QC Anthropologist Makes a Breakthrough Discovery in Kenya

“Forget about cell phones and airplanes. The most important technological invention ever made was a simple stone tool, and everything else followed from that.” So says Thomas Plummer (Anthropology), who directs the international Homa Peninsula Paleoanthropological Project (HPPP), based at QC.

Two to three million years ago, “when our genus was first appearing” in Africa, hominins (human relatives and direct ancestors) began using stone tools, and formed the first archeological sites. These tools were used to butcher animals, and probably to process plants that don’t preserve in the geological record, Plummer explains. That meant these human ancestors could eat the “high-quality foods that fueled the evolution of a big brain”—including meat from animals ranging “from tiny insectivores to elephants.” Stone tool-dependent processing of high-quality food also changed social dynamics by enabling “large-scale food-sharing,” he adds.

Scientists have long known that hominins inhabited East Africa’s woodlands and dry forests. Charles Darwin reasoned that they could have adapted to its savannahs as well. But it was Plummer’s team that found the first evidence of tool-making hominins in a grassland-dominated ecosystem. Early Homo, they conclude, was flexible in using both open and wooded habitat, and that ability profoundly shaped human evolution.

At Kanjera South, on the Homa Peninsula of southwestern Kenya, the team over five years excavated more than 3,000 fossils and 4,500 Oldowan artifacts dating from about 2 million years ago. There are few archeological sites this old, Plummer says, and this is “one of the very few that have remains of the animals as well as stone tools.” In effect, “We have a picnic area preserved.” Small and large antelopes, zebras, and perhaps even birds and rodents were on this Early Stone Age menu.

These hominins brought one-third of their tool-making materials from a surprising distance—at least 13 kilometers—according to Plummer. “They’re preferentially using rocks that are very hard and retain really sharp edges during use,” he points out. The team also found what may continued on page 2

Asian/American Center Receives Major Grant

Since its founding in 1987, the Asian/American Center (A/AC) of Queens College has conducted community-oriented research, explored multicultural topics, and fostered links between the campus and diverse borough groups. Now this work will be brought into classrooms:

A/AC has received a $1.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish a curriculum in Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Community Studies (AAPICS). QC is among a handful of colleges and universities to win awards under a new federal initiative that makes funds available to institutions of higher learning serving Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander populations. Representatives of public officials and Asian American community-based organizations joined President James Muyskens and Madhulika Khandelwal, director of the Asian/American Center, at a press conference on November 16 announcing the grant, which will be implemented over the next two years.

A/AC had already begun offering new classes this semester, before Khandelwal learned of the award. Now, she says, “We are able to do our program on a much bigger scale. Asian American studies is a rapidly growing academic field in the country and our program will resonate with the distinct characteristics of our campus and our diverse local communities.” Government funding will give A/AC the resources to build an interdisciplinary curriculum that spans QC’s four divisions. Khandelwal intends continued on page 2
Students Get on Board the Smile Train

On the afternoon of October 21, the Quad turned into an outdoor arcade as QC’s Inter-Greek Council set up booths for carnival options like the basketball free throw, balloon darts, and a dunk tank that immersed Vice Presidents Sue Henderson and Joe Bertolino, among others. But the fun and games had a serious purpose. All money raised through ticket and food sales—and an off-campus donation campaign—was earmarked for the Smile Train, a charity that specializes in the repair of cleft lip and palate.

Pamela Cantor ’10, a Sigma Delta Tau sister who holds the position of philanthropy chair on the council, came up with the project last spring. “Cleft palates can interfere with breathing, eating, and speech,” explains Cantor, a speech-language pathology major. “Surgery can change someone’s life.” In the United States, the condition is usually corrected in infancy, but parents in poorer nations aren’t able to get treatment for their children. To address this disparity, Smile Train, co-founded by Charles Wang ’67 and former ad executive Brian Mullaney, trains and equips medical professionals in developing countries so that they can perform the necessary operations free of charge.

After meeting with Smile Train staffers, Cantor sent letters to companies, asking for their support. Thirty-one businesses—such as AirTran Airways, Southwest Airlines, the New York Philharmonic, and the dining hall operator Chartwells—contributed prizes, ranging from $10 gift certificates from Build-A-Bear Workshop to two Kaplan test-prep courses ordinarily priced at $1,899.

Asian/American Center from page 1

...to establish an AAPICS minor and set up a resource lounge with a reference library, computer lab, and bilingual staff.

This spring, A/AAC will hold an AAPICS seminar to help professors incorporate Asian American Pacific Islander material into current courses, or plan new syllabi.

The following year she will organize a conference that highlights the borough of Queens and involves faculty, students, and community groups. “Queens has a large pan-Asian population,” she says. “People are looking at Queens to see how immigrants and their families get assimilated. QC will be a place where we can make sense of what’s happening.”

QC will also be a place where town and gown can collaborate. “We are starting with clear community partnerships,” notes Khandelwal. “We will invite organizations and leaders to visit the college, participate in seminars, and offer service learning opportunities to our students.”

Anthropologist from page 1

...be some of the earliest evidence of hunting.

Plummer and Richard Potts, director of the Human Origins Program at the Smithsonian Institution, reported their paleoanthropological findings in PLoS ONE on October 21. HPPP conducts research under a collaborative agreement between the Smithsonian and the National Museums of Kenya. Team members include scholars from Oxford, Liverpool, Rome, and the United States; graduate students; and Kenyans, who “are really happy because I hire 30 people. I’m a big employer,” Plummer says with pride. Several prestigious organizations fund HPPP’s work.

Ever since childhood, when he searched for Native American artifacts on his family’s farm in upstate New York, Plummer has been intrigued by prehistory. “I never outgrew the phase;” he quips. While earning his PhD (1991) at Yale University, he took part in digs in East Africa. He lived in Kenya for nearly two years while working on his PhD and has been back many times since. In 2000 Plummer left a tenured faculty position at UCLA to come to QC; he became chair of anthropology in fall 2008.

“Every summer, every chance I get,” Plummer says, he returns to Kenya. He hopes to find not just stone tools and animal fossils but hominin bones, all at one site. “That’s the trifecta,” he said, “finding the remains of the human ancestors, surrounded by the evidence of their behavior.”

William Leverett

William Leverett believes in the power of the arts to inspire people to do good. That belief was fostered by the extracurricular activities he was able to experience while in high school and at Queens, especially a trip to southern Africa and an internship with an NYC youth program.

Those experiences nurtured his social conscience and helped turn his love of music in a practical direction. Leverett, now a junior, says his goal is to work in nonprofit arts administration and get businesses involved in supporting arts programs.

Leverett plays the clarinet and the tenor sax. He has been part of several jazz and classical orchestras and is developing an arts organization with an eclectic batch of friends. “I see the arts as a way to raise awareness about social issues, like poverty and homelessness,” he says.

Leverett is majoring in political science and urban studies and minoring in business and liberal arts. His intellectual curiosity and drive have won him several prestigious opportunities.

At the end of his junior year at LaGuardia Arts HS, Leverett was chosen by the St. Albans Congregational Church, of which he is an active member, for a two-week faith-service visit to Swaziland in southern Africa. The poverty and deprivation he saw had a deep impact on him.

In his freshman year at Queens, Leverett was chosen for a Jeannette K. Watson fellowship, which provides summer internships. The first summer he assisted the deputy director of the NYC Department of Youth & Community Development.

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Finding New Uses for Light

In recent years scientists have become excited about the prospects of using light to run computers and similar devices. Current computer technology relies on electrical signals, which is why we call computers, cell phones, and the like “electronic devices.” Scientists say that operations done with light signals would be much faster, allowing huge increases in computer speed and power. But there is a problem: light signals are much harder to manipulate than electrical ones.

Recently a team headed by Vinod M. Menon (Physics) reported a significant advance. In an article in the November Nature Photonics, the leading journal in its field, the group reported the first observation of a new type of light-matter quasi-particle that arose when light was shined onto a specially designed, ultra-thin laminated structure known as a photonic crystal.

Menon says the resulting quasi-particle (which, like an electron, exhibits properties of both matter and energy) can be exploited to manipulate light signals: turning them on and off, and even slowing them. These properties—which are the basis of switches, filters, etc.—could eventually be used to make super-fast light-powered computers.

Menon and his students produced their laboratory results on the basis of theoretical work done by two other QC physics professors: Chair Alexander Lisyansky and Lev Deych.

“One of the keys to the success of this project was the close collaboration with the theorists,” says Menon. The work was “really built on the strengths of the department.”

Photonic crystals, the structures used in the experimental work, are composed of very thin layers of different materials stacked together. They have striking optical qualities. The crystals occur in nature where they are responsible, for example, for the brilliant colors of some beetles and butterflies. The structures used in Menon’s work were designed by the two theorists and produced by a group headed by Serge Oktyabrsky of SUNY-Albany.

Menon was born in south India and studied at the University of Hyderabad before immigrating to the US. He did post-doctoral work at Princeton University. In fall 2004 he was hired by Queens as part of a wider drive to build up CUNY’s strengths in photonics, the discipline that covers Menon’s work.

“I’ve had amazing support from the administration which has helped me build a strong research program,” says Menon. His laboratory team consists of 10 students at the PhD, master’s, undergraduate, and high school levels. (The first author on the article, David Goldberg, is one of Menon’s PhD students.) The arrangement gives gifted students the opportunity to contribute to leading-edge research. In addition, says Menon, it ensures that there is a lot of mentoring going on.

Unique Genomics Research Experience for Freshmen

Sixteen QC freshmen are participating in a unique science learning experience. None of the students has declared a major, and most do not know if they even want a career in science. Yet they are taking a biology class that is doing original genetic research whose results may well be published in a peer-reviewed science journal.

The class is part of Queens’s expanding efforts to give entering students a better idea of how science really works and, hopefully, hook some of them early onto a science career path.

The 16 students are part of a new year-long course called the Genomics Research Experience. In it they are mapping the genetic makeup of a virus that attacks a common type of bacteria. The course is co-sponsored by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI). Queens was one of 28 colleges and universities chosen to participate in this initiative on the basis of a nationwide competition. The 16 students are all part of the Freshman Year Initiative.

During the fall semester the students have been collecting soil samples from the campus and their backyards. Back in the lab they isolate a particular mycophage, a virus that attacks bacteria. The class is studying this virus that attacks Mycobacterium smegmatis, a common, benign bacteria that is of interest to scientists because of its close similarity to the bacteria that causes tuberculosis.

Students view the extremely minute viruses under an electron microscope. Then, using genetic techniques developed in recent years, they isolate the virus’s DNA and send it to HHMI for genome sequencing—a detailed analysis of the virus’s genetic code. (The DNA of the virus contains between 50,000 and 100,000 base pairs—the individual “letters” that make up the genetic code. Human DNA, by comparison, has 3 billion.)

During the spring semester, the students will work with the genetic code on their computers. A key aim will be to compare the DNA of their sample to that of samples found elsewhere in the country in an effort to understand the evolution and diversification of the virus.

The results will have a very practical application in ongoing research to better understand how viruses evolve and function, says John J. Dennehy (Biology), who is coordinating the course (the instructors are James Carpino and Peter Novick). In addition, he says, the class’s results will contribute to work on “phage therapy,” treatments based on the use of viruses to attack bacteria that cause diseases.

Dennehy says the students have been very enthusiastic, spending extra hours in the lab. “They have a sense they are contributing to science, rather than doing laboratory experiments that have been done a thousand times before,” he says.

Support from HHMI will last only two years, but Dennehy says he expects Queens to continue the course with its own resources thereafter.
Women’s Tennis Is #1 in the East

Along with being home to the U.S. Open, Flushing has another claim to tennis bragging rights: the Queens College women’s tennis team.

Coming off a picture-perfect fall season in which they were undefeated and won the Division II East Coast Conference (ECC) Championship, the Knights are now ranked first in the east region by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association and 26th nationally, the highest rankings ever achieved by Queens women’s tennis.

“In my over 30 years at Queens, this is the best team I’ve ever had,” says coach Alan Nagel. Asked to cite standouts in his eight-player squad, he quickly responds, “We had a whole team of standouts.”

These include Laura Mocodeanu, Somadi Druker, Erika Goldsmith, and Maria Mendes, who are ranked 4th, 5th, 6th, and 10th, respectively, among singles players in the East Coast region. Druker and Goldsmith are also ranked first in doubles competition in the east and 11th nationally—the highest rankings ever for QC players, both male and female—while Mocodeanu and Kirby Reiss ranked 5th among doubles players in the eastern conference.

Druker previously played for QC’s great tennis rival Concordia College and last year was the top-ranked doubles player in the ECC. She graduated and now plays for the Knights as a graduate student. “Concordia beat us last year,” Nagel says. “They made it to the final eight in the country and Somadi Druker was a big reason why. “We have a really incredible team,” he continues. And that’s saying something when one considers what a dominant force the Knights have been in women’s tennis for several years. “Since the ECC started, we’ve won about 12 championships; this year made it nine out of the last ten years.”

It’s also going to be our tenth straight year in the NCAA,” Nagel says, referring to the upcoming Division II NCAA tournament in May.

As Nagel explains it, a number of factors have contributed to QC’s ability to consistently field strong tennis teams. In a sport in which advancement usually entails a considerable financial investment, he says, the school has become a magnet for talented players of limited means who are drawn by the affordable tuition, a fine academic program, and great tennis facilities located in one of the world’s great cities.

“We don’t have full scholarships,” he says, “but it’s a case of: Do they want to get a full scholarship and be stuck in Arkansas or do they want to play in New York City?”

“In addition to players from Bayside, New Jersey, upstate New York, Utah, and Arkansas, I have players from Russia, South Africa, and Brazil,” says Nagel describing his team’s cosmopolitan makeup.

He’s also happy to report that “Other than Druker, everyone will be returning to play next year.” And Druker’s spot shouldn’t be hard to fill: “Now that we have the dorms and we’re number one in the east, we’re getting so many more inquiries from kids all over the world.”

Women’s Tennis Team.

Coach Alan Nagel and the East Coast Conference Champions Queens College Women’s Tennis Team.

High Stepping

Dressed in colorful costumes, students of Caroline Webb (Drama, Theatre & Dance) put on a lively dance display as part of a Dec. 1 event in the Dining Hall Patio Room observing the annual celebration of Kwanzaa.

Center Stage Curriculum Takes General Education Celebration of Kwanzaa.

Room observing the annual celebration in the Dining Hall Patio for the day’s capstone event: a panel discussion.

Prompted by moderator Eva Fernandez (Linguistics), four faculty members identified general education classes that everyone should take. Charles Repole (Drama) touted the benefits of Introduction to Acting, which encourages creativity and self-awareness; Madhulika Khandelwal (Urban Studies) emphasized the insights provided by her course on Immigration and the Making of New York; Nathalis Wamba (ECP) outlined a class he would like to see created, Literacy Project 101, designed to expose students to the social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of an environment such as Wall Street or a shelter for homeless people. George Hendrey (SEES) proposed a seminar that would have upperclassmen researching an unfamiliar topic as a team, and presenting their findings. The professors’ common goal: Giving students the tools to understand multiple disciplines and succeed in whatever they pursue.
Success in Science

QC is truly making its mark with Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC): This undergraduate program will be featured in an annual report prepared for the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), the unit of the National Institutes of Health that funds this initiative.

Launched on campus in 2004 with a five-year, $2.165 million grant, MARC U-STAR—the second acronym stands for Undergraduate Student Training in Academic Research—prepares select upperclassmen for careers in biomedical research. Participants get $11,064 stipends during their junior and senior years, extensive hands-on lab experience, and mentoring by faculty members. To date, 20 QC MARC alums have gone on to graduate school. “Our record has been good in sending students to doctoral programs,” reports Zahra Zakeri (Biology), director of MARC U-STAR at Queens.

The students have been compiling impressive records of their own, making presentations at meetings, publishing articles in journals, and accumulating prizes. At the American Society for Microbiology conference in early November, Andrew Hillman, a member of QC’s five-student contingent, won top honors for his oral presentation. Later in the month, Jamar Whaley received the superior presentation award at a conference held by scientific research society Sigma Xi. A lot of the schools, especially sister CUNY schools, send 50 or 60 students to the microbiology conference, says Zakeri, noting, “We’re small but mighty.”

NIGMS evidently agrees. In renewing QC’s grant for another five years, the agency increased the dollar amount to $2.499 million; the extra funding will cover 12 students at a time, instead of the previous limit of 10. “They saw what we have and what we do, and gave us more money,” says Zakeri. To encourage additional undergraduates to enter science, she organized QC’s first MARC-sponsored career day. On Monday, December 7, representatives from 30 schools set up booths in the lobby of the Science Building to meet students and discuss their many options.

Copland School Banks on Its First CD

QC faculty, students, and staff pooled their talents in Selected Partsongs of Hamish MacCunn, the Queens College Vocal Ensemble’s first recording under the direction of James John. Now their investment is generating returns: Choral programs at the Aaron Copland School of Music are getting funds and exposure from the CD. It’s also stirring up interest in a Scottish composer who attained considerable success in the late 19th century before fading into obscurity.

The project started in 2006 when John and Jennifer Oates, head of the Music Library—who did her dissertation on MacCunn’s first opera and is writing the first biography of him—applied for a $4,315 PSC-CUNY grant to make the CD. When the money was awarded the following year, they went to work. The first step was for Oates to gather and edit the scores for MacCunn’s unaccompanied choral pieces. “Libraries in Scotland provided me with copys of manuscripts,” she recalls, noting that most of the music came from the University of Glasgow, where she had done graduate research. “It took me a good year to edit the scores.”

Once Oates was finished, John began rehearsing the QC Vocal Ensemble, a chamber choir that draws its personnel from faculty and highly trained students, alumni, and friends. Lovely by the standards of any era, MacCunn’s partsongs—a 19th-century Anglo-American term for songs with multiple vocal lines—incorporate unfamiliar Scottish phrases and texts that range from Elizabethan poetry to an account of a fox hunt. “The hunting song was so distant from what we’re used to,” explains Oates, a soprano in the ensemble. “We had a big collective laugh.” But another selection, “Soldier, Rest! Thy Warfare O’er,” provided poignant commentary on today’s conflicts.

The group taped a dozen pieces in LeFrak Concert Hall during the spring and fall of 2008; recording engineer Rick Krahn donated his services, assisted by QC student Justin Tricarico. ACSM piano technician Andrew Saderman and Cindy Bell, an ACSM assistant professor who has since moved to Hofstra, acted as producers, giving feedback during the recording sessions. Then, working closely with Grammy Award-winning editor Da-Hong Seetoo, John chose the final versions of each song. “I spent hours listening to different takes, trying to decide which ones were best,” he recalls. “If you’re a perfectionist, it’s hard to know where to stop.”

Since last spring, when the CD was released, John and Oates have been selling it for $15 at QC choral events. They’re also sending copies to professional journals and colleagues around the country, and plan to upload tracks to iTunes. “It was very enjoyable to go through the recording process, which enabled us to work toward an unusually high level of excellence,” says John. He looks forward to making more CDs. “The Vocal Ensemble released a recording of music by Renaissance composer Josquin des Prez in the early 1980s, conducted by the late Paul Maynard,” he adds. “It would be interesting to return to music from an earlier period.”

Laurels for L’Orfeo

The Aaron Copland School of Music’s production last spring of Claudio Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo tied for first place in the 2008-2009 National Opera Association’s Opera Production Competition. A joint production of the opera studio and choir, it was directed by David Ronis, conducted by James John, and featured period instruments.
QC People

SALMAN AHMAD (Music) was honored Oct. 29 with a Common Ground Award by Search for Common Ground, an international nonprofit organization that encourages cooperative solutions to the world’s problems. Ahmad received the award for the music video Ring the Bells, a collaboration with singer-songwriter Melissa Etheridge that blends rock music with Sufi devotional singing. The award was presented at a ceremony at the Canadian embassy in Washington, DC. ...The eye-catching Life of the Mind mural created in the lobby of Kiely Hall last semester by 10 of RIKKI ASHER’S (SEYS) graduate art education students will be featured in the 2010 CUNY/New York Times Knowledge Network calendar. A reception marking the calendar’s publication was held Nov. 10 at the New York Times; speakers included CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and Muriel A. Howard, president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. “The mural,” says Asher, “is a meditation on what occurs at Kiely Hall, where so many students congregate in between classes ... where the life of the academic mind flourishes and the imagination is released” ... HANNES BRUECKNER and QIANG YANG (both EES) presented research papers at the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America in Oregon in October ... SHIRLEY CARRIE (En-
glish) is on leave to work on a book, thanks to a Career Enhancement Fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. Only 20 of these fellowships are awarded each year. Carrie’s book project, Acts of Remembrance: Commemoration and the Literature of the Black Diaspora, explores the intersections between collective memory, history, and commemoration in both the literature and the visual culture of the black diaspora. She was a Mellon Fellow as an undergraduate at QC and completed her PhD in English at SUNY-Stony Brook ... MICHAEL COGSWELL (Armstrong House) was among the jazz scholars who gathered Nov. 21 at CUNY’s College of Staten Island for a symposium on the life and music of Louis Armstrong. Cogswell shared and discussed samples from Armstrong’s vast record collection of 78s and LPs ... DAVID GOLDBERG, a PhD student working with VINOD MENON (Physics), was the lead author of the paper “Exciton-lattice polaritons in multiple-quantum-well-based photonic crystals,” which appeared in the November issue of Nature Photonics (see article, p. 3) ... Free-Air Controlled Enrichment (FACE), a large-scale experimental project developed by GEORGE HENDREY (SEES) while he was head of the earth system science division at Brookhaven National Laboratory, was included in a slide show entitled 10 Important Atmospheric Science Experiments appearing on the website of continued on page 8

CUNYfirst Debut in Stages

June 19, 2009 will go down in history as “Go Live Day,” the first time anyone from the City University of New York used the CUNYfirst system. This software package will transform how students and employees engage in tasks ranging from registering for a class to budgeting fiscal year expenditures. At Queens, a CUNY financial tool— which enables users to schedule their budgets for the upcoming year by individual accounts—has begun to standardize the budgeting process. The Human Resources Office is now managing and updating employee records, as well as providing assistance in recruiting new hires. In addition, the Registrar’s Office is building a CUNYfirst course catalog. This new web-based program will improve the productivity and performance of every CUNY business office. John Ray, CUNYfirst communications manager, terms Queens—and Queensborough Community College—“vanguard” schools because they “will lead the system in terms of how to best use CUNYfirst and how to adopt it to specific real-world needs.” The “first” in “CUNYfirst” stands for “Fully Integrated Resources and Services Tool,” and the system—which employs the best practices of the IT field—represents CUNY’s commitment to modernization and university-wide standardization. There are three primary modules in CUNYfirst: human resources, finance, and student administration. Each CUNY college will receive a customized CUNYfirst installation. Being rolled out in phases, CUNYfirst will take probably three more years before it is completely available on every campus. The system was selected after two years of research and is being implemented by its manufacturer, Oracle PeopleSoft. Sue Henderson (VP Institutional Advancement) is supervising the installation of the new enterprise resource-planning product at QC. She praises Human Resources for its “outstanding work in cleaning and migrating old data to CUNYfirst.” “We’ve joined the 21st century with CUNYfirst,” comments Director of Human Resources Reinalda Medina. “CUNYfirst,” she says, “allows us to share information so much more readily. It’s the first step to transparency as a manager because you now can easily obtain information regard-

Lisa Torres (left) of Human Resources and Purchasing Director Lorraine Prasad find something to smile about in the new CUNYfirst system.
Through the Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI), QC wants to bring students back to school for the fun of it. The institute, the college’s latest educational initiative for adults, is inaugurating its first season on February 28 at LeFrak Concert Hall with an event co-sponsored by the Kupferberg Center for the Arts: a screening of Keep Dancing: An Afternoon with Marge Champion. The documentary reintroduces audiences to the legendary Hollywood star and her current dance partner, choreographer Donald Saddler. Champion, still active at age 90, will be in attendance to make a few remarks.

A reception will follow the movie. The institute’s class schedule starts in mid-March, with seven-week workshops in such topics as photography, ballroom dancing, and current events. Then, beginning on June 29, LLI will present its summer film series, “The Dark Night: Inside Film Noir,” a six-week celebration of classic crime dramas from the 1940s and ’50s, with an introduction, screening, and discussion of a different movie every Tuesday afternoon. Individual memberships—available for $295 under a special introductory plan—cover tuition for up to three workshops and admission to all six films, among other benefits. Taken separately, each workshop costs $150 and the summer film festival costs $60.

“We created the Lifelong Learning Institute to engage the surrounding community and give people an opportunity to participate in stimulating educational and cultural activities at the college,” says Douglas Boettner, director of LLI. “In growing the institute, we hope to encourage QC faculty, students, and alumni to become active participants by leading or facilitating workshops and discussion groups and interacting closely with our members, so that unique intergenerational links can be established.” For more information, call 718-997-5025 or visit www.cep.qc.cuny.edu/LLI.

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Tsoukalas, a professor emeritus of sociology, also lectured at the CUNY Graduate Center and Columbia University. His visit was supported by the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation.

In his course and lectures, Tsoukalas explored the ways Greece differs from the rest of Europe. Twenty-seven years after joining the European Union, Greece still has an outmoded economic structure, he says. Only a quarter of the active population are wage earners in the private sector, a portion equalled by those in the bloated public administration. (The other half is divided between small farmers, on the one hand, and small shopkeepers, artisans, and traders on the other.)

Greece is modernizing, says the professor, “but slowly.”

Yet even before gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the 19th century, this somewhat backward Balkan country “was seen as an offspring of the classical Greek society of antiquity,” says the scholar. “This myth created a very serious burden on the modern Greek character.”

The other visitor is Margarita Pournara, a journalist who arrived in September for a six-month stay as a Fulbright Scholar. Pournara is well-known in Greece for her reporting in Kathimerini, a leading daily newspaper. She is devoting her time here to studying the identity of second- and third-generation Greek-Americans. It is a theme that has been sorely understudied, says Christos Ioannides, director of QC’s Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies.

The center, which hosted both scholars, is one of the main academic centers of its kind in America. (QC boasts the largest enrollment of Greek-American students in America, say Ioannides: some 1,500.)

Pournara is writing a series of articles and may produce a book. Not surprisingly, she chose to live in Astoria, the historic center of America’s largest Greek community. She is spending a lot of time networking: getting to know a large number of people of Hellenic ancestry. Greek-Americans have integrated well into middle-class America, says Pournara. “The grandsons of hot dog peddlers are doctors, lawyers and professors.”

A surprising discovery she made early on was that the only Greek bookshop in the borough of Queens is owned by an African American who studied in Greece.

Although only at the beginning of her research, Pournara has some initial observations about Greek-Americans. “They have a certain connection with Greece,” she says. “But not like their fathers and grandfathers. They’re not interested in Greek politics, but in Greek culture, cuisine, ancient history, and nature.”

“I liked Queens College from the first moment,” says Pournara. “It’s very welcoming.” She says she particularly appreciates its great ethnic diversity, as well as the far greater variety of campus activities than is typically found at Greek universities. “I just attended a rock concert,” at Queens, she says. “You wouldn’t find that on a Greek campus.”
IN MEMORIAM
Doreen Berman

It is with great sadness that the Department of Psychology announces the loss of Associate Professor Emerita Doreen Berman, who passed away unexpectedly on November 26, 2009.

Born in England and then immigrating to Canada, Berman received a BSc in 1943 and shortly thereafter an MSc in anatomy, both from McGill University. Following an academic hiatus during which she raised her four children, she earned her PhD from the CUNY Neuropsychology Doctoral Subprogram in 1971. Her doctoral dissertation, which studied brain functioning in infant monkeys, had important implications for the mechanisms underlying cerebral palsy. Her performance led to her initial appointment as an instructor at Queens College, and in 1973 she joined the full-time faculty as an assistant professor. She remained a vital part of the faculty until her retirement beginning September 1, 2009.

Throughout her many years at the college, Berman was known for her grace, keen intelligence, and exceptionally high moral fiber. She was influential in both the undergraduate and graduate programs, in which she taught many courses in her areas of expertise: developmental psychology and ethics. She was elected and re-elected to the Departmental Personnel and Budget Committee; served with distinction as head of both the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and the Undergraduate Scholastic Standards Committee; and was considered a “Master Teacher” in her well-known Introduction to Psychology course. In this latter role she sparked the interest and enthusiasm of thousands of young undergraduates. As a doctoral faculty member, Berman was elected four times to head the CUNY Neuropsychology Doctoral Sub-Program from 1980 to 1992, and transformed that program into one of the premier clinical neuropsychology programs in the country.

Berman leaves behind her four children and eight grandchildren. Her husband, Dr. Joe Berman, a noted neurosurgeon and collaborator, passed away two years ago after a long illness.

Calandra Institute Celebrates 30 Years

CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, QC President James Muyskens, Calandra Institute Dean and Executive Director Anthony Tamburri, and John J. Calandra Esq. (the son of the late Senator John D. Calandra) hosted the November 12 celebration of the Calandra Institute at the offices of McDermott, Will & Emery LLP, in midtown Manhattan. Former Governor Mario Cuomo and former New York State First Lady Matilda Raffa Cuomo were both honored for their lifetime of work and support for the community and for education. (L-r: Muyskens, Goldstein, Cuomo, and Tamburri.)

Chris Greaves of Alumni Relations

In many workplaces, new employees get to take it easy for a few weeks while they familiarize themselves with their surroundings and responsibilities. Chris Greaves, who on August 10 became QC’s manager of alumni relations, didn’t have that luxury. “Homecoming was in full swing when I got here,” says Greaves. He immediately got involved in planning that event, and many others: regional gatherings in Boston in October and Sarasota in December, a networking session for people who majored in accounting and economics, and perhaps a Choral Society concert next spring.

Like broadcasters, publishers, and retailers, Greaves wants to identify and serve specific audiences. “I’m defining and growing different affinity groups,” he explains. “I’m focusing on academic majors and careers, and grouping alumni by class year for reunion events.” He also hopes to develop an electronic newsletter and social networking pages to reach QC alumni.

Greaves himself is a graduate of Cornell (2001), where he studied communications—with a concentration in campaign planning and evaluation—and City College, CUNY, where he earned a master’s in economics. The latter interest was piqued by his experiences when the “tech bubble” began to deflate in 2000, when he worked as a freelance business journalist. Greaves spent six months after graduation writing profiles for the alumni magazine at Columbia Business School, followed by six months taking courses in international trade, economics, and Spanish in Venezuela.
Faculty and Staff Honored for Years of Service

On Tuesday, November 10, 27 members of the college’s faculty and staff were recognized for their years of service at a special awards ceremony presided over by President James Muyskens. Those honored for 35 and 20 years of service include:

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Continuing Education Lends Support to a Conference in China

With significant help from QC’s Continuing Education Programs (CEP), a conference was held last month in the major food-exporting province of China to help address issues related to contaminated Chinese food exports.

The conference, US FDA Requirements for Food Products Exported to the US, took place November 10–12 at the Jinan Conference Center in Jinan, the capital of Shandong Province. Over 400 representatives from Chinese food-producing and exporting companies attended to hear presentations from Irene Chan, the assistant country director, FDA China Office, and eight former FDA employees with over 30 years experience each. They addressed such topics as “An Overview of the FDA,” “US Refusal of Imported Food Products,” and “Prevention of Food Contamination.”

The conference was co-sponsored by the Shandong provincial government and Nelson Lee of Sunels International, and was created by George Boone and Rona Goldwitz, consultants for the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation. (One of five regional FDA centers is located in Jamaica on the campus of York College.) CEP was enlisted to facilitate the conference and issued certificates of completion to attendees.

The FDA opened three offices in China in November 2008. “They’re trying to shift from taking punitive measures when tainted food arrives to approving the quality of food before it gets here,” says CEP Director Tom Cracovia, who attended the event.

Cracovia notes that a number of other Chinese provinces have expressed interest in holding similar conferences. In this connection, he visited potential future conference sites at the College of Food Science & Nutritional Engineering in Beijing and the Shandong Institute of Light Industry in Jinan.

The Art of Science

Artist Carter Hodgkin stands near a portion of her three-story mosaic in the new addition to Remsen Hall. Based on atomic particles moving through space, it’s entitled “Electromagnetic Fall.” Covering 1096 square feet, it uses 155,162 small mosaic tiles to create and reflect the digital nature of the mural’s design. Each pixel in the design corresponds to a tile. 105 colors of specialty tiles from five countries were used.

Puppets for Peace

Carrying puppets, a contingent representing Queens College crossed the Brooklyn Bridge on October 2 (the anniversary of Gandhi’s birth) as part of the World March for Peace and Non-Violence. QC also staged an evening called Imagine Peace: Walking in the Other Side’s Shoes, a film, discussion, and meditation on peace in the Middle East. It was co-sponsored by SEYS Art Education, the Center for Ethnic and Racial Understanding, and the QC Committee for Peace.
CUNY-TV’s “Independent Sources” aired a Nov. 4 feature on SALMAN AHMAD (Music) . . . JOE BERTOLINO (VP Student Affairs) was interviewed Oct. 30 on WFUV-FM on the subject of QC’s new residence hall . . . A story appearing Oct. 15 in the New York Times concerning older women who date younger men was framed around data provided by ANDY BEVERIDGE (Sociology). On Oct. 28, the Times carried a story based on research from Beveridge concerning issues of whether illegal immigrants should be included in population counts used to determine representation in congress. Spanish language TV network Telemundo aired the Times story the same day . . . The Chronicle of Higher Education published on April 3 a letter from MARIO CARUSO (Dir., Graduate Admissions) challenging the three-year European degree, known as the “Bologna Process,” and its impact on the US graduate school admissions process . . . A study published in the American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry by MICHELLE CULANG (Psychology) and colleagues concerning the impact of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors on cognitive functioning was reported Nov. 6 in Drug Week . . . DESLYN DYER (LAHM) described various activities at the Louis Armstrong House Museum for an Oct. 30 story in the Daily News concerning how places around the borough were marking Halloween . . .

**In the Media**

JOSHUA FREEMAN (History) commented on the role of labor union endorsements in the New York City mayoral race for an Oct. 5 New York Times story. He also offered his insights for a Bloomberg News Service story about huge salaries commanded by members of some unions who have jobs critical to particular industries . . . JEFFREY HALPERIN’S (Psychology) research into attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in preschoolers was the subject of a Sept. 24 story in the Queens Chronicle . . . The importance of the sweet potato in African-American culinary tradition was explored by JESSICA HARRIS (SEEK) in a Nov. 25 op-ed column in the New York Times . . . TARRY HUM’S (Urban Studies) expertise on finance in New York’s Chinatown was referenced in the Sept. 17 New York Times City Room blog . . . KARRAN JAINARAIN, a 2007 QC grad currently pursuing a master’s degree in early childhood education, was profiled Nov. 17 in the Queens Courier, which saluted his dedication to helping others . . . Reuters News Service carried a story Oct. 13 concerning a study by ASHIMA KANT (FNES) that concluded that people who get much of their daily liquid intake from plain water rather than other drinks tend to have healthier diets overall . . . MADHULIKA KHANDELWAL’S (A/AC) Nov. 16 press conference announcement continued on page 12

**Building a Residence Life Staff Through Teamwork and Legos**

Who would think a talent for building with Legos could help you land a job?

It did if you were among the 40 students competing for the 11 resident assistant positions at Queens College’s first residence hall. (More about this later.)

All of The Summit’s RAs were drawn from the QC student population, explains Terry Walsh, director of Housing and Residence Life. “They were recruited via an email sent in the spring semester by the Student Life Office to all students. Our rule was that they had to have attended Queens College for at least one year before they could apply.”

“We received 100 applications,” says Assistant Director Melynda Davis, the RAs’ immediate supervisor. “We went through those and narrowed them down to 40 who went into the interview process and then a group process. There were two evenings of activities they had to do as a group so that we could see them work in a group environment.”

That’s where the Legos came in. “They had to make a building while various roadblocks came up along the way. We watched how they worked their way through those,” says Davis. “Ten minutes into the activity we’d say, ‘Okay, news bulletin: the green Legos—we called them ‘bricks’—have been found to be faulty; they can no longer be used. You have to remove them from your building site.’ Five minutes later we’d tell them it’s okay to use the green bricks; it’s the red bricks that are faulty.”

“Then we had them work through an event,” she continues, “something that happened on their floor. We wanted to see how they would prioritize things—what they would handle first, what they would handle last.”

This evaluation process, explains Walsh, was designed with significant input from Jennifer Jarvis, Adam Rockman, and John Andrejack of the Student Life Office. (The initial interviews were conducted by Walsh, Davis, and a startup specialist provided by Capstone, The Summit’s builder. With several years of experience in residence life positions at a variety of schools, Walsh and Davis were well prepared to conduct QC’s RA selection process.)

“Obviously, we like students with some leadership qualities. Also community building was a huge thing we looked for,” says Davis. “Some are quieter, some are more outgoing; I can’t have 11 cheerleaders.”

Each RA is responsible for between 40 and 50 students. In return for their service, each has a free studio apartment.

Approaching the end of their first semester, Walsh says, “I think the RAs have done an excellent job. The spring semester’s going to be a lot easier. Everyone now knows what’s allowed and what’s not allowed and what they can get away with and not get away with; I think we’re all now just coming to a little happy place.”

Walsh says they will soon be employing a company to conduct a formal survey among student residents that they will repeat again in the spring in hopes of getting candid feedback on their Summit experience.

**The Resident Assistant staff of The Summit**
QC in the Media from page 11

**QC in the Media**

**Khandelwal**

**Michael Krasner** (Political Science) was quoted in a Sept. 24 Queens Chronicle article concerning the election prospects of two gay candidates for seats on the City Council. He also described the growing importance of the Working Families Party for a Sept. 24 YourNabe.com story. WFIU-FM’s Anne Marie Bertoli spoke with him Oct. 13 concerning the questions of whether newspaper endorsements matter and are proper. He also commented on voter apathy for YourNabe.com on Nov. 12.

**Georgios Marketakis** (Economics) commented on unconventional marketing methods used to increase traffic at shopping malls for an Oct. 6 Daily News article. Former QC basketball star **Gail Marquis**’ Sept. 24 induction into the New York City Basketball Hall of Fame was reported in stories Sept. 1 in the Daily News, Sept. 3 at TimesNewsweekly.com and in the Times Ledger, Sept. 10 in the TimesLedger, and Oct. 1 in the Queens Chronicle. **... Carmella Marrone** (Women and Work) offered her insights to the Queens Chronicle for an Oct. 15 story on domestic abuse. She also was quoted in a Nov. 19 Queens Chronicle story concerning a Howard Beach woman charged with killing her allegedly abusive husband. **President James Muyskens** was quoted Sept. 17 in the Queens Courier and Sept. 25 at YourNabe.com concerning QC’s perennial selection by Princeton Review and US News & World Report as a top-rated college. **QC volleyball player Nicole Nieves**, who was born lacking a hand, was the subject of a Sept. 26 story in the New York Post. She was also featured in a Nov. 11 WNBC sports report. **QC junior Jenn Polish** was a guest columnist Nov. 24 in the Daily News, writing about student activism. **... Mark Rosenblum** (Jewish Studies) discussed plans to offer a course on Bukharian Jews in a story appearing Nov. 3 in the Daily News. YourNabe.com also carried a story on Nov. 12. **Sajan Saini** (Physics) was interviewed for 2012: Startling New Secrets, a documentary about people’s fears of a serious global catastrophe that may occur on Earth in the year 2012 due to a predicted stellar alignment from the Mayan civilization calendar. Produced by NBC and the Syfy Channel, the program is connected with the recent science fiction film 2012. The program aired three times in November and will air again Dec. 21 on the Syfy Channel. **... A Nov. 24 story in the Queens Courier concerning student financial aid quoted Rena Smith-Kiwau** (Financial Aid). **... Godwin-Ternbach Museum Director Amy Winter** was quoted in a Sept. 17 Queens Chronicle feature about the museum’s exhibition of Peruvian and Bolivian textile artifacts, Natural and Supernatural. She was also quoted in features in the Nov. 5 Queens Chronicle and Nov. 26 TimesLedger about the tolerance-themed exhibition Common Ground at the museum. The piece also mentioned the Nov. 14 story in the Queens Courier.

**SMITH-KIWAU**

They Huffed... and they puffed, and they blew away the competition in the Halloween costume contest staged by Human Resources as part of its annual October fundraising campaign for breast cancer research. The three little pigs are (l-r) the Communications Office’s Judi Fields, Maria Matteo, and Joanne Rodes. The big bad wolf... well, we all know who he is.

**Rosenblum**

Saving Energy One Roof at a Time

QC is implementing its sustainability policy from the top down: College construction projects are now utilizing the latest green-roof technology.

The Summit, the first campus building that is expected to meet the silver (and perhaps gold) certification standards for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—a ratings program created by the U.S. Green Building Council—actually has two roofing systems. A membrane made of EPDM, a durable rubber that provides protection from the elements, tops the residential wings. To keep tenants cooler in the spring and summer, architects specified white EPBM, which reflects heat instead of soaking it up.

The second roof is less obvious, albeit greener: It’s the courtyard garden sitting on the underground garage. “You wouldn’t even know it’s a roof system,” comments Amanda Langweil, director of sustainability for Goshow Architects, which designed The Summit. The roofing material is covered with about a foot of seeded lawn that nurtures native, noninvasive plants. However, there’s more to this garden than meets the eye. The cultivated area absorbs runoff, protects the roof membrane from ultraviolet rays, insulates the garage, and reduces urban heat island effect—the tendency of dry, exposed, manmade surfaces, such as pavement and blacktops, to absorb and retain significant amounts of heat even after sundown.

Off campus, the Louis Armstrong House Museum will use a similar green system on top of its new visitors center. Plans, which will be finalized in January 2010, call for a sloping, bi-level roof supporting “a low-maintenance, natural habitat that lives on rainwater,” says LAHM director Michael Cogswell. “It’s good for the life of the building, good for operations, and good for the community.”

**Record Retention Program Takes Off**

About a year ago, in compliance with CUNY’s revised record retention program, QC began implementing a system for organizing and maintaining documents, and discarding any that are unnecessary or outdated. You don’t have to be a neat freak to appreciate the value of this project; storage preempted file cabinets and office areas that might be better allocated. So far, 101 departments have been surveyed and 16 have disposed of old or redundant documents. More than 20 tons of records have been shredded, the equivalent of 1,155 boxes or, by a more meaningful measure, 1,584 square feet of floor space. After shredding costs of less than $5000 are deducted, QC recoups an estimated $74,200 to $113,800 in savings on paper.
17 HSBC Tolerance Concert at Colden Auditorium featuring former NY Yankee Bernie Williams in his current incarnation as a Latin guitarist… Stories about the Sept. 30 opening ceremony for QC’s first residence hall appeared Oct. 6 in the Queens Courier, Oct. 7 in the Queens Gazette, and Oct. 8 at YourNabe.com… The Queens Chronicle carried a story Oct. 1 about the QC Art Center exhibition Poetics of Transcultural. Oggi7, the Sunday magazine published by Oggi America, ran a story Oct. 4 on the exhibition, with a focus on artist Franca Marini and her work. The Art Center’s exhibition of works by Naomi Grossman, Writing the Body, was the subject of stories Oct. 1 and Nov. 12 in the Queens Chronicle… QC’s Oct. 2 Business Forum featuring Queens Courier publisher Victoria Schneps-Yunis was the subject of a story Oct. 8 in the Queens Courier. The Nov. 6 Business Forum devoted to growing “green” businesses was reported Nov. 12 in the Queens Courier (see photo, p. 8)… The reading held Nov. 30 by members of QC’s MFA in Creative Writing program to benefit City Harvest, a program that helps hungry New Yorkers, was the subject of stories Nov. 26 in the Queens Chronicle and TimesLedger… The Fall 2009 edition of Aspire.com featured QC in stories about study abroad options at local colleges and how to get the most out of your student ID.

QC Authors

For much of the 20th century, powerful exit barriers at home and restrictive admission policies in the United States suppressed emigration from the Soviet bloc. That changed with the collapse of the Iron Curtain: Eastern European immigrants began pouring into America in unprecedented numbers. Speaking multiple languages and observing different faiths, they represent a diverse pool. Many are seeking economic opportunity; others are fleeing ethnic conflicts that erupted in lands where Communist leaders had tried to erase cultural distinctions. Predictably, they face challenges adjusting to their new circumstances.

In Eastern European Immigrant Families (Routledge), Mihaela Robila (FNES) documents the altered dynamics between spouses and between parents and children, some of whom are left behind when the mother or father, or both, go overseas for work.

“This Most of the migration policies in these sending countries are focused on developing advantageous labor contracts with the receiving countries,” Robila notes. “There is not much attention paid to the psychosocial impact that migration has on children and families and the support they need to adapt to this process.”

Spanning the Globe

QC mathematics teachers and students use a hands-on approach to execute a mathematical exercise at the Eighth Annual TIME 2000 Conference: Celebrating Teaching and Learning held on November 20.
Meet Your Future on the No. 7

As part of our campaign to build public awareness, the college has placed its “Meet Your Future” message on subway stripes—a new kind of advertisement on the outside of subway cars. Explains Marketing Director Steve Whalen, “We felt that these are most effective, since one of the main subway lines in Queens, the 7 train, runs above ground. By advertising on the outside of the cars, our ads are visible to riders, bystanders, and drivers below the el, who see the ads as the trains pass by.” The 7 train, used by over 2 million commuters last year, extends from Main Street, Flushing, to Times Square. The ads ran exclusively on this line during November. Depending on the MTA’s schedule for removing ads, they may still be seen on select subway cars.

CUNYFirst from page 6

ending process. In addition, “Decisions we made prior to installation have to be revisited now that the system is live.”

CUNYFirst is both powerful and integrated. Ray asserts that when the system is completely installed, “the human resources, finance, and student administration modules will be integrated for the first time.”

In 2010 CUNYFirst is scheduled to take over student administration and registration functions at Queens and Queensborough, and the system will be able to obtain information from as many offices as required.

In the case of a student registering for a course, it will access the Registrar’s Office (to identify the student), the time and cost of the courses selected (as entered by the appropriate academic department), and the Bursar’s Office (for billing). The difficulties in transferring all the data from prior systems, and then training personnel in how to use CUNYFirst, is compared by Henderson to “getting an elephant to dance.”

Training is being provided to staff as the CUNYFirst component relevant to their work nears activation; eventually, all CUNY personnel will be instructed in how to use this new technological tool.

Since it is user-driven, CUNYFirst should prove to be easy to use by anyone familiar with paying their bills or filing their taxes online.

Alum Screens First Film at the College

Flanked by film-loving students, movie producer Alan Siegel ’73 (center) celebrates the on-campus screening of his first cinematic project, Law Abiding Citizen. Recalling his years at QC as the “best time of my life,” Siegel says “QC really supported me—except when they gave me parking tickets.” A veteran Hollywood manager, he put together Citizen as a vehicle for his client Gerard Butler. Siegel not only handled the film’s financial issues and made sure the script—which had eight writers—came together, but also gave himself an uncredited cameo as a priest. “If you blink, you’ll miss me,” admits the former theatre major.

Hard-Wired Messages

A detail of a wire sculpture appearing as part of Writing the Body, an exhibition of new work by Naomi (Susnick) Grossman ’71, recently on display at the Queens College Art Center. It included drawings on paper and in mixed media, cropped nude photographs, and wire sculptures of female figures with words as part of their tensile “skin.” Grossman says her works show “people revealing their fragility and anxiety in our 21st century.”