CUOMO: CITIZENSHIP NOW! ‘A BEAUTIFUL TESTAMENT TO WHAT CUNY IS ALL ABOUT’

Reaffirming the University’s longstanding commitment to providing public service and assisting immigrant communities, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo joined CUNY administrators, students, faculty, community leaders, state and local officials and 350 volunteers at the 13th annual New York Daily News/CUNY Citizenship NOW! Call-In, where thousands of New Yorkers received help with immigration issues.

“Immigration is a good thing, immigration brings in new people with new talents, new cultures, and they add to society, they bring a new asset to society, they don’t detract, look at New York,” Governor Cuomo said. “We made New York the greatest state on the planet by welcoming people and using their strengths and we are still doing it aggressively, that’s the message exactly what CUNY is doing today.”

Cuomo also remarked on public education’s important role in educating immigrants and transforming them into great leaders. He noted how his grandfather, Andrea Cuomo, immigrated from Italy and raised a son named Mario who was educated in public schools and would become New York’s 52nd governor.

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Continued on page 2

GRANTS & HONORS

Recognizing Faculty Achievement

The University’s renowned faculty members continually win professional-achievement awards from prestigious organizations as well as research grants from government agencies, foresighted foundations and leading corporations. Pictured are just a few of the recent honorees. Brief summaries of many ongoing research projects start here and continue inside.

Carin Savage of Bronx Community College has received a $1,246,161 grant from the NYS Education Department for “Institutional Improvement.” The NYS Education Department has awarded a $981,525 grant to Bonnie August of New York City College of Technology for “Perkins IV.” Gilda Barabino of City College has won a $225,000 grant from the National Science Foundation for “MicroFaculty Development Workshop (MF DW) Engineering Enterprise and Innovation.”

A research project titled “Cognitive and Neural Bases of Memory Confidence and Accuracy,” under the direction of Elizabeth Chua of Brooklyn College, has received $157,000 in grant support for the National Institutes of Health.

LaGuardia Community College President Gail O. Mellow joined President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden at the White House College Opportunity Summit, which brought together representatives of colleges and universities, business leaders, nonprofits and others committed to supporting more college opportunities for students across the country.

“Quest for Energy,” a documentary film produced by Ryoya Terao of New York University, is just one of the recent CUNY projects from CUNY’s renowned farsighted foundations and government agencies, research grants from organizations as well as awards from prestigious professional-achievement grants and awards from prestigious professional-achievement grants and awards.

Continued on page 2
New Provost: Job Is Opportunity of a Lifetime

D R. VITA CARULLI RABINOWITZ, a distinguished and highly regarded Hunter College educator, administrator, and scholar, has been named CUNY’s Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and University Provost, an appointment she called “the opportunity of a lifetime.”

Rabinowitz, Hunter’s Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs since 2007, was appointed by the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees on April 6.

Chancellor James B. Milliken, who recommended her after a national search, said, “Doctor Rabinowitz exemplifies administrative experience, together with her distinguished scholarly accomplishments, a strong commitment to students and a deep belief in the mission of CUNY, make her an outstanding choice as the University’s chief academic officer.”

“We’ve been very fortunate to find the best candidate from within the University,” Milliken said at the April 6 board meeting. “I am impressed by her ideas, sophistication and enthusiasm. I’m confident she will be an outstanding partner in the academic leadership of the University.”

Describing herself as “humbled and honored” by the appointment, Rabinowitz told the gathering, “Everything I love about Hunter — the inspiring mission, the striving students and the faculty and administrators who are attracted to that mission and those students — is what I love about CUNY.

“CUNY’s reach, impact and prospects are unparalleled,” she said. “The opportunity to set the academic vision — and to be the academic voice of the indisputable institution of the greatest city in the world is the opportunity of a lifetime for any academic leader anywhere, and the fact that you found me just a few subway stops away is thrilling. This will surely be the pinnacle of my life’s work.”

A distinguished social psychologist and author whose scholarship has focused on women and achievement; gender and health; theoretical and methodological issues in the study of gender; and dilemmas of helping and coping with adverse outcomes, Rabinowitz has been a member of Hunter’s psychology department, which she chaired from 1999 to 2005, and of the doctoral program in psychology at the Graduate Center since 1989.

Her appointment is effective July 1. She succeeds Dr. Julia Wrigley, who served as Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost since 2004. Milliken expressed appreciation to Wrigley for her outstanding service.

As Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost, Rabinowitz will lead the planning, development and implementation of University policies and initiatives regarding academic programs, research, instructional technology, global engagement, student development and enrollment management. She will report to Milliken, provide strategic academic leadership for CUNY and work with the executive vice chancellor and chief operating officer to develop operating and capital budgets that reflect CUNY’s academic priorities.

Rabinowitz will also be engaged in budget planning, resource development and assessment. She will chair the Office of Academic Affairs oversees University policies governing the academic programs of CUNY’s colleges and more than 100 research centers.

Rabinowitz received her master’s and doctoral degrees in social psychology from...
1997 to address the growing need for free citizenship and immigration services among CUNY’s foreign-born students, faculty and staff.

Responding to high demand for these services in other communities, CitizenshipNOW! soon expanded to serve all New Yorkers. Under the leadership of Wernerick, who also is a New York Daily News columnist, the organization has grown into the country’s largest university-based citizenship and immigration law service provider with nine centers throughout the five boroughs of New York City.

The call-in campaign began in 2004 with a vision shared by CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations Jay Hershenson and former New York Daily News editor Martin Dunn. Together, they approached Wernerick to organize the effort. This year’s week-long hot line operated from April 27 through May 1, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., with more than 350 volunteer lawyers, community leaders, CUNY students, faculty and staff answering phones and providing confidential information to thousands of callers.

At Guttman Community College, two classrooms were converted into call-in centers. Calls were answered in English and Spanish, as well as numerous other languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, Korean, Italian, Haitian Creole, Bengali, Polish, French, Yiddish and Arabic.

Although the event started modestly, the calls have evolved into a high-profile New York event that draws notable figures. This year, some of the leaders who visited included U.S. Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and New York State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie.

TheDream.US Awards $5 Million to Students

MORE THAN 200 immigrant students of The City University of New York have been awarded scholarships by TheDream.US, valued at more than $1.5 million. It is the largest amount received by any university in the United States.

The nation’s largest scholarship program for undocumented immigrant youth, TheDream.US, is providing aid to 231 students at CUNY colleges in the five boroughs, more than half of the $10 million in aid the foundation awarded nationally to over 500 students.

The program, the first college scholarship fund created for undocumented immigrant youth, known as DREAMers, awards up to $25,000 for tuition and fees to high school graduates who are first-time college students or community college graduates who seek to complete their bachelor’s degree.

Students must have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, status, or may also qualify under Temporary Protected Status, or TPS.

“Every year I encounter DREAMers who are eager to go to college, serve their community and our country,” says Donald Graham, founder of TheDream.US. “We believe it is the right thing to do to allow DREAMERS to get a college degree — but more important it makes our country stronger and our values firmer.”

CUNY began its partnership with TheDream.US in fall 2013 when 30 students received scholarships to attend three community colleges.

Last year, Chancellor James B. Milliken made it a University-wide priority to expand the scholarship opportunity to immigrant students in 15 CUNY colleges — 12 senior colleges and seven community colleges.

In October 2014, 41 percent of the nearly 1,700 scholarship applications submitted nationwide were from CUNY students. In December, TheDream.US announced that 242 scholarships — 50 percent of those awarded nationwide — went to students from.CUNY. In early 2015, 231 students accepted their scholarship awards.

Kirssy Martinez, a student at Bronx Community College, is one of the more than 200 CUNY students awarded TheDream.US scholarships.

At 14, she immigrated to New York from the Dominican Republic and hasn’t seen her parents or siblings in 13 years. After graduating from high school, she spent eight months as a waitress and babysitter to save money for college.

After one semester at Bronx Community College, she was on the verge of dropping out until she learned about TheDream.US scholarship. Martinez was also recently named valedictorian.

“Our current immigration status shouldn’t be an indication of our future success,” she says. “This is not the time to be ashamed of being undocumented. This is just the beginning. You’ve all heard the old saying, ‘The sky is the limit.’ I would add to that, ‘Education is the vehicle.’”

Grace Couch, another CUNY Dream Scholar, moved to the United States from South Korea when she was 8. She graduated from Stuyvesant High School, one of the best public high schools in New York City, but when it was time to apply to college, she found she was not eligible for financial aid or student loans because of her status.

After working and saving some money, she enrolled at Queensborough Community College and applied for DACA status. With her scholarship, she was able to pursue her bachelor’s of science in nursing at Hunter College.

“From a scared undocumented student living in the shadows, I became a confident registered nurse with so many opportunities,” she says.

CUNY MATTERS — June 2015
Continued from page 2

H ave you heard? English doctoral student Gregory Pardlo is awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry…CCNY alum Flavio Alves wins Grand Jury prize for ‘Tom in America’ at 7th annual CUNY Film Festival…Big Apple Job & Internship Fair draws hundreds seeking employment, internships

Gregory Pardlo, a doctoral student in English at the Graduate Center, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry for his book, Digest. The judges cited Pardlo’s “clear-voiced poems that bring readers the news from 21st Century America, rich with thought, ideas, and histories public and private.” In a recent review, The New York Times described Digest as “a brainy, compassionate book that uses a pleasingly large stylistic palette to paint a portrait of fatherhood, racial politics and Brooklyn before it became a place to buy $300 glasses of bourbon.” Written in a breezy vernacular style and with a lively streetwise inflection, the poems in Digest take their inspiration from Pardlo’s neighbor- hood, the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, or tap into his sense of identity.” The New York Times reported. Pardlo’s first book, Totem, received the American Poetry Review/Honickman Prize in 2007. His poems have appeared in American Poetry Review, Boston Review, The Nation, Ploughshares and Tin House, as well as in anthologies including Angles of Ascent, the Norton Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry and two editions of Best American Poetry.

Big Apple Job Fair draws hundreds seeking employment, internships

HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS connected with recruiters in hopes of launching their careers at the 27th annual CUNY Big Apple Job & Internship Fair. The annual event, held April 17 at the Jacob Javits Center, drew notable firms and government agencies including Apple computers, Yelp, Sesame Street, Bright Horizons Child Care & Early Education, Northwestern Mutual, and the New York State Assembly. At a breakfast reception to kick off the fair, Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson and CUNY Trustee Freda Foster expressed gratitude to recruiters for participating in the event. Keynote speaker for the reception, City Council Member Julissa Ferreras (D-Queens), recalled memories of landing her first job at the Jackson Heights Public Library. “New York needs more young people in the workforce,” Ferreras said. The Big Apple Job Fair began 27 years ago at the World Trade Center, with the objective of bringing graduating students and recent alumni together with private- and public-sector organizations seeking qualified employees. In later years, the fair expanded to include opportunities for currently enrolled students to gain internships with work experience to feature on their resumes. The Big Apple Job Fair also includes a graduate and professional programs fair, providing students and sometimes recruiters from participating organizations with information on advanced degrees.

Thirty-seven CUNY students from the class of 2015 have joined Teach For America – a national, nonprofit organization that places graduates in high-need schools across the country. While the majority of CUNY’s new teachers will remain in New York City, others have been assigned to Miami, Denver, Atlanta, Las Vegas and Washington D.C. Hunter College has the most students committed to the program – 9 – followed by City College, 7, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 5, Brooklyn College 4, Lehman College and Queens College 3, and York College and College of Staten Island 2. Staten Island also has one graduate student joining the corps.

Continued on page 8

Continued on page 8

CCNY Alum’s Provocative ‘Tom in America’ Wins Top Honors At CUNY Film Festival

A FILM ABOUT the secret desires within the marriage of an elderly couple, written and directed by a City College MFA alumnus, won the Grand Jury prize at the 2015 CUNY Film Festival at Macaulay Honors College. Flavio Alves’ “Tom in America” explores the relationship of Michael and Betty – played by the veteran actors Burt Young and Sally Kirkland – a Long Island couple who have been married 50 years. While rummaging through trash in search of things to sell at the local flea market, Michael finds a “Tom of Finland” doll that triggers a long-ignored impulse. Tom of Finland dolls are inspired by the homoerotic fetish art of Touko Laaksonen, a Finnish artist best known by his pseudonym Tom of Finland.

CUNY has a creative and diverse student body, and the films shown at the festival reflect their unique perspectives, says Macaulay New Media Lab director Robert Small. “We have so much talent here, and it would be counterintuitive not to have a place where students could display their work,” says Small, an Emmy-award winning television producer and film director who organized the festival with students from the media lab. The Macaulay New Media Lab is a club where students learn about film, video editing and social media marketing strategies.

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The following awards are from the National Science Foundation: 811.710 to

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GRANTS & HONORS

Moncel Seal and Jonathan Guash of York College have been awarded a $300,000 grant from the Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation for “Promising Assistance to Students Facing Unforeseen Emergencies and Catastrophic Events that May Disrupt their College Education.” Chemical Probes Targeting Polycomb Repressive Complex 2 Gene Repression, a project under the direction of Guillermo Gerona-Navarro of Brooklyn College, has received $157,000 in grant funding from the National Institutes of Health.

The U.S. Department of Justice – Office of Justice Programs awarded $4,750,000 to David Kennedy of John Jay College for “National Center for Building Community Trust and Justice.” Loretta Taras of Kingsborough Community College has received a $911,750 grant from the National Science Foundation for “The John Hunt Technology has received a $4,253,810 grant from the National Institutes of Health for the project “Efficacy of Language Treatment in Monolingual Chronic Aphasia.”

John Hunt of LaGuardia Community College has been awarded two grants: $199,211 from the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services for the “Workforce Investment Act,” and $231,468 from the NYC Office of the Mayor for an “Adult Literacy Program.” The NY State Education Department has awarded $100,000 in grant funding to Eileen Donoghue, Judith Kerekes, Irina Lyublinskaya, Jane Coffin and Ken Gold of the College of Staten Island for “Professional Development in Mathematics and Mathematics Education.” New York City College of Technology has received a $253,810 grant from RFUNY for “New York State Small Business Development Center,” under the direction of Robert Pschotka.

Nathan Lentz of John Jay College has been awarded a $14,809 grant from the National Science Foundation for “The John Jay Forensic Science and Computer Science Scholarship Program.” Kingsborough Community College has received $94,000 in grant funding from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for the project “Modular Mining of Carbohydrates: Chordones (Bulk & Separates) by Position Sensitive Detector Xray Diffraction.” written and directed by City College MFA alumnus, won the Grand Jury prize at the 2015 CUNY Film Festival at Macaulay Honors College. Flavio Alves’ “Tom in America” explores the relationship of Michael and Betty — played by the veteran actors Burt Young and Sally Kirkland — a Long Island couple who have been married 50 years. While rummaging through trash in search of things to sell at the local flea market, Michael finds a “Tom of Finland” doll that triggers a long-ignored impulse. Tom of Finland dolls are inspired by the homoerotic fetish art of Touko Laaksonen, a Finnish artist best known by his pseudonym Tom of Finland.

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CUNY Goes to Bat for International Student Athletes

Kelvin Ahire-Thomas, a Nigerian-born student who aspires to become a pediatrician, loved playing defense on Kingsborough Community College’s soccer team and running the 800-meter event for its track and field squad. Sports, he says, “brings me feelings of ambition to excel in life.”

But Ahire-Thomas was crushed last summer when he learned that he was no longer eligible to compete on either team—disqualified by a rule adopted in 2012 by the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) that barred community college athletes who were over 21 and didn’t attend high school in the United States for at least three years. Ahire-Thomas went to high school in Nigeria and turned 22 last July.

The rule was meant to weed out older international students with professional athletic experience in their home countries, but it was so broad that it disqualified untold numbers of college-age students who had not competed professionally. At Kingsborough, a college with a high percentage of international students, 31 athletes were disqualified by the new rule in the two academic years after it was enacted.

“Some were angry, some were sad. Some stopped going to school because they were frustrated,” says Keith Heron, Kingsborough’s assistant athletic director. “For some of them, sports is what kept them interested in college; they had extra-curricular activities and friends.”

But this winter, the NJCAA agreed to rescind the rule after a long campaign instigated by Heron and Michael Belfiore, director of athletics at Bronx Community College, and led by the Athletic Conference. Taking up the fight, CUNY’s legal department brought CUNY’s opposition to the NJCAA by pointing out that the rule was inconsistent with the athletic association’s own mission statement—especially in its effect on a highly diverse public university such as CUNY. According to the mission statement, the NJCAA seeks “to foster a national program of athletic participation in an environment that supports equitable opportunities consistent with the educational objectives of member colleges.”

“The rule had a particularly negative impact upon urban junior college systems that serve a large number of immigrant students,” the Attorney General’s office said in a statement, noting that 7.2 percent of the university’s first-time junior college freshmen in the fall of 2013 attended high school outside the United States.

In January, the NJCAA’s Eligibility Committee voted to rescind the rule, and the organization entered into a settlement agreeing to allow the New York attorney general to review any future eligibility issues concerning students’ national origins.

Heron noted that any institution that receives federal funding is also prohibited from discriminating based on age. “Belfiore and I spoke many times about this rule, because we were very upset by it,” he says. “We were always looking into how we could fix it. A lot of people didn’t understand the impact it would have.

Community colleges are the main entry point for people who come to America for the first time; one of the reasons is financial. The entire nation of community colleges benefits from it. We should be proud to be the ones who fought for what was right and won.”

“I’m just pleased that all eligible students will now have an opportunity,” Belfiore says.

“I was really impressed by how hard both of them had been working to overturn it,” says Marcia Isaacson, a member of CUNY’s legal department. “Their passion was inspiring. Too often change seems to take forever. Not this time.”

Ahire-Thomas expressed the relief of students who can go back to competing. “I’m so excited because that was my dream,” he says. “It was a harsh rule.”

A biology major, Ahire-Thomas emigrated from his native Nigeria and entered Kingsborough in the fall of 2013. He played on the soccer team and ran track that school year but was told he was not eligible for this year after he turned 22 last summer.

In a letter to the NJCAA last August, he said the organization was discriminating against him based on age, nationality and ethnicity. “I’m just pleased that all eligible students will now have an opportunity,” Belfiore says.

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EVIN GARDNER, the director of the structural biology initiative of the newly opened Advanced Science Research Center, likes to explain his work to the uninitiated by breaking it down to a few simple but extraordinary pieces of information about how we live on the molecular level.

Within each cell of our bodies, Gardner says, is a mechanism that allows the cell to perceive and react to its environment with staggering proficiency. Every one of our red blood cells, for instance, has 280 million hemoglobin molecules that are constantly sensing where that cell is in the body and what it needs to be doing.

"It's a machine that's smart enough to know, 'Hey, I'm in the lungs, I need to pick up oxygen' or 'I'm in the periphery of the leg, I need to dump oxygen,' Gardner says. "What we're trying to figure out is how nature has evolved those machines to work as well as they do. And if we're lucky enough to get answers to how those machines are broken by disease—cancer, for instance—then we'll have insights into how to fix them."

Gardner's field of structural biology sits at the crossroads of three scientific disciplines, tackling questions inspired by biology, drawing on perspectives of chemistry and using the tools of physics to take on a wide range of biomedical challenges. That made it a natural choice to be one of the five research initiatives of the long-planned ASRC—a research center conceived to bring together scientists from distinct but interrelated disciplines, breaking down the traditional walls between them and cultivating a highly collaborative research culture.

After nearly a decade from conception to completion, the University-wide science center, at the south campus of City College, is up and running with founding directors of three of its five initiatives in place.

"We are actually creating new types of chemistry," Ulijn said during an event last month that unofficially introduced the ASRC and its innovative concept—"Transcending Scientific Boundaries," as the event's title neatly summed it up—to members of the New York science community.

Ulijn's nanoscience is distinctive in its "systems" approach—its focus on mimicking the complex collections of interacting components that function as a whole in biological and ecological environments. The approach is aimed at creating new materials that have the ability to actually change their properties to adapt to circumstances, potentially yielding applications for everything from biomedicine to energy production.

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Charles Vörösmarty, a renowned authority on global water issues and other areas of environmental sciences, joined CUNY as director of the ASRC Environmental CrossRoads initiative while the building was still in the planning stages. Rein Ulijn, a pioneering nanochemist with seven patents for new materials that have unique "adaptive" properties inspired by biology, was recruited from Scotland's University of Strathclyde to direct the ASRC nanoscience initiative. Gardner, a molecular biophysicist and biochemist, arrived at the ASRC and CUNY from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center with an international reputation for innovative thinking.

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Vörösmarty says the world's increasing—and increasingly complex—
Collaboration

...from across CUNY will be encouraged to use, whether to collaborate with other faculty or to use the shared core facilities to expand the scale and scope of their work. Graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and even undergraduates from throughout the University will have opportunities to work on research projects at the center.

The ASRC is at the center of an expanding constellation of CUNY science initiatives and centers—from the CUNY Energy Institute at the other end of the City College campus to the Center for Advanced Technology, known as the CUNY CAT, and the Hub for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The Hub and CUNY CAT were created to foster commercialization of faculty discoveries for the economic benefit of the University, the city and state. CUNY CAT, which is now located within the ASRC, promotes collaborative research between CUNY scientists and industry, while the Hub is an incubator of emerging technologies that gives faculty scientists the knowledge and tools they need to start spinoff companies in partnership with CUNY.

Though it might seem that his field has little to do with the other ASRC disciplines, Vörösmarty says there’s no question that it can benefit from research and discoveries in their fields of his colleagues. For example, “How can you combine new kinds of chemistry that Reen will be working on to create cities that revitalize themselves without the environmental impact that we see today?”

With the arrival of its first wave of newly recruited world-class scientists, the launch of the ASRC and its sister building, the City College Center for Innovation and Discovery, is a landmark moment in the University’s decade-long, multimillion-dollar drive to become a leading center of visionary scientific research with real-world impact. The new City College research building, a 200,000-square-foot facility for key interdisciplinary fields, will be another magnet for regional, national and international researchers and an academic hub of learning for students and college faculty.

Combined, these two research centers are poised to become both a jewel of CUNY science and a centerpiece of the state’s rapidly expanding technology sector—a key element of Gov. Cuomo’s economic development initiatives.

Kevin Gardner and his structural biology team are exploring the signaling mechanisms of cells.

Rein Ulijn, director of the nanoscience initiative, holds seven patents for new materials that mimic biology.

Charles Vörösmarty...

Conceived as an incubator of innovation, the ASRC features some of the most sophisticated research equipment in New York. Chief among the shared facilities is the ASRC’s Nanofabrication Facility. Open to faculty and staff researchers and students, as well as government and industrial partners, the Nanofabrication Facility offers researchers the world’s most specialized instruments for fabrication and characterization of materials at the micro and nanoscales. It is CUNY’s first cleanroom and one of the most advanced on the East Coast.

“Science is becoming much more interdisciplinary, and scientists need to understand the capacity of the otherfields to leverage their own,” said Gillian Small, vice chancellor and the ASRC’s executive director. “This isn’t a standard science building with a biology floor and a chemistry floor and a physics floor, each in its own world and scientists who want to work alone for years. The idea is to populate the building with dynamic people who want to work across disciplines and put them together in a very open-plan building, with plenty of common areas, so that their ideas can really bounce off each other. That’s how innovation happens.”

Each of the ASRC directors has a faculty appointment at one of CUNY’s senior colleges—Vörösmarty and Gardner at City College, Ulrich at Hunter. In addition to running their own labs, each will oversee new faculty researchers who will in turn build labs within their disciplines. Searches for the directors of the ASRC’s photonics and neuroscience initiatives are in progress, and once all five floors are fully operational, the ASRC will be home to 20 teams of researchers, four in each initiative. The ASRC has also long been planned as a center that researchers...
CUNY Students Honored As Models of Diplomacy

STUDENTS from three CUNY campuses took the seats of world leaders, debated vexing global issues and won top prizes for excellence in diplomacy at last month’s 25th National Model United Nations Conference.

The 28-member Hunter College Model U.N. team won an Outstanding Delegation award, competing against 2,500 students from 200 colleges. Representing Brazil and Russia, Hunter students also won nine individual awards for Outstanding Position Paper and Outstanding Delegate in Committee.

Students debated topics such as terrorism and disarmament, racial and religious discrimination and violence against women. To tackle these complex geopolitical and cultural issues, the Hunter students prepared with a two-semester course taught by Pamela Falk, a Distinguished Lecturer in American government and international law and the team’s faculty advisor.

“The class and the competition give the students the knowledge of international relations, diplomacy, and negotiation, as well as the expertise in public speaking and debate, all of which serve them well in any career track they choose,” says Falk, who is also a foreign affairs analyst for CBS News and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Students from Queens College and City College also attended the Model U.N. conference. The Queens delegation represented Algeria, and City College represented Uruguay. Both teams won Distinguished Delegation awards.

“Model U.N. taught me to articulate my thoughts,” says John-David Noguerara, the Hunter team’s co-head delegate and a junior studying international relations. “I learned how crucial it is to listen during negotiations and ensure that all parts are in agreement, not just when debating international issues but also in everyday debates and conflicts.”

“I participated in model U.N. in high school. I continue because I want to sit in one of these seats eventually,” says Janily Santana, a Queens College freshman who hopes her experience representing Algeria in the mock U.N will help her become part of the American delegation one day.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke at the conference’s closing ceremony to announce the launch of #YouthNow, a social media campaign to encourage young people to share their ideas on global development issues much like the ones debated at the Model U.N. conference.

“You do not have to be a diplomat or a politician to advance our work,” Ban said. “Everyone with a phone can be a human-rights monitor. Everyone with a screen name can mobilize their friends. All of you can shape the future.”

Free at I

By Gary Schmidgall

FEW YEARS AFTER I began editing CUNY Matters, in the spring 1996 issue, I ran my first book feature, an excerpt from Steinway & Sons by the director of the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives (the piano-maker’s papers are housed there). I liked my title: “A Fine Way.” Since then I have curated more than 100 features on books by CUNY-affiliated authors — most of them by faculty but also a few by alumni and students.

Sometimes I published excerpts. Occasionally I interviewed an author: 91-year-old Joe Machlis, the Queens musicologist and author of the famous Music 1 text The Enjoyment of Music, for example, or Blanche Wiesen Cook, the eminent John Jay College biographer of Eleanor Roosevelt ...

... hey, Blanche, my patient wait for the third and final volume must end now! Mostly I aimed at capturing authors’ intentions and purposes and pointing out the most arresting highlights or insights of a book under view.

But this will be my vaudeville book feature. In his latest column “A Clear Midnight” Walt Whitman fantasized about a “flight into the wordless, Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson done.” Nearing retirement, I’m feeling the same way.

This gig has been almost entirely a pleasure and a wonderful learning experience, but this feels like a good time to vamoose. I have published a few books of my own during my CUNY Matters tenure, and BookTalk has quite properly ignored them. But now, as I leave the building, I have decided to throw editorial modesty to the winds and feature my own book.

Before I get down to tooting my own horn, however, let me cast a look back and say something about how I chose from the several hundred books by authors in the CUNY family over the last two decades.

I’ve always called my articles features rather than reviews because it is impolite to dis “family” in public. I have never kulturated an author (Gore Vidal coined that verb in honor of The New York Times’ often ferocious reviewer Michiko Kakutani). “If you can’t say something nice...” has been my motto; books that I have been tempted to throw at the wall — and I’m happy to say there were just a couple — I wrapped in silence. In one case, I slipped up and flashed my canines a few times.

When an email arrived from the author afterward, I opened it with dread — only to be stunned by a compliment on my careful, fair reading of the book. The way this was the sole instance of an author communicating with me after a feature appeared, so I guess I succeeded in going for benign.

Many a scholarly tome is written by specialists for other specialists, and more power to such studies. But, as George Bernard Shaw said, every profession is a conspiracy against the laity and when I could see no ready access to a book for the literate layman, I passed over it. I was also chary of the hard sciences, but I did tackle Glad Center physicist Michio Kaku’s Physics of the...
From Conning Leaves

Impossible; though he is known as layman-friendly, it still hurt my very soft-sciences head. On the other hand, a godsend for us laypeople was Massimo Pigliucci’s drily Nonsense on Stilts: How to Tell Science from Bank. Maybe because I am not much of a reader of fiction, I pretty much avoided creative writing — maybe my successor(s) will be braver.

Given my readership, I gravitated to New York-centric titles. The monumental Pulitzer-winning Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898 by Mike Wallace and Edwin Burrows was a no-brainer, as was a book on the place of Brooklyn in film history or Irene Dash’s book on the place of Brooklyn in film history: “I am quite aware in BookTalk I have resisted. I know Ovid was Shakespeare’s favorite classical poet, so I was eager to read his published and unpublished comments on women.”

OK, I will admit to every now and then playing favorites. I was delighted to cover the Trees of New York Field Guide because, aside from being a tree-hugger, I was delighted that my English professor colleague Trudy Smoke did its splendid botanical illustrations, and I was happy to boast a flag for Why Milton Matters by my friend and former Grad Center EO in English, Joseph Wwitterich. One of his students, Miltonist Lynee Greenberg, became a colleague, and she wrote a powerful memoir, The Body Broken, about a harrowing years-long ordeal with back pain caused by the flareup of an injury from a car accident in college; I couldn’t resist. I know Ovid was Shakespeare’s favorite classical poet, so I was eager to spread the word on a new translation of his Metamorphoses by Bronx Community College’s Charles Martin. I would say that otherwise serendipity pleasurably reigned, hardening me into many books that might otherwise have escaped my notice: the biographies of such various celebrities as Rosa Parks, the murderers Leopold and Loeb, Alice Herz-Sommer (a 106-year-old concert pianist and Holocaust survivor), the Marquis de Sade, Lee Kramner (the artist and widow of Jackson Pollock), and Bruce Springsteen.

At such a literary smorgasbord, obviously some dishes were especially enticing — reading, after all, is just a matter of taste: N. John Hall’s telling of the cheery life of Max Beerbohm was one and Fred Kaplan’s Lincoln: The Biography of a Writer. Then there was James Saslow’s Pictures and Passions: A History of Homosexuality in the Visual Arts, and Lilian Schlissel’s edition of three plays by Mae West, my favorite bon mot of hers being “I was Snow White, but I drifted.” More recently, I was tickled by Lehman poet Billy Collins’ recent collection of new and selected poems, Aimless Love. Now, about my book. Uh oh, I haven’t left much space.

I am quite aware in BookTalk I have often ridden my hobbyhorse, which for the last nearly 20 years has been Walt Whitman (prior to that Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde were in my stable). When I said “So Long!” — the title of a famous Whitman poem — to the editorship of CUNY Matters in 2004 and headed for full-time teaching at Hunter, I admitted that allusions to Walt were like the little Nina the Times Broadway artist Al Hirschfeld hid in plain sight in every caricature to amuse his daughter. Ten years on, and I haven’t changed, so what better way to bring down my curtain than to direct attention to the latest of my Whitman books: Containing Multitudes: Walt Whitman and the British Literary Tradition. (This book reunites me, after nearly four decades, with the publisher of my youth, Oxford University Press.)

Whitman himself inspired this chutzpah. Just after his first edition of Leaves of Grass appeared in 1855, he published an unsigned rave review of it in which he shamelessly flattered his book and himself. His face, he said, was one “that absorbs sunshine . . . face of undying friendship and indulgence.” In a second anonymous puff piece, he declared, “No sniveller, or tea-drinking poet, no puny clawback or prude, is this Walt Whitman.”

I’m not up to such brazen cheek, so I will just say that I had some real trepidation — but finally much fun — writing a book that really should not exist. For Whitman was, in his salad days, a vociferous advocate for a literature of America’s own, released from the leaden influence of Britain ("foulal" he liked to call its most famous poets). In that anonymous pat on his own back, he declared he would make “no allusions” to other writers or their books — "their spirits do not seem to have touched him.”

My challenge was not only to burrow into the ways Whitman dealt with the "anxiety of influence" that Harold Bloom made so famous — but also to burrow into his published and unpublished comments on five major authors: Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Burns and Wordsworth. My conceit was to try to imagine what Whitman — who never crossed the Atlantic — would have thought when standing in Poets’ Corner of Westminster Abbey, where these five are honored.

Would Walt be miffed at my subversive- ly blowing his all-“American” cover? Possibly. But this student of Whitman will defend himself by quoting “Song of Myself” back at him: “I am the teacher of athletes . . . He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.”

Speaking of students, we folks at CUNY Matters are always eager to tout the University’s graduates. So let me plug a feisty former student, Brendan O’Neill, whose first course with me was “Whitman and Wilde: The Art of Subversion.” I emphasized his “temerity” — a defining quality of Whitman and Wilde — in the recommendations I wrote for him. He is a savvy young acquisitions editor at Oxford, and I am particularly pleased to say he shrewdly shepherded my manuscript through the outside readers process and to a contract.

CUNY Matters welcomes information about new books that have been written or edited by faculty and members of the university community. Contact sheila.mckenna@cuny.edu.
DIVERSITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF DOING MORE

By Barbara Fischkin

The university’s second biennial Faculty Diversity & Inclusion conference was a candid daylong discussion of its ongoing efforts to ensure that equity and inclusion are key components of CUNY life and recognized as crucial to the public good.

The conference, held in March at the Graduate Center and attended by 270 faculty and 50 administrators, featured panels, presentations, talks and interactive demonstrations on virtually every aspect of diversity—from race and ethnicity, sexuality and gender, age, disability, language and religion to topics such as cultural competency, pedagogy for ESL students, and economic status and unconscious bias.

Although successes in eradicating biases, at CUNY and elsewhere, were appropriately applauded, challenges were also openly discussed, both formally and informally. “Yes, we’re very proud of our diversity at CUNY. But if we’re really serious about inclusion, we need a healthy dose of self-reflection in order to challenge our own assumptions,” said Jennifer Rubain, university dean of recruitment and diversity and the conference’s organizer. “That means listening carefully to those we work with and discovering their strengths, talents, and aspirations.”

Looking back at reactions to the conference several weeks later, Rubain emphasized that she was “so pleased” by its “ever-growing impact,” and said its “overall success was due to the dedication and hard work of the planning committee. They made sure the event addressed topics that most energize and engage the faculty.”

Chancellor James B. Milliken, enthusiastically attending the first university-wide diversity conference since his appointment in June 2014, observed: “Three out of four university students belong to underrepresented groups and 87 percent today are women. We are clearly outpacing national statistics on diversity and inclusion but that is the way it should be. . . . We have come a long way. We lead the nation. But we still have much to do.

Race relations—so much in the news both locally and nationally—were a focal point of the conference. Faculty members related the distressed reactions of students following the death of Eric Garner on Staten Island after he was put in a chokehold by police last July. Willie Tolliver, an associate professor in Hunter College’s Silberman School of Social Work who participated in a panel about classroom conversations about race, looked at reactions to the conference in the context of the Garner case. Tolliver noted that although some of Garner’s relatives did not see it as an civil rights case, the death drew attention to the issue.

Looking at the offerings of the conference, Tolliver pointed out that the keynote speaker, University of Wisconsin-Madison professor Kenji Yoshino, had helped him to focus on how to approach the topic of race in the classroom.

“We have to continue to talk about it,” Tolliver said. “It’s not easy. It’s not fun. But we can’t ignore it.”

MTA Hikes and Updating WageWorks

As everyone who uses public transportation in New York City and its suburbs probably knows by now, there was a Metropolitan Transportation Authority fare hike in March. But life is more complicated than it was in the days of subway tokens and yellow paper transfers. Consequently, some of us feel we need a quick primer on how the hike affects different payment options. At CUNY, employees also need to know how this affects their WageWorks transit flex-spend account.

Well, here it is.

The cost of a 7-Day Unlimited Ride MetroCard rose from $30 to $31.00.

The cost of a 30-Day Unlimited Ride MetroCard rose from $112 to $116.50.

The cost of an Express Bus Fare rose from $6 to $6.50.

For details on the fare hikes for LIRR, Metro-North, and Bridges and Tunnels Tolls, search.cuny.edu “Fare Hikes.”

Reminder: The MTA charges a $1 “new card fee” for each new MetroCard purchased at a MetroCard vending machine, station booth or commuter rail station. By refilling and reusing your current MetroCard, you will avoid this additional fee.

As for WageWorks: If you wish to change your monthly transit deduction amount, please complete the Transit Form. For those unfamiliar with the program: When you sign up, you receive a personal commuter account funded on a pre-tax basis through payroll deductions from your pay. Because the deductions reduce your payroll withholding taxes and provide you with tax-free funds to pay your expenses, you can save as much as 40 percent off the cost of your commute through the program. But with the fare hikes, it needs to be updated. Any questions, please contact your college’s human resources office.

FORYOURBENEFIT

June Professional Development & Learning Management (PDLM)

Technology Courses for Employees

Think ahead. To see what PDLM is offering in June to help you to maximize your usage of “desktop technology” at work — visit here. cuny.edu “Desktop technology.” Included are customized courses in PowerPoint, Excel and Word. The courses are free, and applications must be received in the PDLM office at least 10 days before a course begins. Dates are subject to change. According to Rhonye Ricks, PDLM’s director: “The current June courses were designed in response to feedback from participants in our regular MS courses. We asked them to identify the tasks they performed most using MS software and we designed these courses based on their responses. We’ve deferred offering general MS software courses for now because these customized courses are so popular.”

At your service
recalled students walking out of classes in protest after a grand jury decided not to indict the police officer in Garner’s death.

“What the students said over and over was that we need you to help us understand race and racism in the United States,” Tolliver said.

In addition to faculty and administrators, the conference drew on the experiences and perspectives of students, including three from John Jay College of Criminal Justice who were part of a panel discussion of Muslim awareness initiatives at CUNY colleges. The students—Nafiaj Ahmed, Yelida Balouch and Sana Nawaz—have compiled an anthology called “Finding Islam in Tomorrow: Their presentation described efforts on several campuses “aimed at chipping away at the widespread negative stereotypes and images of Muslims as a monolithic group of extremists outside of mainstream American society.”

Four Graduate Center doctoral candidates also presented papers on their research on themes related to the conference. One, by Michael Dorsch, was an analysis of the racial and ethnic socio-demographics of the communities closest to CUNY campuses.

The conference keynote speech was delivered by Kenji Yoshino, Chief Justice Earl Warren Professor of Constitutional Law at NYU School of Law. He addressed inclusion and equity through the perspective of “covering”—a term that describes pressure that racial and sexual minorities feel to continue to mute or downplay their identities. “Finding Islam in Tomorrow: Their presentation described efforts on several campuses “aimed at chipping away at the widespread negative stereotypes and images of Muslims as a monolithic group of extremists outside of mainstream American society.”

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Yoshino, author of Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights, gave a range of examples: Margaret Thatcher, who was instructed to go to a voice coach to lower her voice so she would be perceived as having more gravitas; President Obama, who was told that he could not win national office with two ethnic names; and Julie Chen, who was pressured to have eyelid surgery to become a CBS news anchor.

Drawing on data from a study he did with the Deloitte management consulting firm, Yoshino demonstrated that covering has a significant negative impact on both individuals and the organizations for which they work. Advocating a culture of greater authenticity, he recalled that as a gay man early in his career he was told to avoid writing about gay themes. He said he tried to take the advice for a while but realized he had cut himself off from his passion. He ultimately rejected the demand to cover, he said, and received tenure unambiguously. He shared this story, he said, to underscore that while the melting pot ideal suggests advancement is related to assimilation, it may be just as true that advancement is related to authenticity.

The nuances involved in the faculty hiring process were reviewed in an interactive presentation called It Depends on the Lens: Unconscious Bias in the Faculty Search Process by Cornell University’s Interactive Theater Ensemble. The group uses video, live actors and audience participation to address unconscious gender, age bias and other biases in faculty hiring.

A midday panel on “Women and Leadership: Empowering the Next Generation in Higher Education,” moderated by Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Management Giovanna R. Waters, offered strategies for advancement. Framed by the fact that only one in four college presidents in the United States are women, the panel featured nationally recognized thought leaders such as Joyce Brown, president of the Fashion Institute of Technology; Chancellor Nancy Cantor of Rutgers-Newark; Abigail Stewart of the University of Michigan; and the Graduate Center’s president, Chas F. Robinson. The panelists highlighted aspects of their own careers and offered practical advice for the next generation, not the least of which was: “Love what you do.”

Ann Kirschner, dean of Macaulay Honors College, delivered the closing remarks of the conference by sharing her personal experiences as someone who has felt like an outsider—“the other,” as she put it—at various times in her life.

Kirschner grew up in Jackson Heights, Queens, the daughter of a woman who survived a Nazi concentration camp and “learned English when I did.” After attending SUNY Buffalo, she went to graduate school at Princeton, earning her Ph.D. in English and teaching Victorian literature as a lecturer. Later, she shifted gears to become an entrepreneur in media and technology, launching satellite and Internet businesses for the National Football League. She said she certainly felt like an outsider during that part of her career.

“The flip side of this is that being ‘the other’ and having a different point of view gives you certain advantages,” Kirschner said. “I see difference as an asset.”

At the NFL, she said, “I think I saw new opportunities faster because I didn’t have the reverence not to start something new.”

She added, “You can make the moral and philosophical case for diversity. But you can also make the economic case. It’s the practical thing to do.”
May 26
Cuba and the World, 1995-2015
The Graduate Center
4 p.m.-6 p.m.

May 27
Best Selling Author Series: Joseph Finder
Hunter College
7 p.m.-9 p.m.

June 1
The Power of Legacy: Letty Cottin Pogrebin in Conversation with MarciaAnn Gillespie
The Graduate Center
6:30 p.m.

June 7
The St. Louis Passengers and the Holocaust
Queensborough Community College
1 p.m.

June 11
Beyond Sacred: Unthinking Muslim Identity
LaGuardia Community College
6:30 p.m.

Through May 21
The Future of Justice Exhibition -- Student Expressions of Justice
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Through June 30
Ravi Shankar: Connections through Music
The City College of New York
11 a.m. – 7 p.m

May 29
CUNY Asian American Film Festival
The University
6 p.m.-8 p.m.

May 30
Curious George
Borough of Manhattan Community College
1:30 p.m.$25

June 10
Re-Designing Women
Baruch College
8 p.m.-9:30 p.m.$30.

El Conde Y La Condesa
Lehman College
7 p.m.$40

June 25
Willy Wonka Jr.
Baruch College
7 p.m. -9 p.m.$25 Adults ($30 at door)$20 Children 12 & under ($25 at door)$20 Group rate for 12 or more

May 27
New York Andalus Ensemble
Spring Concert
The Graduate Center
7 p.m.-9 p.m.$13 ($10 students)

June 4
Sidra Bell Dance New York
Unidentifiable; Bodies
Baruch College
8 p.m.–10 p.m.Tickets $20, Students and Seniors, $10.

June 5
NYC Classical Guitar Society presents Pablo Sáinz Villegas, guitar
Baruch College
8 p.m.-10 p.m.$27.50

June 11
Jazz Past & Present
Borough of Manhattan Community College
8 p.m. $45

June 22
Julian Elvira, 2014 Composer's Commission Premiere
The Graduate Center
7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Ken Burns, Geoffrey Ward At Roosevelt House
Filmmaker Ken Burns explains what drew him to the lives of Franklin, Eleanor and Theodore Roosevelt and why their stories are so relevant today. He was joined by Geoffrey Ward, co-creator of the acclaimed PBS seven-part documentary, “The Roosevelts: An Intimate History.”

Dr. Mary Bassett, the commissioner of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, spoke at the Graduate Center about her efforts to transform public policy through the pursuit of health-equity strategies. For more than 30 years, Bassett has dedicated her career to advancing health equity, domestically and across the globe. As deputy health commissioner, Dr. Bassett directed initiatives such as the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s Office of Public Health Elimination, a program to eliminate health disparities and health inequities among New York City’s most vulnerable populations. As commissioner, she has expanded public health programs and care to neighborhoods with the highest needs.

ART/EXHIBITS
THEATER/FILM
MUSIC/DANCE
LECTURES/PANELS
SPECIAL EVENTS

Walter Mosley
Ken Burns
Ravi Shankar
Sidra Bell Dance New York
NYC Classical Guitar Society
Jazz Past & Present
Julian Elvira
Ken Burns
Geoffrey Ward
New York Andalus Ensemble
Baruch College
Queensborough Community College
The Graduate Center
Manhattan Community College
The Graduate Center
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
The City College of New York
The University
Lehman College
Baruch College
Baruch College
LaGuardia Community College
The Graduate Center
Matteo Marchi
Lehman College

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