

SEEK NEWS

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1 FALL/WINTER 2010-11

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*

Greetings to all our SEEK family, colleagues and friends.

Fall 2010 was another busy, eventful semester here at the SEEK Program, and as I write, we are hard at work getting ready for the spring term.

This fall we had a large number of incoming freshmen (182 to be exact), and, as always, we were excited to welcome them into the SEEK “family”.

As usual, our staff worked very hard to help our new students handle the demands

and routines of college life, and most students rose to the challenge.

Our continuing students were busy as well – using the services of our Learning Center in record numbers, coming in for group sessions with counselors on a variety of topics, attending special events and, as usual, juggling their course work and outside jobs and family life. Nobody ever said SEEK students have it easy, and yet most persevere and succeed – often against great odds.

In the SEEK Office, Director Gloria



Garcia with Ms. Kathleen (“Kay”) Esmilla (seated).

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NEWS FROM THE COUNSELING TEAM

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Hello to all our students from the SEEK Counseling Team!

Welcome back to a new year and a new semester.

Spring 2011 will be packed with activities, including workshops on skills and careers, as well as meetings about probation, financial aid and more. We hope to see you at many of these events. We’ll be emailing you with the details, as well as news about scholarships and other academic and career opportunities – so if you haven’t received e-messages from Dr. Fassman, please contact the Office in

1A-112 or 718.982-2410 so we can verify the email address we have on record for you.

We also hope you’ll join us for other fun-filled activities this semester, either sponsored by SEEK or happening elsewhere on campus. Of particular interest might be the *Green Thumbs Club* that runs the CSI garden; as Dr. Fassman says, “grow where you are planted.” Also your counselors plan to organize a group of SEEK students who want to volunteer at shelters, hospitals and other venues around the community.

Please contact Ms. Perez to participate in this endeavor and watch for further details as they develop.

Finally, if you haven’t seen your counselor recently, please remember to make an appointment to do so. Most students will tell you it’s always helpful to stay in touch with your counselor. We have much to offer – so hope to see you soon and OFTEN!

**Dr. Julie Davelman
Dr. Fran Fassman
Ms. Miriam Perez-Lai
THE SEEK
COUNSELING TEAM**

NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

What's happening in the Center...?

If you didn't visit the SEEK Learning Center in 1A in the fall, you might not have heard about all of the activities and services (aside from tutoring) that we organized this semester for our students. To name just a few:

- **The summer "Bridge Program"** – introduced a select group of freshmen to SEEK while enriching their skills in writing and research, and a **November "Bridge Reunion,"** at which freshmen told stories about the challenges and pleasures of their

first months at CSI

- **New skills workshops**, such as "Common Math Mistakes" and "Building Your Research Toolbox" -- helped students develop valuable know-how
- **Supplemental instruction** in remedial English courses, allowed tutors to better assist their tutees by attending classes with them
- **Group sessions on preparing and passing the CUNY Basic Skills Tests** -- gave students extra help and encouragement for overcoming these challenges

Now as we look forward to spring, our team of enthusiastic tutors stands ready to lend its expertise in reading, writing, and math – as well as in basic courses such as COR 100 or beginning sociology and psych. As usual, the Bio Dept. is on-site in 1A-108, and referrals for other sciences, modern language and more are always available. **Remember, using our many services is the SMART thing to do!!**

Ralph Pagan,
Learning Center Coordinator

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

Fall semester was also a time for saying "good bye" – as two of our longest-serving staff members prepared to retire. **Ms. Kathleen Esmilla**, my secretary of over 25 years and **Dr. Roberta B. Vogel**, SEEK faculty member and Program Deputy Director, have decided to move on to new, more mellow phases in their lives. We will all miss them terribly, and thank them for their tireless dedication

to SEEK and our students.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, which highlights some of the best moments of the fall semester, such as students pictured here and elsewhere who studied abroad. To all SEEK students and our friends on campus and in the community, I wish you a most happy and healthy 2011. May you succeed in the goals you have set for the coming year.

Gloria Garcia, SEEK Director



Sophomore Paul Olivier and "friends" in Ecuador.

SEEK RESEARCH ASSISTANTS PROJECT

The SEEK Research Assistants Project started its 7th year this fall. The Project places qualified SEEK students with faculty and staff who use the students as assistants, and mentor them regarding research design and methods, and other aspects of their fields. Student participants are a wonderful and talented group – serious about following their passions and pursuing their dreams.

This fall, three students from the prior year continued their work with professors in chemistry and nursing. They are: **Joseph Rasmy** and **Darya Sabarova**

(both sophomores in chemistry) and **Angelica Popolano** (a senior in women's studies). They were joined by photography major **Iman-Ayesha Platt**, who worked with Antonio Gallego, Assistant Director of Media Services. Iman, a senior, has been the President of the CSI Photography Club, and has exhibited and/or curated many shows here at CSI.

Our final entry in the Project this semester is **LiFang Zhang** (sophomore in chemistry). LiFang

emigrated from China 3 years ago, and has been doing exceptional work in her four semesters at CSI. Regarding her placement in Professor Shuiqin Zhou's chemistry lab, LiFang reports that they "...prepare samples, record observations, outline final results, then compare with other results. I love to study in the chemistry field. Everyday I can learn new things, new techniques."

Interested SEEK students can contact Project Coordinator, Jean Como, in 1A-112 for further information.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

FORTINO APARICIO-RODELA: A GENTLEMAN AND A NURSE

Fortino Aparicio-Rodela was admitted to the College of Staten Island in Fall 2008, entering as a SEEK freshman. On January 19, 2011, having completed the nursing requirements for the associates degree, he was pinned and pledged at the Nursing Department ceremony at CSI. The SEEK Program would like to extend a big “Congratulations” to Fortino, and to share some of his story.

Fortino has overcome many obstacles in his journey to becoming a nurse. He was born in Mexico in a little town called Acatlan de Perez Figueroa. The third child of ten siblings, he is the first generation of his family to attend college. While still living in Mexico, he dropped out of Grammar School in the seventh grade, to go to work in the fields to help support his family. He knew there was a better life for him, and he migrated to the Big Apple at the age of 16 in search of opportunity. However, that was short-lived when his opportunities consisted of washing dishes and cutting lawns. Although he could see many paths to take, he knew he could not move forward without having skills in reading and writing, and a commitment to building an academic foundation.

At SEEK/CSI, Fortino quickly realized the importance of participating and using the Program’s resources. First, he connected with his SEEK counselor who he says “gave me something I did not see in myself – confidence.” He also acknowledges help from others, such as **Jennifer Sullivan** (adjunct instructor in English and former SEEK tutor) who “stuck with me until I passed the assessment exams.” Be-



coming involved with the SEEK for Excellence Club was important too; as a member, he pioneered many food drives and volunteered at a local Nursing Home.

Says Fortino to other students, “I will always be grateful for all the help that the SEEK Program provided, and to my colleagues and instructors from the Nursing Program. I feel like I am on top of the world. If I made it, you can make it too!”



FRANCES A. MELENDEZ, Ph.D.: PSYCHOLOGIST AND SEEK ALUMNUS

As we are proud of saying, SEEK graduates can be found all around the country – in fact the world – doing interesting jobs, earning additional degrees and making wonderful contributions in many fields – from education and nursing, to engineering and chemistry and more. But sometimes we find our alums in our own backyard as is the case of Frances A. Melendez, Ph.D., a 1994 graduate of CSI and the SEEK Program, who in May 2010 was

appointed Deputy Director of CSI’s Master of Arts Program in Mental Health Counseling.

Dr. Melendez (or Frances as we call her) earned a BA in psychology and went on to achieve a doctorate in clinical psychology from the CUNY Graduate School. Since then she has had a hectic life, doing post-doctoral study in neuropsychology at NYU/ Bellevue Hospital, providing services

for adults, families, couples and adolescents, overseeing a traumatic brain injury program – even teaching abnormal psychology and other CUNY courses. She is also the author of several professional papers focusing on multicultural topics, particularly on Latino/a issues, and has presented at major professional conferences.

Congratulations, Dr. Melendez. We’re glad to have you back!

SEEK IN ACTION: THE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS PROGRAM



Tutors Jehona Duka and Zoya Gul work with students at I.S. 49.



John Butler, executive director of government and external affairs for Verizon, poses with CSI administrators, Program staff and college students at the Verizon grant presentation last September.

The *Strategies for Success* Program, now in its 10th year, is a service learning experience in which CSI students (SEEK and non-SEEK alike) serve as tutors and mentors for elementary and intermediate school children in two local public schools and a neighborhood community center. Each participating college student spends at least four hours per week in these after-school settings, helping students with homework and guiding them through other fun, educational activities.

Under the supervision of SEEK, the Program traditionally serves around 300 school children per year. Using grants from a variety of foundations and other corporate and community sources, the Program plans special events and rewards for the children throughout the year, encouraging the pupils to develop the learning strategies and study skills necessary for academic success. The Program is partnered with, and partially funded by, the Jewish Community Center and the YMCA and their respective after-school projects at IS 49, the Cornerstone Community

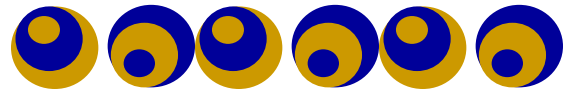
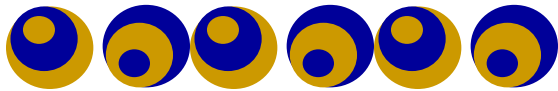
Center in Stapleton and PS 57.

One highlight of the recent semester was that *Strategies* was featured by education writer Diane Lore in an article in the Staten Island *Advance* newspaper. Ms. Lore pointed to recent grants from Verizon and the Staten Island Foundation – the kind of funding that enables *Strategies* to continue its mission. The *Advance* quoted SI Foundation director Betsy Dubovsky who said the \$50,000 grant to CSI is “...in keeping with the foundation’s mission to promote literacy.”

This idea was underscored by John Butler, executive director of government and external affairs for Verizon, who in referring to Verizon’s \$5,000 gift to *Strategies*, said that literacy is one of Verizon’s basic issues in its program to give back to the community and its customers. *Strategies* is also fundamental to SEEK’s mission which is to provide opportunities for personal and academic growth, and to encourage students of all ages to set goals and reach for success.

Attention All SEEK Students: March 31st is the priority deadline to file your 2011 – 2012 FAFSA and TAP applications. Don’t forget to consult with Angela and/or Liz in the SEEK Office or see Stefanie Gardiner in the Financial Aid Office with any questions or concerns about your funds.

SAYING "GOODBYE" TO DR. ROBERTA B. VOGEL



Counselor, researcher, colleague, teacher, mentor, friend ... these are just some of the roles **Roberta Burrage Vogel, Ph.D.** (aka "Bobbi") has filled in her 38 years as a faculty member here on Staten Island. Born in South Carolina, raised in Philadelphia and trained as a clinical psychologist in Michigan, Dr. Vogel has worked with thousands of SEEK students over the years, served on countless college and community committees and boards, received numerous awards, published and presented professional papers and much more. It is hard to imagine a day at SEEK and CSI without Bobbi.

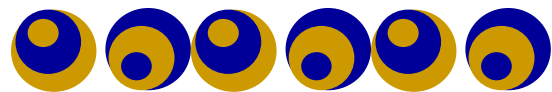
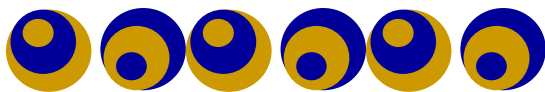
Dr. Vogel joined SEEK back in the day before Staten Island Community College and Richmond College merged to become the College of Staten Island. She arrived as a young psychologist and rose to the rank of full Professor at CSI. Aside from fulfilling her college duties (e.g. even working as SEEK's Director for ten years) and raising two children (Duane and Shoshana), she managed to find time to further her training at the Ackerman Institute for Family Therapy and elsewhere, and to serve as a key member of two boards of the NY Urban League (SI branch and central), as well as those of the SI Mental



Health Society and others. In addition, she served a term as President of the New York Association of Black Psychologists (NYABPsi).

At the College, her involvement has been as diverse as her interests. This is clear from the list of current CSI committees she leaves as she retires, including the CSI Association, the CSI Foundation, the Women's Center Advisory Committee, the Center for International Service Advisory Committee, the Inclusive Excellence Committee and more. Until 2010 she was also for several years an elected member-at-large of the CSI Faculty Senate/College Council.

While she leaves her full-time professorship to embark on a more relaxed lifestyle and enjoy her family including two grandchildren, we know that "Dr. V" will be implored to continue her connection with CSI and SEEK. We hope to see Bobbi as a participant in college activities and (hopefully) as a part-time contributor to SEEK projects. At any rate, we're sure that both the CSI and Staten Island communities will continue to look to Dr. Vogel for her wise counsel, her gentle humor and her fierce commitment to access and justice. We have to let you go, Bobbi, but just don't go too far.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: SEEK STUDENTS SPEAK

ATTENDING THE CUNY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Angelica Popolano, CSI SEEK Student

Angelica Popolano is a CSI senior, Women's Studies major, artist and future psychologist.

The CUNY Women's Leadership Conference...was created to enhance the skills and opportunities of students who have been shown to demonstrate a facility for leadership. Each school gets to choose ten female students to represent their college at the conference.

The opening panel included important figures in CUNY with an array of achievements, from the Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations, Jay Hershenson to the President of Hunter College, Jennifer Raab. Included in the opening dis-

cussion was the keynote speaker Cory Dean, who is the Senior Science Writer at the *New York Times*. Each speaker provided helpful tips for students to be successful in their academic life, as well as in their future careers.

A panel of science professors gave...helpful insight for all the undergraduate students to use throughout their college and future careers. Listening to each professor discuss the struggle they went through to get to where they are today, as well as how they still have to fight to earn their respect in the field of science as a woman, was truly inspiring. The main focus was on women as leaders and the obstacles they face, as well as advice on how one can juggle the many hats women wear (mother, wife, business woman). One reoccurring statement made was that, "women can have it all, but not all at once".



SEEK THROUGH THE EYES OF A FALL 2010 FRESHMAN

Noura Abel, CSI SEEK Student

Noura Abdel attended Susan Wagner High School and started CSI as a fall 2010 pre-nursing freshman.

During the summer of 2010, I met with Ms. Miriam Perez-Lai, a SEEK counselor, and was welcomed into the college. At first, I was quite nervous and confused about starting college, but after spending some time with Ms. Perez, I became comfortable and well aware that college is the place where I will achieve my future goals.

When I started my first semester, I hit some bumpy roads and felt like I was going to give up because nothing was working out the way I hoped it would. Fortunately, from my helpful counselor (the fantastic Ms. Perez) and more experienced friends attending CSI, I received great advice that I use until today. They made me realize that there are times

when a person may fall, but these are challenges that cause a person to strive harder and learn from the obstacles that are in his or her way. At the end of the day, you're always going to land back on your two feet.

During the Fall semester, there were many exciting moments such as the wonderful times when I met new people, and the crucial events that I attended pertaining to my major. One of the events I attended was a nursing workshop (sponsored by SEEK). I walked out of the workshop feeling confident about my future goals in life. Other great examples include tutoring which helps students in the subject in which they feel weak, and also wonderful counselors who would do anything and everything to give the students the help they need. Without being a part of this program, I would have never found out about these helpful events. In addition, I would have never been encouraged to do well in my first semester of college. I feel very lucky to have such a great opportunity at hand.

NEWS TO KNOW: FALL/WINTER HIGHLIGHTS



- SEEK student **Angelica Popolano** (senior--Women's Studies) was one of ten students selected to represent CSI at the sixth annual 2010 CUNY Women's Leadership Conference held at Hunter College in October. The theme of the conference was "Breaking Boundaries in Science and Health: New Careers and Challenges". For Angelica's account of the day, see page 6.
- SEEK Counselor **Miriam Perez-Lai** received a Professional Staff Award during Hispanic Awareness festivities organized by CSI's A.L.P.H.A. Club in October. The award was given in recognition of her "outstanding service and dedication to the campus community."
- The CSI Office of New Student Orientation recently selected two of our SEEK students to become New Student Orientation Leaders. Leaders greet new incoming CSI students and guide them through a series of campus activities before the start of each new semester. Criteria for selection: a solid GPA, good communication skills, enthusiasm for CSI and desire to help one's peers. Congratulations to **Travis Rodriguez** (sophomore--Business) and **Christopher Santana** (junior--Biology). Nice to know that freshmen are in good hands!
- As part of its many activities, our SEEK counseling team is instrumental in helping students apply for many scholarships throughout the year. Coordinated by Ms. Perez-Lai, the team recently helped two SEEK students (**Francesca Navarro** and **Loreyda Sanchez**) win \$1,120 each from Office Depot through the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HUCU).
- In November, SEEK hosted a special event called "Public Speaking: How to Conquer Your Public Speaking Jitters and Give an Awesome Speech," a two-hour session facilitated by **Ms. Tonya Kerry, Esq.** In a lively, hands-on, interactive group, more than twenty student participants learned secrets for overcoming fear and tips for creating interesting speeches, and tried out their skills in giving impromptu presentations. Valuable lessons to use now and for the future.
- SEEK co-sponsored and was one of the hosts of the day-long "**Step Up, Speak Out**" **Family Summit** held on January 15 at CSI. The summit offered a fabulous line up of speakers, workshops and entertainment – all celebrating diversity, and honoring the life, work and non-violent philosophy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Over 400 college and high school students, plus parents and other community members attended!
- Sophomore **Paul Olivier** is one of the busiest and most accomplished SEEK students we know. Aside from being a successful member of the Verrazano School, he is a part of CSI's Student Government and a student representative to the College Council. He has found time to participate in many other groups on campus and off, including a semester as tutor/mentor in SEEK's *Strategies for Success* Program. To top all this off, he recently received a STOCS Scholarship for study abroad, and spent the January 2011 break in Ecuador (see Paul's photo on page 2).

SEEK STUDENTS STUDY IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

January 2011 found SEEK students **Deanna Frasca** and **Tiffany Pham** accompanying Professors Lisa Manne and Richard Veit to the US Virgin Islands (St. John) as part of an inaugural program in biology research. As members of a group of fourteen students taking Bio 504 "Introduction to Tropical Ecology," they stayed in VIERS (Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station), a biology field station located at Lameshur Bay.

From morning to night, the students studied plant diversity and animal communities, looking at moist and dry forests, hermit crab travel, fish diversity, humming bird territoriality and more. One particularly exciting project involved counting bat populations, after capturing them using mist netting.

What a fascinating way to spend Winterbreak. Just think this could be you too!



Prof. Richard Veit and students pause for a group shot.

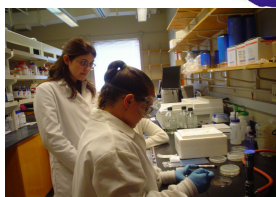
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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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THE SEEK PROGRAM IN ACTION



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