higher education, but also to make sure that we are providing the best possible instruction for our students.

Created by a CUNY faculty committee with assistance from two nationally recognized testing organizations—ETS and ACT—the CPE tests a range of practical skills, such as the ability to write clearly for a specific audience. Passing the CPE, which is given to students who have earned at least 45 credits, also requires the ability to think critically about ideas and information in print and to connect those ideas to other concepts. Understanding and evaluating material presented in charts and graphs and presenting ideas effectively are emphasized as well.

The CPE focuses on those skills not only because they are vital to the completion of degree programs, but also because colleges and agencies that employ CUNY graduates consistently tell us that proficiency in these areas is crucially important to their success. Most importantly, the ability to think logically and critically and express those abilities both verbally and in writing, are invaluable skills that will help our students throughout their careers.

Our students spend two or more years preparing for the CPE and most pass it the first time they take it. The University and the colleges have developed an extensive array of academic interventions to assist students in preparing for it. Those who don’t pass it are not abandoned. We continue to help them strengthen those skills and encourage them to try again.

As of this writing, 33,000 students have taken the CPE. Of those students who took the exam for the first time in the spring of 2003, 92 percent have passed, though not all on their first attempt. At CUNY we’re finding that the CPE has become an agent of change. As expected, the exam has generated productive discussions across the campuses, discussions related to expectations for general education and writing across the curriculum initiatives. The unavoidable necessity of requiring our students to pass this test consequently has sparked a variety of curriculum reforms and a productive focus on writing. Faculty members require students to display higher levels of literacy and analytical thinking, not only in freshman composition but also throughout the University’s curricula. By guiding the development of the tests themselves, the faculty are able to give priority to the concepts and skills that years of experience have shown them to be crucially important.

The CPE may come as a surprise to those who remember the CUNY of 30 years ago. Open admissions—and the lower academic standards that went with it—was a well- intentioned effort to create opportunity that might otherwise have remained unobtainable. But it sent a mixed message all the way down to grammar school: whether you study or not, CUNY will accept you.

Those days are gone. While strengthening CUNY’s role as a place of opportunity for immigrants and first-generation college students—half of New York City’s college students are enrolled in a CUNY college—we have returned to CUNY’s cherished traditional of a valued degree. Today the CPE is helping send another message to prospective students: if you want to attend a CUNY college, study hard and learn. After all, many of the proficiency for which CUNY prepares its students requires a certification exam, including nursing, accounting, teaching, the law and many more. Using testing to demonstrate an understanding of complex material is hardly isolated to the classroom.

Education is not a sprint—it’s a marathon. To complete such a long and demanding challenge, you must begin training at the earliest possible moment. CUNY’s message to high school and college students alike is that the need for thinking skills never ends. The CPE, and its use as a measure of quality assurance within CUNY, places the University at the leading edge of national efforts to re-examine and redefine educational assessment.

The real test is life. The sooner we help young people prepare for this test the brighter their future will be.

F
ollowing the attacks on the World Trade Center, the noted photographer Bill Perlmuter spent over a year documenting visitors to Ground Zero. His photographs, collected in an exhibit entitled “Return to Ground Zero,” form a moving depiction of the visitors’ emotions and their efforts to honor the heroes of 9/11.

“Return to Ground Zero” has been on display at the CUNY Graduate Center through September. The exhibit is made possible by CUNY’s Office of the Chancellor and the CUNY Alumni Association.

“Return to Ground Zero” consists of 25 photographs, including haunting images of faces that echo the grief, shock, sadness and patriotism that 9/11 evoked in all Americans. Other photographs depict poignant messages of love and support that were left by friends and relatives, as well as strangers, who came to pay their respects to the heroes of 9/11.

Chancellor Matthew Goldstein said: “As we mark the third anniversary of 9/11, CUNY is proud to host this exhibit by an alumna of The City College. It is a meaningful tribute to the heroes of 9/11 and to New Yorkers and others who visited Ground Zero to honor their heroes and sacrifice.”

Donald Jordan, executive vice president of the CUNY Alumni Association, added that “everyone who sees ‘Return to Ground Zero’ will be moved by Bill Perlmuter’s remarkable depiction of the aftermath of the greatest tragedy in American history. We are proud to partner with CUNY in

Brick Community College Gets

Bronx Community College received $228,000 from the J. Paul Getty Trust, a grant that will help the college preserve its historic complex of buildings, considered one of the triumphs of late 19th-century American architecture.

The historic core of the campus was designed between 1892 and 1896 by McKim, Mead & White, the legendary architectural firm responsible for some of the finest buildings in the country, including Pennsylvania Station, the Washington Memorial Arch, the Morgan Library, and the campus of Columbia University.

Located on a 43-acre parcel of land overlooking the Harlem River Valley, the campus of Bronx Community College in the University Heights section of the Bronx was originally designed for New York University, which occupied the buildings until 1971.

“As stewards of this historic treasure, we are excited about the Getty Foundation grant,” stated Bronx Community College President Carolyn Williams. “This significant investment is truly an important step in beginning the comprehensive and authoritative preservation and restoration of the complex to its original form. For our students, these buildings are everyday visual reminders of the importance and tradition of higher education.”

State and City Budgets Provide for

The City University budget adopted by the state and city for fiscal year 2005 totals $1.719 billion, an increase of 5.8 percent, or $94.4 million. State aid increased by $71.1 million, or 9.9 percent, while support from the city increased by $15.3 million, or 9.5 percent.

The state budget provides $1.115 billion for a new Capital Investment Plan for the senior colleges and $97 million in re-appropriated funds, for a total of $1.212 billion. Additionally, the state budget re-appropriated $119 million in capital monies for the community colleges and Medgar Evers College.

The state operating budget provides resources to cover projected cost increases in fringe benefits and energy for the senior colleges. The city budget reflects an increase of $8.8 million for projected collective bargaining costs, plus additional monies for health insurance and pensions for the community colleges.

The city budget includes the restoration of the City Council Vallone Scholarships, at $87 million. The Vallone Scholarships are for students with high school averages of “B” or higher and were last offered after former City Council Speaker Peter F. Vallone, the original sponsor of the tuition assistance program for four years. The program has had millions of students.

The new city-state approved Capital

Photographer Bill Perlmuter assembly columns fallen by New Yorkers after summer morning of death three years ago.
in Photographs Taken at Ground Zero

sponsoring this exhibit by a distinguished City College alumnus.”
Born in New York City in 1932, Perlmutter majored in still photography and cinematography at City College, where he graduated in 1934. He studied under the avant-garde artist and filmmaker Hans Richter.
“Richter told me the experience would be worth more than money could buy,” Perlmutter said, “and he was right. How else could a kid from the Bronx have rubbed elbows with Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray?”
Perlmutter’s real interest, however, lay with the two most avant-garde artists who were interested in documenting everyday life. He was inspired by the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson, marking that photography’s “decisive moment.”
As an Army Signal Corps photographer in Germany, Perlmutter’s subjects ranged from victims of war and softball players to local VIP’s and Winston Churchill. Following Army service, he decided to return to the streets of Europe in 1958, this time as a civil photographer.
“Capturing those moments and keeping people forever outside of time has been a wonderful legacy for me,” he said.
Of his recent exhibition, he said, “the words Ground Zero are forever embedded in the American heart and soul and the very words evoke ‘complex feelings of tragedy, loss, pain and heroism.’”
He added, “As the innocent child who knows something important happened there, to the grief-stricken adults who hold onto one another because they cannot face its grim reality alone, Ground Zero was the most compelling subject I’ve encountered.”
Copies of photographs from “Return to Ground Zero” may be purchased for $50 (framed) and $75 (unframed). Half the proceeds will go to the CCNY Alumni Association.
Perlmutter’s photographs are included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian Institution, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Art, the Portuguese Center for Photography, as well as in many private collections here and abroad.

Grant to Preserve ‘Original Grandeur’ of Historic Buildings

education in an increasingly complex world.
Situated on the highest point in the Bronx and modeled on the Pantheon in Rome, the complex is the core and symbol of the college. It includes Gould Memorial Library, the open-air colonnade housing the Hall of Fame for Great Americans, and two flanking buildings, Language and Philosophy Halls.

The whole complex was designated a landmark in 1981, and is considered a stel

Building Projects

Investment Plan supports several major projects underway, including the John Jay College of Criminal Justice expansion, the Brooklyn College West Quad building, the City College School of Architecture and the renovation of the Roosevelt House for Hunter College.
The plan also provides for a major upgrade of the science facilities on the Hunter, Queens, Lehman and City College campuses. Approximately $86 million also has been provided for the first stages of a state-of-the-art facility at the New York City College of Technology.
For additional information about the University budget and for regular updates visit www.cuny.edu/news.

Old Name, New Technology

Blackboard Makes Big Debut

In name evokes an enduring fixture of the classroom, but a new “Blackboard” is making a CUNYwide debut this fall with bold ambitions to enhance teaching and learning.
Using Blackboard’s advanced, e-learning software, faculty can track grades, post assignments, keep attendance and conduct on-line discussions to enrich the traditional classroom experience.
“It’s the best of both worlds,” said George Otti, the University Director of Instructional Technology.
Blackboard, an educational software company based in Washington, D.C., has been making inroads across the nation, but its system-side use at CUNY represents a major step forward in applying technology to instruction.
A number of CUNY colleges had been using versions of Blackboard in recent years, but this semester the central Office of Computer and Information Services under the direction of Chief Information Officer Brian Colon began providing the most advanced versions to the 10 colleges.
Because Blackboard is a type of intranet, freed from restrictions of the web, students can hold meetings in “real time.”
The pre-launch surveys, college officials said they wanted Blackboard to have characteristics like “campus logs,” said Mara Bumco, project manager at the Office of Computer and Information Services. They get what they wanted, Bumco said.
Ottie, a James Joyce scholar by training, said, “It falls to me to get the faculty to use this new technology.”

Bronx Community College’s Gould Memorial Library Rotunda.
At Boston Convention, Students Pick Up Some Powerful Tools

Along with dozens of other CUNY students, Mohammad Salem attended the Democratic National Convention in Boston and he learned that what politics may be an art, it’s also a craft with its own tools.

“Before I went to this convention, most of my knowledge was theoretical,” said Salem, an Honors/Hunter College student with an interest in foreign policy. “When I went to Boston, and saw the politicians, their reactions to questions (and) run into journalists, it was a whole different skill.”

Salem found out that perhaps the most important tool of the political craft is people, or, more precisely, meeting them and communicating with them. And he was almost overwhelmed at the breadth and depth of the exposure.

Salem was introduced to experts from national think tanks; he met daughters of Democratic presidential nominees John Kerry and told them they’re doing a great job; and he attended a media party with so many politicians, journalists and others that it took him 15 minutes to cross from one side to the other.

Dozens of other CUNY students were in Boston with Salem—from City College, Hunter College and Brooklyn College—and they shared an experience that City College Professor Andrew Rich called a unique exposure to politics at a high and very memorable level.

“At conventions are a key part of the presidential selection process, and having the Democratic convention in Boston created a great opportunity to give our students a first-hand perspective on how campaign work,” said Rich, who was the trip’s coordinator.

Over the course of the convention, students assisted delegates, helped organize rallies and protests, and attended seminars led by distinguished officials. They were well prepared for the week’s encounters. Before the trip, back in New York City, the students were assigned to read literature on the election process and the Democratic Party; and by the time they got to Boston they were able to comprehend the broad issues affecting the economy—like the deficit and social welfare policies—as well as understand the political jargon of the campaign.

Salem, who came to the United States at the age of six from Pakistan, feels it’s important for students to get involved in politics.

“Even if you are involved at the smallest, local level, you can still make a difference,” he said. “You look at those issues—debt, health care, Social Security or Iraq. Every single one of those issues hits right at students’ first. And this election is really crucial to our future.”

But the convention was not only about politics, it pointed out. It was also about making friends. After each exhausting day, he sat with other students, and they bonded over shared stories.

After the convention, Salem went back to his internship at the Foreign Policy Association, which educates the public about critical foreign policy initiatives. In the future, he sees himself getting a law degree and working for a non-profit organization that improves people’s lives in important ways.

by Agon Zakazaki

At Ethnic Parades, Students Celebrate an Array of Cultures

CUNY was once again a floating presence at a city ethnic parade this past month—one that runs behind the West Indian Day parade, an annual attraction for hundreds of thousands of Caribbean immigrants and other lovers of the culture. West Indian Day stands out among ethnic celebrations, perhaps, because the term includes a vast swath of nations dotting the Caribbean, evident in the variety of national flags being waved on Labor Day.

One of the parade grand marshals was Hunter College president Dr. Edwin O. Jpkson.

Earlier in the summer, in a preview of the West Indian parade, venerated CUNY students and staffs participated in the Bronx’s Dominican Day parade, sailing down the streets of that borough in a CUNY boat.

“CUNY students, although they are from a single country, are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the city, and at CUNY City College’s Dominican Studies Institute, where Dr. Ramona Hernandez is the director, has been done some of the most significant research on Dominicans in New York. CUNY also has floats in the Puerto Rican Day Parade and in the Mexican Day Parade.”

A Distinguished Professor is a “Delighted Professor”

Teaching at CUNY, with its remarkably diverse student population, is a dream come true for Dr. Nancy Foner, an immigration scholar recently appointed Distinguished Professor at CUNY’s Hunter College.

“It’s such a great place to be for anybody,” Foner, previously an anthropologist at the State University of New York at Purchase.

“I’m so delighted to be here,” added Foner, author of numerous books and articles on the immigration waves to New York City over the past 120 years. CUNY recently named a total of six Distinguished Professors and two Visiting Distinguished Professors.

The other Distinguished appointees are:

Dr. Samuel C. Heilman, of the Sociology Department at Queens College, who has done important studies of Jewish communal life, and who is greatly impacting current understanding of modern Jewry; Dr. Cosma A. Minichiello of the biology department at Queens College, whose research has yielded important insights into biomedical control in all living cells; Dr. David Sarna, who is in the theater program at Hunter College; and Dr. Robert Sklar, a major figure in American theater scholarship, a theatre professor, researcher into the intersection of race and masculinity in cultural studies; and Dr. Helen Fries, who is a philosopher and an original founder of the CUNY African Studies Program.

In his newly named Visiting Distinguished professors are:

Malcolm Holzman, an architect and partner with IBA, who will be at City College and whose buildings are acclaimed for their innovative modernist and technical visions; and Martha Schwartz, who will also be at City College, is of the architectural firm ASLA and has taught at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design. Schwartz has received numerous honors including the National Endowment for the Arts Federal Design Achievement Award.

Students’ Image Will Adorn NYC Marathon T-Shirts

Denis Kovzev, a student at Kingsborough Community College, felt the thrill of victory when he got the news.

The image he designed was chosen to be the logo of the 2004 New York City Marathon, adorning t-shirts and other merchandise at the race in November.

Eighteen thousand runners from around the world competed on a number of images posted on the CUNY website, resulting in the selection of Kovzev’s design as the official icon.

Kovzev initially created the image, featur- ing a man and woman running and holding hands, sitting in the Manhattan skyline, with a model of the United Nations。“It’s going to be exciting to see my image on so many shirts,” Kovzev, a Kazakhstan native and now a Brooklyn resident, said in an interview with the Daily News.“The whole city will be at Hunter College.”

The university’s president is scheduled to distribute to 34,000 registered runners in the days before the November 7th event.
As an international AIDS conference this summer, CUNY scholars shattered some of the myths associated with people who have the disease. In one of the notable findings, Hunter College professor Susan Nokes showed that people over the age of 50 display great resiliency in coping emotionally with HIV/AIDS. Nokes noted, "they still seem to have more in common with the rest of society than is usually thought. A sense of generativity and satisfaction with their lives emerges.

In other findings, a CUNY Graduate Center researcher showed that while female sex workers in New York City are at great risk of HIV infection, many of them effectively protect themselves by being assertive in what they will and will not do in the course of their work.

Presenters at the 15th annual AIDS conference in Bangkok, Thailand, were often to Hunter College, John Jay College and the likes of them. They represented a variety of departments, including nursing, psychology, anthropology, social work and sociology, and all together they produced over 20 papers, keynotes, and workshops.

Regarding the older people with HIV, Nokes found that they suffered significantly, with more body changes which were associated with HIV medications and more accurately described by Nokes as "high blood pressure. Yet they also reported less anger about being HIV-positive and fewer depressive symptoms.

Nokes, working with a team of national and international researchers, presented 19 abstracts at the conference. She was the principal researcher on three papers concerning relationships between age and employment status in people living with HIV/AIDS. Collaborating with her on the employment study was John O'Neil, Professor in the School of Education at Hunter.

Melissa Dimter, a Research Fellow at the Center for the Study of Women and Society in the CUNY Graduate Center, examined the working conditions of indoor sex workers in New York City. A "surprise finding," she said, was sharply varying levels of self-determination among women, who are frequently imagined to be uniformly victimized.

One independent sex worker was virtually entirely autonomous, "a small-brained person essentially," Dimter said. Yet another sex worker, employed in the club-house of a drug gang, was preyed upon severely. "She is akin to that of trafficked labor, even though she was a U.S. citizen. 'Autonomy is central to HIV prevention,'" Dimter said.

Jeffrey T. Parsons, an associate professor in the Hunter College Department of psychology, studied sexual risk behaviors and harm reduction strategies among gay groups. Parsons was principal author on two studies and co-author with CUNY graduate student David S. Bambra on a third.

Studying HIV-positive men who have sex with men in New York City and San Francisco, he discovered a variety of harm-reduction strategies. The men practiced "sawing," where HIV-positive men engaged more frequently in oral and anal sex with other HIV-positive partners than with HIV-negative ones. They also employed "strategic positioning," in which men modified sexual practices to reduce harm.

Parsons commented: "Sometimes assumptions are made that HIV-positive men who have sex with men are not taking responsibility for trying to reduce the risk of transmission to their sexual partners. Our data contradicts this assumption."

Iva Sussman, professor of anthropology at Hunter, described how new concepts of care are emerging from the epidemic in Namibia and South Africa. A space is open for men to take a public role in the fight to gain treatment and care, she said.

In a poster presentation, Sussman offered less optimistic findings about Namibian Bushwomen, who had enjoyed high levels of gender equality in their society. Their autonomy and health now are threatened as they interact with HIV-positive stagnant workers.

Two other studies related to the importance of combating the marginalization of people living with HIV/AIDS by actively including them in community interventions. Professor Roy Curtin of the John Jay College anthropology department presented findings from a project that recruits and trains active drug users to identify community needs and deliver services.

Assistant Professor Darren P. Wheeler and Project Coordinator Miroterza Garcia of the Hunter College School of Social Work addressed techniques to improve recruitment of hard-to-reach men who have sex with men.

Welcome to the "Chico de Jazz" show, where the guests are real-life criminals and you, the members of the audience get to play the role of judge and jury. Chico's guests tonight are Vylla, a prostitute who turned a trick into a near-fatal femicide assault, Ricky, an HIV-positive philandering beggar (he's got 11, count 'em, 11 wives!), and he's deliberately and delightfully infected all of his sexual partners, and the baby-faced, good-boy Malcolm, a serial killer whose favorite prey are children.

Chico and his crew of criminals, all the product of playwright William Hoffman's vivid imagination, made their debut at Lehman College, where they were brought to life on the stage by Lehman College students, faculty and alumni.

"The premise of the play is that New York State has become so impoverished that it has decided to allow the adjudication of death sentences to the court. William Hoffman, a Lehman College professor whose groundbreaking 1985 drama about the AIDS epidemic, "As is," was nominated for three Tony awards. "The audience is asked to vote not on the guilt or innocence of the guests, but on their punishments because they're all convicted criminals. So

CUNY Researchers Shatter Myths at AIDS Conference

Lehman College Thespians Put Reality into a ‘Reality’ Show

Melissa Dimter (right), a Research Fellow at the Center for the Study of Women and Society in the CUNY Graduate Center, speaks to participants at the Bangkok AIDS Conference about her research on sex workers.

Ned Menden (left), playing the role of reality show host Chico de Jazz, and Christopher Cole (right), playing the role of a real-life guest.

After Chico opens the show and the applause sign lights up like a Christmas tree, the perps, clad in orange jailhouse jumpuits, parade in and plead their cases as the audience applauds.

Vylla, played by Lehman student Damara Swayne, is a prostitute not with a heart, and with no redeeming qualities other than a wonderful mother. She tries to sway the vote with her sex appeal. "You can really go wild and crazy with this role," says Swayne. "So basically, I had fun with it. I just think about how Vylla's life could have been and what would make her into the type of person she is."

But Ricky, who gives out HIV like candy, is the kind of guy who even a moth-er — and the actor who plays him — could’t love. ‘My goal is to have somebody look at Ricky and say, ‘Jono, how can I avoid somebody like this,’” says Lehman alum Duanne Ferguson. “How can I save somebody like this?”

Last but not least, there’s Malcolm, the child killer with multiple personalities who in an insane move by the court has been declared sane. The role presented a challenge for Lehman student Christopher Cole because of all the character changes.

"There’s killer Malcolm who is sadistic, confident, cocky,” Cole says. “There’s Malcolm the little mouse, who is very confused; There’s Malcolm the boy, and then, Father Malcolm, the preacher who is very strict, and the mother, who is a leach and she’s out of it."

As far as Hoffman is concerned, the characters in the "Chico de Jazz Show" deserve the chair and the actors deserve the ovations. "We have some fantastically talented stu-dents here," he says. "Some of them need to be polished. Some of them are farther along, unusually farther along. So that’s exciting."
CUNY Takes Job Placement to Next Level

Confident the Future is on Its Side, Kingsborough Fortifies Its Maritime Program

It was a breezy day—very breezy—and Tony DiLemaria’s classroom is heading for what seems to be certain disaster. The waters of Sheepshead Bay have been whipped to froth by the wind, and the classroom—a heavily-built, twin-screw, 62-foot-long fishing boat—is bearing down on the Kingsborough Community College dock.

Zach Bergen, a student from the Upper West Side of Manhattan, who is still a few weeks shy of his 20th birthday, is at the wheel.

DiLemaria, who runs the college’s marine technology program, is relaxed. “When you come in, come hand left on the wheel and back down on the port engine,” he counsels Bergen. “Be sure to bring your RPM’s down before you shift.” As the boat battles toward the dock, DiLemaria tells his student, “I’m going to back off here. The boat is yours, unless you want me to jump in.”

All goes well until the wind catches the boat’s stem and messes up the approach. “Ok, just pivot out and give it some juice,” DiLemaria says calmly. On the second try, the boat moves smoothly into position and lands sweetly against the dock with a gentle bump.

Bergen hands the wheel to a classmate, Dennis Schmid, and takes the helm on the waters off Brooklyn as part of his training in Kingsborough Community College’s revised maritime program.

Aquino, a 19-year-old from the Brooklyn neighborhood, “I came here two years ago,” Aquino explains, “I needed a major I like the water. So I.” He shrugs, smiles, and steers the boat away from the dock and out into the chop.

Bergen, Aquino and 22 classmates are navigating toward associate’s degrees that they can take directly to the maritime industry or to a senior college. “We have more jobs than graduates,” DiLemaria says. “People in the industry keep calling me, saying, ‘We’re looking to hire.’”

One of the frequent callers is Fred Ardolino, a former trawler captain who is building a 150-foot, 400-passenger “dinner boat” to join the one his company, New York Cruises, already operates from Sheepshead Bay.

“When it was difficult to find trained crew members,” Ardolino said, “I’m probably a better world. Basically, in New York, you have a tremendous pool of people, but you don’t have people who are marine-oriented.”

Tony’s program is a really valuable resource,” he adds, “when they come out of school, are eager to be on a boat. And when they come out of the program, they know their way around a boat.”

In the past decade, job opportunities have increased in the harbor. As ferries proliferated along with dinner boats, sight-seeing vessels and water taxis, the surge in jobs has allowed DiLemaria to resurrect the maritime technology program he founded, almost 20 years ago, when the outlook for a life and career on the water was much different.

Back in 1986, when DiLemaria joined the faculty, the initial idea was to train students to work in the growing American fishing fleet. DiLemaria had been a charter boat captain since 1978, starting on fishing boats in the same Sheepshead Bay waters where he now teaches. In response to the federal government’s efforts to revitalize the fishing industry, he organized the Kingsborough Maritime Technology program.

But the federal efforts—which included churning away foreign vessels and subsidizing American fishing boats—proved altogether too successful.

Transport Displaces Fishing

Within a few years, fish stocks collapsed off the Northeast U.S., an area where they had once been so plentiful that ships were slowed as they plopped through the schools. Technological advances that made it easier to catch fish only hastened the process.

“By the early 1990s it was clear that America had done too good a job,” says DiLemaria, who was appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce to the national Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee and still serves on that body.

“Training folks for a fishing career at sea was not what we should have been doing. We should have been discouraging them.”

But as the fishing industry went under, notes and technology combined in more recent years to create other opportunities. For example, DiLemaria says the ferry business has been growing rapidly, with dozens of routes opening up on waters around the city, a development that picked up after September 11, 2001, as commuters looked for transportation alternatives.

In yet another trend, New Yorkers have been taking to boats for celebration and recreation, heading reunions and bar mitzvahs on the moonscrapers of the harbor.

As for changes in technology, now sophisticated equipment may have been bad for fish—making it increasingly difficult for them to find hiding places—but it had the positive effect of spawning a new generation of tech-savvy mariners and maritime entrepreneurs.

DiLemaria’s job, in part, is to blend the old and the new. He points out that the old skills—seamanship, boat handling, maintenance, piloting, and rigging—everything that makes a sailor can’t be neglected. In the modern world, a maritime education has to include everything from operating a desk wind to fixing a refrigeration system, from piloting with the help of a global positioning satellite to steering boats in bad weather.

And as DiLemaria’s students found

Rising from the Waters, Or How the KKC Ship Came In

“T"ook a job teaching in the high schools. I was one of the faculty that put together the Marine Biology program at Beach Channel High School in Queens. I was teaching there and I was recruited to Maritime Trades High School, which was a vocational high school in Manhattan. I went there and took over the responsibility of their training vessel.

“We were attached to the school ship John Brown, which was on the west side of Manhattan. Then a fellow with a lot of foresight, a fellow by the name of Milton Drucker who had worked for the University, was working with the Federal Government and with the University and put together a fisheries and marine technology program.

“He recruited me to come to Kingsborough, and not only did I come to Kingsborough, but I also brought the research vessel with me. The Board of Education transferred the research vessel from the University and we started the program. We opened the first set of classes in September, 1986.”

— Prof. DiLemaria
Stage: Working on Harbor Waters

Boats Offer Careers for the Future

The Center for an Urban Future, a local think-tank, noted earlier this year that CUNY is a "job-training powerhouse," with a vast array of programs putting students on career paths.

The report mentioned Wall Street, the tech industry and the public sector. But working on water? Who’s been thinking about that?

Kingborough Community College, for one.

Leaders in the maritime industry say demand has been growing for qualified workers on tourism boats, ferry boats and other vessels regularly plying the waters around New York.

“Many of our members have been expressing this need to us constantly,” said John Groundwater, executive director of the Passenger Vessel Association, a group representing 550 maritime businesses around the country, including Circle Line and NY Waterway.

College-based training programs such as Kingborough’s are desirable, Groundwater said, because companies want employees who possess basic deck-hand skills and are also educated and well-spoken.

“They have a good, long-standing program,” he said.

Kingborough mariner Professor Terry Dierkens says that the program is more than good; it’s unique. “We’re the only non-military (maritime) program on the East Coast,” he said.

Started in 1986 by Milton Drucker, now retired dean of Kingborough, and strengthened later by Dr. August Treado, its current director of community relations, the college has about 60 students in its maritime program. Its officials say they get jobs for all their graduates.

“Our out of program, it’s one hundred percent employment,” said Michael Goldstein, Kingborough’s spokesman. “The demand is with water taxi, dinner boats, tourist boats and tug boats. There really are a lot of opportunities.”

State labor statisticians say there has been a steady decline in maritime industry employment, citing declines in ocean cargo jobs, for example, but professor Dierkens points out that there is a difference between “blue water” work—like on cargo ships that sail the ocean—and “brown water” work—around New York Harbor, for example.

New York City is experiencing a kind of boom along its waterfront, as planners, politicians and businesspeople realize ferries and pleasure boats are the future of the future, one expert says.

“People are talking about waterborne transit in a way of moving people around in a cost-effective manner,” said Jonathan Bowles, research director at the Center for an Urban Future, which in April published “CUNY on the Job,” the report analyzing CUNY’s success in placing students on career paths.

“It’s already happening,” Bowles said, talking about the increase in water transportation around the harbor. “The growth between New Jersey and Manhattan has been incredible in the last couple of years. It started to happen between Brooklyn, Manhattan and parts of Queens and the potential for growth is enormous.”

peters “because there were so many people in that field. Here’s sure there’s a need for more opportunities now for introductory level jobs, for career paths in the maritime industry, particularly on the water taxi, the ferries’ and other types of vessels, said Angus McCain, captain of the Shearwater, a classic charter sailing boat operating out of the North Cove marina, near the World Financial Center in lower Manhattan.

McCam said he would like to see more young people enrolling in college courses like those at Kingborough, because maritime workers should have a broad exposure to the technical and other skills offered in a college setting.

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LaGuardia College Women’s Team Leaps to Hall of Fame

By Edward Jęwoski

One of the most significant achievements in the history of CUNY athletics, the 1972-73 Queens College women’s basketball team has been inducted into the New York City Basketball Hall of Fame. This is the first time a women’s team has been so honored, joining previous local squads, professional and collegiate, that have been inducted in the past, including the 1960-70 NBA champion Knicks, the 1940-50 City College team that won both the N.C.A.A. and N.C.T. crowns, and the 1963-64 undefeated Power Memorial H.S. team featuring Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

The event formally marking the honor was to take place September 21 at the New York Athletic Club. Aside from its on-the-court accomplishments, and the fact that it was the first women’s collegiate team from New York City to be recognized for a national championship, the Queens women attracted media and public attention that had far-reaching implications for the future growth of the women’s game.

One of the players on that stellar team was Maggie Hilgenberg, currently LaGuardia Community College executive assistant for academic affairs. Edelen Mentone, current CUNY Dean of Development, graduated from Queens in 1971, two years before the indutrcrs played their championship games, but as captain of the ‘72-’73 team she set it on the path to the Hall of Fame induction. During the early 1970s, with 36,000 students at Queens, it was easy to find enough students to demonstrate for peace, ecology, civil or women’s rights, or the CUNY budget. Some even wanted to eliminate mandatory gym classes; indeed, intercollegiate athletics were a relatively low-key activity on CUNY campuses. So it especially was surprising to find hundreds, then thousands, of students making their way to Flushing Park. During 1972-73, to watch the Queens College women’s basketball team, headline coverage of the team’s winning ways by two student newspapers and the campus radio station, helped to create the interest. The student media affectionately nicknamed the team ‘the Nightingales.’

The team itself was something of a patchwork quilt: one player, Debbie “The Pearl” Mason, probably was the nation’s most creative, exciting female player; another was selected for the first-ever U.S. Olympic basketball team; three

LaGuardia Helps Businesses Get Loans and Stay Solvent

Tina Mendez had this great idea for starting her own business, but she didn’t have a loan. So she turned to the LaGuarda Small Business Development Center, which is housed at The City University of New York’s LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, to make her dream of opening Ascend Day Spa Inc. in her New Garden neighborhood a reality.

“I’m not good at financial analysis or projection,” the 39-year-old paralegal says. “The bank just handed me a folder with all the paperwork. I couldn’t understand the forms or fill them out, and I’m a New York University graduate.”

After several free consultations with staff members at the LaGuardia Small Business Development Center, which is set up on the campus of the community college, a notary filled out the paperwork, she also got the $53,000 loan she needed.

“It’s overwhelming when you’re starting out, and they explain and step by step what I had to do to complete the paperwork successfully,” Mendez says.

When you apply for a loan, you have to list everything you need, and the LaGuardia center staff told me to add things that I would never have thought of like a credit card machine and what it would cost per month. Then they put me in touch with the person who gave me the loan. If I didn’t have the LaGuardia Small Business Development Center, I don’t think I’d be in business.

Since the center opened right after 9/11, it has helped 1,000 small-business owners like Mendez secure $13 million in financing.

“We work one-on-one with people and do everything from assessing their needs and laying out roadmaps for them to helping them repair or establish credit to get the financing they need,” says Joyce Moy, LaGuardia’s executive director of economic development, adding that the loans range from $500 to $750,000. “We help small businesses reach the American dream, and we do it free of charge.”

The center, whose staff members speak English, Spanish, Korean and three dialects of Chinese, has worked with restaurant owners, medical cab companies, credit unions, media companies, computer companies and photographers. We also give cultural help in navigating the ways of U.S. business,” Moy says.

LaGuardia Small Business Development Center, a state program that is funded by the federal Small Business Administration, also was instrumental in helping Kevin Tay and his wife, Valerie Jew Tay, set up Import Food Network in Fresh Meadows.

“Rose Figuerra at the center helped me get a loan for $250,000,” says Tay, who found out about the center while attending a general small-business seminar sponsored by LaGuardia Community College. “I knew I could do it myself, because I already had done a lot of the work, but I would have had to invest a lot of my own time.”

Tay and Mendez say that the ongoing support they receive from LaGuardia Small Business Development Center is a key to the ongoing success of their businesses. “When I was setting up Ascend Day Spa last year I would go to the center every two or three weeks,” Mendez says. “And I plan on going back and consulting with the staff again.”

Tay found the center’s help invaluable and urges others to go for free consultations. “They will tell you whether your idea is good and your plan is executable and whether in the long run the banker will support you,” he says.

And as Tay’s Import Food Network is getting ready to celebrate its 13rd anniversary, he’s also getting ready to apply for another business loan so he can expand.

“Every step of the way, I will talk to Rosa at the LaGuardia Small Business Development Center. Her ‘free coaching’ will point me in the right direction again.”

For more information, call the LaGuardia Small Business Development Center at 718-482-3303 or visit their website at http://laguardia.nysbdc.org
TOP Enables Would-Be Teachers to Fulfill Their Dreams

E lsa ciudad hay mucho...” “There is much in the city...” says a timid voice. “Yes,” raises Diane Betancourt. “Yes, Rudy. But remember it’s tráfico!” Her class of 29 ninth and tenth-graders in Bayside’s Benjamin Cardozo High School is the usual rich city mix of races and cultures, but Betancourt works hard to keep the accent as authentically Hispanic as possible until the bell rings and class ends. Betancourt, who is 43 and cheerfully refers to herself as a “middle-aged mother,” is a new teacher in the New York City system. Not many months ago, she was deep into a very different career, that of criminal law. She worked both sides of the courtroom, prosecuting defendants as an assistant district attorney in Suffolk County on Long Island, and later representing those accused of crimes as a defense attorney in private practice.

Her move into a teacher of Spanish was made possible by CUNY’s Teaching Opportunity Program (TOP), which, in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education, provides money and special training to highly-qualified candidates who wish to make teaching a career. The Teaching Opportunity Program, begun in 1999, is designed to meet the needs of the city school system, which has current shortages of math, science, Spanish and literacy teachers. It served as the model for the Teaching Fellows Program, created in 2000 by the New York City Department of Education with the support of the University. It is therefore a pioneer in the ongoing effort to fill professional shortages in the city school system.

Both TOP and the Teaching Fellows program receive substantial funding from AmeriCorps, the federal community service program. TOP also receives financial support from more than a dozen private foundations.

“The Teaching Opportunity Program has made its mark as an outstanding route to teaching in areas of high need in New York City,” said Dr. Nicholas Michelli, CUNY’s Dean for Teacher Education and the architect of TOP. “Because it is highly selective, because students meet all standards for teaching, and because we focus on preparing students specifically for the subjects they wish to teach, it is a very rare program. Part of the evidence of excellence is the continued support from major foundations, the New York State Department of Education and AmeriCorps.”

TOP pays for each student’s master’s degree through tuition waivers and AmeriCorps Education Awards. Each of them works as a salaried teacher at the city’s school system under the supervision of CUNY faculty. At the same time, they take graduate coursework at Lehman, Hunter Brooklyn, Queens and City Colleges. Courses include training in teaching methods related to their specialty, classroom management, student assessment, adolescent development and advanced studies in Spanish, mathematics or science.

For many, it’s not the money that’s most important. For Irena Waga, currently teaching Spanish, like Betancourt, in Cardozo, TOP cut through bureaucratic red tape that had thwarted her earlier attempts to become a teacher.

Waga came to New York from her native Latvia in 1994, when she was 22 years old. “I always wanted to be a teacher,” she said. “When I came to this country, the first thing I did was apply to the Board of Education to become one. But it was so bureaucratic; I gave up. Everybody sent you to see somebody else. It was just like in the Soviet Union. I tried twice more, but it always defeated me.”

Already proficient in Spanish—which she had studied in Latvia and used during a job-stint in Ecuador—Waga began studying Chinese. She taught Russian for a language institute. She started a family, and now has two children.

But the dream of becoming a teacher didn’t leave her. Then, two years ago she applied to TOP. “Someone recommended this program to me,” she said. “I didn’t know what was going to happen. They called me for an interview, it went well, and here I am.”

For Betancourt, as for many TOP students, this career-while-you-learn arrangement made it possible to attain her goal of being a public school teacher, an aspiration that otherwise would have eluded her school.

She had taken up law at her father’s suggestion. “He used to say to me, ‘You like to argue; you should be a lawyer.’” It was good advice. Betancourt went to Queens College, then Touro Law School on Long Island, and enjoyed her years in court. “Where else can you get paid to argue?” she says with a laugh.

In time, though, the hardship of a career in criminal justice wore down her enthusiasm. “As my son was getting older I realized how much I loved children,” Betancourt says. “I had been doing a lot of arguing. I decided I wanted to do more nurturing.”

Although her father had been born in Peru, and her mother was of Puerto Rican descent, Betancourt grew up in Washington Heights (and later Rockland County, an English-only household). Her father’s stories brought him first-hand experience with bigotry and racism, and he wanted none of that for his children, so Spanish was frowned upon.

But Betancourt’s grandmother made sure his daughter didn’t lose touch with her heritage, telling her bedtime stories and family anecdotes in Spanish. When her grandmother, Betancourt could read and understand Spanish even before she studied it in school.

Yet when teaching beckoned, Betancourt’s first thought it would be impossible to follow the call. She needed teaching skills. “I had been thinking about this for years, thinking, ‘How can I do this,’” she says. “Without TOP, I wouldn’t have been able to do it.”

Time and money were also big obstacles. Whatever time she didn’t devote to law was consumed by raising her son and keeping her house. Night classes weren’t an option because, needing the money, she had to continue practicing criminal law, and since a lot of people get arrested at night, she could be awakened anytime by a client’s call for assistance.

Students Work as Interns in Washington, Learning about the World

Brooklyn College student Adeyego Arowolo wanted to know why countries with so much natural wealth, like the oil-rich Nigeria where he grew up, have so many people living in poverty.

As a management and finance major, he had read textbooks that helped him to see the complex issues at play, but he had a thirst for something more.

This summer he began to quench that thirst, as part of the highly selective CUNY Washington Internship Program, which introduces a dozen students every year to key makers of national and foreign policy.

Arowolo was assigned to the office of Brooklyn Congresswoman Edolphus Towns, and got to see up close how decisions are made in the city on one called “the capital of the world, Washington, D.C.”

It will be a while, Arowolo acknowledged, before he takes big steps toward reducing disparities between rich and poor nations, but he believes he can at least say that he began his journey this summer.

The internship that introduces CUNY student policy makers is part of the Edward T. Rody Internship Program in Government and Public Affairs, which is named after the CUNY scholar of New York politics who died in March of 2001. “This is among the more selective programs at the university,” said director Anthony Matonkoski. “It’s only budgeted for 12 people. It’s really for juniors and seniors but also outstanding sophomores may apply.”

While the interns typically have broad ambitions to someday change the world, or some little part of it, they also have very specific motives and questions that they want to have answered.
Sartorial Splendor with 'Dark History,' and Other CUNY Books

by Gary Schmiedall

Italy’s Fashionista Fascists

Speak the word “fashion” and only two nations in the world come instantly to mind: France and Italy. “German fashion” or “Japanese fashion” evokes a blue “Dutch fashion,” “Chinese fashion,” and “Austrian fashion” are complete blips. If you admit that French fashion is really just Parisian fashion, then you can accept that Milan is the supreme national avatar of fashion. “The Made in Italy” label is synonymous with refined taste, elegance and care,” writes Queens College Professor of European Languages Eugenia Padvillicci. “Indeed, Italian identity itself seems to be at one with the dolce vita of Italian style, glamour and sophistication.”

This fortunate—and very lucrative—association is thanks, in substantial part, to Benito Mussolini and his fascist colleagues of the 1930s, as Padvillicci demonstrates in her latest book. In the historical study Fashion under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt, just published by Berg as part of its distinguished Dress, Body, Culture series. “The textile industry played a major role in the Italian economy during the phase of modernization in the two decades between 1920 and 1940,” she writes, and the fascist government was thoroughly aware that fashion was “both serious and a business.” Fascist control of the fashion industry—and, of course, the attendant advertising industry—was exerted largely through the Este nazionale della moda (National Fashion Body, ENM), which was founded by Mussolini in 1932. For Mussolini a propaganda machine was quick to pounce on Italy’s advances in production techniques for the so-called new intelligent fibers like nylon. And, mimicking the Nazi urge for ethnic purification on the Italian fashion scene, the body published a dictionary of fashion in 1936; “the specific purpose of which was to purify

Touring the City’s Real Underground

Two years ago BOOK TALK OF THE CITY featured Unwanting Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City, a comprehensive, awe-inspiring book about the city’s past lying below ground-level throughout the five boroughs. Its authors—City College and Graduate Center Professor of Anthropology Diana DiGregorio Wall and Batteerhoff, Anne Marie Cantwell—have now produced, also from Yale University Press, a spin-off that will be happily greeted by New Yorkers possessed of interest in the antiquarian and sensible walking shoes. This is Touring Gotham’s Archaeological Past: Eight Self-Guided Walking Tours through New York City, packet-size guidebook with numerous illustrations and maps that allows readers to explore thousand-year-old trading routes, sacred burial grounds, and 17th-century villages. Years of research by Unwanting Gotham would be received by the two authors (write in their introduction, “We were overwhelmed by the favorable attention but everyone asked the same question: ‘What sites can we see?’ “Wall and Cantwell started thinking: “We got out our maps and notebooks, put on our comfortable shoes, and conjured up maps and busses and subways all over the city, and came up with this book of explorations.”

The eight tours, which embrace every borough but Staten Island, are: The Harbor Islands, Lower Manhattan (The Premier City of the New Nation), Greenwich Village (At Home in 19th-Century New York), Northern Manhattan (How Archaeologists Uncovered Indian, Colonial, and Revolutionary War New York), The Bronx Shore (A Voyage through Thousands of Years of Indian Life), The Farms and Towns of Queens County, The Town of Brooklyn (Third Largest City of the 19th-Century Nation), and Southern Brooklyn (Native American and Early New York).

Not all of the authors’ favorite sites could be included, some for logistical reasons (too isolated to connect with a tour), but some for other precautions. “We knew from bitter experience just how vulnerable archaeological sites and how easily they and all the information they contain can be destroyed,” the authors explain. “With great regret, we did not include sites subject to looting.” Some of these are on Staten Island, but they tantalizingly note, “one important exception can be seen in the distance from a stop on tour #3.”

All sites included in Touring Gotham’s Archaeological Past, they add, are now protected, have already been excavated, or have been replaced by subsequent buildings.

Starstruck—Queensborough’s Spacelady

If astronomy is a mystery to most of us, the fault, dear reader, is not in our stars but in ourselves—Cassini famously opined. And a very convenient way to recite one’s ignorance of the territory beyond heaven’s gate is to acquire a copy of Astronomy: A Self-Teaching Guide by Queensborough Community College’s Professor of Physics Dennis L. Mochi. Just out in its sixth edition (John Wiley & Sons), Astronomy sold more than two million copies in its previous incarnations. One reason for its popularity must be its unimposing, user-friendly design and presentation, though Mochi notes that the contents are those of a college-level course. Math-phobes need not fear: mathematics is not required.

Among the helpful features for beginners offered in the book are line drawings, and graphs—one or two on almost every page, up-to-date star, constellation and astronomical data, popular sky targets for hobby telescopes (among them the astronomically named Wild Duck Cluster, Owl Nebula, Beehive Cluster, and Sombrero Galaxy); the latest 21st-century research on black holes, active galaxies, searches for life in space, new ground and space telescopes, and Web links to the best astro- net sites online. The Web site for the book is www.space-bady.com.

Mochi’s twelve chapters are: Understanding the Starry Sky, Light and Time, The Stars, The Sun, Stellar Evolution, Galaxies, The Universe, Exploring the Solar System, The Planets, The Moon, Comets, Meteors and Meteorites, and Life on Other Worlds? Past the self-tests with flying colors, and you will be able to discuss on dwarf galaxies, Doppler shifts, the heliosphere, Kepler belt objects, and occultations. Mochi’s epilogue is an admirably short 45 words, perhaps because its epitaph, from Plato’s Republic, says it all: “Astronomy compels the soul to look upwards and leads off from this world to another.”

Among the chapters in Fashion under Fascism are essays on “Fashion, Gender and Power in Interwar Italy,” “Disciplining the Body, Language and Style,” and “Nationalizing the Fascist Industry.” Also included is an interview with Michel Fontana of Fontana Sisters, a leading post-war fashion house founded in 1944.

More broadly, Padvillicci says, Fashion is an important field of study with a long and dark history bound up with questions of self and national identity. “She has recently been spreading this view in courses at Queens Fashion, Gender and Power and “(this fall) on Fashion and Image in Cross-Cultural Perspectives. She is also planning a Fashion Studies Forum at the Graduate Center (where she also teaches).

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Betancourt, who teaches Spanish, was able to make her career change because of financial assistance and training provided by TOP to talented candidates like her.

She found the solution to her problem while doing research on line, at the TOP website: www.top.com.edu.

The program begins with a seven-week-long summer “boot camp” during which participants get classroom experience as students (taking for-credit CUNY courses toward their masters’ degree) and as teachers (observing in classrooms). After completing the tuition-free-session—and thereby earning up to 12 credits towards a master’s degree—scholars receive a $3,000 foundation-funded stipend.

To continue in the program in September, scholars must pass two New York State licensing exams. During the school year, they teach full-time in a city school, as Betancourt is doing, and receive a full teacher’s salary as they work toward a master’s degree.

It is a demanding program. After successful completion of the first year’s teaching and studies, participants—who need a 3.0 grade-point average to be accepted, and must maintain that average in their class work—are awarded a $4,725 grant, which can be used to pay their CUNY tuition. Any money left after paying the tuition can be put toward repaying student loans. That arrangement has allowed Betancourt to return to Queens College for her master’s while teaching at Cardozo.

A student’s obligations don’t end with graduation and certification. Each must commit to teaching in New York City schools for at least two years after completing a master’s degree.

Waga didn’t need the rule to keep her committed to Cardozo. “I was offered a job in Long Island, where I live, and the salary was going to be $10,000 more,” she said. “But I love Cardozo; I love those kids. I’m really happy at that place.”

As Betancourt has found out, teaching is not a walk in the park. “It’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done,” she told a visitor to her classroom, as her students prepared to take a quiz. “Harder than trial work. If you’re not interesting to the kids, they’re not going to listen to you. In court, the jurors usually want to hear what you’re saying, and the judge has to listen.

“Here? You can’t count on anything.

EXCUSE ME LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,” she says in a commanding voice that still carries a trace of her normal good humor. “I’m hearing too much buzz.” The buzz of conversation subsides, and the quiz begins.

Betancourt’s natural air of authority, coupled with a real liking for young people, works well in the classroom. The students are attentive, responsive, well-behaved. Betancourt’s fondest wish is that she be able to spend the rest of her career right where she is.

She doesn’t regret her years as a lawyer. “I think that if I had become a teacher earlier, I would always have had that fire in my belly to try a case,” she said. “But I’ve evolved. This is a better place for me to be at this time in my life.”

Queens College Professor Has 40 Years of Translating Latin American Novels

Professor Gregory Rabassa of Queens College has brought the finest gems of Latin American literature to the English-speaking world. CUNY Matters editor Ron Howell interviewed him this summer. Rabassa is proud to be from a CUNY family. His wife Clementine C. Rabassa is Professor Emerita of Humanities from Medgar Ever’s College.

CUNY Matters: Professor [Gregory] Rabassa, you’ve translated the most significant novels to come out of Latin America. Tell us about some of them.

Rabassa: Well suppose you’ve got to start with 100 Years of Solitude, which is probably the most famous. But then there is the first one I did, Hopscotch by Julio Cortazar… That was 1965 and it won the National Book Award, so I look upon that as kind of a landmark.

Q: How many books have you done?

A: About fifty, I’d say.

Q: But that’s more than a year?

A: Sometimes I do more than a book in one year. Two books or three books sometimes, and then another year with no books. But it averages out.

Q: Now, after forty years of translating others, you’re writing your first book, If The Bees Disappear: Translators and G2 Documents. Tell us about it.

A: Well, the “y” is a play on words, of course. It refers to mistakes that are made in translations… The book is a memoir of sorts. It’s not about theory. I don’t think there’s any place for any theories in literature or art for that matter. It’s about how a translation works and all of that. The second half is talk about authors. I discuss my experience with each one—two or three pages, sometimes more, for each one… It will be out in the spring, with New Directions.

Q: Was writing your own book more, or less, difficult than translating?

A: It was much easier. Maybe it’s the nature of the book. I wasn’t writing fiction, so I didn’t have to imagine anything. I didn’t have to look much up.

Q: How do you approach translating novels as systemic and magical as those you’ve worked on?

A: I sit down with the typesetters, book, dictionary and I think maybe the best explanation is… that I read the book, but then I read it in English as I put it down on paper. Then I’ll go back and rewrite it, smooth it up.

Q: Of the authors you translated, which were your closest to?

A: I was probably closest to Julio Cortazar because Marquez I met a couple of times but he wasn’t around very much. He let me go my own way. But Julio visited us a couple of times, he listened to old jazz records, my 78 collection and all that. And then there was Demetrio Aguilera-Malta, the Ecuadorian novelist who was living [in exile] in Mexico. He was getting kicked out all the time. But I got to know him quite well and my wife, Chas, wrote her doctoral dissertation about his work.

Q: What can you say, Professor, about this amazing explosion of the past thirty years in immigration from Latin America? How has it affected the teaching of literature at CUNY?

A: It has brought us students, as immigrants or the children of immigrants, and that has boosted our programs. I think also, the interaction amongst students gets other students involved in what the culture is. Spanish at Queens is the runaway language for language teaching and a good many of the students go on to study the literature.

Q: You teach a course, Hispanic Literature in Translation. What’s the experience of teaching like now, after several decades?

A: When I first started teaching I was about the same age as my students, and I still labor under that delusion. So I’m sort of surprised when I realize that these students here could be my grandchildren. But I still have this sort of idea of equality, which I think helps because it saves you from pontificating.

Q: Tell us about where you grew up, your family, and the schools you attended.

A: I grew up out in the country north of Hanover [New Hampshire]. So I went to Dartmouth, got a nice scholarship. In high school I studied French and Latin. I didn’t take Spanish until I got to college. The old man [my father], he was Cuban but he didn’t speak much Spanish. My mother was a New York WASP so English was the lang-

Q: You mentioned a love of jazz. Is there an intrinsic relationship between a love of music and a love of foreign languages?

A: I do think [music] may have something to do with translation or the ear for language. I like chamber music more than anything else. … My old teacher, Robert Goff, who was a poet and quite a fellow, a veteran of the Escalde Lafayette in World War II, I claimed that Proust wrote his novel based on the structure of Beethoven’s fourteenth quartet. So I play that lots of times… I guess that’s the connection. Maybe I don’t know.
With a Little Help and a Lot of Heart, They Earned Their GED’s

All the odds were stacked against Jennifer Herrera. The single mother and high school dropout from the Bronx was simply too busy just trying to make it through each day to worry about her future. “I was easier to be responsible for others rather than to take responsibility for my own being,” she says, adding that all of her time was spent focusing on earning enough money to feed her child. But her life changed dramatically after she enrolled in the CUNY Adult Literacy/GED program. Not only did she earn a high school equivalency degree, but she also was one of 11 of outstanding students to recently be awarded a 2004 GED Laurel Award College Scholarship of $1,000. “Now, I’m shooting for the stars because they are not as far away as I imagined them to be,” says Herrera, who is enrolled at Lehman College, where she earned a 3.75 grade-point average. “I want to work on a doctorate in either psychology or sociology. My vision is clear now, and every day I wake up with this thought: ‘Dr. Jenny, I very much like the sound of that.’ The 2004 Laurel Scholarships, which were financed by the Bank of New York, recognize students like Herrera “who have fire in their bellies and a desire to change their lives,” CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein told the winners at an awards ceremony this summer.

ABC News Anchor Peter Jennings congratulates Kingsborough Community College student Michelle Prashad, who earned her GED with CUNY’s help and won a Laurel Award Scholarship.

Confronting the Crisis of the African-American Male: CUNY Leads the Way

A public policy magazine says colleges have “a huge role to play” in ameliorating a grave crisis facing New York City: the persistently high levels of unemployment among black males.

The article in the current issue of City Limits magazine goes on to single out and praise CUNY for ongoing efforts dealing with the problem.

In its master plan for 2004-2008, CUNY says it recognizes there is a black male crisis and will continue to develop “vibrant and intellectually rigorous programs to create opportunities for these young men to achieve and engage with themselves and the world.”

One of the models for future CUNY programs is the Male Development and Empowerment Center at Medgar Evers College, which among other things “offers intensive interventions aimed at retaining black male students,” the master plan says.

“We also give them a sense of well-being through the acquisition of skills,” said Dr. Edward O. Jackson, the president of Medgar Evers, in a telephone interview. “We do a lot of how-to seminars, how to start your own business, how to manage your finances, how to raise your child.” The president added that black males must learn “paradigms” enabling them to counter negative stereotypes and behavior patterns.

He went on to praise CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein “for stepping up to the plate” on the issue of the crisis of the African-American male.

“The City University of New York would be the first to embrace this initiative [as expressed in the recently adopted master plan],” Jackson said.

The director of the Male Development and Empowerment Program at Medgar Evers is Peter A. Holeman, whose job is to “maximize the involvement of males in their community by increasing their knowledge and understanding of self, promoting leadership, encouraging educational and personal pursuit, and enhancing their level of economic suitability,” according to the program’s web site.

CUNY says in its master plan that Dr. Otto O. Hill, the Vice Chancellor for Student Development and Enrollment Management, is using Medgar Evers as a model, in large part, to combat “increasingly alarming” low retention rates for black and Latino males around the country. In this effort, Hill has been involving City College, York College, the Borough of Manhattan Community College, Hostos Community and Kingsborough Community College.

Earlier this year, the Community Service Society of New York issued a report saying almost half of the city’s black men were unemployed in 2003. The recent City Limits magazine article was written by David Jason Fischer, project director with the Center for an Urban Future.

Unlike labor statistics released by the federal government, the Community Service Society counted those who had stopped looking for work.

Sociologists nationwide have said African-American men confront a range of issues that make success in life a more difficult prospect, including high arrest and incarceration rates.

Peter A. Holeman, director of the Medgar Evers Male Development and Empowerment Center, meets face-to-face with students as they discuss problems facing them as African-American men, including relations with police officers and their responsibilities as fathers. This meeting was held in the spring semester.