



OFFICE OF STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

May 2013 Newsletter

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COMMENCEMENT 2013



Congratulations to all our graduating students on your wonderful achievement! We are so proud of you!

Preparations for Lehman's 45th Commencement Ceremony are well underway for May 30th, 2013. This memorable event will be held outside on the South Field of the Lehman Campus at 10:30 a.m. More than fifty students affiliated with our office will receive either their Bachelors' or Masters' Degrees. Over 2,700 students are expected to graduate this May.

Students registered with The Office of Student Disability are cordially invited to attend an end of year celebration in honor of their graduation from Lehman College. This will take place following the conclusions of the commencement ceremony in the Library Conference Room # 213 (next door to our ATC computer lab). Please remember to bring your Lehman ID to enter the Library.

It is your moment to bask in your achievements with loved ones and friends and we look forward to making this event special for you. There will be refreshments and plenty of good wishes!

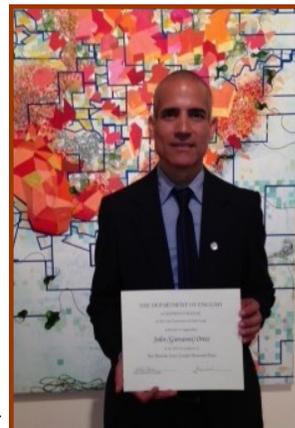
See you there!

Save the Date:

- May 17-24: Final Exams
May 27: Memorial Day-campus closed
May 30: Commencement and Welcome Reception
Jun 3-Jul 3: Summer Session 1
Jul 8 - Aug 7: Summer Session 1.1
Jul 16: Transfer Orientation
July 17: Freshmen Orientation
Aug 6: Freshmen Orientation
Aug 27: Last day to drop with 100% tuition refund
Aug 28: Fall 2013 classes begin
Aug 28-Sept 3: Late Registration for Fall 2013 classes
Sept 2: Labor Day-campus closed
Oct 17: Disability Mentoring Day

ACHIEVEMENT OF GRADUATING STUDENT

Johnalbert Ortiz, the model, dancer and actor took the name of Reverend Gio when he entered the One Spirit Interfaith Seminary in 2006. Giovanni, as he is best known, will be graduating this semester from Lehman College with a Bachelors of Art degree in English in Creative Writing and Psychology minor. His intention was to major in Psychology, but after speaking with a professor and taking some English classes, Giovanni became hooked on English.



John Ortiz- Graduating Student

ing the shame and fear behind him. He wants other students to feel comfortable about who they are, saying it is not that they are disabled, but that they do things differently than others.

On May 1st, Giovanni attended two separate events at Lehman College. He was awarded the Blanche Lewy Joseph Memorial Prize for academic excellence by the English Department. This award is given annually to the deserving senior who has made progress in the study of Literature. Later the same day,

Giovanni struggled for many years with the shame of being dyslexic. As a young boy, he was teased in school for this condition and when he came to Lehman the first time he never notified anyone. His grades suffered greatly and he dropped out of college. On returning to Lehman 27 years later, Giovanni has embraced his disability, leav-

Giovanni was also recognized for his hard work and creativity by Obscura, the Lehman College Literary and Arts Magazine. Giovanni's book entitled Boots on the Box Berkley Angels will be published later this year. This is one out of three books that he has written and it is a memoir of his days as a dancer.

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## PROFILE: STUDENT ATHLETE - CLAUDIA TEJADA

Since the age of 10, she played basketball and grew to love the game with a passion. Claudia Tejada is a member of the Lehman Lightening Women's Basketball team, where she plays the position of power forward. When she enrolled as a freshman, she did not immediately play but managed the team. This experience was very humbling for her but her desire was to be one of the players. The next year, Claudia tried out and made the team, but unfortunately, she did not stick it out. However, because of her love for basketball, Claudia never gave up. She is now back on the team full-time and was fortunate to play during the last basketball season which ran from October 2012 to February 2013. The team played 26 games and won 5, but

Claudia was not disheartened because she is confident that her team has the ability to be number one.

What Claudia wants other students with or without a disability to know is the advantage of playing a sport or getting involved in physical activity. She has credited her involvement of basketball and regular work-out to her academic success and her ability to establish meaningful relationships. Claudia finds that she is able to manage her time better between classes and practice and her moods and panic disorder have certainly improved. "Exercise and fitness are good for the body and the mind" she said.

Claudia is a sophomore and her future goal is to be a High School Math

teacher. In high school, she used to cut a lot of classes, but her math teacher would always talk to her and because of that encouragement, Claudia is motivated to take up this profession. Along with basketball, Claudia is very active in the Differently Abled Students and Friends club on campus, where she serves as secretary.

We wish Claudia and her team all the best in the upcoming basketball season.



**Claudia Tejada –  
Student Athlete**

## MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE



*From The Editor:*

How quickly four years went by! As I anxiously await graduation day, I cannot help but to reflect briefly on my accomplishments and experiences. When I started college, I did not immediately get involved in extra-curricular activities.

Having left school for almost twenty years, I concentrated more on regaining that classroom feeling and ensuring that I got good grades. It did not take me long before I started to focus on the big picture in order to make the end result of college a success. I figured that the best way to enhance my college experience was to get involved in activities around the campus that I was passionate about. I took interest in students clubs, leadership programs, volunteer opportunities and leadership roles on campus. By doing so, I was able to meet new people, take advantage of new and exciting initiatives and learn how to work with others.

My two biggest commitments were to Lehman L.I.F.E. (Leaders Involved for Everyone) and the peer educator program. Lehman L.I.F.E. is an organization that helps to create awareness of issues affecting humanity from the Lehman campus to the wider world through volunteer work. I have had many opportunities to volunteer on campus and around New York City and in a few weeks, I will be travelling to Kenya to support the needs of poor children in the Kibera slums. I was also fortunate to be a peer educator assigned by the office of Student Disability

Services. This experience was truly amazing! I was able to develop my writing skills by taking on the challenge of producing a monthly newsletter to help spread disability awareness around the campus. There is not enough space in this column to talk about the pleasure of working with the finest staff.

My reason to attend college was to be a well-educated individual so that I could be better prepared to embrace the world of work. However, as I come to the end of my experience, I can honestly say that these were the best years of my life because I made the effort to enjoy myself. I am proud to be graduating with honors and awards which include Summa cum laude, Golden Key, Departmental Honors: Social Work, Undergraduate Social Work Program: Community Service Award and Undergraduate Social Work Award: The Leona Thompson Award. I am also one of the recipients of the SGA Distinction Award for Social Sciences.

My advice to students is DO NOT wait until you have reached the end of college to say, regrettably, that you should have done more. College is a time for growth so CHALLENGE yourself, GET INVOLVED, ENJOY yourself and get the best out of your college years.

I will be continuing my studies at the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University so this will be my final newsletter. It was an awesome privilege to have served you in this capacity.

*Kim Singh*

## SGA DISTINCTION AWARDS WINNERS 2013

Each year, Lehman College Student Government Association (SGA) awards 10 different distinction awards to students from all different fields within the college. These scholarships vary in both criteria and monetary worth and are created to benefit the students in their academic endeavors. At the Office of Student Disability Services, we are very pleased to congratulate three of our student winners. *John Ortiz* and *Claudia Tejada* are recipients of the Student with Disabilities Award and *Rolando Martinez* is the winner for the Leadership/Civic Engagement Award. They will each be awarded \$300.00.

The winners will receive their awards at the SGA Gala Awards on Thursday, May the 20th from 5:30 to 8:00 pm in the Faculty Dining Room. Come and celebrate with all the students on their excellent achievements.



## Lehman Students on Disability and Higher Education: An International View

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, the Office of Student Disability Services hosted a panel discussion on Disability and Higher Education from the perspectives of CUNY students and graduates who immigrated to the U.S. from other countries. The panelists shared their personal experiences about their disabilities. For some, it was the first time speaking publicly about their views on such a topic.



Panelists from L to R—Syeda Kabir, Joinal Abedin, Edmund Asiedu, Nooria Nodrat and Mairoby Hernandez

The panel consisted of five amazing students and graduates: *Nooria Nodrat* who grew up in Afghanistan and is the President and Founder of the of the Afghanistan Blind Women and Children Foundation, which supports blind children and youth in education and career development. She immigrated to the United States in 1991 as a political refugee and is currently in her last semester at CUNY Graduate Center of Professional Studies, obtaining her Masters in Disability Services. *Syeda Kabir* moved to the United States from Bangladesh in 2000 with her husband and two children. She is an accounting major. *Edmund Asiedu*, originally from Ghana, came to the United States in 2010 when he won the lottery for permanent residency. He is an upper junior and is majoring in Social Work. Edmund will be interning in Washington DC this summer with the National Disability Rights Network. *Joinal Abedin* arrived in the US in 2006 from Bangladesh after winning the lottery for a Diversity Visa. He graduated from Lehman in January of 2013 with a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting. *Mairoby Hernandez* moved to the

United States from the Dominican Republic six years ago. She is graduating this semester with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. Mairoby is currently interning at City College in the AccessAbility Center.

All the panelists had different life experiences concerning their disabilities, but they all shared a similar viewpoint regarding disability in higher education in their home countries. They all felt that there were not adequate accommodations for people with disabilities, mostly due to the fact they are viewed as a minority group that cannot contribute to society in a profitable way. The panelists from Bangladesh both agreed that people with physical disabilities are not often seen in higher education, that they are not seen as a group who can handle college, or even high school.

The panelists all came to the U.S. for opportunities and experiences they could not have received in their home countries and they hope to return to their countries of origin in hopes of seeing further progress. CUNY LEADS Advisor,

*Cont'd on back page*

## DISABILITY MENTORING DAY (DMD) 2013



Recruitment has begun as part of the NYC Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD)

Disability Mentoring Day will be on **Wednesday, October 16, 2013**, but sign up now to receive all the opportunities offered in the summer months, such as workshops!

Apply for a one day internship with a mentor in your future career! Network! Gain first-hand experience and knowledge of what a career in the field you are working toward could be like! You can participate in DMD if you are a current student, college alumni, veteran, vocational job placement client or an experience ready consumer.

*Mentees will learn and experience:*

- *Job networking workshops, seminars and career*

*related opportunities*

- *Job shadowing with an employer (mentor), internship development assistance*
- *Career exploration and informational interview opportunities with an employer (mentor)*
- *Resume, interview and dress etiquette workshops through MOPD*

Mentee interview selection will begin in early June and will continue through September. For DMD 2013 Mentee application, please visit the site:

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/mentee\\_application\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/mopd/downloads/pdf/mentee_application_2013.pdf)

If you are interested in applying for DMD, please see CUNY Leads Counselor, Lauren McCarthy in the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall 238, (718) 960-8441 or contact her by email:

[lauren.mccarthy@lehman.cuny.edu](mailto:lauren.mccarthy@lehman.cuny.edu). For more information please go to: [www.nyc.gov/mopd](http://www.nyc.gov/mopd)

# The CUNY Service Corps Job Opportunity!

**Do you want to get paid to do Community Service?**  
**Do you need working experience?**

Lehman College has been selected as one of the inaugural colleges of the newly-created CUNY Service Corps!!!! CUNY students will be given the opportunity to work on projects that will help to improve the future of New York City residents and communities. If accepted you could make \$12/hr for an average of 12 hours per week for 24 weeks, while gaining a fantastic working experience!

**APPLY BY JUNE 1st.**

*To be eligible for the CUNY Service Corps, students must:*

- Be enrolled full-time (at least 12 credits) in the current semester and plan to enroll full-time next semester.
- Have a cumulative Grade Point Average of at least 2.5
- Have earned at least 24 college credits.
- Have addressed any remedial education needs prior to beginning in Fall 2013.

For more information and to download the application, please visit the following website:  
<http://www.cuny.edu/site/servicecorps/cuny-students.html> or contact Lauren McCarthy at the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster 238, (718)-960-8441.

## GRADUATING STUDENT

*cont'd from pg 1*

Giovanni says he owes much of his success to the staff at the Office of Student Disabilities Services. He encourages students to utilize the services of this office because the advice and guidance that the staff offers are gifts that they will treasure for life. Giovanni's message to other students is "There is nothing you cannot do. The only thing that stops you is YOU. When someone tells you that you cannot do something, smile and reply, YES I CAN." Giovanni will be taking a year off before starting graduate school.

The staff of the Office of Student Disability Services extends heartiest congratulations to Giovanni and wishes him continued success.

## DISABILITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

*cont'd from pg 3*

Lauren McCarthy, remarked that she felt the event shed a lot of light on the perception of disability and higher education worldwide and that there is still a lot of work to be done in order to change negative perceptions. The Office of Student Disability wishes to thank all the students for giving of their time to share in this endeavor in celebration of Disability Awareness month.

## READY FOR SUMMER?

Summer is almost here and I am sure many of you cannot wait to be done with finals, kick off your shoes and throw those books in the air! What are you going to do with your summer? The opportunities are endless! You can choose to take a summer class and accelerate your degree program. You can find a job and earn some money or you can do a summer internship and gain valuable experience. Many students however, simply look forward to visiting families and friends so that they can unwind from the rigors of school work.

If you are planning on doing nothing this summer, please think twice. As much as that may sound absolutely appealing, it could be rather boring. Engage in something productive and keep your mind sharp so that you do not lose your momentum come Fall semester.

*In all that you do, have fun, stay in shape, eat well and be safe!*



**Office of Student  
Disability Services  
Shuster Hall 238  
718-960-8441**



*"ATTITUDES  
are the real disability"*

## SDS Staff

*Merrill D. Parra—Director  
Chandrika Surajpal—Assistant Director  
Lauren McCarthy—CUNY LEADS Counselor  
Doreen Patrick—College Office Assistant  
Michael Rymer—Writing Specialist  
Glendaly Rodriguez—Notetaker Coordinator  
Magdalena Wojeik—College Assistant  
Kim Singh—Peer Educator, Newsletter Editor  
Joshua Karpiloff—CUNY Cap  
Lashay Bentley—Peer Educator  
Willa Ivory—Advisor*