Looking who's teaching at CUNY!

CUNY is a leading research university with a diverse faculty that includes some of the most accomplished scholars and educators in the world, contributing to the high-quality education that is available at CUNY.

This special edition of CUNY Matters highlights the distinguished faculty who are teaching at CUNY, providing a glimpse into the breadth and depth of expertise that comes from the university's long-standing traditions of excellence.

The faculty at CUNY are not only dedicated to teaching but also to conducting cutting-edge research, contributing to fields ranging from arts and humanities to science and engineering. Their work is recognized both nationally and internationally, bringing distinction to CUNY and its reputation.

When you start looking at the faculites that we have across this university, you are absolutely stunned by the depth of talent," says Chancellor Matthew Goldstein.

The faculty at CUNY are an integral part of the university's mission to provide a high-quality education to students from all backgrounds, fostering a community of learning where students can develop their full potential.

Read on to discover more about the distinguished faculty members who are shaping the future of CUNY and its students.

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Look Who's Teaching at CUNY! - Springer 2007
Putting Faces on the Decade of Science

L ast month I traveled to Albany to test-
ify on the State Executive Budget at a joint hearing of the New York State Assembly Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees. There I spoke about many of CUNY’s initiatives and programs currently underway, and emphasized how much we rely on the State’s continued investment in order to recruit additional full-time faculty and provide the student services required to maximize our effectiveness.

Part of my testimony (available in its entirety at www.cuny.edu/statetimeways07) focused on “One Decade of Science” at CUNY. It’s no secret that our country’s strength, security, and advancement depend on scientific literacy. An acknowledged decline in student participation and proficiency in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields imperils our competitive advantage in science and technology. The need for our multi-faceted Decade of Science initiative, launched in 2005 and profiled previously in CUNY Matters, could hardly be more pressing.

Spend a moment or two at least reflecting on this work in Albany. But words only go so far. The vitality of our Decade of Science effort was underscored by the willingness of the Albany legislators by the presence of 15 faculty scientists drawn from the extraordinary talent we are privileged to have recruited to CUNY:

• Professor Daniel Alkon, Director of the CUNY Center for Analysis of Structures and Interfaces, studies the synthesis of semi-conductor and magnetic oxide nanoparticles, as well as the fabrication of carbon nanotubes using various matrices. He is a professor at City College and received his Ph.D. from UC Berkeley.

• Professor Hiroshi Matsumura, Associate Professor of Chemistry at Hunter College, was recently elected as a Fellow of the National Academy of Engineering and is recognized for his work on non-lithographic fabrication of devices such as sensors, by fabricating peptide-based nanochips (antibody) and functionalizing them with various recognition components (antigens).

• Disembowled Professor Ruth Stark, Director of the CUNY Institute for Macromolecular Assemblies at the College of Staten Island, uses NMR techniques to study the molecular structure and organization of fatty acid binding proteins as well as their lipopolymers.

• Professor Derrick Brazill received the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers in 2005 for his work on cell sensing and control of cell growth during development. He is Associate Professor of Biology at Hunter College and received his Ph.D. from UC Berkeley.

• Professor Lynn Francis-Arnold, Associate Professor of Chemistry at Hunter College, studies the chemistry of elements such as technetium, with a goal of developing the chemistry as it relates to the medicinal uses of their radioisotopes—millions of dollars in science and technology.

• Professor Steve Greenbaum, Professor of Physics at Hunter College, performs spectroscopic investigations of solids by mag- netic resonance and synchrotron radiation, applied mainly to materials for electrochemical energy storage and conversion.

• Professor Greenbaum received a 2002 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathe- matics and Engineering Mentoring.

• Professor Christine Li is a development- al neurobiologist studying how communi- cation is established between cells in the nervous system. She is a Professor of Biology at City College and earned her Ph.D. from Harvard University.

• Professor Ellis Wurtzel, a researcher on eukaryotic chromatin organization in animal cells, was elected as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2006. He is Professor of Biology at Lehman College.

• Professor Alex Couzis is the Herbert G. Kayser Professor of Chemical Engineering at City College. His research on the adsorp- tion of organic material from solution onto solid surfaces impacts critical areas such as food science and packaging, microelectronics, optics and delayed drug release.

• Professor Cathy Savage-Dunn studies the roles and mechanisms of cell signaling during animal development. Dr. Savage- Dunn is Associate Professor of Biology at Queens College and received her Ph.D. from Columbia University.

• Professor Harry Gafney has recently assumed the Directorship of the CUNY Center for Advanced Technology (CAT) in Photonic Applications. Professor Gafney works closely with New York-based companies such as Corning Inc., and is also a guest scientist at Brookhaven National Laboratory. He is Professor of Chemistry at Queens College.

• Professor Richard Maglione has con- sistently produced high-quality research from the National Institutes of Health for research studying the structure and function of a bacterial home enzyme responsible for activation of an antibiotic used to treat tuberculosis, and another bacterial enzyme that catalyzes critical reactions. He is Professor of Chemistry at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center.

• These scientists represent a small sam- ple of the individuals at CUNY—faculty, staff, students, and alumni—who are dedi- cated to making our Decade of Science as productive as possible. I thank you all for your support.

In New Knowledge Economy, New

H ow’s this for a reality series? Contestants compete for jobs and income based on their education, and their home town’s survival or die based on how much brain power they can generate.

That’s the Darwinian game that’s being played out now across the United States. Back in 1970, the number of people with at least bachelor’s degrees was small—11 percent—and spread fairly evenly around the country. But today, cities have more than twice as many college graduates, and educated people are continuing to gravitate to intellectual centers like New York City, Boston, San Francisco and Raleigh. Much has been written about the migration to those intellectual and cre- active hubs. Less well known, perhaps, is the extent to which the economic and intellectual lives of these great centers like New York City are interconnected and so dependent on their respective institutions of higher learning.

And in this respect, CUNY stands out. It is the largest public urban university in the nation, and its campuses are like streams spurring the life that keeps the city great.

Selma Botman, the University Provost, noted that CUNY enrollment has been ris- ing in recent years as New Yorkers, includ- ing some of the newest of New York’s inter- immi-grates—realize that the surest way up the ladder of the Knowledge Economy is to obtain a degree. “The fortunes of this city are linked to the richness of this University,” Botman said. “And both residents and out-of-towners are seeing that CUNY degrees are the best educational bargains in the country, without question.”

Frances Horowitz, formerly president of the Graduate Center, said, “City University is the social engine of New York. It’s ubiquitous and at every level. There are very few cities that are as saturated with educa- tional opportunities as New York City.”

Soaring

Percentages of Degree Holders

A third of the city’s residents age 25 and over have bachelor’s or advanced degrees, and their number surged by an eye-popping 20 percent between 2000 and 2005, growing by 280,000 to 1.7 million, the Census Bureau says. More astounding, almost two-thirds of Manhattanites in that age bracket are college grads.

Other cities had higher percentages in 2005, but of course no one matches New York in absolute numbers. In San Francisco, half of the residents age 25 and over had college degrees, some 281,000 people. In Seattle, the nation’s best-edu- cated city, some 210,000 people—more than half in that age group—had at least a bachelor’s degree.

With enrollment at 223,000—the high- est in 30 years—CUNY has grown to meet demand and has been competing success- fully with some of the most aggressive pri- vate universities in the country. Now on 23 campuses, it has a new Graduate School of Education, a new Teacher Academy and expanding business pro- grams that are increasingly international in their focus.

The Down Side

It must be said also that the burgeoning knowledge economy is leaving its tracks in a class of men and women marginalized for their lack of skills and education. This slide down the economic ladder has harmed whole regions of the country, as well as communities within otherwise burgeoning cities.

In February the Community Service Society, an advocacy agency, reported that the strongest job market in decades has left the city’s youngest minority workers behind. Just 4.9 percent of all workers were unemployed last year, but unemploy- ment remained high among blacks and Hispanics, especially men.

“The shift is toward jobs that require more education, more literacy, more math, more ability to interact with customers and coworkers,” Mark Levitan, a senior policy analyst with the Community Service Society, told The New York Times. “The youthful unemployed include the 20,000 teens who drop out of high school each year here, although the city says that the dropout rate is steadily declining and that the Class of 2005 had the highest graduation rate on record at 58.2 percent.” (Another 27 percent of that class...
Helen Marshall, Borough President of Queens and alumnus of Queens College, sponsored CUNY on Wheels, an Internet-equipped bus that will travel through the impoverished Rockaway Peninsula, recruiting residents to seek degrees at LaGuardia Community College and other CUNY institutions.

Community College will soon hit the road with CUNY on Wheels—a specially built, Internet-equipped bus. Financed with $250,000 secured by Queens Borough President Helen Marshall [who earned her bachelor’s degree from Queens College], CUNY on Wheels aims at spreading the word about CUNY’s array of educational and job-training programs. The target is the impoverished and isolated Rockaway Peninsula, where LaGuardia President Gaul Mellow says, “When you put smart people together, they bounce ideas off one another. They get better at doing whatever they do.”

Dominic says, “In short, smart people want to be with smart people and that breeds creativity. Educated people earn more because they have more people to become teachers and people and are more willing to spend on education.”

In contrast, students who gave up in places with fewer college graduates are more likely to get stuck educationally. “Educational segregation is a zero-sum game. For every booming human capital hub, there are dozens of brain drain communities, and for those communities, educational segregation can be disastrous,” Dominic says.

Future Generations

Graduate Center sociologists Paul Attewell and David Levine have found that when college enrollment is easy enough, it is as at CUNY, it pays off in the lives of those students and their children. In the April–August 1999 issue of the American Sociological Review, they published their latest research, “The Returns to Higher Education: The Disadvantaged Pay Off Across the Generations?”

Two former doctoral students share authorship, Donna Dominguez and Tania Levy, who is now a research assistant at York College. For thirty years, they followed the first three classes of CUNY’s “open admissions” freshmen, who started between 1970 and 1972. By 2000, the researchers interviewed 2,000 women drawn from those 100,000 students.

Although there was a lot of controversy about the terrible, low grade rates of those open admission students, who were not thought of as college material, in fact their graduation rates were as high as those who were not intended to be. “You can do it if you have the time,” said one.

“What Such Brain Power in NYC?”

Why would college-educated people concentrate in certain cities? There are answers, but one of the most surprising comes from Thornton Dominguez, who received his doctorate in sociology in 1975. He and a colleague are now doing research on Princeton and next fall will teach at the University of California at Irvine.

A President Who Knows What It’s Like to Struggle for a Degree

When LaGuardia Community College President Gaul Mellow says that she knows what her students go through, she speaks from experience. The first person on either side of her family to go to college, she was brought up by her first-year at the University of Michigan on a scholarship when her father went bankrupt. He was an independent claims adjuster, and New York had just switched to no-fault auto insurance, so there simply wasn’t enough work. (He fortunate later received because even no-fault requires adjusters.)

“We lost our house,” Mellow recalled. “I had enough money from working in the summer to get by, but had to go home and help my father earn money to take care of the kids.”

Home was Jersey City, south of Buffalo. She worked full-time selling advertising for local newspapers while attending City College community college nights and weekends, and she kept her books in the car to study between appointments.

“She was never for the community college, I could never have advanced education. That incredible facility saved my intellectual backbone.”

Mellow finished her associate’s degree in two years—the only CUNY president to have earned one—and then faced a common roadblock.

“SUNY Albany wouldn’t take nine credits, three of my classes,” she recalled. “I was so angry. I took classes that I had already passed.”

But Mellow graduatedPhi Beta Kappa in a year and two summers, and then went on to earn her doctorate in social psychology at George Washington U. She remained deeply grateful for the community college experience that had rescued her years before, and outfitted with her fresh Ph.D. she began teaching at community colleges in Maryland, Connecticut, New Jersey, and elsewhere.

Mellow believes that the variety of her experience at LaGuardia. She’s a big booster for CUNY on Wheels, an Internet-equipped bus that this spring will begin expanding CUNY’s contact with the neglected Rockaway Peninsula, and she’s proud of the LaGuardia-supported business “incubator” that has helped small entrepreneurs.

“Queens is a very ethnically diverse county in the U.S. If not the world,” the President said. About 10,000 people a year take English as a Second Language (ESL) at LaGuardia. Some have advanced degrees from other countries, and often the Afghan who works in Mellow’s office as her first President Honor Fellow—she is studying English as their third language (she also speaks Polish and French).

“Their lives are so inspiring. You see the power of education to make a better life and a better city. When I look at these students I realize I haven’t gone through anything,” Mellow said.
Loving What You Do, and Making Money from It, Too

When Anthony Velocikin was in his early teens, he would often listen to music on college radio stations. Music moved him, in ways that felt good. “They used to have cool stuff in the mornings, mostly metal, and interesting specialty shows, all kinds of genres in the evenings,” said Velocikin.

More recently, after his family got a high-speed Internet connection, Velocikin began looking for his favorite songs on the Web, with sites like Music for Robots, Flatblog and Stereomag. He was fascinated by them.

"Those were people who aren’t doing it for the money,” said Velocikin, now 21 and a senior at Hunter College. "They only write about those songs because they liked them." Through such blogs, Velocikin discovered jazz greats like Nina Simone, folk rockers like Arthur Lee, and an eclectic array of contemporary groups, including Kronos Quartet, RJD2 and Cat Power. This explosion was so intense, Velocikin said, that “I realized I had to share my experience with others.”

So in the spring of 2005, he launched The Hype Machine, a Website (http://hypegm.com) that now aggregates more than 1,000 music blogs—including personal, Web-based pages on which creators share interests with others far and wide—attracting about 50,000 visitors a day.

“I love it. I use it all the time,” said Fred Wilson, a partner of Union Square Ventures, a Manhattan-based venture capital firm that invests in young information technology companies. "It’s one of the best music discovery sites on the Web,” said Wilson, one of several venture capitalists tracking Velocikin’s work. "I think what he’s done is fantastic.”

Many students try to find an outside activity that generates income even as it pleases them and satisfies social needs. But an undertaking like The Hype Machine is uniquely unusual, said Virginia Tiller, chairwoman of Hunter’s Computer Science Department, even among smart, risk-taking students like those at Hunter.

So far, The Hype Machine, which cost about $5,000 to run last year, remains roughly a break-even venture, Velocikin says. But it has begun to generate income. Through links to iTunes and Amazon.com, the site allows users to buy tracks they like—and Velocikin gets a 5 percent commission on the sales. The Hype Machine also carries a modest amount of advertising. "Overall, I could be making a ton more with ads at the expense of the user experience,” said Velocikin.

"But that’s not the goal,” said Velocikin. "A National Science Foundation Scholarship recipient, Velocikin is no newcomer to computers and the Internet. His father, Jiro, is a computer programmer for Friendship Dairies, the well-known cottage cheese manufacturer. ‘His work inspired me, although I went in a different direction,’ said Velocikin, who emigrated from Moscow to Brooklyn with his parents when he was 15 years old. "I’m interested in computer technology, but how it can be useful to the ordinary person.”

Since he was 14, Velocikin has worked as an intern at Brainlink International, Inc., a Queens-based company that designs a wide range of computer systems consulting services. "Anthony has done an amazing amount of stuff for me,” said Raj Goel, Brainlink’s chief technology officer. Velocikin has worked on "several large-scale projects—everything from network administration to disaster-recovery scenarios.”

When Velocikin walks into a meeting with people "twice his age,” Goel added, "he knows how to speak appropriately and intelligently. Within an hour, age is no longer a factor.”

A few months ago, Velocikin presented The Hype Machine at a "Mashup Camp” in Boston, attended by about 230 software developers, programmers, technology providers and venture capitalists. "Mashups” are applications that combine software or content from several sources in creative and useful ways.

The camp was designed as an "un-conference,” an informal program of discussions and events focusing on the topic at hand. There, Velocikin’s entrepreneurial talents were recognized.

Attendees had a chance to briefly pitch their work to small groups of others, and competitors who pleased their audiences received a wooden nickel as a sign of approval, and the one with the most nickels won. That was The Hype Machine, chosen the "Best of Camp.”

About 75 percent of the site’s traffic—including "lots of visitors” from universities—comes from the United States, the rest from Western Europe, Velocikin says. Although Velocikin has received offers from major music companies to work with their sites, Velocikin acknowledges that not all of the early blogging about his blog was laudatory. Some complained that Velocikin’s site was marginalizing their writing—enabling users to easily download songs from their sites without bothering to read what they had to say about the music.

But others jumped in to defend—and applaud—Velocikin’s creation. "I see this as a free, open, and it appreciate it,” wrote blogger nuclearex.com. Another said all music bloggers should be happy because "The Hype Machine is bringing them traffic to read [their] articles.” The only person not happy, according to the blogger, is "the person who’s spending all this money on records.”

The Hype Machine has created a kind of online mall in which music lovers shop, chat and buy. And it’s the kind of mall that expands without zoning approval from local authorities. So Velocikin knows there’s a good future in it.

Looking to that future, Velocikin says he plans to continue running The Hype Machine part-time while attending graduate school. (He’s applied to MIT’s Media Lab and New York University’s Interactive Telecommunications Program.) But he has plans to make it bigger.

"I’m looking to build a team to grow it, to help me bootstrap it,” said Velocikin. "I’m constantly re-evaluating whether I should actively pursue raising capital. Right now, while I’m in school, I don’t think it’s worthwhile, but as things move on, this can change, of course.”

Velocikin also recognizes that despite his efforts to facilitate buying, rather than ‘stealing’ copyrighted music, The Hype Machine still operates in a legal gray area. It’s difficult to monitor materials offered on the MP3 blogs listed on his own site, he concedes. And whether record companies will eventually choose to make an issue of illegal downloading of tracks from such sites remains unclear.

"I hope people recognize it for what it is—a really great music discovery site… a great way for bands to be discovered,” said venture capitalist Wilson.

As for Velocikin, it’s about music more than money.

Recently, he spent a few hours in the cold, trying to get into sold-out performances by The Arcade Fire, the indie rock band, at Isidore Memorial Church in Manhattan’s Greenwich Village. “I was on the list, and the shoes blew my mind,” he said.

For their last song on a Thursday night, the band let all the fans in with their gear and played right in the center of the crowd on the floor.”

Now that was worth a million bucks.
**Lehman Finds Asthma and Dirty Air Links in NYC**

The Bronx has one of the highest hospitalization rates for asthma in the United States and contains many of New York City’s major air pollution sources, including truck routes, highways and seven facilities that take off their students’ toxic materials. New researchers in Lehman College’s Geographic Information Sciences program, led by Dr. Juliana Maantay, have used computerized mapping and spatial analysis to show a definite link between asthma hospitalizations and air pollution in the Bronx.

Bronx children with asthma are hospitalized at a rate 70 percent higher than in the city as a whole and 70 percent higher than the rest of the state (excluding the city), the city Health Department said. The asthma death rate in the Bronx (6 per 100,000) is double that of the city. Based on analyses of asthma hospitalizations in the Bronx between 1995 and 1999, Lehman’s team found that people living in close proximity to a major pollution source were 25 percent more likely, overall, to be hospitalized for asthma than those living elsewhere. For those living near two or more major pollution sources, the increased risk of hospitalization jumped from 25 to 34 percent. The affected area varied with the source of the pollution and the likely distance the pollutants would travel.

“Regardless of whether the high asthma hospitalization rates are primarily due to environmental causes or also result from the effects of poverty and other socioeconomic factors,” Maantay said, “the findings point to a health and environmental justice crisis.”

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**CUNY Tackling Diabetes**

- **Confronting a rising epidemic, CUNY has launched “The Campaign to Stop Diabetes,” a disease that afflicts 500,000 New Yorkers, 300,000 more who don’t know they have it and another million who are at risk. Diabetes and the related problem of obesity can cause heart disease and blindness, and lead to amputation, particularly of feet and legs.**

- **CUNY’s enormous presence and positive impact in New York City is a big plus for us,” she said. As part of CUNY’s campaign, student volunteers with special training will form a Diabetes Awareness Corps, which will reach out to other students and community members. CUNY will help develop community-based patient support and self-management programs. CUNY will also use technology to spread the word about the dangers, risk factors, and treatments of diabetes—e-visits to students, faculty and staff, a special Web site: www.cuny.edu/stopdiabetes; and an upcoming television program that will be webcast on the site, shown on cable at CUNY-TV/75, and shared with all CUNY campuses.**
William H. Greene was the First Black CUNY Graduate and I KNEW HIS EYES WERE TELLING A STORY.

When I became Secretary of the Board of Trustees back in the summer of 2004, I found a number of photographs buried in a closet here at CUNY’s Central Office, including one of a young man, William H. Greene, who was believed to be the first black graduate of City College, in 1884.

The look in his eyes was sad and somewhat haunting. I had the sense that there was a hidden story of struggle and triumph behind them. We dusted off the photo and it now graces the wall of our Trustee Lounge, along with photos of Jonas Salk, A. Philip Randolph, and other alumni luminaries.

In the months after the discovery of the photo, I began asking various people about Greene and learned that he had applied to the elite United States Signal Corps but had been rejected solely based on his race.

Eventually he became the first African-American to enter the Signal Corps, an extraordinary achievement. As I learned more about his struggle to overcome discrimination, my curiosity grew even stronger and I asked Ron Howard, editor of CUNY Matters, to see what he could learn about this person from our past who so enchanted me.

What you will read on these two pages is the result of that effort. We are honoring the memory of a “sturdy son” of City College in trying so diligently and with such persistence to uncover and tell his story.

— Jay Hershenson, Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations

This article was written by Ron Howard, editor of CUNY Matters. He benefited from advice and assistance given by Hunter College African-American History Professor Joanne Eddy-Rhodes, a genealogy expert. Some research was also done by Charles DeCoco, editor of The Alumnus, City College’s alumni magazine. At the City College Archives, Professor Sydney Van Nort made available relevant archival materials from the 19th-century.

For decades now, William Hallett Hallett Greene, which has existed as a distant figure in CUNY’s history, with that quality of distance pertaining not only to the passing of time but to the incalculability of the eyes gracing his comely image in photos taken for his graduation more than a century ago.

There were even that suggested a certain tenacity, even as they conveyed a sadness that was perhaps appropriate for a man lost in the deaths of time.

Greene received his bachelor of science degree along with other members of his graduating class on the evening of June 26, 1884, at the Academy of Music, not far from their beloved City College, then located on Washington Avenue and 23rd Street.

An article in the following day’s New York Times noted the presence of Greene, remarking that he was “the first colored boy who has ever graduated from the college” and that he “made a good record” while a student. “The audience applauded him liberally last night,” the Times wrote. “It was a day of triumph for Greene, as it was for other members of his class, who like him were men of great promise, schooled in a strict, classical way of study that left them with feelings of camaraderie and high ambitions.

Known affectionately as “Greene,” Greene was popular and highly respected. He had been voted recording secretary of his class and he was a cabinet member of the literary society known as Phrenoscosma.

But many stories of research—including searches of records in the National Archives, old city directories, ancestry.com and old newspaper articles—have led to a conclusion that Greene was, at the moment of his graduation, like a flashing star approaching its apex.

By all accounts uncovered so far, Greene soon fell victim to the racism that was so prevalent in his day, even as he, perhaps, also fell to inner demons that often gripped young men, then, as now.

His story could even be called a 19th-century foreshadowing of what today has been termed the Plight of the Black Male.

Breaking Barriers

Greene, slight of build, standing five-foot-seven and weighing only 132 pounds, according to a June 1884 issue of The College Mercury campus newspaper, had long wanted to be in the U.S. Signal Corps. In The Mercury, he listed his favorite person as “Uncle Sam” and his favorite course of study as astronomy.

And so two months before his graduation, Greene, just 19 years old, applied to become the first black member of the U.S. Signal Corps, the highly competitive U.S. Army unit that tracked weather patterns and was the precursor to the National Weather Service.

The Signal Corps required that applicants pass written examinations, and in Webb, a former army general who had been a hero at the Battle of Gettysburg, responded right away. He dispatched off a letter to Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln (son of assassinated President Abraham Lincoln), writing: “This young man is the first colored student who has ever passed beyond the sophomore class of this college. He is the first colored graduate and, by election, the secretary of his class, composed of some of the finest young men of this city.”

Webb said he believed Hazen was eerring in his interpretation of the Army Reorganization Act. Lincoln not only agreed but in hard terms ordered Hazen to accept Greene or any other black person who met the qualifications for the position.

Thus Greene effectively wrote his name on a bit of military history. He went on to attend the Signal Corps training camp at Fort Myer in Virginia, where newsmen were instructed in the specialized skills of the Corps, which in those days had to do with telegraph communications and the tracking of cloud and wind patterns. Greene must have felt well prepared for the tasks at hand, given his background at City College.

Sure enough, he received the second highest grade in his class of eight trainees (two of whom were dropped for poor performance), and he was soon sent to head up the Signal Corps station in Pensacola, Florida.

In his 1974 book Blacks and the Military in American History, (published by Praeger), historian Jack D. Forbes wrote that Greene “opened the way for the acceptance of a handful of black enlisted men into other technical branches, such as the Hospital Corps, the Ordnance Corps, and the Quartermaster and Commissary departments.”

But Greene’s story did not end with that happy achievement. Perhaps he might have sensed a hint of lingering ill feelings right there on his engrainment papers, where it said, near the section “Sands and Marks found upon the person,” the notation: “Blacks and was found.”

Enlisted for the Signal Corps, U.S. Army by order of the Secretary of War.

The papers were signed by 2nd Lt. B.M. Pursell, a recruiting officer who had strongly disapproved of Greene’s enlistment.

Sure enough, soon after his posting in Pensacola, there came a series of demotions and transfers that ended two years later, in June of 1887, when he was dishonorably dismissed from the Signal Corps and the army. His superiors charged that Greene gambled, falsified reports and was in debt.

A Target

But a close reading of scores of documents at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. suggests that a number of white Corporals had targeted Greene, and did so with impunity following a key transitional event in the nation.

In March of 1885, the Republican administration of Chester Arthur turned over the presidency to Democrat Grover Cleveland. Greene now were two men—who President Arthur and ex-Secretary of War Lincoln—who were among the nation’s strongest supporters of civil rights for blacks. Not only had Lincoln proven himself a believer, like his father before him, in extending rights to people of color, but Chester Arthur had a record on that issue surpassing any president before him, perhaps excluding Lincoln.

It was Arthur who in 1884 represented a Manhattan black school teacher, Elizabeth Jennings, after she was forcibly ejected from a “whites only” omnibus (horse drawn public coach) near the current police headquarters building. The case, which Jennings and Arthur won, was considered by many to be the first one overturning “Jim Crow” transportation practices.

And while a number of African Americans expected changes for the worse in March of 1885, as the Republican Party of Lincoln handed over the reins of government to the Democrats, who in the minds of those blacks, continued on page 11.
Decade of Science

SO IMPORTANT IS SCIENCE and academic research to the society in which we live that we have declared 2005-2015 the “Decade of Science” at CUNY. We have affirmed our commitment to opening the pathways for serious advancement in the areas of science, mathematics, technology, and engineering—training students to teach in these areas, and encouraging young people, particularly women and people of color, to study these disciplines.

Our country’s strength, security, and advancement depend on scientific literacy. The decline in student participation and proficiency in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields imperils this country’s competitive advantage in science and technology. Our Decade of Science initiative could not come at a better time.

The Business Roundtable recently led a call to double the number of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields graduates by 2015. The National Academies convened a panel of experts that recently made an urgent plea to increase this country’s scientific competitiveness.

The New York State Business Council has called for an increase in students receiving postsecondary education in science, math, and engineering, as well as the education of new, highly qualified teachers of math and science.

Governor Spitzer has emphasized the importance of investing in the high-tech, high-wage, strategic industries that will create the jobs and businesses of tomorrow in order to revitalize New York State’s economy. In focusing on the need for a concentration on math and science, Governor Spitzer has stressed that from grammar school to our universities, we must all do a better job in preparing our young people for the 21st Century economy and workforce.

Over the next decade, the University will invest in science in the several ways. We will expend about $1 billion across the University on the construction and modernization of science facilities, most notably the CUNY-wide Advanced Science Research Center—which will concentrate on emerging disciplines such as nanotechnology, biosensing and remote sensing, structural biology and macromolecular assemblies, and neuroscience—and science facilities at Brooklyn, City, Hunter, Lehman, and Queens colleges.

We will revitalize our Ph.D. programs in the laboratory sciences, leading to new investments in graduate student support for highly competitive students, Ph.D. degree-granting authority for selected campuses, and an expansion of master’s programs.

We will encourage enrollment in CUNY’s math, science, and engineering degree programs, which over the last five years, has increased by 26 percent (compared to total enrollment growth of 12 percent) and included more than 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students in Fall 2005.

We will continue to run summer science programs and expand summer programs in mathematics through CUNY’s extensive College Now program, which prepares students in the public schools for college enrollment. As part of the College Now program, the University is also introducing a new “Science Now” program for middle and high school students. CUNY will work with the New York Academy of Sciences and New York City’s Department of Education to foster interest in the sciences through after-school and summer courses and workshops; an annual science competition that extends existing competition models to students who have not traditionally participated in such contests; and an interactive television program featuring science activities and innovations.

As this special section of CUNY Matters, “The Decade of Science” demonstrates, science is not made in a laboratory; it is made when a young person gets that initial spark of inspiration, that flash of exhilaration. Through the University’s Decade of Science, we hope to encourage and sustain that sense of excitement and curiosity, whether in budding scientists or seasoned researchers.

Tracking Mosquitoes And Preventing Epidemics

EVEN AT the mosquito flies, it’s a long way from CUNY to Chittagong. Yet this Bangladeshi commercial and manufacturing center was the subject of malaria-mapping research at City College, supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Cooperative Remote Sensing Science and Technology Center Chittagong, which borders the infamous

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opium-producing area called the
Golden Triangle, is known for its
mosquitoes and minarets. It’s also known for its mosquitoes and a high incidence of malaria. As for the ocumen administra-
tion, part of the federal Department of
Commerce, it is known for the vast
amounts of climate data collected by its
cosmic-orbiting satellites.

The aim of what they learned gave City
College Prof. Leonard Oytman and gradu-
ate student Atiq Rahman of Dhaka,
Bangladesh, the idea to use the satellite
data, collected via remote sensing, to try to
predict where and when outbreaks of
malaria were likely to occur so the cash-
starved subtropical country could make
best use of its limited resources to attack
the outbreaks effectively.

“It’s hard to predict how widespread
the epidemics will be,” says Oytman,
adding that he was looking for new ways
to use the agency’s data. “It’s like pre-
dicting the stock market. By the time
the market crashes, it’s too late. Because
of our study, we are able to predict three
months ahead when, where and whether
there will be an epidemic.”

This is crucial, he says, because the so-
called vector-borne diseases—malaria,
dengue, dog heartworm and yellow
fever—increasingly have become global
public-health concerns. “We studied
malaria, the most widely spread, which
is coming back in a lot of poor countries,”
Rahman says. “But our technique may be
used on the others.”

Oytman and Rahman focused on the
western third of Chittagong, where the
population is most dense, because 60 to
80 percent of Bangladesh’s malaria cases
occur there. “The people who live there
are indigenous, tribal peoples,” Rahman
says. “They are in rural areas, where they
are most susceptible to mosquitoes, and
they are not very educated.”

Through the federal agency, Oytman
and Rahman had access to two decades’
worth of remote data measured by its
cosmic orbiting satellite. The satellite
reports information in grids of 4 kilome-
ters by 4 kilometers, about the size of a
Bangladeshi village, and highlights areas
of high vegetation by detecting chloro-
phyll in leaves and reflecting their
images. “We also had people on the
ground reporting on the quality of vege-
tation so we could come up with a
model,” Oytman says.

Since mosquitoes feed on vegetation,
in the areas where there is less vegeta-
tion, there are fewer mosquitoes and
fewer cases of malaria. We also could
measure the temperature from the
reflection.”

Thanks to Rahman, they also had malaria statistics collected from the
Directorate General of Health of the
Bangladesh Ministry. “I’m an engineer,
and I know the son of the director
because we were in the same profession-
an organization,” Rahman says. “It was he
who helped us get this data. It would
have been difficult if not impossible for
us to do this study without the help of
the government.”

This ground data, says Felix Kogan, a
physical scientist at the U.S. agency who
is collaborating with Oytman and
Rahman, was crucial to the study’s suc-
cess. “The satellite data is remote—not
direct—and has to be verified from the
ground. With the data Rahman collect-
ed, we found correlations and developed
a methodology. Without the ground
data, we could not say anything about
the malaria.”

Abdul Rahman Khan, chief of
Bangladesh’s health department, calls the
study “a valuable contribution,” adding
that it “will be helpful in monitoring
malaria epidemics” and in prevention
and control.

Because Bangladesh experienced an
increase in malaria cases in the 1990s, the
researchers looked at the data and then
targeted certain years in that time frame.
“We chose the years 1997 and 1998
because they represented extremes,”
Rahman says. “The smallest percentage
of cases—18 percent—occurred in 1997
and the largest percentage—24 percent—
occurred the year after.”

Rahman and Oytman correlated epi-
demiological and environmental data of
Bangladesh malaria cases with the satel-
Chemists have long been interested in developing ways to create nanoscale solid or semi-solid gels from liquids so that they can be used as templates for drug delivery, cosmetics, separations and biometrics, but there have been few studies on functional use.

John and postdoctoral fellow Praveen Kumar Vemula wanted to know how the gold nanoparticles would arrange themselves in the gel and how stable they would be.

“We want to answer these questions: Are they distributed all over the gel? Or are they aligned in a particular orientation along with the gel microstructures?” This is especially interesting in building aligned arrays of gold nanoparticles for possible applications in optical devices,” John says.

From June to December 2005, he synthesized various mono-substituted urea derivatives, and the study showed that the amphiphiles—so-called because they have both a hydrophobic and hydrophilic nature—were efficient gelators for water and various organic solvents and carry a free terminal amine group that may reduce the gold to form the nanoparticles.

As is often the case, the details of the scientific research that he carried out might cause a certain numbness in the eyes and mind of a casual reader, but John says that there are very practical and, he would dare say, hoped-for results from this tinkering with amphiphiles and creating of nanoparticles.

“The most important thing,” John says, “is that after the nanoparticles are reduced, they retain their gelatin properties and trap the gold nanoparticles in the supramolecular assemblies. These gels should help us develop nanostructured-advanced materials from the gels and metal nanoparticles, which may be used in the promising field of supramolecular devices.”

Ultimately, John hopes to use byproducts like industrial waste as an alternate feedstock for organic synthesis.

“My basic interest is the design and synthesis of amphiphilic molecules from bio-based materials,” he says. “That way, we can make the amphiphiles and assemble them so we can make what we need in a bottom-up fashion. But this, he says, “is still only a dream.”

Walking, Virtually, Through Shepard Hall

LETS SAY you’re going to a Yankees game. But you want to see the seat and the view it will provide before you buy the ticket. What do you do? If City College Professor George Wolberg and Hunter College Associate Professor Ioanna Stamos have anything to say about it, you will simply enter the Stadium’s website and click on the seat to obtain a virtual 360-degree 3-D view of where you’ll be rooting for the home team while eating your peanuts and Cracker Jacks.

Using multiview geometry, coupled with digital photos and data from laser range scanners, Wolberg, in a joint effort with Stamos, is working on an automatic system that will create photorealistic 3-D models of buildings like the Stadium.

“You can do this manually now, but it’s very labor intensive,” Wolberg says. “And even when it is done, you sacrifice detail. Right now, this work would take a week, with this system, it would be a matter of minutes.”

As Wolberg and Stamos envision it, the automatic modeling system—which would be a boon to architects, urban and military planners, designers of 3-D car navigation systems, video-game makers and even Hollywood movie-makers—would be much more efficient than previous methods.

To illustrate the process, Wolberg and Stamos chose Shepard Hall, the 1897 neo-Gothic historic landmark that has become City College’s hallmark. They and their team spent a few minutes shooting 24 laser range scans of its rich architecture, which includes pairs of iconic gargoyles, and then spent a few minutes rendering the 2-D digital photos of the building.

“The laser scanner, which weighs about 80 pounds, is on a tripod,” Wolberg says. “With the current technology, it takes 10 to 15 minutes to get each scan.”

The 2-D images or textures were automatically mapped and registered with the 3-D scans and projected onto a pair of models, a process Wolberg likens to “digital wallpaper.”

“We generate a pair of 3-D models of the scene,” he says. The result is “a Shepard Hall viewed in all its glory, right down to the detailed marking of every stone and the eye of each looming gargoyle.” His complete explanation of the complex process is available by going to Google video and typing “City College Shepard Hall.”

“There will come a time when there will be 3-D digital cameras,” Wolberg says. “And laser range scanners will get even faster, and someday soon we will be able to get the dense 3-D images in the time it takes to walk around the building.”

Or the time it takes to select the best seat in Yankee Stadium.
Global Warming: A City Under Water?

LONG BEFORE Al Gore’s “Inconvenient Truth” made global warming such a hot topic, CUNY researchers were taking the temperature of the New York metro area to try to forecast the phenomenon’s effect on the climate.

Hunter College Professor Bill Solecki, interim director of the CUNY Institute for Sustainable Cities, is using the city as a lab for his work, and Queens College Assistant Prof. Stephen Pekar is studying historical salinity changes in the Hudson River due to runoff or discharge from precipitation to throw light on the dynamics of Antarctica ice sheets.

According to Solecki, the city is a perfect lab for understanding how urban environments can respond to and mitigate climate change. CUNY, as an urban university, is more than just a test case, he says, its role will grow. There are few examples of large, extended metro areas, and New York is one.

Global warming, both researchers say, ultimately may be linked to a variety of changes, including stronger storms, flooding, intense heat waves, increased air pollution and even an influx of asthma attacks.

“There have been significant changes in climate throughout history,” says Solecki. “But the rate of change in terms of speed and the extent of the current event over a short period of time are unparalleled in earth history.”

In and of themselves the changes that occur during global warming may not seem catastrophic, Pekar says, but their effects can be wide ranging. “Sea surface temperatures increase, and the magnitude of hurricanes is higher. By August 7, 2006, for example, there had been three Category 5 hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and the temperature in the water in New York City that same day was high—78 degrees.”

Likewise, in the next century, the global sea level is likely to rise three feet. “This means the shoreline will retreat significantly,” Pekar says. “And it means the coastal communities will be more susceptible to flooding.”

According to Pekar’s local research, which looks at climate data in New York City for the last 6,000 years, warmer may also mean drier. “My studies suggest that the last time it was warmer, which was 5,000 years ago, the salinity was much higher today, which means that there was less discharge and less precipitation and my thoughts are that there were drier summers.”

Pekar’s research on the Antarctica ice sheets offers further suggestions regarding New York City’s future. “The ice sheets are much more susceptible to climate than we thought,” he says. “If the east and west sections melt, sea level will raise 210 feet, and if the ice sheets in Greenland melt, it will raise sea level 230. At 210 feet, you would have beachfront property in Pennsylvania and every coastal city in the world would be under water. And at 230 feet, the Statue of Liberty would be under water almost up to her shoulders. Even 40 feet destroys every coastal city, and Queens and Brooklyn would be under water and Manhattan would be tiny islands.”

The changes that global warming will bring should be viewed as challenges and opportunities, Solecki says, adding that there will be tradeoffs. “There will be less ice to shovel off the sidewalk,” he says. “The energy demand in the winter will decrease, but it will be effort by the increase in electricity demand in the summer. The use of more fossil fuels will send up more pollutants and will increase asthma attacks. Some parts of the world, like Canada, will benefit agriculturally because of longer growing seasons. The bottom line, Pekar and Solecki say, is that global warming is a part of the future. “We will be forced to re-evaluate societal structure,” Solecki says. “We need to adapt to these new realities, and what we do will make society more resilient.”

Hurricanes, The Bernoulli Effect, and Other Killers

WHILE KATRINA has focused the eyes of forecasters on the future, Hunter College Geology Professor Nicholas K. Coch has put himself in the eye of the hurricane by peering into the past.

The self-described forensic meteorologist is studying historic hurricanes, and he says that if history repeats itself, New York City, which was hit in 1821, 1893 and 1938, will really find itself struggling when the next one hits. “No major hurricane has hit a major coastal city except for New York in 1938,” he says. “When a hurricane hits a city, it’s a whole other ballgame because the infrastructure, the subway system, will be affected.”

Northern hurricanes are “uniquely dangerous,” he says, “because they are infrequent and move two times as fast as Southern ones and the wind field expands.”

He points to the hurricane of 1833, which made a direct hit on New York City. “This was the first record of a hurricane’s hitting skyscrapers,” he says. “When the wind goes between two skyscrapers, it will suck the windows out, and when it gets to the end of the corridor they form, the Bernoulli Effect occurs, and the wind speeds up and the windows will be knocked inward.”

The city’s unique geographical position makes it particularly vulnerable to damage. “There are only three coasts that have right angles in the United States,” Coch says. “The Florida Peninsula, Mississippi, and the area of New York and New Jersey. A right angle is a killer situation for a hurricane, and the right angle formed by New York and New Jersey is the most dangerous in the country. No matter where the hurricane hits, New York City gets flooded because we’re the right angle.”

By studying hurricanes of the past, Coch says, it’s possible to predict the course of future storms. Coch, for instance, recently was able to chart a deadly colonial hurricane of 1635, supplying extensive data so a computer model could be made.

“None of this is hypothetical, all of this is record,” he says, adding that he hopes his research saves lives.
of many were still associated with race segregation and oppression of blacks.

Signal Corps records show that later in 1885, there commenced a series of punitive actions against Greene that lasted until he finally agreed to being discharged from the service.

In October of 1885, officials of the Signal Corps issued an order demoting Greene from his position in Pemiscot, Fla., with no change, and placing him under a white corporal who, like Greene, was a First Class Private.

A newspaper article from these days noted that whites in Pemiscot had been very unhappy with Greene’s being placed there.

Soon after the October demotion, on Nov. 14, 1885, there came a special order telling Greene to proceed to Rochester, New York, to report for duty as an assistant to Sgt. Edward W. McGann, who was in charge of the Signal Corps.

A Strange Accusation

Greene’s most difficult period would come in the ensuing months, through 1886 and 1887, as he worked there in Rochester on the first of what would become an ongoing pattern, according to a 1987 book The City College. Memoirs of Sixty Years, by Philip J. Moshenthal (Class of ’83) and Charles C. Chace (Class of ’87).

When that background, the accusation of August 22, 1886 would seem out of character on that day, Second Lieutenant F.M. Beall, a Signal Corps inspector, charged that Greene had filed a false report of his weather observations.

Beall was effectively accusing Greene of lying by several minutes about the time of the report.

Beall says that at 2:59 p.m. he went to the office where Greene was supposed to be completing his three o’clock report, but because Greene was not in the office, Beall maintained that Greene had therefore lied about filing a three o’clock report and put this in a letter of reprimand to higher-ups.

In his written defense, obtained also from the National Archives, Greene maintained that he had heard a three o’clock bell as he was leaving the weather office to file the report and believed that was in fact the time; he also later explained that he had completed the report no earlier than 2:56 p.m.

Given the tone of Beall’s threatening letter, Greene angrily felt compelled to add a plea that “I may be given a chance to prove myself, by the strictest obedience to the orders and performance of duty in the future, worthy to remain in the service.”

In the coming months, the sergeant who was Greene’s immediate supervisor, Sgt. McGann, would go on to compile a list of people to whom Greene owed money, passing that information on to higher-ups.

(Curiously, that accusation seems to be contradicted by an August 23, 1887 “Inspector’s Confidential Report” in which Beall explicitly stated that Greene was “not in duty.”

Nonetheless, a coup de grace came nine months later, as Sgt. McGann asserted that on the morning of May 19, 1887, Rochester authorities had arrested Greene “in a live colored gambling resort...imagery disgrace on his office and the service.”

Signal Corps authorities sat a time that Greene admitted the offenses and agreed that he was not fit to remain in the service.

Racial Code Words

The final official document in the matter was written May 21, 1887, by the new Signal Corps Commander, Gen. Adolphus W. Greeley.

The letter, addressed to the Adjutant General, a extraordinary in that it states its case against Greene even while opening the door to a belief that Green’s race may have been a factor.

Greely wrote that his predecessor (Gen. Hazen, who had died the previous January) had been afraid to take action against Greene because, having opposed Greene’s enlistment in the first place, Hazen feared he would be accused of race bias.

“The present Chief Signal Officer has no such fears,” he wrote, referring to himself in the third person and adding that he “believes that his four years service as an officer of colored troops renders it certain that any recommendation which he makes in this case cannot be considered as emanating from an officer prejudiced against the colored race.”

It’s worthy of mention that Hazen himself, three years earlier, had said virtually the same thing—that his own experience dismissed in 1887, the new Signal Corps Commander, Gen. Greely, went on to explain that he “does not recommend a court-martial, on the ground of the expense to the United States and because of the experience the Army has once had in trying a colored soldier, when a degree of public excitement entirely disproportionate to the case was engendered.”

The last reference was apparently to the case of Lt. Henry O. Flipper, who in 1877, became the first African-American to graduate from West Point. In 1880 Flipper, serving as quartermaster at Fort Davis in Texas, was charged with embezzlement and court-martialled. Though acquitted on some charges, he was found guilty of “conduct unbecoming an officer” and given a dishonorable discharge.

For the rest of his life Flipper tried to convince the country he was falsely accused. In 1999, more than half a century after his death, President Bill Clinton pardoned him. Of course, it was a particular blow to full disclosure that Gen. Greely chose not to—court-martial Greene.

That decision had the effect of preventing the public—and history—from making anything remotely commensurate with the promise he once showed as a student at City College decades earlier.

Nineteenth-century Manhattan was an especially rough place for African-Americans. And in the decades after the Civil War, whites increasingly came to feel that it was time...to come to an understanding with the Rest of the South, to end misguided reform efforts, and unite in defense of the status quo.

Michael Wallace

Unhappy in New York, the Greene family moved to Fairfield, Conn. and William went first to Brooklyn and then to New Britain, Conn. In the 1890s in New Britain he worked at the R and E Manufacturing company. A 1928 town directory lists his job as operator. By 1930 he and his wife no longer showed up on the address listings, and the year and circumstances of their deaths are unknown so far.

In Fairfield, a distant relative (by marriage) is still living in the house that William Hallett Greene’s parents occupied in the early 1900s. Her name is Gibson Rodgers. She does missionary work with the First Baptist Church of Stratford, Conn., and in her younger years had been a psychiatric nurse.

Fascinated when told Greene’s story, Rodgers allowed CUNY Matters several hours in the dusty and extremely cluttered attic, where a search turned up a number of old documents and dark experiences, some of which bore William Hallett Greene’s name but said virtually nothing beyond mentioning him.

Among the items at the house was a 19th-century cachet of the Westminster Assembly, bearing William H. Greene’s signature. The book began with the theological question “What is the chief and highest end to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him for ever?”

Rodgers said the actions taken by Army superiors against Greene were “atrocities” and that Greene should be considered a hero for what he went through, whether he gambled or not.

“The burdens on his shoulders were ten times greater than what black soldiers faced” during World War II, he said.

“The whip might not have been lashing at this back but lashing him,” Rodgers added. “He had all this education and they tried to break him. But they couldn’t break him.”

Greene must have felt somewhat broken, but how much so is a question that his hailing 19-year-old eyes cannot answer.
Parold Wins Book Prize

Margaret Evans

College Professor Gregory Parold has won the 2007 American Poetry Review/Honickman First Book Prize, becoming the first writer of color to win the prestigious award. Parold, an Assistant Professor of English and creative writing, received the prize for his manuscript of poems, Tzitz, which will be published this fall by Copper Canyon Press. Tzitz was selected from a pool of 850 submissions. In addition to publications of the manuscript, the American Poetry Review/Honickman Prize offers a $12,000 award.

SEEK Director Honored

Professor Frank S. Franklin, director of the Queens College SEEK Program for academically disadvantaged students, was recently honored by the United Negro College Fund, along with former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

At the organization’s 33rd anniversary dinner, Franklin received the United Negro College Fund/Greater New York Inter-Alumni Council’s Distinguished Alumni Award for his fund-raising service and active participation. (The former presidents were honored for their fundraising efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.)

 Fellowships to Professors

Four Brooklyn College junior humanities faculty members have received Whiting Foundation fellowships. The Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation awards are for non-tenured faculty deemed to be among “the very best teachers.” The winners are released from teaching duties so they can pursue scholarly interests.

Receiving a full-year Whiting Fellowship is Assistant Professor Celina Sa, of the Political Science Department. Receiving one-semester fellowships were: Assistant Professor Allison Cavanaugh, of the Anthropology and Archaeology Department; Assistant Professor Jennifer L. Ball, of the Art Department; Assistant Professor Rachel Keesler, also of the Art Department; and Assistant Professor Staim Seivick, of the Philosophy Department.

ESL Teacher of the Year

A professor who for 20 years has taught English to speakers of other languages has been named ESL (English as a Second Language) Teacher of the Year by The New York Times.

Ellen Quash, an instructor and program developer at LaGuardia Community College’s Adult Learning Center, was the winner of the citywide competition.

The New York Times is delighted to recognize Ellen Quash as our first-ever ESL Teachers of the Year, said Diane McNulty, executive director of community affairs and media relations at the Times.

The winning teachers were recognized in February and were given a special ceremony where Quash received $2,500 and a commemorative plaque.

FACULTY HONORS

White House, Gracie Mansion Chefs Praise City Tech Program

In its six-decade history, the hospitality management department of New York City College of Technology has earned a reputation for producing chefs for some of the world’s greatest restaurants, but 2007 will go down in the review books as a five-star year.

That’s because a pair of chefs with City Tech credentials—one an alumna, one a student—are working in two of the most famous kitchens in the country—at the White House and at Gracie Mansion.

Bill Yosses, who graduated in 1982 with an associate’s degree, got the sweet job in January when Laura Bush asked him to step in as the presidential pastry chef. The news hit the national wires, serving up scoops of culinary-colored headlines like “Pastry Chef Joining the Upper Crust.”

That same month Feliberto Estevez—\who has four more classes to complete before earning his associate’s degree—also found himself in the spotlight. Mayor Michael Bloomberg appeared at City Tech for his annual State of the City Address, and His Honor night away let it be known that City Tech was close to his heart; that is to say, his stomach.

Bloomberg told the gathering that student Estevez was top chef at Gracie Mansion, and he furthermore remarked that City Tech “has one of the finest hospitality management programs in the nation.”

The mayor said, “One of City Tech’s current students happens to be the most important man at Gracie Mansion, the executive chef, Feliberto Estevez.” Then Bloomberg quipped, “I think I get to eat his final exam, so I hope he does well.”

Estevez has been cooking for major events ever since Bloomberg was elected in 2002.

The recipe for the successes of Yosses and Estevez? Each gleans copious credit to an esSENTial ingredient: City Tech.

Changing Careers, Sweetly

For Yosses, City Tech offered a chance to change careers in mid-life and, along the way, land a career—that is, dream— job.

The 53-year-old Yosses was in Toledo, Ohio, and growing up there, “dinnertime was sacred,” Yosses said. “My mother loved to cook and bake recipes from magazines.”

There was something about baking that touched him pleasantly in his spirit, Yosses said. But in his twenties and early thirties, he found himself working full-time in the sales department of Air France.

Then, when those inner connections to the activity he really loved—baking—grew too strong to ignore, a ready-bell within him went off and Yosses decided to enroll at City Tech.

He came to love the place.

Yosses said that, like him, many other students were career changers. “There were people out of high school, and there were people older than 1, people who were lawyers and accountants,” he said, still in awe at the diversity of the study body, in ethnicity and economic background.

He still remembers his instructors. “These people inspire you for life,” he remarked in a telephone interview.

Pretty much right after graduation, Yosses got what he wanted, a chance to practice his newly acquired skills in interesting places. “I was lucky enough to get a placement in Europe, thanks to Professor Thomas Ahrens, who was a great friend and mentor to many of us,” he recalled.

His career path took him to several noted restaurants, including Jospeh by and I would chop things and add garlic and spices to the dishes,” he recalled fondly.

He eventually immigrated to the United States, settling in New York. Along the way he began working at jobs that very much suited his tastes. Estevez was promoted from cook to banquet chef at the Four Seasons in only eight years, and was the executive chef for Manhattan’s Chef Louis before he went to Gracie

Cittarella, Bankey and Tavern on the Green.

And then earlier this year—in mid-life—he reached a career pinnacle of sorts, as he was appointed chef at the White House.

Yosses says the presidential palate runs toward healthy fruit and fruit-based desserts, although “the Bushes love both love chocolate. Mrs. Bush loves food and loves talking about menus. She has lots of ideas and is always looking for things that are original, healthy and tasty.”

What Yosses especially enjoys about his work is the act of creating. “I enjoy making pastries because it is precise and it has an architectural aspect,” he said.

To the (Gracie) Mansion Born

Estevez, who is from the Dominican Republic, got his first culinary crash courses in his early teens as he helped his mother make family meals. “She was a schoolteacher, and she came home every day during the sixties period, from noon to 2, to put the finishing touches on the beans and rice,” he said.

Eventually, he concluded that he wanted to continue climbing the culinary ladder, a degree would earn him a helpful boost. Besides, he’s recently harbored thoughts of teaching the culinary arts someday.

And so he enrolled at City Tech, where his long-held fears were put to rest, and his dreams were encouraged.

The courses there, Estevez says, are a combination of practical training and liberal arts instruction, a blend that he finds pleasing. “I’m taking math, English and accounting along with the food and wine classes,” he said.

The City Tech classes have helped him deal more efficiently with his current duties, which include planning, purchasing and preparing, Estevez says. At Gracie Mansion, where the mayor often hosts ethnic-themed events, Estevez and his staff of four chefs are called upon to create a variety of melting-pot dishes that celebrate the diversity of Big Apple’s cultural cuisine.

“it’s a unique opportunity to work with so many different cuisines,” he said, adding that “we reach out to community chefs, and they help us Every week is different. I’ve done Irish breakfasts, Italian foods, and during the summertime, we have barbecues Every week is different.”

Now Hoping to Teach

Yosses and Estevez are looking forward to many more dinners in their respective, famous kitchens. “This is something I have wanted all my life,” Yosses said.

“I’ve reached my goal, and I’m happy to stay as long as they want me.”

Estevez can’t wait to get his degree, which he’s hoping to earn in a year. “I would like to take a full load of classes in each semester, but it’s not possible. I’m too busy in the kitchen,” he said. “One day, I would love to teach cooking, and for that you need credibility. That’s why I want to finish the degree. I want to be prepared for the future.”

City Tech graduate Bill Yosses is the chef pastry chef at the White House, where he prepares desserts for the President, First Lady and guests.

While creating City Tech recently, Mayor Michael Bloomberg proudly let it be known that his top chef at Gracie Mansion, Feliberto Estevez, was a City Tech student.

Photograph by Michael J. Hession
Back to the Future: Milton Regained

By Gary Schmidgall

A s Joseph Wittreich, distinguished professor of English at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, approaches the flesh wounds and pastures new of retirement, he has chosen to answer a simple but large question about the most complex, radical, and political (also polemical) figure in the English literary pantheon: John Milton. Consisting of just three long, densely end-noted chapters, Why Milton Matters: A New Preface to His Writings (Palgrave) has a passionate, valiantly “do I believe” quality, capping a long career dedicated to the post. If one begins the book dubious of Wittreich’s view that “most of us agree” Milton (1608-1674) really matters in 2007, by the end one is certainly convinced he should matter.

Wittreich also mounts a vigorous case for the surprising assertion that Milton is “an ironical figure.” The quoted phrase is from the pioneer 19th-century feminist Margaret Fuller, and her praise of Milton is key to Wittreich’s own view of the poet. “He understood the nature of liberty, of justice,” she wrote. “He is one of the Fathers of the Age, of that new Idea which agitates the sleep of Europe” (a reference to the libertarian revolutions of 1848).

Arguing that “it is high time to say that Milton is back in season,” Wittreich notes that Hell’s Angels have ridden their horses with texts from Paradise Lost in their pockets, that Malcolm X was ushered into his discovery of the Muslim religion by reading the epic poem while in prison, and that novels like Ralph Ellison’s Juneteenth and Toni Morrison’s Beloved resonate a potent Miltonic context. And then there was the sudden celebrity after 9/11 of Milton’s satirical poem, Samson Agonistes. Wittreich notes there were in 2003-4 no fewer than six New York City public readings of the 1,886-line “dramatic poem” based on the Bible’s Book of Judges. Why?

Wittreich suggests the root reason is that Samson perfectly epitomizes Milton’s supreme gift as a poet and polemicist: the ability to tempt readers into mutually contradictory interpretations of the characters he creates, most famously his Adam, Eve, Satan, and Samson.

For a world now clutching in Gaza (and the whole fractured Middle East), Milton’s Samson’s “eyebrows in Gaza,” presents two huge either-or questions. Does his destruction of the Philistine temple represent the noble “victory of patience and self-repression—the Divine overcoming of evil with good” (as John Milton argued) or does Samson, by turning himself into a human WM3! figure all those people in history who “outrightly exceed the ethical objectives and take upon themselves the offices of scourg’ of God [as another critic argued]?” Or does he, by murdering the child of his own mother, hurt the cause of the Jews?

For Wittreich, such profoundly contradictory but arguable ways to read Samson Agonistes are precisely why Milton should matter: he forces the reader to think. Wittreich values Milton, finally, as a subversive questioner: “Milton’s project,” he writes, “is to interrogate, often with the intention of dispersing of the cherish’d commonplace of his culture.” Thought-provoking contradictions are “at the heart of the poetic vision.” Wittreich even consciously echoes Whitman’s famous lines: “I contend myself I am large, I contain multitudes”—when he writes, “Some contradictions may achieve resolution in Paradise Lost, but not all, as before in a poetic universe that is large, that contains multitudes.”

The frustrating contradictions and ambiguities of Milton’s three final poems, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, Samson Agonistes, are for Wittreich “a goal to truths” and “testing to the enduring value of discussion, debate, dispute, dissent.” They also remind us that easy binaries—Roundhead or Royalist? Democrat or Republican? Arab or Jew? Hamas or Fatah—offer a perfect excuse for avoiding serious reasoning. “The temptation is always to choose sides when the wiser recourse may be to choose not to choose.” How then, to read Samson Agonistes?

Applying the poem to the war in Iraq, Wittreich claims the US for its eagerness “to practice the politics of retaliation. America has yet to learn from Milton’s tragedy that redemption comes not through repetition of the Samson story but resistance to it.” The real lesson of Samson for Wittreich is that “blood spilled in violence begets more violence”—a lesson not in 6-foot pole-fest in Baghdad.

A corollary point repeatedly emphasized in Why Milton Matters is Milton’s dedication to individual liberty, the “mas-ter-themes” of his prose works and, especially, of Paradise Lost, which “everywhere champions moral and political freedom.” Milton was a rebel with a cause—not the Good Old Cause of Cromwell’s republic, but the cause of the individual’s reasoned pursuit of truth. This is surely why Wittreich often refers to Milton as “a sect of one” and describes him as an author always inviting us to “read rebelliously.”

Wittreich does not draw the connection explicitly, but clearly he believes that expository reading of Milton would strengthen our desire (and ability) to resist the threats to liberty and justice that are typically raised during the current prosperity. If you care about Abu Ghraib, rendition, justice, Guantanamo-style or about government propaganda, surveillance, secrecy, and censorship, Milton’s interrogatory and resisting habits of mind should matter.

This is to imagine an ideal world, which, in fact, was Milton’s ultimate goal. Finding “the earthly foundations for a new Jerusalem of the spirit,” Wittreich asserts, is “the very heart of Milton’s last poems.” They remain decisively anti-corporal, Wittreich says several times, because they were written “in the future tense.”

Back in the real America, I worry. What really matters here is whether the latest round went to Rosie or Donald agencies. Parn Milton’s global positioning, which basketball teams will make the Final Four, who will be left standing in “Survivor: Fiji,” I Googled “reality tv” and got more than four million links. What matters is stuff that doesn’t matter one tiny bit.

Why Milton Matters is undoubtedly to make it into Oprah’s book club. The author’s deep immersion in Milton’s works and 250 years of critical heat and cry will most delight his fellow Miltonians—and doubtless provoke them to debate.

Still... we need a wake-up call from our deep REM sleep of reason, of which reality TV is but one glaring symptom. Who, better to produce that wake-up call than Milton, whose “universal haim,” Wittreich believes, is “the mind, awakening to more and more reality,” and whose “larger project” is always to show “a world awakening to new possibilities.” As Wordsworth famously wrote more than 200 years ago, “Milton’s thought should be living at this hour.” The world still hath need of thee.

Lauren S. Fine, author of Brazil’s Democracy, was an observer of the 2007 presidential campaign and new democracy. She says the challenge is to build new social networks committed to controlling violence.

Book Talk

Drugs, Democracy in Brazil

In his book, Drug and Democracy in Rio de Janeiro, John Jay College of Criminal Justice Professor Enrique Domínguez Arias takes an ethnographic approach to understanding urban violence.

Arias, Assistant Professor of Government, looks at the ongoing problems of crime and political corruption that have led to widespread misery and human rights violations, not only in Brazil, but in many new democracies in Latin America.

Arias says the challenge is to build new social networks committed to controlling violence. Drug and Democracy was published by The University of North Carolina Press.

CUNY Matters — Spring 2007
In the silent sound-proofed room, knowledge speaks softly.

It is in this room that you may see a spark of a new theory on the origins of life, feel the rhythms of a jazz composition, imagine the sword of an exotic fish or perhaps shed a tear for the measured cry of a reformer seeking justice in post-apartheid South Africa. The volume that line the walls of the Dissertation Reading Room, a library within a library tucked inside CUNY’s Graduate Center, are where the essence of human experience lies: biology to music, languages to zoology—hundreds of pages for each dissertation, more than 1.3 million pages in all.

Fundamentally, the dissertation reading room honors scholarship. “By locating it on the first floor, in an elegant room, we pay tribute to the life of the mind,” said President William P. Kelly. “This room reminds current doctoral students of their primary responsibility, to produce new knowledge.”

A professorial space, the dissertation room is unlike so much of the outside world that has become democratized beyond recognition in an emerging digital age. “The tradition we extend has its origins in the monastic creation of manuscripts,” President Kelly said. “Like those scholars, we are intimately involved in the preservation and generation of knowledge. A room such as this speaks to that genius, to the title professor—someone who shares his knowledge with others. It’s the determining activity of the doctoral enterprise.”

This storehouse of doctoral enterprise also has practical value; it is the first space, Kelly says, to which he takes potential supporters of the Graduate Center. “It is an objective correlative of what we do so well here,” he said.

It is also the embodiment of the University’s most advanced learning, the pursuit of the doctorate, a somewhat recent phenomenon in the history of public higher education in New York City. The University awarded its first Ph.D.s in 1965, four years after the Graduate Center was created by an act of the State Legislature and more than a century after The Free Academy, the forerunner of today’s University, was chartered.

“The dissertation room’s contents represent the growth of the Graduate Center itself. More than 648 linear feet of blind woodshelves the most recent of more than 6,600 dissertations—those written since 1969. The balance is in the regular stacks, making the library’s second floor. All but three of 31 disciplines are represented in the dissertation room. Business dissertations are at Baruch College, engineering work is at City College, and criminal justice projects are at John Jay College.

In the last four years alone, the increase in the number of doctoral students, and the number of completed dissertations, has risen dramatically. Two hundred and four dissertations were deposited in the library during the 2002-2003 academic year. By 2004-2005, the number jumped to 283. And in 2005-2006, the library received 334, according to chief librarian Adir Cunningham.

The dissertations, organized by year of completion and then alphabetized by author, create a candy box of reds (math and political science) greens (anthropology, chemistry, earth and environmental sciences), blues (music, classics, comparative literature, urban education), browns (history and speech), blacks (art history and engineering) and oranges (economics). Each colored spine represents an academic discipline. Blue binders deposited last year mark the first dissertations in urban education, and the newest of the Graduate Centers offerings.

Dissertations line two tiers of walls in the reading room: a set on the ground floor adorns shelves wrapped around conventional library study tables, and a set above fills shelving on a walk-around mezzanine reached by a vintage Victorian staircase saved from the century-old site, formerly the B Altman Department Store building.

The works are the product of years, perhaps lifetimes, of study and reflection by doctoral candidates. They have inspired into mice and humans, water and earth, and uncovered some new facet of learning for the world to consider. Read these pages, study their compositions, pursue their photographs, and be reminded that these are also testimonials of late-night toiling, from the young composers and authors to the up-from-the-outside-borough master’s students seeking greater understanding into the social fabric of New York City.

In 1998, Adam Habib, a South African political scientist who had volunteered imprisonment for his opposition to apartheid, wrote of the rigors of the dissertation process in his preface to Structural Constraints, Resources and Decision-Making: A Study of South Africa’s Transition to Democracy. “Had it not been for the late night duties he imposed on me in the first 14 months of his life,” he wrote in acknowledging the “assistance” of his newborn son, Brian, “this dissertation definitely would not have been completed as quickly as it was.”

While many of the topics on the
solves killings and even of swing fellow officers slain. And they provided rich accounts of the smells, sights and sounds that accompanied the deaths they witnessed.

His work now has a catchy lay title: Death Work: Police, Trauma, and the Psychology of Survival. (Oxford University Press, 2004) Henry also was the first American police officer to be awarded a Fulbright Fellowship. He jokes that he is probably the first published author-Fulbright Fellow-Ph.D. to direct New York City traffic.

Many dissertations have won awards in their fields. For example, Soledad Cabrera de Yaca wrote her 1993 dissertation, Internal Clerk and Memory Processes in Animal Timing; for the Learning Processes and Behavior Analysis program in psychology. It won a James McKevitt Cattell Award from the New York Academy of Sciences. According to psychologist Executive Officer Kevin Bruce Brown, Cabrera de Yaca’s research with pigeons “led to a new interpretation of the effect of the interruption of the stimulus … and suggested that memory for accumulated time decay during the gap.”

Cabrera de Yaca says her work with pigeons was meant to understand behaviors as simple as why humans get traffic jams and seem to have a built-in clock to anticipate when the light will change. “We do not know much about how this remarkable ability to anticipate events and act accordingly works,” she said in a recent interview. Cabrera de Yaca selected pigeons for her research, she said, because “they’re very slow, live long lives, and are easy to train. Also, human behavior and a pigeon’s performance are based on the same basic principle,” she said. “Many animals, including humans, use this context for a cue for behavior,” she explained. “So, we studied what happened when the timing cue is disturbed or interrupted.”

Cabrera de Yaca, 56, from Madrid, Spain, is now an assistant professor studying the neurobiology of drug abuse in the Department of Psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine. She says she hasn’t been up to the dissertation room to see her work there. “I still, I’ll think perhaps of some day to go back, to bring back my own memories,” she said.

Another author contemplated the big band halls of New York City. Consider Composition and Performance in Contemporary Urban Policemen. His dissertation topic was the psychological impact of exposure to death in contemporary urban policing. He found out how exposure to death in the line of duty affects the lives of police officers. He studied the subject for three years. Four weeks later, he saw his theories played out during 9/11. His dissertation drew on interviews with schoners, former police, crime scene investigators and homicide detectives. They told tales of murder and suicide, and accidental death. of killings, of

MATERNAL GUIDING LIGHT

The Dissertation Assistant Who Eases the Pain

Judith Waldman

You’ve completed your coursework, chosen a dissertation topic and gotten your topic approved. You’ve researched it, defended it before a faculty committee. But you’re not a chemist, a dissertation chair or scholar in 30 or so other disciplines, you’ve got one more hurdle on the road to your Ph.D. You must defend your dissertation with Judy Waldman at the Graduate Center’s Minor Race Library.

Doctoral candidates receive 13 pages of instructions on how to prepare their dissertations. Included are specifications for margins, fonts, layout, pagination, graphics and maps. As CUNY’s dissertation assistant, it’s Waldman’s job to make sure those specifications are not. In fact, Waldman is far more than an editor; she also considers herself a sort of material guiding light to students at the culmination of their Ph.D. programs.

The case with which computers help to make corrections to formatting errors is one reason that producing a dissertation is less of a nightmare than it used to be, some current Ph.D.s say. “By the time you get that final draft (of depositing your dissertation), you’re so expert that you’re finally finished. It’s not really a big deal,” to follow the rules, said Edward (Ted) Menino, a 2002 Ph.D. in Theatre who wrote in The New York Times, "New York Jews in Jazz Age American Popular Culture."

“Told me horror stories about margins,” said Thorsten Duraso, who earned a Ph.D. in sociology in 2006 with Bruno D’Alessio and Bruna Gazzeo, Educational Segregation in the United States. “I met with [Waldman] for maybe 15 minutes to go over the format,” he said.

“She told me not to change some color graphics to black and white, I believe. It was painless, and it all came together very quickly.”

But Judy Waldman’s domain is another matter. She takes a personal interest in the students that rival that of an old-fashioned doctor in a rural town.

“I like working with people. I love to hear their stories,” said Waldman, whose office is tucked away in a corner of the library’s second floor.

“They tell me about their families, their jobs, their children. It’s a really mixed group of people.”

In her 19 years as dissertation assistant, she said, not an engineer who decided to go to law school, a musician and singer who returned to college at age 55, earned a Ph.D. in history, and is now an adjunct college instructor, a Holocaust survivor who worked in a shop downtown and many years ago decided that getting a Ph.D. was what he really wanted to do; and a U.S. Army colonel stationed in Saudi Arabia, who earned a doctorate in business and hopes to teach after his military career.

“I’ve seen students ranging from their 30s to nineties who decided to go back to school for a Ph.D.” Waldman said. She says taking away the notable differences between the graduate and undergraduate experiences, she said, “gave an undergraduate and graduate students living their parents and grandparents. But at the graduate level, it’s the reverse. They bring their children and grandchildren.”

The Dissertations Assistant Who Eases the Pain

Audrey Waldman

Judith Waldman’s job as dissertation assistant is not without risk. In her 19 years as dissertation assistant, she said, not an engineer who decided to go to law school, a musician and singer who returned to college at age 55, earned a Ph.D. in history, and is now an adjunct college instructor, a Holocaust survivor who worked in a shop downtown and many years ago decided that getting a Ph.D. was what he really wanted to do; and a U.S. Army colonel stationed in Saudi Arabia, who earned a doctorate in business and hopes to teach after his military career.

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The City University of New York may be the biggest stage in the country, if not the world, with musical performances, dramatic performances, lectures and conferences being offered year-round on its 23 campuses.

Topics at the conferences can be of the lighthearted variety, but often they explore topics more typically associated with academic journals. As an example of the latter, take the symposium scheduled for April 17 at Hostos Community College in the Bronx. The college’s Division of Academic Affairs and its Latin American Writers Institute are co-sponsoring the “Jewish Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

Scholars, artists and writers from across the United States and Latin America will present and debate the topic in roundtable discussions and plenary sessions.

In the past, Hostos has stood out among CUNY colleges for its explorations of the African presence in Latin America, particularly in the Dominican Republic.

Serious pursuits, yes. But those of you who want your hearts unburdened should be of good cheer.

On April 23 and 27, at 7 p.m., the Alexander String Quartet is showing off its talent at the Baruch Performing Arts Center, with admission at $25 for the general public; and discounts available for those with CUNY ID’s.

On May 6, at 3 p.m., Queensborough Community College is presenting the musical revue “Five Guys Named Moe,” with ticket prices beginning at $35. And on May 7, at 7 p.m., vibraphonist Bill Jacobs is performing at York College. Admission is free.

But back to the serious happenings. Those interested in topics ranging from terrorism to racial profiling can consider lectures and conferences being organized by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

On May 18, for example, the college’s Prisoner Reentry Institute will have an expert discussing “Perceived Criminality, Criminal Background Checks and the Racial Hiring Practices of Employers.”

There’s much more to hear and see at CUNY’s colleges in all five boroughs, much of it free of charge. Activities and performances can be found by going to CUNY’s home page, www.cuny.edu and then clicking the “events” link.