

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Hard as it is for me to believe, this is my last message as the Director of the SEEK Program. Most likely as you read this, I will be retired from CSI, having completed my final day at this desk on December 22.

I say it is hard for me to believe because I have been SEEK's Director since 1989, well before most (if not all) of our current students were born. As many of my colleagues know, I have put my heart and soul into the SEEK Program, and it



is very, *very* hard for me to say "good bye."

As I leave, I hope that I have always done the very best I could for the students and staff with whom I have worked throughout the years, and I know that the Program will continue to flourish well after I am gone. With respect to the employees, SEEK has always attracted the finest, most dedicated human beings one could ever know, and it has been my privilege to encourage them and help them be successful in their work. With respect to the students,

(continued on page 2)

NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER

This past year, the SEEK Learning Center Coordinator, Georgia Landrum, created a pilot mentoring initiative for some of SEEK's first-year students. These particular freshmen, often referred to as "basic skills students," were those who entered the college with at least one remedial-level course, and who were required to attend at least two hours of tutoring each week. Because the first-year experience is often met with difficulty, especially by those stu-

dents who are in remediation, it was thought that students might be supported through more intensive outreach than simple follow up.

The concept and effectiveness of college mentoring has long been documented, showing that mentoring programs can serve important roles for first year students. Understanding how discouraging it can seem to enter college only to be told that you need remedial work, Ms. Landrum thought that it

would be helpful to connect with the students on a more personal basis, wherein mentors would get to know the students better and understand their history and struggles with the subject matter.

The mentors, drawn from trained Learning Center tutor/college assistants, closely followed their group of students on a week-to-week basis to support the mentees as they navigated the first semester at CSI. Mentors tracked tutorial

(continued on page 2)



Inside this issue:

Counseling Corner	3
A Glorious Retirement	4
SEEK in Action	6
News to Know	7
CUNY Interim Dean	8



FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR (continued)

SEEK has helped hundreds, if not thousands, of students gain access to a college education and then move on to make their mark in their home communities and beyond. I have been honored to play even a small part in their successes. To my CSI colleagues outside of SEEK, I will take with me so many fond memories of friendships and collaborations that made my job so much easier and enriched my life.

So, as I say, all of this is so difficult to leave behind. But as so many past “retirees” will tell you, moving on presents its own opportunities and rewards. More time to spend with family, to pursue other interests, to travel, to volunteer – and yes, even to relax. I’m sure I will need a little time to realize that after forty-some years at the college, I won’t need to set my alarm five days a week and head to CSI.

To my dear colleagues, students and friends, I wish you every success as you move forward, and be assured that I will be keeping a watchful eye on SEEK from afar as a new day dawns for you and me.

All the best,

Gloria Garcia



NEWS FROM THE LEARNING CENTER (continued)

sessions and reached out by way of phone calls, text messages and emails, offering encouragement and personal contact along the way. At various times, they also conferred with students’ counselors, checked grades and coached their mentees about winter immersion and/or spring enrollment.

While all SEEK students are offered a mixture of frequent study groups and individual tutoring, the pilot showed that, aside from academic support, these students also benefitted from the friendly intervention of staff mentors. Adding mentor outreach to tutoring seemed helpful in keeping many of the mentees on the right track.



SEEK Staff mentors Rosina, Jessica, Kristina and Geethanjali

As for the mentors, there is no greater feeling than hearing that their mentee has exited remediation. At SEEK, student success has always been our goal, and we are constantly working to find the right approaches to helping students achieve theirs. Linking

tutoring with mentoring just may be a winning combination.

Kristina Montesano



COUNSELING CORNER

SEEK Counselors had a hectic, albeit rewarding, fall 2017 semester. I say “hectic” because, as many of you know, counselor Fran Fassman retired from CSI last spring, and counselor Jennifer Carrión left at the end of the summer because she was relocating to another state. This meant that the remaining counseling team – Miriam Perez-Lai, Steven James and myself – welcomed 188 new freshman in August while keeping up with the needs of the over 350 continuing students at the same time.

While I can’t call the fall semester “typical,” in many ways our team did many of the same things we always do: Ms. Perez and Mr. James taught sections of SKO 100, our freshman orientation course; we sponsored a fun “Welcome Back” party in September; we organized a workshop for our prospective nursing students; Ms. Perez continued to serve on the Petrie Grants Committee while Mr. James continued membership on the Advisory Committee for CSI’s Black Male Initiative (BMI). I oversaw participants in the “Youth Matter” Program, which provides CUNY’s special outreach and support for students from foster care, and continued to represent SEEK at CSI’s Enrollment Management Committee meetings along with Stefanie Gardiner, our financial aid coordinator. I also served as liaison to the CUNY Student Leadership Academy. We wrote letters of reference for students for prospective employers, internships, study abroad and other opportunities. And of course, we all dealt with students’ serious personal prob-

lems concerning finances, housing and homelessness, academic challenges and more.

In the middle of all this, we participated in a Search Committee to fill our two staff vacancies and prepared for the retirement of SEEK’s Director, Gloria García, by trying to learn everything we could from her experience and wisdom before she departed! “Hectic” hardly begins to describe it.

As we look forward to spring, we hope to find renewed energy for the semester ahead. We are bolstered by the exciting knowledge that we will be joined by two new counselors (actually called “Academic Student Support Specialists”) who will arrive in time for the start of the new semester. We expect them to bring new energy and ideas into the Program, and know that our students will grow to love them as we already do. And as always, our students are the ones that keep us going. They are our inspiration and our focus.

Happy New Year!

Maria Levine,
Counseling Coordinator



GEORGIA LANDRUM: CSI EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Georgia Landrum, SEEK Learning Center Coordinator, has been named as CSI’s first Employee of the Month for 2018. She was nominated by her team of tutors/college assistants for the outstanding job she does in caring for SEEK Program participants. Georgia often goes above and beyond for our students, and spearheaded the newest mentoring initiative, as noted in *News from the Learning Center*.

Georgia first began working for SEEK in 1998 as an English tutor. In 2001, she was given the opportunity to work with the coordinators for SEEK’s new program, “Strategies for Success”, created by Gloria García and Roberta Vogel. “Strategies” began with just nine CSI students as mentors, and ten intermediate school students as mentees. In its final year, there were 50 college students and over 150 elementary and intermediate students.



In 2017, Georgia became the SEEK Learning Coordinator. Of her position, she states, “I am honored to have the opportunity to serve SEEK students. I believe in the Program, our wonderful students, and I see all incoming freshmen with a graduation cap halo floating above their heads.” Her positive outlook is infectious, and part of why she was so determined to have a mentoring program. This past spring, during a staff turn-over, she also took on additional responsibilities for SEEK recruitment and enrollment for the fall, an effort that again demonstrated her wonderful leadership skills.

On her recognition, Georgia said, “It was awesome to become Employee of Month, especially securing such a great parking spot with all of the snow and ice outside!” On behalf of the entire SEEK team, we would like to congratulate Georgia on this wonderful accomplishment, and we thank her for her many years of dedication to our Program.

SEEK DIRECTOR, GLORIA GARCIA, RETIRES

After more than 45 years at the college, Gloria Garcia, Director of the SEEK Program for the past 28 years, is retiring from the College of Staten Island at the end of 2017. Gloria first came to what was then the Staten Island Community College (SICC) in the fall of 1971, a few years before SICC merged with Richmond College and became the College of Staten Island (CSI). She had come to the U.S. from her native Puerto Rico soon after earning her baccalaureate degree in sociology at the University of Puerto Rico. Although she had some family members in Illinois, Gloria quickly adopted New York City as her home because she had friends here and felt comfortable among New York's large community of Puerto Ricans.

As a new professional, Gloria's earliest job was as a counselor for Aspira, the Puerto Rican educational agency where she worked with high school students in Hoboken, NJ. Having learned about SICC from some friends, she became a financial aid counselor, and soon after, joined the staff of the College Discovery Program, the community college's counterpart of SEEK. It was an exciting time as New York City's public colleges were beginning to provide access to previously non-traditional, under-represented students, and Gloria found herself at the forefront of a new era, especially for Latino and African-American students.

In 1974, with the encouragement of some of her supervisors and co-workers, Gloria traveled to Boston to enter a Master's program in education administration. While in Cambridge, she treasured being inspired by fellow students from all over the world. Back at CSI, she later assumed the role of SEEK Director, a post she has held since 1989 except for two years during which, at the request of the administration, she worked as Interim Director of the Counseling Center and again for the Office of Continuing Education.

Aside from her responsibilities as SEEK Director, Gloria has served CSI on numerous committees and task forces for which her contributions are legend. As the "face of SEEK" on campus, Gloria is known as a champion of social justice, an unceasing advocate for students and colleagues, an amazing strategic thinker



and visionary, and a person of boundless energy and commitment to CSI.

While we're not sure to believe her, Gloria says she is looking forward to retirement and the next phase of her life. Never one to sit still, it is fortuitous that her daughter Kathleena's first child will arrive soon, so no doubt being "grandma" will absorb much of Gloria's new found freedom. While she claims that she plans to relax, we know it won't be long before she finds one or two important social causes to which she'll devote her time. Also a poet, she is looking forward to having more time to write, as well as spending more leisure hours with her partner of 41 years, Deborah Hurd.

After all these years, it is impossible to imagine the SEEK Program – and CSI – without her, and yet, come December 22, we will be facing the unimaginable. All of her colleagues, past and present, will miss her support, her creativity, her brilliant mind, her fighting spirit, and most of all her warm, loving embrace. Gloria, no one you've touched will ever forget you. We wish you all the best good fortune as you move forward to even better days. All our love,

The SEEK Family



GLORIA AND FRIENDS



SEEK IN ACTION



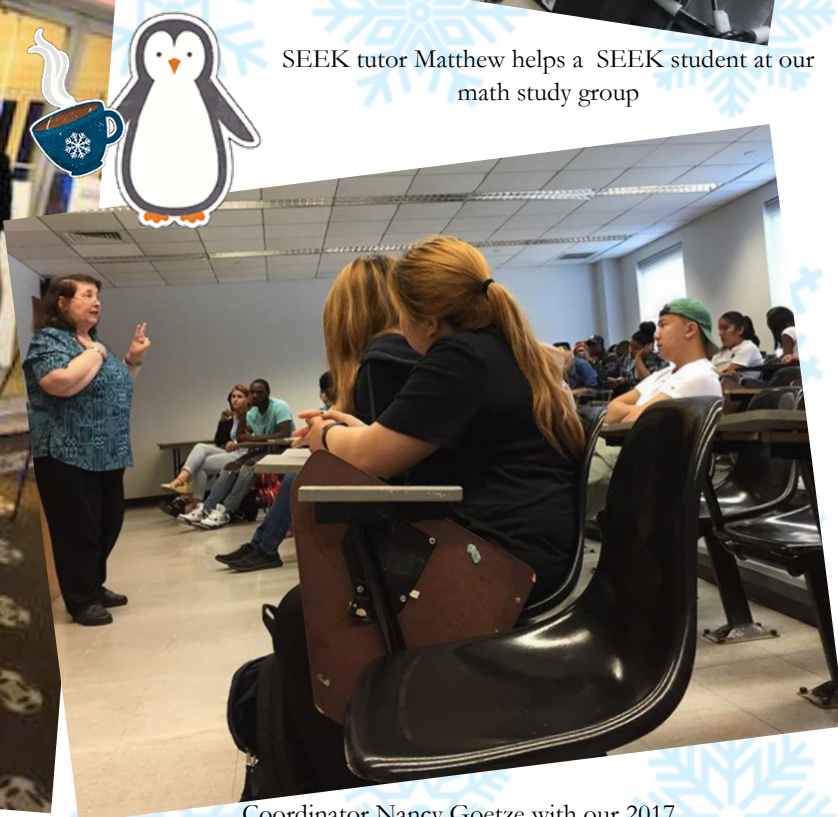
Some of our SEEK tutors: Rado, Taylor, Nadia, Danielle and Mimi



SEEK tutor Matthew helps a SEEK student at our math study group



SEEK Students Wafaa Jabar and Pharlande Saint-Juste with CSI President, William J. Fritz, at the Celestial Ball



Coordinator Nancy Goetze with our 2017 summer Bridge Program students

NEWS TO KNOW



Senior **Pharlande St. Juste** is about to become a world traveler. She will be celebrating the New Year holiday in Rome, Italy on her way to the historic city of Florence, where she will be studying during the 2018 winter intersession. While in Florence, Pharlande, who plans to teach high school language courses after graduation, will be taking SLS /HST 302. The course focuses on the literature of the Italian Renaissance and a study of Italian contributions to the fields of literature, art, politics and philosophy. We're excited for Pharlande, and proud of her openness to new opportunities for learning.

We're also proud to report that Pharlande, along with 26 other current SEEK students, made the Dean's List this past fall, and for many of them, this is not the first time. As everyone knows, being on the Dean's List is a terrific academic achievement. This time round it was a diverse group of students representing many majors and interests. Here is our list of high achievers: **Aman Asous, Terry Benedict, Krystle Chapple, Huangbin Chen, Xin Chen, Stacey Eisler, Gregory Garnett, Christina Espinoza, Anas Hageko, Jonathan Huang, Aisha Khan, Alexandra Klein, Dan Jiang, Stevenstome Joseph, Nancy Li, Daoud Othman, Jessybell Peguero, Arkadiusz Prus, Victor Ramirez, Pharlande Saint-Juste, Muntaha Shehadeh, Abigail Taylor, Bella Usubov, Safiya Vera, Shuying Zhang, Shu Yu Zhang, and Usama Zubair.** Congratulations to all!

And speaking of the Dean's List, in the **"Where Are They Now?"** category we recently touched based with SEEK grad, **Stephen Barnett**, who was on the Dean's List for three years (2006-09) while a student in the SEEK Program. Since graduation, Stephen has been working steadily in his chosen fields of cinema and photography, and has been the recipient of many fellowships and awards. We also recently heard through the grapevine that another SEEK grad from the past, **Alain Alfaro**, has developed his career as a videographer, branching out into producing, editing and directing as part of several Emmy award winning shows. We've also touched based with **Rhagina Chisholm**, a 2010 SEEK graduate who majored in English with a concentration in writing. Rhagina went on to the NYC teaching fellows program at LIU/Brooklyn and is now in her third year of teaching, after having done graduate work in special education. She's currently teaching middle school social studies, grades 6 – 8. Rhagina loves her work, and wants everyone to know that the biggest misconception about teachers is that "...they have it easy with weekends and summers off. In fact, most teachers work until late hours at night, during the weekends, and also plan lessons over the summer." And finally, another recent SEEK grad, **Kevin Gomez**, is now in his second year in CSI's Master's Program in History, and also working toward a Public History Certificate. While with SEEK, Kevin earned a BA in History and American Studies. He plans to go all the way to a Ph.D., hopefully at NYU or Columbia. **These SEEK grads are an inspiration to us all!!**



CUNY'S JERMAINE WRIGHT VISITS OUR SEEK PROGRAM

On December 18th, CSI's SEEK Program had the opportunity to welcome Dr. Jermaine Wright, CUNY's new Interim Associate Dean of Special Programs, to our campus. The CUNY Office of Special Programs (OSP) is the central office that oversees CUNY's many SEEK Programs, as well as College Discovery and other special citywide initiatives.

Dr. Wright, pictured here with outgoing SEEK Director, Gloria Garcia, assumed his position this fall, when long-time OSP Dean, Cheryl Williams, retired. Prior to his current role, Dr. Wright for six years was the Associate Director of the University's Black Male Initiative (BMI), a program that, under his leadership, provided mentoring and other services to over 3000 students as well as administrative staff for BMI programs throughout the CUNY system.

To welcome Dr. Wright and to demonstrate the strong partnerships that SEEK has developed throughout CSI over the years, Associate Provost Ralf Peetz and Ms. Garcia



Interim Associate Dean of Special Programs, Dr. Jermaine Wright, with SEEK Program Director, Gloria Garcia

invited directors from many areas across campus to speak about their relationships with SEEK. Dr. Wright was introduced to over a dozen offices, including Financial Aid, Admissions, Academic Support, CSI's Learning Communities, Institutional Research, Housing, Career and Professional Development and more. Faculty members Wilma Jones (Library) and Fran Melendez (Psychology) also spoke about their connections to SEEK. Lastly, SEEK used the meeting to highlight some of our online educational initiatives, with a presentation by SEEK staff member, Joseph LaCerra.

Dr. Wright was accompanied to CSI by two other employees of the Office of Special Programs -- Ms. Mavis Hall, the University Director (OSP) and Ms. Frances Kingston, Program Associate for Finance. Their visit ended with a meeting with Provost Gary Reichard, and an open invitation to return to CSI in the spring. We look forward to welcoming Dr. Wright and his staff whenever they plan to travel to Staten Island again.

THE PERCY ELLIS SUTTON SEEK PROGRAM



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