



SEEK NEWS

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

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

In our last issue, we reported on the fact that all SEEK Programs across CUNY were celebrating our 50th anniversary. I myself have worked with the SEEK Program here at CSI for more than 40 years. Despite that, I still get questions from students, staff and community members: What is SEEK anyway? What is its mission? Who are CSI's SEEK students? And how does SEEK differ from the relatively new ASAP initiative (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) found throughout CUNY? In this



issue, I thought I'd use this space to address a few of those queries, and to introduce our Program to those who may not know SEEK.

SEEK (Search for Elevation, Education and Knowledge) was established in CUNY as a higher education *opportunity* program. It was designed to do just that – give college *access* to students who might otherwise, by reason of their financial and academic status, be shut out from the chance to obtain a college education. Started at a time

(continued on page 2)

NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

As any casual observer can see, SEEK's Learning Center (LC) is a beehive of activity on most days of the week, from students pouring over their assignments with a tutor - to gathering in a study group - to using the computer center or attending special workshops. But what a visitor wouldn't see are the many learning activities that take place behind the scenes every day as students participate in SEEK's "Virtual" Learning Center. Established through Black-

board by adjunct Nancy Goetze, whose unofficial title is "Distance Learning Coordinator," the online opportunities for learning and student participation have been steadily growing over the past few years, meeting specific goals that the LC had in mind.

Although for many years SEEK has offered its students an array of skill-building workshops (e.g. on note-taking, textbook reading, test taking, math anxiety, grammar and more), SEEK's

first step in providing online options for students was to make some of these topics available at any time of the day in SEEK's virtual library. Students can access these interactive workshops from any computer – on campus or off – at a time and pace of their choosing. The library, with each item carefully crafted by Nancy, contains eight to ten workshops, as well as links to instructional math videos and other resource materials. From there, Nancy moved on to incorporating

(continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Counseling Corner	3
A SEEK Retirement	3
SEEK in Action	4
SEEK Studies Abroad	6
News to Know	7
SEEK Leadership	8

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

and in an environment that typically only embraced the most qualified, academically elite students, the Program was intended to enable less eligible students to succeed if given a boost through a system of financial, academic and personal supports. This continues to be our mission to this day.

While there have inevitably been some changes to the Program throughout the years, the basic structure has remained remarkably the same over many years. Most SEEK students, by virtue of their family size and income, are eligible for full financial aid. College fees are covered, and students receive a yearly stipend toward the cost of books. At CSI, incoming applicants, with either a high school diploma or a GED certificate, are accepted based on their eligibility for associate degree programs. Lastly, SEEK students receive tuition assistance for an extra two semesters if needed, based on the assumption that they typically must overcome some level of academic challenge along the way. Thousands of SEEK students have graduated from CSI over the years, and SEEK graduates may be found in many disciplines and careers throughout NYC and beyond.

Who are SEEK students today? The most recent Institutional Research data show that our current SEEK students are mostly female (63%) and mostly young (55% under age 20.) In a breakdown by race/ethnicity, they were 15% Asian, 38 % Black/African American, 22 % Hispanic and 24 % White. The largest number of freshmen come from Brooklyn

(40%), followed by 36% from Staten Island. While many are in associate programs, most quickly convert to baccalaureate majors. The diversity of their career interests mirrors that of the CSI student body at large. SEEK students also become campus leaders; readers will recall the many that have been featured in past issues of this newsletter (see also page 8).

Lastly, how does SEEK differ from ASAP? In many respects, SEEK and ASAP are very similar, in that they provide counseling, financial assistance and other supports to help students succeed. However, although ASAP may serve some students who are similar in some respects, it appears that it reaches out to a specific population for whom, as the ASAP name implies, the mission is to demonstrate ways in which students can be helped to achieve Associate degrees quickly. In that regard, ASAP's focus is quite different from ours. Nonetheless, while our students and approaches may be different, clearly both Programs are designed to promote students' educational success.

I hope these brief Program highlights are helpful, and I invite you to contact me at any time should you want to know more.

Gloria Garcia



NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER (continued)

online "assignments" for SEEK's summer Bridge Program, our two-day orientation for incoming students who do not require CSI's Summer Immersion Program. These students follow-up the on-campus portion by participating in a discussion board and completing specific online activities on Blackboard, after which Nancy provides individualized feedback.

Since using Blackboard has become an essential part of college life, the Learning Center's next move was to demonstrate its use in our SKO 100 course, "Freshman Orientation." Using an online workshop on procrastination as an example, Learning Center staff are deployed to all five course sections where they instruct students on the use of Blackboard. As Nancy says, "Not only do the students learn how to navigate the Blackboard platform, but in doing so, they are exposed, in a fun but educational way, to some important concepts about how procrastination can sabotage our goals, and how to struggle against it." Finally, another way in which new students find themselves in SEEK's virtual library involves the few students who are unable to register for SKO 100 due to school, job or family scheduling conflicts. These students attend an introductory session led by Nancy, and then are required to choose four workshops from the library that

they must complete before the end of their first semester.

Based on students' participation and comments, SEEK's online options have all been successful in meeting our goals. Students keep in touch via Blackboard, learn new ideas or skills, and demonstrate success with the expected learning outcomes. They also like controlling the pace of the online sessions, and the fact that they can do them most anywhere at any time. Definitely a win-win situation!



Nancy Goetze

COUNSELING CORNER

As many readers know, the bulk of funding for SEEK and College Discovery Programs (personnel and other expenditures) comes through legislation and annual allocations made through the CUNY Office of Special Programs (OSP). Last year we were excited to learn that OSP had found the monies to increase counseling staffing across the board for the first time in many years. The restoration of this funding resulted in two new positions for our program. Known as “Academic Support Specialists,” these positions have now been filled, and we are thrilled to introduce Maria Levine and Jennifer Carrion to the CSI community.

Maria did her graduate social work degree at Rutgers University, and earned her bachelor’s in sociology at Wagner College. She comes to SEEK after more than a year in CSI’s Office of Academic Advisement. Prior to that, she was an Educational/Vocational Coordinator and Supervisor for a non-profit children and family services agency. All of us in SEEK have quickly come to rely on her for questions about advisement, but her main responsibilities lie in teaching SEEK’s freshman orientation course and managing a caseload of over 100 students. She has also been working with a SEEK sub-population of students who are nearing completion of the associate’s degree, and has already worked on a number of special projects with Director Gloria Garcia, from assessment to record-keeping systems.

Jennifer Carrion is a product of CSI, having earned her Master’s in Clinical Mental Health Counseling here, as well as an

undergraduate degree in psychology. She has returned to CSI from the Children’s Aid Society where she was working as a family therapist. Like Maria, Jennifer taught freshman orientation this semester and supervises a large caseload. In addition, she serves as a SEEK liaison to CSI’s Dolphin Cove residence, where many of our SEEK students reside. Finally, to our surprise, among her many skills and talents, she also has a Certification in Zumba – which will no doubt come in handy for one or more of our student parties!

I’m especially glad that Maria and Jennifer have joined us at this time, as I myself am getting ready to retire after 8 years as Counseling Coordinator with SEEK. In mid-February I expect to be leaving CUNY for the sunny shores of Florida, a state that I previously lived in for many years, despite my Brooklyn roots. I appreciate the years I’ve been at the college, and will miss my colleagues and students terribly, but not enough to keep me here – especially at the thought of digging my car out of another snow drift. Suffice it to say that I respect the work of the SEEK Program, and wish great future success for the Program and the students it serves. (For a photo, see page 4).

Fran Fassman, Counseling Coordinator



RALPH PAGAN RETIRES

Aside from losing Fran Fassman to retirement soon, SEEK saw another long-standing member of the SEEK family join the ranks of retirees at the end of December. Mr. Ralph Pagan, Coordinator of the SEEK Learning Center since 2003, has decided to leave full-time work for a more relaxing life.

As Coordinator, Ralph hired and supervised dozens of tutors, and welcomed hundreds of SEEK students into his area. During his tenure, the Learning Center went through a period of much growth – increasing not only student participation but also the range of services offered. Among other things, he was not only instrumental in developing SEEK’s first Summer Bridge Orientation Program for incoming students, but also supervised the creation of the SEEK Virtual Learning Center, our original (and still growing) library of online workshops and materials.

Despite being such a familiar face in the Learning Center, where students (and staff) reached out to him daily, Ralph was well-known around campus and elsewhere, serving on many committees and searches, including a period as co-chair of the CUNY Office of Special Programs’ Council of Tutoring Coordinators.

Many readers don’t know that Ralph has a master’s degree in political science with a concentration in international relations – a first love that he is thinking about rekindling. In the meantime, SEEK wants to hold onto him for a while longer – so perhaps expect to see him back in the Learning Center part-time in the spring. But he’ll also be enjoying those laid-back mornings with no reason to rush – one of those great perks of the retirement life! Congratulations from all, Mr. Pagan!!!



SEEK IN ACTION * SEEK IN ACTION

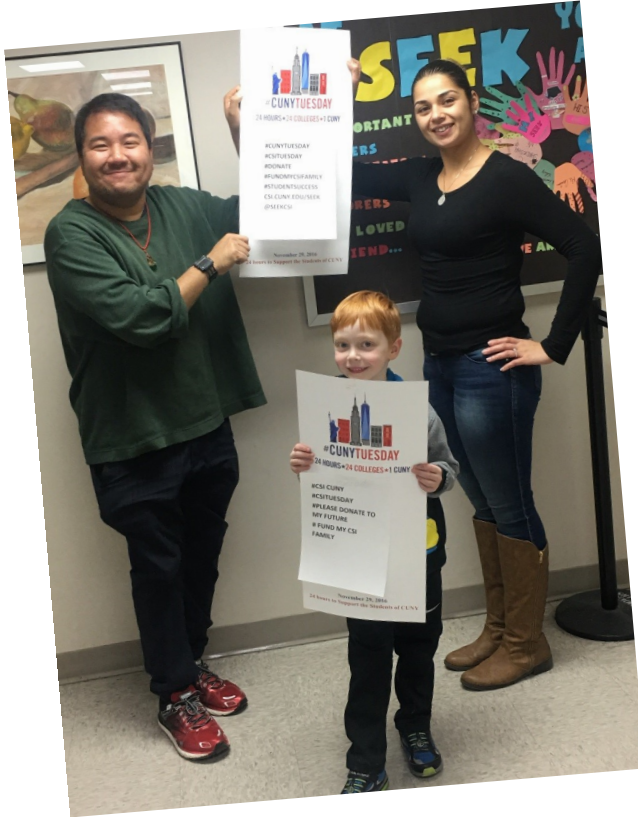


Ms. Maria Levine, Dr. Fran Fassman, and Ms. Jennifer Carrion



Members of Maria Levine's "Freshman Orientation" class tour the campus in a "Scavenger Hunt" of CSI resources.

SEEK IN ACTION * SEEK IN ACTION



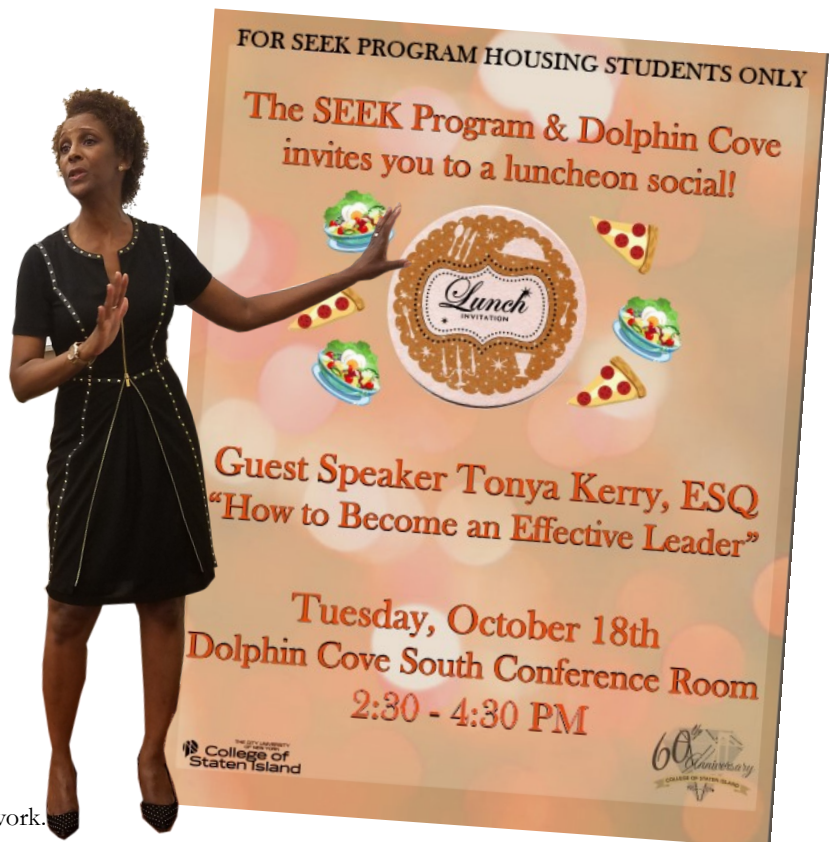
SEEK staff members Earl Gatchalian and Rosina Christian get ready for “Giving Tuesday” with one of SEEK’s youngest members, Jack Landrum (son of Georgia), age 6.



SEEK Program Director, Ms. Gloria Garcia, after giving a presentation to members of the Division at the Green Dolphin lounge.



Ms. Jessica Rainer’s “Seven Habits” workshop for BRIDGE students.



Speaker Tonya Kerry, Esq. at work.

SEEK STUDENTS TRAVEL THE WORLD

Every SEEK student is encouraged to study abroad, and over the years we've seen students go to England, Greece, France, China and more. It's very exciting to see them go, and equally exciting to hear about their experiences. This semester we heard from two: Taylor McCarthy (now a senior psychology major) who studied in Venice, Italy last summer; and Yong Hao Hu (a junior engineering major) who is currently starting a second semester in Japan.

As Taylor reported, "I chose Venice because I thought it was a unique part of Italy. Venice was perfect because of its historical canals, and I liked the fact that it was made up of small islands. The college I attended in Venice was small, and I had people from all around the world in my classes." She said the best part of her experience "would have to be the friends that you make. In school I met people from Croatia, Germany, Russia, Australia, and the United States ... and I'm still in contact with many."

Like most study abroad students, Taylor earned college credits while in Venice, studying Italian toward her major's language requirement. And she topped off her Italian experience by traveling to Paris and Amsterdam before returning home. Her

next stop? Costa Rica next summer after graduation. "Before studying abroad," she says, "I never travelled outside of the country. Now traveling is all I want to do."

SEEK student Yong Hao Hu studied this past fall on the CSI Exchange Ambassador Program at Seinan Gakuin University (SGU) in Fukuoka, Japan. As he reports, "I've learned and experienced many things here. Japanese culture is very interesting, and day-by-day, I learn new things about everything. Also, my Japanese is improving every day!" Yong was awarded an additional scholarship mid-year which has enabled him to stay in Fukuoka for the spring semester as well. His advice to other CSI students? "For anyone interested in studying Japanese, science, technology or finance, Japan may be one of your top choices for study abroad."

These two students have experienced the amazing transformative power of travel and contact with new cultures. It's an experience we hope more SEEK students will consider. SEEK counselors and the staff at CSI's Center for Global Engagement are ready to help – just as they did for Taylor and Yong.



Taylor McCarthy in Venice, Italy



A night view of Fukuoka Tower, courtesy of Yong Hao Hu.

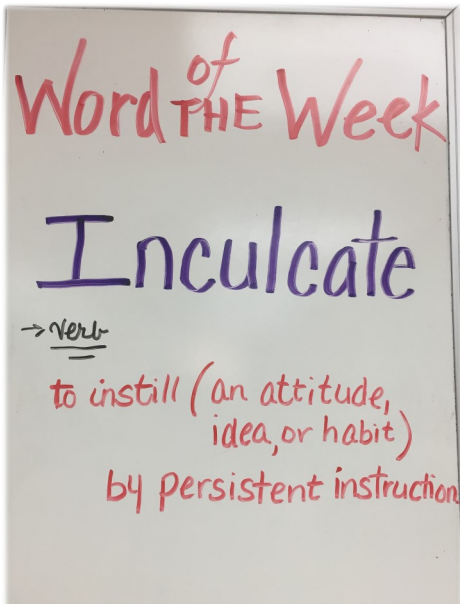


Fukuoka: city view at the Park

NEWS TO KNOW



- The SEEK Research Assistants Project entered its thirteenth year this past fall. That means dozens of students have participated over the years, along with the wonderful faculty who have supervised them. This fall, three students took part in the Program: **Luis Zaragoza** continued working with Professor Alan Zimmerman (International Business) on a book that Zimmerman is updating; **Taylor McCarthy** began assisting Dr. Darryl Hill (Psychology) with various projects; and **Mary Cawog** found herself working with mice in Dr. Sarah Guariglia’s biology lab. (Mary reports that she’s finally gotten over her “phobia” about mice, now that she’s spending more time with them – LOL). The Research Assistants Project is a great opportunity to learn first-hand what faculty are doing outside of the classroom, and to build one’s own research experience. To apply, SEEK students should contact Jean Como in the SEEK Program Office.
- We love when we stay in touch with our graduates, and this past semester, one of our favorites brought her daughter into the SEEK family. Pictured at right is **Reweida Othman**, R.N., graduate of SEEK and



Did you know?
 We have new “Words of the Week” in the Learning Center! You can also find them on our **Instagram**, **@seekcsi**



CSI’s Nursing Program with daughter **Muntaha Shehadeh** (L). Reweida has been working since graduation – first at SI Hospital and now as a nurse at a local public school. This fall, she returned to CSI to enroll Muntaha as a SEEK freshman. One generation inspires another -- how wonderful!

- Another SEEK nursing graduate, **Lissette Altreche**, just let us know that she has landed a plum job at New York University’s hospital. She’s also planning to go back to school to become a nurse practitioner. At the same time, she is a member of the board for the NY chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses. Way to go, Lissette!



SEEK'S LEADERS GO TO THE FRONT

Junior **Safiya Vera**, a SEEK “star,” is one of the deserving students who was chosen to represent CSI at last October’s CUNY Women’s Leadership Conference. We asked her a few questions about her experience: ***Why do you think the tradition of this Conference is important?*** “It gives us the opportunity to see other women from our community make it to higher places in life and beyond. It shows us that the glass ceiling no longer applies to us, and we are free to break boundaries.” ***What was the most memorable part of the day?*** “That had to be during the luncheon, when Letitia James, NYC’s Public Advocate, was giving her speech. It was such an empowering moment; the room was filled with roars and laughter -- even becoming a bit emotional at points because what she said left a great impact on myself as well as several others.” ***What else went on that day?*** “There were several panels (NYC Council members, Women in Tech at CUNY) and different resource tables.”

Safiya, a Dean’s List member and Cum Laude recipient for her AA in Liberal Arts and Science, is the kind of student who takes advantage of all she learns, applying it to her other experiences, like being a peer mentor for incoming freshmen, or working for NYC 311. And now she’s about to embark on her desired career path, having just been accepted to CSI’s Nursing Program! We can’t be more proud of her and other SEEK leaders like her. Keep up the good work, Safiya.



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



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