Bold, New Steps for College Success
A record 22 City University of New York students, plus 14 faculty members, received highly esteemed Fulbright Program grants this past year for research and teaching abroad. The global opportunity reach of this program is taking them to such far-flung places as Taiwan, Spain, South Korea, Argentina, England, Hong Kong, Sierra Leone and more. Fulbright winners share their knowledge, skills and cultural perspectives and return home enriched for further study, service and advancement.

— James B. Milliken, Chancellor

cuny.edu/awardwinners
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CHANCELLOR MILLIKEN’S VISION

ECLARING THAT “the best city deserves the best public university,” Chancellor James B. Milliken is putting forth an ambitious vision for a more global, more digital, more STEM-focused City University of New York that will build on CUNY’s rich history, raised academic standards and other strengths to develop a tech-savvy 21st-century workforce.

“Our goal should be for the University to achieve its full potential in serving the people of New York,” Milliken told the Association for a Better New York (ABNY) in his first major policy address since his appointment as Chancellor. He outlined an ambitious agenda “for the next 10 years” — a “new spirit of engagement” — proposing that CUNY lead in workforce development, develop stronger public-private partnerships to benefit students and faculty, and foster research and technology development. The Chancellor envisions a “Global CUNY” benefiting the city by addressing global challenges and a “Digital CUNY” expanding the use of technology in teaching and learning.

“Our challenges are significant but the payoff is enormous,” the Chancellor said.

Keynoting a November ABNY breakfast at the New York Public Library, Milliken told the gathering of business, civic and nonprofit leaders that CUNY serves “many students who otherwise would have little or no opportunity.” Among the University’s strengths, he noted, are its exceptionally diverse, 274,000 degree-seeking students — a record enrollment for Fall 2014 — as well as accomplished faculty and “a steady rise in CUNY’s value and reputation,” driven by a 15-year drive for improved academic quality and “strategies for student access, mobility and success.”

The latter include CUNY’s groundbreaking Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) have boosted the graduation rates for community college students, improving remedial education and encouraging students to stay focused once they’re in credit-bearing courses. At CUNY, programs such as the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) have boosted the graduation rates for community college students, creating models for others. CUNY Start provides core instruction by specially trained teachers and student support from advisers to build the skills, concepts and strategies that students need for college-level work. ASAP and CUNY Start have provided new ways to approach a stubborn challenge in higher education — with exceptional rewards — and the University continues its commitment to develop methods to improve college preparation and timely graduation.

Drawing on CUNY’s rich history, Milliken declared that the vision articulated by Free Academy for the 21st century. Citing Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s scholarship program for STEM — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — students and Mayor Bill de Blasio’s investment in STEM programs at CUNY community colleges, Milliken said, however, that “real work needs to start in the public schools” where students...
A Global, Digital CUNY, Developing Research, Technology and the Workforce

often decide to pursue science and math. He urged “new levels of collaboration among the schools, CUNY, government, labor and the private sector” to build upon school-to-employment programs such as P-Tech. Milliken also said New York tech sector leaders “are desperate for well-trained programmers, software developers and gamers — many of whom can come directly from our community colleges with less time to a degree, less cost and a quicker path to earning a very good living. … This is a very attractive path and one that may be perfect for many CUNY students.”

- CUNY must develop stronger, richer public-private partnerships. “We need more internship opportunities for students that can lead to full-time jobs and more mentoring opportunities for students who are often the first in their family to attend college. We should provide interested faculty with more opportunities to work collaboratively with the private sector.”
- CUNY must build its research enterprise and increase its technology development. “Opportunities in the 21st century include businesses that didn’t exist in the 20th and our faculty and students can be an integral part of the development of new knowledge, new technologies and new processes,” the Chancellor said. “We’ve made some impressive investments in science facilities, with more to come, but we must double down on recruiting and retaining the best scientists and students to reap the full advantage of these investments. We’re in a global race for talent and we simply must be competitive. We also need an institutional culture that supports, rewards and nurtures faculty who are interested in commercially developing intellectual property.”
- CUNY should lead in addressing challenges facing cities. “While much of this new spirit of engagement is about developing knowledge and a skilled workforce for the new economy, there are other benefits to the city. CUNY should be a leader in research, education and engagement that address grand challenges in an increasingly urbanized global population, attracting leading urban university partners around the world. Today, this work would include areas such as applied research in early childhood education and development, policing and criminal justice, and the 21st-century built environment.
- CUNY should become Global CUNY. “Every major university must be global in outlook and scope, and few universities are better positioned than CUNY. We have an enormous advantage: a student body with 40 percent born outside this country and students who speak almost 200 languages.” Noting that CUNY had a number of student and faculty winners of Fulbright awards in 2014, he said, “I want our graduates to be competitive with graduates from the best universities anywhere, and without an understanding of the world … they will not be.”
- CUNY should become Digital CUNY. “We are developing new technological tools and new classroom platforms, blended learning opportunities that are transforming the way subjects are taught,” he said, adding, “It’s hard to beat 24-hour asynchronous delivery offered by digital classes. … I want our students to leave CUNY very comfortable with online learning.”
- CUNY should be a leader in raising private funds for public higher education. “Despite the fact that New York has been more generous than many other states, CUNY cannot achieve its potential and adequately serve New York with only public funding and modest tuition. We are becoming much less competitive for faculty — and there is no such thing as a university better than its faculty.”

Chancellor Milliken delivered his remarks as CUNY experienced record enrollment for Fall 2014 — more than 274,000 degree-seeking students choosing CUNY Value, the combination of academic quality, affordability, opportunity and the New York City experience offered by the University. The many facets of CUNY Value are detailed in a new publication, The CUNY Value Plus, and at cuny.edu/value.

Rising standards at the senior colleges, demographic changes in New York City, where most CUNY students reside, and increasing city public high school graduation rates have combined to drive up enrollment as more students, including increasing numbers of well-prepared students, choose CUNY colleges for their extraordinary value encompassing quality academics, exceptional affordability and low student-loan debt among graduates.

Transfer students, overwhelmingly from the city, constitute a majority of graduates at every CUNY four-year college including the most highly selective. Two-thirds of students who earn bachelor’s degrees from CUNY enter baccalaureate programs as transfers rather than freshmen.

Ambitious students are increasingly applying to CUNY colleges. The numbers of applicants with high school grade point averages of 85 or greater was up by 4.2 percent to 22,700, another new record, out of more than 70,000 students applying for Fall 2014. More than 12,000 newly enrolled freshmen in 2014 received $800 New York City Council Merit Scholarships given to students entering CUNY colleges from New York City high schools with B or better averages.

With colleges conveniently located throughout the five boroughs of culture-and-opportunity-rich New York City, CUNY also offers an array of traditional extracurricular activities including 195 intercollegiate sports teams and a multitude of clubs and connects hundreds of students per year with life-changing internships and service opportunities through the CUNY Service Corps.

Mentored by distinguished, award-winning professors and taking advantage of the University’s extensive academic offerings, CUNY students garner numerous prestigious national awards year after year. In 2014, 22 won Fulbrights for study and teaching abroad, 16 won National Science Foundation Graduate Research fellowships and CUNY was well represented among winners of other top honors. Fourteen CUNY professors also won Fulbrights for research, teaching and consulting.

CUNY Value also encompasses support given to students facing hardships such as homelessness and job loss. Single Stop USA offices in the community colleges provide services and other assistance to such vulnerable students, helping them remain in school. The Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation Emergency Grant Fund has given $11 million to more than 5,000 CUNY students.

Private donors to CUNY and its colleges provide extraordinary support for institutional scholarships; $560 million in CUNY scholarships, 20 percent of $2.8 billion given through the Invest in CUNY initiative, has been awarded since 2000 because of donors’ generosity. Chancellor Milliken said of CUNY, “This Great American Dream Machine serves over 500,000 students every year, the vast majority of whom live, work and contribute to the economy, the tax base and quality of life in New York. There is no greater way to leverage a gift than to invest in CUNY.”

“The environment for public higher education is changing in ways that make CUNY more essential than ever,” he said. “We have an ambitious agenda … If we’re successful, the returns to students and to New York will be tremendous.”
When Isabella Rossellini was a girl growing up in Italy in the mid-1960s, her father bought her a copy of *King Solomon’s Ring*, a famous book about animal behavior by Konrad Lorenz, an Austrian zoologist who later won a Nobel Prize and may have been the world’s first animal whisperer.

Rossellini had always been enraptured by animals, and half a century later she becomes animated at the memory of devouring Lorenz’s book about the intricate social interactions of creatures great and small, airborne and aquatic. “I was only 12 or 13,” says the 62-year-old actress, “but he wrote it so it was comprehensible, and I loved it. It was like — how do you say it in English — a lamp bulb went on. That’s what I want to do. I have always been fascinated with animals because they are so mysterious. They are also comical. There’s something about them that always made me smile. But when I went to college there really weren’t classes in animal behavior because it was a new science.”

There weren’t classes of any kind before long. Rossellini came to New York at 19 to attend tiny Finch College, a women’s college on the Upper East Side that had started as a finishing school in 1900 and was to close for lack of students in 1975. She worked as a translator while in school and as a reporter for Italy’s public television station. And then Rossellini, whose parents were Ingrid Bergman and the director Roberto Rossellini, left school to join the family business. “I started to work, which is what actors do,” she says. “It’s really a job for young people.”

Over the next few decades, there were movies (most memorably her turn as a torch singer in the art-house classic “Blue Velvet”), modeling (14 years as the...
Isabella Rossellini’s Fascination With Animals Finds a Place to Grow

Lancôme (“spokesmodel”) and marriage (the first, for three years, to Martin Scorsese). But she eventually found her way back to her childhood fascination with animals — and back to school to study them. About six years ago, nearly four decades after she dropped out of college, Rossellini finished her undergraduate degree, in art and environmental studies, at New York University. And now she’s a CUNY grad student — enrolled in Hunter College’s master’s program in animal behavior and conservation.

It was a confluence of art and science in her career that put her back in a classroom. In 2008, urged on by Robert Redford, Rossellini wrote, directed and starred in a series of video shorts for the website of the Sundance Channel: “Green Porno,” in which one of her generation’s most glamorous cover girls portrayed creatures from barnacles to bedbugs explaining the peculiar and sometimes downright bizarre ways in which they have, or approximate, sex. (“Bedbugs have penises like knives ... Chase with me! Mate with me! Seduce me! Doesn’t need a vagina at all! Ha — he ejaculates in my wound. The sperm will travel on their own to my ovaries.”)

Naturally, “Green Porno” got some attention. Critics and viewers loved its cheeky inventiveness — “strangely hypnotic,” said the Daily Beast — and the series grew to 40 webisodes and won a couple of Webby awards. Rossellini brilliantly tapped her appreciation of the comical nature of nature, but just as important to her was the Web show’s biological accuracy — every detail researched and verified with a scientific consultant.

“Green Porno” morphed into a book and then a stage performance — a one-woman-many-animal show that Rossellini spent last winter touring from the Brooklyn Academy of Music to concert halls in Europe and Australia. Researching the series and then developing the other projects reignited her interest in animals as an intellectual pursuit.

“After I finished my degree at NYU, I was looking for where to study animal behavior, but I could only find schools in Minnesota and Florida,” says Rossellini, who lives in Bellport, Long Island. And then a bit of serendipity. In 2012, she had major back surgery and hired a nurse named Jemma Futterman to help her recuperate at home. “I was writing the stage performance then, and I was telling her what I would like to do. She was getting an advanced degree at Hunter, and she said, ‘I think I saw something like that at Hunter.’ Six months later, I had my first outing. I got a ticket to hear a lecture at Hunter by Temple Grandin” — the prominent animal behaviorist and autism advocate — “and there was a table with brochures about the animal behavior master’s program. I couldn’t believe it.”

Not only was Hunter nearby, but the program was in its Psychology Department. “All the other programs are very scientific, so there is comparative genetics and I would have to do so much chemistry. It would be interesting, but I’m 62 and there’s not enough time. When I first started back at school at NYU, I arrived with great fantasy and humor. But taking exams and writing papers was very daunting. I didn’t understand why they wanted the papers to be so boring. The first paper I wrote, we were studying Darwin. He was so interesting, he would go to the zoo with fake snakes to see if they were recognized. And I wrote a paper that was a fantasy. The
Back to Her First Love

Continued from previous page

have been courses in animal behavior in captivity and the wild, the biology of conservation and her favorite, Psychology 757 — Animal Thinking and Communication. It’s taught by Diana Reiss, a prominent behavioral psychologist who directs a research program involving dolphin cognition and communication at the National Aquarium in Baltimore.

“She has done studies to see what kinds of human behaviors animals have, such as deception and humor and acquiring a sense of self,” Rossellini says. “Children recognize themselves in a mirror at a year and a half, and she applied that experiment to animals and found that bottlenose dolphins and Asian elephants can do that.”

Rossellini is working first toward the Hunter program’s master’s certificate, which requires most of the courses for a full degree but not a thesis. Then she hopes to continue on to the master’s degree. “When you’re enrolled, there is a psychological commitment,” she says. “But there are always pressures — theater performances to do, going away, opportunities to work. Then you say, ‘Well, maybe I should do that and not go back to the studies.’ So much of this has happened in my life. I postpone something that is a passion to respond to something that is money or whatever. This love for animals is so skewed from my career.”

Maybe not so much, if her recent career is any indication. “I was so impressed by ‘Green Porno,’” says Reiss, who was a theater set designer before she became a scientist. “How she got the scientific information and the details and wove them into a beautiful tapestry that was inventive, dynamic, engaging — and accurate.”

Rossellini wanted to take Reiss’ course in animal thinking last spring, but she was out of the country touring in “Green Porno” so often that she decided to audit the course and take it for credit in the fall. Reiss has been Rossellini’s mentor in the master’s program, and the two have become friends outside the classroom. They gave a talk about performance and behavior earlier this year at the Rubin Museum of Art. And Rossellini has been working on adapting some of Reiss’ Psych 757 coursework into her next theater piece: how animals think and communicate when they’re not having sex.

“Isabella is remarkably perceptive,” says Reiss. “She’s one of my star students, all puns intended.”

Five CUNY Colleges Training City’s Pre-K Teachers

By Barbara Fischkin

When Sherry Cleary was in “nursery school,” years ago, a one-sentence progress report came home. It said: “Sherry hates worms.” She still does.

Nevertheless, within minutes Cleary can devise a prekindergarten curriculum using worms to teach arithmetic, storytelling, basic science and more.

As executive director of the Early Childhood Professional Development Institute — and a CUNY-connected educational leader — Cleary is also a key player in Mayor Bill de Blasio’s nationally unprecedented initiative to make pre-K available to
Miguel Ortiz, a CUNY-trained pre-K teacher, at Garden School in Jackson Heights.
Five CUNY Colleges Training City’s Pre-K Teachers

Continued from page 6

every child in the city. This fall more than 50,000 children were enrolled in full-day pre-K classes, up from about 20,000 the year before.

And in 89 classrooms, the head teacher was someone newly trained — tuition free — by the University.

As part of a project that began last spring, this intensive teacher-education program is being carried out by faculty at five senior colleges: Brooklyn, City, Hunter, Lehman and Queens. It is funded by a $6.7 million city grant to the University and the Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI) — a prominent educational non-profit partnered with the University. As PDI’s executive director, Cleary’s goal is to ultimately provide 400 pre-K teachers with master’s degrees and certification in early childhood education, many of them as soon as September 2015.

This puts CUNY in the forefront of the future of early childhood education. What used to be more commonly called “nursery school” has evolved from a luxury for those who could afford it — and one with varying curriculums — to the more structured pre-K, which according to current research is considered a crucial ingredient for student success.

And while CUNY is in the forefront, Miguel Ortiz and Ruth Cazena-Cesar are on the front line as two of those first 89 CUNY education scholars. They both spent their summers at the University, Ortiz at Queens, Cazena-Cesar at Brooklyn. Both are now head teachers in city pre-K classes. They will continue their University studies this fall and are among those who hope to earn both their master’s degrees and certification before the 2015 school year.

Ortiz’s classroom is at the Garden School in Jackson Heights. A 2012 Queens College undergraduate alum, he majored in Communications Sciences and Disorders.

For Ortiz, 23, early childhood education comes naturally. “I have grown up in a very large family so there were always children around me, nieces and nephews,” he says. “I think that children are very silly in a good way. They like to laugh; they think many things are fun… If you can be silly with them you can connect with them, and then you can use that connection to teach them.”

About the PDI-CUNY program, he says: “We all share resources. We have a huge group email every night … and the first few professors were very helpful. Even now that we are done with their classes they have told us to feel free to email them about any questions. It’s been a very tight-knit community.”

Cazena-Cesar’s first classroom was at the SCO Morris Koppelman Early Childhood Center in Brownsville. She, too, has an undergraduate CUNY degree in biology from Brooklyn College. She began teaching pre-K after she graduated about five years ago.

“This program is strengthening my skills,” she says of her current Brooklyn College graduate studies. “My instructor, Meredith Resnick, when she explained the concept of learning through play, it really hit me that this was about teaching real-life issues and bringing practicality into the classroom play setting.”

Cazena-Cesar, 26, sees this come to life in her classroom’s dramatic play area.

“We have different community worker uniforms and the children have to use their imaginations to become different characters. It’s not just dressing up.” She also uses the kitchen area to teach students how to set a table. “I realize that this age group is a sponge,” she says. “You have the power to cultivate a child’s mind so that he or she can become something great … I can say to them, ‘You are smart. You have the ability to do this.’ And these encouraging words mold who they become.”

Both Ortiz and Cazena-Cesar are on “Track One” of the University program, which is for those who need both graduate degrees and certification. There is also a second track for teachers who were already in classrooms when the project began and are at different stages when it comes to what they need for their degrees and certification.

When first interviewed about the entire project last spring, Cleary said, “It will be very ambitious — and daunting — for the participants because they will have to work very hard. We’re going to be very selective and find candidates who have the ability to thrive. … The PDI is known for being resourceful, nimble, energetic and creative. But this is a big lift and we are committed to helping the mayor realize his vision, which means all hands on deck.”

Now Cleary sees that “big-lift” working.

“Track One” finished the summer with those 89 participants, down only from about 100. “Some excused themselves … once they realized the intensi-
ty of the project,” she explained. “A few others lost their spots when they couldn’t meet the academic standards. This attrition was expected and we are delighted with the group of scholars that remain.” “Track Two,” she adds, is “coming along slowly but organically.”

“We are closer than ever to transforming the lives of thousands of children,” is what Mayor de Blasio said when the pre-K initiative was announced in the spring. To this Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña added that “through collaboration, our children and families benefit.”

PDI’s recruitment began in May in preparation for a June start-up. By May 21, it had reviewed about 800 applications. About the CUNY faculty involved in the effort, Cleary then said, “We called a meeting. We told them about this. And they said, ‘What do you need us to do to help?’ They are extending themselves and will be teaching through the whole summer.”

A PDI educator will work with each campus and lend further support to each of the students. Sixty percent of the city’s pre-kindergarten classrooms are in community-based facilities such as child care centers and Head Start programs. The remaining 40 percent are in public schools and, according to Cleary, this ratio is likely to continue.

And Cleary’s own take on pre-K?

“Four-year-olds are very competent learners, as long as their teachers know how to create a learning environment that is play-based and allows children to handle the materials about which they are learning. A good teacher knows children have to be active. ... If they are sitting in chairs looking at something in the middle of the room, that is not an effective way to teach.”

Flexibility is also important. Consider the worms.

“Let’s say a teacher comes into the classroom thinking she or he is going to teach about plants,” Cleary says. “But it’s raining outside and the children come in and say that there are worms on the sidewalk. So the teacher shifts the program, taking the children outside to get the worms. They can make a home for the worms. They can learn math literacy by counting the worms, measuring the length of the worms, seeing how fast the worms crawl from plant to plant. They can write a story about the worms. They can talk about the environmental value of the worms ... then they can talk about why we want the worms back outside.”

Which might be the part of the lesson Cleary likes best.

She says she can’t remember ever not wanting to teach young children. She is forthright, though, about just how much universal pre-K can accomplish. “The real response to that is that pre-K won’t do enough unless we have a really good program that starts at birth,” she says. “We need to be thinking about all young children. Life doesn’t start at 4.”
How did you get your start as a writer?
I was an English major at Hunter and I had great teachers. I always read poetry and wrote poems, but I never would have thought of being a writer. I left Hunter without completing my degree and went back eight years later because of [the late writer Audre Lorde]. I had been reading her essays. I got so excited when I met her and she said to come study with her. It was like everything fell into place.

What kind of topics do you write about?
Generally, I don't focus on a particular subject. My poems used to be very urban — with a lot about New York City. The city is like a character in my writing.

Where do you find inspiration for your pieces?
I'm not one of those people who walk down the street and something hits me and I think, "Oh my god!" and I stop to write down a poem. I usually have to fight for them down the page and then, "Wow, there it is — I've got something."

What are some of the challenges you've had to overcome as a writer?
At times, I get that voice of doubt saying, "You're not smart enough, you're not good enough." The idea of being "enough" is really big for me. The name of my new novel is even called The Good Enough Mother. That's why Audre was so good for me. She would say, "I need you to remember this: Everything I've done in my life, was done, not without fear, but in spite of it."

It seems like Audre's mentorship had a strong impact on your outlook on life and your career. What kind of lessons do you want to leave with your students?
I love my life — I get to talk about poetry and fiction to people. I get to see students excited by poetry. So I want them to have a sense of possibility — you can do anything. I tell them that. Some kids grow up in a family in which everything is possible, and others don't. Growing up, if I told my family I want to be a writer, they would have said, "No, it's too scary."
And in a way, by teaching writing workshops, I can be a sort of a coach. Students need someone to tell them that they can find insight within themselves and that they are important.

You mentioned your latest novel, The Good Enough Mother earlier. What's it about?
The book in a lot of ways is about class. My character immigrates from one social class to another. She grew up working class and now she's a psychoanalyst. She's a woman who is divorced and has no children of her own. She becomes obsessed with a young girl she meets at a nearby public school. She doesn't realize that it's not so much a child she wants, but rather a childhood.

What advice do you have for aspiring writers and poets?
Writing poems is an art. And great poets have written bad poems. So you have to learn to fight for your work. You don't settle. I always say this to my students. It takes a while to be great. Also, you just have to show up to the page and write. Don't listen when people say, "Nobody wants to publish poetry. Nobody wants to publish fiction. The market is terrible now!" You can't think about that. The one thing is that you show up, you do the work.
GREAT GRADUATES

Chess grandmaster Maurice Ashley at a kids' chess tournament at P.S. 6 on the Upper East Side.

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CITY COLLEGE KNIGHT
TO . . . GRANDMASTER

By Richard Firstman

Maurice Ashley remembers it as if it were yesterday — or today. The move, bishop to e7, that made him an international grandmaster of chess, and the first black player in the world to achieve that most exalted status. “It was exactly 15 years ago — today’s my anniversary!” the onetime star of the City College chess team was saying one afternoon in his Brooklyn apartment. The coincidence triggered a checkmate smile and a burst of memories.

“I had been chasing this moment for 20 years and suddenly, here it was — I beat this guy, I’m in,” Ashley recalled. The guy was no slouch: a fellow international master from Romania, he had once played Garry Kasparov to a draw. “I went into the game nervous, really tight. And then in one moment I suddenly became totally calm. It’s just another game. It’s all good. You’re gonna be fine. Just play the game. I began pressuring him and he must have sensed the shift because he got totally nervous. I kept up the pressure, chasing him around, playing cat and mouse, confusing him with some moves. And in the end he just blundered — allowed a move that was so easy. And I thought, wow, this is ironic. I come this far and the move that makes me a grandmaster is a beginner’s blunder.”

There are 1,453 grandmasters in the world, 82 of them Americans. (There are now two more black grandmasters — one from Zambia, the other from Sweden.) To be conferred the exalted title by the International Chess Federation, a player must compile a succession of victories and impressive performances against the world’s elite players, enough to attain a complex numerical rating that factors in the strength of his opponents. “It’s as if, to play in the NBA, instead of a draft, college players had to play one-on-one games against both the top college players and NBA players,” Ashley explains. “They’d have to crush the other college players and do well enough against the pros to prove they belong.”

Once so knighted, a grandmaster is a grandmaster for life. Which seems only fair given that life after coronation isn’t exactly its own reward. “I’ve been all over the world, playing, making appearances,” Ashley says. “It’s the life, right? It’s the dream. Unfortunately, for chess grandmasters, and I’m one who has suffered this fate, there’s not a lot of money in it so you have to do other things if you’re going to stay in chess.”

Ashley has not only figured out how to stay in the game, but in some respects he’s risen higher than most of his grandmaster brethren in the decade and a half since his crowning achievement as a player. At 48, he no longer competes in tournaments with the frequency or focus he did when he was pursuing the holy grail. But he has capitalized on his prominence as the world’s first black grandmaster by fashioning a career as a kind of chess celebrity — an irrepressible promoter of the game who’s become something of a household name, at least in households where chess is king.

Ashley is a sought-after teacher and coach (Will Smith, the actor, is among his students), a chess author and TV commentator, a motivational speaker who’s a true star, a chess prodigy who can go online any time and get a game against anyone from anywhere in the world, and they can study using computers that far surpass humans in ability. “I’ve been all over the world, playing, making appearances,” Ashley says. “It’s the limelight,” Ashley says, “and I think the timing is excellent. Chess has been growing over the years because of the digital age. So many people play online. In the old days, when I was trying to get better I had to go to chess clubs, I had to go look for guys in Prospect Park, get hustled for money. But now you have chess prodigies who can go online anytime and get a game against anyone from anywhere in the world, and they can study using computers that far surpass humans in ability. It’s the perfect time to be born as a chess player.”

Ashley himself wasn’t born into chess and he started too late to be a prodigy. He came to New York from Jamaica with his family when he was 12 and didn’t play his first game of chess until he was 14 and a freshman at Brooklyn Technical High School. “Somebody had a chess set,” he says. “He brought me to the chess club at school and I fell in love with the game. He and I played chess every single day after school.”

Soon he was hanging out with a group for whom chess was actually cool; a kind of blood sport for boys of a cerebral bent. There were weekend “chess rumbles,” Ashley recalls, in which “you had to be a plodder,” willing to choose chess over girls and every other...

Please turn to next page
City College Knight to... GRANDMASTER

Continued from previous page

other teenage temptation. He began dreaming of becoming one of the world’s elite players, a grandmaster, and City College was the first step. Ashley was the star and captain of the chess team, leading it to the national college championship tournament — CCNY’s first taste of inter-collegiate glory since the days of Nat Holman. Alas, he says, “We were wiped out by Harvard.”

Ashley would have majored in chess if he could have. “I started out in engineering,” he says, “but I fled because there was too much math, which I was good at, but it was just too much work because I was really being a chess player. So I switched to creative writing.”

After graduating, Ashley joined an initiative by the American Chess Foundation to send coaches into inner-city schools. It began with modest expectations but Ashley took it several moves ahead. “In the beginning I would go twice a week and give the kids lessons, make sure they’re playing every day. Then I started taking them to tournaments, analyzing their games, ‘here’s your mistake,’ really attacking it like serious chess players. And the kids were attracted to the game as a competitive activity. They wanted to win — ‘Sit down, I’m going to kill you.’ “ Ashley became renowned for coaching teams of Harlem middle-schoolers — the Raging Rooks and the Dark Knights — to three national championships, gaining national recognition for breaking down stereotypes.

In these years, Ashley wrote two books on chess and became ESPN’s chess commentator, making a splash with a rollicking style that suggested Clyde Frazier calling chess as an action sport: “The knight is galloping toward the middle!” “Pawns are attacking mercilessly!” “The bishop is slicing and dicing!”

The assembler responsible for such breakneck chess chat is Maurice Ashley, a 27-year-old international master, who is the voice of the Professional Chess Association’s Intel World Chess Grand Prix.” The New York Times TV sports columnist, Richard Sandomir, wrote in 1994. “Ashley is loud. Not obnoxious. Just louder than a voice is expected to be for noise—toll chess.” Ashley told Sandomir what happened when he covered a tense tournament in Moscow: “I was going crazy. The Russian announcer came over and said, ‘Could you tone it down?’”

Ashley was an international master at that point, one step below grandmaster but a big one. “My Jamaican grandmother would say to me, ‘Jack of all trades, master of none,’” Ashley recalls. “I thought she was putting me down but what she meant was that I had been doing all these things — coaching, commenting, writing — instead of focusing on my dream, which was to become a grandmaster. Finally the light bulb went on.”

Ashley devoted himself to the quest and began collecting victories against a succession of higher-ranked players, including grandmasters. Word began traveling in the chess world that an American was primed to become the first black grandmaster. The pressure became intense, Ashley recalls. He couldn’t go to a tournament without being asked when and where he thought the big moment would happen. Finally, in March 1999, he was pitted against the Romanian grandmaster who represented the last hurdle. It turned out to be a tournament just a few subway stops from home.

“I had traveled the whole world and wound up doing it at a tournament at the Manhattan Chess Club,” Ashley says. “I remember ironing my shirt before the game, thinking about this big moment in my life, thinking about my grandmother — ‘focus on your dream.’” And I actually dropped the iron and started crying. I was still feeling the emotion when I started the game, but I managed to get control.

Ashley says he’s always had some mixed emotions about being thought of as some kind of Jackie Robinson of chess. The times were different, for one thing. “I knew people weren’t allowed in chess clubs, the same restrictions as in society, but I never experienced that. There were a couple of experiences where ignorant people said ignorant things,” but nothing like what Robinson went through. Still, he understood the significance of his achievement, of course. “African-Americans are famous for being athletes and performers, so it made people proud to have someone be one of the best in the world at something that’s considered one of the highest intellectual activities. I understood that, even if it’s in many ways almost random to talk about it now.”

Besides, Ashley says, when it comes to titles, “I’m the least successful member of my family. My brother is a three-time world-champion kickboxer. And my sister is a four-time WBC boxing champion. And a black belt in karate.”

OPENING DOORS

The MAGICAL TOUCH of GREGORY RABASSA

By Margaret Ramirez

WHEN RENOWNED Latin American author Gabriel García Márquez died in April, his passing sparked renewed interest in his rapturous novels filled with magic realism, especially the beloved Cien Años de Soledad, or One Hundred Years of Solitude. But most Americans would never have read Márquez had it not been for the remarkable work of Gregory Rabassa, one of the most important literary translators of the 20th century.

Rabassa, now 92, a distinguished professor emeritus of Hispanic language and literature at Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center, achieved worldwide recognition for translating more than 50 books from the Spanish and Portuguese by some of Latin America’s greatest writers, including Márquez, Julio Cortázár, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Amado, José Lezama Lima, Miguel Ángel Asturias and Clarice Lispector. In 2006, Rabassa was awarded the prestigious National Medal of Arts for his translation, the nation’s highest honor for contributions to the arts in the United States.

From his apartment on the Upper East Side, Rabassa reflected on the legacy of Márquez, the state of translations, and his concerns about the impact of technology on language.

When asked about Márquez, who was...
Gregory Rabassa, affectionately known as “Gabo,” Rabassa says they exchanged occasional letters, but he only met Gabo once during a visit to New York in the 1970s.

A few years before, in 1967, Argentine novelist Julio Cortázar had recommended Rabassa to Márquez as a translator for One Hundred Years of Solitude. The novel, set in the imaginary town of Macondo, was already a hit throughout Latin America, but Spanish-language novels were still a hard sell in the United States.

Rabassa said he was unsure how American readers would react to Márquez, the magic realism literary style, and the themes of imperialism, incest, economics, dictatorships, and destiny found in One Hundred Years.

“I knew it was damn good book,” said Rabassa. “But at that time, I was very skeptical about books from down there, making it up here [in the U.S.]”

Rabassa translates books as he reads, page by page, usually on a yellow writing pad. But with One Hundred Years, Rabassa said he had already read the book and so it took some of the fun out of it. Márquez later praised Rabassa as having improved the original text and called him “the best Latin American writer in the English language.”

The humble Rabassa shrugs at such praise, saying it is Márquez who deserves the credit for writing an epic.

“The book itself wasn’t a lemon,” he says with a laugh. “It was so well-written that I always say that book translated itself.”

Born the son of multilingual parents — his father was from Cuba and his mother was of Scottish and English ancestry — Rabassa holds a master’s degree in Spanish literature and a doctorate in Portuguese from Columbia University. He began teaching at the CUNY Graduate Center and Queens College in 1968 and retired in 2008.

In describing his craft, Rabassa added: “It’s like being a musician and being given a theme. You can’t vary the theme but you work around it in your own way.”

Despite the phenomenal success of One Hundred Years of Solitude in English, Rabassa said he didn’t receive royalties and earned only a few hundred dollars. In April 2005, Rabassa published a memoir on his career, If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents, and recounted how translators were paid by the word and often failed to receive recognition, rights or royalties. He credited publisher Alfred A. Knopf Sr. for leading the fight to have the translator’s name printed on the book jacket.

“In later years, I received royalties for books of more recent authors, but not for Cien años, he said. “Things have improved a bit, but not much. It’s still a business.”

Still, Rabassa has no regrets on the many treasured books he has translated and close friends he has made. His biggest concern today is the impact of digital technology on language and the written word.

“I guess what worries me a little bit more is that with all the technological devices we have now, you see language is disappearing,” Rabassa said. “What’s going to happen to each individual language? The word, the sound, and the beauty.”
A LIVING LEGEND in American public secondary education, Rudy Crew developed a panoramic view of what works. He held leadership positions in six states, including New York. A national advocate for school reform initiatives, he began as a teacher in middle and high schools and was a principal as well.

Now, as the president of Medgar Evers College, Crew, who has also taught university students, is bringing his ideals, goals and expectations to higher education in a broader way.

Over three decades, Crew has engendered great praise. With his signature wit, he concedes there has been a flip side. Appointed in January 2013, he told the CUNY Board of Trustees, “I don’t remember the last time someone clapped for me, so can you please do it again?”

He ran the New York City public school system from 1995-2000, when vouchers were an issue, as charter schools are now. Crew, adamantly on the side of public education, often butted heads with then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani. About charter schools, he now says he prefers to help make the public schools in Medgar Evers Central Brooklyn neighborhood better.

Crew became the college’s president 50 years after Evers’ assassination, as civil rights continues to be a challenge for a diverse America. These days, Crew celebrates the diversity of Central Brooklyn. His taste in music is eclectic, too, running from jazz to country to the gospel selection that was playing during an interview in his office earlier this year. The song: “I Can Imagine.”

Medgar Evers College Associate Professor of Education Sheilah Paul — the department chair — says the new president has come to the school with “a vision based on what the college really was developed to do, to serve the community in which it was built.”

How will you make this vision a reality?

Medgar sits in the midst of a community that arguably has some of the lowest-performing elementary, middle and high schools in all of New York City. You can sit here and decry that, say: “Oh my gosh what’s coming in the door is not the right kind of raw material that we need.” Or you can say that part of the job now is to cultivate the K-12 students so that they come here with a treasure trove of skills. So, I am taking 30 or 40 schools and I am going to partner them with Medgar. We are calling it the “Pipeline Project.” If you are a child born within “earshot” of the campus you’re mine. You are a Medgar student automatically and the only question for me is, can I get you?

Specifically, how do you help those who need this academic support?

We are assembling a recruitment team. We are looking at this with market segmentation. Who are the students? What kind of interests do they display? What are their parents talking about? What needs do they have academically? We will offer summer courses. We should own the summer. We should own the Internet. We should own having conversations with parents so that their kids are living in a college-going culture. We are going to have a whole lot of people push this conversation into the homes of Brooklyn.

You were raised in Poughkeepsie, by your father, who was widowed when you were small. He was devoted to education. Do you want the college to give students what you got from your father? That’s exactly right. And sometimes you’ve got to say it and it’s tough. Love is not always easy and bouncy.

What about the students who believe they can do better than here?

There is a Medgar Evers Prep, a high school. But traditionally those students bypassed this school. They understood it was supposed to be a bad idea. You only came here if you had no other choice. These students could go to SUNY and they had other options as well. We started by having a meeting there. There were more than 500 students and parents.

If there were no restrictions and you could do anything at all to ensure success here, what would that be?

I don’t have a picture of being prohibited from doing what is possible. I have a picture of being enabled. ... I view this as a wonderful campus on which I get a chance to make a patina, like watercolor where you don’t have complete control. It bleeds into the mat and your job is to kind of get it to angle itself in the right direction. This is about allowing people in this college to have their
own campus. If you get that happening among faculty and staff it will automatically happen to students.

You have had a broad view of education in America, mostly K-12. How do you see the landscape of higher education?
The landscape is dotted with an enormous array of places that are a few questions away from greatness. But failure to answer those questions will lead us to a circular road, asking the same questions generation after generation. How do we educate those with the least? How do we build better strategy? How do we offer more opportunity? And how do we distribute differently without causing a breakage in the covenant with people who don’t need all these things? Where and what is the trampoline, the jump to the middle class? And why are fewer and fewer students, including middle class students, unable to get into the middle class themselves? In Central Brooklyn, specifically, parents are asking what's the new on-ramp to get into a post-secondary institution.

What is the on-ramp?
It is to build really confident learners and then to maximize their efforts so that they can learn anything that anyone puts before them. But if the cornerstone is not built, if they are not really confident in anything, then social change, let alone academic change, won’t happen. Students need to learn: I might get an “F.” But I am not an “F.”

How do you teach this?
You do this by not ascribing theory to them about being smart or dumb. There are more choices than this. More intelligences. This isn’t a question of being defined as smart or dumb by a state test. Or as quote-unquote “remedial.” How do we create a way of talking about knowledge so that we understand it is simply another asset we can distribute? To everyone. Just because one student knows algebra does not mean there is less algebra in the world. It just means that another student gets a chance to learn algebra and may do it very differently.

On a personal note, what is it like to be back in New York?
I have come home because it is home. I am living in Brooklyn. My son lives here. This is going to be home again for me for a very long time. I don’t have anywhere else to go.
Elizabeth Butson knows what really matters and it’s not money. “It’s all about making a difference in the lives of others,” says the philanthropist.

Butson, a former Philip Morris International advertising executive, reporter for Time/Life magazine and local newspaper publisher, spent her early life making opportunities for herself. Now she creates them for others.

A longtime supporter of the Borough of Manhattan Community College, she has given the school thousands of dollars over the years, funding many scholarships for academically gifted students. One was named in honor of her mother, Katy Halepli.

“We talk about inequality and ‘the haves and the have-nots,’ but that’s not what it’s all about,” says Butson, who is a BMCC Foundation board member. “It’s about creating opportunity and BMCC gives anyone who really wants an education that chance.”

It was nearly 15 years ago that Butson attended the college’s annual gala and became inspired by a student from the Caribbean who had struggled in life. “He was kicked out of his home and he lived in a crawl space in the roof of a building,” recalls Butson. “But look at what determination to succeed can do. He got a scholarship ... and he was one of the top graduating students even though he didn’t have a place to live. I really wanted to be a part of that.”

Soon after, Butson — who, with her late husband, Tom Butson, owned two Lower Manhattan newspapers, Downtown Express and The Villager — was invited to join the BMCC board.

Born in Istanbul to parents of Greek heritage, Butson has a story that in some way mirrors those of many foreign-born BMCC students. She moved to the United States alone at 18 in search of educational opportunity. She received a scholarship from Boston University, studied political science and journalism, and supplemented her income by teaching Greek-American children in the Boston area.

“When I came here, I really had to make it on my own,” she says. “My parents couldn’t help me because the Turkish...
The government didn’t allow people to send money out of the country. I did all those things on my own — being able to do that energized me. It also energizes me when I see it in others.”

Since its inception in 2002, the $1,000 Katy Halepli Scholarship has been awarded to 12 graduating women seniors. The Elizabeth Butson Scholarship, which was established last year, has been awarded to eight students. They received $1,600 scholarships.

Gentiana Rina, a recipient of an Elizabeth Butson Scholarship, is juggling school with a job in retail. The scholarship means she can afford to take some time off from work so she can study more.

Rina is 30 and a third-year engineering science major who arrived from Albania four years ago to further her education. “When I came, I didn’t know anybody and I didn’t speak a word of English,” she says. She was accepted into BMCC’s ESL program and now she has a 4.0 GPA. She plans to follow in her father’s footsteps to become an engineer.

“There are people driven to succeed and make it to the top,” says Butson. “Most people need for someone to open a door for them. For me, opening doors for myself and others has been a big part of my life.”

Last spring, Butson joined four scholarship recipients for lunch at BMCC’s Shirley Fiterman Art Center. She wanted to get to know them and hoped they would learn a bit about her. “Every time I see those kids graduate, I feel really terrific,” she says. “I wanted to meet them because I want to know where they are and what they are doing.”

Though Butson is celebrated for her philanthropic work, she is most proud of her professional accomplishments. “I was the first female V.P. at Philip Morris in a very male dominated world, in a very conservative business,” she says. “Now, the number of women in exec jobs has significantly increased I am glad that I opened doors for them.” Butson worked for Philip Morris International for 27 years where she was the first woman hired for a nonsecretarial position.

“Success in life is not all about making money,” she says. “It is about making new tracks, taking the road less traveled, sharing the knowledge you have gained with those who are getting started. Opening doors.”
Sheryll Pang is no stranger to hardship, but it’s adversity that has driven her to succeed. Pang, 25 years old, says that at 16 her abusive stepfather kicked her out of their house. And three years later, she became a single mother. “I was told I was stupid and that I’d never amount to anything,” she says. “I really didn’t think I would be able to go to college. I did not believe I had the mental capacity.”

She would never have guessed, just nine years ago, that in the spring of 2014 she would graduate from Baruch College summa cum laude with a degree in finance and investment. “My life was a bit of mess and unstable before I had my son,” says Pang, who described her life back then as turbulent. She had a series of abusive relationships and worked dead-end retail jobs. But once Jayden, who is now 5 years old, was born her life took a different direction. “After I had him everything became 100 percent clear — I knew what I had to do and I wanted to give him a better life.”

Jayden was only two months old when Pang enrolled at Queensborough Community College. It didn’t take long for her professors to take notice of her academic prowess. “QCC was a stepping stone to something bigger,” she says. “I thought I was going to get an associate’s degree and maybe find a job on Craigslist. But my professors would reach out to me and tell me that I was capable of much more.”

With the encouragement of her professors, Pang applied to the New York Needs You fellowship — a career-development and leadership program at CUNY for students who are the first in their family to attend college. With the encouragement of her professors, Pang applied to the New York Needs You fellowship — a career-development and leadership program at CUNY for students who are the first in their family to attend college.

“I didn’t even know what finance was. But having mentors and joining these programs that guided me, helped me to identify what I wanted to do and what I could be good at,” says Pang, who was later admitted to the highly competitive Zicklin Undergraduate Honors Program.

“Sheryll stood out even among really smart students in terms of her ability to communicate and participate. We had Larry Zicklin as a guest lecturer and the students were intimidated. But not Sheryll, she had her hand in the air, asking really smart questions,” recalls marketing professor Gloria Thomas, who also serves as the director of the Zicklin Undergraduate Honors program.

“I love learning. I took school a lot more seriously, since I worked first and then went to college,” says Pang who started college three years after graduating from high school. Along with her major in finance Pang had a triple minor in economics, international business and advanced business analysis.

After her junior year, Pang was given an early job offer at the asset management firm BlackRock as a financial analyst. “I believe that she has top management potential,” says Carol Gamm, an executive coach who mentored Pang for two years through Baruch’s Executive on Campus program. “Through her life experience, I think she has developed a kind of street smarts. And that’s not something you can teach people.”

As a new graduate she has many plans, and among them is working with other single mothers to coach them to fulfill their potential. “I really do want to inspire women. I want to show them that you’re not in it alone. A lot of people get embarrassed by the bad decisions they make,” says Pang, “but for me, I realize that I had to go through it to be who I am today. We’ve all gone through our own adversity, and it’s what you do about it that really matters.”
By Barbara Fischkin

Professor Sheldon Weinbaum, now 77, retired from City College in 2007. Or more accurately: “never really retired.” Hired in 1967, he is still very much a presence at City College and its Grove School of Engineering, advising graduate students, overseeing grants and participating in courses as a guest instructor.

One day last spring, dressed in a plaid shirt, black sweater vest, blue jeans and sneakers, he offered encouraging advice to those presenting papers on the intricacies of kidneys, tubular diameter change and the absorption of fluid through epithelial cells, leaky and otherwise. The papers were accomplished; the students nervous, nevertheless.

“This is stuff you wouldn’t know yet,” Weinbaum said, after suggesting a plan for additional exploration. “But I do.” Some laughed, most seemed to relax a bit. Certainly, Sheldon Weinbaum is in many respects a regular guy. He signs his emails “Shelly,” and that is what many colleagues and staff call him, even if his students and former students are generally more deferential. This is perhaps because in his field, Sheldon Weinbaum, regular guy, is a superstar.

Formally, he is a Distinguished Professor of Biomedical and Mechanical Engineering, emeritus. Last year when elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) he became one of nine living persons to hold membership in these four elite national science academies: the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine and the AAAS – and the only one in New York State.

His contributions to re-entry aerodynamics and fluid mechanics are widely recognized. In 2002, he was the first engineer awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in molecular and cellular biology. More recently, he proposed a new fuel-saving concept for an airborne jet ski train that travels at more than 430 miles an hour.

There is more. He also has been a prominent, staunch, risk-taking activist for diversity, at CUNY in particular.

Along with all of this, Weinbaum is also among the University’s proudest mentors and his devotion to diversity comes into play here as well. He relishes the fact that in a field overwhelmingly male in years past, 17 of his 45 Ph.D. students have been women and/or underrepresented minorities. Once he even spent a month in China, recruiting women students.

Asked to suggest a few former students to contact, Weinbaum gushed over a number of them, including Ghebre Tzeghai (’84) his first African-American Ph.D. student. Tzeghai retired last summer after 30 years at Proctor & Gamble, where he was Global R&D and Innovation Executive. He is now working part time as Chief Innovation Officer and Independent Consultant at Summit Innovation Labs. Tzeghai was recently elected to the National Academy of Engineering, the fourth African-American to be elected in the field of bioengineering.

And then there is Bingmei Fu, now a City College professor. She was the first female Ph.D. in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

His students return the admiration. One, born in Kiev, even went to Ukraine with him to help him trace his father’s roots. Others, when asked to write about their experience with Weinbaum, quickly sent back glowing emails, offering to write or talk more about his influence on them. In truth, their stories could fill a book about mentoring.

Here is an offering from Yi Arnold, who as a student was Yi Duan:

“I had trouble learning fluid mechanics during my first trimester at CCNY and received a not-so-good grade. I was very upset because I thought I wasn’t good enough to be one of Dr. Weinbaum’s students. But he calmed me down. He showed me the email he got from another professor stating that I had excellent presentation skills, comparable to students from Harvard or MIT. He told me that one course is not enough to pass judgment on who you are and that not everybody can be good at everything.”

Arnold earned her Ph.D. in biomedical engineering from City College in collaboration with Yale School of Medicine and Mount Sinai School of Medicine in 2008 and received postdoctoral training at Columbia University. She is now a senior scientist at Osiris Therapeutics in Baltimore.
Professor Bingmei Fu received her Ph.D. in 1995, and her own page on the college’s website, if printed, would be seven pages long and includes students she has mentored herself. “The most precious thing I learned from professor Weinbaum is an optimistic attitude,” she notes. “Not only in my career but also in life.”

To this, Laura Causey Sandoval, who received her Ph.D. from City College in biomedical engineering in 2013 and is now a program associate at Rice 360 Institute for Global Health Technologies, adds, “He has constantly worked for a more just world.”

Weinbaum says this is because the mentor had a mentor: his wife. Weinbaum has been married to Sandy Weinbaum, also an educational activist, for 52 years. (Alexandra Weinbaum, as the professor’s wife is known professionally, is a documentarian of the new Guttman Community College in collaboration with Nan Bauer-Maglin and Camille Rodríguez, with funding support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation).

She also was the one, the professor says, who persuaded the scientist to become an activist.

And, as a result — as a recently hired professor — Weinbaum led a demonstration against the Vietnam War at the college’s Steinman Hall and was an outspoken supporter of Black and Puerto Rican student demands in their takeover of the City College campus in 1969. He was almost fired. Later, in the 1990s, acting on a long-held belief that diversity was crucial to CUNY, he led students and professors in a class-action lawsuit, “Weinbaum vs. Cuomo,” which argued that New York State financing of higher education was racially discriminatory. It was unsuccessful yet enabled new voices to be heard.

In speaking about the original impetus for his activism so many years ago, Regular Guy Weinbaum recalls: “My wife said to me, Why don’t you do something important with your life?”
ONE MIDSEMESTER DAY at Queensborough Community College, Colleen Abbate arranged an array of black and white photographs on the blackboard ledge in the college’s photo studio. Then she stepped away and glanced back and forth between the images and her professor’s panning eyes.

“What is that — it looks like a Diane Arbus photograph,” Jules Allen said, casually tossing off a comparison to one of the most famously idiosyncratic photographers of the last century. His students are accustomed to such references, even if they don’t always get the references, or the compliments.

“What was it — Halloween or something?” Allen asked.

“It was the Polar Bear Club where we jumped in the ocean in January,” explained Abbate, a Navy veteran.

“You went into the water in January?” Allen asked, as if simultaneously appalled and delighted. That’s another thing his students are accustomed to: the exaggerated tease.

“We did it for the Make-a-Wish Foundation,” Abbate explained, but Allen didn’t care. “You went in the ocean when it was zero outside? You’re crazy!”

Allen, a professor of art and design who’s been a fixture at Queensborough for more than three decades, is a renowned art photographer whose work, primarily focused on the contemporary African-American experience, is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian and the National Gallery, among others. His books include studies of nude black women, denizens of Gleason’s Gym and people who wear hats. A forthcoming volume looks at the culture of black marching bands — a “precision-based art form that fully embodies the love of the public event as a spectacle,” as Allen sees it, and “breathes the soul and spirit of Africa within the modern world.”

Allen brings serious intellect to his photography, but to his students he’s an amalgam of personality and attitude — a professor apt to tell a student, “It’s disgusting how good that photograph is.” He’s demanding but playful, worldly and wide-eyed, insightful and inciting.

And, at 67, still very cool.

“That’s a beautiful photograph of that parrot,” Allen said, moving to another photo. “Is that your bird?”

“It’s my boyfriend’s,” Abbate said, “but I bought it.”

“Okay, go to work on these three, they’re killers. Burn the sky on that one.”

“What about that one over there, with my daughter crying?” Abbate asked.
Allen paused to call over to another student. “Sequoia! First of all, that’s a name to die for. Do you have some photographs with you?”


“What’d I tell you about that word? There’s no thingie in here.”

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move to New York — and become a photographer. “New York had a rhythm, a pace,” Allen says, “and Harlem was like magic to me. I started meeting other photographers and they really helped me get going. Everyone got along around the image, but everyone was scrambling to make a living.”

The first notice he got was a show of street photography at the Studio Museum in Harlem that was covered by The New York Times and the Village Voice. In the 1980s, he took up boxing at Gleason’s, the legendary Manhattan boxing gym, but found fight training to be a window into the souls he found in and around the ring. He wound up doing more shooting than sparring, “and two years later I had a book” — or at least the makings of one. Double Up, Allen’s fourth book, was published in 2011, 30 years later.

Overhearing the discussion, a student asked Allen, “When you do concepts and you focus mainly on blacks, do you feel like that kind of limits you?”

“That’s a good question — you’re a smart man,” Allen replied. “But I think it actually expands me. Diane Arbus said the more specific something is the more general it is.”

“So by focusing on one group of people you’re shooting for the whole world?” the student said.

“Bam!” Allen said. “In order to be whoever you are you have to be who everybody else is. Because everybody has a culture and the closer you are to your culture the more you can give to the rest of the world.”

In the age of camera phones, selfies and underemployment, students often tell Allen that their parents think photography courses are a waste of time. “They don’t understand what their children are doing taking pictures,” he says.

Allen freely acknowledges photography is a tough career to break into, especially photography that aspires to art. Years ago, he found himself confronted with that reality by students themselves. “They said, ‘We’re supposed to make a living doing what you do, this art? You’re supposed to be the teacher — teach us how to make a living. They wanted to learn commercial photography but I never did that at all. So I went to the department, got some lights, some backdrops and in my studio I taught myself how to light and put a portfolio together, started looking for work. And before I knew it, I was blowing up. I had all students as my assistants. We were doing advertising, magazine shoots.”

Allen had realized long before that he had the kind of embracing personality that allowed him to blend into the culture he was trying to portray and shoot “from the inside out.” The same personality his students knew. It turned out to have a similar effect with famous and powerful people.

“We went to do Colin Powell at the Waldorf,” Allen recalls. “And he says, ‘What’s happening, man? How you doing, baby?’ He took all that Mr. Secretary of State stuff off.”

Continued from previous page

Learning to Look Before You Shoot

By Margaret Ramirez

WITH THE AUTUMN SUN blazing through Hunter College’s north studio, hip-hop choreographer Jennifer Weber leads a brash group of dance students in a master class that attempts to reinvent hip-hop.

As the beat thumps, the dancers follow Weber’s movements, learning an animated routine filled with swooping arms and complicated footwork. Weber then splits the class into pairs, asking them to play off each other’s movements, in a style less like hip-hop and more reminiscent of ballet.

Weber, who is founder and artistic director of the hip-hop dance company Decadancetheatre, is one of 19 acclaimed choreographers taking residence, rehearsing and teaching at 10 colleges across The City University of New York.

The groundbreaking new residency program, known as the CUNY Dance Initiative, strikes a unique cultural partnership by providing dance companies with free rehearsal space on a college campus, while allowing students and surrounding communities to interact with professional dancers at master classes, public lectures and open rehearsals.

In addition to the Decadancetheatre residency at Hunter College, some of the other dance companies participating in the CUNY Dance Initiative include: Renegade Dance at Brooklyn College; Elisa Monte Dance at City College; Chloe Arnold’s Syncopated Ladies at John Jay College; Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo at Lehman College and...
Dance to the People at the College of Staten Island.

Jeffrey Rosenstock, assistant vice president of external and governmental relations at Queens College, which is leading the Dance Initiative, said the project gives dance companies an opportunity to explore the diverse neighborhoods where CUNY’s colleges are located.

“This is a chance for these dance companies to see how their work fits on an audience that might not be their regular audience,” Rosenstock said. “So I think CUNY really has another opportunity … to impact the cultural life of our city.”

Jana Feinman, director of Hunter’s dance program, said the initiative provides dance students with a unique opportunity to observe a working artist in the midst of creating an original performance work. Weber, for example, will be holding rehearsals at Hunter College for the upcoming December premiere of “A Hip Hop Nutcracker in Washington Heights.”

Feinman said several dance professors are integrating the Dance Initiative into their curriculum through lectures and also by requiring students to attend master classes and rehearsals.

“There’s a feeling of intensity that you get from questioning and observing these choreographers and dancers,” Feinman said. “It’s something you can’t teach.”

Malaika Holder, a Hunter dance major who attended the Decadancetheatre master class, said she was impressed by how much she learned from choreographers Weber and another Decadancetheatre member, Taeko Koji.

“It was refreshing how they broke stereotypes of hip-hop,” Holder said. “It’s known to be rough. But I’ve never seen it as vulnerable in the way that she was teaching today.”

Weber said the most exciting thing about the initiative is not just the space, but also the relationships to be forged while the dance companies are on campus.

“It’s so important as an artist to have a home to create work,” Weber said. “And that is the best thing about this Dance Initiative. This is now going to be the home for the next piece that we are creating. And now that we’ve had this class, it’s more than just an empty rehearsal room, it’s a space that we feel connected to.

“Now we’ve already started this relationship and we have this history already in this space from today,” she said. “So, there is a certain energy that we will then bring through to our work.”
NEWLY ARRIVED in the United States and working in a restaurant, Qiong Zhou wondered: “Is this job I will have all my life? Wash tablecloths and cleaning table, clean up cups and the plates?”

She had left China in 2010 with a shaky grasp of English but a firm hold on her dreams. “My family preferred for me to work rather than study, but I was very determined to continue my education,” Zhou recalls.

And in two years Zhou had completed an associate degree at Bronx Community College and started a bachelor’s in nutrition at Brooklyn College. She credits her achievement to the University’s Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), an initiative started in 2007 to help community college students earn their degrees and do so faster than is usual.

Community colleges nationwide have dismally low graduation rates, and many of the students who stick with it take years to earn their degrees. But Zhou is one of the ASAP program’s many success stories: Like 57 percent of the students who started ASAP with her in 2011, she earned her associate degree within the program’s three-year target. That’s more than twice the three-year graduation rate of a comparison group of non-ASAP CUNY students.

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...it’s CUNY’s ASAP that stands out for being both academically successful and cost-effective.
To achieve President Obama’s goal, community colleges need to overcome what reformers call “the leaking pipeline” of remediation: Each year, 1.7 million unprepared students enter U.S. colleges, and most quit at some point in the traditional sequence of remedial math, writing and reading courses. Failing to turn struggling students and staff, orients students to program expectations, and informs them about campus resources. Based on research-based practices that have been shown to improve student outcomes, ASAP requires full-time study in select majors, which will expand within two years to include more in science, technology, engineering and math. ASAP also offers a consolidated course schedule, which encourages rapport between students and helps them balance job and family responsibilities. And it provides close, hands-on monitoring by advisers — “intrusive advising,” as it’s called — along with career development services and tutoring.

To measure ASAP’s effectiveness, the University contracted with MDRC, an independent education and social policy research organization, to conduct a five-year study of 900 students at three colleges. It was a random-assignment study, the gold standard in research but a rarity in education studies. Two years in, MDRC found that ASAP students earned substantially more credits per semester and had higher graduation rates than similar students who followed the conventional route. The University’s internal analysis of the program demonstrated that across ASAP’s first five cohorts, 52 percent of participants earned degrees within the three-year goal, compared with the 22 percent rate for similar non-ASAP students.

MDRC researchers said that ASAP’s increases were “larger than the effects of any other community college program that has been studied to date using a large-scale, rigorous experimental design.” These findings indicate that ASAP is the kind of “comprehensive, extended intervention” that may be necessary for substantial improvement in community college graduation rates.

Qiong Zhou’s success illustrates what makes the program work. She came to the United States at age 20 with her mother and younger brother. Her father had been in New York for a decade, working six and seven days a week to pay off the Chinese smugglers who had gotten him into the country. When he got a green card, making him a legal resident, he sent for his family, but getting clearance from Chinese and U.S. authorities took years more.
ASAP provides close, hands-on monitoring by advisers — “intrusive advising.”

Johnny Lopez Castillio takes part in ASAP at Queensborough Community College.
**Coverstory**

**On the Path to College Success**

*New Help That Really Works*

Continued from Page 30

Soon after arriving in New York, Zhou concentrated on improving her English. She completed a GED high school equivalency course and a city Department of Education college-transition program. Still, she says, “My reading was so-so, and I had no confidence.”

College would have been out of reach without ASAP’s financial incentives, Zhou says. They included a free monthly MetroCard that enabled her to travel to Bronx Community College, cost-free use of textbooks and a waiver of the difference between tuition and the amount of her federal and state financial aid.

“I thought it would take four years [to earn an associate degree] because of bad English, bad writing,” Zhou recalls. “But ASAP prepared me for college, and I tried my best.”

She says her English 10 class, a six-hour-a-week course incorporating remedial and credit-bearing work, prepared her for the University’s assessment test, which students must pass to take college-credit courses. But most important, she says, was Melanie Robles, her ASAP adviser at Bronx Community. “I always spoke to her, and she always say, ‘Come on, you can do it!’ which for me is a lot,” Zhou says. She adds, smiling, “My husband says that, but he loves me.”

Robles says, “We walk students through their whole first year, and it’s intense. A lot of what we do is coaching them through the things that are going on in their lives.” Zhou talked “not only about her classes, but also about her relationships and things she might be thinking and feeling. She passed all her classes with As, maybe one B ... She was willing to take risks in communications. Immigrants sometimes hold back in the classroom because of how they sound; she wasn’t like that.”

Zhou earned her associate degree in January and wore cap and gown at the graduation ceremony in May to the cheers of her family. She’s looking forward to the next step, earning her nutrition degree gown at the graduation ceremony in May to the cheers of her family.

She’s looking forward to the next step, earning her nutrition degree.

**Efforts Across the Country**

During a White House conference on Aug. 13, Cecilia Muñoz, director of President Obama’s Domestic Policy Council, announced in a blogpost that the Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation, a nonprofit student loan servicer, was committing $5 million to an experiment. A partnership with MDRC, the Ohio Board of Regents and CUNY to replicate CUNY’s successful Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) to support as many as 2,000 community college students in Ohio to help more students graduate sooner.

It will be the largest replication attempt, but just the most recent example of the interest ASAP has drawn from higher education officials and reform advocates. Much of the attention stems from the program’s showcasing by Complete College America, an organization funded by education philanthropy heavyweights including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation.

Complete College America was established in 2009 to help close the success gap in American higher education. “We’ve made progress in giving students from all backgrounds access to college,” the organization says, “but we haven’t finished the all-important job of helping them achieve a degree.” Complete College America invited Donna Linderman, the University’s associate dean for student success initiatives, to speak about ASAP at several of its national and state conferences, and audiences were intrigued.

Meanwhile, the University hosted an ASAP “Design Studio” last spring that attracted 19 colleges, 10 states and several research organizations. Groups also visited ASAP programs at five CUNY campuses. This may lead to further replication.

Linderman and other reformers were invited to speak at a conference hosted by the Hawaii Graduation Initiative, a program launched by the University of Hawaii in 2010 to help 25 percent more students graduate in five years. After hearing Linderman’s presentation on ASAP, Hawaii educators traveled to New York to see it firsthand. They liked what they saw, and so far two of Hawaii’s community colleges have adopted the ASAP approach.

“We’re taking the best practices that show success and are doing a lot of professional development for our faculty as they customize what they’re learning to fit their course or campus,” says Suzette Robinson, director of academic programs for Hawaii’s community colleges.

**Slaying the Math Dragon**

It’s not often that a presentation about math at an education conference draws a standing-room-only audience, several rounds of loud applause and comments afterward of the “Thank you for doing this important work” variety.

But that’s what happened when CUNY faculty scholars Alexandra Logue and Mari Watanabe-Rose presented the findings of their research aimed at helping improve college graduation rates by breaking down one of the key barriers for many students: Doing the math.

Nationally, about 60 percent of new college freshmen need remedial courses, and math accounts for most — algebra, to be specific, and what happens next might be the ultimate math problem. “The percentage of remedial students who finish the courses is dismal,” says Logue, who recently left her position as CUNY’s executive vice chancellor and provost to do research. “They don’t pass the courses, they don’t take the whole sequence. ... It’s clear that the whole approach to remediation is one of the biggest blocks to students getting their college degrees.”

Some community colleges around the country have started offering statistics for students who don’t intend to pursue degrees requiring advanced math. It’s an idea not without controversy — reformers say statistics is more practical while traditionalists consider it a lowering of standards — but in 2013 Logue and Watanabe-Rose set out to see how much difference it makes, especially in combination with another growing approach in remediation: building extra help into courses.

Logue especially wanted to test the idea with the rigor of a controlled laboratory study, something rarely done in education research because it’s difficult and time consuming to get enough consenting participants for a statistically valid sampling. The size of CUNY helped get over that hurdle. Last fall, Logue and Watanabe-Rose began a study involving 721 incoming freshmen at three CUNY community colleges: Borough of Manhattan, LaGuardia and Hostos. They were randomly assigned to one of three groups, and these were the results:

- Traditional remedial algebra class: 39 percent passed.
- Remedial algebra plus a weekly workshop: 45 percent passed.
- College-level, introductory statistics
Windward Community College, for example, started with a program for all full-time freshmen with developmental needs that includes an “intro to college” class and “early warning” from instructors at specified checkpoints in the first half of the term. The college also has started two grant-funded projects with intrusive advising for underrepresented Native Hawaiians.

Leeward Community College tried an ASAP-based pilot program last year at a satellite campus called G2FO (Going to Finish On time). Results were so encouraging that the college secured a five-year grant to expand it to its main campus. Aimed at students who commit to full-time study so they can graduate in two to three years, G2FO features a consolidated course schedule, structured course pathways, a common seminar course, free textbooks and $500 scholarships at credit milestones.

“This is huge,” a researcher at the Community College Research Center, at Columbia University’s Teachers College, told Inside Higher Education.

Bruce Vandal, the vice president of Complete College America, a nonprofit advocacy organization, said the study supports an ongoing national movement to reduce the number of students in noncredit remedial courses. “This is just going to add more fuel to it,” he said.

The CUNY study may be the biggest answer yet to the sinkhole that remedial math is for so many students. For educators, it might come down to a simple question — one as moral as it is practical: Should a student’s prospects for earning a college degree — and the lifelong benefits associated with it — depend on passing one algebra course?

Logue says the conventional approach to remediation doesn’t take into account the often devastating psychological effects of stigmatization and discouragement. “What I learned from many years as an experimental psychologist is that it’s harder to be motivated for goals that are delayed,” Logue says. “So it’s hard for students to stay motivated when they think they’re starting college but instead they have to take what are basically high school courses for no credit, and they have to use up their financial aid to pay for them.” — Richrd Firstman

Please turn to next page
analysis found that nearly twice as many ALP participants as traditional remediation students completed the gatekeeper course. This has led 195 community colleges and universities so far to adopt the ALP method.

At LaGuardia Community College, for example, 10 remedial English students are in a class with 12 proficient students. They meet together for four hours a week and the remedial students work three more hours with the same instructor to perfect skills needed to pass the University’s proficiency test. If they pass, they earn three
credits. The success rate at LaGuardia has been comparable to Baltimore’s.

“I think this should be the default way we teach basic writing at LaGuardia,” says English professor Heidi L. Johnsen, who directed LaGuardia’s program for three years.

22% rate for students who were not in ASAP.

Math Innovation and CUNY Start

CUNY, meanwhile, is pioneering an approach for improving remedial math that uses mainstreaming and workshops; it substitutes a statistics course for traditional remedial algebra. A recent study led by Alexandra Logue, the University’s former executive vice chancellor and university provost, compared the pass rates of math students in a traditional remedial algebra class with those who took a credit-bearing introductory statistics course plus a weekly workshop. The statistics students had a pass rate nearly 50 percent higher.

The math experiment is the latest University initiative to excite advocates of remediation reform, following the success of CUNY Start in improving student performance in remedial courses: Once matriculated, CUNY Start students take and earn more credits, earn higher GPAs and are retained at higher rates than similar students.

The program has a strong commitment to teacher training and instructional practices and curricula that build the skills, concepts and strategies students will need for college-level work. Adult literacy and education experts developed the program and serve as professional development coordinators for the participating colleges. Professional development is critical, and instructors take on their on classroom or advising caseload only after a semester of close training under a lead teacher or adviser.

CUNY Start is offered at six of the seven community colleges and at two senior colleges.

It has full-time and part-time versions. The full-time program runs 25 hours a week with instruction in reading, writing and math, the subjects of the three University assessment tests, along with a college success seminar. The part-time program addresses either reading/writing (taught as one subject) or math for 12 hours a week. The cost to students is just $75.

Classroom instruction is student-centered and highly interactive, with teachers encouraging “student talk over teacher talk” and advisers supporting development of effective communication, self-advocacy skills, time management and study habits.

After 12 weeks of core instruction by the specially trained CUNY Start teachers and support from the program’s advisers, students retake any required assessment tests in reading and writing or a common math department final exam. Three to six weeks of additional instruction are available if needed, followed by retesting. There’s also individualized advisement to help students complete the program and matriculate in a University degree program.

For students like Rosa Rios, CUNY Start has made all the difference. For most of her 42 years, she was challenged by an eighth-grade education, pressing family needs and weak training that led to unsatisfying jobs. “I fell through the cracks,” she says. When her mother developed Alzheimer’s disease, Rios cared for her until she died four years ago.

With a lot of hard work and support, Rios used CUNY Start to bring herself up to college level in reading, writing and math. “The student-faculty relationship is real quality and great. They prepared us for college,” she says. She became such a good writer that she won second place in a campus competition.

Now maintaining a 3.0 GPA at Queensborough Community College, she aims for a career as a registered nurse. When she encounters struggling students, “I tell them, ‘Go with CUNY Start and work your way up.’”
By Lenina Mortimer

WENEVER HE CAN, Stanley Greff starts his shift as a public safety officer at Kingsborough Community College by raising an American flag. “This is how I do my part to honor the flag, freedom and the people trained here who made the ultimate sacrifice for this country,” says Greff, who is a retired gunnery sergeant of the United States Marine Corps.

At the onset of America’s entry into World War II, KCC was the site of the largest U.S. Maritime Service Training Station in the country. The $8.5 million facility in Sheepshead Bay trained 500,000 merchant mariners to man merchant vessels called Liberty ships.

And, while the government decommissioned the station in 1954, traces of the World War II military installation remain. A memorial plaque, a naval gun and a flagpole are some of the reminders. The large bronze plaque displayed outside of the Central Services building lists names of mariners who trained at the base who died on duty. In the distance, a deck gun used on Liberty ships to sink enemy vessels flanks the flagpole that once stood in the 1939 World’s Fair in Queens.

The campus’s military history is a point of pride for many at KCC, which is why Greff and other former servicemen continue the tradition of raising the flag — seven days a week between 6 a.m. and 6:30 a.m.

The merchant mariners served to support the U.S. Navy and were called upon to deliver military personnel and materials. The Liberty ships carried battle equipment such as explosives, army tanks and fuel. However, wartime cargoes were not limited to war materiel. They included food, clothing, medicine, hospital supplies and construction material.

“To send all that equipment to the Allied Forces we had to expand the merchant marines and build Liberty ships,” explains professor Anthony DiLernia, who is the director of the Maritime Technology program at KCC and a licensed captain in the U.S. merchant marines. “They were considered ugly ducklings. They were not very fast or maneuverable but they were easy to build,” says DiLernia. The Liberty ships were 441 feet long, 57 feet wide, carried 10,500 tons of deadweight, and reached a top speed of 11 knots.

The merchant mariners were not part of the military, but they were targeted during the war. There were two areas where the ships would get torpedoed, says DiLernia. German submarines would sit right outside of the Verrazano Narrows at the entrance of the New York Harbor.

If the ships made it to Europe they would have to travel through the Murmansk Run. German U-boats would just sit in a line and blow up Liberty ships left and right,” says DiLernia, referring to Germany’s effort to disrupt the flow of supplies that supported the Allied Forces on the Russian front.

“If you were on the outside of the convoy you were going to get sunk, but we threw more ships at them than they could sink,” says DiLernia. American shipyards built 2,751 Liberty ships during World War II, according to the U.S.
Department of Transportation, and because of the simplicity of design they were built very quickly. The fastest ship to be built on record took three days to complete.

Though the merchant marine base is gone — the city purchased it from the federal government for one dollar in 1954, and Kingsborough took it when it was founded in 1963 — maritime training and the tradition of service live on through the Maritime Technology program. The program focuses on operating small boats like tugboats, ferries and pleasure boats. Students receive technical training in courses like oceanography, navigation, sailing, vessel repair and firefighting.
Teaching Patients Health Care in Haiti

For York College assistant nursing professor Margarett Alexandre, sometimes humanitarian aid can do more harm than good: To create lasting change, volunteer missions need to be about helping others help themselves.

Five years after the earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Alexandre is most concerned about what will happen to the Haitian people after the aid is gone. “We cannot be helicopter saviors. We have to ask ourselves, ‘Whatever I’m doing? How is that going to be sustained once I leave?’” says Alexandre, a Haitian-American, who directs York’s two-week volunteer program in Carries, Haiti.

Alexandre travels with a group of nursing students and faculty to teach in health care workshops and provide care at the Mission of Grace medical clinic and orphanage. During the program, which is funded by the Office of the University Dean for Health and Human Services, students assist doctors and nurse practitioners by taking vital signs and doing intake assessments. “They do patient-teaching once the physician orders medication,” she says. “There are many cases of hypertension, so students do presentations on food choices and food additives, like salt. We were helping people understand that it’s a lifelong illness and medication must be taken continuously.”

It is Alexandre’s hope that this program will inspire students to help others abroad and at home. “I want to share with the students what my world is about,” she says. “No matter the obstacles, you can always try to do better for yourself and the next person. You can be an advocate for change, not only in your own backyard but globally. And it doesn’t take much to make a difference.”
Playtime with one of the boys, building cars with Lego parts, at the Children of Grace Orphanage

Helping out in the clinic pharmacy, Grace Community Medical Clinic (left). Students and faculty visit Health Center of Grand-Bois (above) in L’Artibonite, Haiti.
ALKING the streets of New York with William Helmreich is a trip into the hidden soul of this chaotic and often misunderstood city. On a recent tour in East Harlem, he shared a history lesson on the Robert F. Wagner housing development. He unraveled mini mysteries painted into an immense mural. And his knock on a basement door unlocked a heartwarming secret. 

Outside a brick building on East 124th Street, Helmreich spotted a dingy, narrow staircase leading underground and walked down. Upon reaching the door, he knocked and was greeted by a man's stern face and the wafting aroma of roasted turkey.

"Isn’t it true that you cook meals in this place for all the homeless in the whole city?" Helmreich asked in a mock accusatory tone.

The stern face soon melted into a toothy smile.

"Well, not the whole city," he said coyly. "Come in and take a look."

The little known basement kitchen used by the Coalition for the Homeless is just one of the many intriguing places discovered on his remarkable tour of New York. Drawn by the lack of sociological data on the city's five boroughs, Helmreich decided to walk the entire city, block by block.

By the end of four years, the City College sociology professor had walked a grand total of 6,048 miles, an average of 1,512 miles a year, 126 miles a month or 120,960 city blocks. He wore out nine pairs of shoes and chronicled his urban adventure in the 449-page book, *The New York Nobody Knows*.

"New York is a complex city that needs to be explored in order to be fully appreciated. And you can’t do it unless you go out and walk it," Helmreich said. "You could take me to any street and I could find something that will interest you."

Since its release, the book has become wildly popular, earning rave reviews for its rich storytelling, scholarly observations and laugh-out-loud vignettes. Helmreich himself has also achieved personal fame, fielding hundreds of requests for interviews and walking tours from journalists around the world. His most recent fan mail came from Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

After walking a few blocks with Helmreich, it becomes clear how he was able to get so many New Yorkers to open up. The silver-haired professor is charming and charismatic, and speaks to strangers as if he’s known them forever.

In rougher neighborhoods, he steps with a bit more swagger but...
The COURAGE of SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

What led you to write about Shirley Chisholm?
To be very honest I hadn’t thought much about Mrs. Chisholm until I became a professor at Brooklyn College. And I realized that she was a graduate of the college, and that she had been unrecognized. I was trying to develop ideas for projects, and I wanted to do something about women’s activism because that’s my field. So I went to my colleagues in the Women and Gender Studies program and suggested we name this new research center after her. Can you imagine my surprise when half our faculty didn’t even know who she was? That’s the faculty under the age of 40 because Mrs. Chisholm was out of the political and personal spotlight for so long. So creating the Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women’s Activism has become a real mission of mine. And because I was so immersed in every aspect of her life, writing this biography was not only a labor of great love, but also a natural extension of all the work I’ve been doing.

Chisholm decided to run for president in 1972. From your research, was she trying to make a statement or did she think she could win?
I just want to remind everyone how courageous this was. The Voting Rights Act had just passed in 1965. So the Voting Rights Act was seven years old. And when Chisholm campaigned in the South, for example, African-Americans had never seen an African-American campaigning for the vote. She writes about how so many elderly African-Americans came up to her crying, and saying they never thought they would live to see the day. I don’t believe she thought she could get elected or get the nomination. But she did believe that she was the most qualified ... to fight for a progressive social agenda for the Democratic Party.

What can young people learn from your book?
I hope the book gets into high schools and colleges. Many of my students at Brooklyn College, when they see Shola Lynch’s documentary and read parts of my book, can identify with Mrs. Chisholm. She could be their great-aunt or their grandmother’s best friend. She is such a familiar person in the borough of Brooklyn. My thesis is basically: Chisholm’s life exemplifies urban America, post-World War II. That is, it talks about the immigrant experience, the working-class experience, and the black struggle. ... So her life is a window into a certain period in U.S. history.

— Margaret Ramirez

For the complete interview, go to: www.cuny.edu/chisholm

William Helmreich and his block-eating stride that took him down every street in New York City.
Here is a collection of new books written by CUNY authors:

**The Color Bind: Talking (and Not Talking) About Race at Work**
- Hunter College associate professor of psychology
- Tamara R. Buckley and New York University associate professor of public and nonprofit management Erica Gabrielle Foldy
- Russell Sage Foundation

Workplace experts Foldy and Buckley investigate diversity in office settings, looking at how both the “color blind” approach, which emphasizes similarity and assimilation and understanding people as individuals rather than members of racial or cultural groups, and what they call “color cognizance” have effects on the ways co-workers think and interact with each other. Based on an intensive two-and-a-half-year study of employees at a child welfare agency, the authors show how color cognizance — the practice of recognizing the profound impact of race and ethnicity on life experiences while affirming the importance of racial diversity — can help workers move beyond silence on the issue of race toward more inclusive workplace practices.

**The Double Life of Paul de Man**
- Graduate Center and College of Staten Island professor emerita of English Evelyn Barish
- Liveright

Given the tremendous influence of the charismatic literary critic Paul de Man, shock waves resulted when it was discovered, five years after his death, that he had written for collaborationist newspapers in Belgium during World War II. After the war, he abandoned his family and fled to New York, penniless, but quickly rose again. Relying on years of original archival work and interviews with more than 200 of de Man’s circle of friends and family, Barish explores de Man’s personal story and his meteoric rise through American academia.

**Romantic Intimacy**
- Baruch associate professor of English Nancy Youssef
- Stanford University Press

How much can we know about what other people are feeling and how much can we sympathize or empathize with them? The term “intimacy,” which has always referred both to the inmost and personal, and to relationships of exceptional closeness, captures a tension between a confidence in the possibility of shared experience and a competing belief that thoughts and feelings are irrevocably private. This book is an interdisciplinary study of shared feeling as imagined in 18th-century ethics, romantic literature and 20th-century psychoanalysis.

**Birthplace with Buried Stones**
- Hunter College Distinguished Professor of English Meena Alexander
- Tri-Quarterly

With their intense lyricism, Alexander’s poems convey the fragmented experience of the traveler for whom home is both nowhere and everywhere. These poems range widely over time and place, from Alexander’s native India to New York City. Poems of love and poems of war convey the rippling effects of violence and dislocation, of love and its aftermath. We see traces of mythology, ritual, and other languages.

**The Modern Art Cookbook**
- Graduate Center Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature, English and French Mary Ann Caws
- Reaktion Books

Food has always played a role in art, but how well, and what did the artists themselves eat? Exploring a panoply of artworks of food, cooking and eating from Europe and the Americas, Caws opens a window into the lives of artists, writers and poets in the kitchen and the studio, from the end of the 19th century to the present. She examines the parallels between the art of cuisine and the visual arts and literature, using artworks, diaries, novels, letters and poems to illuminate the significance of particular ingredients and dishes in the lives of the world’s greatest artists. In between, she supplies numerous recipes from these artists — including Ezra Pound’s poetic eggs, Cézanne’s baked tomatoes and Monet’s madeleines — alongside 100 color illustrations and thought-provoking selections from both poetry and prose.

**Breathless: An American Girl in Paris**
- Graduate Center Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature, English and French Nancy K. Miller
- Stal Press

The story of a girl who rebelled against conventional expectations for marriage, children and suburban life, Breathless offers a glimpse into the intimate lives of girls before feminism took hold. Paris was a magnet for those eager to resist domesticity, and Miller was enamored of everything French. Upon graduating from Barnard College in 1961, she set out for Paris with a plan to take classes at the Sorbonne and live out a great romantic life inspired by the movies. But after a string of sexual misadventures, she gave up her short-lived freedom and married an American expatriate who promised her a future of three-star meals and five-star hotels — and who turned out to be a con man.

**More Than Two to Tango**
- Queens College associate professor of public health Anahi Viladrich
- University of Arizona Press

This book offers a detailed portrait of Argentine immigrants for whom tango is both an art form and a means of survival. It also addresses broader questions on the understudied role of informal networks in the entertainment field. Through the voices of both early generations of immigrants and the latest wave of newcomers, Viladrich reveals a diverse community navigating issues of identity, class and race as it struggles with practical concerns, such as the high cost of living in New York City and affordable health care. She also considers Argentina’s social history in exploring the immigrant’s unified front to keep tango as their own “authentic” expression.
It’s an Honor
By Miriam Smith and Ronald E. Roel

Across
1. Dean of Macaulay: Ann
9. British test of secondary subject
14. Short punch... “to joy”
17. Scrutinized
18. Between hi-fi and no-fi
21. Painter’s medium
23. Macaulay is housed in a building...
25. Overhead railway
26. Colorful common carp
29. Asian holiday
31. Scottish one
32. Bank offering, for short
33. Moo goo... pan
35. Chipped stone of the late Tertiary Period
37. TV station for selling goods
41. Silver symbol
42. “Borstal Boy” author
44. Students may receive full...
45. Hugs, symbolically
46. Romeo or Juliet
48. Stylish
49. Int. base on balls
51. ___ Cummings
52. Pen name of George
53. “Pow!”
54. Collections
55. Symbol for technetium
57. Women’s...
58. Small counter with a sink
59. Colored wax for crops
60. Willingly
62. Clique
64. Graduates receive a ___ computer.
66. More eccentric Miriam Smith
67. 1973 Supreme Court bond
68. Seventh tone of the scale
69. Hurt
70. Willingly
71. 1966 Rhodes Scholar
72. Notability
73. “i” lid
74. Little bird
77. Garages
78. Daddy-o
79. _____ was a 1966 Honors graduate of City College.
80. The program has families of... students.
81. _____ Eliot
82. Seventh tone of the scale
83. “Home college” and... Macaulay.
84. Upsets
85. Train, abbr.
86. Students may design programs.
87. _____ Eliot
88. Indian bread
89. Indian bread
90. The program attracts... Macaulay.
91. William Macaulay’s gift was... single donation in the history of CUNY.
93. Apeninable Snowman
94. ET carrier
95. “Kaput”
96. ET carrier
99. Indian bread
100. The Macaulay building, located at 35 West
101. Chatterboxes
102. Macaulay students receive full...
103. “Kaput”
104. One of several horses with the same owner
105. “Kaput”
106. One of several horses with the same owner
107. A.A.R.P. members
108. ___ Eliot
109. Train, abbr.
110. Color wax for drawing
111. Senseless follower of Illo
112. Country club figure
113. Sixth note
114. Symbol for technetium
115. “Wheel of Fortune” request
118. Choose
119. Baseball card stat.
120. Blast maker
121. “Nightmare on 11th Street”
122. ___ Eliot
123. “Love is just another word... Hemingway
124. Shares 3-7 yr. treas. bond
125. Rasp
126. Form of address for British royalty
127. Where TV signals come from
128. Where TV signals come from
129. Macaulay was the brainchild of Chancellor Matthew...
130. Students may design a university-wide, individualized... program.
131. Big time
132. Time to collect and show their work.
133. The program attracts students with a mean high school grade of 53.5.
134. Known as the Macaulay College University Scholars Program, it launched in 2000.
135. Macaulay was the brainchild of Chancellor Matthew...

Down
1. More eccentric
2. Prefers with... syncretic
3. Care
4. 1/100th of a peseta
6. Kitty
7. ___ White
8. Egyptian solar deity
9. Apportioned
10. Grassland
11. Giant author Ferber
12. “A Nightmare on 43rd Street”
13. Burden
14. NY int. airport
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In India for Research and Teaching

Simone Gordon (City College, B.S. in childhood education, 2014) has a nine-month Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in Calcutta, India. A native of Jamaica who emigrated to New York at age 6, Gordon has wanted to teach since third grade at P.S. 135 in Queens Village. Gordon sought a Fulbright assistantship to work in India, teaching English literature and grammar to middle school students because of the opportunity to blend teaching with research. At City College, she held student government posts, participated in the Colin Powell Fellowship program and received public service and leadership honors.

Forging Cultural Connections in Malaysia

John Brendan Horgan (Brooklyn College, M.A. in Education, 2014) headed to Beijing in 2012 to teach English at the Vitaly Springs Experimental Kindergarten. Soon after, he came to Brooklyn College, where he earned his master’s degree in education while teaching inner-city students with special needs at the New York Harbor School on Governors Island. As a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Malaysia, Horgan says he wants to strengthen cultural connections and encourage educational enrichment. “I would also like to manipulate technology with programs such as Google Docs and Skype to arrange for direct interaction between Malaysian students and native English speakers in the United States.”

English Language in Taiwan

Alyssa Marchetti (Hunter College, M.S. Ed., 2014), an immigrant from China, will channel her experience as an English-language learner during her Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in Taiwan. Born in the People’s Republic of China and raised from age 11 in the United States, Marchetti has explored the boundaries of race, ethnicity and identity through her experience as an English-language learner. After college, she signed on for a two-year stint with Teach for America and headed to Hunter for her master’s degree, specializing in adolescent special education. In Taiwan on a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, she brings a profound understanding of the difficulties that students can face when learning the language that gave her so much trouble.

Teaching English in South Korea

Zarin Tasnim (Macaulay Honors College at Lehman College, 2014) is teaching conversational English through a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. She’s off to South Korea to teach conversational English to elementary and secondary school students through a yearlong assistantship. Tasnim received a number of academic awards, including the Horace W. Goldsmith Scholarship, Jewish Foundation for Education of Women Scholarship, Freeman Asia Scholarship and a St. George’s Society Scholarship. “She is definitely one of our stars,” says professor Gary Schwartz, who directs the Macaulay Honors College at Lehman and the Lehman Scholars Program. “Zarin is an exceptional combination of intellect, tact, sensitivity, insight and leadership.”

Researching Linguistic Connections in Austria

Daniel Friedman (Brooklyn College, M.F.A in Creative Writing, 2014) is a mathematician, poet, philosopher and scholar of the German language. For Friedman, a Fulbright U.S. Student Program award will allow him to finally connect those diverse academic and intellectual interests. Friedman believes the key to cultural exchange and mutual understanding between two cultures lies in the study of their languages. With his Fulbright in Vienna, Friedman plans to collaborate and write a poetry manuscript focused on the philosophical and poetic potentials in German and English.
Community College as a “Health Profession Opportunity Grant to Serve TANF Recipients: Allied Health Career Pipeline.” Gisela Rivera of Queensborough Community College has received two grants from the New York State Education Department: $299,087 with Sherri-Ann Simmons for the “Liberty Partnerships Program – Project PRIZE”; and $219,380 for “CSTEP – Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program,” with Marie-Francois Berrouet. Carlos Meriles of City College has won a $425,440 grant from the National Science Foundation for “GOALI: Research and Development of Chip-Integrated Magnetic–Resonance-Based Platforms for Chemical Sensing of Trace Systems.” Anne Rothstein of Lehman College has won $232,734 in grant support from the New York State Department of Education for the “Science and Technology Entry Program: Mathematics and Science through Excellence and Research.”

Robert Piechotta of New York City College of Technology has received $654,078 from RF SUNY for “Hurricane Sandy Revitalization.” City College has been awarded a $546,678 grant from the U.S. Department of Education for a project aimed at “Increasing Retention and Graduation Rates through Enhanced Pedagogy and Improved Technology,” under the direction of Craig Levinsky. Dean Balsamini of the College of Staten Island has received a $516,687 grant from NPORG/Research Foundation/SUNY for “NYS Hurricane Sandy Business Assistance.” A project titled “SC2: Synthetic and Biological Studies of Understudied Anti-Tubercular Natural Products,” directed by Ryan Murelli of Brooklyn College, has been awarded a $141,300 grant from the National Institutes of Health. Gerald Mallo of Hunter College has received two grants: $1,477,186 from HHS/Administration for Children and Families for a “National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections”; and $291,384 from the NY State Office of Children and Family Services for a “Community Case Management Institute.” The U.S. Department of Education has awarded $575,000 in grant funding to Patricia Rachal of Queens College for “Special Education-Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities.”

Stephen Fearnley of York College has won $498,250 in grant support from the National Institutes of Health for a research project titled “Oxazole Cycloadducts as Heterocyclic Scaffolds for Decahydroquinoline Alkaloids.” The Creative Arts Team (CAT) of CUNY has been awarded an 18-month, $460,000 grant from the New York Community Trust – Brooke Astor Fund for New York City Education to expand CAT’s successful Early Learning Program (ELP) in K-2 classes at four NYC public schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged students and English-language learners. Helen Wheelock directs the ELP, and Lynda Zimmerman is executive director of the CAT. Two faculty members from City College’s Center-Heart: Cardiovascular Control/NIOSH for “World Trade Center–Heart: Cardiovascular Health Impact and Prediction of Incident (Primary and Subsequent) Cardiovascular Events Among WTC Responders.” Ramona Brown of the College of Staten Island has received a $109,000 award from the New York City Council for the “Black Male Initiative.”

Simone Rodriguez-Dorestant and LeFondro Gadson of Medgar Evers College have received a $782,738 grant from the NYC Department of Education for a “Young Adult Borough Center,” while the U.S. Department of Education awarded $308,546 to Abraham Nyameh and Rodriguez-Dorestant for the “Talent Search Program.” Additionally, the NYS Education Department granted $350,000 to Sean Anderson and Rodriguez-Dorestant for the “Liberty Partnership Program”; as well as $287,054 to William Bailey and Rodriguez-Dorestant for the “MEC Science Technology Entry Program”; and $188,562 to John Brown and Rodriguez-Dorestant for the “Science, Math and Robotics Science Technology Entry Program.” Peter Mertens of Hostos Community College has been awarded $293,848 from the U.S. Social Security Administration for “Work Incentives Planning and Assistance”; and the NY State Education Department has awarded two grants, $197,794 to Mertens and Noise Koffi for “STEP/Project Access”; and $170,719 to Mertens and Koffi for “CSTEP.”

President Jeremy Travis of John Jay College served as chair of a National Research Council committee dealing with “The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences.”
Brain Waves of 16 Predict Market Preferences

Media and marketing experts have long sought a reliable method of forecasting responses from the general population to future products and messages. According to a study conducted at The City College of New York, it appears that the brain responses of just a few individuals can be a remarkably strong predictor. By analyzing the brain waves of 16 individuals as they watched mainstream television content, researchers were able to accurately predict the preferences of large TV audiences, up to 90 percent in the case of Super Bowl commercials. The findings appear in a paper, “Audience Preferences Are Predicted by Temporal Reliability of Neural Processing,” published July 29, 2014, in “Nature Communications.” Jacek Dmochowski, lead author of the paper and a postdoctoral fellow at City College during the research, said that brain signals measured using electroencephalography (EEG) can provide immediate physiological responses, and that “our findings show that these immediate responses are in fact closely tied to the subsequent behavior of the general population.”

For-Profit vs. Nonprofit Home Care Costs

For-profit home health agencies are far costlier for Medicare than nonprofit agencies, according to a nationwide study published in the August issue of the journal Health Affairs. Overall cost per patient was $1,215 higher at for-profits, with operating costs accounting for $752 of the difference and excess profits for $463. Yet the quality of care was actually worse at for-profits, and more of their patients required repeat hospitalizations. Researchers at the City University of New York School of Public Health analyzed detailed Cost Reports filed with Medicare by 7,165 home health agencies in 2010-2011, as well as data for 22 quality measures from Medicare’s Home Health Compare database covering 9,128 agencies. Compared to nonprofits, operating costs at for-profit agencies were 18 percent higher, with excess administration (at $476 per patient) accounting for nearly two-thirds of the $752 difference in operating costs. For-profits also did many more therapy visits, which are often highly profitable under the complex Medicare payment formula. Despite their higher costs, for-profit agencies delivered slightly lower-quality care.

John Jay Alumni Awards

The Outstanding Young Alumnus Award of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, created in 2013, was presented to Andrew Schweighardt (M.S. ’99, Ph.D. ’12), a criminalist with the Office of the New York City Chief Medical Examiner. Schweighardt spoke of his good fortune to be working in “one of the greatest labs in the world,” where some 30 John Jay alumni are on the staff of his department. “John Jay is the Ivy League of criminal justice, and I’m so proud to say that.”

The recipient of John Jay’s annual Distinguished Alumna Award, LaBrenda Garrett-Nelson (B.A. ’75), who recently retired after a distinguished legal career, was saluted for her work as a prominent taxation law specialist. She has worked for the blue-chip law firm of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, served on the staff of the Joint Congressional Committee on Taxation, founded the boutique law firm of Washington Counsel PC, and concluded her career as a principal for the accounting firm of Ernst & Young LLP.

Thermos CEO Alex Huang

As the CEO of Thermos, Alex Huang (Baruch Ph.D. ’01) travels the world to run a multinational corporation whose vacuum-insulated containers are iconic enough to be in the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History. Huang began working at Thermos in 2001, first as the company controller, next as CFO and then COO. In 2005 he became CEO, running worldwide operations from the company’s U.S. headquarters in Chicago. “Baruch has a good reputation in Taiwan,” Huang says. He was also persuaded to study here by Stan Ross Professor of Accountancy Joseph Weintrop, who later became his dissertation adviser. What he learned in his doctoral program continues to influence his business style, Huang says. “I follow logic tremendously. I don’t get emotional in decision making.”

Brittany Hodak, Co-Founder of ZinePak

Co-founder of startup CD packaging company ZinePak, Brittany Hodak (Baruch M.S. ’10) remembers being fascinated with her dad’s record collection as a child. “I remember looking at the pictures and touching them; I remember the way they smelled. I fell in love with physical music.” That early memory helped inspire her idea for music packaging for “superfans” that incorporates a magazine plus exclusive merchandise and digital features. Hodak started ZinePak in 2011 with partner Kim Kaupe, and its impressive roster of clients includes Katy Perry, KSS, the Beach Boys, and Taylor Swift. What Hodak says she loved about Baruch was “the emphasis on real-world education that you can apply the next day on the job.” She says of her master’s program: “If I could have taken 30 more hours of classes for the degree, I would have. I learned so much and met so many fantastic people.” The Baruch education "really helps me reframe the way I think about everything we do at ZinePak.”

Mark Weber, DKNY CEO

DKNY International CEO Mark Weber (Brooklyn College ’72) welcomed nearly 30 Brooklyn College students and graduates to the fashion firm’s headquarters in the summer and shared some career advice. “You may not get everything you want in your first job... but in every job there’s always something of value that you’ll learn, even if it is patience or discipline,” he said. “So it is important that you find your own niche because what we think you want to do is not necessarily the best, or wisest, choice.” After finishing a B.A. in psychology at Brooklyn College and trying different jobs, Weber landed a position with Philips-Van Heusen, starting in retail as a merchandising assistant and moving up to become the company president and CEO, which is the subject of a new book, Always in Fashion. From Clerk to CEO — Lessons for Success in Business and in Life (McGraw Hill), to be released in January 2015. “The truth is that the education I received at Brooklyn College was not only good — it was better than the one you get in many of today’s private schools,” Weber said.

Hockey Maven Stan Fischler

Stan Fischler (Brooklyn College ’54) recently finished his 100th book, Behind the Net: 101 Incredible Hockey Stories, with most of the anecdotes coming from his many years of personal hockey experience. It was quick to follow book No. 99, We Are the Rangers: an oral history of the New York team, in which Fischler has collected stories about the team and luminaries of the Rangers organization from its beginning to today. His own history is well documented in the book, starting as a New York Rangers employee out of college, moving into the world of journalism at the New York Journal-American, Hockey News and the Toronto Star, then on to broadcasting for other teams, including the Hartford Whalers, and for the MSG Network.
Ruby Dee, an alumna of both Hunter College High School and Hunter College, died June 11 at age 91. The actress, poet and civil rights activist made several Broadway appearances with Harry Belafonte, and in both the film and stage versions of “A Raisin in the Sun” with Sidney Poitier. She continued to work in later years, playing opposite her husband, actor Ossie Davis — who died in 2005 — in Spike Lee’s 1989 film, “Do The Right Thing.”

“If I don’t want to go someplace all I have to say is, ‘No thank you, I’m 101 years old!’ Terrific excuse. It’s such a liberating experience to say no thank you.” — Bel Kaufman

“A Raisin in the Sun”

Paul Gibson Jr., 86, a City College graduate and New York City’s first black deputy mayor, died on July 11 at his home in Jamaica, Queens. Gibson was a vice president of American Airlines when Mayor Abraham D. Beame appointed him deputy mayor. Mr. Gibson had earlier been general counsel and housing chairman in the state NAACP, a board member of the Democratic Club in Jamaica and a social worker in Brooklyn, among other positions.

Claire Tow, 83, co-founder with her husband of the cable television company Century Communications Corp. and the cellular telephone company Centennial Cellular Corp., died July 7 after a 14-year struggle with Lou Gehrig’s Disease (ALS). She was born in Brooklyn and graduated from Brooklyn College, where she met her husband, Leonard, in 1949. She was president of The Tow Foundation, the charitable foundation she and her husband founded in 1988. Through grants from the foundation, she offered opportunities for personal success and helped to alleviate pain and suffering for countless individuals.

“The kind of beauty I want most is the hard-to-get kind that comes from within — strength, courage, dignity.” — Ruby Dee

Elaine M. Brody, 91, died July 9 at her home in California. A 1942 graduate of City College, she became a social worker and researcher whose work helped to found the field of gerontology. She wrote six books, including “Women in the Middle: Their Parent Care Years and scores of academic papers. She was associate director of the Polisher Research Institute in Philadelphia, where she spent 31 years, and established a group residence for elderly women who needed assistance but not full-time care, a forerunner of contemporary living arrangements.

Ernesto Butcher, 69, a Hunter College graduate, was a soft-spoken Panamanian immigrant who effectively took over management of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, as its most experienced surviving operations officer. He died on May 15 in Maplewood, N.J. Before becoming chief operating officer, Butcher was manager of the George Washington Bridge, director of bridges and tunnels and head of several other departments.
At the Center of Thriving Technology

By Lenina Mortimer

THREE YEARS AGO, while on the way to class, New York City College of Technology senior Yevgeniy Babkin got off on the wrong floor and discovered the Mechatronics/Robotics Technology Center.

"I'm really passionate about electronics and robotics so when I found this place it was like a dream. I like to get my hands on everything, and with the tools and material available in the mechatronics club I was able to do anything my heart desired," says Babkin, a computer engineering technology major who recently took home the top prize at the Diggity Design Contest — an international tech competition.

Babkin, along with teammates Bijan Mokhtari and Angelo Kuka and team adviser Ali Harb, created TOBiAS, which stands for Tele-Operated Bi-Manual Augmented System, using a 3D printer available at the center. TOBiAS is a humanoid robot that mimics the movement of the person operating the control unit — a remote control worn as a glove. The user gets a virtual reality-style immersive experience by wearing a helmet that receives a live video feed from a camera mounted on the robot.

An increasing number of innovative tech creations such as TOBiAS are being developed in Brooklyn, which is a growing tech hub. The Brooklyn tech triangle, which encompasses DUMBO, Downtown Brooklyn and the Brooklyn Navy Yard, is home to more than 500 startups, computer science research firms and digital design companies — and City Tech is in the center of it all.

City Tech is one of the largest public colleges of technology in the state. It was established in 1946 as the New York State Institute for Applied Arts and Sciences. City Tech joined CUNY in 1964 and merged with Voorhees Technical Institute in 1971.

City Tech offers 27 associate and 24 baccalaureate degree programs. Some of its offerings include Communication Design, Dental Hygiene, Accounting, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Biomedical Informatics, Radiologic Sciences and Hospitality Management. City Tech serves about 17,000 degree students and 13,000 non-degree students through its Schools of Technology & Design, Professional Studies and Arts & Sciences. The college also boasts the only program in Emerging Media Technology east of the Mississippi, and an award-winning program in culinary arts.

The City Tech campus includes nine buildings within Downtown Brooklyn. College administration and offices, the Ursula C. Schwerin Library, the School of Professional Studies, and the School of Arts & Sciences are primarily based in a complex formed by the Namm, Atrium, General, and the Pearl buildings in MetroTech Center. A new 350,000-square-foot academic complex is currently under construction on the site that was formerly occupied by the Klitgord Building.

Construction on the $406 million project is expected to be completed in 2017. The eight-story building, which is currently unnamed, will be home to City Tech’s expanding programs in health care and the core sciences such as physics, chemistry and biological sciences.