EILEEN BARROSO

CAMPUS TALK
Columbia on the high seas | 3

UPDATE
Woodbridge Hall goes green | 7

SCRAPBOOK
Columbia Community Outreach | 8

Seeking the Work-Life Balance

By Dan Rivero

Carol Hoffman’s appointment as Columbia’s first-ever associate provost and director of work-life signals a new era for the University’s family-friendly policies, programs, benefits and services.

Hoffman, a trained clinical social worker and a native New Yorker, comes to the University from the San Francisco Bay Area. She spent 20 of her 35 years on the West Coast at UC Berkeley, initiating and administering the employee assistance program and work-life office. At Columbia, she will be using her expertise to help faculty and staff address the sometimes conflicting responsibilities of career and family life.

She reports to both Provost Alan Brinkley and Vice President of Human Resources Cindy Durning, because her job will support the needs of faculty and staff alike.

“Hiring Carol and opening our first work-life office is such an exciting and important step for Columbia,” said Durning, who praised Hoffman as the best work-life officer in the country.

Hoffman is clear that her approach to work-life is to address issues from birth to death.

A PERFECT MESS

By Bridget O’Hara

Eric Abrahamson, a professor of management at Columbia Business School whose specialty is organizational theory and change, grew tired of hearing the same refrain when visitors took in the sheer magnitude of the mess in his office: piles and piles of papers, books sliding across the shelves, telephone messages stacked up. “Shouldn’t you be more organized?” they asked.

The question inspired him to write an academic paper on mess. “It started as a bit of a joke, and it turned out to be really fascinating,” he says. While there are hundreds of academic studies about organizational theory and behavior, there are very few about the lack of organization, or mess. Abrahamson’s 2002 paper, “Deorganization Theory and Disorganizational Behavior: Towards an Ecology of Messes,” drew the counternintuitive conclusion that messy systems are frequently more efficient than those that are highly organized.

Abrahamson defined mess as “a disorderly accumulation of varied entities.” (He even came up with an equation to represent mess, pictured above.) In layman’s terms, mess is “the failure to live up to one’s idealized conception of order,” he says. This refers not merely to messy desks and offices—the most obvious way most people confront mess—but to entire companies, organizations and even governments.

“People say order is better; I don’t necessar-ily think so,” Abrahamson says, and not just because mess may be his default mode. “In terms of time, reorganizations are prone to fail-

Padma Desai’s Russian Retrospective

By Adam Price

At a time when the threat of nuclear Armageddon loomed large, many young scholars took up Soviet studies because they hoped to understand and help defeat the communist foe. Ronald Reagan would later dub “the Evil Empire.”

But for Columbia economist Padma Desai, a professor of comparative economic systems and director of the Center for Transition Economics, it was always about something more. Desai was a precocious teenager, growing up on the West Coast of India, when she discovered Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment.

“When you are only 13 years of age and read its themes of sin and redemption, suffering and murder, it touches you to the core,” she said. “I was so bowled over, I said ‘I have got to read this in the original Russian.’”

Desai plunged into Russian (and economics) as soon as she arrived at Harvard in 1955, and today is a leading authority on the former Soviet Union and Russia, penning a number of books and widely read articles. In 1995, she served as a U.S. Treasury advisor to the Russian Finance Ministry.

On April 26 and 27, scholars from around the world gathered on campus for a scientific conference held in her honor. Guests included former Russian Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, Nobel Prize-winning economists, former finance minister and chair of Russia’s central bank Sergey Dubinin and Jack Matlock, former U.S. ambassador to Russia.

The conference title, “Russia: Soviet Past, Present Performance and Future Prospects,” seemed especially timely due to the recent death of former President Boris Yeltsin.

Desai knew Yeltsin personally as well as many of the others involved in post-Soviet Russia as it shifted to a freer market. Her latest book, Conversations on Russia: Reform from Yeltsin to Putin, provides interviews with many of them.

Yeltsin’s legacy, she says, “on the whole is positive.” He planted the liberal idea in the land of Lenin and Stalin. And in my view, history...
TRIUMPH ON THE GREEN

Since the inaugural Ivy League Women’s Golf Championship in 1997, the title has been passed between the same two teams—the powerhouses of Yale and Princeton. But on April 22, the Lions recorded a long-awaited upset and defeated second-place Princeton by 10 strokes for the win. In just its fourth season as a varsity team, Columbia posted a three-day winning total of 933. The Lions earned three of the top five spots, including an individual title for Sara Ovadia (CC’09), who edged out teammate Stevy Loy (CC’10) by four strokes. Carly Nathanson (CC’09) finished fifth. By virtue of their top-seven finishes, Ovadia, Loy and Nathansin each earned All-Ivy League distinction.

Neither Here Nor There.

Dear Alma’s Owl,

Recently a friend suggested we meet at the Van Am. Not knowing where that was, I suggested in front of Hamilton Hall. But where is the Van Am?

—Hiding Behind Hamilton

Dear Hamilton Hugger,

The Van Am Quadrangle is the area in front of Hamilton Hall stretching to John Jay Hall and bordered by Hartley and Wallach (nee Livingston) to the east and South Field to the west. I suspect, however, that your friend meant the Van Am Memorial for which the quad is named. The memorial is the small stone gazebo in front of the Taint Gate.

(By the way, if you’re curious about the name of the gate between Hartley and Wallach, it’s called the Taint Gate because “Taint part of Wallach.”)

The memorial is dedicated to John Howard Van Amringe, a Columbia through and through. A graduate of the class of 1860, he was a professor of mathematics in the School of Mines from 1865 to 1910, and a beloved dean of the College from 1896 to 1910. He also was president of the University Club and chair of the Alumni Council. Van Amringe defended his alma mater in an 1889 speech, when then-Columbia President Frederick A.P. Brunner proposed eliminating the College (then called School of Arts) in favor of more professional schools with greater academic rigor. As Columbia began to develop into a modern university with graduate and professional schools, it was Van Amringe who reminded the Trustees that the University was there to make men, not merely professional men.

After his death in 1915, a group of 25 alumni from the College and the School of Mines donated the funds for what is today called the Van Am. The memorial, designed by McKim Mead & White, the architectural firm for the original Morris Algus campus, was dedicated at the commencement ceremonies of 1918. Ever since, Van Amringe’s bust has been a familiar sight. One year, Van Amringe’s bust appears to have been lifted, and in its place appeared a bust of Mark Van Doren, a renowned scholar of the art of writing literature.

—The Van Am

THE IVY LEAGUE

AWARDS

The Academic Awards of the Ivy League are bestowed annually by the Academic Awards Committee of the Ivy League...
TALK OF THE CAMPUS

Action! CU Film Festival Begins

By Dan Rivero

Next stop, Sundance, Cannes and Tribeca.

Before they hit the film festival circuit, short films by Columbia students will have their premiere at the School of the Arts (SoA) film festival which starts April 30.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Columbia University Film Festival will showcase 40 short films as well as readings for 15 screenplays, the thesis work from SoA's advanced M.F.A. students. The festival will run in New York until May 10 and then travel to Los Angeles for the West Coast leg June 6–8.

Shot around the world using techniques from 15mm film to the latest digital technologies, this year's work reflects the film division's focus on narrative storytelling as filtered through the vision of each student filmmaker. The film division is building on Columbia's success at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival, where Columbia students and alumni were invited to screen a record-breaking 20 films and walked away with top prizes, notably the Grand Jury Prize for best dramatic film, the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award, and the Audience Award for best documentary.

The judges at this year's Sundance Film Festival were impressed not only by the quality of our Columbia films but by their variety," said Dan Kleinman, acting dean of SoA. "Columbia's entries at Sundance represented 10 percent of the short films invited to show there. We don't have a 'house style' at Columbia, and because of this, there's no predicting what our students will come up with. We are proud of this diversity and proud to be known as the best single source for short films in America.

The judges for the CU Film Festival have viewed the films twice and have voted on the six that will be featured at the May 10 faculty selects screening at Symphony Space. Other awards are also selected by sponsors, students, and audience members.

The films will screen at the IFC Center, 323 Sixth Ave., from April 30 to May 3. The screenplay readings will take place at the McGraw Hill Theater, 1221 Sixth Ave., on May 7, and the festival will culminate with awards and screenings of the winning films at Symphony Space, on Broadway and 95th St., on May 10.

For tickets, times, and information about the screenings and readings, please visit the festival Web site at www.arts.columbia.edu.

Columbia's Own Constant Gardener

By Melanie A. Farmer

Before landscape designer Lynden Miller first dug her hands into the soil at Columbia University's Morningside Heights campus, the hedges were unkempt and the lawns were a sea of mud and dust.

Now, 10 years later, the campus is far more verdant and beautiful, said Miller, who is on the program's advisory board, and because of this, there's no predicting what our students will come up with. We are proud of this diversity and proud to be known as the best single source for short films in America.

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Chaos

... Just as there are all kinds of offices. To illustrate mess, The Record undertook a tour of some very unscientific offices. Academia being what it is, some messy offices are meant to be mess. Some are occupied by people who can find anything, and some are occupied by people who can’t find anything. One was occupied by a professor who was so high on every available surface with his coffee table, that the table had to be moved out of the way. And, conversely, just because a person’s office is messy, it doesn’t mean the occupant is not able to provide some of the best work at the university.

Assistant Professor Karen Duff, of the Department of Pathology, apologizes for her neat office, but points out that she hasn’t finished unpacking since joining Columbia University Medical Center last October. Indeed, her shelves still contain moving boxes and her office couch had just arrived. Now with the Taub Institute for Research on Alzheimer’s Disease and the Aging Brain, she also has a stuffed mouse or two perched on her window sill, a reference to her groundbreaking research devising a method for inserting human disease-causing genes into mice. She received the prestigious Potamkin Prize for her research into Alzheimer’s, but a testament to her prospects for future awards may be found in the gift from her former colleagues that hangs behind her desk—a Nobel medallion, made of chocolate.

University Professor Richard Axel, another Nobel Prize winner, works in an office with a floor-to-ceiling whiteboard—every inch of which is covered in equations. Although he has a sleek glass desk at one end of the office, “I never use it,” he said. Rather, he sits at the long, leather sofa, with his computer and stacks of papers in front of him crowding a glass coffee table. Other papers and his briefcase are beside him on the couch.

Annette Insdorf, a professor of film at the School of Arts, shares an office with a colleague, but it’s her end and her office mate’s begin. She’s been in here this up I’d go bonkers,” she said. “What a mess!”

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Theory

There are all kinds of minds, and Eric Abrahamson’s theory of took its own totally random survey of faculty members’ offices. His was tidy ones were hard to find anything in it. "Not at all," he said, and his efforts to keep things straight, he said, by adding somewhere. "On the other hand, there is a certain rediscover what you couldn’t find," he said.

University Professor Eric Kandel says the tidiness of his surroundings has little to do with any sense of orderliness. His office has a panoramic view of the Hudson River and the George Washington Bridge. "If you have a lot of space, it’s less cluttered," he said. Kandel, who won the 2000 Nobel Prize in Medicine, added "scientists spend so much time at work. Unless you make it attractive for yourself and others, you don’t enjoy it.”

Robert G. O’Meally is the Zora Neale Hurston Professor of English and Comparative Literature and the head of the Center for Jazz Studies. That means he has two offices, but he uses the one on the Morningside campus (pictured here) to meet with students and get most of his work done. "I write here," he said, apologizing for the pile-up of books on a chair, saying they’re out because he was trying to get organized.

University Professor Eileen Barroso of the Arts and director of undergraduate film studies has been hard to distinguish where her piles of papers are. Her current office for 14 years. "If I had to clean..."
TUESDAY
May 3

**Seminar**

**Statistics Lecture**

The Samuel Rudin Visiting Professorship Lectures on "Thick Goodness for Gestalt: Defining the Operational Intuition" by David Shea.

**Organized Information Session**

Small group information sessions cover important details about the School of General Statistics.

**Undergraduate Information Session**

Small group information sessions cover important details about the School of General Statistics.

**Lecture**

Join us for the opening of the 2004–2005 Elihu Rose Fellowship, discussing newspapers with presentations by Earth Interdisciplinary Scholarship.

Go online! Complete event listings: www.calendar.columbia.edu

**FRIDAY
May 4

**Friday Workshops**

Worldwide Workshops on Networking and Teaching in Latin America and the U.S.

**ILAS Symposium**

ILAS Symposium Historians from Latin America and the U.S. present: "Communist Vocabularies, Different Political Histories on 19th Century Latin America."

**CBM Players**

At Noon, University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching presents "Science Advising Faculty," an examination of the faculty mentoring process. Wine and cheese reception to follow. 4:00 p.m. University Club, Long Musser Room 205, Tea and cookies provided. www.earth.columbia.edu.

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WOODBRIDGE TO BECOME 1ST “GREEN” DORM
By Barbara King Lord

Come fall, perhaps Woodbridge Hall should be called Greenbridge after a summer facelift—Columbia’s first dormitory renovation. The biofuel heating oil will be derived from organic matter in part rather than solely from petroleum, says Nida Mesa, director of Environmental Stewardship. The renovation will go a long way towards decreasing the greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions of Woodbridge, and should save money over the long run. And what we learn at Woodbridge, we can apply to other residence halls here.

Wright says there are other green initiatives in play at Woodbridge that will be part of the project’s Phase II, scheduled for 2008. They include painting a white reflective roof and adding windows when this system has been installed in conjunction with a new boiler and new windows, we’ve found that fuel consumption has dropped between 12 and 20 percent,” says Nida Mesa, assistant vice president for Residential and Commercial Operations.

Replacing the old boiler with one that can burn biofuel “is a big step forward in terms of using less environmentally intrusive products,” Wright says. While some questions remain regarding the use of biofuel, the hope is that by the end of this year or early in 2008 the Woodbridge boiler will be using some form of it. The biofuel heating oil will be derived from organic matter in part rather than solely from petroleum, says Nida Mesa, director of Environmental Stewardship. The renovations will go a long way towards decreasing the greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions of Woodbridge, and should save money over the long run. And what we learn at Woodbridge, we can apply to other residence halls here.

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The 50th annual Columbia Community Outreach (COC) Day was held this year on April 14. Founded in 1967 by students Allen By (CC’79) and Charlie Leykam (CC’79), COC is a community service initiative that seeks to bring together the Columbia community to raise awareness about volunteerism and to form mutually beneficial relationships with the Harlem and Morningside Heights communities. This year, the keynote speakers were Congresswoman Charles B. Rangel and City Councilwomen Melissa Mark-Viverito (CC’98). Volunteers worked on various service projects throughout New York City.

**Community Impact Auction**

Community Impact held its annual auction on April 11 at the Museum of Arts & Design. "The Make A Difference" auction was Goldman Sachs Managing Director Gregg A. Granade’s (SEAS’91). The award to Granade (center) was presented by SEAS Dean Zvi Galil (left) and Community Impact’s Executive Director Sonia Renee (right). As an undergraduate at SEAS, Granade was a big brother in what is now Community Impact’s Big Simple mentoring program. He was also a Jackie Robinson scholar at Columbia, an organization on whose Board of Directors he now serves.

**Law Professor Honored**

Patricia Williams (center), the James I. Dooh Professor of Law at Columbia Law School, received the 2007 Constance Baker Motley Award for lifetime achievement by the Association of Black Women Attorneys. At a March 24 gala celebrating the association's 30-year heritage, Williams was honored for her scholarship on race and gender. Walter Law (CL’61), brake dare gender and race barriers as the first African American woman elected to the New York State Senate in 1844 and to the Manhattan borough presidency in 1865.

**Work-Life**

Refine its benefits package and other offerings to make Columbia as competitive as possible. Other universities are recognizing the significance of the work-life movement, in what Inside Higher Ed recently labeled the "family-friendly competition." Within the last month, Harvard, Stanford, and Yale announced significant improvements to support the work-life balance of faculty and staff, such as providing vouchers and grants, and building more local child care centers to accommodate new parents.

Fresly moved into her Low Library office, Hoffman hopes to build on existing Columbia policies and programs to assure its employees that it is possible to mix parenthood or other family obligations and careers in higher education. For example, the University is looking into expanding its child care network, adding more lactation rooms on campus, adding a national back-up care program for family members of any age and recruiting a housing counselor.

If Hoffman's time at Berkeley is any indication of what she can accomplish, the next frontier for family benefits at Columbia is in able hands. In addition to developing child and elder care programs, Hoffman also helped to establish a broad-based plan for responding to faculty, staff and student deaths, and supported tenure-clock stoppage for faculty and domestic partners.

"Carol Hoffman brings many years of experience with and knowledge about work-life issues to Columbia, and we are thrilled to have her here helping us improve the quality of life of our faculty," said Provost Brinkley.

**Padma Desai**

Changes with ideas, and that was his remarkable contribution," she says. "His legacy was imperfect because he did not implant a system of laws or properly insti tute checks and balances."

Desai's academic legacy will be her studies, which employ rigorous quantitative methods and sophisticated economic models—her work during the 1980s would have increased about five to seven percent, and tried to determine at what rate technological change in various Soviet branches had declined.

In recent years, however, Desai's understanding of Russian cultural attitudes and history has allowed her to serve as a voice of reason as anti-Russian rhetoric heats up anew. She considers current president Putin a "pragmatist" rather than an ideologue of the Soviet days, and notes that Russian foreign policy has always been independent throughout history, something that is unlikely to change.

"I sense a mounting and dangerous paranoia about the re-emerging economic and military power of Russia," Mexico's former President Ernesto Zedillo wrote in a letter of tribute to Desai submitted on the occasion of the conference. "At every international meeting I attend where that paranoia is present, I find myself wishing that pertinent policymakers could be made acquainted with your work."