LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As always, at this year’s commencement, Fellows shared their sadness to be parting and their joy to be completing their CCNY degrees with distinction as they anticipate new and exciting challenges. I know I can speak for the graduates in saying that their success would not have been possible without the financial support and comradeship of the fellowship community, hours of mentoring from faculty mentors, and the faith and encouragement of family and friends. They have thrived not just because of their hard work, but also because the College invested in them. I am confident that their future achievements will make the College proud. Congratulations and good luck!

Highlights of the spring semester included two conferences. City College hosted the 12th Annual Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship’s New York Regional Conference: a daylong event including presentations of student research and a luncheon panel featuring City College Mellon Fellows who participated in the January 2014 MMUF Cape Town Program. In addition, the 12th annual City College Fellowships Research Conference brought Fellows together to share their research across the disciplines. At both events, the sophistication of the research and the professionalism of the undergraduate presenters were on full display. Equally important, the wonderful spirit of collegiality, respect, and support among the Fellows served as an inspiration for both presenters and audience members. (See the program below).

Please see Fellows’ journal excerpts below, which comment on this spring semester’s workshops. Many Fellows greatly appreciated the generosity of the graduating seniors who passed on what they had learned about applying to doctoral programs, providing inspiration and valuable advice on how to succeed. Thanks are due to Prof. Cheryl Sterling (English/Black Studies) for sharing her insights on the rewards and challenges of conducting interdisciplinary research on African-Brazilian cultures. Professors Elizabeth Mazzola (English) and John Krinsky (Political Science) spoke with candor and warmth about the challenges and rewards of balancing an academic career with family life. Finally, Professor Joshua Wilner (English) contributed valuable information to our round table discussion on how to build strong mentoring relationships.

Congratulations and welcome to our seven new City College Fellows and to the new cohort of seven Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows. We anticipate that your diverse backgrounds and interests will enrich our community, sustaining the comradeship and intellectual energy that help 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 starting this fall.

Susan Besse

NEW FELLOWS

The new City College Fellows are:

Megan Candolfi
Luthfunnahar Dewan
Jerry Guillaume
Bilha Njuguna
Seyed Noori
Jonathan Perlow
Asha Whale

The new Mellon Mays Fellows are:

Orubba Almansouri
Keevin Brown
Gabriella Clemente
Alycia Hall
Wendyliz Martinez
Sophia Monegro
Zulai Romero

ACHIEVEMENTS

Fellows’ Activities and Awards 2013 - 2014

Graduating Seniors

Rachel Ansong (English) graduated June 2014 summa cum laude with English Honors and Phi Beta Kappa. She received the Department of English’s David Markowitz Poetry Award and the William Bradley Otis Fellowship in American Literature. In February, Rachel attended the 39th Annual Conference of the New York Africana Studies Association at SUNY Cortland, and she was chosen to participate in the summer 2014 CCNY-Stanford Exchange (SROP, Summer Research Opportunity Program).

Corey Burke (English) graduated June 2014 cum laude. In April, she attended the Feminist Porn Conference held at the University of Toronto.

Rene Cordero (History) completed his BA/MA June 2014 magna cum laude. He was awarded the History Department’s Sidney Ditzon Outstanding Paper in Social History award and Robert Buckman Prize. In April, Rene traveled to Waterbury, CT to attend the 5th Bi-annual Conference of the Dominican Studies Association, and he was chosen to participate in the summer 2014 CCNY-Stanford Exchange (SROP).

Haiming Deng (Physics) graduated January 2014 cum laude with Research Honors in Science. He will enter SUNY Stony Brook’s PhD program in Physics fall 2014.

Emily Graham (History) completed her BA/MA June 2014
Continuing Fellows:

Miriam Abdullah (English) is a Kaye Scholar. She was chosen to participate in MURAP (Moore Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program) at the University of North Carolina, summer 2014. In April, she traveled to the University of Chicago to attend a conference entitled “The Varieties of Historical Experience.”

Natasha Adams (Women’s Studies/Sociology) held the Josh and Judy Weston Public Service Scholarship and was awarded the Kaye Scholarship. She was also chosen to participate in the CCNY Graduate Center’s Pipeline Fellowship program.

Orubba Almansouri (English) is a Kaye Scholar. She received the SEEK Academic Excellence Award and was chosen to participate in the CCNY Graduate Center’s Pipeline Fellowship program.

Joestin Benjamin (International Studies/PolSci) is a Skadden Scholar in the Skadden, Arps Honors Program in Legal Studies.

Shaila Bora (Philosophy) received the Philosophy Department’s Brittain Prize for Moral Philosophy. She held a Colin Powell School Fellowship and was chosen to participate in the summer 2014 CCNY-Stanford Exchange (SROP, Summer Research Opportunity Program).

Daphne Chang (Biology) received the Biology Department’s Professor Krupa Award for Excellence in Research. She presented her research at the City College Biology Honors Research Presentations and the 6th Annual Celebration of Macaulay Scholarship.

Tameekia Imani Cooper (English) is a Kaye Scholar. She was chosen to participate in the summer 2014 CCNY-Stanford Exchange (SROP).

Karim Elhaies (History) was awarded the Kaye Scholarship. In April, he traveled to the University of Chicago to attend a conference entitled “The Varieties of Historical Experience.”

Maria Gavrutenko (Biology) was a recipient of the Bernard Levine Scholarship in Science and Mathematics as well as the CCNY Division of Science Scholarship. She was awarded the Biology Department’s Professor Jeff Hanks Award for exceptional potential in Environmental Sciences. Maria was also selected to participate in a REU (NSF-funded Research Experience for Undergraduates) in Biology led by her mentor, CCNY Professor Robert Anderson.

Laura Hoffman-Hernandez (Psychology) is a Kaye Scholar. She was also chosen to participate in MURAP (Moore Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program) at the University of North Carolina, summer 2014.

Nadia Hessain (History) was awarded the Kaye Scholarship.

Jeffrey Kasper (Urban Studies) is a Kaye Scholar and was awarded Smith Academic Fellowship by the CUNY BA Program. He was the Guest Artist/Critic at Parsons The New School for Design. He published: “Maps and Sketches” featured in issue 3 of Hunting Ground: Journal of Landscape Architecture, edited by students of the Spitzer School of Architecture. He is also an exhibiting Artist/Designer at various international institutions and published his essay “555 Hudson” in Place Matters.

Angelo Laine (Psychology) served an advance at Health Leads and was a member of Chi Alpha Epsilon Honor Society. He gained admission to the CCNY Psychology Honors Research Program and was selected to participate in TRACC (NIH-funded “Translational Research Training in Addictions for Racial/Ethnic Minorities at City College of New York and Columbia University Medical Center”).

Ivana Lazaroska (History) was awarded the Kaye Scholarship.

An Alumnus Fellow is also beginning doctoral studies in 2014:

Ala Fink (BA, 2011), PhD English, Notre Dame University.
**FALL 2014 SCHEDULE**

* Required attendance for all Fellows.

Please see the “Guide” for other events required for Fellows at different stages.

All events begin at 12:30 in 6/309, and lunch is served, unless otherwise noted.

**TH Sep 4:** Orientation for all new City College Fellows and Mellon Mays Fellows

**TH Sep 4:** DUE: Summer reports (for all who received CCFELL & MMUF summer 2014 funding)

**FRI Sep 5:** *Fellowships Dinner (begins at 6:30 PM in NAC 6/316)*

**TH Sep 11:** *Round-table: Summer Research Experiences*

**TH Sep 18:** Round-table: Race, Class and Gender in the Academy

**Wed Oct 1:** DUE: Seniors (& other Fellows wanting to participate) hand in drafts of statements of purpose to Renee Philippi for Writing the Statement of Purpose Workshop.

**TH Oct 9:** Workshop: Writing the Statement of Purpose

**TH Oct 16:** *Forum: “On Research”*

**TH Oct 23:** Round-table: Mentoring

**TH Oct 30:** Workshop: Financing your Education and Research

**TU Nov 11 in NAC 6/316:** Recruitment meeting for prospective Fellows

**TH Nov 13:** Workshop: Building Academic Skills

**TH Nov 20:** Workshop: Mental Health

**MON Dec 1:** DUE: Applications for City College Fellowship

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**GRE PREP COURSE OPTIONS**

Just a reminder that the City College Fellowships Program will cover the cost of GRE Prep for all Fellows (up to $650), whether you choose to enroll in any Kaplan GRE-prep course (at the CCNY discounted fee) or any GRE online tutorial (such as Magoosh). Fellows may also receive reimbursement for the purchase of any GRE prep materials, up to a total of $650 for all GRE prep course fees and materials. If you would like to take the Kaplan course, you MUST apply for the CCNY discount. To receive the CCNY half-price 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).

You must obtain approval from Renee (Renee_Philippi@verizon.net) before registering for any of the courses mentioned above or before purchasing GRE prep materials.

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**CHECK PROCEDURE**

With the implementation of the new CUNYFirst college-wide system, the procedure for checks has changed. All fellowship stipend checks will be mailed to fellows. Fellows will no longer pick up these checks in the Bursar’s Office. All other checks (stipends, reimbursement for travel, summer monies, etc.) are picked up in the Bursar’s office, A103. It takes approximately four weeks to receive a check once Renee submits a disbursement form. Fellows may not receive semester stipend checks until their journal has been received with the Mentor’s signature. If you have any questions about the procedure, please ask Renee Philippi.

If you have any questions regarding your check, once Renee has processed it, you MUST speak with Ms. Anna Hutcheson in Admissions, A101. Renee does not have access to information regarding checks!
Scholarship; from the Economics Department, he received the prize for the Outstanding Economics Thesis as well as the Mark and Estelle Clements Scholarship for Excellence in Economics and Statistics. He was also selected to participate in the CUNY Graduate Center’s Pipeline Fellowship program.

Nadia Hossain (History) will travel to Paris to pursue intensive French language study at the Sorbonne. During her time in Paris, she also plans to explore sources regarding French colonial rule in Algeria, which are housed at the Archives nationales d’outre-mer (ANOM). Her faculty mentors are Dr. Jennifer Onyedum (History) and Dr. Amr Kamal (Foreign Languages).

Jeffrey Kasper (Urban Studies) will expand his research on New York City municipal children’s farm gardens, focusing on the period from 1934-1964. He will conduct oral histories and also consult archival resources found in museums, local cultural institutions, and city records. His faculty mentor is Dr. Marta Gutman (Architecture).

Angelo Laine (Psychology) was selected to participate in TRACC (NIH-funded “Translational Research Training in Addictions for Racial/Ethnic Minorities at City College of New York and Columbia University Medical Center”).

Ivana Lazaroska (History) won a scholarship to attend a two-week summer seminar at the University of Graz (Austria) on “Transforming the Western Balkans and Turkey.” She will also conduct archival research in Macedonia, focusing on how policies implemented by Socialist Yugoslavia during the 1960s-1970s impacted the distinct Muslim communities in the region. She is especially interested in exploring the experiences of Muslim women and inter-religious marriages. Her faculty mentor is Dr. Emily Greble (History).

Tamra Lepro (English) was selected to participate in MURAP (Moore Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program) at the University of North Carolina.

Betsy Marmol (History) was selected to participate in the CCNY-Stanford Exchange (SROP).

Wendyliz Martinez (English/Black Studies) will participate in the University of Chicago’s MMUF Summer Research Training Program.

Conor McGlone (English) was selected to participate in the University of Chicago’s MMUF Summer Research Training Program.

Seth Rodriguez (History) will travel to Washington, D.C. to conduct archival research at the Library of Congress on African-American labor organizer A. Philip Randolph. Seth’s research focuses on Randolph’s secular humanist beliefs in the context of his political collaboration with black theologians and black churches in the struggle for civil rights. His faculty mentor is Dr. Anne Kornhauser (History).

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

Joel Sati (Philosophy) was selected to participate in the CCNY-Stanford Exchange (SROP).

Sara Seweid (Psychology) will participate in the CUNY Graduate Center’s Pipeline Fellowship program.

Samina Sirajuddowla (History) will travel to Bangladesh and India to conduct archival research for her thesis. Focusing on Bengali nationalist Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), Samina seeks to recover non-elite contributions to decolonization of the Indian subcontinent. She will explore Nazrul’s prolific writings at the National Archives and National Library of Bangladesh, the Nazrul Institute in Dhanmondi, and the West Bengal State Archives in Kolkata, India.
Her faculty mentor is Dr. Swapna Banerjee (History), Brooklyn College, CUNY.

Chunbiao Wang (Economics) will participate in the CUNY Graduate Center’s Pipeline Fellowship program.

**EXCERPTS FROM FELLOWS’ SPRING 2014 JOURNALS**

Two new Fellows describe how they met the challenge of the fellowship to take charge of their education and reaped considerable benefits from doing so.

Shay Culpepper (Economics/Math). When I started this semester as a City College Fellow, I expected little more than a nice stipend. I was delightfully surprised by the value of participation in the community and of the academic mentoring that came with the fellowship. The sense of comradeship among the Fellows immediately struck me; making new friends among peers who are passionate about their work has inspired and comforted me. Throughout the semester, time spent with my mentor and other professors in my department also caused me to appreciate academia as a sphere of mentoring and cooperation; relationships are key to this ecosystem. This now informs how I approach my education; I understand that my desire for professional success does not require competing against my peers. In the university, we all stand to benefit from one another’s success.

The next lesson I learned was to take more risk. Previously, I hesitated to apply for anything for fear of being rejected. This semester, I applied for scholarships that I didn’t think I had any chance of winning; happily, because I took the risk, I have tuition and rent (and books and some other things) fully paid for next year. Previously, my coursework had been lack luster, intended simply to fulfill the requirements and earn good grades. This semester,

**TWELFTH ANNUAL CITY COLLEGE FELLOWSHIPS RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

**May 2, 2014**

**Panel I 9:30 - 10:45**

Natasha Mishchenko, Cryptography and the SSH Protocol: Connecting Computers Securely

Gabriella Clemente, On a Modified Fourier Transform involving the Jacobian Determinant

Neelam Prashad, Moderate Depression and Attentional Interference in a PTSD and Trauma-Exposed Sample

**Panel II 9:30 - 10:45**

Debra Williams, Nature and Animality in the Postmodern World of Octavia Butler’s DAWN

Nikeeyia Howell, Masquerades in the World of Barbie: An Examination of How Toy Company Mattel Constructs Notions of Femininity and Masculinity

Mayelin Perez, Killing the Gothic Heroine: Feminist Readings of the Female Gothic and the Politics of Canonicity

**Panel III 11:00 - 12:15**

Josetin Benjamin, The Use of Federal Courts in Enforcing International Environmental Law

Joel Sati, The 1.5 generation - On Jus Nasi Citizenship and Rootedness

Sben Korsh, Constructing Water: Jamaica Bay, 1898 - 1942

Jeffrey Kasper, Small Civic Spaces: Children’s Farm Gardens in New York City, 1934-1964

**Panel IV 11:00 - 12:15**

Orubba Almansouri, From Mouth to Ear to Paper to Screen: Impacts of Oral Tradition on Middle Eastern Literature and Film

Shanna Jean-Baptiste, The Personal is Political: Rethinking Haitian Identity in Fernand Hibbert’s Les Thazar, 1907

Tamra Lepro, Moving Like Men: Armoring and Dismantling Women’s Agency in Shakespeare’s Anthony and Cleopatra and Othello

**Panel V 1:45 - 3:00**

Rachel Ansong, Rewriting Identities in Noviolet Bulawayo’s We Need New Names

Tameekia Imani Cooper, Can the Hyphen Speak? A Theoretical Reading of the Postcolonial Identity in Alain Mabanckou’s Black Bazaar (2009)


Corey Burke, Eating Out: Ethics, Consent, and Authenticity in Feminist Porn and Fair-Trade Food Politics

**Panel VI 1:45 - 3:00**

Emily Graham, Entartete Kunst: Degenerate Art and the Third Reich

Emmanuel Lachaud, Imagining the Haitian Nation-Family: From Domestic Patriarchalism to State Authoritarianism, 1801-1843

Samina Sirajuddowla, Gods, Floods, and Genghis Khan: Anti-colonialism and Subalternity in the Literary Corpus of Kazi Nazrul Islam

Karim Elhaies, National Masculinity: Intersections Between West and East
through encouragement of the fellowship to use course assignments to explore research interests, I produced some meaningful, challenging work on topics that are important to my long-term research goals. In short, I benefited enormously by daring to be more ambitious.

Gabriella Clemente (Math). I kept telling myself and other people: “this semester just feels different.” Becoming a City College Fellow, then a Mellon Mays Fellow, changed my perspective. At a very concrete level, I went from knowing not one student interested in pursuing a PhD to being surrounded by a community of future academics; from never having heard of an “REU” [NSF-funded “Research Experience for Undergraduates”] to winning a summer 2014 REU at Fresno State; and from wondering about how to become a research mathematician to taking my first steps in that direction. All this happened in a matter of a few months. At a more personal level, becoming a Mellon Mays Fellow has been key for allowing me to be authentic. It has always felt right to me to be a “Latina Woman of Mathematics,” but now it also feels right to say (really loud if necessary) that I aspire to pursue research in pure mathematics, which is where my heart is! I cannot stress enough the extent to which this has helped me in many aspects of my life.

Workshops provide Fellows with valuable information while also fostering a sense of community and solidarity. Below, Fellows comment on lessons learned in workshops on applying to graduate school, public speaking, and the mentoring relationship.

Shaila Bora (Philosophy). This semester I most appreciated the panel of Fellows who talked about the graduate school admissions process. The panel gave me a good sense of the amount of time it takes to apply to graduate school and tips for how to get organized to keep track of all the pieces and meet deadlines. It was also wonderful to hear Fellows speak candidly about the development of their writing samples as an organic process of intellectual discovery instead of a mere goal-oriented task of meeting an abstract standard of what the writing sample “should” be. Finally, it was comforting to share fears about the disassociation I often feel between the demands of an academic career and the expectations of family and friends. I want to acknowledge the powerful importance of the fellowship community as a peer support system.

Natasha Mishchenko (Math/Computer Science). It was really interesting to hear about other Fellows’ experiences learning to co-create a fruitful mentoring relationship with a faculty member. For all of us, this will come in handy, whether in graduate school or working with a boss or a project leader in an intellectually demanding job. I have learned to regard constructive criticism from a mentor as a compliment, because it means that he or she believes I have the capacity to do much more. I have also realized that when I am honest with mentors about issues I’m having or aspects of my work that I don’t understand, it almost always works to my benefit. This was not instinctual or natural for me until I started to work on building mentoring relationships and listened to how other Fellows went about it.

Neelam Prashad (Psychology). There is no doubt that the fellowships program has prepared me to be a better mentee. Much of our success can be due to great faculty mentors, but it is also a product of the initiative we put into building mentoring relationships. I learned that “mentors are like shoes.” Just as we need different shoes for different occasions, we need different mentors for different pursuits. Thankfully, I have had several mentors; each has helped me in different ways to develop my interests in varying topics. I have also realized that developing a mentoring relationship is like dating. If personalities are different, it is necessary to meet half way; and when issues arise (which I now know to expect as normal), I address them directly instead of running away.

Jeff Kasper (Urban Studies). I was not expecting the workshop on public speaking to be interactive. Happily, Prof. Susan Besse (History) led us in practicing to deliver the introductions—the first minute or two—of our research conference talks. Though I stumbled around my words, this practice was very important to help me calm my nerves and to think about the tone I wanted to set for my presentation. The most informative part of the workshop for me was watching the varied modes of speaking and delivery that my peers employed. Joestin’s clear diction and well-paced speaking voice inspired me to practice my talk beforehand. I thought that Neelam’s introduction of her complex research in Psychology with an ordinary, everyday experience was absolutely brilliant. I hope to integrate these strategies into my preparation for future public presentations.

Each semester, the fellowship program invites a faculty member to discuss aspects of “doing research” in his or her discipline. Dr. Cheryl Sterling’s (English/Black Studies) discussion of her research on African-Brazilian culture inspired Fellows across the disciplines to reflect on the research process.

Maria Gavrutenko (Biolog). Studying science at CCNY, I unfortunately meet lots of researchers who have no idea what is going on outside their labs. Fellowship research forums and conferences provide great opportunities for students to leave their “comfort zone” and explore exciting new directions of study. This semester, Dr. Sterling presented her research on the cultural heritage of blacks in Brazil, a topic I knew absolutely nothing about. I learned about the inexplicable cultural contradiction: discrimination against people with darker skin thrives alongside embrace of one’s African heritage. Besides broadening my knowledge, this forum gave me insight into difficulties that non-scientific research presents: researchers attempt to explain phenomena of human culture that defy logic, and there are no datasets or algorithms that will ever prove one right.

Shay Culpepper (Econ/Math). I was impressed with Dr. Cheryl Sterling’s daring in allowing her curiosity to guide her research. At the beginning of the semester, I assumed that I needed to start with either data or a good way to get data; her research process started by asking important questions and then figuring out how to answer them. Although it may seem obvious that the big questions should come first, I needed to be reminded of this.

City College Fellowships Program is an umbrella program that administers the City College Fellowship and the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship. See our website for information: www.ccny.cuny.edu/fellowships/ The City College Fellowships Office is located in NAC 6/316, 212/650-8388.