

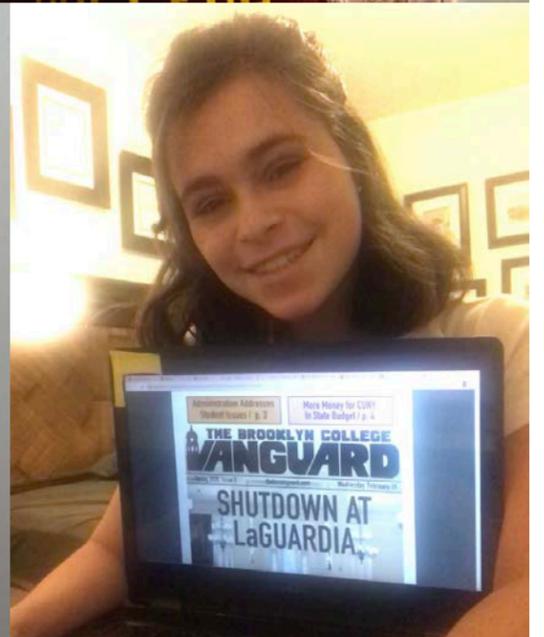


# SPECIAL ONLINE-ONLY "DISTANCE-REPORTING" EDITION THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE VANGUARD

Spring 2020, Issue 12

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Wednesday, May 13



**BC Students Hope For the Best Amid Budget Cuts and Rumors of Fall Remote Learning**

# Milich Named USG Prez After Voting Extended

## Ibrahim, Davis, Allege Unfairness

By Ryan Schwach  
*Managing Editor*

After an extended voting period, USS delegate and former USG Vice President Ethan Milich and Samuel Ganthier win the USG presidency and vice presidency by a margin of just 56 votes.

“We are amazed, honored, and grateful to have received so much support in this year’s USG presidential election, and we want to say thank you,” said the Milich/Ganthier campaign in a statement on social media.

The results, released to the Vanguard on Tuesday afternoon, have Milich at the top with 257 votes, with Michael Davis and his VP Vanessa Collazos coming in with 201, and Dapo Ibrahim and Chika Otisi coming in third with 128 votes.

“We can’t win them all,” said Davis, “I care about BC and will continue to do what I can to make it better for students, faculty, and professor’s alike.”

Initially, the elections were to run from May 4 to May 6, but just before the polls were supposed to close, Student Activities sent a message deciding to extend the voting deadline to May 12, on the ground that the overall voter turnout wasn’t what it should be.

“CUNY issued a directive that all eligible students who are able to vote, must have the opportunity and access to vote,” said Hamilton Raymond, Associate Director of Student Activities in an e-mail to students.

In that same email, Raymond stated that

only 3.5 percent of the undergraduate body had casted a vote, a sharp downturn from the 9 percent last year. Despite the extension, the Vanguard estimates that only 4 percent of the 14,978 undergraduate students participated in the election, a trivial rise in turnout. Still, Raymond says the extension was worth it.

“While the overall participation rate was low, extending the voting period saw an increase in student participation by 20 percent, affording more students the opportunity to let their voices be heard,” Raymond told the Vanguard.

Initially, all three candidates challenged the extension in a joint letter to the election commission.

“We oppose the sudden decision to extend the election by a period of nine days, as we are concerned this decision has been made in haste, without student consultation, and without consideration for the mental, emotional, and academic well being of the candidates and our teams,” the letter read.

Michael Davis still questions the validity of the results since the initial terms of the election were changed. “I do question who was the winner in the original voter tally from May 6th. So I’m disappointed in how the election process was handled,” he said.

The voting extension isn’t the only complication to the election results, with both Davis and Ibrahim seeking to investigate violations. Ibrahim challenged the results,

alleging his opponents broke USG rules.

“Two of the candidates [Milich and Davis] openly violated the election campaign and the commissioner unconstitutionally covered it up,” Ibrahim told the Vanguard. He cites section 3, article D of the election rules, which states that candidates cannot solicit endorsements from student organizations outside of media groups like the Vanguard or WBCR. According to Ibrahim, Milich received an endorsement from the Black Student Union, and Davis from the Puerto Rican Alliance. Ibrahim is arguing the alleged endorsements gave his opponents an unfair advantage.

In a letter of response to Ibrahim’s initial allegations, election commissioner Daron Peters said that he found no reason to penalize Davis, on the grounds that there is no evidence that Davis’s team ever solicited the endorsement from the Puerto Rican Alliance, despite the club making a social media post of their support.

“We never shared or asked for the endorsement, and we immediately asked that it be rescinded until we get confirmation. Which we eventually did,” Davis told the Vanguard.

The allegation regarding Milich relates to the endorsement from BSU. Peters said in his letter that he chose not to penalize their campaign due to a “lack of evidence,” and that it took place before any candidates were officially

validated, and before the campaign rules were implemented on April 21.

Davis also has a separate, pending injunction against Milich’s campaign in relation to a post Milich made in the early days of the campaign, which said that students would be entered into a raffle for \$25 if they filled out a campaign survey. At the time, the post was questioned by students on social media who claimed the post was a form of bribery. One of the election rules, Section 2, Article B, states: “The use of monetary funds, gifts, points, and transactional material shall not be used to solicit, persuade, or stimulate student participation or votes.” As with the illegal endorsement, the post was deleted before the official election rules were released, making any violation of them null and void.

“So it appears that despite a clear violation nothing may be done. But, we are pursuing a fair investigation and that’s all we can ask for,” said Davis.

Despite the allegations against him, Milich says he is confident his victory will be upheld.

“Neither of which was a violation of an existing rule. Plus I removed both before the April 21 rules were implemented,” Milich told the Vanguard in regards to both allegations. “We are extremely excited to start appointing students to committees and working on our platform and towards achieving our goals,” he said.

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# USS Delegates, Election Results

By Ian Ezinga  
Staff Writer

After a week's extension, the results of the Brooklyn College undergraduate student elections are out. The delegates elected to the University Student Senate (USS) are Aharon Grama and Ethan Milich.

The recorded votes show Grama and Milich nearly tied for votes (278 and 271 respectively) with a great margin between them and the other candidates. Kyle Reese had 156, Robiul Alam had 92, and Bianca Molina had 62. Reese and Alam will both serve as alternate delegates.

The results were released on Tuesday, May 12 shortly after the polls closed at noon.

The polls remained open for an additional week this semester after an announcement made by Student Affairs on Wednesday, May 6 extended the deadline to cast a ballot, after experiencing low voter turnout the previous week.

Ethan Milich was able to claim a second victory for the day, having also been elected USG President, and was only seven votes shy of Aharon Grama's for the USS delegate seat. With his victory, Milich will maintain his seat on USS, after falling into the position last year after the initial victor was disqualified.

"Thank you to everyone for the love, support, and guidance that has kept me inspired, helped me to overcome so many

setbacks, and pushed me to keep fighting for what I believe in," wrote Milich in a Facebook post on Tuesday afternoon. "#FreeCUNY #FullyFundCUNY #StudentPower," were the hashtags that trailed Milich's victory announcement, which served to mirror his platform.

While Milich won both the USG Presidential office as well as defended his seat on the USS, Aharon Grama made another large wave in this year's elections, Claiming 278 votes for his University Student Senate seat.

"I'm really happy and excited I won..." said Grama when asked for comment about his victory. In addition to thanking all those that voted for him,



Grama also said that "we are going to see improvements at Brooklyn College."

Grama previously served as a senator in USG.

With one incumbent and another active member of the USG running for the USS seats this year, the elections were fairly

definitive. Together, Grama and Milich secured almost 550 votes. While Grama's platform appears to be more subtle, both newly elected candidates are seeking to enact positive change for Brooklyn College and CUNY as a whole.

## CUNY & Politicians Call for Tuition Freeze

By Natalina Zieman  
News Editor

With the CUNY Board of Trustees imposing a tuition increase of \$320 this year on top of the economic strain of social distancing, students and professors are challenging the tuition hike- and they've got the support of elected officials.

"Tuition is expected to increase by \$320 this year," said Brooklyn College USS Delegate Fay Yanofsky, the Vice Chair of Fiscal Affairs. "In the context of COVID-19, we cannot be expected to pay an additional \$320 for mental health services

and a tuition hike."

CUNY officials are weighing the hike, which is expected to bring about \$52 million in revenue to the university. The \$200 hike would be implemented on July 1, along with a \$120 health and wellness fee.

The proposed tuition hikes are opposed by CUNY's University Student Senate (USS) who accommodated students to object to the hike.

"The \$320 tuition increase is unwarranted when college is distant and counseling services are impossible to be held in person," Yanofsky continued.

"The University Student Senate is working closely with elected officials to ensure students receive a tuition freeze because students deserve a tuition freeze. Students should not have a tuition hike during COVID-19 when students are facing food insecurity, job loss, and housing insecurity."

State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, the Higher Education Chair, sent a letter to CUNY's Board of Trustees denouncing the tuition increase, stating it is unfair to increase the price of tuition during a time like this.

"It is important that the CUNY system does what it can in

order to mitigate the fiscal, social and psychological impacts on its system," Stavisky's letter stated. "Notably, the state and federal governments have taken unprecedented action to ease the burden on all New Yorkers in a number of ways, including but not limited to suspending student loan payments [...] In light of the forgoing efforts that have been made across numerous sectors, public higher education systems should also attempt to ease the burden on their student population during this difficult period."

State Senator Andrew

S. Gounardes also wrote a letter rejecting the tuition hike which stated: "At a time when courses are taught via remote learning, and students have been moved off of campuses and student housing, this is not the time to saddle students with another tuition hike."

Thousands of CUNY students have been impacted by this crisis, including many students who were working and lost their job. An increase of the financial burden will only hurt these students further.

# Cut COVID, Not CUNY, Profs Protest 25% Cut

By Allison Rapp & Gabriela Flores  
*Opinions Editor & Staff Writer*

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, New York State will likely implement budget cuts across state agencies as tax revenues are projected to fall by \$13 billion. For CUNY, these budget cuts could lead to fewer available classes for students, an increase in overall class size, and more uncertainty for adjunct lecturers.

In early May, CUNY spokesperson Frank Sobrino told The Chief Leader that the university has a reduction target of \$31.6 million for the next fiscal year. The CUNY administration advised colleges to be prepared for impending financial loss, and that each school should begin to figure out how to close the gap.

In response to these potential cuts, Brooklyn College, and other campuses, are making tentative plans to reduce course offerings for the Fall 2020 semester by up to 25 percent.

On Monday, April 20, department chairs, in consultation with the Master Planning Committee of the Faculty Council, began compiling course plans with these possible cuts. By Tuesday, May 5, they had to submit their plans to BC deans for review. As of now, no final course cuts have been made.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major, negative impact on the state economy,” said BC spokesperson Richard Pietras. “While the CARES Act will provide support directly to Brooklyn College students in need in the form of emergency grants, we await guidance from the U.S. Department of Education to discover how CARES funding will help the College.”

“Without additional revenue from the federal government, however, the state anticipates budget cuts across state agencies needed to close a \$13 billion shortfall in tax revenues.”

As far as external assistance goes, Brooklyn College is slated to receive \$17.6 million in assistance via the newly instated CARES Act, a COVID-19 relief fund for state and local governments. At minimum, \$8.8 million of this projected funding can be allocated for emergency student grants. However, this money has yet to materialize.

“Allowing college presidents to call for cuts now, before the university’s budget situation is clear, undermines the entire university. It is dangerous for all of us,” said Barbara Bowen, president of CUNY’s faculty union, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), in a video posted on the association’s website.



“Above all because it sends the message that cuts to CUNY are inevitable and acceptable. They are neither. What the university should be doing at this moment is demanding new investment in CUNY.”

In opposition to these cuts, PSC has enacted a virtual petition to keep all staff on board. PSC has also suggested a possible alternative solution: those with executive positions at CUNY taking pay cuts to recoup some of the lost money from the budget.

However, according to Brooklyn College PSC chapter president James Davis, this might not be enough in the long run.

“Even if you were to look for a cut from the people on the executive compensation plan, you would be able to save some money if they

pushed that through,” Davis said, “but it’s nowhere near on the scale of what might be needed going forward to actually fund the college.”

In response to CUNY’s projected loss in city and state funding and BC’s course cut proposal, BC Anthropology adjunct professors, many of whom are also PhD students at the CUNY Graduate Center, have created the #CutCOVIDNotCUNY initiative. They’ve launched Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube accounts to raise awareness around the 25 percent course cut proposal and possible alternatives, such as taxing the wealthy.

Through social media, the adjuncts have shared their concerns of income and health insurance losses, exceeding class

size limits, and other disadvantages that can result once proposed course removals are finalized.

“CUNY is located in the epicenter of the pandemic and to propose austerity measures at such a time is simply cruel. Instead of going after the billionaires and the ultra-wealthy, Governor Cuomo wants to eliminate a source of income and health insurance from people that need it to survive,” said BC student and Anthropology Club President Abhayvir Singh, a supporter of #CutCOVIDNotCUNY. “The proposal to cut these sections will further burden our under-valued and under-compensated adjuncts.”

**Continued on page 5**

# Cut COVID, Not CUNY, Profs Protest 25% Cut

Continued from page  
4

The proposal has been in flux. Many department chairs are trying to determine how to keep as many people on the payroll as possible to avoid austerity measures. As of now, many have been able to trim duplicative sections that are underfilled.

Some others planned to submit proposed cuts that are significantly less than 25 percent. However, in doing so, they initially ran the risk of their adjunct budget being withheld, and possibly having all department adjuncts under their discretion fired. As of now, the repercussions for not proposing a reduction of 25 percent remain unclear.

“They’re trying to do it with integrity and compassion,” Davis said of the department chairs, “but they’re not in a position to exercise a lot of compassion because they’re being asked to do something really pretty brutal.”

Davis noted that the initial direction from CUNY administration

did not mention anything specifically about 25 percent cuts.

Some senior professors, such as those in the Political Science Department, have offered to potentially take a pay cut in order to keep department adjuncts on board. Though, as BC and Queens College Anthropology adjunct Kelsey Chatlosh mentions, this is simply another form of austerity.

“That pay isn’t much either for the amount of work and effort that it takes to get there, and I think a lot of us who are adjuncts want to get there someday ideally,” said Chatlosh. “The logic of austerity is still there [...] Once they start making cuts in one place, it just keeps coming.”

Of course, for Brooklyn College adjuncts and others across the CUNY system, overcrowded classes, along with job instability and low salaries, are nothing new.

“I do remember distinctly in 2017, possibly in 2018, I had three classes of 60 to 65 students in each

section,” said Amanda Schreiner, a doctoral student at the CUNY Graduate Center who’s been working as an adjunct at Brooklyn College since 2010. “So that was extremely problematic just because the class management for that was insane.”

Schreiner noted that transparency has been an issue in regards to the current cut proposals, and that some department chairs had more leeway than others, with some outright refusing to submit plans. What little information adjuncts have been given has come in slowly.

Similarly, most BC students think the administration’s lack of openness regarding the consideration of this proposal and CUNY budget cuts is unfair. To the manager of @cuny\_brooklyn\_college Instagram account, who documents broken BC amenities with the intent of advocating for more funding, the absence of student and faculty involvement in the proposal has its “history of austerity in the context of CUNY.”

“I look at it with more of a nuisance element. They are building on old precedents to make it even more difficult, to increasingly privatize these institutions and make it less affordable for those who need it,” said the account manager, who asked to remain anonymous. “That’s why it’s important to educate people on not just policies that are present right now, and not just on the proposals that are trying to be put into place, but also the fact that this has been something in the works for a while.”

Other students think the BC administration’s decision to plan for 25 percent course removal is reasonable given the state’s projected \$13 billion tax revenue loss due to the pandemic. Nonetheless, for film-major Paola Muñoz the decision to plan cuts early on before the finalization of the CUNY budget has its downsides.

“I don’t blame them [BC administration], seeing all the underfunding in our school. The reason I would understand what they are doing is

because it seems like they are trying to avoid a disaster,” said Muñoz. “But in trying to avoid a disaster, in a ‘timely manner,’ it backfires because people will face losses, like professors who can lose their health care and their jobs potentially.”

BC adjuncts will be notified of which classes they’ve been appointed on May 15th, but they’re hoping that students will also begin to recognize the implication these cuts could have on their education.

“Brooklyn College students are so active,” said Anthony Harb, a BC adjunct who’s also taught at BMCC and Medgar Evers College. “I think that putting energy into this from the student body alongside all of us - the professors, the faculty - would be a really powerful way for all of us as a community to say ‘let’s take back our quality public education’ and realize that that’s possible. With a huge collective fight, we can make CUNY look like what it should look like.”

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!

@THEBCVANGUARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

# The Essential Workers of Brooklyn College

By Ryan Schwach  
*Managing Editor*

With most students hunkering down in their homes and taking virtual classes, one might assume the campus is all but overrun with squirrels, free of human annoyance. However, there are those still working to keep Brooklyn College ticking for the time when we can return to the classroom.

“It’s like being in a park all alone,” said Mike Gershner, 10-year veteran of Brooklyn College’s central routing, which receives and delivers what comes to campus. From pens and pencils to biology equipment and voting booths, Mike sees it first.

“Pretty much everything that comes onto campus comes through us,” Gershner said via phone call from his Roosevelt Hall office. He actually missed the Vanguard’s first call while out handling a delivery of 40 boxes of food for the food pantry. Now, on top of the usual office supplies, Mike is transporting much-needed personal protective equipment and devices for students who need them for online learning.

“The situation feels upside down, just topsy turvy,” he said.

Before the pandemic, Mike supervised a team of five other workers in central routing. Now, it’s down to just him.

“It was much tougher at first, because it is so easy to get overwhelmed,” he said. “You just have to prioritize and start planning your day before the day starts.”

Mike’s day starts in Coney Island, which he drives to and from everyday. At home, he has a wife and two kids, ages four and one.

“The fact that there is no school makes it really challenging,” he said. Thankfully, his wife, who works entirely from home, is able to take care of the kids while Mike is working. “Personally I think her job is harder,” he said.

Pre-COVID-19, Mike worked 9-to-5, Monday through Friday, but now the hours have changed. Now he is only really supposed to be there on the regular receiving days of Mondays and Thursdays, but he comes when he needs to, like Wednesdays to receive the food pantry orders.

“There’s not a lot of downtime,” he said, but he makes the day a little easier with music or YouTube.

“Time just flies by.”

In an e-mail to the college celebrating some of BC’s staff, President Michelle Anderson singled out Mike Gershner.

“When we pivoted to remote learning, he volunteered to drive into Manhattan himself to pick up computer devices for our loan program to students,” she said, “He has a can-do attitude and a willingness to pitch in wherever needed.”

Another staff member William Borgeson, who works in Environmental Health and Safety under BC’s Coronavirus task force chief, Carrie Sadovnik, is working on making the campus safe for when students do return.

“We’ve been dealing a lot with the overall safety planning and guidance for the college,” he said. “We are kind of involved with a little bit of everything.”

Before coronavirus, William spent his first eight months at Brooklyn College monitoring hazardous materials used in BC’s science labs.



Mike Gershner delivers the first laptop to a BC student./ *Mike Gershner*

Now, he works on overall disinfection and cleaning efforts on campus for a different type of hazardous material.

He and his coworkers are personally responsible for handing out personal protective equipment to the other on-campus essential workers and making sure everyone, including themselves, stays safe.

“It’s almost paranoia to an extent, because you are always worried about exposing yourself to infection,” he said, talking about the constant hand washing and lack of face-touching.

William works only one day a week on campus, but describes the situation as “fluid,” because he has to come to work whenever he is needed. Most of that work is trying to come up with plans for when people can come back, and keeping the student body and faculty safe. Since coronavirus only lives on surfaces for a few days, the plan is not to disinfect everything,

but instead to continue keeping things safe once we’re back.

“We’re preparing plans for when we do go back [...] that we have cleaning plans in place to make sure we can clean up after everyone,” he said.

One of those ways may be through misters, dispersal machines that William describes as “like a spray bottle on steroids.” The machines can help sanitize entire rooms, or in our case, lecture halls. The current issue is trying to obtain the mister technology, since everyone is looking for the same things.

“That’s what we are up against right now,” he said.

William and his coworkers are currently operating out of Ingersoll, where they have begun keeping the lights off to save power. The darkness, on top of the emptiness, has made things a bit more ghoulish than normal. William suggested that the now vacant buildings on campus should be used to shoot horror movies.

“It’s kinda spooky,” he said.

William and many others are adapting to a world and responsibilities much different than what they were used to.

“If you told me two months ago this was going to be the way it was, I would have thought you were crazy. I would have told you that you needed to go to a mental hospital or something,” he said. “It’s completely overwhelming for everybody, and we just gotta make the best out of what we can do.”

As far as keeping campus safe, BC’s Public Safety Chief Donald Wenz has a pretty good idea. He has been in charge of BC’s security since 2002, and before that spent 32 years in the NYPD, but his current situation is unlike anything he’s dealt with before.

**Continued on Page 7**

# Interview With a 4th Grade Teacher

By Makeet Finch  
Staff Writer

On Mar. 16, Mayor de Blasio announced the closing of schools in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Educators such as Tierra have faced many challenges during the transition, some of which are now being resolved.

Tierra, who asked not to give her last name to protect her students' privacy, teaches fourth graders at a charter school in Brooklyn. Her school loaned students laptops and other electronic devices, so they can access assignments remotely.

"This also allows students like fourth graders and middle schoolers to become a bit more independent and skilled with technology and academics," Tierra said. "Using technology also allows teachers to organize what students need in a way that's

accessible, quick and clear! There's a direction for everything which has been helpful for students and families."

Although she might not be in a traditional classroom setting, Tierra still intends to keep her students on track. She has strategically mapped out a schedule with a plan to reach each child according to their strengths and weaknesses.

"I currently have 16 students during this time and I've created a schedule that gives me time with each student to confer on academic needs, but also allows them to still be in a small group setting where they can have discussions with two to three other students," she said.

In such uncertain times, Tierra says it's vital for parents to recognize their responsibility in ensuring their children meet their academic goals by including math and other subjects in their normal

routines, such as cooking.

"Even something as simple as setting the temperature can be used as math practice," Tierra said. "If we have to preheat the oven to 350° but the oven is only at 165°, how many more degrees does the oven have to heat? Also, using measurements in the kitchen, [and] while watching TV, asking your child, 'what did you learn? What did we see the characters do?'"

As a student and educator, Tierra is aware of the many challenges during this epidemic, but what has been evident is her passion for teaching and her determination to pull her students through. She empathizes with her students because she shares the same experience, with her own studies going remote.

Tierra is currently pursuing her Master's degree in education and would like to follow up with a doctoral degree in

educational leadership.

"As an educator and a student I have faced challenges of the unknown [...] but I know exactly how my students are feeling with digital learning!" she said.

Educators have foreseen how students would find the transition to remote learning difficult and leave some feeling overwhelmed. According to Tierra, students who were initially receiving services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and counseling in an in-person setting will continue these services virtually. Educators also schedule check-ins with school counselors for students that may be having a hard time due to the pandemic.

As far as city-wide test educators go, they are still at a standstill and waiting for further instructions on how to proceed going forward. Tierra

says summer school is uncertain as far as digital learning, but plans to roll the curriculum out in phases due to how fast things are changing.

While some states are now lifting stay-at-home orders, public gatherings in New York are still prohibited, leaving graduation ceremonies in limbo. Governor Cuomo has extended the pause on New York to May 15 until further notice, which has caused uncertainty being that this has not been the first extension set for social distance guidelines.

"Being that the Mayor and Governor still haven't agreed on an open date, we're not sure of how the moving-up ceremonies will be celebrated," Tierra said, "but teachers and leadership are actively planning to make sure we can make this moment as special as possible for students and families."

"With all of their hard work, they deserve it."

## The Essential Workers of Brooklyn College

Continued From Page 6

"It's a different ball game," said Wenz, who has continued to travel to campus two to three days a week to help coordinate his officers, five of whom have tested positive for COVID-19 since the outbreak began.

Despite the fact that there are no students on campus, and even the amount of staff is extremely low, public safety still has to stay on their toes.

"Even though there is no one around, we have to make sure our officers stay alert," he said. On top

of keeping other essential workers safe, and making plans for the future, Wenz has had to focus on keeping his own officers safe.

"We have to make sure they are following the CDC guidelines," he said. Part of this has been supplying officers with much-needed PPE, most of which has come through outside vendors, but also through the theater department's costume crew, who have been making reusable masks for BC's essential workers. Wenz has also had to limit the amount of officers who would normally take public

transportation in order to cut down on the amount of public interaction that could come to campus.

"We have very few people taking the subway or bus," he said. Still, his team has just enough officers to maintain coverage of the campus. Wenz himself drives and is making sure he stays safe.

"It's tough keeping away from my children and grandchildren," he said. "No one has tested positive so we've been lucky there."

In the same vein as William Borgeson, the vacant campus and darkened hallways have Wenz agreeing that the

whole environment feels a lot more ghostly.

"It's kind of eerie to be honest with you," he said.

Wenz and his public safety officers have continued to keep campus safe, and hope to continue that once everyone gets back. "We are ensuring we have the proper coverage and planning for the future," he said, those plans still in the early stages.

While the nation salutes the frontline workers helping to keep us safe, Brooklyn College has its own essential crew, working hard to make sure students and faculty continue to stay safe when

we are able to return to our normal lives.

"Our staff members are committed to excellence and willing to think outside the box, a skill that became crucial as this semester turned upside down," said Anderson in an e-mail to the student body.



# USG Holds Hit Virtual Spirit Week

By Chaya Gurkov  
Staff Writer

Two weeks ago, Brooklyn College's Undergraduate Student Government (USG) took the opportunity to offer something more entertaining to students finding themselves disconnected and wasting hours scrolling through social media, with an initiative dubbed "Virtual Spirit Week."

USG offered participants a chance to show off their school spirit by participating in the challenges and tagging their account - @BCUSGStudentGov - every day from Sunday, Apr. 26 to Saturday, May 2.

"Now is the time, more than ever for us to join together. Let's celebrate the place that has brought us all together: Brooklyn College," wrote USG in an initial post that showed off the interactive

events they had planned.

The Virtual Spirit Week was kicked off with "Spirit Sunday" on April 26, in which participants followed a simple task: post a picture of their favorite Brooklyn College apparel or gear.

Students were all too happy to oblige. One contributor, Kimberly Deann posted a picture of herself sporting a BC USG cap with the caption: "In honor of #spiritweekbc: this hat was the very first item I bought when I stepped foot onto @bklyncollege411 campus. When I told people I had to travel two hours back and forth to get to school, their response was always the same 'You buggin!' or 'Why?' And my response never changed 'I feel at home here.' I was able to grow academically, physically, mentally, and spiritually especially with the help of the Personal

Counseling center and the Magner Career Center."

The Student Government was noticeably pleased with the outpouring of love for Brooklyn College, writing underneath day two's challenge called "Moving Monday" that, "yesterday's display of Brooklyn College Gear was astonishing!"

The events continued throughout the week, next up a Virtual Escape Room on Tuesday that strayed from the posting-on-instagram-format of the two previous days, challenging participants to digitally solve the identity of two shooters in under an hour.

COVID Cooking Show Wednesday and Skills and Thrills Thursday followed suit, both asking partakers to post pictures of their favorite "quarantine cuisine" or one

of their hobbies with the #SpiritWeekBC.

One account user named Alexa Pizzarello did just that, and posted a picture of a plate filled with brussel sprouts and croquettes she made, writing, "life hasn't been rainbows, for anyone... and I really miss my cat but one positive thing about all this is the increased amount of time I now have for cooking most of the days."

The Stay Home Scavenger Hunt came on Friday, requiring partakers to find a list of items such as a pair of slippers, nail clippers, and a piggy bank to show off on their instagram accounts. Next came Netflix and Chill Series, an movie viewing event co-sponsored by the Student Activities Involvement and Leadership (SAIL) Center every Saturday. Spirit Week ended with a Daily Bulldog Trivia on Sunday that tested

people's knowledge of Brooklyn College with three trivia questions.

Different clubs and sororities jumped on the bandwagon as well, with the Tau Tau Chapter of the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority posting a picture of one of their members wearing a Brooklyn college shirt with the caption, "Its Spirit Sunday!!! Today we have Soror Smith showing off her favorite Brooklyn College apparel."

The Puerto Rican Alliance at Brooklyn College posted a picture on their Instagram story with the President of the Alliance, Danny Vázquez Sanabria, surrounded by a bevy of Brooklyn College apparel. He wrote, "When I heard about virtual spirit week I knew my reindeer onesie was not enough. I literally collect all the @bcstudentgov merch!"

## BC Student Harrison Sheckler Brings 300 Together For Viral Virtual Performance

By Carlos Daniel Martinez  
Staff Writer

Harrison Sheckler, a Brooklyn College student pursuing a Masters in Piano Performance, posted a video collaboration on YouTube in which 300 singers and musicians from fifteen countries all sang and performed "You'll Never Walk Alone" from the musical Carousel. Sheckler spoke to the Vanguard about the daring project, which took a month's worth of editing and mixing every audio/visual piece from each of the 300 collaborators that come from places like Germany, Spain, Australia, South Africa, and more.

"The week of March 15th, the Brooklyn College choir, directed by Malcolm Merriweather, we were working towards having a week of concerts with the New York Philharmonic," Sheckler said. "Suddenly that was gone. So when I was home, I wanted to figure out a way we could still collaborate as artists from the safety of our home."

Sheckler was inspired by what he calls the "groundbreaking" work of Eric Whitacre, a composer who's drafted over 3,000 people into his "virtual choir."

"That was pretty amazing," Sheckler said. "I thought, 'maybe I can do that myself.'"

In the beginning, the project started off with a couple friends of Sheckler's.

"And then it came into April and I thought, you know, I think I can reach even more people," Sheckler said. He shared the idea with Merriweather, who shared it with others, including Orchestra Director George Rothman. Rothman spread the word around Brooklyn College, opening the floodgates for talented people to become involved in the YouTube video.

"It took me about a month to get all the submissions in," Sheckler said. "I'm just amazed with how many people were willing to participate in this."

As of press time, the video has over 300,000 views.

Sheckler's other YouTube videos showcase his wide

variety of interests. From playing classical pieces by Gershwin and Bach to covers of modern musicians like Coldplay and Sam Smith, to even showing his passion for baseball with clips from games at ballparks and a collection of baseball memorabilia), Sheckler doesn't limit himself to his music and neither to his other interests.

Sheckler began to play piano at age six in his hometown of Charles City, Iowa. He later studied the violin and received his Bachelor's degree in Piano Performance from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. The audio mixing and mastering for the YouTube video was done by Josh Meyer and Grant Bayer of Zated Records, people that Sheckler met back in Iowa.

His decision to come to Brooklyn College was for the opportunity to study close to Conservatory of Music and Grammy-winning Professor Jeffrey Biegel.

"He was just so supportive, and has a great personality, and great approach to teaching so I wanted to study



Harrison Sheckler accompanied by 300 singers./  
YouTube

with him," Sheckler said. "And there's so many positive things about Brooklyn College. The community and the student body are so supportive. There's so many opportunities that Brooklyn College presents for their students. Internships and career opportunities, the connections are abundant. And just being in the city is a positive aspect for a classical musician. That was exciting for me, being from a town with only seventy-five hundred people in Iowa."

Sheckler has an album titled An Easy Smile, out now on Spotify, in which

he performs compositions from Handel, Debussy, and Rachmaninoff, as well as classical church music and an original composition. His sister Emma, an artist who just graduated with a major in Interior Architecture and Design from the University of Northern Iowa, designed the album cover.

"I can't wait to see everyone back in the fall," Sheckler said, "to get a little normalcy. It's not gonna be completely normal. But I think everything's gonna be okay. I'm happy to spread this little message of hope during this time."

# KC Johnson: Professor, Historian... Centrist?

By Quiara Vasquez  
*Editor-in-Chief*

Brooklyn College has often found itself in the crosshairs of right-wing groups alleging that higher ed is too ideologically rigid, obsessed with diversity, infested with “social justice warriors,” etc. Given these groups’ antipathy towards BC’s liberal arts ilk, it may come as a surprise that one of our most well-regarded professors says he owes much of his success to such an organization.

Such is the anomaly of KC Johnson, longtime BC history professor and occasional controversy lightningrod. Johnson’s spent much of the past decade criticizing many a liberal cause - Obama-era Title IX legislation, CUNY’s faculty union, and most recently, the New York Times’ 1619 Project - sometimes by himself, and sometimes on *Minding the Campus*, a long-running academic blog critical of what the site calls “the absence of intellectual pluralism” at college campuses. Critics claim that “intellectual pluralism” is code for “right-wing opinions,” but Johnson, a self-described centrist Democrat, isn’t so sure.

“Certainly I would be among the 10 percent most conservative professors on this campus,” Johnson told the *Vanguard*, “which is problematic, because on a whole swath of issues - economic, environmental, educational - I’m not conservative at all! [...] But] I am perfectly willing to cooperate with conservatives on campus issues.”

Johnson’s main “beat” this decade has been Title IX. When Education Secretary Betsy DeVos proposed amendments to the federal sex-discrimination law in January 2019, a panel of

CUNY administrators led by BC President Michelle Anderson (herself an expert on rape law) attacked these changes for “unreasonably constrict[ing] the circumstances in which colleges may respond to sexual assault or harassment.”

In sharp contrast, Johnson has taken DeVos’s side. In his book *The Campus Rape Frenzy*, Johnson (along with co-author Stuart Taylor) argues that Obama-era adjustments to Title IX have been restrictive on the accused, denying them due process. Johnson got interested in Title IX after blogging about the criminal case brought against a trio of Duke lacrosse students in 2006 - what he calls “an incredibly high-profile example of a false rape allegation.”

“It’s not so much that rape on campus doesn’t occur - the statistics on campus rape are unimpeachable,” Johnson said. “[But] the core argument of the Obama policy, that campus policies were too lenient towards the abused, was contrary to my experience with Duke.”

Obama-era Title IX policies re-entered the news cycle when presidential contender Joe Biden called for a “swift end” to DeVos’ proposed adjustments to Title IX’s sexual assault regulations while his campaign weathers a rape allegation from former Biden staffer Tara Reade.

“We live in an era where most politicians are hypocritical, but the brazenness of Biden’s hypocrisy is just astonishing,” Johnson said. “Here you have this man who’s done more than anyone in public life to weaken due process rights of students, but comes up with a different standard for himself.”

Johnson, a registered

Democrat, says he intends to cast a blank ballot this November.

“Trump is obviously... Trump, but I think there’s very little reason to believe that Biden would be a particularly good president,” Johnson said. “For me, what is depressing about the Biden candidacy is that I think this is a year in which Democrats had a significant number of quite talented figures - Buttigieg, Klobuchar, and Booker in particular - who were younger and would move the party beyond these kind of Baby Boomer nominees and restore us to the Obama track.”

Johnson’s praise for centrist figures has put him at odds with his colleagues, many of whom preferred progressive Democrats like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. The May 2020 issue of *Clarion*, PSC-CUNY’s official newsletter, ran a piece boasting of the faculty union’s “historic” and “overwhelming” decision to endorse Sanders. Some on the American right might point to this as evidence of a bias against conservatives in higher ed. Among these would be BC economics professor Mitchell Langbert, who’s authored multiple studies on party affiliation across American universities, and used them to support his arguments against what he claims is the “conversion of the American education system to far-left propaganda purposes.”

Langbert is better known these days for a 2018 blog post insinuating rape was a “rite of passage” for men, which outraged students and colleagues. Johnson was among the history professors who signed onto a group letter condemning Langbert’s words. He says that he’s only signed onto three such letters in the two decades he’s been teaching.

“Even when we’re commenting on nonacademic matters, we’re speaking as academics, and therefore what we say reflects our credibility,” Johnson said. “We quote[d] the comments, and we [made] clear that they were hateful and inflammatory statements.”

As for Langbert’s claims of partisan bias in the university, Johnson has a more nuanced explanation than malfeasance.

“This partisan imbalance is more or less irrelevant because it’s very, very rare that you see this very outright ‘we don’t want a Republican,’” Johnson said. “But the subquestion of ‘are we missing intellectual areas, research areas on our faculty?’ That’s a question we’re not asking enough.”

He points to the field of military history, which he says was once omnipresent at colleges in the ‘50s but has since almost entirely vanished.

“You could have a Marxist [teaching that subject], but more likely, you’d have a conservative who’s enamored with the military.”

The underfunding of higher ed also plays a role. Johnson notes that conservatives gung-ho about big business tend to gravitate away from low-paying teaching work.

This ties into his criticism of the 1619 Project, a series of educational resources and essays published by the New York Times predicated on the idea that the American Revolution was meant to protect the institution of slavery. (Johnson characterized this claim as “simply absurd.”) The Times has said the 1619 Project is intended as a supplement to the high school history curriculum, rather than as a replacement; Johnson considers this claim “misleading at best,” saying

that the project will likely become a primary source for budget-strapped schools.

“In an era where school districts are going to be crushed financially, having this large, very glitzy project that can be incorporated for very little cost will be very appealing,” Johnson said. “Not for ideological reasons, but financially.”

While he objects to the series’ central premise, not to mention the Pulitzer it received, Johnson says he intends to work some 1619 Project materials (in particular, a Kevin Kruse essay about segregation in Atlanta) into his classes next semester.

“No one knows what we’re going to be doing in the fall, Johnson said. “So we have to prepare for two different courses.” In the meantime, while he prepares for what could be another semester of distance learning, he intends to keep writing on Title IX, among other issues.

Where this writing will be published, however, remains up in the air. Johnson intermittently wrote for *The Weekly Standard*, a neoconservative publication (“right-leaning, but [...] they allowed for high quality arguments”) that shut down in late 2018; *Minding the Campus*, which Johnson has written over 450 articles for, shuttered less than a week before our interview. He has no interest in writing for “hard-right” campus watchdogs like *Campus Reform* or *Breitbart*.

“I’m not comfortable writing for the far right publications, and the far left publications are not going to cover the sort of stuff that I do,” Johnson said. “There’s not a huge number of publications that are very open to me.”

# BC Alum Patrick Newall Gives Advice on Film Trade

By John Schilling  
Staff Writer

On a drive cross country, an aspiring actor on his way to Los Angeles was rear-ended and suffered a neck injury. Receiving a \$7500 settlement for the accident, he decided to use the cash to make a movie per a friend's suggestion. That aspiring actor was Patrick Newall.

A theater arts major and Brooklyn native, Patrick Newall studied at Brooklyn College from 1986 to 1991. After graduating, Newall moved to Los Angeles permanently, and the first film he made with the settlement cash launched what would be a very successful producing career.

"It was not a particularly good film, but it was a fun one to make," Newall said of that first film he made with his settlement check. "I kind of got the filmmaking bug after that... and I just haven't stopped."

Since then, Newall has become a successful producer and executive producer, credited with over two dozen motion

pictures, short films, music videos, and plays. He collaborated most recently with the Russo Brothers of "Avengers: Endgame" fame on AGBO's "Extraction" and "Cherry."

On May 5, 2020, the Magner Career Center invited Newall to a Zoom call to discuss his experiences in the film industry and offer advice to students hoping to follow in his footsteps.

Newall revealed his desire to launch an acting career, but made clear that his career trajectory did not go as planned. As an avid lover of film and storytelling, however, his true passion was born.

"I still dabbled in acting a little bit, but it really became obvious to me that the career opportunities presenting themselves were in producing and in filmmaking," Newall said. "I often say I got into filmmaking by accident with that car accident. It just became a passion. I just love the kind of collaborative feeling."

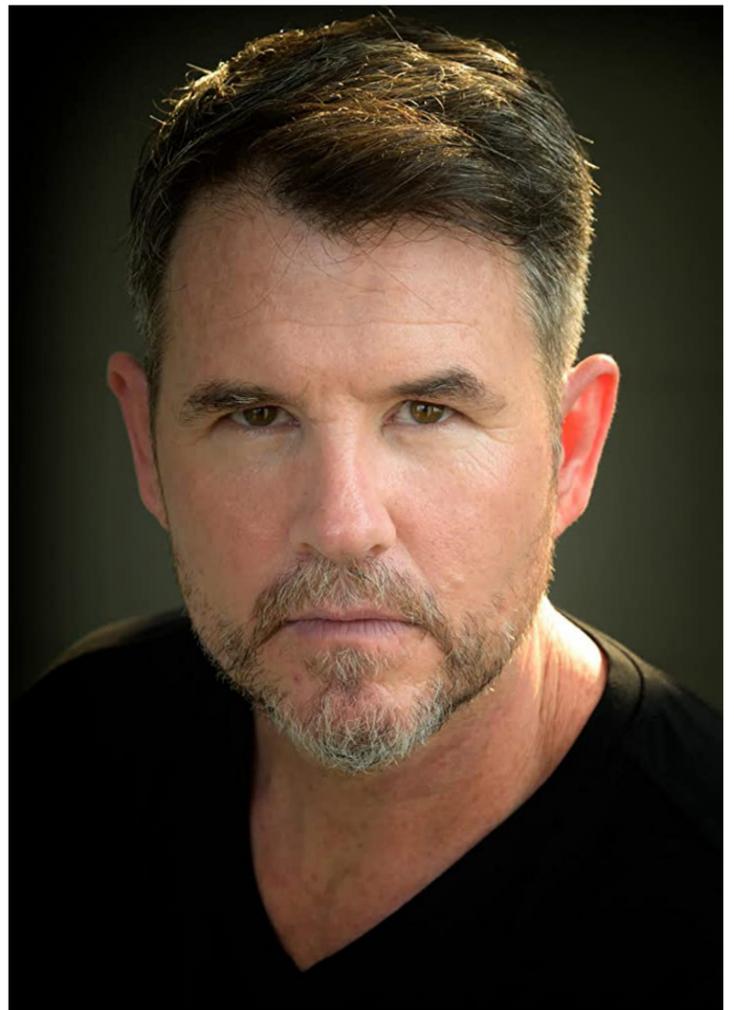
For Newall, a typical day involves scouting with both the director

and the rest of the collaborative team to decide where to film and formulate a plan. Newall then goes to that city or country and sets up an office to hire people from all over the world. Going forward, days involve meetings with the various departments to go over choices and concept work for the film that range from casting to special effects and design elements.

In terms of advice, Newall discussed the importance of networking and making yourself memorable.

"I was bad at this early in my career. I wasn't really good at following up with people or dropping a note...but do that!" Newall said. "Most people are not going to have the energy or the time to remember you. You have to make yourself valuable in this business."

Specifically, Newall recalled a Brooklyn College student named Amina Nada who he met through the Magner Career Center and stayed in touch with. When "Mosul," a 2019



Patrick Newall headshot./IMDB

film Newall executive produced, needed a director's assistant who spoke Arabic, Newall immediately thought of Nada.

This experience led to Nada relocating to Los Angeles to pursue a career, as Newall once did. However, Newall, who still resides in California, revealed that moving to Los Angeles is not always necessary to launch a career.

"I have made 31 feature films in my career and two of them in L.A.," Newall said. "Everybody has a path and your path is not going to look like my path and vice versa."

Newall did warn students that going to Los Angeles on occasion may be necessary, since it is "the hub of the business." He also revealed how important it is to put yourself in position to "drop everything" at a moment's notice.

"Keep yourself in a safe place. Find a way to keep your rent low to pay your bills so you are not stressing about those

things because money will most likely not come in the first couple years," Newall advised.

Newall then emphasized the importance of listening to criticism and not letting it discourage you. He recalled similar advice that he received earlier in his career: "Listen to what the business gives back to you."

"People will tell you all kinds of things... you got to develop a thick skin in this business," Newall added.

Newall was careful to mention how tough it is to succeed in the film industry, but encouraged students to work hard, set attainable goals, and be easy on themselves.

"Just keep pushing forward and if you have the talent and you have the perseverance and you want it bad enough, you will make it," Newall said. "If it's really in your blood, nothing is going to stop you."



Patrick Newall advising students. /Allison Rapp

# Online Classes Miss That Theater Magic

By Michela Arlia  
Staff Writer

Pre-pandemic, many theater classes required students to see every mainstage production on BC's campus, and write a report on each production; for a total of three to four papers a semester per class. These papers are a large chunk of the overall class grade, and gave students the opportunity to critique anything from the acting, or stage elements such as lighting, design, or costumes.

Since shows on campus were postponed, professors had to find an alternative to this assignment. Solution: Watch full length plays online.

While it's nice that you can sit and watch these shows from the comfort of your own couch, or rewind if you didn't quite catch the joke made the first time, these shows are almost always bad video or audio quality, and a lot of these performances come from archived videos of some no-name volunteer theater company. It is not the same quality as watching a show on campus that students worked hard for.

As someone who has been experiencing this alternative assignment for the past two months, I can say I want the BC shows back. Give me a paper on those shows any day. Between the friends and grad students/adjuncts who work on the shows, it



The Claire Tow Theater. / Brooklyn College

is so much nicer to sit and watch your peers on stage for two hours rather than a screen of unknown actors.

One of my favorite show memories comes from the first (and unfortunately, only) production BC staged this semester, *A Winter's Tale*. I worked as the sound board operator, and not only was I able to see a great performance every night from my seat in the booth, I gained so much knowledge and friendship from the cast and crew.

What made that show so exciting were the projections, sound and lighting effects that kept the audience on their toes constantly, anticipating heightened events, not sure where to look. The ability for them to look all around the stage at once and take in what they choose to absorb is not something you get from one singular

camera angle telling you where to look in a performance.

As I sit to watch productions that are not very good, it makes me wonder just how many students are hitting play on their laptops with full intention to watch, and then realizing 20 minutes in that it will take a lot of will power to be watched fully through. But what might seem like over two hours of my life wasted was actually yet another fun memory I can add when I look back on my quarantine times. Plus, it was very comforting to hear that the rest of my class, and even my professor to a certain extent, did not enjoy the performance either. In a way, it brought us all together.

But people like me sit through the entire show, no matter how awful. If it's bad, I don't mind, I'll just make fun of it the entire time. Bad entertainment is still

entertainment, right?

Take this one performance I was assigned to watch for a production class. It was a local London theater company that put on the play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Instead of a traditional set from the late 19th century, this company decided to cover their walls, floor and ceiling with mirrors. This made it incredibly hard to see what was happening on stage, as the back wall of the stage reflected the audience.

Comical moments in the piece helped me deal with the other helpless aspects of the show. Though the play's whimsical slapstick action was fun to watch, I could not focus clearly when I was too busy being drawn to the adolescent boy in aisle five picking his nose for the entirety of Act 2. On top of that, the video quality was poor, and the audio was so bad,

that even the subtitles weren't correctly shown across the screen.

This experience showed me just how much I took college shows for granted, or didn't look upon them in a positive way, especially the productions that BC puts up. With four mainstage shows a semester, plus individual and freelance projects, more respect should be given to the theatre department and the production process our school has to offer. Though it could have seemed as though I attended these shows to fulfill an assignment, I always loved going to support my friends, department, and the BC theater community. Show after show on campus always has something to offer because the level of talent shown at BC is always top notch.

To all the on-campus productions, of any kind: we miss you.

# On The Record: The Times They Are A-Changin’

By Allison Rapp  
Opinions Editor

In some of life’s most poignant moments, I’ve turned to Bob Dylan. Perhaps more than any other musician, Dylan seems to stand like a mountain through everything—war, poverty, illness, anger, heartbreak, loss, love, change always able to put down the words, even when the rest of us struggle to articulate ourselves.

In times of trouble, I like to revisit him and his brutal honesty. It’s difficult to think of another lyricist who has, for so many years, forced people to think about what they’re listening to. Other music writers have alluded to the idea before, but the difference between passive and active bands has been a topic of discussion for decades. Yes, there’s something oddly comforting about being spoon-fed Top 40 chart radio hits — it’s easy to engage in. You can blast it in your car or on the treadmill and go about your business. But active musicians, the ones that refuse to make their music into cookie cutter shapes, write their music and lyrics so that a listener must be paying attention. They’re the ones who simply require you to not just listen to their music but think about it. What questions is it asking? How is it making you feel and why? What’s the story? Where do we go from here?

Bob Dylan, for better or worse, has always felt like America’s poetic scribe. He showed up in New York City in the early ‘60s as a gangly kid from the Midwest, but quickly learned that he belonged amongst the thinkers and

artists of the West Village. From there he just... well, started writing and didn’t stop. When he was 22, he released his third album, *The Times They Are a-Changin’*.

*“Come gather ‘round,  
people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown  
And accept it that soon  
You’ll be drenched to the bone  
If your time to you is worth savin’  
And you better start swimmin’  
Or you’ll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin’”*

Everyone knows this song. It’s been sung or quoted at what seems like nearly every turn of American history — turns that people believed had the potential to upend the very nature of human society. It was released in 1964, took us through the Cold and Vietnam Wars, and persisted through anti-gun violence marches from just a few years ago. The brilliance of Bob Dylan, it would appear, is his ability to write about the present with just enough of a nod to the past, combined with just enough ability to fit the needs of the future. Here we are again, the times are a-changin’ once more.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed cracks in our system and flaws in our ways of operation on a large scale level. Clearly, fundamental change is needed from the very roots. A chord is built from the bottom up; the bass is the most prominent, it provides a foundation, while the layers on top are softer, only adding emphasis where it’s required. Without a

solid foundation, there is little to look forward to hearing. The pandemic has also uncovered who amongst us believes in certain things: science, the greater good of humanity, the importance of death. Nothing has ever felt so polarizing. America has always felt like two separate groups whose names and labels have changed over the years, but have always been drastically divided. But unlike with previous wars or elections, humans were always at the center of it. Now, as we know, we are at the mercy of nature. The virus doesn’t care who you are, where you come from, and least of all what side of the aisle you stand on.

We’ve entered a new era, but still one that Bob Dylan lives in. What he will write about this period of time will likely be an even deeper dive into the human condition that Dylan has been writing about since he was a young man bumbling through the streets of Greenwich Village. He’s

already released some new music this year, including one track titled “I Contain Multitudes.”

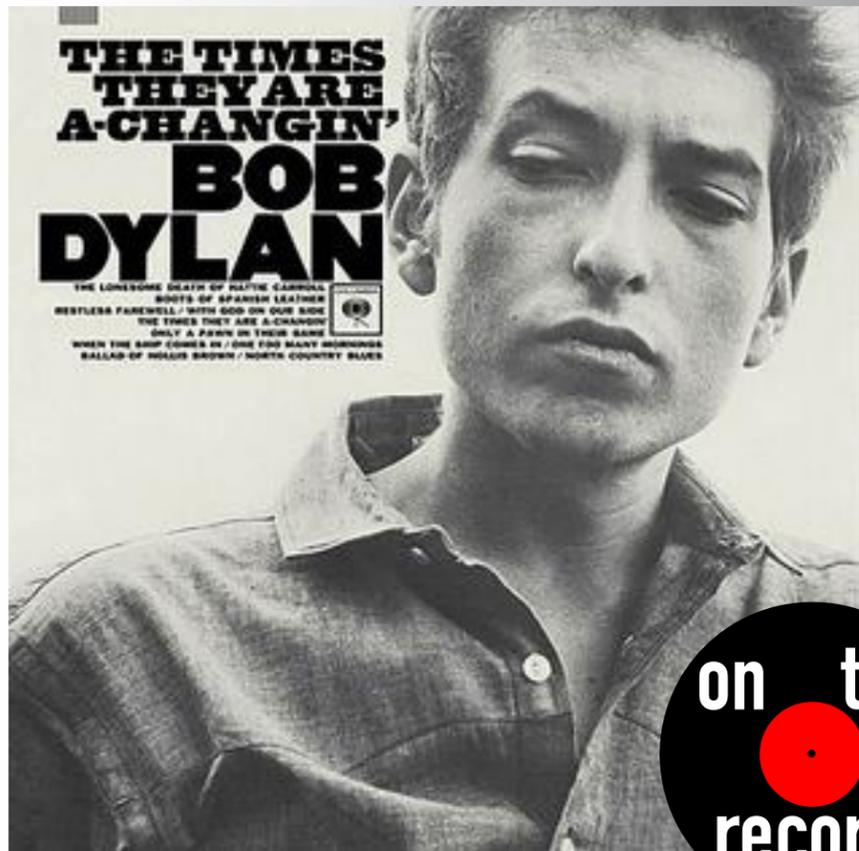
“I’m a man of contradictions, I’m a man of many moods  
I contain multitudes.”

Most of us have noticed our own multitudes during this time of isolation. We’ve started to learn what sort of people we are when we’re taken away from others and asked to be alone with our thoughts. We’ve also learned about some of our breaking points. Maybe we’re taking it easier on ourselves, maybe we’re rethinking the way we view the fragility of our lives, maybe we’re feeling like we’re hamsters on wheels, doing so much and yet going nowhere. We as individuals contain multitudes, but we as a country also contain multitudes. What we do with those multitudes can make a huge difference in what the future looks like.

Dylan concluded *The Times They Are a-Changin’* with “*Restless Farewell*.”

*“Oh ev’ry foe that ever I  
faced  
The cause was there before  
we came  
And ev’ry cause that ever I  
fought  
I fought it full without  
regret or shame  
But the dark does die  
As the curtain is drawn  
and somebody’s eyes  
Must meet the dawn  
And if I see the day  
I’d only have to stay  
So I’ll bid farewell in the  
night and be gone.”*

The fact of the matter is that illness is a very real part of being alive on this planet. We can either fight it without regret or shame, or let it overcome us. Luckily for us, there will be musicians, including Bob Dylan, who will do their best to take our struggle and history and put it to word and song for us to revisit later on down the line.



# COVID: City vs. Country



Binghamton, New York./ *Lorenzo Davies*

By Lorenzo Davies  
*Staff Writer*

As we all know, recently we have been hit by a pandemic that has not allowed us to leave our homes. Because of this, many people have lost their jobs and their general sense of freedom. Having been a soccer coach, I was considered a non-essential employee and was furloughed on March 11. However, since I am paid in cash, I am not eligible to collect unemployment.

In an effort to not pay rent and not expose my family to COVID, I decided to move upstate to Binghamton to live with my friends and girlfriend, who had space in their apartments. Since moving here a week ago, I was not only able to find work in the construction field, I have also had a distinctly different experience in Broome County than in New York City that I

would like to share.

The most notable thing about the area I moved to is the sheer lack of coronavirus cases. As a relatively rural area that is pretty far from any large city, Broome County has only had 338 cases of coronavirus. 221 people have recovered and 22 have died. This extremely low number of active cases is in spite of the local government testing vicariously, with multiple testing centers located throughout the county.

There are many factors resulting in the low coronavirus total here. First off, Binghamton is an area only reachable by car or bus. However, with Greyhound and Megabus services shut down, only people able to afford a car can come to Binghamton. This is all on top of the fact that Broome County is a depressed area and not many people choose to visit here to begin with,

especially tourists. Two other factors directly related to the low Coronavirus numbers are the low population density and the car culture of rural America as a result. Unlike New York City, most residents here, including myself, drive instead of using public transportation, which greatly cuts back on the infection rate. As a result, the hospitals in the area are properly staffed, equipped, and have a sufficient amount of beds.

In terms of quality of life, upstate New York has been immensely superior. From the day I got here I have had no trouble prospecting for work, with most business owners willing to speak to me and (although I politely declined several times) shake my hand. The majority of people have worn masks in big retail stores; however, both enforcement and participation at mom

and pop shops or gas stations have been lax. Roughly half the people here choose not to wear a mask at all.

Since I have been upstate, I have also visited friends in the other upstate cities of Syracuse, Cortland, and Ithaca. While driving through the deep countryside, seeing people eating at ice cream parlors and picnic benches was a common sight. Sports are still played here recreationally, the majority of businesses are still open, and to be honest, I sometimes forget we're even in a pandemic. I know many people in this area from my time attending Binghamton University and not a single person I know has even known someone who has been sick. I have been living my life relatively normally since I got here three weeks ago and I have not even had the slightest symptom, nor

has anyone around me. While the quarantine in the city and Long Island has been extended to June 7, most of upstate New York is planning on reopening on May 15.

I've been fortunate to have this opportunity to move upstate and work without paying rent. When I was in the city I did not leave my house for six weeks out of fear of getting sick, but upstate I have the flexibility to be able to work. I choose to wear a mask out of respect for the virus, but to be completely honest, I'm not even sure it's necessary when living in rural America.

While downstate suffers, there is some peace in being isolated in the middle of nowhere. I hope to be able to return to Brooklyn College in the fall, but I will not be leaving upstate anytime soon until the coronavirus blows over.

# When COVID-19 Hits Home

By Moises Taveras  
Features Editor

This pandemic has held a number of horrible surprises. Two of them came the day my parents got carried off to the ER.

The first was the profound loneliness that set in once they were loaded up and gone. “So this is what it’d feel like,” I thought. My mind rushed to the worst possible reality.

The second surprise came around midnight. My father had dramatically left the hospital in the middle of the night, before he could receive care. He sat in the living room, dejected and weak, filled to the brim with misplaced pride about his decision. I couldn’t believe he could be so reckless. I stood over him and shouted, “You’re 67 and I’m 22 yet I’m the one acting like an adult!”

Those two surprises

probably best capture the extremes to which I’ve been driven. Unfortunately, the international crisis has brought forth a number of personal crises, you see. It’s been a cruel few months, but I’ve done it: I’ve settled into “the new normal.” And it fucking sucks.

As is probably clear, the present situation hasn’t just been harrowing, it’s been deeply traumatic. If I’m not swinging between profound anger or sorrow, I’m wracked with some kind of anxiety, which has now grown beyond assignments I might’ve missed into a semester from hell gone down the drain.

There’s also plenty of fear and reproach to go around now too. I’ve only recently emerged from my hovel (read: bedroom) for longer than a trip to the bathroom or kitchen. I don’t sit on my couches, which



McCarren Park May 7th./ Moises Taveras

became my parents’ beds. Typing this story up at my dinner table by the window is the closest I regularly come to the outside besides receiving takeout deliveries.

Perhaps more tragically, while my parents have bounced back from the coronavirus AND pneumonia, I’ve barely touched or interacted with them. I had pangs of guilt as my mom tried to hug me on my birthday, and my deep fear and mistrust of people kept me from reciprocating.

Although New York has been “on pause,” it doesn’t feel like life has actually slowed down one bit. As a matter of fact, it feels like this pandemic has only made everything happen to me at once.

It’s exhausted me to no end. I’m tired and my body doesn’t let me get the sleep I used to. It’s getting better, but it hasn’t been the same in

a long while.

I feel physiologically different. At this point I don’t know what it is: that I might have the virus, like my parents’ doctor told us, or that I’ve been utterly done in by this whole experience.

On May 7, I tried normal. I finally showered, changed into clothes that left me looking presentable and decent, and took a walk. It was the first time I had left the house recreationally since March.

It felt nice. It was nice to feel the air blow my flannel back, the sun baking my nappy afro, or even to just feel jeans on my legs and Vans on my feet.

But as my jaunt stretched into a trek to the far side of the neighborhood, I stepped foot in a park filled to the brim with people barely observing what had become commonplace in my living nightmare.

People were either right up on each other or, even more flippantly, abstaining from wearing masks.

I was mortified that anyone could possibly act like nothing happened. Even if they didn’t know it, it felt like a slap in my face that I nearly watched my parents wither away for these people to just pretend things were fine.

I remembered that last weekend before everything closed down, how everyone went out to a restaurant, a bar, a club. I thought about the sacrifices that could’ve been made for the wellbeing of everyone. I remembered that they weren’t made then, and that apparently, they weren’t being made now.

Then I realized it, the final, cruelest surprise: the “new normal” is in my head. We haven’t changed a bit.



The toll of the COVID-19 on my parents./ Moises Taveras

# Productivity At Home Under COVID-19

By Michael Castaneda  
Columnist

We're almost there. A couple weeks, then we're done, but we're not there yet. The end of term is May 22nd, and before that "finals."

Almost everyone I speak to tells me immediately that they are doing great. As soon as New York State on PAUSE started, I heard how "distance learning" and "working from home" was going great. Even if that was true, how did they know so fast? At the same time, the ads on YouTube ubiquitously spoke about the "new normal." Is this social engineering? Has enough time passed to qualify the term "normal" or is this another example of words not having any meaning?

So what if things don't feel like they are going great? We are about to enter finals and that never feels great, even when there isn't a pandemic, and to say this is an (insert explicative) semester is an understatement.

Let's face it, things are not great! As of May 10th, there have been just over 20,000 confirmed COVID-19 related deaths in New York City and that number is going up. Unemployment is the highest we've seen since the Great Depression. Alcoholism

and domestic violence are way up.

Even if you haven't been affected by the virus directly, it's likely you know someone who has. You wonder if you will lose your job or if you or someone close will catch COVID-19.

A professor of mine said to the class via Zoom last week that since we are home, we should be able to get more work done. A few days later, a mentor to many told me about how productive Shakespeare and Issac Newton were during self-isolation during the plague. So I guess if we aren't changing the course of knowledge by staying at home, we are total losers. To quote President Trump, "sad."

Let's look at this.

M.I.T. Professor Thomas Levenson casts some serious doubt on the argument that there is a cause and event relation between the phenomenal body of work produced by Issac Newton and his time in self-isolation. Levenson writes: "This is the popular fairy tale of genius: great ideas don't require the tedious work of sustained attention and hard thinking; they arrive in lightning bolts of inspiration, which in turn come only in the right circumstances, like enforced isolation during an epidemic."

He argues that Isaac

Newton started his great work before the isolation, and continued it after self-isolation ended. Newton said his progress came from solely and constantly thinking about his ideas and that these discoveries happened during his most productive years. If you look at great minds across science, they make the most of their advances during early periods of their careers. Just think of Albert Einstein's Golden Year of 1905, when he wrote four major papers that changed physics forever. He was 26 years old and there wasn't even a self-isolating pandemic occurring at the time. For Newton, that period just happened to coincide with Newton in isolation for some of it. It stands to reason that Newton was very well off to just be able to live comfortably in the country and just think.

Those of us at Brooklyn College live in the middle of New York City. We don't have a lot of space and have to worry about annoying things like money.

Now, let's look at the argument that more time at home during a deadly pandemic equals greater ability to do school work. In a brilliant opinion piece in the New York Times, by R.O. Kwon, she writes about how she always wanted to have

a long period of time to write, and now she has it. But she can't write. In fact, she could barely read. The reason why is because she is grieving.

We are all grieving. We are grieving for our former lives. We are grieving for everything we have lost. We are grieving on some level for everyone who has died.

We are also exhausted. We are exhausted because every time we go out for anything it takes up so much mental energy. We put on our masks. We try not to touch anything, especially our face. We wash our hands so much that no amount of hand lotion will restore them to their youthful softness. We are exhausted from the politics that tell us to sacrifice ourselves, our parents, and our grandparents in the name of an economy that will probably not come back, even if everything were to open up today exactly like it was before. It's exhausting thinking that there might not be a vaccine for a year or two.

Now we think about our classes at Brooklyn College. For those of us who are trying to learn hard things, we have it harder.

I feel like I have been trying to read chapter six of my database textbook for the last month. Every time I start it, I feel that I have never learned to

read, then I switch to the book I am reading for pleasure. Somehow, I need to learn and code linear regressions, and it feels like a Herculean task.

I think we need to be kind to ourselves. Making mental space to deeply learn hard things in a cramped New York City is something we need to learn how to do, and have been given no guidance for. Unless you have a nice country house like Issac Newton.

There must be a way to get centered to a place within yourself where deep work can happen. If you have ever been to a mediation session, they somehow transcend a small room filled with uncomfortable chairs into a space of relaxation. Somehow Zoom parties lessen the pangs of social loneliness. There is no one right answer. Everyone is different, with different solutions.

On the other hand, finals will come. We will panic and somehow get it done.

We get through hard things by looking it in the eye. Not by aggressively pontificating Nike ads that sound like a high school gym coach or some guy trying to sell us cheap life insurance policies. Ignore those distractions.

Good luck on finals! You got this. You'll do great!

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!

@THEBCVANGUARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

# Farewell, From Quiara Vasquez, Editor-in-Chief

By Quiara Vasquez  
*Outgoing Editor-in-Chief*

It hit me a couple days ago, after I had made a batch of corn muffins. I looked at the discarded box of Jiffy mix and thought, “I should get more of these - make some corn muffins to share with Cami and Ryan on a Tuesday night in the office.”

And then I realized: there were no more Tuesday nights in the office with Cami and Ryan. The last Tuesday night in the office with Cami and Ryan was the tenth of March. I had turned off the lights in 118 Roosevelt, locked up, left my coursework in the office, figuring I’d pick it up the next morning.

There was no next morning. Without realizing it, I had literally closed the door on my college years.

Some days, I feel like I owe this job not to my talent or hard work, but to fate. Not in the sense that I was destined to be a journalist - nor a good one, for that matter - but in the sense that there were no other options. One by one, I tried every other door, and the knobs turned to sand in my fingers; until finally, all that remained was 118 Roosevelt.

I started at what was then Kingsman in 2016. I had admired the paper from afar for months: it was scruffy, kind of like me as a freshman, but the reporting was solid. But it had too many typos. I e-mailed the editor-in-chief and asked if I could edit the copy. She said yes.

It was the beginning of a long and horrible four years. I failed too many classes, lived at the epicenter of too many stupid college scandals,

and never once went to bed on Tuesday before the toll of midnight. And I wouldn’t trade it for anything.

The tradition in these sort of farewells is to thank Brooklyn College, to attribute your success to this unique and wonderful institution. But I can’t lie: I only went to Brooklyn College because I was too poor to attend Vassar. To pretend I wouldn’t have excelled at a cushy private college, or that I liked watching my campus literally crumble before my eyes, or having a class end early when my classmate had a heat stroke in a 90-degree lecture hall - is sour grapes.

To praise Brooklyn College for its diversity and working class character, as many do, would be even worse. It is not laudable that of all the colleges in America, only one is even remotely accessible to the working poor - it is despicable, a stark reminder of the class divide in this country. “The Harvard of Flatbush?” Don’t believe the hype: beyond the gleaming exterior of the clock tower, this college has a bevy of problems, from failing infrastructure and departmental corruption to adjunctification and austerity. I should know. I’ve spent four years and 96 issues documenting ‘em.

But hey, I sure made the most of my stay here - and I met some pretty cool people along the way. In no particular order:

To Ashley Matos, Dawn Eligio, Derek Norman, Dylan Campbell, Israel S. Rodriguez, and Paul Frangipane, thank you for welcoming my ungrateful ass into the Kingsman crew.

To Joe Modica, Lisa



(L to R) Layout editor Camila Dejesus being guided by Outgoing Editor-in-Chief Quiara Vasquez./ David Rozenblyum

Flaugh, Zeus Sumra, and especially Tati Bellamy-Walker - thank you for making those delirious midnights in the Kingsman office bearable, and sometimes even fun.

To Zainab Iqbal and Sandy Mui, for doing an admirable job running the only slightly inferior Excelsior - even if you did publish too many pieces about the journalism program, and/or Netflix.

To Dani Kogan and Sam Castro, for doing an admirable job running the only slightly inferior Hound - even though, like, Jesus, you put fucking Drake on the cover? DRAKE? Come on.

To Mohammed Ali, for making the best damn kofta-over-rice on campus.

To Profs. Anna Gotlib, Anthony Mancini, Brian Dunphy, Katherine Fry, Ron Howell, Serene Khader, and the late great Bob Viscusi - thank you for your advice, and for letting me crash in your offices uninterrupted once a week.

To Joe Fodor, for letting me steal all those CDs you had lying around.

To WBCR, for “letting me” steal all those CDs you had lying around. (You didn’t even notice

they were gone, suckers.)

To Jack Coleman, for treating me like a queen, and indulging in our arms race to see who could smuggle the most debauched sexual terminology onto our arts pages.

To Camila Dejesus and Moises Taveras, the Vanguard power couple whose magnetic attraction overpowered my steadfast cockblocking and became the very loud heart of this paper.

To Allison Rapp, for your cultural savvy and fashion advice. Between your expertise in jam bands and folk rock, and my knowledge of heavy metal and the entire They Might Be Giants discography, we possess all-encompassing knowledge of the white people musical canon.

To Noah Daly, for sticking that caricature of Rudy Giuliani on our dartboard, for not letting me be a jibbering idiot at budget meetings, and for believing in my brain and my heart more than I ever did. And for letting me bogart your dank-ass kush.

To Ryan Schwach, for growing from a cub reporter to a grizzled BC news veteran before my eyes. You are the

only other person who really comprehends how amazing it is that this paper has transformed into a publication actually worth reading.

To Paul Vasquez, the “double rainbow all the way” guy - like, I didn’t know you, dude, but you seemed like a bro, and we’ve got the same last name, and I love rainbows almost as much as you did. It’s sadly appropriate that you would pass on the same weekend I pass on from my most precious thing in my life.

To Jay Jankelewicz - I miss you so damn much.

To Gabi Flores, Ian Ezinga, John Schilling, and Maya Schubert: the inheritors of this paper’s legacy. Make mama proud.

And to all the new writers (too many to name) who I’m leaving behind, for whom the era of struggling to fill an eight-page broadside is a distant fantasy. Each and every one of you has a bright future ahead of you, and each and every one of you is part of the reason why this final issue of Vanguard is the greatest issue I’ve ever seen. You’ve got bright futures ahead of you, and I love you all.

# Farewell, From Jack Coleman, Arts Editor

By Jack Coleman  
*Outgoing Arts Editor*

I had only ever worked in restaurants, where resumes either serve as indicators that you could handle a brunch shift based on the number of years you've busted your ass, or as confirmation that you are the friend of the server who recommended you.

When I began sending out actual job applications, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. It was March of 2019, my second semester at Brooklyn, and it had been about a month since I had sent in a dozen apps for internships and entry level jobs to art galleries, artist's foundations, and museums. I eagerly waited for the bright, shining emails to hit my inbox, the ones asking me to come in for an interview.

Those emails never came, except maybe for a few "thank you for applying" auto-replies, and the subsequent, cordial "unfortunately, we have chosen another applicant" message from the more established institutions. I spent, admittedly, little time on most of these applications. I remember repeatedly googling How to Write a Cover Letter. A number of those letters ended up being more or less copied and pasted from a single template which I thought would surely land me a gig.

Eventually, certain that my email address was on some kind

of "Shitty Applicant Blacklist," I was jaded just from kicking at the deadbolted, impenetrable door to a field that I thought would lead to my future. My plan of being the fashionably aloof but secretly plucky type of receptionist had fallen flat, and with it, my desire to be that. Around the way, I started to see a backdoor, slightly ajar, which maybe I could fit my foot through.

Fuck it—my general disposition at this point—I'll write about art instead of being a cog in the wheel to sell it, I oh-so-triumphantly said. I frantically walked over to Roosevelt Hall to knock on the door of the (now defunct) Excelsior to talk to an editor, see if I could write something for them. Nobody was there. Across the hall, I noticed that the office of the then Kingsman was cracked open by a stack of newspapers. I knocked, Ryan, the managing editor, and Quiara, the editor-in-chief, told me to come in.

It was a Monday, the two were gearing up for crunch time, editing pieces, maybe finding ones to squeeze in; doing what they do. I asked if I could write about some exhibit at The Whitney. They took my pitch, saying something along the lines of "okay, have it in by tomorrow, we publish every Wednesday." I hauled over the West Side of Manhattan, driven by anxiety and probably a lot of excitement at the



Jack Coleman.

prospect of sticking it to the museum which had recently rejected me (I ended up actually loving the show, the article was mostly praise, unfortunately).

The next fall, The Excelsior and The Kingsman merged, and because of that budget-cut fueled fiery embrace, we now have The Vanguard. Fortunately for me, our newly birthed paper needed an arts editor. I applied, and—get this—actually got it. But not by way of a killer cover letter, but because I was writing things that I actually, truly, gave a shit about. The editing team recognized this, I recognized this. It was right.

It is vital for young writers to be appreciated and supported by their peers. To be able to write and have your writing looked at—in my case, by the sharpest, most

thoughtfully sassy eye of Quiara—with care. It's critical for aspiring photographers to have their work published alongside a story. And on the flip-side, the work that we do is of equal importance for the student body, for whom we publish and stay up way into the uglier hours of the night. (I'll also take this space to apologize for being, more times than I'd like to admit, part of the reason for said late nights). Some of our colleague's first of many write ups will have been on this campus' paper. Some better than others, but that's why what we do matters. You all do stuff, we tell them about it. If not us, then who?

Since I started writing for The Vanguard, I have been doing work that I want to be doing. I am constantly inspired and impressed, almost to the point of disbelief,

by the work that Quiara, Ryan, Camila, and all the section editors put in every week. There is, at some base level, something really cool about what the editing team and staff writers do. Not just cool for me because I got to play the part of a chic art critic, but in the other kind of cool, the coolness that is the reason why I will miss writing for The Vanguard. It is the ineffable chicness of hard work that the entire team displays every damn week, and that I got to be a part of that.

Now I know that I've not only busted my ass waiting tables, but that I've had the pleasure of writing and working with all the lovely people at The Vanguard. I've met some wonderful people and dear friends through this gig.

Thank you.

# Farewell, From Farhad Rahman, Business Manager

By Farhad Rahman  
*Outgoing Business Manager*

I would like to start off by first thanking all essential workers. Including each individual healthcare worker, medical staff in general, and the workers providing food and basic necessities to everyone. And a special thanks to Brooklyn College's essential staff including security guards who still show up to campus despite its current closure and professors and advisors adjusting to the current circumstances courtesy of COVID-19.

I also would like to say that I hope every student, professor and all other faculty of Brooklyn College are adapting to this quarantine situation.

Before I begin saying goodbye, I would like to introduce the time I've spent here at Brooklyn College. I've been on this campus since I was a junior high school student at Brooklyn College Academy -- about six years ago now -- but even when all my friends from high school left for other colleges and universities across the globe, I stuck with the poor man's Harvard. It wasn't the scenic atmosphere of walking through the quad every day, seeing the freshly shaved emerald grass and cherry blossom tree every spring, or the magnificent library bell tower, which was even more breathtaking on the inside. But because I

felt like I was welcome. After highschool, I wasn't sure where to go. My parents told me to join my brother at Hunter even when I didn't want to. But when they denied my application, I had nowhere to go until Brooklyn College sent me a ticket into their school in the form of a mistaken envelope in the mail followed by a phone call.

I've never regretted being here. My opinions were heard, respected, and appreciated. I managed to make a lot of friends and formed relationships that I'm sure I'll carry for a long time, including the one with the girl of my dreams, Winypher.

I founded the Fencing Club with a close friend that I made here as well, and the moments we shared in it were unforgettable. I became friends with some of my professors, who would occasionally give me advice, check in on me and my family, and make me feel like I'm never alone.

When I read that the Kingsman was looking for a replacement business manager for my predecessor, Noah Daly, I debated joining the team. I had read every issue since I picked up my first one during my first semester as a college student, and I always wanted to write or contribute to the student voice on campus without being political. After I was told that I got the position, I was overwhelmed with joy. I



Farhad Rahman.

was told that I had some big shoes to fill, and I knew I could never truly be a replacement to Daly, but rather, a placeholder. My biggest responsibility was ensuring a steady transition of financing our newly combined, large newspaper club which formed from The Kingsman and Excelsior.

The team was the best I could ever have asked for. The Editor-in-Chief, Quiara Vasquez, was funny, witty, outgoing, but surprisingly relatable and down to earth. Managing Editor Ryan Schwach possessed every quality of a leader you could ever imagine, but was always more of a friend when you

needed him to be. Our editors all had their own unique personality, but two things they all had in common were that they were amiable and humorous.

I worked on only a couple of stories during my time as the business manager of the Vanguard, but I wished I had worked on many more. It turned out to be a fun and thrilling experience that I look back on with pride, but nothing makes me more proud than seeing our entire team flourish, despite every hardship thrown our way.

If there's one thing I learned from being a student here at Brooklyn College--I can say it certainly isn't advanced statistics--it's

that opportunity isn't something that falls in your lap, it's something you make for yourself.

If there's one thing I learned about life, it's that life has no meaning on its own. Which is why you have to make it meaningful.

Farewell Vanguard, Brooklyn College, professors and staff. A special farewell to COVID-19, soon, hopefully--you will not be missed. I wish everyone good luck and good health for all their many years to come. Here's to the next Vanguard staff.

# The Last Bullspit!

by Ryan Gleason

## My Time At Brooklyn College

Yes, you read that title correctly. As I am graduating and will no longer be able to write for the Vanguard, Bullspit! shall also come to an end, just like smoking in restaurants.

I refuse to let my departure be a somber one. I want my college career to be celebrated in my absence and for my legacy to live on. In this piece I will recount my experience here at Brooklyn College through all four years. Let me just say I have nothing but fond memories here. I have had amazing classes, made awesome friends, and in fact, I have even met my future wife. Also, I met my current girlfriend. (Don't worry, they don't know each other.)

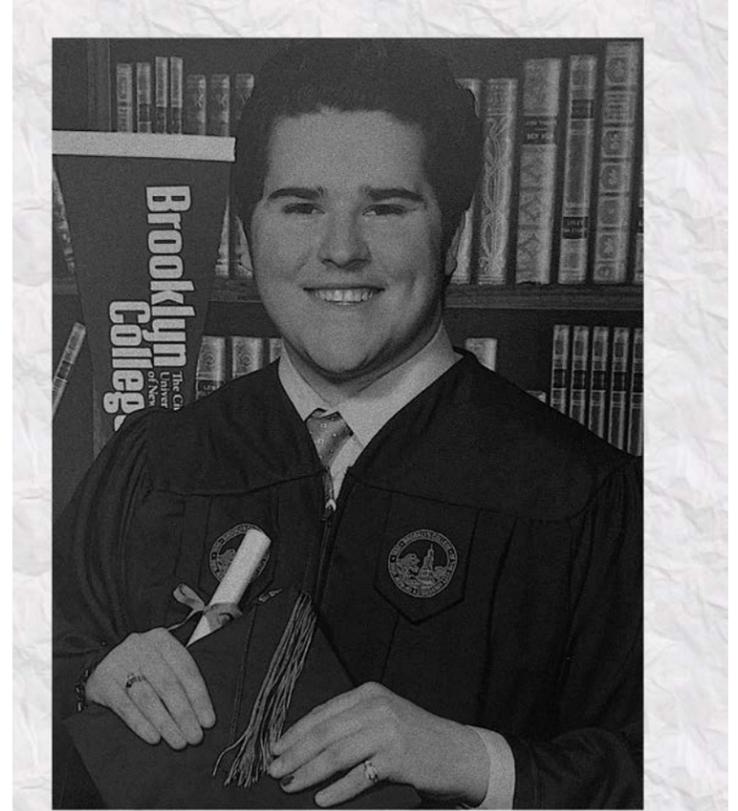
One of my fondest memories on campus was the club fair. Every semester it seemed there was a club fair, where students could see all the clubs and organizations the college had to offer.

I sort of skipped from club to club. First, was the College Cannibals Club. They had a great pitch but honestly, the young man they had chopped up as samples was a little too dry and chewy, so I had to decline. The second club I checked out was the Communism Club. I actually joined them for three months, but I had to leave because every paycheck I got they made me give them a piece of the pie. Totally not my style. Finally, the third club I remember best was the Peace, Love And Coffee Club: Hipster Coalition. I had to decline their invitation because I actually enjoy taking showers and listening to good music.

I also frequented the food court. Most school cafeterias get a bad reputation, but this school's cafeteria was actually alright. In four years, I was only food poisoned 12 times. That has to be a good

percentage. Thinking about it, I ate there five days a week for 10 months out of the year for four years. I probably got food poisoning like... less than 10% of my time here. Those are great odds.

And lastly, the library. Although you can't bring in food and drinks or talk loudly, the library became one of the best places to just sit back and sleep. So much so that I would see someone sleeping every time I would go. College kids love their naps. I actually fell asleep once and got yelled at and security had to escort me out. I think I was probably sleeping where someone needed to do work, but I never found the reason. Some said it was because I was sleeping in the nude under the "American History" section, but I don't think that was why. I mean, all those books are white men's propaganda stories and not actual truths, so I



*Most Likely To  
Get Arrested For Public Intoxication*

doubt anyone would have a problem with me sleeping under there. Who knows?

I had a great time here. College was a great experience. I wish I was stupid and needed four MORE years to graduate. Thinking about it, I'm graduating in exactly four years. That's less time than

doctors and lawyers and teachers. I guess that makes me smarter than all of those professions? AND I was able to sneak in a few naps? I'm probably the best thing to walk out of this place... Thank you... Thank you very much...

# Vinny The Goat

by Mo Muhsin and Gabrielle Toro Vivoni

