

Advocate

<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/advocate>

BMCC Puts "Homeland Security" Program on Hold

JAMES HOFF

When recently asked about the proposed Security Management Certificate Program and the "Homeland Security" course originally slated to appear at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC)

this Fall, BMCC president and member of the American Association of Community College's "Task Force on Homeland Security" Antonio Perez said simply "the college is no longer moving forward with the proposed certificate program." This surprising announcement comes just weeks after a slew of student and faculty protests to prevent the proposed certificate program and the infamous "Homeland Security" course from being offered at BMCC this semester.

When asked why the program was cancelled and whether or not the college was responding to pressure from student and faculty activists, the administration was less than forthcoming. BMCC officials including President Perez, Vice President of Academic Affairs Sadie Bragg, and the Public Relations Department, despite numerous attempts to reach them refused to comment. Student and faculty activists, while relieved that the

program is no longer being considered, remain wary in the absence of a public statement from the college. They will continue to pursue the issue with the administration and to actively work next semester to assure that the program is indeed not offered and that it does not manifest itself later in some other form.

Since September 11, community colleges have increasingly taken a shine to the prospect of homeland security training and education, including Monroe Community College in Rochester, NY and Iowa Central Community College, which offers courses in, among other things, preventing agro-terrorism. Not to be outdone by a Iowa, BMCC proposed its own Security Management Certificate Program last year. The program, which was sponsored by the Business Management Program, was originally intended to be offered as a ten-course certificate program with required courses in "Security Management Techniques," and "Homeland Security." Sample syllabi, which were included in the proposal, con-

see *BMCC Cancels Program*, page 9



Students demonstrate against the proposed BMCC Homeland Security program.

State Assembly Member Ron Canestrari Visits GC

PAUL MCBREEN

The Chair of the Higher Education Committee of the New York State Assembly, Ron Canestrari, paid a visit to the Graduate Center on Friday, January 14. This was Canestrari's second visit to the GC as head of the Higher Education Committee. His hosts were GC administrators Frances Horowitz, Bill Kelly, Steve Gorelick and students Moira Egan, David Golland, Stephanie Domenici Cabonargi, and Paul McBreen.

During Mr. Canestrari's introduction to 365 Fifth Avenue last year, a student representative presented him with a stack of hundreds of letters signed by students, faculty, and staff regarding the lack of tuition remission for GC students. At that meeting, Mr. Canestrari was relatively new to the unique set of problems that we at CUNY face. This time, however, his answers showed familiarity with the plight of CUNY—especially the funding inequity between CUNY and the State University of New York (SUNY).

Mr. Canestrari fielded extremely specific questions about how funding of CUNY graduate students can be improved. For instance, he was asked how the budgeting processes might be altered so that CUNY's annual allocation from Albany would include an amount specifically earmarked for graduate student support. He did not have an answer to that question, but did turn our attention to the Assembly's Ways and Means Committee. According to Canestrari, the Ways and Means Committee has the power to effect an annual allocation specifically for graduate student support. He offered to arrange meetings with members of this committee in Albany; we need to take advantage of this offer.

We now have the benefit of name-recognition with the chair of an important committee. The Graduate Center, CUNY is a presti-

gious institution of higher learning located in midtown Manhattan. People are familiar with us and we need to shed our insecurity regarding our supposed obscurity. We must stop chasing our fair share of the state budget after the fact, looking for handouts from CUNY's Board of Trustees and the PSC. Canestrari appears impressed with our institution, and expressed understanding of our situation as it was explained to him. He understands that we are not looking for handouts but for simple funding parity with SUNY.

The GC community must organize now to keep alive the issue of the lack of tuition remission for our students who teach at CUNY campuses. We must make visits to local offices of state legislators and follow up with visits to those same legislators in Albany. The DSC has met with GC administrator Steve Gorelick making preliminary plans for these activities, and will keep students informed on how they can be an active part of this lobbying effort. Visit the valuable website of NYPIRG (www.nypirg.org) to see exactly which legislators represent you. Becoming informed is the first step to making a change.



NY State Assembly member Ron Canestrari

PSC Negotiates for Better
Adjunct Benefits

Drugs and Western
Power in Afghanistan

Inauguration Protest
Small but Fiesty

Reflections on Sharon's
Changing Coalitions

Red-Blooded Male
Theater Reviews

Chance to
Improve
GC Email
System
After
Outage

JAMES TRIMARCO

As students who use their Graduate Center email accounts undoubtedly know, GC email went down on Saturday January 15 and stayed out of service until January 20. The incident inspired eye-rolling and sighing among students who want decent computing resources at their school—especially now that the usual scapegoat, former Vice President for Information Resources James Haggard, has departed. But the Administration and the Doctoral Students Council had another reason to find the outage frustrating—for the past several years, both groups have been strongly urging GC students to use their school email accounts because, if they do not, it is nearly impossible to contact the whole Graduate Center Community with important information.

One week after the email outage, Associate Provost Stephen Brier sent out a message to the GC Community explaining the conditions that led to the problem and what the Administration is doing to correct them. The Graduate Center's email uses Microsoft Exchange 5.5, a sys-

see *Email Outage*, page 7

Editorial

Defend Ward Churchill and Academic Freedom

On February 3, the University of Colorado placed tenured Ethnic Studies professor Ward Churchill, a radical scholar affiliated with the American Indian Movement, under 30-day review – the first legal step towards firing him. This move is the result of organizing by a group of conservative students at Hamilton College in upstate New York who objected to some of his views in his essay on 9/11 called “Some People Push Back: On the Justice of Roosting Chickens.” In that piece Churchill compares the “technocrats” of the finance and banking industry who were killed in the World Trade Center to Adolf Eichmann, a Nazi bureaucrat who helped organize the concentration camp system.

The essay, which can be found at the link below, has been widely quoted out of context by the media. In particular, it is claimed that Churchill included janitors, firefighters, medics and other in his metaphor about Eichmann, which is not true. As the story spread, he was forced to cancel a lecture – ironically at a forum called “The Limits of Dissent – after receiving death threats. Although he has stepped down as co-chair of his department, he has refused to resign.

Churchill's comments on 9/11 were meant to be inflammatory and to encourage discussion about why the massacre occurred and to suggest possible interpretations beyond the Bush Administration's “attack on freedom” model. To focus on the specifics of what he said or wrote misses the point. The possibility of his removal should concern all those involved in academic work for multiple reasons:

1. Freedom of Speech: This is a basic First Amendment freedom of speech issue. To lose one's job over the use of metaphors and hyperbole, especially in relation to discussion of an important political issue, is state censorship.

2. Tenure and Academic Freedom: Churchill is a tenured professor, and for him to be fired over such comments would be just the sort of intellectual censorship the tenure system was designed to stop. Many departments have written eloquent statements in support of Churchill, such as this one from the Philosophy Department at his own University of Colorado at Boulder:

“The recent controversy over Ward Churchill's essay should not obscure the fact that the precise purpose of the tenure system is to secure the ability of university professors to argue the most unpopular of cases, in the face of the most heated public sentiment. We urge the Regents to honor that system in its

consideration of this case, and not to take any action that would threaten Professor Churchill's jobs or chill the free expression of thought that is so vital within a university community.”

3. The Suppression of Dissent: This is a clear attempt to repress voices critical of the current US mindset and policy. The Bush Administration has cast 9/11 in black-and-white moral terms as a justification for global war. If Churchill is removed because he offered an opposing viewpoint – in the face of ironclad Constitutional and tenure protections – it will set a terrible precedent, possibly harboring the dawn of a new McCarthy era and the criminalization of dissent.

The governors of both Colorado and New York have publicly slandered Churchill as being a supporter of terrorism. The Colorado governor has called on him to resign, and the State House and Senate passed a joint resolution condemning him. These actions are obviously intended to put pressure on CU to remove Churchill, and the Board of Regents has forced CU Interim Chancellor Phil DiStefano to initiate the 30-day review period. He will be assisted by two CU Deans, Todd Gleeson and David Getches. When the 30 days are up, DiStefano will determine whether to issue a notice of intent to dismiss for cause, other action as appropriate, or no action, to the Regents. If a notice to dismiss for cause or some other action is issued then the subsequent process will be governed by the Regents.

The Advocate calls on the Graduate Center community to support Ward Churchill in the name of academic freedom. We urge our readers to pressure Chancellor DiStefano and Deans Gleeson and Getches to do the right thing.

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Letters

First World Oafs?

Although I too share the negative opinion held by many people throughout the world of George Bush (and indeed among many millions here in these United States), I should like to comment on Mr. Kennis's article which appeared in the December, 2004 issue of *The Advocate*.

As a Mexican and American dual national, I welcome sincere interest in Mexico and Latin America and genuine dialogue. But I fear that many a time the American Political Scientist's desire to “save” Mexico covers up an innate lack of genuine commitment to pursuing discussions in a spirit of real understanding and respect.

Mr. Kennis “set out to interview dozens of Mexicans, mostly from Mexico City, but also from different regions of our neighbour country to the south.” Did Mr. Kennis actually visit my country and conduct his survey? Who translated into such idiomatic English the comments of these various and sundry Mexicans? While I do not disagree in substance with the appraisal of the current US Administration, the fact remains that the article seems to reflect more the tone and tenor of Mr. Kennis's views and perhaps even justifies a shrill and overly-generalized view of the world's view of Bush and the US.

One last note—although many Mexicans many not like Mr. Fox, comparing President Fox to John Waters, although amusing to some, is not particularly diplomatic. Left or Right—Americans tend to be First World Oafs. Mexicans can be very sensitive on these points, even Mexicans who may laugh and cajole at the comment. Underneath, it's irritating. Once again, the “gringos” have all the answers—even the coy, cynical ones.

Lo ido a Europa no quita lo pendejo.

Regards,
Roberto Barnard

Andrew Kennis Responds –

My article did not imply any desire to “save” Mexico. Instead, I admitted from the get-go its modest intentions by pointing out that the article was based on “dozens of interviews,” hardly an all-encompassing survey. Sometimes a-bit can be learned, however, from well-reported and well-written articles based on such surveys.

In response to whether or not “Mr. Kennis actually visit[ed] my country and conduct[ed] his survey [there]?” the answer is an unequivocal “yes.” I take pride in the fact that all the articles I have written for The Advocate have been done on the scene (including protests covered from Cancun to Canada and interviews and articles conducted from the occupied lands of Palestine and Chiapas).

Who translated? I did all the translations, though some of those interviewed opted to speak in English when they learned I was reporting for a States-bound publication. Most, however, spoke in Spanish: I am definitely not a professional translator and am just a journalist who learned Spanish the hard way: by immersing myself in the “cultura chilanga,” living in a “barrio popular” for three years, taking the time and effort to learn not just Spanish but also the colloquial phrases that distinguish Mexican Spanish-speakers from other Latinos.

The article had nothing to do with “Mr. Kennis' views,” and instead was my attempt to reflect as best as possible the interviews I conducted. I am at a loss to find where the article even hinted at my own viewpoints. I wonder for whom Mr. Barnard assumed I even voted for—or whether or not I voted at all. Did the article state or even imply such positions?

If the respondent was seemingly upset about a writer's humble attempt to get a grip on Mexican public opinion towards President Bush, why would he stoop so low as to generalize Americans as being “First World Oafs”? Americans shouldn't be considered “First World Oafs” on the basis of these election results in light of the fact that 70% of Americans did not even vote for President Bush. Nor should “gringos” be considered to have all the answers just because they seek to give Mexicans the voice they deserve by living in and visiting their country and subsequently writing articles that seek to highlight the viewpoints of several dozen people.

I cannot speak to the John Waters caption as that was the layout editor's creation.

Sincerely,
Andrew Kennis

The Layout Editor Also Responds –

Actually, I think John Waters is kinda cute. In any event, I personally would rather be compared to a whitty filmmaker like Waters than referred to as an “idiot boy child,” which is how I describe our own home grow oaf, El Jefe Bush. And as someone influenced by anti-hierarchical progressive political movements (which have a long history in Mexico, btw), I consider ALL national leaders to be fair targets. Your equation of the people of Mexico with the leader of the Mexican state apparatus is bizarre at best and self-deprecating at worst.

Spencer Sunshine,
Coy and Cynical First World Oaf

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The Advocate is the student paper of the CLNY Graduate Center and published six times a year. Publication is subsidized by the Doctoral Student Council.

The Advocate accepts contributions of articles, poetry, illustrations, photos and letters to the editor. Please query the above email address. Articles selected for publication will be subjected to editorial revision. Payment for articles ranges from \$50 to \$75, depending on the time commitment.

Shorter articles should be between 500 and 1,000 words, and features may run up to 1,500 words. The Advocate is published in September, October, November, February, March and April; submission deadlines are the 25th of the month before publication.