At A Glance

1. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives: Leader in Urban Community History
   When Professor K. Lieberman talks about how, as the founder and thus far sole director of LaGuardia and Wagner Archives at LaGuardia Community College, he got involved in his crusade to bring the history of the city to its residents, he gives full credit to his students. The professor of urban history is referring, specifically, to the students in his very first City history course, taught as an adjunct some 27 years ago.

2. The Write Place for Students Is to Visit http://writesite.cuny.edu
   When I have to answer the frequently-asked question—"What is the Write Site?"—I don't start by talking about technology, computers, or software.
   The CUNY Write Site is, above all, a collaboration between CUNY faculty, with expertise in every aspect of writing, who share the conviction that writing is at the heart of our lives and our university.

3. Flourishing on Several Fronts: CUNY-1 190- Union Partnership
   Governor George Pataki announced $1 million in state funding to help create the John F. Kennedy, Jr. Institute for Worker Education at CUNY. The Institute, the Governor said, "will be a fitting tribute to a man who worked tirelessly to help direct-care workers build a better life.

4. Sontag on her new work: 19th-Century CUNY Life
   After her February 29 Queens College reading from In America, her new historical novel set in 19th-century Poland and America, Susan Sontag was questioned about how she researched it.

CUNY: The Visiting Team in Albany

As the New York Mets and Yankees were limbering up at their spring training camps, CUNY leaders were touching all the legislative bases in Albany. The excursion took place on March 6-7 and was timed to precede the beginning of negotiations on the higher education bills then moving among the Assembly, the Senate, and Governor's Office.

Pictured above, in conversation with Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, left, and Trustees Chairman Herman Badillo is Senator Kenneth P. LaValle. Chair of the State Higher Education Committee. The subject? Doubtless it is revealed by the button that was in frequent evidence on this road trip.

Joining Badillo and Goldstein on the journey were Vice Chairman of Trustees, Benno Schmidt, Jr., and Trustees Mizzanor Biswas, John Calandra, Kenneth Cook, Alfred B. Curtis, Jr., George Rios, Bernard Sohmer, and Jeffrey Wiesenfeld. The Chancellor was accompanied by representatives of the Chancellery and the Council of Presidents.

A legislative reception and several rounds of meetings provided opportunities to advance the University's agenda, notably an increase in full-time faculty, additional funding for community colleges, College Now, and improvements in the Tuition Assistance Program.

Albany's leaders, in turn, responded with many expressions of confidence in the leadership and stability at the City University. Pictured above, in conversation with Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, left, and Trustees Chairman Herman Badillo is Senator Kenneth P. LaValle, Chair of the State Higher Education Committee. The subject? Doubtless it is revealed by the button that was in frequent evidence on this road trip.

To the left Saul B. Cohen, Chair of the Board of Regents Higher Education Committee, listens as Trustee Jeffrey Wiesenfeld talks with Assemblyman Edward L. Sullivan, Chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee. Pictured below is Senator John J. Marchi with Trustees Kenneth Cook, center, and Alfred B. Curtis.

Ka Boom Resounds at USA Today

You have to wonder just how Sophie Davis Medical School senior Vivian Ka (pictured at left) finds time to be the member of a fencing team, Ka, who won a place on USA Today's 2000 All-USA College Academic First Team in February, has thrust and parried to a 4.0 GPA with a major in biomedical sciences, initiated a student-run health education program at a homeless shelter, and served in the American Medical Student Association.

She has also published research on the use of Chinese medicine among the home-bound elderly and on the toxicity of commonly-used Chinese herbs. She plans to become a physician. Her fellow Sophie Davis student Sherry Xin Hsu (at right) earned a Second Team award with her research on how the compound pravastatin removes plaque from arteries, her work as director of a Harlem tutoring program, and student government service (and another 4.0 GPA).

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As CUNY Matters went to press, it was announced that Ka has become the second CUNY student to win a Fulbright Fellowship. She will use it to study traditional medicine at the University of Western Sydney in Australia.
Message From The Chancellor

Dr. Eduardo Marti, who has previously led Corning and Tompkins-Cortland Community Colleges in upstate New York for a total of 16 years, has been appointed President of Queensborough Community College by the Board of Trustees on March 27. His tenure will begin on July 1.

"Dr. Marti is a prominent educator who has led three community colleges with distinction and ability. He will bring this same sense of leadership to Queensborough Community College," said Board Chairman Herman Badillo. Chancellor Matthew Goldstein recommended the appointment following a nationwide search conducted by a search committee chaired by Trustee Kathleen M. Peseil.

Marti is a prominent educator with 16 years of experience in community college administration. He is an expert in public infrastructure and education, having served as President of Queensborough Community College since 2005.

Message From The Chair

H e dozen years ago, when Mayor Edward I. Koch and the New York City Council finally built the college that is now the University at Queensborough Community College, they named it for Bernard M. Baruch, who had been a leader in the city's financial world.

Baruch College was established in 1919 as City College's School of Business and Civic Administration, and a member of the City's Municipal Assistance Corporation. In 1953 the school was renamed Baruch College and was the first college to be established by the Board of Trustees.

Today, Baruch College is the premier CUNY senior college, and is now, with more than 15,250 degree candidates completing their programs, one of the largest and most diverse liberal arts institutions in the country.

President Marti is a prominent educator who has led three community colleges with distinction and ability. He will bring this same sense of leadership to Queensborough Community College."
By Randy Fader-Smith

When Dr. Richard K. Lieberman talks about how, as the founder and thus far sole director of the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives at LaGuardia Community College, he got involved in his crusade to bring the history of the City to its residents, he gives full credit to his students. The professor of urban history is referring, specifically, to the students in his very first City history course, taught as an adjunct some 27 years ago.

“Two weeks into the course a group of students approached me and asked, ‘When do we get to Queens?’ My first response was, ‘I know nothing about the history of Queens.’” Lieberman says, adding how stunned he was by their inquiry.

“From all my training as an urban historian and all my reading, the history of New York means Manhattan, a little bit on Brooklyn and the Bronx, and nothing on Queens or Staten Island.”

With no history books to rely on, Lieberman explained that he quickly formed student research groups and sent his novice researchers out into their neighborhoods to uncover information on everyday life in Queens. They came back from interviews with older relatives, neighbors, and patrons of senior centers from interviews with older relatives, neighbors, and patrons of senior centers.

These bits of history flowing into his classroom, Lieberman sums up, “changed my whole career and launched me into a whole new way of doing history, community history.”

All those tangible remnants have made possible the many Archives exhibitions on such topics as firehouses and work special elementary school curriculums on City history pored over by 9,000 fourth-graders each year for the last 11 years, a seven-part radio series on the life and times of Fiorello LaGuardia, and those coveted history calendars which have been created from the Archives’ treasures and distributed to more than 5,000 people annually for 21 years.

Making history accessible to ordinary citizens took on a more formal aspect when, in 1982, Lieberman was handed the formidable task of managing LaGuardia’s fledgling archives. “We had nothing,” he recalls, “just an idea.”

That idea—to build a repository around the College’s namesake—soon became plausible when Marie LaGuardia, the beloved former Mayor’s widow, called the archives and asked if they would be so kind as to take her husband’s personal papers from her premises. What arrived, in those several boxes, was a treasure trove to make an archivist’s heart palpitate.

With time, this donation served to attract the personal papers of three more Mayors: Robert F. Wagner, Abraham D. Beame, and Edward I. Koch. In fact, this mayoral archives is unique in the nation.

Notable too among Archives possessions are the papers of nearby Steinway and Sons (on which Lieberman himself has written the book), a collection of City Housing Authority material, and papers of the City Council. Visited by some 3,000 researchers each year, the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, Lieberman feels safe in boasting “many of the most important research resources on 20th-century New York.”

The Archives is also expanding vigorously into the Web. Its ever-expanding site (www.laguardia.edu) is a place to post it. In a new tickertape feature, one can find Today’s Highlights scrolling across the top, providing you with all of the latest news affecting CUNY students (scholarships, for example, or health programs), CUNY applicants (like all the new Frequently-Asked-Questions on Admissions), CUNY funding (the current state of our University budget request), and everything noteworthy affecting the University.

If you visit Today’s Highlights in April, you will see a special message to prospective students from Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, as well as a fully functional online application procedure for freshman and transfer students. As well, you will find Chancellor Herman Badillo’s introduction to the availability of New York State’s Child Health Plus program and its affordable health coverage for CUNY students and their families.

On the instructional and research side, take a look at CUNY Resources and visit the CUNY WriteSite (see story, page 5) and CUNYMath—two web-based resources developed by CUNY faculty for CUNY students. Or you may have wondered what CUNY is doing on the distance learning front: check out CUNY Online in the Resources section and see what faculty from 13 CUNY colleges have been doing with the help of generous funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

Those who are curious about new information technologies in campus libraries may click on CUNY Libraries and access digital sources and services already available, as well as materials in the planning stage. Students planning to transfer from a two- to a four-year CUNY college should click on CUNY TIPS in the Student Info section to learn how their course work will be evaluated by each of the senior colleges and what the University’s current remediation policies are.

CUNY Study Abroad in the Student Info section lays out the available opportunities for study in foreign countries.

New information appears on the CUNY home page every day, and it is clearly becoming an important bookmark for a growing number of the University’s students, faculty, and prospective members of the CUNY community. Lately, there have been about 450,000 hits on the site a month.

CUNY•Matters, You, and the Future

If you have any suggestions for future articles or new regular features in CUNY•Matters—or any views to express about the newsletter that would improve its coverage of life in the City University community—please take the time to visit the CUNY home page and respond to a very brief “Survey for Readers.” The survey can be accessed at http://www.cuny.edu/events/cunymatters/survey.html. Mark Twain once remarked that he didn’t mind criticism at all as long as it was all positive. CUNY•Matters is not so squeamish; readers’
THE JOURNALS OF CUNY

Journal of Basic Writing Celebrates its 25th

ANY believe that, like so much else about writing in CUNY, the Journal of Basic Writing (originally just Basic Writing) began with Mina Shaughnessy. In a sense it did. She was one of nine City College faculty members who founded the journal, with support from the Instructional Resource Center she had created. And she did write thefirst few editorial columns. But that was only the beginning. In 1981, the year after Sara D’Elia became editor, the journal moved from being an “in-house” CUNY publication to having a National Advisory Board including a number of renowned writing scholars from across the nation. Five years later, Lynn Quitman Troyka became editor, expanded the editorial board, and made JBW a refereed journal. Editor from 1986 to 1988, she was succeeded by Bill Bernhardt and Peter Miller. In 1993, Karen Greenenberg and Trudy Smoke became editors, though Karen stepped down after three issues and was replaced by George Otte (Baruch College), who became co-editor with the Fall 1996 issue and continues to edit JBW with Smoke (Hunter College).

As the one scholarly journal devoted to basic writing, JBW represents a rich legacy of research and publication. A recent watershed was the Spring 1997 issue, a special issue on race, class and culture in the basic writing classroom. In that issue, the journal’s first full cumulative index accompanied a set of especially important articles, none more so than Ira Shor’s call for an end to basic writing, which he called “Our Apartheid.” The issue and that article in particular—and the vigorous responses to it by Greenenberg and others—seemed to re-energize a field demoralized by cuts and marginalization. The debate sparked made the journal itself the source of considerable discussion.

A reflection of that exchange is the latest JMRC issue in preparation, which includes pieces by scholars nation-wide on such topics as “Basic Writing and the Issue of Correctness,” “Meanness and Failure: Sanctioning Basic Writers,” “How We Have Failed the Basic Writing Enterprise,” and “Illegal Literacy.” Keith Gilyard, the author of an article on “Basic Writing, Cost Effectiveness, and Ideology,” is a CUNY alumnus and currently chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (the largest national organization devoted to college-level writing instruction). He is among the scholars “grateful” for the chance to contribute to JBW. “It is one of the most important intellectual components of CUNY,” he says. Gilyard’s contribution to what has come to be known as the Shor-Greenenberg debate on the future of basic writing offers compelling reasons why both the field of basic writing and JBW, the journal devoted to it, will live on.

I t struck New York City in 1821. It happened again in 1893. Dr. Nicholas Coch, now an adviser to the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management, is warning that history repeats itself and the City must prepare for the next one.

The professor in the School of Environmental Science at Queens College is talking about the really big Big Apple hurricane, a subject on which he has performed years of research. “If we can see in detail what happened in the past, we can predict the future,” said Coch, “and it will always be worse in the future.”

The last hurricane visited New York in 1938. Coch predicts that the next one will most likely strike within the next 70 years, an assessment based in part on newly discovered evidence of those 1821 and 1893 hurricanes.

Coch predicted that when the next hurricane strikes in the new millennium, “it will be the greatest catastrophe.” In a lecture sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences on February 7, he spoke about the unique vulnerability of New York City and produced a step-by-step damage scenario.

When a hurricane comes, the sea level is driven into the city. When you get salt water underground in those cables,” he explained in an interview, “the whole financial structure goes down. Wall Street goes out of business. The banks go out of business. This is the nerve center of America.”

Besides disrupting the core of the city’s economic infrastructure, the hurricane will also harassly affect the transportation system. Subways will be flooded, bridges will close and airports will nosedive under water. “It’s too frightening to contemplate,” Coch said. But his real point is that we must. Several factors make New York City vulnerable to a hurricane strike. Since New York and Long Island approximate a right angle with New Jersey, that intersection would bear the brunt of the coastal onslaught. In addition, hurricanes that edge up the northeast coast tend to carry stronger and faster winds and move more quickly than elsewhere.

Coch is currently investigating three major northeast hurricanes. By researching the 1635 hurricane that struck the pilgrims and the Bay colony, the 1815 hurricane devastating eastern Long Island, and the 1821/1893 hurricanes eroding New York City, he hopes to provide insight on the susceptibility of New York to future hurricanes. Coch has conducted his research on these long-ago storms among government reports, church records, newspapers, and various unpublished archival materials.

You might expect a hurricane expert to have come from southeast, but Coch’s interest in the subject was piqued as a young boy in New Hampshire after witnessing the great 1938 hurricane that left an extended wake of debris along the New England coast. The image of broken tree branches surfaced years later when he inspected the damage wrought on by Hurricane Hugo outside Charleston, South Carolina. The hurricane, he recalls, “literally snapped the trees and was quite a sight. I came back from that knowing this was the thing I wanted to do.”

In an effort to make New York residents more aware about the potential danger of the next hurricane, Coch stressed education and rallied off a list of must-know information: “Understand the nature of the next hurricane, Coch suggested that people living in areas less than 20 feet above sea level move inland and take refuge in hardened shelters, schools, and auditoriums for safety.

Ironically, the worst case scenario is not a hurricane that hits New York City directly but rather one that passes over New Jersey. In this case, the turbulent right eye wall, considered by scientists as causing the area of greatest flooding and highest winds, would directly over New York City. “The earth is an inherently dangerous place. It is full of hazards,” he said. “Accept the fact that there will be disasters. If we’re not prepared for them, they will become catastrophes.”

Queens Weather Man Warns the Big Apple

The Hurricane (Not the Movie)

By Alicia Chang

Journalism minor, Queens College

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In Stephen H. Smith (Hunter College), "dhotojournalism minor, Queens College"

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Professor Nicholas Coch at the Hurricane tracking board of the National Tropical Prediction Center in Miami, familiar from many an emergency television broadcast. His colleagues at the Center cordially placed a red hurricane symbol on New York City and named it Nick.
When I have to answer the frequently-asked question—"What is the WriteSite?"—I don’t start by talking about technology, computers, or software.

I talk about people. Nora Eisenberg of LaGuardia; George Otte, Gerard Daligsh of Baruch; Ann Peters, Stuart Cochran from the Ph.D. Program in English, Janice Peritz, Christine Timm of Queens; and Jane Paznik-Bondarin (BMCC), Clem Dunbar (Lehman), and Bill Bernhardt (CSI).

For the CUNY WriteSite is, above all, a collaboration of people—CUNY faculty, with expertise in every aspect of writing, who share the conviction that writing is at the heart of our lives and our university.

Officially, the WriteSite is an OWL (online writing laboratory), a phenomenon that has spread in higher education over the past five years. Many other campuses have OWLs, but CUNY is the only university to have developed its own system-wide, web-based resource center for writers on all levels—and throughout every discipline.

Three years ago, when the WriteSite started with technical support from the Office of Computing and Information Services, we were very aware that the vast majority of students had scant off-campus access to computing and the Internet. We imagined building a resource that could support activity on campuses, in learning and writing centers and as adjuncts to particular courses, enhancing existing services.

But we dreamed of a time when CUNY students would have Internet connections to support them off-campus too. Taking to heart the twin CUNY goals of access and excellence, WriteSite developers looked to the near future: when CUNY students would have ready access not only in campus labs. The Night Owl, as we thought to call the student resource, would help students facing busy lives and the challenges of academic writing anytime, anywhere.

The WriteSite (as we finally called it) builds on a foundation of strong principles. First among these, perhaps, is generosity. In the interchange the site supports, students post questions, drafts, concerns, and get feedback from peers, tutors, or faculty. In the creation of the site, too, generosity has reigned: faculty have donated their own textbooks; tutors and teachers have contributed materials; and students have donated their time and good judgment in testing our developing materials. Indeed, the people who do the actual work on the site are CUNY undergraduates, who readily contribute their opinions on usability and style.

Which takes us to another principle, cooperation. Nowhere, perhaps, is the tendency toward idiosyncrasy more entrenched than in texts and multimedia. By having faculty, tutors, and students working together on development and piloting, we have ensured that what goes online makes sense for many.

Though the WriteSite will ultimately offer material for graduate-level writing, professional writing, and curricular development, our sense of the pressing needs of undergraduates has dictated our priorities. Thus, the topics Grammar and Style and Writing Projects claimed our attention first. In the former “corner” of the site, we now have a unique interactive resource called HotSpots, which engages students—and of course any user—in discovery and application of grammatical principles in the four areas that collaborative conversations deemed the most pressing: “Watch your S,” “Don’t Drop D,” “Is it a Sentence?” and “Little Words Mean a Lot.” In HotSpots these most common grammatical minefields are negotiated not through dreary fill-ins and rote rules, but through dynamic interactivity.

The same dynamic principles have shaped the development of Writing Projects. Here, students writing in any course can discover through activity the essence of the various tasks involved in college writing. What is a comparison, an analysis, a discussion? What are the basics elements of college papers? What is a writing journal—and why keep one? What are the best ways take notes, develop drafts, consult, edit, polish? Writing Projects explores all of this in current or developing resources.

A Collaborative Grant from the Office of Academic Affairs has enabled faculty working on Writing Projects to...
If it does not help you much to learn that George Wolberg is deeply into mesh warping, control lattices, morphing algorithms, and energy-minimizing splines, then simply call to mind Forrest Gump, Terminator 2, and Babe. These three films memorably featured the new computer technology called image morphing. According to Wolberg, a City College professor of computer science, the script for Terminator 2 was written quite specifically to exploit this technology, which had made its film debut in Willow in 1988.

On March 8, Wolberg was honored at Gracie Mansion with one of the three 1999/2000 Mayor’s Awards for Excellence in Science and Technology for his seminal contributions to the field of digital imaging. At the age of 26, he published in 1990 (the same year he arrived at CCNY) the first comprehensive book on the subject, Digital Image Warping. Since then his research has focused on a theoretical framework for morphing among multiple input images, the rendering of terrain for high-quality fly-throughs over landscapes generated by satellite data, and the refinement of mapping—or warp—functions. Wolberg holds two patents, one for separable image warping and another for image restoration.

Though video and advertising applications come immediately to mind, Wolberg says he also hopes his research will have some impact in medical imaging—for example the morphing, for diagnostic purposes, of separate slices of a CAT-scan. Pictured here are four frames from a prize-winning promotional video that Wolberg made for City College in which a collage of alumnus Colin Powell, an unidentified student, and emeritus professor of foreign languages Manuel de la Nunez, morph into the official seal of the College. The seal was designed and first cast in bronze in 1866. The three classic heads admonish, Respice, adspice, prospice (“look to the past, present, future”).

CCNY COMPUTER SCIENTIST HONORED

Seriously Warped

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Queer CUNY: An Unprecedented Conference

On Saturday May 6th the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies will sponsor Queer CUNY: Campus Organizing Across the Boroughs. This first such conference will provide a forum for faculty, staff, and students to address issues pertaining to queer life on CUNY campuses. Rather than the usual presentation of papers, Queer CUNY will consist of a series of roundtables addressing such topics as how to form and maintain a student group, combating homophobia on campus, queer pedagogy, and professional concerns of LGBT faculty and staff. Breakout periods and a post-conference party are also planned. Queer CUNY is free, open to the public, and will take place on the 9th floor of the Graduate Center from 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more information, contact CLAGS (212-817-1955 or clags@gc.cuny.edu) or visit its website (www.clags.org).
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CUNYAS

Achieving Academic Renewal at CUNY

Early in 1987, Hunter College professor of philosophy Charles Landesman launched a CUNY-wide faculty initiative to promote higher academic standards within the University. The result was formal establishment of the CUNY Association of Scholars (CUNYAS). In March the Editor of CUNYAS Matters met with three members of the executive committee of the Association to discuss their motivations, hopes, and ideas for raising the quality of undergraduate education, as well as the many specific proposals contained in a recently released CUNYAS position paper, “Toward the Academic Renewal of CUNY.” They were Professors Dorothy Lang (Business, College of Staten Island), Barry Latzer (Government, John Jay College), and Nahma Sandrow (English, Bronx Community College).

When I asked my three visitors to the Central Office to recall particular moments that might capture their reasons for becoming active in the CUNY Association of Scholars, Dorothy Lang told of a student in her Business Policy course. On one of his early papers she said she had remarked, “Writing needs improvement. Use complete sentences.” His subsequent papers did not improve. Lang remembers, “and he finally came to my office and asked me what a complete sentence was.” The capper: this was a Business Policy course for seniors.

Barry Latzer thinks of the time a student came in to his office to plead with him to change a D to an F. Being a professor with a heart, Latzer obliged (more about this F later).

The response of Nahma Sandrow, who specializes in teaching remedial writing, was more general. “I just couldn’t bear to see students in my classes over and over—never graduating. I felt there had to be a better way, otherwise, let them go, stop playing with them.”

Every CUNY faculty member can summon up such moments to be humiliated and/or weep over. I hark back, for instance, to the student in my freshman writing class at Baruch several years ago who referred to that period before the Renaissance as the “Mid-evil Age”—and to another who had occasion to mention that famed analyst Sigman Fruit.

Branch anecdotes like these—and extensive classroom experience—have convinced the members of CUNYAS that, as “Toward Academic Renewal” states, “a new culture of excellence at CUNY requires higher expectations and standards for classroom performance, grades, maintenance of matriculation, and accountability.”

To this end, CUNYAS offers 11 recommendations, and Lang, Latzer, and Sandrow are unanimous in believing the most fundamental are the first three, which address the need to assure that course content is at genuine college level. CUNYAS recommends:

- Establishment of a collaborative process for assuring that (a) course readings are at college level and are appropriately challenging for course level and (b) level-appropriate exams, papers, and projects are required.
- Rigorous enforcement of proper course sequencing and course prerequisites, with waivers of prerequisites permitted only in unusual circumstances, in order to assure suitable preparation for advanced coursework.
- Close monitoring by the central administration of grading for exit-remediation and “rising junior” examinations, in order to assure appropriate basic skills for introductory courses.

Elaborating on these proposals, Latzer is quick to emphasize that CUNYAS is eager for the University to “continue working hard to bring its most deficient students up to genuine college level, but this should not be for college credit.” This view is born of obvious dismay at the consequences of enrolling seriously underprepared students in college-level courses. “This is the great error of CUNY,” Latzer asserts, “because it undermines the quality of the courses, and the price is really paid by the best students and even, really, those students in the middle.” Nor does Lang concede that students granted waivers of prerequisites are substantially helped: “Students with waivers in my introductory management course almost invariably end up dropping out.” I ask what kind of “critical mass” of deficient students in a class can cause it to cap-size; and there was agreement that between 20 and 30 percent was enough to cause trouble. “It is not fair to the middle and superior students to have to devote so much time to basics,” says Lang.

Or simply to repetition: Latzer tells of his chagrin, one day, when an extremely bright student said to him after class, “Professor Latzer, you have great patience.” “I knew she wasn’t commending me for that: she was clearly frustrated by the slow pace!” Changing the institutional conversation to one of excellence means paying more attention to students like her—or like the former student of mine who was the first John Jay graduate to go to Harvard Law School. He’s back in the City now and taking me to lunch?”

“I believe the University’s standards for classroom performance, grades, maintenance of matriculation, and accountability.” Several proposals address this issue:

- Evaluation of presidents on the basis of their effectiveness in raising academic standards at their colleges; establishment of demonstrated commitment to high academic standards as a significant criterion in presidential searches.
- Evaluation of faculty on the basis of (a) the requirement of examinations,
A current pilot project with a group of campus Writing Center directors is giving us important feedback and encouragement. “Students are thoroughly engaged by the WriteSite,” Marian Arkin, Director of LaGuardia’s Writing Center, says. “They love the chance to discover principles on their own and apply these to their own writing. It’s remarkably dynamic, human—and fun!”

Our choice of the name WriteSite implies, we were taken by the spatial metaphors that have become so much a part of the current vocabulary for electronic communication (cyberspace, chatrooms, etc.). From the start, we have thought of the WriteSite as a means for crossing the actual, physical space of our vast and far-flung University community. We wanted the site to be a meeting-place for faculty and students, a place for conversation and dialogue about writing that would link varied disciplines and enable writers on every campus to join in the discussion.

We hope members of the University community will come to the WriteSite and find there not just useful information but opportunity for the discovery and exchange that always distinguish genuine learning and potent writing. Consider this our invitation to students, staff, tutors, and faculty to help us create a web site that truly serves the needs of writers throughout the University.

**Unheavy Metal**

A close look at the sculpted rework on one of the refurbished staircases in the Graduate Center’s new home, the former B. Altman & Company department store. Photo, Andy Becketts.

**Early Reviews of the CUNY OWL**

"Technology is key to our success in the future, and the WriteSite, a unique web resource, can play a key role as the challenges of fostering writing across the University.

Louise Mirrer, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

"This is cutting-edge work with enormous implications for the way we as a society communicate in writing and the way that we communicate the critical value of writing skills to our students."

Robert Maurer, former President of N. Y. State’s Higher Education Services Corporation

"Very useful, because it refreshed my memory. This material should be used by younger children in grade school. They are the ones who are just learning, and it will be easy for them to use.”

Dagmar Cruz, student

"The WriteSite is integral to our work in writing across the curriculum. Here students can not only read about college writing but practice writing and work through college assignments. For faculty, writing fellows, and tutors, too, WriteSite offers a special mix of information and interchange essential to support writing in the disciplines.”

Dolores Straker, CUNY’s Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

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**Got a Nanosecond?**

Last January President Clinton proposed major increases in funding of research in (among other areas) nanotechnology, at the same time urging a 17% increase in the National Science Foundation’s total budget to $4.6 billion.

Seconding that motion, the NSF announced on March 1 that it was awarding a $2.7 million grant to City College’s Center for Analysis of Structures and Interfaces (CAS) to boost research in the new realm of nanotechnology. The word “nanosecond” (just celebrated its 40th birthday and defines a billionth of a second.) Professor of Chemistry Daniel Akins, CAS’s director, expects to involve colleagues at Hunter and Staten Island Colleges, as well as at Columbia and the University or Rochester.

“This project will create a pool of PhDs trained in a cross-disciplinary environment in fields poised to contribute to the next generation of nanomaterials,” Akins said.

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**President Sessoms Resigns at Queens**

Dr. Allen Sessoms, the President of Queens College for the last five years, announced his resignation on April 7, effective on August 31.

Saying that “separated from my family, including my two young daughters, it has been an extremely difficult while productive five years,” Sessoms said. Accepting the resignation, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein stated that Sessoms “every possible good fortune as he considers future challenges and opportunities” and thanked him for his service to Queens College.

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**Irish-American Institute Established at Lehman College**

A proposal to establish a CUNY Institute for Irish-American Studies, to be based at Lehman College, was approved unanimously by the Board of Trustees at its February meeting.

The Institute will focus on the Irish-American diaspora and its impact on American life and culture.

The proposal was made and vigorously supported by Trustee John J. Calandra, who said on the occasion, “We look forward to collaborating with other Irish-American organizations, especially in presenting cultural and literary events that will enable more New Yorkers to share in the rich Irish heritage.

Serving on the Institute’s Advisory Board will be CUNY faculty prominent in Irish studies, as well as leaders of various cultural and artistic organizations. Among the members already on the Board, still in formation, are the poet and Lehman English Professor Billy Collins, former Trustees Chairman James P. Murphy, Ciaran O’Reilly, Producing Director of the Irish Repertory Theater, and Lehman’s specialist in Celtic mythology, Dr. Michael Paull.

Welcoming the Institute, Lehman President Ricardo Fernandez said, “For the past 75 years the Bronx has been a central focus of Irish immigration. As we seek to understand the impact of that immigration, we hope our borough, through Lehman College and CUNY, can also serve as one of the centers for this effort.”

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**QUEENS COLLEGE READING**

Sontag on 19th-Century Viticulture, Crop Rotation

After her February 29 Queens College reading from *America*, her new historical novel set in 19th-century Poland and America, Susan Sontag was questioned about how she researched it.

“Research sounds a little more pretentious than what I actually do,” the distinguished novelist and critic replied. “I just read a lot of historical documents. For the farm—there are two chapters set on a farm in Anaheim [California]—I got pamphlets issued by the Department of Agriculture in the 1870s to find out about alfalfa and crop rotation. . . . The basic rule is you have to know a hundred times more than you actually use.”

Sontag said she also read seven books on the wine industry back then in California. “I took copious notes but very little of it actually got into the novel . . . It was the same for [Sontag’s previous novel] the Volcano Lover, which took place in the 18th century. Of course, I don’t want to say that people wore wigs or had buckles on their shoes or took candles up the stairs when they went to bed. That would be a very amateurish kind of scene painting. You have to learn all this stuff and digest it, then forget about it. But it comes back when you need it.”

During her opening remarks, Sontag declared the venerable Queens Readings “the best reading series in New York.” Her reading will be broadcast several times in the spring on the cable Metro Channel’s Unblinking Eye program and throughout Canada on the CBC, as will the March 21 reading featuring Leonard Lopate’s “Conversation with Philip Lopate.”

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**QUEENS EVENING READINGS**

Director Joe Cuomo making Susan Sontag feel quite welcome before her leap-day appearance. Photo, Rick DeWitt.
CUNY'S First African American Grad

Pictured here is William Hallett Greene, the first graduate of City College who can be identified as African American (B.S. 1884). The son of a coachman who lived on West 31st Street, Greene was one of the 20 graduates who survived from an entering freshman class of 250. Elected secretary of his senior class and described as “very popular” in the College Mercury, after graduation he entered the U.S. Signal Corps, then a branch of the army responsible for communications and meteorological studies. Greene is featured in a new, lavishly illustrated book, From the Free Academy to CUNY, that offers an overview of CUNY’s 150-year history. The volume, edited by Professors Sandra Roff (Baruch), Anthony Cucchiara (Brooklyn), and Barbara Dunlap (City), is scheduled to appear later this spring; it will be featured more fully in the Summer issue of CUNY Matters.

The Faces of CUNY

On the Corner Of 80th Street & Livingston

You could call brilliant the recent choice of Larry Edwards by Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and Harold O. Levy to fill the new position of Deputy to the Chancellor for Recruitment and College Preparation: he’s been preparing for the job for, oh, say 50 years. As a permanent bridge between CUNY and the Board of Education, Edwards is only slightly less venerable than the “harp and altar, of the fiery fused” that Hart Crane went on about in his famous 1927 Brooklyn Bridge poem. First, Edwards considers the appointment as “payback” time for the life-changing experience of earning three degrees from Queens College in the 1950s—a B.A. in Political Science and two Master's degrees in Education and Guidance and Counseling. Second, Edwards brings 41 years of experience working with the Board of Education, the last 15 of them at the central Board office, where he latterly became Supervising Superintendent and focused on the City’s high schools. The Jackson Heights native is also very familiar at the CUNY Central Office, having worked on several University-Board initiatives during the last decade. Now he has his own office on both sides of the East River, and is preoccupied with the expansion of College Now. His favorite word these days? “Seamless”—as in transition from high school to college.

A Trustee Marries in Dhaka

As CUNY's Student Senate Chair and member of the Board of Trustees for the last three years, Mizzanoor Biswas has made his share of political arrangements. Now he has submitted to the ultimate arrangement: his own marriage. In January, Biswas returned to his native Bangladesh—where he spent his first 18 years—to meet and marry Tajin. He is seen here with her just after the ceremony (his headgear is called a paghre). The marriage was arranged by a mutual friend of their two families, both of which reside in the capital of Dhaka. In traditional Bangladeshi fashion, the prospective bride and groom met twice, for less than a total of two hours and with family supervision. The meetings clearly went well. Tajin, an architect, arrives here this spring, and the couple looks forward to raising a family in New York City.

Of Witches: The Origin of PC

Q: When was the first recorded instance of political correctness?
A: In 1939, in The Wizard of Oz, when actress Billie Burke, as Glinda, explains to Judy Garland’s Dorothy Gale that “only bad witches are ugly.” Glinda, of course, is the Good Witch.
Elebash Endowment Comes in Handy

The range of topics addressed in books by City University faculty members and graduates has always been extraordinary. Here is a sampling to prove the point from among titles that have recently appeared. First, three far-flung novels.

Growing out of a short story that appeared in American Fiction in 1990 (Joyce Carol Oates is its editor), LaGuardia professor of English Michael Blaine’s first novel The Desperate Season (Bob Weisbach Books) has received considerable favorable attention. Its subject—a horrifying case of murderous violence committed by a son against his family—certainly touches a topical nerve. Based on actual events that occurred near Blaine’s upstate retreat, the literary thriller was praised in the London Times as a “tense piece of psychological pathology.”

Violence of a more systematic kind—that of the cut-throat gambling world of Las Vegas—is the backdrop for another CUNY novelist, Adam Berlin. Head-lock (Algonquin) is the title; and the hero is a wrestler dismissed from college for turning a match into blood sport. Singularly lacking in wisdom, Odessa Rose drops out to Las Vegas, Berlin, who earned his MFA at Brooklyn College, is now teaching English at John Jay College.

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux describes Rails Under My Back, by Jeffrey Renard Allen, who has been a professor of English at Queens College since 1992, as a “brilliantly colored, intensely musical novel” that follows two cousins, Hatch and Jesus, as they fare danger and come to terms with their families’ past. Deploying the central image of railroad tracks that carry African-Americans from one form of bondage to freedom in another, Allen’s novel addresses the African-American experience of exodus and exile in the last half century. Library Journal called it “a literary tour de force—raw, powerful, and often poetic.”

Cuban-American relations have been much in the news lately—and much on the mind of César Ayala, associate professor of Latin American studies at Lehman College.

Not Elián but sugar, however, is the focus of his attention in American Sugar Kingdom: The Plantation Economy of the Spanish Caribbean, 1898-1934 (University of North Carolina Press). The study attempts to place the history of U.S. plantation agriculture and the business tactics of the U.S. sugar industry—says one specialist in the field, Francisco Scarano, “Ayala weaves a fascinating narrative about the making of an international sugar plantation complex.”

No fewer than four CUNY authors are on the title page of an important new socio-
A Hunter College Chevalier Probes the Gambler's Psyche

ON THE INTOXICATIONS OF CHANCE

Games of chance and of skill have always existed. The casting of dice, pebbles, knucklebones, and sticks or the shooting of arrows have all served divinities and ones of divine purpose. Seers, shamans, medicine men, and oracles were called upon to interpret meanings or predict future events. So significant were the prognostications of dice-oracles that a set of questions and answers, each connected to a specific throw of the dice, were carved on the inner side of the gateway to a mountain necropolis at Terrassus, in what is now Turkey. Here is one example:

Kronos the Child Eater
Three fours and two sixes. This is the side of the gateway to a mountain necropolis at Terrassus, in what is now Turkey.

Stay at home and go not elsewhere
Lest the destructive Beast and avenging Fury come upon you.

For I see that the business is neither safe nor secure.

Dicer (Latin datum, what destiny dictates), used for thousands of years of gambling, have also been associated with religion, ethics, and law. The word play German pflegen, from Old English plegan and Old Frisian plega to vouch or stand for, to take a risk, to expose oneself to danger) implies not only honor, struggle, and judgmental qualities, but also divine will, the power behind everything, as John Huizinga explained in his classic study, Homo Ludens. Gambling and dice in ancient Japan were associated with sacred Shinto ritual. The diviner, a priest, had to cleanse his body, withdraw into a sanctuary, close his eyes, suspend his breathing, and finally concentrate on requesting the help of supernatural powers. Buddhists also used dice casting to search for philosophical guidance from Buddha or to fulfill a vow.

In the Bhagavad-Gita (Sanskrit for “Song of Song”) and part of the Mahabharata, Lord Krishna, a creative power, is described as follows: “I am the game of dice. I am the self seated in the heart of beings. I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all things. The five-handed dices were identified with the five objects of Arga, the Fire God, who “throws down the dice...striving with [the Sun God] Surya's rays for the midsummer place among brethren.” The casting of a lot (from the Teutonic root hlaet, referring to the pebble used in casting) was another form of gambling that both encompassed the notion of destiny and disclosed divine judgments. Moses was informed by God that the land of the Hebrews would be divided according to lot (Numbers); Saul was elected king by lot (1 Samuelle), and we are told in Proverbs that lots are an indication of divine will. “The lot is in the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

The casting of lots was popular in ancient Greece as well. Did not the Gods cast lots to divide the universe, Zeus accusing the sky? Had not Zeus, in the Iliad, used a sacred balance to firm his decision as to whether the Trojans or Greeks would win their war? Indeed, Sophocles attributed the invention of dice to Palamedes, a Greek, who taught the game to his countrymen to relieve the boredom of the 10-year siege of Troy. Patrician Romans, however, considered public gambling shameful. Still, performances of the Circus Maximus attracted gamblers of all types. Juvenal advised that if one really intended to indulge in betting at the gambling table, it was wiser to leave one’s purse at home. According to Suetonius, the Emperors Augustus, Nero, and Claudius were mesmerized by dice, the last having written a book on the subject. Caligula was known to have cheated at gambling. Domitian to have enjoyed it. Commodus to have had special rooms set apart for it. Horace warned against it, and Tacitus claimed that Germanic tribesmen were passionate gamblers, losing material possessions and selling themselves into slavery in consequence.

Though permitted in the Koran, the casting of lots was forbidden to laymen, and even priests and judges could avail themselves of this method as a last resort. The Koran warms, “It is unlawful only to cast among you frankly and readily by means of strong drink and games of chance, and to turn you from remembrance of Allah.”

The special dicing schools (scholae decliurum) and guilds of medieval France not only trained knights in the art of gambling, but helped them to uphold its standards as well. Countermovements following the Council of Mayence in the 9th century militated to outlaw gambling, and John Calvin, convinced that everything was predeter
dined by God, condemned the notion of chance in his Institutes of the Christian Religion of 1559.

Yet that same year Francis I, to raise funds for his government, issued the first letters of patent in 1575 to establish special lotteries. Although forbidden during the reign of Louis XIV, gambling continued even at court. During Louis’ reign, ironically, two mathematicians, Blaise Pascal and Pierre Fermat, invented the calculus of probability. Gambling became a passion in 18th-century France, and, not surprisingly, it was abolished by the revolutionary government in 1793. Only in 1901 was it finally legalized.

Although legislation restricting games of chance was promulgated in 14th-century England, borough officers were frequently chosen by lot and criminals condemned in like manner. From the 16th century on, public lotteries became an accepted way of raising money, their control passing from the crown to Parliament a century later. The early Stuarts encouraged sports requiring skill, but Puritans found them offensive because of the gambling that accompanied them. Despite intricacies, such games as faro, hazard, dice, roulette, baccarat, lotteries, and card-games remained popular.

Not only did lotteries virtually finance the Virginia Company’s endeavors in the New World, but they were also instrumen-
tal in funding the American Ideal of independence. Puritans and Quakers, averse to gambling because it bred sloth and deception, believed that chance was in God’s domain and should not be toyed with.”

Creative artists through the centuries have not only enriched our understanding of the problematics of gambling, but have added to the subject a world of philosophical and psychological speculations as well. Unforgettable, for example, is Rabelais’s portrait in Gargantua and Pantagruel of Judge Birel, who decided his legal cases by dice casting. The playwright Marivaux gambled with love and deception in his comedy, The Game of Love and Chance. A man of learning and the author of celebrated memoirs, Casanova supported himself by spying, expert seductive charms, and gambling. The notion of fatality is interwoven with gambling in Pushkin’s riveting tale, “The Queen of Spades.” In Ts’ao Hsia-ch’in’s The Dream of the Red Chamber, emphasis is placed on games of skill played for diversionary purposes. In Dickens’s The Old Curiosity Shop, Little Nell’s grandfather, an obsessive gambler, intended to make money for his ward but loses it instead. Stéphane Mallarme’s poem “A Throw of Dice Will Never Anabolish Chance” cosmifies the very concept of hazard. In Joseph Conrad’s allegorical novel, Children of the Game, emphasizes the play of irresistible destiny hovering over some children. And Stephen Zweig’s “The Gambler” is, for some, an metaphor of his own obsessive suicidal tendencies. But perhaps one of the most moving paradigms of gambling—and the place where I begin Gambling, Game, and Psyche—is in the posthumously published Thoughts of a Mentally Sick Man, mathematician, scientist, and religious philosopher. For there Pascal places his famous wager in favor of the existence of God.

Correction
In the Winter Issue, the website for the CUNY Faculty Development Program was incorrectly given; it is http://web.gc.cuny.edu/cfd.

Freedom of the Whitney for All CUNY Students

As part of their course work for a class on “The American Century,” the students of Dr. Sally Webster, professor of modern and contemporary art at Lehman College and the Graduate Center, were required to make several visits to the Whitney Museum, especially during its Biennial.

Webster thought, “why not write to the Whitney’s director, Maxwell Anderson, to ask if admission fees might be waived for them?”

Delighted “to hear that this and other Whitney exhibitions have been of interest and service” in Webster’s classes, Anderson responded in a January letter with an even better idea. “It gives me great pleasure,” he continued, “to extend herewith to all students enrolled in a City University of New York college complimentary admission to the Whitney Museum of American Art through December 2000.”


When Webster passed the good news on, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein hastened to thank Anderson for his “splendid and generous gift of access” to one of our nation’s most treasured cultural institutions. “He also expressed the hope that this new CUNY-student perk would be widely publicized and enjoyed.”
Big Man on LaGuardia Campus for his 94th Birthday

Several thousand new and recent CUNY graduates were greeted by 127 employers at the University’s Big Apple Job Fair on April 6. This was the largest number of employer participants in the 12-year history of the Job Fair, which took place at the Jacob K. Javitz Convention Center.

Breakfast keynote speaker for the event was Joseph J. Grano Jr., President of PaineWebber Incorporated, the leading full-service securities firm. He highlighted the aggressive recruitment strategies that are intensifying in the booming economy, observing of his firm that “we compete with no fewer than 10 major firms, and in today’s society the competition is not about market share but about people and growth.”

A member of the CUNY Business Leadership Council and holder of an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Queens College, Grano outlined some of the efforts of PaineWebber (and doubtless many other major corporations) to respond to the heated job market, including the establishment of a “diversity council” that reports directly to him—Grano noting that “three of every five of tomorrow’s replacement employees are today’s minorities.” He also noted that at PaineWebber “women already constitute 48% of our labor force...the glass ceiling is beginning to crumble.”

The last of 10 specific recommendations Grano left his audience with was to urge that “business leaders acknowledge the importance of our City University system by interviewing and hiring its graduates and by demanding of our government officials the competitive requirement of having the best college and university system in the country. The best city in the world needs the best academic foundation if it is to remain the best.”

Letters or suggestions for future articles on topics of general interest to the CUNY community should be addressed to:

CUNY Matters
335 E. 80th St., 7th Floor
New York, NY 10021

CUNY Matters is available on the CUNY home page at http://www.cuny.edu.