Imagine a miniature laboratory that preserves the life of an endangered fish species, speeds up the process of vegetation significantly without diminishing its quality, and produces medicinal supplements with a deep reduction of pollutants. This may seem like science fiction to many, but it is actually happening right in KCC’s backyard.

Led by Dr. Sarwar Jahangir of the Department of Biological Sciences, KCC’s Biotech students — Alex Dean, Tayyeb Din and Bekhruz Bazarov are working on creating a naturally powered lab to save the endangered American eel. And this will all be ultimately done with minimum human interaction, operating inside of a cargo shipping container.

“There is only one way these eels can be saved,” said Dr. Jahangir. “It’s through eel farming. Babies have to be made, and they cannot be made without induced spawning by hormone treatment. And that is exactly what we plan to do through our experiment.”

According to Dr. Jahangir, “in places like Japan, Europe and the United States, we are witnessing the depletion of...
the eel due to the region’s dietary practices. And as a result, laws have declared it to be an endangered species. But whatever we do, we cannot replace the current population of eel as long as there are hydroelectric dams and other structures blocking their eventual migration to the Sargasso Sea.”

Thus the team’s experiment is a biological marriage between agriculture and aquaculture, aiming to combine sustainable vegetation and to preserve the life of the American eel. All the while keeping heavy metals, pesticides and other pollutants at a minimum.

“We’re designing a new module to support additional organisms,” said Dean. “Along with the eel, we can have things like insects, algae, worms, etc. being grown from the container.”

One of the team’s current plans is to implement an artificial intelligence that logs necessary data for the project. This is a must if their project is to be successful.

“The whole purpose is to log data and analyze it — knowing the density of the water, the salt concentration, the pH, etc. We need something that’s automated. That’s what I’m working on now to make sure that in our absence, the data is still collected,” said Din.

Working on this project requires time. Both Dr. Jahangir and the students work on this research using their personal time — outside of any courses or credits, nor are they compensated financially like many other research students. They all do this for the pure passion-driven learning experience, and the sheer will to do good in the world.

And they are on their way. In April 2015, the team’s project was selected for presentation at Columbia University.

As for the future, they plan to acquire a remote land lot in south New Jersey to continue research there.

“The results will be beneficial for everyone,” said Dr. Jahangir. “If we grow enough eel inland, people may stop poaching. The eel population could grow once again, which could result in more food, more jobs and more nourishment. We’ll have more Omega-3 fatty acids. We’ll be healthier and visit the doctor less. It will simply be better.”
By Nimer Abderrahman

Anyone who visits or attends KCC appreciates that there exists a vibrant community of students with diverse backgrounds. In order to fully comprehend students’ relations to this, thorough research has been initiated by faculty and KCC’s behavioral sciences and human services department.

Dr. Stuart Parker, is currently conducting this research with the help of his student, Binyamin Pinhas, a liberal arts major. They seek to answer questions surrounding the personal narratives of a cross-section of students, in regard to concepts such as their personal identity, relation to the community and the American Dream.

“Our plan early on was to get an idea of the students’ ideas and aspirations,” said Dr. Parker. “I also wanted to get an idea of their notions of community. I discovered community was a nice abstract goal, but not really much of a lived experience among students.”

Based on his previous study with the Brooklyn Public Scholars seminar (see chart), Dr. Parker proposed research of the same concept to be conducted with KCC’s student body. The overall goal was to develop ways to increase the level of civic engagement of his students.

This research received a PSC-CUNY grant, providing necessary resources for the project such as being able to hire Pinhas and a transcriber for all the recorded interviews they have conducted with students so far.

Dr. Parker and Pinhas plan to analyze the transcripts this summer. The various results of the research such as the students’ goals, involvement with community and identifying problems within that collective is a direct representation of the dynamically diverse student body at KCC.

“What Dr. Parker helped me realize was that a lot of people have different ideas of what the American Dream really means,” said Pinhas. “To fully understand how these ideas vary based on demographics, can only be done through sociological research.”

Although Dr. Parker’s interest in this project was kindled elsewhere, his observation of his students at KCC is what shaped this research into what it is today.

“The impetus for the project was my participation in the Brooklyn Public Scholars Seminar, which piqued my interest in the students’ understanding of community,” said Dr. Parker. “My experience in the classroom, however, was a significant influence. Learning from my students led me to want to explore, more in depth, students’ perception of the American Dream and how it influenced their decisions and choices.”
Dr. Maureen Fadem: Turning Students into Researchers

By Michelle Yedin

Involved with KCC Reads and many other campus undertakings, Dr. Maureen Fadem is conducting research with her students focusing on civic engagement and social justice.

Dr. Fadem is currently working on an article supported by a PSC-CUNY grant.

“This project is my first article on Toni Morrison and my first publication on African American literature. Object Lessons: Toni Morrison’s ‘Beloved’ argues for a view of the novel as making the case for reparations through the use of intertextuality and a poetics of the object,” explained Dr. Fadem.

While working on this article she was able to hire two of her former students, Anna Sacerdote and Jamila Wallace, to aid in conducting the research, exposing them to critical matters of social justice outside of the curriculum.

Sacerdote is currently researching slavery laws during the time before emancipation — the treatment and governance of slaves under the law, and how they were seen as property and treated as such under property laws.

“When you work with Dr. Fadem, there’s always something that needs to get done,” said Sacerdote. “She is a little demanding, but that’s how she’s able to achieve all the great work she’s done. If she didn’t expect much from us, then we really wouldn’t want to be her research assistants.”

Wallace on the other hand is working on an annotated bibliography for the article.

“I help to gather and annotate articles that relate to ‘Beloved,’ and the lives of African Americans from the time period in which the book is set, all in hopes of making a case for the reparations to African Americans,” said Wallace.

The trio began their research at the Schomburg Center, the New York Public Library branch for Research in Black Culture.

“We started there because we were thinking of initially doing research on slavery and the laws governing slavery, which are important topics in the book and it’s an important part of the article I’m writing,” said Dr. Fadem.

Dr. Fadem hopes to have this article ready for publication by the end of this summer.

She also just completed two research based classes focused on social justice and social responsibility within her two English 24 classes. The students are encouraged to study any U.S. social movement, such as Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and the Women’s Movement, or anything from early U.S. history to contemporary times.

Dr. Fadem also involved students this semester in a conference at The Graduate Center in a panel discussion of teaching and learning Civic Engagement.

“As faculty at Kingsborough,” Dr. Fadem explained, “we have not only a responsibility to develop our students as researchers and writers, but also as civically engaged citizens.”
“Working with Binyamin on this research, and getting to know him from our class experience led me to another research project, which is now an integral part of incorporating math into my sociology curriculum. This is what the faculty innovation grant award that I just received was about. He is a pleasure to work with, and he will be aiding me in my next research as well.”

“What made me interested in working with Dr. Parker was that he has this really interesting way of looking at things — a unique perspective he brings to any kind of problem solving, social science or any hard science, that I’m always amazed that he can think of it that way. So I wanted to stick around him and learn and mimic that, so one day I can utilize in my future career.”

“It was such a pleasure working with Anna and Jamila. Through our work together, they developed stronger skills in research and we all learned alot about slavery, slave laws and the scholarship on Toni Morrison.”

“Working on this research with Dr. Fadem has been an enriching experience. The research has exposed me to parts of American history I was unlikely to learn about in school.”

“I have learned so much from working with Professor Fadem. She has shown me that anything is possible as long as you try your best. That even the smallest change makes a difference in the overall picture.”

“We are here to inspire and support our students through hands on research. If they can learn and believe that they are able to make a difference in the world, then perhaps they will do so by putting their knowledge into practice.”

“Because of Dr. Jahangir, we can easily have conversations with students at graduate schools who are most of the time amazed at how a freshman in a community college know as much as them, and sometimes even more.”

“I never had any interest in social science or humanities. I love science, and what we can achieve through it. Working on this research with Dr. Jahangir reaffirmed what I want to do in my career in biotechnology.”

“One thing I will take from this experiment will be proper lab technique and patience. This experience gave us the ability and confidence to perform projects on a much higher level, preparing us for future jobs and internships.”
Salzburg Scholars Take an In-depth Look at Dachau

By Armin Rebihic

For spring break, 12 Kingsborough Honors students attended the Global Citizenship Program, held in Salzburg, Austria, where they participated in lectures on globalization. During the seminar, the students went to Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site in Germany.

This labor/concentration camp originally detained many Nazi-opposed political figures during World War II where they were put to labor duties. Eventually, Jews, ordinary German and Austrian criminals etcetera were detained here as well.

“It is the place where the need for global citizenship was realized on a massive and tragic scale,” said David Goldman, former faculty for the program.

Dachau has an established museum where there are photographs, personal items and archival documents, along with panels of text.

The students walked across the vast camp where prisoners once worked. There were 34 barracks that held thousands together in small beds. Pebbles now lie where the barracks once stood.

The camp also holds crematoriums, gas chambers and religious memorials, which the Nazis claimed were never used.

At Kingsborough, these students also take Philosophy 7900, a Global Ethics course, with Dr. Rick Repetti. The class covers an extensive ethics curriculum preparing the Salzburg Scholars for their time abroad.

Upon their return, Dr. Richard Tomback, director of KCC’s Holocaust Resource Center, gave a lecture to the students. He talked about the war’s history, how prisoners were treated and etcetera.

Explaining the Nazi mentality, Dr. Tomback said, “If you try to kill every Jew in the world, but left even one child alive, that one child should also be killed because if allowed to grow up, that one child’s mind will affect the German people—the Aryan race.”

He also shed some light on Adolf Hitler, who never personally executed anyone. According to Dr. Tomback, Hitler once visited Minsk to witness an execution, but he vomited. Many scholars thought most Germans were just Hitler’s willing executioners. They participated, in some way willingly, in the genocidal activities of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party.

The students learned and achieved an understanding of global citizenship and the costs of it when it is lacking. Looking forward, they plan to utilize their experience by becoming better stewards of the world.
By Nimer Abderrahman

During Kingsborough’s 9th Annual Eco-Festival, over 80 students traveled to Plumb Beach in Brooklyn, where they analyzed the local horseshoe crab population and learned the various methods of scientific analysis, all the while volunteering to help clean up the beach.

Led by Dr. Christina Colon, assistant professor of biological sciences, and Dr. Jacob Mey, assistant professor of physical sciences, the students not only took part in civic engagement, but also learned how to become scientists.

Organized by KCC’s Student World Assembly and Honor’s Club as part of Eco-Festival 2015, this program was developed to give students an opportunity to satisfy one Civic Engagement credit, as well as to engage in a real scientific study. Through this, the students and faculty can better understand the local beach habitat and help restore the Atlantic horseshoe crab population.

“This training allows students to become ‘citizen scientists,’ where they come out and learn protocols for data collection to study the Atlantic horseshoe crab and participate in a long term monitoring program, learn about the ecosystems and help protect them,” said Dr. Colon.

The enticing research, or the chance to obtain a Civic Engagement credit weren’t the only reasons students came out to the beach. Many just wanted to do their part to help the community — ultimately collecting over 20 bags of trash from the area.

“Everyone is learning and doing their share of picking up the trash,” said Joshua Marrero, a volunteer and a computer science major. “I’m not part of these clubs, but I’m here simply doing something good for the environment, like many others here. I would definitely do this again next year.”

Although their altruistic acts may go without much recognition, their scientific endeavors won’t. According to Dr. Colon, the performed study on the horseshoe crabs will be published in a peer reviewed scientific journal and will be presented at a conference in Japan, “rendering this as an international research.”

The ultimate goal of this event was to simply connect students, Honors and beyond, to their community and environment; to teach them their civic responsibility and ways to fulfill them.

“The great thing about this is that we’re connecting people to the environment,” said Prof. Jacob Mey, Eco-Festival Co-Coordinator and Oceanographer. “We want to build good stewards of the environment. The more stewards we have, the more beneficial it will be.”
A Decade of Excellence: ‘Distinctions’ Marks its Tenth Year

By Gulnoza Sultanova and Brittani Medina

This academic year marked the 10th anniversary of “Distinctions,” Kingsborough’s Honors Journal, consisting of research papers, essays and artwork, to publish outstanding work done by Honors students across the discipline. Approximately 12 papers are published for each volume every term.

Associate Professor Dr. Robert Cowan, editor of “Distinctions,” opened the event with a discussion about the editor’s column. He dedicated the first issue of volume 10 to his recently deceased parents in recognition of challenges and emotional downturns people face daily.

The students discussed their projects during the ceremony and how much research and mentoring by their professors was actually involved in the project.

“I couldn’t be happier about being published. This was all possible because of the guidance of my mentor” said Frances Noel, who wrote “The Crisis of African-American Hunger.”

Among the students’ works, one student presented an unique style of art.

“I was delighted to work on this project,” said Diana Ng, a student whose artwork of the Chinese Zodiac Calendar is now spread out on twelve pages. “When I started this, it was quite difficult and I’m pretty impressed about how it turned out.”

Another student, Diane Nguyen published a compelling research paper on the second issue of Volume 10, discussing the contributing factors to rape culture on college campuses such as an over-sexualized media culture.

“I feel proud of how this journal has evolved,” said Dr. Cowan reflecting on his tenure as the editor.

After seven years in the position, Dr. Cowan will be passing the torch to Dr. Robert Blaisdell, assistant professor of English, to continue the legacy.

“There are many underpinnings that produced this journal and it is of such high quality that it’s a joy every time I see it,” said Dr. Rachelle Goldsmith, Director of the Honors Program.

“’The Rooster,’’ by Diana Ng, was the cover of Vol. 10, issue 1.”

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