

THE EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE MAGAZINE

SPRING 2011

connections





Bicycle Swap for a Healthy Environment

A press conference to promote the college's new Bike Share Program drew a crowd of observers and participants including Director of Sustainability Sadie Ross, front, and Northeast Center Mentor Wayne Ouderkirk. Use a QR bar code app you can download to your iPhone, Android or other Smartphone to scan the QR bar code on the right, which will take you to a short video, or go to <http://www.esc.edu/QR1>.

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On the cover: Artist and metal fabricator Michael Czuba welds pieces of the college's 40th anniversary sculpture. PHOTO: STOCKSTUDIOSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

Connections

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Managing Editor – **Mary Caroline Powers**

Editor – **Maureen Winney**

Writers – **David Henahan, Hope Ferguson, Helen Susan Edelman, Matthew Russell**

Designer – **Gael Fischer**

Copy Editor/Project Manager – **Debra Park**

Contributors – **Evelyn Buchanan '99, Casey Lumbra, David Regan White '05**

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STAFF PHOTO

Smartphone enabled



College to Host Presidents from Around the World

SUNY Empire State College will host the Standing Conference of Presidents – SCOP 2011 – for the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), June 19 - 22, at the SUNY Global Center in the heart of Manhattan. Approximately 125 rectors, presidents and chief executive officers from open and distance-teaching institutions around the world will share their knowledge and expertise about the development and use of new methodologies and emerging technologies for teaching excellence and student engagement.



“SUNY Empire State College is honored and excited to invite members of ICDE-SCOP to New York City and to our SUNY Global Center in Manhattan,” said President Alan Davis, after his return from ICDE-SCOP 2010 in South Africa, where the decision was made. “We hope to provide a meaningful and engaging program of workshops and speakers, and plenty of opportunity for networking.”

ICDE was founded in 1938 in Canada to promote the universal right to education for all, and today has members from more than 50 countries. The last time the college hosted SCOP was in 1994 in Saratoga Springs and Nelson Mandela, then president of South Africa, delivered the keynote address.

Meg Benke Appointed Provost/V.P. for Academic Affairs



PHOTO: STOCKSTUDIOSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

Meg Benke

Meg Benke was appointed provost/vice president for academic affairs at SUNY Empire State College in January replacing Dr. Hugh Hammett, who has been interim provost for the last year.

The appointment came at the end of an extensive search, which drew a large number of applications from across the United States.

Benke has worked at Empire State College since 1991. Her roles have focused on collegewide programs and distance learning. She is credited with

leading the development of the college’s Center for Distance Learning into one of the foremost and most innovative open and online systems in the United States. She also has taught for the college regularly in the School for Graduate Studies in areas such as adult education and social policy, organizational change and human resource management.

In April 2010, Benke was appointed interim vice provost for global and online learning, where she worked closely with her colleagues to implement the first stages of the college’s 2010/15 strategic plan.

She has been recognized by her peers at the Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C), who conferred on her the Most Outstanding Achievement in Online Learning by an Individual award in 2007, and named her an inaugural Sloan-C Fellow in 2010. She was named president of the consortium for 2011. Her other awards include Outstanding Administrator from Ohio University, and Outstanding New Professional by the Ohio College Personnel Association.

A native of Pennsylvania, Benke has been involved in various ways with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and has served as an external evaluator for many institutions and programs in higher education.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Youngstown State University, and both a master’s and a Ph.D. in student personnel, higher education from Ohio University.



PHOTO: SIMONE CASSIN

Toni Raiten-D'Antonio

freeing. Ugliness, she says, is the last taboo, and ugliphobia, the last sanctioned group fear.

"I call it the U-word. We experience ourselves as ugly and we respond to other people as ugly, but we lie and pretend that's not what's going on. This is the last acceptable prejudice, but it's unspoken. When we are trying to be pretty, we are trying to hide our own ugliness."

Raiten-D'Antonio published "Ugly as Sin: The Truth About How We Look and Finding Freedom from Self-Hatred" (Health Communications, Inc.). Last October, she took her message of "freedom from self-hatred" to The Today Show, where she was well-received, "and strangely not nervous" in front of an audience of millions.

Faculty Mentor Seeks to Demolish Last Taboo

"I am ugly," Toni Raiten-D'Antonio tells shocked audiences when doing public speaking. Then she pauses: "But don't feel sorry for me because you're ugly, too."

None of us lives up to the ideals of beauty portrayed daily in the media, says Raiten-D'Antonio, who is a psychotherapist in private practice as well as a mentor at the Long Island Center's Hauppauge Unit.

For the self-described chubby and cross-eyed kid who boys used to bark at when she walked to school, coming to terms with her own "ugliness" has been

Former TV News Anchor/ Alumna Delivers Keynote

The SUNY Empire State College Student Academic Conference 2010 (StAC) drew 200 students, alumni, faculty and staff from across the state and around the world who made the trip to White Plains, N.Y.

The keynote speaker was college alumna Melba Tolliver '98, a former WABC-TV news anchor and reporter and the first African-American woman to anchor a national newscast.

Tolliver recalled her college mentor, Evelyn Wells, and presented an address asking the question, "Are We More Than We're Led to Believe?"

In addition to a record number of student presentations, for the first time and at the request of students, a faculty presentation was part of the conference.

Faculty from the Hudson Valley Center presented, "Poking and Prying with a Purpose: Research, Scholarly Work and the Empire State College Mentor."

President Alan R. Davis made a presentation and discussed the concept of open learning in the context of the college's Vision 2015 strategic plan.

Tough Evaluation Process Results in Accreditation of Nursing Program

The news arrived in late October and it couldn't have been more welcomed. The college's Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program has been awarded a full five-year accreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

The CCNE is recognized by the U.S. secretary of education as a national, autonomous accrediting agency contributing to the improvement of the public's health and ensuring the quality and integrity of bachelor's, master's and residency programs in nursing.

"This validates the work of all those involved in the development and implementation of this innovative program. Most of all, it is important to our students, our graduates and their employers to know that their degree is recognized in this way," said President Alan Davis. "This recognition is a powerful presence in nursing academia and will foster the growth of the bachelor's degree program and future nursing program developments."

The CCNE evaluation involved a written self-study, followed by an onsite review of the nursing program's utilization of available resources, programs and administration and the application of these resources in assisting students in achieving positive outcomes. The college's nursing program hosted the commission representatives in April 2010. Following two additional Commission Review Boards, the program was found to be in full compliance.



PHOTO: DAVID HENAHAN

President Alan Davis, left, Hudson Valley Center Dean Robert Trullinger, keynote speaker Melba Tolliver '98 and Vice President Hugh Hammett

Veterans Share Recollections



Ryan Smithson

Two SUNY Empire State College students read from their original work about their experiences in the military service at a college-sponsored event at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs as part of a Veterans Day observance.

Readings by Ryan Smithson, author of "Ghosts of War" – a compelling memoir of his experience during his one-year stint in the Middle East – and Andrew Davis, director of veterans services for Saratoga County, N.Y., who served three combined tours in both Afghanistan and Iraq, were videotaped and sent to the National Archives collection of recollections of veterans. The videotape will be housed in the Library of Congress.

To hear interviews with Smithson and Davis, use your Smartphone to scan the QR bar code below, which will link you to the interviews or go to <http://www.esc.edu/QR2>.



Andrew Davis



Note: Use a QR bar code app you can download to your iPhone, Android or other Smartphone to scan the QR bar code on the left, which will take you to video interviews with Ryan Smithson and Andrew Davis or go to <http://www.esc.edu/QR2>.

Mentor Eisenberg Talks Candidly About Son Who Plays Facebook Founder On Screen

School for Graduate Studies MBA mentor Barry Eisenberg, Ph.D., is low key about his son, Jesse, 27, who portrayed Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg in the box-office hit "The Social Network."



Barry Eisenberg



Jesse Eisenberg

Eisenberg is based in the college's Brooklyn Unit and has been with the college full time for about two years. His middle child, who has been on stage since age 8, starred in a difficult role as billionaire Zuckerberg, a genius who dropped out of Harvard to develop one of the decade's most transformative and lucrative online communications tools.

"Talking with students, I have begun to understand that they really relate to Mark Zuckerberg," said Eisenberg, a former health care executive. "I know that Jesse appreciates, and tried to express, that Zuckerberg had drives and anxieties like any person, and that he created his own space where he was comfortable."

Jesse, whose past screen achievements include "Zombieland," "Adventureland" and "The Squid and the Whale," can identify with some of Zuckerberg's concerns as an undergraduate. A student of cultural anthropology at The New School in New York City, the younger Eisenberg is working to keep up with his coursework despite a brutal schedule of traveling, filming, writing and reading scripts. Barry Eisenberg said Jesse is considering a master's degree in his future and would like to concentrate more on writing, his first love.

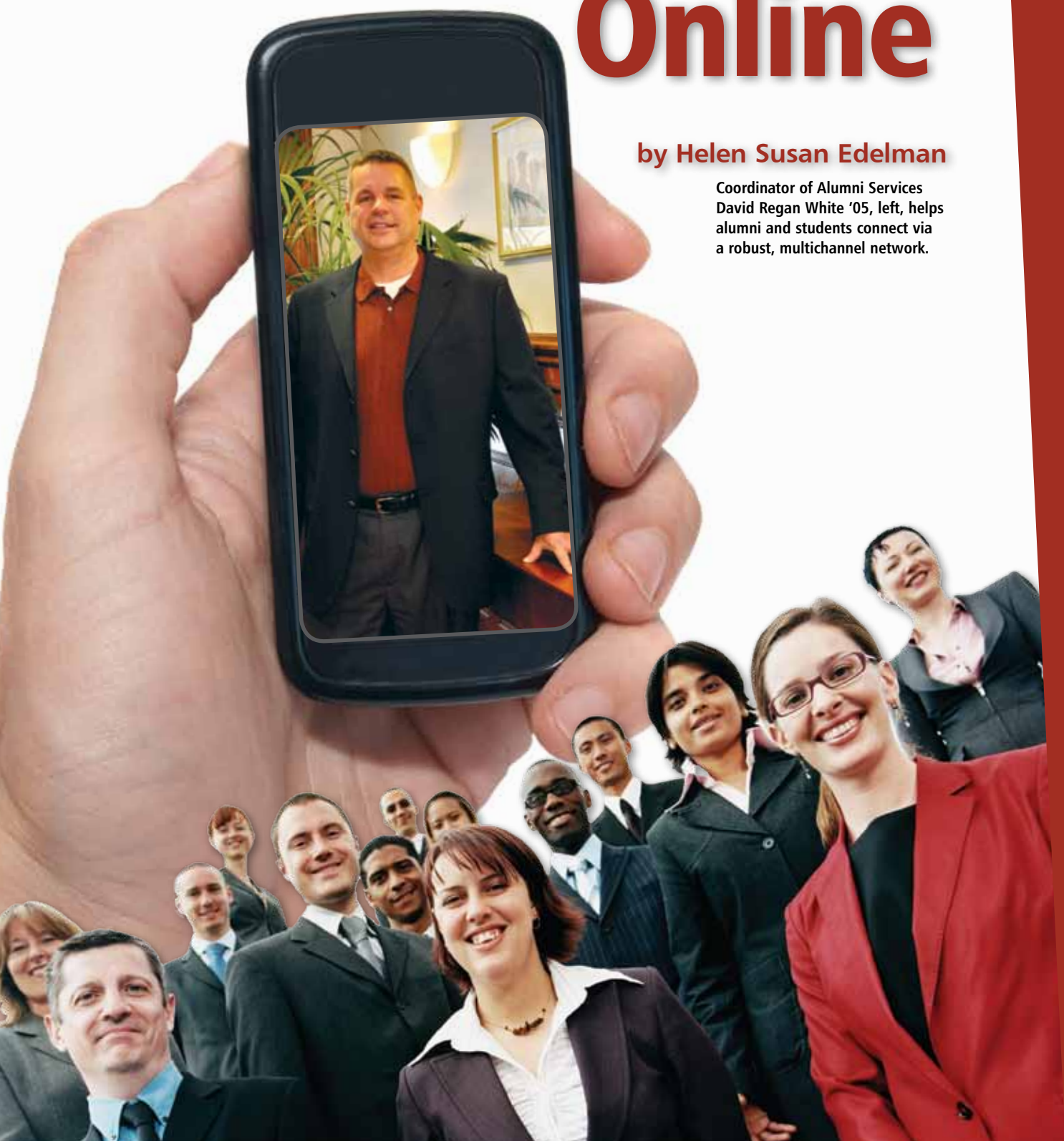
"The main benefit of college for him is less related to his career and more for his love of learning, and that's enough reason to do it," said Eisenberg, who has seen "The Social Network" five times. He says Jesse has been very generous with his good fortune, and already has brought his father to Prague and Budapest and his mother to Rome and Australia with him on work-related trips. Father and son also particularly connect talking about books and riding their bikes together in Manhattan.

Creating Community

Online

by Helen Susan Edelman

Coordinator of Alumni Services
David Regan White '05, left, helps
alumni and students connect via
a robust, multichannel network.



SUNY Empire State College is leveraging the fervor for multichannel online social networking. In addition to serving up college information on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and by e-mail, the Office of Alumni and Student Relations offers an online tool to graduates and students to connect them virtually to the college and to each other. Launching a section of the college's award-winning alumni site (www.esc.edu/Alumni) in 2008 that invited all graduates to participate, Coordinator of Alumni Services David Regan White '05 extended the opportunity to 53,000 alumni. More than 6,000 joined in the first two years, creating 150 affinity groups (online communities built around similar interests). Later, when approximately 20,000 current students were invited to get involved, more than 1,000 signed up in a month, boosting the number of site users to about 8,000 – more than the number of visitors to the college's Facebook page, which White puts at about 5,000. He thinks one key to the college site's popularity is the ability of alumni and students to connect easily in a private community.

"Our members are able to search for and connect with fellow alumni and students who are offering career advice and job opportunities," says White. This offers more value than Facebook which doesn't allow users to search as granularly or connect as easily.

Signing up is a cinch. Alumni and students go to www.esc.edu/Alumni and click "Join Online Community." If they're already registered, they simply login and retrieve their messages, peruse the new groups or start a new one in less than two minutes. Some groups attract two members, some more than 100.

This has resulted in the creation of more than 150 start-up affinity groups. The college seeded a handful, like the veteran and military students community, but most are jumpstarted by alumni and students. Communities have formed around motorcycling enthusiasts, mental health workers looking for job leads, aficionados of all things Irish, online marketers, gamers, anthropologists interested in dance, people who live in Connecticut, forensic experts, historians, humanists and advocates for women's rights. One person wants to discuss Chinese currency, another wants to talk about how to get a transcript.

White also maintains a related site that was established for the Office of Communications and Government

Relations (www.esc.edu/Advocate) to rally alumni and students to advocate for political action that will benefit the college; in one campaign, the site generated 1,800 individual messages to New York state legislators.

As in all social networks, there also are members with commercial agendas, looking for customers, which has been a turn-off for some participants, but that hasn't dampened overall excitement. New groups spring up constantly.

One of the most successful affinity groups is a sorority interest group. Alison Bentley '10 – who initiated it as well as the Irish club – says, "As I send out welcome messages and friend invitations, I am finding that, most of the time, we are the first connection these people have ever made to each other. I was impressed when we had 12 members, now it's more than 100. There are already several women who want to plan parties and gatherings, and many who seem to really like the idea of recapturing some lost youth. It's been quite a ride."

Deb Falco, of the class of 2011, is a member of the Disney Vacation Club, mental health counselors, the sorority/fraternity and the Geezer Club.

"My experience with the online community has been fantastic," says Falco. Because of the college's structure, I was academically and socially isolated.

I have not been involved in an online community specific to a class I'm taking ... but the affinity groups have definitely made me feel more connected to the school as well as helped me to develop online friendships with other students."

White sends out about 500,000 e-mails a year to alumni and students about events, conferences and community activities.

"It's information we know they are receptive to because they've signed up for it and we can monitor the number of website visits, new communities or posts, and how many sign up for events through our site. The trend to use social networking is not flattening. In 2010, we had more than 37,000 visits to the online community."

The goals now are to help cultivate new communities that are relevant to alumni and students and to boost retention by keeping the process user-friendly, sustaining the stream of information coming from the college to potential community members so that they stay interested.

"The key is keeping the conversation going," says White. "We believe in and facilitate the connections between our students and alumni because in a true community you offer support, conversation and company, even online. It's for our benefit and for theirs." ■

online college community

Between mentors and professional staff of Empire State College



Damon Cook, lead instructional designer, School for Graduate Studies

What constitutes an online community? Is it an e-mail? A discussion board? People who share a friend on Facebook? Comments on a blog?



Robert Clougherty, dean, School for Graduate Studies

A single e-mail is not a community. A conversation by e-mail involving several people might be. Social networking theory says the cohesiveness of a group is going to depend on whether it has weak or strong ties. A group might be large, but weak, if its members are tied together around only one factor, such as being a student or a graduate of Empire State College. As the more they have in common emerges, the group might get smaller, but it will be stronger, with more ties, such as being a graduate of Empire State College's Metro Center and living in New York City and liking the theater. That community probably will last longer because everyone is dedicated to a common cause.



Suzanne Hayes, director, Academic Technologies, Office of Integrated Technologies

One way the college helps create communities is through The Commons, an online area we make available where members of the college community can publish individualized, customized public websites featuring blogs, photos, videos and links. Comments are allowed, which makes the websites interactive, and there are repeat visitors who form a community.



Anastasia Pratt, mentor, Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, School for Graduate Studies

I started online communities both on The Commons and through the Office of Alumni and Student Relations for people interested in public history to generate conversation and to keep the members of the group mindful of how to share ideas. It was super easy to do. An online community won't replace face-to-face opportunities, but I think it will actually lead to more interaction because you can communicate with people you may never meet.



David Regan White '05, coordinator of alumni services, Office of Alumni and Student Relations

Joining an instant community can be a good career move, a way to promote a blog, book or event, or a place to find support from people in similar situations, whether it's being a single parent who is working and going to school, a Boston Red Sox fan, a criminal justice practitioner or a resident of North Carolina.



Hayes

People take their time to find their way and place in a group and it takes time to build, just like any community.



Clougherty

Many social networking sites allow for instantaneous responses, which people like. In face-to-face conversation, after about five to eight seconds, people perceive silence as hostile. Online messaging and texting have set people up to expect quick answers, too.



Cook

An online community needs rules and governance so a culture can be built around it.



Clougherty

It's important for members of an online community to treat each other well, just as it is in any healthy social group. People won't go back if they're badgered or if rules of civility are broken. Everyone wants to have a voice and be respected as an individual as well as a member of the community. It's up to other members of the community to let people know when they go out of bounds.



Stephen Simon, assistant director, New Applications and Hosted Systems, Office of Integrated Technologies

Some of these communities are short-lived because they are started for only one purpose, such as to discuss a single course. You need more than that to make a site or an online community *sticky*. You need a rich Web experience with conversation, photographs and other enhancements.



John Beckem, mentor, Finance and Management Studies, Center for Distance Learning

My students and I interact online in blogs, Facebook, e-mail, wiki spaces, texts, tweets and discussion boards, and I might send them video or audio files instead of just text. It brings a human touch to a virtual experience and it creates a more intimate and deeper conversation because people know what you look like and sound like. And it keeps it real; once it's out there, there are no retakes or edits.



Diane Gal, mentor, Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, School for Graduate Studies

I established an online group for students who feel they're working in isolation after their residencies, where they could let each other know why they're online and what they're studying. It makes sense that as students finish a course, the online community doesn't hang together. Thinking through what your needs are is important in creating an online community. We are not looking for a fabulous "wow," but a way of communicating that enhances what we reflect on and talk about as individuals and as a group.



Hayes

The college is so dispersed that we want to provide a place to go, to talk to a peer, to share what you're thinking or doing. The Commons lets people express their personalities within a large group. It's not all utilitarian but it makes conversations concrete.



Simon

People want to participate in shared spaces, but they also want privacy.



Gal

About 150 students were asked to join the community I helped start – about half accepted the invitation. It was strictly voluntary. The students definitely prefer groups whose membership is limited, not public.



Thomas Mackey, interim dean, Center for Distance Learning

We need to teach students how to make critical choices about the information they are getting, giving and storing online. Privacy is a factor. What's OK to share? Knowing how to set privacy settings is part of being an informed consumer. Do you want your phone number out there? Your photograph? Your blog? Is the community you are joining – or creating – public or limited to a certain group?



White

The sites alumni and students create through the college are password protected and I think that's one of the reasons they're so successful. You also can target very specifically who you want to contact or hear from by choosing preferences ranging from geographic area to hobbies. About 150 online affinity groups have been started through the college, and about 7,500 members of our community are signed up to use them. ■



Metropolitan Center Launches

The Black Male Initiative

Jay Marshall '06, '08, left, Ronald Day '09 and Jeffrey Tucker, the first peer coaches of The Black Male Initiative, gather at the Metropolitan Center.

by David Henahan

While American colleges grapple with stagnant graduation rates and persistent achievement gaps, SUNY Empire State College's Metropolitan Center is focusing on one population where the need to increase success and to close gaps is urgent: black males. Tapping the talent of alumni and the college's strength in mentoring, a promising new effort seeks to better connect black male students with student services, faculty and instructors, and, most importantly, with each other to help these men reach their goals and graduate.

The summer of 2010 witnessed headlines in the national press crying out on the sad state of higher education in America.

Why? The College Board had just announced the United States of America's educational attainment ranking was in free fall, with the U.S. plummeting to 12th in the world in awarding degrees, trailing behind Canada, South Korea, the Russian Federation and Japan, among others.

Soon, thereafter, President Obama announced policy and goals to counter this alarming trend and to have the United States regain the lead by 2020.

Recent reporting from The Chronicle of Higher Education – the nation's leading publication focusing on colleges and universities – demonstrates that graduation rates increased just two percentage points from 2003 to 2008, landing at 53 percent. (Graduation rate is defined as the rate at which colleges and universities graduate freshman after six years.)

The Chronicle notes, however, that of 1,400 four-year schools surveyed, graduation rates actually dropped at about one-third of the campuses.

Worse still, achievement and participation gaps between white and minority students persist, with black males trailing black women and their white peers.

Compounding the problem, black men are underrepresented when compared to their proportion of the overall population. So, not only are black men underrepresented on campuses across the country, they are the least likely to continue with their education and get a degree.

Keep in mind that, on average, a college graduate will earn \$1 million more than a high school graduate during a career.

While graduation rates focus on the traditional student and Empire State College's students are mostly working

adults, the college is not immune to this problem.

But at the college's Metropolitan Center in Manhattan a new program shows great promise in retaining more students and thereby helping students achieve their academic goals.

Beginning in 2009, educators and administrators at the Metro Center were working to put in place a program to keep more black men actively enrolled and thereby help them earn a college degree.

The Metro Center's former associate dean, Anne Lopes, suspected – and analysis of the data confirmed her suspicions – that black men at the college did not persist like other groups of students.

In fact, at 37 percent, graduation rates for black males lagged behind black females at 49 percent, Hispanic males at 50 percent, white males at 55 percent and white females at 64 percent. (These data are for the Metropolitan Center only.)

Term-to-term retention rates told the same story, with black males lagging behind black females by 12 percentage points.

But Lopes had an idea about how to improve the retention of black male students: Tap the strength of the college's alumni and the college's expertise in mentoring to better connect black male students with student services, faculty and instructors, and, most importantly, with each other.

Originally titled, The African-American Male Initiative, this was changed to The Black Male Initiative, a more inclusive term because many of the prospective participants' heritage, particularly those of the black immigrant community, were from the Caribbean and they did not identify as African-American.

Lopes formed a committee with Coordinator of Student Services Carl Burkart and the center's Director of Academic Support Brett Sherman, to

oversee operations, track the students' performance and report results.

The program called for two alumni to spend a total of 10 hours (4.5 hours each week), at the Metro Center making outreach calls, meeting one-to-one with students and holding biweekly support groups.

The title of peer coach seemed to accurately reflect the role to be played by the men.

Lopes' committee sent out solicitations to mentors and staff during May and June 2009 seeking candidates for the two positions, reviewed the nominations and conducted interviews. Proceeds from a grant from the Empire State College Foundation enabled the men chosen to earn a very modest stipend.

Alumni Jay Marshall and Ronald Day were selected as the first two peer coaches from a group of strong candidates, and both men agreed to become involved.


Marshall, 53, earned an associate degree in 2006 and a bachelor's degree with a concentration in human services in 2008. Day, 41, earned his bachelor's degree in Business, Management and Economics in 2009.

Peer Coach Ronald Day

Day comes across as serious, thoughtful and goal-oriented, and he possesses a positive, can-do attitude.

Day first heard about the program from his mentor who had recommended him to Carl Burkart. He was, "gung ho" from the beginning. Day knew that black males are not well represented in U.S. colleges and he felt he could play a role in increasing retention for fellow black men.

He decided to pursue his education at the college for many of the same reasons that have been talked about since the college was founded 40 years ago: its scheduling flexibility, the quality of a SUNY degree, the relationship with a mentor, the variety of modes of learning.



All were attractive to him as a working adult.

In addition, the college has a clear process for assessing and awarding credit for college-level life and work experience.

Day, however, stressed that he had to work hard by demonstrating knowledge and providing documentation in order to receive credit. It wasn't easy, but he didn't have to waste time and money going over material he already learned.

For example, he had worked in a law library as a clerk and knew how to do research. So, he wrote an essay demonstrating this knowledge.

But there was something even more important that motivated him. "I knew I wanted a degree, I felt that advancing my career was impossible without a college degree and I wanted to be an example for my son and others who know me," says Day.

Peer Coach Jay Marshall

Marshall's personality is very different than that of Day. Marshall is outgoing and cheerful. Pitching in to help comes naturally to him. He served on the Empire State College Council for two years and was a member of the search committee that helped to bring President Alan R. Davis to the college.

Marshall described his college career as, "stop and go" since he graduated from high school in 1974. He chose the college after going to a friend's graduation, who, like Marshall, was part of the Verizon Corporate College Program, so he saw people he worked with getting a college degree and felt that maybe it was time for him to get one, too.

Like thousands of others, Marshall selected the college as a first choice because he wouldn't have to start from "ground zero." His previous learning wouldn't be wasted and he could get credit for his accomplishments and move forward.

But more than anything else, Marshall wanted to earn a degree as a personal accomplishment after being in and out of college for so long. He did.

The Program Gets Going

Day and Marshall began their training at the beginning of the fall of 2009. It consisted of learning where to refer students for help, how to run a support group and other important tasks such as rehearsing scripts for the phone calls to prospective students.

As peer coaches, Day and Marshall didn't have access to student records, so it was important that they knew where to send students who needed help in very specific areas. Just because the two were successful alumni, didn't necessarily mean they had encountered every possible situation or problem other students might.

While the peer coaches were learning their roles, the campus community was asked to suggest students who may have been struggling with their studies and who might need guidance with financial aid, as well as the names of successful students who might be interested in building a support community.

College staff was surprised when these efforts did not generate enough names to make the program go. Everybody knew the men were out there, but connecting with them wasn't going to be as simple as asking, "Hey, who do you know?"

Burkart pored over lists of students who had attended orientation and those who enrolled in the last year. He went through the names one by one, to identify black males. In addition to identifying prospects, the database would also enable the peer coaches and staff to track all of their interaction with the students and to document results over the long term.

With data in hand, the peer coaches got to work. Cold calls, e-mail blasts, posters and fliers all were used to make initial contact with students.

Still, it wasn't easy. Many students were put off at first, thinking perhaps that a call or e-mail from someone at the college was one more thing they had to do.

But once Marshall explained the full scope of the program to these students, he got buy-in.

Soon, the team of Marshall and Day was interacting regularly with 146 black male students and in addition to phone, e-mail and individual meetings, support groups were formed.

The groups persisted and even thrived throughout the 2009 - 2010 academic year.

Student Paul Maxwell

Paul Maxwell was one of the guys who viewed a cold call with a bit of suspicion.

Majoring in criminal justice with a concentration in homeland security, this veteran of the armed forces, who pegs his age as somewhere between 35 - 45, avoided two calls before talking to peer coach Day.

Like most students at the college, Maxwell was busy juggling life and college and was skeptical of cold calls.

"It sends the message: We care – we notice – we want something for you that you want as well." – Walter Daluze

But when he and Day finally did talk, Maxwell realized this was something worth doing. Maxwell knew the value of peer support from his life experience, and jumped in with both feet.

He also began to attend the group meetings during the day or evening.

According to Maxwell, at first participants were a bit reluctant to talk about what was on their minds, but at

the third meeting, Maxwell says, you could see the change in body language and watch as they dropped their guards.

He appreciated the way Day ran the group and helped the members reach consensus around solutions.

Maxwell says he got help with getting the college and the Veterans Administration on the same page, and with advice on his degree rationale.

Former Student Jeffrey Tucker

Jeffrey Tucker, 50, also participated as a student in the first year of the program. Tucker liked the program so much he became a peer coach after graduating in 2010 with his bachelor's degree.

"We are looking to develop the next generation of leaders," says Tucker. "We want to keep this going and make sure this is not a one-hit wonder."

Right before he came to the college, Tucker felt he needed to earn a degree to advance his career. But there was more to it than that.

He has three children, two have earned master's degrees, and the youngest is completing her master's at the State University of New York at Albany.

Tucker says he loves learning and sees peer coaching as an extension of his career as a counselor for ex-offenders. He also volunteers mentoring teenagers at his church.

Tucker understands the importance of active participation in the life of one's community and he, by no means, is the only one.

Student Walter Daluze

Walter Daluze, 39, anticipates graduating in two and a half years with a bachelor's degree with a concentration in social theory and social change. Daluze is passionate about community organizing and education, and the college brings those passions together.

Unfortunately, he came to the college after losing his job when the recession

hit, but that enabled him to attend the morning meetings for the black male students.

He heard about the effort to get the black male students together through e-mail and phone calls, and decided participating would be a constructive use of his time.

He described the outreach component of the program enthusiastically.

"It sends the message – we care – we notice – we want something for you that you want as well."

Daluze benefited from the experience shared in the groups. He says that it was one thing to read in a booklet about how to navigate Empire State College, but it was another to hear what it really takes to get a degree.

Today, Daluze is a voice of experience and continues active participation with the groups. However, he now attends in the evening because he has found a job providing New York City schools with educational software.

Group Discussion and Impact

As peer coach Day tells it, men, especially black men, are taught to keep their feelings close and not to talk about frustrations and challenges.

Yet, in the groups both students and mentors talked about the isolation of being black in an educational setting. When coming to the center to meet with a mentor or engage in other activities, they rarely saw another black male.

All of the men pointed to time management and the stress of juggling school with other priorities, such as career and family, as frequent topics of conversation.

The complexities of financial aid and how to improve communication when you are not "clicking" with a mentor also provided conversational fodder.

Essentially, Day says, participants will be less inclined to drop out if someone is there willing to empathize and support them.

The peer coaches also are available by phone and for meeting on a one-to-one basis.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Metro Center's "Black Male Initiative" has successfully concluded its first year. Now that the program is well into its second year, students and peer coaches are working on improvements.

Many of the students would like to participate in the groups at the Metro Center, but their schedules don't allow for that. So, the students and their peer coaches are working to develop an Internet-based social media network, like the college's alumni online community, to connect more men with the college and each other.

In addition, the men have formed a student club so they can participate in student governance and the life of the college.

Daluze spoke about the positive experience he had attending the college's fall 2010 Student Academic Conference, and expressed his hope that, with greater awareness of all that goes on at the college, more black men will participate and have more incentive to continue their studies and earn their degrees.

Day certainly sees great value in the program's continuation. "Last session we had 12 guys in the group and those 12 will encourage others, so more black men will be graduating college, and that is what it is all about," he says.

While there is not yet enough data to analyze the program, Marshall knows a good thing when he sees it. When serving as a student government leader and a member of the College Council, Marshall had the job of handing the college's president the medals that are draped around the necks of new graduates at graduation ceremonies.

As four members of The Black Male Initiative Peer Mentoring Program received their medals, Marshall says his sense of pride was overwhelming. ■



PHOTO: GARY GOLD

Past and Present: Tales of Mentoring

Mentor Susan Hollis, with the Genesee Valley Center and the School for Graduate Studies, works with a graduate residency student.

by Hope Ferguson

While mentoring always has been pre-eminent at Empire State College, over the years, it has changed, especially with the increasing use of technology. But, at its core, it's still about faculty guiding, not lecturing, students. Here we profile four mentors who've affixed their individual stamps on the practice of mentoring.

" ... a pioneering spirit ... "

At first glance, Miriam Tatzel's silver, shoulder-length hair, dark eyes and glasses don't reveal the soul of an iconoclast. She's a respected expert in consumer psychology who has been quoted widely in both old and new media outlets: The New York Times, The Washington Post, CBS News, Moneymanagement.org and Health.com, to name a few.

A mentor at the Nanuet Unit of the college's Hudson Valley Center, Tatzel came to the college from Hunter College in 1974, where she was an assistant professor of psychology. She recalls how the early days of SUNY Empire State College were charged with the atmosphere of an educational revolution.

"I was very excited about all of the new philosophies of education in the air at the time," she says. "When I heard about Empire State College, I knew this was the place for me."

Birthered in 1971 during the countercultural upheaval on college campuses across the nation, the college harnessed the era's energy and momentum for change into what Jim Hall, the college's first president, termed "a constructive response." It abolished such hide-bound traditions as grades (replaced with narrative



PHOTO: LARRY ABRAMS

Miriam Tatzel, one of the earliest mentors of the college, in 1991



PHOTO: SETH HARRISON

Long-time Hudson Valley Center mentor Diana Worby, in 1987

evaluations), classes (traded for learning contracts) and semesters (exchanged for rolling enrollments).

“There was such a pioneering spirit – the excitement of a really radically new way of doing things,” Tatzel recalls.

Like other early faculty members and administrators, Tatzel found that rather than attracting the rabble-rousers, drop-outs and hippies, the college, from the beginning, found its niche with working adults who found it difficult, if not impossible, to attend traditional college classes. Although in the '70s, there was perhaps a larger contingent looking to “develop a meaningful philosophy of life,” the typical student then, as now, was more career-focused.

Tatzel was one of the first faculty members hired in the liberal arts at the Lower Hudson Unit. She and other early faculty were interested in “developing ways of integrating career development with academic studies.”

She recalls a rather freewheeling educational environment, where students might spend six months on a single learning contract having “integrated intellectual experiences.”

“Every learning contract had to be written by hand, typed by the secretary,

proofread and then copied,” Tatzel remembers. “Back then, you talked to students more. They would come in every two weeks or so and you’d meet with them face-to-face. Now, it’s much more at a distance. Of course, there was no e-mail, so it was always chasing people by phone.”

As the college moved toward traditional credit units and grades, some of that exploratory, learning-for-the-sake-of-learning has subsided. “I think, though, that we kind of pushed [students] into a different mindset by insisting that they be self-directed,” Tatzel says. They may have come into the college thinking about grades, regalia and other accoutrements of the college experience, which have slowly made their reappearance in recent years, but the faculty did what it could to prod them to self-direction and exploration. “The word *course*, the word *teacher*, were not often heard. Instead, it was the mentor, guiding and shepherding students,” she says.

In the last 15 years, many changes have taken root.

“I am just starting to do blended learning (a combination of online, face-to-face and study groups) and having

an online library has made a huge difference,” Tatzel says. “We’d use the public library. Students almost never used journal articles, and that has been an improvement.”

Also, in the earliest days of the college, the mentor did everything from recruiting students and planning learning contracts to all the administrative details that coincide with college enrollment. “Things took way too long to get done,” says Tatzel. “The mentor was almost the entire college.”

One change that has been positive says Tatzel, is the opportunity for her to really focus on her own specialty, rather than be the generalist the early college often required. However, sounding a bit wistful, she adds, “Now it’s like going to the store and buying something rather than making it.”

“ ... across the corner of a desk.”

Diana Worby describes mentoring as education across the corner of a desk.

“My entire memory of Empire State College is that dyad – one person sitting there with another, with something

(continued on page 16)

Mentored the Old-Fashioned Way

Dinah Bucholz has been on the fast-track for some time. An Orthodox Jewish woman, she knew she wanted to earn a degree as quickly as possible so that she could marry young and begin a family. She thought that motherhood could possibly interfere with college studies.

After one year in Israel, post-high school, in a program affiliated with Touro College, Bucholz enrolled at SUNY Empire State College's Hudson Valley Center. "Empire State College was a good choice because I could go at my own pace, and earn credits for life experience," she says. "That helped me earn my degree even faster."

She also earned credits for her summer internship at Jewish Action magazine and from a teaching internship. Bucholz, who is 34 (she graduated at 20 and met her husband a year later), is now a stay-at-home mom and budding author, having just published her first book, "The Unofficial Harry Potter Cookbook" (Adams Media). It features such culinary delights as Treacle tart, Harry's favorite dessert; Molly's meat pies, Mrs. Weasley's classic dish; Kreacher's French onion soup; and pumpkin pasties, a staple on the Hogwarts Express cart.

Bucholz got the idea because she loved the Harry Potter series and got curious about the food, which is so integral to the books. "I was drawn to the food; it sounded good, very homey, very warm. I fell in love with the British custom of afternoon tea."

The book, which has been favorably reviewed in the New York Daily News and listed on the USA Today Pop Candy blog, was published after being cleared by J.K. Rowling's legal team of copyright issues. Though not approved or endorsed by J.K. Rowling, this type of work is considered "fair use."

Bucholz credits SUNY Empire State College, and specifically, Diana Worby, with launching her editing career. She previously worked at Managing Automation, a trade publication, which eventually led her to writing.

She and Worby would meet every two weeks at Worby's office to discuss Bucholz's next assignments. They never communicated by e-mail.

"I enjoyed working with her," Bucholz says. "As a person, she was very warm. I liked that she appreciated my love of English literature. We share that passion. We just kind of clicked. She pointed me in the right direction." ■



Dinah Bucholz '97, who was mentored by Diana Worby, is now a published author.

PHOTO: NAOMI POLATSEK

(continued from page 15)

between them, either a text, underlined and marked, or a paper that we are going through together. Something clicks between us and then arises in some magical way – truly a tutorial, truly what Empire State College is all about."

Worby, an elegantly dressed woman with a silver, shoulder-skimming bob, clearly loved being a mentor, a calling she came to relatively late in life. She describes herself as a product of her generation: a graduate of secretarial school, not college, who became a "cracker-jack" secretary, a wife and mother of three and active in the community as president of an anti-poverty group, Jewish organizations and the PTA.

But, by the time her kids were reaching their teens, Worby decided to answer an ad for a secretarial position with the New York State Women's Guidance Center, an organization funded by then-Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. She got the job, excelled at it, and one day her boss, Esther Westervelt, a strong-willed feminist, slipped an application under her nose. It was for Rockland Community College, which was holding satellite courses in the same building. She told Worby if she signed up, "she'd give me time off from work. I was scared of her in a way. So, I filled it out, took a course in psychology, and got an A."

At the age of 47, Worby became a college student. She soon graduated from Rockland with a 4.0, went on to Manhattanville College, where she earned her bachelor's degree in English and her Master of Arts in interdisciplinary humanities, and then, upon graduation, took an adjunct job at Rockland Community College teaching college skills.

At that time, Empire State College was located in the basement of Rockland Community College. "A mentor called me because he needed a tutor for a



PHOTO: STOCKSTUDIOSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

Ian Reifowitz, left, accepts the Susan H. Turben Award for Excellence in Scholarship from President Alan Davis at the 2009 All College Conference.

student in English. I think it was on Hemingway or Edgar Alan Poe,” Worby recalls. She then did another tutorial, then another one. Her career further unfolded when she attended a holiday party and ran into then-dean of the Hudson Valley Center, Mary Ann Biller. “She was a most magnificent dean. Strict and magnificent,” Worby remembers. She told Worby that Miriam Tatzel would be taking a two-to-three month reassignment; would Worby be available to do some psychology studies until she returned?

“I’m literature, she’s psychology, two different fields. I had to learn degree planning for both areas. I worked like mad trying to understand the system.”

But Worby also marveled that this was “exactly the way I thought education should occur – across the corner of a desk.” In fact, she and a colleague later wrote a scholarly paper with that title.

Worby eventually was hired by the college, working her way to full time in increments. She would meet with her students for one-and-a-half to

two hours, five appointments a day, from 9 a.m. to 6 or 7:30 at night. She enjoyed doing close reading and making discoveries in literature together. “It was very time intensive and I loved every minute.”

Many students commented that their studies awakened them to “something they didn’t know was there.”

Worby went on to earn her doctorate, in literature education. She received tenure and stayed with the college until her retirement in 2005. She remembers Bob Trullinger, the current Hudson Valley Center dean, telling her, “You’re doing a good thing. You’re retiring at the top of your game.”

She was 82 years old.

“I left just before everything went online,” she says.

She has filled her retirement years by founding The Learning Collaborative, which offers rigorous noncredit courses to post-retirement people on a range of topics, and giving time as a literacy volunteer.

She says Empire State College still holds a special place in her life. Seeing what a student’s face looked like when he or she walked in the door; feeling out their mood and clearing the air with small talk in order to get down to academics; sitting with the door slightly ajar, a marked-up book and paper between them, and the back-and-forth across the corner of a desk.

“I was thrilled being a mentor,” Worby says. “It was the best time in my life.”

“ ... still one-to-one ... ”

Ian Reifowitz very much looks the part of the hip, young mentor, arriving at the office in his black leather jacket, a backpack slung over his shoulder. Reifowitz is a combination of the new breed of mentor, pursuing scholarship and using technology tools – and the old. He still mentors his students face-to-face, one or two times a month. They deliver their assignments in person or occasionally via e-mail, and he doesn’t use social media tools in his teaching,

although the Internet and online publications are part of his repertoire.

He's eager to play a part in the marketplace of ideas, and bring his own intellectual pursuits to his job as a mentor of historical studies.

Reifowitz has written on current political issues for the New Republic Online, Newsday, The Post-Star, which covers the Adirondack Mountain region, and George Mason University's History News Network, and was heard delivering an "Academic Minute" on the significance of the mid-term elections on Northeast Public Radio last year. He's already the published author of one book, "Imagining an Austrian Nation: Joseph Samuel Bloch and the Search for a Multiethnic Austrian Identity," (East European Monographs and distributed by Columbia University Press) and has just completed another, which he is shopping to various publishers.

Reifowitz graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in history from Brown University, and he earned his Master of Arts and Ph.D. in history from Georgetown University. He joined the college in 2002, and by 2009, was selected as the recipient of the Susan H. Turben Award for Excellence in Scholarship from the Empire State College Foundation, which resulted in a lecture on his recent scholarship at the All College Conference in March 2010.

"The core of mentoring is still one-to-one – the relationship between mentor and student. The other stuff matters, but at the end of the day, it's about that relationship."

– Ian Reifowitz

After completing a sabbatical year during which he wrote his new book, Reifowitz is back in his office at the Long Island Center, where he provides direct instruction to 160 to 180 students per year and is the primary mentor for about 100 students. When a student arrives for a meeting with Reifowitz, generally it's to go over a paper, answer any questions he or she may have, clarify issues, or to go "deeper" on a topic.

"Essentially, it's a tutorial of the material," Reifowitz explains. In between meetings, he keeps in touch with his students by e-mail, but he likes to meet face-to-face to discuss course work. On occasion, he sets up a study group for students taking the same course during the same semester. "It's hard, I think, to coordinate the study groups, even though it's nice to have them – especially from a student's perspective."

Technology has made the process of mentoring easier, he says, especially since e-mail has eliminated the need to "make a hundred phone calls."

Just as is the case for earlier mentors like Tatzel and Worby, mentoring is, and will always be, about one thing, Reifowitz believes.

"The core of mentoring is still one-to-one – the relationship between mentor and student. The other stuff matters, but at the end of the day it's about that relationship."

" ... incorporating Web 2.0 ... "

Students enrolled in John Beckem's Center for Distance Learning courses get a personal greeting when they log on to his faculty blog page. After they click on the YouTube video, Beckem, a dark-skinned, bald African-American man dressed in a bright yellow shirt, shares a brief bio: a career in auto engineering, eight years of college-level teaching, bachelor's degrees in engineering and business, master's degrees in business, and counseling and psychology, and a Ph.D. in higher education administration.

The 34-year-old Detroit native is "retired" from a career as an engineer at Chrysler, General Motors and Ford. He's taught as an adjunct at Madonna University, Henry Ford Community College and University of Phoenix.

He started in 2010 at Empire State College as assistant professor and academic area coordinator for finance and management studies.

Beckem believes in bringing the business model he absorbed in corporate America to the educational enterprise. Being at the tail end of Generation X and at the beginning of the millennial generation, he also has a strong affinity for using technology. He explains his methodology for his course, Diversity in the Workplace.

"Delivered through ANGEL's Learning Management System, Diversity in the Workplace was enhanced by incorporating Web 2.0 technologies. Course polling was utilized to generate discussion posts by the learners. Audio files created by me and uploaded into the course were used to correct assignments and provide grading and feedback to learners. Audio files give the learners a personal-touch factor such as voice inflection and tone. Flip video was used to record interviews of pragmatic practitioners, such as an academic chief diversity officer and a United States Army colonel who provide an everyday practical approach on course topics discussed in the text as well as questions raised by the learners. In addition to Flip video, Skype was utilized to conduct a live session interview with an attorney who expounded on the legalities of diversity in the workplace."

Sitting behind the desk in his tidy office at the college, Beckem reflects. "Coming from an engineering background, technology is what we do," says Beckem. "Name one thing a computer is not involved in – it's in totally every aspect

of our lives. When we talk about distance learning, how can it even exist without computers? And how do I take a business model that is very successful and an academic model that is very successful and combine the two together? How do we take a look at ourselves and improve upon our education in the areas where we are not so successful?"

He concedes that in terms of cutting-edge technology, the college has some growing to do. Not only that, but there are emerging technologies that will overtake the marketplace about which the college also must be aware. In John Beckem-land, Second Life is so yesterday.

Beckem says his use of technology is popular among all ages who take his courses.

"The response has been overwhelmingly supportive, thankful, appreciative, and is validated by comments on our survey," he says of a questionnaire he posts online for students to evaluate his courses.

Eighty percent of students say they find the use of technology in the courses helpful.

But he warns that the college will need to keep up with what its busy students will increasingly demand, especially as its student population skews younger. Soon, it will be serving students who began using computers in kindergarten – or before. They will come to the college adept in video making and editing, using audio files, Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Young adults who have learned to socialize through texting will expect more of the same as they enter college.

Yet, Beckem notes the importance of the old-fashioned notion of sharing knowledge and best practices.

"I'll walk into somebody's office in a heartbeat. I'll walk the halls and drop into someone's office or pick up the phone," says Beckem. "We'll share ideas and thoughts and build on that." ■



PHOTO: STOCKSTUDIOSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

Mentor John Beckem chats with student Linda Hearon about her studies via Skype.

Technology-Infused Course is "Fabulous"

Although not a "techie," 32-year-old Linda Hearon, says "on a scale of one to 10, I am probably up there. I feel very comfortable with technology – with computers, cell phones – anything that involves cyberspace."

So, when she decided to return to school to pursue her bachelor's degree in Business, Management and Economics, after earning an associate degree from Suffolk County Community College, she chose to take her courses online, enrolling at SUNY Empire State College's Center for Distance Learning. One course, Diversity in the Workplace, was taught by John Beckem, area coordinator for finance and management studies, who deeply integrates technology tools in his courses.

She likes getting the overview of assignments online and watching the YouTube videos of the professor and of experts tapped for input into the class. "It makes it into a virtual classroom," she says. She has received audio critiques of her work ("I think that's a great tool"), and although she hadn't yet reciprocated in kind, she plans to. The audio clips, which Beckem embeds in the actual paper, and the videos "make me feel more comfortable because [you realize] it's an actual person. It puts me at ease." She also has taken advantage of the wikispaces page. "Basically, it's where you put your papers and ideas up for other students to review and get a little feedback."

As far as the actual use of technology – the ANGEL courseware system, e-mail, wikispaces, blogs, audio and video files – Hearon says there haven't been any glitches. "It's been fabulous, and very user friendly."

Currently engaged to be married and parenting her 8-year-old daughter, Hearon explains, "I like to learn, and I don't want to stagnate." With her hectic schedule, taking online courses has been a godsend. "I can never imagine doing anything differently." ■

PROFILE



Roxana Toma Ph.D.

By Mary Caroline Powers

Hometown: Bucharest, Romania

Education: B.S. in economics, The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, Romania. Doctoral studies in economics at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Changed her major, transferred to North Carolina State University, earned a Ph.D. in public administration and received the North Carolina State University Graduate School Dissertation Award. Joined Empire State College's School for Graduate Studies in July 2010.

Why Empire State College: "What attracted me here is the mission of the college. We are indeed making a difference for our students." She derives real fulfillment from teaching. "I never felt this as deeply as I have at Empire State College."

On living in the Northeast: The college's School for Graduate Studies provides proximity to New York City, Boston and Montreal and the chance to bicycle, kayak and ski. "I get to experience the beauty of nature, and in no time I can be at the Metropolitan Opera. I love Saratoga."

What she teaches: Research methodology, quantitative analysis and statistics, how to write empirical papers and theses in social sciences. She recognizes that students may have fears. "My challenge is to get past that wall. When they end up doing their own research and testing hypotheses using empirical data and quantitative analysis, they tell me that they've never done something so smart before. They're very proud of themselves, and I'm even prouder. I don't make it easy for them, but I have faith in them. Mentorship and bringing the best out of people – that's what I live for."

On food: "Gourmet food is a constant in my life." She loves to eat. A lot. One of her favorite foods is "sarmale," the Romanian version of stuffed cabbage leaves. She admits to being lazy about exercising but does ride her bicycle to work when the weather is good to stay trim.

Likes: Flowers, working with wood, restoring antiques, cooking, traveling, watching BBC documentaries.

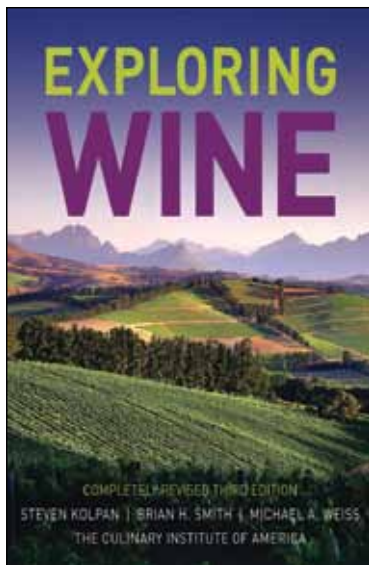
Dislikes: Dishonesty and a lack of integrity in people.

Favorite book of the moment: "Denialism" by Michael Specter.

Her aspirations for her work at the college: "To better the (graduate) school by raising its reputation through continually improving the curriculum and quality of instruction. I also want to showcase the research and quality of my students' work."

Portfolio

BOOKS



Winning Words on Wines Worldwide

**Michael Weiss '92
Hudson Valley Center**

The business of wine has changed so much over the past several years that the third and newest edition of the well-regarded "Exploring Wine: The Culinary Institute of America's Guide to Wines of the World" had to be nearly entirely rewritten. Michael Weiss, one of the three authors, along with Steven Kolpan and the late Brian Smith, professors at the Culinary Institute of America, present comprehensive information about the shifting pre-eminence of wine producers. They say that Italy remains at the top, with Spain displacing France for second, and upstarts like Argentina and Chile quickly becoming important. The book showcases new regulations, tells how to find a great wine at a good price, offers wine and food pairing and shows readers how to order wine like a pro.

ART

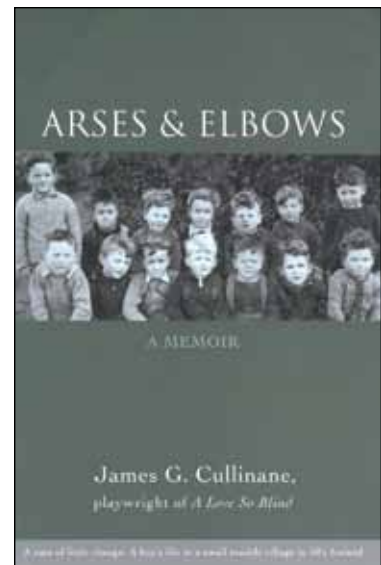


Transforming Space: From Studio to Gallery

**Michael Dudley '98
Northeast Center**

Michael Dudley was renting studio space in Schuylerville, a small upstate New York town, and doing his art work when his wife, Lois, decided in 2004 to open a gallery to show her own work and that of a friend. Gradually, the gallery took over the studio space, and Michael and Lois now represent 20 different artists whose media span bronze and wood sculpture, oils and pastels, and jewelry. The gallery hosts a holiday show every year. Its November opening drew about 200 people. Some of Dudley's pieces were in the show – miniature copper-painted oils of landscapes and various abstracts. When asked what his work represents, he explains, "I like Whistler's philosophy: 'Painting is like a breath of air on a piece of glass.' You can make of it what you will."

BOOKS



Recaptured Memories Of a Childhood in Ireland

**James G. Cullinane '96, '97
Hudson Valley Center**

To recapture a world that has disappeared was the motivation for playwright and author James Cullinane to pen his memoir, "Arses & Elbows" (iUniverse, Inc.). It details a mid-20th century world before rock 'n' roll took over; when children played games in abandoned castles instead of on computers; and rolled in green meadows, discovering themselves and each other. "Things have changed so much," Cullinane says. One of eight children, he grew up in Abbeyside, a small village on the coast of Ireland. Married to a fellow Irish expatriate, Cullinane now makes his home in Mt. Kisco, N.Y. Also a playwright, he's working on a romantic comedy following the production of his play, "The Sheare Street Social Club," another nostalgic look back at the Emerald Isle.

Portfolio

ART

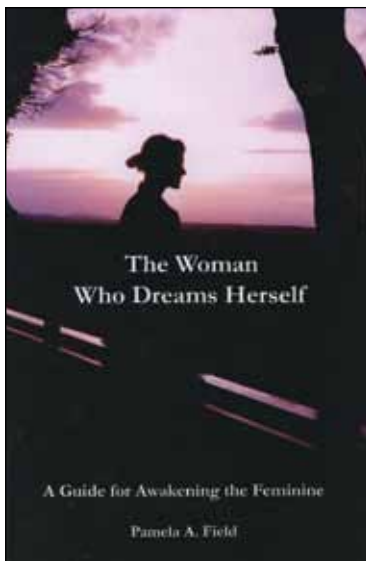


Writing Becomes Art: The Abstract in the Familiar

**Donna Marie deCreft '98
Metropolitan Center**

Donna Marie deCreft is fascinated by writing as an art form. In her gourds filled with discs of paper upon which asemic writing flows – beautiful, but unintelligible – she explores the symbolic and abstract ensconced in the familiar. A graduate of the Metropolitan Center, deCreft also studied at Pratt Institute, the New York Studio School and The New School. One of her pieces uses tree fungus, which she has decorated with elliptical eggplant and green, almost geometric, shapes. Returning to school at 45, “... was like a blossoming for me,” she says. Her tattoo of a five-pointed star, a “sun sign” from Ghana, is an emblem of her own transformation after graduating at age 50, she says. She now works as a teaching artist in New York City public schools, and exhibits her work in and around New York City.

BOOKS



Waking the Feminine: Regaining Balance

**Pamela Field '00
Center for Distance Learning**

Pamela Field believes the power of the feminine can call humanity back to balance. She distinguishes this from feminism, saying that, although gains made in the 1970s by women were necessary, proactive and intuitive power was lost in the process. Her book, “The Woman Who Dreams Herself: A Guide for Awakening the Feminine,” was first published in Spain. It is in its third printing. She hosts workshops where women come to heal fissures she believes arise from their own lives, their ancestors and their culture, and she leads them in exercises to define their authentic selves. Field believes that women need to move from “fighting against, to flowing towards, which requires less effort and is a more pleasurable way to achieve goals.” Find her book at Amazon.com or xlibris.com.

ART



Ice Cold Beauty: Exploring Aging and Death

**Nancy Azara '74
Metropolitan Center**

Nancy Azara spent six weeks during an artist’s residency in a beautiful but bone-chillingly cold castle in Italy. Wanting to capture the two extremes, the beauty of her surroundings and the fierce cold, Azara embarked on creating a series of rubbings and collages, recently shown as “Spirit Taking Form: Rubbings, Tracings and Carvings.” Known internationally as a sculptor, particularly of large pieces as tall as 10 feet, this time she carved luan, a thin plywood, and did rubbings using oil crayon and Mylar, a “tough and semi-transparent” material. Azara also has completed some larger work, using aluminum leaf and white paint. These pieces explore aging and death. “It’s about trying to see the last section of my life after many, many years of my being on the planet. It’s really about looking at that, a portal to the unknown.”

Alumni and Student COMMUNITY

Center for Distance Learning

Josh Berdeaux '09 received his MBA from Baker College at the Flint Michigan campus, complementing his degree from Empire State College in emergency management.

Edward Burden '04 is enrolled at Ohio State University in an M.A./Ph.D. program.

Lilian "Yanni" Deconescu '10 has been accepted into Cornell University's International Labor Relations (ILR) Master of Professional Studies program in New York City. The ILR School at Cornell University is one of the premier institutions for research and education in the fields of labor and human resource studies.

Recent graduate **Jessica Mann '10** has been selected to join Teach For America's 2010 corps of new instructors. In the fall, Mann started teaching in the Mid-Atlantic region, meeting the challenge of closing an academic achievement gap for students from low-income communities. Mann was selected from a record 46,000 applicants and will join nearly 4,500 new corps members teaching in 39 regions across the country.

La MaMa E.T.C. presented "A Woman in Progress," a one-woman show by **Keelie Sheridan '10**, as part of its Mind of the Art Anthology: Volume II in January. "A Woman in Progress" is a new show that explores themes of distorted beauty, the line between self-improvement and self-mutilation, and the role that the mother-daughter relationship plays in a girl's development of her self image. Sheridan also wrote the show.

Erin Steinbech '05 was appointed secretary to the president of SUNY Empire State College. In making the announcement, President Alan Davis said, "Erin brings to this position an extraordinary breadth and depth of understanding of the college, and

exceptional skills and abilities." She formerly was secretary with the Office of Enrollment Management and Student Services. She began her new role in March.

Brooklynn Welden '06 has been appointed assistant professor of diplomacy and gender studies at International University of Humanities and Social Sciences (IUHS)

Million Dollar Baby



PHOTO: DAVID LASSMAN, THE POST-STANDARD

Lady Luck has smiled on one of Empire State College's currently enrolled students. **Craig Jones**, of Liverpool, won a \$1 million instant lottery scratch-off game last June and will be paid \$50,000 a year over 20 years, before taxes. Jones, 40, served on the Syracuse police force for nearly 15 years, retiring with a shoulder injury resulting from an on-the-job car accident. He currently works at Syracuse University in the physical plant.

Jones plans to keep his job and continue on his path toward a degree in human services at Empire State College. Jones has four children, and lives with his wife of six years. He hopes to invest the money and plan for his children's education.

Jones' road to riches began with a June 3 stop at the Sunoco A-Plus store in Clay to put air in the tire of his Dodge Caravan. In a last-minute decision, Jones bought two "Stinkin' Rich" instant games.

Jones says he initially planned to play just the Win Four game when he decided to buy the scratch-off tickets. The first ticket didn't pay, but the second was a \$1 million winner.

"First I made sure my number matched their number and after that I started to thank the Lord multiple times," he says. "It truly was a blessing."

Jones says he felt a rush of energy and found a quick release for it, turning cartwheels in his garage, punching a punching bag and even jumping on the backyard trampoline.

Jones used some of the money to go to Las Vegas with his wife for their anniversary in July. Perhaps his luck followed him there as well.

Russian Tea Room



PHOTO: MARTY HEITNER

Record numbers turned out at the famed Russian Tea Room in New York to connect, network and hear remarks from President Davis. Left to right, Cal Jones '75, Sandra Distasio '10 and Keith Amparado '88.

in San Jose, Costa Rica. She taught online at IUHS in 2010, and anticipates traveling regularly to Costa Rica this year to teach at the university, located in San Jose's Escazu neighborhood. Welden also has had two recent papers published in the Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences: "Come Out To or Pass: Developing a Praxis Communications Model for Sexual Identity Disclosure Discourse" and "Restoring Lost 'Honor:' Retrieving Face and Identity, Removing Shame, and Controlling the Familial Cultural Environment through 'Honor' Murder."

Center for International Programs

Hadassa Meller '99 intends to pursue a doctoral degree to continue work she has been doing on singles groups through the last five years. Seventy of 230 clients in her study group have married and she is considering a qualitative study on why the matrimony-minded singles group has worked so well. She received a B.A. from Empire State College with a concentration in art and psychology. Meller has a master's

in group leadership using creative arts from Lesley University in Israel, where she resides. Her mentor is Efrat Levy.

Central New York Center

Bobbie Panek '10 has published her first book of poetry, "Morning Walks Zen Meditations," an 85-page, hand-stitched book produced by FootHills Publishing. Panek recently graduated with a concentration in creative writing, having returned to college following a 25-year career as a radiologic technologist. Panek's poetry has been published in the magazines Sunshine and Many Waters and the online women's literary journal, Moondance. Her work also appears in the poetry anthologies "Common Intuitions" and "Remembering Faces."

Emad Rahim '02, '03 was recognized for his entrepreneurial endeavors. Rahim, assistant professor of entrepreneurship and small business management at Morrisville State College, received a 2010 Entrepreneurship Teaching Excellence Award from the Experiential Classroom XI Program, and also has been named a 2011 Beyster Institute Scholar Fellow.

Born in a concentration camp in Cambodia, Rahim, a survivor of the Killing Fields, came to Syracuse in the early 1980s through the support of charities and the refugee program. Rahim earned his doctorate of management in organizational development from the Institute for Advance Studies, and two master's degrees in project management and business management, all from Colorado Technical University. He also holds a bachelor's degree in nonprofit and community management and an associate degree in community and human services, both from Empire State College.

Genesee Valley Center

David Gentner '96 has been appointed The Wartburg Adult Care Community's 10th president and chief executive officer. He had been serving as interim president and CEO since May 2010. Gentner earned a master's degree in public administration with a health care concentration from SUNY College at Brockport and a Bachelor of Science in business administration from SUNY Empire State College. In 2009, the Coalition for Leadership in Aging Services honored Gentner as a member of the 2009 Certified Aging Services Professional graduating class.

Hudson Valley Center

Virginia Anson '07 received her M.F.A. in Creative Writing with a concentration in creative nonfiction from National University. She is employed as an editor at FPMI Solutions, Inc., and aspires to become recognized as a nature writer.

Verano LaRue '76, who earned a B.A. in The Arts, has completed a master's degree in education at CUNY. LaRue worked in N.Y.C. for many years as a public school teacher, mainly in science education, and as an Arts in Education specialist for eight years bringing world music and dance collaborative programs to private and public schools and other venues. In October 2010, LaRue self-published a book released by Westbow Press, a division of Thomas Nelson, "The Book of Mayuri:

Why We Can't Have Peace and How We Can Have Peace" under the pen name of Osundara Mayuri.

Peter Neglia '07 has been selected to head the Department of Recreation in Mount Vernon, N.Y. Mayor Clinton I. Young appointed Neglia to the commissioner's post in July. Neglia has worked in Westchester County for 19 years, serving as an aide in the county legislature, assistant deputy county clerk and coordinator of election inspectors. He holds a B.S. in Business, Management and Economics from the college with a concentration in management. He was honored in 2009 by the Business Council of Westchester with its "Rising Star" award.

Ulster County Sheriff **Paul Van Blarcum** has won a second, four-year term in office. Van Blarcum, who worked on his criminal justice degree at Empire State College, fended off a challenge from one of his department's own sergeants, George Goodwin, by a vote of 37,272 to 13,877, according to the Poughkeepsie Journal. A longtime member of the Ulster County Sheriff's Office, Van Blarcum joined the force as a corrections officer in 1976, two

years out of high school. Van Blarcum graduated from the National Sheriff's Academy in 2007 and from the FBI National Academy in 2009.

Long Island Center

Kathleen Casserly '10 spent two weeks bringing aid and comfort to rape survivors in impoverished places in Rwanda and Congo. Casserly and six other women visited an orphanage and met with residents of a village who were being treated at a hospital in Doma in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She also was able to meet with women she is co-sponsoring through the Women for Women International program, which provides direct financial aid from a sponsor to help deal with the immediate effects of war and conflict.

June Christian '04, '05 has graduated with a master's degree in psychology with a concentration in mental health counseling from Adelphi University's Gordon F. Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies in Garden City, N.Y. After doing 3,000 postgraduate clinical hours at an adult

mental health program, she passed her state examination and earned her license. Christian says her undergraduate work and the college's reputation helped get her into the program which enrolls only 20 students per year. She currently works with severely and chronically mentally ill adults as a psychodynamically trained clinical therapist, service coordinator and group facilitator. Christian is a former steel industry executive.

Liz Horning-Fleming '74 is one of four writers selected to read selections from their works at the Long Island Writers' Guild-sponsored "LIWG Reads!" event at Long Island's East Meadow Public Library. Horning-Fleming, of Hicksville, N.Y., is a lifelong teacher and writer. She has a B.A. with a concentration in art education from the college and has taken classes in journalism and short story writing. She taught art in the Nassau library system and writing at SUNY Farmingdale's Institute for Learning in Retirement.

Charles Keeling, who is nearing completion of his degree in Community and Human Services/emergency management, has been named president of the Long Island Chapter of the American Society of Safety Engineers. Keeling is the safety director at Gershow Recycling, a recycling processor with 750 employees at six locations across Long Island. He has more than 25 years in the occupational safety field and has been with Gershow for over four years. He is a former New York City police officer and volunteer firefighter.

Currently enrolled student **Christopher Selvaggi** participated in a summer study program at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, through the John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy. Participants from around the world were provided with a unique chance to experience the political dynamics and mechanics of the U.N. Selvaggi is majoring in Social Theory, Social Structure and Change at the college.



Annual Long Island Dinner

PHOTO: MAUREEN WINNEY

Kimberly Parker Grofik, Deborah Falco '11, Robin Raacke '10 and Sylvia Carter '03, '04 were among the more than 100 alumni attending the annual Long Island alumni student dinner held in Rocky Point.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Zazel-Chavah O'Garra '02

Dancer, actress and teaching artist **Zazel-Chavah O'Garra '02** has been awarded the 2010 - 2011 VSA Arts Fellowship. The fellowship identifies, engages and supports artists with disabilities in the visual and performing arts. Now in its third year, the program is supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education and the Dana Foundation.

O'Garra, of Saint Albans, N.Y., was stricken in 2002 with meningioma, a benign brain tumor that left her disabled and changed the course of her life. "Finding life satisfaction became important to me since I did not want to feel consumed with depression or become overly dependent on others. I chose to pursue a graduate degree in social work because I wanted to help others who suffered from a traumatic illness," she says. By 2008 she had obtained her master's degree in social work from Fordham University.

O'Garra works with mentally retarded, autistic, deaf and mentally ill students, and also is a social worker for the Catholic Guardian Society and Home Bureau. She is a member of the Performers with Disabilities Union through the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

A graduate of the High School of Performing Arts in New York City, O'Garra has performed with Alvin Ailey II and has appeared in many stage productions in the U.S. and Europe. She also served as a movement coach for the TV drama "As the World Turns."

For the past two years, O'Garra has been performing the play "Inside/Out . . . Voices from the Disability Community," which was commissioned by VSA. She has received awards from SAG and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. Her modeling credits include two appearances on the cover of Essence magazine, as well as advertising catalog and runway work. She also has done voice-overs and appeared in national and regional commercials.

As a winner of the Patient Advocate Scholarship, O'Garra visited the White House in 2007 and 2008 to voice her concerns about health insurance in the U.S. She also was asked to speak to Congress and legislative officials about measures to help Americans who are stricken by traumatic illness. "Thanks to strength, perseverance and education, I've been able to 'turn a setback into a comeback,'" O'Garra says in reference to the title of a lecture she often gives as a motivational speaker.

books, in conjunction with singer Whitney Houston. She has written two other novels, "Catwalk" and "Catwalk: Strike a Pose."

Dancer **Miki Orihara**, a Leach Fellow, received a prestigious New York Dance and Performance Award, popularly known as a "Bessie." The award ceremony was held Oct. 18 at Symphony Space in New York City, but Orihara was on tour in the fall with the Martha Graham Dance Company and could not attend. Her husband, Stephen Pier, received the Bessie on her behalf from presenter Tina Ramirez, a founder and former artistic director of Ballet Hispanico. The New York Dance and Performance Awards, in honor of choreographer Bessie Schonberg, are given annually for innovative achievement in dance and related performances. Orihara's award honors her contributions to Graham's company, which she joined in 1987.

Vernell Rountrea-Nunez '95, '01 is a certified mediator for The Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution and the CEO of A.J. Nunez Productions, which is a photography, videography and voice talent company.

Moshe Satt '08 was selected to receive a 2010 Excellence in Technology Award from the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications and Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Satt won Best Mobile or Wireless Project for the development of the Mobile Wireless Access Program, which provides wireless technology enabling city police personnel to access information including street maps, building plans and crime databases while still in their vehicles.

Dennis Shipman '97, '99 has enrolled in the Doctor of Literature and Philosophy program at the University of South Africa, an international distance learning institution in Pretoria. Founded in 1873, UNISA became a distance education university in 1946 and currently enrolls over 200,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Shipman, who received an Associate in Arts and a B.S. in social and behavioral sciences from Empire State College, is an ordained minister, musician, martial artist, broadcaster and writer with pieces published in Essence and The Village Voice.

Metropolitan Center

Master pianist **Kenny Barron '78** launched a Midwest tour in November with David Sanchez, which featured appearances at the Dakota Jazz Club of Minneapolis and stops in Decorah and Iowa City, Iowa. Barron, a nine-time Grammy nominee and consistent critical favorite, is a performer, composer and educator. For more than 25 years, Barron taught piano and keyboard harmony at Rutgers University, and now teaches at The Julliard School of Music. He was inducted into the American Jazz Hall of Fame in 2005, was named a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master in 2010 and, in that same year, he headlined the Detroit Jazz Festival.

Lisa Baxter '03 has written a new book, "Through the Eyes of a Dialysis Patient," which provides readers with a firsthand look at the experiences of a dialysis patient.

Writer, performer and designer **Deborah Gregory '86** appeared in "Leaving Neverland," a tribute to the late Michael Jackson at Harlem's Faison Firehouse Theater, on the anniversary of Jackson's death. The event was staged by Tony Award-winning director and choreographer George Faison, who worked with the "King of Pop" on many occasions during his career. Gregory is the award-winning author and creator of the "The Cheetah Girls" books, and has co-produced a Disney Channel movie of the same title based on the

Writer and educator **Juanita Torrence-Thompson '83** read from her works in an appearance at “Celebrating the Power of Poetry” at the Langston Hughes branch of Queens Library in New York City in September. She read from her books “Breath-Life” and “New York and African Tapestries.” Among her many recent honors, Torrence-Thompson was nominated in 2009 for Woman of the Year by The American Biographical Institute Board of International Research. The American Association of University Women’s New York City branch declared Torrence-Thompson one of 10 women who have helped break down barriers through her dedication to black history and diversity.

Niagara Frontier Center

Currently enrolled student **Peter Johnson** is producing the documentary “Together We Stand: The Story of the 1958 UB Bulls.” The film was previewed at Buffalo’s Mid-Day Club, a meeting place for the city’s legal, business and financial leaders. The film tells the story of the University at Buffalo’s 1958 Bulls football team which won the Lambert trophy, earning an invitation to Orlando’s Tangerine Bowl. Told that the team’s black players would not be allowed on Orlando’s field with white players, the Bulls demonstrated their unity by staying home from the school’s first bowl game. A Buffalo native, Johnson graduated from St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute in 1998 and later graduated from New York Film Academy, where he earned a film degree. He is now pursuing a business degree in arts management with the college.

Jen McCormick '91, a vice president for policy and research at Empire State Development, has earned her M.P.A. in public finance following her graduation from the college with a B.A. in social justice.

Michael Summers '77, a professor of criminal justice at Erie Community College, has been recognized by Cambridge Who’s Who for showing dedication, leadership and excellence in all aspects of higher education. A 41-year veteran of law enforcement, Summers is respected for his expertise in



Reception at the Saratoga Auto Museum

The Saratoga Auto Museum was an elegant setting for an alumni student reception prior to the performance of the Philadelphia Orchestra in August 2010, which featured a reading by Alec Baldwin.

crime scene investigation, and sharing his knowledge and unique perspective with students as chairman and professor of the criminal justice department.

Laureen A. Syta '07 was promoted to vice president and relationship manager for Key Private Bank’s Western New York District. Syta was formerly assistant vice president and financial planner for the bank. She has 20 years experience in the

financial services industry. Key Private Bank is part of KeyBank National Association. KeyBank is the 12th largest bank in the United States by total assets and has approximately 17,468 employees.

Northeast Center

Carol Dimopoulos '03 was named president of Wendy Wu’s China, the new North American division of Wendy Wu Tours. Her office opened in September in New York City. Dimopoulos was executive vice president of sales and marketing for Celtic Tours, where she worked for 10 years. Wendy Wu Tours has become the largest China tour operator in Australia and the U.K. over the last 12 years. The company hopes to continue that trend in its North American operations.

Shawn Goodway '05 was named general manager of The Saratoga Hilton in Saratoga Springs. Goodway, a 30-year veteran of the hospitality industry, studied at Empire State



Buffalo Bills

We had another beautiful day at Ralph Wilson Stadium to see the Buffalo Bills take on the Jacksonville Jaguars.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sarah Wilson

Jazz trumpeter **Sarah Wilson '04** has recorded a new CD, "Trapeze Project" on Brass Tonic Records. In the past few years, Wilson's original music has premiered at highly acclaimed venues at home and abroad, including New York's Festival of New Trumpet Music, Central Park SummerStage, Switzerland's Willisau Jazz Festival, the Healdsburg Jazz Festival and the de Young Museum in San Francisco. Wilson resides in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Wilson did most of her undergraduate coursework at the University of California, Berkeley, and later studied music at Empire State College through a private mentorship with Schoenberg scholar Paul Caputo.

"My mentorship with Paul Caputo was incredible," Wilson writes via e-mail. "Paul

... is a phenomenal teacher and has trained many professional musicians over the years. He devised a course of study that suited my needs with the flexibility to accelerate much more quickly than if I had been studying in a group context. Individual training like this is the most ideal way to study music. Paul gave me an excellent background in classical Western harmony as devised by Arnold Schoenberg, counterpoint, sight reading and piano training. I am so grateful to Paul for his excellent teaching, support and infinite knowledge," she says.

Wilson spent a decade playing in New York City's downtown jazz world before returning to the Bay Area music scene. She won acclaim for her 2006 CD, "Music for an Imaginary Play." The disc garnered a "Best in Bay Area Jazz CD" highlight from music critic Andrew Gilbert. She also has received accolades from the New York Times, Time Out New York, the San Francisco Chronicle and Cadence Magazine. The Chronicle described her as a "lyrical trumpeter and ethereal vocalist."

In the early 1990s, Wilson served as musical director for Bread and Puppet Theater in Vermont. She collaborated for six years with the Lincoln Center for the Arts, writing music for annual puppet theater productions funded by Meet the Composer. She also scored a film in the "Body Art" exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History.

Praise for "Trapeze Project" has been effusive. Bay Area musician and writer E. "Doc" Smith wrote in October 2010 that "there have been some great jazz albums by Bay Area women this year (and) Wilson's "Trapeze Project" must be counted among them."

College and at Hudson Valley Community College. Goodway will be responsible for managing day-to-day operations at the 242-room, full-service hotel. His promotion to general manager follows two years as the Hilton's director of finance.

Neal Zirn '77, '02 was named the 2010 - 2011 president of the Rotary Club of Potsdam, N.Y. Zirn, a graduate of Palmer College of Chiropractic, has practiced in the North Country for 27 years. He has a B.A. in psychology and a master's in Liberal Studies from the college. Zirn has served

on the board of the Potsdam Chamber of Commerce and the Gibson Gallery. He also is an exhibiting artist and printmaker, has won both first and second prizes in the WCNY Art Auction, and is a writer of poetry, short fiction and essays.

School for Graduate Studies

Mary Anne Donovan '07 is publishing online articles with advice about writing for Articlemotrin.com, a service that seeks to connect content providers with

websites looking for content. Donovan has been teaching in both graduate and undergraduate programs for the past nine years, with a specialty in business, technical and professional communications. In addition, she is the chief editor of Writer Online, a professional e-zine for writers and lovers of writing. Donovan received her master's degree in liberal studies with a concentration in digital virtual literacy and rhetoric from Empire State College.

"The Party," a film directed by **James "Jimmy" Dougherty '04, M.A.T. '07** premiered Aug. 4 in the New York New Filmmaker Series at Anthology Archives in New York City. Starring James Sampson, Paul Moreno and Ronnie Hirt, "The Party" is described by Dougherty as "an absurdist comedy" and a rallying call for a beleaguered and confused middle-class. Set in New York's Lower East Side in a time of shifting political demographics, the film illustrates the plight of modern Americans. Dougherty has lived in New York for 30 years. He also has a background in standup comedy and theater. He has written a play, "Canned Salmon," and has directed a documentary, "Eddie," which aired on PBS.

Two recent graduates of the college's Master of Arts in Teaching program, **Steve Goldman '10** and **Edward Hou '10**, both landed jobs at the Theatre Arts Production Company School in the Bronx. Based on recent City School Report Cards, the Theatre Arts School was rated the No. 1 high school in all of New York City. Hou says that he and Goldman both believe the learning, teaching and pedagogical knowledge they got from the M.A.T. program had a tremendous impact on their work to help build the high school.

Laura Maxwell '02, '05 has been appointed vice president for resources at Georgia Gwinnett College. She is responsible for the oversight and management of the institution's financial and business processes. Maxwell is a member of the National and Southern Association of College and University Business Officers. She served as president of the American Society of Military Comptrollers for three years and as vice president for two years.

(continued on page 31)

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"The Monte and Hilda Trammer Scholarship provides assistance to African-American male students with minor children in the household ... Being a working parent and going to school, with the way the economy is, it's difficult to pay for books and other educational costs, so it was a great opportunity for me." – Rodney Jones '09, '10

More Than a "Token"

(continued from page 28)

She earned her bachelor's degree from the Hudson Valley Center in 2002, and her MBA from the college in 2005.

Ladean Warner '07 has written a new novel, "Beyond the Keeper's Gate." Published in June, the book is the second in a detective series and follows 2009's "The Keeper of Darkness." Both are set in Saratoga County, where Warner has lived for almost 30 years. Warner is the former director of finance for the Charlton School in Burnt Hills. She and her husband recently started their own publishing company, Open Door Publishers, where they hope to help talented but as-yet unproven writers. Warner's new novel pits cop-turned pastor Jake Peterson against forces of darkness which descended on Saratoga County a decade earlier. She is working on a third book in the series and is attending Walden University in pursuit of a doctorate in business administration. ■

Please stay connected!

Tell us what's new with you.

Do you have a new job, a promotion, an award, a new publication, new exhibit, etc.?

We'd love to hear from you.

It's easy to send us your news. Just go to: www.esc.edu/Alumni-Info

Don't forget to send photos.



Beverly Hills-based TV and record producer **Phil Margo '73** – a founding member of the '60s doo-wop group, The Tokens – has published his first novel. "The Null Quotient," released in September 2010 by Eloquent Books, tells the story of three unlikely heroes out to save the human race from extinction. Margo's book received a prominent endorsement from Stan Lee, co-creator of Spiderman, Iron Man, X-Men, Hulk and Thor. Lee said, "The Null Quotient" has best-seller written all over it – and I can't wait to see the movie that's sure to come!"

Margo was among the first to receive a B.A. from Empire State College. At the time, he was an active performer and producer, having first jumped into show business as a teenager. He was 19 in late 1961 when The Tokens, a band he formed with his brother Mitch, scored a No. 1 hit with the iconic "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." An earlier single, "Tonight I Fell in Love," charted at No. 15.

But by 1969, Margo decided he wanted a degree, having taken some night classes at Brooklyn College. After transferring credits and enrolling in Empire State College, Margo set out to get a college diploma. His career in the years since has taken him from Brooklyn to Burbank, developing TV movies such as "The Goddess of Love" and "The Kid with the 200 IQ" for NBC, managing celebrities and producing a total of 11 gold records along the way. Margo also is an inventor "with a patent or two" and a qualified commercial pilot. Recently, he has been doing interviews promoting the release of "The Null Quotient," including an appearance on Howard Stern's satellite radio broadcast network.

As a way of promoting literacy, Margo and associates are planning an event at the New York City Public Library at noon on July 27 they call "Wimoweh Wednesday." The date coincides with the 50th anniversary of the recording of The Tokens' big hit. Margo hopes to bring a crowd together between the library's iconic lions, in an effort to get the whole world to join in a chorus of "wimoweh." The word derives from the Zulu word "mbube" believed to refer to leonine majesty. The Tokens are still active, performing 20 to 25 shows a year.

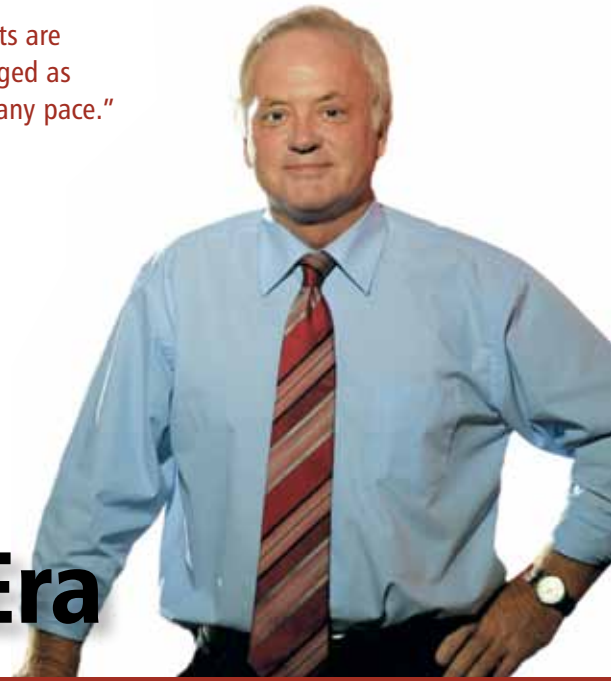
Student Art Reception



Alumni and student artists greet guests at an opening reception for an exhibit, "Brooklyn is Brooklyn."

PHOTO: DAGOBERTO TORRES

"We prepare for this new era as educational borders crumble and as students are increasingly able and expecting to be personally empowered and fully engaged as equal partners in their learning, and to do so at any time, any place and at any pace."



Ushering in a New Era

Our cover shows the building of an open globe that we have chosen to reflect not only the theme of our 40th anniversary, but also as a symbol of our future as a global leader in open learning, in all its manifestations. We prepare for this new era as educational borders crumble and as students are increasingly able and expecting to be personally empowered and fully engaged as equal partners in their learning, and to do so at any time, any place and at any pace.

This past year raised the profile of "openness" in education significantly. Aside from our own discussions here at SUNY Empire State College, there have been many commentaries on all aspects of open higher learning: open resources, open courses, open learners, open faculty.

However, there has not been much about open institutions, because, frankly, there are not many that fully embrace openness as a core value. They may play with open digital learning resources, or experiment with online and blended learning, but they are usually not dedicated to the removal of barriers through diverse innovative approaches in ways that define this college.

In the end, it is the institutional mission that determines a college's attitude and approach to higher

education. Across SUNY, we share our mission with our sister institutions, but we are unique in our approaches, and we need to distinguish the college accordingly.

Only about 120 truly open institutions deliver university degrees around the world, and as part of our 40th anniversary celebrations, we are hosting the presidents of these institutions at a special meeting in New York City in June this year. These open institutions collectively serve more than 20 million students worldwide, which is the equivalent of the entire U.S. higher education population.

This conference is just one of the major events that will contribute to our 40th year. A listing of other events scheduled to mark our 40 years of educational innovation can be found at www.esc.edu/40th, as well as all sorts of interesting background information about the college and congratulatory accolades.

We also will have the singular pleasure of awarding three honorary degrees at three of our graduation ceremonies to national and international leaders in open education: Sir John Daniel, president of the Commonwealth of Learning; Dr. Joseph Moore, my predecessor at this college and now president at Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass.; and Dr. Shirley Pippins, senior vice president

at the American Council of Education, and for many years the president of Suffolk County Community College on Long Island.

Community colleges, like those Dr. Pippins led, are key partners in open education across the state of New York and nationally; their work in providing college preparation, career training and academic associate degrees in every community is being increasingly recognized. We are pleased to have pathways agreements with nearly all SUNY and CUNY colleges to allow their graduates to continue their education without having to relocate or take time from work or family. These agreements will be the basis of new pathways for community college graduates from across the country and beyond who can join us online.

It will be a busy and exciting year, fraught with budget concerns as the state and the nation climb their way out of a financial mess. At SUNY Empire State College, we are pledged to contribute to this recovery, one learner at a time. ■

Scan this QR bar code with your Smartphone to view the president's video on the 40th or go to www.esc.edu/QR3.



Summer Events

Saratoga Style

We're already making plans to welcome hundreds of alumni, students, faculty and friends to our signature summer events: Our annual day at **Saratoga Race Course on Friday, July 29** and our annual eveninging at the **Saratoga Performing Arts Center on Friday, Aug. 5.**

There's nothing like Saratoga in the summer and there's nothing like meeting new friends and renewing old Empire State College acquaintances.

Make your plans now! For our out-of-town visitors, we will secure room blocks at local hotels. For more information or to sign up online, go to www.esc.edu/AlumniEvents

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
 EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

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As noted in President Alan Davis' column, "The Last Word" on page 32, the college has chosen an open globe as the symbol for its 40th anniversary and our future as a global leader in open learning.

Artist Michael Czuba, pictured on the cover and left in his Warrensburg, N.Y., studio, was commissioned by the college to fabricate the metal sculpture, which will be placed outside administrative offices in Saratoga Springs. It will feature the college shield and the dates 1971 to 2011.

The 40th anniversary logo pictured above was designed by Casey Lumbr, the college's web designer/developer.