

COLUMBIA *in New York*

Faculty & Staff Engage the City

Location, location, location. Columbia has long stood out among Ivy League schools for its setting in New York, this most dynamic of American cities. It is a magnet for students and scholars who seek an academic environment that is not apart from the world but rather at its center. As novelist and alumnus Herman Wouk once said, Columbia is a place of “doubled magic,” where “the best things of the moment were outside the rectangle of Columbia; the best things of all human history and thought were inside the rectangle.”

What’s fascinating, of course, is the opportunity to navigate between these rectangles. Students do this regularly with research projects, internships and volunteer services, but countless faculty and staff, too, are deeply engaged in the city where they live and work. In recent months alone, researchers at the Mailman School of Public Health offered mobile health services to uninsured workers in Harlem, an art history professor stepped up to become chief curator of architecture and design at MoMA, and Columbia’s Office of Government and Community Affairs pledged its support for “Miracle on 138th St.,” one of the largest food giveaways in New York City history.

While it’s impossible to present the complete picture here, we can provide a glimpse of the University’s reach into the broader community from both inside and outside the classroom. Toward that end, we offer insights from both faculty and staff whose recent work enriches the city and for whom the city is a source of constant inspiration.

University in the City

These two pages present a small sample of faculty members whose current work focuses on the city: New York as urban laboratory, New York as art subject, and even New York as ecosystem. One of them is also running a program at the medical center that addresses the unique health concerns of Hispanic women in Washington Heights and Inwood.

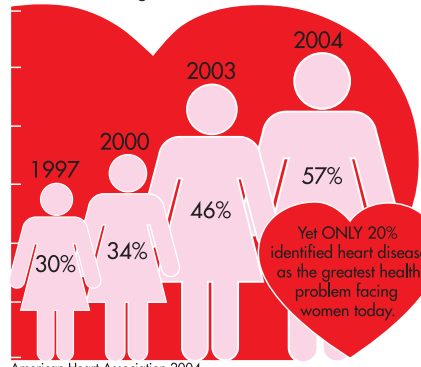
The achievements of these faculty members represent just a few of the many ways in which scholarship and service intersect at Columbia University in the City of New York. Faculty are involved not only in a range of academic research but also in an array of health, education, cultural and other kinds of partnerships that help improve the quality of life in the community and the quality of academic work on campus.



TUPAC SHAKUR
(1971-1996)



Awareness Among Women That Heart Disease Is Their Leading Cause of Death



HILARY BALLON

POSITION: Professor of art history and director of Art Humanities

WORK ON NYC: Ballon, an architectural historian whose interests range from the Paris of Henri IV to the high-rise buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, is now working on a project all about New York. With Columbia colleague Kenneth T. Jackson, she has co-edited a book, *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York*, about the city's long-time planning czar and how he changed New York. The book will be published by W. W. Norton next month, when a trio of exhibitions curated by Ballon opens at the Queens Museum of Art, the Museum of the City of New York, and Columbia's Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery.

ON WHAT'S NEW IN HER BOOK: "The book's contributors tend to position Moses in a national context. They show that Moses was quicker than anyone else to figure out how to use federal funds to advance particular planning goals. The book also highlights the physical transformation of the city under Moses and describes in detail the structures he built as well as the controversial projects that were defeated."

BALLON'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOOK: "Moses was an agent of modernization. For instance, Moses used urban renewal to keep New York City a magnet in an age of decentralization. He said if we don't take action, New York will become a city of the rich and the poor. He promoted affordable housing for the middle class. He promoted new institutions, such as Lincoln Center, to raise the stature of the city. Another goal was to advance higher education so that the city was a center of brain power."

LAST WORD ON MOSES: "The record is mixed, with some notable successes, such as Lincoln Center, and some features that failed because he didn't understand neighborhoods, the social fabric of the city, or race. Interestingly, the size of his renewal projects was small compared to those in other cities like Chicago and St. Louis. He created superblocs, but they're relatively small, and in most cases they've been absorbed into New York's grid."

JAMES DANOFF-BURG

POSITION: Associate research scientist at the Earth Institute's Center for Environmental Research and Conservation (CERC) and a professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology (E3B)

WORK ON NYC (& STATE): Danoff-Burg has measured the impact of urbanization on ecosystems ranging from Riverside Park to forests in upstate New York. In 2004, he coordinated CERC's contribution to the new core curriculum course *Frontiers of Science*, leading 550 undergrads in the collection of data on insects and plant diversity that would benefit the New York City parks and similar organizations. Last summer he offered the Earth Institute's first-ever course for local high school students on restoration ecology in New York City.

WHAT DREW HIM TO URBAN ECOLOGY: "When I was still a Ph.D. student at the University of Kansas, I moved to Brooklyn for a fellowship at the Museum of Natural History. I biked to the museum every day. Nothing will make you agitate for conservation more than jousting with cars on a bike."

WHAT MAKES NYC SUCH A GREAT LAB: "The city's ecological footprint is among the most profound of any in the nation. There are a lot of people, we've been here a long time, and we've fundamentally changed the city's natural ecosystem—the perfect conditions for restoration ecology. The restoration of marshland in Jamaica Bay, Queens, is one of the most ambitious restoration ecology projects happening in the world today. And at Fresh Kills Landfill in Staten Island, there will be all these wonderful recreation sites on top of what was previously the country's largest landfill."

ON TEACHING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: "I wanted the students to see that the city isn't all entertainment and shopping. We also have marshes, grasslands, hills, forests, beaches, dunes, and one of the most important parks in the whole world—Central Park. It's an incredible set of ecosystems. Most of the kids in the class hadn't been to any of the eight parks we went to, except Central Park. They were totally shocked."

ELSA-GRACE GIARDINA

POSITION: Professor of clinical medicine and director of the Center for Women's Health, Columbia University Medical Center

WORK ON NYC: Giardina, a cardiologist who has been at Columbia for more than 25 years, is leading a project funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to raise awareness about heart disease among Hispanic and other minority women in Washington Heights and Inwood. For the past six months, Giardina and her team have studied the factors—including poverty and language barriers—that prevent women in those neighborhoods from taking steps to avoid heart disease.

THE NEED: "Women in Washington Heights and Inwood are at particular risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke. About 23 percent of the general population in this country has metabolic syndrome, a constellation of factors that indicate a high risk of cardiovascular disease. In Northern Manhattan it's much higher than that—about one-third."

BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO TREATMENT: "We often lose patients because of all the competing issues in their lives. Many older women continue to bear responsibility for their families, and it's been a real challenge to get them to attend classes."

IDEA FOR NYC: "In the subways there's information about different diseases, but you don't see anything on heart disease. I would like to see a campaign on heart health awareness targeted at women."

CUMC'S COMMITMENT TO THE CITY: "Columbia's medical center had made an enormous commitment to the community. We are one of only five research centers in the country to be given a grant to enhance and improve heart health care programs for women—work that clearly stands to benefit our local community."

WHAT'S NEXT: Taking the study to another level. "This project will serve as a baseline for learning the best ways to reach out and educate women at risk on ways to modify their behavior. Next, we apply the findings to an even bigger area."

STEVEN HOLL

POSITION: Associate professor of architecture in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

OBSESSED WITH NYC: "My obsession with New York began in 1977, when I arrived here on New Year's Eve from San Francisco," Holl remembers. At the time, he had just become a licensed architect in California, and was holding a return ticket. He never used it. Instead, Holl began a career that has included designing some of the world's most innovative buildings—his addition to the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City will open this year—while becoming one of the best-known members of Columbia's architecture faculty.

HOLL'S NYC BUILDINGS: Holl is responsible for the Storefront for Art & Architecture, a downtown gallery co-designed with Vito Acconci, and an addition to the architecture school at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, which opened in 2005.

THE CITY IN THE LATE 1970s: "When I arrived, the city was falling apart. And yet, for the art world, it was enormously exciting. I began sketching things I thought would make the city better."

THE CITY NOW: "Now we're in a building boom equal to the 1930s, when all the skyscrapers were going up at once. But the good news is, one of my earliest ideas for the city—saving and reusing the elevated rail line through the West Village and Chelsea—is now becoming a reality. The High Line project will transform a disused rail bed into a linear park linking the West Village to the Far West Side. And I may get to do a mixed-use building at its northern terminus."

ON THE COLUMBIA EXPANSION: "Columbia is a very important institution. I think it should expand, and it should do so in a way that connects the historic fragments that are savable with something ultra-modern. It doesn't need to imitate the original campus, which was a wonderful thing for its time. What it builds ought to relate to our time."

JAMAL JOSE

POSITION: Instructor of and acting chair of the School of the Arts

ONLY IN NEW YORK: "In addition, this Columbia Panther, a prisoner of war, a poet, a playwright and a poet."

HIS CONNECTION TO NYC: "I've long been connected to the scene, and has forged connections between Columbia and Harlem. I launched Impact Rep, which trains local students in expression, literacy and art. Harlem Screenwriting Programs draw heavily from Columbia."

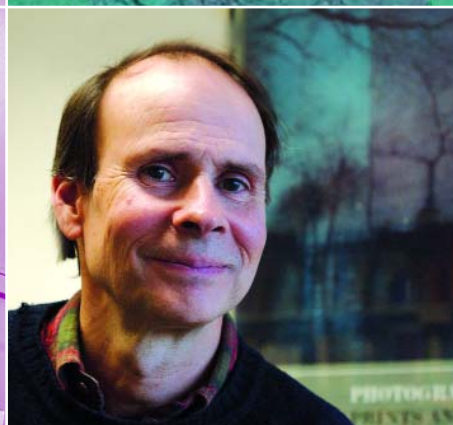
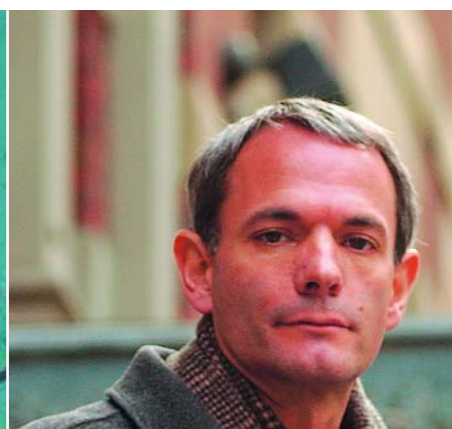
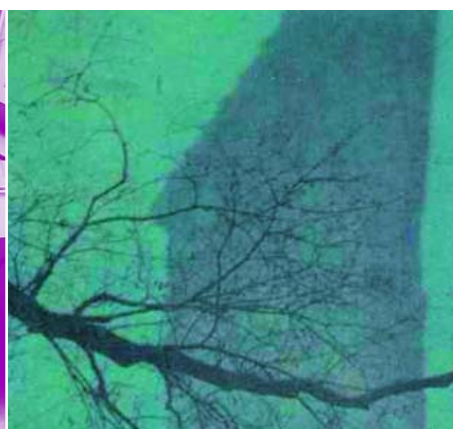
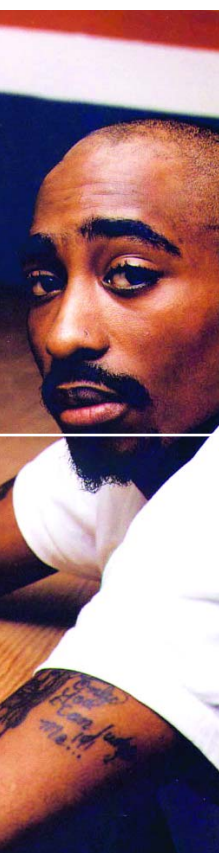
LATEST WORK: An interview with the hip hop artist Tupac. Tupac and his family, including his mother Aleni in 1968, were members of the Harlem chapter of the Black Panther Party.

ON HARLEM: "I grew up in Harlem during the 1960s, when the economy were crumbling and the great theater. Today, the city is as vibrant as it's ever been. The institutions and artists in Harlem are still there."

PATH TO COLUMBIA: "Focus Films recommended Columbia. That was 10 years ago."

BEST FEATURE OF COLUMBIA: "A sense of community. The Division and the willing students to get involved. We now co-sponsors the Harlem Writer's Program, giving grants to writers from the community and into the community and into the youth programs, including the program. I don't feel like I'm just here."

IDEA FOR NYC: "Send you can towards creating a city because this will enrich the city's youth. They're our future."



PH

of professional practice
e Film Division at the

In a previous incarnation,
professor was a Black
Leavenworth, a play-

THE CITY: Joseph has
with the Harlem arts
several links between
m. For instance, he
eritory Theatre, which
ges 12–19 in creative
nd life skills, and the
Workshop. Both pro-
on volunteers from

eractive biography of
c Shakur. Joseph knew
well. He met Tupac's
, when he joined the
Black Panther Party.
p in Harlem; and, even
n the housing and the
g, I saw great jazz and
Harlem arts scene is as
n. There are more insti-
arlem than ever before."

"James Schamus of
nded me to Columbia."

COLUMBIA: "I like the
we have in the Film
gness of the film arts
d in Harlem. Columbia
Harlem Arts Alliance
g space to young writ-
ity. Students also go
d volunteer with differ-
cluding my Impact pro-
have separate lives."
as many resources as
ve arts and education,
ch and empower the
future."

JONAH ROCKOFF

POSITION: Assistant professor of economics and finance at Columbia Business School

WORK ON NYC: Rockoff, along with two other economists, has published a study on the effectiveness of teacher certification in the winter issue of *Education Next*. Using data from a citywide database on student performance, Rockoff and his colleagues found that student performance isn't affected by whether teachers have been traditionally certified or if they come from alternative programs such as Teach for America and New York City Teaching Fellows.

ATTRACTION TO NYC: "I chose Columbia because it has a great group of economists and, personally, I love New York."

MOST GRATIFYING ASPECT OF HIS NYC WORK: "Seeing our work taken seriously by policymakers. We were able to present our research on teacher certification to Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and members of his staff, and he was extremely engaged and asked great questions. I was told the next week that he was carrying around a copy of our paper and brought it up in a meeting with State Commissioner Mills."

CHALLENGE OF DOING RESEARCH ON NYC: "The greatest challenge is also the greatest advantage: its tremendous size. Size means a great amount of variation and large samples on which we can test hypotheses. On the downside, however, it can be hard to pull together a centralized and complete set of data and, even after the data is in hand, to understand all the details. I had many communications with data experts at the NYC Department of Education to figure out the right way to analyze all of the information we'd collected."

WHAT'S NEXT: "We are following up on the work just published by continuing to ask whether administrators can select better teachers at the time of hire. Our recent study shows that basing selection on certification is probably not a good idea, but there may be positive ways to identify effective teachers. I am also looking at the impact of the city's teacher mentoring program."

WILLIAM SHARPE

POSITION: Professor of English at Barnard College

EARLY ATTRACTION TO NYC: Unlike everyone else in his small town in Western Massachusetts, he recalls, "I rooted for the Yankees, not the Red Sox." He moved to New York in 1969—as a Columbia College freshman—and has lived here ever since, spending the last 26 years in the same Morningside Heights apartment.

WORK ON NYC: His research, at the intersection of English and urban studies, has often focused on representations of New York City in art and literature—the topic of a course he has taught since the 1980s. Recently, he has focused on images of New York at night, and in 2008 Princeton University Press will publish his volume on that subject, encompassing everything from Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings of the skyline to Hart Crane's meditations on the subway.

STUDYING NYC AT NIGHT: "It struck me that the nighttime was one of the keys to understanding the modern city. Gas lighting and then electric lighting arrived in the 19th century, at a time when cities were growing tremendously due to migration from rural areas. That led to an opening up of the nighttime as a realm of work and entertainment, which in turn led to interest in portrayals of nighttime in painting, writing and photography."

COMPARISON TO TODAY: "In the 1840s and 1850s, most respectable people did not go out at night unless they had a very good reason. There were no restaurants or theatres. That changed around 1900. Now we've gone to the other extreme. The city seems like a 24-hour theme park. There's little night left nowadays—we can no longer see stars."

PLUG FOR CCS: "Columbia Community Service, where I've served on the board, helps fund programs in the neighborhoods surrounding Columbia. There is no overhead; 100 percent of the money goes to the organizations. It's a wonderful thing the University does."

JULIEN TEITLER

POSITION: Assistant professor at the Columbia University School of Social Work

WORK ON NYC: As director of Columbia's Social Indicators Survey Center, Teitler searches out unique data sources for the city's problems. This month he is conducting a project called Operation Shadow Count, which entails working with the city's Department of Homeless Services to count the unsheltered homeless population. On the night of Jan. 29, when DHS sends out hundreds of volunteers to count the homeless, he will send out 150 decoys as a way of statistically adjusting the figures.

WHY HE LOVES STUDYING NEW YORK: "New York City is one of the most interesting places to study how neighborhoods and cities shape people's lives, both because of its diversity and because of its role as an immigrant gateway to the United States."

CHALLENGE OF DOING RESEARCH IN NYC: "The number of languages spoken. You need language skills to obtain the trust of various populations and to adapt interventions to their particular needs."

OTHER RECENT FINDINGS: "The economic growth of the 1990s benefited the city overall, but some segments of the population were left behind—including immigrant groups, families with children, the elderly, and the very poor. Another recent finding is that New Yorkers are very resilient. While the emotional and economic costs of 9/11 were astronomical, most residents of the city bounced back pretty quickly. Perceptions of the city were as positive in 2002 as they were prior to 9/11."

MORE ON "OPERATION SHADOW COUNT": "It brings together experts in survey research and homelessness in New York City. Also, it engages graduate students in a project that directly benefits the city while giving them hands-on experience in survey methodology."

SUDHIR VENKATESH

POSITION: Professor of sociology and director of the Center for Urban Research and Policy in the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISERP)

WORK ON NYC: Venkatesh moved to New York City from Chicago. One of his earliest projects was on New York's underground economy during the Giuliani administration. Another project has involved looking at the social identity of New York's leisure class. Since last year Venkatesh has been directing the Charles H. Revson Fellowship Program, which offers local urban leaders a chance for a mid-career, nine-month retreat to Columbia, where they take courses that suit their interests.

WHY HE LOVES NYC: "It's allowed me to try things I could not have done had I stayed in the Midwest. I just did a documentary film and a fictional film. Also, this city constantly encourages you to get out of the ivory tower. Major philanthropists are here. A lot of important social policy is made here. The publishing industry is here. You can have an impact and a voice and really get your ideas out."

CHALLENGE OF DOING RESEARCH ON NYC: "As big as Chicago was, it is essentially a small town. It's very difficult to get the feeling that you're grasping New York City's essence. This place exceeds your fondest caricatures. But New York is similar to Chicago insofar as the poor can't get work. Almost all of them had a personal crisis as they neared their late twenties. I did not do first-person field work until I moved to New York, but I was asking many of the same questions as I did when studying Chicago's urban poor."

ON THE REVSON PROGRAM: "The Revson Fellowship exemplifies Columbia's commitment to the civic needs of New York City. Since last year the program has been housed at the Institute for Social and Economic Policy Research, expanding the fellows' opportunities to engage in ongoing ISERP projects that address the challenges facing urban communities."

STAFF Q&A

OLGER C. TWYNER, III

Interviewed by Mary-Lea Cox & Dan Rivero

POSITION:

President and Executive Director, Double Discovery Center

LENGTH OF SERVICE:

8 years

COLUMBIA HISTORY:

As an M.B.A. student at Columbia Business School, Twyner helped to start up a young entrepreneurs program for neighborhood kids with money from the Milken Family Foundation.

Every so often Columbia's Double Discovery Center deserves rediscovery—or else we could be at risk of taking it for granted. Each year for more than 40 years, students in grades 7–12 have been traveling to Morningside campus for help with their homework and college preparation—help that is provided largely by Columbia College students. To qualify for the largely federally funded program, the students must be either low-income or first-generation college-bound.

The program's current leader is Olger Twyner, a former attorney and graduate of Columbia Business School. *The Record* recently spoke to him about the current state of the program, which now hosts about 1,000 junior high and high school students per year.

Q. *Can you tell us briefly about Double Discovery's origins?*

A. We were started in 1965 by two Columbia College students who wanted to be more engaged in the community and who also wanted to bring the community to Columbia—hence, Double Discovery. The students got a grant to run a demo academic enrichment program with kids over

“We help demystify what college is about, especially for kids who are the first in their families to apply.”

the summer. This pilot program turned into Upward Bound, one of the Department of Education's TRIO programs for helping low-income high school kids enter college. (It was called TRIO because there were three originally.) Today, Columbia's Double Discovery hosts two of the original TRIO programs: Upward Bound and Talent Search.

Q. *What is the difference between the two programs?*

A. I like to think of Upward Bound as *prix fixe*, and Talent Search as *à la carte*. Upward Bound students are committed to the full menu of offerings. Talent Search students can pick and choose. They might come in just for SAT preparation, for instance.

Q. *Are the bulk of your volunteers still from the College?*

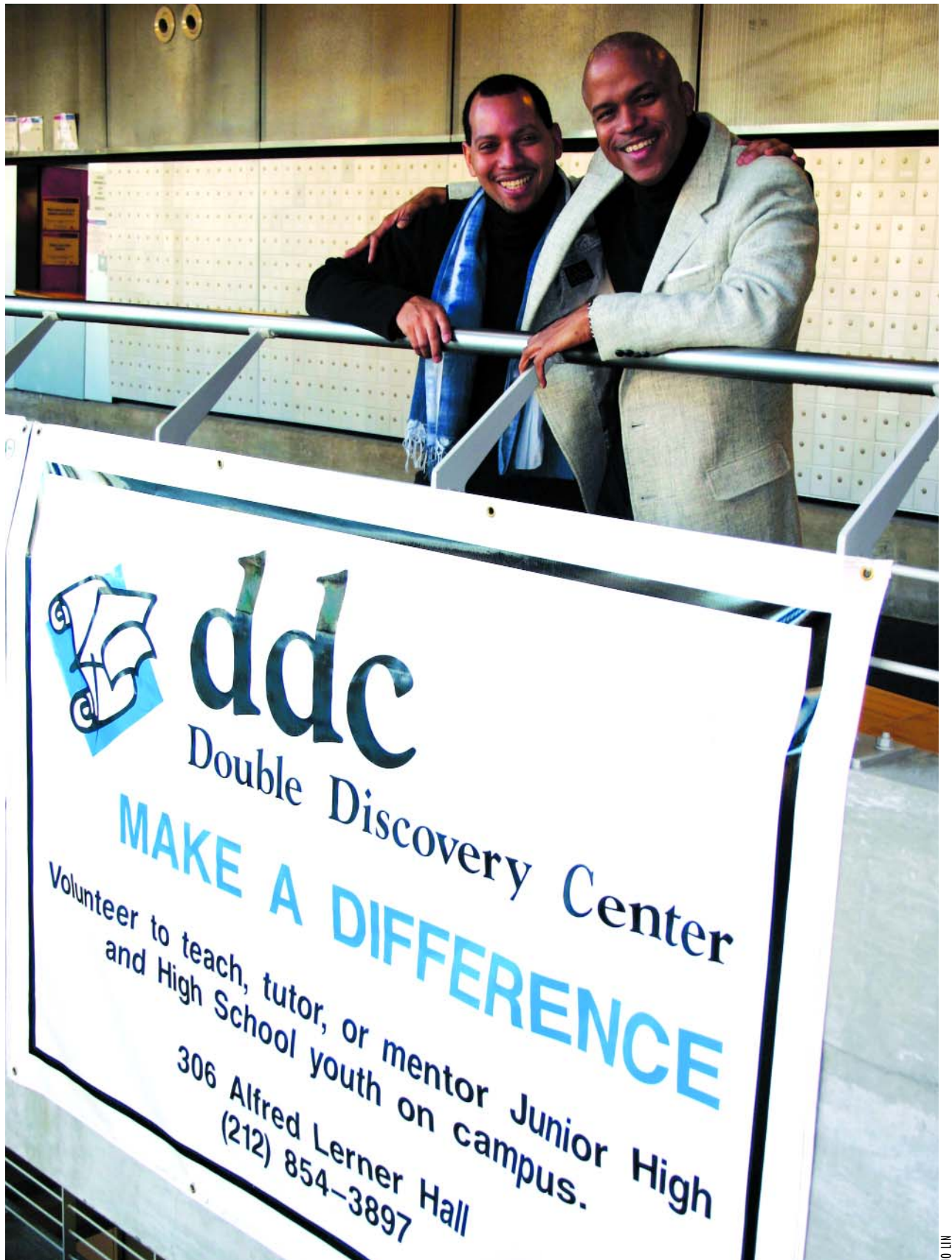
A. Yes. Columbia College students are our tutors. They come in every week and do homework help and workshops with our students. And when the Double Discovery students are on campus during our summer program, College students are our residential advisors and teaching assistants. We count heavily on them for involvement.

Q. *How easy is it to recruit Columbia College students as volunteers?*

A. There's more competition than there was in 1965. And there's lots of different ways people want to serve now—including by starting up their own volunteering efforts. Overall, we've done well keeping College kids working with our program.

Q. *You have impressive statistics. You take kids out of schools where only 30 percent are getting into college, and you have a 90 percent rate of sending kids to college.*

A. That's been true since the program started. The kids who come to us are already motivated. They commit to spend their after-school hours here and come here on Saturday mornings. Also, we don't cherry pick the best and the brightest and try to get them into Ivy League schools. We take students where they are and help them find the best college fit. If they participate in our classes and activities, they should graduate from high school and enroll in college.



The Record makes the double discovery of long-serving staff members Olger Twyner (right) and Marvin Cabrera.

Q. *Do some of them enroll in Columbia?*

A. About two or three per year enroll here. Another couple if you include Barnard and SEAS.

Q. *They must feel comfortable on Morningside campus after spending so much time here.*

A. That's as big as any of our offerings. By having them come to campus, we help to demystify what college is about. It's especially helpful for kids who are the first in their families to apply to college.

Q. *Has the program changed much in 40 years?*

A. To begin with it was more of a citywide thing, and the first-generation focus wasn't there. But over time it's become more targeted at first-generation college-bound, low-income students. We've resisted the urge to serve students who don't meet that criteria.

Q. *Do you still get most of your funding from federal grants?*

A. We get most of our money from two U.S. Department of Education grants, and we supplement that with gifts from foundations, corporations and individuals.

Q. *Is there anything you'd like faculty and staff to know about Double Discovery?*

A. They can volunteer. We get some faculty and staff, but not a whole lot. I'm not sure why—maybe some subjects like high school calculus are fresher for college students than for people on staff. Several faculty have done mini-courses for our students. They tend to become involved in ways like that.

Q. *What do you do in your spare time?*

A. Yankee baseball is my big thing. I have the Sunday Plan. I'm also into music and travel. I go to Germany a lot and participate in Deutsches Haus on campus.

DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

MARVIN D. CABRERA

WHO HE IS: Outreach Coordinator, Double Discovery Center

YEARS AT DOUBLE DISCOVERY: 14

WHAT HE DOES: Oversees all volunteer and alumni programming. A typical day involves making sure that tutoring and mentoring pairs have the materials they need. He might also be planning the next career or social gathering for Double Discovery alums. "We have our own alumni association, which holds events throughout the year."

HOW HE GOT INVOLVED: "I was a Double Discovery Center student, and the program helped me attend college through its one-on-one counseling sessions and its SAT preparation help. I first became interested in working with DDC after a negative job experience. I decided to find a job that would allow me to give back to younger generations of children."

BIGGEST FRUSTRATION: That he can't do more for the kids' families. "Sometimes I wish we could have reached the families earlier so as to have made their lives easier and availing them of more opportunities."

MOST MEMORABLE THING A STUDENT HAS SAID: "You're a part of my family."

MORE ON MARVIN: "I spend most of my free time with my wife Chaumtoli, who graduated from Columbia College in 1993, and our 2-year-old son, Zarif. Currently, I am applying to Columbia's executive M.B.A. program."