Financial Aid for Undergrads Expanded

By Record Staff

In a significant expansion of undergraduate financial aid, Columbia University has announced that students from families with incomes below $60,000 attending Columbia College and the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science will no longer be expected to borrow or contribute any of their income or assets to tuition, room, board and other fees.

The change will be effective beginning in the fall of 2008. Columbia also will eliminate loans for all new and continuing students in the College and SEAS who are eligible for financial aid, regardless of family income. The loans will be replaced with University grants, which could add as much as $20,000 to Columbia-funded grants to each four-year aid package.

“Columbia has a record of attracting among the most socio-economically diverse undergraduate student populations among our peer institutions through our commitment to need-blind admissions,” said University President Lee C. Bollinger. “We are both proud of that diversity and determined to maintain it by expanding aid to the extent our resources allow.”

Columbia is one of a number of educational institutions to make enhancements to their financial aid recently. In the past several months, several other colleges and universities have expanded aid for middle- and upper-income students, or simply replaced loans with grants for a number of students.

Families with incomes between $60,000 and $150,000 that is eligible for financial aid may receive as much as $5,000 per year in aid of that diversity and determined to maintain it by expanding aid to the extent our resources allow.”

“Columbia’s national standing has long been based upon its twin commitments to inclusiveness and excellence.”


generated a family with $75,000 in income and typical assets will see their contribution decrease by approximately one-half. Through the replacement of need-based loans with grants, a student from a family with an income of $150,000 that is eligible for financial aid may receive as much as $5,000 per year in aid instead of a loan of that amount.

“Our financial aid policies reflect a more realistic view of the challenges that lower- and middle-income families face in paying for college,” said Nicholas B. Dirks, vice president for arts and sciences. “While decreasing costs significantly for every College and SEAS family that qualifies for undergraduate student aid, we have reworked our formula to ensure that continued on page 3

By Bridget O’Brien

Everybody, it seems, wants to interview Richard Barnett.

In recent weeks, as deadly protests broke out in Tibet against the Chinese government, the expert on contemporary Tibetan politics has been on ABC News, National Public Radio and Bloomberg Television. He has been quoted in The New York Times online edition and written an op-ed piece for The Wall Street Journal. And oh yes, he recently briefed actor Richard Gere, a close friend of the Dalai Lama. During an interview with The Record his cell phone rings, an International Herald Tribune reporter in Paris seeking an interview. Barnett, director of the Modern Tibetan Studies Program at Columbia’s Weatherhead East Asian Institute, is in the midst of a media storm. With Tibet closed off to journalists and few resources available for analysis and information since the protests spread to some 40 other Tibetan towns, Barnett has become the go-to academic on Tibet. As an expert in the tiny field of contemporary Tibetan politics and the author or editor of nine books on modern-day Tibet, he has extensive sources within the tiny land-locked Asian nation, the product of 20 years of research as a journalist and academic.

“I’m the obvious man in a field of about one and a half people; it’s not that hard to work out” the reason behind the sudden media popularity, he jokes. “He’s quick to acknowledge his fellow scholars, but experts on current-day Tibetan politics are few; Columbia has many of them, such as Gray Tuttle, Leila Hadley Lace Professor of Modern Tibetan Studies, and Lauran Hartley, an expert on modern Tibetan literature. Most scholars on the region focus on religion, anthropology, art or on Tibetan history.

A journalist before becoming an academic, Barnett has what no one else has—a meticulously detailed map of Tibet-related protests throughout China. Started by a colleague who wants to remain anonymous, Barnett and other North American scholars update it constantly through a network of Tibetan and Chinese sources, Chinese newspapers, on-the-ground reports from tourists and other information, and disseminate it to news outlets.

continued on page 4

NEW CANCER BREAKTHROUGH AT CUMC

By Record Staff

A Columbia University professor has discovered a chemical mechanism that can selectively kill cancer cells while leaving normal cells unharmed.

Brent R. Stoeckel, an associate professor in the department of biological sciences and the department of chemistry, found two new compounds, RSL3 and RSL5, that effectively target cancer cells, acting through a cellular pathway unique to certain cancers. The results of the study appear in the March 24 issue of the journal Chemistry and Biology.

“We have shown that there are new ways of selectively eliminating tumor cells,” said Stoeckel. “Using this new approach, we should be able to learn new features of cancer-cell biology, and also how we can eliminate tumor cells without targeting normal cells. The approach we have taken is general and can ultimately be applied to many different mutant genes and many kinds of cancers.”

One of the major goals of cancer research and cancer drug discovery is to find lethal compounds such as RSL5 and RSL5 that selectively target tumor cells, without affecting healthy cells. Synthetic lethal compounds may also help avoid the terrible side effects of existing cancer drugs that target proliferating cells, including non-cancerous proliferating cells in the scalp and stomach lining, leading to the hair loss and nausea commonly accompanying chemotherapy. In the long run, therapies based on synthetic lethal compounds should be more effective with fewer side effects.

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www.columbia.edu/news
Easing the Burden

Dear Alma,
When did financial aid begin at Columbia?
—Checkbook Charlie

Dear Checkbook,

What is now considered financial aid—the process by which the University charges less, or nothing, for tuition—goes back to the early days of King’s College. Or, rather, the idea of financial aid goes back that far. In the 1760s King’s College actually refused a large gift intended for student financial aid, according to Robert A. McCaughey, a professor of history at Barnard College who is an expert on Columbia’s past. “As far as I can tell,” said McCaughey, “they were not interested in attracting students who lacked the financial wherewithal to come.” After the Revolutionary War, when newly named Columbia College joined its peers in competing for students, that attitude changed. Once a student was admitted, tuition price was subject to negotiation, in effect creating financial aid.

In the late 19th century, students could compete for merit prizes, whose cash portions were often large enough to cover a year’s tuition. And in the early 20th century, financially distressed students could turn to their deans for assistance, who were entrusted with funds for this purpose.

The modern era of financial aid at Columbia began in 1954, with the establishment of the Ivy League athletic conference. Together, the eight universities decided not to offer athletic scholarships, but instead provide awards based on financial need. The process was formalized in the early 1960s.

Yet guaranteeing aid for all undergraduates isn’t easy. “Offering need-blind admissions (deciding on admission without regard to an applicant’s financial situation) and full-need financial aid has been a challenge for some Ivies since the 1980s, depending on the economy and financial health of the individual school,” said Jim McMenamin, director of principal gifts and senior adviser to the dean, and former dean of admissions for Columbia College.

McCaughey, who wrote a history of Columbia’s first 250 years titled Stand, Columbia, said the University’s financial aid efforts have brought additional diversity to a student body that didn’t have much of it 100 or so years ago. “During the course of the 20th century, I think Columbia College has been quite generous in using its resources to assure that the student body is not only the sons of wealthy people.”

Today, Columbia is one of the most socio-economically diverse campuses among its peers, and has the highest proportion of Pell Grant recipients—some 15%—in the Ivy League. Pell Grants are available to students whose families earn less than $40,000 a year.

—By Stacy Park

ASK ALMA’S OWL

HoW much: $21 million
WHO GOT IT: Russell Berrie Foundation
WHAT FOR: Columbia University Medical Center

HoW much: $2 million
WHO GOT IT: Columbia Business School
WHAT FOR: To provide funding for non-reimbursed clinical care, a new professorship, new pilot research, a continuation of the Berrie Program in Cellular Therapies (research efforts aimed at preventing the devastating complications of diabetes), and an endowed chair.

WHO GIVE IT: Lulu Chow Wang, B.S./’83

WHo GaVe it: Donald C. Watte, B.S./’66
HoW much: $1.5 million
WHO GOT IT: Columbia Business School
WHAT FOR: Waite Professorship in Social Enterprise

WHo GaVe it: Jack and Susan Rudin
HoW much: $1 million
WHO GOT IT: Columbia Athletics
WHAT FOR: Baseball program

WHo GaVe it: Russell Berrie Foundation
HoW WiLL it Be used: General support for Columbia’s baseball program. In recognition of the gift, the baseball field at the Baker Field Sports Complex will be renamed in Mr. Robertson’s honor.

WHO GIVE IT: Hal Robertson, S.E.A./’81

WHo GaVe it: Max and Laura New
HoW much: $1 million
WHO GOT IT: Columbia Athletics
WHAT FOR: Baseball program

WHO GIVE IT: The Michelson Family
HoW WiLL it Be used: To enable visiting academics or visiting scholars to pursue brief-term research at the Business School and participate in the intellectual life of the school.

WHO GOT IT: Donald C. Watte, B.S./’66
HoW much: $1.5 million
WHO GOT IT: Columbia Business School
WHAT FOR: Rule to recruit outstanding young scientists and to retain those who have distinguished themselves as top physician-scientists.

WHO GIVE it: Paul Marks Scholars Fund

WHo GaVe it: Columbia University Medical Center
HoW WiLL it Be used: To provide matching funds for academic departments to recruit outstanding young scientists and to retain those who have distinguished themselves as top physician-scientists.
New York, New York, It’s A Helluva Town—But Why Is It Great?

By Candace Taylor

How does a city go from the brink of bankruptcy to an economic powerhouse?

Three preeminent scholars tackled the issue of New York City’s remarkable economic turnaround from a nadir several decades ago, at a School of International and Public Affairs forum on March 11. “Urban Colossus: Why is New York America’s Largest City?” featured views on the subject from visiting Harvard economics professor Edward Glaeser; Columbia Business School professor Christopher Mayer; and Esther Fuchs, professor of Public Affairs and Political Science at SIPA, W. Bemley MacLeod, a SIPA economics professor, moderated the event.

New York hasn’t always been top of the heap. The Big Apple lost much of its shine during the 1960s and 1970s, as rising crime rates, racial tension and economic woes plagued the city. By the mid-1970s, New York City was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. It was saved from collapse with help from a federal loan, and in the 1980s a resurgence in the financial industry improved the city’s fiscal health. During the 1990s, crime rates dropped dramatically.

What were the ingredients that made for the city turnaround? The panel’s three professors offered lightly divergent views. Glaeser presented economic analysis supporting his thesis that New York’s revitalization came about because technological changes enabled the city to better export ideas. Fuchs, on the other hand, argued that government is an essential player in urban development, while Mayer suggested New York’s success is based not only on production, but also on consumption.

Glaeser, pressing the case for technology, argued that urban population density leads to innovation, pointing as an example to the rise of the Dutch master painters in the 15th century, a side effect of the prosperity of commerce-based cities like Bruges. “What technology has done is increase the returns on being smart,” he said.

Similarly, as the information age dawned, New York City has been able to turn its legacy of financial know-how into profits, he said. Just as the “chain of ideas” in Bruges led to the funds for art patronage and then to innovation in painting, the close proximity of skilled financiers in New York led to the development of tools like the financial news service Bloomberg. This set New York apart from Detroit, St. Louis and other cities that built their economies on trading specific products, out development of ideas, Glaeser suggests.

“Cities in the ideas-producing business are the ones that revitalised,” he said, adding that questions need to be asked about whether it’s worthwhile to attempt rehabilitation of failing cities.

Fuchs agreed with Glaeser’s economic analysis, but said he was leaving out a key element in the city’s development: the role of activist government. New York has been able to capitalize on its geographic advantages (its natural harbor and central location) because of government programs (such as police, fire, sewers, subways, public housing and education) that promoted commerce and made the city a valuable place to live, she said.

“There are no accidents,” Fuchs said. “You don’t have a vibrant port simply because. You have an investment in the economy by government.”

She argued that New York did not begin its post-World War II turnaround until Mayor Ed Koch persuaded Albany to invest in New York City’s mass transit systems, and Mayors David Dinkins and Giuliani worked to decrease the city’s crime rates.

“Government can destroy great cities by not supporting them,” she said. “New Yorkers have understood this better than other cities in this country.”

Mayer rebutted her points, saying government can only do so much. “Could anybody have been mayor in New York and presided over the same decline in crime?” he asked. He pointed to the decline of Rochester, N.Y., once a prominent city with an extensive public transportation system. “If Ed Koch had been mayor, I don’t think it would have changed much,” he said.

Mayer argued that New York’s recent success is based on the fact that technology—cell phones, the Internet—allows New Yorkers to consume more than ever, finding new bars and trying new restaurants.

“New York is the leading consumer city not only in the country but maybe in the world,” he said.

ON EXHIBIT:
1968 REVISITED

Has it really been 40 years since the eyes of the world turned to Morningside Heights in Columbia’s season of protests? For those not present on campus during those tumultuous weeks in the spring of 1968—and for those who might want to remember that time of upheaval—an exhibit of archival photographs has opened on the sixth floor of Butler Library. Titled “1968: Columbia in Crisis,” it will be on view until June 6 in the Chang Octagon Exhibition Room of the Rare Book & Manuscript Room.

—By Record Staff
Suffering from election fatigue yet? This might make you feel better—or at least not alone.

Marvin Kitman, a veteran media critic at Newsday and now a columnist at the Huffington Post who has covered every presidential election since 1952, has his pulse on the current election craziness. On March 12, at the invitation of the Friends of Columbia Libraries, he turned his jaundiced eye on the elections in an amusing, hour-long discussion entitled “The Making of the President 2008: A Case Study in Media Pathology.”

Speaking to a packed audience, Kitman said the symbol of our electoral ineptitude is the undecided voter who, after “6 debates, 4 primaries and caucuses, the longest race in history and perhaps modern civilization, and mega-hours on radio and in the blogosphere,” still can’t make up his mind. “What a phenomenon!” he exclaimed. “These people will decide the elections.”

It is likely that “the ship of state has pivoted the way for today’s induction in national elections. “Two hundred years after the Revolution we are still not ready for self-governance,” he joked. He then listed 10 “plagues”—devastating “weapons of mass distraction”—that are emitting a mind-bending fog over the electorate. Kitman’s top two plagues: the debates. Yes, that is actually one category, but Kitman pronounced debates worthy of two plague slots. The recent debates, he said, are akin to a Nascar race, with “everyone roaring around a track until they run out of gas.”

Earlier debates were tennis-like exchanges that “may be too elitist for the American people,” he said, with “one man saying my worthy opponent is full of bologna and here’s why,” and his opponent volleying back the same. In today’s state of confusion, he said, the winner is the one “who looks best on TV.”

Other culprits in deluding an informed and mindful electorate, according to Kitman, include late-night TV shows like Jon Stewart’s The Daily Show and the vast cash spent on TV advertising. “We lean towards a candidate based on their war,” he said. “McCain was discounted [earlier in the race] because his coffers were bare.”

Then there are the “pundits and panel” shows where panelists show off their smarts in order to “awe by their bluster.” And of course, polls, which are inevitably wrong, “Universities would better spend their money on football programs,” he said.

Rounding out the plague list are cable news channels and their “yeller journalism” shows like Crossfire and “Opinionators,” or news people who have replaced reasoned commentaries like the late John Chancellor and “opinions on everything.” And then there are the merely “exhausting” commentaries like Chris Matthews, who “pioneered finding Hillary guilty of everything.”

“The electoral system is broken and needs fixing,” concluded Kitman, likening primaries and caucuses to a Survivor show, with Fred Thompson after South Carolina and Mike Huckabee after Ohio—“or was it Texas?”—being voted off the island.

Summing up, Kitman quipped, “I always like to end a speech on a positive note, but since I can’t think of any, I’ll give two negatives. If you think things are bad, they will get worse. And good night and good luck. We will need it.”

**It Takes a (Simulated) Village: New Media Center Reshapes Teaching for the 21st Century**

Frank Moretti’s office is full of high-tech gadgets—picture a 46-inch, High-Definition, wheel- mounted computer screen that responds to human touch. But Moretti, who boasts a Columbia doctorate in history and a 41-year teaching career, insists he’s an academic at heart.

That’s why he defines the University’s massive digital-technology organization, the Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL), as an “advocacy center” for Columbia’s faculty members.

Co-directed by Moretti and Maurice Maritza, and supported by a team of 40, CCNMTL seeks to advance the use of new media within the University’s educational programs. Since its 1999 inception, the center has developed 200 Web applications and provided digital services for 3,000 Columbia professors. Computer experts call it one of the leading education-based technology centers in the United States.

“I’ve been involved in educational technology since 1989, and I don’t know of any other center at any major university that has gained the scale of [CCNMTL’s]” said Lapen Chou, chief product officer for the award-winning software company SchoolNet Inc.

For those poorly versed in techno-speak, the name of the center (and its resulting acronym) can sound daunting, but the term “new media,” explains Moretti, simply means computerized communications. And at CCNMTL these communications have led to a plethora of software packages and digital tools that are changing the face of classroom learning.

One such tool is called VITAL (Video Interactions for Teaching and Learning), which allows students to act like film editors, chopping long-running videos into short clips, then embedding them onto an essay. “We then embed the video clips into online essays that best highlight their performance. Bell watches the clips and offers feedback,” said CCNMTL also specializes in simulations, or visual representations of economic and social situations, which let users manipulate variables and track the effectiveness of their decisions. “Millennium Village” is a simulation used by Jeffrey Sachs, director of the University’s Earth Institute and key contributor to the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals, in his course on third-world sustainability. “Sachs’ students try to ensure the survival of a virtual family living in sub-Saharan Africa by answering real-world questions—‘Which crops should I grow?’ ‘Should I collect fish or wood today?’ ‘Where should I allocate my money?’ the family’s resources are represented with counters, and students watch their family survive, struggle, or, in some cases die, based on their decisions.

Other CCNMTL simulations are based on fifth, forcing students to complete assignments on the clock. A journalism student, for example, might have 30 minutes to file an accident report while being fed continuous information from a variety of virtual sources.

CCNMTL tools also have helped train relief workers, preparing them for future work with HIV/AIDS patients in Asia and Africa. “Our collaboration with CCNMTL has enhanced the quality of our research,” said Susan E. assoc. professor of social work who runs a clinical-trial study testing whether community- based HIV agencies in New York State are ready for or unable to support programs.”

CCNMTL, which just launched a “global classroom” with the Earth Institute (featuring weekly online lectures by professors from five continents), has been called a forerunner in its role as a platform for bringingSubscribe to Open Forum now. Join the conversation. Subscribe for as little as $5.95 per issue. Open Forum is a premium digital subscription that delivers in-depth analysis and opinion on the issues that matter to you.

**Tibet**

Barrett’s interest in Tibetan politics was sparked 20 years ago when he witnessed a rare demonstration while on a visit there. “We suddenly became eyewitnesses to an important event, a number of people were shot dead and the Chinese were very keen to hide this information,” he recalled. Tibetans approached members of his group, begging them to get the information to the outside world. “We became important by chance, in that strange way that sometimes happens.”

Barrett and his fellow tourists saw to it that meticulously detailed accounts of events were sent abroad. In 1988, he set up a news and research project in London that collected information from inside Tibet on the political and social conditions, and he worked as a journalist for such outlets as the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong and the China Daily.

He joined Columbia in 1998 and set up, with Prof. Madeleine Zelin, the first teaching program in any western university dedicated to modern Tibetan studies. Will the media scrutiny on Tibet affect how the Chinese handle the crisis? Such a question, Barrett said, “undermines China and overestimates journalists.” Journalists, and likely the world’s attention, will move on, he said. Chinese authorities, however, will likely clamp down on protesters, as they almost always do. “Closing places off is not difficult, and China can do that if it chooses to,” he said. “But that doesn’t mean there won’t be serious reconsideration of China’s policies behind closed doors.”

And academics like Barrett will try to make sense of it all, as they strive to assist Tibetans themselves. “It’s not in our job descriptions, but there will be lots of human rights work to be done,” he said, “to find people who were arrested and do the back-channel work to help policy people work towards solutions.”
March 31, 2008

Columbia Community Service
61st Annual Campaign

As Columbia Community Service’s 61st annual campaign draws to a close April 15, this is a good time to show donors and would-be donors just where some of their contributions go. The pictures on this page highlight several organizations the Harlem Honeys and Bears, which keeps its members fit with synchronized swimming; Harlem Educational Activities Fund, which keeps young minds active and ready for learning; and the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, a Harlem supermarket-style food pantry.

CCS contributions help these and more than 55 nonprofit agencies in the neighborhoods around campus, maintaining vital programs including educational services, performing arts programs for children and services for the hungry and homeless as well as other programs. The full donation is tax-deductible and, because Columbia picks up the administrative cost, all of it goes straight to the organizations themselves. Please help CCS surpass its goal of $300,000 by donating online at www.columbia.edu/cu/annualappeal.

—By Stacy Parker Aab

A HEAP OF HELP FROM HEAF

The Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF) works with area students to nurture the personal and academic strengths necessary to succeed at college and beyond. “We help high-potential youth become high-achieving youth,” said Danielle Moss-Lee, president and CEO of HEAF and an alumna of Teachers College. HEAF Scholars have graduated from the nation’s leading universities, including Columbia, Yale and Dartmouth. Enrollment begins at sixth grade and requires a commitment of two days per week after school, as well as an additional Saturday commitment for grades 6-8. HEAF Scholars take part in engaging elective courses such as “Destination: Earth” (math and science), “Word on the Street” (media literacy), SAT Prep and Career 411. HEAF Scholars work with accomplished instructors and like-minded peers, fostering community for outstanding students who might otherwise feel socially isolated. More than 300 middle- and high-school students are currently enrolled, with 55 students in college. There is no fee for scholars—however all scholars must be at grade level and maintain a B average. Pictured: Ivana, 17; and Daniel, 12.

PANTRY PRIDE

“I do my work with a lot of love for the people,” says Marina, a longtime volunteer for the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH), a food pantry located at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew. Founded in 1979, the pantry’s clientele can pick up three days’ worth of food in a supermarket-style setting, rather than being given a box of food. “When people can select their own food, you don’t have wastage,” explains Doreen Wohl, executive director. They also meet with a social-service counselor who can connect them to other available programs, and can take exercise, nutrition and cooking classes through the WSCAH Wellness Program. And since the group functions as a customer co-operative, virtually all clients help out with operational duties. In 2007, WSCAH provided food for 741,852 meals.

FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

“Everybody feel alright?” calls out Coach Oliver Foote, as the men and women of the Harlem Honeys and Bears practice their synchronized and competitive swimming routines at the Hansborough Recreation Center on March 24. Founded in 1979, this senior-citizen swim team’s 45 members (13 men, 32 women) know the therapeutic benefits of the aquatic life. “Swimming keeps me out of the doctor’s office,” says Lettice Graham, team vice president. “I’m 86 years old, and I take no medication. Swimming keeps us healthy and our bodies flexible.” James Ford, 63, says swimming is good for one’s mental well-being: “If you don’t solve your problem [while swimming], you’ll have the peace to go through with it.” The seniors practice three times a week. They also compete occasionally, and are preparing for this June’s Empire State Senior Games at SUNY Cortland. Another swimmer, Bill Smalls, 61, sums it up this way: “The pool is like a fountain of youth.” Columbia Community Service helps pay for the Harlem Honeys and Bears’ expenses, including those for uniforms, transportation and office space.
RESEARCH

CUMC Study Finds Brain Pathway Linking Stroke and Alzheimer’s Risk

By Record Staff

For years, neuroscientists have known that the risk of Alzheimer’s disease is heavily doubled among people who have had a stroke. Now researchers at Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) have found a process in the brain that may help explain the link between Alzheimer’s and stroke.

The findings are published in the March 13 issue of Neuron.

Alzheimer’s disease is associated with increased production of toxic beta (Aβ) peptides. In the CUMC study, results showed that Aβ production rises when there is an increase in production of a certain peptide, p25, known to occur following a stroke. The researchers identified a pathway whereby higher levels of p25 led to enhanced activity of a secretase that generates Aβ. When the activity of the secretase was reduced, either using a kinase inhibitor or by genetic manipulation, researchers found a decrease in Aβ production in the brain. The results indicate that the pathway may be a treatment target for Alzheimer’s disease.

Karen Duff, professor of pathology at CUMC and the Taub Institute for Research on Alzheimer’s Disease and the Aging Brain, and lead author of the study, said the finding connects the dots between p25 and increased production of amyloid beta, and the pathway could explain why the risk of Alzheimer’s disease is significantly higher following a stroke. “However,” she said, “we still need to verify that this pathway is actually set in motion after a stroke; right now, the data is still circumstantial.”

Duff’s laboratory is currently working on experiments to verify the pathway’s involvement using human post-mortem tissue of stroke patients.

The specific pathway investigated was shown to be most active in young mice, as compared to older mice, suggesting that the pathway may not be implicated in late-onset Alzheimer’s disease, the most common form of this neurodegenerative disease.

Alzheimer’s disease, which affects 4.5 million Americans, is categorized as either early-onset or late-onset. The early-onset form is rare and tends to affect those between the ages of 30 and 60. The late-onset form is much more common—accounting for 90 percent of all cases—and tends to affect those aged 65 and older.

The Taub Institute at CUMC is a multidisciplinary group that has forged links between researchers and clinicians to uncover the causes of Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and other age-related brain diseases, and discover ways to prevent and cure these diseases.

THE SENATE APPROVES TWO DEGREE PROGRAMS

The University Senate need- ed only 45 minutes to complete its agenda on Feb. 29, adopting two degree programs, the Executive MBA—Global Asia, a single degree joining the business schools of Columbia, London, and Hong Kong universities and the MS in Curatorial, Critical, and Conceptual Practices in architecture.

President Lee C. Bollinger said an announcement was imminent on next year’s financial aid packages (it came on March 11, 2008) and that due to expenses, particularly for international students like himself. The president said he anticipated no increase in aid for international students next year, and declined to provide further details.

At Columbia, he said, “we think what resources we have should be principally devoted to lower-income and very moderate-income [students] as a way of preserving the institutions commitment to the national goal of having mobility across classes in the society.”

Meanwhile, Sen. Daniel Sarin (Research Officers), an astrophysicist, said backlogs in Accounts Payable and Purchasing are forcing Columbia scientists to wait a month for equipment that colleagues at peer institutions receive in a few days, and make it impossible to order supplies from vendors who haven’t been paid for previous orders. “Each of these operational issues is making it difficult for me, for the faculty, research officers and students at this major research university to carry out our work,” Sarin said. He asked for a report from the administration at the next plenary.

Asked about talk in Congress of compelling universities to spend larger fractions of their endowments, Bollinger said conventional wisdom—that long-term averages of 8 percent investment returns and 2-to-3 percent inflation rates justify a spending rate of about 5 percent—may look strange after several years of near 20 percent endowment returns, tuition hikes above the Consumer Price Index, and some large institutional endowments.

At such times, he said, “every president, every dean, every president of institutions could do so much more with a little bit more money than any one else could, and we’re always in a special moment. Trustees, by definition, should be thinking about the long-term view, so they really should be the ultimate check on this. My own view is that for limited purposes—especially where it can be justified as a major investment in the institution—there should be exceptions where the spending rate is increased. I think there is a sense that at this particular moment that is appropriate thing to do.”

Trustee Chairman William Campbell will be the Senate’s guest at the next plenary, on April 11 at 1:15 p.m. in 501 Schermerhorn. Anyone with a CUID is welcome.

The above was submitted by Tom Mathewson, manager of the University Senate. His column is editorially independent of The Record. For more information about the Senate, go to www.columbia.edu/~usenate.

Columbia Hero, Faster Than a Speeding Subway, Leaps to the Rescue

By Ronnie Walker

What started as an ordinary Friday commute turned into a daring subway rescue by a Columbia worker, as Veeramaththai “Kal” Kalimuthu, assistant mechanic for the facilities department in Undergraduate Residential Operations, leaped onto the tracks to rescue an unidentified man.

Kalimuthu, who usually catches a ride home to Queens with a co-worker, on March 14 decided to take mass transit. At about 5 p.m. at the 116th Street station, he saw a man across on the uptown platform—one of whom was fellow facilities mechanic Marcus Santos.

“Subway, Leaps to the Rescue”

When the activity of the secretase was reduced, either using a kinase inhibitor or by genetic manipulation, researchers found a decrease in Aβ production in the brain. The findings are published in the March 13 issue of Neuron.

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When asked why he decided to help the man, and then subsequently re-cropped the dangerous train tracks, Kalimuthu said, “I didn’t stop and think; I just reacted. The same way I came was the same way I decided I should go back. I just thought to get my bag and head home.”

Kalimuthu, who never saw the rescued man’s face, hopes that he is doing well. He, too, would have gone unidentified had he not been wearing his facilities jacket, which got muddied following the incident. “The recognition is nice. I accept it,” said Kalimuthu, who has put in 11 years of service to the University.

Despite Kalimuthu’s soiled jacket, his wife and children didn’t initially believe his story. Still, his actions came as no surprise to his fellow co-workers in residential operations, who each mark the incident as telling.

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“My own view is that for limited purposes—especially where it can be justified as a major investment in the institution—there should be exceptions where the spending rate is increased. I think there is a sense that at this particular moment that is appropriate thing to do.”

Trustee Chairman William Campbell will be the Senate’s guest at the next plenary, on April 11 at 1:15 p.m. in 501 Schermerhorn. Anyone with a CUID is welcome.

The above was submitted by Tom Mathewson, manager of the University Senate. His column is editorially independent of The Record. For more information about the Senate, go to www.columbia.edu/~usenate.
ALICE KESSLER-HARRIS

POSITION: R. Gordon Hoxie Professor of American History in honor of Dwight D. Eisenhower Professor, Institute of Women and Gender.

LENGTH OF SERVICE: 10 Years

HISTORY:
Hofstra University, 1968 to 1988
Temple University, 1988 to 1990
Rutgers University, professor of history and director of women's studies, 1990-1998

INTERVIEWED

When Alice Kessler-Harris, a scholar of women's and labor history, started her career in the late 1960s, there were virtually no women studying with her in graduate school, and she had only one woman professor. Even her own dissertation on labor organizing had no women in it. "Because few historians thought about women as appropriate or interesting subjects," she says. Coming of age as a historian just as the field of women's history was being created, she became one of its architects as well as one of its beneficiaries. Since then, the number of women professors has increased dramatically, as has the field itself. "It was enormously stimulating to be in the middle of real debates about real things," Kessler-Harris recalls. "Women's history linked the past with the politics we were living. At the same time, of course, we were also changing the institutions in which we lived."

In retrospect, of course, the trajectory of her career and of her chosen field seems a straight shot, but at the time every step was new. Kessler-Harris joined a number of new groups dedicated to opening up the historical profession to more women and to encouraging the academic journals—edited then almost exclusively by men—to open their pages to the subject. For her own research, she started first by looking at women in the labor organizing field, from there she turned to questions of women's wage-work, and then to the subject of wages and issues of social policy. Through it all ran an ongoing debate about the nature of women's history, and its relationships to gender. Her book In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men and the Question for Economic Citizenship in 20th Century America won a Bancroft Prize in 2002.

She is currently writing a biography of 20th century playwright and feminist icon Lillian Hellman. In December, she wrote an article with the provocative title of "Why Be Still Need Women's History?" Q: So what is the answer to the question you posed in your recent article? Do we still need women's history?

A: My answer is yes, though the mind of women's history we do now has been transformed. We began in the 1970s with an effort to discover and uncover lost women. By the mid 1980s, historians and social scientists were beginning to argue that women's history was really insufficient, and that we needed to explore the history of gender...that it made little sense to study women without studying men, because one needed to understand the system of ideas and values that underlay why men and women often have different perceptions and expectations. By the 1980s, gender history was launched and by the 1990s it was the center of what we were doing...That led a lot of people to turn their attention to what we called men's history, and led some to wonder if we weren't going back to what we'd been doing all along. What I tried to do in that piece was to argue that there could be no gender history without women's history. So yes, I still think women's history is absolutely necessary.

Q: Do you have a favorite part out of your research, a favorite discovery, as it were?

A: When I started writing about the labor movement and the women who organized it, I uncovered women whose stories had once been known but were then forgotten. Some of them were still alive. I was able to connect those stories with the culture out of which they came through looking at the songs they sang and the goals they imagined for themselves.

Q: Your next project, a biography of Lillian Hellman, seems to be a departure from your previous work. Why Hellman?

A: Hellman is the link to a whole series of other questions that I've spent most of my life studying. She's Jewish, southern, and a woman in a man's world. She began her working life as a script reader, her political life as as a labor organizer [of the Screenwriter's Guild]. She was a victim of the McCarthy era. She was not and would not have called herself a feminist, but she was a woman who valued her own independence, both economically and socially. Later in her life, she became a kind of icon of the feminist movement largely on the basis of her sexual liberation. In these ways, and more, she opens up doors into the tensions between 20th century change and women's lifestyles.

Q: Are there still many women's stories to discover?

A: There are, and we don't know how many stories there are out there. We find them in the most unexpected places. It was the case, for example, that until very recently the records of many women were buried in their husbands' papers.

COLUMBIA PEOPLE

Richard Greco

WHO HE IS: Manager of Facilities, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory

YEARS AT COLUMBIA: 41

WHAT HE DOES: Greco spends most of his time on the administrative end of managing facilities, which means attending meetings, handling the budget, responding to job requests and meeting with contractors and vendors. And, of course, he is the go-to person for emergencies such as snowstorms or equipment failures, which "always seem to occur nights, weekends and holidays."

A GOOD DAY ON THE JOB: When he has enough time and resources to accomplish the task at hand for the day, and also be able to handle any emergencies that might arise.

THE ROAD TO COLUMBIA: Greco first arrived on Lamont's campus on the Palisades as a teenager. At 16, he worked a summer job at Lamont doing mainly grounds work, and in the winter he returned to campus as a part-time janitor. After he graduated from high school in 1967, Greco returned to work on Lamont's grounds and worked his way up through the ranks to head mechanic in 1977, plant manager in 1982 and in 1992, manager of facilities. Early in his Lamont career, he attended SUNY Rockland Community College at nights, where he majored in math, earning his associate's degree in 1970.

MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE: A number of exceptional moments come to mind, says Greco. "I think of the buildings that were constructed while I was here—especially the new Comer lab building that is nearing completion. I think of the blizzards moments come to mind, says Greco. "I think of the buildings that were constructed while I was here—especially the new Comer lab building that is nearing completion. I think of the blizzards..." and "working with an exceptional group of individuals over the years and having a talented staff of mechanics that continually..."

BEST PART OF THE JOB: The beauty of the Lamont campus and "working with an exceptional group of individuals over the years and having a talented staff of mechanics that continually..."

IN HIS SPARE TIME: Greco, 58, enjoys playing golf with friends. He also likes to travel and hopes to do more of it.

--by Melanie A. Farmer
Cancer

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Stockwell and Wan Seok Yang, a postdoctoral researcher and co-author of the study, screened thousands of small molecules for synthetic lethal interactions with oncogenic RAS, which is found in about one-third of human cancers. This mutant cancer-causing protein, known as an oncogene, has been resistant to direct targeting efforts. The synthetic lethal screen resulted in the identification of RSL3 and RSL5 compounds, which showed increased activity in the presence of this mutant oncogene.

Stockwell and Yang used the compounds to discover that the mutant RAS protein causes these tumor cells to accumulate excess iron. In the presence of RSL3 and RSL5 compounds, iron found in these cancer cells is exploited and used to cause them to die through a unique cellular mechanism, a process referred to as oxidative cell death. The RSL3 and RSL5 compounds can now be used as probes to study this mechanism, and they may serve as scaffolds to develop anticancer drugs whose overall effectiveness is high and also hold the promise of minimal side effects.

This is not the first synthetic lethal compound discovered by Stockwell and Yang. In the summer of 2007, they published a paper in the journal Nature on the first major mechanism discovered with a synthetic lethal compound (RSU5), which showed increased activity in the presence of this mutant oncogene.

More than 600 alumni, faculty, administrators and guests came together to honor five accomplished alumni of Columbia College at the John Jay Awards Dinner on March 5 at Spokane 40th Street in New York City. Each award recipient was introduced by a current John Jay Scholar. In his remarks, Dean Austin Quigley declared that the five honorees “have enhanced the standing of the Columbia community through their remarkable achievements.” Above, from left to right: Zainab Iqbal (’10), with Barry Bergdoll (’77), Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art and president of architectural history in the Department of Art History and Archaeology; Nathaniel Nagy (’10), with Alexandra Wallace Conrad (’08), executive producer of ABC Nightline; with Brian Williams; Tim Danielsen (’09), with Jonathan S. Liminer (’09), managing director of Bain Capital; Taylor Harwin (’10), with Robert L. Friedman (’64), senior managing director and chief legal officer of the Blackstone Group; and Noah Bate (’10), with Ronald E. Mann Jr. (’74), president of Jacksonville University. The event raised $32 million for Columbia College, making it the most successful event in the 30-year history of the awards dinner.

Men of Peace

Columbia’s rock star honors met on March 1 with Soum. George Mitchell for a “private lecture” in conflict resolution organized by Columbia’s Center for International Conflict Resolution. Mitchell shared with Iqbal his experience as mediator in Northern Ireland and advised the artist about the role he can play for peace in Colombia. The Center for International Conflict Resolution is assisting Iqbal in his efforts to contribute to the search for peace in Colombia. From left, Ali Cobin of the center, Iqbal and Mitchell.

Financial Aid

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the most dramatic reductions help those most in need, including students attending our School of General Studies.”

The School of General Studies also will expand its total aid budget by just over $1 million annually. The aid will be focused on continuing students with demonstrated academic success who have the highest documented economic need and substantial loan debt. The increase will affect the approximately 50 percent of General Studies undergraduate degree students who currently receive institutional financial aid.

“Columbia’s national standing has long been based upon its twin commitments to inclusiveness and excellence,” said Austin Quigley, dean of Columbia College. “Financial aid is so important because the University’s excellence derives in significant part from its inclusiveness, from the range of voices that inform academic inquiry and social exchange. In this sense, all students benefit from our financial-aid programs, whether or not they receive financial support.”

Funding for these financial-aid enhancements is provided primarily by alumni and friends of the University through annual fund gifts and permanent endowments. The remainder of the needed funding will come from a combination of operating revenue, new fundraising and an increase in the endowment spending rate. Columbia is currently seeking to raise more than $440 million in undergraduate financial aid endowment. More than $2 billion of this total has already been committed.