Freedman’s Book Writing Class Seems To Hold Secret to Being Published

By Caroline Ladhani

Two more alumni from Professor Samuel Freedman’s “Book Writing” class at the Graduate School of Journalism have been awarded book contracts this fall. The weekly seminar teaches students the finer points of reporting and writing extended narrative and explains how to write a formal book proposal. Since its inception in 1991, the total number of book contracts awarded to Book Writing class alumni has surged to 24.

When asked his secret for teaching students to get their books published, Professor Freedman quips point-blank that he is willing to line-edit 30,000 words of student work per week.

“I think the way people learn is how to write is being stringently edited,” he said, “and if you’re not willing to do that work as an editor, you can’t really bring people along.”

Students from the spring 2002 semester are the latest successes—Thai Jones for “A Radical Line” and Holley Bishop for “Robbing the Bees,” both to be published by Free Press, an imprint of Simon & Schuster. They join a distinguished group of alumni authors, including two who have dropped the idea, because I didn’t want it to be ‘pretend play,’” he said.

Freedman said he can’t promise every student will get published of course, especially since he cannot dictate what the marketplace will be. But in the few years, he said, “the pace of being picked up has increased.”

Even for those students whose books will not get published, each walks away knowing what it will take to do so.

Freedman said the most important messages he tries to convey to students is the importance of knowing narrative structure, how absolute control of the tone is essential to success, and that reporting drives writing.

“Writing well has a lot to do with reporting well,” he said.

Serrano Scholars Meet Secretary of State Powell

Nine School of General Studies (GS) students landed a visit with Secretary of State Colin Powell during a recent visit to Washington D.C. The students, all part of the Serrano Scholars Program, met with state department officials to gain insight into careers in the Foreign Service. During their meeting, Secretary Powell emphasized the need for increased diversity in government positions, and praised the students for their academic success at Columbia.

The Serrano Scholars Program, named after Congressman Jose Serrano who was instrumental in conceiving the program, prepares students for careers in the area of international affairs and national security, and is administered through a partnership with Hostos Community College, GS and Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

University Senate Debates Doctorates

University senate debates doctorates (Continued from Page 7)

pediatrician, said he could support the DrNP if its graduates were taking the same licensing exams as MDs and Doctors of Osteopathy.

Sen. Michael Shelanski (Ten., HS), chairman of Pathology, said he could attest to the quality of the primary care provided by nurses in advanced practice, both in a clinical study he had co-directed and as president of the medical board that had approved admitting privileges for nursing faculty. He said the DrNP could help keep the best nurses in the profession and involved with patients, is an experiment worth trying. Nursing School Dean Mary Mundinger said patients need the DrNP because they have a right to know which of the more than three million nurses in this country are the most qualified. She added that other nursing schools are looking to Columbia to take the lead, as it has with other innovations in nursing practice.

Executive Vice President for Health Sciences Gerald Fischbach, who had endorsed the DrNP at the previous meeting, said that two years ago the medical school could not be accredited if fewer than 15 percent of its students were going into primary care. Today this fraction is below 5 percent. “It sounds to me like there’s agreement that a degree-granting program might be warranted,” he added. “I am not going to recommend one way or another, as to whether this program fits the bill. But I think that’s where the debate should be.”

President Bollinger concluded the discussion with a call for a statement of standards for doctoral degrees—either a single set, a few paradigms for different types of fields, or separate standards for every field—as part of the preparation of the new programs for possible Trustee consideration.

Scrutiny of the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) was less intense. Mess-Salentijn said it is a new degree, but one already established by a national accrediting group, to replace the master’s degree in physical therapy entirely. For its own version of the degree, the Columbia program has overhauled its curriculum, as a three-year (eight-semester) course of graduate study adding substantial content beyond the master’s degree. President Risa Gitnick offered statistics showing that Columbia’s DPT exceeds the doctoral standards set by the accrediting group. She said approval of the degree is a matter of some urgency, since enrollments in schools that don’t offer it will plummet.

The two doctorates will be back, possibly for action, at the next meeting on December 13. Anyone with a CUID is welcome, at the Schapiro Engineering Auditorium at 1:15 pm. More information, including meeting documents, is available on the web at www.columbia.edu/cu/senate.