LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Congratulations to our graduates who have excelled at CCNY and are moving on to embrace new and exciting challenges. At our workshop on applying to graduate school, eight (of ten) Fellows who will enroll in Ph.D. programs in fall 2013 provided valuable information, helpful tips, and plentiful encouragement to ongoing Fellows. Good luck to these graduates in their doctoral studies at the CUNY Graduate Center (3), Columbia University (2), University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Penn State University, and Drew University. The Fellows’ achievements were also on full display at our annual Research Conference. The Conference program (printed below) shows the diversity of Fellows’ research interests; and three journal excerpts (see below) by Fellows who presented papers testify to the benefits of participation in the conference.

The spring semester’s workshops were among the best ever. Thanks are due to President Coico, whose words of advice to the Fellows on public speaking, as well as her inspiring example, helped many to gain confidence and skills to present their research at our conference. Professors Kevin Foster (Economics) and Karin Block (Earth Sciences) spoke with candor and warmth about the challenges and rewards of balancing an academic career with family life. Columbia University Sociology Professor Alondra Nelson generously shared with the Fellows the story of her circuitous path to an academic career (and to authorship of her prize-winning book, The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination), reassuring many that there is space for interdisciplinarity in academia. Her comments on the ethical responsibility of researchers to the subjects of their research resonated with many Fellows majoring in the sciences as well as the humanities and social sciences. The Fellows also greatly appreciated the valuable contributions that two of their faculty mentors, Professors Daniel Gustafson (English) and Vivien Tartter (Psychology), made to our workshop on how to build strong mentoring relationships.

Welcome to our eight new City College Fellows and to the new cohort of Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows. We anticipate that your diverse backgrounds and interests will enrich our community, sustaining the comradery and intellectual energy that helps to foster the Fellows’ success. Finally, many thanks to the CCNY administration for its continuing support of the Fellowships Program, including the commitment to raise the City College Fellows’ stipends to match MMUF stipends, and to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its strong support for MMUF on our campus and throughout the U.S. as well as in South Africa.

Susan Besse

NEW FELLOWS

It is with great pleasure that we announce and welcome our new Fellows. From most competitive pools of applicants, 8 new City College Fellows, 1 Associate City College Fellow, and 6 new Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows have been selected to join the City College Fellowships Program in the fall 2013 semester.

The new City College Fellows are:

Natasha Adams Sociology, Political Science
Orubba Almansouri English
Shaila Bora Philosophy
Daphne Chang Biology
Robert Dalva Philosophy
Karim Elhaiies History
Laura Hernandez Psychology
Conor McGlone English
Michelle Peralta Psychology, Associate Fellow

The new Mellon Mays Fellows are:

Miriam Abdullah English
Rachel Ansong English
Tameekia Cooper English
Emmanuel Lachaud History
Betsy Marmol History
Glenda Ullauri Anthropology

ACHIEVEMENTS

Fellows’ Activities and Awards 2012 -2013

Graduating Seniors

Miguel Briones (Psychology/English) graduated Summa Cum Laude spring 2013 and received the CCNY Psychology Department’s Bernard R. Ackerman Award. Miguel will enter the CUNY Graduate Center’s Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience PhD program fall 2013, where he will receive a Chancellor’s Fellowship.

Pahola Capellan (Spanish) graduated Magna Cum Laude spring 2013, was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Society, and received the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures’ Certificate of Academic Achievement.

Barney Chen (Economics/Math) graduated Magna Cum Laude spring 2013 with Honors in Economics. He was the recipient of the Harvey Leopold Scholarship, Thomas W. Smith Fellowship (from the CUNY BA program), Rose Friedman Scholarship, and SC Alumni Chapter Scholarship. Barney also received the Dean’s Certificate for Academic Excellence and participated in the Eastern Economics Association Conference.
Danielle Clare (Chemistry) graduated Cum Laude spring 2013 and received the Chemistry Department’s Marks Neidle Memorial Prize in Physical Chemistry as well as the Benjamin Harrow Memorial Award for her Honors Research presentation. She presented a poster at the annual New York State CSTEP (College Science and Technology Entry Program) Conference in Bolton Landing, NY in April 2013, which won second place in the Technology division.

Lucas Corcoran (English) graduated Magna Cum Laude spring 2013 and was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Society. Lucas served as Editor of Promethean, City College’s literary journal; and he received the English Department’s Edward C. and Ruth P. Mack Graduate Fellowship, the Stark Essay Award in Literature, and the Sidney Jacoff Fellowship for Graduate Studies from the Humanities Division. During summer 2013, he participated in the CCNY-Stanford Research Program. Lucas will enter the CUNY Graduate Center’s English PhD program fall 2013, where he will receive a Chancellor’s Fellowship.

Chathuranga De Silva (Math/Chemical Engineering) graduated Magna Cum Laude spring 2013. He will enter Columbia University’s Chemical Engineering PhD program fall 2013.

Adam Dikker (History) graduated Summa Cum Laude January 2013, was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Society, and received the History Department’s Paul Aron Award for the best undergraduate research paper.

Hyeondo (Luke) Hwang (Biochemistry) graduated Summa Cum Laude spring 2013 and received the Ward Medal in Chemistry (for being the department’s valedictorian), the J. Birnbaum Scholarship in Chemistry, and the Jerome Karle Award. Luke will enter the University of Chicago’s Physical Chemistry PhD program in fall 2013.

Rakim Jenkins (Sociology/Black Studies) graduated spring 2013. Rakim was a Colin Powell Partners For Change Fellow. He interned as a Research Assistant/College Assistant at Hyde Leadership Charter School, and received the Drum Major Institute’s Community Racial Fellowship.

Jessica Mendez (History) graduated spring 2013 and received the CCNY History Department’s Oscar Lloyd Meyerson Prize (for the best honors essay) and Bronsen Prize (for graduate studies). She will enter Columbia University’s History PhD program fall 2013, where she will receive the Richard Hofstadter Fellowship and the Dean’s Diversity Fellowship. During summer 2013, Jessica is studying Spanish at the Instituto Cultural Oaxaca in Mexico.

Pablo Varona Borges (Philosophy) graduated Magna Cum Laude spring 2013 and received the Philosophy Department’s highest award, the Sperling Award (for best graduating student).

Alumni Fellows are also entering graduate programs in 2013:

Shana Adise (BS 2011), PhD, Nutritional Sciences, Penn State University
Kaydian Campbell (BA 2012), PhD, English, University of Wisconsin, Madison
Kasaun Henry (BA 2006; MA 2008, Music Theory, University of Michigan), PhD, History & Culture, Drew University
Lisa Figueroa Jahn (BA 2010), PhD, Anthropology, CUNY Graduate Center
Roy Song (BS 2012), PhD, Biomedical Sciences, Mount Sinai School of Medicine
Winston Scarlett (BA 2011), MLIS, Library and Information Sciences, Pratt Institute

Jung Hua (Elva) Yang (BS 2012), PhD, Biology, Texas Technical University

Continuing Fellows:

Miriam Abdullah (English) holds the Kaye Scholarship. She won admission to, but declined, the University of California, Berkeley Summer Research Opportunity Program.

Orubba Almansouri (English) holds the Kaye Scholarship.

Rachel Ansong (English) holds the Kaye Scholarship and received the English Department’s Richard Shepherd Award as well as the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures’ Award for Academic Excellence in French. Her poems “Meatless Days” and “A Taste of Accra” were published in the Promethean.

Haldan Blecher (Political Science) continues to work with a group of CUNY students who are collaborating with members of the organization “Picture the Homeless” to develop a model for economically sustainable low-income housing. Having just signed a recording/management contract with Tri Angle Records and Wearefree Management, his immediate plans are to take advantage of opportunities to work as a professional musician.

Corey Burke (English) holds the Kaye Scholarship.

Tameekia Imani Cooper (English) is a Kaye Scholar, a Leon Levy Scholar, and an English Honors student. She received an Award for Academic Excellence in French from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and plans to spend the fall semester studying in Paris. Imani has also served as a CCNY Student Admissions Ambassador.

Rene Cordero (History) holds the Kaye Scholarship and received the History Department’s Leslie Steigman Bayor Scholarship, honorable mention (for outstanding work in the field of American History).

Robert Dalva (Philosophy/Psychology) was awarded the Philosophy Department’s Ketchum Prize for History of Philosophy and the Ward Medal for General Excellence in Philosophy. He also participated in the summer 2013 CCNY-Stanford Research Program.

Haiming Deng (Physics) will spend three months in France working on a collaborative project between the members of his CCNY lab and researchers at the Ecole Polytechnique. Their project is to grow topological insulator (TI) nanowires as a preliminary step to finding the hypothetical particle, Majorana fermions.

Emily Graham (History) was awarded the History Department’s Ditzion Award (for the best paper in social history) and is a member of Skadden Arps Honors Program in Legal Studies.

Nikeeyia Howell (English) received the English Department’s Ester Unger Poetry Prize. In addition to continuing to edit the Opinions section of “The Campus” magazine, she is now Editor of the Features section. Two of her poems were published in the Spring 2013 issue of Promethean.

Shanna D Jean-Baptiste (French) holds the Kaye Scholarship and the Southern Nevada Alumni Chapter Scholarship. She is the recipient of the CCNY Foreign Languages and Literature Department’s Downer Award, and also won admission to, but declined, two summer research programs: University of California, Berkeley Summer Research Opportunity Program, and the Leadership Alliance SR-EIP at New York University.

Jeffrey Kasper (Urban Studies) holds the Kaye Scholarship and the Josh and Judy Weston Fellowship in Public Service. He contributed an essay entitled “555 Hudson Street” to Place Matters, an
online public cultural history project. In June, he led a hands-on mapping workshop at the “Interaction Design and Children Conference,” sponsored by The New School and Sesame Street.

Emmanuel Lachaud (History) was awarded the History Department’s Joan Kelly Prize (for the best essay written in an elective course).

Tamra Lepro (English) holds the Kaye Scholarship and received the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature’s Lumieres Award. She is also an English Honors student and participated in the summer 2013 CCNY-Stanford Research Program.

Joshua Liveris (Philosophy) holds the Kaye Scholarship and the Benjamin A. Gilman Fellowship for study abroad. He presented a paper at CUNY Philosophy Conference and published in “The Gadfly.”

Betsy Marmol (History) holds the Kaye Scholarship and received from the History Department the Leslie Steigman Bayor Scholarship, honorable mention (for outstanding work in the field of American History).

Natalya Mishchenko (Math) received the Mathematics Department’s Rich Scholarship. She also tutored math at the Gateway Academic Center in 2012-2013.

Rebecca Panko (Biology) holds a Colin Powell Partners For Change Fellowship through which she participated as a researcher in a wastewater wetlands project. In addition, she worked as: Research Intern for IOBY (“In Your Own Backyard”); Ecology Intern at the Bronx River Alliance; Research Assistant for “It squared” (Information Technology to Improve Teaching); and Research Assistant for PhD student Bob Muscarella (Columbia University).

Mayelin Perez (English) holds the Kaye Scholarship and online public cultural history project. In June, he led a hands-on mapping workshop at the “Interaction Design and Children Conference,” sponsored by The New School and Sesame Street.

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SUMMER REPORTS ARE DUE SEPTEMBER 12, 2013

SUMMER PROJECTS 2013

Miriam Abdullah (English) will participate in the University of Chicago's MMUF Summer Research Training Program.

Rachel Ansong (English) will participate in the University of Chicago's MMUF Summer Research Training Program.

Corey Burke (English) will travel to conduct archival research on pornography at Indiana University's Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction. Prof. Harold Veeser is supervising her research.

Tameekia Cooper (English) will participate in the University of North Carolina's MURAP (Moore Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program), an undergraduate summer research training program.

Rene Cordero (History) will travel to Santo Domingo to conduct archival research on the Dominican Republic's student movements of the 1960s and early 1970s and their relationship to leftist organizations. Under the mentorship of Prof. Susan Besse, Rene plans to use to use this research to write his MA thesis.

Emily Graham (History) will travel to Boston to conduct research on the seventeenth century origins of American Federalism, making use of archives at the Congregationalist Library and the Boston Public Library. Under the mentorship of Prof. Ann Kornhauser, Emily will use this research to develop her MA thesis and writing sample for doctoral applications.

Nikkeeya Howell (English) will participate in the Leadership Alliance's Summer Research Early Identification Program (SR-EIP) at The University of Chicago.

Shanna Jean-Baptiste (French) will participate in the University of North Carolina's MURAP (Moore Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program), an undergraduate summer research training program.

Jeffrey Kasper (Urban Studies) will travel to the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, Ontario) to view the Lisette Model archive. He hopes to gather valuable information about this understudied twentieth century photographer in order to elaborate his thesis, supervised by Prof. Ellen Handy.

Emmanuel Lachaud (History) will travel to Haiti to search in various archives and libraries for primary source materials to expand his paper on the gendering of citizenship in 19th century Haiti. Prof. Susan Besse is supervising his research, which he will draw on to develop his writing sample for doctoral applications.

Joshua Livers (Philosophy) will participate in the newly created Summer Intensive Classical Tibetan program at Kathmandu University’s Centre for Buddhist Studies at Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Betsy Marmol (History) will participate in the University of Chicago’s MMUF Summer Research Training Program.

Mayelin Perez (English) will participate in the University of North Carolina’s MURAP (Moore Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program), an undergraduate summer research training program.

Neelam Prashad (Psychology) will participate in two CCNY-based research projects, the Pilot of Social Scan study and Borderline Personality study, under the direction of her mentor Prof. Robert Melara and Prof. Eric Fertuck.

Rocio Rayo (History) will travel to Managua, Nicaragua to conduct interviews and pursue research in various archives and libraries on Sandinista policies regarding family planning and abortion during the 1980s. Under the supervision of her mentor Prof. Susan Besse, she plans to write a MA thesis on this topic.

Hanifah Robinson (Anthropology) will use ethnographic fieldwork techniques to research how new kinds of interaction between musicians with their fans made possible by recent developments in technology have impacted the evolution of various niche musical forms. Under the direction of her mentors Prof. Kyra Grant (Baruch) and Prof. William Herman (Hunter), she will draw on this research to develop a writing sample for doctoral applications.

Glenda Ullauri (Anthropology) will travel to the Yucatan (Mexico), where she will live with a Maya family that owns and operates a habanero (chile pepper) seedling nursery. Her ethnographic research explores the extent to which traditional Maya agricultural practices are used alongside modern agricultural methods. She hopes that her research will help to break down the dichotomy between traditional and modern peoples and thus to contribute to a larger conversation over what it means to be Maya in the 21st century. Under the supervision of her mentor Prof. James Biles, Glenda plans to use her research to develop a senior thesis.

Yexenia Vanegas (Anthropology) will be working with Prof. Kathleen Riley to analyze data from their study, “Language Socialization and the School Food Change Movement in NYC.” They plan to complete a paper summarizing their research findings, which they hope to present at the fall 2013 meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago.

Debra Williams (English) will participate in the CUNY Pipeline Program at The Graduate Center, CUNY and extend her research on the work of science fiction author Octavia Butler under the direction of her mentor Prof. Carla Cappetti.
EXCERPTS FROM FELLOWS’ JOURNALS

SPRING 2013:

The Fellowship Program seeks to empower students to take charge of their education. An English major writes an eloquent description of empowering lessons she learned.

Nikeeyia Howell (English) The one unifying thread among the challenges I faced this semester was application—in every sense of the word. I realized the importance of: sending out lots of applications, applying and reapplying, applying myself—even in the face of self doubt, and applying faith and realism.

First, during fall semester and the entirety of the winter break, I prepared applications for summer research programs. I wanted to have back up options in case I was not accepted by my first choice program. Working with my faculty mentor [Professor Harold Veeser] on each application, I continually fine-tuned my statement of purpose and better articulated my research agenda. Second, I was determined to reapply for things that I was rejected from last year, including publication in Promethean and English Department awards. Happily I succeeded on both fronts and was glad that I didn’t let my past experiences defeat me. Third, at this semester’s fellowship meetings, I found myself applying and reapplying older lessons and tips to fit my new circumstances. In particular, I drew important lessons from the workshop on public speaking to help prepare to present my paper at the regional MMUF conference. Hearing from President Coico that she used to be a shy speaker gave me hope that I could get over my own public speaking fears. I thoroughly appreciated all her anecdotes, as well as her advice about how to engage an audience and how not to give a presentation. I kept all her tips in mind; they really helped me to pace myself and to control my nervousness. Fourth, I learned important lessons in applying faith and realism to my academic and professional career. In a required core biology course, I learned to be realistic about my limitations and to not let them define me. Instead of feeling defeated by my brain’s aversion to science and by the less-than-stellar teaching of the course, I concentrated on using my writing and visual skills to perform well on tests. I also drew inspiration from former Fellows who had taken time off before applying to doctoral programs. Their stories helped me to overcome my fears about choosing an unconventional route to graduate school and to apply a little faith to trust that things will work out in the end as long as I keep working towards my goals.

Three Fellows describe the benefits they reaped by embracing the challenge to present research papers at the Fellowship Program’s annual research conference.

Emily Graham (History) The most difficult work I did this spring was conceptualizing a thesis prospectus. I struggled for most of the semester, searching for evidence of connections between the self-governing Congregationalist church structures and the form of federalism outlined by the United States Constitution, until I nearly abandoned the topic altogether. The Fellows’ Research Conference was a lifeline when I felt most adrift.

ELEVENTH ANNUAL CITY COLLEGE FELLOWSHIPS RESEARCH CONFERENCE

April 26, 2013

Panel I 9:30 - 10:45 Moderator: Glenda Ullauri

Jeffrey Kasper, “Following a Flâneuse: Lisette Model’s New York City Reflections, 1939-1945”

Yexenia Vanegas, “Digesting Images of Women”

Pablo J. Varona Borges, “Technology: A Brief Reexamination of its Meanings”

Panel II 11:00 - 12:30 Moderator: Miguel Briones

Lucas Corcoran, “Tragedy and Skepticism: the Contours of Doubt in Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth”

Debra Williams, “Nature and Animality Imagined in the Work of Edgar Allan Poe and Octavia E. Butler”

Emily Graham, “Congregationalist Origins of American Federalism”

Adam Dikker, “‘Our Homeric Period:’ Robert Penn Warren, James Baldwin, and the Enlightened Humanism of Inner Turmoil”

Panel III 1:45 - 3:00 Moderator: Rebecca Panko

Miguel Briones, “Effects of distractor salience and correlational structure on auditory selective attention: A behavioral and electrophysiological study”

Haiming Deng, “Singular spin response of topological insulators in AC magnetic fields”


Panel IV 3:15 - 4:45 Moderator: Rachel Ansong

Emmanuel Lachaud, “Engendering Black Citizenship: Constitutional Patriarchalism in Haiti, 1801-1817”

Shanna Jean-Baptiste, “Masculinity, Womanhood, and Modernity in the Work of Fernand Hibbert (1873-1928)”

Rakim Jenkins, “Kwame Nkrumah’s Village: Pan-Africanism or Perish”

The need for finished material to present and the 15-minute time limit to do so forced me to narrow my focus and distill a small portion of my thesis into a concentrated explanation of its most fundamental goals. Nervous as I was, my sense of purpose was renewed when I realized that people understood what I was arguing. I felt encouraged to see History major Adam Dikker—who is very familiar with early American religious and political history—nodding in understanding and agreement with several of my points. The experience helped me to rediscover my direction, and I was able to finish a complete draft of my prospectus for the Research Colloquium.

Jeffrey Kasper (Urban Studies) The research I presented started out as an unfocused essay for Dr. Ellen Handy’s fall 2012 Art History course on research methods. Pressure to deliver a paper at a public conference forced me to transform this essay on Lisette Model’s photographs of New York City life into a pretty good draft of an original thesis and writing sample for doctoral applications. Under Dr. Handy’s mentorship, I found creative ways to merge my interests in urban studies, art history, and cultural theory, and I learned the value of using archival sources. My paper deconstructs Model’s dream-like, kaleidoscopic photographs in order to reconstruct and document the consumer-driven cultural life of Manhattan in the 1940s. Although it was stressful to be developing my argument right up to the week before the conference, the pressure proved valuable in pushing me to crystallize my research agenda. The enthusiasm of the audience, questions posed in the Q&A, and subsequent conversations made this a truly positive experience.

Emmanuel Lachaud (History) The most exciting and educational fellowship event was the Research Conference. First, I was interested to learn about my fellow Fellows’ research. Second, presenting my own research was an eye opening experience that taught me a lot. I learned (once again) that writing is all about rewriting. In an independent study with my mentor [Prof. Susan Besse], I returned to a paper I had started more than a year ago and then developed in the History Department’s Research Colloquium. Still, the argument remained unclear and the writing sloppy. This time, in revising the paper to deliver in a 15-minute oral presentation, I reconceptualized the issue of gender in the early Haitian constitutions by relating it to Haiti’s struggles for national sovereignty. I argued that continuous threats of European invasion, ongoing war, and a refusal of slave holding regimes to recognize the new nation’s independence forced Haiti to remain on a military footing long after the revolution ended. These circumstances of state formation fostered a rhetoric of masculine resistance and a militarized model of citizenship, which in turn institutionalized a culture of gender inequality that plagues Haiti to this day. Five months ago, I was not able to articulate this argument or to explain the relevance of my research on 19th century Haiti. Developing and presenting a conference paper brought me a lot of confidence and clarity. I can now confidently answer the question: “What do you study?”

Many Fellows appreciated the candor and warmth of Professors Kevin Foster (Economics) and Karin Block (Earth Sciences), who shared many personal experiences along with excellent advice at our workshop on balancing career and life.

Natasha Mishchenko (Math) Both speakers at this workshop were wonderful and funny. As they spoke about their lives and gave us advice, the atmosphere became more and more welcoming and supportive. They made us Fellows feel comfortable speaking up about our current struggles and concerns. At that time in the semester, I had so much work to do that I was starting to wonder what the point was and whether I wanted to do “this” for a living. I raised my hand and asked the speakers whether they had ever felt doubt about whether they even liked their fields of study, and whether they ever felt exhausted, bored, or inadequate. When I finished asking the question, everyone in the room laughed. Apparently I was not alone. Apparently, everyone in the room had the same concerns.

As both professors talked about periods in their lives where things got hard, when they had to make one sacrifice after another, I began to feel better. These professors who have the kind of career I want are happy. They love what they do. They got through their periods of doubt and were honest in talking of their struggles, success, and happiness. That was probably the most valuable knowledge that I took away from the workshop.

Fellows often attend academic lectures and conferences, where they gain insight about current research in their fields and make important contacts. Some also present their own research at national conferences.

Haiming Deng (Physics). I traveled to Baltimore to present my research at the annual “March Meeting” of the APS (American Physics Society), the largest physics meeting in the world, with close to 10,000 people attending. I felt lucky and excited to present my work to other professionals interested in the same subject, especially since I was one of very few undergraduates invited to do so. Because this was my first public presentation, my mentor [Prof. Lia Krusin-Elbaum] helped me to prepare by making many suggestions that improved my PowerPoint and by rehearsing with me. It turned out to be a great experience. At the conference, Prof. Krusin introduced me to many people. In addition, listening to others’ talks, I learned much about current research in my field, including ideas I can apply to my own research. Since topological insulators (TI) were the hottest topic at the meeting this year, attending the conference helped me to prepare me for this summer, when I will spend three months in France along with members of my lab collaborating with a team at the Ecole Polytechnique. Our project is to grow TI nanowires to eliminate the bulk and see the surface states; then we can grow TI nano tubes around Nb nanowire or vise versa to study the proximity effect on the surface of TIs. Ultimately, the goal is to find the hypothetical particle, Majorana fermions.