

SEEK NEWS

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 2 SPRING/SUMMER 2014

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*

Dear Students and Colleagues,

In the last issue of this newsletter, I wrote about the pleasures of greeting a new group of SEEK freshmen each summer and fall. Now, at the end of the spring semester, I face another scenario – saying goodbye to our wonderful graduates who have persevered and triumphed over many challenges to finally achieve their goals. It is so satisfying to see their excited faces on Commencement Day,



Above: Gloria Garcia, SEEK Director, with Janet Rainer, Administrative Assistant who just completed her Associate's Degree, Cum Laude, in Sociology, with a minor in Anthropology. Ms. Rainer is a member of the International Sociology Honor Society *Alpha Kappa Delta*.

and to think about the part that the SEEK Program and its staff may have played in helping these students along the way. Indeed, many graduates will tell you that without SEEK and its encouragement, they might never have reached the finish line.

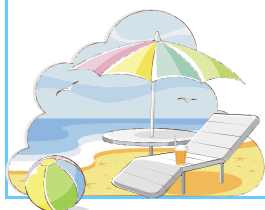
While I know our staff is exemplary, it's the students who are truly impressive, and I'd like to tell you about a few that come to mind for various reasons. First is

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NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

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STUDY GROUPS PROVE VALUABLE: Most students are familiar with tutoring – the extra help that can be gained from working one-on-one with a helpful person who knows a subject well. The Learning Center specializes in such tutoring – especially for basic skills like reading or writing, or for freshman level courses like COR 100, but many students may not be aware that the Learning Center also organizes *study groups* that give students an oppor-

tunity to work together in small numbers with a skilled instructor outside of the classroom. A study group is place where one can bring up challenging problems, hard to understand concepts and more. It's a place where students can feel comfortable grappling with difficult course work, as everyone is in the same boat.

While some students form their own study groups, the Learning Center can facilitate by scheduling, advertising and

getting students together. For example, over the past year and a half, we've been sponsoring two math study groups, specifically focused on pre-calculus and calculus (Math 123 and 130, as well as Math 230 and 231.) Led by popular instructor David Lightcap, these groups address some of the most challenging math courses that students encounter – the so-called "gateway" classes that must be conquered before advancing into many majors. Students who stick with these sessions

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

Holdaliz Brito, who majored in Spanish and Sociology and spent last summer studying abroad. Like so many SEEK students, she is the first of her family to earn a college degree, and she credits CSI and the SEEK family with giving her the opportunity to make her mark. Her membership in Chi Alpha Epsilon, the national honor society, attests to her academic accomplishments, but also during her college years, she worked and volunteered outside of school, tutored at CSI's Modern Languages Media Center and held a Work/Study position. She exemplifies the hard-work and sense of purpose that characterizes so many SEEK students.

Another outstanding graduate is Hassan Haimed, who just completed his BA in psychology. Although born in NYC, Hassan spent much of his childhood in Yemen, and in fact will return there soon to celebrate his upcoming wedding. Here at CSI, Hassan got off to a slow start academically, but with the help of his SEEK counselor and his own fortitude, he was able to turn himself around, going from mediocre grades to A's. He also used opportunities here to explore his future career path – by working, for example, with autistic children through an internship. He now plans to continue his studies to become a mental health counselor. Hassan

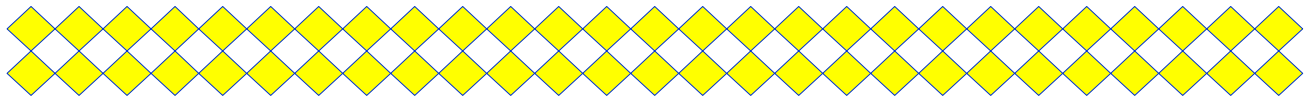
shows us how determination and focus can lead to success.

Finally, another one of our recent grads, Ashley Journey, just received a BA in English literature. She is an aspiring writer who hopes to work in media and/or theatre. Aside from being an outstanding student, Ashley participated for two years in *Strategies for Success*, SEEK's tutoring/mentoring program for elementary and intermediate school children. She claims that engaging in community service taught her a lot about herself and life. We are proud of Ashley's commitment; her experience illustrates the principle that giving back results in personal growth.

So, as we once again greet our new freshmen, we hope they'll all be inspired by the wonderful role models these graduates provide. We are all the SEEK family.

On a final note, and on behalf of the SEEK family, I would like to express our congratulations to Dr. William Fritz, who was recently appointed as CSI's President after two years as Interim President. We look forward to CSI's continued growth and development under his leadership.

Gloria Garcia

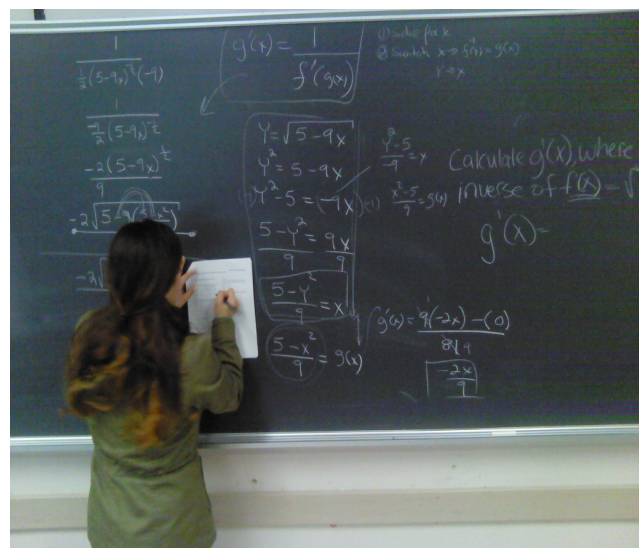


NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER (continued)

week after week find that they really make the difference between passing and failing. So if you are facing a similar tough course, be sure to stop by the Learning Center to find out how we can help.

SEEK COMPUTER LAB IS UPGRADED: In other news from the Learning Center, our computer lab recently upgraded its major hardware and software. The lab received 21 brand new keyboards, mice, and computers. The computers feature additional USB ports and faster Intel i5 processors. The keyboards are designed to respond to a lighter touch, making typing even easier, and the new optical mice have a faster response time. In addition, software was upgraded to Windows 7, a newer operating system, and computers were loaded with the modern internet browser Google Chrome to ensure the security and speed of web browsing. Our computers were among the first to be upgraded to the newer operating system by the Office of Technology Systems under the leadership of Vice President Michael Kress.

Ralph Pagan, SLC Coordinator



Above: Learning Center Study Group Participant.

STUDY ABROAD THRILLS SEEK STUDENT IN PARIS

Our SEEK students continue to explore the globe and report back about their travels. Senior Winnie Darius chose to study in Paris, France and was totally enchanted by the experience. She not only provided a photo montage, but also sent *SEEK News* a few words about “...the most beautiful and most visited city in the world.” According to Winnie, “This experience gave me new perspectives on life, and now all I want to do is travel the world. There are so many things to see and be inspired by. This was by far the best experience of my life!” Not surprisingly, Winnie wishes she could have stayed for another semester, but had to return to continue her studies as a biology major with a 3.1 GPA.

We hope all SEEK students will investigate the many study abroad opportunities – both short and long term – that CSI and CUNY make available.



Above: Winnie Darius in Paris



SEEK STUDY ABROAD DESTINATIONS

SEEK STUDENTS GATHER VALUABLE EXPERIENCES IN THE CUNY SERVICE CORPS

As reported in the last issue of *SEEK News*, six CSI SEEK students were among the more than 700 CUNY students selected for the first year of the new CUNY Service Corps, a city-wide initiative that pairs students with paid internships at non-profit and government agencies, museums and community groups. The Corps is designed to provide valuable contributions to the life of the city while at the same time helping CUNY students to develop new skills and discover new interests.

Not surprisingly, our SEEK students had diverse experiences over the past year. Senior Wing Yan Law (mathematics) worked in the CUNY Building Performance Lab based at Baruch College, where the focus was energy usage at various CUNY locations. The best part of the experience, she says, was "...working as part of a team,

and applying classroom learning to real life situations." Another student, Khanshea Lewis (political science), was placed in the elder services unit of a local community agency.

Four more of our SEEK students (Whitney Agyekum, Winnie Darius, Miriam Vasquez and Guenael Oristel) will have an opportunity to join the Corps. According to their counselors, all of these students are exceptional. Steven James, who has been Guenael's counselor through his freshman year tells us, "Guenael has maintained an outstanding GPA despite enduring many hardships." Counselor Fran Fassman reports that Whitney, "... is a bubble of sunshine, always smiling and ready to pass along a good word. She is the perfect CSI representative for the Service Corps." Congratulations to all!



SUPPORT STAFF GREET NEW STUDENTS

Every spring, SEEK goes into recruitment mode as we reach out to potential new students for the Program. The three administrative staff members (Angela Caliendo, Catherine Hemsworth, Liz McDermott) pictured here are responsible for the many hours of letters, phone calls, receptions, record-keeping, coordination with other campus offices and more that result in the over 180 freshmen that SEEK accepts each fall. These are the first faces that prospective students see. These are the staff members who create the warm and welcoming atmosphere that new students find. We thank them for their dedication and service.

At Right:
Catherine Hemsworth



Above: Liz McDermott and Angela Caliendo



SEEK IN ACTION



Left: SEEK *Strategies for Success* mentor Marwa Ahmar works with her pupil at PS 78.

Right: Vice President A. Ramona Brown, Dr. Roberta Vogel, and members of the Chi Alpha Epsilon National Honor Society gather at the May Induction Ceremony.



Left: SEEK counselors Dr. Fran Fassman, Ms. Miriam Perez-Lai and Mr. Steven James celebrate with SEEK winners on Student Leadership Awards night.

SEEK STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE THROUGH MANY INITIATIVES

SEEK has many students who are academic achievers. Of course, they are successful because they devote the necessary long hours and dedication to master their course work, but many also benefit from SEEK initiatives that encourage and recognize academic excellence.

One such initiative is our CSI Chapter of Chi Alpha Epsilon, the National Honor Society of educational opportunity programs. On May 8th 2014, Chi Alpha once again held an induction ceremony for new members, who had been invited to join based on having at least 24 credits and a GPA of 3.0 or higher in two consecutive semesters. This year's new inductees included Anina Alvarez, Sheilla Auquilla, Winnie Darius, Mary Cawog, Laura Costantino, Kevin Gomez, Corryn McFarland, Sergio Mendoza and Ana Valerio. Celeste DelMaestro, a SEEK staff member, was also inducted as an Honorary Member. The Associate Director of the National Society, Dr. Schevaletta Alford of John Jay College, conducted the ceremony. In addition to inducting new members, jewels were awarded to existing members for surpassing their prior grade point averages. Recipients included Tabish Ali (Ruby), and Sallem Asmar, Holadaliz Brito, Joanna Irizarry-Zaraza, and

Anna Tam (Emerald), and Shireen Shehadeh (Diamond).

Another way that SEEK encourages scholarship is through its Research Assistants Project which has just concluded its tenth year. The Project pairs well-qualified students with faculty members who provide students with hands-on experience. This year's participants were: Palvishah Ismail, Wing Yan Law, Khanshea Lewis, and Ben Yang. These students worked with Professors Jean Halley (SASW), Tobias Schaefer (Mathematics), Jane Marcus-Delgado (Political Science), and George Wang (Business), respectively.

Another of SEEK's initiatives, the summer *Bridge Program*, targets incoming freshmen who do not need Immersion classes. Designed to promote personal and academic preparation for college, *Bridge* introduces students to college writing, research, and Blackboard, and follows-up campus sessions with online activities. Our goal is that these new students will start their first semester with a greater understanding of the demands of scholarship and become future research assistants or Chi Alpha members like those mentioned above.



NEWS TO KNOW: FALL/WINTER HIGHLIGHTS



- Spring is one time of the year when student awards are bestowed, and this season was no exception for our SEEK students. SEEK sophomore Clarisa Gattas, an RA in CSI's new student residence, Dolphin Cove, was recognized as a "Rising Star of the Year," a new award created by the CUNY Office of Student Affairs to acknowledge the "hard work, dedication and accomplishments" of residence life staff throughout CUNY. "Amazing leadership" and "wonderful rapport" were just two of the terms describing Clarisa's contributions to students in the residence hall this past year. Furthermore, Clarisa reports that she also was recognized as a "Student Staff of the Month" from American Campus Communities. We saw Clarisa's star quality from her very first days at CSI, and she continues to make us proud.
- To recognize other outstanding students, the College recently organized an inaugural event to acknowledge the myriad forms of leadership that CSI's students engage in each year. At a June 3rd banquet, award recipients dined at a beautiful Staten Island venue where they were thanked for their many contributions to the life of the college and beyond. For this initial event, various campus offices and leadership programs designed their awards and nominated recipients. The SEEK Program conceived four categories (Scholarship, Initiative, Visionary, and Spirit awards) for which the winners were Mays Jumah, Newton Brooks, Dewayne Stewart and Holdaliz Brito respectively. SEEK's three counselors were at the event to cheer our winners on. For a photo, see page 5.
- Speaking of service, SEEK's *Strategies for Success* tutoring/mentoring program for elementary and intermediate school children continued to dedicate countless hours of homework help, leadership training, financial literacy instruction, and positive encouragement to pupils in three local after-school settings – IS 49, PS 78, and the Gerard Carter Community Center/JCC Cornerstone Program. Over 300 children were served by 52 SEEK and other CSI students this academic year. As positive role models for the children, these mentors not only provided valuable service to the participating pupils, but also grew both personally and professionally from the experience themselves. For a glimpse of one mentor in action, see page 5.
- Each year many SEEK students find the time to volunteer their services for CSI. This year, several helped out at the Alumni Association's annual fund raiser, *Savor the Flavor*. Students Newton Brooks, Guanael Oristel, Kaylin Rodriguez, Michael Tighe, Kaitlin Tighe and Divine Manzano answered the call to help make the event a success.





SEEK staff members join some *Strategies for Success* mentors before they travel to the after school sites.



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