

SEEK NEWS

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FALL 2011

THE PERCY ELLIS SUTTON SEEK PROGRAM
COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND/CUNY

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Special points of interest:

- *Caring counselors and staff*
- *Enhanced financial assistance*
- *Free academic and other workshops*
- *Personalized services in our Learning Center*
- *Career building opportunities*
- *Computer facility with technical assistance*
- *Exciting leadership training*

It gives me great pleasure to once again extend my greetings and best wishes to all SEEK Program students and the rest of the CSI community as well.

For those of you who are new to SEEK and to all our continuing students, I hope you see this newsletter as a way to learn about all of the wonderful accomplishments of our students and the many exciting initiatives conducted throughout the year. As you browse this issue, you'll see that you are part of a large extended SEEK "family" offering many sup-

port services to help you succeed. Our wonderful counselors and Learning Center staff are here to help you meet your challenges and build your skills, and my office is dedicated to ensuring that the Program addresses your needs. But it is you, our students, who produce the results!

Last year, 47 SEEK students earned degrees, 17 received scholarships, awards and other recognition, many more became tutors and mentors in the community and still others worked with faculty on research outside of the

classroom. Read on to learn more, and remember that SEEK stands for "Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge" – which is what we all do together every day.



NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

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As usual, the staff of the SEEK Learning Center here in 1A-108 has been very busy providing a variety of academic support services for SEEK students. If you are new to the SEEK Program, we hope you've already discovered what a wonderful *free* resource you have here. If not, we hope you'll stop by real soon to find:

- individual tutoring services in math, English and many other subjects
- the SEEK computer lab

- a full calendar of skills workshops
- and help with college research and writing
- 1A-108 is also the site for some other important academic support services - for example the Biology Department's Tutoring Center is located here. It's also the location for an outpost of the Center for Academic Student Assistance (CASA) where you can get extra help with COR 100 and other academic areas (e.g. geology). Finally, if you

need another type of service, we'll refer you to the right place.

As usual, we'll be contacting you by phone, email and snail mail, but you can also catch us on Facebook and Twitter, so stay tuned. And don't forget to check out the Message Board at csi.cuny.edu/seek for events and news. There are lots of ways to stay connected. We hope you are making the Learning Center an important part of your academic life.

SEEK IN ACTION: CHI ALPHA EPSILON

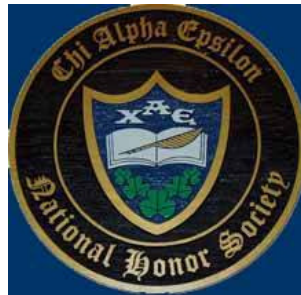
Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society was created to recognize the academic achievements of students who first enter college in educational opportunity programs like SEEK. XAE members have distinguished themselves through their exemplary performance in their academic work. Each semester, our SEEK students are invited to join the Society based on their having completed at least 24 credits and having maintained at least a 3.0 GPA in two consecutive full-time semesters. Students are welcomed into the Society during a special induction ceremony

during which they receive a Chi Alpha Epsilon pin and a blue and white Honor Cord (tassel). In subsequent semesters, students with continued high academic achievement receive recognition through a system of pin upgrades marked by ruby, emerald or diamond jewels.

This semester marked an extraordinary chapter in the history of Chi Alpha Epsilon at CSI as thirteen (13) students (the highest number ever in one semester) accepted the invitation to enter the Society. Nine of these students were welcomed through a special induction ceremony held Thursday, November 3rd in the Center for the Arts, and another

four are awaiting initiation. The thirteen are: **Aya Aly**, **Jianna Barhoum**, **Selvia Botross**, **Denielle Castro**, **Hazem Elsayyad**, **Ashley Journeay**, **Khanshea Lewis**, **Carrie Ma**, **Sehar Muddassar**, **Zainab Toom**, **Marilyn Williams**, **Lifang Zhang** and **Paulina Zygarlicka**.

In addition, three continuing members of the Society earned pin upgrades: **Alexandra Doronina** and **Michael Allamby** (rubies for last spring's GPAs of 3.67 and 3.73 respectively) and **Giovanni Azzarelli** (a diamond for a GPA of 4.0). Congratulations to all!



SEEK RESEARCH ASSISTANTS PROJECT

Fall 2011 marked the beginning of the seventh year for the SEEK Research Assistants Project (RAP). Since its inception, RAP has been instrumental in encouraging over 40 SEEK students to engage in partnerships with CSI faculty from almost all disciplines across campus. First established in 2004, RAP's goal was, and continues to be, to help students gain hands-on experience with research design and methods by working with faculty members who are engaged in

original research. Over the years, students have worked in CSI laboratories, conducted literature searches, performed statistical calculations and much more.

This fall, RAP continues to flourish, with five students currently engaged in a variety of endeavors along with professors **Qiao-Sheng Hu** and **Shuiqin Zhou** (Chemistry), **Peter Kabachnik** and **Alexandru Voicu** (PEP) and **Alan Zimmerman** (Business).

The five students (respectively) are **Daria Sabarova**, **Lifang Zhang**, **Marwa Janini**, **Michael Allamby** and **Alexandra Doronina**. Based on the experience of past RAP participants, these students will have an insider's view of academic scholarship while increasing both their resumes and their abilities at the same time. SEEK is proud to help support these experiences for our students.

COUNSELING NEWS

NEW COUNSELOR JOINS SEEK: MR. STEVEN T. JAMES



Meet Steven James, SEEK's newest member of the counseling team.

Arriving mid-semester to fill the position left vacant by retiree Dr. Roberta Vogel, Mr. James has quickly become a full team member -- reaching out to students, teaching a section of SKO 100 ("Freshman Orientation") and learning all about CSI as he settles into the SEEK routine.

With many years of experience as well as master's degrees in both Counseling and Personnel Services (Fordham University) and Human Resources Management (The New School), Mr. James brings new energy and many professional interests to the Program, including a history of using motivational groups to encourage life planning and goal setting. His presence will enable SEEK to augment services for students around

career education and development. He's also already planning to tie into CSI's Black/Latino Male Initiative (BMI) for SEEK students, and other many other ideas under development as well.

We know this is the beginning of a wonderful new phase for SEEK *and* our new counselor. If you haven't met him yet, be sure to stop by to say "hello".

Counselors organized a "Stress Relief Day" in December at which students enjoyed snacks and a movie. Watch for the next one and join in!

Counselors need your current email address. Please stop by the SEEK Office or call 718.982.2410 to update your contact information.

SEEK PROGRAM RENAMED AFTER PERCY SUTTON

Readers who know the history of the SEEK Program will recall that SEEK was founded in New York City over 40 years ago as an educational opportunity program for eligible CUNY students throughout the five boroughs. What may be less well known is that the legislative action that was responsible for creating the Program was led at the time by Percy E. Sutton, a NYS Assemblyman from New York City. This fall, Mr. Sutton, who died in 2009, was recognized for his leadership and dedication to SEEK by a bill sponsored in the NYS Assembly and Senate which renamed the SEEK Program in his honor. The renaming of SEEK, now known as the "Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program," also pays tribute to the many contributions made by Mr. Sutton throughout his lifetime of public service, including the distinction of being one of the first Black borough presidents of Manhattan.



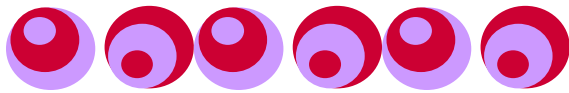
SEEK IN ACTION: STUDY ABROAD

Over the past few semesters, SEEK has seen our students study abroad in China, Ecuador, Greece and more. As we go to press, this list is expanding. First, students **Marwa Janini** (junior, history) and **Noura Abdel** (freshman, pre-nursing) have been accepted for the January Intersession program in Florence, Italy. In the meantime, **Francesca Navarro** (junior, business) is spending this fall in the south of France. Read on for an excerpt of her report from the city of Nice.

“I decided to go to France because it is rich with culture and history. Nice is a very old town with beautiful architecture and breath taking views. I am living with two girls, one from Germany and the other from Switzerland. We enjoy sharing conversations at the dinner table and exchanging experiences from our countries and places we’ve been. I am studying International Management, International Marketing, Business Ethics and French. All of these courses have given me a new perspective in understanding business and working with people from all over the world.”



Noura (left) and Marwa display their study abroad acceptance letters.



SEEK ENCOURAGES MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS AT CSI

Last semester, the SEEK Program was excited and honored to take the lead in an important new initiative for CSI's students from Mexico. After submitting a proposal to the Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior (IME), SEEK earned one of the annual \$20,000 awards given by the IME's BECAS Program to promote educational achievement among the Mexican immigrant community. An added distinction was that this was the first such award for the City University of New York from the BECAS Program.

Known in English as the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, the IME awarded the funds to enable tuition scholarships of \$2500 for eight CSI students. So that the recipients could give back in return, SEEK provided the leadership for connecting each student with volunteer opportunities in his or her community. Volunteers worked with residents at the Silver Lake Nursing Home on Staten Island and in a food drive for Project Hospitality, a Staten Island organization serving homeless people and new immigrants.

In addition, the eight students were recognized at an award ceremony held at the Mexican Consulate in Manhattan, where the Deputy Consul General of Mexico, Ismael Naveja, joined CUNY and SEEK staff in celebration.

The Mexican community is one of the largest Hispanic populations on Staten Island. This initiative demonstrates SEEK's commitment to providing access and support for all those aspiring to higher education.



Student Women of Color Reception Hosted by CSI President

Five female students from SEEK were among the nearly fifty (50) female students of color attending a reception for freshmen and student leaders which was held at the home of President and Mrs. Tomás Morales on Monday evening, October 17, 2011. The reception, co-hosted by Vice President for Student Affairs A. Ramona Brown, and Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences Christine Flynn Saulnier, gave this overflow crowd of eager, excited, curious and highly motivated young women a chance to meet and talk informally with members of CSI's diverse community, including faculty and staff of color as well as members of the Administration.

The SEEK students who attended the reception included **Tif-**

fany Grullon, Lisbeth Pantaleon, Tiffany Pham, Melissa Titus and Lisa Zeng. In addition to chatting with VP Brown and Dean Saulnier, the students were able to meet with President and Mrs. Morales, and CSI's Provost William Fritz and his wife, and were treated to delicious hors d'oeuvres prepared under the direction of CSI's Master Chef, Jody Merendino.

The reception not only provided an opportunity for students to share with other female students of color, many of whom are campus leaders, but also paved the way for meeting administrators and professors who are significant members of the CSI family. According to SEEK student Lisa Zeng, the evening passed quickly as students mingled and ate. Says Lisa, "I met

students, faculty, staff and administrators; we networked and exchanged information...the event was amazing. The best part was I was able to have a one-on-one conversation with President Morales, then Gloria Garcia." Moreover, Lisa reports she is still in contact with the people she met that night, a fact that points to the reception's rousing success. VP Brown, Dean Saulnier and others will continue to meet with small groups of these students, an initiative that SEEK is happy to support. And, as always, SEEK is happy to see our students take advantage of opportunities to, as Lisa says, "practice communication skills, expand network and learn from others."

SEEK IN ACTION: ON CAMPUS

We are proud to report that SEEK students and staff participate actively in the life of the campus – stepping up to get involved! For example, two SEEK students (**Marwa Janini** and **Noura Abdel**) started the semester by volunteering hours in the CSI Office of Alumni Relations where they helped out with various clerical tasks as needed. They were then joined by fellow SEEK students **Michael Allamby, Stephanie Gutierrez, Shannon Kennedy, Gabriela Pineda, Chanelle Scott, Lisa Zeng** and **Brandon Echevarria** – all participating in the annual CSI Alumni "Phonathan" during which callers reach out to alumni to raise funds for scholarships.

Yet another avenue for SEEK student involvement is through student government. Elected to positions for the 2011-12 year were SEEK Students, **Ariel Alamonte, Abdul Amunikoro, Rose Ellicott, Kevin McLaughlin** and **Cesar Torres.**

Students aren't the only ones who volunteer their time however. For example, Counselor **Miriam**

Perez-Lai was instrumental in recruiting SEEK students for the Phonathan. And last semester, staff members **Dr. Julie Davelman** (Counselor) and **Earl Gatchalien** (SEEK Computer Lab Tech) volunteered as "do's and don'ts models" at the annual "Clothes the Deal" fashion show sponsored by the Career and Scholarship Center.



Pictured left to right, Michael Allamby, Alexandra Doronina, Stephanie Gutierrez, Shannon Kennedy, Noura Abdel, Marwa Janini, Nada Abbass, Gabriela Pineda, and Lisa Zheng.



Tutor/mentor, Ejona Beshku
(pictured above right) at I.S. 49.



Tutor/mentor, Ahmed Moftah
(pictured above right) at I.S. 49.

SEEK TEACHES FINANCIAL LITERACY THROUGH "STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS" PROGRAM

Saving. Spending. Donating. Investing. These four concepts are the foundation of a highly successful educational initiative that CSI's SEEK Program has been conducting with public school children and others for the past four years. Developed as part of the "Strategies for Success" Program (SEEK's well regarded tutoring and mentoring program for elementary and intermediate school children), teaching financial literacy has become an important and ever-expanding part of SEEK's service to the community.

Although "Strategies" for the past ten years has been placing SEEK and other CSI students in several after-school sites throughout the school year, it was 2007 when the JPMorgan Chase Foundation first provided funding to begin teaching the basics of financial literacy to middle school children. Part of the initial project plan included the creation of a JPMorgan Chase Entrepreneurial Club through which pupils would practice some of the theoretical concepts they learned, such as marketing products, organizing a sale, selling effectively and making a profit. Proceeds from these activities would then be donated back to the school. This Club idea proved to be a highly success-

ful way to engage young students in active learning, and SEEK's financial literacy program was well on its way.



Student participants at I.S. 49. (above photo).

As seen by Georgia Landrum, Associate Director of the "Strategies" Program, the range of financial topics taught to the children "helps create a deeper understanding of what it takes to be truly financially responsible – that is, being responsible in general. These lessons are learned not only by the children, but also by the college students and others involved."

During the past year, SEEK's financial literacy education has moved on to adding other related topics and audiences, including identity theft workshops for pupils and parents, as well as

lessons incorporating Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. In addition, the SEEK/"Strategies" team took part in CSI's 2011 New Student Orientation programs, leading money management sessions throughout the summer for incoming freshmen. If funding is forthcoming, the financial literacy workshops will be expanded to include juniors and seniors at Staten Island's Curtis High School as well.

Looking at the results, it appears that these efforts are working on many levels. Not only are children, parents and college students becoming financially literate, but this new knowledge is empowering to those involved. As Ms. Landrum says, participants are empowered "...to take a leadership role, no matter how big or small, and to take charge of the decisions that they make for themselves now and in the future." SEEK is grateful to this year's funders -- not only the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, but also the Staten Island Foundation, the NYC Dept. of Education (District 31) and the Jewish Community Center -- for enabling the "Strategies for Success" Program to bring these and other important services to students and the community alike.

NEWS TO KNOW

- SEEK student **Francesca Navarro** was one of four students selected last spring to participate in the 2011 Model NYS Student Senate Session which took place in Albany. According to Francesca, the best part of the experience was "... being part of a diverse group of students who are passionate and dedicated to establishing better political practices in order to provide a better government for the people, for our communities." Francesca is definitely a young woman on the move, both figuratively and literally. For her report from the city of Nice, France, see page 4.
- **Michael Maslankowski**, a popular former SEEK English tutor, was the winner of the "2011 CSI Dolphin Award for Outstanding Service and Contribution to the College by a Currently Enrolled Student." Dolphin Awards are bestowed each year to one student along with other exceptional members of the CSI faculty and staff community. Although not a SEEK student and now a CSI graduate, as a tutor Michael quickly became part of the SEEK "family" and devoted many hours to helping SEEK students move toward success. Michael's commitment to SEEK was just one of the many ways he demonstrated his service to CSI and exemplified the qualities that made him a Dolphin winner. Congratulations Michael!
- Our own **Dr. Roberta Vogel**, who retired at the end of last year, recently won another award. She was one of five recipients of the 2011 Humanitarian Award given in September by the Staten Island Branch of the NAACP. Each year, the group recognizes leading individuals in the community who have personified humanitarian characteristics and demonstrated commitment toward the NAACP's goal of combating racial discrimination.
- Another recent winner was SEEK student **Paul Olivier** who was awarded the prestigious Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship, one of 15 bestowed last spring. Granted for a period of three years, Watson Fellowships provide gifted NYC undergraduates with the opportunity to participate in exciting internships and mentor relationships that will enhance their occupational goals and individual interests. To win this award, students go through a grueling application process in competition with their peers from private and public colleges. Congratulations Paul!
- Among the June 2011 graduates were three SEEK students who won honors for outstanding performance in their major or department. **Jacquelyn Cannizzo** for "Outstanding Graduating Female Business Major"; **Angelica Popolano** for "Outstanding Graduate in the Women's Gender and Sexuality Program"; and **David Glorioso** for "Honors in the Major, Performing and Creative Arts."
- The Learning Center now has evening hours two nights per week: Wednesdays until 6 p.m. and Thursdays until 7. During the extended hours, the computer lab is open and tutors are available.
- 60 SEEK freshmen from our fall SKO 100 ("Freshman Orientation") classes recently attended a lively and informative session focusing on public speaking skills, led by motivational speaker, **Tonya Kerry, Esq.** Ms. Kerry, an attorney and adjunct law professor, is also an experienced corporate trainer specializing in leadership development and relationship mastery. At the SEEK event, she offered ideas for crafting an interesting public presentation, and gave participants a chance to overcome fears, try out new skills and build self-confidence about talking to groups. Students incorporated lessons learned by doing in-class presentations at a later time.
- SEEK Counselor **Steven James** recently held a focus group as well as individual interviews with Black and Latino male students in the Program. With the information gained, he hopes to launch a male support group in the spring that will address these students' interests, needs and achievements. Contact Mr. James in the SEEK Office for more information.

LEARNING CENTER EXPANDS WORKSHOP OFFERINGS

Aside from tutoring, one of the ways that the SEEK Learning Center provides academic support is by presenting topics in small group workshops. This fall, students were offered an expanded schedule of almost 60 sessions, held during club hours or at various other day or evening times. These workshops also reflected a wider range of educational themes, focusing on such topics as general college success (e.g. time management, understanding plagiarism), basic skills (e.g. avoiding common grammar and math mistakes), fiction writing (creating “novel” characters), tackling complex assignments (worry free research papers) and more. Since such workshops are conducted by tutoring and counseling staff who know the students, it’s possible to identify students’ needs and recommend particular topics to address specific concerns.

Both the schedule and the new workshop roster appear to have been well received throughout the fall. Students made use of the expanded schedule which gave them more options throughout the day, and posted positive comments about their experiences. “I now have a better understanding of grammar use, and how to prevent run-on sentences,” said one participant. “I learned how to make a structured outline in order to better organize my thoughts and ideas,” remarked another. At the end of the day, these kinds of favorable comments are a pleasant reward for staff, and a signal that students’ needs are being met through a useful approach.

THE PERCY ELLIS SUTTON SEEK PROGRAM COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND/CUNY

WE’RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.CSI.CUNY.EDU/SEEK/



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