Award-Winning CUNY Students
Top Academic Honors for Hundreds of Scholars
With this special issue of Salute to Scholars magazine, The City University of New York proudly celebrates graduating seniors, graduate students and recent alumni who won some of our nation’s most prestigious academic awards in 2017.

These honors include highly competitive Goldwater, Truman and Marshall scholarships, as well as 12 National Science Foundation Graduate Research fellowships, the most prestigious federal grants for doctoral study in the sciences. CUNY has 14 Fulbright fellowships for research and teaching abroad; five Boren Scholarships, federal grants for U.S. undergraduates interested in federal government service to study less commonly known languages; and four New York City Urban Fellowships to work in our city’s government.

These and the other academic honors mentioned in this magazine reflect the high caliber of the University’s students and the academic opportunities it provides. CUNY students’ interests, drive and achievements underscore the transformative value of a CUNY degree.

This is public higher education at its best, delivering on the University’s historic mission to provide accessible, affordable, high-quality academic opportunities. Our graduates earn acceptance at leading graduate and professional institutions where they pursue law, medicine and the full range of arts, sciences and social sciences.

They are welcomed quickly into the workforce, contributing their skills and talents to the betterment of our society. I am proud to recognize the remarkable CUNY students profiled in this special edition, as well as all members of the Class of 2017. They enrich our city, our nation and our world.

All best wishes,

James B. Milliken
Chancellor

The City University of New York

Articles in this and previous issues are available at cuny.edu/news.
Letters or suggestions for future stories may be sent to the Editor by e-mail to cunycommunications@cuny.edu.

ON THE COVER: Four 2017 Boren Scholarship winners from Hunter College who participated in the federally sponsored Chinese Flagship program, which provides training in the Mandarin language.
Ensuring Fluency for the Next Generation of Global Professionals

SIX YEARS AGO, Hunter College launched its Chinese Flagship program, part of a federal initiative to develop a national corps of young global professionals who can speak, with flawless fluency, languages that are “critical to American competitiveness and security.”

The Chinese Flagship program at Hunter is now one of just 12 in the country and the only one in New York State. Its students live together in a dormitory where they speak more Mandarin than English. They spend semesters in China and graduate with a coveted skill and rare experience that leads them into international careers in government, business and public service.

And a quarter of the 38 students who have been in the program — four this year — have been named winners of a prestigious scholarship by the federal office that supports the nation’s Chinese Flagship programs and others at universities across the country in some 60 foreign languages.

The Boren Scholarships are highly competitive awards from the National Security Education Program, and among this year’s 194 winners nationwide are a record five CUNY students — the four in Hunter’s Chinese Flagship program and a fifth from the Macaulay Honors College at Queens College.

“They conduct high-level discussions and read and write in their professional domains.”

— Flagship Program Director Der-lin Chao

Yelena Suponya
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College

Jacob Kessler
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College

Omar Albert
Hunter College

David O’Connor
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College

Boren Scholars in Chinatown

3 CUNY 2017 AWARD RECIPIENTS
who is studying Arabic.

What is perhaps most remarkable about the Chinese Flagship’s 2017 Boren winners is that they all began studying Mandarin almost by chance and quickly found it life-changing. Jacob Kessler happened to see a student writing Chinese characters one day when he was a sophomore, and now he’s preparing to leave for a year of study in Beijing. Yelena Suponya took up the language after her mother suggested it during a free week before her freshman year. David O’Connor had friends who were learning Chinese and seemed to be enjoying it, undeterred by a language that has no alphabet. Omar Albert, meanwhile, was actually drawn by the difficulty: “Once I found that Chinese was so hard,” he says, “I fell in love with it.”

This year’s winner from Queens College is Frances Raybaud, a sophomore who is as passionate about Arabic as the Hunter students are about Chinese. She will study as a Boren scholar in Morocco.

The four Boren winners from Hunter are the latest triumph for the six-year-old Chinese Flagship program. Two Hunter students captured Borens to study in China in 2016 and four others were named winners in 2013 and 2014.

“Our program combines language learning and study of international relations and national security topics,” says Der-lin Chao, the professor who heads Hunter’s Chinese program and has directed the Flagship since it began in 2011. “The first thing is they must be interested in pursuing government public service, focusing on China and U.S. relationships.”

Because students come in with no prior experience, Chao said, “Our challenge is to bring up students’ proficiency from zero to an advanced level so they can study and work with the Chinese in China.” Few universities offer language programs designed for that level of intensity or connect to international affairs, she said.

The Boren Scholar-
ships, worth up to $20,000 each, come with a one-year commitment to work in national security for the federal government, which may lead to a career in government service. The prestigious award is named for David L. Boren, who as a U.S. senator from Oklahoma was principal author of the legislation that created the National Security Education Program in 1991. He is now president of the University of Oklahoma.

Under the National Security Education Program, the government supports undergraduate and graduate students who study one of more than 60 mostly non-Western European languages including Amharic, Kurdish, Tagalog, spoken in the Philippines, and Twi, spoken in West Africa. There are Flagship programs at other universities focused on Arabic, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish and Urdu. The Department of Defense administers the program.

***

For students in the Chinese Flagship, the language and culture of China become integral to their lives. “They conduct high-level discussions and read and write in their professional domains,” Chao said. “They will be tested in China to track their language growth, and their goal is to reach superior level, which is near-native.”

Besides taking on a demanding and rigorous language program, Flagship students are all double majors. Boren applicants must write statements that relate their research interests to national security issues. This year’s winners are interested in climate change and environmental science, having lost both parents, he has lived on his own since his mid-teens.

As a freshman, he met a Chinese Flagship student who

Kessler will attend Beijing Union University to study Mandarin and other subjects for two semesters so that he can get “the maximum amount of language instruction possible. I started studying Chinese late, as a sophomore.” He also will have a part-time internship in the spring.

The other students will study at Nanjing University, taking language and other courses in the fall and working in full-time internships in the spring, also in China.

“The internships allow them to interact with professionals in China, build a network and get to know the etiquette and culture in the work environment,” Chao explains.

Albert, who is in the Thomas Hunter Honors Program, started in CUNY's SEEK program, which supports students with weak high school preparation. Having lost both parents, he has lived on his own since his mid-teens.

As a freshman, he met a Chinese Flagship student who

There is a floor in the Hunter College dormitory for Flagship students, and all four of the Boren scholars live there, where they speak Chinese as much as possible.

had just returned from Taiwan. Chao listened to him talk about the program and decided to sign on. “I love challenges, and Hunter’s program guarantees fluency.” Albert had previously won a State Department Critical Language Scholarship to study Mandarin in Changchun, China, in the summer of 2015, and he may pursue an MBA following his year of government service.

Kessler began studying Hebrew at age 5 and attended a Jewish high school on Long Island. At Hunter, he minored in Arabic and studied in Jordan during a winter break. “A lot of people who learn languages consider themselves language nerds, getting lost in the history between the words, but that isn’t me,” he says. “What I love is using language as a tool to communicate.” He studied in Beijing last summer and in Taiwan last fall.

Albany native O’Connor credits his grasp of Mandarin to a one-on-one tutoring that Chinese Flagship provides new students. “The way they teach is effective,” he says, comparing it with the way he learned French in France during a gap year after high school. “Learning to speak is similar, but learning to read and write Chinese is very difficult, since they don’t have an alphabet. But if you study in an organic manner, it’s just a process of memorization.” He studied in Taiwan in the summer of 2015, interned with the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City and hopes for a placement with the State Department.

Suponya already has studied Mandarin in Taiwan and Beijing. “I find more and more things interesting about the language and the people and culture that make me stick with it,” she says. “The people are very honest and open, while Americans beat around the bush lots of times.” She foresees a career, perhaps at a policy institute, examining international relations and social and business trends. Suponya grew up speaking Russian at home, and she hopes to raise her command of that language to a professional level after she returns from China.

***

Frances Raybaud, the Macaulay/Queens sophomore, has a way to go in Arabic to match the proficiency of her Hunter peers. “I’m a high beginner,” she says. “My focus is building vocabulary and getting the grammar and writing, but I do have a good grasp on speaking.”

She initially hated the Arabic language when she tried it as a freshman, perhaps because of its difficulty. “And then I took a class in international relations. Because I was so interested in climate change and environmental science, I realized that the best place for me was the Middle East. They have so much sunlight and are running out of oil. I had to go back to Arabic, and then I fell in love with the language.”

She wants to see how Morocco is dealing with climate change. Seas are rising, drought blights agricultural areas and this oil-dependent country is going solar.

Rabadah holds U.S. and French citizenship and speaks French. She won Queens College’s Ibrahim Fellowship, which will take her through the Middle East in May to learn about conflicts, migrants and more. Her Boren-funded studies extend from June through December, at an Arabic-language school in Morocco’s capital, Rabat, and classes and interning in the historic city of Meknes.

She intends to go into the foreign service after graduate school in international relations.

“A lot of people who learn languages consider themselves language nerds, getting lost in the history between the words, but that isn’t me. What I love is using language as a tool to communicate.”

— Jacob Kessler
Student Awards

Munazza Alam
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’16
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Alexander Alvarado
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’16
Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, 2017

Ma Su Su Aung
Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College, ’16
Jonas E. Salk Scholarship, 2017
Creighton University School of Medicine, 2020

Chelsea Batista
Macaulay Honors College at Brooklyn College, ’17
Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons, M.D., 2021

Maneesha Bhugwansing
Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College, ’14
Fulbright U.S. Student Program, 2017
Maastricht University, Economics, Master’s in Economics, 2018

Ashley Brea Tavarez
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’17
Teach for America, 2017

Alexandra Brown-Panisse
Macaulay Honors College at Lehman College, ’18
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017

Alexandria Brown-Panisse
Macaulay Honors College at Lehman College, ’19
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017

Lisa Dazzell
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’19
Hunter College, Psychology, 2025

Saveliy Kelebeiev
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’16
Columbia University, Medical School, M.D./Ph.D, 2024

Kaitlin McDermott
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’19
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Elianna Schwab
Macaulay Honors College at City College, ’17
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Michelle Sheu
Macaulay Honors College at CUNY Baccalaureate Degree, ’18
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017

Lucinda Zawadzki
Macaulay Honors College at College of Staten Island, ’15
University of Oxford, Oxford-Christ Church, Ph.D., 2020

Norine Chan
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, 2017

Bell Chen
Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College, ’17
1st Place Ninth Annual Traders@MIT Fall Intercollegiate Trading Competition, 2017
Winner 2017 Rotman International Trading Competition, 2017

Elisha Edwards
Macaulay Honors College at Lehman College, ’19
Virginia Commonwealth Division of Health Sciences SAEP, 2017

Devin Lee
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’18
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017

Patryk Perkowski
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’18
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Victoria Smith
Macaulay Honors College at Lehman College, ’20
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Yelena Suponya
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Olivia Sztanga
Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College, ’17
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Eline Andresen
Baruch College, ’17
New York University, College of Arts and Sciences, Master’s in International Relations, 2019

Samantha Chiu
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’17
Teaching English in Vietnam Internship

Sara M. Clemente
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
FLAS Fellowship, 2017
Stanford University, Latin American Studies, M.A., 2019

Kendra Cornelis
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’18
Battuta Scholarship for Peace & Diplomacy, 2017

Marco Costanza
Macaulay Honors College at Brooklyn College, ’19
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Shirley Mak
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’15
Amsterdam Merit Scholarship (University of Amsterdam), 2017

Nico Rojas
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’18
Critical Languages Scholarship, 2017

Avi Atkin
Baruch College, ’16
Venture for America Fellowship, 2017

Devin Lee
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’17
Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program, 2017

Frances Raybould
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’19
Ibrahim Student Leadership and Dialogue Middle East Project, 2017

John Wetmore
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, 2017

Saveliy Kelebeiev
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’16
Columbia University, Medical School, M.D./Ph.D, 2024

Kaitlin McDermott
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’19
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Jane Boren Scholarship, 2017

Jonas E. Salk Scholarship, 2017

Anumta Raheel
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Matthew LoCastro
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
New York City Urban Fellows Program, 2017

Danny Lundy
Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College, ’17
New York State Excelsior Service Fellowship, 2017

Elisha Edwards
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’15
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Anumta Raheel
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Matthew LoCastro
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
New York City Urban Fellows Program, 2017

Claire Lynch
Macaulay Honors College at City College, ’18
Trump Scholarship, 2017

Shirley Mak
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’15
Amsterdam Merit Scholarship (University of Amsterdam), 2017

Anumta Raheel
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Matthew LoCastro
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
New York City Urban Fellows Program, 2017

Frank C. Boren Scholarship, 2017

Thomas Davis
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’18
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Patricia Kasne
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’14
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Olivia Sztanga
Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College, ’17
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Yelena Suponya
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’17
Jane Boren Scholarship, 2017

Olivia Sztanga
Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College, ’17
NSF/NSF/NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Karen Crockett
Macaulay Honors College at Queens College, ’17
Teach for America, 2017

Alexandra Brown-Panisse
Macaulay Honors College at Lehman College, ’18
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017

Elinor Whittaker
Macaulay Honors College at CUNY Baccalaureate Degree, ’17
Fullbright U.S. Student Program, 2017

Lucinda Zawadzki
Macaulay Honors College at College of Staten Island, ’15
New York State Excelsior Service Fellowship, 2017

Amir Agrawal
Baruch College, ’17
Winner TAMID stock pitch competition, 2017

Jesse Aman
Baruch College, ’17
Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals Fellowship, 2017

Alexandra Brown-Panisse
Macaulay Honors College at Lehman College, ’18
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017

Elinor Whittaker
Macaulay Honors College at CUNY Baccalaureate Degree, ’17
Fullbright U.S. Student Program, 2017

Lucinda Zawadzki
Macaulay Honors College at College of Staten Island, ’15
University of Oxford, Oxford-Christ Church, Ph.D., 2020

Safiehdeen Zihiri
Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College, ’19
Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Tydie Abreu
Baruch College, ’17
New York State Excelsior Service Fellowship, 2017

Amir Agrawal
Baruch College, ’17
Winner TAMID stock pitch competition, 2017

Jesse Aman
Baruch College, ’17
Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals Fellowship, 2017

Elinor Whittaker
Baruch College, ’17
New York University, College of Arts and Sciences, Master’s in International Relations, 2019

Avi Atkin
Baruch College, ’16
Venture for America Fellowship, 2017

Sean Brock
Baruch College, ’17
St. John’s University, School of Law, JD, 2020
Learning What We Don’t Know About Islamic Law

ORN AND RAISED in Queens, Faiza Masood learned that Islamic law (Sharia) was flexible enough to fit widely varying social and historical contexts. “That’s in sharp contrast to what I knew from Western media, which presents Sharia as strict, archaic and the total opposite of what modern society looks like.”

Masood, who graduates from Hunter College this year, with a 2017 Marshall Scholarship to the United Kingdom, offers an example.

The Quran says women should dress modestly. Masood wears a hijab, or headscarf. While studying Arabic in Jordan with a U.S. Department of Education Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship, she saw that most women also wear a black cloak, or abaya, although some paired the hijab with a T-shirt and jeans, making it seem “more of a cultural norm than a religious imperative.”

But when she wore an abaya in Morocco, where she studied Arabic with a State Department Critical Language Scholarship, she was the most conservatively dressed student. Many Moroccan women who are practicing Muslims do not wear even a hijab.

And in Pakistan, her parents’ homeland, women may wear a hijab outdoors. Indoors, they reject what elsewhere is the norm of covering their heads if men who are not family members are present. “At a wedding, I was the only one of my family wearing a hijab.”

Such diversity in religious practice “undermines the assumption that Islamic law is monolithic.”

Masood will study at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London. Over two years, she intends to earn master’s degrees in Islamic studies and Islamic law.

Her first focus is the sources of law: the Quran; the Hadith, or teachings of the Prophet Mohammad; Qiyas, or analogical reasoning by Islamic scholars; and Ijm’a, consensus or scholarly agreements. As for the law, Muslims – more than a fifth of Earth’s population – have no common rulebook, and law varies by sect, region and time.

Take the Quran’s prohibition of alcohol. Can a Muslim use the cold medication NyQuil, which is 10 percent alcohol? By analogy, Muslims shouldn’t use marijuana, but what about medical marijuana for patients facing chemotherapy or chronic pain?

Masood envisions earning a Ph.D. and perhaps teaching at a public college such as Hunter, whose professors helped shape her worldview. Bert Breiner and Barbara Sproul offered insight into other religions, and Christopher Stone and Alexander Elinson explained the nuances of Arabic words.

And religion’s Mark James helped Masood start Hunter’s Interfaith Club, where students practice “scriptural reasoning,” in which they discuss passages from the Bible, the Torah and the Quran. “What do these verses mean to believers in everyday practice?” Also, “students needed a platform to engage in deeper religious and philosophical discussions.”
When Norbesida Bagabila left the West African nation of Burkina Faso in 2012 at age 20, he spoke only the local and official languages, Moore and French.

In New York, he worked as a dishwasher, a 7-Eleven cashier and an airport security officer, often logging 60 hours a week while saving for his education. He delivered food for a restaurant so he could talk with Americans—even if at first it was only by using his phone’s translation program. “All the time my goal was to learn English,” he explains.

After two and half years, he was ready for higher education. “Borough of Manhattan Community College made me feel welcome.”

Graduating in 2017 as a science major with a 3.83 GPA, he has tutored his peers in mathematics, joined the Phi Theta Kappa Interna-
“In Africa, 80 percent of the time we are treated with plants and herbs ... I would like to research the mechanisms of the active molecules in the plants and herbs to convert them into medicine.” — Norbesida Bagabila

His long-range vision is to combine Western technology with traditional African medicine. “In Africa, 80 percent of the time we are treated with plants and herbs, which are cheaper and more convenient. I would like to research the mechanisms of the active molecules in the plants and herbs to convert them into medicine.” Manufacturing those medicines in Africa would create jobs and keep costs affordable, he reasons.

And then Bagabila gets to his dream. “After a Ph.D., I would like to create the first research university in Burkina Faso. Although there is a national university, it does not conduct research. I want to provide higher education and research facilities to ambitious students who are passionate about science and research, but do not have the opportunity to continue their studies in the United States, perhaps as a partnership between schools in the U.S. and Burkina Faso.

“Coming to the U.S., I did not have a clear path to success, but I now wish to leave a trail behind me for students who want to take big steps toward their success.”

9 CUNY 2017 AWARD RECIPIENTS
Speaking the Language(s) on a Path to Aiding Refugees

OFTEN times the stage for life is set at an early age. Take Claire Lynch’s path toward her prestigious 2017 Harry S. Truman Scholarship, which began with her chance acceptance into the first class of a dual-language elementary school, where she was among 50 English speakers to join 50 Spanish speakers.

“Learning Spanish and being part of a heavily Hispanic immigrant community was foundational for me,” says Lynch, a junior at Macaulay Honors College at City College. That background started in working with staff in her mother’s catering business at 11 or 12 and primed her for a far more challenging language, Arabic. “The way Arabic is constructed, the history and the social norms, the Islamic history that’s present in the language, and the linguistics are so interesting.”

The federally funded and highly competitive Truman Scholarship provides up to $30,000 for graduate study leading to a career in public service. She intends to apply her experience in grassroots advocacy and public policy, along with her knowledge of languages, to the needs of immigrants and refugees. “I’m really interested in pursuing a job that will give me hands-on experience in the field,” such as working with immigrants, perhaps in refugee camps.

As an activist, she has worked throughout New York State as a board member of the New York Public Interest Research Group, including tutoring immigrants for citizenship tests, helping refugees and working on homelessness in New York City. From the policy perspective, she directs the City College chapter of the Roosevelt Institute, a student-run policy think tank that seeks to involve students in the political process.

Lynch majors in both political science and Jewish Studies — “I’m Irish-Catholic,” she adds. Through City College, she traveled to Morocco in her sophomore year and Italy in her junior year “to learn about the political, social and economic dynamics between the Jewish and Muslim communities.” She also studied in Amman, Jordan, in the winter of 2017.

She participates in the Colin Powell Fellowship in Leadership and Public Service, an intensive two-year program for undergraduates at City College, and she interned in Washington, D.C., with New York Sen. Chuck Schumer through CUNY’s Edward T. Rogowsky Internship Program in Government and Public Affairs.

At the moment, she’s thinking of taking a gap year after graduation, perhaps to use her European Union citizenship, which is a benefit of her grandparents being Irish, to teach in Spain. And then there’s the prospect of a dream graduate school at The School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, where she could dive deep into Arabic and Islamic culture. “There are great opportunities all around,” she says.

“The way Arabic is constructed, the history and the social norms, the Islamic history that’s present in the language, and the linguistics are so interesting.”

— Claire Lynch
FOR MANEESHA Bhugwansing, winner of a 2017 Fulbright fellowship to study economics in the Netherlands, seeing the world as an interrelated whole and understanding that knowledge provides opportunity, both stem directly from family experience.

Before she was born, her parents and other family members came to the United States from Suriname, a former Dutch colony in South America. Growing up in Richmond Hill, Queens, which has a thriving West Indian community, she repeatedly saw businesses open and fail because their owners didn’t know how to keep up with licenses, inspections and other business issues. Yet, “around the corner, the public library might be offering a series on small-business skills that they probably weren’t aware of,” says Bhugwansing, who graduated from Macaulay Honors College at Baruch College in 2014. “A lot of immigrants don’t have access to what’s available and have to give up their endeavors.”

Since earning her B.B.A. in international business, Bhugwansing has worked to connect immigrants and the children of immigrants with graduate education as a program specialist with The Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans. She has handled the nuts and bolts of administering the rare and coveted $90,000 scholarships. She has helped “with their entire life cycle as fellows,” including selection, bringing the winners on board, assuring their payments and running conferences.

As she worked with the Soros Fellowships, which is housed in a larger nonprofit with international departments, she realized that she wanted to learn about economic development. With the Fulbright, she will earn a master’s degree at Maastricht University focused on European economic politics as well as global innovation. “I hope to find work in economic development, and that can mean many different things. I hope to figure it out in the next year.”

This won’t be her first international university experience. She won a C.V. Starr Study Abroad Fellowship from Baruch’s Weissman Center for International Business to study at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain, in her senior year. She also used her Macaulay Opportunity Fund to study in China during her junior year.

“A lot of immigrants don’t have access to what’s available and have to give up their endeavors.” — Maneesha Bhugwansing
IN 2014, UGANDA passed a virulent anti-homosexuality law that, as a local advocacy group says, harnesses “the full force of the State ... to hunt down, expose, demean and suppress Uganda’s LGBTI people.” Thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people have since fled Uganda for the continent’s overburdened refugee camps.

Michael Clark, who has a CUNY Baccalaureate in health and human rights from Hunter College, will use his 2017 Fulbright fellowship to document their impact on the more hospitable country of Kenya. “I seek to immerse myself in the refugee communities to better understand the role that sexual orientation and gender identity have on forced migration and what the implications are for the public health of Kenya,” says Clark.

He had applied for his Fulbright last fall from Uganda, where he was conducting similar research into the plight of gay Congolese refugees. It was found “that discrimination in Uganda was just as bad, if not worse.” That research was supported by a federal Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship and the nonprofit Fund for Education Abroad.

Clark, now 43, the first person in his impoverished family to attend college, approaches his research with a depth of experience. A Native American from California, he was forced out of an ROTC college scholarship some 20 years ago because he was gay. He became a combat medic in the U.S. Army Reserves, a safe-sex educator, a personal trainer focusing on clients with chronic diseases and an advocate for the rights of HIV-positive people.
I realized you can only get so far without a degree, and it was always dragging on me. I saw one of those [CUNY] posters on the subway — one of the Fulbright ones — and thought that’s really cool.” — Michael Clark

“I realized you can only get so far without a degree, and it was always dragging on me,” he says. “I saw one of those [CUNY] posters on the subway — one of the Fulbright ones — and thought that’s really cool. I want to do that.” He started at Borough of Manhattan Community College and later transferred to the CUNY Baccalaureate program with Hunter College as his home base.

His research in Uganda led to a 70-page paper and a great deal of data, which he is analyzing with School of Public Health associate professor Christian Grov. After his Fulbright, Clark intends to pursue a doctorate in public health.

In his Fulbright application, he underlines his personal connection with his research. In a Ugandan camp, “an Acholi elder singled me out and asked: ‘You are obviously older than the other students; what motivates you to be here?’ … My answer came without hesitation. ‘My grandfather experienced catastrophic conflict not dissimilar to you [the U.S. government uprooted him and a burial ground from Achomawi tribal land to build a highway]. Two generations later, the effects of that event still impact my life. My motivation for being here is to understand the generational trauma of conflict so that, hopefully, your grandchildren are not affected, as I am, by displacement.’”

Kristina Sarkissyan
Baruch College, ’17
 Fulbright U.S. Student Fellowship, 2017

Mike Szczepanekiewicz
Baruch College, ’18
3rd Place Ninth Annual Traders@MIT Fall Intercollegiate Trading Competition, 2017

Ahathon Tolibov
Baruch College, ’19
New York State Assembly Session Internship, 2017

Dmitriy Treyger
Baruch College, ’17
3rd Place Ninth Annual Traders@MIT Fall Intercollegiate Trading Competition, 2017

Ariela Trotsenko
Baruch College, ’17
Baruch College, Master’s in International Affairs, 2019

Jolisel Vargas-Lopez
Baruch College, ’18
New York State Assembly Session Internship, 2017

Zhaoyou Wei
Baruch College, ’19
Winner 2017 Rotman International Trading Competition, 2017

Annie Willis
Baruch College, ’20
Edward T. Rogowsky CUNY DC Internship, 2017

Raymond Wong
Baruch College, ’17
2nd Place Ninth Annual Traders@MIT Fall Intercollegiate Trading Competition, 2017

Winnie Wu
Baruch College, ’17
Edward T. Rogowsky CUNY DC Internship, 2017

Jamie Yatcha
Baruch College, ’21
Winner TAMID stock pitch competition, 2017

Gongshun Yin
Baruch College, ’19
Winner 2017 Rotman International Trading Competition, 2017

Serena Zu
Baruch College, ’18
Fremian Awards for Study in Asia (Freeman-Asia), 2017

Aleksandra Artyfikiewicz
Baruch College, ’18
CUNY Sustainability Student Competition

Norbesida Bagabila
Baruch College, ’17
Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship, 2017

Laquan Bates
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
CUNY Sustainability Student Competition

Marija Binch
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Phi Theta Kappa Scholar

Mahdiul Chowdhury
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Nan STEM Research Scholarship

Kalida Clarke-Gittens
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17

Emily Colon
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Phi Theta Kappa Scholar

Lionel Colon
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17

Keyo Mo
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Phi Theta Kappa Scholar

Jack English
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Bard University, Levy Economics Institute, Economics, 2019

Sanou Wouhohier Laurent
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
BMCC Foundation Scholar

Yan Ming Lee
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Out-in-Two Scholar

Naomi Mackliff
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17

Jason Silva
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Phi Theta Kappa Scholar

Andrea Reed
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Phi Theta Kappa Scholar

Christian Santo
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Phi Theta Kappa Scholar

Eri Sugimoto
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
Loaretta Lee Foundation Scholarship

Aminur Ullah
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17

Yeshi Dema Wangchuk
Borough of Manhattan Community College, ’17
CUNY Sustainability Student Competition

Catherine Jerry
Bronx Community College, ’17
Mentoring in Medicine

Henry Siccardi
Bronx Community College, ’16
Director and Chief Research Associate of National Alliance of Research Associates Program, 2017
Learning to Become an Agent of Change

WORKING as a college aide sanitarian for the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in 2014, Giselle Cordero had to enforce health regulations at day camps and other sites where low-income youngsters came for lunch. “A lot didn’t have coolers or refrigerators to keep food at the required temperature, so the food needed to be thrown out,” she recalls.

That offered a quick lesson in public policy: spending money on coolers and ice could have saved 200 meals at a time — and insured that those children got a daily meal.

Cordero, who earned a bachelor's degree from Queens College this year, recently won a 2017 New York City Urban Fellowship, a nationally competitive, nine-month New York City program that introduces participants to local government, public policy and public service.

“I aspire to become an agent of change and empower those who otherwise feel voiceless under our current system. I want to be an attorney and work in public service,

— Giselle Cordero
Queens College
New York City Urban Fellowship
so I can better contribute to my community and address its needs,” says Cordero, who majored in political science and government. She already has quite a start.

In 2015, she worked in the health department’s Public Health Engineering Bureau with the team that combatted an outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease. Shortly after, she interned in Albany with then-Assembly Member Guillermo Liénares. “I had to quickly adapt and learn the ropes of the office. The experience improved my research skills, and I learned how to draft memorandums and press releases. I sat in on meetings with constituents and attended legislative sessions. Mr. Liénares was an incredible mentor.”

Cordero is particularly proud of her analysis of a bill to protect undocumented, domestically abused immigrant women from prosecution by state and local authorities. She says her research was published in the state interns’ handbook.

In summer 2016, Cordero, an American-born child of immigrants from the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, interned with her own congresswoman, Nydia Velázquez, through the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI). “I enjoyed the policy briefings, where we learned about issues impacting the community and formulated recommendations to solve them. Belonging to two minority groups, as a Hispanic woman who comes from a low-income neighborhood, I was encouraged by being surrounded by women in power who give us a voice,” she says. “Being part of CHCI, which is full of dedicated, young professionals who want to help their communities, motivates me to continue to strive to break down the barriers placed on all minority groups.”

Cordero attended a prelaw summer institute at SUNY Buffalo in 2015 and now works in an attorney’s office as a paralegal. She intends to apply to law school after her Urban Fellowship.

“I was encouraged by being surrounded by women in power who give us a voice.”

— Giselle Cordero

— Tao Hong

Queensborough Community College
Barry Goldwater Scholarship
and Jack Kent Cooke Foundation
Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship

From Hardly a ‘Hello’ to Studying for a Ph.D. in Science

WEN HE CAME to America from China in 2014, Tao Hong says the only sentence he could say was, “Hello, how do you do?” But after one semester with the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP), “I improved a lot, including my writing, reading and speaking.”

Now graduating from Queensborough Community College, he has captured two prestigious 2017 awards: a federal Barry Goldwater Scholarship for undergraduate students heading toward Ph.D.s in the natural sciences, mathematics and engineering, and a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship.

As a rising junior, Hong will receive the Goldwater – up to $7,500 for tuition, fees, books, room and board – for two years. Graduating with an A.S. in engineering technology and a 3.96 GPA, he awaits admission decisions from several top schools.

The Jack Kent Cooke award – given to just 55 of nearly 3,000 applicants – pays college costs that other financial aid doesn’t cover, up to $40,000 per year. Recipients can apply for graduate scholarships.

Hong is seeking a doctorate in material science. “I like it because it’s not a single thing,” he says. “It mixes math, physics and chemistry.”

“I was encouraged by being surrounded by women in power who give us a voice.”

— Giselle Cordero
His Queensborough education prepared him well, he says. Professor Moni Chauhan “ignited my interest in science.” He explains that they developed an efficient “one-pot” process of synthesizing a PMHS- (polymethylhydrosiloxane)-coated polyrhodamine nanotube – or, in plain English, a neat way of delivering an antibacterial agent in an environmentally friendly way.

Hong also credits his success to Queensborough mathematician Howard Sporn and chemist Paris Svoronos, “the coach of the team.”

In the summer of 2016, he won a 10-week National Science Foundation-funded Research Experience for Undergraduates at Vanderbilt University. There, mechanical engineering professor Deyu Li wrote in a recommendation, “Tao really surprised me with his enthusiasm, productivity and creativity, which led to research progress easily comparable to senior graduate students.”

Li asked Hong to help a doctoral student develop a microfluidic chip to sort and trap C. elegans, a tiny worm used in research. Hong recognized that the worm prefers to swim in curved channels, rather than straight ones. His superior worm-sorting chip won Hong first place in Vanderbilt’s research-poster competition that summer — and co-first authorship of a paper with the graduate student. This summer he will intern at a global specialty chemicals firm, Albemarle Corp. in Baton Rouge, La., thanks to a $10,000 American Chemical Society internship in chemistry and chemical engineering; Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017; National Science Foundation-funded Research Experience for Undergraduates at Vanderbilt University.

When Hong placed first in a 25-college competition sponsored by the New York State Mathematics Association of Two-Year Colleges this year, he said, “To me, science and math are the keys to unlock the natural phenomena that we see, and also phenomena beyond our perception.”

**Hong says he is seeking a doctorate in material science “because it’s not a single thing. It mixes math, physics and chemistry.”**

— Tao Hong
At Harvard, Researching Exoplanets 6.5 Light Years Away

MUNAZZA KHALIDA ALAM conducts her research of a place in the universe where the word may just be arriving that Mitt Romney is favored to beat pizza magnate Herman Cain to challenge Barack Obama’s quest for a second term.

Since Alam’s turf is at least 6.5 light years away, it has taken 6.5 years for that 2011 radio news to reach the nearest of the Earthlike exoplanets she studies as they orbit distant stars.

Alam, a graduate of Macaulay Honors College at Hunter in 2016, now is pursuing a doctorate in astronomy at Harvard University, where she analyzes the exoplanets’ atmospheres with a 2017 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship worth $138,000.

“We don’t know what the atmospheres of these planets will be like. If they are different from Earth’s, what would that mean for life there?” she wonders. “We should expect surprises.”

One method astronomers use to deduce the existence of exoplanets is measuring minute dips in starlight as they transit, or pass in front of, their host stars. NASA had confirmed 3,475 exoplanets and 581 multiplanet systems as of April 13, 2017; almost 4,500 other detections await confirmation.

How do astronomers learn about their weather? As planets transit their host stars, atoms and molecules in the atmosphere absorb light at different wavelengths, each characteristic of a particular element. And, by observing changes in the apparent radius of a planet at different wavelengths, Alam explains, astronomers can infer atmospheric structure, composition and even the presence of clouds.

Alam will conduct atmospheric studies of exoplanets ranging from super-Earths – larger than our planet – to hot Jupiters – similar in size and mass to our Solar System neighbor, but orbiting closer to their host stars than Earth.

“I’m working with data from the Hubble Space Telescope as part of a team from Harvard, with collaborators across the U.S., the United Kingdom and France,” she explains. They study the atmospheres of about 30 exoplanets at different wavelengths: optical, infrared and ultraviolet.

As an undergraduate, Alam used her Macaulay Opportunity Fund to research “failed stars” known as brown dwarfs with NASA’s Infrared Telescope Facility (IRTF) at the Mauna Kea observatory in Hawaii.

Alam was born in Staten Island to a father from Pakistan and a mother from India, and she chose to study astronomy after Hunter astrophysicist Kelle Cruz invited her to join her research team at the American Museum of Natural History. There she also met Emily Rice of the College of Staten Island and Jackie Faherty, senior scientist and senior education manager at the museum. Cruz and Rice were recently promoted to associate professor.

“My first research experience was in a group led by these three strong women,” says Alam, whose name joins theirs on two published papers. “I felt I had a place in science with them.”

“We don’t know what the atmospheres of these planets will be like. If they are different from Earth’s, what would that mean for life there? . . . We should expect surprises.” — Munazza Khalida Alam
WHEN SHE volunteered to teach English and dance in Colombia, her fellow students thought she was an American Latina because of her grasp of Spanish and “my dark features.” When she studied at the Berlin School of Economics and Law, they thought she was Latin American – “I spoke to my roommates in Spanish.”

Now Kristina Sarkissyan, born in Kazakhstan, raised on Long Island, conversant in Armenian and fluent in Russian, has a new venue to test perceptions about her, thanks to a 2017 Fulbright Mexico Binational Internship.

“My Spanish is maybe 90 percent, but I’m lacking in business terminology,” says Sarkissyan, who graduates with a B.B.A. in international business from Baruch this year. Her Fulbright, one of just 16 awarded nationally, provides an internship with a for-profit multinational business or a nongovernmental organization. She also can take courses related to international business at ITAM, the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, a presti-

—Kristina Sarkissyan
Baruch College
Fulbright Scholar
Sarkissyan moved to the United States when she was 5. "Coming from a post-Soviet country, I had to balance the ideals and values of my parents with U.S. customs and school. So much was different, like food. Here I found pizza, hot dogs and tater tots. And in school you were expected to voice your opinions. I had to find my identity as an American."

She chose to attend Baruch because of its international business program and its ranking as among the most diverse colleges in the nation. While she had close connections with a number of professors, it was the assistant director of undergraduate admissions, Kristin Pedicone, who became her mentor as she worked all four years as an "admissions ambassador" in the campus Welcome Center, first as a volunteer and, after two years, with pay.

"She's so fluid in the way she speaks with people," Pedicone says. "Imagine her leading a tour: Wouldn't you want to go to the school where she is? And last week I needed someone to jump up on the stage before 300 people who were filling a theater; she did, and answered questions about study-abroad and international experiences."

For Sarkissyan, part of the value in working at Baruch's Welcome Center was seeing it as an exercise in marketing. "It's right there on the first floor, and anyone can walk in. You formulate the proper way to pitch the school, and you speak with parents, which is very different from speaking with students. In terms of consumer behavior, it's like marketing the same product in different parts of the world."

Sarkissyan, her parents and her brother moved to the United States when she was 5. "Coming from a post-Soviet country, I had to balance the ideals and values of my parents with U.S. customs and school. So much was different, like food. Here I found pizza, hot dogs and tater tots. And in school you were expected to voice your opinions. I had to find my identity as an American."

She chose to attend Baruch because of its international business program and its ranking as among the most diverse colleges in the nation. While she had close connections with a number of professors, it was the assistant director of undergraduate admissions, Kristin Pedicone, who became her mentor as she worked all four years as an “admissions ambassador” in the campus Welcome Center, first as a volunteer and, after two years, with pay.

"She's so fluid in the way she speaks with people,” Pedicone says. “Imagine her leading a tour: Wouldn't you want to go to the school where she is? And last week I needed someone to jump up on the stage before 300 people who were filling a theater; she did, and answered questions about study-abroad and international experiences."

For Sarkissyan, part of the value in working at Baruch’s Welcome Center was seeing it as an exercise in marketing. “It’s right there on the first floor, and anyone can walk in. You formulate the proper way to pitch the school, and you speak with parents, which is very different from speaking with students. In terms of consumer behavior, it’s like marketing the same product in different parts of the world.”

MAGINE BARNACLES on a jetty, some exposed to air, some under water and some partly submerged. They look pretty much the same, but are all their microbiomes – the microbes that live within each of them – the same, or do they vary with water level, exposure to sunlight, contact with bird droppings and other factors?

That’s one question that Bianca Brown, a graduate of York College in 2015 and now a doctoral student at Brown University, intends to answer with a 2017 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship worth $138,000. “I study how host-microbiome relationships change in different environments,” she explains.

The human microbiome has been much in the news and on the web (“How to Build a Better Microbiome for Vibrant Health,” one merchant offers), prompting Brown to ask, “Is it just hype? The microbiome is something we’ve always had. Research like mine, where we try to figure out its true role, can bring clarity.”

Besides barnacles, she works with fruit flies, which zip through a generation in three weeks, and heads to Kenya this summer to study rodents in the wild. “The microbiome offers essential functions. For example, herbivores use gut microbes to aid in the breakdown of plant material. We’re trying to figure out other functional roles that microbiomes play using species in their natural habitat,” she says.

Brown says she grew up near the beach on the island of Jamaica, “so I was always interested in the environment, although I didn’t realize there was an aspect that you could study in the lab.”

When she came to New York City at 18, she initially chose York because of its pharmacy program, but then she met assistant biology professor Elizabeth Alter. “She showed me this different world, where you could study things you never knew existed. She placed me on a practical trajectory and it opened doors.”

Brown started by helping Alter study tissue samples of fish from the Congo River. “This opened my eyes to how the natural environment influences the evolution of species and how it shapes their general morphology and behavior,” she says.

She also connected with CUNY’s Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, a National Science Foundation-funded program that supports undergraduate research.

As an undergraduate she spent two summers in Brazil conducting research into conservation efforts and biodiversity in the dwindling Atlantic Forest. She also studied how butterflies in Gabon diversify between continuous forest and savanna. “We surveyed the different species that inhabited both.”

Travel, she says, “opened my eyes as to what science can accomplish and how it can affect people’s lives. It also allows me to interact with different types of people and to be more patient with different cultures.”
Annemarie Caruso  
CUNY School of Law, ’17  
Skadden Fellowship, Student Representation Project, Main Street Legal Services, 2017

Maggie Gribben  
CUNY School of Law, ’17  
Skadden Fellowship, Justice at Work, representing low wage workers in wage theft cases, Boston, Mass., 2017

Ricky He  
CUNY School of Law, ’17  
Imigrant Justice Corps Fellow, 2017

Connor Mealey  
CUNY School of Law, ’17  
NY State Excelsior Service Fellowship, 2017

Katy Naples-Mitchell  
CUNY School of Law, ’17  
Judicial Clerk, Senior Judge Anne E. Thompson, U.S. District Court, D.N.J., 2017

Mariam Sardar  
CUNY School of Law, ’17  
NY State Excelsior Service Fellowship, 2017

Dianne Galasso  
CUNY School of Professional Studies, ’17  
Fordham University, Graduate School of Social Service, Master of Social Work, 2020

Emily Towner  
CUNY School of Professional Studies, ’17  
Columbia University, School of Nursing, Doctorate in Nurse Practitioner Program (MD-DNP) with a psychiatric mental health specialty, and to Columbia’s post-bac Ph.D. in psychology program, 2020

Matthew Laz Romo  
CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, ’20  
Extraordinary Research in Epidemiology, 2017

Lucas Michael Schiffer  
CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, ’17  
Extraordinary Research in Epidemiology and Biostatistics, 2017

Rokia Diabi  
Hostos Community College, ’17  
Phi Theta Kappa All New York Community College Academic Team, 2017

Olufaweml Ligan  
Hostos Community College, ’17  
Phi Theta Kappa All New York Community College Academic Team, 2017

Nader Abdelrahman  
Hunter College, ’18  
Critical Languages Scholarship, 2017

Munazza K Alam  
Hunter College, ’16  
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Omar Albert  
Hunter College, ’18  
NSEP/David L. Boren Undergraduate Scholarship, 2017

Heather Armojo  
Hunter College, ’17  
Fulbright U.S. Student Program, 2017

Hassan Ayub  
Hunter College, ’18  
Critical Language Scholarship, 2017

Fatoumata Bah  
Hunter College, ’19  
Foreign Language and Area Studies Scholarship, 2017

Keya Bari  
Hunter College, ’18  
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017

Jane L Breakey  
Hunter College, ’14  
Fulbright U.S. Student Program, 2017

Dina Buitrago  
Hunter College, ’17  
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

University of California, San Francisco, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Ph.D. in pharmaceutical sciences and pharmacogenomics, 2023

Hila Chase  
Hunter College, ’15  
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Theresa Heo  
Hunter College, ’18  
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017

Mia Kang  
Hunter College, ’17  
Yale University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Ph.D., 2023

Faiza G Masood  
Hunter College, ’17  
Marshall Scholarship, 2017  
School of Oriental & African Studies, London, Masters, 2019

Halima Mayat  
Hunter College, ’17  
Buttata Scholarship for Peace & Diplomacy, 2017

Dennis Melendez  
Hunter College, ’17  
Rockefeller University, Graduate Program in Bioscience, Ph.D., 2023

Ubayed Muhith  
Hunter College, ’18  
Critical Language Scholarship, 2017

Lisa Nishimura  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, ’19  
Jeanette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

Josephine Guo  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, ’17  
Fulbright Student Research Fellowship, 2017

Jasmine Awad  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, ’18  
Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, 2017

Nadine Gamal  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, ’17  
National Research Presentation Award (Environmental Science), 2017

David Kansberg  
Hunter College, ’16  
NYU, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Ph.D., 2023

Larisa Shahabayaeva  
Hunter College, ’16  
Jonas E. Salk Scholarship, 2017

Edwin Diaz  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, ’18  
1st place Statewide Research Presentation Award (Environmental Science), 2017

Josephine Guo  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, ’16  
Fulbright Student Research Fellowship, 2017

Omar Albert  
Hunter College, ’18  
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Amy M. Russo  
Hunter College, ’18  
Fulbright Student Research Fellowship, 2017

Hila Chase  
Hunter College, ’15  
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2017

Lisa Nishimura  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, ’19  
Jeanette K. Watson Fellowship, 2017

That was just one in a series of internships that propelled Jalloh, who earned a bachelor’s degree in economics from Baruch College this year, into a 2017 New York City Urban Fellowship. The nationally competitive, $30,000, nine-month fellowship places participants with New York City agencies to encourage public service.

This first-generation college student says he graduated from a public high school in Bushwick reasonably up to speed academically, but without needed study and social skills. CUNY’s Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge program (SEEK) and Urban Male Leadership Academy “provided structural support to gain a firm footing in college. They showed me the importance of mentorship and taught me the soft skills necessary for success.”

He has served as president of Baruch’s SEEK Society, peer mentor and vice president of the campus Black Student Union. “I believe that everyone can get through college with the proper support system,” he says.

When he lived with his grandparents and other family members in Sierra Leone for two years, he encountered the aftermath of that country’s 1992-2002 civil war. “At 9 years old I was playing soccer with amputees — kids who had one arm or one leg and were using crutches to play goalie,” he recalls. “It didn’t hit me at that moment, but they were children my age who had survived the civil war. If my parents had not decided to come to America, I could have been one of those kids.”

In the spring of 2016, he interned in Albany with Assembly Member Charles Barron, drafting bill memoranda, analyzing demographic trends and meeting with constituents. In the fall of 2015 he interned with City Council Member Jumaane Williams, working on legislative issues and representing him at meetings. And in the summer of 2015, he worked for the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit, helping with inquiries and advising the public about government policy.

“Working on all legislative levels, from New York City Council to Congress, I’ve touched on many topics: gun violence, economic growth, the social costs of gentrification and bail reform among them,” he says. “I’m passionate about changing my community for the better — regardless of whose jurisdiction it falls under.” He intends to go to law school to better prepare for public service. Jalloh recalls the mock legislative session at the end of his time in Albany, when he played the role of an Assembly member, debating and voting on bills. “It was amazing to see my parents, immigrants from Sierra Leone, watch me, their son, speaking on the floor of the Assembly.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institutional Affiliation and Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veronica Pacheco</td>
<td>John Jay College of Criminal Justice, '18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles B. Rangel</td>
<td>International Affairs Graduate Fellowship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronal Peralta</td>
<td>John Jay College of Criminal Justice, '17 Program for Research Initiatives in Science and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Johnson</td>
<td>Outstanding Undergraduate Researcher Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Jay College</td>
<td>of Criminal Justice, '16 National Institute for General Development (IMSD) Fellowship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donovan Trinidad</td>
<td>John Jay College of Criminal Justice, '17 NSEP/David L. Boren Undergraduate Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mateo Rubino</td>
<td>John Jay College of Criminal Justice, '17 National Institute for General Sciences Initiative for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximizing Student Development (IMSD) Fellowship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Pakow</td>
<td>Kingsborough Community College, '17 National Society of Collegiate Scholars First in the Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scholarship, 2017 KCC Presidential Scholars (2015-2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olalekan Shonowo</td>
<td>Kingsborough Community College, '17 Harvard Public Policy Leadership Participant, 2017 National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model United Nations Participant, 2017 Gladsys Brooks Scholarship for Student Leadership, Civic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel Castillo</td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '17 Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship, 2017 Christian Esquivel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '17 Kaplan Leadership Associate’s Degree Scholarship, 2017 Joey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernandez</td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '17 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konstandinos Gobakis</td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '17 Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soleil Griffin</td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '17 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awatef Ibrahim</td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '16 Women’s Forum of New York Education Fund, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Jarrin</td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '16 Point Foundation Community College Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remy Patrick Lavilla</td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '17 NCHC Innovation For Tomorrow Award, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Leon</td>
<td>LaGuardia Community College, '17 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Carrasco</td>
<td>Lehman College, '19 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Morales</td>
<td>Lehman College, '17 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alwin Joshua Chico</td>
<td>Lehman College, '20 National Science Foundation REU, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Elliot</td>
<td>Lehman College, '17 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Feliz</td>
<td>Lehman College, '20 Columbia University, NERA MedPrep Program, Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretiva Persaud</td>
<td>Lehman College, '19 National Science Foundation REU, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Arcentales</td>
<td>Medgar Evers College, '17 SUNY Downstate Medical Center, M.S. for Physician Assistant Studies, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Arcentales</td>
<td>Medgar Evers College, '17 Bellevue McMillion Scholarship Graduate Center, Ph.D. in Psychology, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon Robinson</td>
<td>Medgar Evers College, '17 Brooklyn College, Masters of Science in Sports Management, 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ALEXANDRA WHITTAKER, who graduates from Macaulay Honors College at City College this year, intends to use her 2017 Fulbright fellowship to learn about a pioneering Polish photographer whose work is all but unknown in the United States.

Fortunata Obrąpalska (1909-2004) is called the First Lady of Polish Photography for her creativity under communist rule and her boldness in exploring surrealism. "The artist versus the totalitarian state is the theme of my research," Whittaker says.

She discovered Obrąpalska in a history of photography course with her mentor, associate professor of art history Ellen Handy. They are in the City College Fellowship, which grooms undergraduates for doctoral degrees and careers in teaching and research.

“I couldn’t find any of Obrąpalska’s work in American collections, and that was my justification for the Fulbright: I couldn’t view her original photographs in the United States,” Whittaker says.

She will be affiliated with Adam Mickiewicz University, “a center for research on postwar Polish art and on the history of photography, so it will serve as an excellent home base,” she says. “I am very grateful to the University’s Institute of Art History hosting my project.” The university is in Poznań, where Obrąpalska lived.

In the 1930s, Obrąpalska studied chemistry, biology and botany, while exploring photography. During the war, she hosted two underground exhibitions in her apartment. Her style cycled from pastoral landscapes to modernism to socialist realism to nature photography. Her excursion into surrealism produced her best-known images. In her “Diffusion in Liquid” series, she dropped ink into water, evoking shapes and bodies. “It was unlike any photograph I had ever seen before,” Whittaker says.

Whittaker studies Polish at Hunter College and, with Macaulay funding, spent two weeks last summer at Jagiellonian University in Kraków.

She intends to become a photography curator. Through Macaulay, she has a taste of that career in a summer internship at the Whitney Museum of American Art. She also studied for a semester at Charles University in Prague through a City College Art Department Connor Fellowship, where she continued research on Czech photographer Josef Sudek (1896-1976), the subject of her senior honors thesis.

Whittaker says that she doesn’t think of herself as a photographer, but it was a summer photography course at City College that sent her “wandering the streets of New York City, taking photographs” and participating in group critiques that “inspired me to study the history of photography. I had been trying to figure out what direction my interest in art history might take, and this summer course was the first step along the path that has led me to Sudek and to Obrąpalska.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Scholarship/Internship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yahya Mused</td>
<td>Medgar Evers College, '17</td>
<td>NYPD Recognition for Service to Community</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy Corporan</td>
<td>Stella and Charles Guttman</td>
<td>Community College, '18</td>
<td>America Needs You Fellows Program, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatou Jobe</td>
<td>Stella and Charles Guttman</td>
<td>Community College, '19</td>
<td>America Needs You Fellows Program, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesco Musio</td>
<td>Stella and Charles Guttman</td>
<td>Community College, '18</td>
<td>Edward T. Rogowsky Internship Program in Government and Public Affairs, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukey Orea</td>
<td>Stella and Charles Guttman</td>
<td>Community College, '17</td>
<td>CUNY Futures Initiative Peer Mentors Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Plastrik</td>
<td>Stella and Charles Guttman</td>
<td>Community College, '17</td>
<td>Cisco Abers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald Sanjurjo</td>
<td>Stella and Charles Guttman</td>
<td>Community College, '17</td>
<td>Nicole Bellaflores-Mejia New York City College of Technology, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fatima Chebchoub New York City College of Technology, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Venu Toolaram Queens College, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suga Orea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jessica Urena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Miguel Gomez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aisa Kolegina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Giselle Cordero Queens College, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amera-Rime Lulu Queens College, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sheila Moalemian New York City College of Technology, '16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safoua Daouki New York City College of Technology, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saloua Daouki New York City College of Technology, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National Science Foundation-STEM Scholars, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Craig Dawes New York City College of Technology, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manuela Hoyos Giraldo New York City College of Technology, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USFW REU scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyace Smith New York City College of Technology, '17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The One Club: Creative Boot Camp New York (1st place), 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Haoxun Liu Queens College, '19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>APIASF AANAPISI (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution) Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naomi Ducat Queens College, '16 White House Internship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reshad Hai Queens College, '16 University of California, Berkeley, Environmental Design, Masters in Regional and Urban Planning, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Courtney Harewood Queens College, '16 Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amandeep Jaswal Queens College, '18 APiasf AANAPISI (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution) Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zainab Syed Queens College, '19 APIASF AANAPISI (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution) Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Venu Toolaram Queens College, '17 APIASF AANAPISI (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution) Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vincent To Queens College, '20 APIASF AANAPISI (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution) Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tao Hong Queensborough Community College, '17 Goldwater Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oliverine Oladijuego York College, '16 Jonas E. Salk Scholarship, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Durrell Washington York College, '17 Columbia University, School of Social Work, M.S.W., 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 CUNY 2017 AWARD RECIPIENTS
In May 2014, Yvonne Ng attended the U.N.’s 2014 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee Meeting as a participant of a Buddhist organization, Soka Gakkai International.

“In Buddhism,” she says, “we learn, in the words of Daisaku Ikeda, that a great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and, further, can even enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.”

How could Ng, a New York commercial photographer in her 30s who was born in Singapore, change herself to diminish the nuclear threat? Thinking about the power of movies to inform and stir emotion brought her to City College’s MFA program. The upshot was her 15-minute thesis film, “Cloud Kumo,” which won a silver medal in the Alternative Category at the 2016 Student Academy Awards, a competition that drew 1,749 entries from around the world. Ng is City Film’s fourth Student Academy Award winner in 10 years.

The movie concerns a fictional Hiroshima survivor who battles illness, and her granddaughter, who carries a radiation-related genetic defect. The grandmother “does not see herself as a victim,” Ng says. “She rises above her situation, never giving up hope that another day will be bright and beautiful.”

Shot in Hiroshima and New York City on a $30,000 budget, “Cloud Kumo” (kumo means cloud in Japanese) cast an actual hibakusha — a survivor of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Michiko Ishii, a musician and poet, was 7 years old when the bomb dropped, burning her severely. Ng hired child actors in Hiroshima for flashbacks.

To play the adult granddaughter, she found Yokko, a New York Butoh dancer, a practitioner of a confrontational Japanese theatrical and dance form rooted in the anguish of war. Yokko, who is from Japan, performs a modern dance in the film. “It was by pure luck I ran into her. She had zero acting experience, but when I sent her the script, she agreed immediately.”

Ng’s film mixes fiction and documentary. “I was keen on having a survivor star in the film.” She and Ishii lacked a common language, but they connected. Although she had never acted, “The quality and depth that she brings to the camera is immense,” Ng says.

She credits City Film’s program directors, Andrea Weiss and Antonio Tibaldi, with helping her to cut miles of footage into a concentrated short. “Every time we screened a cut, they asked, ‘What is the essence?’” Andrzej Krakowski, who teaches screenwriting, “helped tremendously, too. I had to rewrite my script so many times!”

“Cloud Kumo” is the first in a planned trilogy about nuclear issues. The second deals with the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster and the third will be about uranium mining.
JOHN WETMORE has far-flung interests, as his double major in psychology/neuroscience and classical studies indicates. So it’s no surprise that before he heads to graduate school for biostatistics, Wetmore, who graduates from Macaulay Honors College at Hunter this spring, will spend a year in Madrid with his 2017-2018 Fulbright fellowship, teaching English in a secondary school and perfecting his Spanish.

“I applied for the Fulbright when I was studying archeology in Sicily as part of a Hunter study-abroad,” he says. There, and on the island of Stromboli, “We worked on Bronze Age pottery and bones. It’s amazing to see Roman monuments and experience another culture firsthand. The food was amazing, too!”

His interest in classics and languages began at St. Joseph by the Sea High School in Staten Island, where he studied Spanish and Latin. His path to neuroscience was more convoluted. He started at Hunter thinking he wanted to become a Latin professor, but also followed Hunter’s pre-med track. He found that although he liked chemistry (he would minor in it), it was psychology and, in particular, neuroscience that captured his imagination more than medicine.

Meanwhile, he started volunteering with Hunter’s Peer Health Exchange to teach in public high schools about sexual decision-making, substance usage, and mental hygiene. “Our goal is to give them skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about their health.” This work in public health ultimately changed his career goals, as did his stint in the laboratory of Amber Alliger, a lecturer in experimental psychology, statistics and animal behavior.

Under Alliger’s guidance, Wetmore looked at the effects of environmental enrichment and stress on rats. He examined what happened when he changed their environment, making it more stimulating (such as with running wheels and space to play) or more stressful. In results that he presented at the 2017 Hunter Undergraduate Research Conference, he said that he found physical changes in the hippocampus, a part of the brain that deals with learning and memory, that would better defend them against acute stress.

Besides taking Alliger’s psychology statistics course, Wetmore also became her teaching assistant, which in part involved making presentations to students. “She really encouraged me toward biostatistics and the Fulbright. In her recommendation, she was able to say how well I performed as both a student and an educator.”

He also praises the help given by associate professor Rosa Alicia Ramos, his Spanish teacher, who made sure that his Fulbright essays were culturally tailored for Spain.

Before heading to Spain, he will attend the Harvard University Summer Program of Epidemiology and Biostatistics to study neurodegenerative disorders, such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson’s disease. “It’s a combination of all the things I want to do.”