

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

Under the leadership of incoming Dean Jeffrey Peck, the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences has carried forward its ongoing projects and initiated a variety of new ones over the past six months. In the former category, one might mention the assessment of academic programs, an effort that has assumed even greater importance than usual in the period leading up to the college's ten-year review by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and the Freshman Learning Communities, which reached a notable milestone last fall by offering forty communities to over half of the incoming freshman class. At a time of exceptional financial uncertainty in New York and around the globe, the faculty and staff of the Weissman School can take satisfaction in our ability to sustain these and other established priorities, along with our willingness to launch new projects in such areas as curriculum and intellectual life; recruitment of new faculty; gifts, grants, and scholarships; and the promotion of cultural activities.

Curriculum and Intellectual Life

At Dean Peck's suggestion, the faculty of the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences have initiated work on the topic of Global Studies, which has received much attention in institutions of higher learning across the country and is obviously relevant to our own international and multicultural student body. An organizational meeting, attended by some fifty faculty members representing every department in the school, established that there is strong interest in exploring ideas for curriculum and faculty development. Committees have been formed to develop curriculum offerings related to the study of global issues and to organize a series of faculty seminars that draw on expertise both inside and outside of the Weissman School. The first of these groups is planning a Tier III minor in Global Studies; the second is refining our definition of the concept with the help of invited speakers, beginning with David Damrosch, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Professor Damrosch presented his work on world literature to a meeting of the group in early February; he will be followed by two more distinguished guests later in the semester.

Other curriculum initiatives underway include a proposal for a new masters program in Mental Health Counseling, which will raise to four the number of graduate programs in the Weissman School; a proposal for a new major in Biology, which has also passed through the local curriculum process and is currently being circulated university-wide; a new interdisciplinary Tier III minor in Environmental Sustainability, which forms part of the college's sustainability initiative; and committee work in the area of Film Studies, which will lead to the development of a Tier III minor proposal in that field.

Along with these enrichments of the mainstream curriculum, Dean Peck has authorized the creation of a summer program for foreign students entitled *Summer @ Weissman*. Offered in collaboration with the School for Continuing and Professional Studies, this

program will give students from abroad the opportunity to study with Baruch students both inside and outside of the classroom. The course of study is organized around two seminars taught by Weissman faculty and derived from classes usually offered to students in the Macaulay Honors College. *The Arts in New York City* will introduce students to the extraordinary variety of theatre, music, art, and architecture in the New York area, whereas *The Peopling of New York City* will focus on the topic of immigration and the development of neighborhoods such as Chinatown, Little Italy, and the Lower East Side. Besides the two seminars, students will choose from non-credit classes in *American Pop Culture*, *American Business and Politics in the Era of Globalization*, and *Navigating New York*.

Another new project is a series of public conversations entitled *Weissman Talks*, which was inaugurated by Dean Peck. This series features intellectual and cultural luminaries like the actress Tovah Feldshuh, who joined Dean Peck for an exchange on the subject of the Holocaust in Poland. Two well-attended panels followed which brought Weissman faculty together from a variety of disciplines to discuss related topics.

Finally, the Weissman School is proud to have unveiled its newly redesigned website, which is now better than ever able to provide information about all of our many offerings to faculty, students, and the entire community. Supervised by Ms. Barbara Wells of the Weissman Dean's Office, the redesign was a substantial and long-overdue undertaking. We are delighted to have a website commensurate with the caliber of our school.

Recruitment of New Faculty and Support for Scholarship

As a result of the dire news from the financial world, the prodigious hiring of recent years has come at least temporarily to an end. We are, however, fortunate to be conducting searches in the English Department and in the Communications Studies Department on a line from the Macaulay Honors College and an adjunct conversion line respectively. The Mathematics Department has also been conducting a search for an addition to its prestigious Financial Engineering program. In addition, the Weissman School has been able to sustain its record of support for scholarship by offering research reassigned time to thirty-eight faculty members, travel funds totaling approximately \$100,000 to eighty-eight faculty members, a Scholar Incentive Award to one faculty member, and leaves of absence to five more.

Gifts, Grants, and Scholarships

The Weissman School's new Department of Journalism and the Writing Professions is the recipient of a million-dollar donation from the Harnisch Foundation. The money will be used for two new projects: a state-of-the-art multimedia newsroom/classroom (to be known as "Studio H") on the seventh floor of the Newman Vertical Campus and a consortium that will collaborate with leading journalism and educational institutions to advance the teaching and practice of the journalism profession as it navigates a period of extraordinarily rapid transition. This generous gift from philanthropists Ruth Ann and

William Harnisch ('68) follows their earlier gift of four annual scholarships for Honors and journalism students.

The English Department is the recipient of two newly endowed scholarships. The first, created by Melvin Lubin ('48) to honor the memory of his late wife Sarah Guttelman Lubin, commemorates Mrs. Lubin's love of nineteenth-century English and American literature and will be awarded each spring to an outstanding undergraduate studying the literature of that period. The second, created by Donald J. Loft ('74), will be awarded annually to a student who demonstrates excellence in the study of English and promotes Mr. Loft's belief that study of the language develops analytic thinking.

The Mathematics Department has received an award from the National Grid Foundation for support in the development of online tutorials using tablet PC technology and software to help improve the pass rates of students in one of the critical "must pass to progress" math courses.

Individual Weissman faculty members have been awarded a number of major grants from prestigious organizations. Professor Tansen Sen of the History Department is part of a team of scholars who have received a grant from the Ford Foundation for a four-year project entitled "Cross-Cultural Exchanges Along the Unknown (Southern) Silk Road," and Professor Alfonso Quiroz of the same department has received a Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship for comparative work on the constitutions of Latin American countries. Professor Jason Munshi-South of the Department of Natural Sciences received a grant from the National Science Foundation for his work on the environment, and Professors Charles Scherbaum and Kristin Sommer of the Psychology Department have also received a grant from the National Science Foundation for their work on the research experience of undergraduates. In addition to these major grants, sixty-nine Weissman faculty members have received PSC-CUNY awards.

Promotion of Cultural Activities

In collaboration with the Weissman School, the Baruch Performing Arts Center continues to offer a superb range of performing arts events for the benefit of the college and the community and has recently increased its available performance spaces through the acquisition of Mason Hall. For the fall theater production, The Director's Company presented *Irena's Vow*, featuring veteran stage and screen actress Tovah Feldshuh. One of BPAC's biggest hits to date, the play will open on Broadway at the Walter Kerr Theater in March 2009. Last fall's student production was *The Texas Two Step: Men and Women*, a presentation of two one-act plays by James McClure: "Landry and Bourbon" and "Lonestar." The Aaron Silberman Concert Series offered several concerts of chamber music, including two performances by the Alexander String Quartet in a new series devoted to the chamber music of Brahms. The Milt Hinton Jazz Perspectives Concert Series hosted performances by guitarist Rez Abbasi, vocalist Roberta Gambarini, and a lecture by noted jazz journalist Dan Ouellette. The Sydney Harmon Writer-in-Residence this past spring was the novelist Francine Prose, who gave a reading from her work on October 21st. Through these and other events, BPAC and the Weissman School have

again demonstrated that we have earned a place on the map of New York City's many and varied cultural offerings.