



NATIONAL COUNCIL ON  
BLACK AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Northeast Region Spring 2010 Newsletter



## Bronx Activist Urges BCC Freshmen at Convocation To "Be Who You Are Supposed To Be!"

Bronx, NY – Keynote speaker **Alexis M. Torres-Fleming** told 1,000 students, the highest number on record to attend a Bronx Community College freshmen convocation, "As you start your college career aspire to be who you are supposed to be!

"Let your light shine! Don't let people negatively typecast you because you are from the South Bronx or for the color of your skin. And certainly don't let people tell you that you can only lead a better life by leaving your Bronx neighborhood to go somewhere else. Too often we believe those myths which others spread."

Ms. Alexis Torres-Fleming, founder of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) in the South Bronx, who grew up in the Bronx River Houses, said she thought she became a success when she left her neighborhood, stepped into a corporate job, and was living in an apartment on West 34th Street. "It wasn't who I was. I had succumbed to the system's opinions of what I should be, but I found that role was not what I wanted," stated Torres-Fleming.

In a turnabout in 1992, she came back to the South Bronx from Manhattan to work with parishioners from her church to resist drug dealers who had taken over a couple of crack houses in her neighborhood. The drug dealers retaliated by attempting to burn down her parish church. This attack, far from discouraging Torres-Fleming, emboldened her to become even more involved in



her old neighborhood. She founded YMPJ, a faith-based, community development organization that aims to empower local youth. Using education and community organizing, YMPJ has helped a generation of Bronx young people discover that through advocacy, community organizing, journalism, environmentalism, and the arts, they can play an active role in shaping and improving their neighborhood. The successful effort to rid the neighborhood of the crack menace influenced her to take a new career path. She changed her life to be more connected to her community and the environment.

## New NCCC Veterans' OASIS Center Dedicated

**Northwestern Connecticut Community College** formally dedicated its newly established **Operation Academic Support for Incoming Service members (OASIS) Center**. The opening of this Center results from the dedicated collaborative efforts of the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs, The Department of Higher Education, The Connecticut Department of Labor, and many other dedicated and committed organizations and agencies.

**OASIS** is a State of Connecticut Veterans' Project for Public Colleges and Universities that provides a safe location at the public colleges and universities of Connecticut where returning veteran students may meet, socialize, communicate, study and support each other's academic, vocational, cultural, and spiritual needs in the education setting. The supporters of the Vet OASIS Project have agreed to pro-

vide a comfortable, accessible location on campus, assist veterans in accessing supportive programs across state and federal agencies and provide information about veteran benefits and services through regularly scheduled programs. The Vet OASIS partners will also provide services to encourage success in the academic setting and raise funds for grants to the public colleges and universities to furnish and equip the Vet OASIS Centers.

**Dr. Barbara Douglass**, President of Northwestern Connecticut Community College, who presided over the Dedication Ceremony and Open House, said, "We are pleased and honored to provide a dedicated space to better serve our veterans and to aid in their mutual support." It is envisioned that by June 30, 2010, there will be 23 Vet OASIS Centers at the public colleges and universities in Connecticut.

## Construction and Energy Institute Offers an Array of Programs

LARGO, Md.— **Prince George's Community College** is one of 13 two-year colleges in Maryland offering courses in weatherization and energy efficiency through an affiliation called the **Construction and Energy Technologies Education Consortium (CETEC)**. PGCC established the Construction and Energy Institute, which is the umbrella for all construction- and energy-related courses, programs and partnerships.

"Movement toward energy-efficiency and sustainability is important in construction industry and has been added to the Construction and Energy Institute course syllabi," said **Daniel Mosser**, vice president for workforce development and continuing education. "The Construction and Energy Institute has an advisory board as well as expert faculty to ensure students receive a high quality education," he added.

CETEC is designed not only to educate workers in the construction industry on ways to build environmentally sustainable and energy efficient structures, but also to support Maryland's workforce needs for workers with training in constructing environmentally sensitive buildings.

## BCCC'S CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING EXCELLENCE

It is my privilege to serve as director of the newly created Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence at Baltimore City Community College. We seek to instill



focus, direction, visibility and recognition for the College's most fundamental mission: teaching. The Center fosters a campus environment in which effective teaching flourishes and excellence in teaching and learning is both encouraged and rewarded. The Center is the leader in the coordination of monthly professional development opportunities for all faculty members to enhance teaching methodologies and pedagogy. Only an inclusive, comprehensive and flexible learning and teaching environment can address our community's Diverse needs.

The Center researches, designs and coordinates a variety of event to raise teaching effectiveness. We provide consultant services to individual faculty members and design workshops geared toward a division or department on a range topics related to teaching and learning.

Our motto is "Grow Where You are Planted"  
**Rose A. McNeill**, Director

### Addressing the Needs of Female Students of Color

At CUNY's community colleges, young women of color account by far for the largest percentage of total enrollment of any demographic group. But until recently, there has been virtually no research into the specific—and unique—issues these women face as students.

That gap is now being filled by a first-of-its kind study co-directed by Lisa Rose, coordinator of BMCC's Human Services Program and an associate professor of Social Sciences; and Precious Sellars-Mulhern, a counseling psychologist in the Counseling Center and associate professor of counseling. Funded by a grant from the New York Community Trust and entitled "The Community College Odyssey: Identifying and Addressing the Obstacles for Women of Color," the project involves **Hostos and LaGuardia Community Colleges** as well as **Borough of Manhattan Community College**, which is serving as the lead institution.

#### STARTING WITH A BLANK SLATE

What the researchers discovered, to their surprise, was that childcare and outside jobs—key



issues facing female students in the past—are of little concern to female students today. Indeed, women of color who are currently enrolled at CUNY's community colleges are typically much younger than those who attended a generation ago. But they weren't using the resources and support services available to them and often expressed a sense of boredom." Tellingly, the researchers found that most students were receptive to the idea of taking part in focus groups.

But of those who committed to participating, relatively few showed up.

#### NEEDED: A "CULTURE OF COLLABORATION"

"To be sure, there are abundant resources and programs at all three participating schools, such as BMCC's peer mentoring and Ambassador programs for incoming freshmen. "But there is no concerted effort to coordinate these offerings or make sure students know about them," Sellars-Mulhern says. "There are a lot of people doing good work, but information, insights and outcomes are not being shared across organizational lines.

As a result, students often fall through the cracks." Adds Rose, "We need to create a 'culture of collaboration,' so that we can collect data, look at these innovative ideas and figure out what works best. To date, most programs have been geared to the needs of either high- or under-achieving students, leaving a vast middle ground—students in the 2.5-to-3.2 GPA range—underserved. "So we will focus on allocating resources for students in that group," Rose says. The idea, adds Sellars, "is to reach out to them from the moment they walk in the door."

### FROM THE PRESIDENT Dr. Calvin E. Woodland

Dear Supporters of NCBA-Northeast Region:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your continuing support of the mission and professional development activities sponsored by the National Council for Black American Affairs-Northeast Region. The Board



seeks, through our annual spring conference, to address some of the critical issues impacting on the teaching, learning, and counseling of students enrolled in our community colleges. Our **2010 Spring Conference** is being held at **Essex County College in Newark, NJ on March 18-19, 2010**. Higher education is faced with declining resources and increasing accountability from government and the general public. The conference theme: **Culture of Evidence: Best Practices in Institutional Effectiveness & Organizational Vitality** aims to address some of the challenges.

The comments and ratings received from those of you who attended the 2009 conference have been very instructive in guiding the planning of the Conference workshops. Workshops to be scheduled will address some of your requested topics.

For additional information visit our website [www.ncbaa-ne.org/index.php](http://www.ncbaa-ne.org/index.php)

Regards,

Dr. Calvin E. Woodland, President NCBA/NE Region

### National Honor for Essex County College Student

Sophomore **David Kariuki** has been named to the All-USA Community College Academic First Team. He is the fifth ECC student to receive the prestigious honor in the last four years.

Kariuki, 23, who has a perfect 4.0 grade point average, carries a dual major of Engineering (with a bio-medical track) and Mathematics. His career goal is to become a bio-engineering research scientist.

"I didn't know what to expect when I applied for the scholarship," said the soft-spoken Kariuki. "I must have done about 20 revisions on it," he laughed.

In addition to receiving the All-USA scholarship (co-sponsored by *USA Today* and the Phi Theta Kappa two year college honor society) of \$2,500, he is also the recipient of the \$5,000 Guistewhite Scholarship and the \$2,000 New Century Scholarship. He is profiled in the April 7 edition of *USA Today*.

Kariuki has a full slate of potential schools to which to transfer. His top choice is Johns Hopkins University,

with an impressive array of alternatives such as MIT, Yale, Stanford, Cornell, the University of Pennsylvania, and Case Western Reserve.

Born in the African nation of Zambia where his Kenyan parents were working, Kariuki attended school in Zambia, graduating from high school at 17. He then spent the next several years working in Kenya (primarily in a warehouse), deciding his future. "I wanted to continue my education in Kenya, but I could not afford the tuition" he recalled.

So how did he arrive at Essex? Kariuki's sister, who works for United Nations Radio, lives in New Jersey and suggested he look at schools here, including ECC.

Kariuki enrolled at Essex three years ago. "There was a bit of culture shock when I got here coming from another country," said Kariuki. But since English was the medium of instruction in Zambia, language was not a problem. He does have an excellent ear for language, speaking the African languages of Chewa,

Bemba, and Swahili.

When not in class, Kariuki finds time to write for the student newspaper *ECCO* and tutor classmates in math, English, engineering, and computer science in the Learning Center. He is also an active member of PTK and is the PTK regional president. He is also a member of the African Student Association and the Technology Club.



"I really enjoy the time I spend tutoring. My work in the Learning Center sharpens my academic skills and I like the interaction with my fellow students. I even received Christmas cards from some of the students I tutored last year."

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AWARDS, APPOINTMENTS, AND HONORS**

**CONNECTICUT STATE CONFERENCE OF NAACP BRANCHES HONORS DR. CALVIN E. WOODLAND**

In commemoration of the NAACP's centennial celebration, the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP recognized the achievements and contributions of 100 Influential Blacks in the State of Connecticut. **Dr. Calvin E. Woodland**, President of Capital Community College in Hartford, Connecticut was one of the recipients of this honor and recognition.



**GCC PRESIDENT RUSSELL A. DAVIS APPOINTED TO NATIONAL COMMISSION**

**Dr. Russell A. Davis**, president of Gloucester County College, has been appointed to a leadership role as a commissioner of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) on the Commission of Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.

The commission, one of six presidentially-based associations authorized by the AACC Board, works within the higher education community to encourage collaboration among community college entities and organizations. Davis will join the advisory board on diversity, inclusion and equity which meet twice a year to provide advice and promote cooperation among community colleges on issues including student recruitment and retention, campus climate, affirmative action and civil rights.



**DR. BARBARA GABA ELECTED TO ELIZABETH CHAMBER**

**Dr. Barbara Gaba**, Provost Elizabeth Campus and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Union County College (NJ) has recently been elected to serve a 3-year term on the Board of The Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce. The mission of the Chamber is to advance prosperity and quality of life within the business and corporate community resulting in prosperity to the City's residents through economic, social, civic, commercial, industrial, educational, and employment opportunities. Dr. Gaba also serves on the Board of NCBA Northeast Region.



**BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE NAMES INTERCULTURAL CENTER AFTER ITS THIRD PRESIDENT**

On October 21, the College celebrated the architect of its international identity, its third president, **Dr. José López-Isa**, by renaming its Center for the Study of Intercultural Understanding in his honor. The renaming ceremony highlighted the College's annual Latino Heritage Awards dinner.

The College opened its Center for International Studies (now the Center for the Study of Intercultural Understanding) in 1979. The Center was opened at the urging of then-professor Dr. López-Isa, who became Bergen's third president in 1982.

Dr. López-Isa, a Cuban immigrant, first came to the United States in 1961. He became a founding faculty member of the College in 1968 and served for 29 years as a teacher, administrator, and finally, as its president from 1982 to 1995. During his tenure, he diversified Bergen's student body, increased the institution's involvement in civic projects and expanded College facilities.

The Dr. José López-Isa Center for the Study of Intercultural Understanding promotes a greater understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures through better communication and critical thinking skills.

He currently serves as publisher of the **Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education** magazine, which he founded in 1990. The publication remains the only Hispanic-specific magazine in higher education.



Bergen Community College and President Dr. G. Jeremiah Ryan recognized former President Dr. José López-Isa's by renaming the Center for the Study of Intercultural Understanding in his honor.

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