



**Winter 2007**

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Happy New Year! Having watched twelve of the Fellows prepare applications for graduate school this fall, I am in awe of their exceptional determination and resourcefulness as well as their accomplishments. I look forward to celebrating their admission to graduate programs this spring. As they prepare to leave CCNY, we will be welcoming eleven outstanding new Fellows into the program from the full range of disciplines in the college. Their impressive academic records and excitement about their work will bring new perspectives and energy to the program. Welcome! After seven years directing the program, I still feel tremendous excitement in watching the next generation of scholars emerge. It is my privilege to contribute in a small way to their success.

The Fellowships Program incurs many debts every semester. In the fall, we were honored and privileged to welcome Professor Bettina Lerner (Foreign Languages) to address the fellows in our forum: "On Research." Her thoughtful and honest description of her own doctoral research was a revelation and inspiration to the Fellows; she also gave invaluable advice on the process of doing research that many Fellows have begun to implement. To Jose Vasquez, a CCNY graduate and former Mellon Fellow, we owe an incalculable debt. I can always count on him to come back to provide advice and an extraordinary role model to current cohorts of Fellows. Not least, I owe thanks to Professor Joshua Wilner (English) who every year for years, has helped me lead the important fall workshop on writing the personal statement. His astute advice, combined with encouragement and optimism, are just the right mix to enable Fellows to produce excellent personal statements. All of our 40+ Fellows work with faculty mentors, whose support and advice are the underpinnings of our program. Thanks to them is hardly enough.

Please note on your calendars that our annual research conference will be held on Friday, May 4. All students, faculty, family members, and friends are welcome and encouraged to attend. I hope to see you there!

Susan Besse

## New Fellows

It is with great pleasure that we announce and welcome our new Fellows. From a most competitive pool of applications, 11 new Fellows have been selected to join the City College Fellowships Program in the spring semester, 2007.

The new City College Fellowship Fellows are:

Ms. Lynne Allen	Psychology
Mr. Luis Apolo	Physics
Ms. Antonia Florio	Biology
Ms. Ayelet Haran	Political Science
Mr. Ronex Muthukattil	Biology
Ms. Angela Perez	History
Mr. Nelson Rodriguez	Biology
Mr. Jhevon Smith	Mathematics
Ms. Kushya Sugarman	English
Ms. Karen Tito	Psychology
Ms. Micah Wittmer	Music

## APRIL 16, 2007 RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE

For instructions on writing up your research proposal, see: "Funding for Research, Training, Travel: Guidelines for requesting and using research monies," in the Fellowship Program's *Guide*.

## 2006 Summer Research Reports: Excerpts

During the summer of 2006, City College Fellows and Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows received funding to pursue a variety of projects including: independent research under the guidance of a faculty mentor; participation in structured summer research programs; work in science laboratories; and attendance of professional conferences. Below are excerpts from some of their journals, reporting and reflecting on their experiences.

**Judith Castillo** (Spanish) participated in MURAP (Moore Undergraduate Research Assistantship Program) at the University of North Carolina.

I was aware that the MURAP program is designed to give undergraduates an idea of what graduate school will be like. Boy, was I unprepared! When I arrived, I had my mind set on what my project would be: a study of how three of Lugones' short stories from his collection *Las fuerzas extrañas* could be explained through science. During the first meeting with my mentor, Professor Perelmuter, she explained to me that my project was not doable; it was too vast. So, a process of narrowing down commenced. For several weeks, I was stuck with no idea of what to do and a complicated writer. I don't think I have ever been so frustrated in my life. Finally, I mentioned to my mentor that I saw a change in the narrative structure of the stories I was reading. Her eyes lit up and she said: "That's it!" I had stumbled on a way to deal with these stories without even realizing it. Although I was far behind other students at that point, I managed to complete on time a 25-page paper, give a 30-minute oral presentation, and create a poster for the poster presentation. To this day I do not know how I did it.

I learned a lot about myself in the process. I learned that procrastination is not going to get me very far, that I need to stay calm, and that research is truly my calling. I know now that I will be successful in graduate school. I am so thankful to Professor Perelmuter because she stuck with me all the way. We revised, thought, talked; she became a

true mentor to me. I think the only thing I did not do was sleep at her home. She was so eager to see us succeed. In addition, living together with the other MURAP students created an atmosphere of support that I have never experienced before. In two months, we strangers became a family. We fought, cried, and laughed together. Talk about bonding! Sharing this experience with others who were dealing with the same issues gave me strength and courage I did not know I had.

**Marina Chernyak** (Political Science) continued her research on policy aspects of indoor air pollution under the guidance of her mentor, Professor John Krinsky.

In my research this summer, I continued examining the policy aspects of indoor air pollution from solid fuels in developing countries. Besides using information available online, press reports, government and NGO documents, and specialized literature, I began conducting interviews with relevant officials. Thanks to my prior affiliation with the Academic Council on the UN Systems (ACUNS), I was able to secure permission to attend the Commission on Sustainable Development (CDS-14) meetings at the UN headquarters in New York from May 1-12.

There, I met and interviewed three of the United States Environmental Protection Agency officials who are affiliated with the Partnership for Clean Indoor Air, GTZ German-based NGO director and her assistant, and Professor Kirk Smith from the University of California, Berkeley, who is a world specialist on household energy. I was pleasantly surprised that all these busy people made the time to meet with me and talk about their work. I realized how invaluable these meetings are. From the contacts I made during the CSD-14, I was able to obtain references to other key figures.

An unexpected development was meeting Susan Doll, a post-doc student at the Earth Institute at Columbia. With an engineering background and interest in public health and development, she is constructing a comprehensive model that attempts to evaluate cross-sector technology and policy interventions. We have met three times to discuss ways to cooperate and share policy findings on household energy. Susan thinks that my input in terms of policy analysis can be helpful for her model, which I find thrilling. Also, through Susan, I joined Columbia's new Biomass Working Group.

**Carlos Galindo** (Economics) participated in the American Economic Association's summer program designed to introduce undergraduates to graduate level study, which was held at Duke University. He took four classes and worked with two other students to produce a co-authored research paper on the effects of macroeconomic reforms in agriculture-intensive states in Mexico between 1970 and 2000. They won a prize for the best paper.

The classes were extremely hard, the breadth of topics covered was vast, and the degree of sophistication required to fully grasp what was covered was very high: so high that even the smartest students in the class at some point could not help puffing, rolling on their chairs, and throwing pens and hands down at the difficulty of the subjects being introduced. One of the most valuable lessons I learned at Duke was how to manage my time under an excessive workload, remain calm, and understand that I need to pay attention to eating and exercising as well as studying. I would have exploded had I not decided to reallocate an hour of study time each day to exercising.

I had never before had a good experience forming study groups or relying on teamwork to get things done. However, my experience at Duke was radically different. One big difference was the quality of the students in the program. But it still involved trial and error to match us up so that teamwork was efficient. I owe a lot of my success to the classmates in my study group. Probably, if it weren't for the symbiotic relationship we developed, I would have barely made it.

**Jennifer Lyne** (Psychology) continued to pursue her research on mother-child attachment and attended a two-day workshop, "Neurobiology & Attachment Theory in Psychotherapy," at the Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York.

My study of early childhood development began in 1994, when I came across an article in *The Atlantic* by an alumnus at the City College Clinical Ph.D. program, Dr. Robert Karen. "Becoming Attached" detailed "attachment theory," and how a mother's responsiveness to her infant's emotions has a profound effect her baby's psychobiological development. It explained that maternal sensitivity, and resulting "attachment category" tends to be handed down from one generation to next with a reliability even greater than genes, about 80%. This intergenerational transmission of attachment, has been found, in ground-breaking research by City College's Dr. Ariette Slade, to be mediated by maternal "Reflective Function". It is Reflective Function as a clinical measure, and it's therapeutic counterpart Mentalization Based Therapy, that I plan to study this summer in conjunction with my parent/infant interaction research with Dr. Beatrice Beebe at Columbia University.

I began studying Reflective Function and Mentalization Based Therapy during the spring 2006 semester as a research fellow at the Psychoanalytic Research Training Program sponsored by the Anna Freud Centre, University College and the Child Study Center. I made my presentation on "Minding the Baby" a Reflective Function-based parenting intervention pilot program for high-risk mothers designed by Ariette Slade. After my presentation, Linda Mayes, as my discussant, encouraged me to pursue a research proposal on the "Minding the Baby" intervention.

**Guillaume Wadia** (History) spent two months of research in the military archives of Vincennes located on the outskirts of Paris.

My research concerns the political control and surveillance of North Africans in Paris and in the French colonies of North Africa. My goal is to use this research to write an honors thesis on the topic and to prepare a writing sample to attach to my graduate school applications.

Today, the military archives are housed in a twelfth-century castle built by King Louis IX. The archives recently received and declassified are what historians call the "Moscow Files." These were documents taken by the Germans during WW II, brought from Berlin to Moscow by the Russians, and finally returned to Paris in 1994. They have not yet been thoroughly studied by historians.

After acquiring a research pass to the archives, I was informed that the reading room could only accept twenty people a day because the twelfth-century building had been weakened by the weight of the archives. Moreover, I was told that the documents I had come to read were unavailable. Shortly later, I received a call informing me that there had been a mistake: that the Moscow Files were available. I still had to charm the secretary into getting me one of the twenty seats during June and July. Luckily, I succeeded in getting a seat two days a week and the archivists were extremely helpful and patient answering my questions.

Going through the documents proved to be the real challenge. There were seventeen cartons of relevant documents with over 5,000 pages per carton. Fortunately, I was equipped with a digital camera and was allowed to take pictures of relevant documents. But given the pressure of working under time constraints, I did not discriminate very effectively. Still, on the days when I did not have a seat in the archive, I was able to review and write comments on most of the files. I would have never thought that exploring history from cartons of old documents with transparent paper and almost faded ink could be so incredibly fascinating and fun. I can't wait to repeat the experience.

**Roman Palitsky** (Psychology/Jewish Studies) spent the summer in a village called Vashist in the Kullu Valley in the middle of Himachal Pradesh in India. Since it is situated in the midst of a number of pilgrim

age places, many *Babbas* congregate here. Roman's project involved interviewing them.

I began by asking what happens to people who consistently have mystical experiences and altered states of mind? In our society, unless such a person is extremely lucky, the obstacle course of standardized procedures and evaluations puts these people in a box called "crazy." If you cannot be efficient and "well-adjusted," chemistry will help you do so. I have noticed that Indian society allows a much larger space for the religious experience in ordinary life. *Babbas* live on the periphery of Indian society. They include vagrants, holy men, ascetics, the common, the insane, and the poor. Although they are (ideally) considered pure and holy, they often do things that are either frowned upon or even prohibited by Hindu faith.

I hypothesized that many *Babbas*, were they in our society, would be considered mentally ill according to western diagnostic methods. If we are to slowly, carefully create a place for the mystic in our society, we must hone our diagnostic tools and learn their inadequacies. This is why I chose to diagnose a sample of *Babbas* according to the DSM-IV.

A difficulty I had not foreseen was the acquisition of good translators. Almost every translator I identified had notions of their own about what my research entailed, how it should be conducted, who should be interviewed, what should be asked, and what the answers were going to be. The process of interviewing and seeking out subjects put me in many situations I would not otherwise have had a chance to experience. For this I feel tremendous gratitude. The project, aside from

the merit I feel it to possess on its own, also unexpectedly turned out to be a vehicle for many personal revelations.

**Katherine Ramos** (Psychology) participated in a summer research internship at Virginia Tech.

My mentor was social psychologist Professor Danny Axsom. Our goal was to design an original research experiment that I would present at the end of the internship. Professor Axsom and I decided to evaluate helping behavior in women as self-handicapping strategy. The topic was based on a previous study of handicapping behaviors in men and women. We met every day and discussed at length the literature I had reviewed. Then I would go back to my dorm and do more research. Thinking back on it, I have to admit I felt as if I was in way over my head. Yet it was exciting to be challenged in a way I had never been and to know that the days I spent living in the library would pay off down the line. For the first time ever, I felt confident as a researcher. That is when I definitely decided that obtaining a PhD in psychology was the route I would take.

As a City College Fellow, I had already had experience working with a faculty mentor, Dr. Yali, and so I understood how to create a professional mentor/mentee relationship. During the summer, I was able to get the mentorship I wanted from Professor Axsom, which deepened my understanding of the topic. I learned to ask many questions. At the end, I produced a thirty-page paper and a poster, and I presented my research at a conference held by Virginia Tech faculty members.

## SPRING 2007 SCHEDULE

(The Forum and all Meetings are in NAC 6/316)

Th., February 1	12:15 - 2 PM
Orientation for ALL New Fellows	
Th., February 8	12:15 - 2 PM
Welcoming Party & Planning Meeting for Fellow-directed Lunches	
Th., March 1	12:15 - 2 PM
Fellow-Directed Luncheon: Defining Your Research Project, Leaders: Kenya Mitchell, Judith Castillo	
Th., March 1	2 - 3:30 PM
Recruitment Meeting: MMUF	
Th., March 8	12:15 - 2 PM
Workshop: On Mentoring	
Mo., March 12	<b>DUE: MMUF Applications</b>
Th., March 22	12:15 - 2 PM
Forum: Speaker Professor Ann Marie Yali (Psychology)	
Th., March 29	12:15 - 2 PM
Workshop: Applying to Graduate School	
Th., April 12	12:15 - 2 PM
Workshop: Presenting your Conference Paper	
Mo., Apr 16	<b>DUE: Applications for Summer Research Funding</b>
Th., Apr 19	12:15 - 2 PM
Recruitment meeting: City College Fellowship	
Fri., Apr 20	9 AM - 7 PM
MMUF Regional Conference at CCNY	

Th., Apr 26 12:15 - 2 PM  
Fellow-Directed Luncheon: Applying to Grad School,  
Leaders: Seniors who have applied this year

Tu., May 1 **DUE: Applications for City College Fellowships**

Th., May 3 12:15 - 2 PM  
Fellow-Directed Luncheon: Building an Academic Career,  
Leaders: Justino Rodriguez, Elena Sandoval, Ria Julien.  
Invited Speaker: Professor Hugo Benevides

Fri May 4 9 AM - 5 PM  
City College Fellowships Program Annual Research Conference

Fri May 18 MMUF Annual Dinner

## GRE PREP COURSE

To attend the spring (schedule below) or summer GRE Prep course, contact Prof. Pilette: primeprep@onebox.com or 212/237-8989, or visit: <http://www.primeprep.com>. Remember the Fellowships Program will pay the course fee.

### Spring 2007 Schedule

Wednesdays 6 - 9:45 PM	Feb 21 - March 28
Wednesdays 6 - 9:45 PM	April 11 - May 16

## The Fifth Annual City College Fellowships Research Conference

The Fifth Annual City College Fellowships Research Conference is Friday, May 4, 2007, from 9 AM - 5 PM in NAC 6/316. All students, faculty, family members, and friends are welcome and encouraged to attend. Fellows who wish to present their work at the Research Conference must submit a title by Thursday, April 12, 2007.

## The Journal: Excerpts

Each semester, the Fellowships Program invites a professor to speak at our "Forum: On Research." This semester, many Fellows raved about the talk given by Professor Bettina Lerner (Foreign Languages).

**By Ria Julien** (English/Philosophy): I found Professor Lerner's description of her experience of choosing a path within a discipline not dissimilar to the difficulty I was experiencing in choosing a discipline. Her talk was inspiring and reassuring, and she discussed the role of coincidence and chance in determining a thesis subject. Though she started out with one thesis topic, she ended up writing on a related subject that only emerged as she began readings on the original subject. I drew lessons from her talk about the kind of openness required to be able to find one's path, and the kind of curiosity that must drive academic work. In response to questions about fads and fashions in academia and the relevance of narrow academic specializations, she insisted that one must believe that one's work is important and follow one's personal interests. Part of my difficulty had been the requirement that any academic work I choose to pursue seriously must be "relevant." Professor Lerner's talk touched on questions of the value of academic work, and I found some satisfaction, if not answers, simply in her broaching the topic.

**By Ivan Bukta** (MCA): Professor Lerner's talk was certainly relevant to my own experience of doing research, especially the importance of being open to modifying one's topic and embracing the roller coaster adventure of research. You never know where it may take you, but by the time you are done, you will know more on your topic than even your advisor. Professor Lerner also reminded us that your work will not improve unless you let others read it, so it is extremely important to get used to asking others for constructive criticism.

Taking Professor Lerner's advice to heart, **John Romey** (Music) presented his research to audiences at City College and Ithaca College.

I am extremely pleased and proud to report that I gave two successful lectures, entitled: "Lessons with a Master: Researching the Pedagogy and Technique of François Rabbath and the *Nouvelle Technique de la Contrebasse*." These lectures forced me to consolidate the ideas that have arisen from my research and that I will develop in my forthcoming book. I discovered how difficult it is to present highly specialized research involving many technical terms to audiences with varying degrees of interest in the topic. I learned a great deal about the research and myself in the process. Additionally, these experiences helped reveal new, clearer methods for presenting my research in the final book format.

The most important part of the experience of being a Fellow is working with a faculty mentor. **Rosa Mino** (Neurogenetics) discusses the productive relationship she has developed with her mentor, Professor Tadmiri Venkatesh.

I can sincerely say that I am able to talk to Professor Venkatesh and ask questions regarding any matter that relates to my research or personal problems. My mentor has always been very open, but I used to feel awkward and was reluctant to ask questions. Now, we (students who work in his lab) feel that he has decided to trust us entirely. I say this because he resolved that we were competent to attend and present our research at what we call the "fly meeting." This is a *Drosophila* conference held every year in which scientists present their work in the different branches in which this organism can be used for study. My mentor also invited us all to a small Christmas gathering in his apartment, which is a testimony of the good rapport we have developed in our lab.

Many Fellows attend professional conferences. **Je Hi An** (Biomedical

Engineering) discusses her experience preparing and presenting a poster at the 2006 Society for Neuroscience conference in Atlanta in October.

I submitted an abstract in June and collected the data over the summer. During September, I was not concerned about preparing the poster because I had most of the figures ready as well as the conclusions. I thought that this process would not take me too long, but I was wrong. After countless meetings with my mentor, Professor Bikson, and staying in the lab until midnight for a couple of nights, my poster looked very decent, and I felt proud of it. My mentor reminded me that presenting work is as important as collecting data and doing the experiments.

The conference took place at the Omni Center, which was big enough to fit the 30,000 anticipated attendees. Reading the program, I was mesmerized by the vast range of topics and presentations. My impression was that ninety percent of the participants had a PhD or MD, so I initially felt intimidated about asking questions. Eventually my curiosity overcame my shyness. My poster presentation was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. on the second day in the back of a large conference room, so very few people came by. However, I decided to stay until noon and my wait paid off when a PhD student from a very well respected lab came and gave me some great advice.

Fellows attend workshops each semester. **Elena Sandoval** (Music) found the two fall workshops to be especially useful: one on writing the personal statement for graduate school, and another on securing funding for study and research.

This semester's workshops were among my favorites. Perhaps this was because I am a senior, have matured as a young scholar, and am now trying to take advantage of the fellowships program more than I have in the past. During the workshop on writing the personal statement, I felt nervous that Professor Wilner and Professor Besse would ask me to read my statement out loud. The prospect of having your statement exposed to public criticism is intimidating. But I kept telling myself that we are in school to learn and to take advantage of constructive criticism. The professors were able to quickly dissolve the barriers so that everyone could benefit from the workshop and gain the perspective to write the best personal statement they possibly could. When I met with Professor Wilner afterwards, I was prepared to hear his suggestions, and walked out of his office encouraged and motivated to improve my statement.

At the workshop on securing funding, a former Mellon Fellow, Jose Vasquez, spoke. I was fascinated to hear his stories about his road to earning the PhD in Anthropology at the Graduate Center. I could relate to him in many ways, being a first generation immigrant, the first in my family to graduate from college, and the daughter of a low-income single mother. At times, it seemed like he was telling my story, yet it was his. His story was so personal and moving that it encouraged me to continue working hard to achieve my goals. I kept telling myself that if he could make it, so could I.

City College Fellowships Program is an umbrella program that administers several undergraduate fellowships. See our website for information: [www.cuny.cuny.edu/fellowshipsprogram](http://www.cuny.cuny.edu/fellowshipsprogram)  
The City College Fellowships Office is located in NAC 6/316, 212/650-8388.

