

WEISSMAN SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, GENERAL FACULTY REPORT (Fall 2009)

The Weissman School of Arts and Sciences has a variety of accomplishments and projects to report, each of which represents progress toward our goal of becoming a “destination”—that is, a school which not only offers a high-quality general education to future business majors, but also attracts students to Baruch because they want a first rate liberal arts education. The quality of our research and teaching, the dedication of our support staff, the variety and innovativeness of our programs all move us closer to this goal, and at a moment of transition for the college, we are pleased to be able to say that recent changes in Weissman have been changes for the better. Despite a period of budgetary limitations, we have succeeded in launching new initiatives and maintaining established ones; hiring new faculty; receiving fellowships, grants, and gifts; supporting research and travel; and contributing to the cultural life of the college.

Weissman as an Intellectual Center

One measure of our vitality as a forum for intellectual life is the caliber and broad appeal of the public lectures and conferences we have hosted. For fifteen years, the Addison Gayle Memorial Lecture, which was established in memory of the late Addison Gayle, preeminent critic of the Black Aesthetic and long-time member of our Department of English, has drawn a series of notable speakers. On April 1st, Dean Peck, the English Department, and the Women’s Studies Program, jointly hosted a talk by Gloria Steinem, entitled “The Longest Revolution.” This appearance by Ms. Steinem, whose forty-five year career as a writer, editor, and political activist has made her perhaps the country’s best known feminist, took place in Mason Hall and drew what is surely one of the largest audiences ever assembled for a lecture in the Gayle series.

Last spring, Dean Peck inaugurated an ongoing initiative in the area of Global Studies, a multi-dimensional project involving curriculum development (a new course entitled “Globalization, Past, Present, and Future” will be taught for the first time next spring by Dean Peck, together with a group of Weissman faculty) as well as a series of visiting lecturers and a conference this past September 14th on “Diversity and Internationalization.” The latter event, a full afternoon of talks and discussions attended by an impressive range of faculty, students, and staff, included an address by Professor Olufemi Vaughn of Bowdoin College with responses from three of our faculty members, Professors John Brenkman (English), Kyra Gaunt (Sociology/Anthropology), and Sandeep Sreekumar (Philosophy), as well as two Weissman students, History/LACS major Jacqueline Ha and Political Science major and Colin Powell fellow Holdyn Brand. Prior to this event, the Global Studies initiative had hosted three invited speakers, with more to follow. The series began last February with a talk by David Damrosch, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, and continued with sessions featuring Aristide Zolberg, the Walter A. Eberstadt Professor of Political Science and Historical Studies at the New School for Social Research, and Jean-Claude Piris, Director General of the Legal Service for the Council of the European Union. At each of these events, a presentation from the speaker was followed by discussion with members of the Weissman faculty.

Recruitment of New Faculty

Thanks to the unexpected materialization of lines from a variety of sources, the hiring of new faculty in the Weissman School has been nowhere near as dormant as some might have feared. Last spring, Renaissance specialist Allison Deuterman accepted an offer to join the English Department on a line funded by the Macaulay Honors College, and the Department of Fine and Performing Arts is currently conducting a search to fill another Macaulay line. This year the Department of Natural Sciences is also conducting a search to fill a cluster line funded partly by Brookhaven National Laboratory and partly by the office of CUNY's Vice Chancellor for Research, Dr. Gillian Small. Over the summer, Weissman received seven CUNY COMPACT lines—two at the rank of Assistant Professor and five at the rank of Lecturer—and immediately filled all but one of them with substitute faculty. During the academic year, seven different departments will be conducting searches to find permanent occupants for these lines. Finally, veteran adjunct faculty members Antonietta D'Amelio (Modern Languages), Patricia Ougourlian (Communications Studies), and Joseph Butler (Natural Sciences) have accepted offers to become full-time members of their departments at the rank of Lecturer on three adjunct conversion lines.

Fellowships, Grants, and Gifts

Weissman faculty have recently been awarded an admirable list of major fellowships and grants, and the Weissman School itself has been the recipient of some generous gifts. Professor Esther Allan of the Department of Modern Languages has received a fellowship from the Cullman Center; Professor Thomas Desch-Obi of the Department of History has received a fellowship from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; and Professor Zoë Sheehan Saldaña of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts has received a fellowship from The New York Foundation for the Arts. Professor Angela Pinto of the Department of Psychology has been awarded a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH); Professors Chester Zarnoch and Timothy Hollein of the Department of Natural Sciences have received a grant from the National Science Foundation; and Professors Professor Peter Orland and David Gruber of the same department have both also been awarded NSF grants; while their colleagues in Natural Sciences, Professors Jamal Jallian-Marian and Adrian Dumitru, have received a grant from the United States Department of Energy. The Committee charged with the Implementation of the Provost's Report on Quantitative Reasoning in the Weissman School, chaired by Associate Dean Gary Hentzi, has been awarded a CUE Innovative Programs Grant from CUNY Central, and Professor Gregory Snyder of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology is this year's recipient of the Whiting Teaching Award.

Construction of Studio H, the state-of-the-art newsroom, multimedia laboratory, and classroom financed by a large gift from the Harnisch Family Philanthropies is complete, and ribbon-cutting ceremonies will take place this semester. The finished facility, located on the 7th floor of the Newman Vertical Campus, provides the Department of Journalism and the Writing Professions with twenty-four workspaces equipped with computers and related software, as well as other technology including video and digital cameras, sound-recording and editing equipment, and comprehensive multi-media presentation capabilities.

In the spring of 2009, the Weissman Curriculum Committee voted to create the Chase Seminar, an interdisciplinary, team-taught course for second-semester freshmen designed on the model of

the Feit Seminars; and the new course was passed by the Weissman faculty later in the semester. Each spring, two groups of students chosen from among the most promising participants in the previous fall's Freshman Learning Communities will receive invitations to register for these seminars, which have been made possible by a gift from Hedy Feit in honor of former WSAS Dean Myrna Chase. An inaugural installment of the seminar is currently being taught by Professor Feit and Dean Chase, and two more seminars will be offered in the spring of 2010. Recently, Professor Feit has also endowed the Paul Andre Feit Memorial Lecture, which was inaugurated on March 10th with a lecture by Dr. Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez of Mount Holyoke College on the nineteenth-century Puerto Rican artist Francisco Oller's painting *El Velorio*.

Thanks to yet another munificent gift, the Weissman School is establishing the Berlfein Prize, a writing award named in honor of Baruch alumnus Hal Berlfein, who has expressed the wish to promote good writing among the college's undergraduates. Beginning this fall, every instructor of a class that serves as a Tier III capstone will be invited to nominate an outstanding piece of writing executed by a student in his or her class. A committee of four faculty members will choose five finalists, each of whom will receive \$100 on condition that he or she agrees to revise the nominated piece of writing under the supervision of the nominating faculty member. From the revised entries of these five finalists, the committee will choose a single winner, who will be awarded the main prize of \$1,000.

Promotion of Cultural Activities

In collaboration with the Weissman School, the Baruch Performing Arts Center (BPAC) is launching its seventh year with a variety of offerings both educational and entertaining. BPAC's mission is to insert the performing arts into the academic lives of the Baruch College community, but it has also served as a major performing arts venue for the metropolitan area with the New York City debut of *Irena's Vow* in the fall of 2008. After a successful three-month run, the play moved to the Kerr Theater on Broadway. Moreover, BPAC's Nagelberg Theater has served as a playhouse for off-Broadway runs, including The Acting Company's spring 2009 productions of *Henry V* and *The Spy*, an adaptation of the James Fenimore Cooper novel, as well as the debut performance of *Night Sky*, a play about an astronomer who develops aphasia after an automobile accident.

BPAC's Engelman Recital Hall is the home of classical and jazz series, including the residency of the world-renowned Alexander String Quartet, which offered a cycle of the Quartets, Quintets, and Sextets of Johannes Brahms. The ASQ also delivered lecture-demonstrations as part of the Silberman Concert Series to classes of more than 750 Baruch College students, culminating in a Brahms concert. Pianist Alec Chien performed as guest artist for the Silberman Series.

The Milt Hinton Jazz Series presented Edmar Casteneda, Jazz Harpist (April 23rd), and Latin Jazz Percussionist Bobby Sanabria and his Quarteto Aché (February 19th). In connection with his visit, Mr. Sanabria, who is on the faculties of both the New School and the Manhattan School of Music, delivered a lecture on the roots of Cuban music to a class in our Department of Black and Hispanic Studies. Also in February 2009, the 55 Underground Contemporary Concert Series presented up-and-coming folk musicians Jay Brannan and Kyler England.

The Weissman Talks Onstage Dialogue Series continued with a panel discussion of James Fenimore Cooper (inspired by The Acting Company's production of *The Spy*). Participants at other events in the series included Teatro Stage Fest and pianist Elisha Abas, who followed the discussion with a concert of music by Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, and his great, great grandfather, Alexander Scriabin. The arts education program's Great Works Reading Series offered short plays by Harold Pinter and Arthur Miller to Baruch students enrolled in Great Works courses, and the MasterWorks Reading Series presented the acclaimed theater company New Audiences' production of *Othello*. Last spring, BPAC also presented the FPA student production *Machinel*.

The Sydney Harmon Writer-in-Residence this fall is novelist, playwright, and screenwriter Joseph O'Connor, who will read from his work on October 20th. Last spring the position was held by journalist, novelist, and *New Yorker* staff writer George Packer, who gave a reading of his work on March 24th.

By continuing to present such remarkable cultural offerings as these, the Weissman School and the Baruch Performing Arts Center aim to solidify our position as a destination in the realm of the performing arts no less than in the world of higher education.