A record 16 outstanding CUNY students in 2012 won National Science Foundation awards of $126,000 each for graduate study in the sciences. No other university system in the Northeast won more. Coached by our world-class faculty, CUNY students are winning the nation’s most prestigious awards and continue their research at MIT, Yale and other top graduate schools. Study with the best during the ‘Decade of Science’ at CUNY.”

— Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, The City University of New York
Working to Enhance the City

This issue of Salute to Scholars offers wonderful examples of the University’s multifaceted teaching, research and service efforts aimed at advancing New York City’s well-being. Enhancing the city we serve is the embodiment of the CUNY mission. As our most recent Master Plan notes, among CUNY’s core values is a “dedication to the needs of the University’s urban setting.”

In keeping with that core value, in May the University released “Jobs for New York’s Future,” a report of findings and recommendations from the CUNY Jobs Task Force I assembled in fall 2011 (www.cuny.edu/jobstaskforce). With record numbers of students seeking a CUNY education, and an economy still shaken by a deep recession, it is critical that the University closely monitor the local labor market and remain responsive to its evolving needs.

Focusing on five key industry clusters in New York City — finance, insurance and accounting; health care; higher education; information technology; and media and advertising — the task force examined drivers and emerging trends in the industries, the workforce skills in demand, and employers’ recommendations to colleges and universities to enhance students’ preparation for a competitive workplace. The task force’s research included interviews with industry experts, including the members of the task force themselves, analysis of labor market information, and examination of industry reports. (Some of the findings are outlined in my recent editorial in Crain’s New York Business: www.crnswnewyork.com.)

“Jobs for New York’s Future” recommends a number of actions that CUNY and other universities might take to help graduates succeed in their fields, including reinforcing meaningful links to industry and business, conducting regular industry scans, monitoring the experience of recent graduates, and expanding student career guidance and job-search skills training.

Following discussions about the task force’s work with groups such as the Council of Presidents and the CUNY Business Leadership Council, the University is taking steps to respond to the report’s findings.

Two important actions are already under way. First, an Office of Workforce Partnerships is being developed in the University’s Workforce Development Division. The office will provide a central point of contact for employers wishing to engage with CUNY colleges and help the University stay current with industry changes across the city.

Second, the New York City Labor Market Information Service (NYC LMIS) will join the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs to strengthen the University’s ability to monitor the local labor market. Over the last several years, the NYC LMIS has become an invaluable resource to the city, helping policymakers and organizations make informed decisions about programming. Its research includes annual reports on the state of the city’s workforce system and a recent green jobs study. A closer link with the University will enable the NYC LMIS to provide labor market data, reports and analysis to guide CUNY’s workforce preparation efforts.

The University plays an essential role in the New York City labor market: it serves the majority of undergraduates in New York City, and 80 percent of its bachelor’s recipients remain in the city after graduation. Just as we must ensure that graduates acquire the skills they need for a lifetime of learning, so must we understand the industries and economy that will shape their personal and professional lives.

— Matthew Goldstein, Chancellor

ON THE COVER: With The City University of New York’s dedication to providing an excellent education, accessible to all, it is not unusual that often we see and hear about the courses, programs and the diversity of educational opportunities that our students experience. The education of our students is accomplished by an extraordinary faculty. But that service isn’t confined to the walls of the University’s schools and colleges, and in this issue we are honored to have a chance to present the work that CUNY professors and researchers, engaging their students, serve millions of New Yorkers every day. Professors such as Allan Wernick, who organized Citizenship Now! to assist New York’s immigrant population, or Mande Holford, whose research with snail toxins led to development of painkillers for cancer and AIDS, and who now mentors young University scientists. And William Solecki, dedicated to building policies that are sure the sustainability of New York and cities worldwide in the face of so many challenges. In this issue, these are just a few of the professors who you will see at work making our community better for all.
JASENIYA SANCHEZ came to the United States from Mexico City in 1999, when she was 11 years old. Her mother, a cashier at a fruit store, and her father, who works at a supermarket stocking shelves, always told her that if she studied hard, a world of opportunities would open up.

Sanchez listened to her parents. She graduated from Baruch College with a B.A. in economics and is currently pursuing a Masters of Public Administration with a specialty in nonprofit administration at Baruch.

But too many Mexican students, who like Sanchez come to the U.S. with their parents when they are children, as well as second-generation Mexican-Americans, are not graduating from college or even high school.

According to census data, about 41 percent of all Mexican students ages 16 to 19 living in New York City are neither in school nor have graduated. The statistics show that no other major immigrant group has a dropout rate above 20 percent.

“I know a lot of [Mexican] people who have dropped out of high school for a variety of reasons,” says Sanchez, 25. “The top three reasons I’ve heard of are misinformation, money and illegal immigration status.”

CUNY has been working to help address this educational crisis among Mexicans, the third-largest immigration population in the city after Dominicans and the Chinese. In May, a new CUNY Institute for Mexican Studies opened its doors at Lehman College, with its primary goals to promote enrollment and increase retention and graduation rates of Mexican and Mexican-American students, and to foster the study of Mexico and Mexicans in the U.S. in CUNY. The Institute will also strive to educate the Mexican community — officially numbering 319,126, according to 2010 U.S. Census data, up from about 33,600 in 1990 — about educational resources available to them.

“CUNY has played a role as an engine of upward mobility for immigrant families and the Institute is another example of this work by CUNY,” says Alyshia Gálvez, acting director of the Institute and associate professor of Latin American and Puerto Rican Studies at Lehman. “CUNY saw a need for this and sought to address it with this most recently arrived group.”

In 2007, the Chancellor formed the Working Task Force on Strengthening Educational Opportunities for Mexican and Mexican-Americans and appointed Senior Vice Chancellor Hershenson as Chair. The Task Force’s mission is to devise and deliver educational, leadership and outreach services to that community.

Since then, CUNY, the Mexican consulate, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Bronx Library Center have partnered with the Mexican community to create a center of Mexican studies on the East Coast.

“Here in the city there are at least 350,000 individuals of Mexican descent; their talents and ambitions are essential to the success of the city and state,” says Hershenson. “The Institute will combine a commitment to scholarship and research with a very strong community service ... it will involve outreach to the business community, the labor community, the various constituencies that care about the future the Mexican community here in New York.”

The Institute will promote study-abroad programs to Mexico, establish a Carlos Fuentes Visiting Professorship, seek collaborations with an array of institutions, promote the creation of courses, minors, majors and programs of study in campuses across the CUNY system (Lehman offers a minor in Mexican and Mexican-American Studies) and work to create scholarship endowment. It will also serve as the epicenter for community-based organizations like Mano a Mano: Mexican Culture Without Borders, Mixteca Organization and others.

CUNY Institute for Mexican Studies

Promoting Success and Valuing Hispanic Diversity

INSTITUTE FOR MEXICAN STUDIES

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Where to Learn English? 
A Museum, of Course.

Hortencia Marmanillo spent a few days this summer in a museum, but she didn’t just look at art — she improved her language skills.

Marmanillo, who came to the United States from Peru in 2009 speaking very little English, took part in an innovative literacy program, Cultures & Literacies Through Arts for the 21st Century, or CALTA21. She wants to become a nurse, but before she can enroll at CUNY she has to improve her English skills so she can pass an assessment test.

The program is unique because of museum trips where adult students, for whom English is a foreign language, are encouraged to describe the works of art they see, engage in conversation with other students and explain what they like or dislike about the art.

Incorporating visual art into teaching literacy works wonders in the classroom, says Patricia Lannes, CALTA21 co-founder and project director. With their diverse backgrounds, the students include their cultural and life experiences in interpreting art and become curious about cultures they haven’t yet explored.

“It’s very innovative,” says Lannes. “Its innovation and uniqueness lies on the use of images and students’ prior knowledge and rich experiences as immigrants as a springboard to acquire new skills and knowledge in a museum setting. When “reading” a work of art they incorporate their personal experiences, learn from their classmates’ comments and have meaningful conversations in an art museum. They also learn how to navigate a museum and what kind of resources a museum can offer them.” The museum discussions help students build their English vocabularies, practice conversations, articulate interpretations and develop critical-thinking and conversational skills.

Queensborough Community College is the lead institution for CALTA21. Several New York City museums, including the Rubin Museum of Art, El Museo del Barrio, and the Godwin-Ternbach Museum at Queens College are partners. VUE/Visual Thinking Strategies, the Literacy Assistance Center and CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP) are part of the effort.

Marmanillo took part in CALTA21 while taking English classes this summer through CLIP at Borough of Manhattan Community College. CLIP is designed for CUNY English as Second Language (ESL) students who want intensive instruction in all English literacy programs for intermediate and advanced English language learners in programs run by higher-education and community-based organizations in partnership with art museums,” says professor Kitty Bateman, Principal Investigator at CALTA 21 and director of QCC’s Literacy Program.

“It’s an attempt to get more students to be fluent in English.”

“Students are eager to look at art, they ask to look at more art when the class is over,” says Lannes, who came to the U.S. from Uruguay at age 24 with a basic knowledge of English.

After students visited the Museo del Barrio, they returned with family members eager to show them around and act as tour guides. “That’s a good sign that they want to show their family and friends what they have learned,” says Lannes. “Art takes students into a different world.” It’s also about “using visual skills to develop critical thinking and literacy skills that you can apply to anything, including a college paper,” she adds.

“I feel more confident now going back to the museum,” says Marmanillo, “because I feel like I know the right questions to ask when I look at a painting. “I can explain to my family and friends what we need to ask ... how to look at a picture. When I went before I didn’t ask these questions. Now I appreciate it more.”

So far, the response from students has been positive. Building a vocabulary at a museum is more engaging that drilling words by repetition at home or in a classroom, they say. Recently, Marmanillo was eager to share the some of her expanded vocabulary she acquired on a visit to the Rubin: ‘Extravagant, ambiance, complexion, body language and costume are just a few of the new words she learned while describing a painting of a Buddha.”
When the Growing Gets Tough, the Tough Get Growing

VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY, a serious condition that can lead to malnourishment and death, affects 250 million children worldwide.

The deficiency is linked to diets lacking pro-vitamin A carotenoids — naturally occurring pigments that cause the red, orange and yellow color of fruits and vegetables.

Lehman College professor of biological sciences, Eleanore Wurtzel, has devoted the last 25 years to solving this global health problem by trying to develop plants that can handle stresses of climate change in less than perfect conditions. It’s important to develop plants that can handle stresses of climate change all over the world.

The discovery was accidental. CruP was originally tested to aid beta-carotene production in plants, a nutrient that converts to Vitamin A. But during testing Louis Bradbury, a former postdoctoral student in Wurtzel’s lab, discovered clues that suggested CruP might possess qualities that would help plants endure global warming.

Bradbury and several other researchers worked on CruP for more than two years, while juggling other projects, until there was enough evidence to publish the results in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in June. Wurtzel and her team have recently submitted a provisional patent for the discovery.

“I have to admit I was quite stubborn,” says Bradbury. “We found that CruP helps plants survive in anoxic environments so it should help crops recover better from floods. If the plants are healthier, then they will survive in areas that often get flooded. Flooding causes anoxic conditions, where plants are deprived of oxygen.”

“Global warming is predicted to cause more severe weather events like flooding,” says Bradbury. “We found that CruP helps plants survive in anoxic environments so it should help crops recover better from floods. If the plants are healthier, then they will produce more better-quality food. Ultimately it could be the difference between plants living or dying after a flood.”

A POPULAR WORKOUT APP created by Baruch College alumni is bringing a digital twist to the athletic training of basketball players.

Four former Baruch College men’s basketball teammates are the proprietors behind a highly rated basketball-training app called “OneBasketball.”

“This is the new and innovative way for basketball training,” says co-founder Mickey Abbatiello, who earned a bachelor’s in business administration and finance from Baruch in May 2012. “Our mission is to give all the basketball players the opportunity to progress their games by literally placing the tools and information in the palm of their hands,” says Abbatiello.

Created as an off-season tool to keep college and high school basketball players in shape, Abbatiello insisted that the app could be used by anyone. “We got feedback from a mother who downloaded it to train her two kids. She loved it. She felt like a coach and didn’t have to pay for expensive lessons and a trainer for her children.”

The OneBasketball mobile app, which made its debut in the app store in December 2011, can now be downloaded for free on iPods, iPhones and iPads. The training app features 140 basketball drills with video demonstrations and step-by-step instructions. It also includes 16 structured workouts and a “Shot Tracker” system that allow athletes to record and track workout performance.

“There is really nothing like our app in the App Store. It is very thoughtful and well planned out and basically replaces a trainer. Others are very limited — they have eight drills, but we give you much more,” he says.

The app, which has been downloaded in more than 25 countries, has received positive feedback from coaches, players and parents. “We have over 1,500 people downloading it. That’s a good sample to know that you have a good product and we haven’t even broached the full potential of the app yet,” says Abbatiello.

“My partners and I are all basketball fanatics. We just want to pass down what we know to the kids and give them some structure on how to start training the right way early on,” adds Abbatiello.
Tracking a Cold, Cold Case

The mummy of a 15-year-old Inca girl, sacrificed 500 years ago at the 22,000-foot summit of the Llullaillaco volcano in Salta, Argentina, is spilling other secrets.

Thanks to a technique that had never been applied in archeology, researchers learned that the girl suffered from a lung infection before she died. Professor Angelique Corthals, a forensic anthropologist at John Jay College, and her colleagues at SUNY Stony Brook, used a technique called shotgun proteomics to analyze tissue proteins rather than the mummy's DNA.

Known as the Maiden, the mummy was discovered in 1999, along with two younger children, a 7-year-old boy and a 6-year-old girl, who died with her, about 25 yards from the summit of Llullaillaco. The Maiden and the children had been offered as sacrifices to the earth goddess. Past research revealed that the children had been fattened up with maize and dried llama meat before the sacrifice. Their bodies were buried on the summit and were remarkably well preserved because of the area's freezing temperatures, low humidity and the presence of natural disinfectants. The mummies are on display at the Museum of High Mountain Archeology in Salta, Argentina.

"I was working on preservation of the mummies to make sure they don't decay and that they are available to museum-goers," says Corthals. "Once we knew the mummies were stable, we started looking at their health status before they died."

The 15-year-old girl had a large lesion on one leg, which indicated to Corthals that she might have been sick when she was buried. Researchers took lip swabs from the Maiden and the 7-year-old boy and samples from the boy's bloodied clothes. They didn't take samples from the 6-year-old mummy because they suspect it might have been struck by lightning, which could hinder test results.

Proteins found in the Maiden were compared against large databases of human genomes to determine the actual proteins in the samples. What Corthals discovered is that the mummy's protein profile mirrored that of a person with a chronic respiratory infection. The boy did not have the disease or pathogenic bacteria.

"With the protein profile that we recovered, we knew that this person was actively fighting a chronic lung infection," says Corthals, whose findings were published in the July issue of PLoS One.

The shotgun proteomics technique has been widely used in the field of medicine but Corthals was the first one to apply it to archeological research. It's proved to be more accurate than DNA techniques. DNA samples can easily get contaminated by particles from the environment. Proteins are less susceptible to environmental contamination and, unlike DNA, they reveal what the body was producing at the time of her death.

"Now that we know shotgun proteomics works, that it works in archeological samples, we can work on other archeological samples that are challenging," says Corthals. "I'd like to see if it could work on very old skeletal remains, as well as Egyptian mummies."

Long Island City – Perfect Choice for a Bigger, Stronger CUNY Law

Public interest law is the strength and focus of the CUNY School of Law so it made sense to officials there that when it came time to expand, the new location would remain in Queens.

"Queens has the great advantage of being one of the most diverse areas in the country, which reflects our mission to diversify the legal profession," says law school dean Michelle J. Anderson, adding that no other borough was considered when the decision was made to move from a former public junior high school in Flushing to Long Island City.

"And as a school that trains public interest lawyers, we needed to be closer to the center of the public interest legal community in New York City."

Ranked among the top 10 public interest law schools in the country, CUNY Law, established in 1983, adds to the continued rebirth of Long Island City. The vibrant, urban artistic community, and close proximity to several subway and bus lines and the Long Island Railroad, made it an ideal location for the only publicly supported law school in the city. CUNY law also has the distinction of having one of the most diverse student bodies in the nation as 44 percent of its student body is of color.

The new facility at 2 Court Square provides nearly 70,000 more square feet of space than its previous location. It will be used for more classrooms, study areas, lounges and a Moot Court room. Much attention was given to student needs as the new facility also features a child care center, spacious kitchen areas, group study rooms and individual study spaces.

The new building is LEED Gold Certified, making CUNY Law one of the “greenest” law schools in the country, says Anderson. Ninety percent of the structural steel used to build it was from post-consumer recycled materials. The building recycles rainwater in a 20,000-gallon storm water retention system. It also runs on wind power, and was built from recycled material. The structure is also designed to distribute sunlight and outdoor views throughout the building.

"We train lawyers to make a difference in their communities. So supporting environmentally friendly practices that promote the health and well-being of our community and conserve resources illustrates our commitment to our motto, 'Law in the service of human needs,'" says Anderson.
Jason Munshi-South has spent the last four years trapping, weighing and measuring New York City mice. Not those house mice that arrived in the city on ships with the European settlers. Munshi-South studies white-footed mice. They live in forests throughout the Northeast, including parks dotting the city’s landscape.

An assistant professor at Baruch College and an evolutionary biologist, he is looking at how white-footed mice, which arrived in the region 15,000 years ago after the ice glaciers retreated, are adapting to life in the metropolis.

“They’re cute, have big eyes and big whiskers,” says Munshi-South. “You find more of them in city parks than even upstate New York and that makes them a useful model for research. They’re a natural part of the urban ecosystem.”

Munshi-South and his colleagues take small clips of tissue from ears and tails, so they can analyze the DNA of the mice. White-footed mice are predisposed to survive in urban environments, but Munshi-South wants to know whether they’re adapting further so they can thrive even easier in the human-dominated world.

Usually, he says, when a species is trapped in a small area — the way the mice are trapped in parks that are like small islands in a sea of concrete — over time they will lose the unique differences between the individuals and become more alike. He was astonished to learn that white-footed mice in each park still are genetically distinct from each other and how great the differences remain between mice in different parks.

“That was very striking,” he says. “We thought that not enough time had passed for these differences to be that severe, that there would be more movement of mice throughout the city.”

Munshi-South began his urban wildlife research career as an undergrad researcher studying monk parakeets in Chicago. He switched gears later and was trained as a tropical biologist. For a while, he tracked elephants in Central Africa, to see how they were impacted by oil fields, and studied the evolution of proboscis monkeys on the island of Borneo. When hired at Baruch, he wanted to stay local.

“When you’re a professor it’s very hard to go away for four or five months at a time to these very remote locations,” says Munshi-South, who’s also monitoring the spread of coyotes in the city, particularly in the Bronx and Queens and studying stream salamanders that are concentrated on Staten Island. “And I realized that’s all this native wildlife in New York City living within the five boroughs that I had no idea about. It’s an excellent study system for looking at evolutionary biology because you have animals that are confined to one place, that are stuck in island situations.”

Currently, Munshi-South is working on identifying specific genes in mice that have changed due to natural selection from living in the city. It’s an ongoing project but he says he has already identified genes that have to do with immunity, specifically dealing with heavy metals and pollution.

“We have a lot of lead in parks,” he says. “A few parks were used as ash dumps when New Yorkers used coal as a source of heat. Mice in these parks may have mutations in genes that can remove heavy metals from the body or at least resist the damage from heavy metals.”

The mice may also hold a key to how humans have adapted to city conditions. White-footed mice are closely related to the mice used for lab research, the main model for human health research, “so if we can understand what’s happening to mice living in the city, we might have some leads on how urban life affects humans, especially with things like pollution,” he says.

With more than 50 percent of the people in the world living in cities, it only makes sense to study how humans and how animals experience these urbanized and suburbanized environments.

“There’s no longer this divide between the wild and the city,” says Munshi-South. “This is our urbanized world now and we need to understand how nature works in cities.”

Last summer, Munshi-South expanded his research to forests in upstate New York, so he could analyze how these mice are changing compared to their rural ancestors. He received a $200,000 grant in September 2012 from the National Institutes of Health to continue the research he started four years ago.

For his next project, Munshi-South is thinking about urban creatures that aren’t as cute as mice — rats. “We’re a bit resistant to do this research,” he says, “because rats are not pleasant to work with, but we think they’re an important part of the ecosystem and no one really knows anything about the evolutionary biology of rats in New York City.”
All Business

By Cathy Rainone

T WAS ALWAYS apparent to Alyssa Lubrino, a captain of the Baruch College women’s swimming and diving team, that a college sports team had its perks. After all, swimming has kept her in great physical shape, it taught her discipline, it made her feel confident and competitive in and out of the pool, and her team provided a sense of camaraderie on campus.

But Lubrino, a senior with a major in accounting and a minor in English, never thought swimming could also be instrumental in landing a coveted summer internship. Yet that’s exactly what happened when she interviewed at Morgan Stanley, a global financial-services firm.

“On the first things they asked me during an interview was whether I can work as part of a team,” says Lubrino, “and my answer was that as a team captain you have to deal with a lot of different personalities and you have to try to make everyone happy, be a role model. You take that attitude to the workplace.”

Lubrino took her take-charge attitude to Morgan Stanley where she was a summer analyst at the Internal Audit Operational Risks Department.

“I like numbers,” says Lubrino. “I was always good in math and I like the business world. When I was younger I would always admire women in business suits on television.”

Although Lubrino spent the summer in a corporate environment, in college her competitive spirit has been focused on swimming, where she holds CUNY Athletic Conference records in the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle events and...
Majors Into the Pool

in four relays.

A team captain since 20010, she led Baruch’s Bearcats to three CUNY AC Championships, and last March her relay team was first CUNY-AC Women’s relay to attend the ECAC Championship at the Naval Academy. Lubrino received a Baruch’s Women’s Swimming Coaches Award in 2011, and in November of that year was named the CUNYAC/Hospital of Special Surgery Scholar Athlete of the Month. She also serves as a student athletic advisory committee representative to the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

The scholar athlete can’t imagine her academic career without swimming. “It’s opened a lot of doors for me,” says Lubrino. “I did it because I wanted to get that college experience, that sense of community since I can’t live on campus. I also learned that if I can win swimming matches I can also work hard and be successful in school.”

Lubrino, who has maintained a 3.8 GPA, is a member of Baruch’s Honors Program and has made the Dean’s List every semester since 2010.

Her swimming coach and mentor, Charles Lampasso, says Lubrino is a dedicated, hard-working scholar athlete who rarely misses practice. In 2009, the coaching staff chose her to lead the team because she has all the traits they were looking for in a captain.

“These traits — dedicated, hard worker, disciplined, dependable, competitive, a leader in and out of the pool, mentally tough, knows how they deal with adversity — Alyssa exhibits all these traits and her maturity level has helped her attain them,” says Lampasso.

Wearing a beige pencil skirt, black blouse and black pumps, Lubrino looked like a business woman one summer day while on a lunch break at Morgan Stanley. Her attire was a sharp departure from her summer staple for the past 5 years — a bright swimsuit. Since 2007, Lubrino worked as a lifeguard, first at Rockaway Beach in Queens and then at Midland Beach on Staten Island, where she grew up and still lives.

She has been swimming since first grade when her dad started and coached the swimming team for her grammar school. She was a captain of a swimming team at the St. Joseph Hill Academy, a Catholic high school on Staten Island. Her senior year she won the 50-yard freestyle event at the Catholic high school championship. She thought that was good enough to try out for a college team.

During the January break in her first year at Baruch, she got up at 5 a.m. to commute for 90 minutes from Staten Island to Baruch to train from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., six days a week. The hard work paid off — she made the team.

Lubrino will graduate in December with a bachelor’s degree and then continue studying for another year for the Master’s CPA Program in Accounting. She’s not sure what area of accounting she’d like to pursue after school, but one thing is certain, she’ll never stop swimming.

“I want to explore and see what I can do,” says Lubrino. “I’m competitive by nature so I think I’d like to work in a corporation. I like auditing because it combines numbers and people. You have to talk to a lot of people to investigate cases, but you also have to be good at numbers.”
IRELIA LAURE, passionate about student government, had a reverie this summer that she could be the first class president of the first community college to open in New York City in 40 years.

“I’d like to start a student government,” she said. “You gather some students, find two or three people you’d like to nominate and move on from there.”

It is a dream that could come true for her this semester.

On August 20, with Mayor Bloomberg in attendance, Laure and 300 other students joined professors, administrators, staffers and counselors at the inaugural convocation of CUNY’s The New Community College, located across from Manhattan’s Bryant Park.

NCC — as the University’s seventh community college is already called — is, like its students, determined to make history.

With an innovative, issue-based and skill-intensive educational program, and with remedial assistance interwoven into course and counseling sessions, its goal is to become a model for community colleges nationwide. These two-year colleges, although now considered vital to higher education, suffer widely from low retention and gradua-
tion rates — and from a reputation as being second rate to senior colleges.

Fixing this has support from on high. NCC has received grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Robin Hood Foundation and the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation. To help ensure success, CUNY searched for a president with a track record of turning around at-risk students. It found one in Scott E. Evenbeck, who did this on the senior college level, albeit with students who in another time and place might have — and perhaps should have — attended a supportive community college. When it comes to enabling academic achievement — and encouraging student persistence — Evenbeck is considered a national expert. When asked what community college students need, he gets right to the point: “Someone to help them connect the dots.”

The final stretch of the road to NCC’s convocation began a few weeks earlier this summer at one of several mandatory orientations session. During the program, as well as during its break, Mirella Laure and other students discussed their hopes and plans. The sessions were also attended by parents who were invited to be part of the process — and asked to help find internships for students at

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the businesses and offices where they work.

Incoming student Bernard Bright spoke about his own passion, a global issue:

“I want to stop human trafficking,” he said. “We can, as students, link up with other organizations, march peacefully, protest.”

For Stephen Icaza, another member of NCC’s first class, the issue is bullying — how to prevent it and help its victims. During a “casting call” for a video about the college and in an interview, Icaza courageously related his own experiences as a middle and high school student who was the target of bullies, in part because he is overweight. He also spoke about his work as an intern for the Anti-Defamation League and with a cyber safety group. Icaza is considering a career in psychology and he is determined to start an anti-bullying club at NCC.

“I am very driven,” he said, assuredly. Among NCCC students, he is in very good company.

NCC has a unique admissions process in which it purposefully tries to help students understand what is expected of them — and the commitments they will have to make. The school did not reject
any applicants; at community colleges, the City University of New York generally admits all who meet academic admissions standards. But NCC made demands that other community colleges at CUNY and elsewhere typically do not.

NCC’s admissions initiative begins with information sessions that prospective students are required to attend. If they do not attend, they cannot be considered for admission. After these sessions, 30-minute mandatory individual meetings with faculty or staff members or peer mentors are scheduled. At these meetings it is reiterated that to gain acceptance at NCC an applicant must attend school full time the first year, agree to take classes in either a morning or afternoon block and attend one of the orientation sessions as well as a 12-day Summer Bridge program. Students were given Metro cards and lunch vouchers to help with their finances during the Bridge Program this summer — and the Robin Hood Foundation provided each student with a $300 stipend since some might not have been able to work while attending he program. The Robin Hood Foundation is also providing students with stipends of $250 for the fall semester and again in the spring.

Students must also agree to participate in NCC’s innovative yet highly structured academic program, including working with other students in a group; community participation, which will use New York City as a learning laboratory; and to frequent communication with faculty and peer mentors recruited from other University campuses and Student Success Advocates, all of whom have Master’s degrees. Prospective students are told their coursework will be unlike any other CUNY community college, with reading, writing and analysis centered on a topic. This first semester’s topic will be waste and consumption issues in New York City. The required first year mathematics class will be statistics — one which CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, a mathematician, believes is the most useful for all walks of life.

As a bonus — but not actually a requirement — Vera Senese, NCC director of Financial Aid and Student Financial Support, has vowed to make the college’s students financially literate.

“By the time you graduate you are going to have your own checking accounts because I am going to help you manage your money,” she told a group of students during an orientation. Keeping in mind that many students will qualify for grants, she also itemized the cost of The New Community College at $5,321 a semester and $10,642 a year, including tuition fees, books, transportation and other expenses. This follow the same tuition and fee structure as other CUNY community colleges. The first NCC admission process began with 855 prospective students who attended those required information sessions. Of that group, 504 continued the process with the individual meetings. At the end, 492 met all of NCC’s requirements, and 322 who attended the convocation — and who are almost evenly split among men and women — signed up to be in the first class.

In speaking about the admission process, Jennifer Lee, NCC’s director of College

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Admissions and Access noted that the “goal is to help students understand the commitment and expectation. . . . In other words, if a student wants to come here merely because it's in a good location, this is not for them.” She added that during the admissions process students were asked to consider if work or caretaking responsibilities would make it hard for them to fulfill the college’s requirements.

Nationwide and at CUNY community colleges, students are diverse and often of the first generation in their families to go to college. The ethnicity of NCC students mirrors that of other University community colleges. Of the students enrolled at the college, the ethnic breakdown is: Latino, 35 percent; black, 27 percent; white, 21 percent; and Asian, 11 percent, with the remaining 6 percent declining to identify ethnicity. Academically they ranked about the same as students at other CUNY community colleges. Geographically they come in equal numbers from Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens, with about 1.5 percent from Staten Island.

“I am incredibly impressed by how motivated and on top of things they are,” Lee said of the new student body. “The students coming are just so nice and very respectful of one another. And they
are very proactive and in tune with social issues. Many of them want to graduate from here to do other things.”

President Evenbeck, a professor of psychology, comes to CUNY from Indiana, where he was the founding dean of University College at the public Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). He loves New York, and with relatives in New Jersey, often visited the city. At one NCC orientation session, he spoke of how he would go out in the evening to photograph the Stonehenge effect of light shining through the buildings of New York. He hopes to join students on their field experiences in the city — and speaks with reverence about his first New York bagel, brought to him by a fellow graduate student with whom he once shared an office at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

About his new position at CUNY, which he began last year, he says: “It was such a good fit for everything I had been working for, for a long time.”

He reflects on when he began at IUPUI. “Our retention rate was abysmal. Our graduation rate was worse.” Efforts to correct this began in 1997 and, Evenbeck says, that by 2005 there was a palpable turnaround. “We doubled the graduation rate. We vastly improved our retention rate, particularly with African-American male students. And what we learned is that options don’t work with students.” He also disagrees with colleges “that let everyone in at the last minute. Last minute deciders almost never succeed.”

Hence the structure of NCC, from which Evenbeck emphasizes he hopes to learn more — and to learn how to make it replicable.

To commemorate the opening of the college on August 20, Mayor Michael Bloomberg was honored with CUNY’s Chancellor’s Medal, the University’s high executive honor, which recognizes extraordinary contributions to CUNY, commitment to education and outstanding public service. Past recipients have included Jonas Salk, Robert F. Wagner Jr., Coretta Scott King and John Cardinal O’Connor.

In presenting the award, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein noted that the Mayor has supported the idea of NCC from its inception three years ago. “There is no more urgent task in higher education than to find ways to help more community college students succeed,” the Chancellor said.

The mayor replied that in launching NCC, “We’re creating a potentially game-changing model for community college education in New York and throughout the nation.”

The creation of the school, which is also the University’s first new college in more than four decades, was approved by Governor Andrew Cuomo on Sept. 20, 2011, as an amendment to CUNY’s long-range master plan and subsequently by the New York State Board of Regents and the University’s Board of Trustees.

A site visit, which is expected to lead to accreditation, could not be conducted by the state Department of Education until August, since no new college can be accredited until its first students are enrolled.

This posed an interesting situation for the col-

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lege regarding tuition, since financial aid cannot be offered until a college is accredited. CUNY, however, is insuring that the NCC’s first students receive the same amount of aid from Pell and TAP programs to which they would otherwise be entitled if they attended another school at the University. Students do need to complete the FAFSA, or Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Once accredited, Federal and New York State financial aid will be available to NCC students.

Evenbeck’s team includes a mix of those who have experience with a diversity of students and with both traditional and nontraditional educational techniques, including assessment and technology and experiential learning. José Luis Morín, vice president for academic affairs and provost and a former administrator at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, once headed an initiative to recruit Latino faculty to the University.

Verlene Herrington, chief librarian and director of academic technology, most recently worked at Bronx Community College where she managed acquisitions, collections, serials and electronic resources. But before that she was Command Librarian of the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Corp in Arizona, and also received the 2008 Library of Congress Federal Librarian of the Year award.

This summer she talked about her new mission, as she was putting together “a different kind of library” — referred to as the Information Commons — in which the traditional library environment has been replaced with a collaboration center, where students can work in groups at Mediascape workstations, enabling them to plug in laptops and share their work on a common screen. Instead of rows of shelves with books that rarely circulate — research indicates that up to 80% of books in a library never get checked out — it enables students to access books either electronically or in a physical format from other libraries. The library space is mainly used for social learning and collaboration.

The Information Commons will, though, have a small collection of books linked to the curriculum and students can also access eight million books available from the other CUNY campuses. Students also have virtual access to over 120 databases, thousands of electronic journals and e-books. NCC also has a partnership with the New York Public Library, located down the street.

NCC has been in its planning stages since 2008, and throughout the city high school guidance counselors and college advisers have been following the process. NCC students often say that they first heard about the college from those counselors, while the counselors, in turn, mention that they approach the subject of community college tentatively, because parents often have their hearts set on sending their children to four-year colleges and view community colleges as a fallback choice.

And yet for some students a community college — albeit one with the right support — is the best place for them to be.

Kay Rothman, the director of college counseling at Manhattan’s public Lab School for Collaborative Studies, worked with Stephen Icaza and knew NCC would be right for him.

“Stephen came to mind almost immediately,” she said. “Because he had an academic path and he absolutely knows what he wants. But I knew that his test scores would be low and his grades were not that high. I also knew that he needed people to help him to be better. And I knew that was what this school was going to be.”

And so, the members of the first class of The New Community College have begun their studies.

They include Mirella Laure who would like to not only be the first class president but also study public policy. She, too, was made aware of NCC by a college adviser at the University Neighborhood High School. She is ready to start the process of creating a student government, to get out the message that “everyone’s thoughts can go into the process of making the school what it will be.” She suggests that a swimming pool and a basketball court would be welcome additions to the Bryant Park area office building where the school is now located and then, perhaps like a real politician, added: “But it could take awhile.”

Bernard Bright, meanwhile, dreams not only of doing something about human trafficking but also of starting an orphanage and a school. He is already thinking about continuing his education at Baruch. He, too, was guided to NCC by a counselor at the Martin Luther King Jr. educational campus of the Urban Assembly School for Media Studies.

“People told me to aim for the stars,” he says. And that is exactly what President Evenbeck would like his students to do. To aim for the stars — and to be able to explain which stars and why and how they are aiming. It’s what the students’ parents want as well. Or, as one put it at the orientation session, “My son doesn’t have to be perfect but I hope he will be open to everything that is available to him.”

To that President Evenbeck adds: “The whole experience for them is not just about knowing the facts but also being able to present them in a fully engaging way.”
Mambo’s Modest Maestro

By Barbara Fischkin

CITY COLLEGE’S RAY SANTOS grew into adulthood in the 1940s listening to big band music in his family’s Bronx living room, while his mother’s favorite Afro-Cuban and Caribbean selections drifted from the kitchen. Years later, as a saxophonist, arranger and composer, that cross-cultural experience inspired Santos to create the Mambo-era Palladium sound for which he is renowned.

Santos, 83, worked with Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, Mario Bauza and Machito. He scored films — most notably “The Mambo Kings” — and in 2011 received a coveted Grammy Trustees Award.

He also has a delightful trove of tales from bygone eras: He bought his first tenor saxophone from Stan Getz. Thelonius Monk once danced the cha-cha while Santos played. And, yes, booby-soxers did scream for Frank Sinatra. He heard them himself, at the old Paramount.

Santos, a Julliard graduate, has taught at City College for more than 25 years. Despite his fame, he still agonizes over leading his undergraduate students in the “Latin Band” course to a successful concert at semester’s end. When an interviewer greeted the elegantly attired Santos as “Maestro,” he shook his head with a smile and said, “I am Ray.”

How do you introduce Latin music to your students?

The most important part of the music is the rhythm. Latin rhythm. Most of my students have experience reading music and they know their music. But they have never really played with authentic Latin arrangements. Most of them are rock-and-roll or jazz oriented. They are talented. But we have to get them used to phrasing the music differently.

And how do you teach phrasing?

Often, I sing to them. Phrasing is accents. It’s like the difference between a Southern accent and a Spanish accent. Different ways of “saying” the same “word.” So if they “speak” with a Southern accent, which is jazzy and laid back, I have to get them more into the “bop-bop-bop-bop-bop-bop.” The straight syllables of the Spanish accent. Jazzy is more like “ba-ba-adu-ba-daba-do.” The technical terms would be “straight eighths” notes for Latin music compared to shuffle type rhythm. I try to do a little musicology; a little history, too. I get a lot of students from Israel. A lot from Japan. They want to get with it — the Latin beat. I had a student from Israel and she plays the flute in a salsa band in Tel Aviv.

In your own music, you “speak” with both accents.

I had a friend in junior high school and he invited me to his apartment to meet his folks. He played this recording of “Body and Soul” by Coleman Hawkins and it was so impressive. I said I want to play that... When I started learning how to write music I wanted to combine the Afro-Cuban beat with something jazzy. At Julliard, I had good [classical] harmony lessons and I was learning jazz harmony from other students.

Your students, like most of us, no doubt love to hear stories about the other famous musicians with whom you played. Can you tell us more about Tito Puente?

Sometimes we’d go to a place to play and nobody was there and he’d pull the hardest arrangements and he played like there were ten thousand people there. He loved to play. He played up to two weeks before he died. I did his last record date with him and he played great. No downhill playing with him.

What is it like to compose for films?

I always ask the composer to give me the lyrics so I can zero in on the emotion of the tune. In film you are locked into time frames. You have to synchronize a certain sequence with what’s on screen already. But now with computers it’s easier. It gives you a structure. I love the technology. I was strictly pencil and paper but I got on the computer in 1991.

Like Tito Puente, you seem to love the music you write and play. Is there anything in music you didn’t like doing?

I got into doing jingles and the money was good but you have to deal with these people from the ad agencies. They only see selling their product. The music has nothing to do with it. I was once asked to do this jingle for a big oil company. So to me, gasoline means power. So I wrote something with a lot of power. Very Stan Kenton-ish. And the agency rejected it. They said it didn’t have enough impact. I heard what they picked instead and it sounded like a nursery rhyme. That was the end of my jingle career.
A Life in Pursuit of the Secret Mars

By Richard Firstman

With space shuttles relegated to riding piggyback to their retirements as museums, Mars has finally risen to its moment as the mothership of American space exploration. Seven Minutes of Terror was the summer blockbuster, and Curiosity is the most famous off-road vehicle since the Hummer.

To Joel Levine, it’s about time Mars got its due. Earthlings may have only recently come to associate the Red Planet more with planetary science than interplanetary invasion, but Levine has been transfixed by the mysteries of Mars since childhood. He’s 70 now, and from his undergraduate days at Brooklyn College in the early 1960s — when all anyone was talking about was beating the Russians to the moon — through his 41-year career at NASA. Levine has been consumed by the questions that the $2.5 billion rover will spend the next two years exploring: Is there now, or has there ever been, life on Mars?

Levine may have been a support player in the Curiosity mission but he’s unabashedly thinking ahead to one he hopes will be on the runway someday: For 12 years he’s been the chief scientist for a NASA project called ARES, for aerial regional-scale environmental surveyor — NASA-speak for a robotic, rocket-powered airplane that would make the eight-month trip to Mars and then fly a mile above the surface, covering more of the planet in two hours than Curiosity floated to the surface and the mission controller announced, “We are wheels down on Mars. Oh, my God!”

Levine has been transfixed by the mysteries of Mars since childhood. As a young teenager Levine would spend nights peering faintly at Mars through a small telescope set up on the roof of his house. Then one day when he was a student at Thomas Jefferson High School, Levine heard that the observatory on the roof of Brooklyn College’s science building, Ingersoll Hall, had monthly open nights when the public could look through its high-powered telescope.

“I was just amazed, looking at planet Mars for the first time through a big telescope, and that’s when I decided that this was the field I wanted to go into.” He spent a year tracking and photographing sunspots for a citywide science contest and won first prize — a scientific trip to the Arctic Circle aboard a Navy cruiser. Levine returned to Brooklyn College as a student. Officially he was a physics major but he spent more time at the observatory, where he caught the eye of the director, a physics and astronomy professor named Theodore A. Smits. “He taught courses in astronomy and space science and offered special classes where I was the only student,” Levine recalls. “I did a lot of sophisticated research with him, particularly on the atmosphere of Mars.”

Levine graduated in 1964 and went to work as a graduate research assistant at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies, which NASA had opened next door to Columbia University to pursue theoretical research in the space sciences. By night, he went home to Brooklyn to teach classes at his alma mater. In 1972, Levine left for the University of Michigan, where he earned a second master’s, in planetary science and aeronomy (the study of the upper atmosphere) and then a Ph.D. in atmospheric science.

“Brooklyn College prepared me for a very good career,” says Levine, who delivered the keynote address at the college’s commencement for master’s degrees in 2011, paying tribute to his mentor, Professor Smits. “Michigan had the best program in atmospheric and planetary science, and I had the training to compete very well with students from Harvard, Yale, Cal Tech.”

Mars was always in the atmosphere, and it was Levine’s six years at the Goddard Institute that gave his career a foundation. A main focus at Goddard was using data collected by telescopes and space probes to create computer models of planetary atmospheres. In the early 1970s, while still a graduate student at Michigan, Levine devel-
oped models for the atmosphere of Mars and became the first scien-
tist to suggest the presence of two gases found on Earth — argon and
helium. Two years later, in 1976, NASA's Viking space probes became
the first spacecraft to land on the surface of Mars to look for “biosig-
natures” of life. Among the things found were argon and helium.

Levine was such a hot young Mars scientist at the Goddard
Institute that even before he'd left for Michigan NASA hired him as a
research scientist at its Langley Research Center in Virginia, which
was developing the Viking Mars Project. He eventually moved perma-
nently to Langley and established a career that lasted until last year,
when he joined the full-time faculty at William and Mary, bringing his
ARES project with him. “I was at NASA for 41 years and one day,”
Levine says, ever a man of precision, “and never had a dull moment.”
(His wife, Arlene Spielholz Levine, a Queens College graduate with a
Ph.D. in counseling, eventually went to work for NASA herself, study-
ing the psychological effects of long periods in space, and she left
when he did. They had a joint retirement party.)

So what is it about Mars that continues to tantalize him? Levine
says it comes down to this: “Something happened, some catastrophic
event, that changed Mars from an Earth-like planet to the very deso-
late, inhospitable planet it is today. What happened — and does it por-
tend anything for the fate of the earth?”

And there is, of course, that question of life on Mars. “What we are
really interested in is whether we find gases that are produced by liv-

ing systems,” he explains. “The problem with the rover we just put up
there is that it will travel only about 20 miles in two years, so it will be
looking at a very small section of Mars. What the ARES airplane will
do that no rover has done is cover hundreds to thousands of miles and
analyze all the gases in the atmosphere of Mars, down to one-tenth
of one part per million.”

ARES was a finalist among 25 proposals NASA considered in 2002,
but the agency has since selected a series of landers, including the
vehicle eventually named Curiosity by the 12-year-old winner of a
national name-the-rover contest. The next one, in 2016, will be a lan-
der called InSight that will cover even less ground than Curiosity — it
won't move at all once it sets down. But NASA has continued to sup-
port the development of ARES. “There will be another opportunity to
propose missions to Mars in 2013 or 2014,” Levine says, “and we will
re-propose ARES.”

Whatever unmanned vehicles go up over the next few years, Levine
thinks the quest shouldn’t stop there. He co-chaired an international
panel of scientists convened to consider whether there is scientific
justification to send humans to Mars. “The answer is yes,” Levine
says, perhaps not surprisingly. He co-edited a book published in 2010:
Humans to Mars: Colonizing the Red Planet — a 976-page work that
Levine describes as merely “a summary of our three-year study.”

Levine is well aware that many people think there are better ways
to spend billions of dollars, and he's become a passionate defender of
the investment to those who don't see the point. A couple of years ago
he gave a TED talk (“Why we need to go back to Mars”) that's been
viewed by 305,000 people so far.

"In 1965, after the Mariner 4 fly-by mission took the first close-up
pictures of the Mars surface, people thought it looked like a dead
spending a penny more on it. But now we know it is far from a dead
planet. Two of the most fundamental questions in all of science are
how did the planets form and is there life outside Earth. Mars is our
best chance to try to answer both those questions.”

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As a former CUNY student, faculty member, and administrator, Carole M. Berotte Joseph, Ph.D., is uniquely equipped to run Bronx Community College, which is experiencing a major transition in curricula, student services, and with its campus expansion.

In addition to her understanding of the CUNY system — Berotte Joseph served as vice president of academic affairs at Hostos Community College after being a faculty member at City College for more than 20 years — she brings to BCC years of experience from other institutions. As president of Massachusetts Bay Community College in Wellesley Hills, Mass., from 2005 until 2011, when she joined BCC, Berotte Joseph was lauded for increasing graduation rates. She also served as chief academic officer and dean of academic affairs at Dutchess Community College of the State University of New York, where she provided leadership for the academic programs.

At BCC, which has 11,000 degree-seeking students and more than 14,000 adult and continuing education students, Berotte Joseph’s major challenge is devising effective strategies to retain students and increase graduation rates. With a new freshmen seminar, a teacher-development program, and new study-abroad opportunities, she has already made significant advances in that direction. She says she took the job because she saw potential in the college and its historic University Heights campus.

“There are a lot of pockets of good things going on here. We have excellent academic departments — among them chemistry, art, music and communications — but the world doesn’t know about them. I want to make sure that we raise our stature and graduate more students. We have a gorgeous campus with a newly constructed library, which opened its doors in the fall of 2012. I’m very excited about the opportunity to be here at this time as president, and I’m looking to attract stellar staff to help move the institution forward.”

Joseph was born in Haiti and immigrated to the U.S. with her family in 1957. She received a bachelor’s degree in Spanish with a minor in French and education from York College, a master’s in Curriculum and Teaching from Fordham University, and a doctorate in sociolinguistics and bilingual education from New York University.

How are your years of experience in higher education guiding the transformation at BCC?

I believe I bring a vision of excellence. I have knowledge of the CUNY system and also got to see how SUNY operated. After that I went to Massachusetts. That experience opened new horizons for me and helped me to think more creatively about possibilities. While the centerpiece of my focus has always been the student, I didn’t come here with a vision that I wanted to implement. I wanted to learn first. In my first year, I did a lot of listen-
ing. Now I am ready to move forward.

In April you testified at a hearing on higher education at City Hall that students are not coming to college prepared. What steps are you taking to help them?

When students come to CUNY they have to take a placement test so that we know if and what kind of remedial classes they need. But classes alone are not going to do it; we need to look at the quality of teaching and ways to improve faculty outcomes. There are faculty members who are very successful, and there are others who are not. For those who are not successful, department chairs have to be held accountable. We are working with faculty members who are interested in looking at what they’re doing in the classroom and ways to improve. People have to learn to take pride in their work and be accountable for their outcomes.

BCC has among the lowest retention and graduation rates in the CUNY system. Can this be corrected quickly?

We realize that if we don’t capture our students in their first year, they are not going to be successful. We have developed a new freshmen seminar. It will be a basic orientation for new college students, focusing on time management, career exploration, and study skills. We did a pilot in which we ran 10 sections of the first-year seminar; we decided to do them for one credit, two hours. Faculty conceived the themes: art, criminal justice, social history. Students made their selections based on their interests. We incorporated high-impact practices designed to engage students in college life. Studies done of the pilot revealed a high degree of student engagement and interest in the seminars. Based on preliminary Fall 2012 enrollment data, we are predicting a higher retention rate for those students. We have every reason to believe that as we build on our initial success, retention and eventually graduation rates will improve. In addition, we’re reorganizing advisement. I have combined counselors in student affairs with academic advisers and put them under one umbrella called “academic success.” We also put in place an early alert system as well as midterm grades so that students will better know where they stand.

You taught at City College for 20 years. Has this experience helped you as an administrator?

It certainly has! An administrator is also a teacher because you are leading a team. I have to be the chief cheerleader and let my team members know that I believe in them. Faculty hired here all come through me. I interview them with the provost. My background is in teacher training and teacher development, so I’m focused on development because I think a teacher does make a difference.

What changes have you implemented in your first year at BCC?

As I mentioned, the first-year seminar was reorganized and we consolidated academic advisement. Both are works in progress. I’m working on expanding study-abroad opportunities. Students need to know about the rest of the world, and they have to be exposed to different things, so my role is to raise money to provide scholarships for them to do that. Community colleges don’t see themselves doing study abroad, because traditionally they saw themselves as two-year schools. But that’s the old mentality since most students stay longer than two years. Companies want global workers. How are our students going to be global if they don’t leave their neighborhood? We have a CUNY-Haiti initiative, and I’d like to see more people from this campus participate. One of the things I started developing is internship opportunities. We have very good relationships with hospitals because we have nursing and radiology technology programs. But our engineering, business, and automotive-technology programs need help with internships.

You’re an expert in the field of sociolinguistics and you speak four languages fluently: English, Spanish, French and Haitian Creole. What made you want to transition to the administrative side of higher education?

I have always been a doer. I loved research, and I was intrigued when I did my dissertation. But when I was offered an associate dean position at Hostos Community College, and then became a vice president there, I realized I could get things done. I liked doing things, and I liked making positive changes. Administration is a good fit for me. But I miss teaching, and every opportunity I get to teach, I do. I’m hoping I can teach one of our freshmen seminars in the future.

In June, you went to Haiti, where you have been involved in helping rebuild the country’s higher education. That must be a cause that is near and dear to your heart.

Absolutely. There is so much work to be done in that country. My experience in growing up as a child in Haiti was so different from what it would be like today. I took piano and violin lessons offered by my school. There was a park with a luminous fountain where the kids would go bicycling. There was classical music playing. I go to Haiti now and the fountain is not working, and everything is a mess. Much of the middle class has left. I was thrilled that CUNY chose to partner with four public colleges. We’re going to help them establish practical degrees in community health, culinary arts and hospitality.

Your appointment as a president of BCC marks your return to your roots in the University system. Why did you decide to come back?

It was just wonderful to come back to New York. I’m a New Yorker at heart. My family and friends are here. Right before I applied for this position my husband passed away. I was mostly by myself in Massachusetts with no family nearby. When I was offered this position I was very happy.

You are involved in several organizations and boards. What do you do to unwind?

I listen to music. I love salsa and classical music. I love to dance, and I love to read. I enjoy going to concerts. Then, of course, there’s my family, which is very close-knit. We are always celebrating someone’s birthday. BCC welcomed me at a good time, because I am at a point in my life where I can dedicate a lot of time to the college.
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN has reached epidemic proportions in the United States, and over the past decade more than 20,000 American children have died as a result of abuse, neglect, malnourishment and poverty, according to the U.S. Department of Health.

These are some of the shocking statistics cited by experts from the fields of neuroscience, social sciences and public health at the National Consultation to End Childhood Abuse and Violence Against Children, convened by Brooklyn College’s Children’s Studies Center for Research, Policy and Public Service.

To Gertrud Lenzer, who runs the center, the figures are no surprise. A sociologist at Brooklyn College and at the CUNY Graduate Center, she has been tracing this trend since the 1960s. In 1991, Lenzer founded the Children’s Studies program to draw attention to children’s rights as human beings and to bring new understanding of children’s needs and desires.

“My assessment of the situation was that children as an entire class really were not given enough attention,” says Lenzer, who was born in Germany during World War II and came to the U.S. in 1962. “The women’s movement came and we were able to mobilize for ourselves, but the class of children cannot represent themselves, legally and otherwise. It’s the adults who are representing them and making decisions for them until they are 18 years old. The fact that the children were invisible by and large, had no voice, were not represented, that’s what moved me toward establishing Children’s Studies. It’s really representation by way of knowledge.”

Lenzer thought the study of children was very segmented, and academic disciplines like child psychology, education, pediatrics of children and sociology were just “taking a small bite out of the whole.” “We cannot arrive at a comprehensive understanding of children by simply accumulating, aggregating and adding up segmented findings from far-flung varieties of inquiries in the various disciplines,” she once wrote. Lenzer envisioned a new program that would bring knowledge about children from various fields under one roof.

Children’s Studies, recently renamed Children and Youth Studies, provides a comprehensive look at children, from birth to
18 years of age. It’s an interdisciplinary program that offers specialized courses such as the human rights of children, children and the law, child abuse and neglect, children and the media, as well as courses taught by participating departments like African Studies, English and History.

From early on the idea was that what we know about children, what we can learn, and what we understand about them is what really represents them, says Lenzer. “The academic field is a way of representing children.”

Natalie Williams, co-director of the Garden House School, a private preschool in Manhattan, had a major in psychology and a minor in Children’s Studies at Brooklyn College. Unlike education and psychology, she says, Children’s Studies focused on the understanding of a child as a whole and learning from children. She recommends Children’s Studies to anyone who’s planning to work as a child educator, psychologist, pediatrician or prosecutor.

“Children Studies gave me a more holistic view of children,” says Williams, who graduated from Brooklyn College in 1999. “It allowed me to look at the world through the child’s eye, it gave me the reverence, love and respect for children and who they are as individuals.

Gertrud Lenzer, who founded the Children’s Studies Center for Research, Policy and Public Service in 1997

The programs allows you to see them as human beings, you can see them for who they are.”

Lenzer’s passion for protecting children was sparked by research she did on their working conditions in 19th-century England. At the University of Leicester in 1967 she studied original copies of the Royal Commission reports, which described the long hours and unhealthy conditions of working children.

“I vividly remember the detailed and most moving quotations from the interviews the inspectors conducted with these children and young people who worked in mines and collieries, factories and agricultural gangs,” says Lenzer.

“You would even get an insight into the working conditions of small children, who were doing the transfer prints in the production of elegant china, or those of chimney sweeps.”

Lenzer joined the Brooklyn College faculty in 1971. The work she has done in England and other research she has conducted over the years made her realize that children had few legal rights and society had failed to provide a voice for their protection. In 1991, she founded the Sociology of Children as a new section of the American Sociological Association. She led Brooklyn College’s efforts to become the first academic institution to develop the Children’s Studies Program, now taught in colleges across the United States and abroad. In March, Lenzer attended the “Children Studies as an Interpretative Perspective” conference at the Institute of Polish Philology, University in Bialystok, Poland. The university is eager to establish a Children Studies Center modeled on the one at Brooklyn College.

Lenzer believed that the Children Studies program needed a strong advocacy component and in 1997 she founded the Children Studies Center for Research, Policy and Public Service, which focuses on protecting the human rights of children. Since its inception the center has organized several forums and conferences on child policy in New York, including the National Consultation, Social Justice for Children: To End Childhood Abuse and Violence Against Children. It has also spurred legislative initiatives to establish an independent office of Child Advocate in New York State.

“As a scholar and as a citizen, I think it’s one’s responsibility that when things are in a state where one in three children are living in poverty in New York City and 2 million children are homeless in the United States, that we do something about it,” says Lenzer.


“We were delighted that our report to the UN committee was well received, and we’re delighted to be part of the international agenda and treaty development,” says Lenzer.

Lenzer is constantly working to improve the program and the center in the effort to better serve her students.

“I’m very committed to the students here; it’s really teaching in the trenches. Many of our students come from lower- and middle-class backgrounds, many are minority students. But our students are success stories to have made it here… It’s a very fulfilling way of not only teaching students but helping them map out their careers.”
Across the Cultural Divide

REACHING OUT

By Cathy Rainone

ORN IN BANGLADESH, Raza Khan immigrated with her parents to the United States when she was a year old. They settled in Queens, the most diverse county in the country.

But growing up, Khan, a Muslim, only made friends with Bangladeshi Muslims or Muslims from other countries. And that continued when she enrolled at Queens College, where 140 countries are represented.

“I wouldn’t interact with people from other cultures,” says Khan, 25, who got married at age 18. “I would go to the Muslim Student Association club to pray, eat and then head out to class.”

Khan says she had prejudices against people from other cultures that she’s too embarrassed to talk about now. Her attitude began to change three years ago when she joined the Center for Racial, Ethnic & Religious Understanding at Queens College. Now Khan counts not only a Muslim but also a Christian among her close friends.

“I have friends who are Jewish, Christian and atheist,” says Khan. “I have learned to open up to people, bond with them. We have so much in common I couldn’t believe it.”

Queens College history professor Mark Rosenblum founded the center with Steven Appel, his former student and the center’s assistant director.

“I noticed as an undergrad that Queens College was very diverse but everyone was in their own cultural bubble,” says Appel. “There wasn’t a mechanism to get students to talk about the future of the country, no center on campus where students enjoyed cross-cultural music, theater, arts, or getting together to talk about all sorts of issues. Many students, who probably would never have interacted with each other, developed friendships because of the center.”

The focal point of the center’s work is training students in difficult dialogue. Each semester, the center recruits a diverse group of about 25 student facilitators. Through training sessions facilitated by members of the center and coordinated by John Vogelsang, students learn how to engage in a meaningful discussion on a host of issues. Rosenblum wanted to create a program that would train students in conflict mitigation, enabling them to reach across cultural divides and bring about social change and promote cross-cultural understanding.

“We train them in effective listening and then anchor the center’s work around what the students do,” says Appel. “They come up with ideas for programs, facilitate the programs — they’re the crux of the center.”

Being a participant or a facilitator at the center counts as an extracurricular activity, but students receive $500 a semester to recruit students and organize cross-cultural events on campus or in the community. Khan joined the center because she said the concept sounded interesting and money was an incentive. Along with center program manager Sophia McGee and a Jewish friend, Khan organized a screening at a synagogue of “Arranged,” a film about an Orthodox Jew and a Muslim, two women who develop a friendship and along the way discover that they are both going through arranged marriages.

“I found the program to be so powerful; I didn’t know dialogue could be so powerful,” says Khan, who started as a participant and is now a dialogue facilitator. “In my group I had a U.S. soldier, Patrick Saladrigas. He’s an amazing person. I come from a Muslim background, and before I imagined that soldiers are coldhearted, they shoot people. I was shocked to find out that he was no different that I was. Even though we came from different backgrounds — he’s Christian — we want the same things for our children, and we have the same morals. When you talk to other students, you connect with them, there’s a sense of understanding.”

During one dialogue exercise, students are asked to remain silent until a person they disagree with has the opportunity to fully express his or her opinion. The idea is to teach students to listen. So far the center has trained about 400 students in conflict mitigation work.

“The goal was to develop communication and training for young students that would teach them how to maximize a dialogue in which the goal is not to win a dispute but better understand the other,” says Rosenblum. “I want them to see the other side, understand it. Feel empathy for the opposing side if they don’t feel it.”

The center was created in 2009 with a multyear grant from the U.S. Department of Education, but Rosenblum sowed the seeds for it a decade before in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

“My students witnessed the attacks from the campus, and immediately we began experiencing the pointing of fingers,” Rosenblum recalls. “By the end of that day we heard rumors of Muslims that were involved; the blame game had started. I understood that there was going to be an enormous internal conflict within Islam and it was a dramatic oversimplification to cast it as a war between the West and Islam. It would lead to xenophobia.”

Rosenblum, who is an expert on the Middle East and has met with major players in the region, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and with President Barack Obama, thought he needed to react quickly. The idea was born for a curriculum, “America and the Middle East: Clash of Civilizations or Meeting of the Minds?” that later won him a Ford Foundation grant. One of the courses
requires students to study the pains and claims of a religious or racial group that they have little understanding of, or sympathy for, and then make a genuine attempt to “walk in the other side’s shoes.” The students also write a research paper making the best case they can for the other side. The curriculum laid the ground for the center for Racial, Ethnic & Religious Understanding.

Rosenblum also invited Israeli and Palestinian speakers as well U.S. government officials with different points of view to class to speak about the conflict. The curriculum was a hit on campus and has gained attention in the national media.

And he has launched a series of cultural and educational programs meant to bridge the cultural divide, including “Common Chords,” which brings together diverse musicians to talk about the cultural influences of their music; “The Art of the Possible,” featuring cross-cultural art and dialogue; and “Search for Common Ground,” a program that sponsors interfaith, interethnic and interracial dialogue. These initiatives became part of the center’s offerings. The center has also presented “Lake Success: A Real Time Simulation of the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” one of a series of award-winning courses.

“We are clearly and intentionally seeding America with what we hope is a new generation that will advocate, but advocate only after they understand complexities of conflict and see how the other side feels,” says Rosenblum, who also directs two other centers on campus, the Center for Jewish Studies and the Michael Harrington Center for Democratic Values and Social Change.

“We hope students develop deeper analysis without political paralysis. The principle is, ‘If you think you know everything, you know nothing.’”

Rosenblum was influenced by his parents, who were Jewish activists engaged in the civil rights movement in Illinois. Jesse Owens, an African-American track star who stunned the world and Adolf Hitler when he won four gold medals at the 1936 summer Olympics in Berlin, also had an impact on him. Rosenblum’s mother invited Owens to speak at community events. He slept at their house and Rosenblum, 8 years old at the time, says he followed Owens to synagogues and churches.

“I saw white people get up and walk out, leaving in protest that he was there,” says Rosenblum. “I couldn’t understand it. He was the greatest American hero, the fastest man on earth and carried himself with such dignity.”

At Queens College, Rosenblum is more than a professor and mentor. He has personally helped several students grappling with arranged marriages or whose families were insisting they not go to college, and, in several cases, securing housing for students for multiple semesters. Many students became like family.

“He’s had a significant impact on my life and the future direction of my career,” says Appel, who wants to become a politician. “He instilled skills in me that encompass humility and listening — skills that if politicians used, government would look different.”
Knowledge to Share, the Will to Serve

Faculty — often working with students — use their know-how to benefit our community

By Ronald E. Roel

From its beginning 165 years ago, The City University of New York has always had a dual mission: Deliver high-quality education — and serve the citizens of the city.

Today, CUNY’s 6,700 full-time faculty carry on this legacy, contributing in ways that truly transform our city, benefiting the lives of millions of New Yorkers every day. Many provide critical training for the city’s diverse workforce. They teach young scientists to explore new fields like photonics, biodiversity and nanotechnology; they train municipal employees in emergency preparedness for large-scale disasters; they create programs that teach health industry professionals how to detect early incidence of oral cancer and better care for people with developmental disabilities.

These are extraordinary faculty who connect the university to its community, engaging their students in the complex challenges facing the city.

Take Allan Wernick, for example, the Baruch College law professor who launched Citizenship Now! the largest immigrant-aid organization in the city, which assists thousands of people every year — for free — in its nine centers throughout the five boroughs. Or Mande Holford, a professor of chemical biology at Hunter College who has created a unique program to mentor young urban scientists — while she conducts her own remarkable research on the natural poisons found in sea snails that are now being used to help alleviate chronic pain in cancer patients. Or still others, like William Solecki, the director of the CUNY Institute for Sustainable Cities, who brings together diverse groups of researchers and public policymakers to hammer out collaborative solutions to threatening environmental changes.

On the following pages, you’ll find the compelling stories of these and other CUNY faculty — just a few of the remarkable men and women whose service reflects the unique, historic bond between the University and its city.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1973, Allan Wernick was invited to take an internship with a nonprofit organization called CASA, whose mission was to protect undocumented Mexican immigrants from deportation. It was not a high-paying job: $25 a week.

It was a time of fervent community activism, and immigration was an area where Wernick sensed he could make a difference. “There wasn’t a lot of expertise in immigration law” in those days, recalled Wernick, then a law student in Southern California.

After law school, the San Diego native headed for New York, where he built up a private practice in immigration before arriving at the Hostos Community College where he helped organize a Women’s and Immigrants’ Rights Center in 1990. His heart was still in community activism, but he believed he would be able to fulfill his
“serve-the-community feelings” by teaching and using his skills helping immigrants in a college atmosphere. Little did Wernick realize that his fortuitous internship decades earlier would eventually lead to an iconic CUNY program, combining free legal services, education and volunteerism into a single initiative — the most comprehensive university-based immigration service in the country.

Now a professor of law at Baruch College, Wernick is director of Citizenship Now! which includes nine centers in New York City where immigrants can go for forms, educational activities and confidential consultations with paralegals and attorneys. Over the past 10 years, the annual Citizenship Now! Call-In — co-sponsored by the New York Daily News — has answered almost 110,000 calls from New Yorkers seeking help with immigration questions. Thousands more have been helped by the NYC/CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps, which provides free, in-person counseling on weekends. Several years ago, Wernick started the University’s unique Immigration Law Certificate Program, which offers high-level courses for those working with immigrants, or their employers and families.

“I had no idea,” says Wernick, “that this would turn into something as vast and effective as we’ve become.”

Such efforts are especially significant in New York City, where 47 percent of the residents were born in a foreign country and 54 percent live in a household with a foreign-born member. Some 800,000 of an estimated 11.5 million undocumented immigrants nationwide live in New York City.

In the spring of 2010, her class interviewed various neighborhood stakeholders and produced a report recommending ways to redevelop open spaces that could meet the needs of “multiple publics.” In 2011, her students surveyed local businesses and residents about plans to renovate the Flushing waterfront. And last spring, the class put together a plan for installing photovoltaic panels on roofs in this heavily immigrant community, which includes the city’s largest Chinatown.

Such projects would make an important contribution in any community, but the work of Hum’s classes offer particular value in Flushing. “Typically, newer immigrants are not consulted for urban development,” says Hum. “They don’t have ways to voice their concerns.” That is something Hum and her students are working to change.

Hum, who is Chinese-American, came to Brooklyn’s Sunset Park neighborhood from Canada with her family in 1974. “My mother worked in an industrial laundry,” Hum says. “Growing up as an immigrant has transformed my work.” With a master’s in city planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a doctorate from UCLA’s School of Public Policy and Social Research, Hum now specializes in urban planning that incorporates her interests in immigration and community economic development. In addition to her work at Queens, she was recently appointed to the Doctoral Faculty at the Graduate Center’s Environmental Psychology program.

One of the key findings of her students’ projects, Hum says, is the need to find better mechanisms to engage urban immigrants in planning their communities. For instance, in the Downtown Flushing Waterfront project, the class survey of 250 small businesses and residents (conducted with the MinKwon Center for Community Action) found that people were generally unaware of the city’s plans to develop the area.

Earlier this year, Hum’s Solar Flushing Class used the initial work of another class, taught by George Hendrey of Queens College’s School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, to develop a second-phase project. Hendrey’s class used the NYC Solar Map, an online interactive tool, to produce a study of the potential energy savings from the widespread installation of solar panels on buildings. Hum’s class, in turn, used that study as a basis for in-depth discussions about solar energy with community stakeholders, including elected officials, city and state agencies, civic associations, Community Board 7, and the Flushing Business Improvement District.

Such efforts reflect a new emphasis at Queens to “combine service learning with sustainability,” says Hum. “The students really enjoyed working with the community. And we’ve built a lot of credibility with the community — that Queens College kids are able to do good research.”

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the New York area. “Our overall goal is to help people get citizenship,” says Wernick. “We facilitate the process from being here illegally to becoming legal. We do it for free and we have a high-quality reputation. If they don’t have a good case, we tell them.”

Citizenship Now! began with modest ambitions in 1997. First conceived by Jay Hershenson, Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations and Secretary of the Board of Trustees, Wernick launched a program designed to address the need for citizenship and immigration services among CUNY’s foreign-born students, faculty and staff. (More than 60 percent of CUNY students are immigrants or the children of immigrant parents.) It was Hershenson’s vision “that made this happen,” says Wernick. “He understood the role CUNY could play in the lives of New York’s immigrants. His support was the key.”

At first, just a few staff were first trained to provide counseling services on each campus. Responding to high demand for such services across the city, the University soon expanded its mission to cover New Yorkers beyond CUNY campuses.

Over 15 years, Citizenship Now! has steadily grown into what is the largest immigration-aid organization in the city. It has assisted more than 95,000 people at its seven full-time immigration centers and two part-time centers. These services are provided by more than 1,800 members of the organization’s Volunteer Corps — in Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Polish and Creole, among other languages. Citizenship Now! also collaborates with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, making CUNY campuses available for naturalization swearing-in ceremonies.

Wernick credits much of the organization’s success to the University’s broad-based support, from providing the expertise of legal and IT staff, to the use of campus facilities. “It’s remarkable that something like this exists, and it’s because of the University’s willingness to make it happen,” he says. “It enhances what we do. It makes it such a joy to do this kind of thing in an environment that’s so supportive.”

In the last five years, the organization has held more than 200 community events in partnership with local officials and organizations. For example, in the aftermath of the devastating 2010 Haitian earthquake, Citizenship Now! — in collaboration with the American Immigration Lawyers Association — helped more than 900 undocumented Haitians in the U.S. obtain Temporary Protected Status. The quake struck close to home: The city’s Haitian community is America’s largest, with some 6,000 students of Haitian descent studying at CUNY. Just a week after the quake, a webinar was held to train hundreds of volunteers to help Haitians fill out the federal forms at three major events sponsored by the mayor’s office and overseen by Wernick. “It was a terrific experience,” Wernick said at the time. “It was heartening to see so many volunteers come out. And the people were really appreciative. I think they understood that this was really good quality of service and there was no charge to them.”

The CUNY/Daily News Call-In also has become a high-profile annual event, a weeklong campaign each spring when some 350 volunteer counselors answer thousands of telephone calls from city residents with immigration-related issues. The event is perennially frequented by a string of notable public figures, which this year included Sens. Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Secretary of State Cesar Perales, Daily News publisher Mortimer Zuckerman, several borough presidents and City Council members.

Six years ago, Wernick helped create a new Immigration Law Certificate Program at the School of Professional Studies, which offers graduate-level courses for those who are working with immigrants or their employers and families. “It’s where the next generation of immigration law advocates are coming from,” says Wernick, who is author of a popular book, U.S. Immigration and Citizenship: Your Complete Guide (in its fourth edition) and writes a weekly syndicated column about immigration issues for the Daily News. “We train people at SPS, then put them to work at our centers. It’s educational, but work-specific. It’s a terrific service for the people of New York City.”

SERVING THE CITY:
Héctor Cordero-Guzmán

Good Data for Good Policy

O

VER THE PAST TWO YEARS, there has been growing concern among policymakers, academics, practitioners, and advocates about the impact of the troubled economy on children and families. Part of the problem is getting good data: What are the specific racial and ethnic demographics of the poor, and where do they live, particularly in large metropolitan areas like New York. At Baruch College, professor of public affairs Héctor Cordero-Guzmán has made a significant impact in the area with his recent work on poverty and near-poverty in New York City. Using 2010 data, his report released earlier this year found that percent of the population in New York City but 31.5 percent of the poor, and Hispanics are 27.5 percent of New York City’s population but 34.5 percent of the poor. The highest poverty rate is in Brooklyn at 29.3 percent, followed by the Bronx at 25.4 percent and Manhattan with 21.8 percent.

“As a public affairs professor, I try to be a voice, an interpreter of information,” says Cordero-Guzmán. “My role is to help communities connect to policymakers and to help those who make policy better understand low-income communities.”

Throughout his 20-year career at CUNY, Cordero-Guzmán has taught courses on social science research methods, as well as urban demographics; nonprofit management; race and ethnicity; and migration policy. A former chair in the Black and Hispanic Studies Department at Baruch, he also has issued a report on the city’s “disconnected youth,” pointing out the need to increase
area was hit by a hurricane. He was preparing them for a full-scale response, dealing with 600,000 people — roughly a population the size of Charlotte, N.C. “As you can understand,” he says, “I’m not daunted by numbers.”

For the past five years, Boyarsky, one of the city’s premier experts in emergency management, has played a key role in helping the city develop a plan for preparing and responding to disasters like hurricanes — and train the workers needed to run it. “These are city workers who don’t do this on a regular basis,” says Boyarsky, an adjunct professor at Baruch and the Borough of Manhattan Community College. “They’re stepping into a role they’re capable of doing, but they need to know how to manage a public that is likely to be stressed out.”

As project director for “Coastal Storm Plan Personnel Training,” based at the School of Professional Studies, Boyarsky began with classroom training, but soon realized that to provide “hands on” training for 25,000 workers in 19 different agencies, he would need another strategy. He ended up using “Second Life,” a popular, online virtual world that allows users to interact with each other using avatars.

In late August 2011, the emergency response plan was finally activated when Hurricane Irene (then a tropical storm) made landfall in Brooklyn. It would be the first time a municipality like New York had set up an emergency sheltering system of that size on its own (that is, not managed by an organization like the Red Cross). About 5,000 city workers staffed 80 hurricane shelters and special medical needs shelters; 10,000 people were housed in these shelters.

At the request of the city’s emergency management office, Boyarsky himself took over the management of the York College shelter, working a 30-hour shift, from 8 a.m. Saturday, to 2 p.m. Sunday. The facility ended up housing and feeding 1,000 people — 160 of them special needs cases who came in from nursing homes — for a day and a half. A few days later, Boyarsky posted a blog, chronicling events over the weekend. His final words: “We were ready, and we made it happen.”

SERVING THE CITY:
Mandë Holford

From Snail Venom for Treating Cancer to Mentoring Young Scientists

AS A STUDENT AT BROOKLYN TECH in the early 1990s, Mandë Holford had her sights set on attending a private university that would eventually lead her to a career in international law. It was not to be.

After graduating high school as a math and science major Holford initially went to Wesleyan College. But Holford, the third of five children, was trailing two older siblings who were already going to private colleges, and the cost of another comparable tuition was too great a financial strain on the family. She decided to attend York College, near her family, which had moved to Long Island.

“At first, I was angry,” Holford recalled. “But it turned out to be something positive: I met Larry Johnson.” Lawrence Johnson, a professor of chemistry, brought Holford into his lab, where she began doing research on the proton pump of proteins. “He was an excellent mentor,” Holford says. And she made another unexpected discovery. “The life of a researcher really suited her personality and intellect: “I could make my own schedule, choose the question I wanted to work on . . . I’m self-driven. I like initiative.”

So the sting of disappointment was soon transformed into a passion for scientific research — and for mentoring young scientists like her, who might otherwise not choose the road less traveled. “I want to get the word out that science is rewarding,” says Holford, now an assistant professor of chemical biology at Hunter College. “Science is the soccer of careers — anybody can do it. It takes a lot of initiative and drive, but all you need is an active, imaginative mind, which we’re all born with. All you have to do is nurture it.”

After graduating from York in 1997 with a B.S. in mathematics and chemistry, Holford earned a Ph.D. at Rockefeller University. She then accepted a fellowship awarded by the American Association for the Advancement of Science to learn how scientific research can benefit and inform other areas, such as public policy. After her AAAS fellowship, Holford obtained a National Science Foundation fellowship to conduct her postdoctoral studies at the University of Utah, the Paris Museum of Natural History and the Max Delbruck Center for Molecular Medicine in Berlin.

In shaping her postdoctoral fellowship, Holford sought to fuse two prominent silos in science: biomedical research and evolutionary biology. At Rockefeller, a world-renowned center for research in the biomedical science, Holford studied cancer-related proteins. “It was very human-centric research, using abstract knowledge to solve real-world problems,” Holford says. After an internship at the American Museum of Natural History, investments and opportunities for young men, especially those of color. He serves on the advisory board of the Young Men’s Initiative, the city’s premier nonprofits, including El Museo del Barrio, the Paris Museum of Natural History and the Max Delbruck Center for Molecular Medicine. In shaping her postdoctoral fellowship, Holford sought to fuse two prominent silos in science: biomedical research and evolutionary biology. At Rockefeller, a world-renowned center for research in the biomedical science, Holford studied cancer-related proteins. “It was very human-centric research, using abstract knowledge to solve real-world problems,” Holford says. After an internship at the American Museum of Natural History,
Mandë Holford’s passion for scientific research and mentoring, was born at York College.

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she fell in love with the natural sciences, “learning about other organisms, beyond fruit flies and C. elegans [roundworms], which are used as models to compare how their biological systems relate to humans.”

Her research has taken her on many far-flung expeditions. Fusing her knowledge of chemistry and biodiversity, she has focused her research on seemingly esoteric sea creatures: venomous, fish-eating snails. The toxins of these snails were initially investigated in the late 1970s by a University of Utah biology professor who was intrigued by memories of his childhood in the Philippines — deadly accounts of fishermen who were getting stung by snails in their nets. These snails use a dart-like tooth and venom gland to attack and paralyze their prey.

“The goal is to try to find stories from nature that can help humans,” Holford says. “Take these snails that eat fish. How is that possible? It turns out the venom is like a cluster bomb; it hits all the organs of the

SERVING THE CITY:
Robert “Buzz” Paaswell
The Art of Urban Transit

As a young boy growing up in New York and Washington, D.C., Robert “Buzz” Paaswell loved trains. He still does.

Now a Distinguished Professor of Civil Engineering at City College, Paaswell has spent more than two decades at CUNY, conducting research, carrying out worker training programs and providing broad-ranging consulting services on mass transit and public transportation matters. As director emeritus of the University Transportation Research Center — Region 2, a consortium of 17 major academic institutions based at City College, Paaswell is widely considered one of the preeminent experts working on complex public transportation issues affecting the current and future economy of New York City. In 2000, he also founded the CUNY Institute for Urban Systems (CIUS), a multcampus entity that investigates how contemporary urban infrastructure is affected by new technology, finance and changing institutions.

“Once you work in this business, you love it,” he says.

Paaswell arrived at City College in 1990, after serving as executive director of the Chicago Transit Authority, the nation’s second-largest urban transit system. At the transportation research center (one of 10 original university transportation centers nationwide established in 1987 by Congress), Paaswell and his colleagues have overseen an extraordinary array of initiatives, involving every local and regional transportation agency. A sampling: Paaswell served as the impartial expert for path-breaking labor negotiations in establishing standards for bus maintenance hours that saved the city transit authority millions of dollars a year. He has analyzed the multibillion-dollar capital costs versus potential economic benefits of major proposals to modernize the city’s aging transit system. And he worked with unions and the Metropolitan Transit Authority to assess the training need for workers as buses and rail cars transition from manual to high-tech operations.

“My role is to show people how things are changing,” says Paaswell. “We don’t come in and tell them the solution. We come in with the state of good practices and a cost-benefit analysis. We engage leaders in discussions — and sometimes we’re quietly asked to do things.”

Paaswell notes that the CUNY School of Professional Studies also has assumed a key role in training board members of New York State public authorities. This executive-level training in good governance and fiscal oversight practices was developed at the request of the New York State Commission on Public Authority Reform. “SPS has become an important part of New York City,” says Paaswell.

Right now, one of the major questions for Paaswell is whether urban areas have enough energy resources to support needed changes in their infrastructure. He also wonders how the revolution in “real-time information” is changing the way we live. “We’re moving decision-making from long memos to apps on smart phones,” he says. “Does this have resonance in the public sector? We want to set the platform for the next generation.”
The initiative provides female students with faculty mentors on individual research projects, with one-on-one executive coaching sessions to teach important “soft skills,” such as time management.

Holford and other scientists have been studying the snails to learn how to develop therapeutic cures from substances found in nature. In a number of studies, the peptide neurotoxin called Ziconotide, derived from the cone snail species Conus magus, was found effective in providing relief from chronic pain in HIV and cancer patients. While the snail uses Ziconotide to paralyze prey, the same peptide injected into a human spine blocks the flow of calcium into nerve cells, thus interfering with the transmission of pain signals.

Several years ago, the Food and Drug administration approved an artificially manufactured form of Ziconotide, marketed under the trade name Prialt. Now Holford is doing more targeted searches for related species of venomous snails that produce similar “drug-able” toxins. This approach represents a major shift, she says, in the development of non-addictive painkillers, especially as an alternative to morphine.

In 2008, nine years after graduating from York College, Holford returned to CUNY, first reuniting with her York colleague, Johnson, while also taking a dual appointment as a research associate in the invertebrate zoology division of the American Museum of Natural History. Three years later, she joined the chemistry department at Hunter. Her research has won Holford several awards, including a CAREER award from the National Science Foundation and recently a Feliks Gross Endowment Award, presented to assistant professors at CUNY for outstanding work in the humanities or sciences.

While continuing her own research, Holford remains fervent in promoting mentorship opportunities for budding scientists. A former manager of the after-school Science Research Mentoring Program at the American Museum of Natural History, she remains active in the program. The September-to-May program places about 200 students with scientist-mentors at the museum in fields such as astrophysics, earth science and conservation biology. “It’s a way of trying to get urban students into science,” says Holford. “Mentoring is very important. It’s how knowledge gets shared. It has impact.”

Part of the reward of mentoring is showing kids that they “can be something besides a doctor, a lawyer or business person” adds Holford. “You can expose people who would not normally think about science as a career option.” In particular, Holford is committed to getting women into the lab. Through a National Science Foundation grant, Holford has created a two-year program called RAISE-W (Resource Assisted Initiatives in Science Empowerment for Women).

The goal is to help young women at CUNY and other New York academic institutions find sustainable career paths in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields. The initiative provides female students with faculty mentors on individual research projects, with one-on-one executive coaching sessions to teach important “soft skills,” such as time management. Holford points out that long-term success in science, like business, often requires women to juggle many personal and professional tasks — thus, a need to partner executive coaching with hands-on research skills.

Such initiatives also support the University’s broader mission of bringing high-quality science education to underrepresented populations. “CUNY serves a very special purpose,” Holford says. “You have to be gritty, but it gives people a chance.” And promoting science is essential to “building an intelligent citizenry in the city,” she adds. “We need to help people learn about something else — besides waking up and paying bills every day. We want to spark their imagination.”
SERVING THE CITY:
William Solecki

Our Sustainable Cities: Science for Policy That Works

WHEN WILLIAM SOLECKI DESCRIBES the concept behind the CUNY Institute for Sustainable Cities, he evokes a time long before the social and environmental activism of the 1960s — 100 years earlier, in fact. “It can be compared to the land-grant college tradition,” says Solecki, director of the institute and professor of geography at Hunter College.

Land-grant colleges, he explains, were established by Congress through the Morrill Act of 1862, in an effort to transform the nation’s economy through the teaching of practical agriculture, science and engineering, albeit without excluding “classical studies.”

Subsequently, the land-grant cooperative extension service programs were created to provide a mechanism for university-community engagement — a way to respond more flexibly to the needs of a changing rural economy.

“We’re borrowing from that model of civic engagement to look at urban sustainability today, combining cutting-edge research and public-engagement opportunities,” says Solecki. “Our goal is to develop a cooperative relationship between the community and higher education, a longer-term, transformative experience.”

Solecki was born in Manhattan (“a small island in an estuary,” as he wryly describes it), and his 25 years of teaching and research have been devoted to issues of urban environmental change. He has taught numerous classes in this field, as well as courses in climate change, world geography, environmental policy and geographic information systems. And he serves as co-leader of several climate impact and land use studies in the New York metropolitan region, including the New York City Panel on Climate Change.

“The biggest thing for me is illustrating how scientists can interact with policymakers to make a difference in our everyday lives,” says Solecki. “I’m interested in promoting a better understanding and connection between the human and natural worlds.”

This emphasis on making connections across often disparate sectors of society reflects the founding vision of the Hunter-based sustainable cities institute, which was originally financed and supported by the late Theodore Kheel, known as New York City’s pre-eminent labor peacemaker from the 1950s through the 1980s. Kheel spent his later years addressing fundamental conflicts between developers and environmental interests, encouraging decision-makers to apply his alternative dispute resolution techniques to resolve these issues. The CUNY Institute for Sustainable Cities (www.cunysustainablecities.org) was forged as part of a strategic
FOR ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR Dr. Gwen Cohen Brown, dental hygiene has always meant much more than caring for teeth. Since joining the City Tech faculty in 2004, she and her faculty team have been on a mission to educate students, other health care providers and the public at large about the importance of intra-oral and extra-oral examination in detecting oral cancer — a disease more prevalent than melanoma.

Only one in five dentists screen for oral cancer as part of their regular patient checkups, and yet, such routine inspections could greatly increase the early detection of cancer, as well as skin and autoimmune diseases. “Most of what we see in our clinic is benign,” says Cohen Brown, “but early intervention offers the best chance of treating the disease.”

Several years ago, Cohen Brown initiated a project to provide free annual oral cancer screenings in the college’s downtown Brooklyn dental hygiene clinic in collaboration with the Russian American Dental Association. “We knew there was a high incidence of smoking in Russian immigrants,” Cohen Brown says, “so as a way to encourage that patient population to come in, we promoted a highly successful oral cancer screening event.”

Building on that experience, Cohen Brown joined three other City Tech science faculty in an unusual interdisciplinary project over the last two years funded by the National Science Foundation program known as SENCER (Science Education for a New Civic Engagement and Responsibilities). The project linked the teaching of dental hygiene with pathology and nutrition, as well as basic principles of biology and physics, in the diagnosis and treatment of oral cancer.

“The idea is to connect oral and systemic health … and balance classroom knowledge with the clinical component so we are not teaching in a vacuum,” Cohen Brown says. “My approach to teaching is, ‘Why is this relevant to the rest of your life?’”

This fall, Cohen Brown will be leading a team of City Tech faculty in a similar SENCER project, focused instead on combining interdisciplinary teaching and clinical practices related to HIV/AIDS issues in the Brooklyn community. Cohen Brown also has been on the faculty of the state health department’s AIDS Institute for 20 years.

As well as stressing a more “systemic-health” approach, Cohen Brown exhorts her students to become more engaged with patients and their community. “For a significant number of patients we are the only health care provider,” she says. During clinic sessions, which run almost every day, students do head and neck exams on patients and review their medical history. “We translate pathologic terms into English for our patients,” Cohen Brown says. “Although we don’t see that much cancer, we’re picking up a lot of pathology.”

Students are also encouraged to try different ways to bring in patients from the surrounding City Tech community, such as visiting church groups and senior centers. “We are actively trying to integrate all these things — clinic, community outreach and the academic program,” says Cohen Brown. “Our goal is to unify them in a way that has not been done before.”
Improving Urban Education

LIKE MANY CUNY GRADUATES BEFORE HIM, Anthony Picciano was of the first generation in his family to go to college. And since the South Bronx native graduated from Hunter College more than 40 years ago, he has spent most of his professional career at CUNY — teaching, serving in administrative posts and leading cutting-edge research to improve the quality of education in New York and cities nationwide.

“I love the mosaic of CUNY,” says Picciano, now the executive officer of urban education at the Graduate Center. “We get these amazingly industrious students who have jobs and are taking care of their families. They incorporate incredible logistics into their lives.”

Picciano oversees a Ph.D. program that focuses on urban education as an interdependent system of social institutions: the family and neighborhood; schools and partner institutions; and larger-scale political and economic institutions. “A majority of the research is field based,” says Picciano. Many of the program’s roughly 115 students spend extended periods working in schools, hospitals and other institutions. “Their research contributes mightily to education in the city,” says Picciano, who is also Professor of Educational Leadership at Hunter.

One current project, for example, is a two-year initiative to provide training in, and evaluation of, the effectiveness of bilingual programs in New York State’s public schools. (There are about 150,000 bilingual children among the city’s 1.1 million public school students.) Supported by a $1.8 million grant from the New York State Education Department, the principal investigators — Ricardo Otuyeg, Ophelia García and Kate Menken — will be working with bilingual students, teachers and principals, “looking to identify exemplary practices,” Picciano says.

Over the past two decades, Picciano’s research also has involved the pioneering uses of instructional technologies. In 1997, he offered one of the first online learning courses at CUNY. A year later, he co-founded CUNY Online, a multimillion-dollar initiative funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation that has trained hundreds of faculty to develop online and hybrid courses. By 2006, such efforts helped launch the University’s first fully online B.A. degree at the School of Professional Studies. And today, thousands of students are now enrolled in several online B.A. and M.A. programs, as well as two dozen certificate programs.

“The foundation [of online education] is always to use technology to develop quality instruction,” Picciano says. “My main interest is to help working adults, giving them additional chances to complete their education.”

This fall, Picciano will be coming out with his 10th book, The Great American Education-Industrial Complex, (co-authored with education professor Joel Spring of Queens College), further establishing himself as a leading scholar in contemporary education issues. But as he enters his 43rd year at CUNY, he is still most inspired by the daily work of faculty and students at the Graduate Center. “I’m enjoying the center as if I’m 20 years old,” he says. “I feel honored to give back what CUNY gave to me.”

Continued from page 33

cessful TGIF (The Green Initiative Fund) program and helps direct the Hunter Solar Project, a student-organized initiative aimed at expanding the use of solar energy on campus. Last fall, the college completed the installation of a solar photovoltaic system on the Hunter North building to generate on-site renewable electricity and to serve as an educational resource for the campus. “It was a nice opportunity to connect student engagement and instruction facilities,” Solecki says.

Another initiative is the City Atlas project, a “bottom-up” guide to events, ideas and actions related to urban sustainability: “It’s an organic social media platform,” says Solecki, with website items contributed from an array of participants around the city on eclectic topics (Examples: an account of East River Blueway, a community-based waterfront planning initiative; and a story about ecologist Eric Sanderson’s “Mannahatta 2406,” a map-based Web application that will let users experiment with the design of the sustainable city of the future.)

Beside his institute work, Solecki has been active in bringing climate change issues into the urban arena. He has served on a number of key environmental committees, currently co-chairing the New York City Panel on Climate Change with Cynthia Rosenzweig, a research scientist at Columbia University’s Earth Institute. The panel is a group of technical experts that advises Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s Climate Change Adaptation Task Force, one of dozens of initiatives presented in PlaNYC, the city’s long-term sustainability plan.

Two years ago the panel released its first report, providing an initial risk assessment of climate change on New York City’s critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges and tunnels; mass transit; water and sewer systems; electric and gas production and distribution; and telecommunications networks.

Working with the task force — composed of 41 city, state and federal agencies, public authorities and private companies — the panel is developing strategies to make infrastructure more resilient to the effects of climate change. The report, Solecki says, “provides an opportunity to review all existing codes and standards and see if we need adjustments in rebuilding infrastructure, taking climate change into account.”

As the work of the panel continues, the recommendations are likely to become important action points in PlaNYC, “a touchstone document for the city,” Solecki says. But whatever the policy outcomes, the process is precisely what Solecki envisioned in the Institute for Sustainable Cities: “Our goal is bring cutting-edge research to diverse audiences,” he says, “and show how both the sciences and the humanities can inform people about sustainability.”
The City University of New York has a longstanding tradition of welcoming New York’s immigrants and the children of immigrants, providing access to a high-quality higher education. CUNY’s graduates contribute enormously to the economic and social well-being of the city and state as productive members of the workforce, bringing their skills and talents to bear on the improvement of both their own lives and the quality of life of the greater society.”

— Chancellor Matthew Goldstein

Please visit cuny.edu/citizenship
By Richard Firstman

Martin Cohen graduated from City College in 1970 and didn’t think much about his alma mater for a while — three and a half decades, in fact. “I was totally disconnected,” he says.

Then one day about eight years ago, Cohen was at work in his midtown office when his assistant told him that the president of City College was calling. “I said, ‘This can’t be good news — I wonder what the statute of limitations is for bad behavior,’” he jokes — though it would be easier to believe that a man so genial and unassuming as Marty Cohen might have been the only college student in the late ’60s who didn’t behave badly.

So why was the president of CCNY calling a long-disconnected alumnus out of the blue? Like other CUNY campuses, City College was in the midst of an academic resurgence, and its president, Gregory Williams, had proven an adroit fundraiser. Cohen had graduated with a degree in biochemistry but had gone on to a career in finance — an extraordinarily successful career. He had co-founded an investment firm that he’d just taken public.

Williams asked Cohen to come up to the campus, have lunch and a look around.

“I was reminded of my days as a student,” Cohen recalls of the visit. “The faces change but the stories are the same.” By that he meant the financial circumstances of the students, then and now — himself included.

“I grew up in East Flatbush. My father was a laborer in the garment industry and my mother was a hairdresser. City College cost $28 a semester. I knew what it was like not to have.”

Cohen couldn’t help but be struck by the unlikeliness of his return to campus as a man who could send his own four children to the most expensive private colleges. A man, in fact, who was in a position to support his alma mater on a scale that would have seemed unfathomable when he was working his way through school and spending two hours a day commuting to class by subway.

Though the stories of the students may be the same, what has changed utterly, of course, is how much it costs to attend even the most reasonably priced public universities — and how much those schools have come to need support from alumni. Over the past two decades, public colleges like CCNY have established foundations, once the province of elite private institutions, to build endowments with donations from alumni.

“Back when I was in school, no one ever donated money to City College — it was unheard of,” Cohen said. But as he learned from Williams, “[Chancellor] Matthew Goldstein had made it an objective to raise money from alums because the state and city just couldn’t support the programs.”

So, nearly 40 years after graduating, Cohen decided to reconnect with his alma mater in a big way. He joined the board of the City College 21st Century Foundation, CCNY’s primary fundraising organization, and is now its chairman. He’s played a leading role in growing the college’s endowment to about $160 million. And in April, Cohen and his wife, Michele, made news with a $10 million gift to help elevate his first love — science.

The gift, the largest ever to CCNY’s Division of Science, will be used to establish the Martin and Michele Cohen Dean of Science, the first endowed deanship in the history of CUNY, and at least two endowed professorships. The newly established Cohen Fund for Science will also help fund lab renovations and equipment, graduate student research fellowships, student stipends and internships, and other initiatives associated with CCNY’s new science building, which is now under construction and set to open in 2014.

The Cohens’ gift is a landmark in City College’s drive to return to prominence in science and engineering. In the decades before and after World War II, the college’s science faculty were among the most renowned in the world, and eight of its graduates between 1933 and 1954 went on to win Nobel Prizes in chemistry, physics and physiology or medicine. “When I started in 1965, City College was preeminent — maybe second to MIT,” says Cohen. “It really was that highly regarded. We were attracting kids from Bronx Science, Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Tech. Our hope is that this gift helps elevate City College to what it was.”

Cohen graduated early from Tilden High School in Brooklyn and started college as an engineering student. “But there was too much physics, too much math,” he said. “The natural sciences were more to my liking so I switched to biochemistry.” While still in school he got a job with the New York Blood Center, working in a research lab run by a biochemist who had invented a way to preserve red blood cells by freezing them. He stayed on for a few years after graduating, but decided that a significant career in science would require a Ph.D. He and Michele were married and wanted to start a family. He opted for business school at NYU.

The Cohens had met the old-fashioned way — through matchmaking relatives. They were both born in the upstate town of Ellenville, but didn’t meet until they were in their 20s. Michele had grown up in Ellenville, where her father and his brothers had started a company producing their invention — the Channel Master antenna, which became the biggest name in 1960s TV reception. Marty’s parents, meanwhile, had moved from Brooklyn to Ellenville after the war when his father got a job managing a Hires Root Beer bottling plant. “My mother was miserable up there, so we moved back to Brooklyn after I was born,” Cohen said.

His parents had remained friends with a couple in Ellenville who had a niece they thought Marty ought to meet. The only problem was that Michele was in college in Vermont and Marty had gone straight from CCNY graduation to basic training with the Army Reserves. His birthday had come up.

No. 3 in the first draft lottery, and the Reserves seemed the better option. “His parents gave him my address and he wrote to me,” Michele said. “And we started writing back and forth. He wrote beautiful letters.”

“It was the original snail-mail dating.” Marty said. They didn’t meet for a year, until
Marty was home and Michele invited him to her family’s Thanksgiving dinner. He drove up to Ellenville in his green VW Beetle.

Cohen’s first job after graduating from business school in 1976 was as a securities analyst for Citibank. “One day, the chief investment officer called me into his office and said, ‘I have a project for you. I want you to write a marketing brochure. The title will be Why Real Estate?’ I said, ‘I don’t know anything about real estate.’ We were just starting to invest in real estate for our clients as a hedge against inflation. I found that there were a hundred publicly traded real estate companies, and I went all over the country visiting them — developers, owners of shopping centers and apartments, real estate investment trusts. And it turned out they were selling very cheap, way less than their asset values. I wrote a report and he loved the idea of starting a fund that invested in these companies.”

The idea took off, and Cohen never stopped doing what he started. “Michele complained every time we went on vacation we would go to apartment buildings and shopping malls,” he said. “And I wouldn’t let her shop.” But the payoff was big: The portfolio’s initial $100 million value nearly tripled in a couple of years and became the best performing bank fund in the country for several years.

In 1986, Cohen and a partner, Robert H. Steers, started their own company, specializing in the investment strategy Cohen had virtually invented at Citibank and expanding it to international markets. Cohen and Steers took their company public in 2004 and today it’s the nation’s largest manager of real estate securities portfolios, with 230 employees in six offices around the world. “In the beginning I was managing money,” Cohen says. “Now I’m managing people, which I have to tell you is a lot harder than managing money.”

Michele Cohen kept the firm’s books for 18 years, which allowed her to work part time and still concentrate on raising the couple’s four children. She left when the company went public and now spends her time serving on the boards of a variety of nonprofits, including the Museum of Arts and Design, Alfred University and Project Kesher, a Jewish women’s leadership organization. She’s also on the board of the fundraising foundation of her own alma mater, the University of Vermont.

“We built the company quietly over the years, so when we went public some people thought I was an overnight success,” Cohen said. “But it doesn’t really happen that way. Success in life rarely comes that quickly; you have to have a sound long-term strategy and a great deal of patience.”

That could also be said of Cohen’s recent passion outside the office: serious bicycling. He bought a custom-made bike two years ago, and has ridden it practically every day ever since — in Central Park, the Hamptons, and earlier this year, at age 63, on an extreme-biking trip on the Mediterranean island of Majorca. Over the course of a week, he and his riding group rode 400 miles and climbed 40,000 feet on hairpin-turning mountain roads. “It was grueling going up, terrifying going down,” Cohen said. “The bike is made of carbon fiber that makes it incredibly light and aerodynamic. It goes so fast it’s more like skiing. It’s exhilarating, almost an addiction.”

Says the man with the sound long-term strategy and a great deal of patience: “If I woke up tomorrow and my company didn’t exist, I’d just ride my bicycle.”
Cate Ludlam came home from work one night to a voicemail on her answering machine that would change her life. The message was about the Prospect Cemetery Association, an organization formed in 1879 to care for the four-acre cemetery in Jamaica, Queens. Officials there were looking for descendants of the Ludlam family who might want to volunteer to help care for the plots.

Ludlam knew that her ancestors came to America from England during the colonial period, settled along the East Coast and were buried in cemeteries in New York City and the surrounding area. She decided to get involved.

Soon after volunteering in 1989, Ludlam, a computer-systems analyst, was elected president of the association and went on to oversee the revival of the cemetery and its historic Chapel of the Sisters. In 2008, the chapel reopened as a performance space — a new home to the York College Jazz Ensemble.

Ludlam learned that many of her ancestors were buried in Prospect Cemetery, but when she visited it for the first time to find their gravestones she was brought to tears over the condition of the place.

Poison ivy and other plants that had grown without check for years made it impossible to access parts of the cemetery. Many tombstones were broken and the chapel was damaged everywhere. Vandalized its stained-glass windows for target practice, says Ludlam. On that first visit, she made it her mission to rescue the property. What she didn’t know was that it would take 20 years to do it.

“I was glad to find [my ancestors’] names on the list of people buried at the cemetery, but I was terribly upset about the condition of the cemetery and the chapel,” says Ludlam. “The chapel was nearly destroyed, there were holes in the roof. It was full of pigeons and rats. It was one of the most upsetting experiences of my life, to see that the cemetery was nearly abandoned; it had not been cared for. . . . I was terribly upset and very motivated to clean it up.”

Located at 159th Street and Beaver Road, Prospect Cemetery is the oldest in Queens, established in 1668 as the early graveyard of the small town of Jamaica.

Historic figures like Captain J.J. Skidmore, who formed a band of local soldiers and fought the British in the Battle of Long Island, is buried there along with at least 53 of his Skidmore Minutemen. Egbert Benson is also there. A lawyer from Red Hook, Brooklyn, served as U.S. Representative from Dutchess County and Westchester counties to the First and Second American Congress and in 1794 was appointed to the newly established position as the fifth Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

Abraham Lincoln’s favorite actor, James Henry Hackett, was also laid to rest at the cemetery, as well as members of several prominent colonial families like Van Wycklan, Bergen and Nostrand and Sutphin.

In 1856, Nicholas Ludlum (a variation in the spelling of the family name), Cate Ludlam’s ancestor and a wealthy hardware merchant whose family had lived in Jamaica for many years, purchased three acres of land from the Long Island Railroad Company to expand the cemetery. The following year, he built a small chapel to commemorate his three daughters, all of whom had died young, Ludlam says. Named the Chapel of the Sisters, the 19th-century Romanesque Revival structure was intended for family funerals. It was built with ashlar fieldstone and a decorative light brown-colored sandstone trim. It features a gable roof and large stained-glass windows, which were recreated by the Gil Studio in Brooklyn as part of the renovation.

In 1879, the association took over the property, but both the cemetery and the chapel fell into disrepair as the number of the descendants who lived in the area and volunteered to maintain the
cemetery dwindled over the years.

When Ludlam first saw the damage, she immediately resolved to do something about it. For 10 years, she relied on volunteers and her mom, Mary Ludlam, to help her clear the grounds, while she continued to knock on doors looking for help in the local community.

“My mother loved going out there,” says Ludlum. “She pulled the weeds, she was a gardener so she enjoyed it. I had volunteers helping me, kids who never held a pair of pruning shears in their lives. But I was not about to give up no matter what happened.”

Finally, in 1999 the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation (GJDC) and the New York Landmarks Conservancy got interested in Ludlam’s project and partnered to restore the chapel and clean up the grounds. It took several more years to get the funds for it, most of which came from the office of Borough President Helen Marshall and a grant obtained by the GJDC. A title search performed before the work began on the chapel revealed that since 1953 the property belonged to the city of New York, which meant that public money could be spent on the project and that the city should be the one maintaining the land.

“The property is of historic significance to Jamaica. The city didn’t maintain and invest in it, and we found some people who cared about it so we thought it was a good idea to restore it,” says Carlisle Towery, president of the GJDC.

The restoration became part of a larger project in downtown Jamaica. GJDC transformed 159th Street in front of the chapel into a pedestrian walkway, which connects the Long Island Railroad Station with South Jamaica, York College, the Federal Drug Administration Building — on York’s campus — and the cemetery, which sits adjacent to the college. During the restoration the chapel’s facade was exposed to the walkway so people could access the chapel without entering the cemetery, located behind an iron fence. Now thousands of York College students pass by it every day.

“It gives it the flexibility to have events in the chapel without putting historic stones in danger,” says Ludlam. “The idea was to make it part of the York College community.

In 2008 the chapel reopened as the Illinois Jacquet Performance Space, named after a famed jazz saxophonist who lived in southeast Queens and performed with the likes of Lionel Hampton, Count Basie, and who led the Illinois Jacquet Band from 1981 until his death in 2004.

“It’s a wonderful space,” says Thomas Zlabinger, York College music professor who leads the York College jazz ensemble. “One of the best listening environments you can dream of. No echo. All the sound is absorbed by the red long curtains hanging all around the space, so you can hear everything perfectly.”

Since reopening, the chapel has hosted dozens of student recitals, big band performances, and every June 21 it has been part of Make Music New York, a festival of free concerts in public spaces throughout the five boroughs.

“Students love the space because there’s nothing like it on campus,” says Zlabinger, who works closely with Ludlam to organize the concerts. “The chapel is the only structure on campus that was built in the 19th century, and it was restored in such a way that it makes you slow down. I believe music is a social activity and that we need venues or resources like the chapel for musicians to convene and for students to hear music and make music.”

Ludlam isn’t finished yet. She’s overseeing a survey of the 3,000 headstones in the cemetery and creating a database so she could apply for grants that would restore or replace damaged tombstones.

“When I bring people on tours I try to stress that where you’re standing is not just the history of Jamaica but of the U.S and that the U.S. was built by immigrants,” says Ludlam. “I want people to understand the significance of this piece of property, to understand the significance and value of history and that the freedom and privilege that we enjoy in America was paid for by the people who are buried at the cemetery.”
In the Savanna or on the Sofa, the Calorie Count’s the Same

Brian Wood places a GPS on the arm of a hunter, top photo.

Men on the hunt in East Africa, middle photo.

Hazda women return to camp with food, bottom photo.
A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS led by Hunter professor of anthropology Herman Pontzer discovered that people who lead sedentary lifestyles burn the same amount of energy as the Hadza, traditional hunter-gatherers living in the savanna of northern Tanzania, East Africa, and trekking the land in search of food. Published in the PLoS ONE journal in July, the study reveals that despite arduous hours spent foraging for wild plants and animals in the savanna, Hadza expanded the same amount of calories each day as adults in the United States and Europe who were sitting on a couch. The researchers put GPS wristbands on the Hadza to calculate how far they walked each day and they collected urine samples from them, to estimate the amount of energy they burned. Pontzer, who partnered on the project with Brian Wood, now an assistant professor of anthropology at Yale University, and a team from universities in Tanzania, England, Arizona and Missouri, was stunned with the outcome.

“We were really surprised, we didn’t expect to find this at all,” he says. “We thought they would be burning hundreds of more calories a day than Westerners.”

The results throw a long-standing theory out the window. For years, scientists had suggested that the global obesity pandemic was partly the result of an inactive lifestyle. Our ancestors evolved into hunter-gatherers who were physically active for many hours a day, they reasoned, and when people started to lead more sedentary lifestyles without the need to hunt for food, they put on weight. Pontzer’s study shows that obesity is not so much related to a sedentary lifestyle, but easy access to processed food high in calories.

“The idea that people in the West were getting fat because they were sedentary is not true. It’s the diet,” he says.

Pontzer isn’t suggesting that people quit exercising. But, he says, the study proves that diet has a much bigger effect on weight loss than exercise.

“We’re not anti-exercise,” says Pontzer. “We know it’s important for health, cardiovascular as well as mental health. But if you want to lose weight, you have to change what you eat.”
T'S BOTH AN OPPORTUNITY and a danger to be an aspiring writer in New York City, says author Joshua Henkin. “You can go to a book party or reading every night. I think it’s very easy to think that if you are hanging out with writers — you’re writing,” says Henkin who is the director of the MFA Fiction Writing Program at Brooklyn College. He reminds his students to stay focused and write. “I also tell them not to think of writing as a career, but as passion and art. If they are very good and very lucky they might be able to make a career out of it,” adds Henkin, who recently published his third novel, A World Without You. The novel follows the lives of an affluent Jewish family from Manhattan who gather at their summerhouse Fourth of July weekend to memorialize their son, a journalist who was killed in Iraq while reporting on the war. “When people hear the plot of the novel they say, ‘Daniel Pearl.’” Henkin says, acknowledging the similarities between the death of his character Leo and that of Pearl — a journalist working for The Wall Street Journal who was
Henkin was struck by the gap between what it is like to lose a child and what it is like to lose a partner — his cousin’s wife has since remarried. “It was the tension between the mother and daughter-in-law” that inspired the book, he says.

The events in the book take place a year after the death of Leo, the youngest of four siblings. It is revealed that parents, Marilyn and David, will soon end their 40-year marriage. Clarissa, the eldest sibling is struggling at age 39 to become pregnant. Noelle, whose teenage years were shadowed by promiscuity and school expulsions, has moved to Jerusalem and become a born-again Orthodox Jew. And Thisbe — Leo’s widow and mother of their 3-year-old son — has come from California with the intention of announcing that she is involved in a new relationship.

Henkin’s characters are often similar — middle class, well educated, often Jewish. “I’m writing about the kinds of people I know about,” says Henkin who was born and raised on the Upper West Side and now lives in Brooklyn. “The world views, the lives, the concerns of these characters are familiar enough to me that I think I’m able to inhabit and imagine them.”

In college, Henkin didn’t think he could be a writer and considered pursuing a more traditional academic route. “I was probably going to study political theory and get a Ph.D. I’ve always wanted to be a writer. But I’ve always wanted to be a basketball player — at some point I realized that I’m neither tall enough nor good enough. And that’s how I felt about my writing,” he says.

Henkin’s first magazine job out of college, however, inspired him. “I was the first reader of fiction manuscripts. I saw how terrible most of them were. I thought, if other people were willing to try and risk failure, I should be willing to try and risk failure, too.” Since then, Henkin has authored two critically acclaimed books, Matrimony and Swimming Across the Hudson, and is the recipient of the James Fellowship for the Novel, the Hopwood Award and the PEN Syndicated Award.
Here is a collection of new books written by CUNY authors:

**Bruce Springsteen and the Promise of Rock 'n' Roll**
John Jay College of Liberal Arts associate professor of English and Film and Graduate Center professor of English and Liberal Studies Marc Dolan
W.W. Norton & Company

Marc Dolan takes us through Bruce Springsteen's life by tracing the cultural, political, and personal forces that shaped his music. Springsteen moved over the decades from voicing the concerns of a working-class New Jersey guy to writing and singing about the larger issues facing the country, including war, class disparity and prejudice. Dolan draws on a range of new and little-known sources, including hundreds of unreleased studio recordings and bootlegs of live performances, and combines political analysis, music history, and colorful storytelling to reveal how a gifted, ambitious college dropout achieved superstardom — and spent decades refining what he wanted his music to say.

**The Crisis of Zionism**
CUNY Graduate School of Journalism associate professor of Political Science Peter Beinart
Times Books, Henry Holt and Company

In *The Crisis of Zionism*, Peter Beinart lays out in chilling detail the looming danger to Israeli democracy and the American Jewish establishment’s refusal to confront it. And he offers a fascinating, groundbreaking portrait of the two leaders at the center of the crisis: Barack Obama, America’s first “Jewish president,” a man steeped in the liberalism he learned from his many Jewish friends and mentors in Chicago; and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister who considers liberalism the Jewish people’s special curse. These two men embody fundamentally different visions not just of American and Israeli national interests but of the mission of the Jewish people, as well.

**The Anatomy of Harpo Marx**
Graduate Center Distinguished Professor of English Wayne Koestenbaum
University of California Press

Koestenbaum guides the reader through the 13 Marx Brothers films, from “The Cocoanuts” in 1929 to “Love Happy” in 1950, to focus on Harpo’s chief and yet heretofore unexplored attribute — his profound and contradictory corporeality. Koestenbaum celebrates the astonishing range of Harpo’s body — its kinks, sexual multiplicities, somnolence, Jewishness, “cute” pathos and more. Moving from insightful analysis to cultural critique to autobiographical musing, Koestenbaum provides Harpo with a host of odd bedfellows, including Walter Benjamin and Barbra Streisand.

**Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution**
Graduate Center Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, History and Earth and Environmental Sciences David Harvey
Verso

*Rebel Cities* places the city at the heart of both capital and class struggles, looking at locations ranging from Johannesburg to Mumbai and from New York City to São Paulo. Drawing on the Paris Commune as well as Occupy Wall Street and the London Riots, Harvey asks how cities might be reorganized in more socially just and ecologically sane ways — and how they can become the focus for anticapitalist resistance.

**Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education**
Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work professor and doctoral program chair Michael Fabricant and Graduate Center Distinguished Professor of Social Psychology, Women’s Studies and Urban Education Michelle Fine
Teachers College Press

This book aims to reset the discourse on charter schooling by systematically exploring the gap between the promise and the performance of charter schools. Michael Fabricant and Michelle Fine do not defend the public school system, which for decades has failed primarily poor children of color. Instead, they use empirical evidence to determine whether charter schooling offers an authentic alternative for these children. This essential introduction includes a detailed history of the charter movement, an analysis of the politics and economics driving the movement, documentation of actual student outcomes, and alternative approaches to transforming public education so that it serves all children.

**Sexual Types: Embodiment, Agency, and Dramatic Character from Shakespeare to Shirley**
Lehman College professor of English and Graduate Center doctoral faculty in English Mario DiGangi
University of Pennsylvania Press

Building on feminist and queer scholarship, this book demonstrates how sexual types on the early modern stage — such as the sodomite, the tribade (a woman-loving woman), the narcissistic courtier, the citizen wife, the bawd, and the court favorite — function as sites of ideological contradiction. On the one hand, these sexual types are vilified and disciplined for violating social and sexual norms; on the other hand, they can take the form of dynamic, resourceful characters who expose the limitations of the categories that attempt to define and contain them. In bringing sexuality and character studies into conjunction with one another, *Sexual Types* provides illuminating new readings of familiar plays, such as Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Winter’s Tale*.

**In the Company of Men: Inside the Lives of Male Prostitutes**
Brooklyn College assistant professor of Health and Nutrition Sciences and Graduate Center doctoral program chair of Public Health Christian Grov, and Susquehanna University associate professor of clinical psychology Michael D. Smith
Praeger

Documenting male prostitution from the perspective of a group of men working for an Internet escort agency, this in-depth account sheds light on the hidden world of Internet male escorts, their customers, and the niche they inhabit in modern American society. Christian Grov and Michael Smith also address attendant issues of postmodern identity, culture and sexuality — and the transformative influence of the Internet on sexual behavior and male prostitution. Through numerous interviews, the book examines the sometimes-dichotomous relationship between the image men convey and the lengths to which they go in order to meet their most private needs.
A Brief History of CUNY

By Miriam Smith & Ronald E. Roel

Across
1. 1847 The Academy is founded, ratified through a statewide referendum.
4. 1870 The College of the City of New York is established, a free college for women.
10. Big bang maker
13. William Hathaway Greene becomes the first _______ graduate of City College.
16. 1914 The Normal College is renamed _______ College, after its first president, an Irish immigrant.
18. 1919 CCNY's School of Business and Civic Administration opens in the original Free Academy building. It would eventually become College.
21. Like some transfers
22. Russian drinking vessel
23. 1930 In Brooklyn, the annexes of CCNY and Hunter merge to form _______ College.
25. 1937 College opens, founded through the merger of the Queens branches of CCNY and Hunter.
29. 1951 All-female CCNY School of Liberal Arts begins admitting _______.
27. Before dependent
28. Degree after BA
32. Hunter.
35. Between Q and T
37. Prefix meaning "not"
39. The first two-year Board of Education college, is founded, named for City College.
41. During a break-in
46. Hawaiin light
52. ET carrier
55. Before mind or member
58. Vases
62. "___ la la!"
63. Sound of delight
65. At the plate
69. Small military car
71. Start of man
74. Severe brain damage Abbr.
77. Online journal
78. Transgression
81. Bright
83. Blubbers
85. Representation
86. Formal vote
87. ___ Peep
88. ___ Ed
89. "Seinfeld" uncle
90. Chinese currency
92. Chinese currency symbol Fe
94. Freako finish
95. Bacterium
96. "็น, young man!"
99. Very dry
100. Children's card game
101. Makes flush
104. "Pei (dog)
105. Annex
106. Size of small shot
108. Candor
110. Poet Pound
111. ___ Dirty Bastard
112. "Camelot" composer
113. Before univ.
114. Opener
115. Shant end
117. Hollow
118. Dollar
120. Lamb's mother
121. ___ d'Hiver
122. Elbow
124. 2003
125. Diplomatic, Abd.
126. Lending institution
127. "___ young man!"
128. Cupside call
130. Abe
132. South African zebra
133. Divorced spouse
135. Circular
136. Pond fish
137. Shenanigans for short
138. Hebrew evening
139. Mr.
140. Acid
141. Dirty Bastard
142. ___ Dirty Bastard
143. Chinese surname
144. Big pooh
145. Wore away
146. ___ Dirty Bastard
147. ___ Dirty Bastard
148. Dust
149. 2006 CUNY Graduate School of Journalism opens.
150. Yiddish "Sooo?"
151. Ato
For more than a century “The Graduate” — the mural that adorns the front wall of the Great Hall at The City College of New York — has served as a backdrop for important speeches, receptions and lectures. Franklin Delano Roosevelt spoke there in 1929 when he was governor of New York. So did New York City Mayors Robert F. Wagner Jr. and Fiorello LaGuardia. More recently the Great Hall hosted former U.S. Secretary of State General Colin Powell, writer and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Frank McCourt, actor Arnold Schwarzenegger and in 2004, U.S. Sen. John Kerry who was running for President.

“The Graduate,” is one of only two works painted in New York City by Edwin Howland Blashfield, who in the early 1900s was considered one of the country’s finest muralists. The other painting is in the Manhattan Appellate Courthouse.

Blashfield created his sprawling murals in state capitols, churches, universities, museums and other civic spaces across America. He painted “The Graduate” between 1907-1908, at the height of his career. According to Mina Rieur Weiner, editor of a book titled, “Edwin Howland Blashfield: Master American Muralist,” the mural combines many of Blashfield’s techniques, such as the “dramatic use of light and dark” and depiction of real and symbolic figures. In it a student graduate is surrounded by historic figures like Shakespeare, Beethoven and Sir Isaac Newton, and symbolic figures depicting wisdom, discipline, and great centers of learning like Cordova, Oxford and Bologna.

Architect George Post, who had asked Blashfield to do a mural for the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, commissioned “The Graduate.” Post designed the Great Hall as a cathedral to enlightenment — and the mural reflects that design.
MEDGAR EVERS College is attracting more students than ever who are interested in studying the core sciences and mathematics. The college’s new state-of-the-art building, which houses the School of Science, Health and Technology might have played a role, according to the school’s dean and professor of biology, Mohsin Patwary. There has been a 42 percent increase in the number of students studying the core sciences and mathematics since 2004.

The youngest of CUNY’s four-year senior colleges, Medgar Evers was established in 1969 with a commitment to provide access to higher education to the underserved population in central Brooklyn. A year after the college was established it opened, named for the martyred civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers (1925-1963). Today, many of the students who attend the college are from surrounding communities like Crown Heights, Bedford Stuyvesant and Flatbush.

The new building, in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, is a welcome addition to the college, which has also seen an increase in enrollment. Along with the flood of student interest came an acute space deficit, so the new, additional space will provide much-needed relief, explained Dean Patwary. Opened in the fall of 2010, Academic Building 1 houses the School of Science, Health and Technology, and provides five floors of high-tech classrooms, science labs, computer labs and faculty offices. At a cost of $247 million, the 195,000-square-foot structure triples the space previously used by the school.

While the school, which has five departments including nursing, computer science and biology, enjoys the lion share of enrollment — 42 percent of the over 2,900 students enrolled at the college are at the school — Medgar Evers College offers baccalaureate and associate degrees in 21 majors and programs in other areas, such as business administration and early-childhood education.

The new building, outfitted with multimillion dollar cutting-edge teaching and research equipment, features faculty research labs including facilities in the areas of cellular-molecular biology and chemical analysis. It also has aquariums, an animal room and plant growth chambers. Other amenities include two dining areas: the Skylight Cafe, a floor-to-ceiling glass pavilion that seats 264, and a faculty dining room; a multipurpose room for lectures, concerts and social functions; and an art gallery.

Designed by architect Todd Schliemann of Ennead Architects LLP, the brick-and-glass structure has caught the attention of architectural community. It was the recipient of the 2012 Building Brooklyn Award from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce and was awarded the Excellence in Architecture from the Society of College and University Planning in 2011.

Quick Facts — Medgar Evers College

- The youngest senior college at CUNY— established in 1970
- Named for the martyred civil rights leader Medgar Wiley Evers (1925-1963)
- 21 undergraduate majors, special programs and advance certificates
- 75% female, 25% male; student body is 85% black or African-American
- 86% receive financial aid
- Alumni: Over 12,000 since its doors opened.

Notable alumni include Congresswoman Yvette Clark, author and television personality Iyanla Vanzant and former New York State Senator Carl Andrews

- Accessibility: No. 2, 3, 4 and 5 subway lines and the three Brooklyn buses Nos. 44, 43 and 49

THE HOTSPOTS AT MEC

1. Academic Building 1
2. Bedford Building
3. School of Business and Student Services
4. Admissions and Bookstore
5. Carroll Building
6. Portables
7. Eastern Parkway

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CUNY students continue to win the nation’s most prestigious awards coached by our world class faculty. This year they include Clarendon and Beinecke Scholarships to Oxford, Fulbright, Math for America, and National Institutes of Health Fellowships, and a record 16 National Science Foundation awards of $126,000 each for graduate study in the sciences. No other University system in the Northeast won more NSF graduate awards.”

— Matthew Goldstein, Chancellor
The founding class of NCC