

THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE
WANGUARD

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE - THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2021

ONE YEAR
OF
COVID



On March 11, 2020, Brooklyn College suspended all in-person activities. 365 days later, the BC community looks back at a year of hardship, and looks forward to a hopeful future.

What Kind Of Year Has It Been?

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By Ryan Schwach & Moises Taveras
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What kind of year has it been?

A year ago today, the world seemed to stop. Campuses closed, restaurants and bars and clubs followed suit, and the best laid plans collapsed. Vacations were delayed, flights were cancelled, and suddenly everyone was trapped indoors. On a Wednesday a year ago, without our knowing, we took the last train we would take to Avenue H, we took our last walk down Bedford Avenue, our last bumpy ride on a James Hall elevator, and had our last run-ins with the squirrels that run the lawn, at least for the foreseeable future.

At 2:12pm, on March 11, of last year, Governor Andrew Cuomo sent a tweet closing down all CUNY and SUNY schools, effective the following week. This sent CUNY students, faculty, and administration into a spiral to figure out how we would manage the coming weeks and months. At the Vanguard, we wondered how we would put out a weekly issue. At the time, we thought we'd still be able to go back to campus to work and study, and then they closed campus along with classes. After a fractured spring break, and days needed to fully adapt to our new virtual world, we began to somewhat settle into a new normal of zoom meetings and commutes

no longer than a few feet. The world didn't stop though. In fact, the trauma of the last year has been precisely because it didn't stop. School didn't close, it just shifted online. Businesses closed and then prematurely reopened countless times. Rent didn't stop coming, though checks from our jobs and our government did. And people simply acted like there wasn't a national emergency that threatened our existence. And the body count. The body count never stopped. Every week there seemed to be a new headline with a new round of dismal case numbers, refrigerator trucks of bodies outside Queens' hospitals, and denialism and deflection from the one office with the power to stop this.

The last year has been a tragic one, there's no doubt about it. It's a year scarred to hell by injustice, violence, political unrest, and loss. Just so much preventable, avoidable loss.

At Brooklyn, we found out for certain that we would not be returning to campus for the fall, and inevitably the spring too. Some work continued on campus. Construction continued, as it always does at BC, and some lucky folks participated in hybrid courses in labs and studios on campus grounds.

Case numbers rose, fell, and shot up again, and the end of the summer saw some semblance of vibrancy return to the city before we were shuttered indoors once again. We lamented what

seemed like an increased onslaught of Blackboard discussion board questions, and whole class meetings that could have been an email. Days became longer, and our eyes became permanently strained by screens.

We're nothing if not a stubborn bunch though. We pressured the college administration into extending a grading policy that helped students whose pandemic stresses affected their studies, and halted a test proctoring program that infringed on our privacy that was already beginning to whittle away.

Plays and recitals endured despite the loss of their spaces, surviving via live streams or prerecorded performances. Clubs and groups adapted to online, keeping as much school spirit alive as we were capable of. Many even made the pivot to becoming support groups when their fellow students needed them most and resources were at an all time low.

All while rolling with the punches of a school year unlike any other before, and hopefully unlike anything to come.

Now everyone's scrambling for vaccinations so that life can return to normal. The line of thought seems to be that if we all can treat the virus, it and the problems it caused will go away. But that's not really how viruses or trauma work, is it? No, the effects of them linger, even if dormant, for long after you think the problem's come and gone. As much as

COVID-19 is going to be a part of our bloodstream, the long term effects of this pandemic are going to indelibly mark our lives. This is something we're going to always live with, and someday it will become stories we tell our kids, stories of the year that we lost.

It's hard not to feel dramatic talking like this. It's sometimes even harder to justify that the present situation calls for it. Our generation has never faced crises like the ones that we've confronted. Generations before this one haven't faced a crisis like our present one in a long time. It means that we're consistently at war with ourselves and the unknown, and it's really an overwhelming bout.

Desperately clinging to the promise of normalcy isn't foolish though. A cynic would say this situation has doomed us. We're jaded, but not quite so rough around the edges. There's a day on the horizon where we'll be sitting in a bar, a classroom, a movie theater, or across the table from the person who means the world to us and things won't be the way they were. The way they have been. We need something to cling to and this more than anything seems like it. If current projections hold, we'll be nearly, if not totally back to normal by March 11, 2022. Today is March 11, 2021 though, and while something better isn't too far off, there's still work to do. There always is.

So yeah, what kind of year it has been, indeed.

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!

@THEBCVANGUARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Two Tickets In The Running For USG Prez

By Ryan Schwach
Editor-in-Chief

Two tickets have jumped into the race for the executive branch of Brooklyn's Undergraduate Student Government so far, with current President Ethan Milich's term running out at the end of the semester.

Although there are still two full days left to declare, one ticket sees current USG Chief of Staff Aharon Grama making a bid for the highest office on Bedford Avenue, with USG Press Director Iqura Naheed as his running mate. However, Grama and Naheed are considering a split ticket, meaning they would swap positions at the end of the fall semester.

Running against Grama and Naheed are two

outsider candidates: Tanger Hillel member David Tawil, and his running mate Yitzchak Mavashev, an e-board member of the Russian Jewish Club.

Grama, who was appointed by Ethan Milich as Chief of Staff last year and also serves on the USS steering committee, is studying computer science at Brooklyn College. He was born in Brooklyn, but also spent some of his life in Israel, serving in the Israeli Defense Forces, before working as a salesman in Texas and finally making his way back to Brooklyn.

"In student government I've seen how student activism is important," he told the Vanguard, "You need people to get involved."

While serving as Chief of Staff, Grama helped push

the continuation of the credit/no credit grading policy and stop the use of the testing program Proctortrack. "The track record that we have had here this year should prove why students should vote for us," he said. Grama and Naheed are considering switching positions half way through their term, partially so Grama can lead the Senate, which is under the purview of the VP.

"The president and vice president do similar work," Naheed said, "We're sort of just a team." Naheed, who was also born in Brooklyn is a member of the Macaulay Honors Program as an anthropology major. Naheed previously served in the USG Senate. "I wanted to get more involved on campus," she said of her choice to join

USG.

Grama and Naheed say they wish to extend and expand upon the initiatives of Ethan Milich's administration. "His goals were good at that time and they are still good now," Grama said.

The other ticket will be headed by pre-medical student David Tawil, another lifelong Brooklynite, who is involved with the Tanger Hillel on campus.

"I'm really interested in helping people," said Tawil, who is also working to start an EMT club at the college.

Tawil, who has only had one on-campus semester due to COVID, hopes to focus on helping freshmen and transfers as they ease their transition into the school. "There isn't enough guidance," he told

the Vanguard, expressing a desire to focus on "creating a community of students on campus."

Tawil also wants to combat the yearly tuition hikes at CUNY, hoping to hold marches to bring awareness to the issue. Tawil and Mavashev do believe they may come to the race as outsiders from USG, but see it as a benefit, bringing new ideas and new perspectives to the table.

"That can be an element that makes us seem more approachable," Mavashev said, "And that's what we want to be."

Students will be able to vote Mar. 22 through Mar. 25 via BCwebcentral.

CUNY Sees Massive Budget Cuts In Age of COVID

By Maya Schubert
News Editor

After a devastating year for CUNY, marked by withheld funds and faculty layoffs, the state budget for Fiscal Years 2021-2022 is estimated to cut \$26 million from CUNY and increase tuition for students by \$200.

CUNY's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022, which begins this summer, is \$1.17 billion. Comparatively, CUNY's budget in the 2019-2020 academic year stood at \$4.7 billion. Since the pandemic closed campuses and put colleges online, Robert Mujica, Governor Andrew Cuomo's budget director and a member of the CUNY Board of Trustees, has withheld close to \$400 million of CUNY's budget, or 20 percent of a \$2 billion dollar budget for the summer and fall of 2021.

The state, which provides 50 percent of CUNY funding, is presumably displacing the money to New York's COVID related deficit, which is estimated to be at least \$8 billion.

In July 2020, New York City slashed funding for CUNY's Fiscal Year 2021 by \$20 million. By the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester, almost 3,000 University adjuncts were laid off because schools claimed they could not afford to pay them. With less instructors than ever, class choices diminished, funneling students towards fewer classes, ballooning their sizes.

"As a result of the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, the University has experienced reductions in revenue, seen public funding significantly reduced and been obliged to take on unplanned emergency

expenditures," Chancellor Felix Rodriguez wrote in an announcement in November. "We have been forced to make decisions that only months ago seemed unthinkable."

Though CUNY received \$250 million from the federal CARES Act in March of last year, this was a dent in the budget gap. According to the Chancellor's report, the University has spent \$75 million in unplanned costs related to COVID, like deep cleanings for campuses, PPE for staff, and technological equipment for students in need. In addition, a 5.2 percent decline in enrollment for the Fall 2020 semester will cost the University an estimated \$52 million in the coming months.

"We all have had to make sacrifices this year, and unfortunately, I expect

more potentially difficult decisions in the near term," the Chancellor wrote in last year's announcement.

In a budget hearing on Feb. 3, Rodriguez appealed to state lawmakers for additional funding for CUNY, although he did not name dollar figures, and expressed hopes for more federal funding. One day later, several lawmakers announced the New Deal for CUNY, which would provide a fully funded University through taxing the state's wealthiest. The bill, which will head to the State Legislature in the spring, was sponsored by Rising CUNY Alliance and the Professional Staff Congress.

"I think the New Deal for CUNY has a strong chance of approval this spring," James Davis, PSC chapter chair of Brooklyn College, told the Vanguard. "There are already 13 state

senators signed on as official co-sponsors with more coming on every week."

According to Davis, support may be strong enough to generate a veto-proof supermajority in the State Senate and the State Assembly.

"I have never seen the CUNY faculty and staff more active around any proposed piece of legislation," Davis said. "The recession and pandemic have exposed long standing economic inequities in the city and state, and legislators are under more pressure than ever in recent memory to generate new revenue by fairly taxing the superwealthy rather than trying to cut their way out of a deficit."

Zoom Bombing, An Unexpected Symptom of COVID

By Matthew Hirsch
Staff Writer

When the pandemic hit, Zoom became the medium for students to continue their studies and for professionals to meet with their coworkers. Though the shift to an online platform gave rise to Zoom bombing; when an unexpected intruder invades a Zoom call with the intention of disrupting it.

In July of 2020, the Brooklyn College Anti-Racist Coalition had their own run-in with a Zoom bomber as they held a meeting to help spread awareness about combating systemic racism.

“At first I was unaware of what was happening. I thought it was background noise from one of the participants,” said Irva Adams, a BC staff member who spoke at the event. “As the person continued with strong obscene language, I knew that this was intentional. Thankfully, the disruption was brief and we were able to continue without any other occurrences.” Also BC, the Women of Color group had an event terrorized with racist imagery and slurs.

Luckily, the situation was handled quickly and without much trouble, though that’s not always the case. In September of last year an elementary school in Leander, Texas reported a Zoom bomber that showed “inappropriate sexual content” to a classroom of fourth-graders. Depending on the context, a Zoom bombing can seriously affect a student’s ability to learn



Photo Credit: Quiara Vasquez

and focus, or even be a traumatic experience.

“In our situation, we were able to move on in a productive way. But, this can definitely have an effect on one’s ability to function, especially if it’s racially charged,” said Adams.

Before the pandemic began, Zoom hosted 10 million daily meeting participants. In April of 2020 that number grew to 300 million. The surge of users meant more targets for Zoom bombers. As such, last April, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Michigan released a statement warning Zoom bombers could be charged with state and federal crimes. In March of last year, the FBI also published a press release

warning about Zoom bombings, and how to prevent them.

Now Zoom is just another part of our daily lives, and Zoom bombing is an unfortunate reality of this new world we live in. People have gotten used to the fact that occasionally meetings can be invaded by an angry person spewing hate speech. In the case of Adams, some of her colleagues realized what was going on faster because they’d seen it happen before.

“It was alarming, but for some in the room, they immediately knew what was happening,” said Adams. “As this was my first experience, I was unaware of what was actually happening until one of the participants

called it out.”

Though Zoom bombings are normally nothing more than an inconvenience, it can become a traumatic event, like in the case of the fourth-grade class in Texas. However, there are easy steps to help prevent them from happening. Setting a password for the meeting, creating a waiting room, and setting screen-sharing to “host only” are among a few solutions. If a Zoom bombing does occur, don’t interact with the bomber and wait for the host to remove them.

After spending an entire year of using Zoom to interact with colleagues and classmates, there are some proven advantages. Accessibility to the classroom and office is at

an all-time high without a commute. People with mobility problems or other disabilities don’t have to find a way to physically get themselves to class. Zoom, (and other video teleconferencing platforms,) have innovated the ability to work, or learn, from home.

As with any innovation though, there will always be unforeseen issues. Zoom bombing was an unexpected consequence of moving to an online learning environment. If things go CUNY’s way, the option to return to the classroom could become reality again in the fall semester of 2021, leaving Zoom bombings in the past.

Halfway There: Freshmen And Transfers Join BC Amid Pandemic

By Olivia McCaa
Staff Writer

“It’s like there’s this online barrier that is just impossible to get rid of,” said Brooklyn College freshman Frances Porter.

For Brooklyn College freshman and transfer students this semester, their initial impressions and experience in a college setting has been mostly online.

“It’s like feeling alone even in a Zoom class full of people. It’s very isolating, especially for freshmen,” Michele Sherman, a freshman English major, told the Vanguard. “Making things like group chats have helped a little bit, but it’s still not the classroom environment I was used to and hoped to have my first year in school.”

Problems such as isolation, lack of motivation, and mental health have all had a heavy impact on college students, especially newer members to the community. For freshmen, many still have yet to visit or interact on campus.

“I’ve been on campus more as a senior in high school than as a freshman,” Sherman said.

Additionally, isolating conditions and remote learning issues have led to new students facing performance issues.

When classes stopped meeting in person, Gabriela Marcucci, a transfer, moved back home and continued her education online, only to notice how alone and isolated she was left feeling. “COVID has made me very scatterbrained, honestly,” Marcucci said.

As freshmen continue completing pathways and prerequisites, a



Freshmen and transfer students deal with a digital college experience./ Dreamstime

lack of engagement and communication also appear to be a common issue.

“It’s hard for me to have the option of being able to show up to a class but not necessarily be able to pay attention and I kind of just let myself fall behind,” said Porter. “It definitely is more difficult for me to be online because most of my classes are entry level where we really just have busy work to deal with.”

Lack of involvement remains a common theme around students in entry level classes. Freshman Rimsha Marium doesn’t see online classes as a true engaging learning environment that is sustainable.

“I think there is a lack of motivation because we aren’t really learning anything online. It’s primarily just submitting our work before the deadline.”

“The biggest issue I have right now with Brooklyn is that everything is coming in on multiple sources

online,” she said. Different learning platforms such as Schoology, Blackboard, Cunyfirst, and email all contribute to the overwhelming feelings surrounding keeping up on schoolwork.

However, even though it is frustrating for students to not attend school in person, “it’s responsible to remain online,” Frances Porter said.

As the fall semester came to a close and Brooklyn College entered its spring semester online, more students found themselves becoming comfortable with, and adjusting to, being online.

“A lot of the initial awkwardness is over,” Sherman pointed out.

For faculty, students, and administration, there has been a tremendous learning curve. Teachers likely never hosted an entire curriculum online, because their classes were meant to be in person. Students were similarly unaware of how to adjust and adapt to a completely foreign learning

environment.

“After moving to New York my second semester, I have had much more of a wake up call and I realized why I am here,” Porter said. Coming from North Carolina, Porter, like many other students, was faced with distractions. “Now I am faced with my future and I have to be better at working on it especially in school.”

As freshman and transfer students continue on with either their second or third semester online, hostility towards the format has settled. Some, like George Marsoas, a senior studying part of his first semester at Brooklyn College, found himself truly enjoying the academic presence he and his peers had online.

“Just the way the environment and the professor conducts himself is very cool and intellectually stimulating,” he said. “I am an aspiring theologian and my class in Brooklyn even if it is online, is great for this.”

Students are becoming

more aware that during this pandemic and continuation of online learning, time management and self determination are very important factors to remain motivated.

“I can’t just pretend classes aren’t real,” Marium said. Learning how to prioritize her work and understand that her classes need to be taken seriously has been a large adjustment for students like her.

With the support of teachers and hopes of the vaccine roll out for COVID-19, students are excited to hear when they will be able to begin their on campus experience in a safe and manageable way.

“I don’t feel like I am part of the community, and once we are back in person I am excited to get more involved in the community and I hope to join clubs next semester,” Marcucci said.

Local Brooklyn Businesses Fight To Stay Open

By Olivia McCaa
Staff Writer

As Brooklyn College reaches its one-year mark since shutting down amidst the global pandemic, neighboring Brooklyn businesses continue to face difficulties and instability as the city begins to announce their vaccine rollouts and promises of more normality. Many businesses saw themselves making difficult decisions to support their employees and community.

“We were very scared,” an anonymous employee from Berlines Unisex Beauty Salon told the Vanguard, “The world was panicking and scrambling around and I quit for nearly four months.” Berlines Unisex Beauty Salon, just a ten minute walk from campus, found themselves in a difficult position over the year. “I think I lost so many customers, and none of them came back. It’s difficult, and we are relying on this vaccine in the hope people may come back,” they said.

Employers and employees found themselves in a complicated situation trying to ensure they could provide for themselves and their families. Although many businesses did struggle to transition to an online and take-out service, some restaurants found themselves at an advantage.

Footprints Cafe Express, a local Flatbush restaurant was already prepared for the massive changes and regulations put in place by the CDC.

“Basically for us in terms of this location it kind of played into our hands” explained Rachael

Poyotte, the Executive and Admin Assistant of Footprints Cafe Express, “because according to the guidelines and regulations set by New York and the CDC for closing the indoor restaurant service and operating more of a take out service, we already had been prepared for that type of service.” Footprints had been serving their customers on both their own and with third-party delivery sites for the entirety of their seven years in Flatbush. Nonetheless, they face some financial hardships.

“As much as we are currently thriving, it’s killing us. It mainly has to do with the measures that need to be implemented which are costly. We would like at some point to be making back instead of putting out,” Poyotte said.

When it comes to serving their community, local businesses understood that adjustments were necessary for the health and safety of their workers and customers.

“We provide proper materials for cleaning like PPE, taking temperature, contact tracing, and those who did not feel comfortable coming in were allowed to stay home,” comments Poyotte.

Early on in the initial stages of the pandemic and lockdown, many businesses like Marine Park Coffee had to cut down their staff. “We made the difficult decision to temporarily furlough our employees until we could safely rehire them,” said owner John Thomassen. This allowed his employees to remain at home and gain the benefits from the early



Local eatery Anthony & Son Panini Shoppe is among the few businesses “blessed” to weather out COVID-19. / Food’n’Festivities

stimulus package.

Thomassen took on the big responsibility of being the shop’s sole worker for nearly a month to remain afloat and keep Coffee’s doors open to give “a sense of normalcy to our neighbors who were stuck at home and provided some revenue to cover rent and utilities.”

Now nearly a year later, Marine Park Coffee was able to rehire back all of their employees who wanted to return.

Cafe Grumpy in South Slope Brooklyn faced similar challenges, and were forced to close in order to keep people on the payroll. Caroline Bell, Grumpy’s founder and CEO, explained that because things are still slow in NYC, they had to permanently shutdown one location in Manhattan, and temporarily close a few others. However, Bell is optimistic for New York’s recovery.

“We hope that New York will regain its vibrancy and that office workers and tourists will come back into the city so that small businesses that rely on those people to survive

will be able to maintain a presence,” she said. With effort and daily work, Cafe Grumpy’s locations in New York have begun to slowly reopen.

As spring approaches and the winter season ends, businesses are hopeful for more customers and foot traffic to occur. For businesses like Peaches Hothouse in Bedford, run by owners Ben Grossman and Craig Samuel, they noticed that although their overall topline revenue had not recovered to their previous pre-pandemic times, they are still able to get by.

“(...)We have been able to make it work to be a business that can pay our team members, pay our vendors and suppliers, and support our community and be an important beacon of hope during this difficult time for all,” Grossman and Craig stated in an email to Vanguard.

Although Grossman and Samuel’s business had seen a decline, they understood that this was a new normal for a while and focused on how they could continue to give back. Their efforts were

able to provide over 50,000 meals for first responders and those in need.

“It is how we have always operated and how we will continue to operate after this pandemic,” they stated.

Despite the challenges they face as the pandemic continues, many local Brooklyn businesses are grateful for both their loyal regulars and new customers who’ve supported them through it all.

“There are people that have lost everything,” said Sabino Curcio of Anthony and Sons Panini Shoppe on Graham Avenue. “So we are truly grateful and blessed that we have been able to remain open the whole time.”

With vaccines steadily rolling out, local businesses have become more optimistic for the future of their shops and their community. “Just stop by another shop or us and visit,” Curcio says, “Allow and trust in your community and us to support you.”

BC's Essential Workers: One Year Later

By Ryan Schwach
Editor-in-Chief

Last May, two months into online learning during a global pandemic, the BC Vanguard interviewed three of Brooklyn College's "essential workers." We spoke to three individuals, who even as classes and meetings went online, still went to work on campus every day. We followed up with them nearly a year later to see how their lives and jobs have changed within 10-months of the coronavirus pandemic.

When the Vanguard last spoke to Mike Gershner, who works at BC's Central Routing, he was alone and overworked.

"I finally got my staff back, so I am no longer alone, you can only work on overdrive for so long," he told the Vanguard over the phone from his office in Roosevelt. "There's no vibrancy, but I'm no longer as lonely."

A year ago, Gershner's staff wasn't coming to work, and his responsibilities were piling up. He needed to deliver technology so students could continue their studies online, for example. Now that his crew has returned, and as most of the college's other blue-collar staff have come back, Central Routing has returned to its normal duties, which mainly include receiving packages sent to BC.

Looking back on this time last year, Gershner is grateful for the bounds that have been made towards normalcy. "When I spoke to you last, everything was topsy turvy," he said. "There was so much uncertainty, now you can go out and get pizza."

Although things have

begun returning to normal for Gershner, who is awaiting his second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, he thinks eagerly on when things will go back to the way they were.

"I hope everything gets back to normal, I hope students come back, that's my biggest wish, they give it life," Gershner said. "I consider myself lucky that I get to come to work and be healthy and see people... Things have definitely changed."

Another one of BC's essential workers, William Borgeson, who works in Environmental Health and Safety, is working to ensure students and faculty remain safe on campus both now and when we fully return. Borgeson goes to campus most days and was working while talking to the Vanguard.

"It's certainly improved, it's almost been like exposure therapy I guess you could say," he said. "The general sentiment has improved."

Borgeson, who has also been vaccinated, works under BC's Coronavirus Task Force Chief Carrie Sadovnik, sanitizing the campus and keeping up PPE requirements.

"We are more of like a support function and continuous improvement," Borgeson said. When the Vanguard last spoke to him, the campus was mostly empty. Borgeson described it as "spooky," but normalcy seems to be creeping back in. "Then it felt like a ghost town, it feels a lot more lively now, a little more peppy as opposed to then," he said.

Borgeson said he is most looking forward to going to the Boylan Hall Cafeteria and getting



Mike Gershner (right) and his coworker John Brooks (left) at BC Central Routing./ **Mike Gershner**

coffee every afternoon, as well as NYC's nightlife once things reopen. "I am happy that things are improving," he said.

For Donald Wenz, Brooklyn College's Public Safety Chief, going to campus is at least a respite from the long days of Zoom meetings, though it has its challenges. "I'd rather be here than working remotely," Wenz told the Vanguard. Despite the lack of everyday traffic, Wenz's job, and that of his officers, has become more intricate with daily health screenings required of everyone on campus. "There's more stuff we have to do now," he said, "We have to track everyone."

Despite their efforts in monitoring the virus on-campus, contraction hit close to home. Wenz and his family were infected with COVID-19 in

December, though they are now recovering. The virus also tore through the ranks of BC's Public Safety.

"It really took a toll on our personnel," Wenz said, describing a time when an officer came to campus with a negative test, only to later find out he was positive. This culminated in him infecting an entire shift of officers, affecting nearly a quarter of Wenz's total personnel. "We had an entire shift wiped out," he said.

The virus also took the life of one campus security officer. "I give a lot of credit to the men and women who work for me that work every day under trying circumstances," Wenz said of his officers.

Although conditions are improving, Public Safety will continue facing challenges as the on-campus population

grows, due to a shortage of officers thanks to COVID and retirements. "We won't have enough personnel to man every single gate like we have in the past," Wenz said.

Wenz is still awaiting guidance from the college on how things will run when we are fully on-campus, but he worries about the efficiency of current protocols. "If we have to go through the same procedures we are going through now, we are going to have tremendous lines on campus," he told the Vanguard.

Regardless of the challenges, Wenz is also looking forward to a normal day on the Brooklyn College campus. "I think a lot of us are looking forward to students being back and returning to normal," he said.

Amid Pandemic Stress, Some Students Take A Break

By Gabriela Flores &
Mary Zakharova
*Features Editor & Staff
Writer*

Back in Mar. 2020, Brooklyn College was taken by storm when classes made the sudden switch from in-person classrooms to online platforms. As the pandemic has continued, and with campus life becoming a relic, some students are taking a break from their studies in response to the new normal.

"I don't think I was helping myself by just pushing through, because I thought that was kind of the mantra that I needed to follow. 'Push through this - you'll be fine,'" said Mia Galeano, who is taking her first semester off this spring after attending BC for a year and a half. "Pushing through doesn't mean I need to drag myself along in order to reach the finish line if I'm already so tired and worn out."

Remote learning has presented more challenges for students than they perhaps expected. To those who were struggling, and prefer learning on campus, waiting for a sense of normalcy to return seemed like the best option.

"I mean ultimately it's their choice, and if they want to take the break, if they feel it would be their best interest to take the break, then we were in support of it," said Stephany Rodríguez, a Senior Academic Advisor at the Center for Academic Advisement and Student Success (CAASS). Rodríguez and her colleagues worked with students who

considered taking time off, providing resources to ease their remote learning experiences.

"Ultimately we want them to continue, rather than take a break, but it's their choice," she said.

In the beginning, when COVID guidelines were implemented and cases were steadily rising, most students expected remote learning to last for a few weeks. Not knowing how the pandemic would pan out, Galeano was determined to stick with her academic goals. She planned to expedite her graduation by picking up summer courses. But staying in her room at home began to take a toll on her and led her to lose interest in all her classes.

"(...)It's a completely different environment and it's difficult even though there are ways in which people can find environments for themselves in this space. It's just not the same," said Galeano. With her mother working as a nurse on the frontlines, she also became increasingly worried for her family's safety more than her studies.

"That daily stress of worrying about her, but then also worrying about my studies - I guess it just accumulated and accumulated," she said. "Then it led up to the point where I was like, 'All right, I really need to take a break because I don't even know who I am anymore.'"

With personal lives and mental health affected by COVID restrictions, contractions, and deaths, some students have found remote learning to be too much to bear. Their attention shifted sharply towards their family and

other personal needs.

"Seeing my dad, and seeing my sister sick really bad - I just found it very insensitive. How are you supposed to focus? How are people supposed to focus?," said Maribel J., who paused her studies in Spring 2020 when her loved ones tested positive for COVID-19. When BC made the move online, Maribel noticed that the immense workloads, lack of understanding from some of her professors, and sharing a computer made remote learning more difficult to manage.

"I remember being really upset with myself that I couldn't continue college because I genuinely could not. And I was beating myself up for it like, 'How can I be so dumb? How could I not handle remote learning - in the easiest year?," she recalled. With more time to focus on herself and her family, Maribel was able to spark new and old interests alike. Before COVID-19, she did consider taking some time off to figure out if her career path headed towards music, but she backburned the possibility of a break until last Spring.

"I feel very confident, I feel like I'm where I'm supposed to be right now," she said. "I'm glad I'm not following the social norms of having to go to college right after high school. And I know that with college I'm able to enter whenever."

Despite the challenges COVID has created, taking some time off from academia has helped some students slow the pace of their regular day-to-day lives.

"I feel like I'm taking advantage of this time," said an anonymous



Center for Academic Advisement and Student Success
logo./Facebook

student from the Feirstein Graduate School. After starting their one-year leave of absence last spring, they claim they have garnered more knowledge of their craft as a director. In deciding to pause their studies at BC, they considered their financial situation and family's health since they were worried about passing the virus to them if they were to shoot a film in-person.

"There is a good and bad. I'm missing the physical inspiration I get from cohort directors. When you're working, and filming together, you always get inspiration from other filmmakers - so that I'm missing," they said. "But at the same time, I'm concentrating on the small theories, readings, watching movies, analyzing. Those times are also precious so I can deepen my perspective of films."

Noticing the drastic shifts the film industry has undergone with the implementation of COVID restrictions, the student is preparing for the changes that are to come

once the pandemic curbs. "I was more occupied by traditional filmmaking, but right now everything is drastically changing," they said, mentioning that they're currently writing some scripts for future projects. "(...)This is a very dynamic time right now, so it's kinda exciting too - that we're witnessing this shift."

As vaccines roll out and plans for BC's full re-entry solidify, students are awaiting news on how the months ahead will look. For now, they will continue to adapt by their own means, even if it includes taking a temporary break from schooling.

"I think I kinda changed the mantra in my head by saying, 'Help yourself, in any way possible.' Which was taking that break and deciding that I matter - my choices matter," said Galeano. "Just because I'm not in school now doesn't mean that it isn't important to me. I'm helping myself by not burning myself out."

BC Reacts: Vaccine Rolls Out As CUNY Hits One Year Of COVID Shutdown

By Matthew Hirsch
Staff Writer

It's been a year since the COVID-19 pandemic began and vaccines are finally available. President Joe Biden announced that the timeline for every adult to be vaccinated has been moved up to May; two months before the original July projection. The quickened rollout is in no small part thanks to the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

For some Brooklyn College students, there are concerns about the long-awaited return to an in-person classroom. After an entire year of remote learning, CUNY plans on returning to in-person instruction in at least some capacity for the Fall 2021 semester. Although vaccines should be available to everyone, there has been no confirmation on if it will be required for a full re-entry to campus.

"There's a little bit of skepticism on my part about the vaccine," said BC freshman Alexander Howe, "Not because I think it's not safe. But there's strains that the vaccine isn't effective against. And you know how quickly a virus can mutate," he said.

According to the



CUNY faculty and staff are able to get vaccinated./ [ny1.com](https://www.ny1.com)

CDC, about 3,100 people in the United States have been infected with an emerging COVID-19 variant, or a mutation that causes the virus to act differently. Though the number is relatively low, a study from the University of Minnesota found that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines may be less effective against the B.1.351 variant originating from South Africa, which has mutated to avoid natural immunity responses.

On Mar. 1, New York City shifted into phase 1b of the vaccine distribution plan, adding food industry and hotel workers to the eligibility list.

Some students are concerned about the move back to campus, and what precautions will be taken once we

do move back. The college has released a reentry plan, as previously reported by the Vanguard, which has been approved and is contingent on how the pandemic progresses into the fall.

"I would like to see a more coherent plan to make sure every student gets a vaccine and how the administration plans to make campus safe before I feel 100 percent comfortable going back again," said sophomore Oscar Docavo.

CUNY has confirmed that online learning will still have a larger presence than before the pandemic once classes resume in-person. For students who have a harder time making the commute to campus or have other

accessibility issues, these digital resources are a great tool. While others may feel that the college experience just isn't the same without campus life. However, the safety of students, faculty, and staff comes first.

"I think that it's a good start that the CUNY faculty and staff are able to get vaccinated. And I hope that it becomes more available to students so that everyone can return to school in the fall," said senior Emily Ryan. "I think student and staff safety needs to be top priority and that needs to be ensured before everyone can return to campus."

At a conference last December, Dr. Anthony Fauci predicted that the country could achieve herd immunity by

quarter three of 2021. Once that happens, life will look a bit more like it did before the pandemic began.

One thing is certain, though. There's light at the end of the tunnel, but the United States isn't out of the dark just yet. The CDC released new guidelines stating groups of fully vaccinated people can meet indoors without masks. Albeit only in a private setting. For now, masks are still a necessity. Though it's only a matter of time before the old normal becomes new again.



BC
REACTS

On-Campus Groups Adapt And Overcome To Keep Students Engaged During COVID

By Qichelle Maitland
Staff Writer

The arrival of the COVID-19 virus and the chaos that it quickly caused disrupted the world as we knew it. On the week of Mar. 11th 2020, Brooklyn College, along with many other institutions, made the decision to switch to remote learning. People across the world relied on each other to navigate through our new reality, and at BC, support groups were on stand-by for students adjusting to the sudden changes.

“What we originally wanted to do was to make connections with the students in a way that we could learn about them and then help them no matter what their needs were,” said Nava Renek, Program Coordinator for the Women’s Center, who felt an obligation to keep a strong engagement with her community during the pandemic.

For over 20 years, the Women’s Center has been an environment to counsel and empower college students, but it had to quickly transform into a supportive online space.

“We wanted an environment to make students feel like they had a place to go that wasn’t this formal academic type standard,” said Renek. “We made the Women’s Center a really inviting environment that was not traditional and it served our purposes in that way. Students were coming to form a community, to find an anchor on campus where they felt comfortable.”

Renek and her team saw the move to online as an opportunity to optimize engagement even with the limitations of stay-at-home orders. She immediately became acclimated with the new technology and

initiated various virtual wellness events, hosted by previous alumnus, who were more than happy to lead a Meditation and Yoga workshop bi-weekly for students. “We were just going with the resources and connections that we had,” explained Renek.

Renek said that although they adjusted quickly, there was still the connection missing from the environment that they were used to. Prior to COVID-19, she and her colleagues were able to approach students more easily. “Even though they weren’t exactly coming to the Women’s Center to tell us what their problems were, we could see it on their faces and knew that they needed help. That aspect of what I do is completely gone,” said Renek.

Even with a year of remote learning, Renek has not gotten used to carrying out on-campus activities online - a challenge that students have noticeably faced.

“The biggest challenge with this is that most students are ‘Zoomed out,’” said Natalie Esses, Tanger Hillel’s “Let’s Talk” co-host and Engagement Associate. “They don’t want another Zoom event, so getting the attendance rate up at these things is a challenge.” Participants of “Let’s Talk” engage in peer-to-peer discussions on a topic that interests them, with the hosts sharing information related to the conversation.

“We provide resources for them to walk away with [but] it’s still about keeping them engaged and keeping them here,” said Esses.

In order to keep momentum strong, the center has encouraged smaller volunteer efforts to keep students engaged and provide some relief to the weighing Zoom fatigue.

“It’s been incredible to see how students in need come out to help others in need and work together to make it through this time,” said Yelena Azriyel, Assistant Director of the program.

With the pandemic, coordinators have created their own weekly check-ins, including Mindful Mondays and Wellness Wednesdays to offer a space where students can get together and socialize virtually under these new social norms, Esses explained.

At the Women’s Center, Renek has asked for student peers to step in where program directors feel like they can’t reach students as much as they would like to. “We really feel that the students are in a lot of pain and are having extreme difficulties,” Renek said, “which led us to establish something called ‘The Squad.’”

“The Squad,” is a group of students who do peer-to-peer outreach with other students and those who need check ins. “That was our strategy, in order to make up what we’ve lost in terms of that informal connection.”

At the Immigrant Student Success Office, Director Jesus Perez and Ana Bartolome, the Program Coordinator, chose an integrated approach when working with students. Assessing family circumstances, personal counseling recommendations, assigning faculty mentorship and financial aid support.

“Because of the pandemic, we were able to get an emergency grant from the Robin Hood Foundation,” one of New York’s largest anti-poverty organizations, Perez said. The grant of \$150,000 was given to ISSO to help students who had been

struggling throughout the COVID-19 crisis. They were able to distribute \$500 grants to 300 BC students throughout the summer and fall. The aid is to be spent on housing, food, technology needs or for DACA application and renewal fees.

“We needed to meet them where they were,” Perez said, about students who were desperate for assistance over the last year.

When the pandemic hit, Jesus and his team had just opened their doors the previous fall.

“It’s still a work in progress. I think that because of the nature of what we do, having to deal with our immigrant students and undocumented refugees, it’s important for them to meet us and get to know us more.”

“It was really hard in the beginning to connect on a personal level,” Perez said, referring to the switch to Zoom meetings. “However, I have to say that Zoom became the vehicle for connecting with more students.”

Perez has maintained his individual connections with all of those that come to ISSO for help, establishing a “trust between the students and the office.” With their permission, he keeps records of their cellphone numbers in order to check-in and follow up with them about issues that they’ve expressed. Making ISSO’s outreach more personal.

“That’s ultimately what I want. I want to know exactly what I can do and how I can help,” he said. “It’s a more targeted approach.”

Talks of the upcoming fall semester and the extent of in-person campus life still lies in uncertainty. For Esses, the goal would be to switch to occasional

in person gatherings, as long as it’s safe. “I think we’ve realized in this time that in person interactions are kind of vital and it’s an integral part of the college experience. I think that if the world allows it, we’ll try our best,” she said.

For the Women’s Center and Renek, the spontaneous programs and efforts to connect will remain whether social distance restrictions ease up or not. “For now, I haven’t really conceived of what the fall is going to look like. I have a feeling it’s going to be more remote than in person, so we’re going to stick with things, enhance things. We are all in to try to find new ways of doing things better,” Renek said.

With that hope of a Fall semester return, Brooklyn College’s groups are starting to look to the future.

“We can’t wait until we can go back to everyday campus life where students can come, connect again and experience an atmosphere of familiarity,” said Azriyel. “I’m feeling optimistic about the future. During these difficult times we’ve been able to come together as a community. This past year has highlighted how resilient our Brooklyn College community is.”

As the pandemic continues, these groups and others at BC are willing to continue standing beside students. So long as these spaces exist, so will the communal support. “I’m able to make a difference in a student’s life and help them along this journey. It’s also something that gets me up in the morning,” said ISSO’s Jesus Perez. “The more that we can make this community come together, the better that we can work for the students’ well-being and their support.”

Activist, Philosopher, Cornel West Speaks To BC As Part of Common Reader Project

By Ian Ezinga
Opinions Editor

On Tuesday night, students and faculty of Brooklyn College were graced by the presence of Dr. Cornel West, who visited remotely to be the speaker for the final installment of the college's 1619 Common Reader Project. The project was conceived before the pandemic made landfall in New York City, but each of the four events were held during the city-wide shutdown. This final installment was titled "A Conversation with Cornel West on Culture, Race, and Democracy." And what a conversation we had.

West's credentials as an activist and intellectual brought nearly 150 participants to the call, an ample number for a humanities event when considering the more intimate events that are readily common.

After an overview of the evening by English Department Chair Ellen Tremper, followed by an introduction to the night's speaker by one of his former students and a current associate professor of English, Martha Nadell, the spotlight was set on Dr. West. For the next hour or so, we listened to a stream of consciousness that, while certainly focused on culture, race, and democracy, could have been on anything.

West's oratory style is an illustrious hybrid born out of his religious upbringing and current fervor, years within the academy, and his hard-won credentials as an activist in the political arena. He speaks passionately and with a rhythm that is certainly akin to what he believes to

be one of the highest forms of artistic expression: jazz.

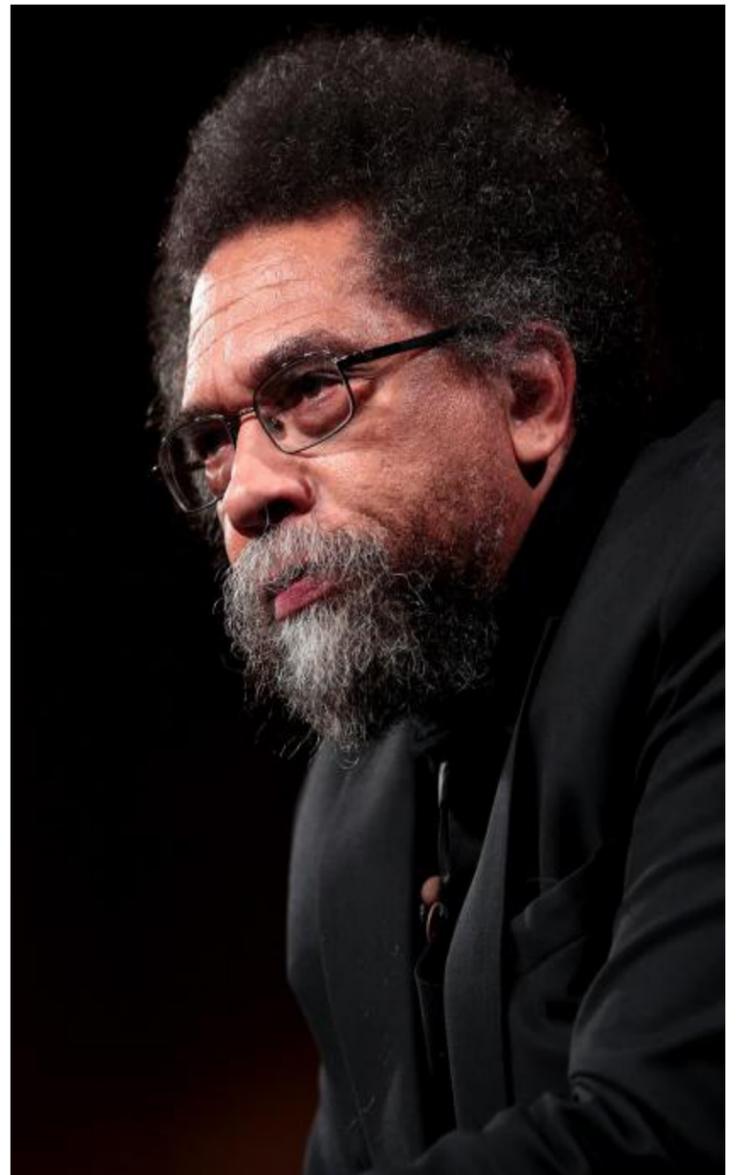
His skill as a lecturer prevailed, however, providing his audience with a sustained message throughout his weaving in and out of references to religion, philosophy, activism, and art. "We must have the courage to think critically for ourselves," West insisted throughout his hour. "Imitation is suicide. You must find your voice," he emphasized. The key to meaningful participation in anything, whether it be the political arena or one's fiddling with piano keys, is to interrogate yourself and the structures that have existed long before you so that you can stride abreast with history and create something genuine.

West spoke seriously of history, drawing on his vast collection of literature and philosophical texts. History, as West understands it, is something that we are in constant struggle with. It is a very American idea to simply be captains of our futures while escaping any notion of being prisoners of our past to borrow language from Brooklyn College alum Greg Grandin. But we are, of course, living in history. Our lives and the sum of our actions are what allows for anything meaningful to come after. There are tremendously strong forces of "greed, hatred, callousness, and indifference," which have long held sway throughout history. But West urges us to "try to create some moments of interruption."

Creating moments of interruption wouldn't be an unhelpful way to describe West's career. His thinking has developed over time and in step

with his insistence to be constantly evolving and challenging one's own beliefs. But he has remained steadfastly critical of anything representing heteronormativity. He describes himself both as a love warrior and a lover of truth. Being a lover of truth means that he is in a constant state of curiosity about the world. It means that he works tirelessly to arrive at the clearest interpretations of events. He takes very seriously the perspectives of non-binary people, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups not for any "PC chit chat," but because he sees it as a "spiritual and moral endeavor." While working the endless task of incorporating these perspectives into his own worldview, he is also sharpening his ability to love. He does not have hatred for people who are defined only because they cast their vote for Donald Trump. They are not 'deplorables' or 'irredeemable' as Hillary Clinton defines them. They are, West explained, like the rest of us who are feeling "so frustrated, so depressed. They are feeling so powerless... and more and more feeling so hopeless."

To talk about race, West argues, "you have to start with yourself." Before working out policies or plans, you need to look at how you have had your thinking influenced by the structures that history built around you. You also need to cultivate a deep appreciation for the cultural contributions of marginalized people, which went without saying through his tenacious ability to riddle off musicians, artists, writers,



Dr. Cornel West visited Brooklyn College remotely./ Gage Skidmore

and other "wounded healers." These people are heralded by West not just for their talent but their ability to confront their trauma and their fear in order to create beauty. These artists wield not only the "hypersensitivity to the suffering of others," West rolled on, but also, "the unflinching candor to confront." The point is that you and I have no shot of being the next Aretha Franklin, John Coltrane, or Al Green. But we must still struggle to find our own voices so that we can use them to talk about matters of race and beyond.

As the "vanishing and disappearing creatures we are," we need to use the time we have to not sit idle. There is no time for indifference. There is no time for hatred or greed. The societal decay

which thinkers like West allude to is rooted in what he referred to as the 11th commandment; "Thou shalt not get caught." It is so easy, and at times the only option that reads as remotely sensible, to look out for ourselves. But what we lose in falling for this trap is the ability to love and connect with our neighbors. Without the ability to use your voice to speak earnestly with others who are in need, what are you but a corpse yet to be buried? "Never fake the funk. You can't fake the funk. You can't deodorize the funk," Dr. West preached. "You can't act as if you are dealing with reality if you are on the surface dealing with superficiality."

The Last Recital At Brooklyn College

By John Schilling
Arts Editor

The date is Mar. 11, 2020, and the “coronavirus” has already made its way into New York City. Aside from those in the Philosophy Department, Brooklyn College classes are still being held in person. At around 2 p.m., Governor Andrew Cuomo announces that CUNY and SUNY schools are moving to distance-learning for the remainder of the semester, and the news begins to spread around campus to all but one place: the Tow Performing Arts Center.

As Cuomo made this announcement, some students were off the grid within the Buchwald Theater at the Tow Performing Arts Center as Dr. Deborah Nemko, a pianist and professor of music at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts, presented “The Music of Anne Frank,” a lecture-recital performance focused on the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands during World War II and the Holocaust in the 1940s.

Unbeknownst to the audience of unmasked students sitting next to each other in close proximity, campus life had vanished, the world was beginning to change, and they were witnessing what would be the last event that the Conservatory of Music would host in person for a very long time.

One year later, Dr. Nemko still remembers what was racing through her head that day. With everything going on, she was surprised that the concert had not been postponed.

“Before leaving for Brooklyn, I was following news on COVID-19 and had expected my concert to be cancelled since several universities and school districts had begun the shut-down,” Nemko told the Vanguard. “I was surprised that the concert was still on. I kept writing

to Dr. Stephanie Jensen-Moulton...to confirm the performance.”

Jensen-Moulton, a professor of music at Brooklyn College, brought her class to Dr. Nemko’s recital, and the virus was a concern for the group of music majors.

“Students had begun to express concern about the virus around the end of February and into the beginning of March,” Jensen-Moulton told the Vanguard. “Only one of my students was palpably worried about getting sick... But then, no one really knew what the virus was, or how lethal it would turn out to be.”

Despite the looming fears of the virus, “The Music of Anne Frank” went on as scheduled, and Nemko performed various works related to the Holocaust and the challenges faced by Dutch Jewish composers of that time, including Frid, Bosmans, Belinfante, Chapiro, Brickman, Smit, and Kattenburg.

The lecture was of specific importance to Nemko and would prove to have an even more profound importance a year later. As a student at the University of Illinois, Nemko was inspired by her mentor, Dr. Alexander Ringer, who was a survivor of the Holocaust. From her studies with Ringer, Nemko came to learn of his story as a concentration camp survivor, and these stories of survival are a common theme among the composers Nemko has studied.

Today, Nemko recalls how enthusiastic the students in attendance were that day and how the theme of survival holds up one year into COVID-19.

“Students asked provocative questions and seemed to feel the weight of the moment as much as I did, both in their understanding of the importance of the topic of the Holocaust and the struggles of the Dutch Jewish composers whose music I performed as

Music in the Time of Anne Frank

Deborah Nemko

I am inspired by the courage and wisdom of a child named Anne Frank. Her impassioned words: “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world,” are remarkable, and her diary remains one of the most important narratives related to the difficulties faced by those living in hiding during World War II. By performing and presenting music by forbidden Dutch composers whose musical careers and, in some cases, lives were destroyed, I hope to promote an understanding not only of the difficulties they faced but also the monumental spirit of people whose voices would not be stifled, even in the darkest of times.



Deborah Nemko

Photo Credit: The Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College.

well as the uncertainty of the day and the future of their school,” said Nemko. “The composers I talked about were under attack in their lives and at the very moment I was performing, New York city was under siege, fighting a war against an unseen but deadly foe.”

After the recital ended, Nemko headed for the subway to return to Boston. On her way, she was accompanied by one of the sponsors of the concert, Dr. Maria Contel, a professor of chemistry at Brooklyn College. Nemko holds this moment now as her last memory of “normalcy.”

“I left on the train to Boston from New York after the concert with the sense that this may be the last time the city would seem normal for a while,” said Nemko. “I was on high alert, noticing everything. There was a bitter-sweet feeling to the trip, almost as if I was reliving this concert already as a treasured memory.”

Meanwhile, normalcy had already left the Brooklyn College campus as alerts from CUNY about the move to distance learning had already made their way around the school. Jensen-Moulton, who received an alert upon the recital’s end, immediately pulled her class aside to explain the situation.

“I explained that I would be going forward with the class

in an online format, and that our Blackboard page would be the central spot for course materials...And that they shouldn’t worry,” Jensen-Moulton recalled. “What did I know? Many of us hugged as we dispersed. Maybe we shouldn’t have, in retrospect. But that contact is so distant.”

Soon after, the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College cancelled all events for the foreseeable future, and the city as a whole began to shutdown with Broadway going dark, the closing of bars, restaurants, and schools, and the beginning of New York’s “On Pause Program” that required non-essential workers to stay home. Quarantine had arrived, and the arts seemed to be a thing of the past.

One year later, Dr. Nemko has performed in live-streamed and pre-recorded concerts, but that day at Brooklyn College has remained with her since.

“It was the last live performance with an audience I gave before or since pandemic life,” said Nemko. “[It] marks the divide between what I took for granted: sharing music with people in the same space, visiting friends, walking around without masks, and life in a post-COVID-19 world.”

One year later, Dr. Jensen-Moulton has not been to

campus since the recital that day, and she now considers it to be the beginning of the pandemic and life as we know it.

“In my mind, I always associate that concert, that moment, that music, with the beginning of the pandemic,” said Jensen-Moulton. “Sometimes I imagine my empty coffee mug on my slightly disorganized and now dusty desk, and it’s hard to think of going back, in the same way it was difficult to imagine walking away on Mar. 11th.”

Going forward, Dr. Nemko is optimistic about the future and hopes to return to Brooklyn College next year to perform a concert that celebrates “liberation” from COVID-19. The likelihood of this happening remains to be seen as classes and Conservatory events remain online and plans for the Fall 2021 semester and beyond are far from set in stone.

“I am truly grateful for the opportunity I had during my residence at Brooklyn College and can not wait to once again perform and teach in person,” said Nemko. “I know I am far from the only one with this dream, but hope when the day comes where this is once again possible, that I never take ‘normal life’ for granted again.”

Website Ranks BC Film One of The Best In Nation

By John Schilling
Arts Editor

On Mar. 1, Brooklyn College's film program was listed as one of the best in the country by Intelligent.com's "Top 50 Film Degree Programs for 2021."

Intelligent.com is an independent website that aims to provide "unbiased, accurate, and fact-based information" in hopes of helping students make informed decisions.

Ranked #30, Brooklyn College's Bachelor of Arts in Film was declared the "most affordable" program on the entire list with an overall score of 72.57. Brooklyn College's program precedes those of Hunter College, Queens College, and the City College of New York, the other three CUNY schools listed.

"We are proud of our history of intellectual freedom and academic excellence, as well as the synergy from our location in a borough known

for innovation, culture, and the arts," Professor Annette Danto, the Film Department Chairperson, told the Vanguard. "Through a rigorous curriculum, using state of the art gear and facilities, our department advances 'learning by doing' while grounding our students in the fundamentals of storytelling."

According to Intelligent.com, 198 universities and colleges were considered for the list and 240 education programs were used for comparison. In order to qualify for the list, the colleges had to be non-profit and accredited.

"We evaluated each program on the basis of flexibility, faculty, course strength, cost, and reputation. Then we calculated the Intelligent Score for each program on a scale from 0 to 100," the list explains. "Our top picks for the best Film Degree program are affordable, respected, and flexible."

On the site, Intelligent.com



Photo Credit: Intelligent.com

also lists overall program strength, student readiness, return on investment, cost, and student engagement as the five main factors used

to further evaluate each college's program for their rankings.

Intelligent.com attributes the importance of their research to findings from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). BLS projects that employment for producers and directors will grow 10% between 2019 and 2029 with an approximate growth of 16,000 new jobs in the industry. One explanation for this growth, according to BLS, includes the growing presence of streaming services and increase in television programs as a result.

"We've learned that our careers can branch into unexpected regions so we want our students to be prepared for an evolving media landscape that is constantly shifting," Danto added. "We want filmmakers who are adaptable, and ambitious and who take risks."

Since 1974, according to Danto, the Film Department at Brooklyn College has remained one of "the most popular and highly enrolled departments" with numerous courses in Cinema Studies and Production that cover various genres and topics throughout American and international film history.

Despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 shutdown one year ago, the Film Department is still going strong and plans to return to in-person classes for the Fall 2021 semester.

"During this challenging global pandemic... Students continue to write, direct, shoot, record sound, and edit," said Danto. "Our Brooklyn College Film students are resilient, creative, and determined!"



Photo Credit: Brooklyn College Dept. of Film

The Show Must Go On: A Year of COVID Gives Theater New Digital Stage

By Michela Arlia
Staff Writer

When Brooklyn College's campus shut down one year ago due to COVID-19, students, teachers, and administrators were left with concern, not knowing when they would return. For the Department of Theater, this meant leaving behind two shows in the midst of production on the stages of the Don Buchwald and New Workshop Theater.

Two weeks after the campus' switch to distance learning, the department originally planned showings of *Small Mouth Sounds* in the New Workshop Theater, as well as a production of *Rhinoceros*, which was set to open in the Buchwald just a month later.

With all of the ongoing uncertainty regarding campus reopening for in-person instruction, a decision on when these two productions will see the light of day still hangs over the department's head.

"As SMS [*Small Mouth Sounds*] is currently sitting on the New Workshop Theater stage, it will be a priority to make a determination as to how we advance that production when we better understand when and how we will be able to start using the campus again," said Kip Marsh, the Department Chairperson.

While the department intends to produce these shows fully, a challenge that Marsh foresees is the original cast and crew having graduated by the time the productions are ready to be shown to audiences.

"We do face the fact that a growing number of students who were attached to that project

will have graduated and potentially [be] unavailable to continue with the project," Marsh said in reference to *Small Mouth Sounds*.

For students, it was upsetting to see friends and fellow actors and creators not be able to follow through on their roles for these shows and not know if they will ever be able to. "At the time I was in disbelief over the pandemic in general, but I couldn't imagine what it was like for everyone working on the project who had prepared for so long," said BFA Acting Senior Francesca Manligoy.

Although, the chance of any of the students who have since graduated or moved on is in doubt. For recent college graduates, it's hard to take any job or project that doesn't come with a salary.

"I'm not sure whether or not those people [cast and crew]...will still be available to come back unless they're paid, but if they are then great," said senior BA candidate Jeremy Palmieri, "I only hope that if the original casts and creative teams return for their shows, the department still does other shows in that semester for their current students."

The effects of the shutdown on these productions are still being felt today, especially key members of the crew.

"It was absolutely so heartbreaking for all of us when we couldn't produce those shows when we were seconds away," said Deborah Hertzberg, College Lab Technician and the costume shop supervisor for this department.

Hertzberg, who has been allowed back on campus

a very limited amount of times to pull inventory, notes that it's as empty as they left it.

"It's like a ghost town, everything is the same way it was a year ago," said Hertzberg.

Rhinoceros, another production that was in development before the shutdown, was set to be a unique experience for the department since the college had gained the rights to a new version of the play. Heloise Wilson, who received her MFA in playwriting at Brooklyn College, worked to create an original translation of the play, which took six months to complete.

"As this was to be the premiere of a new translation of the script, we have an investment in seeing this production on the stage," Marsh said.

Leaving the plays unshown left those most closely dedicated to them at a loss after losing in-person rehearsals and performances after only getting in three full rehearsals before the shutdown.

"I think that I am only now beginning to process the sorrow of not being able to follow the creative spark and collaborative momentum that had been set in motion with that stellar team of artists at that particular moment in time," said Laura Tesman, the Undergraduate co-chair of the Theater BA program and director of *Rhinoceros*.

With the set just beginning to be built and the costume sketches in their early stages, Tesman says it all "feels a bit like a fossil suspended in amber."

Despite the challenges of a virtual semester, the department has still been able to produce

Bess Wohl's "Small Mouth Sounds"

Mar 27-Apr 1

POSTPONED!

New date to be announced.

Ticket-holders will be contacted by the Brooklyn College Box Office.



Small Mouth Sounds begins with a note from the playwright: "Everyone in this play is in some kind of agony." Wohl describes the characters as attempting to learn to stay with their feelings, listen, and be patient. Tasked with a vow of silence at a week-long spiritual retreat, the characters seek to understand exactly how one speaks their mind when they can't say a word?

Bess Wohl is an associate artist with The Civilians and Ars Nova's Play Group. She has developed numerous projects for film and TV.

A Thesis Production directed by Ann Noling

The Brooklyn College Department of Theater Presents

Eugène Ionesco's "Rhinoceros"

April 24-29

POSTPONED!

New date to be announced.

Ticket-holders will be contacted by the Brooklyn College Box Office.



In response to the playwright's personal experience with the rise of fascism during World War II, Ionesco's absurdist tale begins with a rhinoceros charging through a town where nothing really ever happens. The play is an indictment of the ease with which people succumb to herd mentality, and the ways in which hate spreads like a deadly virus, poisoning human nature and turning individuals into mindless beasts.

Eugène Ionesco was born in Romania and raised in France. In 1964, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Spring 2020 Productions postponed due to COVID-19/
Brooklyn College Presents

pre-recorded shows with students in each of the BA and BFA programs on Vimeo and Twitch for the past year.

Along with discovering new initiatives to continue theater training online, the department has tried to stay active by helping the community.

Due to a shortage of masks at the peak of the pandemic, Deborah Hertzberg assembled a team of students, alumni, and coworkers to make homemade masks from cloth and elastic. The team made over 200 masks for security guards, janitors, and other essential personnel who had to remain on campus.

While the initiative helped protect many BC employees, Deborah says there was a necessary and joyful effort in assembling the face coverings.

"Theatre has always saved my life, so here was an opportunity to use my skills to save others' lives," said Hertzberg.

Since specific plans for an in person semester have not yet been decided, there is nothing definite regarding what the Fall 2021 semester means for the Dept. of Theater, but Marsh says the productions that never got to be put on will be shown at some point in time.

"I don't think that performance rights will be an issue for either production," said Marsh.

While questions remain unanswered, the department will continue virtual productions and engage with students in any form possible.

"*Rhinoceros* and *Small Mouth Sounds*...remain on the list of suspended projects that we would like to come back to if we can," said Tesman. "I certainly hope circumstances will align. If this year has taught us anything, it is to remain patient, flexible, and ready for anything."

Opinion: Death To The 20th Century

By Michael Castaneda
Columnist

This week marks the one year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Everything just stopped.

Classes went remote. The streets grew empty. It was weird for New York City. People said, “it’s like a science fiction movie,” except it wasn’t. In the science fiction movie, the streets and buildings were empty. The shutdown was actually more like being in the suburbs, or a smaller and less exciting urban area, on a Sunday evening. The streets were empty but the people were home. If you needed a reminder that there were still folks around, you only had to listen at 7pm everyday when everyone made noise from their windows, balconies, or any place they could.

Too much has happened between then and now to enumerate it again. It’s hard to get perspective on something that is still happening. It’s been hard on everyone. As John Green said, “This is the first time in my life when you can say ‘it’ and have most people know what you are referring to. It is hard. It is a grind. It is isolating and exhausting.”

The New York Times reported last Saturday that one in three American have lost someone to COVID-19. We lost people at Brooklyn College. Last April, I wrote an obituary for Moshe Augustein who served as the Computer Science Chairman. As of last Saturday 524,000 Americans have died from this. According to the White House blog on Mar. 5, 2021, 6.2 percent



The 20th century has kept chugging along; COVID may finally kill it./[digitaltrends.com](https://www.digitaltrends.com)

of Americans are out of work, but adjusted for those who have just dropped out of the workforce the number is 9.5 percent. Some of the jobs will come back, but the people won’t.

New York Magazine aptly stated that if you live in New York long enough, it will invariably seem unrecognizable. Maybe it will seem like the city is for someone else. The retail-apocalypse started with ecommerce replacing brick and mortar stores. Retail during the shutdown suffered from the virus in a way not too dissimilar to someone with a precondition. Walking down Broadway there are so many empty storefronts that it can feel like you are in a depressed and empty upstate town.

In the Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote that, “The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the

mystery and the beauty in the world.” As a city, we will get back there. However, we don’t know what that looks like, but it’s likely not going to look like the 20th Century.

The 20th Century has been gone for a while now. When was the last time you picked up a physical daily newspaper paper? Answers to the previous question may vary, but the last time anything that even resembled a rock song hit number one on the Billboard hot 100 was in June of 2008 with Coldplay’s “Viva la vida.” Just to drive this point home, Apple’s first iPod is already in a museum. I saw it at MoMA.

The world is changing too fast for the true Reaganites of the previous century. It has mobilized the greatest whining session in American history. You can hear their souls break as they cry “Cancel Culture” and “Political Correctness.” I have not

been able to watch an older movie with a male in their 50’s and not hear the pathetic squawk “You can’t do THAT anymore!” One of my professors this semester was explaining the difference between a compliment and the complement. He said “One is something you say to a woman, BUT YOU CAN’T DO THAT ANYMORE.”

One great appeal of Donald Trump is that he promised to return things how they once were. The actor Jeff Daniels, aptly decoded this promise in Trump’s message to Michigan voters, “Trump was the only guy in 2016 who said, ‘I’m gonna bring back your manufacturing job. The one you had. Not a new one. The one you had. I’m gonna bring it back.’” Trump’s message of reinstating the 20th Century was further illustrated by Philip Bump, a columnist at the Washington Post, who wrote that the “value

that Donald Trump offered to his supporters: unwinding the clock to a point in which everything was stable and unchanging and systems worked explicitly, if often unwittingly, to the advantage of White men in particular.” The group that bought into that message has been black-pilled. Don’t even say Dr. Seuss to them.

The issue is that the 20th Century will die because every century dies. The bitterness of men who try to stand in the way of human progress will die because men die. They want to leave this world looking like it did when they came into it.

College students don’t get happy endings. They get their beginnings. Looking back one year seems exhausting. I might even suffer from an inability to count on the future. I don’t know where I am going but I’ll see you there.

Rolling Rock Ramblings: COVID Relief And Political Theatre

By Ian Ezinga
Opinions Editor

The deli on my street was out of Rolling Rock, so I opted for the ever faithful Modelo. I didn't mind the upcharge considering that I have a \$1,400 check aimed at me in the coming days, hopefully. \$2,000, as promised, would have been a lot cooler. I wonder if we are going to let Democrats get away with their not-so-subtle sleight of hand where the check we are receiving totals \$2,000 when added with the last check from the Trump administration. As I wrote that out, I ended my ponderance of the question with an optimistic: of course not.

Sparing any well-worn discussion of governments not keeping their promises and the fact that we are still very much in the midst of the much scorned unprecedented times, it is still worth restating that we are getting screwed over. Trump's stimulus was written for large corporations with regular people as an afterthought. The plan about to be signed by Biden seems to be better structured as far as delivering aid to institutions and initiatives that are aimed at serving poor and working people. Much is still to be seen how it will all play out, but at least we can cash in our checks knowing that some corporate slob isn't rolling in additional tax write-offs.

The question from me, then, is what



Arizona Senator Kyrsten Sinema gave minimum wage increases a "thumbs down" on the Senate floor./ **Bill Clark**



sort of agenda the Democratically controlled House, Senate, and White House will push going forward from this "victory." My use of quotations marks is warranted by the laughable attempt to include a \$15 minimum wage. If you need to see a dystopian visage of a well-off elected representative publicly affirming their inhumanity, you can search "Democratic Senator Sinema giving a thumbs down to raising the minimum wage." Her theatrical gesture of disapproval, which was accompanied by a curtsy of sorts, was an excellent representation of the sort of personalities at the helm of the Senate's majority party.

Whether it's Speaker Pelosi nervously opening her massive fridge to share what sort of ice cream she has been enjoying in quarantine, or Cuomo insisting that he is in fact, not a sexual

deviant, the leaders of this country are grossly out of touch. Out of touch politicians, nothing new here. But, if you may, let us consider an important cultural artifact: the viral portraiture of Bernie looking unimpressed at the inauguration. This relic of a few months ago, carries the same demeanor that we should all have when reviewing the records of the elected representatives in blue. They have all the power necessary to cause meaningful change yet they are continually settling for the bare minimum.

When Democrats weren't in charge, it was easy for them to find excuses for their failure to uphold the dignity of ordinary people. They swore they would get right on the job once the most serious threat to our democracy wasn't in office. Trump is gone but we still aren't seeing the sweeping progressive change that was marketed to us.

Sure bureaucracy is slow and politicians can spend only so much time out of their incubated vivariums before having to slither back, but they can at least spare us the theatre! The Democrats have gotten caught up in positioning their agenda as morally superior to the point that when things are passed that might even be marginally good, they fall hilariously short of the expectations they set. People want help. People want money. They don't really care about this age of unity business. Instead of wasting our time acting like some sort of agent of change, why can't you admit that you're doing a job and collecting a check like everyone else? It's a pipe dream to hope that they'll admit that the people who elected them aren't the ones they answer to, but I think politicians who do less pretending to care actually have a decent

chance of winning elections, i.e. Trump.

We are still waiting on our direct deposits to hit and for the other branches of the stimulus to take root in our communities. There are certainly some indications that this stimulus will have more meaningful impact than the previous one. But until those impacts are etched into our reality, the only difference between the two administrations so far is the former's lack of interest in theatrics. It was a stressful time, I don't blame the Republicans for not showing any semblance of concern for people. A year in, however, the powerless spectators the American people have been reduced to are having one hell of a show put on for them by the party in charge.

Those We Have Lost: BC Family Members

Since January of last year, COVID-19 has cost this country and our tightly knit communities a lot. In remembrance of the losses Brooklyn College's community has been dealt by COVID-19, the Vanguard acknowledges those whom we've lost in the past year.

Mark Blum, Professor of Theater

Blum, a respected actor and professor, passed away from the virus on Mar. 25. Blum enjoyed a long career both on and off-stage, which included a stint in the Broadway revival of *Twelve Angry Men* and a recurring role in Amazon's series, *Mozart in the Jungle*. Blum was well respected by his peers and students, with Brooklyn college president Michelle Anderson, describing Blum as "beloved." At the time of his passing, the director BC's MFA of Acting, Judylee Vivier told the Vanguard, "He was an excellent human being, a consummate professional and artist and our world is less than without him." Blum is survived by his wife, Janet Zarish, he was 69 years old.



Mark Blum./HB Studios

Moshe Augenstein, Alumnus and Undergraduate Deputy Chair of Computer and Information Science Department

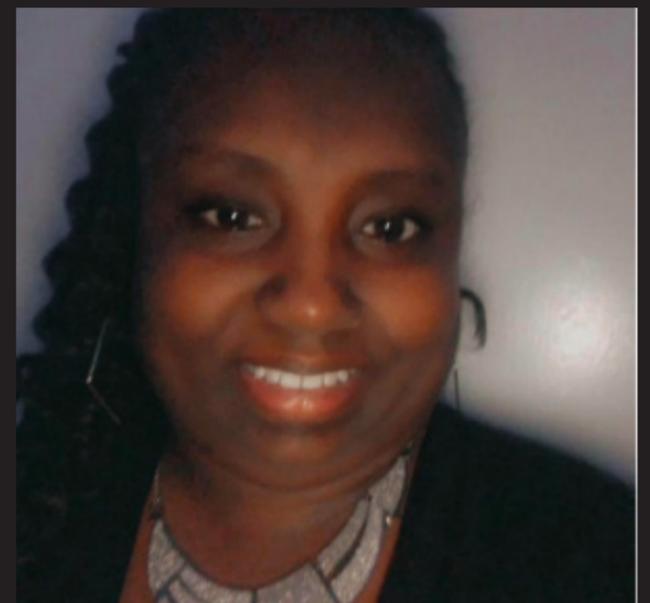
Augenstein was a homegrown professor and alumni of the college, from the class of 1969. He served as a professor at BC teaching computer science for 45 years. During his tenure at BC, Augenstein wrote multiple books on programming. He was described by fellow computer science professor Moshe Lowenthal, who believes he took one of Augenstein's classes back in the 1970s, as a "wonderful guy." He is survived by his family at Midwood, he was 73 years old.



Moshe Augenstein./Brooklyn College

Juliet Manragh, Alumna and Human Resources Manager

A graduate from Brooklyn College in 2007, Manragh was well respected by students and her colleagues. "Juliet was a dedicated, passionate and extremely hard worker, she gave her job 110 percent always," said Michelle Gambale from Human Resources at the college. For nearly 18 years of her life, Manragh had devoted her time building the CUNY community with her can-do attitude and demeanor to succeed. In doing so, Manragh gave her unforgettable guidance and warm-heartedness to everyone she met, she was 41 years old.



Juliet Manragh./Facebook

Jay Jankelewicz, Alumnus and Office Manager For the Philosophy Department

Described as the "backbone of the philosophy" department, Jankelewicz will be remembered at Brooklyn College for his friendliness, sense of humor, and passion for the college and its students. Jankelewicz graduated from BC in 2013, but joined the philosophy department as a college assistant a year prior. He would eventually take over as the office manager where he became the de facto face of the department. "He infused our workplace with a warmth all his own," said colleague and professor Samir Chopra. He was 31 years old.



Jay Jankelewicz./Twitter

Those We Have Lost: BC Family Members

Kenneth Axen, Professor of Health, Nutrition, Sciences, and Kinesiology

Axen was well respected in the BC community for being a “compassionate, available teacher who maintained contact with many students long after they were in his class, supporting them in their lives and careers.” Axen was also an illustrator and photographer whose work could be found in books and local exhibitions. He was even a filmmaker, winning an award at the CUNY Film Festival for Segues. The former head chair of Axen’s department David Balk said, “Kenneth was a friend with a generous soul and understanding heart. He was courageous. He loved puns and had a very quick wit.” Axen is survived by his wife and kids. He was 77 years old.



Kenneth Axen

Peter J. Brancazio, Professor of Physics (Retired)

A BC professor of 30 years, he studied the physics of sports and became famous for debunking the “rising fastball” as well as Michael Jordan’s hang time. In 1963 he was named the director of the college’s observatory, and was awarded the Tow Professorship by the college, which reserved for Brooklyn College faculty whose talents and accomplishments are of a particularly high order. Brancazio’s colleague and friend Arnold Markoe expressed how great Brancazio was as a colleague and as a friend, “Peter was a close friend, a masterful teacher, and a beloved mentor to decades of students,” he said. Peter Brancazio is survived by his family, including his wife of 57 years. He was 81 years old.



Peter J. Brancazio./New York Times

James Pletcher, Professor of Classics

Remembered by his former students as a “charismatic and popular lecturer,” he was awarded a Certificate of Continuous Employment during his time in Brooklyn College and inspired many students’ interest in classical literature with his passion. Pletcher will perhaps best be remembered “for his love of meaningful conversation, his abhorrence of injustice, and his sense of humor. No matter where he traveled in the world, he always spread his love and extensive knowledge of music and Pittsburgh sports.” He was 49 years old.



James Pletcher./@BklynCollege411 on Twitter

Paul Shelden, Professor of Music (Retired)

A well-respected instructor and musician, Shelden was especially heralded as a “clarinetist, saxophonist, flutist, conductor, arranger, and educator” for well over 30 years at the Conservatory of Music. Shelden was beloved by his colleagues and students alike for his “good humor, his caring teaching, and his kind and thoughtful nature.” Shelden directed the Wind Ensemble of the Conservatory for a time and also founded the Conservatory’s Clarinet Quartet. Shelden will be remembered for caring for his students and nurturing the growth of music at the college. He was 79.



Paul Shelden./ New York Times

Those We Have Lost: BC Family Members

Aaron Tenenbaum, Professor of Computer and Information Science

Tenenbaum is remembered as “an excellent teacher” and for his achievement of developing “a specialty in the crucial data structures course.” He was praised for the work he had done during his time as a professor in the field of computer and information science, including helping shape the curriculum for generations to come. Tenenbaum later became the chair of the department and served there for 25 years. Tenenbaum saw the growth of the department during his time as chair of the department and leaves a legacy of academic excellence. “He was a gracious and kind man and will be missed by many,” said Barry Smith from Kinesiology at BC.



Aaron Tenenbaum./ BC Website

Jeffrey Palmer, Campus Peace Officer

Known by friends as “Palmer Man,” a memorial described him as “kind, considerate, selfless and one of a kind.” Jeffrey Palmer was born and raised in Flatbush, Brooklyn, graduating from Kingsborough College and later continued in John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Palmer later became a peace security guard here at Brooklyn College where he met friends that became his family. Palmer was known as an avid comic book collector and a great basketball coach who “exemplified humility,” who listened and put others first. He is survived by his loving family. He was 49 years old.



Jeffrey Palmer.

William Gerdts, Art History Professor

Gerdts has been described as a “giant in the field of American art” and was one of the first faculty members to join the Graduate Center’s doctoral program in art history. He taught at BC and the Graduate Center for well over 20 years, retiring in 1999. An accomplished and legendary figure of his field, Gerds wrote more than 20 books on art history and his personal library of art was heralded as “the greatest American art library in the world.” Bruce Weber, an art history major who studied under Gerds said of him: “Professor Gerds was a devoted friend, ally, and supporter of many of his students, and we will greatly miss his warmth, good humor, and deeply caring spirit.” He was 91.



William Gerds./Courtesy of Artfixdaily

Now One Year Since NBA Shutdown, Fans Back At MSG, Barclays

By Jose Rohdin
Staff Writer

On Feb. 23, the Brooklyn Nets and the New York Knicks played in front of fans for the first time in over a year. In Brooklyn, the Barclays Center allowed 300 fans through the gates, while Madison Square Garden opened up for 2,000 fans.

Combined, both of New York's hometown squads have had seven home games since fans have been allowed back into stadiums. With COVID-19 still being a crucial factor in everyone's life, New York stadiums have been allowed to have 10 percent of seats filled. The Nets are easing into opening up with an

average of 445 fans per game, while the Knicks are averaging 1,330 fans per game.

Daniel Donovan is a recent graduate of Oswego State University, and he came all the way down from upstate New York to watch the Knicks play.

"Honestly the atmosphere was pretty electric. I'd say it felt like there were 15,000 fans in the Garden at times of the game. It's like all of New York was back in MSG."

With New York fans being some of the world's most passionate, it has been a welcoming sight to have them back in the stands. The best thing about fans being allowed is that coincidentally both

the Nets and Knicks could make the playoffs for the first time since the 2012-2013 season.

The New York Rangers, who share Madison Square Garden with the Knicks, have also started to allow fans into the arena. Jane McNally is one such fan and was able to get tickets for a Rangers game when they went on a season ticket pre-sale.

To get into the game, McNally had to provide a negative COVID test that was taken within the last 72 hours. The seats were spread apart, and the arena staff was around to ensure everyone kept their masks on, which led to a safe environment.

One of the most significant question marks

surrounding the opening of arenas has been safety.

"The fans followed the protocol strictly, and security was on top of it if it seemed that someone had their mask a little too low," McNally wrote. "Seeing security dedicated to the enforcement of these protocols was the main factor of me feeling safe at this game."

With Opening Day for baseball just around the corner, the Mets and Yankees are expected to follow the same path as other New York teams, allowing 10 percent of the seats to be filled. Soon there will be seven teams in New York that will be playing in front of their adoring fans.

The first round of tickets

was put on sale just for season ticket holders, but now almost anyone can get tickets. Of course, with the limited number of tickets, they are a lot more expensive than usual though.

To see the Nets this season would cost you over \$100 easy, and for the Knicks, about \$200-\$300 a game, on Stubhub. Fortunately, baseball tickets have always been cheaper, but still, tickets can range from \$30 to \$100 for both the Yankees and the Mets on Stubhub.

The good news is that the best sports fans in the world can finally go back to their stadiums, cheer and heckle, and feel safe while doing so.

Vinny The Goat by Mo Muhsin and Gabrielle Toro Vivoni



Is Yankees' Gary Sanchez Redeemable?

By Nick Wilson
Staff Writer

Ted Williams, an almost superhuman hitter, wrote in his 1971 classic "The Science of Hitting" that his first rule of hitting was as follows: "Get a good ball to hit".

For even the "splendid splinter", as Williams was known, was not immune to the ailments that plagued his mortal contemporaries in the batter's box. On the outside corner low and away, the 12 time AL batting champion could only muster a .230 batting average. Low and inside, Williams batted .200.

The fundamental point of Williams' doctrine was simple: do damage where you can, and survive where you can't. Once pitchers know where your "happy zones" are, they'll avoid them. Once they know what pitches you can't handle, that's all you'll see. If you can't adapt at the big league level, you simply won't last...unless you're Gary Sanchez.

When Gary Sanchez first entered the league, scouts saw him as a kid with a raw power, but susceptible to strikeouts. In his first 143 games, the young backstop

showed power, smashing 43 home runs and came only three long balls shy of breaking a record set by Rudy York in 1938 (a record which would eventually be broken by a different New York rookie, Pete Alonso). Sanchez was the fastest Catcher in AL history to reach 100 home runs, and within his first three years in the big leagues he found himself holding the single-season record for most Home Runs as a Yankee catcher (a record which he broke again in 2019).

Yet despite this success, the young rookie also had shown some noticeable holes in his game - underlying flaws which ceased to fade even with development and experience.

His high whiff rate on fastballs became a troubling reality for a player who had hit 47 percent of his homers on fastballs prior to 2018. He was chasing pitches out of the zone, falling behind in counts, and taking defensive swings to compensate. These defensive swings led to a foul ball percentage on fastballs that went from 14 percent in 2015 to nearly 22 percent in 2016, leading to more strikes and less balls. The number of pitches he chased out of the zone

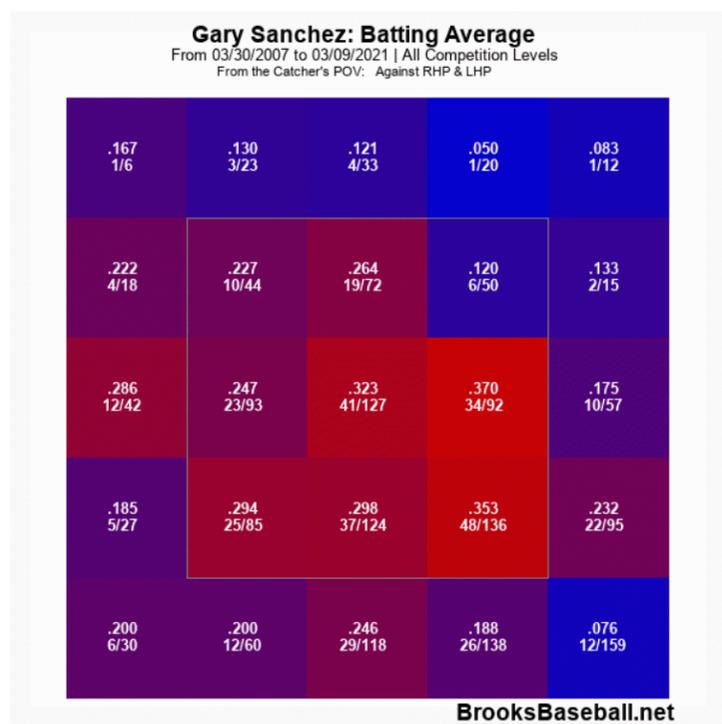
had also remained higher than league average. For all the offensive success Gary was able to achieve, the holes in his game eroded his strengths. It all came to a head in 2018 when the weaknesses of Sanchez's game led to an abysmal .186 average.

If the ghost of Ted Williams was able to appear and whisper in the ear of Gary Sanchez to provide him hitting instruction, he'd probably remind Gary of his #1 rule: "Get a good ball to hit."

Using Pitch f/x data recorded over Sanchez's career, we can see a crystal clear picture of where Sanchez likes to hit, and what the results will be. When Gary does get a good ball to hit in one of his "Happy Zones," watch out.

Not only does Sanchez produce terrific numbers in his hot zones, but what's not seen in these heat maps is just how hard he hits the ball. On average, Sanchez has hit the ball harder than roughly 80 percent of the league for his career.

In some ways this works against Sanchez, however. Pitching Sanchez in his happy zone is so utterly dangerous, that pitchers thoroughly avoid it. And because Gary chases and whiffs so often,



pitchers don't even have to throw near his happy zone to get him out.

When Sanchez's offensive value and positional value are decoupled, his value plummets. From 2016-2020, Gary Sanchez's 115 home runs is first among catchers, but among all other position players, it ranks 32nd (Still not a bad rank, but not irreplaceable).

To provide even further perspective, take a look at Daniel Palka, an adept power hitter from the White Sox organization. In 2019, he hit 27 home runs and batted .240 in just 124 games, but showed poor defensive skills. He found himself playing in Korea the following year.

While Gary Sanchez may never follow the Ted Williams philosophy of hitting, there's reason to be hopeful that the 28-year-old backstop will return to form.

Despite his scuffles, his peripherals have remained shockingly consistent throughout his career. Aside from strikeouts, he isn't showing any alarming trends in any particular direction, and many believe that much of his struggles offensively have come from Yankees coaches giving him too great a workload. His K% (strikeout rate) is trending in a bad direction, but it's never deviated more than 4 percent between any

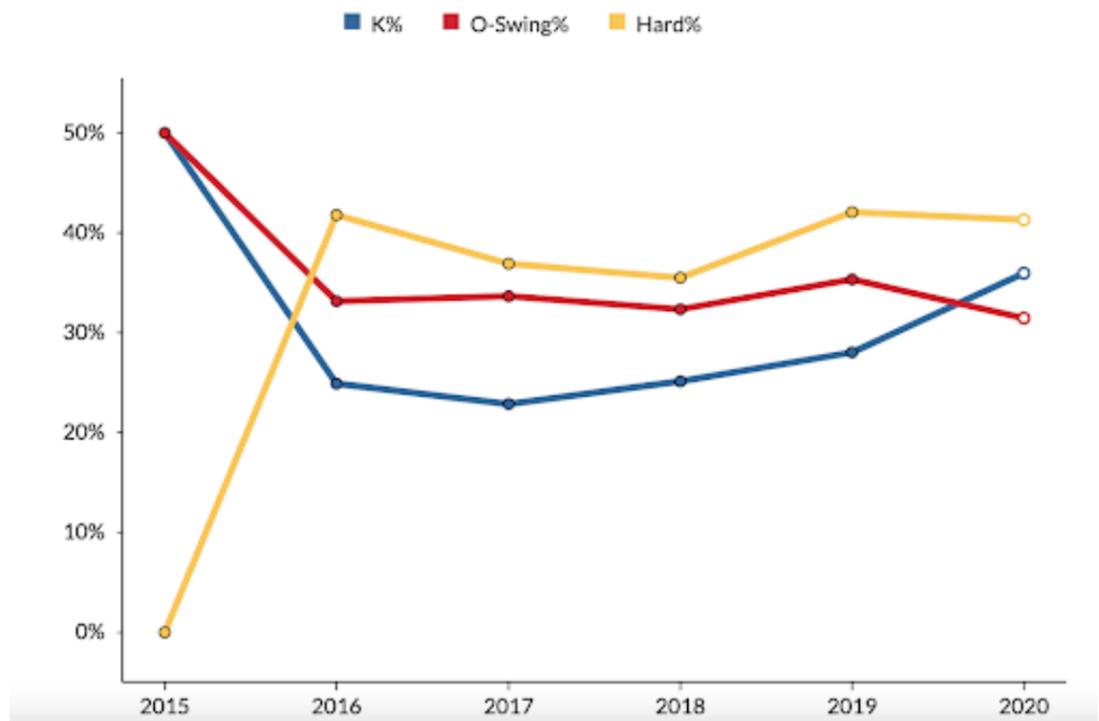
two full seasons.

While Sanchez's strikeout rate (K%) has increased each year since 2017, the chase rate (O-swing %) which has plagued him, has not. He has also continued to crush the ball when he makes contact, as illustrated by the yellow line on the graph that represents the rate in which he hits the ball hard (represented as HH%). If Sanchez is able to lay off pitches out of the zone and get that K% back down to his career average, he should see better pitches to hit. It wouldn't be the first time a hard-hitting slugger with strikeout issues made significant corrections. Yoan Moncada, Kris Bryant, Trevor Story, and Rafael Devers (to name a few) have successfully done so and seen success.

Despite some of the issues that have made Sanchez susceptible to regression, he has seen success even with these struggles. It's hard to imagine that a player who hits the ball as hard as he does does not find gaps or hits balls over walls. While Sanchez's approach may ultimately stunt his growth at times and limit his ceiling, the floor for Gary Sanchez is more stable than some might think. Don't be shocked if Sanchez returns in 2021 mashing 30 homers, playing passable defense, and batting an average above .230.

Gary Sánchez's Season Plate Discipline
Plate discipline by MLB Season

FANGRAPHS



A Year Long Timeout For CUNY, BC Athletics

By Conrad Hoyt
Sports Editor

For Brooklyn College student athletes, it has been a long and disappointing year. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been life-altering for everyone, BC's student athletes have had to struggle with losing the one thing that would usually be respite from the outside world.

"It's been tough, physically and mentally, not having the outlet of sports to have something other than school to think about for a few hours," says Rohan Mathur, Brooklyn College men's tennis team's captain.

There has been little to cheer about for Brooklyn College's student athletes, as all promising possibilities of whether seasons could be played were eventually stomped down upon by the sinister hammer of reality.

Mathur spoke to The Vanguard in March 2020 about the difficulties surrounding the halting of sports on campus. A year later, the wounds from the fallout still cut deep.

"Tennis served as a great way for me to better manage my time, and without the team and my teammates to look forward to, dealing with academics exclusively

during the pandemic has been arduous," Mathur continues.

Sports are not only a passion for so many Brooklyn College student athletes, but they are a daily function. And especially for seniors, the lost final year before graduation was a brutal blow.

"I can say that it was tough and very hard," Miguel De Anda says in reflection of the past

year. De Anda was slated to finish his senior year playing soccer for the Bulldogs, but the coronavirus derailed his last chance at eligibility.

De Anda emerged as a quick and crafty fullback for the Bulldogs in the Fall of 2019, earning a starting spot by the end of the season. Fall 2020 was supposed to be the season where he emerged as an even bigger part of the Bulldogs' core.

Still, there is hope in De Anda's mind, if not just for him, for other Brooklyn College students after him as the college moves back to in-person learning for the fall.

"Maybe sports will be back at that time..." De Anda said, who is graduating in the spring and won't be able to play even if they do. Ultimately, he's left with a bittersweet feeling

towards his time as a Bulldog.

"Brooklyn College has been a good experience and good education," he said.

CUNY Athletics and The Brooklyn College Athletics Department are working hard to communicate and figure out a way to get student athletes back with their teams this fall.



CUNY ATHLETICS

CUNY Athletic Conference has been totally shut due to COVID. / CUNYtuesday.org

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!

@THEBCVANGUARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA