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## Deadline!

All items for the **Winter 2019** issue of **Academic Affairs Update** should be submitted to Marcia Moxam Comrie (mcomrie@york.cuny.edu) by **February 1, 2019**. Text should be sent in MS Word. Photos should be sent as separate hi-res files (preferably not less than 1MB).

# New Dean of Health Sciences and Professional Programs Discusses Plans for the School

Following an exhaustive search, Dr. Maureen Becker was appointed Dean of the School of Health Sciences and Professional Programs. She comes to York from the College of Staten Island, CUNY (CSI).

Dean Becker's CV features a dizzying list of accomplishments—including fundraising—attesting to her qualifications to lead the School of Health Sciences and Professional Programs at York College. She is the immediate successor of Dr. Lynne Clark, who retired in the summer of 2017.

"Dr. Becker joins York College with extensive professional experience in instructional and academic leadership positions," said Dr. Panayiotis Meleties, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at York. "Her experience includes faculty and administrative appointments at the College of Staten Island."

Dr. Becker joined the College of Staten Island in 1992, and served as the Director of Clinical Education and Deputy Chair in the Physical Therapy department for 22 years. As the Director of Clinical Education, she secured and managed 227 Physical Therapy education contracts for more than 500 clinical sites nationwide. From 2014-2017, she served as the Interim Founding Dean of the CSI School of Health Sciences. During this time, she spearheaded and secured more than one million dollars in funds supporting student scholarships in social work and mental health.



Dr. Maureen Becker

Under her leadership, CSI became a key partner of the Mental Health Initiative of the Staten Island Performing Provider System (SI-PPS) and gained support from Staten Island's Borough Hall, working with the Staten Island community at large through the Healthy Neighborhood Project, as well as the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Other programs included the introduction of mixed-reality simulations to enhance instruction and preparation of tomorrow's health professionals, and a study abroad program funded by the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund

that supports transcultural learning and global health sciences in San Jose, Costa Rica and New York City.

Dr. Becker is positive that she and York will be a good fit.

"The School of Health Sciences and Professional Programs at York is better than I even imagined—the personalities and expertise of my Chairs is extraordinary, which is then mirrored by their faculty," said Becker. "I received a warm welcome and it just keeps getting better and better."

## New Dean

*Continued from previous page*

Asked what might be missing, she mentioned that more funding is needed “to be able do more for both students and faculty.” But she is impressed that “the people (faculty, staff and students), all give 110% and that is why great things continue to occur.”

In her distinguished career, Dr. Becker has received numerous awards and professional honors including the “Unsung Hero” Community Service Award from the Staten Island Not-For-Profit Association, The Richmond University Medical Center “Commitment to Excellence Award,” and the New York Physical Therapy Association Appreciation Award. Additionally, she has been an active member in the American Physical Therapy Associ-

ation, serving on a variety of committees, and has held positions on the state and national levels. It all bodes well for York.

“I have a three-prong plan,” she said of how she will grow the School of Health Sciences and Professional Programs. “Faculty development; the creation of more student opportunities, which includes, but is not limited to inter-professional education, scholarships, increased career exposure and experiences; and building upon what we have versus starting completely new programs, for example, the MSW program just started. The Masters of Nursing is close at hand and in the not so far away future, the Doctorate in Occupational Therapy will be a reality.”

After more than two decades at CSI, Dr. Becker said she was ready for new challenges and coming to York is proving a wise decision.

“I know I absolutely made the right decision,” she said. “I was at the College of Staten Island for 25 years, so leaving was bittersweet; however, everything was right with the opportunity at York and I am not looking back, just forward. I feel like I belong here and that it was meant to be.”

In addition to her leadership and commitment to service, Dr. Becker remains an active researcher in the areas of clinical education and health promotion. She continues to be a licensed Physical Therapist, with a career spanning 36 years in numerous professional fields as clinician, business owner and hospital director. Becker earned a Doctorate in Physical Therapy (Institute of Physical Therapy, FL), an MS in Exercise Physiology (Queens College, CUNY), a BS in Physical Therapy (Downstate Medical Center, SUNY), and a Certificate in Industrial Management from the College of Staten Island, CUNY. ■

# York and Microdrones Partner for START-UP NY

**Y**ork College and Pro Drones USA, LLC, AKA, Microdrones, a drone manufacturing and geomatics systems integrator, have signed a partnership agreement under the college’s START-UP NY affiliation.

Specializing in unmanned aircraft (drones), Microdrones integrates sensors, software and workflow to provide full solutions for doing geomatics work more efficiently. The company will expand its global operation into Jamaica, Queens for the partnership with York College. Microdrones will join other companies such as York Analytical Labs (not to be confused with York College), and other firms in the pipeline through York College, a designated START-UP NY location.

START-UP NY, which provides 10 years of tax breaks to companies wanting to start new businesses or expand existing ones, was launched by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo in 2014. Microdrones, the latest company moving into Jamaica



via the START-UP NY partnership with York College, will benefit both the College and the extended Jamaica community. York College students will benefit



from internship and permanent possible full-time job placements; faculty will enjoy collaborative opportunities; and members of the larger community will have career opportunities.

“Jamaica will be [another] tech hub in Queens,” said Oslene Carrington, executive director of Economic and Workforce Development at York College. “START-UP NY is enabling the environment for tech to grow in Jamaica. We aim to become [another] Long Island City or downtown Brooklyn in terms of attracting tech firms and additional tech talent beyond what exists at the College through its Computer Science degree and Tech Academy professional certification programs in data analysis, project management, web development, cyber security and the like. York College is definitely training the Southeast Queens workforce for the growing and well-paying jobs in New York’s tech industry.”

According to Carrington, York is training adults wanting to develop new skills in tech and other high-skill fields through the York College Continuing and Professional Education Center Tech Academy. These students will be ready to supply employer’s needs. Additional-

ly, the college's nearly 50 undergraduate degree programs include computer science as well as environmental science and business, all beneficial to START-UP NY companies' needs.

For their part, Microdrones are also excited about this new partnership.

"At Microdrones, we develop, manufacture and market fully integrated drone systems for professional geomatics applications," said Vivien Heriard-Dubreuil, President of Microdrones. "We are always looking for talented people who are driven by creative problem-solving related to the integration of drones with sensors, software and workflow."

Heriard-Dubreuil sees the partnership as a good strategic move for Microdrones.

"We see our relationship with York College and CUNY as very important to cultivating our workforce of tomorrow,"

said Heriard-Dubreuil. "With strong programs in related disciplines, we are excited to be a part of this community, and hope that students will visit our website to learn more about us."

### ABOUT START-UP NY

Launched by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo in 2014, START-UP NY is an innovative tax incentive program that partners new, growing and relocating businesses with New York State's large network of public and private colleges and universities.

Through the use of tax incentives which significantly reduce state and local taxes for participants, the program encourages businesses to create new jobs while establishing a meaningful, mutually beneficial partnership with its college or university sponsor. These

partnerships enable companies to access faculty, industry experts, equipment and advanced research facilities associated with the schools; and create new opportunities for students to receive first-hand experience and internships with START-UP NY businesses.

Dozens of colleges and universities across New York State are participating in START-UP NY, with more than 650 approved zones that represent over six million square-feet of eligible space for new or expanding businesses to operate on or near campuses. Each college and university's approved START-UP NY plan is available at [www.startup.ny.gov](http://www.startup.ny.gov).

### ABOUT MICRODRONES

Microdrones serves markets around the globe. To learn more about Microdrones, visit [www.microdrones.com](http://www.microdrones.com). ■

## Chemistry Students Gain Wide Exposure to Industry

The Department of Chemistry at York College regularly explores opportunities for students to connect with industry and understand what roles would make the best use of their acquired laboratory skills.

Over the past five years, Dr. Yolanda Small has organized tours to companies that hire the talented chemists and pharmaceutical scientists who graduate from the programs. The York College students attending these tours are generally Master's students, and juniors and seniors in CHEM 310, CHEM 322 and CHEM 421.

Success stories from these groups of students include admission to various graduate and professional programs such as dental and medical schools.

Students have toured Brookhaven National Laboratories (BNL) in Upton, NY; Pepsico (PEPSI) in Vallhalla, NY; The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Queens, NY; Cold Spring Harbor Labs (CSHL) in Cold Spring Harbor, NY; and most recently York Analytical Labs Inc. (YAL) in Queens, NY.

As a member of the START-UP NY program, YAL has engaged in fruit-

ful interaction with the Department of Chemistry and co-sponsored the New York Section of the American Chemical Society (NYACS) Undergraduate Research Symposium (URS) in May 2018.

York College hosted the conference this year, drawing 265 attendees from 28 colleges and universities in the New

York metropolitan area. During the industry fair, 165 research talks were presented and 5 graduate and professional programs and 5 industry sponsors engaged with York students. Since that conference, YAL has hired York Chemistry graduates for full-time positions in their Queens branch. ■



Tour of the food science laboratories at Pepsico (PEPSI) in Vallhalla, NY. Dr. Yolanda Small (front row, left) organized the event and Dr. Dan Robie (back row, middle) accompanied the tour.

## Middle States Accreditation Update



On September 27, 2018, York's newly appointed Middle States Commission on Higher Education liaison, Dr. Kushnood Haq, visited the campus to discuss and make clear what is needed to submit the Monitoring Report (the Report) in response to the warning received from the Commission in June.

While the Monitoring Report Committee, composed of York colleagues, CUNY liaisons and outside consultants, is ultimately accountable for writing the Report, three committees have assumed responsibility for addressing the needed chapters in the Report. The committees doing this work began meeting during the summer of 2018 and continue to meet regularly. The entire effort is being led by Provost Panayiotis Meleties and Dr. Debra Swoboda, lead faculty.

President Marcia V. Keizs expressed gratitude to “everyone directly and indirectly involved with this comprehensive work, which demands reprioritizing some of our ongoing responsibilities in favor of accomplishing this critical goal.”

The college-wide effort involves more than 50 faculty, staff and administrators.

The Academic Assessment Committee (AAC), chaired by Dr. Linda Barley, includes 18 department assessment coordinators representing every academic de-

partment, including the Library; and “are continuing the process of program-level assessment for the college’s 50 registered programs.” The AAC is “reviewing the mapping of each program’s learning objectives,” according to Dr. Barley.

Academic department assessment coordinators are actively involved in professional development workshops, building the College’s “culture of assessment,” and actively engaging program faculty to assess program outcomes, as they assess student learning.

One aim of this work is to ensure that institutional learning outcomes are reflected in both program learning outcomes and student learning outcomes.

Dr. Tim Paglione, chair of The General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC), notes that the committee “has been in action since last summer to formally institute systematic assessment of the college curriculum that affects every York student.” He points out that, “As everyone knows, our students are required to satisfy the CUNY Pathways learning outcomes, and the GEAC has tailored its initial assessment activities to that end.”

This fall, the GEAC committee used selected lab reports from Biology 140 from Spring 2018 to assess student achievement of one student learning outcome from the Life and Physical Sciences domain. The team is also assessing

student achievement in Information Literacy, examining the learning through several Library workshop groups. GEAC members have been “very active in their home departments identifying courses and student artifacts (e.g., tests, projects, essays, etc.), and developing rubrics. All academic departments have been mobilized, and we are orienting the faculty to this new and unique college-level assessment routine,” explains Dr. Paglione.

The third committee, the Administrative, Educational, and Student Support Assessment Committee (AESSAC) is charged with assessing York College’s 64 administrative, educational and student support units. The AESSAC assists unit directors and staff as they engage in systematic and continuous improvement of services, programming, and day-to-day operations to enhance student success and help the College achieve its strategic goals. Committee Chair Dr. Charmaine T. Cruise reports that almost 30 units have been completed, and notes they “are in the process of executing a five-year assessment plan that will have a transformational impact on the teaching and learning environment.”

To continue the College’s efforts to integrate sustainable assessment practices, assessment workshops tailored to the needs of each committee’s charge will be held throughout coming semesters. ■

## Clothesline Project Gives Victims a Voice

By **LISSETTE RIVERA**,  
Student Journalist

The Women’s Center at York College sponsored their second annual Clothesline Project to promote awareness of domestic and intimate partner violence.

In support of Domestic Violence Awareness Month this October, the Women’s Center at York College created a project for those affected by domestic violence. York students and faculty

members were able to express their emotions by decorating a shirt hung on a clothesline as testimony to the issues of domestic violence. The shirts were color coded to show the form of abuse and whether the victim survived the abuse.



Cassita Charles, assistant to the director of the Women’s Center at York College, helped host the project. The Women’s Center sponsors many similar programs throughout the year, such as YorkSAVES Peer Advocacy Program and the HopeLine Project, to help educate the college community.

Since the #MeToo Movement, which went viral in October 2017, has increased awareness of sexual harassment and domestic violence, some people have broken silence and are coming forward to tell their stories. For others, it continues to be

a day-to-day struggle to express their experience. Charles expressed that breaking silence is, “Having the courage to talk to someone that you really feel you can trust.”

She explained that domestic violence can be tied to socioeconomic and psychological factors. “A lot of it has to do with psychological makeup and what you are exposed to at a very young age,” she said. Furthermore, she explained that when children at a young age witness domestic abuse in their family, this can become the “norm” to children.

Victims will go back to their abusers seven times on average before asking for help. Most victims are attached and vulnerable to the abuser. “That’s when they need support most of all,” Charles said. She expressed that many people looking in from the outside on an abusive relationship will not understand the victim. Issues from domestic violence arise from the abuser having mind control over the victim. Most victims struggle not only on a physical level, but on an emotional level with vulnerability as well.

Victims who suffered from abuse in their past have gained the courage to speak up now. Movements such as Time’s Up Now and #MeToo, provided a platform for survivors to speak up. This has not only given survivors a voice, but exposed many abusers who are now facing consequences. Comedian Bill Cosby was recently sentenced to three to 10 years in state prison for the 2004 drugging and sexual assault of Andrea Constand, a former employee at his alma mater, Temple University. Aside from this incident, Cosby has been accused throughout the years of sexual assaults that have dated back to the 1960s. While many see Cosby’s punishment as fair, some have asked if it was too harsh due to his age and the incident dating back to years ago.

“The time doesn’t change what happened, what they suffered,” Charles stated. It can take years for a victim to come forward; however, that does not negate what happened to them.

The Women’s Center and the Men’s Center plan to keep this conversation going throughout the year, with events to include a “Girl Talk/Let’s Talk” session focusing on the #MeToo Movement. ■

## York Aviation Professor Mentors Aviation High Student for Summer Research

Faizah Mumtahn Ahmmed, a 15 year-old sophomore at Aviation High School in Long Island City, New York, spent part of the summer 2018 break doing aviation research at York College under the guidance of Professor Paul Cline.

An immigrant from Bangladesh, Ms. Ahmmed has only been in the United

States for two years, but she excelled in the summer program. Dr. Cline was impressed with Ahmmed’s success in his summer research program.

Dr. Cline described the focus of Ahmmed’s research as “dealing with the effect video game playing had on the ability of subjects to learn and complete tasks in the flight simulator. We divided the subjects into two groups: those who played more than five hours per week and those who played video games less than five hours per week.”

The standout presented her research at the National Society of High School Scholars in Washington, DC at the Scholars Day Event in August 2018.

Faizah also presented at York and received recognition for her work during the poster presentation day at York College on the final day of the program. ■



Professor Paul Cline (left) with Faizah Mumtahn Ahmmed (right)

### Kudos!

**Abbas Nazir**, a 2015 Chemistry graduate, whom Professor Emmanuel Chang worked closely with, has started PhD studies at a program administered jointly by Weill Cornell School of Medicine and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.



Dr. Emmanuel Chang of the Chemistry Department also saw his CUNY PhD student, **Dr. Pratikkumar Rathod** graduate in late summer. Dr. Rathod did his PhD thesis in Dr. Chang’s lab at York and is now a tenure-track faculty member at LaGuardia Community College.



Professor **Tom Marion** (Performing and Fine Arts) performed at La Mama Theatre as part of the Coffee-house Chronicles, an educational performance series in honor of Ralph Lee on November 10, 2018.

Marion’s association with Ralph Lee dates back to the summer of 1987, when he appeared in *The Wildman*.



Professor **Harrynauth Persaud** (Health Professions) co-authored “A Severe Case of Neutropenia Secondary to Clopidogrel” with William B. Jung. Their article appeared in the *Journal of the Practice of Cardiovascular Sciences*, volume four, issue two.



## CUNY PhD Student Mentored at York Graduates

In June 2018, York graduated its largest class to date. Meanwhile, Jayson Vedad completed a degree on a whole different level.

The Class of 2018, made up of 1206 undergraduate and master's degree students in nearly 50 academic majors, received well deserved attention. Quietly though, Vedad, a CUNY Graduate School student mentored by Dr. Ruel Desamero of York's Chemistry department, successfully defended his dissertation, earning his PhD under the guidance of one of York's most prolific mentors and researchers.

"I really like the research environment here at York," said the newly-minted Dr. Vedad. "It's like a family here. I had been to other [CUNY] colleges, but it's smaller here and I get [more] access to the machines. The professors here are really good too. Dr. Desamero, Dr. [Stephen] Fernley, Dr. [Emmanuel] Chang, Dr. [Adam] Profit; and others...and here I got to teach a full class as well."

According to Vedad, whose research focused on the mechanism behind protein aggregation, said to be the main cause of many diseases like type II diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, etc., York provided him the opportunity to not only teach in the classroom but to mentor in the lab as well.

"It is something I am taking with me," he noted. "I would not have had this opportunity anywhere else. It has helped me to get a position at Union College."

Born and reared in the Philippines, Vedad came to New York with his baccalaureate degree, ready to earn his graduate degree and qualify for college teaching. According to Dr. Desamero, the 28-year-old has what it takes to succeed.

"Jayson was a very independent working student, you only have to give him the problem to solve and he will come up (with consultation) with the appropriate experiments and



Jayson Vedad in Dr. Desamero's Chemistry lab at York

execute them properly," said Desamero. "If he is faced with a problem he does all possible permutations until the problem is solved or he is convinced it will not work."

More than that, Dr. Desamero noted that Dr. Vedad is also "very good at managing his time, finishing all the projects I gave him and still having time to teach, work with students and run the day-to-day operation of the lab."

On York as a place where PhD students can thrive, Desamero affirms that the college is indeed competitive on that front.

"The biggest advantage is that perhaps unbeknownst to everyone, we have more or less the same research equipment and facilities that [other] senior colleges have, and since we have fewer graduate students, access to this equipment is pretty much unfettered," he said. "I think we have the best student to faculty ratio so that students are able to get all the help they need." ■

### Kudos!

To Professors **James Popp** and **Kevin Lynch** (Earth and Physical Sciences), who have been awarded another grant from the U.S. Department of Energy:



James Popp



Kevin Lynch

"Mu2e at the City University of New York," \$250,000, June 2018-May 2020. This is to support their research work on the Mu2e Experiment at Fermilab, and includes full-time support for their current doctoral student, Helenka Casler. Additionally, the Fermi National Laboratory wishes to immediately sign another contract with the

dynamic duo, totaling \$114,500, through to the end of Fiscal Year 2019.

"This money will allow us to train and pay York College students to assist us in assembling critical components for the main detector for the Mu2e Experiment," said Dr. Popp. "That detector is a one-of-a-kind leading edge technology tracking detector for low energy electrons. The purpose of the detector is to provide direct evidence of the rare and as-yet unseen decay of a muon (an unstable elementary particle) into an electron, unac-

panied by the usual pair of neutrinos. Such a discovery will be the first evidence for physics beyond the Standard Model of Elementary Particle Physics."

Physics Professors Popp and Lynch are both senior members of the collaboration of scientists and engineers pursuing the Mu2e project. Indeed, Professor Popp, a founding member of the group, began working with the team back in 1997.

"We owe a debt of gratitude for the help Provost Panayiotis Meleties and Dean Donna Chirico have extended to us over the years to participate in this major project," said Dr. Popp. "There are lots of activities for Mu2e at Fermilab and no time to lose."

## Biology Department Colleagues Collaborate on Major Equipment Grant

Biology is one of those departments at York continually seeking grants to fund research and upgrade equipment with which to conduct those research efforts. Earlier this year a small team of professors applied to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and received more than half a million dollars for York's Biology Department.

"The most recent grant was for a major upgrade of biological research equipment from the DoD," said Dr. Louis Levinger, one of the participating professors. "Peri-

odically DoD issues a call for equipment proposals from minority serving institutions, and the Biology Department has been especially successful in receiving these grants."

According to Dr. Levinger, Drs. Lesley Emtage and Ivica Arsov responded to a call for equipment needed to advance their research projects. Dr. Levinger



Dr. Levinger

also needed new equipment and joined efforts with them along with Dr. Margaret MacNeil.

"I was Project Director (PD) on two and Dr. MacNeil was PD on the biggest one, for upgrading the Cell and Molecular Biology facilities," said Dr. Levinger, one of York's most prolific grant recipients.

The professors' joint efforts brought in \$508,473.50 from DoD to keep their labs running with state-of-the-art equipment for teaching research methods and achieving their own research agendas. ■



Dr. MacNeil

## Environmental Health Students See Science in Practice

Through instructional field trips led by Dr. Dawn Roberts-Semple, Environmental Health Science (EHS) students are experiencing science in the real world in ways that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. Dr. Roberts-Semple has connected her students, particularly EHS majors, to several off-campus sites that provide experiential learning to supplement classroom instruction.

In spring 2018, her Solid Waste Management class (EHS 426) visited Newtown Creek Alliance and had a great view of New York City from the green roof of the facility. From there, the class was able to see the first-hand operations at the waste transfer station as barges



EHS 426 visiting Newtown Creek Alliance

transported the city's waste, reducing both congestion from truck traffic and environmental pollution. They also toured Covanta, a facility in Westbury, for first-hand knowledge of the operations that convert household waste into renewable energy to supply thousands of residents in Long Island with electricity. Her Pollution Control Technology class (EHS 340) toured the Yonkers Wastewater Treatment Plant and Sims Recycling Plant in Sunset Park.

A strong proponent of the educational philosophy that value is added to science courses when they extend beyond the walls of the classroom, Dr. Roberts-Semple believes that informing students about current realities better prepares them for future careers.

Even before Dr. Roberts-Semple knew that York College, the designated host of the Empire State Development START-UP NY Program, had established a partnership with York Analytical Laboratories (YAL), her Fundamentals of Air Pollution class (EHS 351) had visited YAL at the Richmond Hill location. In addition to promoting job and technology innovation in New York, YAL offers internship and job opportunities for

science students at York College, training them in practical air pollution monitoring techniques and air quality standards for volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

EHS majors also visited the YAL Headquarters in Stratford, Connecticut, to increase their awareness and understanding of empirical methods employed to solve environmental problems. They observed various applications/instrumentation employed with exemplary professionalism by environmental scientists who are dedicated to attaining success in their field of expertise. ■



### Student Kudos!

York English Majors **Demi Bazán** and **Barrington Brissett** published Creative Nonfiction pieces in the *Rigorous: A Journal edited and written by People of Color*, volume two, issue 4. Written under the tutelage of Professor **Mark Blickley** in ENG 389: Creative Nonfiction Workshop, their pieces explore the complexities of identity and the importance of resistance and endurance.

# A Queens ADA Returns to York to Advise Current Pre-law Students

Assistant Queens District Attorney Joseph Grasso recently returned to the scene of his undergraduate education as a Pre-law student at York College to offer tips for getting into law school and starting careers.

ADA Grasso was not the only alum speaking with students that day. There were others in that department and in other majors across the college. But he is part of a proud family tradition at the college.

Grasso, a member of the York College Class of 2011, received his legal education at SUNY's Buffalo University School of Law, but he has not forgotten his undergraduate days at York. An active student, Grasso, who was considered a "legacy student" because he also had a parent graduate from the college, took full advantage of the many opportunities at his disposal. He wrote for the student newspaper, *Pandora's Box*, just as his father before him had done. He also became active in theatre arts, starring in several plays at York and later in law school.

Asked what made him want to make time to visit with students at his alma mater, Grasso was gracious in his response.

"It was a no-brainer," he said. "It wasn't hard to take some time to come back to York. In fact, my bosses at the Queens DA's office were just as enthusiastic about me returning to York as I was. One of the tenets of this office is community involvement. York College gave me so much as a student that I feel indebted to give back whenever I can."

Grasso added that he hopes that in sharing his experience with the students, they were able to get some ideas about how to use their Political Science degree to pursue a career. "And if nothing else, they now know that I am a person they could reach out to if they want advice on applying to law school."

To the students, Grasso said there were "two main points" that were important to make.

"One: take a theater class! If you want to be involved in politics, or practice law, theater can really enhance your confidence and communications skills,"

he said. "And lift the veil and figure out what opportunities CUNY can provide you as a student. At York, I traveled to the Supreme Court in Washington, DC for oral arguments, interned for a Judge, and a criminal defense firm (Queens Law Associates), traveled to Washington, DC for a Journalism Seminar, interned for a Queens County Assembly member in Albany, studied in China for a month, and more! All of these opportunities were seized through my work with my Political Science advisor. As a student you just need to do your due diligence."

The students had numerous questions for their guest including his study tips for doing well on the LSAT Exam to get into law school, and what the application process to the DA's office entailed.

"I made sure that they knew I was in their shoes not so long ago and that I was there for any of them if they wanted to reach out for guidance or advice in making their decision," Grasso recalled afterwards. "I hope it resonated and that they do reach out."

The young ADA also recalled how York prepared him for education beyond York.

"York's Political Science curriculum was very demanding," he noted. "Writing

20+ page papers for Dr. Michael Sharpe's Comparative Politics class and reading books like Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Plato's *Republic*, set me up well for success in law school. I was also mentally strong thanks to Dr. Sharpe's tough grading."

Grasso informed them that in addition to the academic rigor, practical experience also played a role in his pre-law education.

"Interning with the Assembly in Albany, watching oral arguments at the Supreme Court, where we got to do a Q&A with Justice Scalia, interning with Queens Law Associates and a Civil Supreme Judge, studying abroad in China... these are all experiences that I gained from York that made me a competitive candidate for more internships and more jobs in law school and [beyond]."

As for the future, Grasso says he didn't have to look far for inspiration.

"My career goals are pretty simple," he says. "They lie in a philosophy instilled in me by a fellow York College alumnus, my father, Judge George Grasso, about 20 years ago. It was instilled in me as a kid when he took me up the block to paint over graffiti on a mailbox. If I can contribute to my community and make life better for those around me, I will be a very happy man. That said, I hope to continue to use my law degree to effect change for the better in my community."

The standing-room-only event also featured Ernesto Malave from the CUNY-ETR internship program in Government and Public Affairs, who spoke about opportunities for internships and fellowships through CUNY.

Over its 51-year history, York College has graduated hundreds of pre-law students, who have gone on to law schools across the United States and are enjoying successful careers. In New York City alone there are two judges (the aforementioned George Grasso '81, a Bronx Criminal Court Supervising Judge); and Jeremy Weinstein '71, Queens Supreme Court Civil Term Administrative Judge. Outside of New York, Danielle Blount '97, is Commissioner of Family Court in Delaware.



Joseph Grasso '11



Dr. Robin Harper, one of Joseph Grasso's former York mentors was pleased to have him back on campus.

"We are delighted to hear about what our students do once they leave here," Harper said. "It is, for the faculty, always wonderful to hear that former students have found exciting things to do and that

they are happy. When alumni return they spark current students to dream big. The students know that the alumni were just like them. They can then see that anything is possible. Because there are so many career paths from a Political Science degree, it helps the students to imagine options they never knew existed." ■

## Review: William Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*

By **KIANA CLAUDIO**,  
Journalism Student

The York College Theatre OUTREACH opened the fall semester with a presentation of William Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* at the Milton G. Bassin Performing Arts Center. The story deals with a man named Egeon (Jabaree Muhammad) and his wife Aemilia, (Makayla Noble) from Sicily, Italy who have a set of biological twin sons, both named Antipholus (Shatiek Johnson), and a set of adopted twin sons, both named Dromio (Antonio Irizarry), who set sail to Syracuse. A storm separates them and one of each set of twins ends up with the other.

Years later, the divided twins set off to find their brothers and end up in the same town of Ephesus. Each set of brothers continually gets confused for the other until finally it becomes clear at the end of the show, when the entire family is reunited, that there are two Antipholuses and two Dromioes.



York Professor Thomas Marion, who directed the play, introduced the show by saying that this play was meant to involve a modern day viewpoint. He also clarified that even though there is a modern day twist, the language was left the same. The play incorporated modern day songs including, "This is America," by Donald Glover and "Drip," by Cardi B, which kept the audience engaged.

One interesting aspect of the show was how freely the actors played behind the scenes scenarios openly in front of the audience. Changes of costumes were performed in clear view for the audience to observe. Instead of this being odd, it added humor to the presentation. Professor Marion even involved two members of the audience to participate in the closing scene where both sets of twins finally come face to face. Keeping the audience involved was a goal the production met with extreme creativity.

York College Theatre OUTREACH is a professional program that aims to produce theatrical work that portrays the power and possibilities of the spoken word when directed towards cultural identity, global and national social harmony, and personal empowerment. Further information about York College Theatre can be found at: [yorkpac.com](http://yorkpac.com), [yctheatre.com](http://yctheatre.com) or by visiting the Milton G. Bassin Performing Arts building.

Additional Cast Members included: Jean-Charles Cohen (Officer/Production Assistant), Shanette Mclean (Dancer, First Merchant, Courtesan), Gaitree Ramrag (Luciana), Cassandra Rodriguez (Adriana), Sam Simone (Duke of Ephesus), and Itay Vagner (Angelo). ■

## Kudos!

**Dr. Kelly Baker Josephs** (English) published an article on Caribbean digital studies and the ethics of requiring graduate students to blog publicly as part of their course work. "Teaching the Digital Caribbean: The Ethics of a Public Pedagogical Experiment" appeared in *The Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy*, issue thirteen.



Former York Adjunct Assistant Professor, **Dr. Sara C. Flowers**, has been appointed Vice President of Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Dr. Flowers will serve as the organization's Vice President of Education. At York, Flowers was a research fellow for the college's Collaborative Research Group on Health Policy and Promotion and the *UrbanHealth Lab*.

## Nath Collaborates in Math

Dr. Rishi Nath (Mathematics and Computer Science) spent time at the University of Paris-Jussieu this past summer to work with Dr. Olivier Brunat, with whom he has an ongoing collaboration. Dr. Brunat will in turn visit Dr. Nath in New York this fall to continue their collaborative efforts.



"We have submitted a paper entitled, 'The Navarro Conjecture for the Alternating Groups' as a result of our work and are now working on preparing our second collaborative paper for submission," said Dr. Nath, who added that the research is in representation theory of finite groups. ■

# Fall Convocation Focuses on Middle States, Graduation Rates and Economic Realities

President Marcia V. Keizs presided over an enlightening Convocation 2018, updating the college on progress being made in preparation for the next Middle States visit. She also outlined the Academic Momentum Initiative and the steps being taken to enhance the graduation rate in a timely manner, such as the 4 to Soar campaign, which encourages students to take 15 credits per semester.

Dr. Maureen Becker was also given a hearty welcome to York as Dean of the School of Health Sciences and Professional Programs, and the president announced that the newly-launched MSW program had welcomed a full cohort.

President Keizs highlighted a number of grants faculty received this year, such as Professor Daniel Phelps' \$12,000 NY Space Grant: Sub-award from Cornell University as well as 13 PSC-CUNY grants, ranging from \$3,000 to \$6,000 to Professors Margarita Drago, Francoise Fay (no longer at York), Daniele Musumeci, Rishi Nath, Stephen Fearnley, Robin Harper, Nicholas Grosskopf, Dawn Roberts-Semple, Meredith Powers, Heather Robinson, Emmanuel Chang, Tom Marion and Vadim Moldovan.

But in the midst of the good news, the president also discussed, "challenges aplenty."

"Two major challenges that we confronted in 2017-2018 will continue to be challenges in 2018-2019," said Dr. Keizs. "They are Middle States Accreditation and the budget."

Among the vexing challenges, the college discovered—following "a full review of data points of all eleven senior Colleges using fiscal year 2017 year-end results"—that "York receives a lower budget allocation per FTE than peer institutions, while reflecting a lower than average expenditure per FTE than senior College peers. As a result of these findings, [the college] started conversations with CUNY's University Budget Office (UBO) and asked them to review



President Marcia V. Keizs

York's funding allocation. The UBO has agreed to consider [York's] request."

"Should there be a favorable action on this request, our budget condition would improve," said Dr. Keizs.

However, she is not waiting on that possibility alone to bring the budget into a more favorable condition. The college is also taking preemptive steps to "align revenue with expenditures."

Over the past fiscal year, the college successfully reduced OTPS expenditures by \$1.5 million and reduced overtime expenses by 15%. The college also achieved energy savings of more than 23% in each of the past three consecutive years. During the past five years, "more than five million dollars of sav-

ings accumulated over a decade have been infused into the College's operating budget in order to fuel the growth of the new programs, sustain others and assure we have the right staff to perform mission critical functions," Dr. Keizs noted.

"Based upon current assumptions regarding resources and expenses, the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year will be more challenging than the fiscal year just ended," Dr. Keizs acknowledged. The president revealed that the financial plan, "currently in preparation," reflects a modest increase of 1.5% in enrollment. The college will also aim to reduce OTPS and Temporary Services, as well as overtime, and to establish an expenditure reserve of \$1.4 million in anticipation of a new collective bargaining agreement. While "the adjunct budget will be increased by an additional \$250,000 to support increased faculty release time, a hard hiring freeze will be implemented on full-time positions in all categories except as required for compliance and health and safety reasons," stated Dr. Keizs.

Dr. Keizs indicated that "the college will redouble its efforts to generate new revenue through the capitalization of assets, philanthropy, sponsored research and the Related Entities, and to increase the collection rate on all tuition revenues. On this latter point, the University Budget Office has agreed to reconsider reinstating the use of credit cards to make tuition payments."

An update on Middle States is available on page 4 in this issue. ■

## Kudos!

The York VITA program was awarded a VITA grant of \$51,096 (\$25,548 each year) for the next two tax seasons.



**Dr. Margaret Rose Vendryes** (Performing and Fine Arts) has been awarded a QCA ArtSite commission. She is one of several Queens artists invited to participate in creating and

exhibiting original works representative of urban communities such as Jamaica and Jackson Heights, Queens. Selections from Dr. Vendryes' "African Divas Project" are currently on exhibit along Jamaica Avenue from approximately 168th Street to Sutphin Boulevard. She is currently working on seven more "Divas," including one of Lena Horne.

**Professor Kola Akinyemi Adeyemo** (Accounting and Finance) was awarded a certificate as a fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Management (Chartered).



## Scholar Reflects on Experience in China

Geology major Mildred Mensah-Selby spent six weeks of her summer break from York College as a Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) scholar at China's Beijing University of Chemical Technology (BUCT). She had such an eventful study abroad experience that the time flew by more quickly than she would have liked.

"I didn't realize how fast time had passed by; and I wished I could have stayed more since I had become so comfortable with the system, the food and the people of China," said Mensah-Selby.

Mensah-Selby practiced her research skills in the Asian country and came away enriched by the experience. "As a geology undergraduate, my involvement over the course of the weeks included working in the laboratory, taking cultural trips and interacting with new people, making me feel connected to the traditions of China," she explained.

Her outdoor geology experiences enabled her, she said, "to appreciate various landscapes from socio-cultural points of view." She drew on the experiences of her mentor, Dr. Nazrul Khandaker, who, she said, "shared his previous 2013 China experience based on his prominent role as a leading member of the Geological Society of America where science and society come together."

The experience away from York and home also helped her discover a resourcefulness she was unaware of previously.

"Spending six weeks in China prepared me to overcome certain challenges independently," she said. "My overall international summer research experience [can be summed up] in two words: 'mind opening,' as I had little knowledge on the cultural heritage of China."

What impressed her most about the people of China, she said, "was their cul-

tural uniformity as well as their hospitality. Being away for six weeks conducting research and participating in cultural trips enlightened and positively changed my perspective about China. Moreover, it developed my way of thinking as a student and connected me with people of different ethnicities."

According to Mensah-Selby, research at BUCT was "a little tougher" than expected as the entire school and laboratories were under construction during the six weeks. It sometimes slowed down some experiments. However, she was able to complete most of them even though time was limited.

She believes the experiences she had were invaluable for her future career.

"As an aspiring geochemical engineer, having hands-on research experience provides me the necessary foundation as a student in becoming successful in my chosen career

path," said Mensah-Selby.

Participating in the study abroad program also imparted strategic socio-cultural training, which she says she strongly believes is the cornerstone to "morphing into a leader." Another benefit of traveling abroad was "the galvanizing of connections with other academic geology and professional organizations as well."

The young scholar also hopes other students will enhance their college experiences by venturing beyond the walls of York College.

"I encourage and urge interested students to use the opportunity of participating in studying abroad as a medium to enhance their personal development as well as educational growth," said Mensah-Selby. "The bottom-line is, one doesn't have to seek an opportunity in his/her own academic core discipline; rather, they can equally enjoy being in unknown territory and map out the socio-cultural aspect of the land and feel content." ■



## Chinese Delegation Attends Anti-Fraud Seminar at York

By **LISSETTE RIVERA**, Student Journalist

A Chinese delegation of twenty members attended a three-day seminar at York College.

Since 2014, auditors of the Chinese delegation have visited York College, seeking to learn about Government Procurement Fraud. Many members have come to York College to learn about a variety of topics, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Auditing Procedure and Data Analytics, E-Commerce, CUNY'S Budgeting Process, U.S. Water Regulations, and Professional Programs and Certifications.

The seminar was led by Accounting Professor Mary-Jo Kranacher, a certified fraud examiner specialist. The visiting group selected their topic of interest: the Audit Process and the role of Data Analytics.

"The group was very engaged and asked many questions of the variety of speakers," said Kranacher, a former editor of *CPA Magazine*.

Kranacher shared that the group took copious notes throughout this learning experience. "I hope they will use it to improve their auditing procedures," she said. ■



Professor Kranacher (left) presents a Certificate of Completion to seminar participant Xuejin Fan.

<http://www.york.cuny.edu/academics/academic-affairs>

## Professor Levey Publishes Timely Work

Women who use social media are frequently subjected to blatant sexual harassment and face everything from name calling to threats of physical violence. Sociology professor Dr. Tania G. Levey's 2018 book, *Sexual Harassment Online: Shaming and Silencing Women in the Digital Age*, explores the online use of misogynist language in order to understand contemporary gender and sexual relations.

For her study, Dr. Levey identified words commonly used in online sexual harassment and that research has shown inspire fear among adolescent girls and women. Dr. Levey then collected data on the usage of these words from three social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

As expected, these words were used to silence women for expressing public opinions or to shame women for exhibiting sexual agency or appearing unfeminine. Use of these words peaked during the 2016 presidential debates and on election night due to tweets attacking Hillary Clinton.

Women of color were also frequent targets of misogynist and racist abuse. Commonly targeted celebrities included Ariana Grande, Kim Kardashian, Amber Rose and Melania Trump.

Yet misogynist words were also used in novel ways that hold the potential for transformation of meanings. Offering greatest potential to resist gender and sexual norms, words were reclaimed in positive ways and used to educate and critique restrictive norms.

Dr. Levey argues that the meaning of words can be transformed and online interactions can reverberate back to the social structure. While online campaigns such as #MeToo can be thought of as political action by providing support and raising awareness, they must be accompanied by cultural shifts in gender and sexual norms and institutional changes such as workplace responses to sexual harassment.

Dr. Levey shared her work with the York community on October 11, 2018 at a book reading and discussion. Her provocative book and the questions it raises provided much food for thought for faculty, student, and staff attendees. ■

