



# Academic Affairs **Update**

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## NASA's MUREP Aerospace Academy Reaches Milestone

by **NAZRUL KHANDAKER**

**Y**ork's NASA MUREP Aerospace Academy (MAA) STEM K1-10 Program, including its predecessor program SEMAA (Science, Engineering, Mathematics, and Aerospace Academy), reached its 20,000-student milestone in the 2017 spring session.

As soon as the news reached Dr. Timothy Paglione (current Chair, Earth and Physical Sciences), he deeply expressed great satisfaction and continued by saying "When 10,000 students had passed through our classes in 2010, we had no way to foresee the accelerated success the program would achieve, even in the face of more and more limited funding. Unwavering supports of the College, Con Edison, National Grid, Citibank, [and] the SEMAA families and staff have been invaluable for sustaining this transforma-

tive resource for the kids and families of the greater Jamaica community." As an MSI (minority serving institution), York performs quite well when it comes to offering strategic STEM support to the community and MAA helps them do it. Recently, the program was featured on NY1 (<http://www.ny1.com/nyc/queens/news/2017/02/11/students-learn-about-stem-education-at-aerospace-academy-in-queens.html>). An article also appeared

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## Deadline for Next Issue

All items for the **March/April 2017** issue of **Academic Affairs Update** should be submitted to Cynthia Haller ([challer@york.cuny.edu](mailto:challer@york.cuny.edu)) or Marcia Comrie ([mcomrie@york.cuny.edu](mailto:mcomrie@york.cuny.edu)) by **April 14, 2017**. Text should be sent in MS Word. Photos should be sent as separate hi-res files (preferably not less than 1MB).



Left to right: Rosanna Singh (teacher aide), Terry Yarde (National Grid) and Pauline Miles (1st grade instructor). 1st grade students are proudly displaying their lego activities.

# MUREP Aerospace Academy

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in STEM Connector, one of the premier STEM websites dedicated to disseminating up-to-the minute STEM information globally (<http://stemconnector.org/nasa-stem-murep-aerospace-academy-program-reaches-milestone-york-college/>).

Numerous students who took the program have gone on to pursue STEM disciplines in higher education. Two notable examples are Sandy Wills (completing a PhD in immunology from Duke University) and Ameer Blake (engineering degree in Astrophysics from Howard University). Sandy reflected on her experience with the SEMAA Program: “I participated in the SEMAA program for a total of 6 years, first as a 5th grade student in fall 2000 and as a teacher assistant in fall 2004. My experience in the program has cultivated my love for science at a young age. The program provided a basic foundation in the scientific method with hands-on science activities—essential for thinking as a scientist. An integral part of my time at SEMAA as a teacher assistant was sharing my passion for the field with students and encouraging them to think creatively.”

Ms. Ericka Blake (mother of Ameer Blake) couldn't have been more candid about her son Ameer Blake, who took the previous SEMAA Program and was later accepted into the prestigious Astrophysics program at Howard University. “All parents desire greatness for their children; however, all parents do not have the monetary resources to provide opportunities for their children. I will forever be grateful to the York College SEMAA program for continuing to spark the interest of science in Ameer. It is nice to see the purpose of the program come full circle. Ameer is currently studying Astrophysics at Howard University. He was fortunate to complete his summer internship this year at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland.”

SEMAA's follow-up program, the MUREP Aerospace Academy (MAA), was introduced to the greater York community in October of 2015 with Dr. Keizs, President of York College, spearheading



6th grade students celebrating their superior performance and wearing medals with neatly inscribed NASA MAA logo.

the inaugural session. NASA's former SEMAA Program (1999-2015) was replaced by MAA, and York was selected in a nation-wide competition to offer a quality STEM program to elementary, middle and high school students. MAA also encourages the mentoring of high school students and undergraduates—a new core thrust with the expectation that students will be exposed to hands-on, field-based research experience as part of their early involvement in STEM disciplines. This experience prepares them to undertake and succeed in college-level advanced STEM courses. York is fulfilling this new task with great efficiency. Several former students were the beneficiaries of faculty-led STEM research, and they presented at the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America, held in Denver in 2016. Their presence brought prominence to the NASA MAA and surely put York on the map. Timely financial support from the National Grid enabled York's MAA to reach its 20,000-student milestone by allowing additional students to participate and opening up 10th grade to the existing program. National Grid/Lead Intake and Supervisor Terry Yarde, who visited York's MAA program in December 3, 2016, reflected on her visit by saying, “It was an interesting morning seeing how well the program was run as well as to see how engaged the children were, even the first graders.” As a consequence of Ms. Yarde's visit to the STEM program, National Grid has already pledged its financial support to aid

with adding classes for the Summer 2017 session beginning July 10, 2017.

Dr. Nazrul Khandaker is currently directing MAA and was co-director along with Dr. Tim Paglione of the previous SEMAA Program (2005-2012). Both inherited the SEMAA Program from Dr. Jack Schlein (Emeritus Professor of Biology). It was the dedicated and concentrated efforts of Congressman Gregory Meeks and Dr. Jack Schlein that established the NASA STEM Program at York College in 1999. Since then, York has remained in the forefront of offering STEM education to the greater York community free of charge via NASA funding, congressional earmarks, City Council, corporate supports from Citibank, Con Edison, Time Warner, National Grid, and others. In-kind support from York College is undeniably making it highly cost-effective and efficient in dissemination of STEM content to participating students.

From a recent longitudinal study conducted by Dr. Nazrul Khandaker, at least 100 students were followed who had already completed STEM degrees or are entering STEM professions. The longevity of the NASA STEM program is due to its proven heritage involving interactive, engaging, and experiential learning opportunities made available to students that cannot be ideally offered or duplicated in the normal school setting. Students learn about fundamental aspects of physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology, and earth system science as these relate to aerospace, global climate change, aerodynamics, planetary geology, environmental geology, robotics, computer coding, air traffic, weather tracking, and astronomy. Additionally, pre-service teachers earn field hours via attending MAA lessons and often work as STEM instructors.

Saturday morning (eight Saturdays, both fall and spring ) and weekday (Monday through Friday mornings during the summer) STEM lessons are not just to inspire and engage students towards becoming proficient in science and engineering; they are also intended to create educated citizens with an understanding of science dealing with societal issues. Eminent science writer Jennifer Humphrey went further on this issue and said “Yes, it's vital to expose



children to STEM in a positive environment to foster their interest in STEM learning and careers. (Even if they don't choose to pursue STEM majors/careers, it's still important for them to learn about science in order to become well-informed adults)." Michael Fontana (York graduate, class of 1984) said "What a terrific program; it really fills out the value to the community." Aside

from serving K1-10 students, the Family Café, led by Ms. Unity Deepan, is an integral component of the MAA Program. The Café opens up a plethora of STEM and social activities for the parents/caregivers to enjoy while their children are in classrooms. The café also offers relevant information on topics such as SAT preparation, fire safety tips from FDNY, continuing and adult education, special-

ized high school admission, NASA-supported high school/college internships, etc. Being in Queens, York's MAA program serves many parents and children from first-generation immigrant and minority backgrounds. In a way, NASA MAA can be envisioned as a well-knit fabric of the greater York community and it continues to reach out to young minds to reach for the stars. ■

## Seeking Solutions: A Community Discussion on DuVernay's Documentary "13th"

By **DR. SELENA T. RODGERS**

In early 2017, a professional encounter between Supervising Attorney Germaine Auguste of The Legal Aid Society and Dr. Selena T. Rodgers, an associate professor of Social Work and member of the York College African American Resource Center (AARC) Interdisciplinary Committee, helped spur the first in a series of critical conversations impacting African-Americans.

Most recently, on February 17, 2017, Auguste and Rodgers joined members from the Legal Aid Society, the National Association for Public Defense, the York College/CUNY AARC Interdisciplinary Committee, and the York College Social Work Empowering and Engaging Together (SWEET) student club to host 696 Build Queensbridge, LIFE Camp, Inc., community partners, parents and youth for the screening of Ava DuVernay's documentary "13th". The event was held at the York College African-American Resource Center. Dr. Rodgers moderated the post-discussion, in which attendees shared their thoughts about the documentary, experiences with mass incarceration and other structurally oppressive institutions that have galvanized the Black community. One of the highlights of the discussion was participants' quest to identify resources and solutions to eradicate violence.

Violence prevention grass-roots organizations such as LIFE Camp, Inc. and 696 Build Queensbridge have not shied away

from identifying solutions that promote effective approaches to reduce violence. In fact, they serve as a vital source in mobilizing the shift in staggeringly high rates

of violence in Queens neighborhoods. In 2017, NYTimes.com reported the successful efforts of 696 Build Queensbridge in Queensbridge Houses, the largest public housing development in America, that resulted in 365 days of no gun violence within the community. This was preceded by the launch of Mayor de Blasio, City Council Office to Prevent Gun Violence.

Dr. George White, who is the Chair and associate professor of the Department of History and Philosophy and a member of the AARC Interdisciplinary Committee, shared his insights.



Discussants l to r: Emmanuel Malik Campbell [696 Build Queensbridge], Anthony Posada [The Legal Aid Society], Marquis Black [696 Build Queensbridge], Dr. George White [York College, CUNY]. Standing is Moderator, Dr. Selena T. Rodgers [York College, CUNY].

Photo courtesy of Lorena Acevedo Rodas

# Seeking Solutions

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“The public screening of ‘13th’ held in the African American Resource Center, hosted by members of the AARC interdisciplinary committee, York College Social Work Club, the Legal Aid Society, and the National Association of Public Defenders, was an extraordinary event; this marks the third time (second time at York) that I have watched this film, yet this was a new experience,” said Dr. White. “Perhaps my perception was heightened by the presence of children in the audience. Or maybe it was the audible reaction of many in the audience as the documentary revealed the deep corporate interests in mass incarceration.”

White, who in addition to the PhD in History also holds a JD, further noted, “This might explain why I really focused in on the images of prisoners doing jobs that they cannot get in the ‘real world,’ jobs that might have kept them out of prison. Accordingly, two things stood out from this community viewing. First, I saw most clearly the ‘White Rage’ that historian Carol Anderson talks about in her new book of the same title. The White Rage that jumped off the screen were the cold, calculating policies and practices (justified by political friends and enemies) that consistently dehumanize Black women and men. Second, I loved the solutions-oriented discussion among parents, students, academics, lawyers, and formerly-incarcerated persons. This was an amazing event that



Families, youth and concerned community partners—Timothy Rountree, Attorney-in-Charge [The Legal Aid Society, Criminal Defense Practice of Queens County], Supervising Attorney Elizabeth Newton [The Legal Aid Society, Criminal Defense Practice of Queens County], Jasmine Harrison [Queens Library at Rochdale Village], LIFE Camp, Inc. representatives Ronald Robertson and Daron Goodman along with members from 696 Build Queensbridge (Founder and Director of 696 Build Queensbridge K. Bain, Taylornn Murphy Sr., Emmanuel Malik Campbell, Marquis Black, Takesha Newton)—were among the screening attendees.

embodied the College’s commitment to its neighbors,” said White.

Andrew Jackson (Sekou Molefi Baa-ko), Lecturer in the Department of History and Philosophy and a member of the AARC Interdisciplinary Committee, also found the experience enlightening.

“It was a real pleasure to be part of an evening of collaboration that brought together academics, lawyers, activists, parents and their offsprings and York College students to view the eye-opening documentary, 13th,” said Jackson. “Following the viewing, we had a spirited interactive and honest dialogue on the criminalization of the Black community, the negative impact on our community that benefits the prison system, the level of corporate involvement in designing legislation targeting Blacks

and Latinos, as well as the business of privatizing prisons. While solutions are more difficult to determine in one evening, it is very clear the continuation of sharing ideas is necessary and beneficial, especially for the students who attended from elementary, middle, high school and from York College. One high school student mentioned that his history class does not include Black history nor celebrate Black History Month. The York College AARC is a perfect setting to engage children and families in discussion about Black History. I look forward to the follow up gathering and being part of the planning of future events,” said Professor Jackson.

Seen in photo speaking, Ayanna C. Kaalund, a social work student scholar, York College Social Work Club Vice President and veteran who served in the United States armed forces, shared her reflections about the forum—“The viewing of 13th showed the power law has and its ability to oppress others for economic gain. The racial inequalities that exist are not by coincidence, but are constructs of society designed to legally enslave millions of prisoners, particularly people of color. The group discussion held after the viewing was enlightening and progressive specifically as to what communities can do to empower themselves and others. Passion inspires action, and 13th’s message is resolute in activism,” reaffirmed Ms. Kaalund. ■



Caption: Attendees L to R: Reginald Auguste [Participant], Ayanna C. Kaalund [Vice President, York College Social Work Club] Fatima Mabrouk [President, York College Social Work Club], Sheila Reynolds [Treasurer, YC Social Work Club].



## Update on York's Middle States Decennial Self-Study

By **GERARD McNEIL**, Co-Chair, Middle States Executive Committee



To maintain accreditation, institutions of higher education must be reviewed every ten years by an accrediting body. Institutions in this region are under the supervision of The Middle States Commission of Higher Education (MSCHE).

York's last decennial review was in 2008, and its next will be in 2018. The process extends over three years and started in March 2015 with selection of York's Middle States Executive Committee.

New standards have recently been introduced by MSCHE, with the major change being the reduction of the number of standards from fourteen to seven. Each institution seeking accreditation must undergo a Self-Study focusing on these seven standards plus one area dealing with governmental compliance.

The Steering Committee first decided on a strategy to approach the seven new standards and decided to create a working group for each of the standards. Individual members of the steering committee were selected to chair each of these working groups (Spring 2015).

The working groups were assembled (faculty, administration and staff) in Fall 2015 and started their work (gathering documents related to their standard and populating a document roadmap listing documents that show evidence of compliance).

The first deadline was to complete a Self-Study Design outlining York's plan for its Self-Study. During this process, Dr. Heather Perfetti, York's MSCHE liaison visited to provide feedback and make suggestions. York submitted a revision that was approved during Summer/Fall 2016 and began working on the Self Study in Fall 2016.

Working groups worked very hard during the fall (and this work continues) to assemble a preliminary report to be submitted to the Steering Committee by early 2017, which will be a summary of how well York is meeting each of the seven standards. The report will also include recommendations for improvement and/or further study.

Thanks to the hard work of the Middle States committees and the College community, York is on its way to successfully completing its Decennial Self Study.

All working groups have worked hard so far and three have submitted their preliminary reports. The Executive Committee has reviewed the recommendations submitted thus far and are now focusing on meeting with relevant areas of the College to find out if any of these recommendations are already being implemented and if not, how they could be, with the goal of addressing as many as possible prior to the site visit. Clearly there are recommendations that will be identified that can be addressed now and others that will be more long term.

York's projected timetable currently is:

- Finish with preliminary reports, address recommendations, and begin to put together a draft of the Self Study by the end of this semester.
- First draft of the Self Study by Fall 2017 to be reviewed by stakeholders at York College.
- Revise and send Self-Study to MSCHE Team Chair by October, followed by a preliminary visit by the Chair in November 2018.
- Revise the Self-Study based on suggestions, take it back to College community, and revise again as necessary in January 2018.
- Send final Self-Study to the MSCHE Committee by February 2018.
- MSCHE Team site visit in March 2018.
- MSCHE decision and response should be made by June 2018.

As we continue with our Middle States review process, it's important to keep in mind that our Self-Study has benefits other than getting re-accredited. The results and recommendations of the Self-Study will be used to improve the College and provide a solid basis for York's next Strategic Plan for 2020-2030. ■

## Selena Rodgers (Social Work) named to *Affilia* Editorial Board



For her scholarly contributions to the social work profession and for her advocacy efforts on behalf of the African American community, women and human rights, Dr. Rodgers has earned an

invited seat at the table as an incoming Editorial Board Member of *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*. In April, Dr. Rodgers will attend *Affilia's* 2017 spring annual board meeting to be held in Toronto, Canada. *Affilia's* platform is central to policy advocacy discussions and to expanding feminist scholarly conversations to include womanist and

African centered perspectives to help us understand themes of violence and structural oppression, health disparities, global health and access that disproportionately impact Black womanhood. To learn more about Dr. Rodgers' domestic and global social justice agenda, visit: [https://www.york.cuny.edu/portal\\_college/srodgers](https://www.york.cuny.edu/portal_college/srodgers). ■

# Astrobotics Program Takes Off

**DANIEL PHELPS**

In the Fall of 2014 York College received an MSI grant from NASA to participate in the 6th annual NASA Robotic Mining Competition (RMC) in the Spring of 2015 at the Kennedy Space Flight Center (KSFC) in Florida. An interdisciplinary team of students and staff went head-to-head against the best engineering institutions in the country, exploring and pushing the boundaries of robotic mining technology destined for lunar and Martian soils. This NASA competition is a test bed for unique applications of emerging technologies in robotics, autonomous navigation, alternative locomotion, and physical computing platforms. Designs derived from research in this program will be assimilated and incorporated into future mining platforms key to the eventual colonization of the Moon and Mars. Placing 35th out of an initial group of over 150, our interdisciplinary team developed the “YorkBotMk.I.” Our 150-pound, fully functioning entry in the competition turned heads with its unique design and outside-the-box approach to telerobotic engineering.

Since this inaugural competition, we returned to KSFC for the 2016 RMC with the YorkBotMk.II, and have secured administrative support to compete yearly in this wonderful NASA-sponsored event. Furthermore, the robotic mining team has diversified and grown to include another NASA-sponsored challenge, the NASA Swarmathon. The NASA Swarmathon is sponsored by the KSFC Swampworks group and funded, in part, by a grant provided to the University of New Mexico. In 2016, York College was one of 12 teams to be selected for this three-year interdisciplinary “Swarm Robotics” challenge. As a part of the physical robotics team, York was awarded three autonomous “Swarmie” robots, programming support by NASA’s Swampworks/UNM, and financial aid. The competition brings together Computer Science, Physics, Communications Technology, and Biolo-



The 2015 NASA Robotic Mining Competition team, The Fighting Cardinals. This inaugural team went on to place 35th out of the 50 physical teams in attendance at the Kennedy Space Center.

gy majors to adapt and program NASA’s Swarmies native robotic operating system to simulate the search and discovery of “In Situation” resources found on Mars. Working together to program the simulation and search methods of bees, ants, and fish, York’s 2016 Swarmathon team placed 7th out of the 12 physical teams selected for this competition. The success of our robotics teams led to the creation of an interdisciplinary organization on campus known as York Astrobotics.



The 2016 Swarmathon Competition team showing off their NASA-Swampworks-designed “Swarmie” Robots.

As the Astrobotics program has grown at York College, the students and faculty have come to realize that our contribution to STEM goes beyond just the NASA-sponsored elements. Its deep impact on participants is applying their knowledge outside the classroom and among their peers in other disciplines. The Robotics Mining Competition and Swarmathon require that students coordinate outreach programs intended to foster interest in STEM. To this end, we have not only created a meaningful outreach quota for York Astrobotics, but the undergraduate participants were spurred to expand their mission to include: fostering the experience and application of interdisciplinary and physical science contributions to robotics, promoting and engaging STEM to underserved communities through robotics, and establishing long-term relationships with students and faculty across campuses to promote STEM initiatives and collaboration.

Since its inception, the York College Astrobotics team has consisted of a diverse, multicultural pool of students from a wide variety of disciplines. The team currently consists of students majoring



in Physics, Computer Science, Communications Technology, Information and Systems Management, English, and Journalism. This interdisciplinary group not only participates at the highest level of engineering and computer engineering challenges that NASA has to offer, but they have also been promoting robotics and STEM through various initiatives, workshops, and technology demonstrations. For example, they participate in the NASA Minority University Research and Education Program (MUREP) at York, the MUREP Aerospace Academy, which has engaged over 20,000 K-12 students from southeastern Queens in NASA activities on Saturdays and in the summer since 1999 (see separate article in this issue). York Astrobotics has created a thriving collaboration between NASA-sponsored programs, academic departments, and student groups, and is a powerful tool to introduce STEM to K-12 and undergraduate students alike. Not only have a younger generation been introduced to STEM through the program, but the Astrobotics participants have reinforced their research and academics in a way that keeps them invested in the college and their subsequent STEM majors. The leadership and competitive applied science opportunities that the Astrobotics program provides gives the students valuable experience for their future careers.

The positive intuitional impacts of the York Astrobotics program have been seen since its inception in 2014. By teaming up with faculty sponsors, students within the Astrobotics programs have competed in the NASA Robotic Mining Competition and NASA Swarmathon robotics competitions. These inclusive major collaborations have created hands-on learning activities that apply classroom scholarship in ways that specific discipline learning cannot. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, off-site robotic competition practice, year-round engagement and collaboration with Faculty in their respective fields, the Astrobotics program has exceeded expectations by engaging the student body across every ancillary field of robotics.

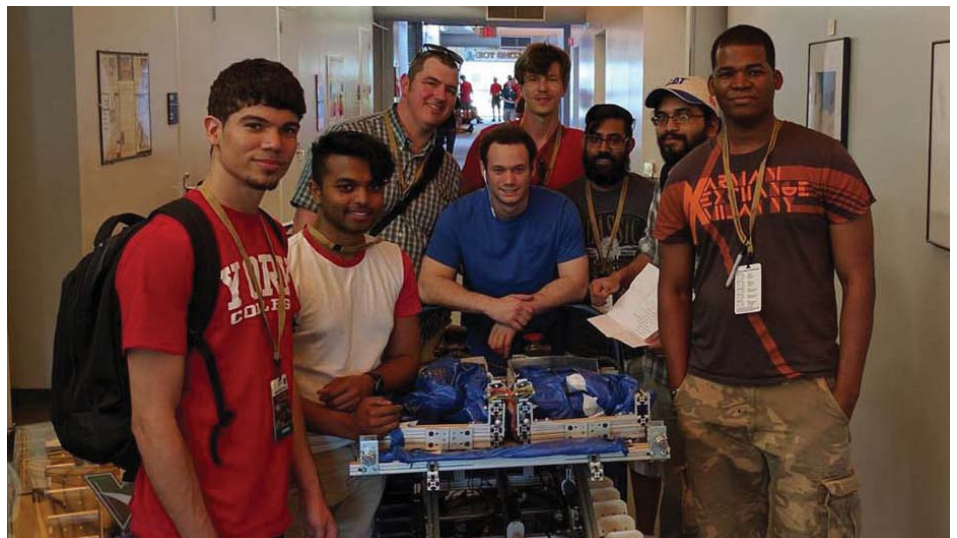
Interdisciplinary collaboration by student and faculty cohorts has become the cornerstone of Astrobotics at York Col-

lege. Because of the complex nature of robotics, the fields of computer science, communications technology, physics and engineering must work collaboratively to be able to compete in NASA-sponsored competition research, which exposes a wide variety of students in major disciplines to areas of study that would not previously be explored otherwise. This cross-pollination of research and hands on learning has, in our case, broadened students' narrow view of their major to incorporate other areas of study. Currently, physics majors are working with computer science cohorts and faculty to incorporate the programming methods into the Robotic Mining Competition robotic entry. Additionally, computer science majors are working with Biology and Communications Technology Faculty to incorporate biological algorithms into programming of swarm robotics in the NASA Swarmathon Competition.

This collaboration between disciplines happens on a year-round basis to enhance learning in the classroom. Student work in Astrobotics takes place outside of the classroom and ultimately leads to off-campus enrichment experiences as the student-and-faculty teams travel to NASA-sponsored competition events. Through these events, student-to-student and student-to-faculty bonds are strengthened as the Astrobotics program applies their research and robotic creations in the competi-

tion arenas. Student-and-faculty teams work closely over the year to improve on previous designs and software methods. The close relationships that the students create with their work and the faculty has led to the retention and recruitment of some of the best minds York College has to offer. By "buying in" to the Astrobotics program, students and faculty alike come to rely on one another through, and beyond, the academic school year. Students participating in the Astrobotics teams also gain access to NASA-sponsored internship opportunities as well as collaborative work on specific faculty research outside of the classroom.

Faculty that work with students in the NASA competition events gain insight into the students themselves. These close one-on-one collaborations lead to faculty mentorship and internship opportunities. Throughout the year, the York College faculty that work outside of the classroom with students come to understand, with a greater certainty, individual student career goals and specific areas of study that are difficult to ascertain in the classroom environment. Ultimately, these faculty collaboration and mentorships lead to greater research opportunities and career understanding for the students as they progress towards graduation. Through the Astrobotics Program and its cross-disciplinary objectives, York hopes to strengthen those ties to the STEM fields for students beyond graduation. ■



The 2016 Robotic Mining Competition team prepares for NASA engineers to evaluate their design for competition.



# Citizens and Others at the Border of Inclusion and Exclusion

By **ROBIN A. HARPER**, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Political Science, Department of Behavioral Sciences

Current news is filled with three big themes: how do we keep people we don't want out, whom should we let in and what can we do to bring people closer? These questions aren't new but at the core of human existence for millennia; at each juncture in history, societies struggle to find appropriate answers. Many social scientists examine the lives of undocumented immigrants who live on the periphery. I am interested in the experiences of those we invite into our society—legal permanent residents, naturalized citizens and temporary labor migrants. My research poses questions about citizenship, inclusion and exclusion, and borders. What does it mean to be a member? How do we transform ourselves (and others) from outsiders into insiders? Can legitimate democracies tolerate “junior memberships”? How can all people—members, non-members and those rejected for membership—participate in meaningful ways in our communities? Can temporary labor migration schemes ever serve migrants, employers and the society at-large fairly? Why do people stay if being a migrant is so hard? And, in all of these cases: What roles do governments play?

The US often calls itself “a nation of immigrants,” but it is also the world leader in naturalizing immigrants. Until recently, the US naturalized more immigrants annually than all other countries in the world combined. Naturalization of immigrants is the norm in the US; it is not so in many other states. Other countries study the American experience to develop their own traditions and cultures of naturalization. To that end, last spring, I was invited by the US Department of State to give a talk to foreign journalists to trace the bureaucratic process of naturalization from the state's and immigrants' perspectives. (There is, ironically, little information why immigrants seek naturalization and how they

experience the process.) My hope was to illuminate the naturalization ceremony as a meaningful public ritual where the state transforms foreigners into members while generating citizen identities, reinforcing state power and confirming relationships between new citizens, current citizens, and the state. Naturalizations are one of the few daily repeated political theater experiences, replete with monologs, dialogues, costumes, props, actors, stage managers, plural audiences, and staged practices. Naturalizations allow new citizens to perform their first official public acts of citizenship. My most recent article discussing the ontological choreography and multiple publics participating in US naturalization ceremonies appears in *Space & Polity* in April 2017.

Foreign media, especially, has a keen interest in US immigration. I have been interviewed about citizenship, naturalization, immigration and civic engagement by a number of media organizations including most recently: *City Limits* (US newsmagazine), *Dagsavisen* (Norwegian newspaper), *Masr Alarabia* (Egyptian newspaper), *Nettavisen* (Norwegian newspaper), *De Telegraaf* (Dutch newspaper), TV 5 Monde/Keep In News Agency (French television/News Agency).

Another part of my research agenda deals with temporary labor migrants (TLM) in Israel. Although the Arab-Israeli conflict sits in center-stage for discussions of cleavage within Israeli society, there are other divisions. I work with an Israeli political scientist, Dr. Hani Zubida, examining how TLM fit into the Israeli national story. When Israel invited these migrants in the 1980s, it envisaged a temporary, rotating labor force. Israel is slowly discovering ‘the iron law of labor migration’: there is nothing more permanent than temporary labor. TLM now account for about 5 percent of the total population and 11

percent of the labor force. Children of TLM are born and socialized into Israeli society, yet, many remain stateless as neither Israel nor their parents' countries of origin can confer citizenship rights. Israel asserts that it is a Jewish and democratic state, yet the presence of the TLM complicates that: by not being Jewish, migrants challenge the Jewishness of the state; by being excluded, migrants challenge Israel's democraticness. The question of how much to include or exclude is a problem facing all states. We explore issues of permanence and the parameters of the TLM experience – the meaning of time, money and space for temporary labor migrants and their children. The findings were presented to the Israeli Knesset. Our work appears in scholarly press book chapters, and such peer-reviewed journals as *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *Diversities*, *Glocalism*, *Hagira Israel Journal of Migration*, *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *Policy & Society*, *Social Identities*, *Sociological Inquiry*.

The third major part of my research agenda examines questions of borders and inclusion and exclusion. The idea of borders often evokes images of physical spaces that demark entrance and exit of administrative territories, but borders exist beyond these contentious political spaces. Imagine Berlin's Potsdamer Platz where costumed East German (‘Cold War’) soldiers guard free-standing segments of the Berlin Wall that divide nothing anymore, stamping fake visas to enter a country that no longer exists. A few subway stops away are the losers of German unification – pensioners from the former East Germany, migrants (and their children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren); ethnic Germans from formerly communist Europe – unable to find jobs in unified Germany, shut out of modernization, facing a globalized world and lacking the necessary



resources to contend with it. There is a border between these people and modern, progressive Germany. So why do we insist on demarcating borders that don't exist and denying borders that are present? What policies can we implement to bring these segments of society together? How do current policies reify

divisions? I served as the expert advisor for a scientific and technical mission funded by the EU-sponsored COST/EastBordNet to document the political, economic, social, cultural, and temporal borders of modern Berlin, Germany. I have published about inclusion and exclusion, citizenship and social borders

in peer-reviewed German journals and several book chapters.

I have had the pleasure of exploring these questions of citizenship, borders, inclusion and exclusion in the field and with my students. I hope that in the process we develop better questions and maybe, some day, even some answers. ■

## Black Youth, The Village, Our Duty

By **DR. SELENA T. RODGERS**

On January 28, 2017, Dr. Selena T. Rodgers, an associate professor in the Department of Social Work at York College, City University of New York and 20+ year resident of the Queens community, served as an invited panelist for a community town hall hosted by Jack and Jill of America, Inc., Queens Chapter. Jack and Jill of America, Inc.'s mission is "to address issues affecting African American children and families, by investing in programs and services that create a strong foundation for children to thrive long-term." <http://jackandjillfoundation.org/> and <https://www.jackandjillqueens.org/>

The event, "Addressing Our Children's Social and Emotional Needs: Gun Violence, Social Justice and Amplifying Your Voice," was held at the Eagle Academy Middle School, in Springfield Gardens, Queens. Three key themes emerged during the town hall.

**Black youth:** Trends of violence and negative overrepresentation in media headlines are too often manifestations of everyday life that plague black and brown youth worldwide. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, homicide is the leading cause

of death among African Americans age 10-24 and second leading cause among Latinos in the same age group.

**The village:** Our youth matter! They are a vital part of the community, society and future. By actively engaging in culturally conscious dialogue and strengthening advocacy efforts, youth, parents, community members, educators, mentors and concerned stakeholders collectively and purposefully develop sustainable solutions to eradicate youth violence. Honorable New York State Senator Leroy Comrie of the 14th Senatorial District was present at the town hall meeting, and listened attentively as Councilman I. Daneek Miller and es-

*Continued on next page ►*



Jack & Jill of America, Inc. Queens Chapter panelists l to r: Councilman I. Daneek Miller [27th Council District], Dr. Margareth Lafontant [Medgar Evers College, CUNY], Royce Russell [Civil Rights and Criminal Defense Attorney-at-Law], Dr. Selena T. Rodgers [York College, CUNY] Stacie Grant [Motivational Speaker], P.O. Jermaine

Washington [Community Affairs Officers, 113th Precinct, partially visible], Jacques Léandre, Esq. [Civil Rights Law], Zakiyyah Ali [Columbia University, Teacher's College], Anthony Hooks [P.S. 123 Principal]. Holding the microphone is York College alumna, Erica Ford (Life Camp, Inc.)

## Black Youth

Continued from 9

teemed pillars in the community took to the panel to describe their passion and efforts to address socio-emotional concerns of youth exposed to unprecedented police shootings, mass incarceration, and violence towards African Americans.

**Our duty:** In addition to the shared platform, the Town Hall was also an occasion to offer three workshops, two for children and adolescents. The youth workshops focused on construction, comprehension and enforcement of laws, civil rights, and effective tips to use when stopped, questioned or frisked by law enforcement. Attendee Germaine Auguste affirmed, “I was so delighted I attended this empowering meeting with my teenager! My son obtained resources to make wise choices and a keen awareness of social justice issues. The workshops provided an opportunity to share ideas and discuss parenting strategies. The esteemed panelists shared their wisdom and offered inspiration during challenging times. Kudos to Jack & Jill for putting this event together!”

The parent/community workshop moderated by Licensed Clinical Psychologist Dr. Alexandra McGlashan was well-attended. Several York College student scholars and alumni participated in the memorable occasion. Amid Dr. Margareth Lafontant [Assistant Professor, Medgar Evers College, CUNY] and Mr. Anthony Hooks [P.S. 123 Principal], Dr. Rodgers, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW-R), presented her talk titled, *A Call to the Village: Are We Our Children's*

*Keeper? Yes We Are!* to attendees. Professor Rodgers delivered an animated talk addressing the intersection between health disparities, violence, multi-stressors and racial trauma endured by African-American youth. She also highlighted the importance of strength-based approaches, mentoring relationships, and African traditions as salient responses to cope with persistent and pervasive multi-stressors linked to violence and advancements in the African American community.

Fatima Mabrouk, a senior in the York College (YC) social work program and President of the YC Social Work Club, offered her reflection. “I have the deepest appreciation to have attended the town hall and see mothers whose purpose was to inform the audience how precious our black and brown children are... As individuals and community members, we all have to strive for a better world. Thank you, Dr. Rodgers, for your tireless dedication to the young people and communities and for showing me how to stand my ground and have the kind of career that I can be proud of,” said Ms. Mabrouk.

According to Durrell Washington, a Fall '16 Alumnus and past Social Work Club vice president, “It was humbling to see not only the number of parents who were in the building, but also the high turnout from high school and junior high school students. The breakout session was my fondest memory. My mentor Dr. Selena T. Rodgers was one of the speakers. The biggest takeaway I got from the breakout session was the importance of mentorship. Having someone to help serve as a guide, and hold you responsible for the decisions you make in life, especially academically and professionally, is important for our youth.” ■



Dr. Selena T. Rodgers (Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, York College/CUNY)

## Kudos!



**Professor Linda Grasso** gave a presentation on her forthcoming book at the Brooklyn Museum March 4, to coincide with the opening of the museum's *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern* exhibition. Dr. Grasso's new book, *Equal Under the Sky: Georgia O'Keeffe and Twentieth-Century Feminism*, will be out in November 2017.



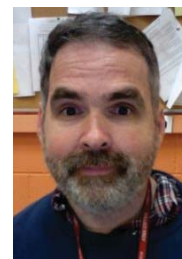
**Tim Paglione** (Earth and Physical Science) recently published an article in *The Astrophysical Journal*: Abrahams, R. D., Teachey, A., Paglione, T. A. D.,

“Calibrating Column Density Tracers with Gamma-Ray Observations of the  $\rho$  Ophiuchi Molecular Cloud,” *The Astrophysical Journal*, 834, 91.



**Dr. Michael Sharpe** was recently interviewed by the *Mainichi Shimbun*, a major Japanese daily newspaper, about his view of President Trump's Executive Order on Immigration. The

*Mainichi Shimbun* has a circulation of 3.5 million copies.



**Scott Sheidlower's** (Library) second book has now been published: *Engaging Diverse Learners: Teaching Strategies for Academic Librarians* by Mark Aaron Polger (Library, Col-

lege of Staten Island) and Scott Sheidlower (Library, York College) <http://www.abc-clio.com/LibrariesUnlimited/product.aspx?pc=A4793P>



## York Springs into New Semester with Symposium

Spring Symposium 2017 focused primarily on four points: Middle States, the Center for Teaching, Learning and Education Technology (CTLET), transitioning to an online bookstore platform and the college's golden anniversary celebrations.

Emceed by Dr. Donna Chirico, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, the February 16 event was well attended by faculty and staff from across the campus. Dr. Gerard McNeil, a co-chair of the college's Middle States Executive Committee, updated the college community on where York is in the Middle States re-accreditation process, which will be completed in 2018 (see details elsewhere in this volume).

Dr. Greet Van Belle made an enlightening presentation on CTLET; and Assistant Vice President Ismael Perez revealed that the college, like numerous other CUNY colleges, is moving to a mortar and brick-less bookstore.

CUNY has selected Akademos, an online bookstore outfit, for all textbooks and course materials. All books and course materials will now be purchased online as the college phases out its Barnes & Noble partnership over the spring semester. According to a CUNY release, students will have their orders shipped to them on an individual basis.

Other campuses already using Akademos include Queens College,

John Jay College, Medgar Evers College, and the CUNY School of Law. Akademos is said to be providing their students with "low cost textbook options and significant savings to date."

Perez said the college will also be launching, with the aid of technology, improved customer service throughout the college.

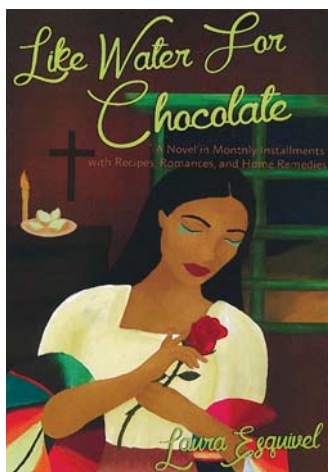
President Marcia V. Keizs updated the College on efforts to obtain public and other possible sources of funding to construct the college's proposed Academic Village and Conference Center, a 163,000 gross square foot nine story site needed to accommodate the college's growth.

Dr. Keizs also announced that York's golden anniversary gala will be held on May 10 at Guastavino's, located on the Manhattan side of the 59th Street Bridge. She asked faculty and staff to help make the event a success. ■



## York Common Reader Updates

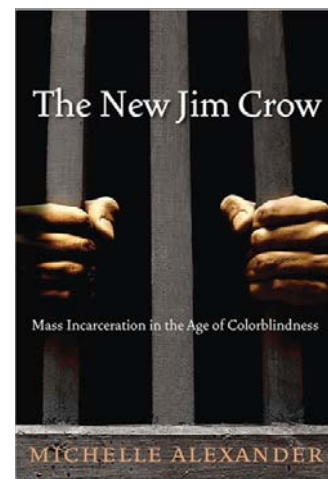
Congratulations to studio art majors Dania Gonzalez and Diana Partap, first- and second-prize winners of the 2016-2017 York Common Reader Art Contest. Contest guidelines asked students to offer potential redesigns of the book's cover, along with a statement of how their redesigned covers reflected the book's content.



First-prize entry by Dania Gonzalez (left); Second-prize entry by Diana Partap (right)

Dania Gonzalez's entry, which she created digitally using Adobe Photoshop, evokes the romantic atmosphere of the novel, using the color red to indicate and symbolize the passion of the main characters, Tita and Pedro. Diana Partap's entry (second-prize) depicts the lovers Tita and Pedro as quail, in keeping with the chapter in which Tita prepares a dish of quail with rose petals for her family.

The 2017-2018 York Common Reader will be Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2015). Alexander explores how mass imprisonment in the U.S. is rooted in, manifests, and perpetuates racial injustice. Cornel West describes the book as "a grand wake-up call in the midst of a long slumber of indifference to the poor and vulnerable." Faculty interested in incorporating the book (or portions of it) in their courses can contact Professor Cynthia Haller (challer@york.cuny.edu) for further information. ■





# Spotlight on Information System Society

## Small Business Development and Business Opportunities

By **MOHINI RAMLAKHAN** and **VANDEVKA CHATTERGOON**, York ISM majors

The Information Systems Management (ISM) Society invited Ms. Andrea Ormeno, the business advisor of the Women's Business Center at the Queens Economic Development Corporation (QEDC) to address ISM students on a number of business opportunities. She focused on the different strategies to initiate and manage a successful small and medium size business. Ms. Ormeno identified the steps in starting a small business, which are:

- creating a business plan;
- having the necessary skills and abilities;
- investing in research;
- looking into cost and finance;
- naming the business;
- obtaining the required registration and permits; and
- gathering resources.

Quite often businesses fail as a result of poor idea execution. Factors such as lack of experience, funds, support, credit, inventory, expertise in the field, as well as the inability to deliver products or services, have contributed to these failures. Hence, it is imperative that business ideas are clear and concise with long-term goals in mind. Ms. Ormeno also stressed the significance of obtaining trademarks and patents prior to the opening of the business.

Starting and funding the daily operations of a business can prove challenging. There are a number of avenues which could be pursued for generating the required revenue.

- Crowd-funding;
- Banks;
- Credit Unions;
- Home equity; and
- IBA loan guarantee.

Crowd-funding is a new way and creative way to raise money for small businesses. It involves raising capital

through the collective effort of friends, family, customers, and individual investors. This approach taps into the collective efforts of a large pool of individuals and leverages their networks for greater reach and exposure. With enough people buying into the idea, enough capital is generated to launch the business.

There are three types of crowd-funding:

- **Donation:** where people invest in your idea because they believe it will work;
- **Debt:** where members of the public lend to small businesses, which is then paid back with interest. This method is highly recommended because entrepreneurs avoid using the banks.
- **Equity:** where investors are given equity such as shares in your company.

Establishing a good credit rating is another important factor. Good credit rating is based on 4 different categories: Character (experience and demeanor), Capacity (how much you can afford), Capital (how much money you have in reserve), and Collateral (what are you putting aside).

Besides all the legal and technical issues that entrepreneurs must face, it is also important that they are intel-

lectually capable of operating the business. Starting and maintaining a small business is quite time-consuming and requires 100% commitment. Useful tips on being a successful entrepreneur are:

- Maintain a strong sense of self;
- Learn from the past but do not dwell on it;
- Trust your instinct;
- Accept change;
- Boost others;
- Take care of yourself—physically and mentally;
- Do the most difficult task first;
- Avoid comparisons;
- Accept valid criticism;
- Build community relationships;
- Listen to your customers;
- Focus on quality over quantity;
- Give your time and expertise;
- Follow up—send thank-you notes;
- Be passionate, but be real;
- Menial work is okay;
- The most important people in life may not be “important people.”

Before moving forward with the process of owning the business of your dreams, take the steps to guarantee your business is on the path to success. ■



A full house attended Ms. Andrea Ormeno's seminar on managing small and medium size businesses.



# Human Resource Information Systems

By **MOHINI RAMLAKHAN**, York ISM major

Invited guest speaker Mr. Bastien Jean-Baptiste, the Information Technology Support Assistant here at York College, presented to the ISM society “The Role of IS in Human Resource Management Systems”(HRIS). Mr. Jean-Baptiste explained the utilization of HRIS within organizations. The three major areas are:

1. Conducting transactions;
2. Building customer relationships;
3. Business intelligence.

According to Mr. Jean-Baptiste the main purpose of an HRIS is to gather, classify, process, record and disseminate the information required for efficient and effective management of human resources in the organization. The uses of HRIS are also numerous and include:

- **Personnel Administration:** personal information of an employee. These may include name, address, date of birth, marital status, and the date of joining the organization.
- **Salary Administration:** present information on salary, benefits, last pay increase and proposed increase in future.
- **Leave/Absence Increase:** used to control leave/absence of employees. This is done by maintaining a leave history of each employee.

- **Skill Inventory:** recording employee skills and monitoring a skill database. Such records help identify employees’ skill sets.
- **Medical History:** required for industrial safety purposes and accident monitoring, amongst others.
- **Performance Appraisal:** data such as the due date of the appraisal, potential for promotion, and scores of each performance criteria.
- **Manpower Planning:** information on organizational requirements in terms of positions.

- **Recruitment:** cost and method of recruitment and time taken to fill the positions.
- **Career Planning:** facilitates positional advancement of employees and planning for succession.
- **Collective Bargaining:** up-to-date relevant and required information, facts and figures that can facilitate collective bargaining.

Since labor is the single largest expense for most organizations, human resources helps companies to derive the greatest value from this important asset. When employees are happy, they create a productive work environment, making the organization achieve its set of goals. ■



Dr. Fenio Annansingh-Jamieson (left) with attendees of the HRIS seminar and speaker Mr. Bastien Jean-Baptiste (center, red tie)

## Kudos!

**george white, jr.** (History and Philosophy) has been busy over the past calendar year publishing scholarship of various kinds.



Over the past year, he has published two peer-reviewed scholarly articles. The first, published in the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, is entitled “The Color of Money: African Americans, Economic Development, and Identity in Kentucky.” The most recent article, “‘Say What One Mo’ Time’: Transmedia Storytelling and Racial Violence in the 21st Century Through the

Lens of The Boondocks” was published in the most recent edition of *The Projector: A Journal on Film, Media, and Culture*. As a member of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, george was invited to serve as an editor for the organization’s historiographical guide for scholars and students. In this regard, george was responsible for drafting Chapter 7 of the forthcoming SHAFR Guide, entitled “U.S. Relations with Africa and the Middle East, 1815-1919.” In addition, george delivered the keynote address at the 2017 MLK Day celebration held by the Supreme Court of the State of New York, Queens County, and the Macon B. Allen Bar Association.

# York Journalism Professor Fights for the Wrongfully Convicted

By **JESSICA LAU**, York Journalism Student

In 1990 teenager Johnny Hincapie was found guilty of taking part in a high-profile murder on a New York City subway. He spent 25 years in prison until York College journalism professor William Hughes and others took an interest in his case. Professor Hughes helped to find evidence that eventually led to Hincapie's release.

Professor Hughes specializes in in-depth investigative journalism projects. He wound up spending substantial time over an 11-year period working on the Hincapie case. During that time he worked closely with Hincapie's attorney Ron Kuby. The big break came when he discovered that a vital witness, Luis Montero, had game-changing information that could support Hincapie's claims of innocence in the murder of Utah tourist, Brian Watkins. Montero was originally too terrified to come forward with this evidence.

In class, Professor Hughes teaches his students to be fair and thorough and to forget everything they see on TV about being a reporter. He mentions good investigative work is a marathon, not a sprint.

"One reason I left the full-time reporter job and became a professor at York College was because being a professor gave me time and freedom to pursue my research," says Hughes, an assistant professor at York for the past nine years.

Professor Hughes continues to screen possible cases of others wrongly convicted. For the past several months, he has been working at the Deskovic Foundation for Justice as a pro bono private investigator. The Deskovic Foundation is a non-profit corporation committed to the prevention of wrongful convictions in both DNA and non-DNA cases.

Jeffrey Deskovic, the founder of this foundation, was a victim of a wrongful conviction in 1990. He was wrongfully accused

of raping, beating and strangling Angela Correa. Deskovic was exonerated after 16 years in prison. He won \$41,650,000 in a lawsuit against the sheriff's investigator Daniel Stephens and Putnam County.

Deskovic now attends law school at Pace University and still spends time working with his foundation. The foundation is a non-profit corporation that has several dozen active cases and a backlog of more than 600 requests for assistance. Hughes spends one day per week at the foundation. He is currently working with Deskovic to develop a system to track the status of each case and digitize all the files. In addition, Hughes conducts investigative work as the need arises.

Professor Hughes says each case is approached in the same way—the incarcerated individuals have to fill out an extensive questionnaire detailing the specifics of their case. The foundation reviews each case to see if it is viable. The team assesses whether or not there were legal violations during the initial trial that might present chances for an appeal. Team members then decide if additional investigative work could uncover evidence that was not available at the time of the trial.

"The greatest challenge often involves convincing witnesses who testified for the prosecution to come forward and admit they lied under oath to save their own skin," says Hughes. They were convinced to do so by law enforcement officials through threats, beatings, lies, promises and all manner of coercive techniques frequently employed."

In investigating a wrongful conviction case, the key steps involve a careful review of each case starting with procuring and reading the original trial transcript. The transcript could run into thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of pages. A list of questions gets drawn up and each client is then visited in prison to discuss the questions which arise from the transcript review. It can be extremely difficult to obtain key evidence that prosecutors keep in their possession. It is also difficult to keep track of so many cases at the same time.

"There are no adequate words to describe the feeling of being instrumental in saving someone from dying in a prison," says Hughes. "But, for starters, I can tell you it is profoundly gratifying on both a personal and professional level."

Professor Hughes continues to use as inspiration his own case from when he was 15 years old. He was falsely arrested and charged in an assault case. Luckily, the charges were thrown out, but he came close to sharing the same fate of the men and women he tries to help. Even for the people with very complicated cases, it gives them a tremendous sense of hope that at least somebody on the outside is doing something to try to right the injustice that got them locked up.

"I'm working on several cases simultaneously," says Hughes. "Several of them involved convictions secured by the work of former NYPD Detective Louis Scarcella, who is infamous for his corrupt practices." ■



Johnny Hincapie (left) enjoys a light moment with Professor Hughes. Hincapie spoke at York following his release in 2015.



# SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

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President and Chief Executive Officer  
Federal Reserve Bank of New York

**March 24th, 2017**  
**10:00 - 11:30 AM**

Faculty/Cardinal Dining Room AC-2D01  
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**Dr. Olajide Oladipo, Professor**  
Economics & Entrepreneurship Clubs Advisor  
Department of Business & Economics  
718-262-2502

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## Geology Major Ality Aghedo: Recipient of Several Prestigious Scholarships

by **NAZRUL KHANDAKER**

On January 20, 2017, Ality Aghedo received an important email “Congratulations on your selection for the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) Department of Energy Scholars Program. We are honored to support you in your educational pursuits,” wrote Johnny Taylor (president and CEO). Ality was awarded \$7,400 for the 2016-2017 academic year.

“The Thurgood Marshall Scholarship will help me to strengthen my resolve to work towards my ambition to become a geoscientist,” said Aghedo. “Because of this scholarship, I will complete my undergraduate program on schedule and enter into the professional job market prepared to succeed.”

A few years ago, Shirley Jackson (a geology graduate of the Class of 2013 now completing her MS in Sustainability in the Urban Environment Program at City College) was also the proud recipient of a TMCF Scholarship. The awards process is highly competitive and the awards are given to qualified students who plan to earn a baccalaureate, graduate or law degree from an accredited college or university.

The Science, Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship for Service Program, which Ality has also won, has been established by the Department of Defense (DOD) to support undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The program aims to increase the number of civilian scientists and engineers working at DOD laboratories.

Finally, Ality also became a finalist in the Summer Undergraduate Research in Geoscience and Engineering (SURGE) program at Stanford’s School of Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences, though he will be unable to join the 2017



Ality Aghedo attending the annual meeting of the GSA

cohort due to limited available faculty projects. The SURGE team conveyed the following encouraging message to Ality and surely it reflected upon his strong geoscience education background: “The fact that you made it to the second round is a testament to your qualifications. We encourage you to continue your interests in STEM and the Earth sciences, and we hope you consider applying to a Stanford graduate program in the future.”

Since 2011, SURGE has been opening the path for underrepresented minority undergraduates from across the



Left to Right: York College/NASA MAA Presenters: Newrence Wills (NASA MAA), Akeed Alrubay (geology), and Ality Aghedo (geology)

country to pursue graduate studies and careers in earth sciences by offering an eight-week research opportunity with Stanford’s earth sciences faculty. In addition to working with a research mentor, SURGE scholars attend workshops on graduate school preparation and take a GRE (Graduate Record Examination) preparation course that has historically improved quantitative scores by 25 percent. Now in its sixth year, SURGE boasts 87 alumni. Over a third of the alumni are in earth sciences PhD and master’s programs at institutions such as the University of Texas at Austin, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and MIT, while others are working in industry and government. Six SURGE alumni have enrolled in Stanford’s Earth Science Program.

SURGE provides undergraduates from a U.S. institution the opportunity to gain mentored research experience at Stanford University in the geosciences and engineering during the eight-week period of June 23rd, 2017 to August 19th, 2017. The underlying philosophy of SURGE is to train students by creating a supportive and rigorous work environment. Like York’s geology program, SURGE sets high expectations for their scholars: to prepare them for a potential career in the field of geoscience and engineering and to ensure that they get the most from their stay at Stanford. Each SURGE scholar is matched with a Stanford faculty member and has the opportunity to work in a research group or laboratory. The scholar is assigned an interesting and challenging project from a broad range of science and engineering topics that are accessible within the eight-week summer period.

The program culminates with a research symposium at Stanford, where scholars present results from their summer projects to faculty, mentors, and colleagues. The total SURGE package per scholar is worth about \$12,000 and includes stipend, round trip travel expenses, paid housing and meal plan for eight weeks, and paid seven-week GRE Preparation course with Clear Focus Test Prep.



Ality took advantage of CUNY's Study Abroad Program and visited China and Brazil last year to undertake both cultural and geoscience-related research projects. He came back refreshed with new ideas and knowledge to appreciate the globalization theme of the Geological Society of America (GSA). Under the guidance of Dr. Nazrul Khandaker, Ality, as a Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) scholar, successfully completed a research task and presented at the annual meeting of the GSA, held in Denver, Colorado (September 25-28, 2016). It was the GSA meeting that enabled Ality to learn about the SURGE Program and its rich STEM component available for interested undergraduates

to seek summer geoscience internships at Stanford. Dr. Khandaker led a small group of geology undergraduates to the GSA meeting and upheld the tradition of York's regular attendance since 2004.

Both Dr. Schleifer and Khandaker have presided over topical sessions focused on geoscience education and enabled over 350 K12-16 students nationally to present their geo-and-environmental science research outcomes since 2004. They have already mentored over 35 of York's undergraduates on doing scientific research, preparing them to present their research, gain feedback, do networking and explore future career opportunities in the geosciences. Several York geology graduates reflected on this

professional networking via GSA and sincerely acknowledged their gratitude and satisfaction for having this opportunity made available to them.

This has become a tradition York can unequivocally claim and take credit for by helping its students to receive well-rounded geoscience education and be job-ready. Ality remains quite busy and highly visible on-campus. Aside from academic pursuits, he is involved with the Undergraduate Research Club and York College Student Programming Council (President). Being a double major (chemistry and geology), Ality is aiming high, and will no doubt continue his achievements beyond his years at York College. ■

## York Alumna Presents Solo Photo Exhibit for Black History Month

Nacha Kama, a York College alumna of the Class of 2008, returned to York with a solo photo exhibit honoring her late grandfather and other family members for Black History Month.

Kama is considered a princess in her homeland of Owerre-Olubor, Delta State, Ghana, where her grandfather Ezinna Ngaboso Onwumena was king of the Owerre-Olubor people.

Kama, who majored in Information Technology and minored in photography at York, created the still-growing exhibit in tribute to the family patriarch; and as a way to "put Owerre-Olubor on the map."

The exhibit depicts mostly everyday life in the village—women displaying produce in the marketplace, children playing, performing chores or waiting for the school bus; and rural life in general.

Among those who enjoyed the exhibit was a group of Photo Journalism students who saw it with Journalism Professor Tom Moore. Aqsa Abbasi was especially moved.

"Surrounding myself with art is another zone I want to reside in," said Abbasi. "I [hadn't] seen anything as beautiful as this concept of unity [before]."

Professor Margaret Rose Vendryes, chair of the Performing and Fine Arts Department and director of the college's Art Gallery, promises another exciting exhibit within the next few weeks. This will feature the work of faculty artists. ■



Artist Nacha Kama (left) with Professor Margaret Vendryes (Performing and Fine Arts).



Artist Nacha Kama points out her mother in one of her exhibited photographs.

# Institutional Grants from the Department of Education

Through the focused efforts of the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, York College/CUNY has been awarded two institutional grants totaling \$ 1,591,136 from the U.S. Department of Education. Funded through the Predominantly Black Institutions Program (PBI) of the U.S. Department of Education, (designated PBI's meet the minimum threshold of serving 40% of African American students), the first program entitled "Promoting Recruitment, Retention and Graduation of African American Students" is funded for the 2015-2020 period, and the second program entitled "Promoting Academic Success of African American Students" is funded for the 2016-2021 period.

The main goals and objectives of both programs are to promote academic success of African American students specifically, and all students in general. Success will be demonstrated by increased and improved recruitment, retention, and graduation rates, as well as, by demonstrating excellent preparation of students for successful transition into careers and into professional and graduate school acceptance upon graduation.

## 1. Program Activities: Direct Academic Engagement of Students

- **Support for the York College Honors Program** In support and to promote academic excellence, resources are made available to the York College Honors Program to provide appropriate honors engagement and activities that will enrich student experience beyond the classroom.
- **Support Undergraduate Internship Program** The program provides support for York undergraduate students to participate in internships with partnering organizations. Support will be provided for student interns with the Northeastern Regional Laboratory of the U.S. FDA and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection.
- **Support for the Male Initiative and Professional/Graduate**

## School Preparation Programs

Through the York College Male Initiative Office the program provides funds and activities to support undergraduate students to succeed in their courses through tutoring, mentoring, etc..

In addition the Male Initiative Office is coordinating with other college programs to organize and support preparatory workshops for students to take professional and graduate school exams such as MCAT, PCAT, GRE, etc.

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- **Support for the Summer Research Program** York College will extend support to a summer research program for York undergraduate and high school students. The program starts the first week of June for the college and the first week of July for high school students. Student participants are mentored by York College faculty. Students receive a stipend at the completion of their research. Faculty mentors receive summer salary and supplies for their participation. In addition to the research component of the program, students attend research seminars, research integrity and safety training.

## 2. Program Activity: Support New Program Development

- The program provides resources to academic departments for targeted undergraduate and graduate program degree development.

## 3. Program Activity: Support Student Academic Success through Supplemental Instruction and Student Advisement

- Resources are provided to support extended supplemental instructional, face-to-face tutoring in academic departments (STEM), and in the college centralized spaces (Math Learning Center & Writing and Achievement Center) is provided. Under the auspices of this program, the Writing and Achievement Centers will merge to a central space to improve student

outreach and promote multiple instructional supports (online tutoring, course embedded tutoring).

- With program support, OAA will create the office for student academic services to provide administrative support to the Committees on Academic Policy and Standards (CAPS), and Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to improve and streamline their operations. Consistent with the mission of these Committees, there will be coaching of students with more than 120 earned credits to graduate. Also, with program resources, York will launch the pilot Accelerated Bachelor's Completion (ABC) initiative. This initiative, focused on students having completed 60 credits (from the most popular majors), will provide coaching to students and support to academic departments to develop academic plans that will accelerate students to graduation.

## 4. Program Activity: Promote Faculty Professional Growth and Success

- Successful and engaged faculty is the cornerstone of student success and college growth. With resources from this program, a professional development program for tenured associate professors will be launched to provide support for preparation for consideration for promotion to professor. Support for the associate

professors will be provided for activities recommended by the college P&B (publications, grant applications, creative activities, etc.).

- Other supported activities for faculty initiatives are the development of Study Abroad opportunities for faculty and students, the development of academic partnerships through articulation agreements, and new accreditation pursuits.

## 5. Program Activity: Promote Integrated Academic Technology Support

- Improved technology in academic departments will promote many of the program activities and will create more opportunities for faculty and students to improve communications, partnerships, and scholarly achievements. Program resources will be allocated in improving the conference capabilities of the academic departments. In collaboration with IT, OAA will begin upgrading the conference rooms of the academic departments.

The programs report to OAA and will be housed in available space in the Department of Business and Economics office suite and the AC 4G04 wing. Program activity managers were hired. They are Ms. Veronica Novy, located in the Department of Business and Economics (AC 2C09), and Ms. Leteria Scott, located in the AC 4G04 wing. ■

# President Keizs Honored in Albany During Caucus Weekend

The New York State Association of Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislators recently presented Dr. Marcia V. Keizs, President of York College/CUNY, with their inaugural Barbara Clark Award.

The award was presented to President Keizs by New York State Senator Leroy Comrie during the annual Caucus weekend, which takes place in the state capitol over Presidents' Weekend. Present at the ceremony were numerous other elected leaders including Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins as well as members of the CUNY Board of Trust-

ees. The capacity crowd also included York College students, staff, alumni, and community friends.

The Barbara Clark Award is presented to an individual "who vigorously advocates for the needs of children and families in the areas of education reform, comprehensive day care, and/or dynamic community development..." Assembly Member Barbara Clark represented the 33rd AD in Queens County, serving from 1986 until her death in 2016.

The York College delegation was in Albany primarily to advocate for the college's needs, most notably, for capital



President Keizs with legislators and York Student Government President Rachelle Antoine

funding for the proposed Academic Village and Conference Center. ■



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## Update on Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

**MARCIA V. KEIZS**, President

In January 2015 the College implemented a plan to expand the services to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) in order to more effectively provide support to faculty in their efforts to write and secure grants. This focus came upon completion of a comprehensive review of the office.

Among the efforts completed and now in effect are the enhancing of the staff with the recruitment of an administrative assistant and a grants manager whose duties include faculty support to develop and to submit grant proposals, management of grant awards and sponsored programs, training for research compliance and development and implementation of related projects and partnerships through sponsored programs. Also completed or ongoing is the systematic support of grant writing and application workshops utilizing the Hanover Associates (a contract that continues) that will be enhanced by support to be provided by Research Foundation CUNY professionals and York College ORSP staff. New fiscal policies were also established including providing bridge funding for OTPS on a competitive basis as well as assuring compliance for returning a percentage of direct cost to the PIs. On the communication front the grants newsletter and the recognition program (every two years) have resumed.

The college continues to seek ways to support our faculty in the pursuit and in the application for grants. We are pleased that we have been able to re-energize the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and to this end we will be asking for continued fiscal review as well as an overall assessment of user satisfaction that will be conducted by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning in the near future and then systematically thereafter every two years. Also on the agenda is an effort to establish a grant writing faculty resource space. ■

