

# SEEK NEWS

**VOLUME 14, Issue 2      SPRING/SUMMER 2012**

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

## FROM THE DESK OF THE SEEK 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*

Dear Students and Colleagues,

These are exciting times at the SEEK Program.

As usual, we've had a tremendously busy semester, culminating in the success of our 66 graduates who now move on to bigger and better things. But it's not just the graduates who are to be congratulated. From junior Michael Allamby who is President-elect of next year's Student Government to freshman Troy Weekes who was just awarded one of the highly coveted Jeannette K. Watson Fellowships, SEEK students



shine at every level across campus and beyond. Their accomplishments are shared with you throughout the several pages of this newsletter.

Along with the students, our professional staff continued to bring their energy and enthusiasm to many different projects. The Counseling team spent a good part of the year evaluating and redesigning SEEK's Freshman Orientation

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## NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

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Many of you already know that the SEEK Learning Center, located in 1A-108, is a busy place, but this semester it was a virtual beehive of activity. Aside from providing the basic tutoring which is at the heart of our academic services, our team of talented and accomplished tutors offered 39 workshop topics – ranging from “Writing an Outline for Papers” to “Understanding Signed Numbers.” SEEK students could learn new skills or sharpen existing ones on almost any

day of the week. We also created a successful Calculus Review Group and saw hundreds of students visit our Computer Lab.

1A-108 also continued to be home to the Biology Department's tutorial center, and served as a site for the Office of Academic Support, which offers tutoring in a variety of subjects; thus students could use the Center to meet many different needs. Finally, this semester we proudly presented our newest

publication, *Hands On: The Art and Craft of Tutoring*, a collaborative effort from Professor Linda Principe (the Learning Center's tutoring advisor) and past and present members of the SEEK English Tutoring Team.

The Learning Center is an important resource as many students have learned. We hope that *you* are making the Learning Center an important part of your life. Our goal is your success!

## 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.*

We can proudly report that membership in Chi Alpha Epsilon continues to grow. This semester, **Israa Najjar, James Lugo, Shireen Shedhadeh and Xiao Xia Lu** were added to the roster of accomplished SEEK students responding

to the invitation to join. This brings the total number of *current* students in XAE to 29, while the overall cumulative total is over 100. In addition, two SEEK staff members (Dr. Fran Fassman and Ms. Angela Caliendo) were newly inducted as Honorary Members of the Society. Honorary Members promote the activities of the Society and serve as role models for its values and standards. As we look toward the fall, all members are encouraged to contribute ideas for next year's XAE program planning. To do so, contact Director Gloria Garcia in 1A-112.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

course and working on other assessment issues. The Learning Center introduced many new workshop offerings and established a weekly review session for calculus students. SEEK's Research Assistants Project continued to thrive, placing five students with faculty in Business, Chemistry and PEP (Political Science, Economics and Philosophy). As always, we try very hard to help all of our students reach their goals, but the ones who ultimately succeed are those who work the hardest and take advantage of the opportunities we offer.



As this newsletter goes to press, we're already meeting and greeting members of our fall 2012 freshman class. While looking forward to a new year, sadly we say goodbye to Dr. Tomás Morales, our CSI President for the past five years, who is moving on to wonderful opportunities in California. We'll miss him very much -- even as we begin working with the new Interim President, Dr. William Frist. As I said at the beginning, these are exciting times at SEEK.

## SEEK RESEARCH ASSISTANTS PROJECT

The SEEK Research Assistants Project (RAP) has a long history of encouraging students to explore the world of scholarly research through in-depth connections with faculty outside of the classroom; the month of June marked the end of the eighth year that SEEK students have worked as apprentice research assistants for faculty. By now, about 50 students have performed in nearly every academic department, from Biology to English to Sociology and more. Getting hands-on experience and being mentored by

faculty are just two of the benefits of Project participation. Students report an increase in self-confidence, as well as improved academic and critical thinking abilities after participating in RAP.

This year we saw five more high achievers engaging in projects in Business, Chemistry and PEP-Geography. **Li Fang Zhang** has worked with Prof. Shuinqin Zhou's team in Chemistry for two years, in particular on the science behind improved methods for monitoring

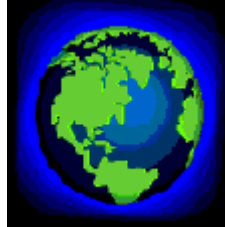
blood glucose levels in persons with diabetes. Says Li Fang, "Research is fun and gives me a sense of accomplishment, just like finding the exit in a maze." Adds **Alexandra Doronina**, who worked this year with Prof. Alan Zimmerman (Business), "Being a research assistant helped me to broaden my horizons and improve my research and time management skills. ... I am sure that this new knowledge will be very useful in my future career."

## SEEK STUDENTS STUDY AND TRAVEL ABROAD

This year, Tiffany Pham, Deanna Frasca and Marwa Janini were among the SEEK students who traveled the world. If you would like to share shots of your journeys, post them to SEEK's Facebook page at [Facebook.com/seekcsi](https://www.facebook.com/seekcsi).



Tiffany & Deanna in Casablanca, Morocco



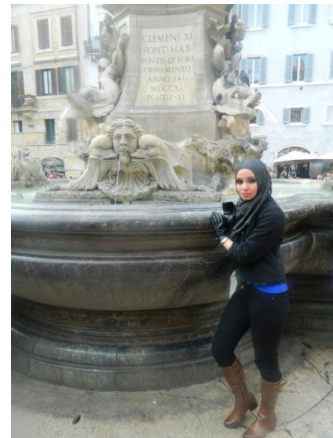
Tiffany in Paris, France



Marwa in Beit Hanina, Israel



Marwa in Amman, Jordan



Marwa in Rione di Trastevere, Lazio



Marwa in Pisa, Italy



Tiffany in Paris, France



## SEEK IN ACTION



SEEK Student, Tiffany Pham (right), celebrates with fellow graduates.



Director Gloria Garcia (left center) joins Hernan Green and Drs. Roberta Vogel and Julie Davelman at Commencement 2012.



With Learning Center Coordinator Ralph Pagan, student **Brandon Echevarria** collects his prize of a \$15 Metro-Card after winning the weekly SEEK raffle, open to any SEEK student attending a Learning Center workshop.



Spring 2012 Chi Alpha Epsilon Members and New Inductees for the Beta Iota Chapter.



## SEEK IN ACTION



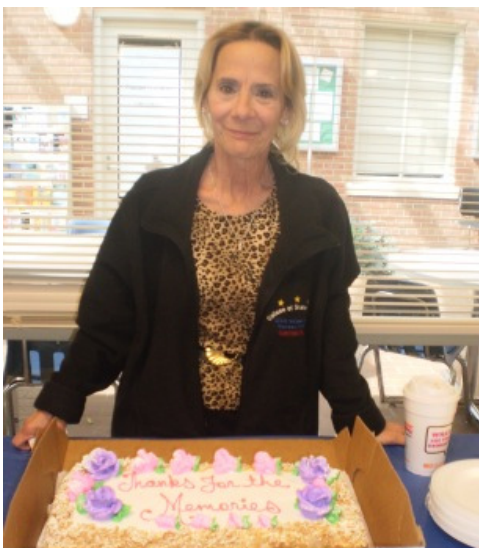
Tutor David Lightcap (right) assists Hila Karmi in the Learning Center's Calculus Review Group.



Contestant Troy Weekes, Jr. at the "CSP's Got Talent" competition in April.



"Strategies for Success" tutor/mentors gather for a "photo op."



Deborah Ruggirello celebrates her retirement from the College of Staten Island and says, "Goodbye" to SEEK after working at the college for more than ten years.



## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS BEGINS LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR CHILDREN

SEEK's *Strategies for Success* Program is a service learning project that pairs SEEK and other CSI students with local elementary and intermediate pupils for the purpose of providing homework help and mentoring. Since its inception, *Strategies* has served thousands of students in the Staten Island community, and it continued its outstanding work in several after-school and community center settings during this past academic year.

Adding to its already successful tutoring/mentoring activities, the Program's newest component this year was leadership training for pupils. To begin, the college students themselves took part in personal development and leadership workshops during which they discussed the fundamentals of living proactively, setting personal goals, managing their time, conflict resolution, being a good listener, embracing others' differences, and the importance of self-renewal. They emerged from the training prepared to exemplify leadership, and ready to apply these fundamentals as they worked with their elementary and intermediate mentees.

Following the staff training, the Program conducted several leadership workshops, including those for students at P.S. 14, P.S. 57, I.S. 49, and the JCC Cornerstone at the Gerard Carter Community Center in Stapleton. The workshops, though conducted for younger students, covered the same topics as those for the college student mentors. This was intended to create a pipeline of principle-based personal development from the elementary level up through the college student level, and gave college mentors a chance to hone their own leadership skills.

As a whole, the members of the *Strategies* team are impressed with the results of this new leadership initiative. Feedback from participants on all levels has been remarkably positive and uplifting, and the team is looking forward to its future in the development of leaders here on Staten Island. If becoming a *Strategies for Success* Program college student mentor sounds appealing to you, ask your SEEK counselor for more information. (See photo, page 5)



## BLACK AND LATINO MALE GROUP BEGINS AT SEEK

As reported in our last newsletter, Steven James (SEEK's newest counselor), along with Ralph Pagan (SEEK's Learning Center Coordinator), last fall began meeting with small groups of Black and Latino males in the SEEK Program with the goal of sharing their experiences at CSI and supporting their academic efforts. Given the national and local statistics that indicate low rates of college persistence and graduation among such males, SEEK is hoping to find ways to address, as Mr. James says, "...issues that impede educational access, academic achievement and professional advancement of men of color."

In surveying these males, Mr. James discovered some curious findings. On the one hand, students described feeling comfortable in their adjustment at CSI, but at the same time reported experiencing loneliness or feeling ostracized. They also

expressed a need for more relevant campus organizations and events, more opportunities to meet role models and mentors, and more chances to make new friends from among their peers. From this, Mr. James concludes that some men of color are not fully aware of how their experiences and feelings might be having a direct impact on their motivation and success in school. He would definitely like to change this.

So far, two of the group members have been enlisted to recruit others, and also will mentor entering freshmen in the fall. In the meantime, plans are underway for a BMI luncheon or some other social event in September, and other activities will be organized as well. Mr. James and Mr. Pagan are hopeful that this initiative will have a positive impact on college success for SEEK's Black and Latino male population.



## NEWS TO KNOW: SPRING HIGHLIGHTS



- Every ten years or so, the College of Staten Island undergoes an intense appraisal process by outside peer evaluators which determines its compliance with high standards for colleges and universities. This year, the so-called **“Middle States” review** found CSI eligible for continued status as an accredited college, and also pointed out several aspects of our college that deserved special recognition. We are happy to report that the **SEEK Program received one of these commendations.**
- SEEK junior **Lisbeth Pantaleon** will be doing a **summer internship with the Ford Foundation in NYC.** The Foundation is a non-profit grant-making organization committed to the mission of strengthening democratic values, reducing poverty, and promoting international cooperation and human achievement. A great environment and opportunity!
- SEEK senior **Daria Sabarova**, Chemistry major, presented her research at the annual **CSI Undergraduate Research and Performance Conference** in April. Her work was entitled “Asymmetric Allylboration of Aldehydes Catalyzed by Optically Active SPINOL-Based Phosphoric Acids.”
- Junior **Joanna Irizarry-Zaraza** is not only a long-distance swimmer, who plans to compete in the one mile (64 laps) for CUNY CHAMPS, but she was also selected to participate in the **2012 NYS Model Senate Session Senate Project in Albany.** This annual event brings students together to focus on important policy issues and to foster critical thinking and leadership skills. Joanna was joined in Albany by fellow student, **Lissette Altreche.**
- CUNY Baccalaureate Program student **Michael Allamby** has been elected to the position of **CSI Student Government President for the 2012-13 year.** This year, Michael has also been the President of the CSI Business Innovation Club, was a participant in SEEK’s Research Assistants Project and worked outside of school as well as being an excellent student. He also participated in February’s Black History Celebration at CSI, speaking about his native Barbados, and became a Student Leader with the Office of New Student Orientation. His tenure as SG President should be awesome!
- SEEK Students **Clarissa Gattas, Kevin Gomez and Haby Ly** have been selected for the **2012 SEEK/CD Student Leadership Academy** sponsored by the CUNY Office of Special Programs. This 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference will provide students from across NYC with three days of exciting and challenging leadership experiences.
- Former SEEK Counselor **Dr. Roberta B. Vogel**, although retired, is still winning accolades! Most recently it was the **Irene Deitch Humanitarian Public Service Award** conferred on Dr. Vogel by the Richmond County Psychological Association at their annual brunch on April 29. A well-deserved tribute indeed!
- Freshman **Julissa Gallegos** won the first-ever **Tutors’ Choice Award** bestowed at the May SEEK Honors Day Celebration. This award, created by the SEEK Learning Center Tutoring staff, recognized the student who demonstrated the most persistence and dedication to learning throughout the year.
- **Troy Weekes, Noura Abdel and Clarissa Gattas** represented SEEK at the March 2012 Staten Island Borough Hearing of the CUNY Board of Trustees. These experiences not only highlight SEEK’s contributions, but also help students perfect their public speaking skills – a talent they’ll need in their future careers.
- This year we salute **sixty-six (66) SEEK students who earned degrees**, and also the **twenty-one (21) students who made the Dean’s List.** Congratulations to all!
- SEEK students are active all over campus. Our own **Lisa Marie Scollo** is the President of the new Gay-Straight Alliance. **Marwa Janini** and **Haby Ly** participated in the Kick-Off Event for Women’s History Month in March. **Haby, Michael Allamby, Alexandra Doronina and Troy Weekes** served as “fashion consultant/models” at the “What to Wear” Professional Dress Seminars sponsored by the Career Center.

## SEEK STUDENT WINS PRESTIGIOUS JEANNETTE K. WATKINS FELLOWSHIP

The Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship is a three year career-building and mentoring program that offers exciting summer internships and other cultural and career-related experiences to promising NYC area undergraduates each year. SEEK students seem to have a knack for making stellar impressions when it comes to winning one of these annual awards. Surviving an arduous application and interview process, Troy Weekes, SEEK freshman and budding Dramatic Arts major, became this year's Fellowship winner from CSI. However, not only is Troy a finalist, he is also the second student from SEEK to be the CSI winner in two consecutive years!

It was only this past fall that Troy decided to enroll in college following a seven year break after high school. His ambition is to eventually make a career in music, but in the meantime, he has quickly made his mark as a SEEK and CSI leader. While achieving a solid GPA, he's also found time to serve as a SEEK Ambassador, compete in CSI's first ever Talent Show (where he received honorable mention for his musical performance) and participate in CSI's Gospel Choir. He's also volunteered to speak at this spring's Undergraduate Open House and New Student Conference. And this doesn't even mention the activities he's involved in outside of school!

Keep up the good work, Troy! Continue to make SEEK proud.

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

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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

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