



SEEK News

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 2

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

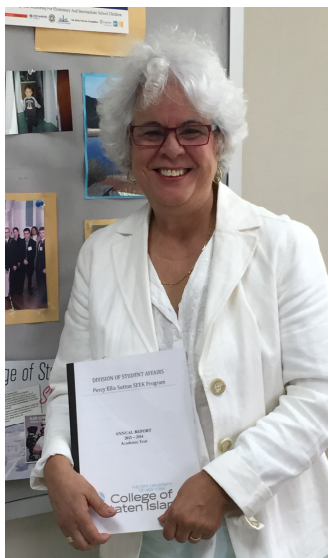
FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Special points of interest:

- *Looking Back*
- *Congratulations, Class of 2015*
- *In Loving Memory of Amos Dean*
- *Goodbye "Strategies" and Farewell to Catherine Hemsworth*
- *Successful Students*

Here we are again – at the close of another academic year, looking forward to a new one – a time for reflection and renewal, as always. As the summer starts, we are beginning to meet our new fall freshmen as they visit the office to meet staff and begin their SEEK journey. We love meeting this new group of students. They're filled with high expectations and lots of excitement about starting their college careers.

However, it's saying "goodbye" to our graduates that I want to focus on in my message this time.



2015's graduates number 100, earning a combination of 11 associates and 94 baccalaureate degrees. They represent over 25 majors – from accounting to philosophy to social work, with some of the highest concentrations in English, psychology, and economics. Five students even earned double baccalaureate degrees!

At the start of *their* SEEK journey, these graduates faced many academic challenges. They persevered against many finan-

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NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

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Once again, the Learning Center spent a very busy semester tutoring students individually and in groups, while at the same time organizing workshops and other events targeting specific subgroups of our student population. Some highlights of the spring included:

- Organizing a new weekly *Open Math Forum*, led by our Master Tutor, for general questions regarding math and math-

related courses and problems.

- Planning and hosting three evening sessions geared toward SEEK Dolphin Cove residents, especially freshmen, which focused on their career counseling and financial literacy interests.
- Leading three sessions throughout the semester for 23 new spring 2015 freshmen, as part of their orientation to SEEK; we

also worked with them as they completed a series of required online workshops on such topics as "Overcoming Procrastination" and "Improving Your Note Taking Skills".

- Implementing a *Spring Reunion* of our Summer 2014 Bridge Program participants, those students who entered CSI last fall having passed (or been exempt from) all three basic skills exams.

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

cial and other difficulties. Most struggled for more than four years to reach their objectives. And yet here they are on Commencement Day, having achieved their goals and even surpassed them with honors and awards: at last count, seven Cum Laude, and the Rehberg Memorial Award for Academic Excellence in Poetry (Danielle Fletcher), the Margaret Ricciardi Commencement Award for Studio Art (Brian Ortiz), the Richard Gid Powers Award in American Studies (Kevin Gomez), and many “honors in the major.” We are thrilled and delighted to have had the opportunity to play a part, however small, in their success.

But, as we look over the list of graduates, we wonder about the new group of freshmen at our doors. No matter how motivated they seem, or how eager they are to begin, inevitably we lose some along the way. We sometimes get discouraged because of all the obstacles they face. We struggle at times to keep them motivated. But the memory of the glowing, proud faces on Commencement Day and the hundreds of graduates throughout the years reinvigorates us and keeps us going. We believe in the mission of the SEEK Program, and all pledge to keep it strong.

Gloria Garcia

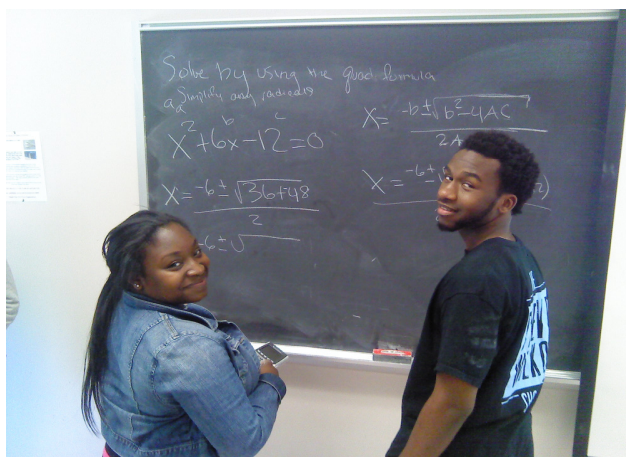


NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER (continued)

- Facilitating two informational and motivational sessions for students in remediation to keep them focused on strategies for meeting these challenges.
- Completing an analysis of our fall 2014 Math Study Group participants that looked at their grades in math 123/130 as compared to another group of SEEK students enrolled in the same or similar math courses who did not attend. RESULTS: 33.4 percent of the study group participants achieved a grade of B or better as compared to 21.7 percent among those who did not attend. If we include “C” grades, those percentages climb to 66.7 and 34.7 percent respectively. CONCLUSION: Math Study Groups work!

The Learning Center will be open all summer, greeting dozens of incoming students and offering help to any SEEK student who reaches out from a Summer Immersion or a summer session course. As always, our computer lab is available too. Please come in to see us!

Ralph Pagan



Whether working on your own, independently or in groups, the results are positive! SEEK students in David Lightcap’s Math Open Forum Study Group, May 2015.

COUNSELING CORNER

The SEEK counseling team congratulates the Class of 2015, and wishes our 100 plus graduates much luck, success and prosperity. Although Ms. Perez-Lai, Mr. James and I have the distinct pleasure of greeting dozens of new students every summer and fall, it's most gratifying when we watch them excel as they move forward through the years – choosing majors, growing intellectually, exploring future careers through internships and, finally, earning their degrees.

I mention internships, especially, because these days they are so important to future success. So many things can be learned from an internship, as

SEEK student Randa Naim, an Engineering Science and Math major at tests. “I recently landed an amazing internship at the NYC Dept. of Transportation,” says Randa, “where I’m helping to monitor traffic across all major roadways in NYC. Because my supervisor is a civil engineer, I have the added benefit of learning from someone who walked a path similar to the one which I am taking now.” Doing an internship allows students to test out various career paths, and can open many doors. Randa says her internship “...has peaked my excitement about becoming an engineer. I’m also excited to

break the gender barrier – females can become engineers, too!”

Among this May’s graduates are two of our favorite Work/Study SEEK students – Tiffany Pringle (Social Work) and Rosina Christian (Media Culture and Communications). We’ll miss their happy faces and dedication to the Program. (See them pictured on page 8.) Finally, we’d like to congratulate our very own hero, Angela Caliendo, for being honored as “Outstanding Staff Member” by Student Government! We couldn’t do it without Angela!

Fran Fassman

IN LOVING MEMORY OF PROFESSOR AMOS DEAN



In April, the SEEK family was saddened by the sudden passing of Amos Dean, a long-standing SEEK math tutor and adjunct faculty member of the Dept. of Mathematics. Mr. Dean had been with SEEK for almost seventeen years, and was a treasured staple of the SEEK Learning Center. At a memorial service held in his honor on May 12, colleagues, friends and especially students, paid tribute to his many wonderful personal qualities as well as his devotion to teaching math. Acting Math Chair Carlo Lancellotti read a statement from Prof. Aru Raychadhuri, a part of which is excerpted here:

“Amos Lal Dean was a kind, caring, devoted educator whose soft-spoken manner and gentle humor were the hallmarks of his teaching system. Although he started his career at

CSI at a later stage in life, he was flexible in his attitude towards the students, had an intuitive understanding of their mathematical difficulties and seemed to have an infinite resource of patience with them. His gift of putting students at ease and helping them overcome their math anxieties will be especially remembered.”

Originally from Pakistan, Mr. Dean came to the US in the 1990’s, after a career as teacher and school principal in his native country. Unknown to many, he had played basketball in his earlier days and been a singer as well,

but he was especially proud of his wife, daughter and three grown sons.

SEEK freshman Altgracia Peralta, who spoke at the Memorial, said in a letter to Mr. Dean’s family, “He was the type of person who would always make a student feel comfortable and would light up the room with his smile. ...he was sweet, loving, kind, and one of the funniest men I have ever met. It is because of him that I succeeded in my mathematics course.” As Ralph Pagan, SEEK Learning Center Coordinator, said at the memorial, “None of us feel that Amos is gone forever, as he will always have an eternal place in our hearts.” A special plaque has been placed in the Learning Center to honor this much loved colleague and teacher – a man who will always be greatly missed.

SEEK STUDENTS AND STAFF ARE RECOGNIZED LEADERS

The Percy Ellis SEEK Program was well represented among winners at **CSI's 2015 Student Leadership Awards Ceremony held May 7 at Staten Island's Vanderbilt at South Beach**. Organized by CSI's Student Government, these annual awards are intended to acknowledge students and other members of the college community who have consistently demonstrated commitment, excellence and dedication in their varied roles across campus.

This year, four awards were nominated by the SEEK Program for some of our most outstanding students: to **Guenael Oristel** for academic scholarship and achievement (*the Scholarship Award*); to **Kevin Gomez**, voted the "most likely to succeed" based on observable drive, initiative and ambition (*the Initiative Award*); to

Steevenstom Joseph (*the Visionary Award*) for his role in helping to organize and manage SEEK's Men of Excellence Group; and finally, to **Damelsa Hatmil** for motivating others and modeling high standards of success (*the Spirit Award*).

SEEK also saw our students recognized for contributions beyond the confines of the Program. For example, winning the *Campus Center Award* for a student employee who most demonstrated excellence in job performance was SEEK senior, **Danielle Fletcher**, while sophomore **Emmanuela Petit-Frere** received the Office of Access and Success Programs' *Outstanding Leadership Award*, in recognition of her service as an ambassador, mentor and tutor. Finally, the Student Service Commission of CSI's

Student Government recognized two members of the SEEK family through two *Student Service Awards*, given to individuals who have shown exemplary extracurricular service to the students of the College of Staten Island: student **Newton Brooks** won the *Outstanding Sophomore Award* while one of three *Outstanding Administrator, Faculty or Staff* awards went to Ms. **Angela Caliendo**, long-time member of the SEEK support staff team. We congratulate all these winners, and also want to acknowledge all the other SEEK Program students and staff who consistently provide leadership in scholarship and service, often against great odds. We give you all a big round of applause for completing another rigorous and challenging college year!

HAPPY RETIREMENT, CATHERINE HEMSWORTH!

May 29th marked the retirement of one of SEEK's favorite staff members, long-time college assistant Catherine Hemsworth. Catherine has been a fixture in the SEEK Program for close to seventeen years. Loved by her fellow workers and

students alike, Catherine's nurturing demeanor and sweet personality helped keep things pleasant around SEEK even on the most stressful days. In recent years, those qualities were totally valuable when, as part of the "Strategies for Success" team,

she worked her magic with elementary school children (see "Strategies" on page 5). Although we'll miss her terribly, we wish her joy and good health as she embarks on her next adventure, wherever it leads her.



Pictured above: The SEEK Family wishes Catherine a very happy retirement, and Catherine with her husband, Robert.

“STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS” PROGRAM SAYS “GOODBYE”

Shrinking grant availability...loss of key personnel...difficulties in managing multiple sites while stretching limited resources. These are the several reasons why, after 14 years of achievements and accolades, SEEK has decided to close down its highly regarded tutoring/mentoring afterschool initiative known as “*Strategies for Success*.” “This decision was not made lightly,” says SEEK Director Gloria Garcia. “Given all the years of successful programming, and the love and hard work that both staff and college students put into the Program over time, it’s been very hard to let it go. But the truth is, that without more stable, sustainable support, we found that the Program became more and more difficult to maintain.”

Starting in 2001 with just one public school and a handful of students, at its peak “*Strategies*” placed 50 college mentors in 3 afterschool sites, serving over 300 elementary and middle school pupils per year. The Program was conceived by Ms. Gloria Garcia and Dr. Roberta Vogel as a way for SEEK and other CSI students to gain practical work experience while serving the com-

munity in a meaningful way.

For years, an enthusiastic group of mentors has departed CSI on most school days, bound for local schools PS 57 or IS 49. More recently, the Program added mentors to the JCC Cornerstone Program at the Gerard Carter Community Center, and for PS 14 and 78.

While serving as positive role models for youngsters, the mentors at all of these sites provided one-on-one and group activities in the form of homework help, creative games and educational ventures. They hosted pizza parties, formed leadership groups, sponsored financial literacy projects and much more. In the process, the college students themselves grew and matured – gaining knowledge and experience that most found helpful in their personal college careers and beyond.

While “*Strategies*” became known on Staten Island as a model for afterschool programming, it also, at the urging of one funder (the Staten Island Foundation), became a pioneer for children’s leadership training using a curriculum based on Stephen R. Covey’s book

“The Leader in Me.” Components of this curriculum were brought to all sites and provided to parents as well.

As the Program staged its final event on May 26 - a party for 19 children at PS 78 - “*Strategies*” Associate Director Georgia Landrum reminisced. “The Program has been a source of great satisfaction, knowing that it brought valuable contributions to children and youth in the community while at the same time, helping the college students to flourish. It’s hard to say ‘good-bye,’ but sometimes change is inevitable. It’s time to move on, but we do so with much sadness.” Added Ms. Garcia, “We have had several meetings with Dean Gold at our School of Education, and are hopeful that the “*Strategies*” concept can find a place in their future community partnerships. It would be great to see it survive.”

The SEEK Program gives special thanks to key staff members Catherine Hemsworth, Site Coordinator at PS 78; Jessica Rainer, Site Coordinator at Cornerstone; and Rhagina Chisolm, Program Coordinator and Site Coordinator at IS 49.

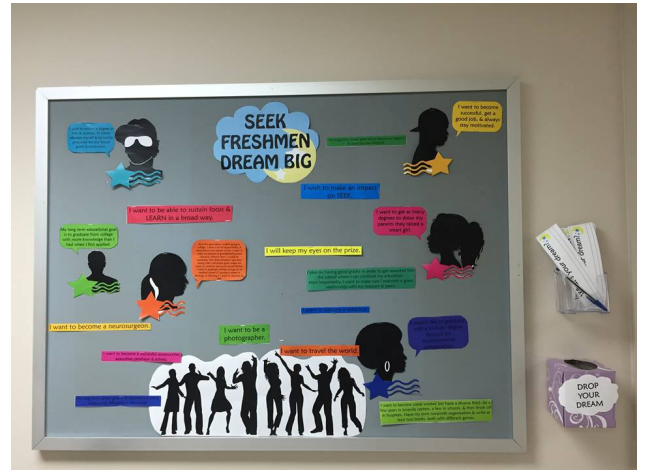


Participants and staff at the Cornerstone Program smile for the camera.

SEEK IN ACTION



SEEK's Jeannette K. Watson fellow, Mays Jumah, in Japan



SEEK Freshmen, why not come add your dream? 1A-112



SEEK & other students attend the standing-room only Congressional debate (Donovan vs. Gentile) held at CSI on Tuesday, April 14th



SEEK students attend a career workshop. March 19, 2015

NEWS TO KNOW: SPRING/SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS



- SEEK was happy to learn that one of our past student volunteer projects has resulted in a letter of commendation to CSI's President William J. Fritz from Pastor Miguel Canton of the Iglesia Pentecostal Rehoboth Church on Willowbrook Road. After SEEK students and counselors organized a canned food drive, the proceeds were donated to the church for distribution to church members, the majority of whom are employed seasonally. In his letter to President Fritz, Pastor Canton said "I would like to personally thank the staff and student members of the CSI SEEK Program for their donation. ...we were able to provide for those in need. This is largely possible due to our strong volunteer base of which you have been an important part."

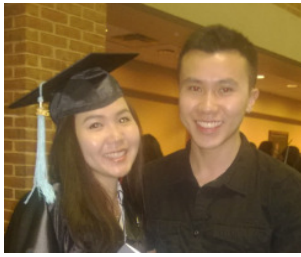
- SEEK's Research Assistants Project is alive and well! In the fall, student **Wing Yan Law** continued working with Prof. Tobias Schaefer (Mathematics). In spring, three others participated in the Project: biology major **Winnie Darius** in the lab of Prof. Cesar Arenas-Mena (Biology) and **Mary Cawog** (also Bio) in an initial experience with Prof. Probal Banerjee. Finally, **Emmanuela Petit-Frere** began assisting Prof. Collette Chapman-Hilliard (Psychology).

Winnie also was a participant at the annual *CSI Undergraduate Conference on Research, Scholarship and Performance*, held this year on April 30th. She and a co-researcher mounted a poster presentation on "Cis-Regulatory Analysis of H2AZ in Strongylocentrotus Purpuratus." Wow!

- Once again, we were excited to greet all the new members of Chi Alpha Epsilon at our induction ceremony in May for CSI's chapter of the National Honor Society for Opportunity Programs. Students from the eligible pool are invited to join based on their academic performance. This semester, new members included: **Ment Aly, Victoria Barry, Newton Brooks, Qiu Ping Chen, Yara Edrees, Brianna Giasi, Kimberly Morales, Emmanuela Petit-Frere, Miriam Nossier, Archana Raghuthu and Lisa Thompson**. That brought the number of current active members to twenty-eight. In addition, **Mays Jumah** received an emerald pin upgrade for continued academic excellence.
- Two SEEK CSI students have been chosen to attend the CUNY SEEK Student Leadership Conference in Glen Cove, NY this June. **Damelsa Hatmil** and **Emmanuela Petit-Frere** will be representing CSI/SEEK at this conference, which prepares students to take a leadership role in student services and program development at their SEEK home school and within CUNY. We look forward to hearing about their experiences. Damelsa and other SEEK students also attended the March 27 etiquette luncheon "The Art of the Business Meal" sponsored by the CSI School of Business, Career and Scholarship Center and the Campus Activities Board. Regarding this annual event, she recommends the experience to anyone "... who will be heading out into the work force in a few years and needs to brush up on their table manners."
- Junior accounting major **Clarissa Gattas'** resume keeps on growing. She just completed internships at the accounting offices of Dazzdowski, Tompkins, Weg and Carbonella, P.C., and also at USA Tax Prep Plus. Congratulations, Clarissa.

FACES OF SUCCESS

Sibling grads Anna and Alan Tam



Kevin Gomez



Rosina Christian
and
Tiffany Pringle



Erica Otoo and Alexis Gilles

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SEEK NEWS is a publication of the SEEK Program
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