Most importantly, Beverly – along with 150 other Columbians, as well as well known supporters such as Senator Edward Kennedy – is giving back to her community and making a difference in a child’s life. When asked what his favorite subject in school is, Felix replies “reading!”

“I encourage my fellow colleagues to at least try it out,” said Beverly. “You feel so good when the hour is over. It is one of the best decisions I have made here.”

To get more information about Power Lunch or become a volunteer, visit the Neighbors Web site at http://neighbors.columbia.edu/pages/programsandservices or http://www.everybodywins.org.”

This year’s Commencement Week was an enormous success, due to the outstanding effort and professionalism of many of our employees. Our hard work was visually apparent – the campus looked great and we seamlessly handled over 185 separate events, including 11 school graduations, 32 receptions and an unforgettable Commencement Day that included over 20,000 participants and guests and 11,000 degree candidates.

The logistics of the week were complex: we put up tents for Class Day ceremonies on Monday and Tuesday (left) took them down on Tuesday night for Wednesday’s Commencement ceremony (right), and put the tents back up again for the Law School Graduation on Thursday - all while keeping the campus safe, functional and beautiful. Congratulations and thank you to all!
As we settle into another busy summer of campus and residential improvements, we must also pause to consider all that we have accomplished as an organization. The 2006-2007 academic year was a remarkable one for Columbia University Facilities, highlighted by great progress in implementing our organizational design; enhancing client service; building for Columbia’s future at the Morningside and Lamont campuses; moving forward on the University’s proposed expansion in the old Manhattanville manufacturing zone in West Harlem; leading initiatives to conserve the environment; and coordinating an unforgettable Commencement Week, all while keeping the campus safe, functional and beautiful. I’m proud to say, and people around campus are noticing, that we are truly “making it happen” at Columbia.

Hiring and Retaining the Best People
At Columbia University Facilities, employees are our most valuable asset. Over the past academic year, a large number of new employees – a total of 104 since September 2006- have joined our organization. Complementing the strong team already in place, these employees will help us continue to realize our organizational goals including improving service to our clients, managing our growth, and measuring and evaluating success. I want to welcome all of our new employees.

Enhancing Client Service
Only one year into its launch, our Facilities Services Center has already exceeded expectations, handling nearly 50,000 service requests, rolling out an online request form to our academic and administrative colleagues, maintaining 24/7 coverage, and receiving rave reviews from our clients (see the “Customer Compliments” section of this newsletter). We also hired a Director of Client Services, David Forbes, a Project Supervisor for Client Services, Raphael Lynch, and increased the number of Client Service Supervisors to four: Joe DiPietro, Anna Fu, Pete Macaluso and Rafael Then.

Building for Columbia’s Future
Continuing our objective of providing-state-of-the-art facilities for our faculty, staff and students, we completed a remarkable 76 renovation or new construction projects. We have entered the last phase of our multi-phase renovation of our flagship library, Butler, and started construction activities on the 9th floor expansion of Jerome Greene Hall, the Lamont Geochemistry Research Facility, and the Northwest Science Building, which will help fulfill Columbia’s great need for science instruction and academic research space. We also worked closely with our neighbors in the community in planning for the renovation of McVickar Hall as the new home for University Development and Alumni Relations, who will have a permanent space in a University building for the first time in 30 years. And on June 18th, nearly 100 CUIT employees relocated to the beautifully renovated Studebaker Building, marking the first phase of Columbia employees moving to that historic building on West 131st Street.

continued on page 8
Dear Matthew [Early],

This is to let you know that the Paint Shop—Alex Aronis, Mark Rondinelli, Anthony Cannon, Rhaming Crawford and Larry DiMarco—yes, all of them, just finished painting in IAB and did a first-rate professional job. The shop is operating at top form and delivering impressive work. I cannot help but notice also that the quality of paint they are using is a better grade than that used by some of the contractors. If you don't believe me come over for a look. Thank you and thank them for helping us look good.

Micaela Lee Ordahl
Building Manager, IAB

Dear Columbia Facilities,

We would like to express our thanks to Solamon Teledano, Miguel Ramos, William Rodriguez, and Fred Vargas for all of their hard work today in restoring electrical power to Butler Library. We appreciate their quick response, professionalism, and good work. A job very well done by all. On behalf of Butler Library - thanks.

Bill Austin
Butler Collection Management

Dear Letitia [Edwards],

I wanted to thank you for the incredibly quick response by you and your folks. Coming from another university, I was amazed that the work was done, and done well, the same day as the request was submitted! I so appreciated it and am happily moved into my office.

Carol Hoffman
Associate Provost
Director, Work Life

Dear Columbia Facilities,

I would like to thank Facilities Operations, and in particular Mr. Vincent Walsh, for all of his efforts in installing eyewashes throughout the laboratories. Your efforts help improve safety for our researchers, staff and students. Thank you again.

Selim Tlili
Lab Safety Officer
Environmental Health & Safety

Dear David [Forbes],

With great trepidation I decided to try the Schermerhorn 7th floor extension ladies room once more. WOW! I have NEVER seen it so sparkling clean and smelling so good. I didn’t think it was possible. What a difference!

Carol Mountain
Program Coordinator
Earth & Environmental Sciences

Dear Matthew [Early],

I wanted to let you know how amazing and fantastic (not words often used to describe administrators, but they apply here) Monica Kuth has been while Acting Director at UAH. I did not imagine that anyone would be as enthusiastic, responsive, and committed as Monica is. Her openness to learning about the Law School and our students impressed me from the first moment she contacted me in this new position, and things have only gotten better from there. I just wanted to let you know that I appreciate the work being done at UAH.

Elizabeth Grainger
Assistant Director of Student Services
Columbia Law School

Dear Wanda Roman,

I just wanted to write to thank the department for its quick service last Saturday. My key was broken last Saturday night, and within a short period of time, Angel Diaz had come to find me a replacement key. Andre Bzadanejinyi was really helpful on the phone as well.

Mukul Bakhshi
Student
Columbia Law School

Dear Don [Schlosser],

I am long overdue in thanking you and the many others in facilities who made the Butler Plaza book return replacement a complete success. We ran into a few snags, but everyone worked together to solve the problems and get the new bins installed. Special thanks go to Gene Profanato for coordinating, Tony Arevalo & Miguel for masterminding the installation and Bob Henney for the great looking signs. We really appreciate the end result, but are equally pleased with the process. We can do good things when we all work together.

Aline Locascio
Coordinator
Butler Renovation
2007 Summer Construction Activity Kicks Into Full Gear

While construction activity is a year round process, a significant portion of the Columbia University Facilities capital construction program takes place during the summer months, when the reduced campus population makes it logistically possible to complete more work. This summer we plan to complete over $35 million in construction projects, including several off-campus projects. Highlights include:

Pre-Construction Work on Northwest Science Building

The Northwest Science Building, designed by architect Jose Rafael Moneo, will be located at the corner of Broadway and West 120th Street above the Levien gymnasium and between Chandler and Pupin Halls. Scheduled to open in the fall of 2010, the 14-story building will house faculty offices, classrooms, a science library, a café and interdisciplinary research facilities for the departments of chemistry, biology, engineering and physics. The pre-construction work at the Northwest Science Building proves to be fun for all ages (pictured above)!

Uris Hall

To enhance the Columbia Business School student experience, the public spaces on the 200 and 300 levels will be renovated, and classrooms located on the east and west side of the 3rd floor will be upgraded with new finishes and lighting. In addition, 34 new student study room spaces will be created on the first and mezzanine floors of Watson Library.

New Floor Addition for Jerome Greene Hall

In response to increased demand for space, Jerome Greene Hall, which is located at West 116th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, will undergo construction to add a new floor atop its structure. This new floor will contain offices for Columbia Law School faculty. Construction is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2008.

New Journalism Student Center

The Stabile Student Center, scheduled to open in the fall of 2007, will contain a series of comfortable and highly visible spaces where students, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni can relax and interact. The plan, by Marble Fairbank Architects, reconfigures the western end of the double-height main floor (200 level) and basement (100 level), and makes exceptional use of previously underutilized spaces, including the 100 level, a long-abandoned stair hall and the outdoor terrace.

Restoration of College Walk

Scheduled to be completed (weather permitting) by the end of the summer, the restored College Walk will feature new asphalt pavers from Broadway to Amsterdam, new granite curbs, a storm drainage system and new lighting. The result will be an attractive, smooth and uniform new passageway that highlights the beauty of our central campus.

This map which depicts the buildings under construction and areas that may experience congestion due to construction activity this summer can be found at www.cuf.columbia.edu/summerconstructionmap.
The Color of Building: Green
By Barbara King Lord

They may have different architectural styles, physical sizes and academic purposes, but there is a unifying element to the three biggest construction projects the University currently is undertaking: They’re all green.

These three highly visible projects—the Northwest Science Building, McVickar Hall and Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory’s (LDEO) new geochemistry building—are the strongest statement yet of Columbia’s commitment to build within the highest environmental standards. This means seeking Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, the nationally accepted benchmark for design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings.

LEED uses a scorecard-type rating system that awards points in specific areas: sustainable site development, water conservation, energy efficiency, environmentally sound building materials, and indoor environmental quality.

Applying for LEED certification, a voluntary designation, usually starts at the beginning of the construction planning process. That’s when project managers, architects, contractors and engineers make decisions on how their project aligns with LEED criteria in each key area. For the Northwest Science building, “we’re making sure all the design-related points are in the drawings,” says Karri Wilhelms, the project manager.

Because seven of Northwest Science’s 13 floors are lab areas, ventilating requirements need 100 percent outside air. “Lots of air changes each hour are lab safety concerns; moreover we use lots more water and energy per square foot than other buildings. So LEED certification for a lab building is more challenging,” Wilhelms adds. As mentioned in the column at right, the design team will work with Labs 21, another voluntary partnership that helps build sustainable high performance, low-energy labs.

McVickar Hall’s gut renovation includes “practically the entire interior of the building,” says Donald Eggleton, project manager. McVickar can claim LEED points for reusing the building shell, and the internal systems construction will also comply with the LEED checklist for new buildings, Eggleton says.

At LDEO, the new geochemistry building replaces an existing building that houses the Geochemistry Division. It will be “a state-of-the-art laboratory building consisting of wet and dry chemistry labs, including ultra clean chemistry labs,” says Patrick O’Reilly, assistant director for facilities and engineering at LDEO.

To date, the building doesn’t have LEED certification, but O’Reilly is confident certification is attainable. “All of us recognize the value of institutionalizing and publicizing good environmental stewardship,” he said.

Reducing Energy Usage
Columbia has taken another major step forward in its commitment to environmental stewardship by enrolling in the award winning electric demand response program “Operation Save New York.” As part of the program, the University agrees to conserve electricity in certain areas of its operations when there is an electric shortage in New York State. The idea behind demand response programs is to have customers reduce electric use when demand for electricity is forecasted to reach or exceed available supply.

Columbia will receive day-ahead notice of periods when the electric grid is forecasted to be unstable and will respond by reducing chiller set points, running the HVAC system at a lower setting, and turning off lighting, elevators and non-critical equipment. Metering will also be installed in academic buildings at the University’s main Morningside Heights campus, Baker Field Athletic Complex, Nevis Laboratories and LDEO. To learn more about demand response programs and “Operation Save New York” please visit www.ecsny.com.
Columbia University Facilities is spearheading efforts to make Columbia a model environmental citizen. Below are some recent efforts to reduce energy consumption, limit our greenhouse gas emissions and incorporate environmental and energy enhancements in new construction projects.

Developing “Green” Labs
The design team for Columbia’s new Northwest Science Building faced a daunting challenge: how to help fulfill the University’s great need for more laboratory space while still building “green.” After all, the typical laboratory uses far more energy and water per square foot than the typical office building, due to intensive ventilation requirements and other health and safety concerns. So Columbia is collaborating with Labs21, a voluntary partnership program jointly sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and the International Institute for Sustainable Laboratories (I2SL) to improve the environmental performance of U.S. laboratories. The goal of the program is to encourage the development of sustainable, high-performance and low-energy laboratories nationwide. As a Labs21 Partner, Columbia will set measurable energy and environmental performance goals for the seven floors of laboratories in the Northwest Science Building, benchmark performance using Labs21 tools, and share performance results.

With the guidance of Labs21, the design team also hopes to incorporate additional energy-efficient laboratory features such as occupancy sensors on fume hoods, which automatically increase or decrease the speed of the fans depending on the proximity of the user. For more information on the Labs21 program, please visit http://www.labs21century.gov.

Creating a Bike-Friendly Campus
Want to escape from the crowds in the subway or the hassles of finding a parking spot? Bike to campus! Bicycling is one of the most healthy, economical, fun and environmentally friendly ways to commute. Facilities has recently installed additional bike racks across campus. There are now nearly 150 bike racks on campus to accommodate close to 300 bicycles. Check out the Morningside Campus bike rack locations at: www.columbia.edu/cu/publicsafety/bikeracklocations.htm. And remember, New York is a great city for riding! Get the NYC bike map and bike safety tips at: www.nyc.gov.

Committing to Mayor’s PlaNYC Challenge
Columbia University has accepted the challenge posed by Mayor Bloomberg to join New York City’s goal in pledging to reduce greenhouse gases 30 percent by 2017. This recent Mayoral initiative, known as the PlaNYC Challenge, is one step toward PlaNYC 2030, the Mayor’s comprehensive proposal to improve the environment while spurring economic development and wise planning for future growth. Over the next few months and in the coming years, Facilities will help develop an implementation plan and targets.

Ways to Go Green at Work

1. Be Bright About Light
   Turn off any lights when you’re leaving any room for 15 minutes or more and utilize natural light when you can.

2. Maximize Computer Efficiency
   Computers in the workplace unnecessarily waste $1 billion worth of electricity a year. Turn off your computer when you leave for the day.

3. Print Smarter
   The average U.S. office worker goes through 10,000 sheets of copy paper a year. Print on both sides or use the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper or drafts. Print in draft mode whenever feasible.

4. Ramp Up Your Recycling
   Recycle! Recycle! Recycle! Just about any kind of paper you encounter in an office, including fax paper, envelopes, and junk mail, can be recycled.

5. Reconsider Your Commute
   If you can, try carpooling, biking or taking mass transportation to work. If you need to drive, consider joining a car-sharing service like Zipcar (www.zipcar.com) - a great alternative to owning your own car.
Welcome!
February 1-May 31, 2007

NEW FACES AT FACILITIES

Fanny Gong
Assistant Vice President, Design Management
Manhattanville Capital Projects

Douglas McKean
Director of Programs
Capital Project Management

James Wang
Assistant Vice President, Financial Services
Finance & Administration

Joseph Agyemang
Supervisor
Custodial Services

Michael Azzopardi
Assistant Director
Residential Operations

Silbinio Blanco
Porter C
Residential Operations

Gloria Brown
Coordinator
Facilities Services Center

Vincent Bynum
Supervisor
Trade Services

Pablo Cora
Porter C
Residential Operations

Gerard Dengel
Assistant Director
Residential Operations

Jennifer Diaz
Assistant Director
Real Estate

Ellen Dodson
Assistant Director
Planning & Space Management

Rickey Dudley
Security Officer
Public Safety

Paul Ewen
Door Attendant C
Residential Operations

Neil Falby
Mechanic A
Plant Engineering & Utilities

Joshua Figueroa
Heavy Cleaner
Custodial Services

Rita Fosu
Heavy Cleaner
Custodial Services

James Fountain III
Assistant Mechanic
Plant Engineering & Utilities

Gerardo Franco
Security Officer
Public Safety

Anna Fu
Client Service Supervisor
Campus Operations

Aaron Guillet
Payroll Analyst
Finance & Administration

Virgen Guzman
Coordinator
Facilities Services Center

Andre Houle
Supervisor
Campus Operations

Maryam Isa
Prop Mgt Associate
Residential Operations

Stephen Jones
Security Officer
Public Safety

Vicky Joyner
Work Control Specialist
Residential Operations

Cynthia Lindberg
Project Manager
Capital Project Mgt

Raphael Lynch
Client Service Supervisor
Campus Operations

Kevin Macaluso
Manager
Capital Project Management

William Oberlin
Project Manager
Capital Project Mgt

David Osiedo
Door Attendant C
Residential Operations

George Perdomo
Handy Person A
Residential Operations

Melissa Perez
Security Officer
Public Safety

Sokha Puch
Heavy Cleaner
Custodial Services

Erik Reid
Heavy Cleaner
Custodial Services

Andy Rivera
Porter C
Residential Operations

Lizbeth Rivera
HR Coordinator
Finance & Administration

Deanda Robinson
Heavy Cleaner
Custodial Services

Maribel Santos
Supervisor
Custodial Services

Norman Simmons
Security Officer
Public Safety

Jarrod Smalls
Supervisor
Residential Operations

Michelle Sokoli
Assistant Director
Finance & Administration

Andre Solomon
Supervisor
Custodial Services

Elizabeth Taylor
Project Manager
Capital Project Mgt

Alfred Torres
Heavy Cleaner
Custodial Services

Nathan Turner
Analyst
Finance & Administration

Isaac Velez
Porter C
Residential Operations

Raymond Williams
Porter C
Residential Operations

*A special welcome to all of our summer interns!
NEW ROLES

John Alessio  
Director of Trade Services  
Campus Operations

Anthony Botti  
Acting Director  
Capital Improvement Projects  
Capital Project Management

Anson Leacock  
Acting Assistant Director  
Compliance  
Campus Operations

Wanda Roman  
Supervisor  
Facilities Services Center

Louis Santiago  
Assistant Supervisor  
Facilities Services Center

Serena Sinkler  
Administrative Coordinator  
Manhattanville Capital Projects

Petrina Whyte  
Assistant Director for  
Administrative Services  
Manhattanville Capital Projects

NEW GRADS

Marah Arbaje  
Supervisor, Custodial Services,  
recently graduated from Columbia University with a Master of Public Administration

JoEllen Bagayoko  
Administrative Assistant,  
Planning & Space Management,  
recently graduated from Columbia University Teacher’s College with a Master of Education & Anthropology

Letitia Edwards  
Coordinator, Facilities Services Center,  
recently graduated from New York Institute of Technology with a Master of Communication Arts

Lorant Kando  
Senior Systems Analyst, Information Technology,  
recently graduated from Columbia University with a Master of Science in Technology Management

Boubacar Maiga  
Manager, Custodial Services,  
recently graduated from Columbia University with a Master of Public Administration

Lauren Morrow  
Assistant Director, Residential Operations,  
recently graduated from Columbia University with a Master of Science in Landscape Design

SILVER SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to the following on their 25th anniversary at Columbia!

Orlando Ferrer  
Door Attendant C  
Residential Operations, hired 5/1/1982

Dianne Gossett  
Manager  
Campus Operations, hired 4/19/1982

Sylvester Lesniowski  
Mechanic A  
Plant Engineering & Utilities, hired 4/19/1982

Charite Louis  
Building Superintendent  
Residential Operations, hired 4/9/1982

Richard Schumacher  
Building Superintendent  
Residential Operations, hired 1/26/1982

Marco Vinuza  
Head Mechanic  
Custodial Services, hired 1/4/1982

RECENTLY ADMITTED TO A DEGREE PROGRAM

Morgan Reynolds  
Space Planning Coordinator,  
Planning & Space Management,  
recently admitted to Columbia University and is pursuing a Master of Architecture

Jolyon Handler  
Analyst, Finance and Administration,  
recently admitted to Columbia University and is pursuing a Master of Public Administration

WEDDING BELLS

John Alessio, Director, Trade Services, Campus Operations and his wife Pilar (pictured below), were married on May 31st. “Since surviving my sky diving accident, I’m not getting enough adrenaline from jumping, so I decided to do something real scary- like getting married!” said John. Congratulations!

Congratulations to Lindsay Miller, Executive Assistant, Office of the Executive Vice President and her fiancé Chris Doering (pictured below), who just graduated law school. Lindsay and Chris were engaged on January 15th.

Congratulations to Karri Wilhelm, Project Manager, Capital Project Management, and her fiancé Ric Rivera, of Ideal Interiors. Karri and Ric were engaged on May 28th.

Congratulations to Pauline Meehan, Director, Real Estate, and her fiancé Brian Gibney, of the Columbia University Chemistry Department. Pauline and Brian were engaged on June 1st.
Moving the Campus Expansion Plan Forward

Speaking of Manhattanville, New York City’s Department of City Planning recently certified that Columbia’s application for the proposed rezoning of the old manufacturing area of Manhattanville in West Harlem is now complete. This is a major milestone for our project and will begin the City’s process for rezoning, the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). The University is excited to realize our vision with Renzo Piano Building Workshop, the design architect, David Brody Bond, the local architect, Bovis Lend Lease, the lead construction management firm and the McKissack Group, a core team member for the preparation, approval process, and construction of the first phase of our proposed expansion. Bovis brings significant experience not only with large-scale projects but also with the inclusion of minority-, women- and locally-owned businesses as part of their team. McKissack, the oldest minority-owned construction firm in the country, has a strong track record in higher education projects.

Conserving the Environment & Resources

Facilities has also led efforts to make Columbia a model environmental citizen. We are commissioning all new construction to ensure that the mechanical systems are operating at peak efficiency and are planning to retro-commission existing buildings. We have registered the new Northwest Science Building and McVickar Hall for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification – Columbia’s first buildings to be registered, but certainly not the last. We have committed to reducing energy consumption when electricity is scarce in New York State, and are now metering individual buildings to collect energy usage data so we can find ways to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. To create a more bike friendly environment, we have recently installed additional bike racks across campus. Most recently, the University has accepted the challenge posed by Mayor Bloomberg to join New York City’s goal in pledging to reduce greenhouse gases 30 percent by 2017. Over the next few months and in the coming years, Facilities will help develop an implementation plan and targets.

An Unforgettable Commencement

To top it all off, Commencement Week was an enormous success, due to the exceptional efforts of many of our employees. After months of preparation, we seamlessly handled over 185 separate events, including 11 school graduations, 32 receptions and an unforgettable Commencement Day that included over 20,000 participants and guests and 11,000 degree candidates. The logistics of the week were complex: we put up tents for Class Day ceremonies on Monday and Tuesday, took them down on Tuesday night for Wednesday’s Commencement ceremony, and put the tents back up again for the Law School Graduation on Thursday - all while keeping the campus safe, functional and beautiful.

In closing, I am extremely proud of all that we have accomplished during this past academic year. I know, however, that this coming year will be even better, as we look towards continuing excellent service to our clients and realizing the full potential of our combined expertise. We will make it happen, together.

I could not be prouder to work with all of the enormously talented and dedicated employees throughout this organization. I wish you and your family a happy and healthy summer.

Joe Ienuso

continued on page 12
Less than a week after the Columbia community was stunned by the tragedy at Virginia Tech and, closer to home, a brutal sexual assault on a Columbia graduate student, Columbia students delivered a clear message to public safety officers: thank you for keeping our campus safe.

In April, two posters were delivered to the Department of Public Safety offices in Low from students who live in residence halls across campus. The posters contained messages from students to public safety, ranging from gratitude to individual officers - “Dear C. Maxwell, Thanks for being a great guard” - to overall appreciation for “keeping us safe at all hours of the day.”

Associate Vice President for Public Safety Jim McShane, in a message to all security officers, congratulated them on a job well done. “Day in and day out you perform a critical function, namely, making sure that our undergraduate residents are safe in their homes,” wrote McShane. “Make no mistake about it, this unprecedented outpouring of gratitude from the students you protect is for you, the security officer on post.”

In addition to the many initiatives already in place, the Department of Public Safety recently announced actions to increase the level of security on campus and to sponsor safety seminars to enhance awareness on campus.

“My team and I are here to keep the University community safe and sound,” said McShane. “We look forward to working to not only to keep our environment as safe as it is, but also to make our students, faculty and staff– and their families– feel safe.”

The Biggest Loser is the Winner

Brian Tesseyman, Investigator, pictured at right, narrowly beat George Farina, Assistant Manager, at the final weigh-in of the First Annual Department of Public Safety Weight Loss Competition. Tesseyman lost 12.1% of his body weight between January 10th and March 15th, compared to Farina’s 11.5%. Besides a trophy, Tesseyman was awarded the entry proceeds of $250, which he generously donated to the family of Security Officer Wilfredo Infante, who recently passed away. Congratulations to all participants!

Ceremony Honors Outstanding Achievements in Public Safety

Recipients pose with their awards at the Third Annual Public Safety Promotion, Awards and Recognition Ceremony. Associate Vice President Jim McShane presented awards for perfect attendance, achievement, crime prevention and also recognized individuals throughout the University for their efforts in making our campus safer. Congratulations to all!
When the workday is done, many of us retreat to our homes for some down time, a home-cooked meal, and maybe catch the latest episode of Lost on Tivo. But dozens of multi-talented people who work for the University by day head down Broadway to the Theater District- or even stay in the Morningside Heights area- at night to pursue their creative dreams as actors, writers, or other artistic activities that contribute to the array of cultural options New York City has to offer.

Surprised? You may be even more surprised to learn that several of these artists work for Columbia University Facilities. In fact, of all the diverse backgrounds and interests of Facilities employees, none may be more prevalent than the number of people pursuing artistic endeavors outside of the workplace.

But why are artists working at Facilities? For most, it is the allure of working in the creative environment a University campus provides, along with the stability of a steady income and health insurance. For others, it all started with Mia Katigbak, an actress and founder of The National Asian American Theatre Company (NAATCO), and a former University employee who first worked for Geoff Wiener and then became the executive assistant to Emily Lloyd, who was then Executive Vice President for Administration. Mia- who is now acting and working for Emily Lloyd again at the New York City Department of Environmental Protection- had this idea to create what she called a “mafia” of artists at the University, and she systematically brought in one artist after another to fill vacant jobs in Facilities. The result has been a work environment that is extremely artist-friendly, and has attracted many more artists to the Facilities fold. Here are some of the members of our “mob”, and their stories:

Mel Gionson: From a Gigolo to a King

Mel Gionson, Senior Administrative Coordinator, Office of the Executive Vice President, arrived in New York City from his native Waipahu, Hawaii with $800 and a dream of acting at the New York Public Theater. Understandably, he was a bit nervous during his first Public Theater audition and was not offered the part. Persistent, he landed his first professional job singing in a production of Shakespeare’s Richard II. Later, Mel joined the Pan Asian Repertory Theater, a major New York theater where he met Mia Katigbak, during a production at La Mama ETC, in which he played a gigolo and she played a prostitute. Although he was cast in several lead roles with Pan Asian Rep money was hard so he got a job at a former erotic theater on 57th Street that went legitimate. Having had enough of buttered popcorn, he took computer classes and got hired by a midtown law firm as a data processing supervisor. Just as the fanatical hours of working at a law firm were getting to him, Mel received a call from the Pubic Theater – exactly ten years after he initially auditioned – and was quickly cast in Henry IV Parts I and II with Thomas Gibson and then King Lear with F. Murray Abraham. Mel next resigned from the law firm to act full-time, landing parts in regional theaters, opera stars such as As The World Turns, and film (he was the “paranoid vendor” in a scene with Renee Zellweger in 1998’s A Price Above Rubies). Some of the other New York theater companies that he’s worked in include New York Shakespeare Festival, Manhattan Theatre Club; National Asian American Theatre Company (NAATCO); and MaYi Theatre. After playing the Kralahome and the King in the National Broadway Tour of The King and I, opposite the likes of Hayley Mills and Marie Osmond, Mel decided to “retire from the road” and was brought in through Karen Lee as a casual with the former Institutional Real Estate organization. Now working directly for Joe Ienuso, Mel still manages to squeeze in some theater gigs and readings, most recently a benefit for the Parkinson’s Disease Foundation with soap opera divas at the Minetta Lane Theatre. He is also on the screening committee of the Hampsons Film Festival.

“In my job you get pulled in so many different directions,” said Mel. “I use my improv skills every day.”

Brian Myers: Tony Voter, Moonlighting at Facilities

If you’ve ever thought about producing theater, you can tell the cheering audience during your Tony Award acceptance speech that you worked with a Tony voter. Brian Myers, Administrative Coordinator, Capital Project Management, is not only a voter for the Tony Awards (which honor excellence on Broadway, in case you didn’t know), but also serves on the National Council of Actors’ Equity Association and is an accomplished theater actor and writer, having performed in all fifty states (including Alaska and Hawaii), as well as Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Brian, whose stage name is Brian Myers Cooper, has done everything from dinner theater to regional theater to Off-Broadway, where he originated roles in Jayson and End of the World Party by Emmy award winning Fraser writer, Chuck Ramberg. He also performed in the national tour of Miss Saigon, where he met his partner, Orville Mendoza. Mia hired Orville, who then brought in Brian in 2002, to work on a project for Karen Fry. Orville left the project when he was cast in the Broadway production of Pacific Overtures, leaving Brian to finish. Recently, Orville was a 2007 Drama Desk Award nominee as Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical for his role in Adrift in Macao, and is currently appearing in the Public’s production of Romeo & Juliet in Central Park. Facilities was lucky enough to have Brian return temporarily in 2006 and now, both times filling in for the AVP Administrative Coordinator position and training the full-time replacements. He continues to audition, is writing a trio of plays about events in his family back in Ohio, and will be starring in the musical Romance/Romance in Raleigh, NC when he leaves Facilities in mid-June.

“There is a unique social and political structure at Columbia,” said Brian. “Actors know how to network, how to speak, and how to problem solve, which helps us navigate the lay of the land.”

Pilar Witherspoon: Yes, That’s Her Real Name

Pilar Witherspoon, Administrative Coordinator, Office of the Executive Vice President, recently returned from shooting a commercial for Publix Super Markets in Florida. Easy work for a Juilliard grad, right? “It was tougher than you might think,” the Boise, Idaho native said. “I ended up
having to ad lib quite a bit.” Maybe not as tough, though, as her first job at Columbia in 1998, when she worked with faculty and students in search of University housing as a temp in the former Institutional Real Estate department. That experience, though, prepared her for future positions at the University. In fact, Pilar might know Columbia better than anyone – she’s worked for Emily Lloyd, then Executive Vice President for Administration, for Joe Harney during his time as Director of Administrative Planning & Financial Management, for Colleen Croker when she was Vice President of Human Resources, as well as for several other departments. Pilar says that her extensive theater background has prepared her to work at Columbia by making her an effective communicator and troubleshooter. In addition to her regional theater experience, Pilar’s Off-Broadway credits include: Nia in Fighting Words for the Underwood Theatre, Elaine in the American premiere of One Good Beat, Sandra in Beautiful Thing, Azra/Glenna in Destination (workshop production) for Second Stage, Adele Natter in Schnitzler’s Far & Wide, Solange in The Maids, and Lili in Why We Have a Body. Her television credits include: Third Watch, Law & Order and Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. In 2004 Pilar left Columbia to perform in perhaps her most celebrated role as Tisana in The Doctor and the Patient, in which she co-starred with Mikhail Baryshnikov. This critically acclaimed production was performed throughout the world, most notably at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, the Festival d’Estiu de Barcelona Grec in Barcelona, Spain, Lincoln Center in New York and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Pilar re-joined Columbia University Facilities in August 2006 and continues to audition.

Mark Cabaroy: The Voice Behind the Phone, the Writer/Director Behind the Camera

When someone calls x4-2222 at night, Mark Cabaroy is the voice behind the phone, helping our University colleagues with their facilities needs as the Senior Coordinator, Facilities Services Center for the evening shift. But during the day, Mark is the man behind the camera, as a filmmaker and a writer. In fact, you may have even seen his most recent work, a short film he submitted for the new Fox reality filmmaking show On the Lot, where filmmaker contestants produce short films to compete for a $1 million development deal. You can check it out at http://films.thelot.com/films/6763. Mark started his career as a freelance writer for Children’s Television Workshop, writing for hit shows such as Sesame Street and The Electric Company. Later, he briefly worked on a film about the life story of Stevie Wonder - even briefly writing with Stevie - before the project was pulled. In 1988, Mark became a father and his priorities changed. He needed a job that offered stability and flexibility, so he could write after hours and on vacations, and he found that job at Columbia University Facilities. “Many of today’s artists are working professionals,” said Mark. “It helps with insurance, vacation, balance, and inspires creativity.” Mark found more than just a job at Facilities – one of his co-workers in the Services Center, Letitia Edwards, co-produced his first feature film, Life’s Passing Me By. “It’s about a young woman who gives great advice to her friends, so her friends can’t stop taking advice from her,” said Mark. “The irony is her own life is in shambles. She can help others, but not herself.”

With one feature film now under his belt, Mark has set his sights on making another. “Now I know I can make a feature film,” he said. “If you can do it once, it’s luck. But if you can do it again, it’s success.”

Chuck McMahon: Financial Analyst, Mad Scientist

Chuck McMahon, Financial Analyst, Finance and Administration, analyzes spreadsheets by day, but by night he performs in productions of Faust, Don Juan and Waiting for Lefty as an actor with Columbia’s Theatre Arts program. “I really enjoy working with the School of the Arts, because you get to do theater you would not normally do,” said Chuck. More typical for Chuck is working in independent film, especially the horror genre, where he most recently played a maniacal scientist in Bacterium (the entertaining but gruesome trailer can be found at http://youtu.be/6W0QhOOGKz4). He has also performed principal roles in other independent films, and has appeared on Law and Order, OZ, and As the World Turns. As a theatre artist, Chuck has performed in Molieres The Learned Ladies at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof at Fleetwood Stage, and Mirita at the Cherry Lane Alternative Theatre in NYC. Chuck also recently worked Off-Broadway in the Roundabout Theatre’s production of Edward Albee’s All Over. Chuck is also a prolific writer, doing most of it longhand – “you connect more when you have a pen in your hand,” he says – during his commute on the train to and from Flushing or late at night after his son goes to bed. He was hired last August to rewrite an interesting but flawed screenplay titled The Arrangement. “It’s about a guy who takes a loan from the wrong person to get through law school, and ends up having to enter into a green card marriage to pay off the loan,” said Chuck. “Naturally, the guy then falls in love with the mobster’s girlfriend.” Following a well-received reading in April, the producers are now raising money for the film and intend to begin shooting in September. In addition, Chuck’s screenplay for the romantic comedy The Last Letter to Daphne is in pre-production with Hit and Run Productions. As a playwright, his work has been produced in New York, New Jersey, and Miami. One of his most recent plays, Is this Love? has been called “passionately conceived” –Playwrights Horizons and “alternately funny and poignant” –Longwharf Theatre. So, Chuck, are you at heart an actor or a writer? “I’ve always considered the two like a composer who plays the piano,” said Chuck. “In acting, the body is the instrument, and the words are like notes on a page with no sound. Words mean nothing -it’s the way they are played.”

So the next time you call one of your Facilities colleagues, you may notice that the person is speaking in a slow, articulate manner, annunciating clearly and projecting his/her voice. Don’t be surprised. You just may be speaking with a Tony voter or maybe even someone who knows Baryshnikov.