

## **WEISSMAN SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES GENERAL FACULTY REPORT (Spring 2012)**

Having weathered an unexpected swell in undergraduate enrollment last fall and emerged from a period of budgetary uncertainty, the Weissman School has been occupied to an unprecedented degree with curricular issues in the form of CUNY's Pathways initiative. It is difficult to recall another academic development that has been the subject of so much heated discussion, not only in meeting rooms and offices but also in the hallways, the elevators, and everywhere else that Weissman faculty and staff encounter one another. At the end of the fall semester, the design of the new general education curriculum was made public—a 12-credit required core; an 18-credit “flexible” core divided into five broad interdisciplinary categories; and a 12-credit “college option,” whose content will be determined separately by each baccalaureate-granting institution. The campuses have been asked to submit general plans for its implementation by April 1<sup>st</sup>, and a second phase will require us to specify which of our courses will find a place in each part of the new curriculum. This task has been given a December deadline, ensuring that discussion will continue at its present pitch of intensity through next fall.

In the middle of such a far-reaching sequence of events, one might be forgiven for not noticing that over the past few months the Weissman School has recorded a variety of achievements in other areas, including scholarship, intellectual initiatives, cultural events, fundraising, and new hires. The latter, especially, offer reassurance that our curriculum will continue to be delivered by a well-staffed and highly-accomplished faculty, whatever form it eventually assumes.

### **New Positions, Ongoing Initiatives, and Special Events**

Six Weissman departments—Sociology/Anthropology, Mathematics, Political Science, English, Communication Studies, and Black and Latino Studies—are currently conducting searches, with the promise of more to come next year. Three of these searches are at the offer stage; the others expect to reach that point shortly. In addition, the Weissman School has received six substitute lines in the following departments: Philosophy, English, Mathematics, Communication Studies, Natural Sciences, Modern Languages and Comparative Literature.

The approval of the Academic Excellence Fee by the Board of Trustees has made it possible to add a number of services to our graduate programs, such as guest lecturers and consultants, scholarships, and funds to support student travel to conferences and competitions. It has also allowed us to create a new career counseling position at the rank of Assistant to HEO, which the school has wasted no time in filling. After interviewing a strong field of applicants, the hiring committee has recommended three finalists to Dean Peck. We hope to fill the position in the coming weeks.

The recently-inaugurated Jewish Studies Center has been the recipient of two splendid gifts, which ensure that it will have a permanent place among the college's scholarly and cultural resources. The first donation from Sandy Wasserman will endow the center itself, and the other donation from William Newman will endow the center's directorship. We are grateful to these generous individuals and to all of our alumni and friends who have offered their support for this project. Upcoming events sponsored by the center include a talk on March 21<sup>st</sup> entitled “General

Ulysses S. Grant and the Jews” by featured speaker Jonathan Sarna in Engelman Recital Hall and, on May 15<sup>th</sup>, the American Sephardic Jewry Conference: Communities and Contributions. Panelists for this event will include Rabbi Marc Angel, Dr. Houman Sarshar, Professor Jane Gerber, Joan Nathan, Poopa Dweck, Stella Cohen, and Lior Lev Sercarz.

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, the Weissman School and the Jewish Studies Center, along with several other organizations, jointly sponsored the “Marie Curie Nobel Centennial Symposium: A Celebration of Science, Art, and Thought,” which was organized by Professors Edyta Greer and David Gruber of the Department of Natural Sciences. The event was introduced by CUNY Vice Chancellor for Research Gillian Smalls, and the Keynote Speaker was Nobel Prize-winning chemist Professor Roald Hoffman of Cornell University, who spoke on the topic of “Chemistry’s Essential Tensions: Three Views of a Science.” The symposium was widely judged a major success and attracted considerable attention from scientists, scholars, and students.

The Weissman School’s initiative in the area of Public Scholarship and Civic Engagement was inaugurated two years ago by Dean Jeffrey Peck and from its inception has been overseen by Presidential Professor of History Carol Berkin, who announced her retirement this year. The initiative will now be led by Professor of Journalism Christopher Hallowell, who will announce new events in the near future.

In recent months, the Weissman School has participated in or developed two overseas programs that promise a wealth of opportunities in years to come. First, Baruch College has been selected to join the 2011-2012 International Academic Partnership Program; Dean Peck will head up the IIE Brazil Partnership Steering Committee. By participating in the IAPP, the college will enhance its knowledge of partnership building among academic institutions, higher education in Brazil, and campus internationalization. Second, with the assistance of Dean Peck, the Ludwig Foundation, and Richard Mitten, the Director of Baruch’s Study Abroad Program, Professor Katrin Hansing of the Department of Sociology/Anthropology was able to offer a course on contemporary Cuban arts and culture that included an extended visit to the island nation itself. In addition to lectures and study in New York and Havana, students were housed with local families and thus were afforded direct experience of day-to-day life in Cuba, which has been largely off-limits to Americans for over a half century. The course was judged a complete success by everyone involved, and we hope to be able to offer it again soon.

### **Student and Faculty Awards and Achievements**

The two teams of students fielded by Weissman’s Master of Financial Engineering program placed first and fourth in the ROTMAN Competition, one of the most prestigious international events in the field. It should be noted that, in the course of achieving this outstanding success, our teams bested their peers from such institutions as the Guido Carli University of Rome, the University of Chicago, Boston University, Columbia University, Duke University, the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, and a number of other leading schools.

The Committee on the J.K. Watson Fellowship has nominated three outstanding undergraduate students in the arts and sciences—Melody Mills, Michael Stivers, and Kamelia Kilawan—to be

finalists in the competition for the fellowship this year. The students will proceed to a highly competitive interview process later this month.

The deadline for the Berlfein Essay Competition has been extended to June, and faculty teaching capstone courses are being urged to encourage their students to submit work. For more details, contact Professor Jessica Lang, who is chairing the Berlfein Committee.

Seven junior faculty members in the Weissman School are currently competing for the Whiting awards for outstanding teaching. The committee, which is chaired by Associate Provost Dennis Slavin and made up largely of past winners, typically chooses one junior faculty member who has demonstrated extraordinary ability to receive a full-year of released time and one or two others to receive single-semester awards.

In the spring 2012 semester, forty Weissman faculty members applied for research funds, and all forty received support for research and student assistantships totaling \$37,000; moreover, forty-seven Weissman faculty members received research reassigned time out of the fifty-four who applied. In addition to the PSC travel money available through the Provost's Office, the Dean's Office awarded conference travel funds totaling over \$50,000 to fifty-five faculty members, both adjunct and full time.

### **Weissman as a Center of Cultural Life**

The Aaron Silberman Concert series is continuing its twenty-sixth season with a concert by world-renowned Clarinet virtuoso Charles Neidich on March 14<sup>th</sup> and a Brahms and Bartok Concert by the Alexander String Quartet on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup>.

The New York Piano Society and the New York Flute Club have offered a variety of concerts throughout the year, and New York City Classical Guitar Society will present the acclaimed guitarist Yamandu Costa on April 20<sup>th</sup> as a part of its BPAC season. Also, BPAC will present "Inspiring Bach" by Repast Baroque on April 12<sup>th</sup> and May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The Milt Hinton Jazz Series celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season this year with Bassist Jay Leonhart and an all-star band in December and Bassist Cecil McBee with the Harvard Jazz Band in March. Next season's offerings will explore the topic of Women in Jazz and will feature Grammy-award winning bassist and vocalist Esperanza Spalding.

The highlight of BPAC's theater season will be The Acting Company's production of William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which will run from April 9<sup>th</sup> through April 22<sup>nd</sup>. From April 30<sup>th</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup>, BPAC will present the FPA student production of *Dispersal: Gentrification Story*, directed by Weissman faculty member Brian Rhinehart. This production is the outcome of an international collaboration between the students of Baruch College and The University of Arts Braunschweig in Germany.

The Latino Stage Fest ends the current BPAC season in late June with performers from South America, the Caribbean, and Spain.

A public reading by this semester's Harman Writer-in-Residence, poet Laurie Sheck, will take place on Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:45 p.m. in room 750 of the Newman Conference Center.

Programs sponsored by the Sydney Mishkin gallery continue to be integrated into the Baruch College curriculum. During the fall semester, the gallery provided talks and workshops for the Writing Center, Freshman Seminars, and the honors program, as well as other Baruch classes. From September 23<sup>rd</sup> to October 26<sup>th</sup>, six classes attended the exhibition *Narrative, Sketch, and Document: The Changing Roles of Photography* for talks, and numerous individual students also viewed this show. The photographs in the exhibition raised a variety of interdisciplinary and multicultural topics, which provided opportunities for students to discuss such issues as child soldiers in Africa and segregation in the United States.

The November-December show, *Milt Hinton's Jazz Photographs: Classics & Works in Color*, was part of the Celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Milt Hinton Jazz Series and was co-sponsored by the Milt Hinton jazz committee. The gallery also participated in the "Weissman Talks" film and discussion, *Keeping Time: The Life, Music and Photographs of Milt Hinton*. The Hinton exhibition drew a large number of students, including seven classes: four Freshman Seminar classes, one honors class, one Writing Center class, and a Feit Seminar. On November 29<sup>th</sup>, an evening event organized by Baruch students brought 35 students to the Mishkin Gallery, some of whom read poems they had written about individual photographs in the show.