Teachers College, Columbia Launch Urban Educators to Train Teachers for NYC Schools

By James Devitt

Teachers College and Columbia University have created a program that annually prepares Columbia graduates to become New York City public middle school teachers in Washington Heights and Washington Heights. The program, Columbia Urban Educators (CUE) at Teachers College, includes a tuition-free masters degree from Teachers College, which will be funded by the New York City Board of Education, Teachers College and AmeriCorps, one of the major initiatives of the Corporation for National and Community Service. President George Rupp and the Carnegie Corporation of New York are also supporting the program.

The children of Harlem and Washington Heights both need and deserve the highest quality teachers our nation can provide,” said Teachers College President Arthur Levine. “Columbia Urban Educators at Teachers College is an effort by the faculty and students at Teachers College and Columbia University to insure that.

“The Columbia community recognizes the promise of this program and welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with New York City’s public schools,” said Columbia President George Rupp. Columbia Urban Educators at Teachers College will bring some of the University’s most notable masters to the classroom, where they will play an integral part in the education of young minds.”

CUE offers 15-25 graduating Columbia University seniors an opportunity to become fully paid and certified New York City public middle school teachers. While receiving a beginning teacher's salary and benefits, CUE associates will have mentors in their schools during the first year, and then commit to two more years teaching in District 5 and 6 of the New York City public schools.

“Columbia Urban Educators is an excellent program that affords the University the opportunity to strengthen its partnership with the Harlem educational community,” said Dr. Thelma B. Baxter, Superintendent of Community School District 5. “Columbia’s commitment to success complements District 5’s motto: ‘Excellence Expected, No Excuses Accepted.’ We are extremely fortunate to have the CUE program in our district.”

During two summers and weekends or evenings during academic years, CUE associates will take courses to complete a masters degree required to become fully certified teachers.

“Columbia Urban Educators at Teachers College will give preparation and camaraderie for students to become outstanding educators,” said Anthony Marx, a Columbia political science professor who founded the program. “But what makes this program innovative is that it gives an incentive for undergraduates to consider teaching in public schools. And, rather than throw new teachers unprepared into classrooms, we provide on-going training and mentoring. The result will be better teachers who are more likely to be retained.”

The first cohort of CUE associates began classes at Teachers College in July, receiving a summer stipend for living expenses. These associates are currently teaching in area middle schools and have found that the CUE program complements their undergraduate education.

“The CUE program has provided me a support to confidently enter the New York City Public School System,” said Martine Palomino, ‘01, who teaches at IS 143 in Washington Heights. “CUE is the perfect post-Columbia College education program. The academic endurance I developed at Columbia, coupled with my desire to educate my students creates a truly intellectual challenge. I want to help my students become better people.”

Other CUE associates noted the importance of the support network the program provides for its participants.

“I have been really happy with the support network that the CUE program provides,” said Koyuki Smith, CC’00, who also teaches at IS 143. “I am very close to the CUE teachers in my school and I hope that I speak for all of us when I say that we feel supported by each others’ friendship, both professional and personal, and that has made us more confident as teachers and more able to reach out to the rest of the staff for support.”

James Massey, CC’01, who is teaching at IS 195 in Harlem, said CUE’s “harmonious educational dynamics” reconnects and facilitates our demanding teaching environment. “The program complements my professional growth and mentoring. Without this extra helping hand, I don’t think I could have lasted my first month.”

Katie Jervis assisted in the reporting of this story.

Barnard Professor Launches Three E-seminars on the Power of Nonviolence

By Lauren Marshall

Like most professors, Dennis Dalton enjoys talking about his subject. Dalton, a political science professor at Barnard College, has studied the non-violence movement of the 20th century—even witnessed and participated in a few—and will gladly discuss his research with a smile, he’ll explain Gandhi’s political philosophy while pulling book after book from the shelves that surround his office. His testament to the non-violence theories of Mahatma Gandhi developed that eventually spread to the United States.

If the theories don’t ignite interest, the professor will turn to stories that surely will: the 2,000 Gentile women who rescued their Jewish husband from a Nazi prison camp after one week of screaming for their release.

In other words, Dalton will go to great lengths to explore the contexts of the non-violence movement of the 20th century. His research demonstrates how Gandhi was transformed into “sanyas” (a religious term that suggests renunciation of worldly life), which has since become a proven political force across cultures. And did he mention Martin Luther King, Jr., who, as the world’s most prominent example of non-violent leadership, employed Gandhian tactics during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.? In short, Dalton believes, “It is historically true that this [non-violence] is a greater power than violence.”

Key points like these, already offered in Dalton’s courses and colloquia, are now being addressed in e-seminars that examine the attributes of such non-violence movements.

The e-seminars are perhaps the most innovative way Dalton has found to communicate his findings. For those who cannot enroll in his colloquium on the non-violence movement, he now offers three different e-seminars on non-violent power in action, which became available through Columbia Interactive (http://ci.columbia.edu) in November. The learning experience, however, is very much akin to what actually goes on in Dalton’s Barnard classrooms.

Entitled “Nonviolent Power in Action,” the three specific e-seminars include “Gandhi: Discovering the Power of Nonviolence:” “An American Gandhi;” and “Gandhi’s Disciples.” The e-seminars are free to Columbia students, faculty and staff, and offer online learners access to Dalton’s lectures in an interactive, multimedia format.

Each seminar contains as many as fifteen video clips and transcripts of Dalton explaining a certain topic or idea and a number of primary resources, such as photos, biographical data, scholarly articles and excerpts from seminal works such as Dalton’s own book “Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action,” writings by Gandhi himself and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Stride Toward Freedom.

The e-seminars were developed by editor Vivian Ducat from Columbia DKV, in collaboration with Dalton. Drawing from over 20 years of experience as a film producer and director, Ducat directed documentaries and TV series for the BBC, PBS and ABC News, Ducat brought her own scholarship and research to the project. She was able to bring a number of additional resources, such as photos of King scanned from original prints she uncovered and even developed new resources such as an interactive timeline mapping the non-violence movement, which complements Dalton’s teaching.

Ducat likens the e-seminars to a TV series. “But there is so much more here than there is a film, which takes one single narrative line,” said Ducat. “With the web, there are many paths that can be taken, depending on your interest.”

While learners get access to a scholar who has spent thirty years at Barnard teaching political theory, Dalton has discovered a new way to reach and teach more people.

“The classroom is the ‘place for me to be,’” said Dalton. “While the e-seminar can’t possibly replicate the dynamics of the classroom experience, it does provide a great advantage—allowing me to reach a much wider audience than I would through the classroom alone.”

Dalton also sees the e-seminars as a tool he didn’t have before. “I’d like to be able to have these (same) references in the classroom. I’d like to be able to say to the students in my courses—for more information click here,” said Dalton.

Dalton is no stranger to an audience beyond academia. Over the years, he has received letters from hundreds of people who bought his audiotapes on political non-violence produced by Teaching Company, a company that produces and sells tapes of experts teaching school lessons. As a scholar and teacher, the questions and comments from listeners have influenced him.

In one case a number of physicists responded to a passage he discussed in his classes. “I sent a letter to the editor and requested the passage to be mailed to the class,” said Dalton.

In another case, a member of the South African public school system who was curious about his theories was asking questions about the classroom.

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“In this kind of response I want to get with the e-seminars. The more people we can catch with the message of non-violence the earlier, the better,” said Dalton.