



**Winter 2011**

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Ten Fellows completed the arduous task of applying to doctoral programs during fall 2010 semester. We eagerly await good news and wish them good luck! As so many seniors prepare to move on to graduate school and other pursuits, we will have a large number of openings for new Fellows. Applications for Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowships are due on March 15, and applications for City College Fellowships are due on May 2. Please encourage all students who are considering the possibility of pursuing a doctoral degree to apply.

We welcome CCNY's new president, Dr. Lisa Staiano-Coico, and the many other new administrators at the college. We especially appreciate their continuing support for the Fellowships Program. Beyond resources that the college provides, our program benefits from support by the Mellon Foundation. Last October, our campus's MMUF program received a four-year renewal grant of \$370,000. Money alone, however, is insufficient to ensure the program's success in helping CCNY undergraduates obtain admissions to top doctoral programs. We also depend on the crucial academic support that faculty members across the disciplines provide to the Fellows. As always, thanks to our faculty mentors is never enough. I would also like to thank **Professor Barbara Brooks** for her valuable input at the important workshop on writing the personal statement; **Professor Robert Anderson** for his fascinating presentation about his research on changing habitat distribution in northern South America; and the Wellness Center's **Doreen Thomas** for providing a much-appreciated workshop on time management.

May 2011 bring you much happiness and success!

Susan Besse

## New Fellows

It is with great pleasure that we announce and welcome our new Fellows. From a most competitive pool of applications, 3 new Fellows have been selected to join the City College Fellowships Program in the spring 2010 semester.

**The new City College Fellowship Fellows are:**

<b>Chathuranga De Silva</b>	Math & Chemical Engineering
<b>Adam Dikker</b>	History
<b>Roy Song</b>	Biology

## Excerpts from Fellows' Journals

Various Fellows take advantage of opportunities to conduct independent research in libraries and archives outside New York City. **Rodion Kosovsky** (History) recounts experiences of his 2010 summer in London.

I had the amazing opportunity to travel to London to conduct archival research on the establishment of cinchona plantations in India between 1859 and 1882. The Raj, as part of the wider anti-malaria campaigns of the British Empire, successfully domesticated the wild cinchona tree in India, developed and began to manufacture several new anti-malarial drugs from the tree's bark, and thereby broke the South American monopoly on anti-malaria drugs. The availability of cheap, locally-produced anti-malaria drugs saved several million colonists and colonizers between the 1800s and the 1940s.

The experience of applying for a summer research grant gave me important skills that I shall need in graduate school. Since I did not know what writing a grant proposal entailed, I sought the help of my mentor, Professor Clifford Rosenberg. Through the writing of six drafts, I had the opportunity to assess the current progress of my research, to articulate a strong rationale for why research in London archives was essential for further developing my project, and to create a plan for how I would use my time, including which sources I wanted to consult. I also learned that in bud-

**APRIL 14, 2011**

### SUMMER RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE

Proposals for funding for summer research are due in the office on Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup>. For instructions, please read the CC Fellowships Program *Guide: "Funding for Research, Training, Travel: Guidelines for Requesting and Using Research Monies."*

getting, one should begin with average scenarios and build in a safety margin instead of counting on a best-case scenario.

The advent of digitization of printed books gave me an immense advantage. Access to a plethora of primary source material before I left for London allowed me (with an immense amount of help from my mentor) to spend the spring 2010 semester researching and clearly defining which story I wanted to tell. Thus, by the time I arrived in London, I knew which gaps I wanted to fill and what sources I needed. Knowing precisely what I was looking for allowed me to go through many large volumes at a fairly rapid pace. Still, not everything went as planned.

The morning after arriving in London, I went to the British Library (which contains the records of the India Office) ready to present the personal identification and list of sources that the library demands for access. The first week served as a real eye-opener. I soon learned that volume titles and volume contents often differ; hence many of the volumes I had planned to consult proved almost useless, and I had to do far more digging than I expected. However, the rules of many British research libraries make digging difficult, because they have a daily limit of ten sources per reader.

Gaining access to the library at Kew Gardens took several days because I needed to email the head archivist, explain to her my research project, provide a list of sources, and request appointments for specific dates. Nevertheless, this exercise proved to be beneficial, as she steered me to several useful sources I did not know the archive owned. I also found useful sources at the Royal Geographical Society, especially the fascinating and detailed papers and diaries of Clements R. Markham, who organized the cinchona expeditions and led one himself. Finally, at the small London Metropolitan Archive, I made my most important (and unexpected) discoveries in the records of the Howards & Sons Company, which tested the Indian Cinchona products for the Raj.

During my research stay, I kept in touch with my mentor through email. Weekly updates not only informed Prof. Rosenberg of my progress; it also allowed me to take

stock of what I had accomplished. Knowing that I could always count on Prof. Rosenberg to try to answer my questions was a big comfort.

If performing an independent summer research project were merely about the research, I would stop at this point. However, this experience fostered immense personal growth. Although going abroad was an amazing experience, it was much harder than I expected. Working independently requires a great deal of personal responsibility, and going to a foreign city with no contacts affords challenges as well as opportunities. I realized that being a historian is about making a lifestyle choice; after this trip, I feel eager and ready to go to graduate school.

REU (Research Experience for Undergraduates) programs in the sciences and social sciences, funded by the National Science Foundation, provide students who aspire to enter doctoral programs with an invaluable and intensive exposure to the nuts and bolts of doing research. **Charlene Blades** (Psychology) traveled to South Carolina to participate in Clemson University's summer 2010 REU in Applied Psychology.

I was attracted to this program because of Dr. Eric Muth's research in the area of eating behaviors in the Applied Psychophysiology lab. Through working with his graduate

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## SPRING 2011 SCHEDULE

All events are in NAC 4/220 B and are from 12:30 - 2:00 PM, unless otherwise noted.

**FRI Feb 4 (NAC 6/316):** Fellowship Dinner at 7:00 PM (6:00 - 7:00 meeting with graduated Fellows; 7:00 dinner)

**TH Feb 17:** Forum: "On Research"

**TH Mar 3:** Workshop: The Mentoring Relationship (Location TBA)

**TH Mar 17:** Workshop: Balancing work/career and life

**MON Apr 4:** Submit titles for CC Fellowships Program Research Conference

**TH Apr 7:** Workshop: Public Speaking

**TH Apr 14 DUE:** Applications for summer research funding (CCFELL & MMUF)

**TH Apr 28:** Workshop: Applying to Graduate school

**FRI Apr 29 (NAC 6/316) (9 AM - 5 PM):** City College Fellowships Program Annual Research Conference

## MELLON AND CCFELL DEADLINES

**TU Mar 1 (NAC 6/316) (12:30 - 1:50 PM):** Recruitment meeting for MMUF

**TU Mar 15 DUE:** MMUF applications

**TU Apr 12 (NAC 6/316): (12:30 - 1:50 PM):** Recruitment meeting for CCFELL

**MON May 2 DUE:** Applications for City College Fellowships

## MMUF EVENTS

**FRI Mar 4:** Ninth Annual NY Regional MMUF Conference, Columbia University (9 AM - 5 PM)

**FRI May 20:** MMUF Annual Dinner (Location TBA)

## The Ninth Annual City College Fellowships Research Conference

The Ninth Annual City College Fellowships Research Conference is Friday, April 29, 2011, 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 **Monday, April 4, 2011.**

student, Jenna Scisco, my fellow intern Melissa and I planned a study from start to finish. I must admit, it was more difficult than I expected, mainly because managing time while running a large sample of participants over four experimental sessions was a skill I had not yet developed. However, it was useful to learn how to do this more efficiently, and the prospect of having a data set of my very own kept me excited. Looking back, I could see my skills improve in terms of identifying questions for research based upon psychological concepts, as well as designing a study around a testable hypothesis. I surprised myself constantly by not only thinking of questions I'd like to research, but also thinking of viable ways to design an experiment in order to answer them. The opportunity to conduct an experiment greatly developed my confidence in my ability to become a successful scientist. Throughout the experiment, I looked forward to analyzing the collected data and came to appreciate the importance of quantitative methods of data analysis in applied psychology. Presenting my work at the 2010 Conference on Applied Psychology gave me a chance to practice talking about my research. Through this conference and through discussions with my peers and with faculty, I deepened my understanding of the material I was studying.

During the Fall 2010 semester, ten Fellows applied to doctoral programs. This challenging task has many rewards; in the process, Fellows deepen communication with their faculty mentors, learn to use constructive criticism, develop academic skills, and clarify their professional goals. **Diana Sierra** (History) reflects on how she met the challenge of preparing the important writing sample.

I found my mentoring experience with [Colombian history specialist] Professor Mary Roldan to be particularly fruitful. When I opened my (already much revised) draft of my writing sample, I found it covered with her red italics, comments, and line-by-line critiques. Although initially overwhelmed, I read and reread her comments, and desperately wanted to understand and address them. I considered the possibilities for moving forward and recognized that my bruised ego was the only obstacle.

In attempting to address her major criticisms, I unraveled the problematic assumptions and methodological flaws in the work of historian James Sander, whose analysis had led me to make fundamental errors. By identifying his mistake in making over-encompassing generalizations on the basis of narrow evidence, I learned an important lesson. After this, by carefully constructing chronologies, comparing maps, and re-examining the manner in which historians interpret and incorporate evidence, I greatly strengthened my argument. It now seems obvious that historians need to critically evaluate the secondary sources we use, but the importance of this did not sink in until I fell into the trap of ignoring it.

Learning how to effectively address constructive criticism proved to be the most valuable lesson throughout the application process. As undergraduate students, we often receive criticism which points to flaws in our writing and problematic assumptions in our analyses, but rarely are we forced to address criticism through revising our work. It is even more rare to have a group of faculty mentors and peers (whom you greatly respect) scrutinize your work! In writing so

many drafts of my writing sample and statement of purpose, I learned to recognize the limits and objectives of a given assignment, prioritize fundamental critiques, and develop a concrete plan to address them.

In a fall 2010 workshop and in discussions with their mentors, Fellows focused on how to improve their writing and define their voice. **Ashley Canino** (English) comments on lessons she learned.

I appreciated Fidel's point that when someone is reading the work of a minority student, "simple" writing may be taken as indication that the student is not fluent in aca

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## GRE PREP COURSE

The GRE® revised General Test will replace the current GRE General Test on August 1, 2011. There will be changes to the test content, design, and scoring scale. Thus it is especially important for you to plan ahead this year to be sure you get the right test preparation for the test you will take.

For test takers who take the GRE® revised General Test in August and September 2011, score reports will be sent starting in early-November 2011. For test takers who take the GRE® revised General Test in October and November, there will also be a special score reporting schedule. In December, score reporting will return to the regular reporting period of 10-15 days after test day. **IMPORTANT:** Applicants who need to submit their GRE scores prior to November 2011 (as required for most national graduate fellowships) must take the current GRE General Test before August 1, 2011.

A brief summary of the changes is available at [www.ets.org/gre/revisedtest](http://www.ets.org/gre/revisedtest). See also [www.ets.org/gre/infocenter](http://www.ets.org/gre/infocenter) for more details.

Students wishing to attend a GRE Prep Course, which the Fellowships Program strongly recommends, may choose from a Kaplan course or the Prep Prime course led by Prof. Pilette. Prep Prime's next course is Feb. 16 to March 23 at Hunter College, Wednesdays from 6:15 to 9:45 PM. If you are interested in this course, want additional info, or want to know more about other upcoming courses, please email [Prep@primeprep.com](mailto:Prep@primeprep.com). For info on Kaplan courses, please consult the website: [www.Kaptest.com](http://www.Kaptest.com).

You must write Renee and request permission to attend a course, supplying dates and costs, before taking a course in order to be eligible for the GRE Prep course tuition payment. Remember, it takes three to four weeks for a check to be processed.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** If you want to take one of the Kaplan courses, you **MUST** apply for the 50% CCNY discount even before asking for approval! To receive a discount, you must:

- Enroll individually by contacting Kaplan directly (1-800-KAPTEST = 1-800-527 8378)
- Provide Kaplan with your CCNY email address and copy of CCNY ID.
- At time of enrollment, students must be prepared to pay at least 1/3 of the final cost (after the discount).

demographic or is not well-read. By now, I tend to take classes with professors who know me, so I think about this less. But especially at the first college I attended, a private school, I was very conscious of professors' expectations based on my ethnicity, gender, and background. Because of this, I started to be hyper-conscious about my use of jargon and to implement it even where, in my opinion, it was not the ideal way to communicate my ideas. What really changed my mind about this practice was reading the paper another student submitted for an English class. It was almost entirely jargon. I thought about how I would grade the paper. It said very little and it almost felt like reading a foreign language, as every line needed to be translated. I imagined the translation would be less than half of the length of the paper. He got an A in the course and that made me uncomfortable.

This semester, although Prof. Veese gave me an "A" on the first paper I wrote for him, I felt there was a lot I could do to improve the style, content, and focus, as well as to better articulate my voice. I met with him during office hours, and over the course of an hour we discussed how reworking two sentences would make the paper more successful. He helped me address my fear of saying outright that the literary critic I engaged with in the paper was wrong in his assertions. Our mentoring relationship began there, before we formalized it.

Each semester, the Fellowships Program invites a faculty member to speak at our "Forum: On Research." **Eliezer Posner** (Math) comments on the fall semester's illuminating presentation by **Prof. Robert Anderson** (Biology).

Prof. Anderson's work involves biology, paleontology, ecology, computer science, and probability, so his research has put him in touch with people from many different fields. I found two things Prof. Anderson said especially interesting. Because Prof. Anderson works with people from different fields, sometimes he and his collaborators cannot communicate well because they use the same words in different ways. Once he realized that this is an issue, he and his collaborators were able to make much more progress. I also liked hearing about the competing algorithms that had been developed to predict which locations would be most habitable for a given species. Some years ago, a group of researchers got together to decide which algorithm was best, with Prof. Anderson's ultimately becoming the most popular. I had heard how science progresses by better models prevailing over weaker models. It was nice to hear a first-hand account of scientific progress in action.

Many Fellows benefit from presenting their research to peers and to broader academic audiences. **Jing Hua (Elva) Yang** (Biology) describes her first poster presentation.

Making and presenting a poster was a remarkable learning experience for me. First, it broadened and deepened my understanding of my research on the biogeography of Southeast Asian insects and enhanced my organizational skills. The poster presentation provided a deadline that forced me to assemble the critical components of my research—including data I had collected over three semes-

ters as well as analysis—and to assess the significance of my research. Second, it gave me an opportunity to present my work to a public audience. Standing in front of the poster, I realized that no matter how creative its layout, I needed to express myself clearly so that others could comprehend my research. In addition, I learned from the posters that others displayed. Exchange of ideas among faculty and fellow students helped me to improve my research and to enhance my communication skills.

Many Fellows take advantage of the wealth of opportunities in New York City to attend academic lectures and conferences. There, they meet professors and graduate students in their fields, gain exposure to academic culture, and learn about current scholarship and issues in debate. This experience can also help Fellows gain the confidence to reach out to scholars in their field. **Zachary Masur** (History) recounts his positive experiences in this regard.

At one of our program's fall events, a Fellow mentioned, almost off hand, that it is easy to contact professors around the country and that one has nothing to lose. This small, seemingly obvious comment changed my semester drastically. First, and with the help of Professor Greble, I contacted and eventually met with intellectual historian Larry Wolff at NYU, who offered me terrific insight into my project [on the impact of the Russian Revolution of 1905 on Polish political and national consciousness]. Next, I got in touch with Professor Robert Blobaum at the University of Virginia, who has authored the only English-language account of the Polish side of the revolution of 1905 published since the fall of Communism. He was extremely pleased to hear from a student who had found his book so helpful, offered me constructive criticism of my work, and put me in touch with Professor Nathan Wood at the University of Kansas who just published a book on early 20<sup>th</sup> century Krakow. Dr. Wood not only offered me insight on my research; he also shared his personal notes from the archives and put me in touch with an organization that will support me during spring 2011 in Ukraine, Center for Urban History of East Central Europe. Through Professor Greble, I met the former director of the Center, who is currently at Columbia, Tarik Amar. Professor Amar spent hours with me explaining how to use the archives in Ukraine, which is no simple task, and he put me in touch with the current director, Sofia Dyak. Dr. Dyak and her staff will assist me in using the archives in L'viv. One cannot accomplish anything without connections in a place like L'viv.

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

