



JACQUELINE MOREA FOR SPECTATOR

DANCING AGAIN | Two years after being relocated by Columbia’s Manhattanville expansion, Cuban restaurant Floridita has reopened at a new location at 125th Street and 12th Avenue. The restaurant has been a neighborhood landmark for 34 years.

Ramadan would be Council’s first Arab-American

BY CHRIS MEYER
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

As a young baseball player entering City College in the ’80s, Zead Ramadan was met with a pleasant shock: He would be playing on a grass field for the first time in his life.

Ramadan, a native of Upper Manhattan, recently declared his candidacy to represent the greater Morningside Heights

area in the City Council. He spent his childhood honing his skills in the streets and vacant lots of his largely Dominican-American community. Almost 40 years later, he said, this upbringing gave him an “intimate passion” for the issues facing the district.

“I’m a seed that was planted in this community,” Ramadan, who would be the council’s first Arab-American, said in

an interview Friday. “All of my friends were on welfare with me.”

The son of Palestinian immigrants, Ramadan moved to Washington Heights from Kuwait in 1971 and lived in a three-bedroom apartment with his parents and seven siblings. Both of his parents were illiterate, and his father worked 18-hour days as a baker on 164th Street to support the family.

Now, Ramadan is the chairman of the board for the New York chapter of the Council for American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights organization, and a member and former chair of Community Board 12. In the interview, he recalled the economic hardships his family went through during his childhood and said his

SEE RAMADAN, page 2

SigEp launches \$3.5K service fellowship

BY ABBY ABRAMS
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

What makes a balanced man?

According to Sigma Phi Epsilon, the ideal of the “balanced man” means dedicating oneself to possessing a sound mind and a sound body, regardless of gender. This paradigm, along with the fraternity’s founding principles of virtue, diligence, and brotherly love, serve as the underlying values for the chapter’s new Balanced Man Fellowship.

The fellowship will award \$3,500 to one student from any of Columbia’s undergraduate schools to help finance a community service project.

“We would like to promote the spirit of brotherly love in the community, you know, love for one’s fellow man, and so that’s why we give out money like this,” Will Krasnoff, CC ’14

and chair of the Balanced Man Fellowship, said.

In past years, SigEp has offered a Balanced Man Scholarship, usually consisting of about \$1,500 split between three or four winners.

“We realized that giving \$500 per person is not that much,” chapter president Justin Feit, CC ’14, said. “So we used our alumni network to be able to give a substantial amount of money for community service.”

The Columbia chapter of SigEp got the idea for a fellowship from Yale’s chapter, which is one of only a few nationwide to offer a larger sum of money. Most chapters offer a Balanced Man Scholarship, Krasnoff said, but the recent growth of the Columbia chapter has allowed it to increase the value of its prize.

Applicants for the fellowship were asked to describe their plan for a “community-minded

project,” Krasnoff said. The committee of brothers choosing the winner will be looking for ideas that are feasible, well thought out, and unique.

“We’re at a school—Columbia—that’s filled with a lot of great thinkers, and we think we can find some original ideas for some really outstanding community service projects, so there’s going to be sort of an X factor that we’re looking for,” he said.

Krasnoff said that students can apply as individuals or as part of a larger group, and that he is excited to see ideas from across the Columbia community.

“It doesn’t necessarily have to be a project sponsored by an individual, it can be a group of individuals, or it can be a project that’s starting something like getting seed money for a club or a nonprofit organization,” he said.

The fellowship is also part of a larger effort on the part of SigEp and other fraternities and sororities to connect with a wider range of student groups.

“A lot of the Greek community is reaching out and doing larger projects. I think that’s what the Greek community is moving toward here at Columbia,” Feit said.

The application deadline is Jan. 31 and the fellowship winner will be announced on Feb. 22. Krasnoff said the chapter is planning a ceremony to honor the winner, which will be open to the whole Columbia community.

“We’re working to build a better relationship with other Columbia organizations so that we can team up for future projects and work together,” Feit said.

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KIMBERLY FLORES FOR SPECTATOR

FUNDING LOCAL | Elsia Vasquez of housing group P.A.’L.A.N.T.E. is applying for a grant.

WHLDC moves forward on nonprofit grants

BY CHRIS MEYER
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

After fielding 101 pre-grant applications from local nonprofits, the West Harlem Local Development Corporation will announce Tuesday that about 80 percent of the applicants are moving forward to the next stage of the grant approval process.

As part of the Community Benefits Agreement, which Columbia representatives signed with West Harlem residents in 2009 in the wake of the University’s expansion, the WHLDC is responsible for distributing \$76 million for development projects in the neighborhood. Under the grant program, organizations will receive up to \$350,000 each to solve problems ranging from education to housing to economic development in West Harlem.

Floridita back after two and a half years

Cuban restaurant became symbol of conflict over M’ville

BY SANTIAGO PENA AND THEA RAYMOND-SIDEL
Columbia Daily Spectator

After a lengthy legal saga, Ramon Diaz once again watched customers dance to live music between tables at his Cuban restaurant Floridita, which celebrated its grand reopening Sunday after two years of closure.

Floridita, a haven for lovers of Cuban food for 34 years, was forced to relocate by Columbia’s Manhattanville expansion.

“He had a thriving business, and all of sudden he wakes up one day and Columbia’s taken over,” said Assembly member Keith Wright, who at the reopening remembered Floridita as the spot for a number of “political breakfasts” over the years. “But as Frederick Douglass said, ‘Without struggle, there is no progress.’”

Once Columbia began eminent domain proceedings in the neighborhood, Floridita became a symbol of the fight to maintain Manhattanville’s character in the face of the expansion. After he was forced to close his original restaurant on Broadway and 129th Street in April 2010, Diaz signed a lease with the University for a new location in a Columbia-owned property on 125th Street and 12th Avenue.

Since then, Diaz and the University engaged in public disputes over asbestos in the new building, unpaid rent, and legal issues. Moreover, Diaz

said, he had concerns that the new location would not attract enough customers.

But a combination of encouragement from the restaurant’s supporters, including Wright, and the growth of nearby establishments like Dinosaur Bar-B-Que next door made Diaz more optimistic about the new location. With bars and nightclubs springing up along the 12th Avenue corridor, Diaz said he hoped to attract both Columbia students and old clientele.

“Everyone walks in here and sees it’s a new place, with new decorations.”

*—Ramon Diaz
Floridita owner*

“This is the new Chelsea or Meatpacking District,” he said, laughing. “Everyone walks in here and sees it’s a new place, with new decorations.”

And although its look is new, the restaurant’s spirit has remained the same. Diaz spent the night welcoming customers as they walked through the door. Old regulars sat down to chat amid a flurry of greetings, festive music, and clattering plates. Sherlock Robinson,

SEE FLORIDITA, page 2



DAVID BRANN / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A BALANCED MAN | SigEp member Will Krasnoff, CC ’14, hopes that the fellowship will “promote the spirit of brotherly love.”

A&E, PAGE 6

BC first-year a sister songstress

Chloe Oppenheim, BC ’16, writes lyrics for her sister’s new EP.



OPINION, PAGE 4

Less is more

Steven Castellano on the importance of keeping sights set on the journey, not just the endgame.

The duty of opportunity

Ayelet Pearl on learning to appreciate opportunity without feeling an obligation to pursue everything.

SPORTS, PAGE 3

Harvard drops game, Yale tops Brown

Dartmouth defeated Harvard to end the Crimson’s six-game winning streak, while Yale responded to its recent loss to Brown with a resounding victory.

EVENTS

Barnard Winterfest 2013

A welcome back party for Barnard students with performances from student a capella groups.

Lehman Lawn, 7 p.m.

WEATHER

Today



48°/46°

Tomorrow



53°/43°



DOUGLAS KESSEL / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

READY TO RUN | Zead Ramadan says that his Manhattan upbringing as part of an immigrant family has given him an “intimate passion” to help solve the challenges facing the neighborhood.

Candidate touts immigrant background

RAMADAN from front page

experiences helped to color his political views later in life, particularly with respect to economic development in Upper Manhattan.

“I know about every immigrant family, and everyone who struggles economically,” he said. “I remember the struggles of my father as a child, and how hard he worked to pay the rent and support us.”

After graduating from City College, Ramadan used his family’s experience as an inspiration to enter the private and nonprofit sectors. He started a small café in Washington Heights and worked with nonprofits ranging from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation to the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, which he said aims to make his neighborhood an “economic environment where artists can survive.”

But while economic empowerment is a major theme of his campaign for District 7, which also includes Manhattanville, Hamilton Heights, and parts of Washington Heights and the Upper West Side, Ramadan also

said that all candidates must address education and affordable housing policies. Although he was one of the first members of his family to study in college, Ramadan said he remembered how confusing public education had been without the support of literate parents or highly educated family members.

“I felt like I was walking through a dense forest at night, and the moon wasn’t out and I had no idea where I was going. I was just trying to get out to a clearing,” he said. “But education is one of the only ways we are going to uplift people in this community.”

With rents rising in areas like West Harlem and Washington Heights, Ramadan said he would work to help the families he had known growing up stay in their neighborhoods with affordable rents. He argued that it was unjust to force out people “just as the sun was starting to come out” in communities with steady economic growth.

Ramadan said he is returning to his roots when he interacts one-on-one with constituents and jokes that he is a “Dominican-Arab,” having

learned Spanish from his baseball friends while growing up. Although he was originally hesitant to use his full name in his campaign slogan, he later decided that he stood to gain from identifying with a family that has become a fixture in Washington Heights.

“We wondered whether we should just make it ‘Zead 2013,’” he said. “But I want it to be central to the campaign so people know who my family is, and that I stand by my family name.”

Ramadan faces a crowded field in the race, including political heavyweight Mark Levine, a Democratic district leader who has attracted substantial establishment support. But Ramadan said he was confident he would win. He raised roughly \$40,000 in the week before the Jan. 15 fundraising deadline, much of it from his extended family.

In discussing his optimism about the race, Ramadan quoted Scottish sea captain John Paul Jones.

“I have not yet begun to fight.”

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The significance of the intelligent athlete

FENG from page 3

an absolute blast.

I had never really been a fan of baseball as a little kid. The games were long and lethargic compared to my national sport of hockey. I only got into baseball when I started to think with the game. As I came to understand its nuances, every at-bat became a tense ninja duel between the batter and the catcher-pitcher tandem, trying to guess the other’s next move and stay one step ahead.

The unique relationship between the pitcher and catcher has always fascinated me. Just how exactly do they figure out which pitch to throw next? How does the batter follow their train of thought and anticipate the next ball that comes out of the pitcher’s hand?

Up until the age of ten, I was quite sure that many of the best hitters were able to read minds and that in particular, Ichiro Suzuki was definitely a nimble Japanese wizard. I eventually realized there was actually a very cool and complex logic behind the precise movement of the balls being thrown, which led me to my ultimately fruitless attempts at tracing these patterns at the ballpark. I was, after all, barely into my teens, and if I had managed to figure this stuff out I’d be off making millions coaching a team instead of spending gratuitous amounts of time in Butler.

If we think about it, though, this catcher-pitcher-

hitter guessing game can extend to many situations beyond baseball. When a tennis player gets set to take a serve from their opponent, when a hockey goalie readies their stance during a shootout, even when an opposing football team tries to figure out what play the quarterback will run, sports is filled with mini-mind games. It’s like in everyday social situations when we interact with a stranger—we’re constantly trying to predict and gauge their reactions so we can respond accordingly. As we do it over and over, these processes become so ingrained in our social knowledge they become somewhat subconscious. Perhaps it’s the same for athletes: In split-second situations, there’s no time to think and instinct can shape the result of the play.

Clearly, simply observing will not get me very far in my endeavors in sports psychology.

There’s a reason why some of the most successful athletes are not only strong, but also incredibly smart. The mental game is integral to success in sports, whether it’s predicting an opponent’s next move or readying oneself for a competition. When is it pure instinct, and when

do years of strategizing and experience come into effect? Does the joy of success or fear of failure motivate athletes? Do superstitions matter, and do they help or hinder?

My notebooks from those ball games have likely been recycled into eco-friendly paper towels by now. Clearly, simply observing will not get me very far in my endeavors in sports psychology. Only real athletes have this sort of knowledge. (Sadly, I haven’t yet reached my life goal of becoming best friends with the Blue Jays.) As I curse my own lack of athletic talent (besides what I believe to be some promising prowess in Wii Tennis), I realize that we are lucky enough to have a vast population of extremely gifted athletes right on campus. I want to ask these athletes how they approach different mental aspects of their sports.

I also need some real science. By combining these athletes’ testimonies with some fascinating psych studies, both social and cognitive, I’ll attempt to make some sense of the complex psychology of sports and muse on how it connects to our everyday actions. I’ve no clue where this will take me, and it’s not something I’ve won at in the past, but what’s there to lose? Let the mind games begin.

*Minnia Feng is a Columbia College junior majoring in psychology. Mind Games runs biweekly.
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Owner hopes to keep community vibe

FLORIDITA from front page

a photographer and a friend of Diaz, said the photos on the wall, some of which were taken in Cuba, maintained the “Cuban heart” of the previous establishment.

Even the menu has stayed the same, right down to the prices.

“Cafe con leche is still \$1.50,” Diaz said.

Diaz said he hoped that the restaurant would spur economic growth in the surrounding neighborhood. He retained 27 out of 43 employees from his original location, and all but two of his current employees still live in the area, which, he remarked, was fortunate given rising rents in Harlem.

While ringing up a customer, employee Yoisha Salazar said the two-year hiatus had caused her considerable financial concern. She said was pleased that the new location was already attracting customers.

“We had bills to pay, kids

to feed,” she said. “People are happy we’ve reopened—they like this place better.”

Rev. Henry Mercado said that the reopening was a cause for celebration. Mercado, a pastor of the Meeting with God Pentecostal Church and a longtime Floridita customer, used to have lunch or dinner with his congregation at the restaurant before the relocation.

“People are happy we’ve reopened—they like this place better.”

*—Yoisha Salazar
Floridita employee*

But Mercado, whose church was also displaced by the expansion, said he had doubts about the new location’s ability to attract customers beyond

the original establishment’s old clientele, and said new patrons were “what Ramon needs right now.”

Despite the jubilant atmosphere, both Diaz and his customers acknowledge the nearby presence of the growing Manhattanville campus that forced them out of their first location.

“Commercially, I feel good about it. Construction workers come in for breakfast,” Diaz said. “It will be a constant reminder, but you’ve got to get past those things.”

Others at the restaurant were split on the issue. Leanette Franco, a first-time customer, said in Spanish that there were no hard feelings with Columbia. But longtime customer Elizabeth Brown holds Columbia responsible for Diaz’s struggles over the past two years.

“I’m glad to see they bypassed this area,” Brown said, nodding in the direction of the campus. “Here, they make you feel like family, Cuban or not.”
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80 percent of local pre-grants approved

WHLDC from front page

projects in particular.”

In order to reduce their initial risk, the WHLDC focused heavily on projects for capacity building within existing organizations, which Boateng said would ensure that the money went to nonprofits with a proven record of success, and therefore can do the most to strengthen the community.

The organization committed to transparency in the grant program in a settlement with Attorney General Eric Schneiderman following his investigation into the development corporation’s practices. That investigation, which concluded last month, revealed no misuse of funds at the WHLDC.

Broadway Housing Communities is one of the applicants. Ellen Baxter, who founded the group in 1983, said she

applied for the grant in the hope of strengthening the organization’s Sugar Hill development, which would provide 124 affordable housing units and early education facilities for children in the neighborhood.

“We’re hopeful that many of the agencies who have worked long and hard to meet the different needs of the community will all benefit,” Baxter said. “It’s been a long journey, and I think everyone uptown is hopeful that the new leadership we have of the WHLDC is a strong one.”

Another organization looking to grow is P.A.’L.A.N.T.E. Harlem, a tenant advocacy group that, among other things, works to educate tenants of their rights and bring in pro bono attorneys to help in housing court.

Elsia Vasquez, the organization’s founder, said the grant would help them bring a paid

attorney on staff and would provide the financial stability necessary to encourage other foundations to provide additional funding. She added that she would like to see the process of strengthening nonprofits in Harlem go beyond the grants.

“My only hope is that when the disbursements come out nonprofits get together and find out how we are going to work together to see how we’ll help the community,” Vasquez said, praising the transparency of the grant program. “It’s easy to ask for money, but how are we going to work as a community together and come up with solutions?”

The last project the WHLDC funded was the city’s youth summer employment program, which the group gave \$750,000 to in June.

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The value of thinking on the field

Going to the ballpark for a baseball game on Sunday is still one of my favorite pastimes. It's the buzz before your players spill out onto the field, the roar of the crowd upon that sweet sound of a ball being hit out of the park, the hope of catching a foul ball that spans the entire nine innings, and even the smell of \$9 beer and peanuts penetrating the stands. Everything that a typical kid loves about the ballpark.



MINNIA FENG
Mind Games

The mental game is integral to success in sports.

But unfortunately, though I did enjoy those things, the nerd in me sprouted at a very young age, and at a furious pace. I was that kid (and not to suggest this is a common trend—I was really the only one) who carried a fat spiral notebook to every game and diligently recorded every pitch thrown with my Hello Kitty pencil, hoping to analyze the data to find some miraculous pitching formula. While others cheered immediately after a hit, I hurried to write down the type of pitch on which the hit occurred, then launched into my own delayed hurrah. I was having, by my definition,

SEE FENG, page 2



COURTESY OF MARIA ZEPEDA / YALE DAILY NEWS

DOUBLE TROUBLE | Bulldog Sarah Halejian racked up 21 points and 10 rebounds to earn her first double-double in Yale's victory.

Harvard's winning streak ends as Yale defeats Brown

BY RACHEL TURNER
Spectator Staff Writer

In the second week of Ivy play for women's basketball, Dartmouth was able to snap Harvard's longest winning streak of the season, and Yale redeemed itself against Brown. Meanwhile, Penn faced Temple in a nonconference game, and Princeton had the weekend off.

Picking up its first home win of the semester, Dartmouth (3-13,

HARVARD	58
DARTMOUTH	45

1-1 Ivy) broke Harvard's (10-6, 1-1 Ivy) six-game winning streak. Dartmouth's ability to capitalize on Harvard's turnovers proved to be the big difference in the game, with the Big Green netting 31 points off 28 turnovers, compared to the Crimson's four points on 15 turnovers. Harvard guard Christine Clark scored 22 points, but she was the only Crimson player to break double digits. Dartmouth co-captains and guards Nicola Zimmer and Faziah Steen played well on

YALE	50
BROWN	47

offense, bringing Dartmouth to a 13-point lead with nine minutes left in the game. Harvard, led by Clark and forward Temi Fagbenle, came within seven points of the Big Green, but Dartmouth's strong defense and accurate free-throw shooting in the final minutes secured its victory.

After losing to Brown (7-9, 1-1 Ivy) at home last week, Yale (6-10, 1-1 Ivy) went to Providence ready to settle the score. For most of the first half, Brown and

Yale traded leads, but a 7-4 run by Yale robbed Brown of its final lead of the game. While a 7-0 run after the first half brought the Bears close, they weren't able to keep up with a career performance from Bulldog Sarah Halejian, who earned her first career double-double with 21 points and 10 rebounds. Great shooting from the field and from the line proved the difference for Yale in the rematch. Despite shooting a lower percentage on three-pointers, Yale's offensive improvements gave it the edge against Brown.

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Oklahoma State edges out Lions

BY IKE CLEMENTE
KITMAN
Spectator Staff Writer

The Columbia women's tennis team dropped its second and final contest of the Intercollegiate Tennis Association Kick-Off Weekend with a 4-3 loss against Oklahoma State on Monday.



At the close of the ITA Kick-Off Weekend, with most of the season yet to come, the Lions are 0-2. As part of the consolation bracket of the event, hosted by the University of Georgia, the No. 70 Lions and the No. 40 Cowgirls faced off for third place.

In first singles, unranked Cowgirl Malika Rose defeated No. 24 senior Nicole Bartnik in three sets, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2. The Lions fared better in second and third singles. For second singles, Columbia junior Bianca Sanon, ranked No. 81 in the country, routed No. 89 Meghan Blevins, defeating her opponent in two sets, 6-2, 6-3. Likewise, No. 85 freshman Kanika Vaidya topped her opponent, in two sets, 7-6, 6-1.

Unranked Cowgirl Malika Rose defeated senior Nicole Bartnik in three sets.

After winning the first set, Columbia freshman Lauren Stratman dropped the next two sets—both by a score of 6-4—as she fell in fourth singles. In fifth singles, Columbia sophomore Crystal Leung defeated her opponent in three sets, but in sixth singles, junior Ioana Alecsiu dropped her contest in only two sets.

On the doubles side of the game, the No. 37 Columbia's tandem of Sanon and junior Tiana Takenaga, competed in the first doubles slot, but fell 8-6 to Oklahoma State's Rose and Kanyapat Narattana. Likewise, Oklahoma State's second doubles duo defeated Bartnik and Leung 8-3. In third doubles, Lions Stratman and Vaidya secured a tight 8-7 victory over their opponents.

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ABOUT GAIL ARCHER
Gail Archer is a GRAMMY-nominated, international concert organist, recording artist, choral conductor and lecturer. Ms. Archer is college organist at Vassar College, and director of the music program at Barnard College, Columbia University where she conducts the Barnard-Columbia Chorus. She serves as director of the young organ artist recitals at the historic Central Synagogue, New York City.

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The duty of opportunity

As much as we may try to avoid living clichés, the spring semester carries an aura of newness and opportunity. Returning from long winter breaks, whether satisfied with the way we spent our time or not, the promise of longer days and more pleasant weather draws us to resolutions of going out more, working harder, and taking advantage of opportunities we’ve ignored up until now. We all heard the speech. Barnard College, Columbia University, located in the heart of New York City, special student discounts to museums and shows, ease of transportation to anywhere in the tri-state area, top-notch professors, unbeatable career development. Four years (or so!) the opportunity of a lifetime.

With the world at our fingertips, however, the pressure to spend every moment exploring it often becomes overwhelming. A relaxed night in easily turns into a guilt trip as we wonder why we are not out seeing the latest Broadway show or attending a VIP lecture. Our few free hours between classes are spent agonizing over whether the time would be better spent interning at a museum or law firm. We put ourselves at fault for our natural inability to do everything.

It is easy to forget that opportunities are really only opportunities if they open new doors for us and provide us with unique, desirable, and otherwise unattainable experiences. The financial internships for which we all receive hundreds of emails a day are only as valuable to you as your personal interest in the field. The student rush tickets are only as exciting as the thrill—or lack thereof—you get at seeing a Broadway show. Is there anything inherently better about spending your free evening at a concert in Brooklyn, rather than lying in bed drinking hot chocolate and



AYELET PEARL

Pearls of wisdom

Locating legacy

What will be my Columbian legacy? Maybe I’m a bit too young to be worrying about how I will be remembered, but it is beginning to sink in that I have only five more months at our august institution. Only five more months of leaving Nikolai-soaked, unrequited kisses on Alma. Only five more months of the (heart)burn of self-judgment as I remind myself for the umpteenth time that Koronet’s is god-awful and never, ever worth it. Only five more months of judging wide-eyed tour groups as they gawk at the weird statue (seriously, what is that thing?) on the façade of the law school. These will be, too soon, highlights in a closed chapter, the “best years of my life,” wistfully recalled over cheap cigarettes and cheaper wine in a pint-sized apartment in Bushwick or Oakland or whatever other neighborhood I will be gentrifying next year. Only five months left in a place that has brought me lower and raised me higher than I could have ever feared or dreamed.

Part of this anxiety, maybe the larger part, is rooted in the fear of what comes next—of life after Columbia. Will I find people who understand my awful Core jokes or stay up late to watch the quarterfinals of the Australian Open? I couldn’t help but wonder, looking around my common room tonight: What do normal people talk about, anyway? Maybe this is why, at the end of my time here, I am so desperate to be remembered, to leave something that shouts “I WAS HERE.” Maybe I am trying to claim a place, anchor myself, before I am washed away by the tide of car payments, ill-fitting suits, and graduate school applications.

The King’s Crown Leadership Awards, which honor “outstanding leadership to their community/ies with exemplary commitment and energy,” offer recognition to Columbia College Seniors in a variety of categories. One of these is for students who have left an “Indelible Mark” on our school. It is for those students whose actions have achieved a certain immortality, a reminder that they will not be forgotten. God knows I will never get one of these: I don’t think my vomiting into the bushes outside Butler sophomore year is the “mark” they are looking for. But when I am denied recognition from The Man, where am I to turn?

Where else but Mel’s? I have therefore decided to nominate myself for a King’s Crown award of my very own: the Brew Crew, Mel’s challenge to consume 33 of the beers on their draft list. Sure, you have to pay your way to this award, but I would venture to say that this feat also requires a certain “exemplary commitment and energy” to a community. You call it semi-public drunkenness. I call it supporting local business. (Perhaps I am a better fit for the “Civic Responsibility” recognition?) In any case, Mel’s rewards your loyalty with an “indelible mark” all your own: a plaque with your name on it, proudly displayed over the bar for all of Theta and SigEp to see. I suppose that will have to be enough. It does have a certain grandeur—dozens of future underage sorority girls mispronouncing my last name as they drunkenly woo and/or dodge the future I-Bankers and Bernie Madoffs of the world. A fitting legacy indeed.

Last week, I attended a party at the house of some friends who were recent graduates of Columbia. There was universal agreement that life after college sucks. These were hardly the words I wanted to hear: I wanted encouragement, progress, “It Gets Better.” But maybe these were the words that I needed to hear, because maybe every college senior quietly rejects those words, daring themselves to be better than their predecessors, challenging ourselves to make every year the Best Year of our lives. Is it this challenge that pushes us out of the nest—to tentatively spread our wings, praying that hitting the ground may not hurt as badly as we imagined? The people at this party were unconcerned with how Columbia remembered them; rather, they were content to cherish their memories of Columbia. Maybe it is a selfish thing, for me to worry about how I would be remembered, when what I should be looking forward to is how I will remember my time here. Legacies, I declare, are overrated. They will not be written in stone or on a commemorative pin. It is in the friends I made, the laughs we shared, and with any luck, a little plaque in Mel’s. With that, I raise my glass to you, Class of 2013. To the four best years of our lives. And to the next four, even better than the last.

Andrew Godinich is a Columbia College senior majoring in sociology and Portuguese studies. He is treasurer of Students for Educational Reform. Too Be Frank runs alternate Mondays.



ANDREW GODINICH

Too be frank

methodically X’ing out the pop-ups from Project Free TV? A lover of music might not hesitate to say yes, but if your interests lie elsewhere, your proximity to the venue might not be a compelling reason for you to make the trip.

We rightfully place importance on expanding our horizons, but when opportunities become obligations, we lose sight of why they exist in the first place.

There is another dimension to the sense of responsibility that comes with such limitless opportunity, beyond the call of free museums and one-of-a-kind internships, the romance of the city and the seductiveness of its networking. It is the duty to appreciate—even if we do not take full advantage—of all our opportunities. The sheer number of choices we have every day, and our inability to successfully take advantage of each one, makes it incredibly difficult to take a step back and be thankful that we have these doors open to us.

I struggled a great deal with coming back to school this semester, having seriously considered taking time off. In part, this stemmed from the guilt I experienced questioning the purpose and value of my education. As I grappled with legitimate doubts about the necessity of an undergraduate degree and the college system itself, I could not shake the feeling that, almost by definition, it was my duty to appreciate my education and all the incredible opportunities open to me at Barnard.

I reached the point where it felt wrong for me to be here. I am presented with the immense privilege of a high-caliber education, access to vast libraries, world-renowned museums, and more networking and career information events than the number of times a Barnard girl says “literally” in a sentence—yet I do not constantly feel a deep appreciation for it all. Significant portions of human history were spent fighting for the opportunity to learn, to work, and to pursue individualistic goals. I oversleep my morning classes and use pretentious words and run-on sentences to cloak the fact that

Less is more

BY STEVEN CASTELLANO

As I reflect on the first week of my last semester at Columbia, I am filled with elation from the great times spent with friends, whether it be eating four-hour dinners and wandering the campus aimlessly, or goofing off at the Winter Jam in Central Park and dancing till 7 a.m. at the CU Dance Marathon.

But as I continue reflecting, a wave of gloom overcomes me when I realize that the pervading spontaneity and optimism throughout the campus may not last. In a matter of days, we will fall behind on readings and problem sets, our dinners will become increasingly rooted only in their function of sustenance, and the pallor of stress will creep across our faces.

We are making time for the opportunities at Columbia to take advantage of us, rather than the other way around.

The problem is that for many of us, this anxiety is all we know. We have likely been habituated since high school or earlier to biting off more than we can comfortably chew. And even if ambition was not always in our DNA, it certainly was spliced in as we faced the dual insecurities that accompanied our acceptance letters: living up to societal expectations for our exceptional aptitudes and discovering that such exceptionality is mediocrity at our new home.

Given these forces, it should be no surprise that they coalesced to pressure us into taking on more responsibilities than we want and to accordingly compete to be the most physically and mentally unwell students we could be. When I was tabling for the Student Wellness Project this week, students filled out Post-its saying they would sleep, pleasure-read, cook, go downtown, go to office hours, work out, and chill with friends if they gained the time that came with dropping a class, yet few were inspired to carry through with doing so. Instead, we all watch as beloved pastimes like playing piano, sketching, and acting become enemies to our social and physiological needs. All the while, inspiring course readings get SparkNoted as we do whatever we can to get a good grade, often forgetting why we signed up for classes, clubs, internships, and more in the first place.

In this way, we are making time for the opportunities at Columbia to take advantage of us, rather than the other way

I never actually read the required material—forget about truly learned. What right do I have to sit in Butler Library, its frieze etched with the names of brilliant philosophers and scientists, when my time is spent checking Facebook and deleting the latest Career Development email?

Appreciation for learning and gratitude for the extra-curricular opportunities we have may seem like different issues, but they boil down to a singular perspective on the college experience. How do we reconcile our personal goals and abilities with external and internal pressures to take full advantage of everything we are given? How can we rightfully appreciate what we are offered, when we must constantly justify to ourselves why we are not taking up every offer? Regardless of the distinctive life circumstances that may shape our levels of appreciation for these opportunities, as a community, we must grapple with these questions that plague us all in some way or another. While I’m not sure what the ultimate solution will be, a re-assessment of the way we look at both our immediate and long-term options seems to be in order. Instead of keeping a running tab of everything we are not doing—the career fairs we’re skipping and the shows we can’t afford and the readings we just never had time to do—we need to pause, take a step back, and accept our decisions as admirable displays of discernment. Rather than beginning the semester with the resolution to do more, perhaps we should approach this semester with a commitment to filter more, to judge more precisely, and to tailor our opportunities to our individual goals.

Ayelet Pearl is a junior in the joint Barnard College and Jewish Theological Seminary program. She is a junior representative to the board of trustees in the Student Government Association. Pearls of Wisdom runs alternate Tuesdays.

around. Even more ironically, though, is that as we turn real interests into superficial ones, we not only get wrapped up in living for ends rather than means, but we also sabotage ourselves from achieving our ends anyway. By giving into the pressure and belief that we need two-page résumés full of “accomplishments” in order to land our “dream jobs,” we often do not realize that these superfluous, unfulfilling, and overwhelming commitments do more to create wrinkles and gray hairs than they do to get us into grad school. Therefore, my response to the friend who wants to add another course to her “light” course load is the same as to the one pursuing a summer internship in finance: if that’s what you love, go for it—but be sure to remember what it means to love something before you answer.

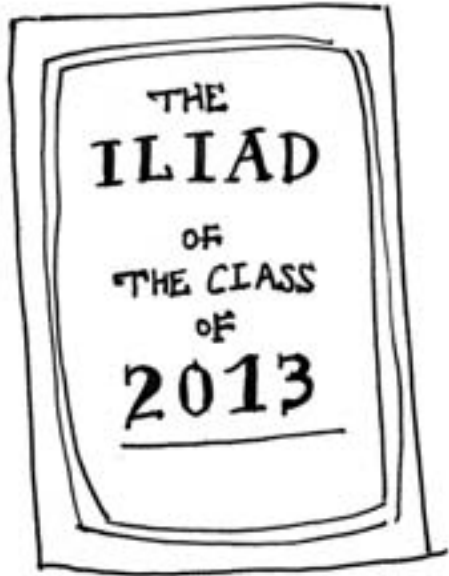
Instead, we should keep our goals simpler. Use college to make ourselves happy and explore who we want to be as people. Fulfillment and personal development should not be deferred when considering our short existences. Therefore, we should all spend at least one semester experiencing another side of college, minimally filling our schedules with activities in order to explore our personalities, meet new people, and discover what truly sustains rather than drains us. Only after relaxing can we know if we prefer educating ourselves simply through talking with peers about their passions.

Dissenters may still say that a healthy level of stress is necessary to motivate us to reach our potential. And while I agree, I think we at Columbia have particularly lost all perspective on what’s healthy, not to mention that we often equate reaching our potential with becoming money-generating robots. Just look at our (likely still unhealthy) peer schools to see what I mean. A normal credit load at MIT is four to 4.5 courses. At Dartmouth, students face additional fees if they take four classes for more than 3 trimesters (the equivalent of taking six classes for more than two semesters). And if you want a good laugh, there’s an article in the Harvard Crimson where the 20 undergraduates taking six or more classes are portrayed as deranged masochists.

If it’s the Harvard students you’re laughing at, you’re missing the point.

Ultimately, less can be more. We can use college to pursue hobbies, socialize, and attend the campus events that we currently only notice when clearing our Facebook notifications. All the while, no one—including employers—will think any less of us for choosing to develop ourselves rather than our second major. Drop a class: It’s refreshing.

The author is a Columbia College senior majoring in biophysics. He is the Columbia College Student Council academic affairs representative and the Student Wellness Project policy chair.



CU film professor makes Oscar predictions at panel

BY CARROLL GELDERMAN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

With the Oscars a little more than a month away, everybody is making predictions about who will take home a statuette. Professor Annette Insdorf, as director of undergraduate film studies, is no exception. Her picks, as revealed at a panel with noted film critics, include “Argo” and “The Sessions.”

Insdorf, along with David Edelstein of New York Magazine, Lisa Schwarzbaum of Entertainment Weekly, and A.O. Scott of the New York Times, talked about what was expected and what was unsurprising about the Academy Awards.

The critics began by noting the negative effects that awards season has on the film industry and the folly of even discussing the subject. But as Insdorf pointed out, it serves as a valid opportunity to discuss and promote those who were snubbed. She and her fellow panelists cited John Hawkes of “The Sessions” as an actor deserving of a Best Actor nomination, which he did not receive. Edelstein joked, “John Hawkes probably spent two days in bed under the covers.”

The panel was also puzzled by the exclusion of Kathryn Bigelow (“Zero Dark Thirty”), SoA ’81, and Ben Affleck (“Argo”) in the category for Best Director. In an interview with *Spectator*, Insdorf questioned whether this occurred because voters were sure the two would be nominated, so instead pushed for less likely nominees Benh Zeitlin (“Beasts of the Southern Wild”) and Michael Haneke (“Amour”).

The critics were not only confused by the exclusions, but at some of the inclusions in the nominee pool. “I think for many of us it was a surprise to see ‘Amour’ among the nominations for Best Picture,” Insdorf said. “You’re looking at a movie that’s not only foreign language, but extremely dark and difficult subject matter with actors who are not known by mainstream movie-going audiences.”

Despite having differing opinions on several of the films, the critics were able to agree on the certainty of a few wins. “So for Best Actor, there’s Daniel Day-Lewis and four guys who are going to lose to Daniel Day-Lewis,” Edelstein said to resounding nods.

They also agreed that the Best Supporting Actress award is Anne Hathaway’s for “Les Misérables,” although none were enthusiastic about the prospect. “It seems all the gods are saying it’ll be what’s-her-name who sings that song,” said Schwarzbaum.

Tony Kushner, CC ’78, was also a decisive choice for Best Adapted Screenplay. “One of the reasons ‘Lincoln’ has been such a critical and commercial success is the screenplay,” Insdorf said. “Kushner displays ... brilliance in both structure and dialogue. He juggles dozens of speaking parts and succeeds in giving each character flavorful and revelatory lines.”

But the broadcast on Feb. 24 will still have its moments of suspense. Opinions were largely split concerning the other major categories—each critic picked a different nominee for Best Actress. In discussing Best Picture, Scott chose “Lincoln,” while Edelstein said Harvey Weinstein’s backing of “Silver Linings Playbook” may give it the edge.

Insdorf advocated for “Argo,” which has recently won top awards at both the Golden Globe and SAG Awards.

“It’s taking on an important subject and I love the character at the center of it ... because the guy has a moral compass,” she said. “It’s an appropriate film for our time.”

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MICHAEL DISCENZA FOR SPECTATOR

SISTER ACT | Chloe Oppenheim, BC ’16, writes lyrics for her sister, who recently released an EP under the stage name Lily Mae.

BC first-year lends lyrical support for sister’s EP

BY JENNY PAYNE
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

A lot of students try to check in regularly with their siblings during their first year away from home, Skyping or staying up to date on Facebook. Yet not many are involved in their siblings’ musical careers as their primary songwriter, necessitating constant communication. Chloe Oppenheim, BC ’16, is one such rarity, supporting her younger sister’s musical career from behind the scenes as her primary lyricist.

Oppenheim was born listening to folk music—literally. “My mom was playing Bob Dylan in the delivery room when she was giving birth to me,” Oppenheim said. Naturally, she had musical talent, but she found it lay more in writing poetry and lyrics than in performance.

Oppenheim, 19, and her sister Lily, 16, both started playing guitar a few years ago. Lily “was instantly really good at it, and I thought it was really hard so I just quit,” Chloe said. “She would play in coffee shops and only do covers, but then she decided that she wanted to start writing songs.” Lily thought that she didn’t have enough life experience, so Chloe stepped up to write her songs.

The songwriting process was easy with Oppenheim’s poetry as a springboard and some

sisterly collaboration. “It’s very easy for us to write songs together just because we’re on the same wavelength,” Oppenheim said. “There’s a lot of very abstract dialogue, like, ‘Make it more purple, make it more red,’ that a lot of people would think sounds really weird. We have our own form of communica-

“We recently wrote one new song where I play the glockenspiel and sing harmonies, but besides that I’m not planning on performing.”

—Chloe Oppenheim, BC ’16

tion.” She finds inspiration for her lyrics in everything from existential philosophy to books she reads to her favorite folk musicians, such as Joni Mitchell, Laura Marling, and Good Old War.

Under the stage name Lily Mae, the younger Oppenheim released her first EP last winter and received some online buzz from blogs like *For Folk’s Sake* and *UK Folk Music*. The sisters have written enough material to fill a full-length album and are working on their next release, a concept album that Oppenheim envisions playing out like a continuous poem. “I was reading ‘Walden’ when I started thinking about it,” she said. The album’s theme is a girl who “is thinking about all of the pain and sadness in the world and wants to run away and find the truth by living in the woods.”

Fans may wonder if being behind the scenes causes family feuds. In fact, Oppenheim is perfectly happy letting her sister have the spotlight. “We recently wrote one new song where I play the glockenspiel and sing harmonies, but besides that I’m not planning on performing. I don’t really have any interest in that,” she said. For now, she’s enjoying just cheering her sister on and continuing their musical collaboration via regular Skype sessions and many shared Google Docs.

Lily Mae is opening for Columbia band Morningsiders at Pianos (158 Ludlow St.) on Feb. 7 at 7 p.m. Her new EP, *Early Days*, can be purchased on iTunes or heard on Bandcamp (lilymae.bandcamp.com).

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Arts Initiative set to launch new website after formation of advisory committee

BY LESLEY THULIN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

A new Arts Initiative website is set to launch in the middle of the semester, according to Executive Director of the Arts Initiative and Miller Theatre Melissa Smey.

The current website “doesn’t best reflect our current programs and services,” Smey said.

Students had identified the outdated website among other concerns in the “Save the Arts Initiative” petition, which garnered about 1,300 signatures, in November.

“The website is no longer continually updated and has stopped being a central resource for Columbians interested in the arts, and often lists information years out of date as if it were current,” the petition said.

Smey’s primary concern is to create a more user-friendly experience.

Her team has been working with an outside consultant since last May to initiate the new website, but will not launch the new website until it has feedback from an advisory group consisting of students, faculty, and staff. The petition also called for the formation of such a group.

The advisory group will include 16 students, including one student representative from each of the 16 schools and colleges. Deans of each school will determine the nominating process.

“We’re still working out the process by which faculty and staff appointments will be made and settling on the right number,” Smey said. “My goal for the group is that it should be big enough to fairly represent the breadth of constituents that we serve, but small enough to be a reasonable working group.”

Smey identified several drawbacks to the current website.

It “has a proprietary content management system, and the company that had developed it isn’t working for us anymore,” she said. “Not even CUIT is able to get in and help us make updates. So there are some parts of the site, some content on the site, that’s more than three years old and there isn’t

anything we can do to update it, which is a drag.”

“The number one mandate I gave to the consultant is to help us to improve the organization and navigation of the site to help us better organize our content, so that it would be an easier user experience ... to better promote our mission and our programs.”

The new website will detail “what an Arts Initiative event is, when it is, and the ongoing events, and the day-off events,” according to Lauren Pearson, the newly appointed associate director for program administration.

Users will also be able to search for options under \$25—“or something along those lines, so students who are looking for a particular event, date, time, neighborhood, and price range can get that information easily,” Pearson added.

“Right now, I think it’s very difficult to find that,” she said. “We’re aware of the problems.”

The new website will retain the visual look and feel—namely, the color scheme and logo icons—of the old website, which design studio Dresser Johnson developed for CUarts over the years.

“One of the things that we’ve gotten them to do for us—for example, ArtsLink and the TIC—those are core programs, and there’s a really compelling and existing logo icon,” Smey said.

But the current website doesn’t have a logo icon for all of the Arts Initiative’s core programs.

“Museum Meetups is new—I invented it last fall. We don’t have a logo icon for that,” Smey said. “And so we’ve asked them to develop a logo icon for all of our core programs, so the new site will incorporate that in a compelling way.”

Smey’s team is currently working with a consultant who has completed other projects at the University.

“She had a really thorough understanding of the University and how websites at the University work and how CUIT works ... She really understood our mission, also, and so was just really excited about helping to create an awesome for our campus’ Arts Initiative,” Smey said.

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GRAPHIC BY REGIE MAURICIO