

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 2

SCHOLARS

HONORS
PROGRAM





NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
of The City University of New York

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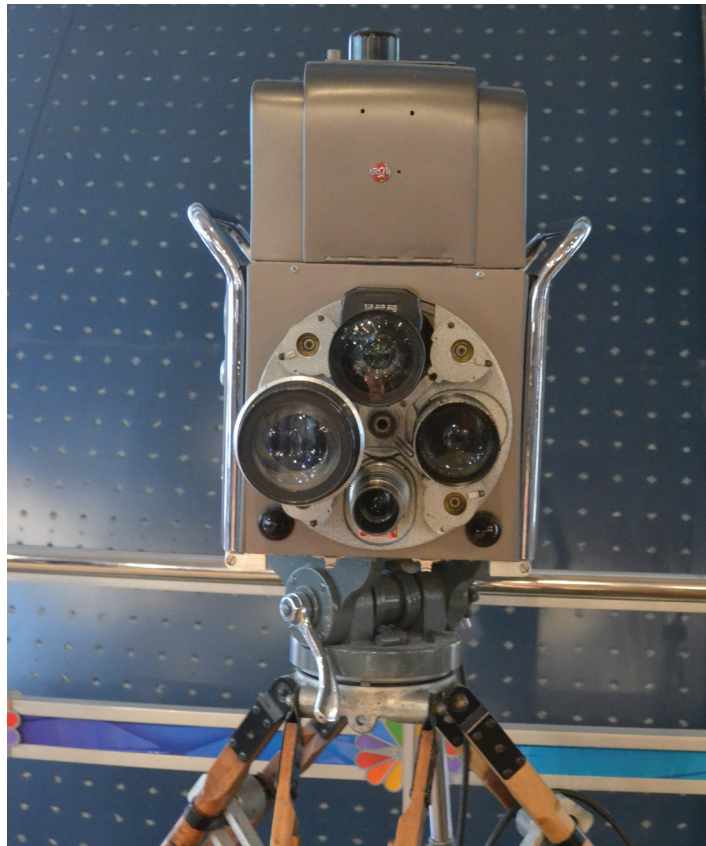


WE'RE READY FOR PRIME TIME: THE HONORS SCHOLARS PROGRAM'S WALK THROUGH NBC STUDIOS

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FELICIA FRANCIS

In 1933, NBC Studios first opened its doors to the public, offering along the way the chance to experience some important highlights from over the years. On October 25, 2013, the Honors Scholars Program had the opportunity to take part in NBC Studios' history. Twenty participants of the Honors Scholars met on the second floor of the NBC studio store to begin the tour by watching a short film about the history of NBC and NBC founder at the Sharp Globe Theater. Although our view of the Broadcast Operation Center was brief since the employees were busy working, we still visited the *Nightly News* studio, which is located in Studio 3K.

The next stop was Studio 8H, home to *Saturday Night Live* (SNL). This is the largest studio in the building and is changed every week to accommodate different skits and performances. The SNL makeup room was one of the difficult jobs that I heard of on the tour since the SNL makeup professionals were responsible for building different characters for the skits. The show produces forty-five sketches which are then eliminated down to 12. Some of these characters had to be premade before the



actor arrives on set, and, at times, it takes hours to transform an actor into a specific character for a skit.

At the end of the tour, everyone had a chance to have his/her picture taken, and two volunteers were selected to produce their own news and weather program in the High Definition Mini-Control Studio. The final products were available to be purchased in the NBC Studio store on the building's second floor. Finally, we were even given a taste of the future of television, as new additions from SNL alums, *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* and *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, ensure that NBC studios will continue to be an attraction.



TAMRAH CUNNINGHAM

THE WORLD IN MY OWN BACKYARD: CHOOSING THE RIGHT COLLEGE

When the time came to choose which college I wanted to attend, I took a different route from my high school peers. Many of them had the ambition to attend the best of the best, sending in their applications to Columbia, Harvard, and Yale. They all dreamed of leaving New York to experience the gilded college life of getting a prestigious degree from a top name school while partying away from the watchful eyes of their parents. I, however, had no such dreams. I did not desire to apply to an Ivy League because they were overpriced. I did not want the stress of moving away from New York City, so I looked for colleges in the city. I knew what I wanted: to study computers. After a brief search, I discovered New York City College of Technology (City Tech). Of course I received strange looks; after all, I was a student known for her good grades. Why would I aim to attend a college that is part of The City University of New York (CUNY) system? I told people that I had always found great opportunities in the city and I am sure I can find more. I was not done with New York City. Hence, I set out to prove just that.

My experiences at City Tech have been interesting and rewarding, filled with opportunities. Some people would say that the secret to success is not so much what you know, but who you know.

Expanding your network of people will help you on your path to success in ways that may not have even occurred to you, and I agree. It was due to all the wonderful people I met that I owe my success. If it weren't for the many faculty who supported me and the many friends I made, my time at City Tech wouldn't have been half as enjoyable. At first, I had planned on just coming in, taking my classes and then going home. Soon, though, I branched out and explored what hidden opportunities existed, and there were many. By pure chance, I was chosen for a learning community that combined a computer programming and English course where I met my mentor, Dr. Reneta D. Lansiquot. Through her, I found out about the Honors Scholar Program, Emerging Scholars, Technovation program hosted by Iridescent and Google, and even the Louis-Stokes Alliance for Minority Participants Research Program. I worked on various projects with her, from being a peer advisor on an online writing program to being an editor for the Honors Scholars newsletter. Through her, I met Dr. Janet Liou-Mark and became involved in the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, which she helped charter. I went from a regular member, to the secretary, to finally the president. I even had a chance to become an intern for the New York City Subway-Surface Air Flow

Exchange (S-SAFE) where I became involved in the largest urban airflow study being conducted by the scientists at Brookhaven National Laboratory and the New York Police Department. It was here that I was able to have a chance to work with Dr. Reginald A. Blake, my team's leader for the whole summer. It was a rare and rewarding opportunity to those students who were able to be a part of the internship. And these were only a few of the activities I involved with.

The doors that opened for me multiplied more than I expected, a pleasant surprise. Through City Tech, and Dr. Lansiquot specifically, I discovered more about graduate programs at New York University, where I had just been accepted. In Fall 2014, I will be starting on the path to attaining my Master of Fine Arts in Game Design at NYU Game Center, a program I had no clue even existed! Thus, as I look back on the time spent at City Tech, on the cusp of receiving my bachelor degree in technology and starting on the path to my goal of becoming an independent video game developer, I just smile and say to those who were skeptical of my choice of attending City Tech, to those who told me that I was hurting my possibilities by limiting myself to this state: "New York City is an unexpected gem of hidden opportunities and wonderful people if only you stay around and look."

Always Upward: My Quest to Improve Myself

Prabesh Gurung

I am Prabesh Gurung. Although my parents were born in Nepal, I was born in Singapore and moved to the United States of America three years ago when I was nineteen years old. My family has worked their way up to the being middle class, always seeking a better life for me and my younger sister. My father used to do manual labor in the villages as did my mother. Fortunately, my father got a job as a police officer for the Singapore Police Force, wherein he was able to provide for his family comfortably. After 27 years of service, my father retired and decided to move to America. I graduated with a Diploma in Civil Engineering and Management from Singapore Polytechnic. Upon leaving Singapore for a new challenge, I have continued my education at New York City College of Technology from the start of fall 2012.

I have many goals, ambitions, aspirations, and desires. My most significant goal is to stay focused on my commitments and to keep an eye on the big picture. I have my heart set on continuing my education and pursuing civil engineering by further developing my interest and skills. Besides having a strong desire to pursue my degree in civil engineering, I have a passion for fitness. Through fitness, I have discovered many things about myself, psychologically and physically. Fitness has allowed me to stay grounded and disciplined in many areas and has allowed me to develop good values.

Perhaps my deepest aspiration is to give back to others. During my time spent in Singapore Polytechnic, I went out with a crew of nine others to the rural villages of Thailand for my volunteer



work. We travelled up the rocky and dangerous mountain road to construct a childcare center for children in the village. We drew up a blueprint and got to work. At the end of it, I was proud to have helped children with little opportunity to develop their education. After my trip to Thailand, I learnt the significance of giving and helping people where they may need help.

It is a great honor to be part of the Honors Scholars Program. I believe that this opportunity will definitely allow me to work well with my mentors in various research projects and develop my knowledge and skills on a broad scale. I will also be able to reach my full potential with the guidance and experience from the Honors Scholars Program.

A JOB UNFINISHED: MY LIFE AS WORK

LUIS CARBAJAL

During a time in my life that should have been filled with family dinners and high school classes, I found myself working to support my family. Everything started in my hometown Toluca, Mexico. When I was fifteen years old, my father became very sick and was diagnosed with advanced Salmonellosis. After many expensive medical analyses, my father was able to get his first head surgery, but my family was forced to sell everything to pay my father's medical bills. Seeing my family emotionally destroyed and financially bankrupt drastically changed my life. As a result, I dropped out of school and started to work to support my family. But the money that I was making was not enough so I applied for a job in an American construction company in Delaware, and, two months later, I was on my way to the United States.

The first months were hard and frustrating. Living in a new country and having to learn a new language made my job quite hard and exhausting, not only because I was working under the sun all day but also because some of my tasks involved physical

labor such as cleaning, painting, loading and unloading construction materials. The only hope that kept me going was the hope that I was helping my family in Mexico so that my father could continue his medical treatments. I continued supporting my family financially, and, as time passed by, my father got better and my family recovered emotionally. I felt very happy! But I also felt the need to be better prepared to survive, as the current work I was doing offered very low pay and brutal hours. Fortunately, I had extraordinary English as a Second Language teachers who inspired me to stay positive and encouraged me to go to the College of Delaware. At the beginning, it was difficult because I encountered new assignments, projects and lots of homework, but I worked hard and made it through the program. However, on the day of the practice test, I received notification that I could not continue with the GED program because I did not have a state identification, driver's license or social security number. According to Delaware state law, all students must present at least one of these forms of identification to take the official test. I was very disappointed! My professors consoled me and suggested that I move to another state. But, after ten years of living in Delaware, it finally felt like home, and to leave everything to start over again felt terrible.

Nonetheless, I moved to New York City, and, although the first two months were very difficult, I found a job and enrolled in the GED program at City College of The City University of New York (CUNY) where I obtained my GED Diploma and a scholarship. Subsequently, I applied to other colleges in the CUNY system, and I was accepted to New York City College of Technology (City Tech). In my first semester at City Tech, I encountered new assignments and a fast-paced learning environment. Despite my nerves, I studied twice as hard as any other student, and, at the end, I had a 3.7 GPA. Today, I feel more inspired to continue with my education, and, most importantly, I wish to inspire other people to continue with their education by providing them with a living example. In spite of all my struggles, I feel that my experiences have served an important purpose in shaping me into the individual I am today.

FIRST SATURDAYS AT THE MUSEUM

Target First Saturdays welcomes thousands of visitors to enjoy free entertainment and art exhibits at the Brooklyn Museum. Aptly named, the event runs from 5-11 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month with concerts featuring local acts in the museum's foyer and food and drinks courtesy of Saul Restaurant and Bar, as well as the museum café. Limited tickets become available at the visitor center thirty minutes prior to the start of the program. Since it's not uncommon for ticket pickup lines to form an hour before headline events, some pre-planning is advised to ensure admission.



October's First Saturday featured live music by Cumbriagra, Sofia Rei, and Chris Washburne and the SYOTOS band. European art curator Richard Aste gave a talk on the Spanish-American art exhibition *Behind Closed Doors* while the museum's auditorium screened *También la Lluvia*, a drama on the experiences of a Mexican film crew shooting a movie in Bolivia while the locals rise up to protest the privatization of their

water supply. Teacher and writer Blanca Vega led conversations on contemporary issues in Latino literature, and the Capuli Mexican Dance Company hosted workshops featuring traditional and contemporary Mexican dance and music. Scenes were read from *La Ruta*, an immigration-themed project-play collaboration between Working Theatre and The Magnum

Foundation, which opened the floor to discussion on contemporary issues regarding the subject. The theme seemed to carry through the evening; the night closed with a social justice forum led by human rights group El Puente while Nora Comstock of Las Comadres Para Las Americas presented *Count on Me*, an anthology featuring prominent Latino authors revealing

the friendships that have helped them overcome adversities.

The evening's hot ticket event was the Hands-On Art workshop at 6:30 p.m. on the first floor. Inspired by the museum's collection of hand-wrought metal arts, 330 visitors were given drafting and sculpting tools, metal foil, and a half-hour session of free rein to create as they pleased. The results ranged from decorative medallions to mini-sculptures to fashion accessories. It was a much-needed break from the typical look-see museumgoer experience. The mixed bag of participants and laissez-faire approach to crafts provided an artistic dialogue on even ground for the young and old.

In between events, I found myself frequenting the contemporary and American art exhibits. The Brooklyn Museum groups pieces by culture and time period rather than form. This allows for lively juxtapositions of paintings and sculpture with focus on common subjects and

themes. I was occupied by the grouping of Albert Bierstadt's 1866 oil-on-canvas painting *A Storm in the Rocky Mountains, Mt. Rosalie* and Valerie Hegarty's *Fallen Bierstadt*, a part-painting part-sculpture piece. The *Fallen Bierstadt* hangs warped and torn as if ravaged by nature, complete with pieces on the floor below that have seemingly fallen off. The blurb corresponding to *A Storm in the Rocky Mountains* reveals that Bierstadt's landscape depiction is art directed; he rearranged the lighting and exaggerated the scale for a dramatic and heroic final canvas. The contrast of the two pieces highlights both Hegarty's views on the tradition of dignified landscape paintings and the Brooklyn Museum's openness and humor in curating its exhibits.

If not for the special events, check out Target First Saturdays for free non-ticketed admission to regular museum exhibitions the whole night. Currently featured are Valerie Hegarty's "Alternative

Histories," "Wangechi Mutu: A Fantastic Journey," and "The Fashion World of Jean Paul-Gaultier: From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk." Hegarty's exhibit features her reworking of the museum's period rooms with treatments similar to that of her *Fallen Bierstadt*. Mutu's exhibit is her first museum survey and features her signature large-scale video works, sculptural installations, and more. The Gaultier exhibit features 140 haute couture and prêt-à-porter ensembles, from the designer's earliest to his most recent collections as well as a multimedia look at his fashion photographer and contemporary artist collaborators. Fashionheads who missed the Met's 2011 exhibition on Alexander McQueen, "Savage Beauty" would be remiss to not check it out before it closes in February. Target First Saturdays is a free event. For regular visits, bring a valid CUNY ID to enjoy discount rates on admission.

Khoreece H. Mendoza



A Sound Tradition

THE STEINWAY PIANO FACTORY

Walter Rada

Human compassion and sensitivity can never be replicated by machines. That is what the workers of the Steinway Piano Factory believe. The people of this factory pride themselves on the value of human craftsmanship and dedication. While other companies may view this as outdated and costly, Steinway believes it is traditional and a worthy price for a worthy product. Pianists have traveled from all over the world to visit this factory and now City Tech students know why.

On January 23, 2014, the students of City Tech traveled through the frozen tundra of Astoria, NY, to the Steinway Piano Factory. This factory has quite a history dating back to the year 1850 with the migration of the Steinway family to the States from Germany. Coming from a long line of carpenters, the family had held an interest in pianos. Therefore, each family member went to work in a piano factory in order to better understand the business and learn English. Three years

manufacturing site in New York. After learning all of this, the students traveled around the factory looking at the very lengthy process of piano construction. The process starts with the collection of Hard Rock Maple and Sitka Spruce; this lumber, included in all pianos, are the best, while other lumber is used for decorative purposes. In fact, the lumber cost alone outweighs its competitor cost. In order to remain environmentally friendly, for every tree taken, three are planted in its place and the newly planted trees cannot be touched for a century. After the lumber is cut, it is taken back to the factory to dry for months. The wood is cut into boards and placed in an aging room with relatively warm temperatures. The average time spent in the aging room is three to six months,

but the wood is considered ready when it contains six percent equalized moisture. Construction of a piano is averaged at twelve months for grand pianos and nine for upright pianos. The average weight for a piano is 900 pounds. However, this is where the standardization ends. Steinway Piano Factory focuses on creating one unique piano at a time, made by human hands without much reliance on machines.

Each board on every piano is handpicked, and, because of the importance of wood in the piano's output, only the basic cuts or holes are made by machines. The wood's fiber and temperature can alter the piano's sounds. Vibrations are then used to test the piano's functionality. The rest of the piano's construction revolves on the different floors of the factory. Since each

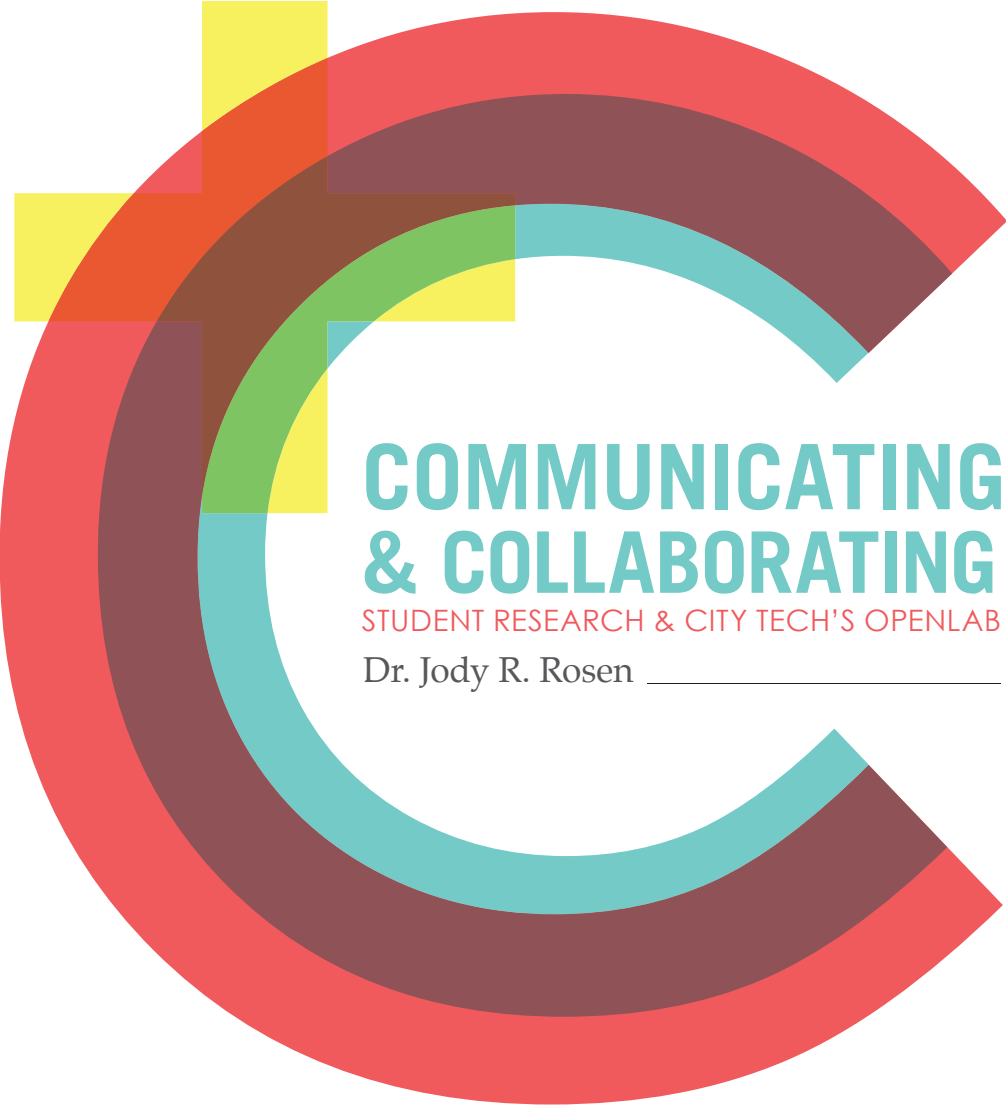
later, the Steinway Company was started in Manhattan near Varick Street. By 1880, the Steinway Company had become the biggest company in the business, and the family set up shop where the Waldorf Astoria Hotel is now located. With their new-found success, the family built a mansion, which is now raising funds to be turned into a museum. The company spawned a factory town which came to be known as Steinway Village, containing housing for the workers, a fire department, church, library, and even its own beer garden. These places have now been absorbed into the rest of Astoria. For example, the library in Steinway Village is now the Queen's County Library. Still, the Steinway Piano Factory is still the biggest



piano is custom made, each has its own unique sound. The piano's sounds are further distinguished by the role of the piano's rim. Normally, a rim would absorb the sound made by a piano, but Steinway piano rims are made using a traditional method started in 1900. This involves layers of wood being bent by rods to form the rim and this allows rims to reflect the music played. Each rim is custom made for each piano to create its own music, and if any piano is brought in for refurbishment, then any worn or broken parts are remade by hand. Just as musicians view instruments as an extension of themselves, the factory workers view their pianos as an extension of their work.

The Steinway Company goes to great lengths not only to maintain product quality, but also to have it improve over

time. In fact, Steinway pianos have built a reputation for improving over the first thirty years of ownership. This is accomplished by accounting for changes in the temperature around the piano. Wood contracts in cold temperatures, thus pins are used to steady the wood and prevent it from collapsing while layers are used to prevent cracking when the wood expands. The factory has also earned the recognition as one of the safest woodworking factories in the US. It is 50% more productive than German piano factories, ironically, and 100% more productive than Asian competitors. Finally, the quality set forth by Steinway Piano has never been fully duplicated in the same price point. This truly goes to display that hard work does pay off and modern technology can't always improve on traditional methods.



Students conducting research at City Tech are in an enviable position. With access to the OpenLab, they have available a fantastic vehicle to support their efforts to collaborate with classmates and mentors for research. Beyond providing a platform for coursework, the OpenLab provides a great opportunity for developing research sharing those research accomplishments. By incorporating the OpenLab into their research practices, Honors Scholars students will develop an online presence and web skills, and showcase their research accomplishments for the City Tech community and the world beyond.

Joining the Community

Once students join the OpenLab, they can create a profile to help identify themselves within this community. This is a great place for a short bio about academic and extracurricular interests, especially since it will also contain links to any Courses, Projects, and Clubs members join, and a link to the Portfolio. Then they should consider joining the Undergraduate Research Project. The Project's site features a list of faculty members interested in mentoring student research, posts about events to support their research endeavors, and updates about internship and fellowship opportunities. OpenLab members who join the Project can add information about events and opportunities related to research at City Tech.

Another great way for students interested in conducting research using OpenLab is to create a Project themselves that will provide a space for collaboration with research mentors. This can be a space shared among all students working with a mentor, or can be one-on-one for student and mentor, or could even be solo for students to record and develop their research. Ideally, mentors would join the Projects, too, to track the research, respond to research questions, guide progress, motivate development, and suggest places for further work or further reflection.

Students can create Clubs related to research in a particular field, or research in general. One important feature of the Clubs on the OpenLab is that they do not need to be official SGA clubs; any members can start a Club, and should based on their interests, developing a community of like-minded collaborators. A student research club would be a welcome addition to the OpenLab.

Crafting an Online Presence

Portfolios are available for all OpenLab members; all students can create ePortfolios for their work, whether related to coursework, research, or other activities. The ePortfolio is a place to record and reflect on growth and achievements—even the failures—because it's a place to consider how those successes and failures shaped subsequent development. As students develop their work across the OpenLab, they can highlight that work in their ePortfolio. When applying for internships, scholarships, jobs, college transfer, or graduate school, students can use their ePortfolio to demonstrate

the range of their experiences and how it has shaped them academically, socially, and professionally. In some fields, students will take another step, drawing material from the ePortfolio to craft their professional portfolio for their pursuits beyond City Tech

In all of the areas on the OpenLab, content is open by default. That means that the work contributed, identified with a member's display name (which can be a pseudonym, not the member's actual name), can be available for consideration. EPortfolio addresses with a student's name in the title or URL (the default option) will certainly identify that member to anyone looking for information. This is a good thing! All members contributing to the OpenLab have the opportunity to shape their online presence to present themselves in the way they want. The OpenLab Team encourages that rather than fear what could be lurking online, all members craft an online presence that will depict their work positively and will provide the opportunity to convey what is important about their accomplishments and contributions to the City Tech community.

In addition to their accomplishments in research, Honors Scholars students can boast about their skills when they gain familiarity with using the OpenLab. Since the OpenLab uses popular software that is open source, namely BuddyPress to create the profiles and network everything together, and WordPress for all the sites, members who actively use the OpenLab are developing technology skills. WordPress is widely used for websites on the Internet, so skills developed through this experience will be very relevant in future endeavors beyond the OpenLab.

The OpenLab Team provides workshops and support for those in the City Tech community interested in developing these skills and enhancing their presence. Students who gain expertise using the OpenLab might be interested in blogging for The Buzz, a Project developed by the OpenLab Student Team. Those who develop an interest in larger questions about technology, community, and other data trends may be interested in doing research about the OpenLab for a future research project. Each semester, there are internships available for students to work with OpenLab developers.

The OpenLab Team (OpenLab@citytech.cuny.edu) welcomes this kind of interest, as well as other suggestions

LEFT BRAIN, MEET RIGHT BRAIN:

INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSES AS SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS

LIZA LUBOA

How would you answer the question, “what does it mean to be human?” as a college student? A reflective answer seems appropriate. Depending on your major, you could say as a Philosophy major that to be human is to show the capacity for rational thinking or as an Art major that being human means expressing a part of you or your emotions through a visual creative medium. But what if a Computer Science major argues that artificial intelligence demonstrated what Philosophy defined as rational thinking?

Non-liberal arts colleges encourage their students to choose a field that is expected to become their lifelong career. However, increasing numbers of students—specifically working adults—attend college courses to change careers or to supplement their existing education to meet the growing demands of their current one. At New York City College of Technology (City Tech), there is a new yet old approach to preparing students for the workforce after graduation: interdisciplinary courses. This approach is new in the sense that different departments work together to demonstrate how their unique academic perspectives can provide a possible approach to a universal question such as the one noted in the beginning of this article. But it is also old in the sense that this approach has been in practice by one of its own departments.

For a business to be successful, it must always obey the key concept of economics: maximizing the use of limited but available resources. Environmentalists continue to warn of global warming, and current industrial practices ignore Earth’s rapidly declining ability to sustain life. *Environmental Economics*, an interdisciplinary course created by Professor Sean P. MacDonald, aims to explore the link between environmental and macroeconomic studies. Students will be introduced to guest lectures by professors from different departments and develop an economically feasible solution to the challenges of saving the environment.

Few cities can boast the rich legacies left behind by past and present residents historically, artistically, and politically as New York. In *Black New York*, an interdisciplinary course created by Professor Marta Effinger-Crichlow, students are challenged to appraise the influence of African ancestry throughout the centuries in defining the New Yorker from a multitude of standpoints.

Technological advancements have made it possible to breathe life into ideas that exist only on paper or through discussions. Through computer simulations, people are able to receive real-time feedback to possible solutions for current problems or develop a videogame that provides a reactive interaction with characters beyond books. *Programming Narratives: Computer Animated Storytelling* created by Professors Candido Cabo and Reneta D. Lansiquot offers students the chance to create their own story using a special computer program, combining writing, problem-solving and computational thinking skills.

City Tech has recently changed its required curriculum for a Bachelor’s Degree: students must now take an interdisciplinary course in order to graduate. Students are able to choose from many courses, including ENG 1773 Weird Science: Interpreting and Redefining Humanity, ECON 2205 Environmental Economics, and AFR 3000 Black New York. Moreover, CST 1102 Programming Narratives: Computer Animated Storytelling is a new course that will be offered in the Spring 2015, and SBS 2000 Research Methods for the Behavioral and Social Sciences will soon be offered. When registering for these courses, be sure that the section of the course you enroll in is designated as interdisciplinary in CUNYFirst. These courses benefit students greatly in that they allow students to sample disciplines, preparing them to address problems in their respective majors with a more diverse perspective.

