

SEEK NEWS

Summer 2016

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The Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program
College of Staten Island/CUNY



FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

SEEK IN NYC CELEBRATES 50 YEARS!



In this issue, I want to use this space to point to a very important and exciting anniversary, namely that the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program in the City University of New York is fifty years old this year!

At various CUNY colleges, SEEK Programs have been marking this milestone with celebrations throughout the year. However, these festivities culminated on May 16th when representatives from *all* of the colleges came together with civic leaders, CUNY



With former Mayor David Dinkins.

administrators, SEEK alumni, staff, students and other dignitaries for an exciting night filled with music, reminiscences, friendship and awards.

Held at the City College campus, the event featured a screening of “The Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program: Opening Doors for 50 Years,” a new video by writer and producer Sara Porath. Speakers, among others, included CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken and Jay Hershenson, Senior Vice

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NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

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In our last issue we reported on the success of a new initiative for SEEK students struggling with remedial math issues. However, math is not the only area that presents a challenge to first year students. In the Humanities and Social Sciences, one particularly demanding course is COR 100, “U.S. Issues, Ideas and Institutions.” Because so many new students find this course quite difficult, this semester the Learning Center put greater emphasis on en-

couraging students to join in-house study groups for COR. For this initiative, we were particularly fortunate to have the excellent input of Mr. Steven Kaufman, an adjunct lecturer in history who agreed to run the groups.

A product of CSI himself, Mr. Kaufman has taught many semesters of COR, and thinks he has good insight into why this course is both important and challenging. According to him, the course “...is of sin-

gular importance for college students, especially freshmen, as it shows them how the America we live in every day came to be as it is now.” At the same time, he says, many students arrive “...hung up on the fact that they dislike history, and do not put in as much effort as they do in other courses.” Little or no effort results in poor outcomes for these students, some of whom get stuck repeating the course on more than one occasion.

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

Chancellor for University Relations. In addition, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Frank D. Sanchez, and Cheryl Williams, Associate Dean of Special Programs, presented many awards.

SEEK, the brainchild of the late NYS Assemblyman Percy Ellis Sutton (for whom the SEEK Program now takes its full name), was created through legislation encouraged by Sutton and others back in 1966. Its aim was to provide access to CUNY for low-income and academically underprepared students across the city -- to enable them to transform their lives through a college education. Since that time, SEEK Programs, in place at eight senior and three comprehensive CUNY campuses, have enrolled over two hundred thousand students, along with their counterparts in CUNY community colleges (College Discovery).

As the Director of CSI's SEEK Program for the past 27 years, I am humbled to be part of this honorable history. I think about all of the students who have become part of the CSI SEEK family throughout these years, and the many hundreds of students who have achieved degrees. I am reminded of all my colleagues, past and present, who

have worked tirelessly on behalf of students, and I also think about our responsibility to work as hard as we can to ensure a secure future for coming generations. All of these thoughts went through my mind as I enjoyed the celebration on May 16. I want to take this occasion to rededicate CSI's SEEK Program to its very special mission. Here's to at least another 50 years of student success!

Gloria Garcia



NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER (continued)

Trying to engage reluctant students is part of the Learning Center's mission, and study groups are one of our strategies. As Kaufman says, the groups are "...intended to fill in any gaps students may have from things not learned in high school...and to help prepare them for upcoming exams." Students attending are appreciative, like freshman **Hannah Ajayi**, who says the groups "explained in detail the material for upcoming exams."

Down the road, Kaufman would like to enliven his groups with educational games and other methods for making the topics more enticing. He also thinks there may be interest in workshops or discussion groups about political or other issues in the news.

Steven Kaufman is a shining example of the dedicated and student-centered team that works in the Learning Center – all devoted to the motto *"your success is our goal."* We are fortunate indeed.

Georgia Landrum, Interim Coordinator



Steven Kaufman at work.

COUNSELING CORNER

Spirits were high on Thursday, May 12, when SEEK students and staff attended the 2016 Student Leadership Awards Ceremony at the Vanderbilt at South Beach in Staten Island. Organized and sponsored by CSI's Student Government, with support from the Office of Student Life and Vice President for Student and Enrollment Services Jennifer Borrero, the event was a fun and festive evening that recognized the many involved CSI students and committed staff who serve the college and community throughout the year.

Awards were bestowed by many campus offices and programs, including SEEK. The highlight of the evening, of course, was the winner, SEEK's own **Dr. Fran Fassman**, of one of the two "Outstanding Administrator, Faculty or Staff" awards given that night. This award is presented each year by Student Government to a member (or members) of the CSI campus community who has shown exemplary extracurricular service to the students.

Not only is Dr. Fassman SEEK's full-time Counseling Coordinator, but her past involvement has included the Student Affairs' Student Engagement Committee and the Advisory Board of Hillel at CSI, as well as support for the development of a community garden and the LGBTQ Center at CSI. Congratulations to all our winners, but especially to Dr. Fassman who was nominated by her fellow staff members and students in the SEEK Program.



Pictured with **Dr. Fassman** (R.) are **Victor Ramirez** (Scholarship Award) and **Pharlande Sainte Juste** (Visionary Award). Other SEEK winners included: **Chanelle Scott** (Spirit Award) and **Damelsa Hatmil** (Initiative Award).

HAPPY FACES OF SUCCESS: COMMENCEMENT 2016

On June 2nd we celebrated the success of over 60 SEEK graduates. They included many recipients of academic and other awards. Although we are sad to see them go, we send them off with every best wish for the next stage in their journeys. Pictured below are some of our wonderful graduates (L-R): **Sergio Mendoza-Gallardo**, **Guenael Oristel**, and **Mohamad Hageko**.



SEEK IN ACTION * SEEK IN ACTION



← **GETTING READY FOR OUR NEW FRESHMEN:**
 Stefanie Gardiner from Financial Aid addresses prospective SEEK students at a March recruitment event.



CREATIVITY AT WORK: Come by and see our SEEK board in 1A-112! →



SEEK IN ACTION * SEEK IN ACTION



SALUTING SEEK LEADERS: Students having a great night at the Vanderbilt Leadership Awards gala.



SEEK SCHOLAR: Graduating senior Emmanuella Petit-Frere displays her poster at CSI's Undergraduate Research Conference in April.



SEEK STAFF GRADUATES

In addition to celebrating our students' success, we also want to highlight several members of our SEEK Learning Center staff who earned degrees and awards this June as well. At the graduate school level, **Geethanjali Padmaperuma** completed a Masters in Computer Science while **Peter Galati** finished the Masters in History, and received a Francois Ngolet Memorial Award. A third staff member, **Geethmi Mapatuna**, finished the baccalaureate in Business/Finance (Magna Cum Laude), also winning a Beverly Curry Memorial Award and Honors in the Major. Congratulations all!



Geethanjali Padmaperuma



Geethmi Mapatuna with President Fritz



Peter Galati

NEWS TO KNOW



- SEEK, this year, became part of CSI's Division of Academic Affairs. As such, we are happy to welcome our new leader, Dr. Ralf Peetz, who was recently appointed Interim Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Student Success. We look forward to his new ideas and energy!
- SEEK scholars **Victoria Barry, Brianna Giasi, Sergio Mendoza Gallardo, Sahlia Mousa and Emmanuella Petit Frere** were recognized at the **annual Honors Convocation** held this year at CSI on May 31st. As members of **CSI/SEEK's Beta Iota Chapter of Chi Alpha Epsilon**, the National Honor Society of Opportunity Programs, these students represent the "best and the brightest" 2016 SEEK graduates. Membership in the Society is based on high academic achievement – the fruits of which will, no doubt, carry these students far, wherever their future takes them.
- Another group of SEEK scholars joined our **Research Assistants Project** this past spring. By participating in this initiative, and being paired with faculty members who are working on their own research, these students got hands-on experience in research design and methods, as well as insight into problems and inquiries in various disciplines. New participants included: **Senior Mohamad Hageko (Psychology/with Dr. Fran Melendez); Senior Summer Lightfoot (International Studies/with Dr. Chao Li); Junior Taylor McCarthy (Psychology/with Dr. Russ Clay); and Sophomore Luis Zaragoza (Liberal Arts/with Prof. Alan Zimmerman).**
- Three of our most articulate students – **Damelsa Hatmil, Victor Ramirez and Pierre Ovalles** -- wowed the visitors at **CUNY's Staten Island Borough Hearing** held March 6 at CSI. This annual event gives CUNY administrators, representatives of CUNY's Board of Trustees and others an opportunity to hear from staff and students at CSI. All three students spoke eloquently about their experiences at CSI and our SEEK Program.
- **The 7th Annual "Savor the Flavors" fundraiser**, sponsored by the CSI Alumni Association and held this year on April 3rd, featured delicious tidbits from popular Island restaurants as well as wine tastings, desserts, music and raffles. Every year SEEK students take time out from their busy weekends to help out with the proceedings (ok...and maybe to taste a few morsels as well). This year the SEEK contingent included **Stephanie Johnson, Damelsa Hatmil, Pharlande Saint Juste, Daryl Martels and Guenael Oristel**. The annual event raises scholarship funds to benefit CSI students.
- In addition to Facebook and Google Voice, this semester we added **Instagram** to give students another option for sharing photos and comments. There are several posts per week, from inspirational quotes, to pictures of the SEEK-at-CSI Program and posters showcasing our workshops. To encourage students to get involved, we ran a contest to reach the 100th user. Sophomore **Victor Ramirez** received a Barnes and Noble gift card as his reward!

**HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEEK!!!
LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT 50.**

“SOLES4SOULS”

In our last issue we reported on our student-led holiday drive called “Socks for SEEK” which resulted in donations to Project Hospitality here on Staten Island. Now our reach has gone global! A few months ago, the United Leaders of CUNY (ULC), an Office of Special Program’s student leadership group in which some of our CSI SEEK students participate regularly, decided to mount a citywide drive to collect gently used shoes for the not-for-profit organization known as “Soles4Souls.” Based in Tennessee, this global charity is committed to fighting poverty through the collection and distribution of shoes and clothing. Founded in 2006, it has distributed over 22 million pairs of shoes, internationally and in the United States.

As the call went out to all SEEK Programs, our student **Pharlande Saint Juste** (pictured here) took the lead in collecting donations from around the campus. At last count, over 75 pairs had been collected! For those of you who donated, isn’t it nice to know that your shoes will find their way to people in need – perhaps across the U.S. or even as far away as Haiti or Thailand?



SOLES 4 SOULS

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soles4souls.org

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



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