Remarkable Students Enjoy Degree of Success
Highlights from Commencements of 2003

By Drew Fetherston

In a perfect world, this story would begin here and its jump would be a few thousand pages long, chronicling the struggles and triumphs of the more than 28,500 women and men who received a degree from CUNY in the last month. It would give a full account of students like Emmanuel Fallah, who emerged from a Nigerian refugee camp to complete his nursing studies at the College of Staten Island and who hopes to return to aid his suffering people. It would tell Lidiija Markes’ story: growing up in Croatia, losing her father to heart disease and her country to war, yet persevering to graduate from the Borough of Manhattan Community College with a near-perfect GPA.

It would tell of Bridgete Smith, an immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago whose struggle with lupus led her to major in medical nutrition under mentorship of a Lehman College professor. It would detail the life of John Bradley, who turned to CUNY after being laid off in the early 1990s at age 48, after 23 years’ work as a journeyman steamfitter.

For a story on a century to more than 43 All-American honors this year. Except for one in basketball, all were in track and field. See page 5.

Salk Scholarships
Keynote Speaker Tells Her Story

At the annual Salk Awards ceremony, Dr. Angela Diaz told of parlaying classes taken at City College into a major career in adolescent health at Mt. Sinai Hospital. See page 4.

Bronzino’s Erotic Motifs Explored at Grad Center on his 500th

It took this Venus, Goddess of Love, painted in the 16th century by the painter-poet Agnolo Bronzino, more than a century to durobe. For a report on a conference on him, see page 12.

Sound Design Wizard at College of Technology Creates “Virtual” Music

That is not a framed poster but a new breed of speakers seen with Professor of Sound Design David Smith. For a story on his advances in re-creating orchestral sound and the worldwide tours of his virtual musicians, see page 3.

York Hails New President; Farewell at John Jay

As the academic year concluded, milestones at two colleges were announced. At York College, Dr. Robert L. Hampton, the University of Maryland’s associate provost for academic affairs and dean of undergraduate studies, has been chosen as president by the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of Chancellor Matthew Goldstein after a national search.

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In the course of earning her 2003 doctorate in the Molecular Cell Development sub-program from the CUNY Graduate Center, Garcia inevitably became a lab animal, studying the mechanisms involved in visual and central nervous system development. As part of this research, she identified a novel gene that appears to play a role in “growth cone navigation” during development of the central nervous and visual systems.

Garcia’s Bachelor’s is from Hofstra University, and her Master’s is from Long Island University, where she worked on stem cell research. Afterward, she worked in Amplicon Corporation labs on mapping newly-identified genes involved in breast cancer pathogenesis, then in North Shore University Hospital labs on genes involved in rheumatoid arthritis and perfect pitch. At the Graduate Center, Garcia was the recipient of a Humana Two-Year Fellowship and a Presidential Dissertation Fellowship.

Continued on page 6
Weathering the Budgetary Storm

Following is an excerpt adapted from a full-length, extensively edited article by Jacqueline Golub, which may be found in its entirety in the current issue of Presidency magazine.

"Uncertainty," wrote psychoanalyst and social philosopher Erich Fromm in his book "The Sane Society," "is the very starting point for all action. It attacks the mind's ability to organize the given world and makes it face a situation of risk and possibility."

Adapted and expanded here is a story from a new second-season edition of CUNYTV's "Study With the Best" which airs Sundays at 8 p.m.

I n November of 2001, Adolfo Carrion was elected Bronx Borough President. It seemed like the perfect result of a natural progression. He had grown up in the borough and had taught school there. He also worked as a city planner and as a district manager of Bronx Community Board 5. Eventually, he served as a city councilman from the Bronx.

Carrion has dedicated his career of public service to the Bronx, but he did leave the Bronx at least once—to attend Hunter College on the Upper East Side.

"I went to Public School 111, Junior High School 142," Carrion recalls, "and I was in the second graduating class from Harry Truman High School in Co-op City. Being here in the city, being a 'city kid,' has been the most enriching life that you could have."

Carrion soon found himself pursuing those goals not in a pulpit but in a classroom. "I was working with kids right here in the inner city, on 184th Street between Morris and Walton Avenues."

Feeling constrained by the curriculum, however, Carrion went to his principal and urged a teaching plan that involved city planning and architecture. "I said, if we allow these kids to approach their environment from a completely different angle, I think they will discover the place where they live. They will begin to understand how local government works."

Carrion recalls with a laugh, "It was kind of humorous. My seventh graders got the giggles when they found their first common denominator in their bathrooms. What happens when you flush the toilet? Answering that question took us to the water supply, to the history of infrastructure in the Bronx, to water pressure and how a toilet tank refills. Then we addressed the issue of the pipes maintained? Who decides? How are these people elected?"

"That experience was for me the trigger to want to affect more than just 30 kids in a classroom," Carrion remembers. Soon he was a student of urban planning at Hunter College, and he was eventually earning a Master's in the discipline there. "It was one of the most exciting chapters of my life. This launched me into politics, because I now started to understand how decisions were made and who was making them. And I said, 'You know what— I can do that! I can represent people.'"

Carrion never thought at that time he would one day be president of the Bronx, but then he adds, "Any of us can achieve anything—anything we put our minds to. Look at the people who have graduated from City University. We have Nobel Laureates, we have prizewinning authors and scientists; we have former mayors; we have graduates who have accomplished great things."

"The purpose of democratic government is to enfranchise people by educating them so that they can be further enfranchised both politically and economically. We must break up the culture of poverty, and the only way we're going to do that is to educate people," Carrion says. "I am on a mission to allow people to be enfranchised and to achieve the American dream. It may sound corny, but it's what makes me wake up in the morning."

Adolfo Carrion, Former Teacher, on Education

Bronx Community College, where he received his associate degree, is an "ideal environment to allow people to grow and achieve," the former teacher and current Bronx Borough President says. "It is an academic environment, and the only way we're going to do that is to educate people."
Making the Virtual Orchestra a Reality

By Gary Schmidgall

When the fiery clash between Broadway producers and musicians was resolved after a short strike in March, David B. Smith, chair of the program in Entertainment Technology at New York City College of Technology, was delighted. "All this rancor was not good for Broadway, and I think the agreement ended up in a fair place."

City Tech's resident sound wizard had a keen professional interest in the Broadway cliffhanger, however. When Smith is not focusing on his campus duties, his thoughts are apt to float through the looking-glass into the astonishing sound world of the "virtual orchestra"—a terrain populated by MIDI files, DML's "patches," and TAP edits. In especially dreamy moments, Smith—who earned a Doctor of Musical Arts in composition and electronic music from the University of Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music—will sometimes peer into the future and see million-point Fast Fourier Transform convolution and performance spaces boating a thousand speakers.

Welcome to the leading edge of virtual orchestral sound design, to which Smith has devoted his professional attention for 15 years—virtually, as it were, from the birth of the field in the late 1980s. His interest in computer-generated music began in the heyday of Switched on Bach and the Moog synthesizer (that is, Prof. Moog of Queens College), when he was well along in a 15-year stretch of violin studies.

In 1999, Smith and Fred Bianchi, a digital music colleague from his Conservatory years, decided to put their expertise to the commercial test and formed the Multidown Manhattan firm Realtime Music Solutions (Bianchi is director of Music Technology at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.) Their students in a sound design class at City Tech. Below, David Smith working with students in a sound design class at City Tech. Photo, Michele Forsten.

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Obstacles and Perseverance—Tale of Salk Awards’ Keynoter

A ngela Diaz came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic when she was 15 to be with her mother. She entered high school and was put in an ESL class with younger students who spoke all different languages. But we had a wonderful teacher who found creative ways to get us to communicate with each other. Because she was good at it, I was allowed into a math class to study algebra. I could understand the signs and symbols, if not the language, and did well. But when I went to take the Regents exam I couldn’t understand the directions, and I flunked it.

After decreasing in an algebra class on her lunch hour, she passed it on her sec- ond try, but then, much perplexing her teachers, she became a drop-out in her senior year of high school. They kept call- ing her, offering help even asking if she was pregnant. Diaz very indignantly responded, “No, I haven’t even had sex!” Finally they struck a bargain with her: if she came back and took a few more courses, she would be able to graduate with her class. So she did.

But her mother did not approve of the idea of going away to college. In their cul- ture girls who are virgins must live with their family, she insisted. “I didn’t know what to do. My mother didn’t speak English, and I had no one to advise me.” Then Diaz found City College, just a few blocks from her home.

One day, a year later, she saw a sign for Columbia University and walked in. “I had always wanted to be a doctor, so I asked what I had to do to get into medical school. I was told I had to take this course and that course, and I said I’ve already taken those courses at City College.” Can I apply?” The registrar handed me an application and I asked her for a pen and filled it out right there. She asked me for the $15 application fee—this was in 1977, remember—which I didn’t have! Still, I was called back for an interview and I got in. It wasn’t until I was in my second year in medical school that something clicked. I became centered: I knew where I was going—and why.”

Such was the tale of perseverance Diaz told to a riveted audience as keynote speaker for this year’s Jonas E. Salk Awards ceremony, and the happy ending to her story has been unfolding ever since.

She never looked back, despite mar- riage and the birth of three children by the time she finished medical school and her residency. She completed her post- doctoral training at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and is now Dr. Angela Diaz, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center, Crystal Professor of Pediatrics at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and one of New York magazine’s “Best Doctors in New York.”

The New York State Department of Health named the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center a Center for Excellence in Adolescent Health in 2000. Her many honors fill pages. Diaz told the newest Salk Scholars and their proud families, “I love what I do. I love working with adolescents. Although I am trained as a pediatrician, this is the population that I most love working with. There isn’t a day in my life when I don’t think I am in the perfect profession.”

She has also worked with international health projects in Asia, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe and Africa, and is deeply involved in health advocacy and policy in the U.S. In 1994 she was selected as one of 17 White House Fellows from nearly 1,300 appli- cants and was assigned by the Department of Interior to assess health care delivery in the U.S. Pacific Islands and Virgin Islands.

And Diaz has not ceased being a student. Unwilling to rest on her newly- earned Harvard M.P.H. laurel, she is now working toward a Ph.D. in epidemiology at Columbia.

The Salk Scholarships are the legacy of the developer of the polio vaccine nearly half a century ago. Dr. Salk, a graduate of City College, turned down a ticker tape parade in honor of his discovery, and asked instead that the money be used for scholarships. The city provided initial funding for the Salk Scholarships in 1953. The endowment now provides a stipend of $6,000 per scholar for medical school.

The Salk Scholars were selected by a panel of distinguished physicians, all Salk Scholar alumni, based on the quality of the scientific research conducted by the students, who have glowing recommenda- tions by professors and mentors. The eight winners and five honorary scholars were recognized for their research in biochem- istry, genetics, environmental toxins, brain development, physics, immunology and other fields.

Among this year’s Salk Scholars is Chiyeda Small, whose life-long love of science developed into an interest in scientific research after her freshman year at City College, when she spent the summer studying immunoglobulin class switching in a human monoclonal B-cell line at Cornell University Medical School. She continued her interest in immunity in the City College laboratory of Professor Shubha Govind, where she studied hema- topoiesis and cellular immunity in the fruity. Her collaboration with a graduate student resulted in a refereed publication in 2002 in BioTechniques.

She will attend Mount Sinai School of Medicine for a Ph.D. in immunology.

Kanwal Farouki, another Salk Scholar, was an independent lead person in a complex research project on the role of p53, a tumor repressor cell, in Professor Carol Wood Moore’s microbiology lab at City College. Because cancer cells often arise after their DNA has undergone dam- age, DNA damage has become a signal for p53 activation. Her research has resulted in academic presentations and an up-com- ing publication. She will attend New York Medical College.

Other Salk Scholarship winners, their colleges, and the medical schools they will attend include: Mihal Rivlin (Hunter), Albert Einstein College of Medicine; Susan Bard (Brooklyn), SUNY Downstate Medical Center; Jeanne Amtia (Hunter), Albert Einstein College of Medicine; Frank Aksaw (Hunter), University of Rochester Medical School; Amir Estphan (Staten Island), SUNY Downstate; and Ronald Charles (City), Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

The honorary Salk Scholars are: Phyllis Eze (City), SUNY Downstate; Kwasi Mansu (Hunter), SUNY Downstate; Larissa Orelif (Queens), University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine; Sheila Saint Fleur (Brooklyn), N.Y.U. School of Medicine; and Rachna Sondhi (Staten Island), SUNY Downstate.

ING Corporation Funds Scholarships for Children of 9/11 Families

T he ING DIRECT Kids Foundation has set aside $167,000 (plus possi- ble future contributions) to be dis- tributed as scholarships to part-time CUNY students who had a parent killed or severely injured in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Foundation, an offshoot of ING, the corporation that does banking, insurance and asset management in 60 countries – was devel- oped to improve the quality of life of children and adolescents.

“We were looking for some place where we could make a differ- ence,” said Deneen Donnley-Evans, the Foundation’s executive director, in explaining how CUNY had been chosen. “We didn’t want to be one cog in a big machine.”

CUNY and its part-time students have a special resonance for Donnley-Evans: Her mother, a corrections officer, was a part-time student for most of the time from the late 1960s until she earned her degree from John Jay College in 1974. Nonetheless, find- ing a place for the fund took some doing. “We had been looking for two years to donate money to help children who were affected by 9/11,” Donnley-Evans said. “We couldn’t find a group that was- n’t being helped by other organizations.”

Full-time students affected by the 9/11 attack are covered by a New York State program. CUNY has 30 participants in that program, which disbursed more than $100,000 in its first year.

About 40 percent of CUNY’s more than 400,000 students attend part-time, and there was no aid program covering them, aside from minimal TAP support. “This new program helps fill a significant gap since the existing World Trade Center Memorial Scholarships are only available to full-time students,” said Chancellor Matthew Goldstein. “I am deeply grateful to Deneen Donnley-Evans… and her colleagues at the ING DIRECT Kids Foundation.”

The ING DIRECT scholarship will be available to students who, in addition to having been affected by the attacks, also meet the University’s admissions criteria for matriculated undergraduate standing, who attend one of the colleges part-time and who demonstrate financial need. An eligible student who remains in good academic standing may receive funds for a maximum of 10 semesters. The University will set the award amounts, based on its regular financial aid calculations.
2003 Guggenheims For Three Faculty

The appointment of three CUNY teachers made 2003 a bumper year for Guggenheim Fellows, as three were announced by the Foundation in May.

Zoe Beloff, a video artist and adjunct professor of media and communication arts at Brooklyn College, will use her fellowship to create a video installation employing photographs made by an early 20th-century Parisian medium of her sitters. Beloff’s work has included a variety of cinematic imagery, film, stereoscopic projection performance, and interactive media.

Queens College professor emerita of English and prominent New York City poet Marie Ponsot will use her Guggenheim to complete her next volume of poetry (her last collection, Springing from Knopf last year). “I have about 20 poems finished, and I need about 20 more,” she said.

Roger Sanjek, the Queens College anthropologist featured in the May issue of CUNY Matters for his pioneering research on ethnicity and race in Queens, will use his fellowship to complete a book on the Gypsy Pantevie. “The Pantevie, which I advocate for the aging—a very timely topic, given the current “graying” of the U.S. population expected in the next decade.”

Summer Conference on Teaching Holocaust at Queensborough

The first conference in the nation to explore the teaching of Holocaust and Genocide studies at community colleges will take place on August 10-11 at Queensborough Community College, under the auspices of the College’s Holocaust Resources Center, which is now celebrating its 20th anniversary. Dr. William Shulman, the founder and director of the Center, calls the Holocaust “a watershed in the 20th century” that has had “an impact on everything that has happened since.” Emphasizing the importance of the subject for the 21st-century classroom, he observes, “Genocide studies are crucial learning from the darkest eras of human history is essential for the understanding of ethical behavior.”

The conference will bring together those who have already taught these subjects and those interested in instituting them. Sessions will be hosted by professors nationwide. Among the presentations will be “The Social Psychology of the Holocaust: Exploring Human Behavior in Extremity,” “Genocide and the Holocaust: From the Armenians to the Trial of Slobodan Milosevic,” and “Literature and History: Natural Partners in Teaching about the Holocaust.” For more information on the conference contact Dr. Shulman at 718-281-5770 or WShulman@qcc.cuny.edu.

Housed in Queensborough’s Library, the Center—the only one of its kind serving New York City and Long Island—offers a series of public lectures, collaborates in curriculum development, offers both Center and traveling exhibitions, and has loan programs that draw from its thousands of volumes and hundreds of videos on the Holocaust and related subjects.

The Holocaust Resources Center, on the Bayside campus, is open M-Th 9 to 4; F 9 to 3; and one Sunday a month 10 to 2 (its web site is www.qcc.cuny.edu/ HolocaustCenter/).

$10M Donation at Brooklyn College

Long recognized for its distinguished performing arts curriculum—in music, theater, dance, film, television and radio—Brooklyn College will soon have outstanding campus facilities to match. President Christoph Kimmich recently announced that two of the College’s alumni, Leonard and Claire Tow ($50 and $52, respectively) are donating $10 million for a new Center for the Performing Arts. This is the largest single donation in the College’s history, eclipsing the $6.5 million bequest from former philanthropy professor Walter Cerf that came in 2002.

The gift, Kimmich predicted, “will transform the arts on campus, and we are exceptionally grateful.” Lindy Hanlon, chair of the College’s Arts Council, agreed: “This gift will enable our support of an arts curriculum that attracts talented students and faculty from around the world.” Planners for the Tow Center envision performance and rehearsal spaces, set design and construction workshops, exhibition galleries, classrooms, an arcade, and a grand lobby.

Tow is chairman and chief executive of Citizens Communications, a major telephone and cable company, and is also involved in the reorganization of Adelphia Communications. He also serves as a trustee on the Brooklyn College Foundation, and the Tows have hitherto funded scholarships, internships, and research travel stipends for both students and faculty of the College.

City Tech Student Drapes Hussein Statue

One of the most memorable images of the recent invasion of Iraq was that of a young marine clambering up one of the seemingly ubiquitous monumental statues of Saddam Hussein and, snapping the dictator’s head, first with an American and then an Iraqi flag.

 Responsibility for that Kodak moment was a once-and-future student at New York City College of Technology. Edward Chin is seen here with his wife Anna Fu, a current City Tech student who expects to get her Associate’s degree in civil engineering technology next year.

Corporal Chin left the College in 1999 to enlist in the marines, and he is planning to apply for readmission after his release from the military this summer Chin hopes to complete a Bachelor’s in architectural technology, and Fu (who holds an NSF scholarship) will be working toward a Bachelor’s in civil engineering. After graduation and working in their respective fields, the couple envision a husband-and-wife consulting firm that will wave the flag for environmental clean-up and protection.

Four Nominated to Be Distinguished Pros

Four professors, including one new arrival to the University, have been nominated by their colleges to the rank of Distinguished Professor.

Deborah Tannen, who is joining the Lehman College faculty after 12 years as a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University, is the author of several popular books, including You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation. The book was on the New York Times’ best-seller list for almost four years, including eight months as Number One. Tannen is the author of more than 80 scholarly articles.

Edwin G. Burrows, who has been teaching at Brooklyn College since 1974, is the co-author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898. Virginia Valian, a professor of psychology at Hunter College since 1987, is the author of Why So Slow?, an examination of the social forces that hinder women’s advancement that has achieved an impact outside the academic field.

Carl Riskin, who came to Queens College in 1974, is a leading authority on income distribution, poverty and hunger in China. Several of his books have been described by reviewers as classics in the field.

The nominations are to be acted on by the Trustees at their June meeting.
Students Enjoy Degree of Success

Continued from page 1

And her next job will be—Garcia seems to love rubbing it in—yet another laboratory. She has accepted a post-doctoral position at the National Institute of Environmental Health, where her plans to study a signaling pathway that may play a role in the metastasis of cancer tumors.

Two Queens Grads (One Couple)

When Graziela Ionescu met Vasili Byros in an Italian restaurant in Brooklyn that Vasili was managing for his Greek father, something clicked. After they began to talk, he asked me out, and before long, we knew we were meant for each other,” Ionescu recalls. Two days after they graduated from Queens College on May 29, they were married, and in the fall each will be taking up doctoral studies at Yale. Ionescu, in ancient history, Byros in music.

Ionescu, a native of Romania, maintained her 4.0 GPA and was the College’s Commencement speaker A Phi Beta Kappa member, she came to the U.S. after high school and soon enrolled at LaGuardia Community College. At Queens she discovered her passion for Latin, the classics, and ancient Roman history, becoming especially interested in researching the little-explored subject of the relations of the Roman Empire with Dacia, as Romania was called in ancient times.

“No other place could have helped me develop the kind of political consciousness that well prepared me to the world I entered after college,” Ionescu says. “No other place could have helped me further my interests as Queens College did.”

A New Bus Route in Brooklyn: The Gleason Depot to CUNY BA

Sometimes, late in the night, a young passenger will stay on the bus of Augustine Jessamy to the end of the line in Brownsville, talking about plans and dreams.

Jessamy, who has been driving the B35 bus along Church Avenue in Brooklyn for nearly seven years, offers the benefit of broad experience in juggling job, family and education. During those years, he spent nights at the wheel of his bus and days with his shoulder to the wheel of a college education.

He is among this spring’s graduates of the CUNY Baccalaureate Program, having completed work for a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration at Brooklyn College.

The 43-year-old native of Grenada, who came to this country in 1986, attended with the help of a Thomas W. Smith academic scholarship, which he was granted after he earned an Associate’s degree with honors from Kingsborough Community College. “That covered my tuition and books,” he says.

After he came to Brooklyn, Jessamy worked as a field inspector for an insurance company. “When I was laid off in a downsizing, I was forced to look around for any job I could get,” he recalls. “I had a young son, born in 1992, so it was kind of a panic situation. A friend of mine said, ‘Why not take the bus driver exam?’

Jessamy took the test and passed, but the first offers were for driving in Manhattan and New Distinguished Professor Applauds Her Students

On January 27, when the Board of Trustees formally appointed Jerrilynn D. Dodds a Distinguished Professor, the architectural historian, formerly on the Columbia University faculty, spoke briefly but passionately about her City College students. Referring to her new title, Dr. Dodds said:

It is a title I owe most of all to City College students—students from the School of Architecture, with their piercing intelligence, their staggering drive and dedication, and their knowledge of a world which I only knew as an intellectual construct before I came here…If my writing was about cultural inter-areas, known as “The Strip,” from 110th to 125th Streets. Talk about street theater.

Henry Miller

The Strip,” then the Stage Former Beat of New Ph.D.

For 15 years, from 1965 to 1980, Henry Miller was a police officer assigned to District 3 of the then New York City Transit Police in Harlem. At that time, District 3 covered what was one of Harlem’s toughest, most crime-ridden areas, known as “The Strip,” from 110th to 125th Streets. Talk about street theater.

But all the while, Miller, newly minted as a CUNY Ph.D. in Theater, was becoming a veteran of the 1960s/70s African-American theater. Now 60, he was a founding member of the Joseph Patterson Players in the South Bronx and also worked with the Afro-American Repertory Theater in Harlem. (His wife is a retired Harlem public school principal.)


A MAGNET—Minority Access/Graduate Networking—Fellow, Miller has also been an engaged theatrical practitioner as well as scholar. He has original plays and musical theater works among his credits, and, most recently directed main-stage operatic productions of Porgy and Bess in Philadelphia and Indianapolis. His one-act plays, The Christmas Eve Companion Plays: A Winter Reunion and Gifts of Parting, won awards in 1995 and 1998. His latest work-in-progress, Only Yesterday, will be a drama employing the music of Duke Ellington that takes place at the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s.

Miller, a South Bronx native (his mom was a Harlem beauty queen), grew up in the former neighborhood of Isaac Bashevis Singer and attended the same junior high school as Colin Powell.

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Multiculturalism, that word by which we have come to distinguish part of the City College experience, is not on any level some kind of compensatory consideration there, a kind of politically correct, working-class consolation which one might weigh against the competitive excellence of a private college education.

It doesn’t work that way. City students are intensely stimulating; they are intellectually challenging and alive. And further, I believe that City students, because of their deep understanding of the urban world of negotiated identities and ambivalent boundaries, understand more about the world which is to come than any other college students. I know their life experience, together with their City College education, grid them uniquely to lead this generation. They are prepared for leadership in this international, urban world more than any Ivy League students I have taught…

The Gleason Depot to CUNY BA

Singer and attended the same junior high school as Colin Powell.

Henry Miller
the Bronx. Instead, he began working for a social service agency in Brooklyn. "I worked in a facility for homeless young women with children," he recalls. "We would screen them and house them for a maximum of six months. We prepared them to live on their own. It was deeply satisfying work, which left him with a resolve to continue trying to help people in need. He went on to become manager of a full-service office at Morgan Guaranty while, starting in 1994, carrying a full-credit load at Kingsborough. "Working full-time and studying full-time was really a killer," he recalls. A second son arrived, tightening the financial screws. When the MTA called with an offer of a Brooklyn route, he took it. He now works out of the Jackie Gleason Depot on Fifth Avenue and 39th Street. Driving, Jessamy says, allowed him to contemplate education, because "bus drivers pick their shifts and days off approximately every two months." He drove from mid-afternoon to the early morning hours. "I'd go to bed about 2 a.m., get up at 8 and go to class," he recalls. Back home about noon, a few hours' sleep, then back to the Depot. "Had it not been for my wife, Elizabeth, taking up the slack, this would have been impossible for me," Jessamy says. He relaxes by playing guitar and painting landscapes and by writing poetry (sample it on the poetry.com website).

Prof. Hershey Friedman was Jessamy's CUNY/BA mentor at Brooklyn College. "Whenever I called, he was right there," Jessamy says. He was a tremendous help to me."

Even after another ten years as an insurance agent, Gurinsky decided to go for his state license as an insurance agent, and has lined up part-time work with a financial services company. The idea of continuing on for a Master's is parked in the back of his mind, but, Jessamy says with an easy laugh, "For the moment, I plan to keep driving the bus."

A College Nightmare with a Dream Ending

SUSAN MADERA remembers well how—long ago—in 1978—her dream of going to college "turned into a nightmare." Like the majority of New Yorkers, she was bilingual: English and "neighborhood" (here being Little Italy). A very intimidating teacher of Speech 101 at Brooklyn College made so much fun of her "neighborhood" idioms that she dropped out after one semester. Marriage, the birth of two sons, and a steady rise to a word processor position in the research division at Morgan Guaranty followed. Then she resigned to be a full-time mom and began to think about a return to college. In 1999 Madera came to Queensborough Community College, and this June received her Associate's degree with honors in English. She just made her publishing debut with "One Voice," an essay describing her life story that QCC English chair Sheena Gillespie included in the 5th edition of her Precalsus (Allyn & Bacon), a collection of essays on multicultural experiences. Adapted here is the happy ending of her essay.

I was lucky enough to get a position as a typist in a very prestigious company, Morgan Guaranty. I began my career in the typing pool, typing on an IBM type writer. Within a year, word processors came into the office, and I was thrilled to be picked as one of the people trained to use one. Eventually, they made me an offer I could not refuse: I headed a department of word processors in the investment research division. I left Morgan on maternity leave with my first child. Upon my return, I was trained to be on the new IBM computers, and become supervisor of an even larger group of people. But once our son was born and I looked into his sparkling eyes, I knew I could not leave him to the care of a babysitter. When I returned three months later, it was to resign my position. I am still a supervisor, but of our home. Michael is now twelve years old, and Matthew is six. I want our children to have the benefit of a strong background in English. I know the downsfalls of not speaking properly, and I do not want them to experience them, as I have.

"To say that I have conquered all my fears of the English language would be untrue. Twenty-one years after walking away from Brooklyn College, I am back in school at Queensland Community College. What was the first class I decided to take? Why English, of course. I am doing well in my class, and I am proud of myself. I am also quite glad that QCC has decided to give me the three credits I earned in Speech at Brooklyn College, although I barely passed, with a grade of D. I could not have taken that class again.

Over the years, I have gained confidence in myself as a writer. The way I speak does not exemplify who I am, however, my writing is a true expression of the person I am inside. When I write, words come from deep inside of me, and spill out on the page. I never stop to correct myself, as I would if I were speaking. I may speak two languages, but I write with one voice.

From Substance Abuser to City Tech Valedictorian

SUBSTANCE abuse dogged Jed Gelber for two decades—during high school on the Upper West Side, through a year at SUNY Stony Brook, a stint as a Wall Street clerk, then during an enlistment in the U.S. Marines. "I am living proof that we don't just get a second chance in life, we get a third, fourth, or fifth," Gelber says. "But it's not an infinite number, and at some point you either pull yourself out of the pit or languish in it permanently."

Even after another ten years as an abstractor for a title insurance company, Gelber had not hit bottom with his abuse. So, finally, at the age of 40, Gelber did pull himself out of the pit—and into New York City College of Technology's paralegal studies program, the only public one of its kind in the City. "In many ways my life really did begin at 40, when I recovered from my final relapse. That's when I enrolled in City Tech."

He took to campus life, he says, "incredibly well." He was rewarded with a 4.0 that first semester, a GPA he has managed to maintain ever since. "I was especially inspired by my criminal law professor, who is a supervising attorney at the Brooklyn Legal Aid Society," Gelber says. Gelber, always a skilled writer, kept himself afloat financially by working as a writing tutor in City Tech's Office of Student Support Services. Though he will be enrolled at CUNY Law School next fall, he is already mulling a return to campus. "When I finish law school, I'd like to come back and teach a writing course. It will be one way I can give back."

A remarkable irony attended Gelber's graduation. His father Jack Gelber, a noted playwright who died just weeks before the ceremony, first made his name with The Connection, a raw look at the dead-end life of the drug-addicted. Premiered Off Broadway in 1959, the year Jed was born. SEEK and Ye Shall Find—A Path to Yale

Ismaele Jacques, who has been spending a lot of time with 2,3,7,8-tetrachloro-dibenzo-p-dioxin—CTCDD for short, and part of the notorious defective Agent Orange—will soon be graduating from Professor Carol Wood Moore's lab on a project to determine the function of an unknown and conserved protein in yeast—the novel BLM3p gene, which is one of many yeast genes whose function is unknown. Recently, similar genes were found in humans, and BLM3p is considered to be very important in malignant organisms. Charles is particularly interested in understanding how cells respond to damage of DNA and how this gene might help in repair processes. As a sophomore, Jacques convinced her counselors to let her take three of the toughest classes in the College's curriculum all at once: Chemistry 1 (five credits), Organic Chemistry (five credits), and Calculus (three credits), earning two B's and an A. She joined the Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) program in her junior year, with the goal of a career in medical research and teaching. Last summer she interned at Cornell's Medical Center for researchers working on dermal fibroblasts. "When I'm taking a new course, it's almost like I get high on the challenge," she says.

Jacques arrived in the U.S. in 1991 with her parents and three younger brothers from Haiti, lived in a one-room apartment, then moved into larger accommodations in the Marcy Projects in Bushwick. After graduating from Martin Luther King High School, she entered the SEEK program, which offers financial and study support to promising students.

Leaving Bushwick is not without tension for the 21-year-old Jacques. Getting into Yale worried her less than getting to Yale. "I'm claustrophobic," she said. "I sometimes get severe panic attacks on trains, and I can't fly. I was afraid this might limit my choice of schools. But I was really proud it was the first time I had ever gone out of state by myself, and the bus ride was fine."

Medical Dream Comes True for BLM3p Student

Growing up in Grenada, Ronald Charles had the grades to attend medical school, but not enough money to do so. Like so many others, he had to make the heart-wrenching decision to leave home and emigrate to the U.S. for more opportunity, bringing his younger brother with him. Both were accepted into City College as full-time students. But they had to endure poor living conditions, and Ronald worked long hours at low-paying jobs to support them both. Despite these hardship, he established an outstanding academic record and was named a Minority Access to Research Careers Scholar, which paid his tuition and a monthly stipend for his research. He graduated from City College this June and, fulfilling a lifelong dream of becoming a doctor, he has won a Salk Scholarship to medical school.

As a MARC Scholar, Charles worked in Professor Carol Wood Moore's lab on a project to determine the function of an unknown and conserved protein in yeast—the novel BLM3p gene, which is one of many yeast genes whose function is unknown. Recently, similar genes were found in humans, and BLM3p is considered to be very important in malignant organisms. Charles is particularly interested in understanding how cells respond to damage of DNA and how this gene might help in repair processes. His research paper on the subject, "Functional Characterization of BLM3p, a Protein involved in Resistance to Oxidative Damage in Saccharomyces cerevisiae," helped him win an Salk award, which he will enjoy at Weil Medical College of Cornell University.
CUNY Research Chemists Rejoice at Arrival of New Spectrometer

The level of excitement rose sharply among chemistry researchers at the City University on May 22. This was the long-awaited day that the installation was completed on a brand-new Varian Inova 500MHz Multinuclear Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectrometer at City College’s Marshak Science Building.

Professor Mahesh Lakshman, a co-principal investigator on the team responsible for the purchase of the $520,000 instrument, hopes to be putting it through its paces over the summer in his field of organic chemistry. Lakshman will be using the spectrometer to illuminate the causes of cancer, discover new therapeutic compounds, and improve solid-rocket propellant.

Taking a broader view of the future, Lakshman also points out, “The new instrument will help us to develop a research infrastructure that will help us to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and graduate students, who will be eager to use the instrument in their research.” He is also happy to know that the spectrometer and its 300 MHz sidekick will also be used for teaching undergraduate and graduate students, particularly in a training course in advanced NMR technique.

The Inova spectrometer purchased with matching funds from the National Science Foundation, will enable scientists from many CUNY campuses to conduct nationally competitive, cutting-edge research in diverse areas of organic, bio-organic, inorganic, and analytical chemistry. It will also encourage multi-disciplinary collaborations ranging from organic synthesis and bio-organic chemistry to biochemistry and engineering.

Lakshman himself will be exploring the synthesis and study of unusual nucleosides (the basic building-blocks of DNA) as well as DNA that contains these unusual nucleosides. His research is particularly aimed at trying to understand the underlying pathways involved in cancer causation. His prime research concern, using the Inova, will be the unambiguous verification of chemically synthesized nucleosides that can then be inserted into small sections or “turns” of the double-helical strands of DNA.

The high-end spectrometer, which supersedes a lower-end 300MHz spectrometer, will significantly upgrade the data of a wide range of molecules. It will also reduce the amount of material needed for analysis. “The interpretation of data will be much simpler,” Lakshman says, “especially for complex compounds. And any ambiguity in structural characteristics will be significantly lowered.”

Among the scientists eager to use the Inova—for which a special room has been redesigned and modified for temperature control—are several of Lakshman’s CUNY colleagues. Dr. Maria Luisa Tasycos will be examining protein fragments, and Dr. Valerie Balogh-Nair is planning to look for novel pharmacophores—compounds with therapeutic possibilities—that are effective against AIDS-related opportunistic infections.

Dr. Gal Gilchrist will study the S-layer protein of Lactobacillus brevis with a view to characterizing products formed in the molecular engineering of proteins and enzymes in order to enhance their natural functions. Dr. Theodore Axenrod will be focusing on N-nitramino and geminal difluoromethyl solid propellant. This, he hopes, will lead to the synthesis of high energy-density materials to be used as solid rocket propellants.

Dr. Padmanava Pradhan, the laboratory manager for the spectrometer, will himself be using it for stereo-chemistry research, in which the spatial orientation of atoms and substituent groups in organic compounds is plotted. “My focus will be on understanding the interactions between proteins and DNA, with the ultimate goal of understanding better the causes of cancer and developing therapeutic agents,” he says.

Dr. Panayiotis Meleties of Bronx Community College will use the Inova for synthesis of a new class of man-made molecules that mimic natural molecules known to have anti-cancer antibiotic effects. And Dr. Robert Rothchild of John Jay College will use the Inova to study hindered molecular motions in novel “crowded” molecules. He hopes this research will provide better insight into basic behavior of molecules, which may lead to molecules of potential pharmacological and forensic importance.

Lakshman adds, “All of us who have been looking forward to a new NMR spectrometer are particularly grateful to Gillian Small, Associate University Dean for Research. Her assistance was crucial in getting all the participants together to request funds for it, and we are grateful to the NSF for the funds that made the Inova a reality.”

Novel Proteins and Other Inquiries

CUNY faculty have been honored this semester with major grants from foundations, government and industry. The awards, reflecting the diversity of scholarly interests of the faculty across the University, include research in bioengineering, biochemistry and disease control. What follows is a sampling. Visit cuny.edu/news for a complete listing.

-“IGERT: Multiscale Phenomena in Soft Materials,” National Science Foundation, Morton Denn, Levich Institute, City College, $742,000.


-“Teacher Quality Leadership Program,” New York State Education Department, K. Kinsler and M. Gamble, Hunter College, $235,000.

-“Bridges to the Future Program,” U.S. National Institute of Health, C. Wu, LaGuardia Community College, $5,996.

-“EDGE—Adult and Continuing Education Program,” New York State Education Department, J. MacKillop, City College, $196,001.

-“China International Migration Project,” NIH/National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Z. Liang, Queens College, $138,600.


-“Characterization of Novel Proteins Involved in Sterol Homestasis,” Pfizer, G. Small, City College, $110,000.


-“Comprehensive Career Development Program,” New York City Housing Preservation and Development, S. Watson, LaGuardia Community College, $1,469,661.

-“National Center for Permanency Planning,” HHS/Administration for Children & Family Services, B. Leashore and G. Mallon, Hunter College School of Social Work, $1,150,000.

A Film Festival and a Life Celebrated

The Tenth Annual Bronx Community College Film & Video Festival was the scene of a first this year, as the initial awards created in memory of a LaGuardia Community College professor were presented to four student filmmakers. The BCC Media Technology Program established the Peter J. Rondinone Memorial Awards after the LaGuardia professor died last November at age 48. The Media Technology program’s director is Professor Jeffrey Wustrzyck, one of Rondinone’s City College classmates. The awards recognize students who have “demonstrated an ability to make a positive difference in the College and in their community.”

This year’s invitation-only festival, held at the Clearview 59th Street Cinema in Manhattan, was sponsored by the Eastman Kodak Co. A larger festival, with screenings open to the public, will take place on the BCC campus in the fall.

Rondinone’s first teaching assignment was at BCC. He went on to serve as professor of English and director of the journalism program at LaGuardia from 1986 until his death. His screenplay, “Yo-Yo Land,” written with Wustrzyck, was a 1996 finalist in the Sundance Screenwriters Development Award competition, and a finalist in Hollywood’s 1997 Beigel Screenwriting Contest.

Rondinone grew up in the South Bronx, and turned his street experiences into literature, producing a series of short stories that were published, to critical praise, by St. Martin’s Press/Picador under the title “The Digital Hood.” His mentor at CUNY was the author Donald Barthelme.

Rondinone once recalled asking Barthelme, “How can I be like you?” He answered my question with a question: “How many words do you think I put into print before I sold my first short story?” The answer was many thousands.

The BCC Media Technology Program offers student filmmakers practical hands-on skills taught by experienced professionals in media production and management.
The Food of Life—Italian Style

The Food of Life—Italian Style

The Milk of Almonds

The Milk of Almonds: Italian American Women Writers on Food and Culture. Each one of the foods just mentioned—many more, like polenta, pomodori, basile, trippe—appears in a poem in this collection, which was compiled by Louise DeSalvo, newly appointed Jenny Hunter Professor of Literature and Creative Writing at Hunter College, and Edwige Giunta, a native of western Sicily and professor of English at New Jersey City University.

The Milk of Almonds is a perfect collection of poems, essays, stories, and memoirs about every aspect of Italian culture, with food the ever-present, insinuating ingredient. Among the 50 writers included are many whose whose roll off the tongue like the titles of operatic arias: Rosanna Colasurdo, Gioia Timpanelli, Laprada, finocchio, or baked ziti…and rush to the supermarket. Carole Maso, Nancy Savoca, Lucia Perillo, others just emerging.

Nor is The Milk of Almonds a mere light-hearted adventure in buon gusto—The editors have more serious intentions, as their explanation of the title hints: “In Sicily, where spring comes in February, as the almond trees blossom, they signal change, renewal, a rebirth. In the island’s distant, mythical past, Persphone comes back in spring, although temporarily, to her mother—Demeter, goddess of Sicily, goddess of harvest and plenty. At one time, when she was found, then lost again: an endless series of departures and returns, the cycle of seasons, the rhythms of grieving and healing.”

DeSalvo and Giunta have given us the serious note when they conclude their introduction: the book is a highly informative set-piece on almonds: “Though it takes hard work to shell almonds, it takes even harder work to extract milk from them. Crushed almonds, sugar, water: the simple, delicious combination used to make pasta delle noci, almond paste—literally, royal paste—and used to make the milk of almonds, latte di mandorle, the ambrosia of the Italian north.”

The “hard work” of living is also in words—many poems in the book are really about food. Donna Masini’s urgent poem “Hunger” has nothing to do with anything you might pick up at Gristede’s. In DeSalvo’s own memoir “Cutting the Bread,” which serves as the volume’s exit aria, she confesses hatred of her mother’s cooking and recalls her grandmother bitterly muttering mendiola at the awful store-bought white bread her daughter brought home.

Nancy Caronia tells of a family’s refusal to acknowledge the years of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse perpetrated by its patriarch. Finally catching him molesting his granddaughter, her grandmother’s automatic comforting response is to make something to eat. Nancy Savoca’s “Ravioli, Artichokes, and Figs” tells of the author’s dying mother, who, after refusing food for days, agrees to share a fig.

Religion, inevitably, figures in several essays. Sandra Gilbert’s poem “Kissing the Bread” takes flight from the image of the priestly hand offering a crust:

Kissing the bread was kissing the carthage that was the body of every body, the writ of daughter and husband, the crook’d arm of the mother, the stone fist of the father.

On a more exuberant note is Mary Beth Cachetts’s “The Seven Sacraments,” which reports on her cooking up, with a friend on one very busy day in the kitchen, a septet of fish recipes to honor the sacraments. Baptism was liqueur in claire-sainte, the Eucharist was garlic filet of sole over lemon risotto.

Cris Mazza writes wryly about being raised in suburban California by a first-generation father who believed food should be grown, raised, hunted or foraged rather than simply collected from a supermarket. Carole Maso opens the book, fittingly, with a meditation-memoir on breast-feeding titled “Rose and Pink and Round.”

The Milk of Almonds is organized in several sections: Beginnings, Ceremonies, Awakenings, Encounters, Transformations, Communities, Passings, Legacies. Library Journal has called it “highly recommend- ed” for “readers seeking meditations on the reality of women’s lives.”

Hot Peppers

Bright red and pointed like horns, weapons against the evil eye antides to decay lean and dry, asetic extreme like saints revolutionaries that set everything on fire.

— Rina Ferraroli

Poems of Praise from a “Baruch” Life

I not a private allusion, there is certainly a delicious irony in the fact that the phrase “Baruch atah Adonai” figures in one of the poems in Grace Schulman’s latest collection, Days of Wonder: New and Selected Poems (Houghton Mifflin). This is because Schulman began teaching at Baruch College in 1972, and over the years—“to my astonishment,” she says—she rose from adjunct professor to Distinguished Professor of English at the College.

Baruch (blessed) atah (are you) Adonai (God), she says, is a prayer commonly spoken before meals as grace—another self-referential wink of the poet’s eye? In a poem titled “Flags,” Schulman describes her father being asked by a wealthy, xenophobe: “Are you a Jew? If so, I demand that you leave my house and, figure in “Footsteps on Lower Broadway.”

Speaking of Crane, there is also in Days of Wonder a poem titled “Brooklyn Bridge.” Among the new poems is one with a psalmic feel, “Jewish Cemetery, Eleventh Street.” It describes the tiny 200-year-old burial ground of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue on 11th Street near Sixth Avenue.

Schulman is poetry editor for The Nation and a former director of the Poetry Center at the 92nd Street Y.

The Piano

Once men pried loose a window to haul in the Kuave grand piano, and I heard brick scrape dark wood, four legs land with a thud that shook bare walls. Harsh birth. You played Chopin, Father tried Brahms as Jacob fought his angel, and I missed keys. Topaz lamps shone brightly, never on our sheet music but on family photographs on the piano: a lost uncle, decades of cousins. In panic over chords, I could implode the piano’s faces, ponder the lives it held, or, at the worst times, stare at statues: Esther, Saint Luke, a clay Buddha.

When the apartment changed hands, I did not stay to discover how they moved it out.

— from Days of Wonder
Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies Parades

By Gary Schmidgall

The gleam in Martin Duberman’s eye first appeared in about 1986: why not establish a center for the study of homosexuality? The Distinguished Professor of history, who arrived at Lehman College in 1964, reasoned that, given the explosion of serious research and publication on the subject in the post-Stonewall years, the time was ripe to call for “the perks and encouragement and support and legitimacy that a university setting would provide” for the burgeoning field.

Duberman’s brainstorm was also born of frustration. Feeling his own “illuminations” as the tide of Stonewall rolled in, the noted scholar of 19th-century American history and Bancroft Prize-winning biographer of such mainstream figures as Samuel Morse and Charles Francis Adams felt an urge to indulge in a “shift in expertise.”

Part of that shift was a desire to explore his history, so in the early 1970s he offered to teach a Graduate School course on sexuality in history, his course abstract carefully worded not to frighten the horses. “There was instant consterna-
tion! It’s not a recognized discipline!”

Disgusted, Duberman cut his ties with the Graduate Center entirely and settled in to see how long it would take for the Ivory Tower to catch up with the real world. He also got actively involved in the old Gay Academic Union, which mount-
ed a well-attended “watershed” conference at John Jay College in 1973. As it turned out, Duberman and several like-minded academics had to wait about 15 years for the prospects for a Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies—or CLAGS, as it is now universally known—to seriously materialize. The sine qua non, of course, was a change in attitude within the suites of college provosts and presidents. And that happened, after a false start in which Duberman approached Yale University with a proposal to house the nation’s first such center there.

Esther Newton, an early CLAGS Board director, says, “I vividly recall the meeting of our Committee for Lesbian and Gay Studies with former Graduate Center President Harold Proshansky. Having been sub-
ject to for many years at my college to sometimes outright homophobic admin-
istrators, I was prepared for the worst. Instead, Proshansky treated us with respect from the outset. Without mini-

ing the financial and political difficul-
ties, his attitude was: How can we do it? Thanks, Hal!” Duberman, also present, agrees: “It was stunning. Proshansky said, “I really want you to thank you for coming to me with this idea. It’s long overdue.”

Proshansky, however, did set a bar of $50,000 in funds to be raised in order to give the center fiscal credibility, and Duberman says gathering that sum “was no easy matter.”

But slowly, over several years, the seed money was gathered—sometimes from unusual sources. Joseph Wittreich, Distinguished Professor of English at the GC and a long-time and generous sup-
port of CLAGS, likes to recall the anec-
dote of two CUNY graduate students dur-
ing with an elderly neighbor in San Diego and talking excitedly about the plans for CLAGS. “That man—he’s name was David Clarke—soon died, and a bequest from him provided some of CLAGS’s seed money. Clarke’s only stipulation, Wittreich adds, was that, when the two graduate students were able, they should make a comparable gift.”

At long last, in April 1991, the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies was formally established; and immedi-
ately began to thrive with Duberman as founding executive director. Wittreich attributes this in part to “the unflagging commitment of those first board members, notably Sam Phillips, who was then university director of personnel, and the steady support of Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds.” (The good offices of Phillips and Reynolds, Wittreich points out, led to the establishment of domestic partner benefits at CUNY at about this time.) Duberman also acknowledges Frances Horowitz for being “wonderfully friendly and helpful” to CLAGS throughout her Graduate Center presidency.

Two impressive declarations of confi-
dence in CLAGS came very early on. First was a donation of more than $100,000 from Dr David Keuler, a San Francisco, that gave the Center its first endowment fund. It supports the annual Kessler Lecture, which honors “an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the expression and understanding of lesbi-

hian and gay life.” Since 1992, the Kessler roll call has brought to the University such movers and shakers as Joan Nestle, Edmund White, Barbara Smith, Monique Wittig, Esther Newton, Samuel Delany, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, John D’Emilio, Cherríe Moraga, and Jonathan Ned Katz.

Another substantial CLAGS supporter from afar over the decade has been Honolulu resident Irv Kraft, whose donations have even extend-
ed to shipments of chocolate-covered macadamia nuts (see “The Pleasures of CLAGS” sidebar).

Also in 1992 came what Duberman calls “the tremendous boost” of a $250,000 gift from the Humanities Fellowship Program of the Rockefeller Foundation. The three-year grant—which was almost unprecedentedly renewed for three more years—allowed twelve schol-
ars-in-residence to come to the Graduate Center between 1993 and 2000.

CLAGS now has the funds to offer fel-
lowships and prizes of its own. Duberman has endowed a fellowship in his own name which gives $7,500 annually to applicants without respect to nationality or academic affiliation. A $5,000 CLAGS Fellowship goes yearly to scholars early in their careers. The Monette-Horowitz Dissertation Prize honors the distin-
guished gay author Paul Monette and his lover (both AIDS victims), and the recently established Sylvia Rivera Award, honoring the transgender activist, goes to the best book or article in transgender studies.

From the early years, CLAGS has raised the profile of gay studies and facili-
tated national and international exchange of ideas through a monthly colloquium series, panels, and conferences. Sparks flew at an early conference on “The Gay Brain,” during which Simon LeVay pre-
sented his theory of a connection between brain structure and the diversity of human sexual feelings and was sharply critiqued by such skeptics as Carole Vance and William Byrne.

Former Board member Oscar Montero says the “highlight of my tenure was working with Elena Martinez and many others” on two Latino/a conferences. “Being around so many committed, artic-
ulate, energetic folks was tough but tremendously rewarding,” Montero says, adding, “it was great fun!”

In March 1995, more than 500 partici-
pated in a three-day event on “Black Nations/Queer Nations,” and its many interrelated passionate moments were filmed with support of the Ford Foundation. Just a month later, 400 people attended a moving article on transgender studies. “It was great fun!”

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The proof of scholarship is finally in the publishing, and the influence of CLAGS members who are as authors, and of CLAGS itself in facilitating research in the field, has been enormous.

Duberman is practically a one-man Bronx cheer at that ridiculous notion of 30 years ago that gay studies “is not a dis-

cipline.” Predating CLAGS was his impor-
tant Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past, which was fol-

lowed by a memoir titled Care: A Gay Man’s Odyssey; a study of the ruckus on Christopher Street, Stonewall; another memoir, My Life: Queer, and a recently, a collection of vigorous political essays, Left Out: The Politics of Exclusion.

But, as far as CLAGS is concerned, the jewel in Duberman’s publishing crown are two titles he edited: A Queer Life: The CLAGS Reader, and the massive Queer Representations: Reading Lives, Reading Cultures (both published in 1987). The latter, which gathers together the work of countless scholars from a wide range of disciplines that were touched in some way by CLAGS, is perhaps the definitive demonstration that the discipline of gay and lesbian studies is not only thriving, but here to stay.

CLAGS also created a productive com-

munity of gay and lesbian writers within CUNY. Among many other present and past CLAGS Board members who have published in the field are Mark Blassius (Political Science at LaGuardia and the GC), who co-edited We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook for Gay and Lesbian Politics, and Steven Krueger (English, Queens and the GC), author of AIDS Narratives: Gender and Sexuality, Fiction and Science. Elena Martinez, Chair of Modern Languages at Baruch College, is the author of Latin America, Representacion en Julian Del Casal. And Esther Newton has to her credit Mother Camp, a study of Female Impersonators in America, and a history of 80 years in the gay community on Fire Island.

James Saslow, of Queens College and the Graduate Center, was on CLAGS’s founding committee and has almost single-handedly joined the disciplines of gay stud-
ies and art history, notably with Gamynder in the Renaissance. Homosexuality in Art and Society and Painter and Passion: A History of Homosexuality in the Visual Arts. Saslow is currently helping CLAGS to plan an art history conference in 2004. Robert Reid-Pharr, now arrived in the Graduate Center’s English program and now a CLAGS Board member, is the author of Black Gay Man. Robert Kaplan, a CLAGS member from 1996 to 2001, is currently working on a disser-


He is particularly happy that, of late, CLAGS has been focusing more attention on quality-of-life-and-learning within
CUNY His fondest memory is of the “sunny Saturday morning in May 2000 when 60 queer students, faculty, and staff from around the University met for the first annual Queer CUNY conference to discuss the joys and travails of being out—or not out, or semi-out—on campus.” It was good to feel “exhalation that CLAGS was beginning to get more involved in the life of its home institution,” Kaplan says.

Among CLAGS projects aimed at fertilizing LGTBQ—Lesbian/Gay/Transgender/Bisexual/Queer—pedagogy nationally was the establishment in 1995 of a systematic collection of college syllabi (it went online a few years later). Calls from around the country about these syllabi are now coming into the CLAGS office, which is staffed by several part-time graduate students.

In 1999 two new media for the dissemination of work in the field arrived: an email discussion listerv (gendersexstud-ies-l) and a book series collaboration with N.Y.U. Press, Sexual Cultures: New Directions from CLAGS. Spring 1999 also brought the announcement of the position that Jill Dolan was leaving CUNY for the University of Texas. Alisa Solomon, a Baruch College professor of English and Journalism and three-term CLAGS Board member, was her successor as director.

In the spirit of the founder’s articulate politics of race and culture, and a roundtable panel, there were also local, national, and international. We have conversed with countless LGTBQ researchers who have dropped by our office or sent us e-mails. We have awarded some 70 fellowships and prizes, collaborated with dozens of academic, community, and activist organizations—local, national, and international. We have difficulty in mathematics and in English. This is revolutionary in this city and quite exciting.

A: We had forty, fifty math curricular and thirty-five different literacy programs. We have—especially in our poverty areas—enormous mobility inside the city. So you may have a young teacher move from school to school two or three times and face a new curriculum each time. So why not try to make it easy? If we were getting good results from all these curriculums, I’d say “let a thousand flowers bloom,” and we’d have a beautiful garden. But instead we have been getting very different outcomes.

Q: I am particularly impressed with the notion of a common curriculum, which is so fundamental in mathematics and in English. This is revolutionary in this city and quite exciting.

A: Standardized test scores. I don’t want to exaggerate their significance, but they are a reasonable measure in terms of whether we are raising performance. We have the data and indeed the federal and state governments are going to use these tests to define our future. We will also look at our graduation rates, the rates of students passing the Regents exam, our attendance rates. We will be very transparent about it. My view is that you put this data out there. You don’t try to spin it.

Q: What are you going to do that is different from what others have attempted, and how is that going to be conceptualized and organized?

A: You are absolutely right about this—and this comes from my own experience in life. This is the way parents, my parents saw the role of public education in my own life. People used to say, well, your parents read to you at home, but my parents didn’t read to me at home. But they conveyed to me that, frankly, if I wanted to live a different life, an economically more secure life than they had lived, then education was the medium to do so. They conveyed that I would be unfortunate if I didn’t seize it. Even though I was a young kid, I had to understand that. So a core thing we are doing is putting a parent coordinator in each school. This is a new position, and this is going to be somebody whose full-time job it is, and we are going to have a training program for them as well. The parent coordinator will relate to the parents in the building.

Q: What are some of the things that get you upset, surprise you, make you just want to bang some heads together?

A: The fundamental problem is that too often in the system the interests of others take precedence over kids. Let’s face it, whether it’s vendors or whether it’s interest groups, whether it is a particular constituency, or how we hire—all those kinds of issues come up in the system and overwhelm the children, who, after all, are not an organized constituency. And I think that has been at times damaging, frustrating. But keeping the focus on the needs of kids is critical. The second thing that surprised me, I think in a very positive way, is how many times, despite common wisdom, you will find very tough neighborhoods, high-functioning schools, where you will have a principal who has created a learning environment that is exciting, that works for the teachers. There is an alignment, not a war/they confrontation, that works. You can tell walking into a building, you can tell whether the principal knows the kids in the building.

The Pleasures of CLAGS

ALISA SOLOMON’S TOP TEN LIST

1. Listening to Joan Nestle’s inaugural Kessler Lecture—not nothing short of thrilling.
2. Being part of the energetic debate at the town-hall meeting that closed the truly groundbreaking “Black Nations/Queer Nations” conference.
3. Watching Carmelita Tropicana capture the high emotion of the Queer Theater Conference as she emce-ed a performance evening.
4. Creating up-coming programs joining LGTBQ Studies and Disability Studies.
5. Learning from master teachers at our regular Pedagogy Workshops.
6. Winning approval of an Interdisciplinary LGTBQ Concentration at the GC.
7. Hazing out ideas for an international network of LGTBQ researchers with some 100 scholars and activists from 35 countries last November.
8. Working daily—and eating Hawaiian chocolates—with a staff made in heaven.
9. Feeling the love (yes, really) at our first Board meeting after 9/11—and agreeing to run a special CLAGS News to help us think through the horror.
10. Dancing cheek-to-cheek with my partner, Marilyn Kleinberg Neimark, in total bliss at the CLAGS 10th-anniversary bash after Judith Butler’s inspiring Kessler Lecture.

Joel Klein Discusses Testing Issues, Parental Involvement in City’s Schools

Innovation and meaningful change were among the topics of discussion for New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, the special guest of Chancellor Matthew Goldberg on a recent broadcast of CUNY-TV’s “CUNY Honors,” excerpted here. The complete interview is available at cuny.edu/news.

Chancellor Goldstein: I am struck by your focus on leadership because I so much agree with you. You show me a great school and I am going to show you an inspired leader.

Chancellor Klein: Well, I do agree with your premise. I think the leadership is all the difference in the world. The principal has to be the instructional leader in the building. If you are there doing something else, it is not going to send the right message. Second, you’ve got to be a situational manager. What we are doing is teaching people a combination of instructional and business skills in a way that, for example, will help them understand that the most important asset any leader has is time. If you dissipate it, you won’t effect change in a system. The third thing we are doing is having a very problem-solving curriculum. We are not big on traditional didactic classroom teaching as a way to really get to students.

Q: I am particularly impressed with the notion of a common curriculum, which is so fundamental in mathematics and in English. This is revolutionary in this city and quite exciting.

A: We had forty, fifty math curricular and thirty-five different literacy programs. We have—especially in our poverty areas—enormous mobility inside the city. So you may have a young teacher move from school to school two or three times and face a new curriculum each time. So why not try to make it easy? If we were getting good results from all these curriculums, I’d say “let a thousand flowers bloom,” and we’d have a beautiful garden. But instead we have been getting very different outcomes.

Q: With the changes, profound changes, organizational management changes and really deep educational changes, how are you going to know two years from now, three years from now, that these alterations are having the effect that you want?

A: Standardized test scores. I don’t want to exaggerate their significance, but they are a reasonable measure in terms of whether we are raising performance. We have the data and indeed the federal and state governments are going to use these tests to define our future. We will also look at our graduation rates, the rates of students passing the Regents exam, our attendance rates. We will be very transparent about it. My view is that you put this data out there. You don’t try to spin it.

Q: There is another ingredient here, and that is the role of getting parents very much involved in the learning process and in the life and vitality of the schools. What are you going to do that is different from what others have attempted, and how is that going to be conceptualized and organized?

A: You are absolutely right about this—and this comes from my own experience in life. This is the way parents, my parents saw the role of public education in my own life. People used to say, well, your parents read to you at home, but my parents didn’t read to me at home. But they conveyed to me that, frankly, if I wanted to live a different life, an economically more secure life than they had lived, then education was the medium to do so. They conveyed that I would be unfortunate if I didn’t seize it. Even though I was a young kid, I had to understand that. So a core thing we are doing is putting a parent coordinator in each school. This is a new position, and this is going to be somebody whose full-time job it is, and we are going to have a training program for them as well. The parent coordinator will relate to the parents in the building.

Q: What are some of the things that get you upset, surprise you, make you just want to bang some heads together?

A: The fundamental problem is that too often in the system the interests of others take precedence over kids. Let’s face it, whether it’s vendors or whether it’s interest groups, whether it is a particular constituency, or how we hire—all those kinds of issues come up in the system and overwhelm the children, who, after all, are not an organized constituency. And I think that has been at times damaging, frustrating. But keeping the focus on the needs of kids is critical. The second thing that surprised me, I think in a very positive way, is how many times, despite common wisdom, you will find very tough neighborhoods, high-functioning schools, where you will have a principal who has created a learning environment that is exciting, that works for the teachers. There is an alignment, not a war/they confrontation, that works. You can tell walking into a building, you can tell whether the principal knows the kids in the building.
Celebrating 500th Anniversary of an Artist of the Erotic

Agnolo Bronzino was the leading artist of mid-16th-century Florence and an official painter at the Medici court. Cupid was often on his mind. A number of his most important paintings represented erotic subjects, and one of them is seen here; “Venus, Cupid, and a Satyr,” from Rome’s Galleria Colonna.

Bronzino painted the large panel in 1553-54 as one of a series celebrating Venus, Goddess of Love and Beauty, which adorned a room in the house of a Florentine patrician and connoisseur of erotic tableaux representing pagan deities. “Bronzino’s scene suggests the imminent erotic interaction between Venus, who reclines on a luxuriously draped bed, and her son Cupid,” says CUNY Distinguished Professor of art history Janet Cox-Rearick. “They play with the boy’s bow and arrow, and a leering satyr leans eagerly into the scene, directing his gaze at the adolescent—just as Bronzino hoped viewers would gaze at his goddess.”

In the 19th century, the prudish owners of many such risqué paintings, including others by Bronzino, ordered them to be overpainted. The Colonna Venus was subjected to just such a cover-up, as seen here, and only in 2002 was her period of literally false modesty brought to an end. Conservators using infrared reflectography discovered the original composition, and the beauty of Bronzino’s eroticism was soon restored to view.

Like his great contemporary, Michelangelo, Bronzino was also an accomplished poet. Some of his burlesque poems were blasphemous and transgressive, and a leering satyr leans eagerly into the scene, directing his gaze at the adolescent when—thanks to the good offices of the RSCP, CUNY’s Renaissance scholars, and Provost William Kelly—the Renaissance Society of America chose to make the Graduate Center its new home.

With more than 2,600 members worldwide, the Society is the most renowned Renaissance organization in the world, and its Renaissance Quarterly is likewise the most distinguished multi-disciplinary journals in the field. The Society’s arrival at 34th and Fifth Avenue is a very timely homecoming, for it is now celebrating the 50th anniversary of its founding in New York, mostly by scholars from Columbia and several of CUNY’s predecessor colleges. Over the decades, CUNY faculty have been extremely active in the RSA. One of these, Hunter College and Graduate Center historian emerita Nancy Siraisi, a former RSA president, will soon be receiving one of its most prestigious awards, The Paul Oskar Kristeller Lifetime Achievement Award. Some 40 CUNY faculty are members of the Society, an extraordinarily high number for a single institution. And CUNY will have a high profile at the annual RSA conference next spring, to be hosted by the Graduate Center. Some 30 sessions on art history, literature, history, music, philosophy, and theater in England, France, Italy, Spain, and the Americas will be organized by CUNY faculty members and students.

The nearly 1,000 attendees will also be treated to an exhibition in the Graduate Center Art Gallery, whose curator is Diane Kelder, an art history professor emerita at the Center. Titled “Splendors of the Renaissance: Princely Attire in Italy,” it will consist of 15 spectacular reconstructions of courtly clothing from the late 15th to the early 17th century worn by Duchesses Eleonora di Lorraine of Florence, Marchesa Isabella d’Este of Mantua, and other members of the Medici and Gonzaga families, such as Vincenzo I Gonzaga, fourth Duke of Mantua. See below is the ceremonial costume of gold-embroidered white satin with an ermine cape he wore on his elevation to the dukedom in 1587 (based on a state portrait of him by Giacomo Stair).

The exhibition of carefully researched and executed reconstructions of court costumes is the creation of Fausto Fornasari of Mantua. Since 1984 the exhibition has toured major cities in Italy and Spain, as well as five Latin American capitals. The exhibition’s curator is Prof. Cox-Rearick, who has also organized two RSA conference sessions on Italian court attire to complement the show, which will be open to the public from March 10 to April 24.

Costume of Vincenzo I Gonzaga
(photos courtesy King Studios, Coiavetto di Luzzara, Italy).

Bronzino’s “Venus, Cupid and a Satyr” is seen in its “polite” state at top, and restored to its original glory in the second image (photos courtesy of the Galleria Colonna).

“Love New York. I love this spot. It’s like a giant funnel with all the new people coming here. They come with hope, and that’s infectious. It’s the climate of New York to have hope.”
— Marie Ponsot, professor emerita of Queens College, award-winning poet and just-announced recipient of a 2003 Guggenheim Fellowship (see page 5)