We are excited to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) program. Similar to College Discovery (CD) at the community colleges, SEEK is the New York State higher education opportunity program here at CUNY which provides high-potential students with resources and services to help them succeed at the eleven CUNY senior colleges. SEEK has enabled more than 300,000 students to advance their potential by providing supports to achieve their educational and professional goals. Clearly where you start does not limit or determine what you can accomplish.

Meeting Allen Ballard, the architect of the program, and distinguished alum, Mayor Lovely Warren and Vice President Carlos Ortiz at the SEEK 50th launch celebration in Albany during the New York State Caucus weekend was inspirational. Seeing the founder of the program with current and past students created a moment in time not to be easily forgotten. These scholars were able to personally thank him and program staff for the contributions they have made to their lives. Connecting the generations over time showed that the value of what the programs provide and the impact made is still enduring. We thank our New York State elected representatives for their continued support.

Within these pages we share some of the highlights of the activities, events, and thoughts of members of our SEEK/CD community. We also take time to acknowledge and pay tribute to our colleague whose legacy continues.

Self-awareness and mentoring continue to be strong leadership strengths of our students. Also reflected are commitment, collaboration, advocacy, civic engagement, and critical thinking which impacts everything. Please enjoy the shared experiences and consider contributing to the next issue.
From the desk of Cheryl Williams, Associate Dean of Special Programs:

The SEEK/College Discovery community joins the family and friends of Frank Franklin in mourning his loss. We will miss Frank’s knowledge of University history, his financial aid expertise, and his leadership on legislative advocacy. Above all, we will miss Frank Franklin as the kind and generous friend he has been to many of us.

Frank’s career at Queens College began 45 years ago in the Office of Financial Aid. He later became SEEK Director, serving for more than 20 years. Under his guidance SEEK soared, becoming one of the premier programs at CUNY. Queens’ SEEK team can proudly boast how well their students achieve. While they enter Queens College with lower SATs and high school averages, under the guidance of SEEK professionals, Queens’ SEEK students are more likely to pass critical math and composition courses, return after the first and second years, and they ultimately graduate earlier than non-program students.

All who knew him will agree that Frank’s leadership style was a major reason the program does so well. Always a gentle soul, Frank brought out the best in students and staff alike. He believed in his students, supported his staff, and they flourished under his patient guidance. We benefited from having him in our midst for so long and will miss him sorely.
The Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program launched its season of celebration and events commemorating its 50th anniversary on February 13, 2016 during the 45th Annual New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Conference weekend.

The “Special 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Percy Ellis Sutton Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) Program” at the CUNY Luncheon was attended by members of CUNY’s Board of Trustees, CUNY college presidents, SEEK Directors, United Leaders of CUNY (ULC) members, other SEEK students and counselors, in addition to other supporters of CUNY and the SEEK Program. The premiere of the video SEEK: Opening Doors for 50 Years included tribute to SEEK civil rights-era advocates such as the late Percy Sutton, former Manhattan Borough President; the late Herman Badillo, former Congressman and Chair of the CUNY Board of Trustees; and the late former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm.

The City University of New York Chancellor James B. Milliken presented Distinguished Alumnus Awards to Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren and Goya Foods, Inc. Vice President and General Counsel Carlos Ortiz, both SEEK Program graduates of John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Lehman College, respectively.

Following the luncheon, workshops continued reflecting the Caucus theme “Restoring Faith & Justice: In Pursuit of Empowering Our Communities” were held to promote professional as well as personal development. The opportunity to learn new information on the most pressing issues being faced by New York residents across the state were provided. SEEK students and other participants engaged in open discussions and shared their thoughts and recommendations directly with advocates and elected representatives in each sessions.
Did you know that January 14, 2016, was the national *I am a Mentor Day*? While it has been a tradition of this group to get together for an annual retreat, this year they were a bit less conventional. The peer mentors of the SEEK Program at Baruch College celebrated by participating in a very interesting and innovative activity at Hoodwinked Escape.

Three of the staff members tagged along to experience this interactive activity. As a team they decided to take on the challenge of the “Military Mission Room,” one of the 60-minute escape room options. The only way everyone could get out was to utilize the teamwork, communication, and collaboration skills of everyone in the room. It is very important for peer mentors to possess these skills in order to effectively interact with their mentees. One of our peer mentors, Bao Lin Zhu, stated that “sharing is something that creates teamwork. Communication is a very important aspect of a team, thus we can have a chance to understand each other's ideas and work our way out." This activity was a great way for peer mentors to practice these skills, and sure enough, their skills shined through.

As the peer mentors interacted with each other, they also practiced when to take initiative, and when to step back to listen and let others provide their suggestions. Mentor Jessica Antonio shared, “my experience at Hoodwinked allowed me to improve my team building skills. I was able to think critically, share ideas with my peers and execute them in a strategic manner.” Everyone pitched in to solve the various challenges in this activity with the help of some clues. Together, the team managed to get extremely close to escaping the room. One of the peer mentors stated that “if there were only thirty seconds more, we would have escaped successfully!” Counselors Betty DuVerger and Rebecca Quainoo were pleased that the students were there because they agreed solving this mystery would not have been possible without them. Hoodwinked Escape was the perfect place for peer mentors to take part in a fun student development initiative.

Our next stop was just a few feet away, on the same street (116th) at the Harlem Pizza Co., an authentic brick oven pizza shop. To continue celebrating and honoring our peer mentors, we went to this very popular pizza shop where we ate delicious pizza. The service in this very friendly environment was fantastic. The owners of Hoodwinked Escape (Michele Ware) and Harlem Pizza Co. (Alper Uyanik) joined the peer mentors and staff to check in on their experience. One fascinating tidbit we learned while we knew Michele Ware was a Baruch alum, it was a coincidence that Alper Uyanik was also a Baruch alumni. They both also were in the class of 1989!

Michele Ware shared her experience transitioning from being a college student entering the professional world after graduation. Peer mentors took turns sharing their experiences at Hoodwinked Escape, what they learned and what they are taking away. After finishing our delicious meal and taking a few pictures, they wrapped up *Peer Mentor Day.*
On Wednesday, February 24, 2016, the SEEK Student Association at Medgar Evers College hosted a Black History Month event entitled, “Who Are We?” The event was a celebration of “The Beauty of Black and Latino Culture and Identity”, as reflected in the SEEK student population at Medgar Evers. Sphere-headed by the elected executive board, the event opened with greetings and remarks from Associate Provost Dr. Gladys Schrynemakers and the Program’s Interim Director Ms. Sherrill-Ann Mason. Ms. Mason highlighting the persistence rates of students in the SEEK program. The audience to applauded the value and importance of equal opportunity programs which enhance the academic performance of minority students.

The program continued with welcome greetings from the SEEK Association executive board members. Each asked the question, “Who Are We?” in five different languages -- Spanish, Haitian-Creole, French, Patois, and Jula (a Mande language spoken in parts of West Africa). The members then stated, “although we are all from different cultural backgrounds, we are all different shades of Black.” This captured the attention of the audience and some of the cultural diversity of the students in the SEEK Program at Medgar Evers College.

The student performances included the singing of the Black National Anthem, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* beautifully rendered by Tiona Bibbs. It was followed by an original rap by Marquis Clinton with lyrics that highlighted the injustices of police brutality in communities of color. The program then shifted to student voices in a panel discussion. The student panelists were from the Ivory Coast, Haiti, Cuba, Casablanca, Morocco, and the Dominican Republic, representing different parts of Africa and the Caribbean. The discussion was facilitated by Dr. Yvanne Joseph, a lecturer/counselor in the Department of SEEK/Special Programs. Students were asked to share the uniqueness and beauty of their cultural backgrounds. They also shared some of the challenges they have faced, including be-
Jibreel Jalloh is a Brooklyn native with Sierra Leonean ancestry who attends Baruch College, one of the preeminent business schools in New York City. Expected to graduate in December of 2016, he is one of the SEEK program’s many shining stars. Throughout his short time at Baruch he has displayed a tremendous sense of leadership. During the previous academic year Jibreel played a paramount role in the revival of the SEEK Society, a student run organization on campus. Furthermore, he spearheaded the school’s first ever trip to Yale University’s Black Solidarity Conference during the prestigious month of February.

Over this past summer, Jibreel interned for the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit, where he actively propelled Mayoral initiatives to further justice and opportunity for all New Yorkers. He was also selected to participate in the CUNY School of Law Pipeline to Justice Summer Program. Housed at the nation’s premier public interest law school, the Pipeline to Justice Summer Program was the ideal place for Jibreel to continue his journey as an advocate for social change.

Today, Jibreel works as a legislative intern to Council Member Jumaane Williams, who coincidentally chairs arguably the most important committee in the council, housing and development. He also serves as the Vice President of the Black Student Union and has recently organized a Know Your Rights workshop with students from CUNY Law. Jibreel attributes his success in college to the entire SEEK family. However, he affirms a special thanks to Dr. Anselmo, Kristy Perez, Rebecca Quainoo and all his past and present UMLA (Urban Male Leadership Academy) brothers.

Medgar Evers College SEEK Student Association Hosts “Who Are We?”

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ing confronted with stereotypes and misconceptions about their physical features, and race, and the importance of embracing differences while working together to end oppression.

Committed to being the voice of SEEK students at Medgar Evers College, the SEEK Student Association looks forward to planning other events and activities that will encourage students to serve as active participants in their communities, both on and off campus.
I entered LaGuardia Community College (LAGCC) in the fall of 2014 with no idea of what I was in for. My name is Ruby Cordero and I want to share with you why I’m so grateful that I’m a College Discovery student!

When I entered LAGCC, I faced so many challenges that I wasn’t even aware of. One of the most pressing challenges was that I was not financially prepared for college. I did not have a laptop or phone which often made it really difficult for me to complete my work in a timely manner. It was also hard therefore for me to communicate with my professors as proficiently as I would have liked to. Another challenge was that my work and school schedules conflicted. I needed to work because I needed to pay my bills and help my mom around the house. So quitting my job was not an option. This was the first time I experienced serious consequences from my failure to properly manage my time.

During my first semester I also faced intense social, emotional, and academic challenges. I had to learn how to adjust to my new college student lifestyle, and pretty much needed to disconnect myself from my social life. It was very distracting and prevented me from succeeding in college. Learning to balance and manage my high levels of stress was a huge challenge for me. I have lupus which is a chronic autoimmune disease that often has debilitating symptoms affecting any part of my body. So properly managing my health, making sure that my disease was not so agonizing to the point where I could not complete my assignments, and working my hardest towards my studies were the most difficult challenges I faced.

With the help of my College Discovery Counselor and other offices on campus I am doing a much better job. One of the most important things I’ve learned is that I have to maintain my health, and then I can manage everything else. I’ve also learned that working is really a huge distraction preventing students from engaging themselves in their academic careers. So finding a job that supports your college attendance is important because many of us have bills and debt we need to take care of. Social media and hanging out with friends were also huge distractions from my focusing on my academic career. So in order to focus more on school I had to literally disconnect myself from all social media networks. I deac-tivated my Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and all other social media accounts. The only type of social networking and communicating I utilize is email. I made a promise to myself that until after I graduate and learn how to balance my personal and academic life, I will not be networking through social media.

Learning how all of these factors affected my academic performance didn’t happen overnight. Working very closely with my CD Counselor and seeing my 2.8 GPA during my 3rd semester on my transcript set the stage for my change. But my commitment to changing my priorities came when I saw my younger brother having problems in school. I realized I needed to set a better example and influence him to do better. At that moment, I promised myself that I would do better academically so that I can prove to my younger siblings that I too work hard in school and face

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So Grateful That I’m a College Discovery Student!

(Continued from Page 7)

the same challenges they do. But even through all the hard times I make the time to focus on my school work. Now whenever I get a 100 on my tests I show my brother and hopefully inspire him to want to do better academically.

Remaining focused and motivated helps to keep me on track despite the responsibilities and challenges I have, and I encourage other CD students to do the same. My younger siblings are my motivation and I want them to stay motivated and focused in school, so I prove to them that school can be fun. I remind them to never give up because anything is possible. When I reflect on the person I was when I first began LAGCC in comparison to now I feel grateful for the College Discovery Program and motivated to do more! I am so grateful because if it were not for the Program, my CD Counselor Sunny and the rest of the CD Program staff who sincerely want the best for me, I would not have been where I am today! I would’ve dropped out. My CD Counselor stayed on top of me and forced me to take ownership for myself and my academics. I made a lot of mistakes academically but my counselor was there to give me the best alternatives to help me solve a lot of my issues before it was too late. She gave me real world advice, made me read more and research everything, and constantly reminded me of the primary purpose why I came to college.

To all the new College Discovery students entering college, I encourage you to stay connected to the CD Program. Become involved in school, explore campus events, and read about opportunities and resources. The more you inform and surround yourself with other students who have same the goals as you, the more likely you are to stay inspired and accomplish them! Also, maintain a close relationship not just with your CD counselor, but with your professors as well. Your counselor will guide you in the best direction and inform you of anything you should know. Your professors will at most times be supportive and willing to help if they see that you are really making an effort.

As I move into the upcoming semester, I will be working really hard to boost my GPA to a 3.5, so that I can join the Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) national honor society. I want to also get a job on campus, stay involved in campus affairs to motivate and set an example for all the new freshman, hopefully join the chi alpha organization, and become a peer mediator.

In five years I see myself helping the community and being a positive role model in society. I will either have or start working towards getting my master’s degree, motivating students to go to school and hopefully owning a business. But I know this wouldn’t even be my path if I wasn’t in College Discovery. So I am extremely grateful for the program and all the people who work in it. If I could sit down and talk with the person who created the program, I would tell them how grateful I am to be part of the college discovery because it has changed my life! I’ve never had someone in school who cares about me and my success the way CD does and has done so since the first day of school. Through them I have stayed motivated and achieved my potential to be the kind of person that I want to be.
Overall, it was a very successful day. Everyone enjoyed being in a different environment and spending time together.

Mentor Tarak Chowdhury summed up the experience for all very well. He shared, “I had a wonderful time at the event. One thing that struck me from the day is that no matter what you are doing, work with all the perspectives there are, some of which might be something you don't want to hear or follow. You loose nothing from listening to all sides of a story. At the end of the day you can always gain something new.” We were pleased to hear from mentor Gagandeep Kaur that this experience was the best day of her winter break! The peer mentors have grown to be a family and it is an honor to have them as mentors in the SEEK Program. Here’s to another successful semester with our peer mentors!
My name is Orlando Pitre, Jr. and I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York to a Dominican Mother and a Puerto Rican father. All my life my family and I were able to afford to live in New York due to Section 8 housing. My life has been one of trial and tribulations, but isn’t that a part of life? My parents had very little education. My dad went as far as the 8th grade and my mom went as far as the 3rd grade due to family responsibilities. Education wasn’t a big thing in my family growing up. I have two older sisters who dropped out of high school. Even though there was some backlash from my mother, there weren’t too many consequences if they didn’t return to school.

My aunt on my mother’s side, Rosa Arelis, was actually the main force that drove my education. I can remember her emphasizing the importance of reading to me when I was a very young age. My favorite book of all times, *Harry Potter*, was first introduced to me by my aunt when she gave me the first book in the chronicle that was brought to her by her co-worker who would visit twice a year. Every year when a new *Harry Potter* Book came out my aunt would get me a copy before they hit the shelves in the U.S. I was fascinated with reading, not just *Harry Potter* books but all types of books, even ones that may seem boring to others. She instilled in me that in order to make it through life here in the United States you have to focus on school because that opens doors for people of color in this country. I can proudly say that I am the first person in my family to graduate from high school and also the first to achieve an Associate’s Degree. I will soon have my Bachelor’s from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I aspire to be a lawyer.

Attaining my bachelor’s was a tribulation in every way. My family and I were unfortunate victims of Hurricane Sandy and lost most of our possessions when our basement apartment flooded during the storm. I had to take a year off from school and helped my family rebuild by working and saving money to buy our much needed items. I always knew I would go back to school no matter what. A year after the storm, my family and I have fully landed on our feet. I was able to return to school raising my GPA from academic probation (below a 2.0) to the highest it has ever been in my academic career (over a 3.3). I am now poised to graduate this coming June! Currently I am exploring law schools in the New York City area.

With the constant help of my SEEK Counselor, Dr. Cheryl Franks, and other SEEK staff and counselors, including Juana Polanco, Counselor, Dr. Chevy Alford, and Fay Williams, my life has changed. I would not be graduating with honors without them. They have instilled in me knowledge, life experience and hope for the future….that anything is possible if you put your mind to it and put in the hard work. The reason why I want to go to law school is to “pay it back,” in some way!!
LaGuardia Rewarded for College Discovery

The College Discovery Program at LaGuardia Community College was recently awarded $13,100.00 for the College Discovery Civic Scholars Program, a part of President's Mellow's LaGuardia Retention and Graduation Innovation Grant. The selection process was highly competitive but Dr. Sophia Ward, a former Director of College Discovery (CD) and Dr. Kyoko Toyama, a faculty counselor, developed a creative civic engagement project. It is based on a few already established CD leadership programs, including Peer Partner, CD Scholars, CD Leadership Academy and CD Ambassadors.

The College Discovery Civic Scholars Program encourages students to become engaged citizens and to cultivate their capacity to create positive social change in their communities, addressing the issues of homelessness in New York City. This program is designed to help Scholars continue to build organizing skills, increase leadership responsibilities and grow through planning, reflection and collaborating with community organizations. The goals of the program are to improve students’ understanding, knowledge, and awareness about political and social issues such as homelessness in New York City; to facilitate community and campus partnerships in order to foster a campus culture dedicated to civic engagement and service; and to promote the development of leadership and professional skills through direct service and civic/political action. They will participate in a kick off retreat, in a bi-weekly seminar facilitated by co-coordinators of the project, visit various homeless shelters, work with children who are homeless and attend a City Council hearing related to housing and homelessness in New York City.

At the kick off retreat students received some wisdom from Mr. James Macklin, Director of Outreach at the Bowery Mission, one of the largest social services agencies to serve the homeless. He shared how he was once homeless but never gave up his integrity and hope. Students will be meeting bi-weekly to develop leadership skills and to plan a conference on homelessness in New York City in May for the entire college community, coordinated by CD’s Counseling graduate interns, Annibel Tejeda (Hunter), Vidhi Tamboli (Teachers College) and the program supervisor, Dr. Kyoko.
Shout Outs for Service

Socks for SEEK at CSI

This past holiday season, SEEK student Bruce French came to the SEEK Office with an idea: why not help Project Hospitality, Staten Island’s respected not-for-profit agency for the homeless, find warm clothing for those in need?

The idea, eventually dubbed “Socks for SEEK,” took hold when he and Counselor Fran Fassman decided to reach out across campus for donations of warm winter socks. As a result, socks of every size and style began pouring in. In the end, Bruce and his fellow students managed to collect 225 pairs.

Delivered to Project Hospitality by Dr. Fassman and Ms. Perez-Lai just before the holidays, the socks made their way into the agency’s holiday baskets in time for Christmas. Not only did SEEK students and staff give to this drive, but donations poured in from other offices as well (Financial Aid, Bursar, Testing, Academic Advising, Counseling, Alumni to name just a few), proving that CSI staff members always rise to the occasion. Three cheers for all involved!

John Jay’s Letter from IRIS

On January 27, 2016 the SEEK Department at John Jay College of Criminal Justice received a letter from IRIS, the Integrated Refugee and Immigration Services. Chris George, the Executive Director, expressed appreciation for the donation they made to assist the people his organization serves. For more than 30 years IRIS has welcomed and offered services to help refugees become self-sufficient as they transition their lives in new communities.

“Thank you for your gift of multiple boxes of clothing; and thank you for the message it sends to refugees arriving in Connecticut. The feeling of being welcomed is particularly important in the midst of current events. Events events have brought refugee resettlement to the forefront of national and international news. While Syria has been featured, refugees from all over the world continue to seek refuge and safety in our country.”

We extend our thanks to the students and staff at John Jay for their thoughtfulness and community services. Let us all continue to find some way to contribute to help trans-
Queens College SEEK Volunteers Awarded for Service

The Queens College Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program, under the leadership of Stacy Hepburn, was recognized by Mitchell Silver, Commissioner for the City of New York Parks Department, for their community service to the Forest and Highland Parks on February 26, 2016. He acknowledged the debt of gratitude that the city owes to the volunteers who make the parks a special place for the community. At the celebration held to honor the many volunteers who keep our parks beautiful, the awards given to SEEK Program volunteers for their work included the Volunteer Group of the Year Award from the City of New York Parks & Recreation; a certificate of recognition and congratulations from Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.; and citations from New York State Assembly Member, Mike Miller, City Council Member, Eric A. Ulrich and City Council Member Rafael L. Espinal Jr. Congratulations for your well-deserved recognition for your hard work.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, May 5th, 2016
Hunter College SEEK Class of 2016 Senior Banquet

Friday, May 6, 2016
Baruch College SEEK Awards Ceremony
Medgar Evers College SEEK Awards Ceremony

Wednesday, May 11, 2016
Brooklyn College 50th Anniversary Celebration
John Jay College of Criminal Justice SEEK Awards

Monday, May 16, 2016
University SEEK 50th Celebration
SEEK/CD Collaboration Yields Higher Critical Thinking

by Leidy Pichardo, Nancy Colon & Walter Valero

Within the oases of the Bronx Community and Lehman College campuses in the Bronx, first year SEEK/CD students have discovered the promise of learning how to think critically beyond the walls of the classroom. Teamwork and collaboration between The Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program at Lehman College and the College Discovery Program at Bronx Community College have undoubtedly broaden students’ horizons and prepared them to face challenges and overcome obstacles. The following is a succinct summary of how this collaboration was forged and how students are benefitting. To be sure the combined tenets, talents and resources of SEEK/CD continue to transform and empower students, and the Bronx is a stronghold proving ground.

Critical Inquiry at Lehman College: Background and Impetus

Ever in pursuit of ways to improve the academic performance of SEEK students at Lehman College, SEEK Director, Dr. Annette Hernandez invited Dr. Sharona A. Levy from Brooklyn College to lead a professional development workshop for her staff on the merits of incorporating critical thinking into academic support programming activities. Dr. Hernandez learned about a summer program that Dr. Levy had piloted for the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program at Brooklyn College as part of a FIPSE grant that entailed teaching Critical Inquiry skills to incoming SEEK freshmen students. Rooted in the belief that reading is the key to students' success in college, Critical Inquiry assists students in controlling their own learning. Essential to the process are a set of active reading strategies that demand that students preview texts, read the text multiple times, and formulate questions as annotations. Students are trained to think of the act of reading as an activity that requires multiple drafts in much the same way that they are trained to write multiple drafts of an essay. Students are taught to meaningfully annotate the texts rather than create a series of yellow highlighted lines across the page. The important effect is that students become independent readers and learners with an understanding of how to approach academic texts.

In spring 2014, Dr. Sharona A. Levy visited Lehman and conducted a one-day professional development workshop in which she demonstrated how Critical Inquiry was incorporated into the SEEK Summer Program at Brooklyn College. The workshop served as a catalyst for the SEEK staff at Lehman to adapt Dr. Levy’s Critical Inquiry model and implement it as an new activity for students. As a result, beginning in the summer of 2014, all SEEK freshmen students at Lehman College are required to participate in Critical Inquiry workshops

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Critical Inquiry at Bronx Community College: Adaptation & Development

Hearing about the success of Critical Inquiry in the SEEK Program at Lehman College, in fall 2015 the College Discovery (CD) Program at Bronx Community College (BCC) embarked on an external collaboration. It was comprised of a two-day training on Critical Inquiry led by Ms. Nancy Colon, Learning Facilitation Coordinator, and one of her Critical Inquiry Facilitators, Ms. Naudy Suarez. The training consisted of teaching tutors how to facilitate critical inquiry sessions on a set of cognitive skills such as: annotation, higher order questioning and close reading, with the goal of preparing students for college through understanding and practicing the principles of critical inquiry. Ms. Colon defined critical inquiry and thoroughly explained the meaning and benefits of annotating a text. Many students enter college without the proper critical thinking skills necessary to tackle rigorous texts that require deep understanding. Through critical inquiry, students are taught to interact with the text, mark up or annotate and ask questions as they read. After doing so, the facilitators are able to guide the group of students in a conversation about the topic, their notes, and others’ opinions about the text, while encouraging them to problem solve and think about the author’s purpose, point of view and opposing side.

Critical Inquiry at Bronx Community College: Implementation

The Bronx Community College (CD) Program received a CD Scholars Grant for the 2015-2016 academic year to work with fifty selected freshman students. The goal of this project is to foster students’ smooth transition from high school to college, improve student retention and academic performance, and provide co-curricular activities during the SEEK Summer Program and through their first year in college.

The benefits of good critical thinking skills are not only apparent in better academic performance, but they also help prepare students for the job market. Last year the Wall Street Journal reported that employers are looking for their potential hires to have critical thinking skills. The paper reported that in an Indeed.com study employers mentioned that critical thinking in job postings has doubled since 2009. Good critical thinking skills support creative problem solving, the ability to analyze data and the ability to be able to look at situations from a variety of viewpoints. Critical thinking skills are surely invaluable to any business and employer.

The Critical Inquiry component of the SEEK Program at Lehman College provides students with opportunities to practice and improve their critical inquiry/thinking skills in a risk free environment. Students participate in a variety of activities including debates, Socratic seminars and cooperative learning. This program has allowed Critical Thinking Facilitators to take part in ongoing training allowing them to gain knowledge about how students learn, effective teaching techniques, curriculum development and how to write lesson plans. As an outcome, Facilitators report being more energized and excited about their own learning and in turn have become more effective Tutors. Not only has this energy and excitement help produce students who are more active and motivated learners, they provide students with empowering skills. The ability to think critically enables students to not only be successful academically, as they apply this skill across many disciplines, it empowers them to tackle the challenges and obstacles that they must face outside of the classroom as well.

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that enhance learning and provides a sense of connectedness. These goals are to be achieved through an enriched student support program that includes a structured pre-freshman summer experience, first year theme based learning communities, comprehensive academic support services, and proactive counseling.

In order to supplement the tutoring and Supplemental Instruction services to these freshmen, the BCC CD Academic Support Coordinator, Mrs. Leidy Pichardo, decided to provide a rigorous eight week Critical Inquiry Seminar (CIS) for the fifty CD Scholars. As part of the preparation for the CIS, the six trained tutors further developed and utilized the lesson plans provided at the training with Lehman. They also researched articles on the topic of overcoming obstacles, which directly correlated with the themes introduced in the learning community course at BCC. Once the seminar began, each student was given a workbook that contained all of the readings, pre-tests, post-tests and note taking pages.

Critical Inquiry at Bronx Community College: Outcomes

While Lehman’s Critical Inquiry sessions were facilitated in a larger group, BCC CD opted to do small groups since they were piloting this type of academic support with only fifty students. Students were grouped and registered into the CIS based upon their schedule availability. The six groups included between five and twelve students in each and met once a week. Two groups met twice a week for an hour and the remaining four groups met once a week for an hour and a half. All students were administered a pre and post-test that assessed critical thinking and annotation. Analysis of Pre and Post Tests revel that students’ performance was positively impacted as indicated in the following table:

These results demonstrate that overall student’s performance increased by 22% in critical thinking and 32% in annotation. The average cumulative GPA equaled 2.341.

As part of their assessment, the Office of Academic Support at BCC also administered a student feedback survey with seven questions to gauge students’ experience and thoughts about the overall learning experience; facilitator level of preparation and engagement; academic rigor of the articles; time allotted for CIS; knowledge and use of annotations; knowledge of factual, interpretive and evaluative questions; and applications of skills learned.

The bar graph on the next page shows the overall results:

It is evident by these results that students were highly satisfied with their learning experience in critical inquiry. But most importantly, they expressed that they can truly apply these skills not only to their other academic courses, but also to their everyday lives as being better problem solv-

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SEEK/CD Collaboration Yields Higher Critical Thinking

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Critical Inquiry at Bronx Community College: Analysis of Outcomes

Based on these results, the Office of Academic Support at BCC has decided to extend the Critical Inquiry Seminar into the spring 2016 semester with some modifications and will offer the Seminar as a component of the Pre-Freshman Summer Program. Currently, forty four CD Scholars will continue this learning experience for six weeks during the spring semester. The facilitators have narrowed down the topics offered by the students, and decided upon the following: “The Pros and Cons of Technology”, “Gender Roles and Inequalities” and “Tragedies and Murders.” During the spring 2016 semester tutors will be co-facilitating the sessions, as opposed to the fall where they each had their own session. Due to scheduling, there are only four critical inquiry sessions a bit larger in size which will meet only once a week for an hour. It is important to note that these sessions are supplemental to the regular tutoring support provided in the academic areas. As a culminating activity, students will be engaging in a debate on one of the topics discussed in the seminar. They will be asked to think critically on their position as well as the opposing side.

Critical Inquiry at Bronx Community College: Next Steps

As next steps, the Office of Academic Support at BCC will provide its tutors with professional development workshops to enhance their profession-
SEEK/CD Collaboration Yields Higher Critical Thinking Skills

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al pedagogy. Some topics will include: “Bloom’s Taxonomy”, “Socratic Seminar”, “Learning How Students Learn”, and “Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Writing Intensive Courses.” During the summer of 2016, Mrs. Pichardo and the CD tutors will engage in planning with the goal of expanding and offering critical inquiry to all its incoming students throughout their freshman year.

Conclusion
The sharing of ideas and resources among professionals can truly go a long way. Teamwork and collaboration among SEEK/CD programs undoubtedly works! What started out as an idea to design a new academic support model to develop and enhance the critical thinking skills of SEEK students at Brooklyn College as part of a grant has expanded and morphed into a rich and ongoing activity that has impacted and continues to deeply benefit SEEK/CD students in the Bronx. As the aforementioned data reveals, it is clearly evident that critical inquiry truly helps SEEK and CD students beyond the walls of the classroom. It is without a doubt that teaching students to think critically will prepare them, not only for the challenges they encounter in the classroom, but for the challenges and obstacles they will have to face and overcome in life. As such, the academic success and learning enhancement promoted by critical inquiry can and should benefit all SEEK/CD students CUNY wide. Therefore, sharing and collaboration must continue, it must be fostered, it must be nurtured, and it must be expanded. After all, not only do we owe it to our SEEK/CD students, they need it and deserve it!
LaGuardia’s Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) Induction

Fourteen (14) individuals were inducted into the Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) chapter at LaGuardia Community College on Thursday, January 28, 2016. Included among these scholars were two honorary members, Ndigo Washington, Legislative Director/CUNY Liaison, Office of New York City Councilmember Inez Barron, and Omari Pearson, National Program Director, Operation Hope, Banking on Our Future College Edition.

From 2016 XAE Honorary Inductee Omari Pearson:

Over the last five years Operation HOPE Banking on Our Future College Edition has empowered more than 6,000 CUNY SEEK & CD students. What started as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated with Dean Williams, CUNY Office of Special Programs, has expanded into something so much bigger. I have had the pleasure of partnering with amazing directors, counselor, and staff at nine SEEK and CD campus programs including Medgar Evers College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York City College of Technology, City College, York College, Queens College, Brooklyn College, Baruch College and LaGuardia Community College. In addition, I have spoken to future world changers at the last two annual Student Leadership Academy conferences. But this last January I was humbled beyond words. College Discovery (CD) at LaGuardia Community College inducted me as an honorary member of Chi Alpha Epsilon.

Founded at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society was formed to recognize the academic achievements of students admitted to colleges and universities through Opportunity Programs. Its purposes are to promote continued high academic standards, foster increased communication among its members, and honor academic excellence. Membership in Chi Alpha Epsilon requires a 3.0 or better for two consecutive semesters. This was a surprise and honor because they were the first CUNY SEEK/CD program to give me such recognition. I would like to thank Dr. Toyama and Dean Brannon for honoring me with such an award.
You're Invited
The Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program at CUNY Celebrates 50 Years!

Sharing What Works Exhibit
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Wednesday, April 13, 2016
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(b/w 58th and 59th streets)

Office of Special Programs
City University of New York
555 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019
646-664-8800

Cheryl Williams, University Associate Dean
Shirley de Peña, Director, Youth Matter
Mavis Hall, Director, Office of Special Programs
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