2008

A Year for Looking Back...

2008 at Lehman College was a striking time for both remembering and moving forward. On the one hand, the year marked the celebration of Lehman’s 40th anniversary and of the milestones achieved over four decades. At the same time, as the calendar pushed ahead, the College moved forward in different ways. One new construction project was completed, and another begun. Enrollment hit new levels, and more programs were added to the curriculum. Institutional partnerships not only grew across the Bronx but also deepened in Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Throughout the year, the College’s history and future met along three familiar paths: faculty research, community outreach, and student success. These aspects of institutional life—distinctive pillars of the College’s mission since its establishment—produced notable initiatives and outcomes that made 2008, itself, a year to be remembered. The pages that follow illustrate just a few of them.
Faculty Research: Making a Difference in People’s Lives

Dozens of Lehman faculty received notable research grants in 2008 to explore a wide range of global issues, from the forces affecting television makers in Syria to the plight of child soldiers in Guatemala and Colombia. They delved into medicinal plants found in the Dominican Republic, pushed the boundaries of our understanding of nanomagnets and complex mathematics, and sought to improve the care of those dying from AIDS in South Africa. The profiles of these researchers illustrate the diversity and depth of this work and its potential to advance both our society and others.

Dr. Abby Cuttriss Came All the Way from New Zealand To Study in Dr. Eleanore Wurtzel’s Plant Sciences Lab

Last fall, the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology—an agency of the New Zealand government—awarded three-year postdoctoral fellowships to twelve researchers it praised as some of that nation’s brightest.

When the announcement was made, Dr. Abby Cuttriss, one of the twelve honored, was about twenty-four hours away, working in the Bronx lab of Dr. Eleanore Wurtzel (Biological Sciences), her mentor. The lab team, which includes scientists from India, Australia, Israel, and Sweden, is investigating the role of carotenoid pigments in human nutrition.

Carotenoids are a large family of compounds that have roles in photosynthesis and plant protection. Their pigments make the kernels yellow in an ear of corn, and turn the skin of a tomato red. But they do a lot more than add color.

“The pigments are precursors to vitamin A,” Dr. Cuttriss explains, “and vitamin A deficiency is a huge problem in developing countries. There are 250 million children worldwide who are vitamin A-deficient, and that has huge health implications. Carotenoid pigments are also critical for plant growth and viability. If we understand how these pigments are made, then perhaps we can help increase crop yield and improve human nutrition.”

Born and raised in “the middle of nowhere,” as she describes it, Dr. Cuttriss became interested in the sciences primarily for the sense of adventure. “Every day’s a discovery of some sort,” she says, “not necessarily a new discovery, but we’re always exploring something new and coming up with new ideas.”

Dr. Abby Cuttriss, shown in the research cornfield growing on the Lehman campus, is working to understand the role carotenoids play in enhancing the tolerance of crops to extreme weather conditions.

She came to New York over a year ago to work as a postdoctoral researcher with Dr. Wurtzel, who helped her apply for her own funding. Out of the twelve recipients, Dr. Cuttriss is one of only two to be awarded the fellowship to conduct research in a lab outside of New Zealand. With this support, she will be able to pursue her studies at Lehman, and with collaborators at the University of Hawaii, for another three years.

Specifically, she is examining the role carotenoids play in enhancing the tolerance of crops and pasture grasses to extreme weather and other stressful conditions. Environmental change and the increased risk of extreme weather events, such as drought, mean that Dr. Cuttriss’s home country of New Zealand needs to develop stress-tolerant crops and pasture grasses to protect food security and maintain sustainable agricultural practices.

Her work in a Bronx lab just might achieve that goal.
Laughing Through the Tears: Play Portrays a Cross-Dressing Colonial Governor

Professor William Hoffman’s 1976 play debuted in Manhattan last fall.

Eliot Spitzer? Rod Blagojevich? Neither gentleman has anything on Edward Hyde, third Earl of Clarendon. Hyde—or Lord Cornbury, cousin to Queen Anne of England—was the colonial governor of what is now New York and New Jersey for eight years ending in 1708. He was also, as the story goes, a cross-dresser. His portrait at the New-York Historical Society, which has provoked books and articles as to its authenticity, shows a man with a five o’clock shadow on his round face, wearing a blue gown.

Hyde is the subject of a 1976 play co-written by Lehman College’s William M. Hoffman, professor of Journalism, Communications, and Theatre. Fresh from its debut last fall at the Hudson Guild Theater in Manhattan’s Chelsea District, the play moved this spring to a production at Lehman’s Studio Theatre. “He was a flamboyant, wild man,” says Professor Hoffman, “and rumor has it that to emphasize his relationship with Queen Anne, he would dress like her.”

Professor Hoffman originally conceived of the play, along with his collaborator, the late actor Anthony Holland, back in 1974, just as the country, in the aftermath of Watergate, was preparing for the American Bicentennial in 1976. “We noticed that there were no plans to celebrate any gay presence in America,” he says. “We were furious about it so, as an act of fun and revenge, we wrote our story of a ‘great American’.”

He’s joking. In reality, Hyde was a corrupt official, often thought to be one of—if not the—worst governor imported from England to rule its then relatively new colony in the New World.

The Networks That Bind

Most people just want their computers to work when they turn them on. Professor Nancy Griffeth wants to know how they work—or more accurately, how they communicate with one another.

No, this isn’t science fiction, but a true story that Ray Bradbury might be interested in reading. Since arriving at Lehman in 2003, Dr. Griffeth (Mathematics and Computer Science) has received more than $700,000 in grants from the National Science Foundation and Cisco Systems to better understand the way in which computer networks interact. When not teaching, she works with her doctoral students, trying to uncover how computer networks work; and how—and most importantly, why—they do not.

Computer networks communicate by sending messages to one another. Professor Griffeth wants to map out how messages get sent and are received. The goal is to create a working model of how computer networks essentially tick. “We know how computers work,” says Professor Griffeth. “Humans built them. They are human artifacts. What they are doing when they communicate is the problem.”

Since computer networks are dependent on the interaction of various types of software, and that software is created by any number of sources, the results can be unpredictable. “Human error is
Professor Flam Returns to Pakistan to Unearth More About the Indus

Receiving Sudden Permission to Resume His Excavating, The Archeologist Uses His Own Savings to Pay for the Trip

At Ghazi Shah, in the mountainous desert of Pakistan's Sindh province, summer temperatures routinely soar above 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Up until very recently, there was no electricity. The area is desolate, arid, and sparsely populated. There are snakes and scorpions—and, always, the danger of banditry or political violence. But Ghazi Shah is where Lehman Professor Louis Flam has worked for much of the last twenty-four years.

Since 1985, Professor Flam, an archeologist in the Anthropology Department, has been excavating a five-acre mound that sits thirty-five feet over the surrounding flood plain; it is, among other things, a link to the long-vanished Indus Civilization, which flourished more than four thousand years ago, between 2600 and 1900 B.C.E.

"The oldest civilization in the world is in Mesopotamia," says Professor Flam. "The second oldest is Ancient Egypt—and the third oldest is in the Indus River Valley, primarily in Pakistan."

Professor Flam's work was put on hold for security reasons since 9/11, because the government of Pakistan was not able to give him a license, which is needed every year to carry out excavations. "I would go over to visit friends—I have a tremendous number of friendships that I've developed over the thirty-five years I've been working in Pakistan—but I was not able to do any research." Then in October he was delighted to receive a very welcomed surprise: permission to resume his work.

"I was the only archeologist from any foreign mission allowed to work in Pakistan this winter," he says. "We were able to put in seven good weeks of excavation during December and January." But, with only two months' notice, he did not have time to line up funding for the project. "I had to go into my savings to finance the trip," he says. He still needs to find funding to test the radiocarbon samples he brought back in January.

He also may have scratched the surface of a significant find. Eight years ago, he uncovered the corner of a stone building from 4000 B.C.E. This time, digging down below it, he came upon another stone structure—round—and then the digging season ended. He will have to wait until next winter—assuming he gets permission—to find out what's there, and what era it comes from.

Professor Flam, who has been at Lehman for nineteen years, is following in the footsteps of another distinguished archeologist, Nani Gopal Majumdar. "In 1938, he was shot dead while doing fieldwork," says Professor Flam. "Since that time, nobody dared go into that area for further exploration. In 1975, '76, and '77, after I finished my doctoral dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania, I reexamined many of the sites he had discovered. I decided I didn't want to teach at that point, so I went to Pakistan and lived there for six years."

Professor Flam painstakingly retraced Majumdar's scientific footsteps. "In 1985," he says, "I selected the site of Ghazi Shah from all those that he had discovered, as well as sites I had discovered, to excavate."

Ghazi Shah fascinates him because of the clues it may hold to an unimaginably distant past. "The site was continuously occupied—6,000 years ago, 5,000 years ago, 4,000 years ago," he says. "But then it was abandoned before being reoccupied during the Mughal Dynasty, about 500 years ago, between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

"Because Ghazi Shah was occupied for such a long time before the beginnings of the Indus Civilization, one of the questions it addresses is the origins of that civilization," he adds. "One of the most important discoveries we've made is that people were living in this area—thriving, doing agriculture, keeping animals for food—going back thousands of years earlier than the Indus Civilization. There's a continuous cultural sequence dating from the Neolithic Revolution."

For Professor Flam, expanding our knowledge of the Indus Civilization is measured in increments: There is likely to be no equivalent to Howard Carter's 1922 discovery of Tutankhamun's burial chamber.

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They will spend their first two years working toward Lehman’s one-year R.N. to B.S. in Nursing program. Of passing the National Council Licensure Examination, the A.S. in Nursing degree in Antigua, with the goal that allows nursing students from Antigua to enter Lehman signs an Articulation Agreement with the American University of Antigua College of Medicine, which in turn would grant them entrance into Lehman’s B.S. in Nursing program.

As he seeks to decode the lives of the people who lived in Sindh in the distant past, Professor Flam has grown closer to the people who live there nowadays. “When I first started to go to Pakistan,” he says, “I immediately clicked with the people. I’ve adapted tremendously well to their cultural mannerisms and values. I dress like they do. I speak Urdu, one of the languages of Pakistan. And I just love the people and their culture.”

Since he is the only archeologist at Ghazi Shah, he needs the help of many hands to conduct his excavation. He employs as many as thirty helpers from the nearby village, making him the largest employer in a desperately poor region. “I employ everyone who comes to me,” he says. And when he’s not there, Ghazi Shah lies undisturbed. “The villagers know me,” he says, “and no one digs on my site.”

How Best to Overcome Aphasia in Bilingual Patients? Professor Mira Goral Is Working to Find the Answers

The elderly New Yorker struggles to find words. A stroke victim, she suffers from aphasia—a heartbreaking condition, caused by trauma to the brain’s language centers, that impairs the sufferer’s ability to express or comprehend language. She can’t communicate either in Spanish, the language of her childhood, or in English, which she uses with her grandchildren.

Professor Mira Goral (Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences) is working to unravel that mystery. She’s conducting a four-year study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, on how aphasia affects people who speak more than one language and what may be the best way to treat it.

The single-subject study examines how each of six monolingual people in various stages of aphasia responds to language treatment—and how multilingual people respond to treatment in one or more of their languages. Each person undergoes seven to nine hours of treatment a week for three months. According to Professor Goral, among the questions she hopes to answer are: “Which language do we focus on? In which language do we administer treatment? Does one approach or the other offer greater improvement?” And, perhaps most intriguing: “Does treatment of one language cross over to improve the language that isn’t treated?”

Professor Goral and her colleagues have completed studying the monolingual subjects and are beginning to work with people who speak more than one language. “So far,” she says, “we have enrolled two individuals, one with three languages and one with five languages.”

The therapy in the study has been designed to maximize the language needed to fully communicate. One example: “We place a barrier between the participant and the clinician. If the participant is trying to describe a picture, the listener does not know what the speaker is trying to describe, forcing the speaker to use words. We encourage the participants to produce full sentences.”

One thing is already clear from the research: Aphasia does not have to amount to a life sentence of silence. “Even years after the stroke or traumatic brain injury that causes the aphasia,” Professor Goral says, “there can be steady improvement.”

And that’s very good news, in any language.
Community Outreach: Partnering to Help Build a Stronger Bronx

Supported by grants from government agencies as well as private organizations and foundations, Lehman in 2008 was able to extend the reach of its work in the community, adding to the partnerships that are impacting thousands of Bronx schoolchildren and their teachers, as well as businesses, communities, and residents.

Good Neighbors Build Strong Communities

Progress can come in small ways that often go unnoticed, unless you know about the work going on behind the scene.

Josefina Gomez, for instance, works at the Coqui Bakery on West Kingsbridge Road, just off the Concourse, and says the area is becoming “cleaner and healthier,” thanks to the Sanitation Initiative of the New York City Clean Streets Program.

Cirilo Roman, owner of a deli and coffee shop on Bainbridge Avenue near the busy commercial district of East 204th Street, is grateful for a free security system that helps protect his investment and his customers.

Both retailers and residents of Bronx Community Boards 7 and 12 are benefiting from the HSIAC (Hispanic Serving Institutions Assisting Communities) Program. Community Board 7 is home to Bedford Park, Fordham, Kingsbridge Heights, Norwood, and University Heights. Community Board 12 covers Edenwald, Wakefield, Williamsbridge, Woodlawn, Fish Bay, Eastchester, Olinville, and Baychester.

Behind the program, which provides economic development opportunities and quality-of-life initiatives, is a partnership that connects several different entities at Lehman College with the Mosholu Preservation Corporation (MPC) and the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center. Supplying the funding is a $600,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which builds on two earlier grants that began eight years ago and totaled $1 million.

The program’s co-directors are Professors Keville Frederickson and Eleanor Lundeen, both long-term members of the College’s Department of Nursing. Professor Lundeen also serves on the MPC Board and recently became a member of Community Board 7.

Although Hispanics constitute the largest ethnic group in the neighborhoods covered by Community Board 7—as well as being a significant presence in Community Board 12—this HUD grant is intended to assist small business owners of every ethnicity.

HSIAC promotes neighborhood economic vitalization through mini-grants to retailers, meetings with local police precincts, improved sanitation services, and an annual summit during Bronx Week. An HSIAC business counselor also promotes commercial opportunities within each neighborhood and helps train workers through a course emphasizing the development of retail skills.

The goal is to promote prosperity on such commercial strips as Bainbridge Avenue at 204th Street, the entire length of Bedford Park Boulevard and Kingsbridge Road, and White Plains Road north of Gunhill Road. First-time retailers can gain valuable expertise, as well as established merchants who are seeking new markets. Guiding the program’s activities are the successes achieved by many of the City’s Business Improvement Districts.

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Members of the HSIAC Project Committee include (L–R) standing: HSIAC secretary Sharon Tyler, MPC Contracts Manager Jennifer Mitchell, MPC Director of Economic Development Roberto Garcia, Project Co-Directors Kevlel Frederickson and Eleanor Lundeen (Nursing), MPC President Dart Westphal, Mirian Zavala (Nursing), MMCC Assistant Director of Youth Programs Lenore Sealey, and Bronx Data Center Director William Bosworth; sitting: HSIAC Business Counselor Kathy Jimenez, SBDC Director Clarence Stanley, Carrie Shockley, director of Health Programs in Lehman’s Continuing Education Division, HSIAC intern Lee Payne, and Dr. Mario Gonzalez-Corzo and Dr. Vassilios Gargalas (Economics, Accounting, and Business Administration).

‘We Share a Love of Mathematics’
A New Partnership Aims to Boost Bronx Scores

It turned out that Saturday, January 10, not surprisingly, was a snowy winter day. But that did not deter thirty-eight teachers who had been accepted into the Mathematics Teacher Transformation Institutes (M.T.T.I.) from gathering at Lehman College.

The program’s leadership described in detail the multifaceted, three-year program the teachers had joined, and then they worked together on—what else?—a math problem: Pick’s Theorem, which provides a formula for determining the area of any polygon. (A polygon is a multi-sided figure, like a triangle, rectangle, or square.)

Carl Curiale, the program director, was gratified both by the turnout and the enthusiasm of these Bronx teachers: “We all share a love of mathematics,” he said, “and a desire to impart our enthusiasm and appreciation of mathematics to our students.”

The goal of the Institutes is to empower math teachers to serve students better. Since all courses and extracurricular events are directly relevant to the current New York State curriculum, the improved teaching skills that are developed and improved can be put to use immediately in Bronx classrooms.

The need for better math teaching is clear. Last year, The Washington Post reported that “a Presidential panel declared math education in the United States ‘broken’...and called on schools to focus on ensuring that children master fundamental skills that provide the underpinnings for success in higher math, and ultimately, in high-tech jobs.”

M.T.T.I. is dedicated to certain very specific goals, such as improving student scores on State Regents Examinations and helping
teachers to acquire the most useful instructional methods. But it also involves teachers in mathematical and educational research and promotes networking.

The teachers chosen for the new initiative are among the best public education has to offer. Working in Bronx middle and high schools, they each have a minimum of five years of professional experience, a master’s degree, and a recommendation from their principals.

Kate Belin, an eleventh- and twelfth-grade teacher at Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School, applied to the Institute “because of the need for quality math education for all students. This is a difficult job, and teachers often feel very isolated. Anything we can do to build community around the idea of strengthening our own content knowledge, while thinking about our practice, will help teachers stay in the profession.”

Funded by a $5 million, five-year grant from the National Science Foundation’s Math and Science Partnership Program, the Institutes require a commitment to complete each of three different phases. Initially, the teachers enroll in courses designed to develop their content knowledge of geometry, algebra, and other areas. This summer, they are pursuing an intensive, three-week course in applied mathematics (either technology or music), enriched by guest speakers discussing the importance of math in their occupation.

In the program’s second phase, the focus is on the effectiveness of various teaching strategies, learning about data collection and analysis, and improving student math scores. The teachers will take education courses and complete another intensive three-week summer experience, this time exploring theoretical math (topology or number theory).

Finally, in phase three, the teachers will pursue courses focusing on leadership development and share the insights they have gained. Curiale expects this part of the program to yield “results that identify effective practices and good pedagogy.”

Throughout the three years, teachers also will improve their leadership skills by heading up problem-solving teams, supervising undergraduate tutors from Lehman at their schools, and learning how to apply for external funding to support in-class and extracurricular activities. Supporting them on-site will be members of the New York City Mathematics Project, also based at Lehman College.

For their participation, the teachers will enjoy significant benefits: free tuition and books, stipends totaling up to $12,000, twenty-four graduate credits, and a certificate of completion.

Five principal investigators applied for the N.S.F. grant. Four are from Lehman—Professor Serigne Gningue (Middle and High School Education), New York City Mathematics Project Director Suzanne Libfeld, Professor Christina Sormani (Mathematics and Computer Science), and Institute for Literacy Studies Executive Director Marcie Wolfe. One is from the City’s Department of Education (D.O.E.): Community School District 10 Superintendent Sonia Menendez.

Each brings different strengths and objectives to the project. Professor Sormani, for example, is concerned with mathematics’ nuts and bolts, specifically, geometry. “The program,” she says, “improves knowledge of content. What math courses are most useful to these teachers? If a math course they need does not exist, we will create new curricula to match what the teachers deem to be most useful.”

Looking at the project from the point of view of a teacher educator, Professor Gningue believes the Institutes are valuable because they “address two components: pedagogical knowledge that teachers need to work more effectively and content knowledge that teachers need to become leaders in the field.” In turn, he said, they will have the tools to become better mentors, and thus provide other math teachers with the help they may require to succeed in the classroom.

Libfeld (B.A., ’69 and M.S.Ed., ’75) says the M.T.T.I. will “establish teacher leadership in mathematics, which in these times of ever-changing structures in New York City is essential.”

The Institutes will accept a total of eighty Bronx math teachers divided into two cohorts. The first group of forty-three—representing twenty high schools and twelve middle schools—began the program this spring.

Lehman Celebrates the Groundbreaking of CUNY’s First ‘Green’ Science Building

Lehman celebrates the groundbreaking of a new Science Building on September 24. The project is the first new lab building in what has been hailed as “CUNY’s Decade of the Sciences” and the first CUNY project to be designed and submitted for LEED® certification.
Growing Number of Awards Are One Indication of Student Success

Lehman undergraduates as well as graduate students continued to garner prestigious scholarships and fellowships in 2008, demonstrating their ability to compete both nationally and within their various disciplines. Many are giving back to their community at the same time as they manage academic and family responsibilities.

A Look at Some of Lehman’s ’08–’09 Bronx CUNY Scholarship Winners

June Debra, Class of ’09, accounting

A wife and mother of three, Debra spends most of her time taking care of her family, while pursuing her studies. In the past, she has been involved with youth and women’s groups in her community and has volunteered at a food pantry. Her career goal is to become a certified public accountant with one of the “big four” accounting firms. She also hopes to open a facility that offers activities and educational programs to teenagers after school or on weekends.

Meredith Knight, Class of ’09, nursing

After completing a master’s degree, Knight hopes to become a midwife or nurse anesthetist. She also would like to open a birthing center that promotes natural childbirth. “Perseverance is the true measure of success to me,” she says.

Stephanie Vasquez, Class of ’09, finance

Vasquez hopes to work in a capacity where she can help people make better financial decisions and also would like to work with an organization that helps the less fortunate. Eventually, she hopes to run a small business in a developing country.

Paulie Tuazon, Class of ’11

Born in the Philippines, Tuazon moved to the U.S. when she was two and became interested in the pharmacy field after taking a chemistry class in high school. In addition to being a full-time student and student athlete, she has worked at a Manhattan public relations firm for three years. Tuazon would like to build a career in the pharmacy field and help change the healthcare system so that each person will have access to health care.

Jackie Robinson Scholar Ayesha Lewis (’10) Aims for a Doctorate—and the Supreme Court

“Never think that something is too difficult for you to at least try, especially if it’s what you want to do.” That’s what Ayesha Lewis urges—and her advice has paid off, with the award of a prestigious Jackie Robinson scholarship. The scholarship carries up to $7,500 a year for her education, plus mentoring and leadership development training.

Lewis, heading into her senior year in the Macaulay Honors College at Lehman, has already demonstrated her community service and leadership skills with commitments both on and off campus, including an internship in the Office of the Public Advocate and volunteer work at the CUNY Citizenship and Immigration Project. On top of that, she was a research coordinator this past year for Lehman’s Student Conference.

“I’ve learned a lot, but it has been challenging. And even though it’s difficult, I think it’s best to learn how to handle a lot of different things now when I’m young and in college than to have to learn on the job.”

The Bronx High School of Science grad is majoring in history, with a minor in political science. Her goal is to earn a doctorate in American legal history and, ultimately, become a Supreme Court Justice. “When I first came to Lehman, it was like a candy store, because there were so many courses that were interesting and that I wanted to take,” she says.

Rachel Robinson, the widow of the famous baseball player, founded the Jackie Robinson Foundation in 1973.

Leadership Gala Raises $500,000

The Lehman Leadership Gala celebrates the 40th anniversary of Lehman College, honors outstanding figures from two different worlds—music and business—and raises $500,000 in scholarship funds for Lehman students.

‘Road to Energy Independence’ Leads to Lehman

Lehman hosts The Center for Sustainable Energy’s Alternative Vehicle Technology Conference.

November

Urban Social Work Conference Held

Former Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields delivers the keynote address at a conference held Nov. 18 by Lehman’s Department of Social Work to celebrate twenty-five years of social work education.

NYC Council Honors Center for Urban Male Leadership

The New York City Council holds a special ceremony to honor Lehman’s Center for Urban Male Leadership with a formal proclamation for its work with black and Latino males.

December

Lehman Receives Sustainability Award

CUNY’s Task Force on Sustainability recognizes Lehman’s long-standing commitment to the environment with a 2008 Sustainability Award.
Lehman grew a little greener last year, with the arrival of thirteen trees, courtesy of “MillionTreesNYC,” a public-private program that aims to plant and care for one million new trees across the City over the next decade. Buildings and Grounds staff planted the collection, which included two little leaf Lindens, four red maples, two dogwoods, and a green ash, in three locations.

Already, more than 300 trees grace Lehman’s thirty-seven acres, providing shady spaces for studying and a rich rainbow of colors in both spring and fall. Most are pin oaks or London planes (sycamores).

The oldest and most notable is an elm that stands in front of Shuster Hall, anchoring College Walk with a magnificent towering canopy. It’s approximately 100 years old, judging by its size and growth (no one can tell the age of a tree for sure without slicing the trunk and studying the rings), and is one of the few in the Bronx to have survived Dutch elm disease. Beginning in 1928 in Ohio, the blight spread in waves across much of the country and eventually destroyed more than 77 million elms, including thousands in New York City.

A former greenhouse manager at Lehman always believed the College’s elm had survived because of the care and protection it had received. Today, the tree is still receiving that special attention because it remains threatened, not by disease, but by a split in its trunk. To help increase its chances of survival, the largest branches have been braced and the tree “air-pruned,” with its branches thinned out, trimmed, and shaped. That way, it should collect less wind—and sway less—when fully in bloom.

Memorable for a different reason are the dogwood trees on the quadrangle. On the United Nations’ fiftieth anniversary in 1995, the College planted a “peace grove” to commemorate its role in the founding of the U.N. and to honor Secretariat staff who worked on the campus during U.N. meetings here in 1946. In 2008, the grove was rededicated and additional dogwoods planted as part of a “homecoming” for those Secretariat staff.