Fighting Obesity
Fresh Ideas from CUNY Experts
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How CUNY Sparked the Rise of NYC's Top Fireman
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Impact of chemotherapy drugs on target genes

Genes implicated in neurodegenerative disorders

Brea king boundaries in science at The City University of New York — Whether investigating the most basic or far-reaching genetic and molecular research, or finding ways to provide better nutrition to starving populations, women scientists at all CUNY colleges are conducting pioneering research of world-wide importance. In addition, they are teaching and working with outstanding students in the newest areas of basic and applied science in laboratories and classrooms through CUNY’s “Decade of Science.” The new CUNY Advanced Science Research Center at City College, now being built, with construction and programming planned by Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, Management and Construction Iris Weinshall and Vice Chancellor for Research Gillian Small, will offer the most advanced scientific research facilities and opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration to all CUNY scientists.

For more information about CUNY women in science visit www.cuny.edu/decadeofscience
Reimagining Today’s Colleges

Earlier this year, President Obama spoke at the University of Texas at Austin about his higher education plans and referred to education as “the economic issue of our time.” He explained, “It’s an economic issue when the unemployment rate for folks who’ve never gone to college is almost double what it is for those who have gone to college. Education is an economic issue when nearly eight in ten new jobs will require work force training or a higher education by the end of this decade.”

It’s clear that a college degree is increasingly an economic necessity. And CUNY’s record enrollments demonstrate that students know this, as well; they are eager to get a high-quality education that will prepare them for an unforgiving job market.

At the same time, the country’s public higher education system is facing economic issues of its own. A headline in The Chronicle of Higher Education earlier this year described the situation in stark terms: “State Cuts Are Pushing Public Colleges Into Peril.” As the article pointed out, the recession has only worsened the trend of declining state spending on higher education — at a time when many states are also experiencing significant population growth and enrollment increases. CUNY’s senior colleges alone have sustained over $205 million in state budget cuts since 2009, while adding thousands more students.

Such circumstances provoke difficult questions: How will public colleges and universities be able to continue their historic mission of access and quality? How do we ensure that students can engage in a rich academic experience without shouldering an onerous tuition burden?

Across the country, public institutions are considering a variety of responses to such questions, including reducing the required number of credits, expanding the use of academic technology, increasing faculty teaching loads, outsourcing services and advocating for greater federal investment.

Two years ago, CUNY took the lead in bringing together a group of experienced public higher education leaders to discuss the state of the public mission in this changing economic environment and to advocate for stronger investment in public institutions. This fall, we will continue this crucial conversation in the hope of stimulating bold new approaches to our postsecondary enterprise. Hosted at CUNY’s Graduate School of Journalism, our November summit, “Reimagining Public Higher Education,” will ask system and institutional leaders from across the country, California to Florida, to re-envision traditional college education and rethink standard financial models — all while maintaining the quality and access that are the hallmark of this country’s celebrated public system.

In his remarks in Texas, President Obama was unequivocal about the essential role of education in our country: “If we’re serious about making sure America’s workers — and America itself — succeed in the 21st century, the single most important step we can take…is to make sure that every one of our young people has the best education that the world has to offer.” Our challenge — and our nation’s challenge — is to find the resources, ingenuity and will to take that important step.

— Matthew Goldstein, Chancellor
‘Citizen CUNY’: Voter Info and Much More

From distribution of registration forms to demonstrations of new voting machines, the University’s CUNY Votes initiative revved up for the fall elections, registering new voters on CUNY campuses at a pace exceeding that of any New York City government agency.

The voter drive was but one of the many helpful, informative, money-saving benefits and services offered to students, faculty, staff and alumni. These benefits include an e-Mall, special city cultural discounts, tax preparation seminars, counseling and child care services, continuing education for all ages, and access to libraries, athletic events and performances.

As CUNY continues to stake its place as an academic destination, more New Yorkers recognize the University’s logo, take note of its student and faculty successes and are aware of its improved reputation. What they may not be aware of is the extent of the CUNY community; that they and their family members may be a part of it, or that they, too, have access to services simply by virtue of a CUNY connection.

“Citizen CUNY,” a new communications initiative, will keep the community informed of the benefits of CUNY “citizenship.” Updated information on services and programs will be delivered to students, faculty, staff and alumni, along with more permanent or seasonal information, through a branded Citizen CUNY intranet kept fresh with new and rotating content. Messages, advisories and video announcements will be targeted to discrete user communities.

The intranet, available via the existing CUNY Portal login, will be the University community’s primary source for applications and services — including class registration, office services and job listings — as well as access to the array of other benefits available to citizens of CUNY.

The many other University benefits promoted by the Citizen CUNY intranet include day care, parenting workshops, health resource referrals, job banks and career counseling, veterans’ services, financial aid advice, psychological counseling, discounts at New York City cultural institutions, information on accessing University libraries and their services, and more.

“An educated, vibrant and active citizenry is essential to the future of New York City and State,” said Chancellor Matthew Goldstein. “Nowhere in the world will you find a more diverse and talented population numbering in the hundreds of thousands that share a common strength: their membership as ‘citizens’ of the largest urban public university community in the nation. Their purchasing power as tax-paying consumers contributes mightily to the economic base. They are at the core of meeting constantly changing work-force needs and at the heart of innovations to help improve the quality of life here in the world’s capital. They invariably support family members while pursuing their educational goals, multiplying the impact of CUNY and its constituent colleges and professional schools on their individual and collective lives.

Citizen CUNY is about how a great University connects and uplifts people and helps to positively transform their lives.”

CUNY Votes exemplifies the University’s long-standing commitment to promoting voter participation. Coordinators at CUNY campuses organize voter registration and awareness activities throughout the year, but this year’s statewide elections gave impetus to the drive. With 262,000 academic credit students; 269,808 adult, continuing and professional education students; and 35,000 faculty and staff, the University community constitutes a potentially significant voting presence.

Scores of events at all campuses encouraged participation in the electoral process. Special Facebook and Twitter social media sites were created to build an online community to encourage students to vote. And to visibly demonstrate their commitment, Barnes & Noble Bookstore offered a 25 percent discount on collegiate apparel so students could wear their school colors to the polls.

At York College, student Basirat Subair tries a ballot-scanner with guidance from Board of Elections representative Preston Baker.
As Waists Expand, Healthy Days Are Reduced

AS MORE AMERICANS are becoming obese, they are having fewer days of healthy life, according to a nationwide study by Erica Lubetkin, acting chair of the Department of Community Health and Social Medicine at the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education at City College, and professor Haomiao Jia of Columbia University. Using data from 3.5 million Americans tracked by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they found the number of healthy days per year that American adults lost due to obesity has more than doubled from 7.5 in 1993 to 17 in 2008.

"Black women consistently have the highest prevalence of obesity as well as the greatest shortening of healthy life compared to the other groups," says Lubetkin. The study, called "Obesity-Related Quality-Adjusted Life Years Lost in the U.S. from 1993 to 2008," was published in the September 2010 issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

The researchers also found that the prevalence of obesity has nearly doubled from 14 to 27 percent over a span of 16 years. The burden of diseases associated with obesity might overwhelm recent advances in public health, like the positive health effects gained from decreasing rates of smoking, and increase the cost of health care in the county, says Lubetkin.

She points out that there’s no magic bullet to eliminate the obesity epidemic, but recent strategies employed by New York City like eliminating trans fats from restaurants, posting calorie information on menu boards and drawing attention to the dangers of sweetened sodas are steps in the right direction.

"Many creative solutions will need to be implemented by a number of different organizations, health care providers, and policy makers to reverse this trend," says Lubetkin. "And these interventions must be implemented throughout an individual’s life span, particularly during early childhood."

Caribbean Discovery Adds a Branch to Primate Family Tree

THE MINUTE Alfred Rosenbergersaw the fossilized remains, he knew what he was dealing with. Antillothrix bernensis, a capuchin-sized extinct monkey from the Caribbean.

"There are no living examples of these animals," says Rosenberg, a biological anthropologist at Brooklyn College who led the examination of the monkey’s bones found in an underwater cave in the Dominican Republic. "There is only one other specimen of that species from the Dominican Republic that we know of."

A team of scuba divers of the ADM Exploration Foundation discovered the remains, which included a nearly intact skull, in 2008. Rosenberg has been working in collaboration with Siobhan B. Cooke, a CUNY Graduate Center student, and Dr. Renato Rimboli of the Academy of Sciences in Santo Domingo and the Museo del Hombre Dominicans in Santo Domingo on cataloging, preserving and identifying the remains — a process that will take a few years. The next step in their research, he says, is to place this species on the family tree of New World monkeys, and then determine their adaptation and their ecological situation.

Rosenberg believes that Antillothrix bernensis got from South America to the Caribbean 10 million to 17 million years ago, probably accidentally. “We’re also trying to figure out when they became extinct,” says Rosenberg. “[The fossil] is a window on the anatomy of ancient South American monkeys and let’s not forget that it’s also telling us about the past ecology of the Dominican Republic.”
REPORT RELEASED earlier this year by the Center on Race Crime and Justice at John Jay College of Criminal Justice sheds new light on the “stop and frisk” policing method used by the New York City Police Department.

According to the report, since 2003 the number of “stop and frisk” encounters by the NYPD has more than tripled, from roughly 161,000 to 576,000 in 2009, but only about 12 percent of those people were charged with criminal activity. “The return rate on these stops is minuscule; we would not accept that kind of return in any other profession,” says Delores Jones-Brown, director of the center and lead author of the report, “Stop, Question & Frisk Policing Practices in New York City: A Primer.” Jones-Brown says blacks and Latinos were nine times as likely as whites to be stopped by the NYPD in 2009, but once stopped were not more likely to get arrested. “There needs to be a survey of police officers to determine what’s motivating them to engage in stopping the people they do,” she says.

Delores Jones-Brown, the report’s lead author, says there needs to be a survey of police officers.

**Dalai Lama at Hunter:**

**Happiness Is ‘a Basic Human Right’**

TIBET’S DALAI LAMA stopped by Hunter College while in New York for a four-day appearance at Radio City Music Hall last spring. The spiritual leader discussed education, religion and happiness with scholars of Chinese descent at Hunter’s Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute and later delivered a keynote address at The Bridge Conference, a Tibetan and Chinese youth dialogue project hosted by Hunter. “We are all the same human beings, mentally, physically and emotionally,” he said. “Everybody wants a happy life. That’s a basic human right.”

“We are all the same human beings, mentally, physically and emotionally.”

Tibet’s Dalai Lama
Does Anyone Here Speak Babuza*?

LINGUISTS BELIEVE that by the end of this century, half of the 6,500 languages near extinction will die out and be replaced by national languages or world languages like Chinese, English, Russian or Arabic. That’s why the Endangered Languages Initiative (ELI) at the Graduate Center is racing with time to help document them.

“The globalization of media and the spread of Web access around the world means that world languages are now brought to almost every corner of the globe, spreading these languages much faster than in the past,” says Juliette Blevins, professor of linguistics and ELI’s director.

The mission of the institute, which opened this fall, is to train graduate students in language documentation and description and to educate the public on issues surrounding language endangerment. Blevins says the institute will take full advantage of New York’s linguistic diversity by matching students with speakers of languages that have no written alphabet or lack good documentation, and may not even have a writing system, like Maasalit, an endangered Nilo-Saharan language of the Darfur region of the Sudan.

"From the perspective of linguistic science, the loss of a language is equivalent to the loss of a species in the biological sciences," says Blevins. "Each language informs our view of what human language is, how it has evolved, and how it makes us different from all other living creatures on the planet."

*An endangered language indigenous to Taiwan with fewer than 10 native speakers

Psychology
Is the Name of the Game

I F YOU’RE NOT THINKING while playing poker, you’re gambling, according to Blake Eastman, founder and head instructor at the School of Cards, a New York City poker school. “Poker is about making profitable decisions,” says Eastman, also an adjunct lecturer of psychology at LaGuardia Community College. “You know you’re playing good poker when you’re constantly asking yourself ‘why.’ You have to have sound reasons for the moves you make.”

Founded in 2007, the school offers group lessons for intermediate and advanced skill-level students, as well as private lessons, poker parties and tournaments. Eastman, who received his B.A. and M.A. in forensic psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, lost a lot of money before he began playing professionally four years ago. Nonetheless, he says he can teach amateur players how to make the right moves in a few sessions.

“You get good by having a community of players around you,” he says.

But not everyone has what it takes to win in poker.

“It takes a lot of discipline and a lot of hard work, because there are ups and downs,” says Eastman. 24. “I’ve read every single book that has been written on poker and am still learning more about the game every day.”
In 1985, at the peak of the AIDS epidemic in America, William M. Hoffman felt hopeless. “My friends were dying and no one was talking about it,” says Hoffman, a playwright, librettist and an associate professor of theater at Lehman College. AIDS “was a nonsubject in the mainstream media.”

To bring attention to the crisis, Hoffman wrote “As Is,” one of the first plays to tackle the AIDS epidemic in America. The 90-minute play was staged that same year off Broadway at the Circle Repertory Company and then on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre where it ran for 285 performances.

In 1986 it earned Hoffman a Drama Desk Award, an Obie, and Tony and Pulitzer Prize nominations and was one of Time magazine’s best plays of the year. The Apple Core Theater Company revived the play in October — the 25th anniversary — for a 16-performance engagement at The Studio Theatre at Theatre Row.

“I’ve received lots of letters and people would stop me on the street and tell me that they have the same story; we all had horror stories about AIDS,” says Hoffman, recounting the reaction of audiences who saw the play. “Everyone in the country had a family member or a friend or knew somebody who was affected by it.”

Centered on a relationship between an HIV-positive man and his ex-lover, who comes back to care for him, the play depicts the chaos and fear that gripped the country as the disease spread. It opened to great reviews. New York Times theater critic Frank Rich wrote at the time, “Mr. Hoffman has turned a tale of the dead and the dying into the liveliest new work to be seen at the Circle Repertory Company in several seasons.”

Hoffman had hoped that the play would bring attention to the crisis, but he was surprised that it had as big an impact as it did.

“When I started to write it, I didn’t think that what was a little play would help deal with an epidemic,” says Hoffman, who began his career at the legendary Caffe Cino, a Greenwich Village coffeehouse in the 1960s where playwrights tried out their work. “I was fortunate that I was able to put AIDS into the consciousness of the American public.”

While AIDS is no longer a death sentence for many who have access to drugs that have been developed since the mid-1980s, the disease still kills thousands of Americans each year.

“A lot remains to be done because people are still contracting AIDS by the same mechanism of denial,” says Hoffman. “Teenagers are especially vulnerable. The media should make a bigger noise about it.”

To Hoffman the enduring AIDS epidemic in Africa has similarities to the crisis in America. “It’s exactly what we went through originally — it’s a nonevent,” he says. Hoffman points out that not long ago the former South African president’s [Thabo Mbeki] administration was claiming that AIDS could be cured with garlic treatments. “This is an ongoing problem of denial,” says Hoffman, “and this is very dangerous.”

“Playing With Fire Paid Off in Many Ways”

— William M. Hoffman

Playwright William Hoffman spotlighted an ignored health crisis.
Designing Scholarships

By Neill S. Rosenfeld

LARRY GRALLA (CCNY ‘51) has never stopped hustling but, thanks to him and wife Yvette (’52), so far 187 of New York City’s brightest public high school graduates have not had to hustle to pay tuition at City College.

Larry started the first of four CCNY scholarship funds in 2001 after chairing his 50th college reunion. More than 110 of his scholarship funds in 2001 after chairing his teachers knocked his grades down to 75 to books, but early on his French and math fewer came each year. He wanted to restore a tradition.

At Stuyvesant, Larry had aced his tests just by going to class and studying textbooks, but early on his French and math teachers knocked his grades down to 75 to teach him to hand in homework, as well. His three science teachers apparently favored results over process.

Grasping collegiate coursework just as easily, Larry had time to work, selling photos and articles to the college while free-lancing sports reports for The New York Times — a gig his older brother, Milton, passed on after graduating in 1948. His first story, he says, recounted a rife competition against West Point marksmen. “The headline was, ‘Army Shooters Triumph.’ No surprise there.”

In his senior year, Larry and Milton launched the Nationwide Trade News Service, which connected Chicago and New York publishers with hundreds of U.S. journalists who localized stories. Larry also traveled, selling articles to more than 100 magazines. Milton edited and ran the business.

The going rate was two cents a word, but with Larry’s photos, they might earn a steep $50 per story. “We’d send an article to Plumbing Contractor News,” he says. “If the editor sent it back, he’d say the next month in his competitor, so he’d grit his teeth and buy it.”

One story always led to another. Reporting on luxury marketing for Playthings Magazine and about window design for Curtain and Drapery Department Magazine at Robeson’s Department Store in Champaign, Ill., he also chatted up the lingerie buyer. “In 25 minutes I got four articles for Hosiery and Underwear Review and Lingerie Merchandising Magazine — sales training, seasonal display, cut-price sales of markdowns and buy-one-get-one-free.”

Larry married Yvette after she earned her degree. They had become friendly while taking golf lessons in the Hygiene Building’s basement, hitting balls into a mat hung on a wall.

“Larry learned how businesses were run,” she says. So when he encountered a Cleveland plumber who was installing complete kitchens, not just subcontracting for part of the job, he spotted a trend. “There was no trade magazine in an emerging field, kitchen remodeling,” says Yvette.

While living in Chicago in 1954, Larry incubated his idea in a publishing course at Northwestern University. His term project: designing a home-remodeling magazine. But for secrecy, once again he didn’t turn in homework. He failed the course.

Yvette, teaching first grade, used colored pencils to help create a dummy issue, which they took on a road trip. “I’m shocked that anyone I showed this to didn’t throw me out of his office,” Larry says. But manufacturers were enthusiastic.

“One sticks in my mind,” Larry says. “I arrived late at the Mutschler Brothers Co. in Nappanee, Ind. It’s after 6 o’clock. There’s a fellow leaning against the fence. I said, ‘Can I get in? There’s a guy named Dick Chapman. I’m supposed to see.’ Well, that was Chapman and he’d waited an hour. He said, ‘I’m giving you a full-page ad for 12 issues.’”

The brothers started Kitchen Business in 1955 with $5,000 from savings. Yvette, Larry and relatives compiled a national mailing list of 15,000 cabinet dealers by scouring Yellow Pages in the New York Public Library.

Gralla Publications eventually became a 22-magazine powerhouse in retail, merchandising and travel, with titles like Professional Furniture Merchant and National Jeweler. It also ran trade shows. Larry was president and general manager and Milton was creative director. They shared decision-making for 40 years without a squabble, Larry says. They sold the company in 1983 and divided the proceeds with the staff.

By the time Larry had learned of the falloff in Stuyvesant grads who chose to study at CCNY, the academic world had changed. By 2001, top students had more options than in the 1940s, including CUNY’s own wider array of colleges. On the other hand, the Grallas noted, CUNY was on an upswing under Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, who that year created an honors college with free tuition and other perks to attract high achievers to the University.

Larry worked on a parallel program with Elena Sturman, executive director of the philanthropic City College Fund and, he says, a creative fundraiser. Grants are $5,000 to $7,500 a year and the CCNY admissions office awards them based on high SAT scores. Students must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average and be in an honors program.

After recruiting the first six Stuyvesant grads, they targeted graduates of the Bronx High School of Science and Brooklyn Tech.
Starting in 2009, the Grallas funded “New Era” scholarships for graduates of 11 other respected schools: Bayside, Benjamin Cardozo, DeWitt Clinton, Edward R. Murrow, Forest Hills, Fort Hamilton, Francis Lewis, Hunter, LaGuardia Music and Art, Midwood and Townsend Harris.

To date, the scholarships have helped 74 students from Stuyvesant, 42 from Bronx Science, 14 from Brooklyn Tech and 57 from New Era schools. The retention rate is astonishing: Only two failed to graduate or left CCNY.

Larry encourages other alumni to dig deep. More than 1,200 Stuyvesant-CCNY graduates and about 1,000 Bronx Science-CCNY alumni have contributed. The Brooklyn Tech campaign is beginning. Sturman said total donations top $5.4 million.

Donors “all say City College gave me a chance. It transformed my life,” says Yvette, who worked part time at Gralla Publications, analyzing sales statistics, after teaching school for a number of years. “Now is the time to give back. City College is again doing what it did when we were there, offering a truly outstanding education to those who are willing to work. We’re thrilled to see this happening and to be able to be part of it.”
Hold the FIGHTING OBESITY
MICHELLE OBAMA NEEDED HELP. Seven hundred of the best chefs in America were heading to a meeting in Washington — and then the White House — to brainstorm over what they could do to help fight the national epidemic of childhood obesity.

With 7 billion breakfasts and lunches a year served in public and private schools in grades K-12 and supported by federal funds, change could happen if these chefs, who know food and nutrition so well, also understood the culture of schools.

The chefs had been asked to “adopt” schools throughout the country where the challenge would be to revamp the meals to include fresh fruits and vegetables and other local ingredients “cooked on the premises” — and to educate the children about the connection between health and food.

But change is hard and the chefs needed to know what they would be up against. So Share Our Strength, a national organization focused on childhood nutrition, summoned Hunter sociologist Janet Poppendieck, author of the acclaimed book, *Free for All: Fixing School Food in America*.

In June, Poppendieck stood before a sea of chefs in white toques and jackets. There was much for them to consider: Principals are overloaded with school-meals paperwork; food-service workers feel undervalued; custodians, beleaguered. There would be many teachers who would welcome the chefs into their classrooms for lessons on food and cooking. But teachers, she added, also need to budget their time so that they cover material on which students are tested. And students are not tested on their cooking skills.

Then, of course, there are the students themselves. How do you get them to even try “strange,” but good food? Schools, in serving subsidized and partially subsidized meals — as well as *a la carte* items they sell to help balance their books — often have to sacrifice health for familiarity so that students will not reject what is offered.

As for parents, Poppendieck said some would welcome the chefs but “unfortunately the schools in which your ‘chef-ness’ is most likely to inspire parents are probably not the schools that most need your intervention.”

William Telepan, chef and owner of the eponymous Telepan on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, was among those who heard Poppendieck speak.

“I remember being mesmerized by Jan’s speech, the way she broke it down,” he says. “She made it very comprehensible, the severity of the problem and how we must help.”

Telepan leads New York City’s “Cook For Kids,” which serves 6,500 children, introducing them to healthy food in their schools. Under Obama’s program he will also “adopt” two schools with a total of about 2,000 students — one in Manhattan, which his daughter attends, and another in the South Bronx.

“It doesn’t matter that kids are bombarded by too much junk on the outside,” the chef says. “We should take this as a responsibility to help teach these kids about healthy food and give them healthy choices while they are in school. Why should they get junk all the time? And remember, kids get 50 to 80 percent of their daily caloric intake from school. So, that shows you we can make a difference.”

Poppendieck, who was awarded this year’s Outstanding Book Award from the FAST FACTS

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<th>In New York City, the statistics are startling and confounding.</th>
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<td>• 47% of households with children had a difficult time affording food in 2009.</td>
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<td>• 70% of food pantries and soup kitchens served more children this year than last.</td>
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<td>• 40% of children in grades K-8 are overweight or obese. Typically, the obesity epidemic has hit underprivileged neighborhoods far more intensely than prosperous ones.</td>
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<td>• New York City schools serve meals to more than 860,000 children.</td>
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<td>• To address this issue and recommend solutions, a report on improving food in the city’s schools was issued in August by the Projects for Healthy Public Policies at CUNY’s School of Public Health at Hunter College and City Harvest.</td>
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<td>The report is available at <a href="http://web.gc.cuny.edu/che/NYCSchoolFood.pdf">http://web.gc.cuny.edu/che/NYCSchoolFood.pdf</a></td>
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Healthy-food advocate Janet Poppendieck talks with student Igor Pikaliak and college lab technician Winnifred Johnson in a Kingsborough Community College training kitchen.
Association for the Study of Food and Society, is a key resource in nationwide efforts — now led by the First Lady — to eradicate obesity within a generation. The professor’s *cri de coeur* is to make healthy, tasty school food free for all — and a part of the curriculum so that the next generation embraces a better way to eat.

Currently children who qualify economically receive free or reduced-price meals, creating in many schools not only a segregated lunchroom atmosphere, but so much bureaucracy that for many schools it might ultimately make more sense to provide all the meals for free, she says.

In scores of schools in Philadelphia this is exactly what happened. In the 1990s, as part of a federal pilot project, free meals were offered to all students in 144 out of 272 schools in that city. Thousands of hours of staff time was saved and printing and money handling costs were reduced. Perhaps most significantly, high school student participation rose by 186 percent — and some participating schools still offer free meals to students today.

Poppendieck, who details this pilot project in her book, does concede that it could cost an additional $12 billion a year for universal free school food to become a reality. But she notes that in dire circumstances money can be found: “The ‘bailout’ funded in response to the banking crisis would have been enough to pay for a conversion to universal free school meals for more than half a century.”

There are other crucial benefits to be reaped if schools succeed in teaching children to eat better. For example, medical costs for obesity-related illnesses are currently estimated to be about $147 billion a year, with $14.1 billion for children.

Money issues aside, Poppendieck is adamant that food should be varied, creative and interesting. Asked about some dishes she would like to see in school meals, she suggested vegetable chili and whole grain corn bread. She is also a loyal fan of the wide variety of healthy food available throughout the five boroughs, so much more appealing than the fast, overly processed fare consumed by so many.

As for that fast food, Poppendieck admits that she herself has been tempted by the seemingly wholesome old-fashioned aroma of an airport Cinnabon. But that aroma, she says, is deceptive since it comes from a fat- and chemical-laden product — and the classic Cinnabon has 880 calories. Even the “MiniBon” has 350 calories, more than three times the amount of a typical apple. Not, Poppendieck says, the kind of fare that should be served in schools, although she did visit one in California that had Cinnabons on its *a la carte* menu.

At CUNY, Poppendieck is one of many, including more than a dozen professors, who are working to help people at the University — and in the community, country and the world — eat healthier, with more environmental consciousness, and exercise more. At the University this has become a focus of teaching, research and public service. And there are more initiatives at the colleges including nutritional counseling and support and exercise groups.

According to a 2005 report in the New England Journal of Medicine, unless current trends in obesity and diabetes change, our children and grandchildren are likely to have shorter life spans than the current generation, reversing more than a century of public health progress. Unfortunately, little headway has been made since that study. In August, the United States Centers for Disease Control reported that more than a quarter of American adults were overweight and that the obesity rate had increased by 1 percent in 2007.

In September, the New York City Department of Health reported that 40 percent of New York City children in kindergarten through the eighth grade had been found to be overweight or obese in the 2008-2009 school year, with no decline from the previous year.

In regard to the obesity-related illnesses causing those astronomical medical costs, at least one-third of all children born in 2000 are expected to have diabetes at some point in their lives. Diabetes is among the most serious health problems caused by obesity and many children are now contracting a form of the disease once only seen in adults. Asthma, heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer are also linked to obesity.

Researchers

In addition to the campaign to educate students and encourage better eating, researchers at the University are also trying to find out what causes obesity and how it can be cured.

Among those working on the problem are Kathleen Axen, a Brooklyn College professor of health and nutrition sciences; Hunter associate professor of public health Ming-Chin Yeh; Diane Gibson, an associate professor of public affairs at Baruch College; and also at Baruch, Angela Marinilli-Pinto, an assistant professor of psychology. That these scholars work in three different areas is significant; the puzzle of the epidemic appears to demand that. Or, as Distinguished Professor of Public Health Nicholas Freudenberg says: “CUNY has a wide cross-section of disciplines and perspectives. If we are going to be successful in addressing obesity, we’ll need an interdisciplinary approach.”

Axen is studying obese rats, which are fed purified laboratory versions of the food we eat, to determine the effectiveness and safety of very low-carbohydrate weight-loss programs such as the Atkins Diet. Many individuals have lost a great deal of weight, oddly, by limiting carbohydrates but not such food choices as juicy steaks, butter and real ice cream. Some on this diet have eschewed carbohydrate-packed beer for white liquors such as vodka and gin. Could this be healthy?

Axen, who has written three papers on this topic and awaits additional data, started experiments on more rats this summer. Her research so far has shown that “taking in more fat does not make you burn more fat.
away.” While it may not show on an individual’s physique, “it stays in your liver and in your muscle,” she says. She adds that “even when rats lose weight on the very low-carbohydrate diet, they don’t show the improvement in diabetes risk factors that rats losing weight on a high-carbohydrate one do.” She adds that her research has not been conducted without some protests from the industry.

“There are some researchers who have conducted studies on humans, prescribing Atkins-type diet and have reported studies overstatetheir findings since they can’t document what and how much people ate, that is, whether subjects consistently followed the regimen and whether the effects simply came from eating less in contrast to whether the diet had ‘special properties’ that let you eat a lot of calories but still lose weight.”

Criticsof Atkins-type diets have said that since there is less variety of food, people eat less and lose weight. Proponents said that the diet sparks a chemical reaction in individuals that enables them to burn fat more efficiently.

Axen has a $471,000, four-year grant from the National Institutes of Health for her work.

In another laboratory, at Baruch College, where the only equipment is a professional digital scale, Pinto is also looking at diet but in a different way. In a study that appears to be the first of its kind, she is evaluating the clinical and cost effectiveness of an approach that combines University-based behavioral weight-loss treatment with a commercial weight-loss program. A total of 144 overweight and obese adults, ages 30-65, are enrolled in this study and were randomly assigned to one of three different programs for one year. There will be a follow-up six months later.

In one model, subjects attend a traditional Weight Watchers program, in another they are part of a University-based program led by a behavioral psychologist — Pinto herself in this case. In a third, innovative model, a group begins with Pinto and then moves into Weight Watchers to determine if transitioning from one program to another will work. This research is in keeping with a trend to evaluate commercial diet programs using scientific methodology.

While the programs deliver similar messages for losing weight through balanced nutritional and lifestyle changes and physical activity, there are differences in how they are structured that may impact outcome. “The training of the leader, or leaders, is different in each model, which may have implications for effectiveness and cost,” says Pinto, who studied eating disorders earlier in her career. Another difference is that in the University-based program participants attend group meetings with the same people each week while Weight Watchers meetings are open so members may change from week to week.

Pinto’s research is funded by a $640,000 four-year grant from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health and she expects to have some data available in the spring.

Diane Gibson, Pinto’s colleague at Baruch is examining obesity through a public-affairs lens, focusing on the most affected communities — the economically disadvantaged. This is also an issue which one of Ming-Chin Yeh’s students studied under his guidance; that student’s work has been cited in Michelle Obama’s report on childhood obesity.

Gibson has been trying to find out why women often gain weight when they use “food stamps,” subsidies now provided by the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The program now allocates these subsidies to about 40 million individuals a month, although generally people use much of their own money for food as well since the average monthly benefit is about $125 per person.

Gibson has also found that young daughters — but not sons — of women on food stamps often gain weight. She thinks this might be explained by the fact that mothers seem to be more controlling about the foods adopting schools throughout the country. She then accompanied the chefs to the White House where they toured the First Lady’s organic garden and heard her speak.

Additionally, a paper authored by three University public health scholars was mentioned in the First Lady’s report to the conference: “Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation.” The authors are Hunter associate professor Ming-Chin Yeh and Hunter Master’s of Public Health graduates Lauren Dinour and Dara Bergen. On page 61 the report states: “Still, a number of studies have suggested a possible correlation between food insecurity and obesity, especially in women.” A citation then refers readers to footnote 240 and an article published in 2007 in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association entitled: “The Food Insecurity – Obesity Paradox: A Review of the Literature and the Role Food Stamps May Play.” This is also an issue related to research by public policy expert Diane Gibson of Baruch College.

Although all three received credit on the report, Yeh emphasizes, “Lauren did all the work as it was her thesis. Dara also helped on some literature review and synthesis.” As thesis adviser, the professor supervised the project.

Dinour, a registered dietitian, graduated from the Hunter program in 2006 and is currently pursuing a CUNY doctorate in public health with a concentration in nutrition. She is also an adviser to Food Fight, a New York City-based organization that works with high school students and teachers on a nutrition curriculum.
their daughters eat, which can backfire and result in increased calorie consumption. Gibson’s studies, which used longitudinal data going back to 1979, may in one sense be emblematic of the entire obesity issue since there are more questions than answers. “The public policy person in me would love for there to be easy fixes,” she says candidly. Instead she is enmeshed in an area in which conventional wisdom often does not hold up under scientific scrutiny. And scientific findings differ. Gibson’s work doesn’t support a common belief supported by other research that neighborhoods with supermarkets — and the accompanying fresh produce they sell — reduce the incidence of obesity, as opposed to neighborhoods with only delis and bodegas. “Even if you live in a disadvantaged neighborhood without a supermarket almost everyone gets to a supermarket to do their shopping,” she says. It gets even more complicated, says Gibson, since ZIP codes or census tracts are often, for convenience, used to define neighborhoods. But residents may use different guidelines in viewing the boundaries of their neighborhood. How can researchers accurately determine if residents have neighborhood supermarkets if they don’t know where the neighborhood begins and ends for the people who live there?

With this in mind, Gibson hopes to take a crucial step back and examine whether the way a neighborhood is defined influences research results. With her interdisciplinary leanings playing a role, Gibson will publish a paper next year on neighborhood food environment and adult weight status in the American Journal of Public Health.

Gibson says she wishes she could use her research to explore whether people gain weight because they buy unhealthy items on food stamps. But her data do not have the details to test this explanation. “Food insecurity may produce disordered eating patterns,” Gibson adds, referring to large swings in calorie consumption that occur when funds are available for food after a period of limited resources. Individuals who have not had enough money for food for a while may make inex-
CHEWY CHIPS AND OH! OH! OH!

While adults in New York City have slightly lower rates of obesity than elsewhere in the United States, children here are obese and overweight at higher rates — nationally the rate is 35 percent. In addition, obesity is increasingly concentrated in the city’s poorest neighborhoods, where healthy food is hard to find and opportunities for physical activity are more limited.

BMI, or body mass index — although an imperfect indicator because it doesn’t look at muscle or the lack of it — is the way in which obesity rates are currently measured. According to the National Institutes of Health, BMI is “a measure of body fat based on height and weight that applies to adult men and women,” while in children BMI is measured by comparing children to others of their age and gender.

Although there are many theories about how and why the obesity epidemic has occurred, it remains open to intense debate. Most experts agree that multiple factors contributed to the increase and hence there is no single remedy. The numerous ones purported to work range from the most invasive of bariatric surgeries — a trend which concerns many public health officials — to generally slow, steady commercial weight-loss programs, like Weight Watchers and others that are free such as the Healthy Weight groups at CUNY.

Freudenberg was asked why there are no

**TRANSFORMING LABELS**

**MAGINE BEING** in a country where you don’t know the language, and worse, can’t even decipher any of the letters to attempt to make an educated guess. Imagine being there now, when processed food is a worldwide phenomenon. Imagine trying to figure out just what a food label says so you know what you are eating.

Westerners who have traveled in or moved to Asia often speak about being stymied this way. And, of course, it happens to people from other parts of the world every day in New York City. Newcomers from China and Taiwan and elderly individuals from those countries who, like thousands of other immigrants before them, prefer their own language, are frustrated by what they cannot know.

With this in mind, the University Settlement at the Houston Street Center in Manhattan teamed up with Hunter associate professor of public health Ming-Chin Yeh to present a lesson on American food labels for Mandarin speakers, most of them elderly, at a Senior Health Fare in June. It was organized by Ada Wong, director of the Chinese Community Partnership for Health at New York Downtown Hospital, and in the audience were white-haired Chinese grandmothers in silk, as well as some local senior citizens of other ethnic groups who wanted to learn more. Reading today’s intricate food labels can be confusing to anyone, even if you know the language they’re printed in.

The associate professor, who was born in Taiwan, arrived brandishing a bag of White Fudge Chewy Chips Ahoy — and a large poster and handouts with the cookies’ food label reproduced. Information from the label had been translated from English into Mandarin. It was, in effect, a translation guide showing what words commonly found on food labels such as “cholesterol,” “carbohydrates,” and “saturated fat” would look like in Mandarin.

The presentation and responses from the audience were in both Mandarin and English.

“What is the difference between saturated and mono-unsaturated fat,” a woman asked in English. “Mono is a good fat, saturated is a bad fat. It’s simple as long as you remember that,” Yeh explained in English. And then he switched to Mandarin, explaining the difference between the fats. He also discussed the recommended daily percentages of fats, sodium and other ingredients and how easily you can exceed them. “If I have six cookies and then I have breakfast and lunch I am going to go over those percentages.”

What about the soy or oyster sauce served by restaurants in hard-to-quantify bowls — and without labels — another woman asked. And what do you do, she added, about those roasted ducks hanging in windows? How do you know how many calories they have, how much sodium?

Questions about calories or salt plague many of us, no matter what restaurant we are in. But the effusive professor did not hesitate.

“Moderation,” he advised. “Moderation.”

Which in any language is perhaps the only answer.
solutions that really work. Why isn’t there a pill to fight fat?

Obesity, he explains, has so far defied solution because it occurs as the result of “an immensely complicated process involving a wide range of body systems, including metabolic, immune and psycho-cognitive.”

The veteran public health professor adds that we live in an “obesogenic environment,” overflowing with advertising directed at young people who have too much readily available fast food and not enough opportunity for physical activity. As an example, he cites Hardee’s which, when it determined its sales were the lowest among fast-food chains, created a new bacon cheeseburger targeted to tempt young men. Freudenberg says that advertisements for Mountain Dew have been directed at young men, as well — African Americans in particular.

Soda, generally, is believed to be a major cause of obesity. Its consumption has increased sharply in recent decades and its effect is not only due to the extra calories in the sweetened drinks. Carbonation, according to some experts — even in diet soda — fools the body into believing it is hungry when it isn’t. According to the Mayo Clinic Women’s HealthSource, artificial sweeteners in diet drinks may actually increase sugar cravings. In August the publication, which examined various studies on the health effects of soda, linked it not only to obesity and diabetes but other health problems including osteoporosis and increased risk of kidney disease.

Because of all of these influences, the solution to curing obesity may be as difficult to find as a neighborhood without a fast-food palace or a chain restaurant. In these establishments, according to a book recommended by Freudenberg, The End of Overeating, by David A. Kessler, industry scientists have insidiously concocted products that layer and blend salt, sugar and fat, making them, in effect, addictive. Kessler, also known for battling the tobacco industry, served as commissioner of the United States Food and Drug Administration under two presidents and has been the dean of Yale and the University of California at San Francisco medical schools.

Important research is focusing on what people already know about their food — and how to help them make meaningful changes in their diets. These are questions now being pursued by students in CUNY’s new doctoral program in public health, directed by Freudenberg.

In this morass, one thing is clear. People can lose weight but far too many cannot maintain that loss. Baruch psychology professor Pinto, a researcher in this area, says that when weight loss is charted “it looks like a big check mark,” with a decline at first and then an increase over time. Motivated people lose weight quickly and then, more often than not, regain it. Gibson, the Baruch public-affairs professor says that people have a “mean biology,” referring to research conducted at Columbia University that shows individuals can gain weight far more easily than they can lose it.

“It’s a major health concern. It affects so many people and it is also something people have trouble maintaining success in,” says Pinto. “If people follow any program they are able to lose weight but adherence is a key piece of the puzzle.” She adds, as many in the field suggest, that in the past the human body was programmed to gain weight when there was plenty to ensure survival in times of famine and other crises — and perhaps that is still the way our system operates.

**Combating Obesity and Diabetes at CUNY**

With this epidemic raging in the United States and other developed and developing nations, it’s no surprise that CUNY is also working on the problem throughout the
University. A CUNY survey of 1,579 students from Hunter, Hostos and Medgar Evers found that 14 percent are obese and 23 percent overweight; 5 percent said they have diabetes and more than 20 percent live with someone who has it; and 16 percent care for someone with the disease. Feinstein says that the rates of excessive weight, obesity and diabetes at CUNY are similar to those found for all young adults in New York City. He adds this suggests that CUNY students are similar to their peers who do not attend college.

Although Poppendieck’s research examines school-age children, not college students, her philosophy is much like that embraced by CUNY. It emphasizes that individuals who are overweight and obese should be supported and helped rather than blamed. Neither Feinstein nor Poppendieck negate personal responsibility — eating well, exercising, losing weight, testing and monitoring diabetes and blood pressure, and controlling sodium intake. But they do blame the food and advertising industries for turning people away from eating the way they used to when string beans were plucked from gardens for the next meal, people went berry picking, the sweetness in treats didn’t come from high fructose corn syrup and animals were not pumped up with hormones and antibiotics.

Like many scholars and activists, they emphasize that obesity disproportionately affects economically underprivileged individuals, including many CUNY students. They firmly believe that help should come, as Feinstein puts it “from the top down as well as the bottom up.”

At CUNY, in part, that means the cafeterias should sell healthier food at a lower cost and display it more prominently. That the University’s cafeterias, many of which are run by different contractors, have already begun to take action, was prompted in part by a report entitled “What’s for Lunch at CUNY.” It was published by the University’s Campaign Against Diabetes, a five-year effort, and the campaign leaders are now planning a broader initiative that builds on lessons they learned.

For the University, Feinstein envisions “an integrated coordinated response where we can ensure that every student who wants to lose weight has an opportunity to get help, that the University is a leader in providing healthy food on our campuses and that we are doing everything we can to make sure our graduates have professional skills to help their patients, clients, students and family members to prevent or better manage diabetes and obesity.” He adds that this is particularly important since weight issues have often been overlooked by colleges, as if this problem was one that should have been solved by elementary and secondary schools or families.

Although the University’s anti-obesity initiative is relatively new, Feinstein now works closely with faculty, students and staff in public health, nutrition, administration, food services, student health services, political science, sociology and culinary arts — and more researchers who are doing related work have mentioned an interest in his work. There is also the realization that to solve the problem it will, to borrow an expression from an earlier First Lady, “take a village.” Along with the efforts at Queens and on other campuses to change the content of vending machines, there are those reminders near elevators that walking the stairs burns more calories. A Hostos Community College student laminated cards detailing how many more calories people of different weights burn for each 15 minutes of stair climbing.

Mercado has perhaps set the bar for walking groups since she marches her Bronx students into Manhattan at lunchtime. In the community, professor Paul Fardy of Queens College, director of the Physical Activity and Teenage Health (PATH) program, has been running physical education programs in New York City schools for years; programs he has been asked to replicate in France and Spain.

And at a multifaceted workshop in June organized by Lorraine Mongiello, a doctoral student in public health, students learned to test their own blood sugar. The importance of that was underscored earlier when nearly all the students in a workshop said they knew someone who had diabetes.

There is an atmosphere at the University that each student’s struggle with weight issues is important. Mercado peers on a student who has lost a lot of weight and together they speak about the miniskirt she will wear when she reaches her goal. Fruits are

**CHEFS WEIGH IN**

Jonathan Deutsch is a chef, although sometimes he doesn’t sound like one. For example, he isn’t totally adverse to fast food — and can even advise how to put together a healthy meal at McDonald’s.

Deutsch, director of Culinary Arts at Kingsborough Community College and an associate professor, did just that in a talk delivered to nutrition students who attended a Healthy CUNY workshop in June.

A modest hamburger, he says, has a salad, skim milk or water and apple dippers, albeit without the low-fat caramel sauce, would be a good choice.

Then, Deutsch compared this meal — healthwise — to a meal at one of his favorite high-end restaurants, Per Se, in Manhattan. The foie gras appetizer, he says, has as many calories and fat as a Big Mac. A full meal at the restaurant, “two and a quarter Big Macs,” says Deutsch.

Not that the chef/professor exonerates fast food for its lapses. He speaks of a common complaint among those advocating for healthy food: “Super-sizing” meals accounts for both major increases in obesity and profits for the fast-food business. By paying just a little bit more for these oversized meals, he says, consumers believe they are getting a bargain. But the cost of making more fast food is cheap.

Each year, he makes sure to talk to his students about the pros and cons of the food industry in general. “I paint a more complicated picture of school food and fast food. The industry does some very deplorable things with food, but it can also provide healthy food for a lot of people.”

An innovation the chef particularly likes: those baggies filled with cubes of butternut squash that can be steamed and added to salads and other meals.

Deutsch also knows that his students will cook in many venues. “My argument has long been that the best way to improve the food system is to train the gatekeepers — cooks who cook in hospitals, nursing homes and neighborhood restaurants.”

Those gatekeepers have taken what they have learned in the Culinary Arts program to various venues around the city including a hospital, a program that teaches cooking techniques to Spanish-speaking cancer survivors, a day-care center and a nursing home.

Ricardo Silvera Jr., a Culinary Arts major who expects to graduate in January, runs the food-service department at Silverlake Specialized Care Center, a nursing home in Staten Island. Most of the residents, he says, have kidney disease, diabetes or heart conditions. Although food restrictions vary, Silvera says, “basically everyone needs a low-sodium diet.” With everything cooked from scratch at the center, Sil- vera’s chicken broth is made with “certain spices that will give it taste, but there is no salt.”

Dylana Degannes, a chef assistant for four classes in the Culinary Arts Program and the mother of two small children, is also a part-time Food Service Supervisor at New York Downtown Hospital. She often has an opportunity to discuss the menu and mention important issues such as the freshness of fruit and vegetables.

“I try to make sure that if someone has just had a baby I give them more fruits or something healthy. Maybe it’s because I’m a mother,” she says. “One young guy who was working there put a piece of pound cake and a soda on a tray for a woman who just had a baby. I said, ‘Let’s put on grapes or an apple and a bottle of water. Let’s start right.’”

**WINTER 2011**
handed out free at events, pedometers and instructions on how to use them are given as prizes. Professors speak openly about their own battles with weight.

In regard to obesity, Freudenberg sees CUNY not only as a microcosm of the city and many areas of the country but in an international context as well. “What we can learn at CUNY is relevant to a lot of places,” he says. With this in mind, the professor spearheaded a collaborative project on the similarities regarding childhood obesity in New York and London. He also met with researchers and municipal officials in Cape Town, South Africa, and Lisbon, Portugal, cities which, like New York, are seeing an increase in the rates of weight gain in children. In Lisbon, his efforts helped inspire city officials to plan an interagency task force on childhood obesity. In October, researchers from these four cities were scheduled to present their findings at a meeting of the International Society of Urban Health at the New York Academy of Medicine.

CUNY’s Student Advocates

Could someone who has lost more than 80 pounds but still has far to go be an effective advocate in the battle against obesity? At a meeting of the Healthy Weight Group at Hostos Community College, that happened. A student trying to lose weight herself was able to get others to think about eating better and moving more.

From the window of the meeting room, the view was of a neighborhood where Subway is the only inexpensive quasi-healthy food choice. More prominent were the Golden Arches. For Lissette Machuca, the restaurants outside didn’t matter. She spoke about cooking and said, “I am starting to eat more vegetables. More vegetables and salmon.”

Machuca, a nursing student from Manhattan and the mother of an adolescent son, had lost 26 pounds in the months before that meeting and 80 pounds since September of 2009. Still, she knew she had a long way to go.

DO YOU WANT FRUIT with THAT?

AGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE dietetic technician students Miriam Benavides and Mei Yan Huang carefully poured two cups of peach tomato salsa for Iliana Quander and her 5-year-old daughter, Egypt Amparo Quander-Crenshaw, and explained to them why buying in-season fruits and vegetables is healthier.

“I think it’s great that they have this going on,” said Quander who actually came to the market to visit a friend but was drawn in by the salsa. “We’re usually healthy food oriented but recently we have not been eating well and this reminded us that we really need to get back on track.”

Benavides and Huang are two of 14 LaGuardia students who were working with Cornell University Cooperative’s Extension’s Farmers Market Nutrition Education Program throughout the summer to advocate a better way to eat. “Since there are a lot of people suffering from obesity, we’re trying to make people aware that there is another way they can improve their meals by eating more vegetables,” says Benavides. “If they eat healthier, they’ll lose weight and feel better about themselves, and besides, it’s delicious.”

The students set up a table blanketed with recipe cards from Community-Markets.biz and featuring a pot filled with recipes from the farmers’ markets in Jamaica on Fridays, Elmhurst on Tuesdays and in Astoria on Wednesdays. The markets provide locally grown organic food to many low-income residents, and the students demonstrate how to use those foods to make a healthy meal.

“The students are here for their fieldwork experience and, we hope, to push healthier food and educate the people on how to buy food,” says Bette Cohen, director of the food and nutrition programs at LaGuardia. “This experience also helps reinforce everything they’ve learned in class, as well as improving their communication skills.”

Huang, who has used what she has learned to help her mother battle high cholesterol, also has gained enough confidence through this program to comfortably talk with the shoppers at the market.

“I never spoke in class before, but this experience has helped me be confident enough to talk to different people; it really encourages me to engage with people,” says Huang, who is set to graduate in the Spring 2011 semester. “I now can help people by talking with them.”

The success of the program is difficult to quantify because it doesn’t survey or keep track of its participants, but many do return every week to learn a new recipe.

“I sure will make this salsa at home and I’ll be back to learn other recipes,” said Carol Hunt, an elderly frequenter of the Jamaica Farmers’ Market. “It’s quite delicious.”

Everyone loved the peach tomato salsa, with not a cup left unfinished. And the children couldn’t get enough. “Can I have more,” asked the 5-year-old Egypt as she was handed another cup. “It’s my third,” she said with a big smile.

— Beethoven Bong

LaGuardia student Miriam Benavides, left, and administrator Bette Cohen introduce Egypt Amparo Quander-Crenshaw to peach tomato salsa at Jamaica Farmers’ Market.
Distinguished Professor Nicholas Freudenberg, not a fan of fast food, is a leader in the effort to improve Americans’ health.

She decided to lose weight while taking a nutrition class with Mercado. And, when other students in her Hostos group asked her how she was able to do so well at cutting her weight, she talked about lifestyle changes, involving both diet and exercise. “I go to the gym 40 minutes a day,” she said, noting that she uses the gym at the college and it’s free.

Soon after this meeting, Lorraine Mongiello, the graduate student who ran the Healthy CUNY workshop, was able to report to Machuca that her blood sugar, elevated before, is now normal.

Despite talk of exotic diets and confusion as to what causes obesity and what can cure it, there is also a wave of common sense that pervades the University and an insistence that the time-honored ways of losing weight — move more, eat better and less — are still the best weapons in the battle.

At the Healthy CUNY Workshop held over two weeks in June at the Graduate Center, students shared ideas.

Steven McCartney, a student in York College’s teacher physical education program spoke about walks he organizes for scores of people in the Rockaway community.

Melissa Anganu, a dietetics student who attends Queens College, spoke about her campaign to improve the quality of food in the school’s vending machines. Other students at Queens say they would like the school to make microwaves available so they can warm up meals brought from home.

Another suggested a food bank for students who can’t afford healthy meals. Wafa Hawamdeh, a mother of five who is getting her master’s degree in public health at Brooklyn College, then suggested an effort aimed at all students. “Why don’t we have a day when people like me can cook at home and bring it in,” she offered.

In Janet Poppendieck’s quest to improve school meals, she has seen all too much of what she calls “carnival food” served to students across America, often as those “a la carte” offerings. They range from the popular dish of pizza with french fries piled on top to those calorie-laden Cinnabons.

“The menus that have become commonplace are symptomatic of a food system gone mad,” Poppendieck says. “a system in which snacks and fast food clones have replaced wholesome meals.” Compounding this problem, vending machines with popular but unhealthy food have often been the only way some schools have raised funds for other purposes.

A philosophy of good school food can work, Poppendieck says. Indeed, she has already seen it in action in public and private settings from Alice Waters’s Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley to teachers eating with their students at the United Talmudic Academy in Brooklyn. She speaks of dozens of gardens at public schools in New York City, some linked directly to cafeterias. In Sweden, where all school food is free, the cafeterias described by Poppendieck are natural gathering places for students and their teachers to socialize.

“CUNY can help,” Poppendieck says, “not only through the research carried on by its faculty, but also by modeling in our own campus food-service operations the sorts of choices we want to see more widely available.” At a meeting of “Food Fight,” an organization that is trying to fix New York City school menus, Poppendieck heard about the efforts of a teacher in the Bronx, who grows vegetables on the walls of his special education classroom. She also met CUNY graduates who now teach and came to pick her brain for ideas.

The curriculum she envisions would include “taste tests.” She speaks fondly about kindergartners in a New Orleans teaching garden tasting a food for each letter of the alphabet, food that was not necessarily familiar to them. “D,” for example was a Daikon radish. And it was a hit.

In speaking about changing school food in general, Poppendieck says, “There is an enormous level of interest. Far fewer people have said, ‘we can’t afford this,’ than I had anticipated … and the movement to reform school food is only a part of a broader movement for good food: healthy, sustainable, affordable and just.”
Oysters aren't just a succulent treat. They can clean up polluted water. Baruch College natural sciences professor Chester Zarnoch and Timothy Hoellein are putting oysters' abilities to the test in Jamaica Bay, the largest urban wildlife preserve in the U.S., where grasses are slowly disappearing due to nitrogen buildup.

"One of the things that oysters can do is filter out the plankton from the water and then deposit the nitrogen that's locked up in the plankton directly to the sediments," says Hoellein. "That's where the microbes can process it and turn it into an inactive form of nitrogen."
A single oyster can filter about 50 gallons of water a day, but Zarnoch and Hoellein, who received a two-year grant for their research from the National Science Foundation, say it’s too early to determine what impact the bivalves will have on the polluted estuary. “There aren’t a lot of concrete examples of the influence of oysters in nitrogen cycling that aren’t in aquariums, or in modeling exercises, so we just don’t know how it will work in real life, but it’s worth exploring,” says Hoellein. Narendra Paramanand, a recent Baruch graduate with a degree in economics spent this past summer helping out with the research. “I joined Professor Zarnoch to learn more about the science,” says Paramanand, who started his master’s program in environmental science at Louisiana State University this fall. “The degree in economics is going to impact the way I look at environmental science.”

To see Zarnoch and Hoellein in action, go to the CUNY channel at http://www.youtube.com/user/cunymedia.
THEY FLASH ACROSS THE SKY, shooting stars that have fired the imagination ever since there were people. Meteorites, rocks that fall from the heavens — messengers of the gods, portents of good fortune or cataclysms to come, depending on the culture. But in reality, they’re so much more — the very stuff the solar system is made of.

“You can’t have life until you have a planet, so to hold a meteorite — something that was around before there was a planet — is totally awesome,” says Harold C. Connolly Jr., one of two petrologists, or geologists who specialize in rocks, at Kingsborough Community College’s Department of Physical Sciences.

Colleague Michael K. Weisberg says cradling the most primitive type of meteorite, a chondrite, “is like holding the sun, minus the gasses, and they also have organics, which are the building blocks of life.”

Each meteorite tells an extraterrestrial story, and many emerged in July at the 73rd annual meeting of the Meteoritical Society in Manhattan, which Connolly and Weisberg organized under the auspices of the City University of New York and the American Museum of Natural History. The meeting drew some 500 scientists from around the world.

Presentations delved into Martian meteorites, planet formation, the origin of organic molecules on meteoroids, the structure of craters and the relation between asteroids and meteors, among other topics.

Sean Solomon of the Carnegie Institution of Washington delivered the keynote lecture. As principal investigator of Messenger, NASA’s current mission to Mercury, he described how the first craft to visit the innermost planet since the 1970s whipped by Mercury three times since its launch in August 2004; it goes into orbit in March 2011. Messenger has already detected ion emissions from Mercury’s atmosphere, expanded knowledge about the planet’s magnetic field and

Continued on page 24
The 73rd annual meeting of the Meteoritical Society, held July 26-30 in New York City, included these findings:

- Audrey Bouvier and Meenakshi Nadhwa of Arizona State University in Tempe and colleagues homed in on the solar system’s age by examining calcium-aluminum-rich inclusions in the chondrite Vigarano. Their estimate: 4,568.7 million years, plus or minus 3 million years.
- When asteroid 2008 TC3 exploded over Sudan’s Nubian Desert in a blast that would have devastated a city, it spewed 1-to-10 cm fragments known collectively as the Almahata Sitta meteorite over a 5-by-26 km area. This is one of four known ureilite meteorites, which contain submicrometer-sized diamonds. Fourteen presentations considered TC3’s formation, its age and its carbon, metals and diamonds, as well as nitrogen and noble (non-reactive) gases trapped in the fragments.
- Weisberg and Denton S. Ebel of the American Museum of Natural History described the 7.31 kg NWA 5717 chondrite found in 2006. Its mineral textures and compositions show little thermal alteration, so it retains much of its original structure, including chondrules rimmed with dust-sized mineral grains. The rims formed when the chondrules floated freely in the early solar nebula.
- Connolly was on a team led by Chi Ma of the California Institute of Technology that discovered two new minerals not found on Earth, chlorine-bearing mayenite and a calcium-mono-aluminate, in a chondrite called NWA 1934.
- The University of Chicago’s Fred Ciesla offered a new technique for calculating the transport and chemical evolution of water ice in pre-planetary disks like the solar nebula. Water is needed for a planet to be habitable.
- CUNY doctoral student John Wolbeck, working with Connolly, offered an original “icy impactor model” (Illustration left and story page 25) to explain both the moon’s origin and the source of Earth’s water. Given similar rocks on the Earth and the moon, the most common hypothesis is that the moon sheared off when a Mars-sized ‘planetesimal’ hit the young Earth. If it was mostly ice, they reason, it would have delivered enough water to fill the oceans and humidify the atmosphere.

Given similar rocks on the Earth and the moon, the most common hypothesis is that the moon sheared off when a Mars-sized ‘planetesimal’ hit the young Earth.”
Michaël Weisberg, left, and Harold Connolly Jr., with a piece of a meteorite that fell in Allende, Mexico, in 1969. A chondrite with calcium-rich, aluminum-rich inclusions, it provided clear evidence of the age of the solar system.

proved that, at least in the past, Mercury had volcanic activity.

Connolly and Weisberg, colleagues for 30 years, work not only with meteorites found on Earth, but also with materials plucked from the cosmos.

Weisberg was on the international team that analyzed dust from NASA’s Stardust Mission; launched in 1999, Stardust returned with samples of the comet Wild 2 in 2006. “We’ve had particles to study in our laboratories for four years. It turns out that a lot of the particles in the comet are similar to what we find in chondrites, including the chondrules and calcium-aluminum-rich inclusions,” Weisberg says.

In other words, the dust and rock formed near our sun, traveled to the deep freeze beyond Neptune, and then mated with ice to become comets. This was a stunning finding, since scientists had thought that the dust and rocks of comets came from other stars and predated our own solar system. (Stardust did retrieve some mineral grains from other stars, which were identified by their unusual isotopes.)

Also, looking beyond Earth, Connolly joined a science team that is competing with two other groups for a $650 million prize — a NASA mission. If selected, their OSIRIS-REx probe would visit asteroid 1999 RQ36, which NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center calls “a chunk of rock and dust about 1,900 feet in diameter.” It would orbit RQ36 for a year, test ways of deflecting it from a possible impact with Earth in 2170, then extend a robotic arm and scoop up a pristine sample of its surface to return to Earth in 2022.

For extraterrestrial petrologists like Connolly and Weisberg, that’s the real prize.
THE FIRST MYSTERY is where our moon came from. The second is how Earth got its water. Those mysteries may well share a single solution, according to CUNY doctoral candidate John Wolbeck. Working with associate professor Harold C. Connolly Jr., of Kingsborough Community College and the Graduate Center, Wolbeck advanced his hypothesis at this summer’s Meteoritical Society meeting. But first, some background: When Earth was a mere 45 or 50 million years old, more than 4.5 billion years ago, it collided with a Mars-sized object about half the size of today’s Earth and twice the size of the moon. This generally accepted scenario was proposed in 1975 by William K. Hartmann and Donald R. Davis of the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson. Their Giant Impact Theory says the collision ejected massive amounts of rock into space. This debris eventually clumped together to form the moon. This explains why the rocks that Apollo astronauts brought back from the moon some 40 years ago so closely match those on Earth.

But a conundrum troubled Wolbeck, who is a licensed professional engineer and an associate professor and interim chair of the Department of Science, Engineering and Architecture at SUNY’s Orange County Community College. “An object the size of Mars would have had its own unique signature, so lunar rocks should not be identical to Earth’s,” he says. So here’s his hypothesis: If what hit Earth was half ice, then heat from the collision would have vaporized the water into superhot steam. The solar wind would have blown away most of the vapor, removing the impactor’s unique signature. The collision also would have liquefied the rock and iron at the impactor’s core, with the rock becoming part of Earth’s geology and the heavier iron sinking to become part of Earth’s iron core. “This hypothesis allows the impact theory to work and explains why the moon is so similar,” Wolbeck says. It also explains the source of Earth’s water. Before, scientists thought that comets — which are dirty ice balls — had rained water on our planet. But, Wolbeck points out, all of the comets that space probes have sampled so far have ice made of heavy water, which contains a one-proton, one-neutron isotope of hydrogen called deuterium. Most of Earth’s water has ordinary hydrogen, with just a proton. So, since comets like Halley, Hale-Bopp and Hyakutake had deuterium at twice Earth’s level, it appears unlikely that our water came from comets.

Wolbeck estimates that his icy impactor carried 300 times the amount of water now in our oceans. The water actually quenched the impact, he theorizes, keeping the rock-melting temperatures lower than they otherwise would have been. Most of the water vanished into space, but because of the lower temperatures, enough was left to form our oceans, lakes, rivers and atmosphere, even after 4.5 billion years of solar burnoff.

Are there small planets that are half ice? Look no further than Jupiter’s two largest moons, Callisto and Ganymede. “So these objects exist. In fact, they are common,” Wolbeck says.

Since he is still finishing his coursework and has not yet begun to write a dissertation that would back his hypothesis with hard calculations, Wolbeck has a long way to go. But scientists at the Meteoritical Society meeting took notice. “When scientists hear the idea, they’re skeptical at first,” Wolbeck says. “But as they walk away, they say, ‘It might not be right, but I hope it’s right, because it’s so cool.’”
Innovative Model Community College On the Launchpad

By Neil S. Rosenfeld

THE UNIVERSITY’S fresh take on community college education is moving steadily toward the opening of a new campus in the fall of 2012, as leaders from President Obama on down call for two-year colleges to raise graduation rates and train students more effectively to keep America competitive in the global marketplace.

A founding president, six core faculty members and a registrar are refining plans nurtured in a from-scratch rethinking of community college education. The University also has leased space for the new school across from Manhattan’s Bryant Park and named a vice chancellor charged with enhancing associate-degree education citywide.

Work on the University’s seventh community college began in fall 2007, when Chancellor Matthew Goldstein conceived of a school with a different structure and approach. “The new community college employs an innovative model for improving student performance and graduation rates,” he said. “Over the next year, the new college’s team will flesh out the concept developed during more than two years of intensive work by faculty and staff from 15 of CUNY’s undergraduate and graduate institutions and the central administration. Excitement is building.”

Underlining the importance of the two-year degree, the Board of Trustees approved the appointment of Queensborough Community College President Eduardo Martí as the first vice chancellor for community colleges. “Community colleges have taken a front row seat in the national agenda and the CUNY community colleges are well poised to take on a leadership role among this important sector of higher education,” he said.

Although CUNY has broken enrollment records as more students sought an education in a sour economy, the goal in creating a new community college was never to provide more space; indeed, it will remain an educational laboratory, starting with 500 students and maxing out at 3,000.

Rather, said John Mogulescu, senior University dean for academic affairs and dean of the School of Professional Studies, the chancellor asked him to determine “whether a new model, nothing like anything presently at CUNY, would deliver better results.” He led the broad-based effort to craft a new approach with Tracy Meade, who directs the New Community College Initiative.

The evolving plan captured the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Josiah Macy, Jr., Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, as well as Mayor Michael Bloomberg, whose Gateway to the Middle Class plan specifically endorsed the idea.

The University selected Scott E. Evenbeck as founding president after a national search. Evenbeck, who officially takes office in January but already has logged hours of work, is a psychology professor and founding dean of University College at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. Since 1997, University College has served all beginning students in 18 undergraduate schools in that urban public university system, from orientation through entry into a degree program.

CUNY’s new community college will open in this building at 50 W. 40th St.

“All too often campuses ascribe success to attributes that students bring to the classroom,” Evenbeck said after a weeklong meeting with the CUNY planners and the new core faculty in late August. “What’s exciting is we’re committed to providing a context so that students will be more successful. The planning team looked around CUNY and around the nation to find the structures, the ways of delivering the curriculum, that will make it more likely that students will succeed.”

What does the new approach include? Since many community college students need remedial help, they will get it while immediately beginning academic work. It will start during a required summer bridge program for incoming students, which also is designed to encourage students to form supportive social networks. A common first-year curriculum provides twice the normal time for math, along with a signature City Seminar focusing on the complex physical, social, environmental and political realities of New York.

A limited curriculum — perhaps 10 or 12 majors — will prepare students for real jobs if they do not continue on to a bachelor’s degree. Internships and mentoring will be tied to the majors and to jobs and pathways that can lead to bachelor’s and advanced degrees. Students will have to enroll full time for at least the first year, which 80 percent of CUNY freshmen already do, although many later switch to part-time status.

The six core faculty members this fall started with appointments and teaching responsibilities at other CUNY community colleges. They are: assistant professors Caitlin Cahill in urban studies (temporarily based at Kingsborough), Karla Smith Fuller in biology (Borough of Manhattan) and Emily Schnee in English (Kingsborough), as well as associate professors Steven Cosares in information technology (LaGuardia), William Rosenthal in mathematics (LaGuardia) and Naveen Seth in business (Borough of Manhattan).

A limited curriculum . . . will prepare students for real jobs if they do not continue on to a bachelor’s degree.
WITH HIS WORKS PERFORMED by prominent musicians and orchestras throughout the world, John Corigliano is one of America’s most acclaimed composers. He has written three symphonies, an opera, movie scores and refashioned Bob Dylan’s “Mr. Tambourine Man” into a score with his own newly composed music for orchestra and soprano. He has won three Grammy Awards, a Pulitzer Prize, the Grawemeyer Award and an Academy Award. Corigliano is also a Distinguished Professor of Music at Lehman College, where he has taught for 36 years.

At his Upper West Side apartment recently, he talked about the process of composing, why he loves teaching at Lehman, and why he never paid attention to Bob Dylan in the 1960s.

You grew up in Brooklyn in a classical music family. You could have settled for a quiet life as an orchestra musician but you were drawn to composing. Why is that?

My father was the concertmaster at the New York Philharmonic and I would see him rehearse them and get nervous before the concert and then the next day get the seven New York newspapers and see what they said about them … so the idea of being a performer … I could not imagine standing on a stage and playing an instrument. But I loved music and got fascinated with composing.

You got started composing as a teenager, listening to long-playing records in your bedroom?

LP records opened me up to contemporary music because the Philharmonic didn’t play a lot of it. I was fascinated by how Copland got those wonderful harmonies by simple chords and spacing them differently. And I’d go to the piano and try to figure out how he got it so fresh even though it was just C major. And then I’d go to the library, get the score and see how he did it. That’s how it started.

You do so many different types of composing . . . symphonies, movie scores . . .

I never like to do the same thing twice. I have three symphonies and the first is for full orchestra, the second for strings alone and the third for concert band. I try to discover in the writing of a piece, something new.

How hard is the process?

Composing is the most awful thing to do and the greatest thing to have done. But every time I start a new piece, I go through the fires of hell because I have no ideas. I don’t write a melody. I have to picture the entire piece … see its shape so that I can find out what kind of music it needs. Then you have to get the pitches and rhythms … It’s very hard.

You rescored Bob Dylan’s “Mr. Tambourine Man,” but you never heard him in the 1960s. How could that be?

I am sure I was in a coffee shop and may have heard his music but my ear didn’t go to it because the music is based on three chords … maybe four … and my ear didn’t find that inviting. It’s not an insult to him. That’s the tradition of folk music. Very simple for everyone. Now the Beatles’ works were so unusual musically that I immediately gravitated toward that, so I can say I knew the Beatles but didn’t really know Bob Dylan.

Is it true you got your job at Lehman because your mother met someone in a beauty parlor?

She was sitting next to a woman whose son was Ed Kravitt, who was chairman of the music department at Lehman. And my mother was convinced that if I became a composer, I was going to become poverty stricken and never earn a cent. While Mrs. Kravitt’s hair was drying, my mother made a persuasive argument about why her son should hire me.

You’ve been at Lehman since 1974. Why do you still teach?

I love the students and I love teaching there. Some of the students have composed but some never have. And to see what you can pull out of them — a student who has never written music before — to actually compose music and hear it back and watch the expression on his or her face. … It is worth a lot.

What advice do you give young composers?

I tell them two things: How will you earn a living and compose? Are you willing to take little jobs, side jobs and earn pennies and live rather poorly for a good part of your life until you get enough fame that you don’t have to? And two, don’t get married at 20-something years old. Wait. I’ve seen young composers get married and have a kid and be so overwhelmed by the financial and home duties that they can’t possibly write music anymore and that’s a real shame.
As former President of the University of the District of Columbia, the only public university in Washington, D.C., William L. Pollard has long been sensitive to the needs of urban students who often have to fit classes in around jobs and family commitments. In Washington, he developed a counseling center where students could get both academic and mental health help. His supporters say the center has enabled many more students to succeed and increased the college’s retention rate.

Pollard became president of Medgar Evers in August of 2009. He was dean of Syracuse University’s School of Social Work and founder of the university’s College of Human Services Professions. He was president of the University of the District of Columbia from 2002 to 2007 and later served as vice president for the Office of Access and the Advancement of Public Black Colleges and Universities for the National Association for State Universities and Land Grant Colleges.

Pollard was raised in Raleigh, N.C., and earned his bachelor’s degree from Shaw University. He received his master’s degree from the University of North Carolina School of Social Work and his doctorate in policy and planning from the University of Chicago School of Social Administration.

What changes have you implemented at the college?
The major changes have been in the area of personnel. The new team includes a new provost, chief operating officer, assistant vice president for facilities, assistant vice president for finance, chief information officer, and vice president of external relations.

You’ve said that you want to transform this college into the most student-centered campus within CUNY. Can you explain what that means?
More than half of our students come to class on the weekend and in the evenings, yet office hours are normally 9 to 5, so we weren’t catering to student needs. We have extended some hours in admissions, registrar and student-affairs offices so that major operations are accessible to students. I’ve extended operational hours [in my office] on Tuesdays and Fridays until 7 p.m. during the academic year. Students don’t need an appointment; they just show up.

Enrollment at CUNY is up but there are still concerns about retention. How are you going to boost retention and graduation rates here?
We have a significant population of part-time students so there’s a culture of starting and stopping. And the stopping appears not to be related just to academic difficulty. It’s income or family-related issues. These students require more nurturing and hand-holding from faculty to work through some of the challenges.

In your first address to students you offered them a dozen eggs — a few words of wisdom. Which of those “eggs” is the most important one?
The egg for responsibility: reading, not sitting in the back of the class, going beyond what their teachers ask them to do, making sure the teacher knows who you are, getting to class on time. These are simple things, but they make a difference in student success.

Addressing 2010 graduates you urged them to leave their mark on the world. What would you like to see them do?
I’m talking about giving back, supporting one’s community, taking a leadership role. We’re all going to find ways to support ourselves but ultimately the things that make a difference in our lives are the values we instill in others.

In its 40-year history Medgar Evers has experienced tremendous growth. Where do you see this institution in the next few decades?
I expect Medgar to be one of the premier CUNY colleges offering several master’s degrees in education, science education, mathematics, and additional bachelor’s and master of arts degrees.
in music and drama. We have to look at what the community of central Brooklyn needs. I’d like Medgar to play a greater role in the delivery of human services and to that end we’re developing an accredited program in social work. I’d like to see us develop a master’s program in social work with a special focus on the services to children and youth.

What are some of the challenges that the college faces?
Medgar has to build better relationships with elementary and secondary schools in the community. We will always have resource challenges as long as we have an economy that is as sick as ours is right now. In the next 20 to 30 years, Medgar will have to find a way to support itself other than through the tax dollars. Hopefully we will grow alums who are wealthier, who will understand the need to give back to Medgar.

What do you do in your free time?
When I have spare time, I’m on a golf course. I love golf. … And I read.

What’s the one thing Medgar students would be surprised to learn about you?
Until about 15 years ago I regularly played the flute. I learned to play flute when I was 27. When I got to Syracuse there was not as much time, my two sons took up a lot of time. I pick it up every once in a while.
Yuri Gorokhovich, an expert in mapping natural disasters using Geographic Information Systems, knows he can’t single-handedly stop the deadly landslides that occur in Uganda every year.

But what he does hope is that his research will raise awareness about the disasters and eventually help set up monitoring programs that would issue warnings on landslides for communities at risk.

“I think that every small thing that you do counts,” says Gorokhovich, assistant professor in the Department of Environmental, Geographic and Geological Sciences at Lehman College, who’s a native of Ukraine. “My work can stimulate interest, discussion and activity in that area.”

Gorokhovich spent two weeks in July investigating geologic factors and sociodemographic consequences of floods and landslides in the Uganda districts of Butaleja and Bududa that occurred in March. Landslides happen in this part of Africa every year because of heavy rain and poor agricultural practices, but the disaster that struck villages in Bududa was especially devastating.

“It killed 300 people, and it destroyed a clinic and a school in the village [Nametsi] which were the only sources of electricity and hot water,” says Gorokhovich, who conducted the surveys with Tahjib Zaman, a Lehman student majoring in geology, and Shannon Doocy of Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Fearing additional landslides, most of the people in Nametsi and close-by villages resettled to nearby Bulucheke Camp, set up by the United Nations near Bulucheke village. Originally a temporary settlement intended for 4,000 people, the camp now has more than 8,000. New landslides occurred in June and new cracks continue to develop in the ground above neighboring villages, according to Gorokhovich’s report, part of which was published on Relief Web, a project administered by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Gorokhovich estimates that at least 29 households are in imminent danger when the next landslide occurs.

He shared his findings with local government officials and offered a solution to the problem: establish a landslide-monitoring program using inexpensive vertical bars along the slope. But
setting up such systems in remote villages isn’t easy.

“Technically and logistically it’s a big challenge for the government and it’s not high on their list of priorities,” says Gorokhovich. “We’d like to start a program there but local people lack the knowledge to do the monitoring and companies who can do it want to charge a lot of money. It’s a sad part of my work.”

But there is some hope. Gorokhovich’s report has prompted the kind of interest he’s looking for — at other schools, as well. One student at the University of Western Ontario told Gorokhovich that he plans to do his thesis work on modeling slope stability in this area of Uganda because it would be the best way he could raise awareness of his university peers to the critical needs of the people.

Gorokhovich has mapped other natural disasters in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University and sponsored by a National Science Foundation grant. In January 2008, he was in Peru to map the distribution of people displaced by a magnitude 8.0 earthquake that struck the central coast of the country in August 2007.

Part of his work there involved testing the strength of construction materials in buildings that collapsed, and one hot day a Peruvian woman whose home was destroyed offered Gorokhovich a cup of a local corn drink, *chicha morada*.

“I wanted to give her some money for the drink,” says Gorokhovich, “but she refused it and said, ‘I’m so happy to see you working on this, I feel like we’re not alone.’ ” Just a few words like that, Gorokhovich says, makes his research worthwhile.

In 2008, Gorokhovich also created computer models of the geographic distribution of people affected by Cyclone Nargis, which hit the Irrawaddy Delta in Myanmar in May 2008 and left 134,000 people dead or missing and some 2.4 million stranded without adequate food, shelter or supplies. The maps and other research he produced were used by the U.N. and the Red Cross to estimate the damage.

Currently he is developing a website in collaboration with a research group from the Center for International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University that will allow people to track natural disasters and see how they affect populations that live in the area.

“It’s amazing how much global data we have,” says Gorokhovich. “A lot of people, including local governments ... anticipating hurricanes, for example, can go on the website and see how many people would be affected.”

By Nature

Yuri Gorokhovich with local children, above, on a survey of a floodplain last summer in rural Uganda; at left is Bulucheke village.
NEW YORK CITY Fire Commissioner Salvatore Cassano always had a good excuse when he was late for class at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. But he didn’t have to explain it to his professors. “Sometimes I got stuck at a fire,” says Cassano, a 40-year veteran of the department who’s been commissioner since January, “and my professors understood it because they smelled the smoke on me when I got in.”

Cassano, 65, became a firefighter in 1969 and in 1970 enrolled in John Jay’s fire science program. For six years he battled fires with different engine companies in lower Manhattan then headed off to school after his shift.

After graduation, he rose through the ranks of the FDNY, and he attributes much of his success to earning a CUNY degree. “We took hydraulics classes, we took psychology classes, we took building-construction classes and all of that helped me out in grasping of what it was to be a fire-fighter,” says Cassano. “It taught me how to study for my promotional exams. It carried me throughout the rest of my career.”

Like many CUNY students who have full- or part-time jobs, juggling work and college wasn’t easy. “It was a hectic schedule,” he says. “John Jay was full of policemen and firefighters and we all had the same goal: to work, to raise a family, but also to get an education. So it was a great way to go to school.”

Cassano graduated from John Jay in 1976 and a year later was promoted to lieutenant, working at Ladder 113 in Brooklyn. He became a captain in 1984, then went on to become a battalion chief, division chief, deputy assistant chief and in 2001, assistant chief. Four years ago, he became FDNY’s Chief of Department — the highest-ranking uniformed officer — in charge of fire and EMS operations, training, safety, fire prevention and communications. When Mayor Michael Bloomberg named Cassano to become the city’s 32nd fire commissioner in January, it was a departure from the selection of previous mayors, who usually chose candidates from outside the department.

Cassano didn’t always want to be a firefighter. He loaded trucks on the Red Hook docks with his dad, Angelo, then got a job in a bank. Drafted into the Army at age 20, he returned to the waterfront after a year in Vietnam.

Then one day everything changed. His older brother Patsy, a retired fire captain, took him to a firehouse. “Once he got me to meet the firefighters, to play softball with them, to go to a communal breakfast, it was instantaneously apparent that [being a firefighter] is not just a job, it’s a whole way of life,” says Cassano. “I tell people that I never felt like I worked a day in my life because I love what I do.”

Although his responsibilities evolved over the years, nothing compares to fighting fires. “There’s nothing like the adrenaline rush,” says Cassano, who still goes to many fires to assess the department’s response. “I miss it every day. The excitement of helping people never goes away. I hear a siren now and I figure I should be responding somewhere.”

Although he has been cited five times for bravery, he says he always had a bit of fear when answering the alarm. “You go to work always respecting your job and the dangers of it,” says Cassano. “And there’s always something in the back of your mind that you may not come home that night.”

One of the darkest days for the department was Sept. 11, 2001, when 343 members of the FDNY lost their lives in the World Trade Center terrorist attacks.

“I was very lucky,” says Cassano, who stood in front of the north tower when it collapsed. “I scurried away and was able to dive under an apparatus.”

Cassano helped rebuild the department and also helped with the cleanup of ground zero. Nearly a decade has passed since that tragic day, but for Cassano it’s still an open wound. “It keeps me grounded,” he says. “It keeps me focused on my job…. I’m here to make sure that our firefighters are protected.”

Since September 11th, the role of the department has expanded to include training in response to terrorism. In May, when firefighters from Engine 54 and Ladder 4 responded to a car fire in Times Square, they quickly determined it wasn’t a fire but a
car bomb and called for the police department’s Emergency Services Unit.

“They knew exactly what not to do, which was as important as what to do,” says Cassano. “We’re not just first responders anymore, we’re first preventers.”

As commissioner, Cassano hopes to make firefighters safer by providing them with necessary tools and training. “If I can do that, I’ve done my job,” he says.

Among more thorny issues for Cassano has been lack of diversity in the department. The FDNY has been mired in a discrimination lawsuit filed on behalf of the Vulcan Society, a black firefighters group in 2007. In August, a federal judge ruled that the hiring test used by the FDNY discriminated against minority applications and banned the city from using it as a hiring tool. At press time, the judge ordered the city to try again to find an unbiased way to hire firefighters or wait a year until a new, nondiscriminatory test is developed.

“A third of 4,000 top-scorers on the current firefighter list are minorities, more than ever before,” says Cassano. “This is due to the unprecedented and highly successful recruitment campaign we held in 2006 and 2007, prior to the last exam. It’s unfortunate that the city is being prohibited from hiring off this list as we had hoped, since there are more than 1,300 minorities in the top 4,000 and they deserve a chance to be hired without race-based quotas being involved.”

When he finally retires, Cassano still wants to find something to do to help people.

“I’ve been doing it for 40 years so I think it’s in my blood,” he says.

And it seems that he’s passed on his passion for helping to his five children. Two daughters are teachers and his youngest son plans to become a firefighter. CUNY is also a tradition in the family. Three of his children graduated from the College of Staten Island and his youngest son is currently a student there and member of CSI’s baseball team.

“My experience at CUNY was tremendous,” says Cassano. “I think it’s a great way to get an education without having tremendous bills later on.”
Extraordinary accomplishments of FDR's presidency inspire students at Hunter College's Public Policy Institute, just opened in newly renovated Roosevelt House.

The stately Manhattan townhouse where Franklin Roosevelt recuperated from paralyzing polio, accepted President Hoover's concession telegram, delivered his first radio address as president-elect and incubated the New Deal has been reborn as Hunter College's new Public Policy Institute.

With visiting scholars joining an interdisciplinary faculty, graduate students and undergraduates, the institute intends to deepen scholarship about the creation and impact of public policy. The first public policy students arrived this fall, while human rights students start in the spring. They can enter either an undergraduate minor or a certificate program. The institute enhances other public policy initiatives, including master's programs, at several of the University's colleges.

This is a third life for the townhouse. From 1908 to 1942, it was the New York City home of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt and his mother, Sara. And from 1942 until 1992, it was Hunter's interfaith center — the nation's first collegiate meeting place for students of different religions, ethnicities and interests. As city landmarks commissioner before becoming Hunter's president in 2001, Jennifer Raab knew about "this amazing house with an incredible legacy. It had been closed and was in dilapidated, rundown condition."

Restoring the home and using it to study the "public issues that were part of the Roosevelt legacy" was a top priority and Chancellor Matthew Goldstein gave his full support. State and private donations financed renovations. Iris Weinshall, CUNY vice chancellor for facilities planning, construction and management, said renowned architect James Polshek "grasped the essence of the historic nature of the building, but added the modern elements and amenities."

Locating such an institute there flowed naturally from the interests of its original residents. Elected four times, Franklin Delano Roosevelt transformed government during the Great Depression and World War II. His lasting innovations are as diverse as Social Security, federal bank-deposit insurance and electrification of rural areas. Eleanor Roosevelt wrote a daily newspaper column read by millions from 1935 to 1962 and oversaw drafting of the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

(early U.N. sessions — with her as a U.S. delegate — were at Hunter's Bronx campus, now Lehman College.) And Sara struck an early blow for racial equality by hosting a luncheon at her house for the National Council of Women. There she befriended Mary McLeod Bethune, daughter of slaves and founder of the traditionally black Bethune-Cookman College.

Sara built the townhouse in 1908 as a gift to her only son and his wife and distant cousin, Eleanor. Number 47 (Sara) and 49 (Franklin and Eleanor) East 65th St., between Madison and Park Avenues, share a stately façade and a single entrance. Inside, steps lead to separate doors of the mirror-image houses. Franklin and Eleanor returned only sporadically during their more than 12 years in the White House. In the spring of 1942, after Sara died at 87, the townhouses went on the market for $60,000.

Hunter president George N. Shuster asked FDR if he could convert the building into what became the Sara Delano Roosevelt Interfaith House. Roosevelt, enthusiastic, lowered the price to $50,000 (about $669,000 today) and kicked in $1,000 himself. Shuster raised the rest from Catholic, Jewish and Protestant individuals and groups.

The New Deal had financed construction of Hunter's Bronx campus in the 1930s and the North Building on Park Avenue, which Franklin dedicated in 1940. (The New Deal also built Brooklyn College.) For more than 40 years, Eleanor visited Hunter, then a women's college, often informally, and invited students home. Interfaith House housed some 120 extracurricular organizations until disrepair forced its closure in 1992.

Restoration was complicated because its exterior and parts of the interior are landmarked. "Elements could be cleaned, but had to go back into the house," which was gutted, Weinshall said. With the only access to the backyard — where a 115-seat auditorium would rise — being through the house, workers couldn't use heavy construction equipment; they also couldn't park a dumpster on the street. So shovelful by shovelful, they carried dirt and debris out the front door and around the corner, where trucks could briefly park on Park Avenue.

The National Endowment for the Humanities recently designated Roosevelt House as part of its "We the People" initiative and awarded it a $40,000 "Interpreting America's Historic Places" planning grant. The funds will help...
develop programs and materials exploring the Roosevelts and their legacies, especially in terms of contemporary social policy issues.

With the graceful banisters now once again agleam, Hunter's Public Policy Institute began its work in mid-2010, when two visiting scholars moved into apartments carved out of former servants’ quarters on the sixth floor. John McDonough, the inaugural Joan H. Tisch Distinguished Fellow in Public Health, helped shape health care reform both in Massachusetts and nationally as Sen. Ted Kennedy’s senior adviser. And Jonathan Fanton, the first Franklin Delano Roosevelt Visiting Fellow and former president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, is helping to develop Hunter’s human rights program.

Fanton said guest speakers invariably want to tour Roosevelt House, for “every room has a piece of history that’s inspiring, which I hope will call forth all who work here to think about the high ideals that the Roosevelts set for us and for the world.”
FOURTEEN YEARS AGO, when he was an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee, Massimo Pigliucci was alarmed to learn that a bill requiring equal teaching of creationism and evolution in public schools had been introduced into the state legislature.

The bill was voted down, but it had made a strong impression on him. “It was the first time that I woke up to the possibility that I would be living in a society where our kids would be taught nonsense,” says Pigliucci, now chair of the philosophy department at Lehman College. “And since I have a kid who goes to public school . . . that was a very personal attack on my own family.”


In it, he points out that fewer than 40 percent of Americans believe in Darwin’s theory of evolution even though it’s one of science’s best-established findings, and that 40 percent of Americans believe that the threat of global warming is inflated, in spite of a near consensus among scientists that man-made climate change is real.

“The point of the book is to try to convince people that some of these beliefs do actually have consequences and it does pay to inform yourself and think critically about certain kinds of beliefs,” says Pigliucci, who received his Ph.D. in philosophy of science from the University of Tennessee in 2003 and taught at SUNY Stony Brook before coming to Lehman in 2009. There’s no problem “if you open your horoscope and just read it for fun. On the other hand, if you plan your financial investments based on what your horoscope tells you, you’re likely to run into trouble.”

Pigliucci, who is teaching a new course at the Graduate Center, “Philosophy of Pseudoscience,” this fall, says several factors influence people’s beliefs in UFOs,
Always set your baloney detector to at least the yellow alert, because a lot of people will try to take advantage of you.

— Massimo Pigliucci

Pseudoscience

astrology, intelligent design and other pseudoscience. He says people often don’t have the time or inclination to investigate the basis of their beliefs, or it makes them feel good to believe something regardless of the evidence. He also blames the media for propagating pseudoscience and inviting people who have no scientific background to speak publicly about scientific notions, as when actor Tom Cruise has bashed psychiatry or actress Jenny McCarthy has insisted on a link between vaccines and autism.

“You have the right to believe in nonsense, but I have the right to tell you that you believe in nonsense, especially when it does have practical consequences,” he says.

Pigliucci admits that it’s often difficult to tell good and bad science apart. In the last chapter he provides a series of tips on how to distinguish the two. He says it’s like finding a good car mechanic: You find an expert, investigate whether he has the proper training and credentials, then get a second opinion from other experts. Still, that’s not a foolproof method.

“The bottom line is that science is not an infallible activity,” says Pigliucci. “The reasonable thing to do is always question whatever beliefs and whatever notions come your way, no matter who is presenting them to you. Always set your baloney detector to at least the yellow alert, because a lot of people will try to take advantage of you.”

THE GRADUATE CENTER
An Advocate for Human Guinea Pigs

Volunteers who participate in the early stages of clinical drug trials can make much more money than they would earn in minimum wage jobs, but being a human guinea pig is a dicey business.

“Phase 1 is the first step of drug trials and that’s when the drugs are tested for toxicity,” says Roberto Abadie, who examines the experience of paid research subjects in his recent book, The Professional Guinea Pig: Big Pharma and the Risky World of Human Subjects. In the trials, Abadie says, volunteers can be given “ten times the amount of what you would take if you were sick.”

A visiting scholar with the health and sciences doctoral program at the Graduate Center, Abadie spent 18 months living in group houses and hostels in Philadelphia, a hotbed for clinical trials because of its proximity to pharmaceutical companies. He interviewed more than two dozen volunteers to find out what motivates them to sign up and how much they know about the risks involved.

“Some of these guys do 80 to 100 trials over a five-year period,” says Abadie, who received his Ph.D. in anthropology from the Graduate Center in 2006. “They knew some trials are riskier than others. If the drug has never been on the market, they know the risks are higher.”

The pharmaceutical industry began relying on paid volunteers in the mid-1970s, when Phase 1 trials on prisoners were banned in the U.S. Now research payments range from $1,200 for three or four days of the less intensive trials to $5,000 for three to four weeks of intensive trials, says Abadie. Most volunteers are indigent African Americans, Latinos and political activists who like to make money on a flexible schedule.

“It’s a weird type of work,” says Abadie, who is critical of pharmaceutical companies’ aggressive recruiting techniques. “Because of the current economy, there are a lot of people who are desperate and they would do anything to try to get by.”

Although subjects are carefully monitored during trials and adverse effects are rare, Abadie worries about drug interaction and long-term effects. “There’s a 30-day period between drug trials; it’s called a ‘wash out period,’ which means the drugs are no longer present in the blood and urine, but these drugs may stay in your liver,” says Abadie.

Since volunteers pay taxes on their income from trials, he would like them to be recognized in a way that would bring them under the umbrella of federal labor laws.

Abadie also supports establishing a national registry of Phase 1 trial volunteers — administered by the Food and Drug Administration — that would prevent them from participating in too many trials and might help identify long-term adverse effects.

“We have to protect the volunteers who are helping the society,” says Abadie. “The industry may not like it because they don’t like oversight, and it may slow down the recruiting. I keep pushing for this idea because I care about the well-being of the guinea pigs.”

— Cathy Rainone
Here is a collection of new books written by CUNY authors:

**Rum Drinks: 50 Caribbean Cocktails, From Cuba Libre to Rum Daisy**
Queens College professor of English Jessica B. Harris
Chronicle Books

With recipes for 40 of the Caribbean’s classic and contemporary cocktails and 15 traditional snacks to accompany them, *Rum Drinks* provides a tropical taste vacation. It’s a rum resource, including salty tales—from a history of the sugar trade to the sparkly heyday of the Cuba Libre—an island-by-island listing of Caribbean rums, and a guide to great rum bars all over the world.

**The Madame Curie Complex: The Hidden History of Women in Science**
Baruch College American history professor Julie Des Jardins
The Feminist Press at CUNY

Why are the fields of science and technology still considered to be predominantly male professions? *The Madame Curie Complex* moves beyond the most common explanations—limited access to professional training, lack of resources, exclusion from social networks of men—to give historical context and unexpected revelations about women’s contributions to the sciences. Exploring the lives of Jane Goodall, Rosalind Franklin, Rosalyn Yalow, Barbara McClintock, Rachel Carson and the women of the Manhattan Project, Des Jardins considers their personal and professional stories in relation to their male counterparts—Albert Einstein, Robert Oppenheimer, Enrico Fermi—to demonstrate how the gendered culture of science molds the methods, structure and experience of the work.

**Free For All: Fixing School Food in America**
Hunter College sociology professor Janet Poppendieck
University of California Press

How did our children end up eating nachos, pizza and Tater Tots for lunch? Taking us on an eye-opening journey into the nation’s school kitchens, the book is the first to provide a comprehensive assessment of school food in the United States. Poppendieck explores the deep politics of food provision from multiple perspectives—history, policy, nutrition, environmental sustainability, taste and more. How did we get into the absurd situation in which nutritionally regulated meals compete with fast food items and snack foods loaded with sugar, salt, and fat? Poppendieck reveals the forces—the financial troubles of schools, the commercialization of childhood, the reliance on market models—that are determining how lunch is served. She concludes with a sweeping vision for change: fresh, healthy food for all children as a regular part of their school day.

**The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson**
Queens College distinguished professor of sociology Samuel Heilman and professor emeritus of sociology Menachem Friedman (Bar-Ilan University, Israel)
Princeton University Press

From the 1950s until his death in 1994, Menachem Mendel Schneerson—revered by his followers worldwide simply as the Rebbe—built the Lubavitcher movement from a relatively small sect within Hasidic Judaism into the powerful force in Jewish life that it is today. Swept away by his expectation that the Messiah was coming, he came to believe that he could deny death and change history. Heilman and Friedman paint an unforgettable portrait of Schneerson, showing how he reinvented himself from an aspiring French-trained electrical engineer into a charismatic leader who believed that he and his Lubavitcher Hasidic emissaries could transform the world. They reveal how his messianic convictions ripened and how he attempted to bring the ancient idea of a day of redemption onto the modern world’s agenda.

**Off the Charts!: A Novel**
City College adjunct lecturer in theater and English Kevin Scott Hall
iUniverse

When 21-year-old Greg Bounder, a brash, wealthy college student, meets his one-time singing idol, Sally Testata, at a Scranton bar, he seizes the opportunity to create an exciting career for himself by managing her comeback. With the half-million dollar inheritance from his grandfather, Greg intends to restart the career of this 40-something, washed-up singer. But first he must convince her, his conservative Philadelphia family and all the doubters that he has what it takes to make it big before he blows through his inheritance. With the help of his gay brother, Marcus, a DJ in New York—and a lot of money—Greg orchestrates Sally’s return. The result is a whirlwind year in New York as their hit single “Grind” climbs the charts, but Greg soon finds that Sally might be more than he bargained for. While struggling to reap a return on his investment, Greg needs to figure out how to keep Sally clean and out of trouble and keep her from grabbing the wrong kind of headlines.

**Ethics and Economics: New Perspectives**
Edited by College of Staten Island professor of political science, economics and philosophy Mark D. White and professor of economics and Christian ethics (Radboud University Nijmegen) and associate professor of feminist development economics, Institute of Social Studies Irene van Staveren
Routledge

Since the days of Adam Smith, ethics and economics have been closely intertwined, and were nominally separated only with the advent of neoclassical economics in the beginning of the last century. This book features 11 essays by leading scholars in economics and philosophy who argue for a renewal of the bond between the two disciplines. Several of the contributors argue that the ethical content of economics and moral status of the market have been misunderstood, for better and for worse. Some recommend changes in the way individual economic choice is modeled, in order to incorporate ethical as well as self-interested motivations.

**Poetics of Dislocation (Poets on Poetry)**
Hunter College and Graduate Center distinguished professor of English Meena Alexander
University of Michigan Press

The book sets the work of contemporary American poetry within the streams of migration that have made the nation what it is in the 21st century. There are few poets better qualified to muse on that context than Alexander, who spent her life studying at prestigious institutions around the globe before settling in the United States to work on her acclaimed body of poetry. The book studies not only the personal creative process Alexander uses, but also the work of other prominent writers. Alexander discusses what it means to come to America as an adult to write poetry, and her place—and that of others—in the collection of cultures that makes up this country.
Marcel Roberts entered John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 1998 as a freshman already convinced that research and doctoral degrees were “only for smart people and not on my radar screen.” Today Roberts has a Ph.D. in chemistry, a body of work with implications for national security, health and the environment — and a new position as an assistant professor at John Jay.

How did this happen? During his first year, Roberts was mentored by then assistant professor Anthony Carpi. “He taught me how to do research,” the younger professor says. “He taught me how to write papers. He taught me how to get into a Ph.D. program.”

Back then Carpi — now a full professor in the Department of Sciences — along with some of his colleagues envisioned a much broader faculty-advised undergraduate research program. Today the college has one. PRISM (Program for Research Initiatives for Science Majors) began in 2006 and as a result three or four students a year move on to graduate or medical school, ten times the number as in the 1990s.

“I wanted students to learn not just what science is but what it does,” Carpi says. “In the classroom they learned about atomic and evolutionary theory — and about the organic chemicals they needed to know for the semester. But we didn’t focus on process.”

Now his students also have ample laboratory space, a luxury that did not exist in years past. For his efforts, Carpi, one of PRISM’s two co-directors, received John Jay’s 2009 Distinguished Service to Students Award. And this year Jason Quinones (’10), a student mentored by Carpi, was accepted into the Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology doctoral program at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Like both Roberts and Carpi, Quinones did not have parents who considered graduate school an option for themselves. His mother had earned some college credits and his father left school in the ninth grade. Quinones says his undergraduate research made him competitive and “was the best choice I could have made.”

PRISM, subsidized by federal, state and nonprofit sources, grew from an earlier state-funded program. About 50 students a year participate, up from 13 when it began. (Only four students did undergraduate research in 2000.)

About 50 students a year participate in PRISM up from 13 when it began.

“pretty typical middle-class family.” Her mother and sister both have graduate degrees and she hopes to gain acceptance to a doctoral program in biological sciences. Yet she says the opportunity to do research changed her outlook, too. “I thought there was a right answer in class and in lab…. Conducting research has made it clear that nothing goes as planned. It has helped me to become more of a thoughtful problem solver.”

Carpi, an environmental toxicologist who studies mercury emissions from soil — work that might help us to understand the effects that climate change will have on the toxicity of the metal — involves his students in his research in both intricate and basic ways. “He brings in large bags of soil from his backyard in Connecticut for us to test,” says Anthony Ho (’09). Ho now works as Carpi’s lab assistant and teaches freshman chemistry. His parents have bachelor’s and associate degrees, and he is contemplating medical school or a program in which he will study how foreign substances affect gene regulation.

Students such as Ho, Mayo-Perez and Quinones are the latest links in a mentoring chain that began in the years when Carpi helped freshman Marcel Roberts. Of his own students Roberts now says, “some of them remind me of me when I was younger.”
**Pet Project Spotlights Talented Student**

**By Cathy Rainone**

**WHAT’S REALLY TO BE FOUND IN DOG FOOD?**

Queensborough Community College student Andre Smithson found more than just nutrition.

Last year, Smithson had a chance to work with QCC chemistry professor Irina Rutenburg investigating the possible presence of heavy metals, especially mercury, in holistic, fish-based dry dog food with the use of an X-ray fluorescence spectrometer. Rutenburg and Smithson didn’t find mercury in the foods they tested, but they did find “significant concentrations of lead.”

“I did all the tests in one semester,” says Smithson. “And I saw how important chemistry is.”

Smithson had come to New York City from Jamaica two weeks before the beginning of the fall 2009 semester with one goal in mind: stay focused on his studies. He’s now in his second year at QCC with a 4.0 grade point average.

“I really wanted to do research,” says Smithson. “I’ve only seen scientists on TV in white coats with glasses on. I like being in a lab and feeling like I’m a scientist.”

Rutenburg was impressed with Smithson’s work on the project. “Andre is the most wonderful student I have ever had: highly intelligent and talented, extremely reliable and responsible, at the same time modest and humble,” she says. He was recommended to her by professor Paris Svoronos, then the chair of QCC’s Chemistry Department. In an honors general chemistry course, Smithson constantly raised his hand to answer Svoronos’s questions and explain the problems to his classmates. Svoronos soon offered him a tutoring job in the college’s chemistry department.

“Andre is a very articulate person who can apply concepts taught in class in an impressive manner,” says Svoronos. “I quickly decided to use his patience and quiet mannerism in the tutoring program. He excelled and earned the respect of all students he tutored.”

After completing the investigation of heavy metals in dog food with Rutenburg, Smithson presented his findings at the Thirteenth Annual CUNY Pipeline Honors Conference at the Graduate Center in February 2010.

“I was very excited [to present],” says Smithson. “I just like talking to people and telling them what I know and seeing how people react.” Smithson also did presentations of his work at the American Chemical Society’s 41st Middle Atlantic Regional Meeting in Wilmington, Del., at the 6th Annual Honors QCC Conference and at the 240th National American Chemical Society meeting in Boston.

The research also helped Smithson get into the CUNY Summer Undergraduate Research Program. He spent two months working on a project, “Elemental Analysis by Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy (EDS)” with his mentor, Glen Kowach, a chemistry professor at City College.

“I chose this topic for my research project because I have done [dog food] research, which used the type of data that was generated in this project,” says Smithson. “This research study had helped me understand concepts I thought were unnecessary.”

As part of the program, Smithson was awarded a $3,500 stipend, room and board at City College and a “cultural passport” to visit museums and other attractions in the city.

“My experience in the program was exceptional,” says Smithson. “I worked with a post-doctoral student, undergraduates and high school students. Although it was a long two months, it was an experience that I am glad I was allowed to endure and I would do it over again if I get a chance to.”

Smithson got interested in sciences back in primary school during a math competition for sixth graders. Then while attending Wolmer’s Boys School in Kingston, the oldest school in the West Indies, he found himself engrossed in physics and chemistry.

“I always wondered what’s the use of math in everything we do,” says Smithson. “And I learned that in physics all of it is being applied. And I was fascinated about chemistry because it helps you understand how things are interacting with each other.”

Smithson plans to become an engineer, though he’s not sure what field he’ll focus on. He’s grateful to his uncle, Thomas Gordon, a stationary engineer at Hunter College, who thought QCC would be a good fit for his nephew. Smithson often marvels at how much he’s accomplished in just one year.

“I’m very glad I came to QCC,” says Smithson. “I didn’t know going to a community college would be that good because in Jamaica we have community colleges, but I would have never considered going there. There are so many opportunities available through QCC. I’m very happy with my uncle’s choice.”

Andre Smithson’s first research project was analyzing holistic dog food.
**A Dozen Nobels**

Answers to starred brown clues are CUNY graduates who won Nobel prizes.

By Miriam Smith

Across

1. * Nobel Prize for Economics 2005; City College, 1950

10. ___ Holmes, serial killer

12. Sturmabteilung (brownshirts)

13. * With 11 Down, Nobel Prize for Physics 1961; City College, 1935

14. Paddle

15. Country code for Angola

16. * Nobel Prize for Medicine 1977; Hunter College, 1941

18. Slang for the word “truth”

20. Chemical ending

21. Mails again


27. *See 22 Across

29. Tunisian labor union

30. Boston Japanese restaurant


32. Cellist Yo-Yo

33.* With 42 Across, Nobel Prize for Physics 1978; City College, 1954

34. Charge

38. Low card

40. Blue

41. Sixth note

42. * See 33 Across

45. Obliquely

47. * With 62 Down, Nobel Prize for Chemistry 1985; City College, 1937

50. Procurer

51. Shortened endearment

53. Meriam -

55. * With 10 Down, Nobel Prize for Chemistry 1985; City College, 1937

59. Protein kinases

59. Amos or Spelling

61. Quebec village of Abenaki Indians

63. * With 66 Across, Nobel Prize for Medicine 1970; City College, 1933

66. * See 63 Across

68. ___ revior

70. Difference between two stimuli that is detected as often as undetected, Abbr.

71. Catch on

72. Escape

73. Canal sites

75. Ful start

76. The objective case of I

79. Throatwash

81. “So long!”

83. * See 87 Across

85. One who quits again

87. * With 83 Across, Nobel Prize for Economics 1972; City College, 1940

90. * Nobel Prize for Medicine 1986; Brooklyn College, 1943

96. To take an excessive amount of a drug

97. “Psst!”

98. ___ Estevez

99. Ego partner

100. Our state, Abbr.

101. * Nobel Prize for Physics 1988; City College, 1943

Down

1. Egyptian sun god

2. “My man!”

3. Greek goddess of the dawn

4. Moroccan airport

5. Israeli production company

6. Otherwise known as diedehydrobenzenes

7. ___ Reader

8. Bubbles

9. * With 46 Down, Nobel Prize for Medicine 1959; City College, 1937

10. * See 53 Across

11. * See 13 Across

12. Ave.


16. Any “Seinfeld,” now

17. Spanish gold

19. 18-wheeler

22. Target

23. Indian stringed instrument

24. Greek sweet bread

25. Blood factor

26. Enn ending

27. Double 35 Down

28. “Get with ___”

31. Son of Elah

34. Pedal pushers

35. Half of 27 Down

36. Library web program

37. “What in the ___ is that?”

39. Oldest recorded name of Japan

40. Nick name?

42. Menses symptoms, Abbr.

43. One plus one Roman numeral

44. A beginning of consciousness

46. * See 9 Down

48. German physiologist Hering

49. Blunt

52. Dee Dee’s kid

54. Pilot’s announcement, briefly

56. Part of a Clue accusation

57. Dysmorphophobia, Var. Abbr.

60. But beginning

62. * See 47 Across

64. Not readily handled

65. Opposite of NW

67. 10th letter of the arabic alphabet

69. Addict

74. Galicia-born Israeli writer

76. Nine ______ (film)

77. Otherwise

78. Jigs end

79. Common college maj.

80. Artificial Intel.: ______ (film)

82. Blackbird

83.* “Patsy ___ ori ay,” Boy Scout song

84. Red Hat, Inc. stock moniker

86. Charlton Heston title role

88. Painter Alice

91. First class

92. Big cheer

93. Oshima commencement

94. E-mail finish, Abbr.

95. After BC

99. All the rage

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TEXTING is the fastest way to communicate, and this intent group of University students hanging out at Kingsborough Community College’s cafeteria seems representative. According to the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project (2009-2010), on average young adults ages 18-24 send more than 200 text messages a day, similar to preteens and teenagers 12-17. Unfortunately, according to CUNY professors, students don’t always stop texting in class. “Imagine 30 kids texting while you’re trying to explain plate tectonics theory,” says Yuri Gorokhovich, assistant professor in the Department of Environmental, Geographic and Geological Sciences at Lehman College, who had to crack down on the practice. “I take away 50 percent of attendance if I see a student texting. If the student continues, they get zero for attendance. It’s 15 percent of the total grade, so after I implemented this system last year, I’ve had a nice environment in my class.” Professors generally do have the last word.
Go for the Classes, Stay for the Extras

If students at Borough of Manhattan Community College spend a lot of time hanging around campus, who could blame them?

After all, the college is located in Tribeca, one of Manhattan’s most artsy and charming neighborhoods. It’s just a short walk from the Hudson River Park and River Promenade, stretching from Battery Park City to the Chelsea Piers and beyond; trendy art galleries; hot restaurants and chic boutiques.

For BMCC students, lower Manhattan is their playground. It’s also full of internship opportunities. The college has worked with Wall Street, City Hall and BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center to create a unique range of opportunities and resources for the students.

BMCC is CUNY’s largest community college, with 22,500 undergraduate and 10,000 continuing education students, and is also its only one in Manhattan.

Founded in 1963, it originally focused on preparing students for business careers but now boasts 27 academic programs including nursing, multimedia technology, engineering science, criminal justice, forensic science and paramedics.

The college’s main campus, at 199 Chambers St., is on 4.28 acres shaped like a ship. There are state-of-the-art labs, a library, one of the most advanced media centers in the country, and a newly renovated swimming pool. Students gather in open lounge areas that extend the length of the building and look out onto the Hudson River.

The newly renovated Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development is at 25 Broadway, in lower Battery Park.

Next year, the college expects to open the new, 14-story Fiterman Hall at 30 West Broadway. Fiterman was damaged during the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and later demolished.
Breaking boundaries in science at The City University of New York — Distinguished women scientists at all CUNY colleges are making history all year round by conducting pioneering research in fields that are critical to our nation’s future. Through CUNY’s “Decade of Science,” they are teaching and working with outstanding students in laboratories and classrooms in cutting-edge areas of applied and basic science. Vice Chancellor for Research Gillian Small and Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, Management and Construction Iris Weinshall are working together on the programming and construction of the new CUNY Advanced Science Research Center at City College. World-class faculty. Breaking Boundaries. Making History. All year round at CUNY.