Civic Education and Democratic Engagement

This fall of 2012, we once again opened our doors to deliver on the promise of providing a high-quality education to over 550,000 degree-seeking as well as adult and continuing education students. As part of this year’s student experience, our country’s presidential election will, ideally, provide an educational platform for engaging students in civic education and a discourse about democracy and the future of our country.

Eleanor Roosevelt eloquently captured the importance of educating our future leaders in democracy and civic involvement when she stated:

"Our children should learn the general framework of their government; and then they should know where they come in contact with the government, where it touches their daily lives and where their influence is exerted on the government. It must not be a distant thing, someone else's business; but they must see how every cog in the wheel of a democracy is important and bears its share of responsibility for the smooth running of the entire machine."

In the spirit of these words and CUNY’s educational mission, the Central Office of Student Affairs (COSA) has been selected by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) as a lead institution to participate in a national initiative on civic learning and democratic engagement. NASPA has made a commitment to encourage and highlight the work of student affairs to make civic learning and democratic engagement part of every student’s college education.

Starting this month and over the next year, COSA will invite all colleges to identify specific efforts, many of which are already planned, to promote clear and tangible civic learning and democratic engagement activities. Collaborations with students, programming offices, faculty and the broader community are encouraged through this initiative and will be documented over the course of this effort.

It is our hope that CUNY students will not only participate in the democratic process during this election season but gain a better understanding where government “…touches their daily lives and where their influence is exerted on the government.”

I look forward to your participation in this important initiative, and wish you and your students great success for the 2012-2013 academic year.

Yours in education,

Frank D. Sanchez
Dr. Chris Rosa Wins New York Post Liberty Medal

University Assistant Dean Chris Rosa will accept the New York Post Liberty Medal in the Education category at a special ceremony on October 17th. CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson nominated Dean Rosa for the award, describing him as a “passionate advocate” for students on CUNY’s 24 campuses. The medal is awarded to an administrator or teacher who excels at preparing the next generation of New Yorkers for their future challenges. Winners in other categories will also be presented at the Post’s 11th annual event. See the full New York Post story on Chris’ nomination at:


CUNY Champions President Obama’s Directive On Undocumented Youth

During September and October, CUNY demonstrated its commitment to the federal government’s directive called “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” (DACA) with activities to service and support undocumented youth. CUNY-wide actions included emailing students to advise them of the service and posting information on the University website. Students were encouraged to sign up for help at the Citizenship Now! website, www.cuny.edu/dreamers. Following that, they were contacted about events held on their campuses. Early updates had more than 2,024 students responding that they qualify for the program. Through CUNY Citizenship Now!, led by Baruch College professor and attorney Allan Wernick, attorneys assisted students with completing their applications, answering questions, and providing photographs at no charge. Campus liaisons helped to promote and co-organize the events with Citizenship Now!

From the CUNY Newswire: Tobacco-Free CUNY

The City University of New York this fall became the largest 100 percent tobacco-free urban public University system in the United States, with a total ban on tobacco use, marketing, promotions and sports sponsorships in effect at all 24 institutions. The ban includes all forms of tobacco and chewing tobacco, as well as e-cigarettes. It applies to buildings, outdoor locations such as playing fields, entrances and exits to buildings, and parking lots. On Sept. 4, a University-wide campaign began about the new policy. Read more about it: http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2012/09/13/cuny-becomes-tobacco-free/

Click on the photo to watch the video.
Professional Development Grants Available

The Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs recently announced a very limited number of professional development grants for staff working within the various areas of student affairs across the University. Staff members can apply for a grant of up to $500 to be used to cover costs related to conference attendance. For additional grant information including deadlines, requirements and the grant application link on the Division of Student Affairs Professional Development website, access http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/sa/professional-development-resources.html

CUNY Remembers 9/11

2,819 individuals died in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. This September 2012, a number of CUNY campuses paused to remember their lives and commemorate the day with a host of quiet events: On Sept. 9 at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) a giant 76 by 40 feet flag was draped to the south side of Fiterman Hall, opposite the World Trade Center. The next day in downtown Brooklyn, New York City College of Technology (CityTech) students and administrators sat for a dialogue on community service and a plan to support community service initiatives. And at Bronx Community College (BCC), 9/11 program attendees held a memorial hosted by student life and campus ministry in recognition of the “need for global learning, tolerance and understanding throughout the campus, New York and the world.” Queens and John Jay colleges were among many other campuses scheduled to hold remembrance events.

22nd Anniversary Celebration Held for Americans with Disabilities Act

On Thursday July 26, 2012, the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD), the Queens College Committee for Disabled Students (CDS), the University Student Senate (USS), Queens College Office of Student Life and the CUNY Office of Student Affairs (COSA) helped sponsor the Queens College annual celebration of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The event marked the 22nd anniversary and signing of the landmark civil rights legislation by President George H. W. Bush that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities.

The festivities included a ceremony attended by a number of elected officials including: State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, State Assembly member Grace Meng, State Assembly member Barbara M. Clark, and State Assembly member Michael Simanowitz. All of the participating elected officials provided the CCSD and CDS student leadership with citations recognizing the work of their respective organizations. A staff member of State Assembly member Michael Miller’s office was on hand to award individual citations to student leaders.

CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations and Secretary of the Board of Trustees, Jay Hershenson served as Master of Ceremonies and welcomed Board of Trustees Vice Chair Philip Alfonso Berry, Queens College President James L. Muyskens, Deputy to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Chief of Staff Paulette Dalpes, and University Assistant Dean Christopher J. Rosa, all of whom provided remarks to the audience of students and staff.
Wheelchair Basketball Paralympian Patrick Anderson the Talk of CUNY

His coach calls him the “perfect wheelchair basketball machine,” and Patrick Anderson has done many a courtside feat to earn that description. On Sept. 8, he won his fourth medal (the gold) at the London Paralympics, leading his Canada team in a 64-58 victory over Australia. Today the student-athlete, who lost both his legs in an accident at the age of 9, is a symbol of courage, humility and success at CUNY’s Hunter College where he is in his senior year, taking 16 credits as a music major. On any given day, his talents and skills remain the talk of the CUNY community. His focus he says is to finish his B.A. in music in December 2012. More coverage of Hunter’s famous athlete at: http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2012/09/11/hunter-paralympian-wins-gold/

York College Graduate Vanessa Rivera and Two Others Named 2012 Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Award of Valor Recipients


Seventh Annual CUNY BMI Conference
Held at the College of Staten Island

On October 5th, the Seventh Annual City University of New York Black Male Initiative (CUNY BMI) Conference was held at the College of Staten Island (CSI). Over 647 CUNY staff and students registered for the event where invited officials and guests convened for talks and workshops under the conference theme “Rock the Vote: The Presidential Election of 2012, the Struggle for Voting Rights and the Future of Urban America.” Beginning the day, attendees were greeted by Interim President William J. Fritz and Vice President for Student Affairs, Ramona Brown. Also offering remarks were Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Frank D. Sanchez and distinguished New York City Council members Charles Barron, Ydanis Rodriguez and Deborah Rose. (Councilwoman Rose is a former CSI administrator and the first African American elected official from Staten Island.) Later, CUNY BMI Director Elliott Dawes expressed much appreciation to all CUNY BMI program staff including CSI BMI administrators, Debra Evans Greene, Alicia Murray and Olaniran (Niran) Asanbe. The day’s keynote speakers included author, journalist and activist Kevin Powell and Derek T. Dingle, Editor-In-Chief of Black Enterprise Magazine. The goal of CUNY BMI is to increase, encourage, and support the inclusion and educational success of under-represented groups in higher education, in particular African, African American, Caribbean and Latino/Hispanic males.

Youth Voter Registration Jam Held at Lehman College

Students, celebrities and the CUNY community converged for the Youth Voter Registration Jam held on September 25th at Lehman College. The event, planned in conjunction with National Voter Registration day, was open to the public and highlighted weeks of voter registration activities happening across CUNY campuses. NYC Votes! collaborated with members of the University Student Senate (USS), Student Voter Awareness Committee (SVAC) and the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD) to sponsor the afternoon of music, live performances, giveaways and contests to encourage New Yorkers to register for this November’s election.