

SOAR

A PLACE TO LAUNCH YOUR LIFE™

SEEK/CD Mission

The SEEK/College Discovery Mission is to increase the level of education, social mobility, and vocational capability in NYC and NYS by providing access to higher education to students who are:

- **Educationally disadvantaged**
(as defined by CUNY)
- **Economically disadvantaged**
(as defined by NYS)

To provide comprehensive services in:

- **Academic support**
- **Counseling**
- **Financial Aid**

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Boot Camp Prepares
Incoming Freshmen
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SEEK and CD Mourn the Loss of Program Giants

It is with deep sadness that CUNY's Office of Special Programs acknowledges the passing of two giants in the SEEK program – Percy E. Sutton whose leadership in the New York State Assembly helped bring about the creation of the SEEK program in 1966, and Martha J. Bell, Ph.D., Chair, and Director of the SEEK Department at Brooklyn College.

"This year the New York State higher education opportunity programs have experienced a tremendous loss in the passing of both Percy Sutton and Martha Bell," said **Cheryl Williams**, University Associate Dean of CUNY's Office of Special Programs. "These are two people who for many years embodied the spirit, focus, and mission of the SEEK and College Discovery programs. Their legacies live on in all of our students."

Dr. Bell was a member of the SEEK Department at Brooklyn College for 33 years and Chair and Director for 27 years. She was, at the time of her death, the longest serving Chair at Brooklyn College.

Chairperson **Benno Schmidt**, Board of Trustees, The City University of New York, and Chancellor **Matthew Goldstein**, The City University of New York, issued a joint statement about Dr. Bell, "The passing of Professor Martha Bell is deeply mourned by all of us at The City University of New York. Her academic integrity, outstanding leadership, and dedication to diversity, access to education, and financial support for CUNY evoked great admiration. As Chair of the Brooklyn College SEEK (*Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge*) Department, she developed innovative nationally-praised strategies to help educationally disadvantaged students succeed in college, and served on the Board of Trustees' Committee on Student Affairs and Special Programs. Professor Bell will always remain an enduring inspiration as CUNY continues to assist all students to realize their dreams."

Brooklyn College President **Karen Gould** wrote to the college community: "Her academic interests were wide-ranging, her commitment to diversity and student access was unwavering, and her influence over the years on major college issues was profound. Our collective admiration for the values she lived everyday on our campus and in the community will be long-standing."



► Martha J. Bell, Ph.D., Chair & Director, SEEK Department, Brooklyn College, with Percy E. Sutton, founder of the SEEK Program.

In a video celebrating the 40th anniversary of the SEEK program, Mr. Sutton explained why founding the SEEK program was so important to him and his colleagues. "We wanted to create a program so the injured of our society could occupy positions of power," he said.

Mr. Sutton recounted how after midnight the Black, Puerto Rican, and Hispanic Caucus met with the Speaker of the New York State Assembly **Anthony Travia** to demand that the budget include funding for the SEEK program. The Speaker, Democrats, Republicans, and Gov. **Nelson Rockefeller** embraced the idea and the SEEK program was created.

Mr. Sutton was the senior member of a group of prominent Harlem politicians often referred to as the Gang of Four. The other politicians included **David N. Dinkins**, New York's first black Mayor; U.S. Rep. **Charles B. Rangel**; and **Basil A. Paterson**, who was a State Senator and New York's Secretary of State. Mr. Sutton also was a mentor to Mr. Paterson's son, Gov. **David A. Paterson**.

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Martha J. Bell, Ph.D

Chair & Director, SEEK Department, Brooklyn College (1950-2010)

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— Brooklyn College President
Karen Gould

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— Chairperson Benno Schmidt,
Board of Trustees, and Chancellor
Matthew Goldstein, The City
University of New York

Martha Joan Bell was born in Jersey City and grew up in Bayonne, New Jersey, where she lived until she went to college at New York University at the young age of 16. A prodigal early reader and a superb student, her professional life may be summarized as a largely successful attempt to extend the joys of reading and learning to the underprivileged.

Dr. Bell received her Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics as well as her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English Education all from New York University. Her special areas of research included language acquisition, the acquisition of reading, and curriculum development. She taught developmental and compensatory reading and writing as well as anthropology, linguistic anthropology, language acquisition, and teacher education.

Dr. Bell was a member of the SEEK Department at Brooklyn College for 33 years and Chair and Director for 27 years. She was, at the time of her death, the longest serving Chair at Brooklyn College, having replaced her husband **George Shapiro**, long-time Chair of the Department of Mathematics, (whom she met at a Core Curriculum Seminar in 1980) in this position. She used to say that the SEEK guidelines were responsible for her marriage: the guidelines state that SEEK could offer courses in any subject except mathematics and that SEEK had to work cooperatively with the Math Department.

In the mid-1990s, the political and budgetary difficulties of opportunity programs burgeoned. This led to Dr. Bell’s realization that she had untapped lobbying and political skills. Her earliest mentor was Assemblyman **Ed Sullivan**, then Chair of the Higher Education Committee, who became one of her staunchest supporters. He arranged for her to bring some of her most successful students to the floor of the Assembly and to present them to the sitting house (to vigorous applause) and this gave him additional ammunition to use in defending opportunity programs. This was the first of many successful lobbying efforts.

However, none of these activities at this time was as important to Dr. Bell as the fact that she and her husband adopted a baby, **Isaac**, born in the very section of Hungary from which her beloved grandmother had emigrated after World War I. Isaac, who spent many days in a playpen in her office, only slightly adding to the chaos there, was the light of her life.

Beginning in 1995, Dr. Bell was the principal investigator for three Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grants, DEP I, II, III: Making the Core a Reality for Disadvantaged Students. During this time she also received numerous other grants from the City University of New York, the New York State Education Department, and the U.S. Department of Education to support programs for at-risk students at Brooklyn College including pre/post freshman summer enrichment programs, work supporting instruction of at-risk students, and instructional technology

Dr. Bell developed and promoted the highly successful pedagogy known as “Critical Inquiry” and formulated the “Nine Transportable Elements” essential to a successful opportunity program which are adaptable to any college or program. The FIPSE projects have been disseminated to 16 colleges and universities. Forty-five additional colleges have participated in dissemination activities.

Under the three FIPSE grants, she presented at a wide range of conferences, disseminating the curriculum model and curriculum model process. She visited and served as consultant at the 16 colleges that were part of the project. In addition, she gave numerous conference presentations at NCTE, IRA, Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs, Freshmen Year Experience, NADE and AERA along with presentations at FIPSE Conferences.

Dr. Bell was named **Murray Koppelman** Professor for Community Service (June, 1998) in recognition of her work in supporting access and excellence at Brooklyn College and in the larger community in New York City and New York State. In 2007, she received the **Eric M. Steinberg** award for College Citizenship.

Dr. Bell was active in professional organizations and served as co-chair of Opportunity Programs United (NY State), President of the Council of SEEK Directors, Secretary of the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs, and Treasurer and Executive Committee member of the CUNY University Faculty Senate. She also served as a member of the CUNY Board of Trustees Committee on Student Affairs. All of these activities enhanced her knowledge and familiarity with the community of scholars and professionals who work with at-risk students. At Brooklyn College she was an active member of the Council on Administrative Policy, Faculty Council, Policy Council, and served on innumerable committees and task forces.

Dr. Bell published in the areas of applied linguistics, curriculum development, and reading acquisition. Her educational and faculty development work informed her

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Percy E. Sutton

Founder of the SEEK Program (1920-2009)

Percy Ellis Sutton, politician, lawyer, civil-rights activist, and entrepreneur, was born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1920 and grew up on a nearby farm in Prairie View, Texas.

In 1964, Mr. Sutton was elected to the State Assembly. It was in this position that he created the SEEK Program in 1966, working with members of the Black, Puerto Rican, and Hispanic Caucus to secure funding.

The New York City Council selected Mr. Sutton in 1966 to replace Manhattan Borough President **Constance Baker Motley** when she was appointed to a federal judgeship. He was later elected to serve the remaining three years of her term and re-elected in 1969 and 1973. He served as Manhattan Borough President until the end of his term in 1977 when he ran for the Democratic nomination for New York City Mayor. U.S. Rep. Ed Koch won the nomination and general election.

Mr. Sutton's father, **Samuel Johnson Sutton** was born in the last days of slavery and became principal of a segregated high school in San Antonio as well as a civil-rights activist, farmer, and entrepreneur. His mother, **Lillian**, was a teacher.

Mr. Sutton attended Prairie View A & M, Tuskegee in Alabama, and Hampton University in Virginia. He served as an intelligence officer with the Tuskegee Airmen, and won combat honors in the Italian and Mediterranean theaters. He was honorably discharged with the rank of captain.

After the war, Mr. Sutton entered Columbia Law School on the G.I. Bill. He transferred to Brooklyn Law School because he needed to support himself by working two jobs, one at a post office from 4 p.m. until midnight, then as a subway conductor until 8:30 am.

After serving in the Korean War, Mr. Sutton opened a law practice in Harlem in 1953. He represented more than 200 people arrested in protests in the South during the civil rights movement, and was the attorney for **Malcolm X** until the leader's assassination in 1965.

In 1971, Mr. Sutton was among a group of investors that bought the New York Amsterdam News, New York's largest black newspaper, and an AM station, WLIB, the first black-owned radio station in New York. In 1974, he and his investors bought WBLS-FM, and the group, Inner City Broadcasting, eventually expanded its holdings to more than 18 radio stations and cable franchises.

He was the chairman of Inner City, which bought the Apollo Theater in Harlem in 1981 at a bankruptcy sale for \$225,000. He oversaw the theater's \$20 million renovation and reopening in 1985. The renovation included a cable television studio that was used to produce the syndicated television program "It's Showtime at the Apollo."

Mr. Sutton died on Dec. 26, 2009. He is survived by his wife, **Leatrice**; a son from their marriage, **Pierre**; a daughter from his second marriage, **Cheryl Lynn Sutton**; his sister, **Essie Mae Sutton** of New York; and four grandchildren.

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publications. For example, her article entitled "Critical Inquiry in a Multicultural Setting: Educational Opportunities in a Public University," with **Robert J. Kelly**, was published in 2005 in *Language in Multicultural Education*, edited by **R. Hoosain** and **F. Salili**, (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing). She was also at work on a book about Brooklyn College's SEEK program and its FIPSE project.

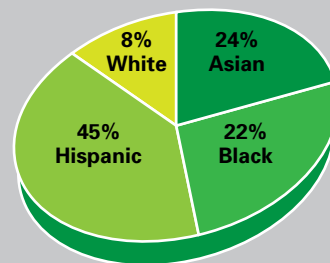
While research was an important activity for Dr. Bell, most of her energy was devoted to teaching and counseling students. She worked tirelessly to ensure that each and every student had a genuine opportunity to succeed. Her office was a beehive, with students, faculty members, counselors, family members all competing for her attention while she was usually engaged in some more longtime project, but the needs of the students always came first. Eventually, everyone was attended to.

The students especially loved Dr. Bell because she knew them personally along with their individual progress and problems. The number of students she shepherded from timid entering freshmen to confident, successful graduate students was truly remarkable. She didn't suffer fools (or boors) lightly, but she would battle with every bit of her considerable strength for students or faculty who were making a good effort but were getting a raw deal. In these efforts her collection of friends and connections was enormously useful.

Dr. Bell battled with her failing health all spring and most of the summer, finally passing away on August 17, 2010.

Did you know?

- SEEK enrollment is 8,960
- College Discovery enrollment is 2,993
- Approximately 80% of incoming SEEK freshmen finish their first semester in good academic standing.
- College Discovery students have higher graduation and retention rates than non-program students.
- SEEK six year graduation rates have risen by 18% since 1995.
- One year SEEK retention rates are higher than for "regular admits."
- 88% of SEEK students have a GPA \geq 2.0.
- SEEK/College Discovery Student Profile: Fall 2010 Race/Ethnicity



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**SEEK/College Discovery
on the Web**

View the SEEK 40th Anniversary
Video on You Tube at:
www.youtube.com

Keywords: "SEEK history"

Intellectual Boot Camp Prepares Incoming Freshmen for College Career

Editors Note: *Several months before her death, I had the privilege of interviewing Dr. Martha Bell about her signature program, the Pre-Freshman Summer Program, which has been adopted by colleges across the country. We are including an article about the program in our tribute to Dr. Bell because it captures her dedication to the success of her students.*

Some might call it an intellectual boot camp, others are overwhelmed by its rigor, but one thing is certain, when SEEK students at Brooklyn College finish their four-week summer orientation, they know what to expect when classes begin in the fall.

Each year, more than 200 incoming SEEK freshmen are required to attend the Pre-Freshman Summer Program, which was created by the late Martha Bell, who was Chair and Director of the SEEK Department at Brooklyn College at the time of her death. The program offers an interdisciplinary curriculum including a one-credit course on strategies for critical reading and analysis.

Dr. Bell said the theme for the Summer of 2010 "Freedom and Responsibility" required students to read original documents and essays such as President Abraham Lincoln's Inaugural Address and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Interactive sessions with the New York Historical Society and exhibits on such topics as the Underground Railroad and architects of the American Revolution are incorporated into the summer program every year, and participants also take trips to Broadway shows and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Brooklyn Museum.

Incoming SEEK students take a math course, either pre-calculus or remedial math, and developmental classes are offered

to those students that need them. A computer workshop is included and students are trained in creating on-line portfolios for Benchmarks for Success, a program that provides a roadmap of activities in which students should engage to be successful. The Writing to Learn program also is part of the offering.

"Students are overwhelmed by it, but they love it," Dr. Bell said. "The ingredient to success is we have serious and clear expectations. They learn how to model excellent student behavior. It's that transparency that kids do well with."

Dr. Bell said students receive back packs loaded with supplies, and intensive counseling sessions orient them to the rules and regulations of the college, expectations on time management, and personal responsibility.

"One of the major benefits of the program is students meet other incoming students, instructors, and tutors that will remain part of their learning community when they enter the college in the fall and in the semesters that follow," Dr. Bell said.

The SEEK Freshman Summer Program was recognized by the Middle States Commission Report that recommended the re-accreditation of Brooklyn College. The report said the program was an excellent example of the college's commitment to students with either special needs or special interests.

Loss of Program Giants *(continued from cover)*

Gov. David Paterson called Percy Sutton a trailblazer. "He began his career as a prominent lawyer for Malcolm X and then took Harlem by storm as a leader of the Harlem Clubhouse where he launched not only his own successful political career but, as a member of the Gang of Four, spawned the successful careers of so many other African-American leaders," Gov. Paterson said in a statement. "It was Percy Sutton who talked me into running for office and who has continued to serve as one of my most valued advisors ever since."

As a fitting tribute, Gov. Paterson signed into law on July 21, 2010, a bill renaming the SEEK Program the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program.

The Bill states:

"A political pioneer, The Honorable Percy Ellis Sutton, as a member of the New York State Assembly created the Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) Program in 1966. This program allowed thousands of promising students from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to attend college at one of the City Universities with the help of State funding. The SEEK Program offers a unique and supportive educational opportunity to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom have had inadequate academic preparation for college-level coursework. SEEK was designed to assist students with the intellectual potential to succeed in college who lack the educational foundation and economic resources necessary to pursue a degree. This bill is introduced to honor the memory of this tremendous individual and the countless individuals who he helped throughout his lifetime."