Two Years Ago, CUNY Closed Its Doors – Much Has Changed Since Then. (pg. 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 15)

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Graduation Returns To Barclays After 2 Years Online

By Matthew Hirsch
News Editor

For two years, Brooklyn College’s commencement ceremony was forced online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. BC’s class of 2022 will finally be able to celebrate their graduation at the Barclays Center as per an update from President Michelle Anderson.

“We are hosting our 2022 Commencement Ceremony on Tuesday morning, May 31, at Barclays Center,” read the letter from President Anderson. “Our Student Affairs Office will circulate details about the event shortly, but after two years of online ceremonies, we are thrilled to be returning to an in-person event to celebrate.”

Students who graduated in the summer, fall, and winter of 2021, or are expecting to graduate after spring and in summer 2022, are also eligible to participate in this year’s commencement ceremony.

“I’m very excited to participate in an in-person graduation because it will allow all my efforts to be realized,” said Gigi Polizzi, a graduating senior. “Working remotely for the past two years has made it hard to distinguish between work, school, and regular life. So this ceremony will be a celebration of the perseverance in the most challenging time of my life.”

There is a checklist of tasks for students who want to participate in the ceremony. Notably, graduating students are required to subscribe to the Commencement E-Newsletter for updates about the ceremony.

Each student may request up to four guest tickets. Details regarding reserving the ticket will be announced toward the end of March, according to the college’s commencement information page.

“I feel excited to actually have a graduation [ceremony] in person. When I graduated [from] BMCC during the pandemic, it was online, and the experience wasn’t exciting. It felt like a lecture and people just getting rewarded,” said Juwan Wyatt, who is graduating from BC this spring.

But now I feel like it’s going to be a special feeling, walking across the stage getting the degree and hearing everyone scream you did it!”

Those who wish to have their graduation photo appear in the 2022 Brookludian yearbook need to make an appointment with Thornton Studios on West 29th Street in Manhattan by June 1.

The Barclays Center played host to Brooklyn College’s commencement ceremony from 2017 to 2019. Before 2017, commencement was held on the East Quad. During BC’s inaugural ceremony at the Barclays Center in 2017, Senator Bernie Sanders gave a keynote speech to the graduating class.

CUNY Follows NYC’s Mask Mandate Lift

By Matthew Hirsch & Marwa Ikhmayes
News Editor & Staff Writer

Mayor Eric Adams recently announced a public school students from kindergarten through 12th grade can finally drop their masks. Last Friday, Mar. 4, CUNY Chancellor Felix V. Matos Rodríguez followed suit by announcing that students, faculty, and staff are no longer required to wear masks on the 25 CUNY campuses throughout New York City.

“In response to revised guidance issued by the CDC last week, we are lifting the temporary mask mandate that has been in place since August 2021 and required all CUNY students, faculty, staff and visitors to wear masks inside University campuses, office buildings, classrooms and other non-enclosed spaces,” said Chancellor Rodríguez in a CUNY-wide email.

The new protocols went into effect this past Monday, Mar. 7. Though the mask mandate is lifted, CUNY’s quarantine guidelines are unchanged.

All students, faculty, and staff that are vaccinated, and have received a booster if eligible, are required to wear a mask for ten days after exposure to COVID-19. If they do not develop symptoms, quarantining is not required. However, those who experience symptoms of COVID-19 should isolate for at least five full days. If they have no fever for at least 24 hours, they can stop isolating but should wear a mask for at least five more days.

“Brooklyn College will continue to follow New York State, and the University’s COVID-19 protocols,” said Brooklyn College Media Relations Manager Richard Pietras in a statement to the Vanguard. “As the Chancellor announced last Friday, masking is now optional inside CUNY buildings. While many people will continue to mask, doing so is no longer mandatory.”

Unlike CUNY, requirements for proof of vaccination at restaurants and entertainment venues, including gyms and theaters, will no longer be in effect. Anyone who enters a CUNY campus must be vaccinated or have an approved medical or religious exemption.

Despite the vaccination and mask mandate lifting in NYC, business owners can continue to enforce mask and vaccination requirements. Masks are still required by the federal government while riding on public transportation, such as trains and buses, and in public healthcare settings.

“Because New Yorkers have stepped up, we can confidently remove the statewide mask requirement in our schools,” Governor Kathy Hochul said in an official statement. “This is a huge step forward for our kids and communities and I am grateful to the students, educators, and parents for their dedication to keeping us all safe—we’ve reached this milestone because of your hard work.”

According to the CUNY COVID-19 Safety Tracker, Brooklyn College had two cases of COVID-19 out of 674 tested last week, Feb. 28 through Mar. 6.
BC Study Abroad Programs Reopen, TREM Plans South Korea Trip

By Marwa Ikhmayes, Staff Writer

Brooklyn College's International Programs and Study Abroad is now officially accepting applications to study abroad for the summer and fall 2022 semesters after an extended COVID-19 shutdown. IPSA currently offers two international opportunities: exchange and study abroad.

“We’re excited, we’re very optimistic this summer will send students abroad, it will not be a huge number or at least the number we usually send, but at least it’s a good start for us,” said Mohamed Tabrani, IPSA’s Director.

Prior to the pandemic, BC’s study abroad programs sent around 170-200 students overseas. Two years later, with the programs’ return, some students are hesitant to travel because of COVID.

“It will take some time for us to go back to normal,” said Tabrani. “Our goal, and definitely my personal goal, is to increase the number of students from Brooklyn College that have the opportunity to study abroad.”

Applications for the summer abroad programs are open until April, with destinations such as Italy, South Korea, France, and more, pending CDC guidelines. Exchange programs for this coming fall are currently open for international exchange students who come to Brooklyn College for one to three semesters and complete their degrees in their home country.

Brooklyn College is currently hosting five exchange students with plans on launching 20 abroad,” according to Tabrani. BC and CUNY will decide study abroad locations based on CDC guidelines in cooperation with the Department of State Travel Advisory. “ […] They also rely on CDC for travel that could allow us or tell us if this country’s pandemic numbers or COVID-related numbers are high or not high,” Tabrani said. He noted that travel advisories would likely be updated by the middle to the end of March, prompting for possibly more destinations to study abroad this summer.

South Korea is currently one of the countries where the Television, Radio, and Emerging Media (TREM) department plans to study abroad, but the program is pending official approval, according to Professor Young Cheong, the trip’s director.

The course to South Korea will be held for three weeks during the summer, starting in mid-July. The program will accept up to 12-14 students for the upcoming summer trip after Professor Cheong personally interviews students for enrollment.

“I interview everyone to know what they know about South Korea, what they want to learn from Korean culture, and what do you want to experience,” said Cheong. “When I go to Korea, I invite Korean students and make a group project together, and that’s the best way to make friends from similar age groups.”

Brooklyn College had a mutual exchange program at Dongguk University in South Korea. Due to the pandemic, the school administrations paused the program for students and public safety. However, with the reopening of study abroad, students can develop new media-related skills such as editing and filming by creating documentaries throughout TREM’s South Korea program.

“Students create documentaries, where the team usually do a comparison between Korea and whatever culture they’re familiar with; usually, they compare food culture in Korea to America, or dating culture,” said Cheong, who noted that study abroad can allow for students to develop different connections and experiences for future careers.

“Students here must go out to find real experience,” said Cheong. “After you graduate, you can’t have a three-week trip unless you get a job and pay your bills.”

For more information on study abroad and exchange programs, contact studyabroad@brooklyn.cuny.edu
USG Referendum Proposes Lowering Student Activity Fee

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-In-Chief

Brooklyn College's Undergraduate Student Government recently petitioned a referendum that calls for the student activity fee to decrease by 90 cents in the fall and spring semesters and by $18.95 in future summer terms. The referendum, which also targets issues pertinent to the student government's structure, did not receive the 10% student body threshold needed to be added for voting in the upcoming student government election. Nonetheless, USG leaders are working to present the referendum this election season.

"Each year since USG came to be, we've been modifying and updating and working out the kinks in our constitution and the way we function," said USG President Iqura Naheed. "[...] I feel like it's just a normal step in the evolution of making a better student government each year."

The student activity fee for fall and spring currently costs BC undergrads $113.40 per semester, funding student organizations and activities like USG and the Vanguard. To date, USG oversees 104 clubs, according to Ron Jackson, BC's Vice President for Student Affairs. USG currently manages two separate streams of funding backed by student activity fees: a $60,000 operating budget for its necessities and a $163,000 club allocation budget exclusively for the organizations it oversees.

Besides the clubs that USG oversees, BC has referendum groups like the Women's Center, that receive student activity fees directly from the college rather than USG. Under the latest referendum, members called for some groups to lose their referendum status and move under USG, primarily because it would allow for the student government to reallocate funds to active organizations that need funding. The proposed decrease of 90 cents for the fall and spring terms comes from the $1 allocation reserved for Night Call News, a publication that has not been active since 2019.

"Since they're not active, it just stays over there, and nobody uses the money, and there's no way for USG to reallocate it to clubs that are actually active," said Aharon Grama, USG's Vice President.

News outlets like the Vanguard, which has a referendum status to avoid conflict of interest in reporting USG and other student affairs, were not proposed to move under USG. However, for other referendum organizations, USG's proposals would make them like "any other club," Jackson explained.

"They will no longer be guaranteed funding but would be eligible to request funding like all the other clubs from student government," Jackson said. "It would be up to the discretion of student government to approve or not approve their request."

In some organizations losing their referendum status, USG plans to ensure that student activity fees go directly to students and that e-boards have student representation. If USG's proposal passes, each listed referendum group would have its allocated share of the student activity fee moved to USG's club allocation budget. USG also proposed creating a fund oversight body within its government.

"Say the board - if it doesn't have representation from students, they can use that money in any way that they see fit," Grama said. "[...] I'm not saying that at the moment referendum groups are doing that, but in theory, if somebody decided to do that, we would have some oversight and we would be able to, in some way, raise awareness."

For Austin Dragos, the President of the Student Organization for Every Disability United for Progress, the potential move of his referendum group under USG has its advantages.

"I feel like with that, it'd definitely connect USG more with the SOPEDUP club in terms of disability advocacy and awareness because in Brooklyn College there needs to be a lot in terms of how we move forward," Dragos said.

Besides changing the structure of certain referendum groups, USG's current referendum aims to address constitutional technicalities. Since 2019, USG has been the uniting body of two former student government organizations: CLAS and SGS. When USG formed, certain rights and privileges outlined in club constitutions remained reserved to the now-defunct CLAS and SGS. If the referendum garners enough votes and is approved by CUNY, those rights would be transferred to the existing student government.

"We're just making sure the representation students always had on these different committees and boards still exist," said Naheed, "and it's still students who are able to take those seats."

Though USG did not garner enough petition support to have its referendum on the student government ballot, members asked BC President Michelle Anderson to include their proposals in this upcoming election for student voters.
Brooklyn College To Erect COVID-19 Memorial On Campus

By John Schilling
Managing Editor

Now that CUNY’s mask mandate is lifted and COVID-19 cases are going down, it would seem that the Brooklyn College community has started to move on from the pandemic, but this could not be further from the truth.

To commemorate those in the Brooklyn College community who died due to COVID-19, a special memorial will be erected on campus sometime in the near future.

“We are, as a community, developing plans for a memorial at Brooklyn College for those who died of COVID, hoping to do a memorial ceremony this spring,” Brooklyn College President Michelle Anderson revealed during the Feb. 15 Faculty Council meeting. “Some kind of planned display and ceremonial coming together when it is safe to gather in person on the quad in large groups…we hope to do that kind of memorial later this spring.”

When COVID-19 closed campus and moved classes online in Mar. 2020, the Brooklyn College community suffered losses almost immediately. Mark Blum, 69, an adjunct professor in the Department of Theater, passed away due to COVID-19 on Mar. 25 after working at Brooklyn College for 15 years. Soon after, the community faced three more losses with Moshe Augenstein, 73, an alumnus and the undergraduate deputy chair of computer and information science, on Apr. 7; Juliet Manragh, 41, an alumna and the human resources manager, on Apr. 8; and Jay Jankelewicz, 31, an alumnus and the office manager for the Department of Philosophy, on Apr. 9.

The losses continued within the year with Health, Nutrition, Sciences, and Kinesiology Professor Kenneth Axen; retired Physics Professor Peter J. Brancazio; Classics Professor James Pletcher; Retired Music Professor Paul Shelden; Computer and Information Science Professor Aaron Tenenbaum; Campus Peace Officer Jeffrey Palmer; and Art History Professor William Gerdts, and others since then.

The memorial will not only honor those from Brooklyn College who passed away due to COVID-19 but will also extend to family members and friends of the community.

“We want to honor not only those members of our own community who have passed due to COVID but so many members of our community had family members and friends also pass due to COVID,” added Anderson. “So we’re going to try to pull something together that does justice to those very serious losses to our community.”

Details regarding the timetable and location of the memorial remain unclear as the project remains in the planning stages. “Brooklyn College is assembling a group of students, staff, and faculty for input [...]” Brooklyn College Media Relations Manager Richard Pietras told the Vanguard. “It will be announced as soon as the date, time, and location have been determined.”

The Vanguard will update readers as information is made available.
BC On The Run: NYC Gaza 5K

By Serin Sarsour
Features Editor

After two years of the annual event being held online due to COVID-19, the Gaza 5K returned back in person on Mar. 5 at Prospect Park. Brooklyn College students and faculty joined hundreds of others in the walk/run dedicated to raising money for the mental health and well-being of Palestinian refugee children and families in the Gaza Strip.

The event was hosted by a non-profit organization called the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which serves to improve the lives of Palestinians with support and fundraising from Americans. The UNRWA has been operating since 1950, and its mental health program behind the 5K helps to provide Gaza refugees with at-home counseling, group sessions, and school counseling. All proceeds from ticket sales and individual/team fundraising went to the efforts that equip Palestinians with “a safe space to express their emotions and fears and a way to learn valuable coping skills,” according to the UNRWA’s website.

“My team, Academic Workers for Palestine, raised over $3,000 to support Palestinian refugees in Gaza. We want them to know they’re not alone and that their mental health matters,” said Anthropology Professor Naomi Schiller who attended the Gaza 5K. “It was a powerful event and I was so happy to see so many CUNY colleagues and Brooklyn College students there,” she said. About 20 other CUNY faculty members formed part of Schiller’s team.

BC sophomore Showda Shahid was a part of another team registered in the Gaza 5K that was comprised of 14 members of three BC clubs: Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Islamic Society and Muslim Women’s Educational Initiative (ISOMWEI), and Muslims Giving Back (MGB). Together, the clubs raised approximately $421.

“At the end of the event, we all gathered around as everyone participated in dabke [a Middle Eastern folk dance], sang along to Palestinian songs, and passed around the Palestinian flag. Getting to enjoy and have some fun during these tough times was really nice,” said Shahid, while describing her favorite part about the event.

Fahria Orine, a senior at BC, was another member of the SJP x ISOMWEI x MGB team who participated in the Gaza 5K. “I believe this event is important because it highlights how much of an impact being at war for your homeland has on the mental health of many. Not only is it important nationality-wise, but also community-wise,” Orine said.

Although for many the event was a great way to bring the community together and raise money for Palestinian refugees, some of the 5K’s participants faced obstacles. “A passerby made anti-Palestine comments and called me a terrorist,” said a BC senior who wished to remain anonymous due to privacy concerns. “Unfortunately, as supporters of the Palestinian struggle, we aren’t surprised when this happens.”

However, the anonymous BC senior did not let those remarks get in the way of her completing the run. “It is important we spread awareness about the occupation of the Palestinian people by Israel and the effect it has on the mental well-being of those living in Gaza,” she said.

“Of course, the mental health of Palestinians is severely impacted, which is why UNRWA aims to raise funds to support Palestinians with resources, such as mental health services, to help them cope with their losses and traumas.

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Millions of Palestinians live under Israeli occupation and military rule, according to the New York Times. In numerous cases, Palestinians have been and are continued to be expelled from their homes or have their homes demolished by Israeli authorities. As a result, the mental health of Palestinians is severely impacted, which is why UNRWA aims to raise funds to support Palestinians with resources, such as mental health services, to help them cope with their losses and traumas.

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Tanger Hillel Volunteers For Local Ukraine Relief Effort

By Aliyah Jacobson  
Staff Writer

On Sunday, Mar. 6, a team of 24 volunteers from Brooklyn and Queens College gathered together to sort 3,750 pounds of medical supplies for Ukrainians on the ground in Ukraine and Poland. The volunteers worked alongside the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and Afya Foundation, who organized the relief effort.

The Afya Foundation has been around for 20 years and has aided in disasters from the earthquake in Haiti to the COVID-19 pandemic here in the United States and abroad. With the help of local volunteers, Afya takes sterile medical supplies that hospitals can no longer sort through and ships them locally and around the world where they can be of the most use.

“I have felt hopeless the last few days with the war in Ukraine, and this volunteering event is helping keep my mind off of the conflict even briefly and my hands busy,” said Tatiana Makarenko, a Brooklyn College biology student, who thought Sunday’s event was an opportunity for her to aid her family in Ukraine. Before volunteering, Makarenko researched Afya and discovered it is a credible organization. Though it is almost impossible to get into Ukraine right now, she trusts that the supplies will make it to Poland and into the hands of the Ukrainian refugees who need them.

Other volunteers, including Michaela Pomeranets, heard of this event from Tanger Hillel and expressed that the Ukrainian conflict is personal to them. “I have family and childhood friends there [Ukraine]. I am confident that these supplies will get to those in need and I am happy to help even if it is from the other side of the world,” Pomeranets said.

Benjamin LeSalle from Queens College, an AEPI fraternity brother, was among the volunteers on Sunday. After researching Afya, LeSalle felt it was a trustworthy charity to devote his Sunday afternoon to, and he plans to bring more of his AEPI brothers from the Queens chapter to volunteer on a different date.

“It is personal to me as I have been volunteering for other causes for years, and this time, it is my home country that is in need,” one of the main volunteers at Afya, Valentyna remarked.

Brooklyn College’s Tanger Hillel hopes to organize another trip to volunteer again in the coming weeks.

“Although I do not have family in Ukraine like many of the volunteers here today do, I have been watching videos online and have seen the suffering that the Ukrainians are enduring and am grateful to help today,” LeSalle said.

Two volunteers from Afya were also from Ukraine and spoke about the fears they have for their families. The volunteers asked students to reach out to elected officials and ask that they assist in stopping the war on Ukraine and aid refugees leaving the country.
BC Reacts: Russia’s Invasion Of Ukraine

By Johan Abdu
Staff Writer

Russia’s sudden invasion of Ukraine has shocked the world, leaving many to see images similar to World War II-torn Europe.

On Feb. 22, Russian forces were given the go-ahead to invade the Ukrainian republics of Donetsk and Luhansk for a specific mission to “demilitarize” and “denazify” Ukraine, CNN reported. Days later, forces attacked areas around and near the capital city of Kyiv, as many Ukrainians were forced to act quickly to fend for their lives.

“It’s hard not to be impressed by the courage of individual Ukrainians and the remarkably impressive performance of the Ukrainian leadership,” said Robert “KC” Johnson, an author and history professor at Brooklyn College who specializes in American politics and diplomatic affairs. “The last decade has featured aggressive challenges to the international liberal order – from Russia, from China, from Iran.”

U.S. President Joseph Biden has reiterated his concerns and efforts to aid Ukraine with economic assistance through Congress while constantly keeping an eye over the conflict.

Johnson complimented the Biden administration’s responsibility of spreading information widely around the world in response to Russia, but claimed their handling of foreign affairs is “something of a mixed grade.”

“Biden’s badly botched handling of the withdrawal from Afghanistan hovers over contemporary international relations… it’s not hard to imagine Putin assuming that if Biden were willing to leave behind American citizens and Afghans who risked their lives for the U.S. military, the administration likely would do little on behalf of Ukraine, where American lives weren’t on the line,” said Johnson.

As for what is happening on the ground in Ukraine, Brigid O’Keeffe, a BC history professor who has studied modern Russia and the history of the Soviet Union for years, calls Putin’s regime “intolerant of truth and miserably afraid of its own people’s voices.”

“As a historian, I am all the more appalled by the fact that Putin has unleashed a torrent of lies and historical falsifications to undergird his ostensible ‘justification’ for war — a war that he is aggressively lying to the Russian people about,” said O’Keeffe. “Putin has amply demonstrated that he is willing to inflict suffering to Ukrainians, the people of Russia, and the wider world in his bid to conquer Ukraine, rewrite history, and nurse a series of historical grievances that he has obsessed over for decades.”

It is unclear how effective the United States’ involvement in the invasion of Ukraine will be in the coming months, but Johnson believes this conflict is very detrimental to the future of worldwide foreign affairs.

“The invasion of Ukraine continues a troubling pattern, showing that we’ve moved beyond the post-Cold War era to a period that’s likely to be more dangerous for the United States and European democracies,” added Johnson.

Both parties will have the ultimate say as to when the bloodshed will end, but the damage is irreversible.

“Putin’s threat to Ukraine is a threat to us all,” said O’Keeffe. “I am heartstuck and worried for Ukrainians who are suffering inexcusably right now…and for Russians who are against this war, some of whom have shown extraordinary bravery in risking arrest by Putin’s police forces and the grave consequences they will face for doing so.”

For some Brooklyn College students, the ongoing conflict incited concerns of a potential third world war.

“And at first I thought it was a joke, one of those World War III jokes that people make all the time, but I looked it up and it turns out it’s true,” said Nathalie Karam, a junior at BC. Karam could not help but be reminded of January 2020, when many believed that a conflict would break out between the U.S. and Iran. “It gave me flashbacks of that, you know?” Karam said.

Worried about the possibility of the U.S. becoming more involved in the conflict with escalating tensions, Karam noted how she is concerned for “how global politics will be changed by the end of this.”

“We should not interfere because if we do enter, we have missiles, Russia has nuclear missiles,” she opined.
CUNY Reacts: New York And CUNY Lift Mask Mandate

By Mary Zakharova
Staff Writer

New York Governor Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams announced that starting on Mar. 7, masks and proof of vaccination will no longer be required in most indoor venues. Two days before the state’s lift, CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez sent out a university-wide email announcing that CUNY will also be removing its mask mandate, giving students the option to wear their mask or not.

All other COVID-19 mandates, such as vaccination and booster requirements for students and faculty, mandatory COVID-19 testing for those with approved vaccine exemptions, and random testing for vaccinated CUNY members, will remain unaltered. The Chancellor’s announcement caused many across campuses to question if the mask mandate lift is too soon.

“Omicron was at its peak in mid-January and that’s only about two months ago,” said Anastasia, a Brooklyn College student who did not want to share her last name. “There should still be a mask mandate for packed areas like stores, subways, and places where people gather because right now we really don’t know if a worse strain could develop.”

Between December 2021 and last January, the highly-contagious Omicron variant was estimated by some epidemiologists to have infected 40 percent or more of New York City residents, the New York Times reported. However, during this Omicron peak, there were fewer COVID-related deaths in comparison to the pandemic’s first wave of contractions in 2020. Contractions in the city have dropped significantly with 12,454 cases recorded as of press time, according to Our World In Data.

Pro-Student CUNY, an organization that demands the university to include student voices in COVID-related policies and decisions, is also against the mask mandate lift. One of the members, who preferred to remain anonymous, believes professors should make students aware of any unvaccinated students in the classrooms since masks are no longer mandatory. “You can say there is someone [unvaccinated in the class]; you don’t say who,” the anonymous student said.

Jennifer Reyes, a John Jay College student, agreed that everything is happening too fast. She believes there is no structure in the decision to lift the mask mandate, and desires more clarity from CUNY on what students should expect.

“If we take the mask mandate off, how are we going to verify […] who has COVID and who does not? From my understanding, unvaccinated students still have to […] get tested if they want to come into the building, but are we going to start testing everybody now because there’s gonna be no masks?” she said.

Saaif Alam, a John Jay student who serves as University Student Senate’s Vice-Chair of Disability Affairs, added that even though Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams lifted the mask mandate, “universities still have their discretion to enforce mandates,” and suggested “the Chancellor to communicate more with the student body first before making those kinds of decisions.”

Since CUNY students do not currently have representation in the university’s decisions regarding COVID policies, John Jay student Sophia Kieseheuer says that students do not have enough power to overturn the mask mandate lift. However, she suggested that online and hybrid classes should be made more accessible.

“If there is no more mask mandate and students are feeling now even more uncomfortable to go on campus, this is another reason why we need more online and hybrid options,” said Kieseheuer.
When the university first felt better, “Narisma added. “During the early stages of the pandemic, but seeing people socially crippled, “ said Joshua a sophomore at BC. “I often joke with my friends on their learning, teaching, and remain connected with my BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said.

Ongoing mental health issues during the early stages of the pandemic, but seeing people in person again has made me feel better,” Narisma added. “When the university first closed on Mar. 11, 2020, adjusting to schedule changes and a deadly pandemic soon became second nature to many BC students. However, the abrupt and isolative move to remote learning and working brought about struggles as most stayed home. “Running for me is really important. And so when I had to stop, it definitely did affect me a lot,” said Farvorites Lotin, President of the National Association of Black Accountants chapter at BC. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said. “Before the pandemic, Lotin was a student-athlete who formed part of BC’s cross country team. To stay aloft and remain connected with her BC peers, she used the college’s resources, such as the Women’s Center, to cope with challenges that came her way. “It was definitely a sad time, but at the same time, you try to stay positive. And what I keep telling myself is like, ‘I hope COVID ends pretty soon. So that’s the only thing that kept me positive,” Lotin said.

March 11, 2022 marks the second anniversary of CUNY’s coronavirus shutdown. /Barry Winiker for Getty
Prof. Todd Chandler Explores Gun Safety In ‘Bulletproof’

By Alexandria Woolfe & Michela Arlia
Staff Writer & Arts Editor

The Film Department’s own Professor Todd Chandler released a documentary with PBS titled “Bulletproof” on Feb. 14, where he intended to put a more productive spin on the aftermath of school shootings.

Though he previously taught at high schools and the College of Staten Island, Chandler has been an adjunct at Brooklyn College since 2015, teaching students about the post production stages of film including editing and cinematography. His experience in the field comes from his graduate schooling where his thesis was in documentary film, as well as various jobs on sets.

“Bulletproof” came to fruition after Chandler overheard students in one of his classes back in 2015 discussing yet another instance of gun-related violence in public spaces like schools and theaters. Chandler expressed to the Vanguard the stark difference between his work and other documentaries/films of the same caliber, noting the main difference being “no real mention of a particular shooting or act of violence.”

The decision to make “Bulletproof” a documentary rather than a feature film didn’t just rely on the fact that Chandler is a documentarian - his intent was to showcase reality.

“Sometimes the truth is stranger than fiction,” said Chandler.

Though the release date coincided with the fourth anniversary of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, Chandler had begun making this film and building the concept for it from 2015 to 2017. After working on funding, production began and it was finally finished by 2019 and submitted to PBS’ Independent Lens program.

Chandler explained that the documentary is not necessarily about surviving school shootings, but what safety can mean for students and faculty alike. Furthermore, he feels that the documentary should be viewed through an eye that is trying to be “less investigative and more meditative.”

While researching for “Bulletproof,” Chandler attended school security trade shows where he observed the commercialization of school security with his own eyes. Chandler noted the world of school security is now, “high tech and expanding in response to or in conversation with mass shootings.”

An especially heartbreaking but crucial scene in the film was a conversation with a young woman who made bulletproof hoodies after her neighbor was mugged and murdered in front of her young kids. The woman sews kevlar, a material commonly used in bulletproof vests and equipment for law enforcement, into the hoods and body area of the sweaters.

This moment really illustrates what Chandler wanted his documentary to be about, not just school shootings, but gun safety in America. Chandler states that the issue of the US government’s refusal to enact laws protecting citizens from gun violence can be resolved through problem-solving, which he notes that his research and conversations for “Bulletproof” led him to see.

“The problem is bullets and the solution is something to stop bullets,” Chandler said.

“Bulletproof” is currently available to stream on the PBS website through Mar. 14.
By Cailah Parker  
Staff Writer

Columbia University hosted a talk session featuring playwright Lynn Nottage on Mar. 4, as part of the school’s Complex Issues series. This online series focuses on the theme of repair, a conversation of performance that engages social initiative and human interaction.

Nottage is a Brooklyn native who has won two Pulitzer Prizes for drama and her plays have been cast and seen by many worldwide. A Libretto, which was the topic of discussion, was introduced among several other achievements in the theater circuit.

Nottage gave an intro into what could be expected from her latest play “Intimate Apparel.” She took the time to explain a personal story, a photograph, and what it meant for her to learn about the willingness to share the past in her family. Unfortunately, with the timely passing of her family, she did not have many resources to find out her family’s history.

With the research she had done, she was able to piece together a notion that black women during a certain time were invisible.

“This play that I wrote, which really was something that I wrote for my mother and was truthful and emotional and really represented where I was emotionally - which was missing my mother and just trying to figure out how do you love something that is no longer there,” said Nottage.

“The Intimate Apparel” was based on the idea of complexity of relationships and telling the history of not just all women, but African American women and many other minorities,” brought it to life.

“I never dreamed that it would find another form until Ricky Ian Gordon, who is a wonderful composer, approached me to say ‘Do you want to write an opera?’ and I’m like ‘Yeah, I kind of do want to write an opera!’,” said Nottage.

Gordon had just finished writing an opera and became interested in the commission of new works that were being showcased with an ambiguity in their purpose. He confessed during the event that he read every play that Nottage wrote. When he first read “Intimate Apparel,” Gordon said he connected to it in multiple ways.

Gordon proceeded to contact Nottage on Facebook and ask if she wanted to write an opera for the Met with him.

“It was a perfect piece for me,” said Gordon. “It really just began the campaign of writing a Libretto, which just meant that the music tells a lot of the story. By the third draft it was a dream; it was stunning. It was a very transformative piece to write and luckily that was translated.”

Nottage took the time to discuss the cast and how different everything was this time around compared to what she’s used to. The cast had time to rehearse for a month with music and refine the work that was unusual for the process.

Gordon stated that the rehearsal process was set up where the actors performed as if they were actually giving a show, while there were changes and revisions being made at the same time.

“It’s a kind of luxury that you never have in the opera world,” said Gordon. When Nottage and Gordon first sat down to create this piece, they focused on the idea that they wanted it to be easy to grasp but also brought with it a sense of comfort across all audiences.

“One of the things I loved about making this opera is that we really had an opportunity to delve deeply into the rehearsal process and develop the characters in ways that are unusual,” said Nottage.

Snippets of the opera were shared during the discussion to expand on the process and nature of the play, along with what one could expect from the main characters, Esther and Mami.

Nottage added, “It was a delightful exercise to figure out how to expand this world of Esther but keep it very true to the initial impulse of the play.”

Nottage also stated that when she and Gordon were writing the opera they were really interested in the fact that it had taken place at the beginning of modern America when there was an amalgamation of many cultures.

She stressed how in the end, the piece needed to feel like a collision of cultures.

“As a black woman, who has not only been marginalized in every aspect of my life but also has felt marginalized in terms of the way we approach the telling of stories, I really feel that it is essential in my own art practice that I tell the stories of people who have shaped me - and those are workers,” said Nottage.

“Intimate Apparel” can be seen next fall on PBS.
The Fences of Perception: Why One Ought to Study the Humanities

By Ian Ezinga
Opinions Editor

We each see the same cast iron fence as we enter Brooklyn College, but each set of eyes sees an entirely different image. It is how a single object can appear as an infinite amount of vastly different images that intrigues me. Perspective is what is being discussed, but I would argue that the active search and development of one’s perspective is the single most valuable pursuit of a college student. We are all capable of gleaning public information to learn a fact or how to get a job, but in the end, we are condemned to wander in an endless library if we don’t know what they are doing. Perhaps the eyes of your parents, your bosses, the police, or even so carefully into those belonging to influencers online. Do you see people who know what they are doing?

These groups of people, and just about all others, operate under the guise that they obviously know what they are doing. Staring long enough, however, it becomes readily apparent that of course, they don’t know what they are doing. The amount of decisions one needs to make to land in a place of authority is shockingly small. Yet, once adorned with power or influence, these people assume the stance of someone who knew what they were doing all along.

Seeing their eyes and their stories for what they are can be useful in writing your own. The question of what that story ought to look like is best answered in the sweetest fruits and heartiest crop of our collective consciousness: the humanities.

The study of the humanities will always be imperfect, but the most important aspect of its pursuit is the inevitable process of osmosis. Reading, listening, or even just starting, are what these classes ask of students. It is no wonder why on the surface they are often considered boring. But what you are doing by simply using your senses is strengthening them.

Through practice and patience, you will select various elements of other people’s perspectives so that you yourself become someone worth listening to. You cannot read a single book and understand the meaning of the universe. But years of appreciating art or history can lend themselves to the ordinary person in quite magical ways.

The magic I speak of may be disappointing when it’s disclosed that you can’t immediately tell if someone is lying, predict the next words in a speech, or always correctly guess the direction in which the beat will go – though doctors say these, other unexplainable wonders can be observed among practitioners of the humanities. The magic is seeing that cast iron fence in a completely different way than the person walking or standing next to you.

There is no correct image to have when looking at or thinking of the metal fence that surrounds Brooklyn College. You can think of it as an allegory to the walls built up around public education; or a product derived from several millennia worth of defending what is valuable; maybe a relic of FDR’s New Deal; perhaps a manifestation of humans’ psychological tendencies to develop new technologies like iron or welding; or maybe just a raggedy collection of iron, weather-beaten and rusting, which gracefully displays the light emitted from a setting sun or a parked car’s blinking hazards.

It doesn’t matter how you see the fence or if you’re even interested in talking about how different people might see a fence. I suppose I am less arguing and more earnestly welcoming all who have a spark of curiosity to pursue it now while you’re in school.

There will always be a way to make a living, albeit most don’t allow for a lifestyle that society unsuspectingly suggests that you are lesser if you don’t achieve. But we are each given a very small allotment of time to smell, to listen, and to stare at the world around us. Yes, don’t forget to smell the roses, but also don’t forget that such a saying is only made possible by an understanding of what an education in the humanities can offer.
Opinion: SCOTUS Nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson Is A Step In The Right Direction

By Priscilla Mensah
Staff Writer

Ketanji Brown Jackson is poised to make history as the first African-American woman Supreme Court Justice. Should Ketanji be confirmed, she would be helping to break the glass ceiling that has long stood in the way of progress for women and people of color in the political sphere. To date, only five of the 118 justices have been women and only two of the 118 have been black—black men that is.

Adding Jackson to the mix would bring the total number of women who have served on the highest court to six, which is no simple feat. Additionally, in being nominated to the highest court of the land, and if confirmed, Jackson will be providing an alternative view of African-Americans, straying from stereotypes that often portray people of color in less than ideal lights.

Jackson becoming the first African-American woman to serve on the Supreme Court would effectively amount to another step along an already highly successful career trajectory that she has enjoyed. Raised by parents who were educated at historically black universities, Jackson excelled in academics and eventually graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law School. Throughout her impressive academic and professional careers, Jackson has exemplified excellence and, speaking for myself at least, will most certainly be viewed as an inspiration to women of color to aspire to greater heights.

It is perhaps due to her solid academic foundation, combined with her exemplary career, that Jackson is viewed favorably by lawmakers on both sides of the country’s political spectrum. As a result, it has already been widely predicted that she will be approved by the Senate.

A little context on this laudable professional career that Jackson has had. For one, immediately following law school, Jackson served as a clerk to Massachusetts-based US District Judge Patti Saris. Impressively, she also managed to land the highly coveted position of associate at the law firm Miller Cassidy Larroca and Lewin. Additionally, and noteworthy because she is set to replace him, Jackson also clerked at the Supreme Court for Justice Stephen Breyer. Jackson’s other professional accomplishments follow this theme of prestige and excellence. Most recently, for instance, she served as a judge of the D.C. Circuit, which is commonly referred to as the United States’s second-highest court of the land.

Serving on the D.C. Circuit is important because it proves, yet again, that Jackson is duly qualified for the job. The prominence and prestige of the D.C. Circuit are palpable, supported by the fact that several Supreme Court Justices, including some holding office today, have served there. In her nomination for D.C. Circuit Judge, Jackson, who was nominated by President Biden in April 2021, was confirmed in June of 2021 with bipartisan support. If this trend of broad support continues, it is likely that Jackson will be easily confirmed to the Supreme Court.

Jackson’s nomination has not been without its critics, unfortunately. As is typical in the cases of the relatively few people of color who have sought, or who have been nominated to high political positions, there have been some attempts to undermine Jackson’s legitimacy. For instance, I recall coming across an article that highlighted how some relatively prominent political figure had wanted to see Jackson’s Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score.

Not that I have been alive long enough to remember the details of too many supreme court nominations, but with the few that I do recall, I don’t ever remember an LSAT score being brought up. Such talks are reminiscent of those requesting that former President Barack Obama produce his birth certificate, which have widely been viewed as being racist in nature.

Nonetheless, and all critics aside, based on some articles and reviews that I have read, I am confident that Jackson’s preliminary bipartisan support will prove pivotal in her being confirmed by the Senate. I’m hopeful that she will be confirmed and am already excited about what her appointment will mean for future generations. Jackson’s nomination, in and of itself, has already done so much in moving the present that much closer to realizing a vision of equality, so whatever the future holds will hopefully be just as promising.
Kyrie Irving Still Barred From Playing At Barclays

By Tyrell Ingram
Staff Writer

Mayor Eric Adams announced that on Mar. 7, vaccine mandates for indoor venues will be lifted. Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving, however, will still be ineligible to play in the Barclays Center.

The mayor has announced that indoor venues such as restaurants, gyms, and entertainment facilities, will no longer require proof of vaccination for entry. Unfortunately for Irving, who remains unvaccinated, these rules do not apply towards the private sector as businesses can still require workers who interact with other people or who work in-person to receive at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Though the 29-year-old basketball star can enter the arena, he will not be able to play due to these guidelines. He will also be barred from playing in Madison Square Garden when the Nets face the Knicks.

Previously, the mayor said in a Feb. 28 interview with CNBC that he wants Irving to play, but he doesn’t want to make an exception for the Nets’ guard because it will set a bad example for the city.

“We want to find a way to get Kyrie on the court, but this is a bigger issue,” Mayor Adams said. “I wouldn’t send the wrong message just to have an exception for one player when we’re telling countless number of New York City employees, ‘If you don’t follow the rules, you won’t be able to be employed.’”

The league is 97% vaccinated, according to theScore, and 77% of New York City is at least fully vaccinated, according to NYC Health.

Despite the guidelines, unvaccinated players from other teams outside of New York can play in the Barclays Center. The mayor acknowledged that the rules are “ridiculous.”

“It makes no sense,” Adams said. “I don’t know who thought of putting such a ridiculous rule in place of ‘away teams can come and play’.”

This sentiment was also pointed out by NBA Commissioner Adam Silver weeks prior.

Irving remains unable to play.

“This law in New York, the oddity of it to me, is that it only applies to home players,” Silver told ESPN. “I think if ultimately that rule is about protecting people who are in the arena, it just doesn’t quite make sense to me that an away player who is unvaccinated can play in Barclays.”

Irving has only played 15 games this season and has averaged 25.1 points, 4.8 rebounds, and 5.3 assists. The Brooklyn Nets (32-32) are eighth in the Eastern Conference and have lost seven of their last 10 games.

BC’s Fitness Center Opens After Nearly 2 Years

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

On Mar. 1, Brooklyn College announced that the Fitness Center in the West Quad Center would be open for the first time since 2020. With the recent lift of CUNY’s mask mandate, Brooklyn College students find the school inching out of COVID limbo and perhaps back to normal.

“Students can reserve a spot by going to their WebCentral account,” BC Media Relations Manager, Richard Pietras, told the Vanguard. “Once there, they should click on E-Services and then schedule an appointment.”

The Fitness Center will operate on a reservation system for all vaccinated BC students. Reservations can be made 12 hours in advance, and students can reserve two half-hour slots per day.

After nearly two years, students can finally exercise on the Brooklyn College campus, though the decision may have come later than expected. Student-athletes have been competing since the start of last fall, using the West Quad Center to practice. Not to mention, students have been attending sporting events since the end of this past January.

According to Pietras and the school, the Fitness Center was not open because “the college and the Athletic Department were focusing on safety.” Private gyms in New York have been open since Aug. 24, 2020.

For now, students can rejoice in the return of Brooklyn College’s cost-effective alternative to the Planet Fitnesses of the world, but they will have to wait a little longer for the school’s other amenities.

“The track and tennis courts will open on time,” Pietras shared. “The College typically opens those facilities after a week of 50-plus degree weather. As the campus moves forward with the reopening of the Fitness Center and COVID-19 numbers around the state stay down, other facilities will be opened.

As winter turns to spring, students can expect Brooklyn College to resemble a pre-COVID campus.
BC Sports Recap (Mar. 3 – Mar. 6)

Women’s Basketball Season Ends

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

The Brooklyn College women’s basketball team ended their historic season this past Saturday after being eliminated from the NCAA Div. III National Tournament. Brooklyn started the week, and the tournament, with a first-round matchup against Emmanuel College on Mar. 4. The Emmanuel College Saints came into Friday’s game evenly matched with Brooklyn’s Bulldogs. Both teams ran the table in their respective conferences, finishing with flawless conference records.

As the first quarter tipped off, the two teams were neck and neck. Heading into the second quarter, the score was 18-17 in favor of the Bulldogs. The rest of the game proved to be just as close, and in the end, the score had changed 12 times. However, off the efforts of a superb fourth quarter, the Bulldogs won the game 70-57. Friday’s win was the first time in program history that Brooklyn advanced past the first round of the NCAA tournament.

How did the Bulldogs do it? Well, much like the rest of their wins this season, Brooklyn was led by star forward Chanel Jemmott, who dominated the game. She finished with 30 points and 22 rebounds.

Brooklyn’s second game of the week came on Saturday, Mar. 5, against the nationally-ranked Pioneers from Smith College. From the jump, it was clear that it was not Brooklyn’s night. Smith poured on 20 points in the first quarter, and only allowed nine from the Bulldogs. Brooklyn battled back, showing life in the second quarter, but they did not catch up to the Pioneers. Finishing the game out with a 25-12 final quarter, the Pioneers defeated the Bulldogs and brought an end to their historic season.

In her last game as a Bulldog, Chanel Jemmott scored 22 points, punctuating an incredible collegiate career. The Bulldogs had their best season to date after missing over a year of play due to the pandemic. Not only did they sweep the CUNYAC, but they also earned their first-ever NCAA tournament victory. Fans will be waiting with anticipation for next season to see if the Bulldogs can do it all over again.

Men’s Volleyball Grabs First Win After Six Losses

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

The Bulldogs’ week consisted of two CUNYAC matchups - their first conference matchups in nearly two years. On Mar. 3, the Bulldogs squared off against Baruch. The Bearcats made quick work of the Bulldogs, sweeping them in three straight sets (25-16, 25-20, 25-13). It was the second straight sweep and fifth straight loss for the Bulldogs. Though being led in practically every category, Junior Darren Roach was able to manage seven kills against the strong Baruch team.

Saturday, Mar. 5 saw Brooklyn in conference play again, this time hosting Lehman College. Desperately needing to avoid a sixth straight loss, the Bulldogs came out firing. Brooklyn won the first two sets (25-17, 25-21) behind a strong team effort. Hoping to close out the match in three, the Bulldogs battled down to the wire with Lehman in the third set but were unable to secure a sweep. Lehman won the third set 27-25.

With the Lightning building momentum, Brooklyn hunkered down and put an end to any possible comeback, winning the final set 25-21. Sophomore Admir Cekic did his best to help Brooklyn secure the win, serving four aces and earning 39 assists. The win against Lehman ended Brooklyn’s five-game skid and secured the Bulldogs’ first CUNYAC win of the season.

From here on out, it is only CUNYAC games for the rest of the year. Brooklyn will look to improve their conference standings against York College on Tuesday, Mar. 8.

Men’s Tennis Returns to Brooklyn

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

Men’s tennis is back in Brooklyn for the first time in over 1,000 days. The Bulldogs opened their season on the road against Albertus Magnus College last Saturday, Mar. 5 in New Haven, Connecticut. It’s fair to say that Saturday’s return, however, was not the outcome Brooklyn was hoping for. The team was swept across all eight matches in their first contest since 2019. Both the doubles and singles competitors were held winless by the Albertus Falcons.

Brooklyn will hope to bounce back in their first home game of the season set on Mar. 10 against SUNY Purchase.