

# SEEK NEWS

**VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1**

**FALL 2010**

**SEARCH FOR EDUCATION, ELEVATION AND KNOWLEDGE**

## 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*

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### Greetings once again to all of our SEEK family, colleagues and friends.

It's hard to believe that another academic year has come to an end. As I wrote to you in our last newsletter, this has been a busy and exciting year filled with many fantastic student accomplishments. We started the year with over 190 new freshmen -- bright, motivated incoming members of the SEEK family. We ended the year with almost 50 graduates -- some with associates, but most with baccalaureate degrees. They are future teachers and scientists, nurses and business people -- all moving on to new phases of

their lives. We are sad but excited to see them go. They make me proud.

As for me, I treasure my days with the Program. Every day brings something new to savor, from attending a SEEK for Excellence Club event (of which there were many this semester), sending a SEEK contingent off to Albany, hearing about our academic achievers and their honors, or seeing our serious students at work in the Learning Center. Our students are lively and engaged. They may struggle with many challenges, but every day they make me proud.

I also treasure my days with



my SEEK colleagues -- the counselors, support and tutoring staff and others who work so tirelessly to help our students succeed. I admire how hard they work, the respect

## NEWS FROM THE COUNSELING TEAM

### Greetings from the SEEK Counseling Team!

Hope you're having a great spring 2009 semester. We're glad to see so many of you around the SEEK Office. However, if you haven't seen your SEEK counselor at least ONCE since the summer, we are coming after you! Please make an appointment as soon as possible to review your courses, your progress and any concerns you have about your academic success and

college experience.

On a sad note, fall marked the passing of one of our bright new scholars, Mousa Aljahmi. Mousa was only with us a short time, but he made a tremendous addition to the SEEK family, with his great smile and infectious sense of humor. Our condolences go out to his classmates, friends and family. If you would like to participate in creating a memorial to Mousa, please come to the SEEK office to

share your ideas. Also, see the tribute written by Magd Khidir elsewhere in this newsletter.

Have a good semester. Remember that life passes quickly; make the most of it!

Dr. Fran Fassman  
Ms. Miriam Perez-Lai  
Dr. Julie Davelman

THE SEEK  
COUNSELING TEAM

## CHI ALPHA EPSILON NEWS

*Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) is the National Honors Society that recognizes the academic achievements of students in special programs like SEEK. Our CSI Chapter currently has 21 students, four of whom were newly added during the fall semester. Recently, we invited all members to a special meeting with two of CSI's deans. Junior Shannon Foreshee contributed this report.*

The opportunity to sit down and meet with both deans -- Dr. Francisco Soto (Humanities and Social Sciences) as well as Dr. Gail Simmons (Science & Technology) -- is something that does not happen every day. The fact that they took time out of their busy schedules to sit down with eleven members of Chi Alpha really spoke of how much they value students here on campus. Each of us had a chance to speak about who we are and what we have achieved so far at CSI. Also, members Gerard Forte, Rewieda Othman, Stephen Barnett and myself spoke about our experiences in the SEEK Research Assistants Project. Both deans stressed the importance of this Project and the opportunities it provides for students to bond with professors outside of the classroom, as well as the advantage it gives to any student looking toward graduate study. I feel that this Chi Alpha meeting is something that, if possible, should be done each semester or at least once every academic year.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

"...OUR STUDENTS ARE SUCH BRIGHT, ENTHUSIASTIC AND INTERESTING INDIVIDUALS."

they show to others and the good will and good humor they show. Each day with them is important and fun, and they make me proud.

No matter how well things are going, we can always do better -- so a major emphasis this semester has been working on an ex-

panded plan for evaluating our actions. Busy as we are, we've made a point of carving out some hours to work on improving our Program Assessment Plan. This semester, we've given a lot of thought to goals and objectives, learning outcomes we hope for our students and ways to measure our efforts.

I hope you'll enjoy reading this newsletter, and delight, as I do, in seeing all that goes on in CSI's SEEK Program. We hope always to make the College proud.



## NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

### Do You Know *Your* SEEK Learning Center?

Most students know that the SEEK Learning Center is the place to be if you want individual, one-on-one help with a subject, especially English or math. However, this semester students found themselves treated to an expanded menu of *group* workshops on many different topics. SEEK staff

and faculty offered sessions on plagiarism (avoiding it), common writing mistakes (preventing them), math anxiety (conquering it), note-taking skills (improving yours) and more!

If you take advantage of these workshops, you will take away key pieces of information that you didn't know before. Sometimes it's might be just a little thing that improves your course-

work or exams. Or maybe -- like the research strategies workshop -- you'll learn critical skills for doing a large assignment. Either way, students who use the Learning Center find its services extremely useful. So whether you're an "A" student or someone else, stay tuned for Learning Center events starting up in the fall.

You'll also notice that SEEK students

## SEEK WINNERS

### NERVANA GABALLA

SEEK's own Nervana Gaballa (a junior Communications major) was selected out of a group of 150 nominees across CUNY to participate in this year's CUNY Leadership Academy, the flagship student leadership program of the City University of New York. Nervana, along with two other CSI students, will join a group of 28 students selected for state-of-the-art leadership education focusing on service, community building, global perspectives and innovation. Nervana is hoping for a career in medicine, and, among her many activities, is the cur-

rent President of the CSI Pre-Medical Society .

### REWIEDA OTHMAN

Another SEEK winner is Rewieda Othman, the recipient of a \$1500 Student Government Academic Scholarship for excellence in CSI's Nursing Program. Rewieda, who plans eventually to become a family or adult nurse practitioner, is the mother of two children (ages eight and ten). Nominated by her nursing professors, Dr. Mary O'Donnell and Dr. Arlene Farren, Rewieda is the first student to win this award. Also, Rewieda recently became

another kind of "star," when she was selected with other nursing students to be featured in a CSI brochure, designed to publicize the Nursing Program's Advanced Certificate in Cultural Competence. The brochure is used by CSI's Office of Recruitment and Admissions.



MR. PAGAN &  
SCENES OF THE  
LEARNING CENTER



## SEEK IN ACTION: THE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS PROGRAM

*by Rhagina Chisolm, I.S. 49 Site Coordinator*

The SEEK Program offers an internship called *Strategies for Success* to CSI students with a GPA of 2.75 or better. *Strategies* places CSI students in schools in low income neighborhoods to tutor and mentor children attending there. The Program has been in existence for 8 years, and has been part of I.S. 49's JCC Beacon After-School Program since 2001 and at P.S. 57's Virtual Y since 2004. *Strategies* has been going strong over the years thanks to Ms. Georgia Landrum, Program Coordinator.

Last fall, 22 tutor/mentors participated in the program. These college students benefited by obtaining experience in teaching as well as having the opportunity to change a child's life for the better. The Program is open to all majors, but many of the tutors plan on becoming teachers in the near future, and some are deciding to change their major to Education.

This year we received a grant from Richmond County's District Attorney Daniel Donovan Jr., for school supplies, dic-

tionaries and calculators. We also received a grant from Time Warner Cable for school bags and school supplies. The 24 third grade students at P.S. 57 and the 100 sixth through eighth grade students at I.S. 49 were very happy to receive their school bags filled with supplies.

The Program's goal is to encourage the elementary and intermediate students to do their best in school and to be successful in the future. Borrowing an idea from the SEEK Program, we reward them with "incentive" coupons at the end of each homework help session. The students collect their coupons and cash them in for prizes on "Incentive Day," which is a day of fun and games that gives students a break from homework once a month.

The *Strategies for Success* Program is available for all college students registered full-time at the College of Staten Island. If you are interested in this opportunity to be part of a great team that helps children in our community, please call Georgia Landrum at (718) 982-2424.



*Strategies for Success in action*



## SEEK IN ACTION: MORE STUDENTS GET INVOLVED

During the fall semester, SEEK students saw the debut of the new SEEK "Incentives Program" which rewards students for their willingness to get involved in out-of-the-classroom activities, either in SEEK or elsewhere on campus.

Dr. Julie Davelman, coordinator of this initiative, reports that 179 students participated by the end of fall semester.

Students completed an *Incentive Coupon* for each activity attended during a given week, after which the coupons were entered into a weekly drawing for a \$10 Barnes and Noble gift card. All weekly participants then became eligible for the final drawing held during the spring '09 Welcome Back Party on February 5.

The winner of the grand prize, a \$50

Barnes & Noble gift card, was freshman Wilson T'se. Be sure to drop your coupons off before each weekly drawing for a chance to be a winner.

	Weekly Incentive Coupon
	Name: _____
	Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____
	Staff Signature: _____

## SEEK IN ACTION: SEEK CONNECTS WITH THE COMMUNITY

On Saturday January 17, hundreds of high schoolers and parents from around the borough arrived at CSI for a day-long “Youth Summit” planned by local organizations and co-sponsored by CSI’s SEEK, Black Male Initiative (BMI) and Liberty Partnerships Programs among others. Students were treated to workshops, entertainment, refreshments and information as they moved throughout the day. Three SEEK students (Bilikisu Hassan, Babatunde Adekanbi and Joveda Edwards) and two SEEK Counselors (Dr. Vogel and Ms. Perez-Lai) were there to help out with regis-

tration and other details.

SEEK’s participation in this summit topped off a busy semester of involvement with the community – especially with the Black and Latino Male Initiative and the Staten Island branch of the NY Urban League. In collaboration with these organizations, SEEK invited the Urban League’s Ranti Ogunleye to conduct a series of weekly workshops for CSI students during the fall semester. Attendance, which started small at the beginning, swelled to over 70 by the final fall session. Mr. Ogunleye will be leading

another round of these workshops expected to start in March or April. Watch the SEEK message board for more information. And to read about one student’s involvement at the Youth Summit, see Shannon Foresee’s article on page 7.

**“ATTENDANCE (AT THE URBAN LEAGUE WORKSHOPS), WHICH STARTED SMALL AT THE BEGINNING, SWELLED TO OVER 70 BY THE FINAL FALL SESSION.”**

## SEEK IN ACTION: THE “SEEK FOR EXCELLENCE” CLUB

The SEEK for Excellence Club had a very busy fall, and is planning an exciting line-up of events for spring as well. In fall, members participated in a one-day voter registration drive during which they reached close to 100 new registrants. The club also sponsored “What Do I Want to Be When I Grow Up,” an event that featured CSI career counselors and was attended by 45 SEEK and non-SEEK students. However, the club’s fall highlight occurred on Sunday, November 16 when 10 students, along with counselors Miriam Perez-Lai and Roberta Vogel, devoted their day to cooking and serving breakfast and lunch at the Project Hospitality homeless shelter in St. George. Referring to the students in a letter of thanks, the Rev. Will Nichols, Director of Communications and Community Outreach at

Project Hospitality said, “Their presence alone brightened the day for many of those less fortunate in Staten Island and positively impacted our community.” Congratulations to students Bilikisu Hassan, Adejoke Adegoke, Cherno Sow, Alpha Barry, Bryan Durante, Doris Miranda, Emy-Luz Incarnacion, Jing Shan, Maria Tsoukalas and Leigh Ann Renault for their dedication and service. Read Bilikisu’s article on page 6 for more on this event.

Spring ‘09 club events led off with a day in Brooklyn with Habitat for Humanity. Other plans include a wellness event (“Zumba! Get Fit, Eat Right and Start Now”) on March 18th, a “Toastmasters International” activity slated for April, and more. Watch for details on flyers, or contact the club through the SEEK Office in 1A-112.

## CAREER CORNER

Why do we go to college? According to SEEK Counselor, Dr. Fran Fassman, sometimes we go because it is expected of us or because we don’t know what else to do. But sometimes we have an idea of what we want to do when we “grow up” or we want to get ready to move onto the next phase of our life – a CAREER! Says Dr. Fassman, “College is a huge commitment, both financially and personally. At the end of the long road, hopefully you will have prepared for a specific goal.”

Finding that goal sometimes is difficult, but help is available through SEEK. Many of you have completed MY PLAN, an exploration of careers and interests to help you decide a major. If you haven’t done that, please ask your counselor for information. Remember, everyone has a four-year career plan to follow, and your SEEK counselors will help you stay on the right track with that.

One final thought: Research shows that workers with college educations will earn over 1.5 million dollars more in a lifetime of paychecks than those without. How’s that for motivation?

## ASK THE FINANCIAL AID COUNSELOR

*In this issue Stephanie Gardiner, SEEK Financial Aid Counselor, introduces a new column which will unravel some of financial aid's mysteries. Feel free to submit other questions via e-mail at [seek@mail.csi.cuny.edu](mailto:seek@mail.csi.cuny.edu)*

**Question:** I live on my own and support myself. Why do I need my parents' income information?

**Answer:** Although you are supporting yourself, the government criteria for receiving federal aid as an independent student says you must fall into *at least one* of the following categories:

- At least 24 years of age by the end of the calendar year
- Married
- Working on a master's or doctoral degree
- On active duty or veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces
- Have children or other dependents who will receive more than half their support from you during the academic year (July through June)
- Both parents deceased

- In foster care, dependent or ward of the court, or in legal guardianship as determined by a court in your state of legal residence
- After July 1, 2008, it was determined that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless

If you think you have a special circumstance that makes you independent, you should speak to a financial aid counselor in 2A-401 to determine your dependency status. If a parent refuses to give you his/her income information, you may be able to get an unsubsidized loan, but this reason alone does not make you independent.

**"IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A SPECIAL  
CIRCUMSTANCE THAT MAKES YOU  
INDEPENDENT, YOU SHOULD SPEAK TO A  
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## IN THEIR OWN WORDS: SEEK STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

### SEEK CLUB SERVES AT HOMELESS SHELTER *by Bilikisu Hassan*

Feeding the homeless at the Project Hospitality shelter was a beautiful experience. It not only affected me but the lives of others. Before we went, Rev. Will Nichols brought two guest speakers from the shelter to one of our club meetings. Hearing their stories made me want to help even more. And there is no better way than to serve food!

I am so happy that we took the time to cook from our homes and bring meals to the shelter. Seeing the light in these people's eyes brought joy to me because it showed me that I have affected their lives. Their stories touched me. Everyone who has been homeless has a story to tell, but there is a reason why people become homeless, and we should not judge them because we don't know what they have been through. I am so happy we did this event because it has affected me in a positive way, and I am more willing to help people in need. I think this is something we should do more often.



Counselors Ms. Miriam Perez-Lai and Dr. Roberta Vogel (3rd and 4th from left) join students in the kitchen.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS: SEEK STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

### MY BEST FRIEND AND BROTHER *by Magd Khidir*

*Freshman Magd volunteered to write about his good friend Mousa Aljahmi who passed away during the fall semester in a tragic accident at a worksite.*

I would like to speak about my best friend and brother, Mousa Aljahmi, that only blood does us part. 1<sup>st</sup> place rapid body builder, 3<sup>rd</sup> place PSAL track sprinter in Fort Hamilton and my best friend. We graduated in the same year from high school and began attending the Summer Immersion Program at CSI together. If it wasn't

for him, the Immersion Program would have been a disappointment, but his energy made it the most entertaining thing in the summer.

Mousa happened to get a job valet parking at a restaurant, and after a few weeks, he persuaded the manager to give me a position there too. From that moment on, we would see each other from 9 a.m. until 1 a.m. – going to school, hanging out on breaks, driving home together, eating dinner and then going to work at 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. almost everyday. But the night of the

accident, November 1<sup>st</sup>, he was working and I was not. So the best thing that I had so far in my life was taken from me.

Mousa is not just remembered by me, but also by the whole neighborhood and also by CSI. God rest his soul. Appreciate your friends and be there for them because they will be there for you. Don't hate others, and always try to be loved – just like what Mousa did. He loved, lived, supported and respected all, then left. Left nothing but the best memories.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS: SEEK STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

### STEP UP, SPEAK OUT YOUTH SUMMIT *by Shannon Foresbee*



*Shannon volunteered to write about his experiences at this event which was co-sponsored by SEEK at CSI on Saturday, January 17.*

I was asked to assist Dr. Matt Brim, professor of Queer Studies in the Dept. of English, to facilitate at the Youth Summit a workshop called “Don’t Judge a Book by Its Cover.” The group of students that attended my workshop were gay, lesbian or bisexual, and thus did not need to be told to “Don’t Judge a Book by Its Cover,” since they live it every day. Instead of doing our planned activity to debunk stereotypes, we decided to have the teens share with us their experiences of being queer in today’s Staten Island high school environment. Their stories seemed to mirror each other’s in that they were accepted by most of their peers and that their schools offered a support network for them in gay-straight alliance clubs and accessible faculty. Although many felt accepted in public, they still expressed a feeling of being criticized and ostracized behind closed doors.

Many of the youth were not thinking of attending college for various reasons, such as academic fear and financial burdens; being a SEEK student, I was able to share with them that the SEEK Program can help them achieve their college goals through a supportive and diverse environment.

I feel that I walked away from the workshop with a greater knowledge of today’s gay youth, and it is extremely helpful for me to understand what some of today’s queer high school students are facing.

## SEARCH FOR EDUCATION, ELEVATION AND KNOWLEDGE



WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.CSI.CUNY.EDU/SEEK/](http://WWW.CSI.CUNY.EDU/SEEK/)

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COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND  
City University of New York  
2800 Victory Blvd., 1A-112  
Staten Island, NY 10314  
718.982.2410

### THE SEEK PROGRAM IN ACTION



Dr. Tomás D. Morales, President  
Mr. Michael Daniels, Interim VP for Student Affairs  
Ms. Gloria Garcia, SEEK Program Director  
Ms. Jean Como, SEEK Newsletter Coordinator

### Contributors for this issue:

Ms. Angela Caliendo  
Dr. Julie Davelman  
Dr. Fran Fassman  
Ms. Beth McNelis  
Mr. Ralph Pagan  
Ms. Miriam Perez-Lai  
and students

## NEWS TO KNOW

Are you missing out on important news and updates from SEEK via e-mail? Join the other 125 plus SEEK students who keep informed about SEEK through e-mail. Next time you're in 1A-112, ask the front desk if we have the correct address for you (that is, the one you actually *use*...).



Did you know that 30 SEEK students made the Dean's list during the last award cycle? To qualify, a full-time student must attain a GPA of 3.5 or better during the preceding academic year, earning *at least* 12 credits in each semester. Congratulations to our scholars!

Some coming events include . . . . Workshop: "How's It Going So Far/Part II?" (March 4 at 2:30); SEEK Social Hour (March 19 at 1:30).

At the suggestion of some of our students, we have decided to assemble a compilation of essays written about the recent election and inauguration of Barack Obama. The essays can be of any length and can portray any political thoughts or feelings you may have concerning the new administration. Please see Earl in the SEEK Computer Lab for more details.

