



# Champion of International Students

Ruben Barato, Westchester Community College's international student advisor, still remembers the small, timid young woman who spoke in a delicate whisper. She had recently immigrated from the Middle East, largely unaware of the educational opportunities available in this country. During their meeting, she was silent while he discussed the many academic programs and variety of support services available at the college.

Suddenly, she began crying.

Handing her a tissue, he asked her if he could help. She explained that in her country, women were not allowed an education, and she was overwhelmed by her options in this country. "That's when I almost had to pull out a tissue myself," says Barato.

The international students who visit Barato discuss their hopes and dreams, get assistance navigating the registration system, and receive advice on class selection. "I know what they are going through, because I was the first one in my family to get a college degree," he says. "Sometimes I offer to sit down with their parents to explain the

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educational system. I remember that my parents knew very little about the process."

Since it was not that long ago that Barato was a student himself, he is able to relate to the students. "He really knows where I'm coming from," says Dawid Rarowski, a student from Poland. "Ruben is very connected to all of the students. He's a great listener and he has a big heart."

Barato is excited about the new Gateway Center and he says the international students feel the same way. "They know we are about to make a very real commitment to these students," he

says. "They are aware that the college already provides an extraordinarily nurturing environment for them. This new building will help us continue to show a real recognition of the diverse nature of Westchester."

Through the continued dedication of administrators such as Barato and the expansion of resources through the new Gateway Center, international students are sure to succeed in developing new skills for the local marketplace. Or, as the sign says on the door to Barato's office, "Remember, the best is yet to come... I guarantee it."



RUBEN BARATO SHOWCASES ARTIFACTS FROM INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN HIS OFFICE, WHERE HE MEETS WITH STUDENTS SUCH AS DAWID RAROWSKI (BOTTOM PHOTO).