Diversity Research Award recipient, Dr. Lalitha Vasudevan

For the last few years, Dr. Lalitha Vasudevan, of Communication, Computing and Technology in Education, has been involved in research that centers on court-involved youth. Currently, Vasudevan is looking forward to piloting the second phase of a particular storytelling project with young men in two separate locations in New York. The first phase of this project focused simultaneously on two groups of young men, one group at a corrections facility working on oral history projects, and one group of students in a digital media course at an alternative to incarceration program where the students produced a film during the length of the course. Vasudevan approached both projects with the goal of better understanding the education backgrounds of the young men involved. Her inquiry focused on the concept of literacy for this group of young men, how their technological, social, and cultural resources guide them through their production of new texts, whether it was an oral history or cinematic narrative.

This spring, due to a generous grant from TC’s Faculty Executive Committee (see page 4), Vasudevan will be given the resources and allowed the time to pilot a follow-up research project to her previous work with court-involved youth. Vasudevan looks forward to documenting students’ “re-entry” into life outside of the day-to-day accountability implicit in these two programs. The young men emerge from these programs “part of a booming digital world in some ways, but so distant from it educationally,” says Vasudevan. The re-entry process, she explains, includes a confusing “negotiation process” for these young men who face going back to school, pursuing a GED, or search for opportunities in higher education and/or employment. Vasudevan hopes to work with these students to produce a documentary of their journey. In addition, she wants to explore the idea of using new media and technology as a resource already available to these young men, to challenge the deficit expectation that this group of students is necessarily among the most deprived of the digital divide.

“In all my classes,” Vasudevan explains, “I want to push all of us to question what counts as knowledge.” Amidst a culture still reliant on tests and pen and paper assessment, successful teaching, she argues, requires creativity and a willingness to attach value to all kinds of assessment. Vasudevan is convinced that the privilege of any association with TC, therefore, accepts the responsibility to lead in new ways, “to help create a community, a more collective ethos” that will find new ways of defining and assessing literacy and other educational standards.

This fall, Dr. Vasudevan, Assistant Professor of Technology, is teaching Culture, Media and Education, as well as co-teaching CCTE’s Core Seminar. She has also recently published an article entitled “Writing Out of the Unexpected: Narrative Inquiry and The Weight of Small Moments,” with E. Gordon, K. McKibbin and R. Vinz, which was featured, this year, in English Education (p. 326-351).
Welcome To A New Academic Year!

The 2007-2008 school year at Teachers College kicked off on the first weekend of September with the New Student Experience, coordinated by the Office of Student Activities and Programs. Over 1200 new students assembled in Alfred Lerner Hall to kick off a weekend jam-packed with information and fun activities. On Friday August 31st, the highlight of the day was the block party. 120th Street was lined with vendors selling everything from gyros to artwork. It was a great chance for students to mingle and get to know each other.

Saturday September 1st through Sunday September 3rd consisted of an array of activities, both educational and social. New students could take part in an academic writing workshop, a diasporic discussion and then go for a tour of NYC at night! The Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology orientation took place on Monday, September 4th, where we welcomed 145 new students. On behalf of the department, we would like to wish all of our students success in the upcoming year!

Welcome Tom James, TC’s New Provost and Dean of College

The College recently welcomed a new Provost and Dean of the College, Dr. Thomas James, most recently of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. While at UNC, Dr. James distinguished himself as collaborator, diplomat and teacher education advocate. “He brings a combination of strength and gentleness to this position that will be of great benefit to Teachers College,” commends TC President Susan Fuhrman, as cited on TC’s website. James also brings with him a lifetime of rich and varied educational experiences, both as student and educator, including attendance at the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, founded by none other than John Dewey. Since his elementary years in Chicago, James became tenured Professor at Brown University, then was Associate Dean at NYU’s Steinhardt School of Education, and most recently, Dean of the School of Education at UNC, Chapel Hill. James returns to New York with a passion for education in this city, “I believe New York City reflects the opportunities and also the problems of our civilization in their most concentrated and intense form. If we can engage that human prospect through education in New York, our work truly can be of national and worldwide significance. There is nothing more important than that challenge, and Teachers College is right in the middle of it,” (also cited from “Tom James is TC’s New Provost” on TC’s website.) We’re honored by his leadership “in the middle of it.”

CCTE Student Publishes Book of Star Wars Parodies

Jonathan Bresman, a doctoral student in Communication and Education, recently published a book called Mad About Star Wars. This is a compilation of classic Mad Magazine parodies with a foreword by George Lucas. Jon is currently a senior editor at Mad, and previously worked for Lucasfilm. This book, and Jonathan’s previously-published The Art of Star Wars, Episode I - The Phantom Menace can be ordered via various book-selling websites.

Mathematics Alumnus Publishes New Handbook

Dominic Mentor, Ed.D Student, CCTE

Dominic Mentor is a Fulbright Fellow and is pursuing an Ed.D. in the Communication, Computing, and Technology in Education program. A native South African, Dominic started his career in education as a high school teacher of second language at a small farm town school in South Africa. While completing his Masters Degree in Hypermedia for Language Learning, at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, he designed and launched an online computer assisted language learning program for ESL students. Dominic has always been interested in the acquisition of a second language and believes that technology is a very underrated system in this area. Currently, as a third year Doctoral student, his research interests include issues in computer assisted language learning, teacher technology training, hypermedia design, including online formative and summative assessment practices, as well as using the emerging new media technologies for teaching and learning. Dominic recently co-coordinated a summer technology program. Not only was he able to offer digital and leadership skills to underprivileged inner city school students, he also introduced them to the creative power and multimodal affordances of computer technology. He has also hosted web design workshops for fellow students as well as for the broader TC community. When asked about the impact of technology on his life, Dominic states, “Even though there are many different technological devices out there, computer technology has probably been the technology that I have paid most attention to, in how it has captivated me and impacted my life.” For those of us that have finally learned all of the tricks with Windows XP, Dominic adds, “Do not get too comfortable, the rug is about to be pulled out from under us, yet again, as the launch of a new money making era starts with new operating systems on the horizon.”

Dr. Henry Pollak, Visiting Professor, Program in Mathematics

Upon retirement from a 35-year career at Bell Laboratories, Dr. Henry Pollak decided to continue his longtime work in mathematics education as a Visiting Professor of Mathematics. While with Bell Labs, Pollak indulged his interest in mathematics education for nearly 50 years. He comes from an environment at Bell Labs “where the usefulness of math motivated people,” Pollak says, “changes what you do and how you think.” He wants to bring that kind of enthusiasm into his classroom, where the same usefulness that motivated his teams at Bell Labs can motivate mathematics students of all ages. One of Pollak’s favorite courses at TC touches on the mathematics of making choices, which, Pollak argues, has all the same features of mathematical modeling, but the human experience of dividing a birthday cake evenly, for example, is more universal than many other examples in most text books. For 20 years now, Dr. Pollak has been observing and writing articles about a variety of interesting applications of mathematics, most of which have been published in a newsletter of the Consortium for Mathematics and Its Applications (COMAP). These articles simply articulate examples of mathematics applied to everyday life such as “Why do so many trucks get stuck under overpass bridges? Other articles touch on the math involved in baseball, postcard collecting, hanging pictures and more. When he’s writing these observations for publication, Pollak says it’s simply a way of “getting things out that I have enjoyed.” Pollak’s wonder at the world through the mathematics lens is pretty contagious, perhaps because he never ignores an opportunity to learn more. “I observe something crazy and wonder why it happens,” states Pollak, in a matter of fact tone that belies a childlike excitement for calculating just how, and why, that crazy thing occurs.
CCTE Students Are Finalists In Competition

CCTE students Cheng-Ling Chen, Kuo-Hsun Hung, and Selen Turkay were one of five finalist teams selected, from more than 20 who participated in the last Hidden Agenda competition. Hidden Agenda is an educational video game development contest for college students. This year’s contest took place in Austin, Texas on June 28th and 29th. Our TC students’ game, called Tank-Q, was designed to teach specific physics concepts and was awarded second place in a very tough competition.

This contest has been running every year since 2003 and today has entered a new stage as the winning games from previous years have been released online for middle school children (and everyone else) to play. Hidden Agenda is sponsored by the nonprofit Liemandt Foundation. The Liemandt Foundation is dedicated to facilitating, testing, and promoting “stealth education” video games so that they can make learning fun for kids who might enjoy playing games more than listening to teachers.

Faculty Accomplishments

Professor Chris Emdin presented at the Responsive Research Network for Mathematics and Science Education at their Inaugural Research Forum in September. He also delivered the plenary speech at the NSF sponsored “Equity in Mathematics and Science Education: Critical Issues in Leadership Development” conference in Portland, Oregon on October 6th.

Professor Felicia Moore has accepted to work on two collaborative teacher professional development projects with K-8 teachers. The first is “Collaborative Inquiry within Curriculum Domains: A Cross-grade Discussion” with educators from PS 180, Bank Street, Teachers College and Hofstra University. The second is the “Teacher Leadership Quality Partnership” with educators from Teachers College Center for Technology and School Change, Columbia University Department of Chemistry, Yonkers Public Schools.

Professor Lalitha Vasudevan was given the Diversity Research award by the Faculty Executive Committee of Teachers College for the spring semester, 2008. This grant will allow Dr. Vasudevan to launch the second phase of her current research project working with multi-ethnic, court involved youth here in New York City. This project incorporates storytelling, literacy training and multimedia technology.

Dr. James Fey, 1968, Ph.D. in Mathematics Education

Like many aspiring teachers, alumnus James Fey credits his interest in mathematics education to his enjoyment of both mathematics and working with young people. Attending Teachers College in the 1960’s, Fey took advantage of many of the opportunities available to him while working towards his Ph.D. An assistantship on the “Secondary School Curriculum Improvement Study” allowed Fey to focus more on the development of curriculum materials, another interest of his. From 1968 to 1969, Fey was an Assistant Professor at TC, teaching courses in abstract algebra and point-set topology. After TC, he became a professor at the University of Maryland in the Dept. of Mathematics and Mathematics Education. He also became involved in the professional community of mathematics education. Fey took part in the National Advisory Committee for Mathematics Education in the mid-1970s and the Mathematical Sciences Education Board of the National Research Council in the 1980’s. He was also the Principal Investigator for the Core-Plus Mathematics Project, sponsored by the NSF, from 1992-2002. In 2005, Fey won the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

“Doing meaningful work in a continually evolving field, with first rate colleagues, has left me with no regrets at all about my life’s work choices.”

He has recently retired, but when asked to look back on his career in the education field, Fey stated, “Doing meaningful work in an evolving field, with first rate colleagues, has left me with no regrets at all about my life’s work choices.”

Did you Know?

According to the most recent Department of Education statistics available, about 269,000 of the nation’s 3.2 million public school teachers, or 8.4 percent, quit the field in the 2003-4 school year. Thirty percent of them retired, and 56 percent said they left to pursue another career or because they were dissatisfied.

- New York Times
Faculty Publications


Conference Presentations

**CCTE**


**Science**


Campaign for Educational Equity Symposium

The Campaign for Educational Equity was created in 2005, with the purpose of advocating for educational equity and overcoming the gap in educational access and achievement. This year, on November 12th and 13th, the Campaign for Educational Equity will hold its 3rd Annual Symposium at Teachers College. The theme for this year’s symposium is “Equal Educational Opportunity: What Now?” and will focus on reassessing the role of the courts, the law, and school policies after Seattle and CFE. It will be co-sponsored by the Columbia Law School. Many major research papers will be presented at this two-day event, along with panels of experts to discuss them. A few of the topics for discussion include, “Democracy and Diversity in Higher Education,” and “Political and Educational Impact of School Finance Litigations.” Some of the notable people in attendance will be Hon. John Greaney (Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court), and Paul Reville (President of the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy.) There will also be speakers from Teachers College and many prominent speakers in the fields of both education and law. Registration for the symposium is $10 for TC and Columbia students, faculty and staff. For TC alumni, it is $60 for the full symposium or $30 for one day. For more information and to register for this event visit http://www.tcequity.org/symposium.

Mathematics Symposium

On Saturday December 8, 2007, representatives from Math for America (MfA), and the New York City Department of Education will convene at TC for a Symposium on mathematics education in the city. Also in attendance will be faculty from many MfA Fellows Program sites including Bard College, New York University, and Teachers College, as well as other special guests.

The symposium, organized by Dr. Erica Walker, will include panel presentations, discussion groups and guest speakers.

For more information and/or to register for the Symposium, email: tcmath@columbia.edu or call 212-678-3381

Leslie Day Publishes Book

Leslie Day, a graduate from the Science Education program, has recently published a book entitled Field Guide to the Natural World of New York City with The Johns Hopkins University Press. With a foreword by Michael Bloomberg, this book is a guide to the flora and fauna of NYC. Adrian Benepe, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation says, "Visitors to New York City, and even longtime residents, are astounded by the natural world that can be found in our City parks...There are mysteries waiting to be solved with the assistance of Leslie Day’s illustrated guide." Currently, Day is an environmental and life science educator at The Elisabeth Morrow School in NJ and an adjunct faculty member at Bank Street College of Education.

Upcoming Study Tours with the Program in Mathematics

International Study Tours are co-sponsored by the Program in Mathematics and the Center for Educational Outreach and Innovation (CEO&I), please contact either office for more information on these and future tours, tcmath@tc.edu or ceoi_mail@tc.columbia.edu

Study Tour to Moscow & St. Petersburg, Russia
November 16-25, 2007

Spanish Language Tour to Antigua, Guatemala
January 2-15, 2008

Study Tour to Singapore, Vietnam & Cambodia
May 9-19, 2008

Photo by Susan Liciwinko
Nepal & Tibet Study Tour, 2007