LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The twenty City College Fellows who have entered the program since September 2008 are reinvigorating the fellowship community with the diverse perspectives and energy they bring. As you can see from the journal excerpts below, they are approaching their education with a growth-oriented mindset, and many are already making the switch to thinking about themselves and their education more like doctoral students than like undergraduates. This switch is fostered by their peers who are applying to graduate school, by workshops that help them make the most of their education at CCNY, and especially by the mentoring relationships they are building with faculty members. Without the broad range of support that faculty mentors provide, the program could not succeed. Thanks to them is never enough.

During the fall semester, the fellowship Program also drew on a wealth of expertise from various communities. We were honored to welcome back alumni Assia Nakova, and Bryan Rosenblithe to talk about their transition to doctoral programs at Princeton and Columbia Universities, as well as Victoria Chevalier—now a professor herself at Furman University—who spoke to the Fellows on building productive mentoring relationships. Professor Joshua Wilner again gave most valuable constructive criticism to seniors at the important workshop on writing the personal statement for graduate school applications. Professor Deborah Vietze enlightened us at the Forum with a discussion about her research on racial identities. Dr. Regina Biscogilio of the Wellness and Counseling Center provided encouragement, warm support, and excellent advice at the workshop on mental health. Ebony Coletu, MMUF alumna of Williams College and Stanford University PhD recipient, led an inspiring and motivating workshop on financing education and research. We appreciate their generosity and support.

Finally, we hope you will join us for the seventh annual City College Fellowships Program Research Conference. It will be an all day event held on Friday, May 1st. It is open to the public, and we look forward to welcoming many faculty, students, friends and family members to hear the Fellows report on the research they have been conducting. It is always a fascinating and impressive event.

Susan Besse

New Fellows

It is with great pleasure that we announce and welcome our new Fellows. From a most competitive pool of applications, 10 new Fellows have been selected to join the City College Fellowships Program in the spring semester, 2009.

The new City College Fellowship Fellows are:

Mr. Abdulah Beretay History
Ms. Ashley Canino English/Philosophy
Ms Millicent A. Cheu Biology/Asian Studies
Mr. Joshua H. Clough History
Ms. Ala Fink English
Ms. Adela Gonzales Spanish
Ms. Michelle Muita Anthropology/IS
Ms. Evanieleen F. Pattison Sociology
Mr. Winston Scarlett History
Mr. Fidel Tavarez History

APRIL 20, 2009
RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE

Proposals for funding for summer research are due in the office on Tuesday, April 20th. For instructions, please read the CC Fellowships Program Guide: “Funding for Research, Training, Travel: Guidelines for Requesting and Using Research Monies.”

EXCERPTS FROM FELLOWS’ JOURNALS

Shana Adise (Psychology): Before entering the City College Fellowship Program, I viewed school as a boring, mandatory task I had to do every day. I went to school, hated it, but did my work. It wasn’t until spring semester 2008 that my attitude towards school changed. My statistics teacher (Professor Sophie Barrett, Psychology Department) encouraged me to extend my academic studies beyond my classes and to apply for the CCNY Fellowship Program. During the application process, I started changing how I viewed myself as a student. I began to think about research projects I would like to pursue. I thought about the people I wanted to work with and the difference I could make. My acceptance into the program transformed me even more. I have begun to see myself as a completely different person who takes life more seriously.

Over the summer, I contacted Professor John Foxe and asked him to be my mentor. When he agreed, I started preparing for the upcoming semester by reading. Throughout the fall semester, I met with my mentor weekly. We discussed many topics including my goals and the two projects I am working on under his supervision. My first experiment, which has been in development since September, is studying the effects of a bi-stable illusion on attention and multi-sensory integration. The bi-stable illusion is most commonly known as the McGurk effect. The study will involve monitoring brain activity in response to both the auditory and visual stimulus and their effects on attention and multi-sen-
Writing the personal statement was one of the most difficult tasks I have ever done. Although I knew it would be taking a class he is teaching on Francophonie that will explore the idea of identity. This, along with his mentoring my independent study, will help me to improve my writing in general and in French, and will be once again of immense aid in my preparation for graduate school.

Reut Gelblum (Psychology): When the fall semester had just begun, I felt that becoming a researcher was light-years away for me. As the semester progressed, however, I became more aware of the different sets of skills I would have to acquire before I could run my own experiments, and I began to take the idea of identity seriously. This, along with his mentoring my independent study, will help me to improve my writing in general and in French, and will be once again of immense aid in my preparation for graduate school.

Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Marguerite Duras. In addition I will also gave me the sense of contributing, although minutely, to the in class. He was really kind to incorporate the poem, which was in relation to the Paris Commune of 1871 that we were discussing in class. We chose books that suited both my interests and work by myself and have a glimpse of the type of work required in class.

Yari Rodriguez (History): The roundtable on race, class and gender in the academy. Kitty Xu describes how two workshops helped her to improve her personal statement for graduate school applications.

I had for him as a professor and intellectual was strengthened by our conversations that helped me to form a better understanding of graduate school as an institution and the role of a professor in society, and also to appreciate literature more thoroughly, its purposefulness, its beauty and its social importance.

Prof. Blanchard has shown immense support in our discussion of my future as a scholar and a professor. Being doubtful at moments that I may not be a “person of letters”, lacking substance and original ideas, I have been convinced by Prof. Blanchard that the path to a PhD degree is indeed a very arduous, demanding, disciplined experience that at times might be very exhausting but that that should not discourage me from pursuing my goals. “It is important to doubt” he would remark, emphasizing that we need to question things as a first step to comprehending them and then changing them.

He has been encouraging me the entire semester to write every day, to sharpen my sensitivity to ideas and to not be overcome by a sense of mediocrity or lack of originality. “Originality is a posefulness, its beauty and its social importance.”

Working in John Foxe’s lab has challenged me academically. In a few brief months I have gained skills that extend beyond the classroom. I have learned how to place electrodes on a participant’s head, set up the lab, work with new software programs, monitor brain activity, and work effectively in a group. In addition, the opportunity to work under two doctoral students has not only fostered my academic learning, it has helped me grow as a person. It is very motivating to work in a lab with people who are dedicated to learning. These peers have both supported and helped me through my academic struggles.

This is just the beginning! If you had asked me just a few months ago if I thought I would be running my own experiments, I would have laughed.

Erag Ramizi (French): The most important achievement this semester was undoubtedly establishing a wonderful mentor-relationship with Professor Maxime Blanchard. The mentorship with him has been a profound, involved, genuine experience from which I have learned tremendously. Our weekly meetings developed from the very first encounter into deep, thoughtful, intelligent conversations on topics ranging from literature to social and philosophical problems, such as national identity, the importance of ideas, and the power of writing. The deep veneration that I had for him as a professor and intellectual was strengthened by our conversations that helped me to form a better understanding of graduate school as an institution and the role of a professor in society, and also to appreciate literature more thoroughly, its purposefulness, its beauty and its social importance.

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program, I had not formed a clear, concrete, and convincing explanation (to graduate school admissions committees or even to myself) for my choice. In the first few drafts, I merely reported what I had done during the last three years and what I wanted to do in graduate school, but this sounded plain, was full of clichés, and the same could have been said by all strong applicants. I urgently needed a writing lesson that could help me learn to make myself stand out. Thanks to the workshop on writing the personal statement, I gained constructive criticism from both Professor Joshua Wilner and Professor Besse. They encouraged me to include some reference to my unique background as a Chinese international student, to try to tell interesting stories about how my undergraduate experiences had transformed me into a neuroscientist, and to emphasize what special assets I have to contribute to research about human cognition and behavior. The writing samples of Luis Apolo (Physics) and Kimberley Paige Young (English) provided me with handy examples of useful approaches. Then, a second workshop on “Advanced Learning Techniques: Writing and Rewriting” offered me further support by changing my writing habits. Following the advice of the Fellows who led the workshop, I started to let myself type whatever thoughts flew out of my mind, without worrying about grammar or even whether any of the thoughts would prove to be useful. This allowed me to write a lot very fast. Later, when I went back to read what I had written, I found it easy to condense the material and edit. I finally finished the statement after fifteen drafts and with the input of nine readers, including six professors and three lab friends.

The Fellowships program supports the development of Fellows’ research interests and projects in numerous ways, including travel to conduct research and to attend professional conferences. Reut Gelblum comments on her recent experience attending a conference.

Reut Gelblum (Psychology): One experience that was extremely important for me this semester was attending the Society for Neuroscience annual conference in Washington D.C. (thanks to funding from the City College Fellowships Program). The first thing that struck me upon entering the conference was the magnitude of the Society for Neuroscience, which exemplifies the magnitude of the field. I attended many lectures and learned about possibilities for research subjects, as well as methods of which I was unaware. The fact that the conference presenters comprised of prominent, as well as young researchers, has inspired me to pursue my own interests, and assured me that young scholars also have a significant role in advancing this field.

In order to prepare a strong application to doctoral programs and to succeed once admitted, students need to have research experience as undergraduates. Below are a few excerpts from the reports Fellows wrote about summer 2008 research projects that were funded in whole or in part by the City College Fellowships Program and the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship.

Luis Apolo (Physics): I sent my days at the Institute of Physics at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg (Germany). With my coordinator, Oliver Melchert, we studied the properties of an original problem, negative-weight perception of string-like objects. I did not know much about the problem when I started the internship, neither did I have knowledge of C, a programming language, or how to carry out computer simulations. At the same time, statistical physics and phase transitions were as foreign to me as I was to Germany.

The way we managed to change this to the point I could carry out research on the problem was unexpected to me. If there is one impression, one image that comes to mind when I think of research in Germany, it is freedom. Before starting the internship, I thought I would have a formal introduction to computer simula
include the role of the Moorish forces in Franco’s army and the caught my attention and that I hope to explore in the future archives, which include Spanish Civil War posters. Themes that revolutionary and fascist art in this period. as a symbol of modernity, heroism, and terror was used in both compare to Renau. In this process of research, I decided to start museum collection, took notes on the section dedicated to the Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo. At the Riena Sofia, I toured the Contemporary Art Museum, the Biblioteca National, and the I conducted research at three institutions: the Reina Sofia Universidad de la Rioja in Logroño, I headed for Madrid. There after a month of intensive language study at the after a month of intensive language study at the...