

“It’s a work in progress,” said Dr. Sciorra. “And we’re not the only ones working on this. Some of the best institutions in the world are trying to duplicate the environment cells grow in without causing genetic damage. We’re still anywhere from five to 15 years away from good cell therapies.”

MacConchie devoted three years to the project, as an undergraduate researcher and following graduation from Saint Peter’s as a research technologist, while he prepared applications for medical school. He’s conducted data analysis on experiments, designed trials for new studies and managed various aspects of the tissue culture facility. The alumnus clearly values the trust Dr. Sciorra places in students. “He is always asking what we think about the research and what do we want to do next. [Dr. Sciorra] understands that we’re students and that we’re learning.”

“The only way students can learn is to get in there and do it,” Dr. Sciorra said regarding his mentoring and teaching style. “I always tell my students that ‘failure is your friend.’ It tells you what went wrong in an experiment and to learn from it. You have to have an adventurous heart and can’t get discouraged doing research.”

MacConchie isn’t the first student to benefit from the Schuh Scholarship



Eugenia Palmegiano, Ph.D., and Nicholas Lambrianou '13

of personal care, can be.

“That’s what Saint Peter’s College is great for—it’s a stepping stone,” added Dr. Sciorra. “If you can prove yourself here, you can go and be anything in your life.”

As he waits to hear from medical schools, MacConchie is grateful for the *cura personalis* he received when he needed it most. The alumnus recalls a letter from Rev. James Loughran, S.J., then-president of Saint Peter’s, who informed

## INVESTIGATING THE 19TH CENTURY PRESS

For Saint Peter’s College students, the benefits of assisting a faculty member on a research project are fairly obvious: valuable knowledge gained in your field of study and experience that can help you stand out for graduate school and fellowships. But as the collaboration between Eugenia M. Palmegiano, Ph.D., professor of history, and mathematics major Nicholas Lambrianou '13 demonstrates, faculty-student research projects can also be mutually beneficial.

“In some ways, the work [Nick] was verifying was more important than what I was writing,” said Dr. Palmegiano, referring to her forthcoming book, *Perceptions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Anthem Press), an annotated bibliography of 19th century British periodicals.

The book was well underway when Lambrianou was a freshman in Dr. Palmegiano’s honors history class. He was tasked with researching data on the 48 periodicals examined for the book, as well as confirming more than 700 pages of bibliographic information and crosschecking 4,500 entries to ensure details such as author and date were correct. “Nick verified the authenticity of

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the MacConchies that James’ Presidential Scholarship would be waiting whenever he finished treatment and was ready to return to the College. “Fr. Loughran didn’t want my parents to worry about my scholarship,” MacConchie remembered. “That was a really big weight off my shoulders. I knew then that I had to come back and continue my education.”

program and he most certainly won’t be the last. Saint Peter’s graduates have gone onto Robert Wood Johnson Medical School as well as doctoral programs at MIT, Oxford University and Princeton University. Their success, and the contributions they will make to advance science and humanity, demonstrates just how powerful *cura personalis*, the fundamental Jesuit principle

nearly everything a scholar needs,” said Dr. Palmegiano. “In terms of accuracy, he’s been my guardian angel.”

Lambrianou’s mathematical background was a definite asset to the project. In addition to verifying the data in *Perceptions of the Press*, the undergraduate research assistant even detected errors and inconsistencies in a major reference resource used in this field of study. The experience, he says, has been professionally and personally rewarding. “The actual work, in a way, has trained me to pay attention to the smallest detail and how to follow a process correctly,” Lambrianou noted. “On a more personal level, it allowed me to collaborate with another person on their project. The feeling of working toward a purpose is gratifying and one that has just made me better overall.”

When the book is published this spring, it will make a significant contribution to the field of media history with a detailed subject index that will help researchers and scholars discover new information. “This has never been done before,” said Dr. Palmegiano, noting that the index was created using her annotations of the text and Lambrianou’s thorough verification of titles and publications.

For Lambrianou, the faculty-student collaboration has turned into so much more than he initially anticipated. “I can go to [Dr. Palmegiano] with any problems I have, so I don’t see her as just someone I’m working for but as someone who genuinely wishes well for me.”

His mentor expresses a similar sentiment. “Before anything else, [students] come first,” Dr. Palmegiano said. “We’re partners in an enterprise of learning. Isn’t that the way it should be? In the life of the mind, that’s absolutely the priority.”

### GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Small businesses on Central Avenue in Jersey City Heights come and go. A group of Saint Peter’s student-researchers are trying to determine why. The students, mostly sociology and business majors, began investigating the patterns along the commercial strip last summer as part of a multi-component Title V grant awarded to the College.

Through field observations and interviews with business owners, the students are working to identify factors that influence the life history of a business. The ultimate goal is to develop a set of principles and best practices that could

inform the decision-making processes of small businesses in this area, many of which are owned and operated by immigrants.

While findings that document the unique challenges and opportunities faced by immigrant-owned businesses could be of great value to merchants and a boost for the local economy, Alex Trillo, Ph.D., associate professor of sociology and faculty co-director of the project, points to its larger purpose. “It’s an opportunity for students to conduct real research on a topic that they can take ownership of. They’re able to get some field and research experience and become research mentors to others.”

Already, Dr. Trillo says, he has used this study as a concrete example to motivate and inspire underclassmen. “It’s a conversation piece that I talk to freshmen about,” he said.

“The most beneficial part of this project is learning how small businesses get started,” said Alec Torres ’12, a sociology major from Hoboken, N.J. Torres and Giancarlo Antigua ’14 will present their findings (which were developed in conjunction with Katherine Jimenez ’13, who is studying in Spain this semester) at the Eastern Sociological Society Conference in March.

Mary Kate Naatus, Ph.D., assistant professor of business, who also serves as faculty co-director, has observed other benefits among students who participated in the project. “The actual interviews are a bit tough and intimidating at first, but as the students practice and gain confidence, I have seen them really improve not only their interviewing techniques, but also general professionalism and interpersonal skills,” she said.

“It was very interesting hearing why the owners [we interviewed] opened up their particular businesses, especially in these hard economic times,” Torres added. The group is currently updating the study’s results and modifying their presentation for the upcoming conference. “Personally, I am excited. To not only present, but to also observe the other projects.”



Central Avenue in Jersey City, where a group of Saint Peter’s student-researchers are helping small businesses.