

SCHOLARS

HONORS
PROGRAM





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

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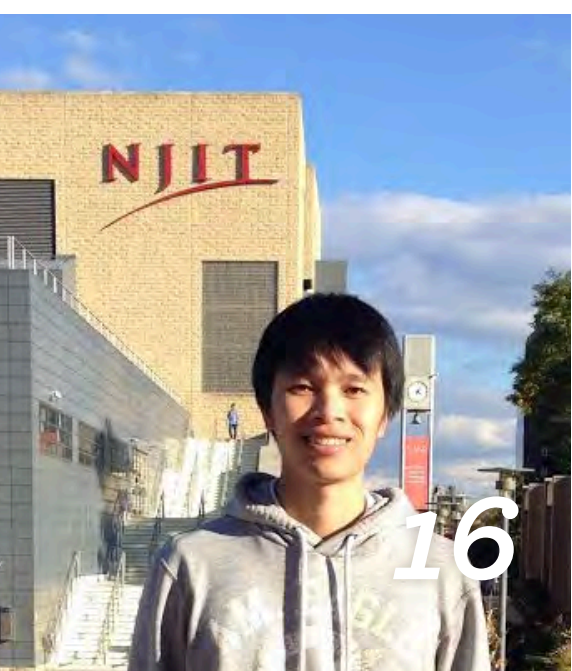
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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jane Tan

For the longest time, I was apathetic towards what I wanted to be in life. When the time came, I imitated what was practical or easy. I followed what was expected of me! When the time came to decide on a major, I simply chose Biology. I did okay on that path, I think. However, in my quest to find myself, I stumbled upon food. While I loved food dearly—and who doesn't?—I had not quite given it much thought in terms of a profession. Last year, though, I discovered New York City College of Technology (City Tech), and I absolutely fell in love with its Hospitality Management Department. There, I met like-minded individuals with the same degree of passion for food as I had, or even more. The atmosphere was so entrancing that I found myself truly engaged, and, for the first time in my life, I found something that truly inspired and excited me. In my mind, I finally saw my grand plan: intensely studying food, spices, culture and traveling to new remarkable places. I finally began to dream vividly and the opportunities were endless!

As for accomplishments, I am embarrassed to admit that I do not have any that can be authenticated

academically or professionally. Before finally deciding to change career paths, I was faceless like a drone among the millions in a beehive, not to mention motionless, floundering about passively waiting, waiting... just waiting for something to happen. Now months later, I am very proud to say that I am so much more. Today, I am fiercely

motivated, working and studying full time six days a week with only my culinary dreams cheering me on. Dare I say that I am now tougher, wiser, more aggressive, and confident than before? I am positive that, given more time at City Tech, I will come to realize what other accomplishments I am capable of this time around.





Rock Stars of Research

WALTER RADA

Every semester, students in the Emerging Scholars Program assist professors in their research or other scholarly projects. The purpose of the program is to help students develop a close relationship with faculty, promote a practical understanding of material learned in courses, provide mentorship to students, and provide faculty with some assistance. In the spring of 2014, the College created the Rock Stars of Research award in order to recognize the hard work and accomplishments of student researchers.

Professor Justin Vazquez Poritz, Director of Undergraduate Research, explained that the purpose is to “recognize the independence of thinking of student researchers and the promise that their research holds for leading to new results, as manifest either by innovative products or results that push the boundary of human knowledge. City Tech has many deserving students that we hope to recognize as Rock Stars of Research in the coming years.” Last semester, of the nearly 100 Emerging Scholars, two were chosen to receive the award

and its cash prize—Brittany Dhital and Md Arefin. Both students gave oral presentations of their research during the Undergraduate Research Mixer on May 7, 2014. Dhital worked with Professor Armando Solis in the Biological Sciences Department on the study of information theory and how it could be used to investigate protein folding. Arefin worked with Professors Oleg Berman and German Kolmakov in the Physics Department in the study of the nonlinear dynamics of polariton Bose-Einstein condensates. Both winners are returning Emerging Scholars

who display a passion for their studies and who look forward to continuing their work.

Dhital studies proteins due to their universal role and believes they hold countless possibilities. She plans to expand her research to protein folding with hands-on computations and molecular modeling. Arefin pursues his research for the thrill of discovery and the preparation his work will give him to pursue a doctorate degree. He will continue his research this semester with a project entitled “Turbulence in New Light: Nonlinear Dynamics

of Microcavity Polaritons.” He incorporates his programming knowledge in order to measure the behavior and lifetime of bound states of electrons and electron holes known as excitons, and plans to apply his research to quantum computing.

For current students thinking about undertaking research, know that both winners have been in your shoes and they have some good advice. Dhital’s suggestion is “Don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. Don’t be afraid to push yourself. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Don’t be afraid to

fail: we often learn more from our failures than our successes. Know that what you do is important, no matter how insignificant it may seem. Expect to enjoy your experience.” Arefin’s advice is to “Aim high, work hard, have passion and be an inspiration; success will follow you.”

The passion that these Rock Stars of Research show for their work is an inspiration for upcoming students for years to come.



Math Prep Workshops – Winter 2015

Posted on November 25, 2014 by Mandy Mei



Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a comment | Edit

Upcoming Trip: Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA)

Posted on November 4, 2014 by Mandy Mei



Place: Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA)
Date: November 6, 2014
Time: 4:00pm – 7:30pm
* Dinner in Chinatown

FOR SCHEDULES &
OTHER UPDATES

<https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/honorsscholarsprogram/>

Mysteries of the Deep Just Outside Your Door

Zianne Cuff



charismatic mammals, Californian Sea lions Osborne, Duke, Nav, and Diego located in the on-site Aqua Theater. Younger visitors may enjoy “SpongeBob SquarePants 4-D: The Great Jelly Rescue,” an interactive and highly enjoyable 15-minute underwater adventure complete with its sensational special effects and hilarious ensemble of Bikini Bottom’s most commonplace faces. There are also walrus feedings which allow onlookers to get up and personal with the park’s friendly and “blubbery beauties.” Last but certainly not least, penguin feedings are an opportunity to become fluent in the ancient tongue of “penguin braying” while learning how the Wildlife Conservation Society has made leaps and bounds in saving penguins threatened by pollution and coastal development. Other exhibits such as Conservation Hall enable patrons to further enhance their knowledge of marine life and dispel any misconceptions about such creatures as piranhas, which are

On October 17, 2014, one of the oldest continually operating aquariums in the United States played host to the Honors Scholars. The New York Aquarium, located on Coney Island, is home to a plethora of New York’s most beloved creatures of the sea, boasting over 350 classifications of our most remarkable scaly and flippered friends on the East Coast. Despite the calamity of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the aquarium remains resilient and keeps its doors open to accommodate guests both young and old. While there were severe

damage to several of the buildings and the exhibits therein, aquarium staff were able to work around the lack of space and provide stable support for the fish and marine animals in a smaller yet equally grand institution. A partner in furthering the growth of today’s aquarium site, the Wildlife Conservation Society continues to raise public awareness of environmental issues that pertain to the ocean and its ecosystem. They offer an enrichment program that stimulates the aquarium’s on-site animals

through invigorating exercises of both the minds and bodies of the animals as well as their keepers. Their state-of-the-art Aquatic Animal Health Center, which opened its doors in 2008, is tailored to tend to the needs of aquatic life via diagnostic, surgical, and therapeutic care in their 15,000 square foot observatory space and research center. Upon entering the park, guests are given free rein of the space and are encouraged to behold some of the park’s most

deadly yet distinctly misunderstood. As the New York Aquarium continues to flourish, one can become fully immersed in the aquatic life by taking advantage of the volunteer opportunities and programs offered throughout the year. Gain experience through interactive hands on maintenance of the tanks, animals and, if you’re feeling generous, donate to restore one of New York’s most progressive and educational environments that seek to open the minds of all ages and walks of life.





A WORLD OF BEAUTY BROOKLYN BOTANICAL GARDEN

Walter Rada

Observing the beauty of nature reminds us that technology cannot replace everything. We spend so much of our lives staring at screens that we never see much of the beauty the world offers. Our daily outlook becomes mundane, and we seek a way to escape, but our escape does not need to be dangerous or expensive. Extraordinary beauty is just next door at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden.

On September 23, 2014, students in the Honors Scholars Program journeyed to the Brooklyn Botanical Garden to have a look at a worldly mesh of plant life. Their journey started on the winding

and intersecting trails through the Japanese Hill and Pond Garden. They sat across the pond and watched catfish swim by before passing into the Shakespeare garden. There, the sights and scents of the flowers mentioned in Shakespeare's plays and sonnets were complemented by a recitation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 108 by Andre Manloney, a sophomore studying Radiology.

The Scholars left the sights of this garden for the fragrance garden. The garden allows visitors to feel and smell the leaves of the housed plants, and all the plantations are lowered for wheelchair accessibility.

Following this exhibit, the group was stunned by the magnificent view produced by the lily pool terrace in conjunction with the Steinhardt observatory. They took in the beauty of the terrace as they passed it before entering the observatory which housed a bonsai museum. It included a short history on the bonsai tree and exhibits plants in humid, tropical, and desert environments.

After a short break, the Scholars continued their tour and passed by an odd wood structure. The structure turned out to be the Sandy Remix. The structure is a symbol of hope and revitalization built



from recycled wood left over in the wake of the destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy. Through winding branches, the group made it to the Cherry Esplanade and Cranford Rose Garden, the last stop of the day. The garden presented an area of simplicity, complemented by a sundial. Here, the Scholars reflected on the beauty just at their doorstep.



A 'MOCA' AFTERNOON IN CHINATOWN

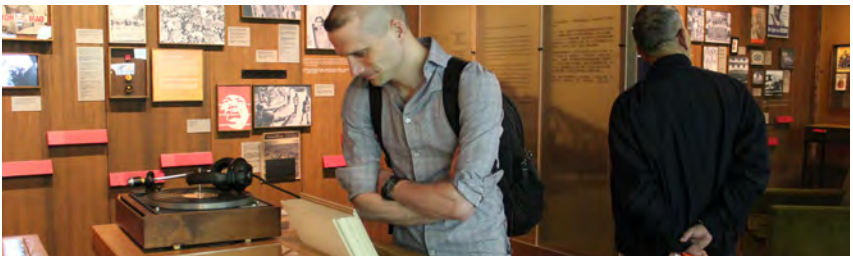
Jane Tan



New York City is a world-renowned cultural melting pot that is made apparent by its effortlessly diverse neighborhoods coexisting in a cohesive fashion. For the Chinese-Americans, its long-standing tradition is duly encapsulated by efforts of the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA). Nestled at the intersection of Chinatown and SoHo, the MOCA aims to become the institution at the forefront for preserving, nurturing and celebrating the colorful heritage of people of Chinese descent residing in the United States.

And this is where, on the late afternoon of November 6, 2014, Honors Scholars were treated to an excursion defined what it means to be a Chinese-American. Right off the bat, the students were welcomed by an interactive wall that showcased TV screens, each featuring a popular icon within the Chinese-American community. Fittingly, right next to it was a thought-provoking exhibit

called *Memory Prints: The Story World of Phillip Chen*, which, from a series of vague and gloomy etchings, revealed a touching, personal accounting of Chinese-American history. Further into the museum, the main exhibition, entitled *With a Single Step: Stories in the Making of America*, began with installations involving the first historical exchanges between the United States and China, up until in our present time, where a fully incorporated and continuously evolving relationship flourishes. Lastly, *Waves of Identity: 35 Years of Archiving* is a fun and engaging exhibition displaying MOCA's enormous artifact collection, aiming to encourage the viewer to actively explore themes about the Chinese in America. Posted questions around the exhibit are complemented by photographs, documents or any other memorabilia, answering topics that range from the humble beginnings of MOCA to deeper questions of identity.



More than just a vehicle to travel back in time, the MOCA stands as a solid beacon that celebrates the past, present, and future of the Chinese-American community in New York. Standing in the heart of Chinatown's hustle and bustle, illustrates how two cultures meld into one perfect union. As the day closed and as we all went home, this experience showed us that celebrating differences and learning from them is a hallmark of a true American.

LEARNING THROUGH CONNECTING PEER MENTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Ilia Silva, Program Coordinator, First Year Programs

While there is much discussion on on-line learning, there will never be a replacement for human interaction, particularly with experienced and successful students trained to help new students who walk into City Tech for the first time. The First Year Programs Office does just this as it utilizes peer mentors to provide support to first-year college students. The program, which started seven years ago, helps first-year students become acclimated to college life and assists students in their academic achievement. The program houses two vibrant peer mentor programs: one links a peer mentor with a learning community block and one assigns peer mentors in a college readiness program called At Home in College, originally from CUNY Central.

A universal truth in higher education holds that successful students are more engaged in the academic, social and cultural elements of the college at their earliest possible moments of their college journey. Peer mentors play a critical role providing the information, encouragement, events, and special workshops that engage first-year students, who, at times, may not be aware of how to actively build their own learning rhythm. “Peer Mentors ease the underlying

stress that comes with entering college and balancing a heavier academic load, while also making new friends,” according to Walter Rada, a current peer mentor.

An evaluation interview conducted with each peer mentor at the end of each semester reflects on the program. Peer mentors articulate specifics about the semester, what worked, and what didn’t work and what would they change. It is an incredible opportunity to receive first-hand feedback and make improvements to the program. A former peer mentor, Donald Cherestal, captures the core of the position: “It feels great to help students, and I keep learning more and more by helping them.”

However, not everyone can earn the honor of becoming a peer mentor. It takes special skills and the right mindset. Given their important role, it is critical that those who serve as peer mentors are the most capable and energetic individuals. We have developed a competitive recruitment and application process to find peer mentors who have the potential to further develop such necessary skills as robust communication skills, a welcoming demeanor, an ability to work independently, familiarity with the college, a genuine interest in helping others,

a professional attitude, enthusiasm, and resourcefulness. Once selected, peer mentors attend an initial training session and receive on-going training throughout the year. Peer mentors are very clear about their role, expectations and the support they will receive in their efforts. Our peer mentors represent a diverse student group, with a variety of majors, interests and a range of class ranks.

As discussed in training, the College-wide goals of the program are at the heart of our efforts. We want students to succeed, and two critical measures of that success are college retention and graduation rates. Peer mentoring programs are at the core of a student-centered environment that improves student retention and increases progress toward their degree. This helps students understand the significance of our role in the college.

Moreover, in addition to making progress on these larger goals, the program is continually validated as a meaningful experience through feedback from former mentees and mentors. I often hear from former peer mentors about the value of the opportunity and how it was one of the most memorable aspects of their years at City Tech.

“Being a part of the First Year Programs has not only given me a great opportunity to grow, but has changed my entire outlook on life and instilled in me a passion for helping students live up to their true potential,” according to one of our senior peer mentors, Justin Ramos.

Our peers also look to increase college involvement outside of the classroom. Each semester, a welcome orientation kicks off the semester, an informal social held during club hours that encourages mentors, students, professors and staff to have lunch, build community and socialize in a casual setting. In addition, the peer mentors have monitored study rooms, collaborated in study skill workshops, participated in scavenger hunts in the Wellness Fair, organized pre-spring break socials, and organized and facilitated registration workshops to help students learn how to use

the on-line features for course selection.

We also know that, in addition to achieving significant college goals and generating memorable times at City Tech for students, college students who participate in peer education display significant improvements in leadership, gain interpersonal communication skills, increase peer education relevant knowledge, develop higher levels of self-esteem, and create better personal health behaviors (Brack, Millard, & Shah, 2008). We are able to see this first hand with our peer mentors, and many of them also see personal gain based on their achievements in helping others resolve problems and deal with conflicts and by promoting academic excellence.

Peer educators are valuable for an academic institution because they are experienced with the campus,

they are cost efficient, can relate to the situations of fellow students, and are effective (Newton & Ender, 2010). We are proud of this signature program and specifically the peers, who strive to maximize the first-year college experience for City Tech students. The program has proven to be a quintessential college experience for both peers and their peer mentors.



“I felt like I was just running on ice. I wasted a lot of time on the Internet and struggled to start my work. But I really started to advance after talking with my Peer Mentor.”

Past Motives, Future Success

Catching Up with Former Honors Scholars

Jodieann Stephenson



Sometimes, we find ourselves waking up in the middle of the night doubting our decisions from the previous day or contemplating our next move. Although self-doubt arises at the most unsuspecting of times and grips at us, self-doubt is something we are all too fond of. How can we have dreams if we cannot believe in ourselves? E. E. Cummings said it best, "We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us something is valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust, sacred to our touch. Once we believe in ourselves we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight or any experience that reveals the human spirit." In this, Cummings reminds us of the extraordinary individuals such as our families,

friends, mentors and teachers who are very important in our quest for success.

Each year, graduating students from the Honors Scholars Program at New York City College of Technology (City Tech) prove that, with help from mentors and peers, we can aspire to pursue Graduate Schools. Given a rich and stellar company including past Scholars such as Christopher Chan-Hunter College (CUNY)-Master's in Statistics, Tamrah Cunningham-The Tisch School of the Arts at New York University (NYU)-Master's Program in Game Design, Jodian Laird-Hofstra University-Master's Program in Family and Consumer Sciences, Juan Mejia-City College of New York-Master's Program

in Computer Science, Bijan Bayat Mokhtari-Aalto University (Finland)-Master's Program in Mechanical Engineering, Yi Ming Yu-New Jersey Institute of Technology-Doctoral Program in Applied Mathematics, Karmen Yu-Montclair State University-Doctoral Program in Mathematics Education, Guannian Zeng-City College of New York-Master's Program in Computer Science and Suhua Zeng-Stony Brook University, SUNY-Master's Program in Applied Mathematics and Statistics, I found it easy to contact past Scholars to find out what life at grad school is like.

I met with recent graduate and former editor of this publication, Tamrah Cunningham, who is currently studying in the Master's Program in Game



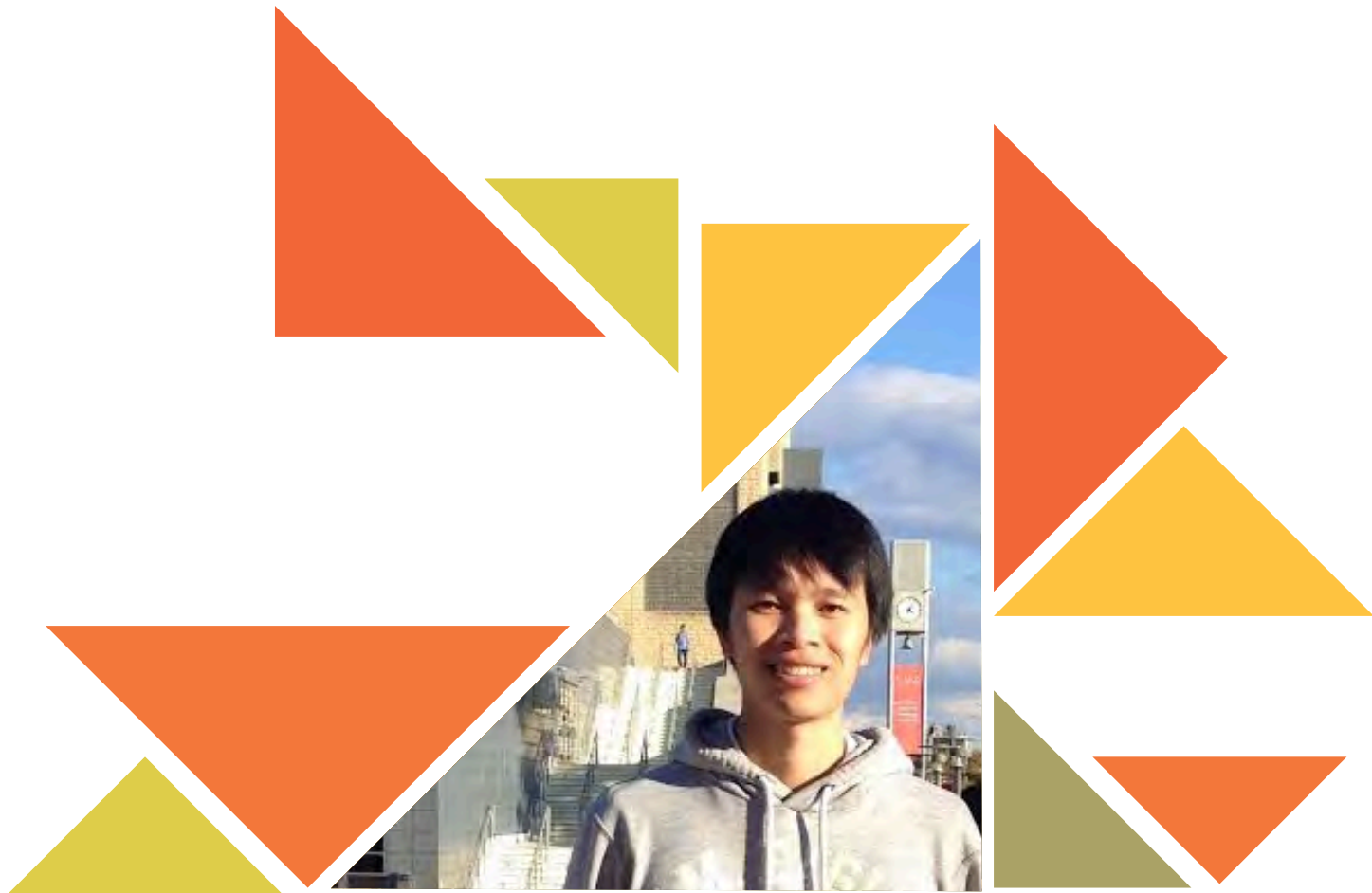
Design at The Tisch of the Arts at NYU. Tamrah found her niche in Game Design as a way to create her own stories using her imagination. At twenty-two years old, she never envisioned the life she has now. She met her mentor, Dr. Reneta D. Lansiquot, in her first semester in college who introduced her to the Honors Scholar Program and other like-minded individuals who shared her love of games. Thereafter, many opportunities presented themselves such as interning for the New York City Subway-Surface Air Flow Exchange (S-SAFE), a company that organized the largest urban airflow study in Brookhaven National Laboratory and the New York Police Department. Even though society has a negative perception of games,

Dr. Lansiquot and Dr. Reginald A. Blake were able to caution her to stick to her "original goals and dreams." Believing that "there is a deeper message in games that teaches us to be literate about history and culture," presently, she is researching narrative storytelling in games with hopes of becoming an independent video game developer.

Yi Ming Yu, studying at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Doctoral Program in Applied Mathematics, moved from China to the U.S. in December of 2007. When his China High School Diploma seemed inadequate, he completed his GED and then entered City Tech. When asked what he appreciated most about City Tech, he said "I was a farmer back home, and City Tech

gave me a second chance at life. Education in China is extremely competitive and I have more opportunities here. My mentors Prof. Urmi Ghosh-Dastidar, Prof. Janet Liou-Mark, and Prof. Singh changed my life!" While tutoring as a Mathematics Peer Leader, he experienced his proudest moments when students had an "Aha moment!" in finally understanding the concepts. He wanted to work with them and properly teach them that math was their friend just as his mentors had taught him. In spite of having a hard time communicating because of a thick accent, he never deviated from his dreams of teaching.

"Looking back, I never thought I would graduate middle school," said Karmen Yu, who is now in



Program in Mathematics Education at Montclair State University (SUNY). When she moved to America from China, it was a “turning point and a chance to start out all over again.” This can be said about most students who migrate from foreign countries. She began tutoring as a Mathematics Peer Leader, which introduced her to the Honors Scholars Program and revealed her love of teaching. Through tutoring, she realized “there are different types of learners and not everyone learns at the same rate.” Although she was initially interested in Entertainment and intended to transfer to Baruch College after obtaining her Associate’s, Karmen’s mentor suggested that she continue her studies in Applied Mathematics. Professor Janet Liou-Mark was able to

guide and inspire her to apply to grad school. As Karmen recalls, “The program is a close-knit family who created a supportive environment filled with encouragement. They really showed interest and believed in me from the start and for that I am forever grateful for their love and support.” Although Math was his least favorite subject, Christopher Chan had no idea he would be enrolled at Hunter College (CUNY) en route to his Master’s Program in Statistics. With past dreams of becoming an artist, then an Engineer, he finally discovered his interest in Statistics. Likewise, Suhua Zeng’s desire to “never stop learning” inspired him to become a Mathematics Peer Leader. As a result of tutoring,

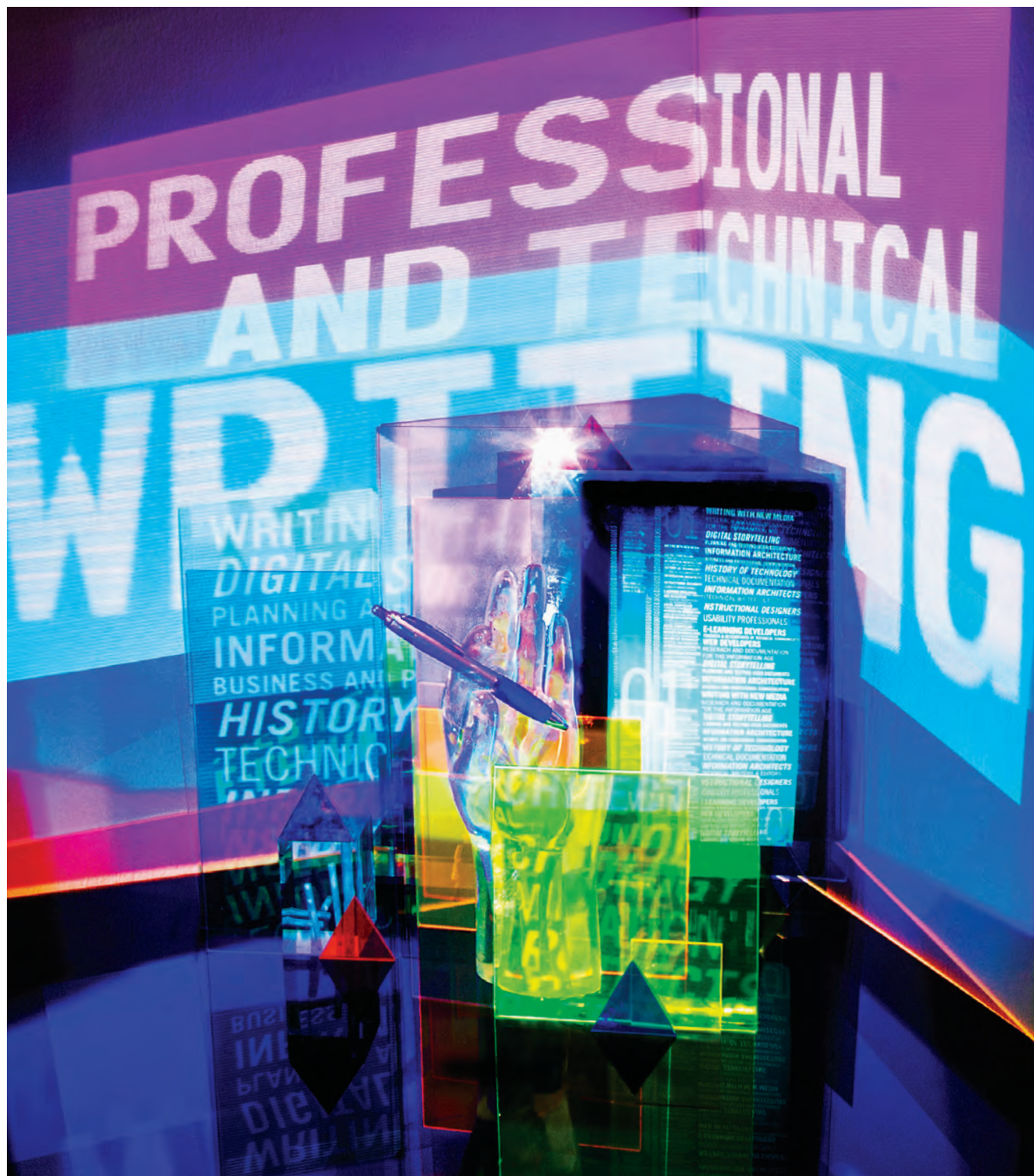
he became familiar with the Honors Scholars Program where he met mentors Profs. Reginald Blake, Janet Liou-Mark, and Boyan Kostadinov, who went above and beyond and aided him in applying to City Tech’s Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Program, which offers students a rich and comprehensive research experience in satellite and ground-based remote sensing. Guannian Zeng at the City College of New York (CCNY) Master’s Program in Computer Science described the Honors Scholars Program as “a great platform for me to meet with other scholars and professors. The most beneficial part of being part of the program is that I can interact with other smart students, in which we both learn from each other.”

Immediately after speaking to each student, I concluded one common denominator: every Scholar had an overwhelming amount of appreciation for his or her mentors and peers. For the most part, when asked about their experiences in graduate school thus far, I was surprised by their candor. Karmen Yu and Yi Ming Yu both expressed the “gap between professor and students, [being a graduate student] is more like a job because you spend a great deal of time working on research.” Guannian Zeng said, “I believe that both City Tech’s computer courses and the Honors Scholars Program helped me to better prepare for my Master’s degree.” As a result of these exceptional individuals believing in themselves, we are able to internalize their words and bring forth the greatness in each of us.

WRITING

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