VICE DEAN’S LETTER

As our wonderful Dean Gabi Starr pursues her well-deserved research sabbatical, I have the honor of welcoming you to the new semester and highlighting some of the happenings at the College.

On a personal note, although I’ve been teaching at NYU for the past 10 years, my new role has involved me much more widely in the life of the College. I am moved by the depth and richness of that life. Here are some of the many high points of my first few weeks: my heart was warmed by the welcome of the students in the Higher Education Opportunity Program, and the Academic Achievement Program. I was inspired by the thoughtful comments of Spatulah (aka Cohort 18) as we discussed this year’s powerful Freshman Dialogue book, Ta-Nehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me*. I was proud indeed to introduce President Hamilton as he personally welcomed Proud to Be First, a group dedicated to students who are the first people in their family to go to college. I’m sure you’ve all seen for yourself the incredible work our students, faculty, and alumni are undertaking.

Fortunately for us, Dean Starr has not been spending all of her time in the lab. During the week-long celebration of President Hamilton’s inauguration, she joined Imam Khalid Latif and Rabbi Yehuda Sarna in a public discussion of the rising political and racial tensions in the United States, along with the role that religious and spiritual leaders should play.

In his inaugural address, President Hamilton asked the entire NYU community to concentrate our best efforts on two important issues above all. The first issue is diversity and inclusion. Not only is the incoming CAS class diverse in terms of ethnicity (highlights: 23% Asian or Pacific Islander, 14% Hispanic, 7.5% African American), it is diverse in terms of background and origin (18% are the first person in their family to go to college, 23% are international, representing 52 different countries). This welcome diversity comes with test scores and other measures of achievement continuing to edge upwards—diversity and excellence, hand in hand.

The second presidential challenge is affordability. NYU must become more affordable. One of the main ways we address affordability in CAS is through scholarships, and we are devoting major time and energy to continuing to raise scholarship levels. In addition, we’ve made some progress in lowering costs. For instance, we no longer charge additional fees for course trips from students. We are increasing funds supporting students studying away, and helping with the cost of applying to professional and graduate schools. Finally, Associate Dean Richard Kalb is leading the effort to help all students to graduate in a timely manner, and in some cases, to graduate in under four years, if desired.

There’s much more to tell—I hope you will take a break from midterm stress and drop by one of the Dean’s Open Hours, or at any other time, and say hello!

Chris Barker
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MacArthur “Genius Grant” Fellowship, Proud to Be First Program, CAS Events
At the College of Arts and Science, we believe that education—exposure to different ways of thinking and the nurturing of new ideas—often takes place outside of our classrooms as well as in it. Of course, our location within New York City plays into that, but so do the co-curricular events, lectures, conferences, and celebrations that we plan for our community.

Throughout the year, we host a series of Bentson Dean’s Lectures featuring full-time, part-time, visiting, and adjunct professors in the College. Bentson topics have included everything from mapping the Universe to the anthropological study of New York through its layers of garbage, to important discussions on race and class. The first Bentson lecture of the year, “What was so great about Genghis Khan?: Thinking about the Mongol Empire in contemporary times” was presented to a packed house on September 27 by Professor Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, who teaches courses on Asian history in our Departments of History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.

On Thursday, October 6, Thomas Gensmer (CAS ’99) was Dean Gabi Starr’s special guest for another in our ongoing Alumni Conversation Series. In a casual and intimate one-on-one dialogue, our recent alums talk about how they got to the College and their feelings upon arrival, experiences they had during their time here that shaped them, their take on the Village then and now, and offer words of advice to our students about getting the most out of their CAS years and beyond. Gensmer, Chief Strategy Officer at Burson Marsteller/WPP, and co-founder of Blue State Digital, is likely best known for his work with the “It Gets Better” Project, Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way Foundation” and for crafting President Obama’s groundbreaking 2008 online Presidential campaign.

SAVE THE DATE: College of Arts and Science Baccalaureate Ceremonies will be held for the graduating Class of 2017 on Thursday, May 18 at the world-famous Radio City Music Hall! Stay tuned for further details.
What is your favorite memory of your time at NYU?
There are a few! I met very driven and motivated classmates when I lived in Goddard Hall my freshman year. They were all doing their own thing, which encouraged me to pursue my own interests. That community was really important to me. I took several great classes during my time at NYU, with professors who were very supportive and motivating, and always offered help. I majored in Economics with a minor in Math and Public Policy and Management. When I started my nonprofit organization, Brighter Today, faculty gave me feedback and valuable guidance. In particular, Prof. Sarah Durham guided me on how to set up a nonprofit and helped me prioritize.

What led you to found your nonprofit, Brighter Today?
When I was doing a project in high school, I visited a village in India with my grandfather, and I noticed that the villagers had light bulbs but they weren’t turning them on. That really intrigued me. I found out that their electricity bills were very high, which is why they weren’t turning their lights on. This meant that kids didn’t have the opportunity to study at home and women were cooking in the dark. After doing my research, I learned that the villagers were using 60-watt incandescent bulbs because they are the most inexpensive option they have. They cost about twenty cents, but only last one or two months and are energy inefficient.

I spoke to the village leader in order to identify ten of the poorest families, and donated 11-watt compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs to them. The bulbs cost more, about $2 each, but they last up to five years and would reduce electricity bill payments by 80%. It was a pilot initiative to see if the villages would adopt the new model, which they did.

What is next for Brighter Today?
When I came to NYU, I followed up with the village leader and he reported that most of the village had adopted the new model of using the CFL bulbs to keep their electricity bills lower. The families I have spoken to shared that they have been able to save money to improve their quality of life and send their children to school. Now Brighter Today continues the mission of using eco-friendly, energy efficient bulbs to help alleviate poverty.

What advice do you have for aspiring entrepreneurs?
I think that you have to find the right resources and people to help. For me, I attended the Clinton Global Initiative Conference and won a fellowship, which was a large component of what helped me found my nonprofit. I also won the grand prize of Glamour Magazine’s Top 10 College Women 2015 contest, which I am using to expand the Brighter Today project globally. It is important to create awareness about your project, but also reach out for guidance. You can’t do it by yourself—you need the right team. You might face some obstacles on the way, but that shouldn’t deter you from your mission.
ALUMNI RELATIONS NEWS
Scott Harrison (CAS ’98) [pictured], Founder and CEO of charity: water, received a Making a Difference Award at President Hamilton’s Inauguration on September 25. View NYU’s “Making a Difference” feature at https://youtu.be/r9TbOo3wMTQ.

On October 22, Robert Kamen (ARTS ’69) received the CAS Alumni Achievement Award from Dean Gabi Starr for his work as a screenwriter. One of Mr. Kamen’s biggest box office successes, “The Karate Kid,” opened to critical acclaim in 1984, paving the way for a filmmaking career spanning almost forty years. Kamen is responsible for a slew of Hollywood blockbusters, including “The Fifth Element,” “The Professional,” “The Transporter” series, “A Walk in the Clouds,” “Lethal Weapon III,” and all three films of the “Taken” franchise starring Liam Neeson.

ALUMNI RELATIONS STAFF
Keep in touch and stay connected! Phone: (212) 998-6880 or email: cas.alumni@nyu.edu.

Ann Marie Ladisa, Senior Director of Alumni Relations
Heather Seltzer, Assistant Director of Alumni Relations
Marta Wallien, Administrative Aide

We are always looking for alumni, student or faculty interest stories as well as guest bloggers for the NYU Arts and Science Alumni Blog. The NYU CAS Alumni Association Facebook page and NYU CAS Alumni LinkedIn Group are wonderful resources for those alumni looking to network and engage in conversations with each other and with the alumni office. Follow us on Twitter (@artsandscience) and Instagram (nyuartsandscience).

This office is responsible for all alumni efforts on behalf of the College of Arts and Science, Liberal Studies, and the Graduate School of Arts and Science.

FACULTY AWARD SPOTLIGHT
2016 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship

Subhash Khot, the Silver Professor of Computer Science in the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, was awarded the prestigious honor of a MacArthur “Genius Grant” Fellowship for his work on computational complexity. Born in India in 1978, Khot followed his passion for mathematics by obtaining a bachelor’s degree in computer science from the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in 1999 and a doctorate in computer science from Princeton University. Known for his unique games conjecture, the theoretical computer scientist has received other honors such as the National Science Foundation’s Alan T. Waterman Award and the Rolf Nevanlinna Prize. Khot’s groundbreaking work promises solutions to challenges within his respective field and offers inspiration for future projects. To learn more about Khot’s work and the fellowship, visit: https://www.macfound.org/fellows/960/.
The CAS Advising International Team successfully launched the CAS International Student Mentor Program this fall, a program which pairs new first-year and transfer international students in CAS with returning international students in the College. Well over one hundred students joined the program this semester to serve as Mentors or Mentees. Monthly big-group meetings for the participants have fostered community and encouraged reflection and discussion about such issues as cultural adjustment, challenges of communicating across cultures, and university life around the world. Mentor-Mentee pairs have grabbed coffee, gathered for lunch, and taken neighborhood walks, to name a few of the many ways participating students are connecting with one another. This relatively new program continues to grow and evolve, and the team looks forward to further developing it.

The International Team also hosted an enjoyable and interactive new first-year international student mixer during Welcome Week as well as a series of orientation sessions for new international students in partnership with the Office of Global Services (OGS). The team has held lively and well-attended events, including an exciting New York Mets baseball game and a guided tour of the Asian Art galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Upcoming events include a Halloween celebration and an excursion to the Metropolitan Opera for a performance of Don Giovanni. The team has likewise offered a series of active and informative weekly Thursday sessions of the CAS International Student Coffee Hour, on topics such as career-work opportunities and challenges for international students.

The CAS International Student Club has already held an annual Elected Board member retreat along with a yoga event and an art-making, cookie-eating gathering in Washington Square Park. The club is poised to bring more dynamic events to the CAS international student community throughout the academic year, with upcoming programs including a service event with the Go Project and participation in a Japanese tea ceremony via the Urasenke Chanoyu Center. Visit the club on Facebook to learn more!

Mentor program activity at CAS Silver Center

International students enjoy a Mets game at Citi Field
The Proud to Be First program kicked off the academic year by welcoming first-generation, first-year students to NYU College of Arts and Science. This year, 18% of the class of 2020 identifies as first-generation and over 80 students attended the welcome program. NYU President Andrew Hamilton was the keynote speaker, sending a strong message that first-generation students are important and valuable members of our community. Professor Trace Jordan shared his experiences being the first generation of his family to complete a college degree and asked students to reflect and engage as they began their college career. Proud to Be First faculty advocates were also in attendance to show their support of students as they began their college journey.

Proud to Be First matches every first-generation student with an undergraduate peer mentor to offer guidance and support through their transition into college. During the fall semester Proud to Be First mentors have hosted more than ten events and workshops encouraging students to connect with others and take advantage of all that life in college and the city has to offer.

The program works to inspire students to build their networks of success and tap into their own power, motivation, and resilience. During the October “Secrets to Success” program, students hear from first-generation faculty about the experiences and realities of their unique journey to and through higher education.

New this year, Proud to Be First is excited to partner with the Lower East Side Girls Club in supporting tenth grade women in achieving their higher education dream. Eight Proud to Be First sophomores were selected to be mentors to assist young women in the college search process, preparing personal essays, and researching scholarships. In early October, mentors and mentees also attended “College-for-a-Day” at CAS which featured a campus tour, visiting an Energy and Environment class, having lunch with the Dean Gabi Starr, and attending a financial aid information session.
Fiona Wang is a CAS senior from Singapore studying International Relations and Economics, with minors in Math and Psychology. Fiona spoke about her research and its impact on her studies and career outlook.

Why did you choose to do research as an undergraduate and what was your experience like?
I really wanted to give myself a challenge. I got two $1000 research grants [Dean's Undergraduate Research Fund] and did research over the past two semesters. I’ve always been really interested in research because of the economics professors I had. They really encouraged me to look into the field by myself. Also, working with the Presidential Honors Scholars really helped me zoom in and focus on something that I’d be interested in research. Within academia, there’s not a lot of undergraduates doing research. Mostly if you have a subject you want to learn more about, you can read up about it, talk to people, but actually doing the research and giving back to the field, even though your research is so micro, but it feels good to be actively involved.

What subjects have you researched?
My first project was looking at the correlation between governmental economic policy in recession and suicide rates, which was a pretty random two variables to look at, but it laid the groundwork for my other projects. Then, with Professor Henry Ma, I looked at economic development in the form of Foreign Direct Investment, looking at the form of the investment (money, skills, connections, etc.) and the local governments’ attitudes towards those investments and how they influenced GDP. It’s a lot of data collection, and it’s going slowly, but it’s a lot of fun.

Why these subjects?
I’m very interested in human interaction and looking at these interactions as macro representations of humans. I don’t think I could have done this anywhere but NYU, because the study abroad experiences really helped me see the world and understand the cultures that are making these decisions and understanding these positions. I don’t think the conclusion is even the main point. It’s about the journey.

Has research helped in the job market?
Definitely. Almost every job I’ve applied to ask about research. Because it’s your work. It’s not passively learning. You’re taking what you know, something that’s foreign to you, and making it yours. That’s something a lot of employers want to see, this active passion to take something and make it yours and turn it into something useful. It’s not about producing something per se, it’s about learning how to find the right sources, learning how to target data and figure out what it’s telling you. Especially in the professional field, it’s something very worthy of talking about.

What are your aspirations for the future?
I want to continue learning, regardless of where that’s coming from whether that be in classes or in the work force. I also want to give back to all the people that have helped me and to the society in general. I’ll be entering the workforce coming up, which is sad for me because I really enjoy studying, but I’m lucky enough to be pursuing a career that I’m very interested in and, at the same time, learn a lot of real life skills and see how the stuff I’ve learned in school can be applied in the real world. I’ll still be learning and adapting and getting used to new things.

How do you keep up with your busy schedule?
Well, last year I did seven classes each semester I was a Presidential Honors Scholar, I was going through recruiting for internships, and I was doing research, so it was a pretty insane year. If you’re going to do that, you need to be delivery focused, meaning that you need to be really clear about your time-line and your planning. I procrastinate to, but when you realize that if you don’t get these two things done today I’ll be doing ten things tomorrow it really helps you put everything in perspective. It’s a kind of a balancing act, but for me it all comes down to planning. I don’t recommend that much stuff, though. Seven finals is not something you want to go through.
CAS SUMMER ABROAD

2016 Creativity Contest Winners

Students can choose to participate in one of twelve CAS Summer Abroad programs in nine different cities: Accra, Athens, Berlin, Dublin, Florence, London, Madrid, Paris and, as of Summer 2017, Tel Aviv. Each program is carefully designed to offer a rigorous academic experience that engages with that city’s history and culture. Guided by a faculty director with local knowledge and expertise, Summer Abroad programs offer students the opportunity to earn up to 8 credits. Check out all CAS Summer Abroad programs at: www.nyu.edu/summer/abroad/cas.

Each year, participants in one of the College’s Summer Abroad programs submit poems, photographs, stories, and other creative works for a chance to win prizes. The following winners of the second annual Creativity Contest were judged by CAS staff to have captured the essence of a Summer Abroad experience: the feeling of immersion in a new place, transcendent friendships, and new knowledge of language, culture, and of self.

First place: Melissa Sturges (Summer in Dublin) “This photo was taken on the 4th of July in Dublin. It was taken during a flash summer storm where the group and I were tucked away into a pub to stay dry.”

2nd place: KP Mendoza (Summer in Madrid) “‘Okay.’ ‘Vale.’ Both words mean the same thing in separate languages. This photo represents a promise of eternal friendship between myself and my madrileña friend. If it were not for NYU Madrid, I never would have met her, and I am forever grateful for that.”

3rd place: Antalya Jano (Summer in Madrid) “I took this photo in Malasaña, a trendy neighborhood in Madrid. It captures the calm behind the liveliness of the city, especially at night. The colorful flags celebrate Madrid’s Pride Week, one of the largest such festivities in the world.”
CAS STUDENT COUNCIL

Fall 2016 Events and Info

CAS Student Council welcomed students back to campus this September with their Kick-Off Week sponsored by their Class Boards. For returning students, the Kick-Offs were an opportunity to reunite with old friends and meet new ones. For new students, the New Student Kick-Off was a chance to be welcomed to their new home and learn more about Student Council.

Each Kick-Off had a specific theme, capturing the array of interests of the different classes. Candy CASTle, the New Student Kick-Off for Freshmen and Transfer students, offered many types of candy as well as carnival games, turning the Silverstein Lounge into Candyland. The Sophomore Kick-Off, Clean Plates NYU, highlighted healthy living habits for students and provided exercise and nutrition tips. The fun continued with the Junior Kick-Off, which brought carnival games and a mock-tailgate to the Grand Hall. The NYU Bobcat even showed up! The Senior Kick-Off presented a trip down memory lane, allowing seniors to reflect on their time at NYU for their final Student Council Kick-Off. All events featured food, raffles, and camaraderie!

Continuing the momentum from the Kick-Offs, CAS Student Council is continuing its work to build community among all CAS students during the year. The Class Boards are in the midst of planning numerous events all pertaining to the three pillars of CAS: college life, academic inquiry, and service. Moreover, Student Council held a Voter Registration event in order to register members of the NYU community for the upcoming election. Other upcoming Student Council events include the Student Faculty Banquet on Monday, November 21. This annual dinner is a chance for students to engage with faculty outside of the classroom.

Student Council’s General Assembly meetings are held each Tuesday from 7:00–8:30 pm in Heights Alumni Lounge. The Student Council Executive Board welcomes new members to help plan events and build CAS community. For more info visit: cas.nyu.edu/page/cas.student.council.
The Academic Achievement Program continues to expand and thrive with the addition of over 100 new first-year and transfer students joining the growing family of dynamic, high-achieving students of color at NYU. While the program encompasses over 300 members largely from the College of Arts and Science, AAP also expanded this year by opening up the program to students from the Stern School of Business. Through this collaboration, new incoming Stern students had the opportunity to be paired with an upper class mentor already involved in AAP. This Big Brother/Big Sister mentorship program kicked off at both CAS and Stern during the Welcome Week Mixer held at the beginning of each year. The event allowed new members to meet their mentors who will be responsible for providing both academic and student life support in an effort to make new students feel at home at NYU.

The six student-led committees within AAP have been keeping busy this year. In addition to running the mentorship program, the Academic Committee provides support for members through biweekly newsletters filled with student news and internship and scholarship information. The committee also provides study spaces reserved for AAP members and maintains a text book library where students rent available books to help alleviate financial stress.

This year’s Community Service Committee continues to work with the Bronx Lighthouse Charter School as part of their World Changers Mentorship program. Through World Changers, AAP members were chosen to work with high school students to provide advice and social support geared towards college prep and social responsibility. This year’s Shadow Day took place on October 18, allowing high schoolers to visit NYU and experience a day in the life of their college mentor. Our mentors have found the program to be very rewarding and enjoy the opportunity to help high school students succeed.

Games Day and the Rap Session Committees have hosted their popular weekly student events this semester. Games Day takes place every Thursday and allows students to come together and relax through various games, including a Salsa lesson taught by members of the Latin and Ballroom Club. Rap Session is also held each Monday and is an opportunity for students to consider the opinions and perspectives of others in an open forum. Topics this semester have ranged from the rise of social consciousness to the role of celebrity activism. Rap Session was excited to host NYU President Andrew Hamilton as a guest on October 17 where the students discussed representation and diversity.

The Events Committee and PR Committee have also played important roles in facilitating events held through AAP. The students have been hard at work planning both the AAP Leadership Retreat and the annual K.I.N.G.S. Banquet. This year’s leadership retreat took place October 21–23 and was a fun way for students to escape their busy schedules and focus on building a bond with their fellow AAP members. Over the weekend, students had a great time taking part in team-building and leadership activities. This year’s K.I.N.G.S. Banquet will take place in November and students look forward to the opportunity to honor various men from within the NYU community who have been identified by AAP members as having had a profound impact on their lives and respective communities. Thanks to the hard work of student staff and committee members, AAP constantly strengthens growth in both community and leadership.

 AAP Leadership Retreat NYU President Andrew Hamilton [center] joins an AAP Rap Session

AAP constantly strengthens growth in both community and leadership.

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RESEARCH AT CAS

DURF and Research+

Every year hundreds of undergraduate researchers receive funding through the Dean's Undergraduate Research Fund (DURF) to carry out their research projects. Students who receive a DURF grant are also eligible to apply to participate in Research+ during the summer. Contact Joel Ward, Assistant Dean for Students by email at jsw298@nyu.edu for additional information.

DURF
Each year there are three chances to receive funding (research grants up to $1000; Freshman and Sophomore Training grants up to $500) for original research or program of training through the Dean's Undergraduate Research Fund. Just formulate a research or training project in conjunction with a faculty mentor, and then, using our online application system, tell us what that project is, why it is significant, and what will be needed in terms of time and resources to make it happen. Proposals are reviewed by a faculty panel in your broad disciplinary area. If your proposal is judged to be both feasible and important, then in most cases it is funded. For more information and submission forms, visit www.cas.nyu.edu/page/deansresearchfund. Check online for the times and locations of workshops and information sessions designed to help you frame and refine your funding proposals. Whether you’re working on a senior thesis, an independent study or an independent project, if you’re doing research you should apply for a DURF grant. 2016-17 DURF deadlines: November 4, February 10, March 31.

Research+
Research+ is a 6-week summer program for DURF recipients from any discipline interested in strengthening their understanding of research both within and beyond traditional settings. During the program, students participate in weekly workshops and discussions that introduce students to key issues related to research e.g., research presentations and career paths. As a result, participants will be better positioned to achieve their personal, professional and academic goals whether they plan to pursue an advanced degree or other post-graduate training in the US or abroad. Successful applicants will be considered for NYU housing stipends for Summer Session One (Monday, May 22–Sunday, July 2, 2017). Preference for housing stipends will be given to successful applicants with demonstrated financial need. Applications for Research+ include a personal statement (250 words) and current CV and are submitted along with your DURF proposal. 2016-17 Research+ deadlines: November 4, February 10, March 31.

COHORT PROGRAM

Welcoming the Class of 2020

The start of the fall semester is always an exciting time in the Cohort Program, as we get to welcome over 1,700 new students to CAS. Throughout Orientation Week, over 1,500 freshmen and 200 new transfer students engaged in activities with their fellow cohort members across campus and the city. Along with CAS faculty and staff members, our upper-class student leaders led their cohorts on campus tours, service projects in Brooklyn, info sessions and student panels, student mixers, and discussions on their hopes and plans for their NYU experience. Freshman cohorts also engaged in faculty-led conversations about this year’s Freshman Dialogue book, Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates.

As it is every year, one of the highlights of the week was the freshman class trip to East New York, Brooklyn to work on street trees in the neighborhood. As this is our fourth year going back to same neighborhood in partnership with NYC Parks and Recreation, it has been rewarding to see the improvements over time and to hear the appreciation from community members about the work our students are doing. Students are able to see from their very first week on campus that NYU is indeed “in and of the city,” and that they are part of the larger NYC community beyond Washington Square.

The students started their Service Day on campus at Convocation, where they were charged to get involved with their new community and embrace the value of service through powerful speeches by Vice Dean Chris Barker, University Chaplain Imam Khalid Latif, and student speaker Chandni Sharma.