From City Hall to Lecture Hall

Columbia's New York Identity

By Dan Rivero

When he led Columbia from what is now midtown Manhattan to a new campus on Morningside Heights in 1897, University President Seth Low said, "I count it as a matter of no little moment that here, in its new home, Columbia cannot escape the observation of the city, nor can the city escape from it. The University cannot be indifferent to what is going on in the great city of which it is a part."

More than a century later, there is an extraordinary breadth and depth to the ways in which the University—through the work of its students, faculty, alumni and staff—and New York City affect and reflect one another.

Through community partnerships and services programs, employment opportunities and economic impact, basic and applied research, intellectual and cultural contributions, Columbia and New York are woven together into the fabric of both academic and urban life.

Columbia’s identity has been shaped by being in the City of New York. And much of New York’s history has been shaped by Columbia. It was a Columbia graduate who first proposed that New York streets be divided into 155 streets and 12 avenues; a Columbia alumnus who engineered New York’s subway system; and a Columbia dean who designed the city’s sewer system.

Through economic peaks and valleys of recent decades, higher education has continued to grow and reflect one another. When the Studio Museum in Harlem needed an artistic technique. Douglas presented his lecture, titled “Inconsolable Memories,” to an enthusiastic audience that brought together Columbia’s M.F.A. program and the city’s cultural scene.

By Mary Lee Cox

Former Mayor David Dinkins and former mayoral advisor Ester Fuchs (above) have moved from City Hall to Morningside Heights, but that hasn’t stopped them from serving the city they love. Their latest effort is a collaboration with the New York Immigration Coalition and Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) on public service including Dinkins’ term as New York City’s 106th mayor and Fuchs’ work as special advisor to Mayor Bloomberg for governance and strategic planning.

At Columbia, they use their hands-on experience to inspire students at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). Fuchs, a professor of political science at Barnard College for 20 years and chair of Columbia’s Urban Studies Program before taking leave to work for Mayor Bloomberg, teaches courses on urban politics and policy. This past semester she led a workshop in which students assisted the task force for the city’s new Comprehensive Neighborhood Economic Development initiative, which is charged with developing five-year investment plans for the city’s low-income communities. The students did the baseline work for expanding the initiative into Harlem and the South Bronx.

Dinkins teaches public policy and has sponsored an annual forum at SIPA for the past dozen years to encourage a dialogue between academics and practitioners on major challenges facing cities. He also plays a role in fostering student diversity at Columbia. Next month, for instance, he will invite undergraduates from Hunter College, Brooklyn College and Queens College to his home to gauge their interest in participating in Columbia University Medical School’s summer program for minority students who aspire to be physicians and research scientists.

Community Lecture

Studio Museum in Harlem Comes to Low

By Dan Rivero

When the Studio Museum in Harlem needed construction done on its auditorium, it asked Columbia for some neighborly assistance. Could Columbia, at the last minute, host a lecture by the museum’s latest exhibiting artist? The answer was yes.

Canadian multimedia artist Stan Douglas—hero to many of the University’s visual arts protégés as well as to those who are interested in multimedia racial narratives—the only question was which room would best accommodate the crowd that was sure to appear. On Jan. 9 in Low Library's Faculty Room, Douglas presented his lecture, titled "Incredible Memories," to an enthusiastic audience that brought together Columbia’s MFA students and local community residents.

"Although school is still out of session, more than half of the 50 students in the Visual Arts MFA program made the effort to attend the lecture," said one of them, Anne Shaw.

They were attracted by the rare opportunity of hearing Douglas dissect his videography, using both movie clips and slides of his photographs. Following the lecture, the students bombarded Douglas with questions about his artistic technique.
impressed. “I’ve visited other universities,” she said, “but Columbia is on a whole different level.”

More minorities to join the foreign service. Not everyone on the Jan. 9 tour plans to apply to the program, but one potential applicant, Crystal Brooks, was impressed. “I visited other universities,” she said, “but Columbia is on a whole different level.”

Hoping to enter the realm of academia, six graduates of Hostos Community College in the Bronx toured the Morningside campus on a crisp afternoon in January. They were here to attend an information session on the Serrano Scholars Program, a partnership among Hostos (part of the City University of New York system), Columbia’s School of General Studies, and its School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). The scholarship provides graduates of Hostos with the opportunity to earn an undergraduate degree at General Studies followed by a chance to enroll in SIPA for a master’s of international affairs or public administration. The program is named in honor of Bronx Congressman José Serrano, who was instrumental in setting it up as a way of encouraging more minorities to join the foreign service. Not everyone on the Jan. 9 tour plans to apply to the program, but one potential applicant, Crystal Brooks, was impressed. “I visited other universities,” she said, “but Columbia is on a whole different level.”

FIRST STEPS TO THE SERRANO SCHOLARSHIP

Why does the name include “…in the City of New York?”

Dear Alma’s Owl,

How did Columbia pick up its present name: “Columbia University in the City of New York”? Since the campus has always been in the city, isn’t the name redundant?

— Etymologist-Wannabe

Dear What’s-in-a-Name,

Our esteemed institution began life in 1742 under King George II and was named King’s College. Not long after, the colonies declared their independence, and the school suspended instruction. It reopened in 1784 as Columbia College—a name that demonstrated its commitment to the new republic. The 1784 charter granted the college the responsibility for overseeing higher education throughout New York State. But when out-of-town trustees showed little interest in attending meetings, the college’s New York City friends, including Alexander Hamilton, secured a revision in 1787 changing the name to “Columbia College in the City of New York.”

For a while, this name change meant that the college appointed trustees who were city residents, a practice that continued into the 1920s. But as New York began to develop into a thriving metropolis, the city of New York” tag came to mean something more: namely, a commitment to playing a part in the city’s lifeblood (something made easier by the college’s move to 96th St., near Madison Ave., in 1857). William Barclay Parsons, for instance, a graduate of the School of Mines, served as chief engineer for the city’s first subway.

— Etymology-Wannabe

LARRY DAIS, assistant vice president in the Office of Government and Community Affairs, retired this month after 37 years of service. Before his work in community affairs, Dais directed Columbia’s Double Discovery Center, which helps to motivate local minority students to apply to college and develop careers. During his tenure at Columbia, Dais served the city in various capacities, including chairing the Abyssynian Development Corporation and serving on the boards of the Harlem Congregation for Community Improvement, the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce, and the New York Urban League. He has also chaired the New York Urban League Whitney M. Young Football Classic, the largest African American athletic event in the Northeast. He has won many awards for his civic service. Dais will continue working for the University as a consultant to the athletics department on strengthening its community outreach programs.

Ask Alma’s Owl

By the time Seth Low came on board as president in the late 1800s, the stage was set for Columbia to become a great university in one of the world’s greatest cities. Another name change, along the move to Morningside Heights, was in order. From then on, the institution would be known as “Columbia University in the City of New York.” Archivist Charles McKim got it. He said of his design for the Morningside campus “Columbia University will always look the city straight in the face.” From today’s perspective an urban campus would look very different and would be woven into the fabric of city life. Yet Low’s vision has proved correct. Not only has Columbia become an integral part of the city, but many Columbians have gone out and changed the city for the better—including Low himself, who resigned as president in 1901 to become mayor of New York.

Send your questions for Alma’s Owl to curecord@columbia.edu. Authors of letters we publish receive a Record mug.
Sixteen-month SLICE Certifies IT Students

F resh out of high school in June 2000, 18-year-old Alex Caamano from upper Manhattan never had the chance to think about what to do next. His father, an apartment building super, had been diagnosed with cancer, and his chemotherapy treatments prevented him from working. Alex had no choice but to take his place and become the family's breadwinner. But two nights a week he comes to Morniquad campus for courses he hopes will propel him into the world of high technology.

Alex is one in a group of 15 people from the communities around Columbia—from teenagers like him to mothers in their 40s—who have enrolled in SLICE, short for Service Learning in the Community Environment. Part of the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science’s Boxwood Gateway Learning Laboratory, SLICE is one of an array of Fu Foundation service-learning programs that engage Columbia engineering students and faculty in working to help residents of Upper Manhattan expand their technology skills.

SLICE, which graduated its first class in December 2006, offers a 16-month program of courses and certification in software engineering, Web and database design, and Java programming. Students also receive mentoring in office skills, as well as advice on how to interview with recruiters from such global high-tech companies and leading insurers as Prudential Insurance Co. of America and American International Group Inc.

“We would love to be a programmer someday, and this experience is helping me gain the knowledge to do that,” said Caamano, who completes the program this year. “With this training, I hope to become one of the best programmers out there.”

Langer added that SLICE hopes to give its students everything that it takes to land and keep a well-paying job such as building Web sites or software with credentials. “They are sufficient skills or credentials to compete once they graduate,” Langer said. “Indeed, the lab, which is the latest center to be started at the Earth Institute, brings together academic experts of different backgrounds—architecture, civil engineering, public health, and social work—to create solutions for communities that lack the resources to pay for private consultants.

“We are beginning to see real results in terms of identiying Columbia resources to address the diverse community needs that one would expect to find in a city as large and complex as New York,” said Richard Plunz, director of the lab and a professor in Columbia’s Graduate School of Architecture, Preservation and Planning.

Already the lab has forged relationships with many of the city’s boroughs. In Brooklyn, it has proposed remediation strategies for the Gowanus Canal through the Gowanus Community Development Corporation and the South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation. In Manhattan, it has worked on waste and other ecological issues in Harlem in partnership with the 125th Street Business Improvement District and City Life Is Moving Bodies, or CLIMB—a project based at Columbia’s Mailman School of Public Health. It is now exploring projects with WEACT in West Harlem and with Sustainable South Bronx.

Pluaz said that the lab’s work can be expected to assume an even higher profile as a result of Mayor Bloomberg’s recent announcement that scientists at the Earth Institute will serve as advisors for his new Office of Long-term Planning and Sustainability.

“We look forward to participating in the Mayor’s 2030 sustainability initiative and hope that as the city’s efforts evolve, our expertise can be put to good use,” said Pluaz. “This is a crucially important moment for our city’s future.”

Haitian Alum Becomes Voice of the UN

Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger believes that great universities must actively engage in the issues of globalization, and that Columbia should cultivate students who go out and change the world for the better. He recently spearheaded a success story in Michelle Montas. An award-winning journalist from Haiti who graduated from Columbia Journalism School in 1990, Montas recently agreed to serve as spokesperson for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who succeeds Kofi Annan.

Upon receiving the appointment Montas said that although she would have preferred to stay in her native Haiti fighting for human rights, she chose this way to further her cases in her home country and publicize other human rights abuses around the world.

Montas began her journalism career in Haiti in the early 1970s with her husband, Jean Dominique. Dominique ran the country’s first independent radio station, which, as Haiti’s only uncorrupted news and information source, provided a lifeline to many of its citizens.

Dominique was assasinated in 2000 for broadcast increasing sharply criticism of Jean Bertrand Aristide’s party. After her husband’s death, Montas tried to run the station on her own—a feat for which Columbia Journalism School awarded her its Maria Moors Cabot Prize for courage in journalism. But, after receiving many death threats, she was compelled to shut the station down and flee to the United States.

This is not Montas’ first time on the other side of the microphone. She was a spokesperson for the president of the UN General Assembly in 2003–2004, shortly after she arrived in New York.

The time, however, she will be facing much tougher questions about Ban’s stance on the death penalty, the situation in Darfur, and his appointments to senior UN positions.

URBAN DESIGN LAB OFFERS ADVICE ON SUSTAINING NEIGHBORHOODS

I n there are no machines, no test tube racks or other equipment in Columbia’s Urban Design Lab, it’s because the laboratory in question is New York City itself. Begun two years ago on the initiative of former Mayor David Dinkins and Earth Institute director Jeffrey Sachs, the interdisciplinary lab has the mission of providing practical assistance to community groups looking to improve and develop their neighborhoods in the face of various kinds of environmental stress.

Indeed, the lab, which is the latest center to be started at the Earth Institute, brings together academic experts of different backgrounds—architecture, civil engineering, public health, and social work—to create strategies for communities that lack the resources to pay for private consultants.

“We are beginning to see real results in terms of identifying Columbia resources to address the diverse community needs that one would expect to find in a city as large and complex as New York,” said Richard Plunz, director of the lab and a professor in Columbia’s Graduate School of Architecture, Preservation and Planning.

TALK OF THE CAMPUS

The Sustainable Gowanus Saltmarsh Proposal/Jonah Hansen

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld was discussing the need for a unified front between the United States and European allies in the war on terrorism, but Columbia students, faculty, and administrators have been closely watching the cultural and political importance of the theatre in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa.

In the 1960s, the Middle East was facing a new set of pressures. The rise of oil money and the spread of nationalism, coupled with the rise of the United States in the region, marked a new era in the Middle East, where political and cultural sentiments collided, leading to new forms of expression. This led to a new generation of filmmakers, who sought to use the power of the screen to challenge the status quo and to create new forms of cultural expression.

The question then is, how can we begin to understand these new forms of cultural expression? And how can we begin to engage with the cultural and political landscape of the Middle East?

The answer to this question is not simple. It requires a deep understanding of the historical and cultural context of the region, as well as a commitment to building relationships with filmmakers and cultural leaders in the region.

One way to begin to address these questions is through the development of new and innovative programs that support the training and development of filmmakers and cultural leaders in the region. The Sustainable Gowanus Saltmarsh Proposal provides a model for such an approach.

The Sustainable Gowanus Saltmarsh Proposal is a project that seeks to use the power of the cultural and political landscape of the Middle East to address the challenges facing the region. The project is led by a team of Columbia University faculty and students, and it is supported by a range of partners, including the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the United Nations Development Programme.

The Sustainable Gowanus Saltmarsh Proposal is a model for how to engage with the cultural and political landscape of the Middle East. It is a model that can be replicated in other regions, and it can be used to create new forms of cultural expression that can challenge the status quo and create new forms of cultural expression.

The Sustainable Gowanus Saltmarsh Proposal/Jonah Hansen

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SCRAPBOOK

Art for Youth’s Sake

The visual arts have always thrived in Harlem, and if two recent displays of creative works by the neighborhood’s youngsters are anything to go by, the next generation will be able to carry the torch even farther. On display from mid-December to early January at the Harlem School of the Arts were works by students exploring the theme of hospitality (photos 1–5). Columbia’s Office of Government and Community Affairs is actively promoting the work of the school, which for 40 years has been offering arts enrichment programs in the Hamilton Heights section of Harlem. From Jan 9–12 Government and Community Affairs hosted an exhibition of children’s artwork by another of Columbia’s neighbors, the Children’s Arts Carnival (photos 6–10), at the East Gallery in Buell Hall. The carnival provides programming in the visual arts, dance and music to young people, ages 6 to 18, in West Harlem.

University Impact

continued from page 7

More than two-thirds of Columbia employees live in New York City. And even without counting a substantial number of faculty living in University-owned housing, nearly a third of the administrative and facilities staff live in Harlem, Washington Heights and other upper Manhattan neighborhoods.

Columbia also provides a significant amount of community service in partnership with community groups and public agencies. Since 1989, Columbia’s Community Impact (CI) has grown into its largest student service organization and has become a primary interface between the University and the Morningside Heights and Harlem communities. CI consists of a dedicated corps of more than 950 student volunteers participating in 25 community service programs, which serve more than 8,000 people each year. Its Jobs and Education Empowerment Project, for example, has provided hundreds of GED and English as a Second Language (ESL) workshops for the Harlem residents of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone.

Community Impact is one of many ways students and faculty from across the University work to improve the quality of life in upper Manhattan and other New York neighborhoods. From targeted research on asthma, HIV/AIDS, and obesity to free dental and vision clinics for the uninsured, the Mailman School of Public Health is a leader in community health and education. Students from Columbia Law School serve local tenants in free legal clinics. Students and faculty from Columbia Business School volunteer to enhance local entrepreneurship and socially responsible business. At Teachers College, students work as assistants in hundreds of city schools while earning their credentials.

President Bollinger points out that Columbia gains immeasurably from the life of the city and also contributes to it. “We are a city that has always run on big ideas and that has always provided an engine of economic opportunity,” Bollinger recently wrote in the New York Daily News. “Having growing research universities of the first rank that are a steady source of both good jobs and great minds is clearly one part of what it will mean for New York to maintain that kind of leadership.”

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

HINT: They’re not test tubes. First to e-mail us the right answer receives a RECORD mug.

ANSWER TO LAST CHALLENGE: Putting up the Christmas tree on Low Plaza (1961). No winners.

Stan Douglas

continued from page 4

“In terms of specific elements about Stan’s work, I was especially intrigued by how his film and video work rework narrative conventions,” Shaw explained. “I was curious about all the possible motivations behind his structural experiments.”

Douglas’ exhibit, also titled “Inconsolable Memories,” displays the body of work he created after his recent sojourns to Cuba. Its centerpiece is a 16 mm film shot in 1968, Memories del Subdesarrollo (Memories of Under-development). In essence, he remakes Gutiérrez Alca’s film by combining and recombining documentary and fictional footage. The effect is to unravel the experience of watching film by confronting the viewer with probing questions about the nature of time.

The exhibit also features Douglas’ photos of Havana’s recycled urban architecture—villas that are now schools, banks that are now motorcycle lots. Immaculate and technically flawless, the prints are in stark contrast to the ruin and entropy they describe. The Studio Museum, located on 125th Street between Lenox Avenue and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Blvd., has an ongoing relationship with Columbia and is one of the many museums that take part in the Passport to New York program. The program offers all current CU students free access to 27 museums and cultural centers citywide. Shaw said she plans on taking advantage of her passport to visit the Douglas exhibit, which closes on March 18.
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.

HILARY BALLON
POSITION: Professor of art history and director of Art Humanities
WORK ON NYC: Ballon, an architectural his- torian whose interests range from the Paris of Henri IV to the high-rises 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 plan- ning goals. The book also highlights the phys- ical 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 decen- tralization. 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 institu- tions, 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 MUSES: “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 superblocks, 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 pro- fessor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology (EEB)
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 co-ordinated 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 organiza- tions. Last summer he offered the Earth Institute’s first-ever course for local high school students on restoration ecology in New York City.
WHAT DID HE WANT TO TELL HIS URBAN ECOLOGY STUDENTS: “When I was still a PhD 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 conserva- tion 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 ecosystems—the perfect conditions for restora- tion ecology. The restoration of marshland in Jamaica Bay, Queens, is one of the most ambi- tious restoration ecology projects happening in the world today, and 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 site 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: Associate professor of 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 stud- ied the factors—including poverty and lan- guage barriers—that prevent women in those neighborhoods from taking steps to avoid heart disease.
WHAT’S THE NEED: “Women in Washington Heights and Inwood are at particular risk for cardio- vascular disease and stroke. About 23 per- cent of the general population in this country has metabolic syndrome, a combination of factors that indicate a high risk of cardiovascu- lar 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 com- peting issues in their lives. Many older women continue to bear responsibility for their fami- lies, and it’s a real challenge to get them to attend classes.”
IDEA FOR NYC: “In the subways there’s infor- mation 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 edu- cate 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 and director of 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 Salvador,” 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-Aindsay Museum in Kansas City, where he will open this year—while becoming one of the best-known members of Columbia’s architec- ture 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: “We’re in a building boom equal to the 1930s, when all the sky- scrapers 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 from the West Village to Chelsea—is now becoming a reality. The High Line project will transform a disused railroad bed into a linear park linking the West Village to the Far West Side. And I may get to do a mixed-use build- ing 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 JOSEPH
POSITION: Instructor of art and acting chair of the School of Art
ONLY IN NEW YORK: “My family is Pan- therist, a prisoner-at- wright and a poet. His connection to the city is long and connected to a sense of community and artistic practice, expression, literary and Harlem Screenwriting gramms draw heavily on Harlem. LATEST WORKS: As in the hip hop artist Tyfae Upac and his family- mother Aience in 1968, the harlem chapter of the OB HARLEM: “It grew during the 1960s, when the panthers and revolutionaries were a part of the arts and culture in Harlem. Path to Columbia: Focus Films recommen- ded that was 10 years ago, best feature of the community: the Division and the willingness of students to get involved now co-sponsors the Writer’s Program, giving students from the community into the community into the emerging youth programs, inc- ing, I don’t feel the same idea for Nyc: “Send your ideas you can take them to something that will enrich the city’s youth. They’re our...
In a previous incarnation, Professor Jonah Rockoff was a Black Leavenworth, a playwriting professor at the Harlem Arts Alliance, which he founded in 1994. He met Tapscott's mentor, who was a Black woman, at a Harlem arts space where he was a volunteer. They started a mentoring program that has been going strong ever since.

**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.

**ATTENTION 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, 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 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."

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**WILLIAM SHARPE**

**POSITION:** Professor of English at Barnard College

**EARLY ATRACTION 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 36 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 the 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 night-time 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."

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**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 right of Jan. 29, when DHS sends out hundreds of volunteers to count the homeless, he will send out 150 decays 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 encourages graduate students in a project that directly benefits the city while giving them hands-on experience in survey methodology."

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**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 couldn't 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:** "So 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 REVISION 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."
E very 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 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 a prequel and Talent Search as a sequel. Upward Bound students are coming into the pipeline 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, Columbia 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. 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 discovery alums. “We have our own alumni association, which holds events throughout the year.”

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.

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