

SEEK NEWS

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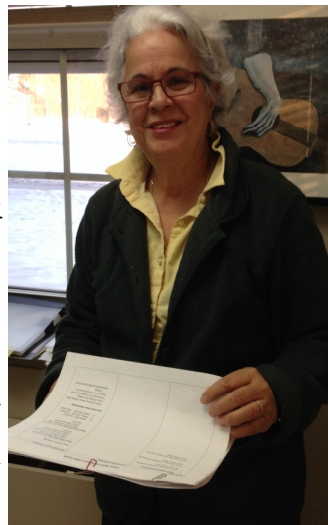
THE PERCY ELLIS SUTTON SEEK PROGRAM
COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND/CUNY

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*

As I write this message, the holidays are over and a new year has just begun. January provides time to reflect on the fall semester, and to move forward on plans for the coming months. Looking back, the past semester was filled with many activities that are typical of a new academic year; we greeted 175 new freshmen, taught five sections of our orientation course, worked on career and leadership development, and continued to serve the community through our *Strategies for Success* Program. We also continued our math study groups, increased our online workshop program and more.



However, this fall we also took time for a renewed look at our mission and goals. As most readers know, the SEEK Program is an educational opportunity program, created over 40 years ago to provide college access and extra resources (such as counseling and tutoring) to help underrepresented students achieve. But some questions to ask are: how does this lofty goal translate into daily action, and what are the best things that we can do to try to succeed? How best to bring our new, many underprepared students into the

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NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

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In a previous issue of "SEEK News," we highlighted our group of Learning Center (LC) tutors – the highly dedicated college grads who provide the daily enrichment services that benefit so many of our students. While we have grown to expect staff changes from year to year as tutors move on to full-time work or graduate school, this fall we're happy to report that the group remained largely intact, except for one relatively new face -- Danielle Auriti (Math).

While the tutors, of

course, are the heart of our operation, there are a few other important part-time staff members whom we didn't discuss last time. One such person is Earl Gatchalian who, for three days per week, covers the Learning Center's Computer Lab, where students work on course assignments, access library materials, practice math skills and much more. Earl, an English major graduate of CSI, has been with SEEK for over seven years. When not on the job, he pursues his love of drama

and cinema. Another go-to person for computer-related issues is Geeth Padmaperuma, also a CSI grad with a 2012 BS in Computer Science. Coming to CSI from her native Sri Lanka, Geeth originally joined SEEK for alternate days with Earl. She now has assumed many other functions – especially keeping the Program on track with utilization reports and other reviews that are vital for assessing our services. Geeth is mom to two small children, and, when not on campus, has been

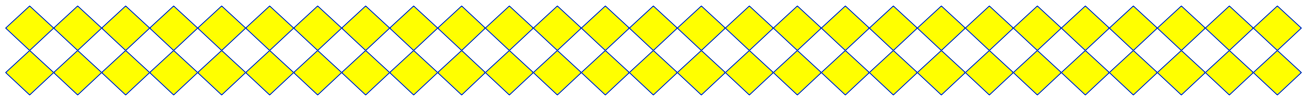
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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

world of college with the hope that they'll succeed? With those questions in mind, we are taking a look at some specific areas, such as the time some students spend in remediation, the credits and grades they achieve, their timely movement toward graduation, etc. Can we identify which students have a better chance of succeeding? Can we become better at persuading our students to accept the help we offer? What more can we do to help students overcome the formidable life challenges they face along the way?

While we haven't discovered any magic answers, we are trying to become more systematic and thoughtful about the things that we do. While college isn't for everyone, a college degree still opens doors toward a better life, and we want this opportunity for the students we serve. So...here we go into a new semester, refreshed and ever hopeful that our work will make a difference. I'm sure this sentiment is shared by my colleagues across the campus; may 2015 bring all good things to you and the students you reach.

Gloria Garcia



NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER (continued)

doing an internship at the United Nations for the past few months.

Finally, two other part-time workers play key roles in the Center. Kristina Montesano, another CSI English grad, is our social media and outreach guru who also schedules students and tutors, texts daily appointment reminders, designs flyers and announcements, and more. Kris is a writer at heart, and saw her first novel, *Piper at the Gates*, published in 2012. Outside of work, she continues to write – including a weekly column about her greatest love, European football (aka soccer). Last but not least among our roster of part-timers is Nancy Goetze, who has introduced distance learning to our Program. Nancy brings a wealth of experience to her role in the Center, where she designs our online educational lessons and coaches students along the way. In addition, you'll find Nancy putting together special initiatives for our Bridge Program students, our students in remediation, our SEEK Scholars, and other segments of the SEEK population.

In sum, these talented part-timers are vital to the success of the Learning Center. Not only do they add value in very specific ways, but are all very versatile and willing to

step in to get any job done, including backing-up our tutors when the need arises. They are key to the day-to-day functioning of the Center, and I'm proud to have them as part of the LC team.

Ralph Pagan



Above: Geeth and Earl in the SEEK computer lab.

COUNSELING CORNER

As usual, the fall semester was a hectic one for our three SEEK Counselors, Fran Fassman, Miriam Perez-Lai and Steven James. Aside from working individually with over five hundred continuing and freshmen students, the counselors also taught five sections of SEEK's Freshman Orientation course (SKO 100), organized social gatherings (e.g. "Welcome Back" and "Midterm Madness" parties), *and* put together a heavy schedule of workshops on such topics as study abroad, leadership, career development and more.

Of the workshops, one of the most popular is an annual session on "Public Speaking" – attended this fall by 135 students. The two-hour workshop, led by motivational speaker Tonya Kerry, Esq., gives students an entertaining overview of how to mount an effective

presentation, and provides opportunities to practice new skills. Lessons learned in this session are put to use in the classroom as part of the SKO 100 final exam, which takes the form of individual presentations to the class.

Another well-attended session was organized by Ms. Perez-Lai for prospective nursing majors. Faculty member Karen Arca-Contreras (Nursing) was invited to address issues and questions regarding CSI's nursing program as well as the nursing field in general. Information was also provided about other health careers.

Students report finding these events helpful, and the counseling team is already preparing new ones for the spring. Look for flyers and other announcements soon!

Dr. Fran Fassman
and David Lightcap.



SEEK's "MEN OF EXCELLENCE" GROUP CONTINUES TO FLOURISH

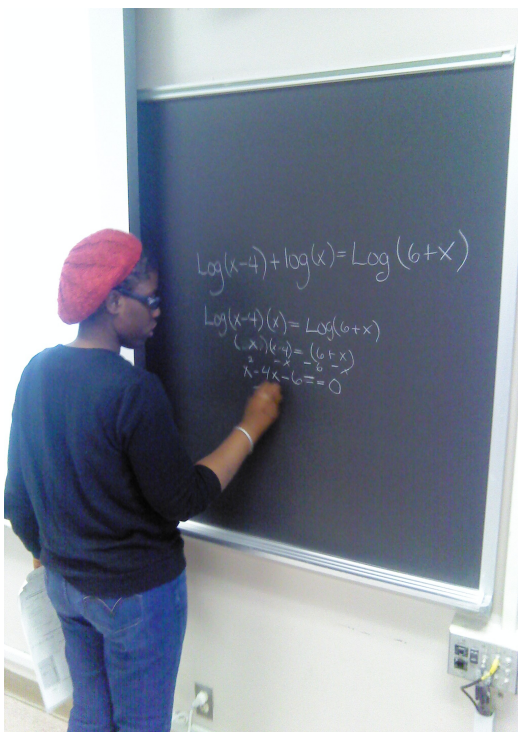
As we have reported before, staff members Steven James and Ralph Pagan continue to co-lead a group for Black and Latino male SEEK students which focuses on a wide range of issues related to college success. In the fall, the group (now called "Men of Excellence") held monthly meetings during which students were privileged to spend time with outstanding role models from CSI and CUNY. In September, the young men were treated to a session with Mr. Robert Kee, coordinator of CSI's *Emerging Leaders Program*. October's session featured a visit from Mr. David Jones, CUNY's Associate Director of Student Housing & Residence Life. Dr. Fausto Canela, from CSI's Faculty Center for Professional Development spoke in November,

and the semester closed in December with a visit from Dr. Francisco Soto, CSI professor of World Languages and Literature.

According to Mr. Pagan, these presenters shared their thoughts "candidly and eloquently" -- discussing the "rough times they went through and what they had to do to get to where they are today. By sharing their personal histories and goals, they were truly an inspiration to the students." Mr. James reports that thirty-eight (38) young men took part in the sessions this fall, and are looking forward to regrouping in February. For a photo of some of the students, see page 5.

SEEK IN ACTION

Student Brandon Roberts looks happy in Math 123/130 Study Group.



Above: Student Kevisha Kellar works out a problem in the SEEK Math 123 Study Group.



Above: Motivational Speaker Tonya Kerry, addresses a packed audience in November.

SEEK IN ACTION



Above: In December, *Strategies for Success* staff member Jessica Rainer leads a "7 Habits of Happy Kids" workshop for 2nd graders and their parents at PS 78.



Above: SEEK students RinZhi Larocque and Newton Brooks looked very elegant at CSI's annual Celestial Ball.

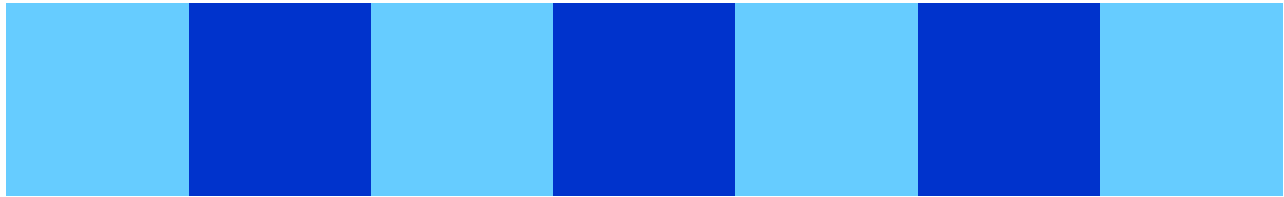


Above: Students in SEEK's "Men of Excellence" group are pictured with CUNY's David Jones (far right) at the October 2014 meeting.

SEEK'S STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS REACHES PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN AND PARENTS

SEEK's long-standing public school tutoring/mentoring initiative, *Strategies for Success*, was in full swing this past fall. Thirteen SEEK and other CSI students participated in our program for second grade pupils at PS 78 in Stapleton. As usual, our tutor/mentors provided much needed homework help, and served as positive role models for the children, who grew very fond of their mentors. Also at PS 78, *Strategies* introduced a special workshop for parents, based on the "7 Habits of Happy Kids," an offshoot for children of Sean Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People." The session, which focused on Habit 1: "Be Proactive," used a story called Bored! Bored! Bored! about a little squirrel who learns he is responsible for making his own fun and shouldn't rely on everyone else to make him happy. The workshop was well received by the parents, who got to see, first-hand, what their children do on Tuesday afternoons. (For a photo of staff member Jessica Rainer in action at this session, see page 4).

By all accounts, the *Strategies for Success* Program has been a win-win endeavor for both youth and CSI students for many years. Over 3,000 children and close to 300 college students have participated in the program since its 2001 inception. As we look forward to the spring semester, six new SEEK students will come on board, and we'll resume services at PS 78. In addition, we'll be implementing a Young Males Mentoring Group (YMMG) and a Female Youth Initiation (FYI) for pupils at IS 49, continuing two well-received projects our team developed last year. Funding to make these latter initiatives possible comes from Councilwoman Debi Rose. Also, through funds from the NYC Dept. of Education, the *Strategies* team will be conducting three leadership and two financial literacy workshops for students at IS 27. The next few months promise to be very busy, but, as always, rewarding!



SEEK ALUMNI: WHERE ARE THEY ARE?

From time to time, we hear from some of our SEEK Program graduates, which gives us a chance to learn about life after CSI. In this case, we recently reconnected with **Marwa Janini**, a 2013 graduate (major/history and minor/geography.) After CSI, Marwa headed off to the CUNY Graduate Center, where she is enrolled in an MA program in Middle Eastern Studies. We found Marwa back at CSI working as a tutor and adjunct instructor for the CSI Immersion Program in the Office of Academic Support.

As a CSI/SEEK student, Marwa was an outstanding scholar -- on the Dean's list for three years, a SEEK Research Assistant and a Suma Cum Laude grad with honors in her major. As a graduate student, Marwa's research interests lie in the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America, with questions about how Palestinian identity survives through a network of family, friends, oral histories and culture. Her favorite course thus far has been "Egyptian History and the Arab Spring", because of her interest in the Nasser era of the 1950's and '60's, as well as ideas about Arab nationalism and unity.

However, study is not Marwa's only occupation, as her following account of last summer's activities attests. "I participated in a teach and travel program with the Arab American Leadership Initiative Foundation where I got the opportunity to teach an intensive English course to Syrian refugees in a Syrian Guest School in Gaziantep, Turkey. After the program, I traveled to Northern Ghana and worked on education development for women and children in Al-Nuriye Primary School. There, I raised funds to supply students with books, pens/pencils, and a few desks."

Regarding her future, Marwa says, "I want to help improve the conditions of our global community by expanding educational opportunities for youth, women and the less privileged. I want to continue working on education development in Ghana. I also aspire to be an academic so that I can help students pursue an education to achieve their dreams the way I have." If SEEK's mission is to encourage scholarship, leadership and global awareness, then Marwa is certainly a stellar example. We couldn't be more proud.

NEWS TO KNOW: SUMMER/FALL HIGHLIGHTS



- SEEK students are well represented on the latest Dean's List. As readers may know, the annual list recognizes matriculated students who have demonstrated academic excellence in the previous year by achieving a GPA of 3.5 or better for full-time study for two consecutive semesters, or, if part-time, a GPA of 3.5 or better in 24 credits earned in the prior two academic years. Here are our SEEK stars, listed in alphabetical order by last name: **Chen**, Huangbin; **Duka**, Diana; **Edrees**, Yara; **Fletcher**, Danielle; **Garcia**, Anthony; **Gilles**, Alexis; **Jachcinski**, James; **Lewis**, Khanshea; **Liew**, Kevin; **Mendoza-Gallardo**, Sergio; **Othman**, Daoud; **Selmani**, Enkeleta; **Tam**, Anna; **Tayeh**, Ranyah; **Thompson**, Lisa; and **Tighe**, Kaitlin. Congratulations to all of our most academically outstanding students!
- And speaking of outstanding individuals, SEEK students **Kevin Gomez** and **Newton Brooks** volunteered last summer to be on hand when the new University Chancellor, James Milliken, visited with students and faculty at CSI. Kevin reports that the Chancellor seemed happy with the warm welcome he received. According to Newton, he was impressed by the Chancellor because he "...took the time to personally visit each campus to learn how diverse the various CUNY branches are." Students who volunteer for these types of events gain a wider perspective and appreciation for the functioning and organization of the University. We hope other students will participate if given the chance.
- As you can see by the photo on page 5, **Newton Brooks** not only met the new Chancellor, but also rubbed shoulders with CSI elite at the December 6th Celestial Ball. Newton and fellow student **RinZhi Larocque** were invited guests at the Ball which is hosted annually by the College of Staten Island Foundation. The Foundation raises funds for CSI, contributing money toward programs and scholarships.
- At the invitation of Vice President A. Ramona Brown (Division of Student Affairs) and SEEK Director Gloria Garcia, three SEEK Learning Center staff members made a combined presentation at the December meeting of the Division's Directors. Discussing the various uses of technology in the Center, **Nancy Goetze** demonstrated SEEK's online educational offerings and student participation, **David Lightcap** spoke about math tutoring via email and Skype, and **Kristina Montesano** shared various ways of using Google Drive, Voice and Mail to increase student outreach. SEEK's use of technology not only reaches students where they are, but also maximizes the use of staff resources.



JEANNETTE K. WATSON FELLOWSHIP: AN UPDATE

Over the past few years, SEEK has been proud to report that three of our students have won prestigious Jeannette K. Watson Fellowships. This annual award includes a multi-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. Fellows are chosen after an arduous application and interview process, resulting in one winner per college per year. In spring 2013, the CSI winner was SEEK student, Mays Jumah, who had arrived in the US in 2009 from her native Iraq after a three-year stop-over in Egypt. Mays' first Watson internship was a 2013 stint at Columbia University's Earth Institute for Environmental Sustainability. A few weeks ago, we checked in with her to see what's been happening since.

"Last summer," reports Mays, "I was at MUFG-Bank of Tokyo in Manhattan. It was an unforgettable experience. The bank rewarded me by asking me to stay with them until college started. So I was an employee at the bank after I finished the internship." She will have an opportunity for one more summer experience, possibly an internship in Japan, and expects (hopes) to graduate at the end of the spring '15 semester with a degree in biology and a goal of dental school. In the meantime, she says the best thing about the entire experience has been "friendships -- the fellows I have met are beyond amazing. I've learned so much from them and am still learning. I really think Watson was one of the best things that has happened to me." SEEK is happy to have played a role in encouraging Mays' successes; she is a testament to the value of educational opportunity programs like SEEK that help students realize their potential.



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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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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

Dr. William Fritz, CSI President
Dr. A. Ramona Brown, Vice President for Student Affairs
Ms. Gloria Garcia, SEEK Program Director
Ms. Jean Como, SEEK Newsletter Coordinator
Ms. Angela Caliendo, SEEK Newsletter Design



Photographers for this issue:
Angela Caliendo, David Lightcap
Georgia Landrum, and Ralph Pagan
Additional Contributor:
Miriam Perez-Lai