CUNY Raises Big Money

BC And 27 Other CUNYs Raise Over $3 Million In CUNY Tuesday

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Companies Invest In Magner Center, Aim To Recruit More BC Students

By Shlomie Katash
Staff Writer

The Magner Career Center recently opened the Brooklyn College Career Partners Program in an effort to expand their services in aiding students’ job searches on campus. By enrolling in and donating to the program, companies can establish connections and a mutually beneficial relationship with students. Companies can join the program by donating a minimum of $2,500 to the Magner Center.

“As a public institution, any time we could get any support, whether it’s through employers or alumni, that is just extra resources and support that we could then provide in many different ways [to students],” Natalia Guarin-Klein, director of the Magner Center, told The Vanguard.

By branding themselves as partners of BC, the companies will be showcasing their determination in recruiting at the school. This extra step will help the Magner Center improve their ability to offer these companies’ opportunities to students who might otherwise not know of them.

“A lot of our students may be first-generation college students or their parents don’t know the system here in America just yet in terms of how they could move forward, so definitely by their presence here on campus, students are allotted more knowledge to say, ‘Wait, I could potentially do a career in this company,’” Sabine Saint-Cyr, the Magner Center’s business liaison, told The Vanguard.

‘Of course, they’re going to get a superb education at Brooklyn College, but one of the goals is economic mobility and that helps support one of the college’s missions, too.”

The donations will be going directly back to the Magner Center, expanding existing and future programs that the center has to get students on campus involved in determining their careers. The program’s creation came to fruition by the influx of new companies looking to recruit from campuses like Brooklyn College.

‘I’ve been here a very long time, and there are a lot more employers who are looking to come recruit students, and we thought that this is a good opportunity to say that you could recruit, but if you’re part of this program, which they provide financial support to be a part of it, then you could get some extra access to students and visibility for your company,” said Guarin-Klein. “There’s a lot more employers who reached out. They want to be active, they want to be visible.”

Currently, the Career Partners Program consists of three companies, but as the program grows in the coming months and years, more employers will join in an effort to hire and invest in Brooklyn College students.

“Know that these are companies that want our students, that want you,” said Guarin-Klein. “There are so many students that don’t take advantage of what’s available to them. These are people who want to recruit here. Also, for students to believe that they could work at these great places.”
CUNY Tuesday Raises $3M For Students And Services

By Shlomie Katash
Staff Writer

CUNY’s annual version of Giving Tuesday, CUNY Tuesday, was able to raise over three million dollars to support the university’s programs and student body on Tuesday, Nov. 29. Brooklyn-based CUNY’s Brooklyn College, Kingsborough Community College, and Medgar Evers College, garnered over $266,000 in donations.

Giving Tuesday is a global movement where fundraisers are held to help those in need during the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving. A significant portion raised by CUNY for 28 colleges came from alumni who benefited from several programs during their time in college, and gave back to help fund those same programs that aided them in their college careers. "It’s about creating a culture of helping others," Natalia Guarin-Klein, director of the Magner Career Center, told The Vanguard. "We go to these alumni who were helped by career programs in Brooklyn College and now have a chance to make sure those who come after them have the same opportunities."

The center earned the top fundraising spot for BC this year with $6,740 in donations. Another major fundraiser for Brooklyn College, The Women’s Center, also stressed the importance of bringing people together on campus for a common, charitable cause. "Brooklyn College is made up of many different communities," said Sau-Fong Au, director of The Women’s Center. "So, the goal that we have is to increase the funding and also create an opportunity to not only get to know us but to become a part of us."

The money and contributions for The Women’s Center will go toward "support services to students who fell through the cracks," Au explained. Donations will help to continue in-person and virtual resources for students in the Ingersoll-based center, including personal hygiene products, crisis intervention services, mentoring opportunities, access to a computer lounge, and other services.

Medgar Evers College, which raised $93,548, noticed a "more than 20% increase in the number of donors over last year," according to Dr. Particia Ramsey, the college’s president.

"Our focus is on student success; funds raised will benefit students through scholarships and curricular opportunities that will help students reach their goals and broaden their horizons,” Ramsey told The Vanguard.

Creating a culture that helps students can extend beyond the efforts of alumni and monetary donations. Current students with even the smallest amount of experience can help others here at Brooklyn College, even without giving a cent, according to Guarin-Klein. "If you’re a student who’s maybe had an internship or has benefitted in some way from the Magner Center, get involved," said Guarin-Klein. "Tell other students about your experiences and empower them to help them take early steps toward building their career."

This past November’s fundraising efforts continue a "fourth consecutive year” run where CUNY reached record-high donations, according to Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Chancellor of CUNY. "It is only through the dedication of our community that we can continue to serve our students and our city at the highest levels possible and make good on our commitment to providing a top-quality education to New Yorkers of all backgrounds, regardless of their circumstances or means,” Rodriguez added in a press release.
Staying Rooted: Councilwoman Shahana Hanif Returns To BC

By Gabriela Flores  
Editor-in-Chief

After being elected as District 39's council member last November, Shahana Hanif has not forgotten her Brooklyn College roots and the mentors that shaped her into the leader she is today. As a Kensington local with Bangla roots, Hanif is the first Muslim woman to be elected to New York City's Council. With all the barriers she has overcome, Hanif remains connected to her BC community and returned to The Women’s Center on Friday, Dec. 2. "Students take this as a space that they can truly call home when they’re on campus,” said Sau-Fong Au, director of The Women's Center housed in Ingersoll Hall. Being a “school mom” to Hanif and other women in the college community, Au opened the event alongside other BC administrators before turning the floor to the alumna turned councilwoman.

After arriving to BC in 2009, Hanif became an active student leader, becoming involved with organizations like Students for Justice in Palestine, Muslim Students Association, and other causes where she allied with her Puerto Rican and African American studies colleagues. Though her undergraduate career started on the pre-med track, she switched gears to women and gender studies when she recognized the impacts her identifiers as a woman, child of immigrants, and other aspects shaped her experiences. “This is a campus where my history was taught to me. This is a campus where I learned about the shared struggles of Black, Latinx, South Asian, Asian, and Indigenous communities,” said Hanif. Looking to her mentor Au, and reflecting on her time in The Women's Center, Hanif recalled the importance of representation. Being the first in many positions, the 31-year-old city council member has remained true to her Muslim, Bangladeshi roots, and when she recognized the communities and the people she represents from Park Slope and central Brooklyn neighborhoods.

“You go out to the streets of Brooklyn, New York City, every single day - whether you’re in an Uber, getting Halal from a street vendor, or going to Dunkin Donuts - the visible faces you’re meeting are South Asians. They’re Bangladeshis,” said Hanif. “The people we’re seeing, the density of the communities that make up our homes, don’t reflect who's legislating on our behalf - who's making decisions about how the city's dollars get spent.”

In the midst of all her success, Hanif has battled a bigger challenge: her lupus, a disease she’s been diagnosed with since 17. One of the chief reasons why Hanif chose BC more than a decade ago was because the local B11 bus line took her to Maimonides Medical Center, where she formerly would receive treatment. Today, as she continues navigating through New York City as a woman with a disability, Hanif continues fighting for those who are often not given adequate city resources. Since starting her service as a councilwoman in January, Hanif has passed six pieces of legislation.

After the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, a landmark decision that ruled abortions as a constitutional right, Hanif went on to ensure that her municipality would have the money and means to support those who needed an abortion. Another significant groundwork that Hanif and her team have committed to well before her election into District 39 has been their long-standing partnership with CUNY Citizenship Now, a free immigration law service. Under the council tenure of Brad Lander, Hanif served as director of organizing and community engagement, where she ensured District 39 worked with local organizations to address local issues.

"CUNY Citizenship Now has been a lifeline to the community in my district. And, of course, they operate everywhere, and they’re CUNY,” Hanif said. “So I wanted to really make sure that the partnerships that the council was joining forces with were local. The talent was from our city, delivering the expertise and specialty services that our immigrant community needed.”

Despite initial language barriers with no attorneys speaking Bangla, the service now has a Bangladeshi attorney. Supporting minorities, immigrant communities, and women has been a practice that's extended to different scopes of Hanif’s stay as a council representative. According to Hanif, only 5% of NYC’s over $30 billion investment for businesses is granted to minority, women-owned businesses. The low figure is a challenge that Hanif is working to change and tasking BC’s up-and-coming entrepreneurs to address. "We should be contracting minority, women-owned businesses for city operations," Hanif explained.

While she continues advocating for those she serves, Hanif will remain connected to Brooklyn College, remembering the mentors and support she’s garnered along her way to becoming a local leader. “Every day, I’m reading very terrible things about myself,” said Hanif. “So I like to have that confidence now to keep doing the work, keep remembering what got me here, to what my principles are, where I’m not gonna compromise, is important.”

Council member Shahana Hanif returns to BC’s Women’s Center /Gabriela Flores  

BC students, event organizers, and organization directors at the end of Hanif’s event /Gabriela Flores
USG Hosts Student Town Hall, Gets No Turnout

By Radwan Farraj
News Editor

An Undergraduate Student Government town hall was hosted on Tuesday, Nov. 29 for students to talk with USG members about how student government funds could be spent and used to address student concerns. The event was held in the Student Center's Bedford Room and ran for two hours.

Town hall events are typically held once per semester and during the pandemic, they were held either on Zoom or the social media platform Discord. Although students outside of student government did not attend, USG senators spoke of concerns with campus elevators, the cleanliness of the Boylan cafeteria, ID scanners at campus entrances for Cleared4 passes, and the possibility for putting monitors at each campus entrance to inform students of train and bus times.

Despite being held during common hours, the town hall's lack of student turnout has been a persistent challenge for student government since before the pandemic.

"When I held it [town hall] on Zoom one time, nobody showed up. But it's not the only time that they [students] can voice their opinion," said Flavia Shyti, USG's press director. "I feel that it's our responsibility to not make the town hall the only time our ears are open."

Currently, USG hosts several group chats for students across social media services including WhatsApp, Facebook, and Discord. These groups are for general student use and serve to provide announcements directly from USG.

"I think for the most part this semester we've done a really good job at getting USG out there and showing people what we are and what we can do for them through our events and our outreach on emails and group chats," said Carrie Ebbin, USG's vice president. "I think that there's always room to get the word out there more, you know, we are a resource to you."

Hillel Hosts Thanksgiving Dinner For The Unhoused

As an organization that hopes to create bridges between all students and provide support for Jewish students, Hillel hosted this dinner with respect to essential aspects of the Jewish culture.

"Helping repair the world and helping others are crucial parts of Jewish culture, and these values propel us to host this dinner every year," Cohen said.

The event was run by student volunteers primarily from several student organizations, including BC's Greek Council; Russian Speaking Jewish Club; Hillel Club; United for Israel; United for Israel; Creative Coexistence; the Newman Center; and the Student Center. "The dinner was entirely a collective effort by the community," said Cohen.

Student volunteers conducted and assisted with the event in several capacities, such as speaking with vendors to get donations, helping to prepare meals, serving food, and entertaining the children who attended the dinner.

Most of the attendees were children from the ages of six through 12. With that in mind, the organizers hosted several fun activities like face painting, cornhole, and giant Jenga. After the dinner, the children got to dance and let loose. The event also featured gifting the children with presents, such as games, socks, and gloves, to get everyone in the holiday spirit. Hillel donated several products and everyday necessities to a shelter after the event, including baby wipes, diapers, and feminine products.

"Everyone has something to give," Cohen said. "Doing something for the sake of doing something can be really beautiful."

Hillel plans to have a blood drive in March, a toy drive during the holidays, and food deliveries during Passover for the elderly.
Free Uyghur Now And BC Clubs Raise Awareness About The Uyghur Genocide

By Kate Dempsey
Staff Writer

There are brands and companies that Americans cannot seem to get enough of: Nike, Adidas, Apple, Microsoft, The North Face, Zara, and many other major companies that produce the world’s products. What may seem like harmless consumerism and purchases has a more sinister background because the origin of such products starts with Uyghur forced labor. The Uyghur people reside in the Xinjiang province in northwestern China, an area known for its abundant coal reserves and connections to the Middle East and eastern parts of Europe. Uyghurs are a Turkic ethnic group who practice Islam and speak the Uyghur language. Since 2014, the Chinese government under the Chinese Communist Party has held Uyghurs in “re-education camps,” claiming these detentions are to prevent terrorist attacks and uprisings, and to provide formal “training” to the mostly rural population.

Many governments and non-governmental organizations around the world believe that China is committing cultural genocide towards this religious group in a country that is strictly atheist. Control of the population would also mean eliminating the threat of economic and territorial separatism by claiming to be preventing “religious extremism,” according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

At the Uyghur Genocide Awareness Discussion held at Brooklyn College on Tuesday, Nov. 17, Uyghur activists Jewher Ilham and Kabir Qurban spoke about what their people are experiencing and ways to help them. For many Muslim students at the college, coming to the talk was a means of supporting and raising awareness about what is happening to their fellow Muslims, highlighting that this is not an activism “trend” to be forgotten about.

“I feel like every time something like this happens, people like to focus on it for a month and then disappear out of it. I feel like this is an awareness that we should all focus on, not just for that one month and call it a day,” said Besan, a junior at BC who did not want to share their last name.

The event was sponsored by the Bridges for Yemen club, Brooklyn College Historical Society, BC Muslims Giving Back, and the Brooklyn College Islamic Society and Muslim Women’s Educational Initiative, in conjunction with the student-led coalition Free Uyghur Now. Throughout the discussion at the Student Center, Uyghur activists shared their personal stories of life in the Xinjiang region and the stories of other Uyghurs living there. For Jewher Ilham, the beginning of the Uyghur detention brought about changes that permeated her life.

“When we go to the shopping mall, when we go to the campus, we are followed by policemen. Our phone calls were bugged,” Ilham said. “At the end of a phone call, instead of saying goodbye we say, ‘Allah [the Arabic word for ‘God’] wish you safe, Allah wish you health, Allah wish you peace.’ But now what I hear is, ‘Xi Jingping wish you peace, wish you health.’”

Ilham, who recently released her biographical book “Because I Have To: The Path to Survival, The Uyghur Struggle,” recalled the moment her father was detained before her very eyes on Feb. 2, 2013. As they were in the airport about to leave the country, Ilham’s father told her to go on as the authorities detained him. She has not seen him since.

For Uyghurs, they have witnessed their families being torn apart from the detention, seeing relatives and friends arrested for even saying the Arabic greeting “As-Salaamu Alaykum” out in public, which translates to “peace be upon you.”

Many do not know if their loved ones are still alive since they have seemingly disappeared from existence. As Ilham described, Uyghurs would come home and find nobody there, leaving many to wonder, “Where did everybody go?”

For others, the horrible truth on what happened had to be concealed in order to stay safe.

“My grandmother who we had to lie to for years because she wanted to speak to her daughter and we told her that, ‘Hey, you know, there’s just this situation with the phone line, you just can’t call,’” Qurban said. “For years we would lie to her and not let her know that her daughter has passed away because of the fear that she would try and go to visit her daughter.”

Qurban discussed many ways to sustain Uyghur activism and avoid being complicit in forced labor: continue to educate yourself, find allies, join student campaigns, and research the brands you wear. Raising awareness about the plight of Uyghurs can only be reached through global solidarity; Qurban explained, recognizing that this problem is not just a Uyghur or Muslim problem, but something everyone needs to be concerned about.

“You do not have to be a Uyghur to understand how Uyghurs feel, you don’t have to be a part of a specific ethnicity or population to help the other side of the world,” Fehim Hoti, secretary of the Islamic Society, said. “You just need to be a human being.”
The end of the fall semester is upon Brooklyn College students. With most classes continuing on campus after the COVID shutdown, students reflect on their time during the past few months as they gear up for finals week. Over the course of the semester, student clubs and organizations have ramped up events, allowing for the maximized potential of student and community involvement. With events like the annual Club Fair, Diwali celebration, Halloween costume contests and more, the goal for many was to ensure that students receive the opportunity to be involved in the BC community as much as possible.

"This semester has seen a great shift in student involvement, as many more events are being held in person as opposed to online," wrote USG Press Director Flavia Shyti in a statement to the Vanguard. "For BC junior and psychology major Jaden Haynes, having more of his classes in person allowed him to make connections with a broader range of students. By attending events this semester alone, he has been offered opportunities for volunteer work and study abroad.

"Last semester, because everyone was getting more adjusted, it was still more distant," said Haynes. "But like this semester, yeah, I definitely made more friends, reached out to more people than compared to other semesters."

As student enrollment is seeing a downward trend this semester, Shyti explained this should be taken as an advantage for current students while they register for spring 2023 courses.

"I don't think a decline in student enrollment significantly hurt the student body, there is a lot to be enjoyed on campus and I bet students are feeling a bit less rushed to register for classes in fear they will fill up," Shyti said.

As the colder weeks roll in, USG plans to host more events for students to wrap up the semester for all. One of their most recent events was the Gold Fest, a volunteer fair for students to explore service opportunities on and off campus, such as volunteer work for soup kitchens or shelters.

"Our events give people from all different communities in the college to meet and share one common space, a very rare opportunity as most club events are interest-based," said Shyti. "This allows people to get to know each other in a setting that would not have been possible online or at any other event."

Fall comes to an end after campus life returned in full swing post-COVID shutdown. /Kaylin Guzman
Growing Together, The Brothers Of Kappa Sigma

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief

Finding lifelong bonds is no easy feat. But for members of the Kappa Sigma Pi-Phi chapter at Brooklyn College, looking after one another is at the core of their brotherhood. From working in philanthropic initiatives like the Military Heroes Campaign, to pushing another to pursue their professional and personal goals, the BC chapter remains steadfast in helping members grow and better themselves.

“That’s the thing that really matters to Kappa Sigma is just how do you want to grow. With all of us having that same kind of desire, even if it varies in what it looks like - what are own definition of success looks like - we all want that;” said Travis Matos, the chapter’s second vice president. “It’s like how can we get there, how can we get each other to get there.”

Stretching across states in the United States and Canada, Kappa Sigma is currently one of the largest fraternities globally. Since 2009, when the Pi-Phi chapter began at Brooklyn College, members have worked to uplift each other through their four pillars of scholarship, leadership, fellowship, and service, according to Matos. Housed in BC’s Newman Catholic Center on Glenwood Road, the chapter works to serve each of its members, including its 15 pledges, or students committed to joining their fraternity.

Through a Greater Cause, a philanthropic body of Kappa Sigma, the BC brothers have also contributed to volunteer and charity work. Collectively, all fraternity members have completed over 4.7 million hours of volunteering and raised about $22 million in donations for several causes, according to the organization’s official website.

In a recent trip to Washington DC, the Pi-Phi brothers joined an ongoing tradition of paying respects to fallen soldiers in the Arlington National Cemetery and honoring living veterans. Working with Veterans Moving Forward, a non-profit that provides service dogs and other resources to veterans, they remain aligned with their veteran cause. Once they returned to their home base in Brooklyn, the members continued their efforts through a charity flag football tournament in Prospect Park.

“There’s a lot of veterans that go unnoticed. They go to seek out help, they don’t get it. And these are people who put their life on the line to defend the country;” said Matthew Roman, the chapter’s president.

Despite running with the momentum of their philanthropic work and personal pursuits of better futures today, the Pi-Phi chapter underwent a dead zone during COVID. At the cusps of the pandemic, membership was dwindling, eventually leaving one member to keep the chapter alive.

“At one point, it was just me - just me;” said Simeon Karakatsiotis, the chapter’s first vice president and BC Greek Council’s vice president. With recruitment limited to online, Karakatsiotis struggled to find members who were willing to join him in re-envisioning and revising Pi-Phi. That is until one fateful day when the BC community was gradually returning to campus, he came across Travis Matos, a former high school colleague. Jointing forces with another friend, Sami Akhtar, the trio planned for a chapter that would exceed their present challenges.

“...And to quote one of our brothers, we want to bring a traditional college experience to a commuter college world;” said Karakatsiotis. Once they met Roman, and saw he was a natural leader in his own right, the wheels began churning and led the chapter to have its plans come to fruition. “I’m happy to say that no matter how low you go, you’ll always have a chance to rise up, as long as you have a dream to get there and the willpower to get it done;” Karakatsiotis said.

Though he joined the fraternity this past spring, Roman was elected president soon after. Since becoming part of Kappa Sigma, he has noticeably become one of the driving forces that led the organization to its strong standing today with a record-high 15 pledge count. Being 31 years old and a non-traditional pre-med student with experience coaching football and navigating through different colleges, Roman has taken his lessons learned and shared them with his fraternity peers.

“We are all ride or die;” said Roman. “When I joined and I became president, the one thing I really wanted to emphasize and try to portray to all the brothers and all the pledges was [that] I was trying to provide them with the college experience that I never got.”

Providing support, all while having the backing of the Kappa Sigma’s nationwide networking, Roman and each of the other members have been able to live out.

“Once you graduate, we want to make sure you’re set - you have a good job and become financially independent;” Roman said. “I know without a shadow of a doubt, I wouldn’t have made any other choice if given the opportunity because I am set for life.”

In committing themselves to grow together, the Pi-Phi chapter has also ensured that hazing and other dangerous initiations for members do not exist within their collective. Through My Brother’s Keeper, a program that encourages members to keep one another accountable for any wrongdoing, the Pi-Phi brothers have vowed to be a “completely different side of Greek life,” according to Roman.

“Hazing has no place in this chapter, hazing has no place in this fraternity, hazing has no place in Brooklyn College;” he said. “We would be one of the first ones to speak up about that because of how strongly we feel that new members should be treated in an organization like this.”

Though faces within the chapter’s leadership will change over time as members graduate, the bonds they are currently cultivating will remain intact well beyond their undergraduate run.

“These are the people I want to spend the rest of my life with;” Karakatsiotis said. “These are the people I want to invite to my wedding, that I want to introduce to my child. These are the people I want to invite to a barbeque and just be reconnecting over a good meal.”
Phi Sigma Chi, CSU Celebrate Diversity in Multicultural Night

By Michela Arlia
Managing Editor

Brooklyn College’s Phi Sigma Chi fraternity and Caribbean Student Union teamed up to co-host a multicultural night packed with food, live music, and live performances on Nov. 17 to highlight and celebrate the diversity that radiates on campus.

The two main cultures represented at the event were Caribbean and Desi heritages. Performances by CSU, the Desi Cultural Club, and Phi Sigma Chi’s National Stroll Team, an organized line dance created by Greek life chapters, allowed attendees an exciting experience into cultural performances and customs.

“This is a continuous event that the chapter at Brooklyn College hosts as a way to support our national philanthropy mission of multicultural awareness,” said Mohammad Tusar, the fraternity’s vice president, citing the organization’s goals and motivation for the event.

As performances were set up like a fashion show runway, each student performer walked down dancing to a song of their choice while dressed in traditional garments from their cultures.

“CSU invited us to wear traditional Desi attire,” said Stella Matthew, co-president of the Desi Club, noting the clothing is typically worn in celebrations like weddings and religious get-togethers.

“At our Desi Night event last semester, which is like our spring formal, everyone who attended wore traditional Desi clothes, so many of our pictures from the event showcase that. The outfits were owned by the individual models.”

CSU president Gabrielle Huggins noted that the event was the first time that the Desi Club modeled their cultural garments for a CSU event. Other students from the Caribbean also showcased their traditional style.

“Some had more modest costumes and others had more revealing,” said Huggins. “Music also played a big part in representing their individual islands… We wanted them to feel comfortable and have fun at the same time and they looked amazing!”

Almost all of the Caribbean Islands were represented, including Trinidad, Jamaica, Panama, Barbados, Guyana, and the Bahamas. Student participants had full creative control over the ways they wished to represent their native cultures, from outfits, to performance style, to music choice.

For Matthew, the sense of community and being able to learn from one another’s cultural customs as students make BC’s diverse representation of students special.

“Cultural diversity is something to be celebrated because there are so many factors in the world that can be divisive, but when we look to our unique cultures, we can see the differences and similarities between them,” said Matthew. “Seeing the joy or pure emotion in peoples’ faces when they partake in their culture and share it spreads those same emotions and can unite us despite our differences.”

Tusar explained the main goal of the night was to highlight New York City’s diversity and how it affects the diverse experiences on BC’s campus.

“I believe it’s important to celebrate the cultural diversity at BC because this is what makes us great,” Tusar said. “We have a rich variety of cultures on campus. Diversity and multiculturalism is the fabric of what this city is made up of.”

Huggins expressed the importance of events, such as the multicultural night, for students on campus, so they are reminded that there is always a place where they can feel they belong and feel comfortable being themselves.

Phi Sigma Chi, CSU, and the Desi Club all have events lined up for the spring semester, including financial literacy workshops, Holi festivals, and the annual CSU week.
Not many people in their 20s can say that they own and manage a restaurant all while working on obtaining a college degree. For Brooklyn College senior Tawhid Elahi, however, he is doing just that. His restaurant, Curry In Handi, offers authentic Indian cuisine with a typically unheard-of component: a halal bar.

"Owning a business is definitely something I've always wanted to do, but I didn't think it would actually happen this early on in my life," Elahi told The Vanguard.

Elahi's initial vision of owning a restaurant ensued this past summer when his brother and brother-in-law offered him the opportunity to join their team and help build the restaurant from the ground up. The 20-year-old was eager to take part in the endeavor and instantly began developing different ideas on how they could make the restaurant as successful as possible, which is where the concept of a halal bar came into play. "Halal" is the Arabic word for "permissible.

Consuming alcohol is not allowed in several religions, including Islam, and some people would rather opt for an alcohol-free option.

"I was thinking, you know, people want to do stuff like pop a bottle of champagne at a wedding or party or drink a glass of wine to feel elegant, but they don't want to bring alcohol into the mix," said Elahi. "So I wanted to bring a new thing that most people haven't heard of and create a halal bar that has drinks that mimic alcoholic drinks but don't actually have any alcohol in them."

Curry In Handi partners up with a company called Halal Wine Cellar to stock their shelves with bottles of non-alcoholic wine. There are a variety of wines available at the restaurant; some of the bottles originally contained alcohol, but were chemically fermented out in order to eliminate the presence of alcohol in the beverages. Other bottles are organic and are not made with any alcohol at all.

Apart from wine and champagne, the restaurant also offers fun, classic drinks on the menu like mojitos, piña coladas, and blue lagoon cocktails. The restaurateur even uses dry ice to jazz up the drinks and give them a fog and smoking effect. As a Muslim, it is important to Elahi that he gives fellow Muslims a chance to have fun and drink with their friends in a way that doesn't compromise their values or religion.

"Our drinks have 0.0 percent presence of alcohol in them. A lot of places illegally show zero percent presence of alcohol in their drinks, but they actually have like 0.025 or 0.05 percent of alcohol in them," Elahi said. "The halal bar is definitely one of my favorite parts of the restaurant because I think it's the first restaurant to explicitly display a halal bar in the U.S., and that's really cool."

In the heart of Bushwick, Elahi's restaurant has all things Indian food, from chicken tikka masala to lamb biryani to naan bread. One of Elahi’s main goals is to celebrate the Indian culture inside his restaurant. Other than the large spread of Indian cuisine present at the restaurant, Indian music plays in the background as guests enjoy their meals.

Although the restaurant has seen great success after only having been open for four months now, Elahi and his partners faced struggles along the way. "I've definitely faced a lot of financial and emotional stuff with the restaurant. Owning a restaurant is not cheap and we weren't sure we were going to make much revenue right away," Elahi said.

Another speed bump Elahi hit was when the construction team he was originally supposed to work with fell through, so he had to find another team on short notice.

Balancing school while owning and managing a business is also not an easy task. Elahi explained that the key is compartmentalizing and making school and work priorities on different days; he scheduled and attends his classes at BC twice a week, leaving the rest of the week open for him to look after the restaurant and enjoy some free time.

"It is hard to balance, but I think it's possible," said Elahi. "I love what I do so much that it doesn't even feel like work sometimes. Like the other day, I went to do something at the store and I ended up working a whole shift." He highlighted that when you invest your own money into something, you always want to give it your all.

Elahi emphasized that the use of Instagram and other social media platforms is imperative to getting the word out there about the restaurant. He noted that utilizing the halal bar as the restaurant's angle and making it "Instagrammable" has paid off since most people have never even thought about the possibility of a halal bar. The restaurant's posts and videos have gotten many views and likes, along with many others posting about their trips to the restaurant. Several popular accounts have also posted about Curry In Handi on their social media, such as @muslimfoodies and @thehalalguys on Instagram.

When he graduates from BC at the end of this fall semester, Elahi wants to focus on getting into real estate investment, along with continuing to invest time into Curry In Handi.

"My goal is to make sure all our guests are actually happy and are smiling when they leave our restaurant," Elahi said.
BA-MD Academic Club Hosts Lecture With National Institutes Of Health Director

By Haritha Lakshmanan  
Staff Writer

The BA-MD Academic Club hosted its second annual distinguished lecture on Wednesday, Nov. 16, titled “The View from NIH: Many Challenges, Many Opportunities.” Dr. Lawrence Tabak, the current director of the National Institutes of Health, was the event’s guest speaker.

Through the event, the BA-MD Academic Club wanted to share the opportunity of getting to hear from leaders in the healthcare and science disciplines with other students. “The purpose of this event was to introduce our student community to highly successful members of the scientific and medical field and provide them with the opportunity to learn from and interact with Dr. Tabak,” said Robert Adler, the club’s president and a BC senior.

The BA-MD Academic Club is made up of students and alumni from the college’s Coordinated BA-MD Program, an eight-year program that pipelines BC students to the Downstate Medical Center’s College of Medicine after their undergraduate years. Collectively, members host events and provide support for pre-med students looking to further their understanding of medicine.

Before beginning the lecture, introductions were given by Brooklyn College leaders Benjamin Stewart, Director of Pre-Health Professions, Dr. Peter Tolias, Dean of the School of Natural and Behavioral Sciences, and Dr. Todd Galitz, Vice President for Institutional Advancement.

Dr. Tabak later spoke over Zoom about his journey to success from his start at the City College of New York, where he graduated in 1972, to his career at the NIH directorship. Through failure, mentorship, and trial and error, Tabak described how his obstacles along the way contributed to his success.

Notably, he mentioned his transition from SUNY Buffalo to a professor without tenure at the University of Rochester. He explained that he made the move because of the prospects the University of Rochester had at the time. “It would have been easy for me to stay at SUNY Buffalo, but I wanted to be somewhere stronger,” he said. Tabak later became the University of Rochester’s senior associate dean for research and professor of dentistry and biochemistry & biophysics. Along his journey, he realized that he enjoyed teaching and giving back, leading to his ascent towards the NIH leadership position.

“My favorite part of the event was hearing Dr. Tabak reflect on his journey and the people that impacted him with so much passion and thankfulness.” Shrividhya Babu, junior and club connector of the club.

Tabak himself stated that he hopes to be a symbol of hard work for students, and many students seemed to agree with that statement throughout the event. “It was very inspiring to see firsthand that a fellow CUNY alum can achieve amazing successes and be a leader in science and healthcare,” said Tasneem Ibrahim, BC senior and vice-president of the BA-MD Academic Club.

While club members admitted they were initially worried about the turnout for the event, they were pleasantly surprised by the number of students outside the club who showed up. “Ensuring a strong turnout was definitely one of our biggest goals. We conducted a lot of outreach with various clubs, the Cancer Center and with the School of Natural and Behavioral Sciences,” said Gabriel Cruz, a senior at BC and the club’s secretary. “We were very happy to see such a great turnout from all over the Brooklyn College community.”

Many students appreciated the question and answer session that followed Dr. Tabak’s lecture. “My hope is that students will take away the understanding that healthcare is more than just becoming a member of the profession. Their own path is as important individually as it is to the many other pieces that make the medical art an invaluable part of the health of humanity,” Stewart said.

The BA-MD Academic club hopes to continue bringing inspirational leaders in healthcare and medicine to speak with the Brooklyn College community. They hope to have more distinguished lectures in the future where more students will be able to attend.
Review: ‘F*cking A’ Reveals America’s Potentially Doomed Future

By Samia Afsar
Arts Editor

Be prepared to reflect on the possibly soon-to-be disastrous reality America could become in BC Theater Department’s "F*cking A," a play written by Suzan-Lori Parks and directed by Brooklyn College alum Dennis A. Allen II.

With a stage transformed into the Wild West where a cell attached to a cabin-like house is decorated with kitsch decor, the play appeared to take place in an almost apocalyptic, dystopian society. However, "F*cking A," which opened on Nov. 18 in the Claire Tow Center, was intended to take place in the near future in "a small town, in a small country, in the middle of nowhere."

The play, which was inspired by the novel "The Scarlet Letter" written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, revolves around Hester Smith (Susan Myburgh), a hardworking and committed mother who once worked at the mayor’s house before her son, Boy Smith (Ebenezer Adjei), was caught stealing. As punishment, Boy was sent to prison in his youth, and Hester was forced to become an abortionist - a profession that is heavily relied upon and equally ostracized in this "fictional" world.

In fact, in the world of the play, women have created their own language called "Talk," which was utilized whenever mentioning topics related to sexuality and or fertility. When spoken, translations to this dialect were projected directly onto the borders of the stage itself, ironically illuminating the societal taboo that has been constructed around such subjects.

As time goes on, Hester is seen saving and scraping by in order to gather enough money to pay the "Freedom Fund" for her son’s release. But since Boy constantly has "bad behavior," his dues are forever increasing, making his release seemingly unattainable throughout the entirety of the play.

In order to get by, Hester is often helped by her most trusted friend and the mayor’s mistress, Canary Mary (Nathaelle Denis), who regularly gifts Hester gold coins given to her by the mayor.

Hester’s love interest and the town’s butcher’s (Michael Adrian Burgos) daughter was also imprisoned for criminal offenses such as speaking when not spoken to, drinking, daydreaming, and masturbating. The list goes on and on, quite literally, with Burgos’ character having a five-minute-long monologue listing all of her crimes. He also aids Hester by delivering butchered meat for her to eat and blindly becomes an accomplice to some of Hester’s own crimes later in the play.

All of this and much more goes on while an escaped prisoner known as "Monster," infamous for his heinous crimes, is on the loose.

As brilliant as Parks’ writing is, especially when considering its relevancy in today’s political climate with the US Supreme Court overturning the Roe v. Wade legislation that made access to an abortion a federal right in the United States, it truly was the theater department’s acting that stole the show; specifically Susan Myburgh’s performance as Hester Smith.

Hester’s character is one that is full of vengeance, motherly love, and bravery, but more importantly, a character that Myburgh played with such passion that her performance transformed patrons into such a deep and vivid sense of suspension of disbelief. Personally, I found myself forgetting that Myburgh is in fact not Hester Smith.

Myburgh powerfully streamed the audience through her journey as an abortionist, ashamed of her career, yet fully convinced that it is the only way to free her son so eloquently that she enabled the theatergoers to truly reflect on and arise much-needed change in today’s social and political climate.

The department’s adaptation of "F*cking A" was one that had audience members laughing, crying, nervous, and engrossed, leaving onlookers with much to contemplate on their way home.
You Can’t Spoil ‘The Crown’— We Know The Ending

By Michela Arlia
Managing Editor

How do you spoil something that follows a current event timeline? That is exactly the question I asked myself at the thought of reviewing the season five release of Netflix’s hit “The Crown.”

I had so much anticipation for what was to come in the new season, and told everyone I wanted no spoilers, until I came to realize the entire storyline has already been spoiled.

The binge-worthy drama on the streaming service follows the royal family in Britain under the now late Queen Elizabeth II’s reign. While the partly truthful and dramatized retelling of events follows the family since the Queen’s take over of the throne in 1952, season five reels audiences into the 1990s amidst attempts at a “modern” monarchy.

In just 10 episodes, viewers are taken through the painful “Annus Horribilis” of Queen Elizabeth, the scandalous separation and divorce of the Prince and Princess of Wales, Charles and Diana, and the common theme of struggling to marry into not just a family, but a system.

As a fiend for anything with a royal trace, I have indulged in this series for years now and still am learning so many intricate details about this family, whether they be true or not. Watching only solidified one recurrig thought I’ve had all this time – the newly instated King Charles is a terrible human being. While the show is scripted and draws on most of the factual events from this timeline, I still find it hard to believe that the way Charles’ character is written as anything of an exaggeration.

One thing about the series was my shock at where they chose to end it. I made the assumption going into this with the belief that the season would culminate in Diana beginning her involvement with Dodi Fayed, her last partner at the time of her death and son of the owner of Harrods, a high class department store in London. Instead, Dodi is set to marry another woman, and Diana begins a strange yet father-daughter-like relationship with Dodi’s father, Mohamad Al-Fayed.

It came across as a cliffhanger, but to a story we are all knowledgeable about how it ends. Spoiler alert: Princess Diana dies. Unless you’ve been living in seclusion for years on end, this “spoiler” comes as no surprise.

We will never know just how accurate the events behind closed doors are, but there still is no reason to believe that anything new about this family can be uncovered by the plotline of the show. So if we all are aware of the chain of events, and we all know what is to eventually become of these real-life-turned-semi-fictional characters, why do we obsess over the entity that is “The Crown?”
By Samia Afsar
Arts Editor

The holidays are an exceptionally exciting time for members of Brooklyn College’s Conservatory of Music, with numerous ensemble performances throughout the months of November and December. One of this season’s first concerts was held on Wednesday, Nov. 23 to highlight the Conservatory Winds Ensemble with adjunct lecturer and winds ensemble director, Thomas Oberle, as its conductor.

Held at the Claire Tow Theater for the first time this semester, patrons happily packed much of the empty seats, eagerly awaiting the ensemble’s performances. And after a welcome address by Oberle, followed by a brief introduction of the ensemble’s first piece given by one of the Conservatory’s members, the performers kicked off the event with their recital of “American Faces” composed by David R. Holsinger. Being a quite fun and upbeat piece, “American Faces” was intended to display and celebrate America’s pioneering spirit, honoring the array of faces that make up the United States. Although beautifully executed by the ensemble, I couldn’t help but find similarities between Holsinger’s composition and the opening credits to “The Simpsons.” Perhaps, Holsinger’s quirky mode of instrumental storytelling is to blame, but even so, it served as an excellent introduction to the night’s event.

The ensemble’s performance of “Prayer of St. Gregory” composed by Alan Hovhaness followed immediately after, spotlighting Conservatory member Ryan Martin on the trumpet. With the percussion section generating sounds mimicking a hammer to a nail paired with the overall medieval tone of the piece, “Prayer of St. Gregory” was a confusing transition from “American Faces,” but nevertheless one that radiated much passion and love.

Oberle oftentimes walked around the stage exchanging smiles and pats on the backs for the ensemble members. A selection from Tim Burton’s “The Nightmare Before Christmas” was performed next and was an eminent directorial choice to recite following Halloween. Immediately after, the ensemble broke for a 15-minute intermission where Conservatory members eagerly yet patiently walked off stage to hug and greet their families and loved ones.

Following the intermission, Oberle lightheartedly joked about conducting an ensemble where the intermission is longer than the concert itself before thanking again the patrons for attending and being there to support the Conservatory of Music.

The winds ensemble later performed “First Suite in E-Flat Major” composed by Gustav Holst, where the instrument players were truly able to capture the listener’s attention. Collectively, they invited and encouraged their audience to listen to the story as it unfolded with each rise and fall in its melody.

“Bugler’s Holiday” composed by Leroy Anderson followed immediately after and was primarily performed by Aziza Cazaubon, Alex Colasanti, and Ryan Martin on the trumpet. As an extremely upbeat and joyous melody, the ensemble’s performance of “Bugler’s Holiday” was one that shifted the theater’s overall mood from post-school and work tiredness to a room filled with big happy hugs and tender smiles.

As the event came to a close, the ensemble’s last performance consisted of music from the 2004 Disney movie, “The Incredibles,” and being a family favorite, this specific performance truly entrapped the entire theater with audience members longing for more.

After one final bow, Oberle wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving, thanked patrons one final time for attending, and urged audience members to attend the winds ensemble’s next concert which will be held in the spring.
Opinion: What Games Mean To Us

By Shea Stevenson
Staff Writer

When describing ancient Mesoamerican ball games, a teacher of mine once said that they were "intensely religious, ritualistic games" and that "the players wore garments resembling animals, perhaps to embody their characteristics." This moment has stuck with me because, beyond the exoticized language, that's American sports.

I don't mean in the snide "people like their teams so much it's a religion" way, but that by any definition of the word "ritual," all American sports are steeped in pseudo-secular ritualism. Sacred realgia (jerseys, facepaint), repetitious mass chanting, and that "the players wore garments to embody the spirit of a bulldog? Perhaps not.

And if future archaeologists dredge New York from the ocean floor, how might they interpret Yankee Stadium? How about the thousands of gyms, some dedicated to a single sport? How about these grass diamond baseball fields carved into otherwise towering grayness? How about the concrete piers by the promenade, massive slabs laid overtop of the most ancient blood vessel of the city, dedicated entirely to basketball courts?

We as archeologists would assume that these structures must have religious significance. So much space and tax dollars are put into the construction and upkeep of these stadiums that there's no way people would just... do this, right? But archaeologists of the future will be smarter than that. They will look upon our sprawling sports fields, and our million-dollar courts, and they will say, "these people liked games." Even if we think we don't.

In American culture, games don't matter. If something is "just a game to you," you don't care about it. Yet if there's one thing that humans resoundingly do care about, it's games. For as long as we've left traces of existence, we've played games, and to think that cavemen weren't playing things around as complex as we do now is unimaginative. We're just cavemen in office clothes, and that cavemen weren't playing games, and to think that cavemen weren't playing things around as complex as we do now is unimaginative. We've just cavemen in office buildings. Games, like all forms of art, are apparently a human necessity.

Perhaps it's the segmentation that Americans perform between "sport" and "game." Though a game is meaningless, a sport is important. Many people dedicate their entire lives to sports and never play them professionally. It's a multi-billion dollar industry. It's an American institution! That's the crux of the repulsion many sports fans feel when that distinction is challenged: a sport can be serious, but a game can't.

Checkers is a game, football is a sport. If sports and games are indistinguishable, then what are we doing? Their mistake is to think that if football is a game in the same way that checkers is, football doesn't matter. But no: checkers matters just as much as football if enough people watch it. It's not the game itself, but the social experience.

It's a widely held belief that in order to be a proper "sport," you have to fulfill some invisible requirement for physical exertion. This is a tool to separate different sorts of game enjoyers. Though a football coach and Chess master may teach at the same university, they would never be put in the same department. We've decided that they are cut from different cloths.

But imagine a game where, for ninety percent of it, you are playing checkers. As you do, a team of people are in position to play football. Every once in a while, you do something in checkers that requires the people on the field to play two minutes of football, then they stop, and the checkers start again. Is this a sport? Is ten percent running around, ninety percent waiting and thinking? Of course not. We have unlimited uses of the word.

Such a linguistic shift may aid in this asymmetric divide between game players. The idea that football is categorically totally different to a board game like Settlers of Catan is fictitious. We all need to wisen up to the fact that we are built to love games of all sorts.

They all mean something, they are each worth our time, so long as we experience them in good company.

"Games, like all forms of art, are apparently a human necessity."
Opinion: Holistic Versus Conventional Medicine

By Delasia Vanterpool
Staff Writer

You always have “the talk” about what is better for personal treatments and health, either holistic healthcare or popping pills. Some have different views as to what medicines are the best, but I prefer holistic.

Holistic Healthcare focuses on prevention and treats the problem in due time. Meanwhile, prescribed medication relieves the pain for that particular period of time and could lead to a dependency on the drug. Plants have been shown as effective in treating various conditions, including cancer, memory deficit and Alzheimer’s, atherosclerosis, diabetes, and other cardiovascular diseases, as reported by the National Library of Medicine.

Antioxidant activities of herbal medicines are effective in reducing the toxicities of toxic agents or other drugs. You can incorporate herbs, vegetables, fruits, and spices such as cloves, cinnamon, peppermint, oregano, thyme, and other ingredients, all dried and ground, in your daily regimens or meals. Clove has the highest antioxidant value and helps contain nutrients, protect against cancer, kill bacteria, improve liver health, regulate blood sugar, promote bone health, and may reduce stomach ulcers, as reported by the Nutrition Journal and St. Johns Health.

Despite its benefits, herbal medicines can cause kidney failure and liver damage in some consumers because they contain toxic chemicals, heavy metals, or react harmfully with other drugs, a study has found. They may also produce negative effects such as allergic reactions, constipation, rashes, asthma, headaches, and other side effects.

What I love to do every morning, besides drinking 16 oz of water, is to prepare an oatmeal breakfast with blueberries, strawberries, bananas, and a pinch of cinnamon to top it off. You can also accommodate your breakfast meal with a side of yogurt or a watermelon papaya smoothie.

I have also tested out making the sclera part of my eyes bright or fixing the yellow stains that affect my sclera’s appearance. Before I share the medicine I found to cure this, I would like to say the yellow stains that could develop on your sclera don’t have a major effect on your eye health, it is simply known as yellow pigmentation or pinguecula. Studies have shown the “majority of those affected” are people of color due to the overproduction of melanin, their environment, and the diet they consume on a regular basis, according to an article by NVision Centers.

I just found this article to be very interesting because, arguably, the communities of color are put into are designed to Splendor of Youth.

As mentioned before, holistic healthcare looks at the overall wellness of the patient. This includes any possible imbalances, such as issues with mental health and diet, and discussion on how to level out imbalances. For holistic practitioners, environmental and emotional influences are factors equally important to the well-being of a patient as physical components.

Meanwhile, conventional medicine looks at physical components, such as corporeal symptoms and genetics, for the causes of illness. A conventional doctor prescribes drugs and medicine that are tested and approved by experts in the relevant field. Since conventional medicine follows symptom-based therapy lines, these are fast-acting. In emergency cases, time makes a difference between life and death, and modern drugs can save lives in critical situations, according to Splendor of Youth.

Both systems have their own way of handling or curing ailments that bring harm to the human body, but it is up to the individual how they will treat their own body. Long-term or short-term treatments can both have a major impact on your health for better or for worse.

Antioxidants like calcium, magnesium, grape seed extract, and other ingredients. Using this formula, I have truly found a difference in my eye health. I don’t have to hurt my eyes with eye drops anymore, I don’t wake up with any redness in my eyes, and this saves me money. Plus, I know that this will get twice the work done thanks to the organic ingredients they have provided me within each veggie capsule compared to sterilized water.

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WOMEN’S BASKETBALL BOUNCES BACK

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

The women’s basketball team had a tough start to their season. Coming off of a successful campaign last fall, the Bulldogs started this year by dropping three of their first four contests. Heading into this week, Brooklyn boasted an unimpressive 1-3 record. How did they fare heading into December?

On Monday, Nov. 28, the Bulldogs secured their second win after trouncing Rutgers-Newark. Brooklyn allowed the Scarlet Knights to jump out to a 23-22 first quarter lead. It looked as though Brooklyn could fall for their fourth straight loss. But the Bulldogs refused to back down. Brooklyn outscored Rutgers 61-36 over the following three quarters and finished the game with a win. Sophomore Mary Dolgin led the team with 17 points coming off the bench, while senior Nancy Pham scored 11 points and recorded 13 rebounds. The Bulldogs made sure to leave no points on the table, scoring 16 second-chance points.

After a convincing victory on Monday, the Bulldogs hosted NYU on Wednesday Nov. 30. NYU came into the contest ranked number 3 in the nation for Div. III. Brooklyn had their hands full all night with the Violets. After all was said and done, Brooklyn lost 49-87. The Bulldogs could not stop NYU, allowing 21 points off of turnovers. Senior guard Gianna Gotti was the only Bulldog to score double digits, recording 10 points.

On Saturday, Dec. 3, Brooklyn hosted Drew University. Brooklyn jumped out to a seemingly insurmountable lead with the score standing 32-8 in their favor at one point. Despite the strong start, Brooklyn began to crumble. Drew University chipped away at the lead, and stormed all the way back to take the lead after a 21-point run to start the second half. Brooklyn never recovered. Drew won the game 63-46 on the back of a 43-point second half. Senior forward Elisha Park and sophomore guard David McFadden led the team with 11 points each; they were the only Bulldogs to score double digits.

Despite the loss, junior Anastasia Kutuzova led the Bulldogs in the 200 yard individual medley, garnering nine points with a time of 2:23.33. Kutuzova didn’t stop there. She led in the 100 yard breaststroke in 1:14.28.

Sophomore Monica Prado Capon also made splashes, bringing in nine points to Brooklyn’s total with her performance in the 500 yard freestyle.

When it came to the 200 yard freestyle relay, four Bulldogs secured 11 points together against the host. Brooklyn will hit the water again on Jan. 5 against Lehman, where the team will open their conference play.

On Tuesday, Dec. 6 at Drew University. They will have a chance to even their record at 4-4.

MEN’S BASKETBALL KEEPS LOSING

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief

After their second consecutive loss, the Bulldogs returned to the pool at William Paterson University on Saturday, Dec. 3. Coming off two losses this fall, the women’s swimming and diving team looked to take home a win before 2022 ended. But they dropped their non-conference matchup 70-95, leaving them wireless.

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This week was a gloomy one for the men’s swimming and diving team. Since beating their host Sarah Lawrence College on Nov. 12, the Bulldogs have struggled to land another win. Brooklyn’s most recent meet against William Paterson University on Saturday, Dec. 3 pushed the team 1-2. Falling to Pioneers 57-83, the Bulldogs came short of an end-of-year win.

Though the scoring was not in their favor, the Bulldogs shined in some of their performances. Adding 11 points to their scoreboard, the BC swimmers dominated the 200 yard medley relay with Max Bratkovsky, Devin Boodha, Christian Hoyek, and Ronaldo Barrios. The quartet beat the Pioneers in points, leaving them with only four.

The win there, however, did not suffice for Brooklyn’s total score sheet. Despite being outmatched in most races by the host, some Bulldogs showed out. Devin Boodha landed first in the 100 yard freestyle with a 51.56 finish. Fellow BC swimmer Max Bratkovsky led in the 100 yard breaststroke.

After their second consecutive loss, the Bulldogs will swim again on Jan. 5 against Lehman.
Esports Come to Brooklyn College, Attract Many Students

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

There’s a new team at Brooklyn College that is already making waves. You won’t find them on the Brooklyn College Athletics web page, but the Brooklyn College Esports team is up and running at full speed.

The Esports and Gaming Club became fully operational this semester after the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated a need for virtual athletics.

“It is a COVID proof sport,” the club’s president and founder Xander Raff told The Vanguard. For those who are unaware, Esports is competitive gaming. Teams compete in a wide range of video games, from anything like Super Smash Brothers to League of Legends. It is a newer sport, which seems to be all the rage on campus.

After starting with around 40 members, the club ballooned to 370 members currently on their Discord. As for the Esports club itself, there are two teams: a League of Legends and a Valorant team. There are 17 competitors in total, with eight on the League team and nine on the Valorant. Despite only being one semester old, both teams have exceeded expectations.

“We are competing at a Division I level,” Raff stressed. This past week Brooklyn’s Valorant team competed in the National Esports Collegiate Conference’s Metropolitan Division semi-finals. Their opponents were the no.1 ranked Montclair St. CyberHawks, who were as intimidating as their name suggests. Earlier this season, they smashed the Bulldogs, winning in convincing fashion. Brooklyn had their work cut for them, but never backed down. The Bulldogs defeated the CyberHawks and punched their ticket to the finals on Dec. 5.

“We are fielding two nationally competitive teams,” Raff explained. “Brooklyn College has an insane natural talent pool.” If it weren’t for Brooklyn’s natural talent, the team wouldn’t be able to sustain itself, especially considering the college’s lack of support.

As of now, the Esports team is a club. It is not a team in the same sense that the basketball and soccer teams are a “team.” There are no official coaches, but Raff acts as coach for both teams and stands as the best player on the League of Legends. “With minimal support you can field a national caliber program,” Raff said. “That not only represents Brooklyn in a positive light but also is a huge draw for students.” Enrollment numbers are down for Brooklyn College. On the flip side, colleges adopting Esports programs are seeing increases in their total enrollment. And according to Raff, budding Esports programs don’t need much.

As of press time, the team asks for 10 to 15 computers, a physical space on campus, and funding for proper coaching. The computers would allow all of the teams to compete at once, and the physical space would allow the team to compete and train together. As of now, they practice and compete from their homes. When it comes to coaching, Raff has been offering his guidance, but he does not have much experience with the game.

“It is like having a football coach come in and coach soccer,” Raff explained.

The Brooklyn College Esports and Gaming Club has had an excellent first semester. Earlier this fall they hosted a Super Smash Bros. tournament which saw over 100 people come out and take part, whether that be competing or just watching. Their two competitive teams have excelled despite lack of support, and they look to expand by the spring. The club will field teams for Smash Bros. and Rocket League among other games.