Greetings! My name is Phillip Menzies, the new director of the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) at NYIT. I hope everyone had a fantastic summer and a great start to their fall semester. I am excited to present my very first issue of this year’s Arthur O. Eve HEOP Happenings, highlighting many examples of our students’ leadership and involvement on and off campus.

This past summer, for example, our freshman class participated in a community service project known as “Meals-on-Heels,” where they had the opportunity to deliver warm meals to senior citizens in Manhattan. In addition, members of the Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society participated in a leadership training and team building day.

A number of community service and other projects are underway, and we hope you will participate. Stay tuned for details!

We encourage you to inform us of milestone achievements you receive while studying here at NYIT so we can include them in HEOP Happenings. We believe that every student’s achievements deserve a moment in the spotlight.

I wish all of you a successful and productive semester. We look forward to the rewarding year ahead!

Sincerely,
Phillip Menzies
Director, Arthur O. Eve HEOP

FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

HEOPPO GRADUATE RECOGNITION DINNER
BY RACHEL FIDIS

Each year in May, the HEOP Professional Organization-NYC Region holds a dinner and graduate recognition ceremony to celebrate outstanding members of the graduating classes from each program. Students are chosen to be honored on the basis of their academic successes, personal growth, and perseverance in the face of obstacles and adversity. This year’s ceremony, on May 5 at Fogo de Chão Brazilian Steakhouse, was attended by multiple schools from within the New York City region, including Barnard College, Fordham University, New York University, and Pratt Institute.

Each school is asked to recognize two graduating seniors at the ceremony. The students chosen from NYIT’s 2015 HEOP class were Zikomo Barr, B.S., business administration/management, and Lakisha Scott, B.S., behavioral sciences/sociology and social work. HEOP assistant director Carla Freeman introduced the awardees before presenting their certificates, painting the picture of a pair who has held on to their determination to successfully complete their degrees. For Zikomo, his college career even included time off from school. As they said that evening, the HEOP staff could not be prouder of his decision to return to NYIT to complete his degree. Though reluctant to speak at first, both Lakisha and Zikomo shared their thoughts with the attendees. Their words echoed those of their fellow award recipients: hope for success in the future, gratitude for the assistance they have received over the years from HEOP, reminders to reflect on what they have accomplished, and encouragement to support those students that will come after them.
"In vain have you acquired knowledge, if you have not imparted it to others.”
—Deuteronomy Rabbah

The students of the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) have certainly not gained their knowledge in vain. For the past five years, they have been sharing their stories, experiences, and knowledge with the students from the High School of Arts and Technology at Martin Luther King Jr. Educational Campus. This initiative began with the first group of students inducted into the Chi Alpha Epsilon National Honor Society (XAE) who were looking for a way to live out the mission of helping others achieve academic success. On April 24, the mission was once again lived out by seven HEOP students and members of XAE, three of whom will be graduating this May. Students who participate in this trip are dubbed HEOP ambassadors.

On this visit, the HEOP ambassadors were split up so that they could cover several classes and reach even more students. In all, the students spoke to three different classes of juniors and seniors. Questions ranged from specifics about majors to more general questions like how to stand out when applying to schools. The HEOP ambassadors really opened up on this visit; one student even shared some of his setbacks, explaining how failing courses early on in his college career made it difficult to improve his GPA later on. He advised every class to learn from his experience and avoid making the same mistake. A good portion of the visit was spent answering questions about HEOP. Sophomore Najnin Mimma, also known as Mimma, described the event as one of the most rewarding experiences she has had. She said she learned not to judge students based on how they act in front of their peers and that “patience is key.”

Graduating senior Cody Souffrant was particularly affected by the visit. “My experience was honestly amazing; I enjoyed sharing my story as well as being an advocate for NYIT and HEOP. This needs to happen more often in different schools across New York. Students all have questions about college, and it makes sense for the answers to come from college students. We can mentor and coach them as they prepare to apply to college. That transition from high school to college is scary; I want them to be prepared.” When asked if he learned anything that could be applied to his career, he said the following: “As an aspiring social worker who aims to work in a counseling and wellness setting, this was truly vital to my learning process. I learned a little bit about the high school students, their fears and also their ambitions. I can be the bridge and assist students with the transition from high school and college. That first year of college really sets the tone for the next couple of years of your life. Let's start it off right. I hope to help them do just that!”

After the visit, Dr. Edward A. Mainzer, a counselor at the High School of Arts and Technology, thanked NYIT “for bringing over such a marvelous group of HEOP students from your program at NYIT and for the valuable information and inspiration they imparted to our juniors and seniors.” It was a win-win situation as the HEOP students gained valuable insight and experience from the visit as well, some of which can even be applied to their future careers. We look forward to meeting more students on our next visit!

XAE LEADERSHIP TRAINING 2015
BY PHILLIP MENZIES

On Friday, August 21, five members of the Zeta Lambda chapter of Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society met for XAE leadership training to prepare for the 2015-2016 academic year. During this training, topics such as community service, membership awareness, new initiatives, and collaboration with NYIT social clubs were discussed. The students also held elections for leadership roles on the XAE executive board. Congratulations to the following members on their new roles!
As our continuing students and many NYIT staff members should recall, all incoming HEOP freshmen are required to participate in a five-week summer program prior to beginning their college careers. While the majority of the program focuses on honing math and writing skills, there is always time set aside for expanding our new students’ horizons in other ways. This year, HEOP freshmen participated in a variety of activities both on and off campus.

On July 10, the HEOP staff led the students to the North Meadow in Central Park for a day of bonding and team building. A core intention of this outing was to encourage interaction among the new students. Games were played, and fun was had by all. A highlight of the day included a very energetic match of tug of war. Students also poured their efforts into a long game of Giants, Elves, and Wizards, a strategy game similar to life-size “rock, paper, scissors.”

The following week, the group spent the morning learning about the financial aid process and the importance of properly and promptly completing FAFSA and TAP applications. Margaret Dunbar, financial aid director, educated the class on topics such as cost of attendance and satisfactory academic progress. Following their lessons, the students were sent outdoors on a scavenger hunt to explore the campus area.

Week 3 of the summer program focused on the importance of community service. The HEOP freshmen and staff put in several hours of volunteering for Meals-on-Heels, a program run by the Carter Burden Luncheon Club & Senior Program. Groups were given packs of hot meals to be delivered to homebound seniors in the area and were encouraged to spend time with the individuals on their route. One group met a woman eager to talk about the history of her building and show off her large collection of artwork. Reflecting on the day, the students saw the value of giving their time in the service of others when possible, and some even spoke of returning to the center during the school year.

The final outing of the summer took the students out to the Hudson and East Rivers on a Circle Line Cruise. Luckily, it was a day of beautiful weather and clear skies. They enjoyed many fun facts about New York City and more than a few gorgeous views of the island.

Another successful summer program has come and gone. The staff of the HEOP office looks forward to seeing our newest students succeed in their first year!

MEETING MISSIONARIES
BY VANDERIE VIELIE

On April 2, HEOP students Aidan Mohammed and Bryan Diaz, also a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity Incorporated (TKE), joined HEOP counselor Vanderie Vielie on a trip to the local soup kitchen at St. Paul the Apostle Church. This was Aidan’s second trip to the soup kitchen. The students of HEOP and Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society have been offering their support to the soup kitchen once a semester for the past four years. On this trip, they met a group of over a dozen young adults from North Carolina who were visiting New York on a missionary visit. St. Paul the Apostle was one of several soup kitchens they had volunteered at during their short stay in the city. After some socializing with the visitors, everyone got to work helping to set up the soup kitchen and organize the pantry. We look forward to our next visit this semester!
Last spring, eight students and two faculty/staff leaders traveled to Managua, Nicaragua through NYIT’s Alternative Spring Break program. Some of the students selected to participate had never been outside of the United States, and applied because they wanted to experience a different culture, travel abroad, and gain experience for their career. While in Nicaragua, the group ran a three-day overnight summer camp for 37 underserved children ages 4 – 12, planning fun and educational activities. They also met with local community members to understand water conservation and filtration issues in order to recommend viable solutions. In spring 2016, NYIT students and faculty/staff will return to Nicaragua to continue the great work the 2015 group began.

HEOP student Anthony Holloway reflects on his experience:

“During part of the trip, we were in a camp for children who were less fortunate. I taught them how to play several sports, including soccer, football, and steal the bacon. The hardest part of the experience for me was not knowing the language (Spanish) at all. Two pastors came every day with children. Luckily, the younger of the pair knew English and would translate for me.

What was interesting was that we went there to do research to find out what these communities needed. For instance, we learned it would rain for three to four months straight in the rainy season. What struck me immediately is that not all rainwater is being recycled, and it is going to waste. As a group, we interviewed people and found out problems the villages have. For example, one village with flooding issues needs a piping system for the water. Another village recycled rain water but not correctly. They could wash laundry but not drink the rainwater.

One important thing we learned was that these people do not need money or possessions to be given to them; they need knowledge. Donated items and money will be sold or used as soon as someone at home gets sick. Knowledge is more valuable because they can build things up on their own. Schools teach the basic subjects (math, science, etc.), but they would benefit from survival skills and how to use their natural resources.”

When asked if he would attend the Alternative Spring Break again, Anthony quickly replied that he is already in the process of applying for the next trip.
On April 30, NYIT held its Annual Student Affairs Leadership Awards. This year, several HEOP students were recognized for their outstanding contributions to the NYIT community.

Oshane Cooke was presented with the Dorothy Schure Memorial Award for his work in extracurricular activities that reflect concern and support and dedication to the college community. He was recognized as the co-founder of the popular student group SWAG (Students Working to Achieve Greatness) as well as his roles as orientation leader, HEOP and first-year mentor, and role model to all students.

Jaishel Linch Bennett received the Israel Louis Schure Award for extracurricular leadership for her involvement in several volunteer events on campus, including organizing the Heart Ball to raise funds for the American Cancer Society and participating in NYIT’s alternative spring break trip to Ecuador in 2014. Jaishel has served as president of Bear Hug, orientation leader/first-year mentor, resident assistant, HEOP tutor, and president of Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society.

Zikomo Barr was presented with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Award for outstanding contribution to the community at NYIT. He was described as “a servant leader always helping his peers by setting an example and giving back to others”. Zikomo has served NYIT in the role of student ambassador, orientation leader, SGA vice president of judicial and compliance, president of Inter-Greek Council and ZH Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, secretary of the School of Management Student Advisory Board, and member of the student programming board.

Lakisha Scott received the Student Services Award for her outstanding service in her positions as treasurer of the Student Government Association, vice president of Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society, orientation leader/first-year mentor, member of Students Working to Achieve Greatness, and Bear Hug. When presented with this award, Lakisha was described as “a wonderful example not only to NYIT students but young people beyond the NYIT community.”

Cody Souffrant was honored with the Alumni Award for his outstanding service to NYIT. Described as a natural leader, Cody’s role as co-founder of SWAG (Students Working to Achieve Greatness) “has allowed him to leave behind a legacy for current and future students”. He has served as first-year mentor, orientation leader, and resident assistant; he is also a member of the National Residence Hall Honorary and Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society.

Anthony Holloway was chosen to receive this year’s Community Service Award for his role in sponsoring several successful events on and off campus to raise awareness for a cause reflecting the concerns of the NYIT community. He was also recognized for his involvement in NYIT’s 2015 Alternative Spring Break trip to Nicaragua.

Yoini Mejia was recognized as Student Employee of the Year for his work with Academic Computing Lab. He is described by his supervisor William Stennett as someone who “displays a level of maturity and dedication not seen in someone his age. He has been a positive role model to his peers – if you want anything done and done well, Yoini is the student worker you can call.”

Celeste Puac received the Outstanding Recreational Athlete Award for her commitment to and support of her peers, as well as bringing school pride and her talent to NYIT’s soccer team.

Francheska Vasquez was honored with a Recognition Award in appreciation for her service to the NYIT community and her work in the Office of Campus Life.

HEOP students who are also members of SWAG and Bear Hug were recognized for organizing Program of the Year, “CarnEvil.” In organizing this event, the two groups worked hard and were committed to bringing the Old Westbury and Manhattan campus communities together to raise over $3,000 for Relay for Life, the March of Dimes and Breast Cancer research.

Congratulations to all of the awardees, you have shown in a big way that HEOP works!
On my island of reds and blues
of birds, tropical trees and tunes
where the sand in between my toes and pebbles flow

On my island where we go on vacations to
and leave all stress behind of our busy lives,
where we live the rhythm of merengue, bachata, and salsa

On my island where our sun enriches our skins
and our skies fall every day,
where scented flowers fill our nostrils
and we sing the night away
and mosquitos bite our souls giving us that Spanish flavor of a true dominicano

At NYIT, students are recognized for academic excellence achieved during their freshman year by way of induction into the Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society. In order to be eligible, a student must earn a minimum GPA of 3.5 during at least one semester of their freshman year. We in HEOP are extremely proud when our freshmen earn membership. It is a testament to the success our students can attain through hard work and dedication. On March 30, freshman Lismary Cabral became the newest HEOP student to be welcomed into Phi Eta Sigma during its annual induction ceremony. We wish her and all of our students continued success in their studies at NYIT!

During spring 2015, I attended the Northeast Greek Leadership Association Annual Conference (NGLA) from Feb. 26 through March 1 in Hartford, Conn. I was given this opportunity by the Inter-Greek Council at NYIT. Attending this conference helped me develop my leadership skills as I spoke to several other members of the Greek community from all over the Northeast. The several keynote speakers focused on how to get more students on campus involved in becoming Greek and in helping others.

What many people fail to realize is that the students that “Go Greek” are those who are more likely to be successful. We develop the ability to be able to handle situations that we may come across in the workforce earlier on. We learn how to dress professionally, write emails, hold events, and go through an interview process. Being in a sorority or fraternity is more than what the movies makes it seem. We are powerful leaders capable of doing so much. Being able to connect with other sorority and fraternity members made me more grateful for being in Alpha Sigma Tau. Without it, I would not be the woman I am today or have the connections I have made with hundreds of other people throughout the United States.
On Tuesday, April 14, eight Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) students and one honorary member were inducted into the Zeta Lambda chapter of Chi Alpha Epsilon (XAE) National Honor Society at NYIT. During this fifth induction ceremony, eight current XAE members received jeweled upgrades to their pins based on their stellar academic performance after their initial induction. Zennabelle Sewell, associate dean of campus life, gave the keynote address, which focused on the importance of hard work. She stressed that there is no such thing as luck. “Luck is simply preparedness meeting opportunity.” She urged all students to continue to work hard and be prepared when opportunity arises. Dean Sewell ended her keynote address by quoting from a powerful poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

“The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night.”

This year’s honorary inductee was HEOP’s own Carla Freeman. Carla serves as the assistant director and counselor for HEOP. In her role, she helps guide students through academic, financial, and personal challenges. Carla has dedicated over 14 years of service to Arthur O. Eve HEOP and remains committed to empowering students to achieve a college education, while aiding them to be successful members of the NYIT and larger community.

Throughout her time here, she has touched the lives of hundreds of students and continues to be an integral part of their journey. Carla expressed her gratitude for being selected to join this prestigious group. “It is an honor to be called honorable.” (“Honorable” is the title given to all XAE members after they are inducted into the group.)

Inductees shared their stories of struggle and success, many of which brought the room to tears. Proud parents, friends, family, and NYIT staff and faculty were honored to be a part of these students’ special day of recognition. Induction into XAE is no easy feat. Many honorees are the first in their families to pursue a college degree and have overcome significant obstacles in the process. This day is a true testament to the success of opportunity programs like HEOP. XAE President Moona Nadeem spoke of the transformative effect being a member and president of XAE has had on her. She also discussed XAE’s numerous community service initiatives and encouraged the new inductees to take part.

The ceremony ended on an emotional note as well when then-HEOP Director Deepa Bhalla was honored for her years of service to HEOP and XAE at NYIT. The HEOP staff presented her with an engraved clock which read “To Deepa Bhalla, with love from your HEOP family.” We wish all of our HEOP family continued success.

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The primary objective of The Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) is to help provide a broad range of services to the student, who because of academic and economic circumstances would otherwise be unable to attend college, yet has the potential and desire to obtain a college degree.

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