

## 2000-2001 Budget Request Highlights

The draft 2000-2001 University Budget Request of the Board of Trustees will be considered at its November 22 meeting. The draft Request, which was discussed at a public hearing on October 18, totals \$1.4 billion.

Five areas critical to strengthening CUNY's role in the City and State are emphasized.

First, the Request proposes a strategy "for building national prominence by drawing on the resources available to the system as a whole—the creation of a "flagship environment." The combined effect of a flagship environment and a steady rise in admissions criteria will promote a clearer identity for CUNY's top-tier colleges. Two important components of this initiative are "replenishing full-time faculty at the colleges, a *sine qua non* of any first-rate institution, and a strategic effort to bring to the University significant clusters of new faculty in particular areas."

Related to the "flagship" strategy is current planning for a University-wide Honors Academy. Drawing on faculty from undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools, the Academy will provide honors students special opportunities to benefit from expertise across the University's campuses. This approach builds on the recommendations of the recent report of the Mayor's Task Force on CUNY.

A second focus of the Request is support of academic achievement through further investment in pre-collegiate and collegiate academic advising, counseling, and tutoring—notably by expansion of the College Now program (see story below). The \$9 million in new funding represents a significant increase and will enhance counseling for approximately 36,000 students and expand tutoring for a similar number of students. The ultimate goal is to provide an environment in which all students can make the necessary adjustments to college life and work.

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## THE FACES OF KINGSBOROUGH'S COLLEGE NOW

# Scouting City High Schools For Major-League Students

By Robert Singer

Associate Professor of English,  
Kingsborough Community College

We all recently learned about the problems Edmund Morris encountered writing *Dutch*, his long-awaited biography of Ronald Reagan. Morris's subject seemed so remote and unengaged but at other times, affable, humorous, even charismatic. Yet this biographer had to discover, to some degree, who was this person?—what was the explanation for his undeniable success as a politician and President? Considering all his puzzlement, Morris perhaps should have called his book *Double Dutch*, since the phrase once meant "unintelligible language, gibberish."

Luckily, I had none of Morris's problems with this assignment, which is to profile another remarkable success story, Kingsborough Community College's flourishing College Now program. No crippling writer's block, no far-flung legwork needed, and—best of all—instead of one (by many accounts mysterious) personality to deal with, I had multiple personalities to choose from, all willing to tell their story: those of hard-working College Now instructors and their ambitious students. *Double Dutch* might have made a good title for me, too, but

strictly—with a bow to a familiar sight on New York City playgrounds—as a metaphor for agility, energy, and high-stepping collaboration.

This program, supervised by Dr. Rachele Goldsmith, trains high school instructors to teach a variety of specialized college-level courses to high school seniors. Since its inception, we estimate that College Now has served 60,000 students—more than enough to fill Yankee

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Teacher **Joseph Gambuzza**, pictured here with his College Now students at Lafayette High School in Brooklyn, is a perfect fit for the baseball allusions in Robert Singer's article. A baseball institution in the borough, he was Lafayette's baseball coach for 22 years and mentored the longtime Mets reliever John Franco. Featured recently in *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, Gambuzza had lucky players who enjoyed plenty of free Mets tickets: the team's owner, Fred Wilpon, also attended Lafayette. And so, too, one hastens to add, did pitcher Sandy Koufax.

## Board of Trustees Approves Exit-from-Remediation Policy

By Louise Mirrer

Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

The use of tests based on national standards to determine when students in remedial classes are ready to do college-level work was overwhelmingly approved by the City University's Board of Trustees on September 27. The new policy reflects CUNY's determination to establish appropriate criteria for student placement in credit-bearing courses.

Strongly backed by Board Chairman Herman Badillo, Vice Chairman Benno C. Schmidt, Jr, and Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, this action is the latest in a series of



CAPPR chair, Trustee Nilda Soto Ruiz

November. The examination will serve to place students in remedial course work, as well as determine readiness for exit. It will include a 45-minute essay to be graded by trained faculty. The CUNY Math Assessment Test will continue to be used for both placement into and exit from remedial instruction in mathematics.

Determining when students are ready for college-level work is an integral part of CUNY's program to raise admissions standards at its senior colleges. Refinement of this process will reinforce the University's determination to begin phasing out remediation in baccalaureate programs by January, 2000.



Chancellor Matthew Goldstein

measures designed to strengthen academic standards at the University. The policy was recommended by the Board's Committee on Academic Policy, Program and Research (CAPPR). Its chair, Dr. Nilda Soto Ruiz, commented that it "moves the University one step closer to the ultimate goal of the Chancellor's plan: to ensure that students are accurately placed in college level or remedial work." Implementation of the policy will begin this spring.

As a first step toward establishing appropriate exit-from-remediation measures, Chancellor Goldstein convened an advisory committee comprised of faculty and student representatives and administrators involved in the University's testing program. This committee, which has been working with the Office of Academic Affairs, recommended a contractor for a new examination in reading and writing early in

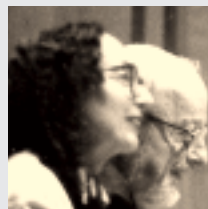
During discussion of the new policy on exit from remediation, Chancellor Goldstein submitted plans to require applicants to CUNY senior colleges to take standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test or the American College Test in order to be considered for admission. The SAT is already offered free of charge to potential applicants at five CUNY campuses. Applicants who score below a prescribed threshold on the SAT, ACT, or Regents examinations will be required to take CUNY's own nationally-normed assessment tests. If they pass all tests, they will be admitted to senior colleges.

During discussion of exit-from-remediation policy, Goldstein said that it has always been his belief that "one indicator of college readiness is insufficient." For September 2000, he has proposed that students applying to CUNY's baccalaureate programs be judged in several re-

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## IN THIS ISSUE

The two famed authors at left differed over how to drive—a narrative, that is—at the most recent Queens College Evening Reading (see page 5). The very first Evening Reader, 24 years ago and Queens professor emerita, at right, won the National Book Critics Award for her poetry this year. Learn more about her on page 9.



Briefly last summer, the historic New York question “Where were you when the lights went out?” was supplanted by “How did you make it to work in the deluge?”

Metropolitan-area commuters will long remember August 26th, when torrential rains flooded all forms of local transportation. Metro-North stopped running completely. In Manhattan, FDR Drive was closed, and play was halted on the West Side’s Joe DiMaggio Highway. All Central Park transverses were flooded, and bus schedules went on hiatus. Taxis? —don’t ask! Those commuters who managed to arrive at work were in time for lunch.

Meanwhile, on the John Jay College campus, the meteorological anomaly was whipping up a minor educational disaster.

For August 26th was the opening day of a first-ever two-day summer institute planned by the leaders of CUNY’s Writing Across the Curriculum initiative, whose objective is to enhance discipline-specific writing skills on all CUNY campuses. The institute had been designed to provide an essential opportunity for disciplinary and cross-disciplinary exchange. As well, it had been hoped the seminars would acquaint faculty and members of the newly established Writing Fellows Program with the basic concepts of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)—and also give the members of campus teams formed to implement the policies and practices of WAC on each campus the chance to get acquainted.

Would these best-laid plans go the way of Johnstown or, to think of more recent floods, North Carolina and Mexico?

APRÈS LE DELUGE—WAC

## Afloat at a John Jay Conference: Improved Writing in the Disciplines

By Dolores Straker

CUNY Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Writing Across the Curriculum has grown out of the Board of Trustees’ January 1999 mandate to assure that CUNY graduates bring fully-developed communication skills into the workplace and into graduate and professional schools. This can only be accomplished through the promotion of extensive writing practice within each discipline, which has been taking place at some of our campuses since the 1970s. WAC, however, is the first University-wide initiative.

A unique complement to WAC is the Writing Fellows Program, which will initially deploy 85 specially trained CUNY doctoral students from 31 disciplines. They have been selected and matched with programs on all 17 campuses. These Fellows will assist in a variety of capacities to support intensive writing instruction, and they will be monitored by full-time faculty coordinators, who will work with them closely throughout the academic year.

During the past 20 years, tens of thousands of faculty, students and administrators at hundreds of institutions have been exposed to the writing-across-the-curriculum

movement, which is founded on two assumptions. The first is cognitively based and suggests that writing is a unique mode of learning in all disciplines. The other assumption is rhetorically based and focuses on introducing students to the distinctive

“Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never  
Remember to have heard. . .”

—the storm scene in *King Lear*

conventions and modes of discourse in their chosen discipline.

The WAC mission has been to reform pedagogy rather than curriculum. Its emphasis has thus been on thinking-and-learning and on attempts to bring about changes in teaching as well as enhanced writing skills. WAC theorists have concluded that successful programs in the field must meet certain criteria: (1) they must address all levels of the curriculum, from basic through advanced writing courses; (2) faculty development must be an integral component of such initiatives; (3) students must be allowed a broad range of audiences with which to communicate; and (4) the entire faculty must recognize—and act to reap—the benefits of academic literacy.

During the spring 1999 semester, the University-wide WAC task force compiled a summary of current and prior campus-level initiatives in this area. The following goals guiding our efforts at CUNY are extrapolated from practices observed within the University and at other institutions:

- An expanded articulation of the central importance that writing development has in the entire undergraduate experience
- An acknowledgment of the significance of a given college’s mission for

the development of its writing policy

- Experimentation with—and subsequent adoption of—promising new practices

- The development of clearly stated goals, well described methods, provisions for extensive faculty development and student support, and evaluation plans for all WAC programs

A few words should be added about the Writing Fellows Program, which is linked to the WAC initiative and represents a commitment to CUNY students at two levels: it advances the professional training of graduate students, who in turn assist in improving the writing skills of undergraduates. Advanced doctoral students will participate in a variety of teaching and administrative activities designed to enhance undergraduate learning and, at the same time, to broaden their own professional experience.

Picture, now, the organizers who had trudged in early through the downpour on August 26th to greet the 180 participants scheduled to appear. A literary soul might have looked out onto Tenth Avenue and thought of Shakespeare’s *Lear* in his big storm: “Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never/ Remember to have heard.”

Baruch College’s George Otte and I, two of the event’s planners, met on an A train that was actually moving, and we pondered the horrible prospect of cancellation. It was all too easy to picture many empty seats. And would the momentum lost on the first day undermine the events scheduled for the second day (which, you will recall, was bright and sunny), we also asked ourselves. In the meantime, Vice Chancellor Louise Mirrer’s office was on the phone requesting instructions for the barrage of calls already coming in.

But then something amazing began to happen: a few soggy faculty members and writing fellows began to appear. The lucky ones from nearby just walked. Others were able to drive. One faculty member rode his bicycle.

And they simply kept on arriving—the vast majority by truncated or makeshift itineraries on public transportation. One stalwart couple started their journey, got soaked, encountered a train on fire, returned home, changed clothes, and started out once more. A writing fellow came in from New Hampshire.

Yet the most difficult commute seemed

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## Something Old, Something New At Brooklyn College Library



Ground breaking for a major \$50 million expansion and rehabilitation of the Brooklyn College Library took place on November 4th. This project will give the Library more than 100,000 square feet of new space, renovation of the 1937 Gideonse extension (118,000 sq.ft.), and a restoration of the 1937 LaGuardia Hall (54,000 sq.ft.).

When the Library, shown here in an exterior perspective from the Lily Pond, is available for occupancy in June 2001, LaGuardia Hall, with its stately Georgian facade and imposing tower, will again be the main entrance.

The existing core stack will be reused for Special Collections, and will remain the only part of the building not accessible to the public. The existing reading room on the second floor will be restored, and the reading rooms on the top

floor will become offices, a multipurpose room, and a reading room. A new auditorium is also planned for the new extension. The two architectural firms of Buttrick White & Burtis and Shepley Bulfinch Richardson & Abbott have taken care, in their designs, to preserve the primacy and detail of LaGuardia Hall and preserve the view of its tower from all campus vantage points.

In the last decade, the need for this project became clear: by the mid-90s, Brooklyn College was operating at approximately 40% of City University space standards for reading areas, even as storage capacity for the collections was diminishing.

The project is being funded by the State of New York through the support of Governor Pataki, the State Assembly and Senate, and with the assistance of the State Division of the Budget.

### Budget Highlights, continued from page 1

Third, the Request commits the University to improving the undergraduate experience by investing in the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative begun this year (an article on it begins above on this page). A valuable new resource now available to students is the CUNY Transfer and Information Program and Planning System (CUNY TIPPS), a website that assists them in planning course work and transferring between CUNY campuses.

The fourth focus of the Request is on a comprehensive University economic development plan that will embrace and nurture a number of targeted initiatives such as the CUNY Institute for Software Design and Development, a Photonics Compact Device Center, a Small Business Support and Incubator Program, and expansion of the University’s workforce development programs.

Finally, the Budget Request supports the upgrading of the University’s technology and data management. CUNY was recently ranked fourth in the nation in a PC Week survey. Building on this success, the University hopes to continue improving its local and wide-area network infrastructure, the digital resources of its libraries, and distance learning opportunities. Revamping of CUNY’s major administrative management information systems is also a major priority in the Request.

A \$1.1 billion operating budget is requested for the senior colleges, an increase of \$74.5 million. About equal amounts from these new funds are allocated for new collective bargaining requirements and for critical program improvements. The \$375.9 million requested for the community colleges constitutes a \$22.6 million increase. Of this \$5.5 million is for base-line needs, and \$17.1 million is for program improvements.

## \$2.5M U.S. Grant Opens Horizon For Minority Research Scientists

For this column, which will appear as an occasional feature in future issues of CUNY•Matters, **Dr. Leslie S. Jacobson**, Acting Vice President for Research Development at the CUNY Research Foundation, has adapted material from the NSF grant proposal of Dr. Gail Smith, P.I., to support the Minority Graduate Education Program.

An alarming fact for the university world is that, while the population of the U.S. is increasingly multi-ethnic, the academy's Ph.D. candidates remains nearly homogeneous—that is, white and male. According to the National Research Council's survey of the total population of science and engineering doctorates (1998), the population is "84% white, 12% Asian, 2% black, 2% Native American, and less than 1% Hispanic." The inevitable result of so few doctorates is that there are few minority faculty.

The City University is in a unique position to assist in remedying these distressingly low minority percentages. The Graduate School and University Center already produces African American and Hispanic Ph.D.s at twice the national rate, and this stellar record will be further enhanced by a grant to support the Minority Graduate Education Program (MGEP), a collaboration between the National Science Foundation and CUNY.

Funded for a total of five years and \$2.5 million, the MGE Program, sparked by the CUNY Research Foundation, Office of Research Development, will be led by Principal Investigators Dr. Gail Smith (GSUC), Prof. Neville Parker (City College) and GSUC Associate Provost Dr. Linda Edwards. The MGEP objective is to increase CUNY minority Ph.D. graduates in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics as part of an overall strategy to enhance research capabilities nationwide and to guide a highly educated and diverse workforce. This development effort is part of the ongoing program of the Office of Research Development at the Foundation to promote multi-campus collaboration on research and training.

The City University of New York has long worked to enhance the level of diversity among doctoral degree recipients. Today, its doctoral programs serve about 4,000 students across more than 30 disciplines. They are taught and mentored by about 1,700 doctoral faculty, the vast majority of whom also teach on one of CUNY's college campuses—schools which have a long history of educating under-represented minority groups. The NSF grant recognizes the colleges' long-term success in encouraging and supporting minority students eager to earn advanced degrees.

If treated as a single unit, CUNY granted more bachelor of arts degrees to black students—3,360 in all—in the 1995/96 academic year than by the top three historically black colleges and universities combined. Yet, while CUNY has had substantial success in increasing minority graduate student success in the arts and humanities, a similar level of high achievement has been elusive in the sciences.

The NSF funding will operate the Minority Access/Graduate Networking in the Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics (MAGNET-SEM) project and will entail two major components. The first is attracting additional minority students to matriculate

at CUNY by providing stipends for first- and second-year students; the second is improving retention rates among minority students through workshops, research presentations, and a planned Regional Network of graduate programs. The Regional Network will involve joint activities with Polytechnic University, Stevens Institute of Technology, and the New Jersey Institute of Technology. The bottom-line objective for the five-year MGE Program is to triple the number of CUNY minority doctoral graduates in science, mathematics and engineering.

The MGEP is one of several the NSF has funded that address the persistent lack of diversity in doctoral education, notably in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics—a critical national problem cited recently by the National Science and Technology Council:

*The scientific and technological advances that keep our nation at the forefront of economic progress, military preparedness, health care, and quality of life for our citizens depend upon a highly educated and motivated workforce. Developing such a workforce requires that the best and the brightest students from varying cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic origins are prepared for careers in science and technology.*

The proposed MGE initiative in science seeks to increase the enrollment, retention, and doctoral degree completion of African-American and Hispanic-American students in each of the following targeted disciplines: Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth & Environmental Science, Engineering, Mathematics, Physics, and Speech and Hearing Sciences.

Improved recruitment of black and Latino students to the targeted doctoral programs will take place through the systematic identification and nurture of talented

## Reaching Up & CUNY Celebrate J.F.K. Jr.'s Life



One of the University's major disabilities initiatives has been the collaboration of the **CUNY Consortium for the Study of Disabilities** with **Reaching Up**, the foundation established by the late John F. Kennedy, Jr. Many of those associated with both organizations were present at a memorial service held in the 1199 H&HS Union's Martin Luther King, Jr. Labor Center on October 22. Among the musicians who performed during the event was pop singer **Nona Hendryx**; she is seen here with **Reaching Up** Vice President (now Acting President) **Jeffrey Sachs**. In the rear, from the Consortium, are Jason Chapin, left, and its director, Bill Ebenstein. Photo, André Beckles.

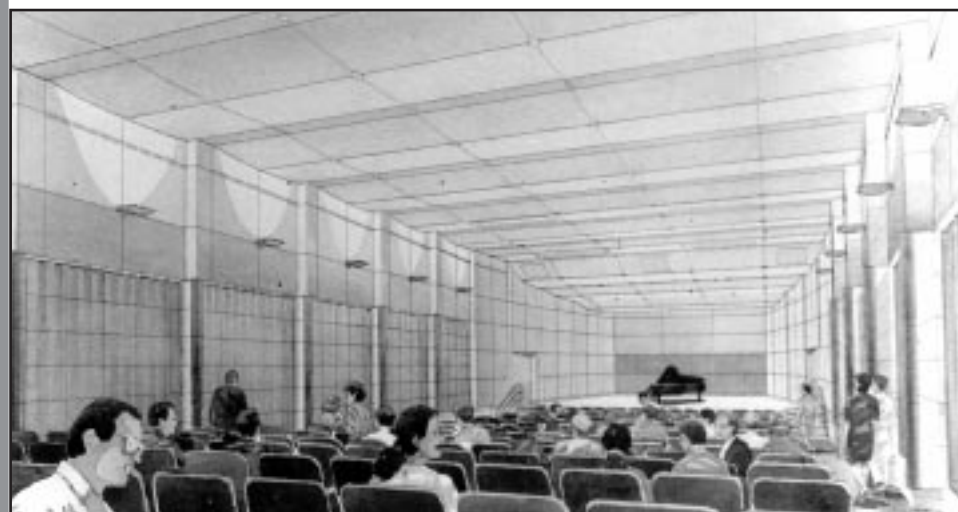
undergraduate science students at the senior colleges and at collaborating colleges outside of CUNY. Enhancement of faculty and peer mentoring systems is a core activity, and will be reviewed in regular meetings of a Steering Committee and through the monitoring of enrolled students' progress.

First-year doctoral students will also be enlisted to share experiences with the most promising undergraduates in their discipline. They will also be exposed to minority faculty from other CUNY campuses, as well as visiting scholars of color from

industry and other universities. It is hoped that MAGNET-SEM, facilitated by traditional and technological communication systems, will establish a supportive community of junior and senior minority scholars and minority doctoral candidates.

We believe this project will serve as a model for similar programs across the U.S. More immediately, we hope our Minority Graduation Education efforts will increase a steady and substantial stream of minority CUNY Ph.D. holders who will be national leaders in research science for the new millennium. ♦

## Elebash Hall in the New Graduate School



A handsome new Midtown cultural venue soon to open is the Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall in the Graduate Center on Fifth Avenue. Seen here in a rendering by the Gwathmey & Siegel firm, it honors two devoted New York music lovers, Mr. and Mrs. Elebash. Morgan Guaranty Trust Company, Trustee of the Elebash Fund, has granted the Graduate Center \$1.5 million to support musical programming and dissertation work on music related to New York City. The Hall's inaugural event next spring will be a symposium on the life and music of early jazz great W.C. Handy. Full coverage of the new GSUC home in the former B. Altman building will appear in the next issue of CUNY•Matters.

## Of Cyclos, Pho, & Monkey Bridges: Notes from Ho Chi Minh City

Since the CUNY-Vietnam Projects program was initiated in 1997 by the College of Staten Island, 12 CUNY faculty from six campuses have visited Vietnam for two to three weeks to share their expertise as teachers of English as a Second Language. In return, CUNY has hosted several Vietnamese colleagues for professional visits to New York. The exchange, coordinated by Ann Helm, the director of CSI's Center for International Service, has produced some notable advances. For example, the Vietnam-USA Society's English Language Programs have begun to differentiate courses for a range of learners, from adults to children. CUNY ESL faculty have observed classrooms, helped select engaging materials, provided new tools for assessment, and have introduced such innovative modes of learning and teaching as student-centered classrooms and the Silent Way methodology. They have also worked to enhance Vietnamese integration into the international ESL and linguistics community.

These visits have also helped our faculty to understand better the needs of Vietnamese students at CUNY campuses, which may include focused attention to pronunciation and speaking skills, academic writing, and American English. The CUNY faculty have enjoyed meeting their Vietnamese peers, and there is hope that longer assignments, of a semester or year, will be possible in the future.

Teamed with Susan Price of Borough of Manhattan Community College, **Judy Gex**, an ESL teacher at LaGuardia Community College since 1979, made her first trip to Asia as part of the program this last June. Previously, she has done extensive teacher training in Benin, West Africa, as a Senior Fulbright Fellow. Gex kept a journal from which the following excerpts are taken.

**Moving Soup Kitchens, Greenery**  
Sometimes you hear the clinking of spoons of the little boys announcing soup for sale. If you stop them, they'll run back and get you a bowl. Sometimes the women vendors carry it, all the serving bowls and utensils in big pots slung from a pole which they carry on their shoulders. They walk with a lilting step which, I'm told, makes it easier to carry heavy weights. Greenery sellers put boxes of flowers and plants on the back of their bicycles. They pedal these little gardens through the streets.

**Hailing a Cyclo**  
My favorite way to get through HCMC traffic is breezy and thrilling. If you've seen the movie *Three Seasons*, you've seen a cyclo, a three-wheeled contraption with the passenger seat in front. It's the Vietnamese version of a roller coaster. You don't quite see how you are going to avoid hitting or being hit, but you do. In order to prevent arguments at the end of the ride, I negotiate a price for it before starting. I also wear a dress with pockets for money, after seeing Susan hurt when two people on a motorcycle reached over and tried to grab her backpack while she was in a cyclo.

**Good Morning Vietnam**  
Sun up at 5:30, and the park across the street is crowded with walkers, joggers and people playing a kind of soccer game with an elongated shuttlecock. Breakfast in Vietnam is *pho*. That's a big bowl of noodle soup served with basil, mint, bean sprouts, red pepper, and *nuoc maam* (pronounced "nuke mom"), a very strong and yummy fish sauce. Fruit sellers come by with many fruits I've never seen: dragon fruit (a bright red and green fruit with gills—the inside, white with tiny black seeds, is delicious), fresh lichees, mango, sweet green bananas, and durian (a popular, large, bumpy fruit that smells a little like shellac).

### "Life's Dust"

In the more elegant tourist areas of town, you can be accosted by small children begging in English or young women carrying drugged babies to appeal to sympathetic visitors. People call them "life's dust." In less chi-chi areas, you don't see them.



**Teaching Tourists**  
Native speakers of English from America, England, Ireland, Canada, and Australia who teach here are mostly young men about my son's age who have professions in their own countries (law, teaching). They teach English as they travel around seeing the world to make their living. Several of them have stopped here for several years. It's a sweet life: a good salary, no taxes, low expenses, a warm climate.

**Respect Your Parents. . .**  
Today a group from our newly organized English Club—150 students strong, ranging in age from 10 to 75—made an excursion to a beautiful pagoda. Everyone took turns sitting by Susan and me to practice their English. We were shown the pagoda's pictures of the punishments in hell for people who misbehave this time around. For example, children who disrespect their parents can expect to be ground into sausage.

### . . . Or Don't!

A more shocking view of child-parent responsibility surfaces, however, in a wonderful short story by Le Minh Khue, a contemporary writer from Hanoi. In "Scenes from an Alley," some children set their 90-year-old father under a tree every day with

the hope that a drunken Westerner will run over him with his car, both making them rich and ridding them of their father.

### Agent Orange

I've also visited the War Remnants Museum. It has an Agent Orange room with deformed babies preserved in formaldehyde and photographs of victims of the chemical agent sprayed during the 1970s. Also on display is a public apology from Admiral Zumwalt to General Giap. Zumwalt had been responsible for supervising the spraying, and his own son later died from exposure to Agent Orange. Also on view is a long apology from former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara for the mistakes our government made during the war. There are now a lot of American Viet-



CUNY ESL teachers Judy Gex, above left, and Susan Price with Dang Thi Bich Thuy, Academic Director of the Vietnam-USA Society. Seen at left, a movable feast of soup—a common sight on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City. Below, Ann Helm congratulates a top graduate at the first graduation ceremony of the Society's English Program in November 1998 in Ho Chi Minh City.



nam veterans with their families in HCMC as tourists.

"Beautiful Resilience" in the Tunnels  
The last war site I visited was the Cu Chi Tunnels, about two hours north of the city. Beneath the lush green rice paddies and lounging water buffalos is this large complex built on three levels over thirty years and housing 16,000 people. I traveled to the tunnels with two young women. One, whose name means "Beautiful Resilience," was born just months after the war ended in 1975. The other, "Autumn Season," is the daughter of a soldier who fought for North Vietnam in both the French and the American Wars. She expressed sorrow about the lonely American mothers who lost sons here too.

**Homework for a Visit to Vietnam**  
Here are some movies I enjoyed as I pre-

pared for the trip: *Scent of Green Papaya*, *Three Seasons*, *Heaven and Earth*, *Regret to Inform*. And readings, too: Lady Borton's *After Sorrow*, Duong Elliott's *The Sacred Willow*, *Four Generations of a Vietnamese Family*, Duong Thu Huong's *Paradise of the Blind*, Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge*, Le Minh Khue's *The Stars, The Earth, The River*, Thich Nhat Hanh's *Our Appointment with Life*, *Peace in Every Step*, *The Stone Boy and Other Stories*.

### "The Tale of Kieu"

This is the title of a 17th-century epic poem. One of my colleagues, who had served as a military adviser here in the 60s, said I must read it because so many Vietnamese quoted from it and I would understand a lot more about their philosophy of life, too. He said he doubted if we would have gotten heavily involved in Viet Nam if more people in our government had read this poem. One saying from *Kieu* I often heard was, "Women are like raindrops. Their life depends on where they land." Intelligent women students and a successful Vietnamese business-woman I met have the same questions women in the U.S. have. Women who are not married by the age of 30 here have enormous problems both in their birth families and in society. Another commonly repeated saying from *Kieu*: "If heaven forces us to live a life of hardship, then we must live like that. If heaven allows us to live a life of ease, only then can we live like that." Many people in Vietnam believe that heaven and earth change places in 30-year cycles.

### Monkey Bridge

My ESL students at CUNY will get a taste of Vietnam, too. I plan to use Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge* in class. A monkey bridge is a log thrown across a stream as a footpath, with two smaller branches added as handrails. Lan Cao says moving from one culture to another is like walking on a monkey bridge.

What are you learning?  
Making this trip has been a big privilege; the Vietnamese have been very kind to us. And the ones we've met seem to love to learn. An Australian lawyer who is teaching here told me they are always asking each other what they are studying now. "They find it strange if you say you are studying nothing." ♦

*Exit-From-Remediation*, continued from page 1

spects, including high school grades in specific academic subjects, the number of academic courses taken, and scores on nationally- or state-standardized exams.

The Chancellor has also instructed senior college presidents to engage faculty bodies on their campuses in establishing specific admissions criteria for their colleges and to convene an admissions review board charged with considering students in special circumstances. In discussing this comprehensive proposal for senior college admissions, Goldstein told the Trustees, "Universities are always challenged on how to best assess student preparation. I am persuaded that there is a need to take a fresh look at the process." ♦

## Dream Cast for Queens Readings

A columnist for the *Queens Times/Ledger* wondered aloud recently, "How does he do it? This Joe Cuomo guy. Does he know where the bodies are buried, have the negatives of the pictures, or what?" He was wondering how the founder of the Queens College Evening Readings (and professor of English) managed to lure so many luminous scribes to his long-running series of readings, discussions, and roundtables on the art of writing.

The question was particularly apt on October 13, when a pride of literary lions—E.L. Doctorow, Arthur Miller, and Joyce Carol Oates—appeared for a lively discussion moderated by Cuomo that opened the 24th season. He believes the audience must have set a Readings record, for not only was the College's Concert Hall SRO but the sound had to be piped into the nearby Choral Room, also full, to accommodate the overflow.

All three authors agreed that the writing process is mysterious. "Books for me begin quite irrationally," said Doctorow. "When I first started out, I always had plans for books. I had outlines, I did research, I had all these high intentions, and the books would never get written. It was only when I learned to trust the act of writing that I got going. That is to say. . . writing to find out what I was writing."

While she agreed that the sources of creative work are

mysterious, Oates saw her self as a "contrary example" from Doctorow: "Ed said that for him writing a novel was like starting out on a journey in a car at night. And it was enough for him to have the headlights on. . . he doesn't know his destination inevitably, but he trusts in the journey to get him there. Now I can't write that way. I have to know my destination. . . have to have a map. . . As a writer, I always know the structure of my novels before I start. I know the ending, the final scene, the last sentence."

"Of course, I have a slightly different approach," said the author of *Death of a Salesman*, "because, in some part of my mind, I have to see the stage rather objectively. A novelist can bring on 35 people at a party, and it doesn't cost him anything!" Still, the mystery of the process is undeniable: "It's a bit like trying to cross an ice crevasse, and you throw a rope

across with a spike on the end of it and hope it'll dig into the other side. Most of the time, of course, the rope just falls into the crevasse."

Miller also suggested that dreams are a source for him. "I dream of things on the stage. I even have spotlights in my dreams, especially on people who are dead." He added, "I think we're all trying to say that any writing that is really interesting involves the unknown, the subconscious. How to get down to where you yourself are involved that way is, I guess, the trick."

"Not only do you drive along the road and only see as far as your headlights," Doctorow observed, varying the point. "If you are really lucky, you go off the road entirely!"

For information on other Queens College Readings through next spring, call 718-997-4646. ♦

*Authors Joyce Carol Oates, E. L. Doctorow, Arthur Miller, and moderator Joe Cuomo during a lighter moment of a roundtable on the art of writing.*



## Free SAT Tests Planned by CUNY

All freshman applicants for University baccalaureate programs will be required to submit SAT I results, beginning in the fall of 2000. This is pursuant to a mandate of the Board of Trustees.

In order to assist students who plan to apply only to a CUNY college, the Office of Admission Services is sponsoring a free Institutional SAT for current high school seniors who have not previously taken the test. Scores from the free SAT may only be used for CUNY admission application.

The free SAT is scheduled on select Saturdays and Sundays from November 1999 through May 2000, from 8:30 to 12 noon.

Students may register for a test in their borough by calling one of three numbers at the Office of Admissions Services: Manhattan and Bronx (212-290-5631); Queens (212-290-5679); Brooklyn and Staten Island (212-290-5639). The four testing sites will be Brooklyn, Hunter, Staten Island, and York Colleges.

For further information call Nevanka Olijnyk at 212-290-5649.

### Whimsy for the Old Millennium

Here is one scenario for the closing moments of the current millennium, courtesy of CUNY poet Billy Collins. It comes from the first of the Lehman College professor's three collections published by the University of Pittsburgh Press, *The Art of Drowning* (1995). Summer before last *CUNY Matters* published his poem "Morning" from *Picnic, Lightning* (1998), and *Questions About Angels* appeared this year.

#### Dancing Toward Bethlehem

If there is only enough time in the final minutes of the 20th century for one last dance I would like to be dancing slowly with you,

say, in the ballroom of a seaside hotel. My palm would press into the small of your back as the past hundred years collapsed into a pile of mirrors or buttons or frivolous shoes,

just as the floor of the 19th century gave way and disappeared in a red cloud of brick dust. There will be no time to order another drink or worry about what was never said,

not with the orchestra sliding into the sea and all our attention devoted to humming whatever it was they were playing.

### LANGUAGE SKILLS WITH FRIES

## Did Somebody Say **BMCC** Donald's?

As part of a pilot program that is planned for replication nationwide, Borough of Manhattan Community College has been taking ESL training to the Golden Arches.

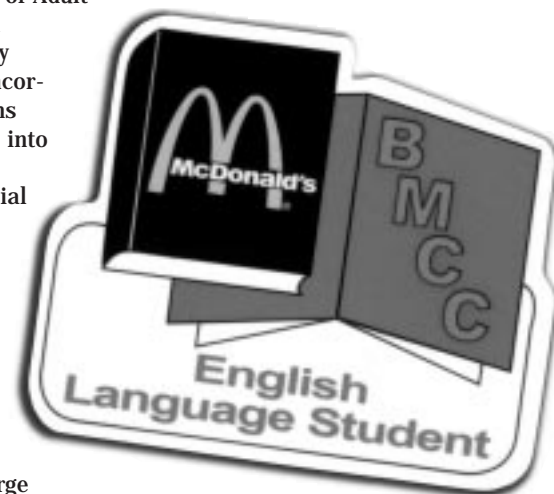
BMCC's collaboration with the corporate food-service giant is one of six around the country designed to assist employees in developing their language skills.

Classes have been conducted this semester by Steve Gilhooley at a McDonald's training room in Manhattan 1-1/2 hours two days each week. According to Dean of Adult and Continuing Education Acté Maldonado, Gilhooley "has been innovative in incorporating oral presentations and McDonald's literature into the classes."

Shown here is the special badge that student-employees wear at their job sites. This encourages their fellow employees to use "English only" on the job, which complements their ESL classwork. Materials for these classes have been supplied free of charge

by the Steck-Vaughn Company, one of the world's leading educational publishers.

BMCC President Antonio Pérez considers the collaboration an ideal example of the College reaching into the community and opening educational horizons: "Because of the training we are providing, these employees are better able to perform their jobs. . . and they may also choose to pursue further educational opportunities at BMCC."



## Creating a Book World for Children

By Ellen Goldsmith and AnnMarie Tevlin

Director and Associate Director of the Center for Intergenerational Reading at NYC Technical College

Josefina, a student at New York City Technical College, remembers being with her children during a big thunderstorm this summer: "We were really scared by the heavy, noisy rain, the thunder, the lightning. My kids asked, 'Mommy, what's happening? what's lightning?' I told them, 'I can't really explain to you but we have books that will give the answer.' We had so much fun reading the books together—they weren't scared anymore."

What Josefina had was a wordless picture book about a snowman and a beautifully illustrated children's book about the weather that featured a spider named Anansi—not the usual contents of a college student's backpack, you may think? But Josefina had these books because she was participating in the Parent Readers Program, which is offered under the auspices of the Center for Intergenerational Reading at the College.

In existence since 1990, the Center for Intergenerational Reading (CIR) at New York City Technical College (NYCTC), promotes the pleasure and learning that comes when adults share literature of high quality with their children. Our programs begin with adults, and aim to be as engaging for them as for children.

The Center's roots explain this commitment. As members of the NYCTC Developmental Skills Department in the mid-1980s, we—along with Ruth D. Handel (now of Montclair State University and author of *An Urban Family Literacy Program*)—were struck by comments our students in reading classes were making: "Tiffany used to like reading and now she doesn't," for example, or "Frederick only listens for a short time when I read to him." Their concern was for their children's reading, not their own. From these observations came our idea of offering workshops in reading and discussing children's literature. So began Parent Readers Program in 1987.

The Program has been recognized by awards from such organizations as the English-Speaking Union, the New York Metropolitan Association of Developmental Educators, and the National Association of Developmental Education. In addition, it was included as one of ten "pioneering and promising" family literacy programs in *First Teachers*, published in 1989 by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.

By recognizing students in positive adult roles and providing opportunities to link their literacy development with that of their children, the Program has had an impact on participants' lives. The following testimony of one parent is typical:

*I'm strengthening her mind when I'm reading to her. And, believe it or not, I think when I'm reading to her I'm also learning. Sometimes when I'm reading I'll explain something in my own words, using a word that's maybe a little too big and she'll ask what the word means. I'll tell her, and she'll use the word.*

As time went on, it became apparent our students were beginning to take a much more active interest in the content

of their children's education. They were also forming ideas about how reading ability develops and how to make reading a pleasure rather than a chore. They wanted to talk about these ideas with their children's teachers; they wanted to influence what was going on in the classroom. Some of the Program's students initiated conversations; one student even started a Parent Readers Program at her daughter's school. But the great majority did not feel comfortable about communicating with teachers in this way.

It then occurred to us that communication between parents and teachers could be enhanced if they shared a Parent Readers Program experience. And so was born the idea of training teachers to provide family literacy workshops for parents, beginning with early childhood education.

Thus began "Reading Starts With Us" (RSWU) in 1990 with a group of 20 teachers from 10 East Harlem day-care and Head Start programs. Five preliminary sessions were designed to prepare early-childhood teachers to run literacy programs. These workshops for parents took on the format of a book-discussion group and featured linked children's and adult readings. For example, an article on handling child discipline problems extended the discussion of Maurice Sendak's *Where*



AnnMarie Tevlin with Denise Mahadio, a NYC Tech student in Americorps training to work with elementary school children in Ft. Greene, Brooklyn. Photo, George Lowe.

*the Wild Things Are*, and for a globe-trotting non-fiction children's book titled *Bread, Bread, Bread* we actually discussed recipes for bread from different cultures.

The parent workshops also served as a discussion forum for children's responses to literacy activities. One obvious benefit of RSWU, we correctly hoped, was the transformation of parents into frontline literacy teachers.

To date, there have been four RSWU programs in which 20 day-care centers, nine Head Start programs, and seven public schools have participated. The following parental observations—or, to use a book world term, blurbs—eloquently capture the impact the initiative has had:

*I used to tell her what I think. I learned to tell her what she thinks . . . use her imagination.*

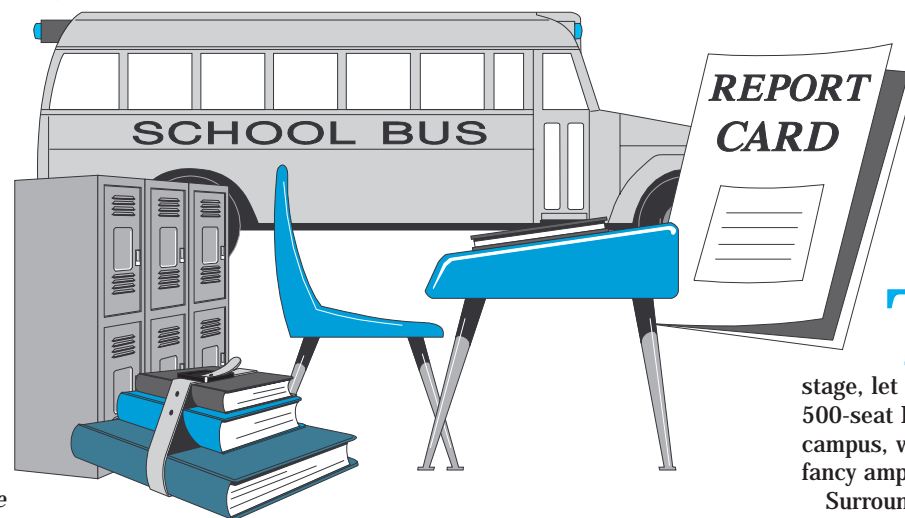
*I read to her before—just read. Now I ask, "what did you think? What do you remember?" I realized the importance of valuing what my child knows and giving time.*

*I thought because I only knew Spanish, I was not going to be able to read to my children. Now I realize that there are good books in Spanish. Also, reading should be done at home regardless of the language you speak.*

Teachers noted positive changes in children whose parents attended Reading Starts With Us.

"They seem to love story time even more now," says one. Another observed, "They are much more attentive to details and remember them better." Yet another: "Two from my class show a great deal of pride and tell stories of their mothers reading to them." And parents and children are now borrowing more books to read to each other.

The final RSWU program included an exciting collaboration with the Brooklyn Public Library's Walt Whitman Branch



and a place to rekindle and share their expertise with new teachers.

The Center for Intergenerational Reading fosters the Reading Starts With Us network through a newsletter, annual Staying-in-Touch reunions, and by providing technical assistance.

Common to all the Center's programs is an underlying focus on experiences that promote reading development and enjoyment of a wide variety of literature—folk tales, poetry, non-fiction stories, concept books, and wordless picture books. Each workshop book is presented along with a reading and discussion strategy. For example, the strategy of prediction ("What do you think will happen next?" and "Why do you think so?") works very well with folk tales. With *The Little Red Hen*, a big favorite, feathers always fly when parents discuss the different predictions about the hen sharing the bread with her friends who preferred not to help with

*Continued on page 11*

*College Now, continued from page 1*

Stadium. With 221 team members now, the program serves about 8,000 students annually.

As one of the College Now coordinators of the English program, which serves hundreds of students throughout the city, I did not even have to invent a fictional persona to describe its impact. But I did realize that, like Morris, I had to make a leap into the past as well as the present in order to grasp the future. Unless I heard from a variety of sources with first-hand experience supervising, teaching, and actually attending College Now classes, I would never get to the "rosebud" of it all.

The first person I contacted, Frank Volpicella, is not only the United Federation of Teachers representative for the borough of Brooklyn but also a 14-year Behavioral and Social Science veteran of College Now at New Utrecht High School. Getting warmed up for a New York-Atlanta play-off game, he was in a good mood. "College Now is a new challenge for the students, who are highly motivated. I don't know where I would be without it, because College Now made me a better teacher."

Volpicella attributed the success of College Now in part to how teachers are "treated as true professionals." To the sounds of the national anthem, he added, "The College Now administrators and professors I have met want to help the students succeed in their college careers."

Next on my line-up was Maryann Cucchiara, a basic writing/ESL instructor at James Madison High School since 1988. She is also the director of the adolescent literacy project for Brooklyn high schools. Cucchiara told me that working for College Now "has given me a more enriched idea of what's ex-

pected of my students at the college level, especially such academic literacy skills as multiple revision of essays, scrupulous proofreading, and new approaches to textual analysis." She also noted, "My pedagogical



College Now alumna Vivian Costalas in her Telecommunications High School classroom in Brooklyn.

perspective has developed beyond grades K-12 into areas involving higher education," referring particularly to her interest in interdisciplinary approaches to teaching the humanities." College Now, she adds, "bridges the gap between theory and practice." Asked why she thought the program was successful, Cucchiara ventured, "the equity and access College Now offers to all students, including English language learners."

Ted Timmins did not remember me as a former English teacher at FDR High School in

# CUNY Matters in the Public Schools

LEHMAN, PUBLIC SCHOOLS COLLABORATE

## First Playwrights Festival Dramatizes Writing Skills

By Marge Rice

The 10-year-old thespian was getting nervous. It was his first performance on any stage, let alone the huge, fully professional, 500-seat Lovinger Theatre on the Lehman campus, with its ranks of spotlights and fancy amplified sound system.

Surrounded by his Bronx classmates—he thought back to all his rehearsals—the ones in his public school, the ones at the Lovinger, and especially to those in his own living room, where his father was acting coach and audience. Looking into the auditorium, he found that familiar face and sang to it. . . from the heart.

There were some happy tears in the Green Room afterward. Many such memories were generated for more than 200 Bronx public school students last June, when the recently renovated Lovinger hosted the first annual Young Playwrights Festival.

The latest initiative from more than a decade of interaction between Lehman College and the Bronx's public schools, the Festival brought theatrical artists, teachers, and more than 200 Bronx students together to experience hands-on creativity as a personal and positive force. This burst of fledgling theatrical adventure was the result of collab-

oration by the College and Community School District 10 with DreamYard Productions, an arts-in-education organization.

For the students on stage, the Festival was every bit as exciting as an opening on Broadway, especially with the sense of anticipation that filled the air before the curtain rose. Their audience included family, friends, principals and administrators, joined by the teachers who had worked all term to make this celebration of the arts a learning experience as well. Most importantly, the lines that were spoken and sung on stage came not from other pens, but from the texture and tempo of their own lives. From a scenario about the unsung heroes of the civil rights movement to a rap musical about the environment, the plots, themes and lyrics of the productions sprang from these 1st- through 9th-graders' own experiences, families, and cultures.

The six stage works presented by the students were either adapted from other media (a re-working of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) or original, as with "The Princess and the TV," a fairy tale in which a king and queen seek to rescue their daughter from the powerful spell of video. The students at P.S. 32 also chose the course of adaptation. Taking aim at threats to the environment, they altered the lyrics of "Home on the Range" to

Brooklyn. Since 1986, he has been the program coordinator for College Now and also direct of FDR's college counseling office. Ted has also been involved with the Kingsborough campus's annual "Family Day," a forum for students and parents to learn about college admission and financial policies.

College Now, Timmins says, has given him a better "view of how students can learn to transcend their own limitations and become active readers and writers. In College Now English classes, they develop portfolios and begin to see themselves as writers. This is special."

How well is College Now working from Timmins' perspective? "Where do I begin? We start at 6:45 a.m. and have more than 279 students—isn't that incredible! When I visit a class and see groups discussing com-

### COLLEGE NOW'S EXPANSION TEAMS

By next year College Now will be in operation at every CUNY campus. Approximately 13,000 students in more than 100 high schools will be enriched by such activities as skills assessment, advisement, basic skills instruction, and college-credit coursework. If the College Now line is approved in the current Budget Request, it will be able to serve an estimated 28,000 high school students in 2000-2001.

plex editorials from *Newsweek* or when I read the third draft of an essay on arms control, I know something is right."

On deck for me was Vivian Costalas, who is not only a College Now alumna but also a new adjunct faculty member at Telecommunications High School in Brook-

P.S. 32 teacher Janet Steinberg assembling a schoolbus for their original rap musical *Recycle* for the Bronx Young Playwrights Festival.



convey their view:

*Oh, give me a home where we are free to roam, where our air is clean to breathe. Our garbage is placed in recycled space. Our earth is sparkling clean. . .*

There were plenty of lighter moments as well. During rehearsals, Festival co-producer Betsy Shevey gave the classes a lunchtime introduction to the recently renovated Lovinger's backstage technology. "Does every actor have lunch in his dressing room?" one student wondered. "Only at Lehman College," she assured him.

Working behind the scenes were Shevey, an assistant professor who is also the resident producer at the Lovinger, and other faculty and staff from the College's Department of Speech and Theatre. The Festival's success, Shevey believes, demonstrates that theater offers "another model for sharing creative educational processes between our faculty and students, public school teachers and students, professionals and the community."

During the term leading up to the Festival, Shevey worked in district classrooms with Jason Duchin, artistic director of DreamYard Productions, to guide the creative process. Duchin had completed earlier projects with Geri Hayes, the director of cultural

arts for District 10, who was eager to move beyond traditional musical productions to explore new opportunities for learning and self-expression.

Together, more than a dozen schools took part in the project, with six selected to perform a fully-staged work: P.S. 32, 33, 207, 280, P.S./M.S. 37, and the Theatre Arts Production Company School.

Teachers involved in the project believe it helped their students learn in many ways. Kerry Castellano believes her P.S. 33 1st- and 5th-graders, who adapted the story of "The Wizard of Oz," advanced in literacy skills. The older students first read the book, which meant learning new vocabulary. Then, by working on the adaptation, they learned how to rewrite and condense material.

Other skills were acquired as well. "The 5th-graders designed and created the scenery," Castellano noted, "and they became role models for the first-graders, who were our Munchkins. All the children learned how to work together—I don't think there was one child who didn't know everyone else's lines!"

That kind of focus was evident during the performances, adds Marcia Dolan, a 1st-

*Continued on page 12*

from Sheepshead Bay High School is enrolled in a humanities section and told me "College Now has given me the discipline and direction I need to plan my future at CUNY." Another student at Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn says, "I know I can handle college-level work. My English instructor makes us work hard but it's worth it." And one student won't be on the Seward Park High School farm team for long: "I can hardly wait to go to Baruch College to study business, something I learned so much about in my College Now class."

In October we all basked in the Yankees' record-setting World Series win streak. Manager Joe Torre singled out enthusiasm in explaining the triumph—which inspires me to say that, if one single word "clears the bases" in accounting for the College Now win streak, it is *enthusiasm*: plain, old-fashioned, I'll-be-glad-to-talk-and-work-with-you enthusiasm.

And there is no need to create a fictional character to make this point. I need merely recall my many years as one of the supervisors of the English program for College Now and the decidedly non-fictional motivated and talented public school teachers I have worked with. Once, for example, I casually mentioned in a staff conference a writing lesson I had invented that used jury trials to show how emotions affect our perceptions, adding that I used scenes from the movie *M* with Peter Lorre (a much better actor than Reagan!). Later that day four teachers requested copies of my materials, and I learned afterward that all four taught the lesson, developing new and compelling insights in the process.

But please—in the tradition of CUNY grad Jonas Salk, who preferred the honor of student scholarships—no ticker tape. ♦

## Medgar Evers Scholars Honor African-Russian

By Fred L. Price

What started as an intellectual excursion to Russia became a spiritual journey also," recalls Dr. Andrée Nicola McLaughlin, Medgar Evers College professor of literature and language and interdisciplinary studies. "As we began to appreciate the magnitude of Aleksandr Pushkin's talent, courage and impact, we connected with humanity's great potential to excel creatively, to tackle adversity, to envision a blissful world."

McLaughlin's inspiring memory is of the Pushkin Bicentennial Symposium & Study Tour—of which Medgar Evers was one of several international co-sponsors—that took place last June in Moscow and St. Petersburg. (She was also program coordinator for the International Pushkin Bicentennial Committee.) Coinciding with official observances by UNESCO and Russia, the event commemorated the 200th anniversary of the birth of Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin (1799-1837), world-esteemed African-Russian poet, father of Russian literature, and pioneer of Russian as a literary language.

Participating artists, writers, intellectuals, educators, students, elected officials and other interested parties comprised a delegation from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and the Pacific Islands. The group joined hundreds of thousands of revelers who traveled from abroad to partake in Russia's nationwide festivities honoring Pushkin's life and legacy.

The Interdisciplinary Studies Department at MEC co-sponsored the symposium and study tour in collaboration with the Institute of Asian and African Studies of Moscow State University, among other institutions and organizations of Canada, South Africa, the UK, as well as the USA. In addition to McLaughlin, three other MEC faculty served on the Bicentennial Committee: Dr. Clinton Crawford (Mass Communications & Art), Dr. Tatyana Flesher (Mathematics), and Prof. Leonid Knizhnik (Academic Computing).

Pushkin is credited with single-handedly giving birth to modern Russian literature by both his inventive virtuosity in a remarkable variety of literary genres and his employment of the native vernacular (French having been up to his time the language of the cultural elite). Pushkin is also hailed as an important literary innovator and as a drum major for justice and liberty.

Pushkin was only fifteen years old when he came to public notice as a gifted black poet under the Tsarist regime with the publication of his poetry in the premier Russian magazine, *Messenger of Europe*. To contemporaries, he stood out as much for his strong classical formation, which numerous biographers attribute to Pushkin's aristocratic family background, as for his apparent black ancestry, which was reflected in what were described as a "swarthy face, wavy hair, thick lips, nose with wide nostrils. . ."

In *The Poems, Prose and Plays of Pushkin*, editor Avrahm Yarmolinsky writes of Pushkin as being proud of his lineage and liking "to refer to his African origin, on one occasion speaking with sympathy of the fate of those he called 'my



in tow, Hannibal among them. Upon arrival in Russia, the young Hannibal was freed by the Tsar, Peter the Great, who also protected and educated him.

Pushkin's great-grandfather received the best education of the day, both in Russia and France, became a military engineer, and subsequently distinguished himself as an Imperial Army general. Pushkin's pride in his ancestor is explicit in this passage from a poem he titled "My Genealogy": "The Black-amoor/ Bought at a

And see page 5 for a Y2K poem by CUNY poet Billy Collins.

("I hate despotism!" he wrote to a friend). When his writings inspired political resistance, Pushkin experienced censorship, exile, surveillance and travel restrictions for the remainder of his life. (See the small ode to liberty in the sidebar, an 1823 poem from his exile.)

Among Pushkin's most acclaimed writings are his poems, "Ode to Liberty" and "Ruslan and Lyudmila"; a novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin* (famously transformed into an opera by Russia's most eminent composer, Tchaikovsky), the story "The Queen of Spades," a prose collection, *Tales of Belkin*, and the historical drama *Boris Godunov*.

In 1831, Pushkin married Natalia Goncharova, a high society beauty. By all accounts, her social ambitions put him in excruciating debt, and her rumored flirtations were a source of scandal. Although debate persists about a conspiracy behind his death, history records that Pushkin fought a duel to defend Natalia's reputation and was mortally wounded. Thousands appeared at his Moika home in St. Petersburg to bid farewell to their beloved poet, dead at only 37. To the present day, Pushkin remains the most widely read and quoted Russian writer.

The Pushkin Symposium, held at Moscow State University, included scholarly presentations on several topics related to Pushkin's ethnic identity (African Origins of Pushkin, the African Presence in Early Europe, Russia's Historical Relations with Africa), as well as recitations of Pushkin's writings and recitals featuring songs and operatic arias inspired by him. McLaughlin and other

Continued on page 10

### "With Freedom's Seed"

*"Behold, a sower went forth to sow."*

With freedom's seed the desert sowing,  
I walked before the morning star;  
From pure and guiltless fingers throwing—  
Where slavish plows had left a scar—  
The fecund seed, the procreator;  
Oh, vain and sad disseminator,  
I learned then what lost labors are . . .  
Graze if you will, you peaceful nations,  
Who never rouse at honor's horn!  
Should flocks heed freedom's invocation?  
Their part is to be slain or shorn,  
Their dower the yoke their sires have worn  
Through snug and sheeplike generations.

brother Negroes." Pushkin clarified his African heritage thus: "The author on his mother's side is of African extraction. His ancestor, Abram Petrovich Hannibal, in his eighth year was abducted from the shores of Africa and taken to Constantinople."

"Hannibal, an Ethiopian of noble origin and Pushkin's great-grandfather, was seized and conveyed to Turkey in retaliation for his father's refusal to pay a sum of money to Turkish occupiers," according to MEC's Russian-born Professor Knizhnik. Shortly thereafter, a visiting emissary of the Russian emperor absconded with several youths

bargain, grew up staunch and loyal/ The emperor's bosom friend, not slave."

Pushkin himself was to challenge the Tsarist regime of his era with his pen

### Yevtushenko Leads Pushkin Fête at Queens



The famed Russian poet performing two crucial functions, hailing and popping, at the "Champagne for Pushkin" celebration. Reciting Pushkin's poems with him were Queens drama students Natasha Scott and Dike Matthew. Photos, Karen Leon.

On October 28, Queens College's professor of European languages and literature Yevgeny Yevtushenko, led an elaborately orchestrated salute to Aleksandr Pushkin at LeFrak Hall on campus that offered a performance of Pushkin's Mozart and Salieri (the basis for the play and movie *Amadeus*), Russian songs on Pushkin texts, a balletic version of Tatyana's Letter Scene from *Eugene Onegin*, and then the ideally exhilarating climax: the Coronation Scene from Mussorgsky's opera based on Pushkin's *Boris*

*Godunov*—the music performed by soloists and the Queens College Orchestra, conducted by Maurice Peress.

Prior to these artistic fireworks, Russia's elder poet-statesman, who has called Pushkin "the first multicolored and multicultural poet," opened with a personal tribute in which he likened Pushkin, as a national icon, with Shakespeare, Dante, and Goethe, adding that he was also something of a Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine as well. Then read a new poem of his own to mark the occasion. Titled "Paul Robeson and Pushkin," the seven-minute work superimposed on Yevtushenko's life-long impressions of Pushkin his memories of the iconoclastic African American singer when he gave a concert in Moscow in 1949.

Yevtushenko remembers Robeson being asked by an interviewer how he could sing Russian folk songs with such feeling . . . and Robeson replying, "Because I have a close relative in Russia." Who might this be, he was asked. "Pushkin" was the daring reply, any reference to the poet's African heritage doubtless infuriating Stalin.

## A Poet in the Classroom: Marie Ponsot Reminisces

By Rita Rodin

# Corner

This year Marie Ponsot's latest book of luminous—one reviewer said “iridescent”—poetry, *The Bird Catcher*, won the National Book Critics Award, one of the nation's most prestigious literary prizes. This must have delighted a quarter century's worth of Queens College writing students, who knew her as an inspiring teacher able to nurture the poetry and improve the acuity in any aspiring writer. I was lucky enough to be one of them.

Professor Emerita Ponsot never intended to be a teacher, however. “My mother was a teacher, my grandmother was a teacher, my great aunt Minnie was a teacher. Everyone expected me to be a teacher. I said ‘No way!’”

Instead, with an M.A. from Columbia University, Ponsot worked at translating 37 books of fairy tales and other stories, mainly from French to English, all the while trying them out on the perfect product-testing audience: her own seven children. She also wrote radio and television scripts, but after she and her French artist husband separated when the youngest child was five years old, she needed to find a steadier job.

She found one teaching writing in the SEEK program at Queens College in 1966. One class meeting and she was hooked: “It was a class of ex-offenders. They were very smart, very acute, learned everything you threw at them, and they had had a hideous education. They were there to learn to write. People say you can't teach writing,” Ponsot says, but then adds firmly, “Yes you can.”

“CUNY students,” she reminisces, “have an absence of arrogance. This may mean less self-confidence than they will eventually need, but that absent arrogance is an asset because they learn to listen more quickly. They have a strong realization that what you learn is how you create yourself. They live with a tippy balance as they try to determine which is more important: being the same or being different. They can get a little panicked being in a place their parents never went, but they

live in a world where to be different is an asset. Balance is the trick.”

In 1967, having published her first book of poetry, *True Minds*, and the Signet Classic *Fables and Tales of La Fontaine* in her translation, Ponsot moved into the English department at Queens College. Some years later, in her poetry writing class, she became one of my most memorable teachers. It was a mixed class in age and achievement, but all worked hard and bravely read their work aloud. Her encouragement flowed, no matter what the level of talent. Every poem-in-progress came back with thoughtful line-by-line comments in her minute hand, noting what was good, where the image could be sharper, where the meter might be changed. “Reading everyone's work was the best part of the day,” she said. “If you are as interested in writing as I am, what a privilege to have people giving theirs to you!”

The comments reflected her approach to teaching writing, “You don't need to be told what you did wrong. You need to be told what you did right, especially in poetry. You may know what you thought you were doing, but until someone responds to it, you may not know how *much* you got out on the page. You need someone to tell you this. Error evaporates in writing if you leave it alone,” Ponsot observes adamantly. “We learn by the pleasure of getting it right. The only way to practice writing is by doing it right—and then going back and doing *more* of it right.”

(One of her former students, by the way, has been doing something very right for the art of writing on the Queens College campus for 24 years. Joe Cuomo established the Queens College Evening Reading series in 1975, inviting distinguished writers to read from their work. His choice for the very first reading was, if not surprising, certainly auspicious: Marie Ponsot.)

Every day brings writing and revision, with Ponsot often putting an apparently completed poem away for months before looking at it again. The year I was in her class she set herself the task of writing a sonnet a day. “The wish to write poems,” Ponsot explains, “mobilizes the preconscious part of language that is in our heads. Our heads are full of language and experience is kept in memory in a language way. We have to give it a chance to energize.”

“I love to walk in the city or in the country among trees,” she says in explaining how a poem begins. “With the physical involvement that goes with walking, I often get a phrase—coming from nowhere—that sounds right. I might even know where I am going with it, whether it is a ‘writable’ phrase. I have a notebook with little phrases I have caught. If I start from that, if I make a sentence, get a shape, begin a structure, I may have some sense of who is talking and why they are talking.”

*The Bird Catcher* is her fourth collection of poetry. *Admit Impediment*

(1981) and *The Green Dark* (1988), as well as the latest book, were all published by Knopf. Poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whom she met on a crossing to Paris soon after World War II, published her debut volume, *True Minds* (1957), when he started City Lights Books in San Francisco. Dinitia Smith, her interviewer for the *New York Times*, said of her work “A Marie Ponsot poem is a little like a jeweled bracelet, carefully carved, with small, firm stones embedded in it.”

In addition to many poems about domestic life, friendship, and marriage, Ponsot touches sometimes on death—notably in *The Bird Catcher*. The poem quoted here is dedicated to a Queens professor of comparative literature and good friend who vanished mysteriously while on vacation in Indonesia and to a father who suffered a heart attack and drowned while swimming in the ocean with his young sons.

She hadn't intended death as a theme in the book, she said, but “when you are 78, you have seen a lot of close people die and realize that it is a popular human hobby, something we all do sooner or later. As Wittgenstein said, ‘You don't have to think about it. Nobody lives through it.’ I don't think of it as a limit, but it changes the way you think about time. You realize that the past is the present. Time doesn't

### OCEANS

(for William Cook, drowned in Maine, and for Roy Huss, lost in Indonesia)

Death is breath-taking. We all die young,  
our lives defined by failure of the heart,  
our fire drowned in failure of the lungs.  
Still planning on pouring the best ripe part  
of wines our need or grasp has sucked or wrung  
from fruit & sun, we're stopped before we start.  
Taste like talk fades from the stiffening tongue.

In reach of what we've wanted, our hope is strung  
toward closing chords of accomplishment; we  
grip ourselves.

Cut off we go stunned, raw  
as a land-child brought out to see only  
ocean all the way to sky. Shut in awe  
we wrap our secret in us as we die  
unsaid, the deaf objects of good-by.

have a neat form. It is more a feeling of swimming in time, not a specific address or place.”

A small woman, with large blue eyes and a lively face, Ponsot's humor, obvious *joie de vivre*, delight in her children and grandchildren, and passion about writing and teaching suggest a person much younger than 78.

Though retired from Queens College since 1991, she still teaches for the 92nd Street Y and Columbia and NYU graduate programs. “Queens was wonderful! CUNY gets the best students—their desire to learn is acute and they are very often more focused on the subject than on a career.”

An interest in students from less privileged backgrounds was sparked when Pon-



Marie Ponsot (photo, Rosemary Deen). The image featured on the jacket below is a detail from a fresco in *The Stag Room of the Palais des papes in Avignon, France*.

sot, who was raised in a middle class Queens home by educated parents, was just 16. She volunteered to work in a youth program run by the Catholic Interracial Council in Red Hook, Brooklyn. “A priest spoke to our assembly and said they wanted to keep the program open in the summer when free lunches provided by the City during the school year otherwise stopped. It struck me like thunder that there was such need.”

She recalls, “I basically just played with the children, who ranged from four to 14. But I learned how much you can learn about other people just from their way of being! They were very poor, but they

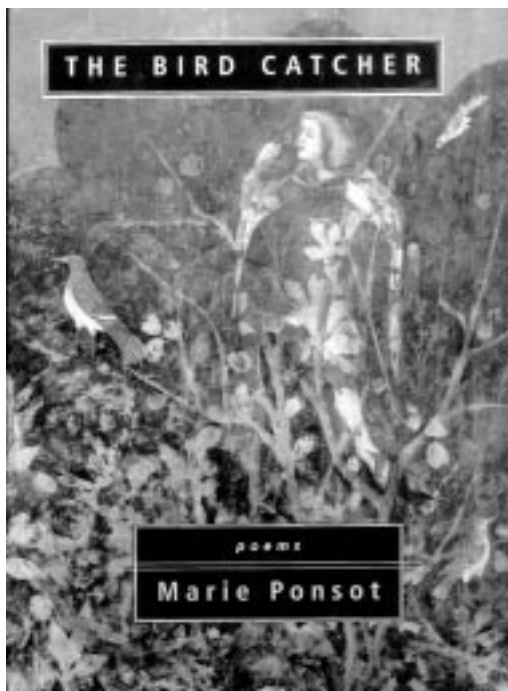
thought of themselves as ‘this is how it is.’ I learned to listen—and I learned how lots of people in this world are exactly like you, though they may seem different. One day our usually rickety store front became very quiet. I was told in Spanish that a funeral was passing and saw a hearse followed by people on foot. Although as a child I had been taken to wakes because my parents felt children should know of death as a part of life, I had a sense from these children that this was something to which you pay real respect

and attention. It is a big deal.”

Ponsot approached the singlehanded raising of a daughter and six sons with a similar appreciative attitude. “I loved having children,” she said, “although I scandalized my mother by having so many.” Her maternal love is certainly reflected in this passage from “The Story After the Story” in *The Bird Catcher* about preparing her “bed-ready boys” and daughter for sleep:

*I crib them, warm in their  
soft shirts, & sit to eat a bruised sweet apple  
as I nurse Chris and float on mild air*

*a story for everyone: Monique & Denis  
Settle on child-chairs; we are a tangle,  
Bitch and pups, in the oldest comity.*



## BEAUX-ARTS COURTHOUSE TRANSFORMED

### Newman Real Estate Facility Inaugurated at Baruch College

New York City's premier facility for real estate education and public policy, Steven L. Newman Hall at Baruch College, was inaugurated at ceremonies on October 21. The neoclassic building, designed in the beaux-arts style, dates from 1915, and was for many years the City of New York's Children's Court. Subsequently, the landmark, at 137 East 22nd Street, served as the College's Student Center.

The building will provide faculty offices for the school of Public Affairs and meeting and conference rooms. It will also be the home of the Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute at the College. Architect for the project was Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates.

Applauding the opening on a campus he knows well, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein praised Newman Hall as perfectly exemplifying the observation of Pulitzer Prize-winning architectural critic (and Hunter College alumna) Ada Louise

Huxtable: "the past lives only as part of the present."

"Weaving the old and new involves not only economic and functional considerations, but aesthetic ones as well," Goldstein added. "This beautifully restored building fulfills both sets of concerns in breath-taking fashion. . . . The renovation has retained and revitalized all of the original period elements, while also supporting the needs and tastes of contemporary users."

Thanking Baruch College's benefactor, Goldstein acknowledged, "The Institute would not exist today were it not for the generosity and vision of Bill Newman, who has infused his personal values in it."

"Crucial policy questions regarding real estate, land development, and management in the City are being debated," Goldstein added, "and CUNY's energetic minds should have a strong, clear voice in that debate."

## Tony Randall, Seven Alumni Honored by CCNY

At its 119th Alumni Dinner in Midtown on Nov. 5, the City College Alumni Association bestowed its highest awards on actor and ubiquitous New York City cultural figure **Tony Randall** and seven distinguished graduates.

Randall was the 52nd recipient of the John H. Finley Award for service to the City of New York, which is named after CCNY's third President, who went on to become editor of the *New York Times*. Randall was honored for his long local stage and television career (his debut on Broadway was in 1941), his leadership of the National Actors Theatre, and his charity work, notably with the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation.

The Townsend Harris Medal, established in 1933 and named after CCNY's founder, recognizes outstanding post-graduate achievements. The seven winners this year represent, as usual, a striking variety of careers. **Robert Catell** ('58ME, '64MEE), who joined Brooklyn Union as an engineer just after graduation and worked his way to CEO, is now Chair and CEO of Keyspan Energy. Among the current projects of architect **Joseph L. Fleischer** ('66Arch) is the Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock; he has designed many cultural edifices across the country. **Charlotte Frank** ('50B), a pioneer in education reform, is now a Vice President with McGraw-Hill's educational division.

**Robert T. Johnson** ('72) has been elected to four consecutive terms as the Bronx District Attorney. *New York Times* Washington bureau chief and Pulitzer Prize winner **Michael Oreskes** ('75) began his career, aptly enough, as editor of *The Campus*. **Lillias White** ('78) garnered a 1997 Tony for Best Featured Actress, for *The Life* and will be, with Jim Carrey, in the forthcoming film *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. And **Arthur Zeikel** ('54B) was for 20 years president of Merrill Lynch's prosperous Assets Management Group, which he built into the third largest such firm in the world, building client assets from \$300 million to \$300 billion.

## Janus-Faced—But in a Nice Sense: New 'Looking Both Ways' Publication

Appearing in November from the Looking Both Ways Project will be its initial publication: *Looking Both Ways: High School and College Teachers Talk About Language & Learning*. The Project is an initiative designed to encourage high school and college-level writings teachers to share pedagogical strategies and experience. It is a joint undertaking of the Office of Academic Affairs, the N.Y.C. Writing Project at Lehman College, and the

CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors—in cooperation with the City's Board of Education.

The Project brought together more than 60 high school and CUNY college teachers in seminars that met throughout last spring term to discuss common issues related to writing instruction. The book, authored by the eight seminar leaders with additional contributions from the Project's directors, highlights the seminars'

most productive explorations, some of the issues that proved particularly stubborn, and some of the common understandings that emerged from thinking about high school and college writing together.

Throughout *Looking Both Ways*, ideas and words of the participants give fascinating glimpses into the ways teachers look at their work and strive to improve it. For copies, contact Glenda Phipps at 212-541-0375.

*Pushkin*, continued from page 8

literary scholars spoke of Pushkin as "Shakespeare's peer."

One American participant had especially pertinent ties to the Pushkin Symposium: Dr. Lily Golden, the author of *Africans in Russia* and a distinguished scholar in residence at Chicago State University. Golden, who was a visiting scholar during the inauguration of the Shabazz Chair at Medgar Evers College earlier this year, is herself of Russian-African ancestry. Born in Uzbekistan to an American agronomist who had studied under George Washington Carver at the Tuskegee Institute, Golden was the first black student to earn a Ph.D. at Moscow State University. She offered a political analysis of Pushkin, comparing his influence and fate to that of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Another highlight of the Pushkin Symposium entailed a meeting in Moscow with members of the African-Russian community, who shared their struggles for economic development and care for black orphans, as well as their concerns about racism and racist violence in post-Soviet Russia. (Russia's black population is estimated to be approximately 14,000 in a nation of 149 million.)

Discussing her awareness of Pushkin's African heritage and the Afro-European contribution to literature, McLaughlin salutes the late writer John Oliver Killens for his early articles in the now-defunct journal *Black World*: "Killens' book on Pushkin, published posthumously, is a treasure for those wanting to examine

Pushkin from a black literary perspective."

Members of the MEC delegation also had opportunity to visit the cities Pushkin loved most, Moscow and St. Petersburg, sites of two major Pushkin museums, his lyceum, and his last home of residence. Some traveled to Pushkin's estate in Pskov (then Michail-ovskoe), where he was exiled and where he is buried next to his mother at Svyatogorsk monastery.

Looking back on the study tour, McLaughlin fondly recalls, "We witnessed a sea of diverse faces, representative of the global community, all united by the simple act of paying homage to the splendor of Pushkin. Indeed, even with a full schedule of activities, we were energized by our observations and exchanges. We came away renewed by our knowledge of the commonality of the

human soul which this illustrious ancestor continues to touch."

In the U.S. a ground-breaking ceremony was held on June 4 at George Washington University in the capital for a Pushkin statue to mark his bicentennial. The Bicentennial Committee plans a forthcoming anniversary exhibition and lectures on Pushkin in the USA and elsewhere. Dr. Crawford, the Committee's chair, is confident "Medgar Evers College can be one of the places where people will come to study Pushkin, the writer and the African-Russian." For information about another Pushkin study tour next May 25-June 7, contact Dr. Isa Jeanette Blyden—a Symposium speaker and the grand-daughter of Edward Wilmot Blyden, "father of African Nationalism"—at [Wilmotina24@yahoo.com](mailto:Wilmotina24@yahoo.com) ♦



Medgar Evers College professors Andrée McLaughlin and Leonid Knizhnik at the Moscow River, with the walls of the Kremlin in the background. Many brought flowers to the statue of Pushkin in St. Petersburg that appears on page 8.

### Some Academic Table Talk from Samuel Johnson

How Johnson dealt with a boring colleague:  
"He talked to me at club one day concerning Catiline's conspiracy—so I withdrew my attention, and thought about Tom Thumb."

When a meeting goes nowhere:  
"We had talk enough, but no conversation; there was nothing discussed."

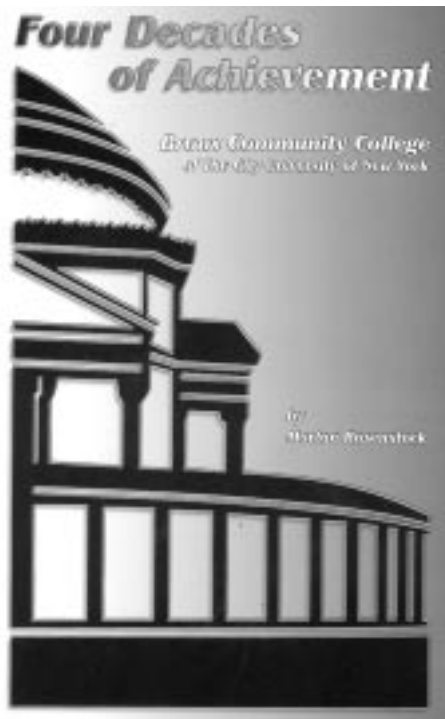
A perfect squelch for an academic rival (Johnson was referring to Mrs. Macaulay):  
"To endeavour to make her ridiculous is like blackening the chimney."

A not exactly ecumenical colleague:  
"He has a mind as narrow as the neck of a vinegar cruet."

How to unwind from a hard day on campus:  
"A tavern chair is the throne of human felicity."

# Open Admissions Comes to the Bronx

Fortunately for Bronx Community College, **Morton Rosenstock's** institutional memory about the campus goes back to the very beginning. The emeritus professor of history—his specialty is American Jewish history—taught there from 1958 until his retirement in 1995, and he was also Acting President during the unenviable budget crisis year of 1976-77. The Bronx native and graduate of its James Monroe High School still vividly recalls being “present at the creation,” which took place on February 2, 1959. On that day, Rosenstock was among the twelve original faculty members on stage with the College's first president, Morris Meister, in Hunter College's huge Assembly Hall (the College's first campus from 1959 to 1973, the former Bronx High School of Science on West 184th Street, was not yet ready for occupancy). In the audience were the College's first 123 students. Rosenstock's interest in the campus has continued during retirement. He has just published a substantial history of BCC, **Four Decades of Achievement**. Following here is an excerpt adapted from the volume that describes the impact of open admissions, which occurred during the 1966-76 tenure of BCC's second president, James A. Colston. Colston, the son of a poor Florida farmer who rose to become the president of Knoxville College, was the first black president of a predominantly white institution of higher learning in New York State.



acceptance to the senior colleges, the community colleges were faced with the task of educating students whose high school records put them in the lower half or even in the lowest quartile. The impact on Bronx Community College was dramatic and immediate. For Fall 1970 admission, 4,000 students were invited to attend, twice the previous year's acceptances.

Enrollment climbed steeply, from 8,865 in 1970 to 11,756 in 1971 to 13,668 in 1974. By 1975, the College was serving more than 14,000 students, double the number when Colston arrived.

To handle this influx, staffs had to be expanded, new quarters sought, budget obtained. In 1970, for example, 116 new faculty members were engaged at BCC, including eighteen new counselors. More important than the logistics, a wholesale shift in educational philosophy was required. Well over 50% of the newly admitted students required remedial aid in reading, mathematics or writing. It was easy to blame these problems on the poor preparation students received in the city's high schools, but the fact remained that the colleges had to develop programs, and

President Colston's arrival on the New York educational scene coincided with a period of intense pressure by the minority communities on the city fathers to open the gates of higher education to all high school graduates. In the late 1960s, there was continual controversy between City College and its surrounding community in Harlem, which felt excluded from the benefits of higher education. The University's Chancellor then, Albert H. Bowker, and the Board of Higher Education responded to these pressures and to their own good-faith desire to improve the socioeconomic status of New York's black and Hispanic youth.

student protests, revised its timetable and adopted a proposal by Bowker to implement the open admissions plan five years sooner than originally projected. For Fall 1970, the Board approved a plan under which students who were in the top half of their high school graduating class or who had an 80% average would be guaranteed admission to a senior college. All other high school graduates would be admitted to one of the community colleges, regardless of high school average or course preparation.

In 1968, the Board approved a plan promising admission to a tuition-free college education for every high school graduate by 1975. A \$600 million building program was launched and by the early 1970s the City University had expanded to 17 colleges.

Bronx Community College's enrollment had been expanding slowly during 1966-69, and the student body's ethnic composition was shifting. After the University's adoption of the open admissions program, the College could no longer screen candidates for admission; it had to accept to full matriculated status all high school graduates who applied. With better students promised automatic

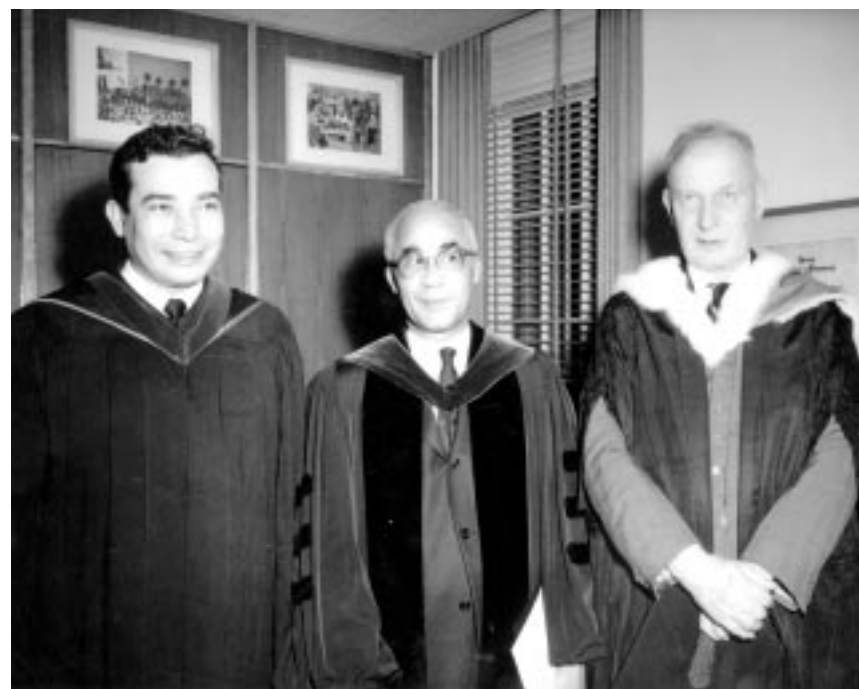
### The CUNY Timeline

One campus, one year:  
116 new faculty members hired.

What year was it?

1970    1976    1983

In 1969, the Board of Higher Education, influenced by continuing community and



President James Colston, the second president of Bronx Community College, welcomed then Bronx Borough President Herman Badillo, left, and Porter Chandler, Chairman of the Board of Higher Education in June 1967.

do it quickly, to bring these students to a level where they could deal successfully with college requirements. It soon became apparent that the dropout rate was increasing. Community college students who did not drop out often had to spend one or two semesters in overcoming their remedial handicaps and were, therefore, forced to extend their education well beyond the standard two years.

Bowker left the University shortly after open admissions was instituted. The Board of Trustees selected Robert Kibbee, an administrator and professor from Fordham University, to replace him as Chancellor. Kibbee continued to champion open admissions. In 1974, he addressed the BCC Faculty Senate and defended the program: “The purpose of open admissions is to bring young people in and try to do the best for them according to the resources available. Some will go on to get degrees, some won't. But all will have benefitted to some extent.”

*Reading Center*, continued from page 6

the planting, tending and baking. The Center for Intergenerational Reading is also playing a key role in NYCTC's Americorps and America Reads programs. Students in these public service programs indicate that they want to “make a positive impact on a child's life” and “want to contribute in a positive way to the community.” Before being placed in a public school or after-school site in the Fort Greene area of Brooklyn, they attend three training sessions to prepare them to help children learn to read and enjoy reading. As a result of this training, students gain expertise in reading, reading games, and children's literature.

parent readers themselves. And there has been one other benefit from these programs: some of our students have become interested in teaching as a profession.

The Center for Intergenerational Reading has enjoyed the vigorous support of New York City Technical College and sever-



Parent Josefina Rosario doing her homework for future reading to her children. Photo, George Lowe.

Everyone benefits with Americorps and America Reads: the children who receive additional reading time and mentoring, the teachers who get help with individual children, and our college students, who, in the fullness of time, will be more skilled

al major local foundations, among them the Altman, Vincent Astor, Robert Bowne, Louis Calder, Chase, Diamond, Hasbro Children's, Morgan Stanley, Namm, Pinkerton, and Taconic Foundations. Corporate underwriting has also come from Chemical Bank, the Hunt Alternatives Fund, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, NYNEX, and Joseph E. Seagrams & Sons. Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden and the West Side Day Nursery have also supported our work.

The presence of the Center for Intergenerational Reading at City Tech attests to the College's and the University's conviction that literacy activities should begin in early childhood and that there is no better role for teachers than to encourage parents in developing their children's love for books. At the heart of the Center's work is the richness of children's literature and the creation of new family traditions based on the pleasure of being able to tell a book not by its cover but by its contents.

*Four Decades of Achievement* (206 pages) is available from the BCC Foundation in Gould Memorial Library. Paperback editions are \$40, or free with a \$100 donation to the Foundation; hardcover are \$60, or free with a \$125 donation to the Foundation. For more information, call 718-289-5184.

grade teacher at P.S. 207. "I never saw one class pay so much attention to another class presentation."

Her students' play, "Come Over to My House," told the story of an alien visit. It grew out of a study of homes around the world, which introduced poetry, art, music and folk dances from Mexico, Russia, Greece, and countries in Africa. "The lyrics were poems we put to music," she explained, "and we wrote the dialogue together. When the children performed, they were proud, excited, and confident."

The morning after the performance, one of her students used poetry to express how he had changed from the start of the project to its culmination:

*We had our show.  
I was so shy—  
I felt like I could fly.*

Shevey believes in the power of this transformation. With an extensive background in theater that ranges from the New York Shakespeare Festival to international productions, she looks back at the project as "a lesson in exchange—the exchange of our experts' skills for the pleasure of watching young students walk onto a professional stage for the first time." Preconceptions were also exchanged, she says: "We reached a new understanding of how much we have in common—how we all want to transcend our limitations and find ways to shape our expression so that others will listen."

And, most importantly, the students exchanged their hard work for the appreciation of their parents and peers and for their own pride and self-respect.

Geri Hayes in District 10 agrees. "The students will remember this event for years." ♦

*Another group of Bronx students will enjoy this same opportunity next spring, as the Second Annual Young Playwrights Festival expands and is presented at the Lovinger Theatre in June 2000. For more information, contact Betsy Shevey (718-960-7830 or bshevey@lehman.cuny.edu).*

## A Trumped-Up "Carol" for Bronx Public Schools

Picture this: wealthy businessman Ebenezer Scrooge is a Bronx native, but he now resides at 725 Fifth Avenue (a.k.a. Trump Tower). His latest project is buying up Times Square, closing homeless shelters, and making Christmas an illegal holiday. The Bob Cratchit family is still living in the Bronx, and it's the last holiday season of the millennium.

Thus will Charles Dickens' humane tale of redemption unfold later this fall as part of the continuing outreach of the Lovinger Theatre at Lehman College to the Bronx public schools. Under the direction of the Lovinger's producer, Professor Betsy Shevey, Lehman's Department of Speech and Theatre will present a series of school matinees of *A New York Christmas Carol*. Like the Bronx Young Playwrights Festival, this educational outreach has been designed to expand literacy and creative self-expression through the arts.

Students from the Bronx High School of Science, De Witt Clinton High School, and middle schools throughout Community School District 10 will have a chance to see the production as well as attend workshops in their schools in which Shevey will share techniques for adapting stories for performance. Students will read the original version of *A Christmas Carol* and explore the process of re-envisioning a classic in their own cultural terms. The cast will include current Lehman College students, alumni who are working as professional actors, and, as Timmy Cratchit, a 12-year old actor from Middle School 141.

The real *coup de théâtre* will be Scrooge's dream-time. Multi-media effects will show the audience a visual montage of New York City from the 1940's to the 21st century as they follow Scrooge's journey from selfish greed to loving acceptance of himself and others. The ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future will appear to Scrooge as Oz's Dorothy, Cher, and Madonna. Also featured in the dream is an organ harvesting in which Scrooge is found to have no...well, you know.

In addition to the school matinees, performances for the Bronx community will be given at the newly-renovated 500-seat Lovinger on December 8 (3:30 p.m.), December 9, 10, and 11 (8 p.m.), and December 12 (3 p.m.). Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and children; they can be reserved by calling 718-960-8134.



*P.S./M.S. 37 second-grader Jean Carlos Rodriguez rehearses a royal request to his daughter, played by Sierra Paige, to turn off the tube in "The Princess and the TV."*

### John Jay Conference, continued from page 2

to be from Brooklyn. The longest commuting time recorded among this hearty group was five hours. Apparently, passengers were encouraged to take alternate subway lines, but when they were taken to these recommended lines by shuttle buses, the trains were not running either.

In the end, there were more participants on hand than had been expected! And they were unbelievably cheerful, enthusiastic and eager to get on with WAC business.

The first day's three sessions were: Introductions: Beliefs, Assumptions, Learning, and Language; Responding to Readings; and Using Writing-to-Learn Strategies

in the Classroom. The next day's sessions included examining and responding to student writing and creating assignments. Participant evaluations of the seminar were high, and three more are anticipated for the 1999-2000 academic year.

August 26th was truly an auspicious and fitting beginning for an initiative that has been so eagerly awaited and welcomed. The Office of Academic Affairs owes a debt of thanks to the coordinators and facilitators who made it possible—and to all the participants, whose commitment to Writing Across the Curriculum was not dampened by the torrents. ♦

## Dispute Resolution Institutes at John Jay

The CUNY Dispute Resolution Consortium, based at John Jay College, is offering three advanced Institutes in the near future designed for mediators with at least two years of experience and a minimum of 25 hours of mediation training:

**Work Place 101: Labor & Employment Basics for Mediators**  
(Dec. 6, from 9 to 5)

**Sexual Harassment Mediation**  
(Jan. 12, from 1 to 5)

**Americans with Disabilities Act Employment Mediation**  
(Jan. 13 & 14, 9 to 5; Jan. 15, 9 to 1)

All will take place at John Jay College, 899 Tenth Avenue at 59th St. For more information call Julie Ratcliff at 212-237-8692 or email to [dispute@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:dispute@jjay.cuny.edu)

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