

Alumni Spotlight

Continued from page 6

"Trappings was inspired by the desire to create an artwork in the public realm that explores women's relationship to power," Renee said. "The first component was interview sessions where groups of women came together to respond to the question: 'What do you wear that makes you feel powerful?' The second is a national traveling exhibition. The third is our book, *Trappings: Stories of Women, Power and Clothing*. Lastly, we hope to create a series or feature-length film about the women we have met."

Renee and Tiffany's goal was to encourage women to open up about their feelings and opinions on feminism, sexism, prejudices, and cultural constraints on female identity. They chose clothing as their vehicle to get at these sometimes tightly held opinions.

"Not just a project where two nice girls set up lunch and get together with girlfriends to chit-chat and take some photos," the Trappings introduction says, "this is an artwork that causes people to think, with a social framework. At a time when women's rights are being challenged in the United States and the status of women around the world is still second class at best, we want to inspire women to become empowered in their own lives."

Trappings has received several grants including one from the National Endowment for the Arts' Challenge America: Reaching Every Community, and another from the Heinz Endowments' Small Arts Initiative. Complete information about Trappings can be found at www.trappings-stories.com or on the Two Girls Working website at www.twogirlsworking.com.



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Volume 27 • Summer 2008
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Opening Doors, Creating Opportunities, Building Leaders

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Volume 27 • Summer 2008

HUNTER COLLEGE
Public Service
Scholar Program



25 years of filling the pipeline

In 1982, eight young women constituted the first class of scholars. These bright undergraduates were eager to experience public service in the "real world." They faced multiple challenges in getting and succeeding in leadership positions. The program gave them career opportunities beyond their expectations, as it continues to do today for each year's class, larger and more diverse but no less eager.

The program has grown and evolved. Up to 24 Scholars are now accepted annually. Stipends have increased to \$6,000 from \$2,000 a student annually, although the program no longer covers tuition as in the initial years. Stipends have been historically essential, allowing self-supporting students to forgo part-time jobs and participate in the Program. The demographics have broadened, with students from different backgrounds, religions and cultures entering. These changes strengthen the Program's capacity to achieve its mission. The motivation of scholars has remained the same since 1982, and the program is true to its founding principle—to open doors to women and minority students who have been traditionally underrepresented in management, policy and planning positions in public service.

The value of the Program and its Scholars is now widely understood in the city. The program began with few organizational partnerships for internships. Now, requests from nonprofit and government agencies flood the office each spring when the rolls open for placements. Scholars are unlike most other interns. In 1986, Elaine Walsh, the

program director, had the foresight to begin calling the students "Scholars" rather than "interns" because of their exceptional work ethic and eagerness for public service. The designation also hinted at the well-designed system of



Then and Now: PSSP Classes from 1982 and 2008

reporting by the agency and by the Scholar, which enables Dr. Walsh to make sure the Scholars are being given tasks of real meaning, not just work to replace a "gofer" the agency might otherwise hire.

Eric Brettschneider, founder of Agenda for Children Tomorrow (ACT), has been

partnering with the Program for over 20 years. In a recent interview, he said: "Every public scholar we had at ACT was one, effective and two, likeable. They usually exceeded reasonable expectations in the research, leadership and management contributions. Elaine was both a mentor and diplomat ...for students and supervisors alike."

On its anniversary, the Program is even more crucial than in the past. As the baby-boom generation starts retiring from public service jobs in the next few years, qualified professionals with leadership qualities and competencies will be needed to fill the executive positions left open. The Public Service Scholar Program is an excellent example of planning for succession. The majority of Scholars graduate prepared to lead, to make a positive impact in the public service sector, and work toward a more civil society. Over 80 percent of alumni now hold or held leadership positions in public service agencies.

Nancy Wackstein, executive director of United Neighborhood Houses of New York, has been a key supporter since the program's initial years: lecturer, guest speaker, and scholar supervisor. She strongly believes that the Program will continue to be a key source for leaders in our city.

"The public interest sector, both nonprofit and government," she said recently, "increasingly will demand a new generation of motivated, skilled and savvy leaders. The Program is the perfect

Continued on page two

A view from the

DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

by Elaine M. Walsh, Ph.D.



For over 20 years it's been my proud task to watch hundreds of talented and capable students complete the Public Service Scholar Program and emerge with the potential to make a difference. Scholars are bright, talented and motivated, and armed with experience to pursue careers in the public sector. But are these qualities enough to achieve professional success? When faced with gender and race prejudices, securing top level positions is often an uphill battle. Race and gender biases were relevant 25 years ago when the Program began, but they are still roadblocks in career progress for too many qualified women and minorities.

On the cover of this newsletter, we celebrate our 25th anniversary. The need for this unique program is as strong today as when it began. Women and members of minority groups are vastly underrepresented in political and most other top public-service positions. Our program continues to empower these populations and strives to work toward a more humane society, where our leaders

will speak with the voices of the whole population. We are creating change and we are pushing past the workplace "glass ceiling" that has halted movement for many women and minority-group members.

The program's success rate in preparing our next generation of leaders is crucial today as we look toward the retirement of large numbers of executives over the next years. A steady flow of qualified candidates will be essential to lead these organizations into a new era of better management and improved policies. The Program is one key resource for our city.

In this newsletter, I am proud to share with you a recent *New York Times* article about our scholars. Having seen first-hand, in their placements, the workings of city government, they were voicing their views on an occasion when Clyde Haberman, a reporter from the *Times*, was listening. His column, "Searching for Optimism but Finding Government," evoked positive responses from alumni and supporters of the Program.

We also share some of our recent activities, including our Scholars' participation in Homeless Outreach Population Estimate, or HOPE. On page three, Scholars describe some experiences in the survey and offer their opinions about the methods of the Department of Homeless Services. We also held our first Career Forum in April, which is detailed on page five. We are eager to provide extended career development and networking opportunities for our Scholars and alumni, and plan to continue these regularly.

The future for the Program is indeed exciting. After 25 years, we are now in a position to increase our impact on additional scholars and city institutions and I look forward to program expansion opportunities. My sincere gratitude is extended to all of our generous donors, many of whom have been directly involved and affected by the Program. A core principle has always been to "give back," and I cannot thank our generous supporters enough for their many acts of kindness.

25 Years

Continued from front cover

introduction and training ground for these leaders, and has proved time and again, how important internship opportunities like these are to developing the workforce of tomorrow for our sector. I applaud the work of this program and the hundreds of young people it has exposed to this most important career track."

Based on the Program's design, experience, and success rate, replication is an obvious future goal. Growing the Program at Hunter and then carrying it to other institutions will help meet demand.

Ruth W. Messinger, now president of American Jewish World Service and former Borough President of Manhattan, has supported the Program for over a decade. She called it a "tremendously important program." "Over time," she said, "it

continues to pick extraordinary students, give them a great hands-on experience, challenge them to think deeply about what they are learning and why." "Its graduates move out into

"There is no better time to attract our best and brightest young people to public service. PSSP is even more relevant today!"

— a comment on the 25th anniversary of the Public Service Scholar Program by Dr. Donna Shalala, founder of the Program, former president of Hunter College and current president of University of Miami.

the world ready to pursue interesting careers," Ms. Messinger said, "able and willing to make a difference in the city and beyond. The program should be funded to exist into perpetuity."

CONGRATULATIONS to the 2008 Program Graduates

On May 5, the PSS class of seventeen scholars celebrated their year of growth and accomplishments with friends, family, alumni, mentors, internship supervisors, funders and city representatives in the City Council Chambers and the Rotunda at City Hall.

United Way's Vice President of Community Investment Kathryn O'Neal-Dunham applauded the ambitions of the cohort of women Scholars as she spoke about the challenges females face in the workforce and public service. Addressing the graduating cohort of Scholars, Ms. O'Neal-Dunham says, "Sixty-eight percent of full-time employees in the nonprofit workforce are women, while women only make up 52.6% of the NYC population. The problems associated with poverty can seem intractable. This is why your participation in solving them is so critical—we need smart, passionate, idealistic and realistic women to help us build organizations that will solve these problems."

Ms. O'Neal-Dunham thanked Professor Walsh for "her vision and passion, for leading a program that provides something that many only happen to stumble into in life: mentorship. The PSSP provides it in an industry where encouragement is key. I want to thank all of the mentors here tonight who have chosen to build the next generation of passionate and committed leaders. Your investment will most certainly experience great returns."



Scholars and friends



Vice President of Community Investment at United Way of New York City, Kathryn O'Neal-Dunham



Professor Walsh with PSSP supporter Yvette Furman-Katz

Speaking truth to Albany

Each year, a few Scholars go to Albany to impress upon the legislators there the needs of the city's vulnerable children and families. This political trip, called Advocacy Day, was on March 4 this year. Indera Singh, Gillian Feuerberg, Fariha Mughal, Odessia Brown, Amanda D'Annuncci and Nicole Seemungal made the trip on behalf of Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC).

Indera was particularly involved since she had helped organize travel plans and line up the agenda while she worked at the Citizens' Committee last year. "In some ways I felt responsible for everything that went right and wrong that day," the Scholar said. "It was my first time in Albany and I really didn't know what to expect from the state representatives. I think they were receptive and open to our suggestions. In total there were over 20 meetings scheduled. Our volunteers, totaling over 45, divided into groups to advocate for funding allocations for child welfare programs."

Gillian also learned a lot about how things operate. "It was fascinating to see exactly how things are accomplished and the inner workings of policy," she said. Fariha agreed. She spoke of meeting with Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera, a democrat who represents the 76th district in the Bronx. "This was helpful in understanding how the New York State Legislature distinguishes between funding recommendations," Fariha said, "and how it can impact CCC's agenda and programs."

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

What do you wear that makes you feel powerful?



Renee Piechocki, a 1994 PSS alumna, spent six years traveling the country asking women: "What do you wear that makes you feel powerful?" This question is the core of a national interview-based art project called Trappings, developed by Renee and her creative partner, Tiffany Ludwig, who together are known as Two Girls Working.

Renee has stayed true to her passion for art since her time as a Scholar. She was a fine arts major and interned at Hospital Audiences, a nonprofit organization that offered art-related programs to disabled people. She also participated in the City

of New York Urban Fellows Program. "The PSSP was a key step for me in becoming a public art administrator," she says. "I became more acutely aware of how the arts operated outside of the traditional museum and gallery settings." Renee is now a noted artist, an accomplished writer and in Pittsburgh, director of the Office of Public Art, a partnership between the City of Pittsburgh and the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council.

The combination of Renee's passion for art and women's empowerment led to her organization of the interview project.



Photo Credit: Ryan Hughes

The artists Two Girls Working
Tiffany Ludwig (left) and Renee Piechocki (right)

Continued on back cover

THANK YOU:

Our program thrives because of you



Many thanks to these friends of the Public Service Scholar Program who contributed in the last year.

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were received from
the following:**
New York Times Foundation

**We sincerely apologize for anyone we may not have included. Please contact our Program Office if you were not acknowledged.*

Scholars help survey the homeless for HOPE COUNT 2008

Over 1,700 volunteers spent most of the night of January 28 on New York City's sixth annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate, or HOPE. Twenty-five of these volunteers were Public Service Scholars, their mentors, friends or faculty members.

As volunteers, Scholars, working as part of teams of three to five, either on surface streets or in the subway, walked specified routes to the end. They approached everyone they met who was not sleeping or clearly working, and asked questions formulated by City Department of Homeless Services. After describing their mission—a survey of housing in the neighborhood—and showing their stick-on identification badges, the volunteers asked, "Tonight, do you have some place you call home or the place where you live?" People who answered "no" were offered van transportation to a safe shelter and someone to stay with them until the van arrived. The rest were asked other questions about their home.

The department uses the results to extrapolate and gauge the street and subway homeless population. This information helps the department get federal funding for programs, locates pockets of homeless people, and helps design support services. HOPE is one of the tools used to evaluate the Mayor's Five Year Plan to Reduce Homelessness. The result this year indicates a homeless population of 3,306, against last year's total of 3,755.

The Count has both advocates and critics. Scholars share their views.

"The HOPE Count was everything I did not expect it to be," Odessia Brown said. "The DHS training was not what I expected. I would have liked more instruction about how to identify a homeless individual. I had a wonderful time with team members who worked with various homeless outreach organizations who told us about their experiences in the field."

"The night of the HOPE Count was at first a little scary," says Indera Singh. "I've never walked around NYC at 2 a.m. with a group of people I hardly knew. But as the night progressed, I realized how important it was for us to be there. We were

representing a population of NYC that is virtually ignored by society." The police department assigned officers to any team surveying an area considered dangerous.

"The HOPE Count is a wonderful event and I plan to attend it again in the future," Megan Butler said. "But I do feel it's in need of change so that it can be more effective. We were thrown off by our assigned routes. Aside from that, many of us got to meet like-minded people who care about what happens in this city. It's an event that is a life-altering experience."

Tara Bisnauth was an intern at the Department of Homeless Services this year and helped organize the count, also distributing and gathering surveys, food supplies, and maps. Tara reported, "Everyone at DHS worked hard on the HOPE project. I was very glad to hear that the homeless rate has dropped since the last count."

Fariha Mughal said she wasn't sure how the count covered "areas where there are many homeless individuals."

Sydney Cespedes was assigned in Riverdale, Bronx, and said that her team encountered no potentially homeless people. "Apparently, that was necessary for statistical purposes," she said. She would like to have a better orientation in advance of the actual walk. "The HOPE Count has good intentions," she said. "I look forward to volunteering in the future."

Jay Bainbridge, assistant commissioner for policy and planning at the department, spoke with the Scholars about the work and answered questions. He said the city is divided into sections and each area is designated as high or low density for street homeless on the basis of where homeless were found previously or on the basis of information from outreach teams, the police, park employees, transit workers and community boards. For the count, the department assigns teams to all high density areas and to a random sample of low density areas. Bainbridge said: "We welcome the participation and input of PSSP scholars with HOPE. DHS has been the beneficiary of their talents in the past and looks forward to ongoing collaboration."

DEDICATED TO OUR MISSION

The Public Service Scholar Program, a leadership program, seeks to improve our cities and the lives of people by preparing talented undergraduates for careers in the public and nonprofit sectors. Housed in the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, the 18-credit, full academic year program gives these students, especially women and minority-group members, an opportunity to explore public service through internships in government agencies, legislative offices and nonprofit organizations. Scholars participate in academic seminars on city government and public policy. The PSSP receives external funds to support the program, including funding for stipends for our scholars. Without this help, our students could not participate.

Searching for Optimism but Finding Government

BY CLYDE HABERMAN

Published: March 7, 2008 • THE NEW YORK TIMES

March, in case you missed this factoid, has been designated Optimism Month by whatever force it is that decrees such things. Why we are supposed to be optimistic isn't clear. The Ides of March alone offer no reason for cheer, especially if your name is Julius or Caesar.

Nonetheless, in search of optimism we went to Hunter College the other day to sit in on a class of students who are intrigued by the mysteries of local government. What better embodiment of optimism than youth?

The 18 students— young women all, as it turned out— bear the title of public service scholars. They receive fellowships to examine public policy and to serve as interns at various nonprofit groups, government agencies and lawmakers' offices.

They also attend seminars led by City Councilwoman Gale A. Brewer of Manhattan and her former mentor in government, Ruth W. Messinger, a former Manhattan borough president who ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 1997.

Ms. Messinger is now president of the American Jewish World Service, an organization in the mold of the Peace Corps that helps poor countries plagued with hunger and disease. This is a rather outrageous pursuit. New York politicians, upon leaving office, are supposed to go to work for real estate developers and help make billionaires of hard-pressed multimillionaires.

On this particular morning, the students reported on their experiences at City Council hearings and community board meetings. Theirs was, on occasion, the perspective of young people who suspect that their elders are, almost by definition, clueless. But they spoke from the vantage of ordinary citizens exercising their rights without the benefit of official badges, press cards, lobbyist credentials and the like.

We won't identify the public agencies and officials at issue, because none of them are being offered equal time here. Let's just say that optimism took it on the chin.

For Nicole Seemungal, going to City Hall for a Council hearing meant having to "overcome the feeling that I don't belong there," and not for the first time.

"The gates surrounding the building never fail to tell me, 'Keep Out,'" she said. Once inside the Council chamber, she tried to pick up a copy of that day's testimony, only to be screamed at by a security guard: "Miss, miss! You can't take that!" He kept yelling, Ms. Seemungal said, even after she had put back the papers.

Fariha Mughal attended a community board hearing in Manhattan at which "it seemed as if the public was ranting and raving" while board members appeared to go through the motions of listening. To Jennifer Krinsky, who was at the same session, "it was so blatant that so much of it was crafted."

Odessia Brown moved her arms stiffly to underscore how one councilwoman acted like "a robot" at a hearing. "It's probably better that she didn't stay around long," Ms. Brown said.

At that, she had a better time than Gillian Feuerberg, who phoned a councilman with several questions, only to have him snap at her each time she opened her mouth. "Thank God I didn't talk to him in person or I would have burst into tears," she said.

Midday sessions of the full City Council struck Jessica Lee as odd. "Who has the time to go to these unless you're not working or you have a flexible job?" she said. Elizabeth Rodriguez caught some Council meetings on a community access cable channel. They may not have been as dated as "I Love Lucy" reruns, but they were hardly current. "I see hearings now from last June," she said. "It's a long way back."

SEVERAL students who attended the same Council hearing on the performance of a mayoral department were disheartened by how ill prepared that agency's representatives seemed. The officials showed up without data that council members needed, Sydney Cespedes said. Nahid Noori found that "testimony was redundant, there was no transparency and there were no numbers."

But not everything was a downer. This is Optimism Month, remember.

PROGRAM UPDATE:

What's new with the Public Service Scholar Program?



Program inaugurates its career forum

The Program has started on a new venture. Think of it as an alumni reunion with a portfolio, or a hook. The Career Forum, which made its debut April 15, marked the start of a range of activities supporting the professional development of alumni as well as current Scholars. The purpose is to provide exposure to and networking opportunities with leaders who can offer valuable career advice and guidance based on their personal backgrounds.

Natalie Gomez-Velez, CUNY law professor and Program alumna, moderated the forum. The expert participants were Martha E. Stark, commissioner of the City Department of Finance, and Herbert Barbot, general counsel at the William F. Ryan Community Health Center on the West Side of Manhattan. The panelists were forthcoming and informative. They supported exploring all opportunities and taking risks. This night was particularly rich since the moderator shared events in

her own career and encouraged scholars. "Let people know that you are interested in getting a job," she said. "Talk to people. Find a mentor. Don't be afraid to sell yourself and your accomplishments."



(left to right) Natalie Gomez-Velez, Herbert Barbot and Martha E. Stark

Commissioner Stark said her motto for life had been "always look to do better," which she learned when she showed her mother a 97 score on her geometry Regents exam and was immediately asked "where are the other 3 points?" Martha advised, "Do

work that you love" and "always be nice to people—you never know who will end up assisting you in your career."

Barbot's advice on seeking jobs is: "Figure out what you want to do. Make a list of people who you want to talk to and ask to have lunch with them. Research the place you are applying to—have questions for potential employers. You must manage and be responsible for your own career."

Over 30 scholars and alumni attended, reconnecting and networking. The Program plans to hold at least two career forums annually.

The Career Forum was supported by the Ann S. Kheel Charitable Trust, the Shirley Kaye Maisel Fund and United Way of New York City.

Two scholars win coveted fellowships

Jessica Lee received a fellowship to study this summer at the Public Policy and International Affairs Program at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs in Princeton, N.J.. This is a seven-week program to strengthen skills in economics, statistics, policy analysis, writing, and public speaking. The program's mission is to increase opportunities for future global policy leaders in both the public and nonprofit sectors. Jessica considers this fellowship timely and valuable. "I plan to work in the nonprofit field before pursuing a master's in public administration," she said. "I hope to have a better idea of where I would like to work and what my focus of study will be after my participation. I believe this program will provide me with the skills, connections and resources needed to succeed in the nonprofit and public policy fields."

Elizabeth Rodriguez was selected to participate in the Urban Fellows Program sponsored by the City of New York. It is a highly selective nine-month fellowship combining work in Mayoral offices and city agencies with an intensive seminar series exploring current urban issues. The program selects 25 students nationwide, making it an extremely competitive situation. Fellows receive a stipend of \$25,000 and health insurance coverage. Elizabeth says of her future: "As a native New Yorker, I have a passion to work as a public servant for all New Yorkers who are fighting to stay in a city that has become high priced and unaffordable for too many people. I have aspirations to work in a high level position in a city agency and also hope to become an elected official."