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THE BROOKLYN COLLEGE

VANGUARD

Spring 2023, Issue 12

vanguard.blog.brooklyn.edu

Wednesday, May 3rd

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TUESDAY: 11 A.M. - 6 P.M.

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BC, CUNY Student Enrollment Remains Low



Courtesy of Kaylin Guzman

By Michela Arlia
Managing Editor

As the end of the spring semester nears, Brooklyn College and the CUNY system still grapple with student enrollment and retention concerns.

The enrollment numbers at BC have continued to decline annually, and even semesterly. Compared to fall 2022 data, the total spring 2023 enrollment numbers have decreased by about 1,000 students. However, with enrollment standing at 13,231 students as of February 2023, it is higher

than the enrollment counts throughout the height of COVID-19 lockdown.

In spring of 2021, just one year following the initial pandemic lockdown, BC saw total enrollment numbers under 10,000, coinciding with campus reopenings and more of a selection for in-class learning.

The numbers have climbed since, but are still not reaching the college's targeted enrollment numbers each semester.

Enrollment and retention at BC has been a longstanding issue, even

before the pandemic. In fall 2019, the last semester to be fully on campus prior to the start of the lockdown, analyses report enrollment being 12,309. With constant fluctuating numbers throughout the semesters in the past four years alone, it has become a struggle for Brooklyn College and CUNY to raise numbers.

At the start of the spring semester however, CUNY reported a win as the university exceeded its re-enrollment numbers for the academic year through CUNY Reconnect. Clocking in at 14,443 students enrolled across all colleges through the program, the university surpassed its 10,000 student re-enrollment goal. CUNY Reconnect, an initiative in which administration contacts students in the CUNY system who were shown to have not completed their degree over a long period of time, allows for individuals to finish their degree of higher

education.

In an effort to boost enrollment from high school graduates for the coming semester, CUNY announced an initiative to waive the \$65 application fee for all high school seniors in the New York City public education system.

“We are trying to motivate seniors who may still be undecided about applying to college to take this important step toward their future at no cost,” wrote CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez in a CUNY Communications press release. “We are also removing a financial roadblock that has deterred many students from applying.”

The fee waiver initiative is a part of CUNY’s newest approach to expand access to higher education. A targeted audience in particular is first-generation college students, immigrants, and working-class Black and Latinx New Yorkers.

Upcoming Events On Campus (May 4 to June 2)

Thursday, May 4th
Project Sunshine
End of the Year Event
Student Center - International Room, 12:15 PM.

YDSA x Union Power
Presentation
Student Center - Hall of Fame Room, 4 PM.

Bulldogs Spring Carnival
West Quad, 12:30 PM to 6:30 PM.

Friday, May 5th
Desi Night
Student Center - Bedford, Amersfort, & Glenwood Rooms, 6 PM to 10 PM.

Thursday, May 11th
Puppy Party
West Quad, 12:00 PM

Friday, May 12th
BC Theater Dept. Presents:
The One Act Festival
The New Workshop Theater, 7:30 PM.
(Show runs through May 15th)

Wednesday, May 17th
Bulldogs Breakfast
Boylan Cafeteria, 10 AM.

Women of Color 10 Year Anniversary
Student Center - Gold Room, 6 PM.

Wednesday, May 11th - Thursday, May 23rd
Finals Week

Thursday, May 23rd
Last Day of Spring 2023 Term

Tuesday, May 30th
Make A Difference Leadership Awards Dinner
Student Center - Gold Room, 6 PM.

Friday, June 2nd
Commencement
Barclays Center, 9 AM.

Got an event?

Send calendar listings to
TheBCVanguard@gmail.com.

Events should be sent at
least one week prior.

Students For Justice In Palestine Protest Israeli Independence Day

By Kate Dempsey
Staff Writer

Protesting chants and calls rang through Campus Road as many students, faculty, and other visitors stopped to stare as they made their way onto campus Thursday, Apr. 27. About 70 people were part of a protest held by the Brooklyn College's Students for Justice in Palestine chapter. The protest, titled the 75-Year Nakba (Arabic word for "catastrophe") Rally, began directly outside of Tanger Hillel, a Jewish community center for Brooklyn College students.

"The goal of this protest is to spread awareness on the genocide, displacement, and ethnic cleansing the Zionists are committing against the Palestinians. We had to let them know there's nothing to celebrate when they have committed nothing but crimes on the Palestinians for 75 years," said Laila Mazhar, president of Students for Justice in Palestine and a sophomore at BC.

Inside the Tanger Hillel building was a celebration of Israel: blue and white balloons adorned the inside of the building, and an abundance of Israeli food was laid out for many to enjoy. Attendees of the Independence Day Fair had access to an inflatable bouncy

castle slide and a photo booth with accessories, all completed with a chance to win a raffle prize. Last year, the celebration took place on the West Quad with SJP protesting outside the college's gates. The day marked when Israel declared its independence in 1948 and created a homeland for Jewish people, a safe haven following the atrocities of the Holocaust, known as the "Shoah" (Hebrew for "catastrophe").

"Today we are celebrating Israeli Independence Day [...] It is very special for us because it's 75 years since the independence and since the declaration of independence," said Allegra Timsit, the head of the Israeli Independence Day Fair Committee and a senior at BC. "And we are the Jewish voice, the Jewish presence on this campus, and it really is very important for us to celebrate where we come from, our home, and having to be able to celebrate."

For Palestinians, however, Israel's independence is clouded by trauma and injustices on their ancestors while being displaced in the process of establishing their homeland. In order for Palestinians to feel solidarity, many feel that the larger BC community needs to acknowledge what the holiday means to Palestinian people.



Students holding the Palestinian flag on campus./Kaylin Guzman

"There's no such thing as Israeli independence," said Jihad Ahsan, secretary of Students for Justice in Palestine. "In fact, it is Palestinian genocide and ethnic cleansing which is continuing to this day."

To religious leaders in Judaism, the protest is a reminder of the injustices experienced by Palestinians, and serves as a call to action to help them.

"By trampling on the rights of an entire people by occupying a lot of people's lands, killing and stealing the lands of others, this compounds the crime against humanity and it's a crime against Judaism, our religion," said Joseph Kohn, a rabbi and speaker at the protest and a member of the Anti-Defamation League. "It's our obligation to speak out against this injustice."

Tensions were high at the protest as many different religious sects argued about

the issue. Phones could be seen recording from the street and from buildings stories above, creating anxiety among participants. NYPD Community Affairs Officers stood by as a precaution. To many, the protest came as no surprise given the protest held last year by Students for Justice in Palestine. For Jewish students at Tanger Hillel, the presumed protest meant taking additional precautions to ensure safety.

"We knew that there was going to be protests, especially seeing what happened last year. It was no brainer. So we always take precautions from before they announce that they were going to protest," explained Timsit. "Everybody has their own free speech. They have their opinion, it is what it is. As much as we would love peace, it's just different perspectives on the issue at hand."

For some members in the BC Israeli community hoping for a resolution to the conflict, open dialogue between the different parties could be the means of achieving greater understanding.

"Everybody has their right to civil protest. I would personally much prefer for them to come in and for us to be able to have a conversation and create

peace and understanding between people," said Sarali Cohen, an engagement associate at Tanger Hill and senior at BC.

As festivities continued inside, many protesters continued to chant at Tanger Hill and walked through campus waving Palestinian flags and wearing traditional Palestinian scarves known as Keffiyehs. Each pattern within the Keffiyeh represents strength, resilience, and perseverance, and serves as a means of creating solidarity between Palestinians through a national symbol.

Both groups waved their flags in the air that day, remembering what their ancestors had to endure in order to do so. Both groups have suffered what has been called a "catastrophe" in their history: "Nakba" for Palestinians and "Shoah" for the Jewish people.

"We also want to make it clear that Brooklyn College, and Brooklyn College students, does not stand with genocide," said Ahsan. "We stand against all forms of hate and oppression against all people. And in this case, this Independence Day is a direct attack against the Palestinian people."



Members of the Jewish community joined the protest against Zionism./Kaylin Guzman

Bring Your Kid To School Day, Children First Hosts Art-tabulous Event



Organizers of the event./Children First Club

By Serin Sarsour
Features Editor

Rather than the typical ‘bring your children to work day,’ Brooklyn College students got to bring their kids to school last Thursday, Apr. 27, to attend Art-tabulous, an arts and crafts event hosted by the Children First Club. With a vast selection of paints and canvases, students and their children got to bond while painting up a storm in the

Student Center on campus. “It’s just rarely that we see students that have the opportunity to bring their kids on campus and do activities together,” said Ashley Hidalgo, the president of the Children First Club. “So we wanted to bring something new to the community and kind of help students engage with their children because they may be working and they don’t have the time to always do that.”

The club operates inside James Hall, and members see first-hand how many BC students bring their children to the daycare center before heading to their classes. From being full-time parents and students who also work to provide for their children, they don’t always get the chance to spend one-on-one time with their kids in a fun and creative setting. The Children First Club was excited to give these students the space to have fun and paint with their kids before the stress of finals ensues.

Students and their children were able to paint frames, canvases, and canvas bags together, as well as participate in finger painting.

One student and mother in particular expressed her gratitude for the Art-tabulous event to Hidalgo.

“There was one mother that brought two of her kids that was very happy that we had this kind of event. She doesn’t see it [this kind of event] at all. She was able to engage with her children. She was really happy, definitely wanted to see more of this on campus,” Hidalgo said.

Although the event was successful with the help of volunteers from other clubs, the Children First Club noted that they struggled with getting the word out since their club is relatively small. About 20 to 25 people ended up attending the arts and crafts event.

“We stand for helping mostly at-risk children and giving children a voice,” said the vice president of the Children First Club, Savannah Kirby. “Our mission is basically to help children. I know it’s a very

flat statement, but that is our mission.”

Before the spring semester comes to an end, the club is doing a hygiene drive for at-risk youth, specifically young girls and LGBTQ youth. As a non-profit organization, the Children First Club wants to raise funds and give them access to necessary hygiene products.

Although Hidalgo will not take on the role of the club’s president next semester, she hopes that whoever takes over will continue to connect BC students with their children on campus in fun times like the Art-tabulous event.

“It’s to help children, youth, adolescents. I guess to also unify them, include them into the space, in general, basically teaching others of issues that are affecting them,” said Hidalgo.

Hochul’s Budget Starts Passing, PSC Plans Another Rally

By Kaylin Guzman
Photo Editor

CUNY continues facing many budget cuts as the governor’s \$229 billion executive budget for the 2024 fiscal year begins to pass with minimal support from elected officials. The progress comes a month late, after the budget deadline was pushed back several times. The Professional Staff Congress, a union that currently represents more than 30,000 CUNY employees, has been actively voicing their opinions on the cuts.

Since 2021, PSC has advocated for the New Deal for CUNY, which aims to make the university tuition-free, as well as improve adjunct pay and working conditions, among other

benefits. In their final push before Hochul’s budget officially passes, they are organizing a rally on May 11 outside City Hall against pending budget cuts and the ongoing hiring freeze, where vacant positions are unable to be filled university-wide.

Most of the public funding for senior colleges at CUNY come from Hochul’s office, while community colleges mostly depend on funding from the city level. On Apr. 27, PSC released a statement where President James Davis attempted to sway Mayor Eric Adams’ recent move towards budget cuts.

“CUNY graduates strengthen the City’s workforce and contribute \$4.2 billion annually to the state economy, most of it here in our city,” wrote Davis. “No university



Rally at City Hall

NO CUTS TO CUNY

Thurs., May 11, 12:30 PM
(Outside City Hall Park, Broadway Side)

RSVP: bit.ly/NoCUNYcuts



The PSC and other organizations are set to rally on May 11./@PSC_CUNY via Twitter

system lifts more students and families out of poverty and into the middle class than CUNY.”

In attempts to reach many of the politicians, the Twitter account for Brooklyn College PSC tags them specifically and lets them know what their intentions are. Budget cuts will be affecting all schools across the CUNY system. The university’s budget has dropped from \$234 million to \$194 million in the fiscal year of 2023.

“The city wants exactly what CUNY needs: restoration of the Mayor’s draconian cuts, funding for desperately needed academic advisors, resources to increase enrollment, and more,” wrote Davis.

Outgoing Prez Aharon Grama Reflects On Time In USG



Courtesy of Aharon Grama

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief

Climbing the ranks in student government and every environment he has found himself in has become synonymous with Aharon Grama's character, the Undergraduate Student Government's outgoing president. Though Grama is set to graduate this May, his legacy and impact on the college's student life will remain.

"I'm really impressed by the way that we [USG] are moving, and I'm hoping that this will be maintained in that way," Grama said.

Grama is a non-traditional student, who joined Brooklyn College back in 2019 through the BC Bound program, which aids those who received a high school equivalency certification to smoothly transition into their undergraduate career. Before returning to his native Brooklyn,

Grama was raised as an ultra-Orthodox Jew in Israel. For years, the innate critical thinker who sought a life beyond the restrictions set around him was isolated from secular living, including secular education. Once he left the life he knew, he served in the Israeli Defense Force, making trips back to the States in the years leading up to his time at Brooklyn College.

"I strongly believe in education, and wanted to get my education – wasn't specifically to Brooklyn College, but just in general, wanted to get an education," he said.

In valuing the educational opportunities he has, Grama wanted to ensure the needs and concerns of his fellow peers were met with problem-solving. Grama's start in student governance came somewhat coincidentally, after he met his predecessor Ethan Milich while he campaigned for USG. Once he joined

Milich's cabinet as chief of staff, Grama began a new chapter unconventionally yet again. His first term in USG coincided with the university's pandemic-induced shutdown. The budding student leader took the move online as an opportunity to reshape and restructure the student government that merged two former entities, CLAS and SGS, into USG.

"Many students did not know what USG is, but it feels different now," said Grama. "It feels like many students know that student government exists, knows that they're over here to support them."

At the height of the pandemic, Grama and his colleagues fought for the credit/no credit policy to be extended for students given the unprecedented circumstances of COVID-19. When the university attempted to implement ProctorTrack, an online proctoring software, Grama began a petition that collected over 30,000 signatures against the decision. Grama and his colleagues asserted that the program infringed on students' privacy, tracking more than their test responses, but their personal history and files as well. CUNY did not move forward with ProctorTrack, and Grama decided not to stop there.

He continued the momentum of Milich's administration and aimed to better organize the University Student Senate, the university's student government. To do so, he joined forces with a powerhouse co-president, now alumna Iqura Naheed. After they won their seats, they boosted the presence of

USG among students and helped the community transition from remote to on-campus learning in 2021.

In the midst of helping student leaders and addressing student concerns in real time, USG flourished into a significant line of support for students on campus. On the backend, college committees where students had seats but were often left vacant without representation in previous years became filled under Grama's terms. Better communication and collaborative efforts with the college's administrators also improved. In handling all the minutiae and major issues that impacted campus, Grama hoped to extend his efforts on a CUNY-wide level. In his stint running for USS chairperson, Grama's goal of becoming a student trustee in the CUNY Board of Trustees, the top-deciding body in CUNY, was cut short. He was disqualified by USS's Elections Review Committee, who alleged he used The Vanguard newspaper for campaign purposes. His removal from the race was followed by disapproval from many student representatives across the university, and a months-long delay to the appointment of a new USS chairperson. For Grama, he learned to accept the loss and keep moving forward.

"It felt really like there was injustice over there. But I learned that I can be stuck in that kind of dimension," said Grama. "Sometimes you need to move on."

Today, Grama also serves as USS's Vice Chair for Senior College, where he advocates for students

enrolled in CUNY's senior colleges. Beside him is USG's second-in-command Carrie Ebbin, who was recently elected to take over as president with her running mate Huda Ayaz.

"They will do great. They care, and they're invested in it. And I feel like that's the most important thing. You wanna have leaders that actually care about it," he said about the newly-elected winners.

Seeing the immense strides and connections he's made with his team, students on campus and beyond, Grama is proud of the work he's accomplished for Brooklyn College. His work in politics is far from over. After considering computer science as his major, Grama settled with philosophy and is looking to study law after BC. Once he becomes a lawyer, he envisions getting a taste of local politics. The innate leader, who manages to turn most no's to yes's for the sake of his community, will continue working at the college after graduation. His drive, detailed organization skills, and dedication to improving student life have set him apart as a student advocate. Now, as he leaves his undergraduate years behind, he'll carry on the lessons and experiences he's garnered at USG. What he'll miss most of all are cabinet meetings with his colleagues.

"It might be boring for many students, but the amount of information that comes inside that meeting, that one meeting, and we get to know exactly everything that moves on, what's the status of what we're working on," he said. "I'm gonna miss that for sure."

Taking Up Space: ISSO Hosts Undocu Student Meetup

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief

In support of the undocumented students and their allies across New York’s high schools and colleges, the Immigrant Student Success Office hosted an Undocu Student Meetup last Tuesday, Apr. 25. Hundreds of students from across the city came to tour Brooklyn College, learn more about advocating for immigrant rights, and find a space to connect with like-minded peers in the Student Center.

“Seeing how we evolved, seeing how we’ve taken up spaces, is admirable and we need to continue pushing for that,” said Leslie Ramirez Carbajal, the ISSO program coordinator at BC, during the event’s closing section.

In collaboration with the New York State Youth Leadership Council, ISSO intended to bring student

leaders to campus and inform them of the lived experiences and advocacy that’s being done on the ground in Dream Teams, or youth groups that fight for immigrants and their needs. For many of the event organizers involved, seeing the next generations of advocates reminded them of how they started.

“I was trying to find my place somewhere in New York, and I got involved through the BMCC [Borough of Manhattan Community College] Dream Team,” Maria Vera, a community organizer at NYSYLC, said during the event. Vera noted that the Dream Team she eventually became the president of was her “safe space on campus.”

With the efforts of Vera, as well as her long-time friend and fellow NYSYLC leader Jackie Muller, BC’s Immigrant Student Success Office gave students the opportunity to connect and

organize for a common goal. At CUNY, only two out of 25 campuses have centers specific to immigrant students: one at John Jay and another at Brooklyn College in Roosevelt 117. For CUNY student leaders outside of these schools, more needs to be done to better support the mental health, academic, legal, and personal needs of immigrant students.

“[...] We need immigrant resource centers on all CUNY campuses,” said Lorena Modesto, a member of City College’s Dream Team, who consistently advocates for a center on her campus. During the pandemic’s peak, CUNY and Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez’s emergency relief grants did not adequately support their undocumented students as many struggled with unemployment, deaths of relatives, and other obstacles, Modesto explained



Some of the participants and organizers who joined the meet up./@issobc via Instagram

at the event.

As undocumented students continue advocating for one another, they will continue strengthening their bonds and bettering the resources available to them at CUNY, high schools, and other institutions.

“Just seeing this sense of community, it’s honestly just amazing to see that we fostered so much creation, so much change, and we

continue to do so,” said Sergio Leon Hidalgo, a BC first-year student and member of the budding Dream Team on campus.

The event closed with visiting students enjoying meals and playing games before departing from BC’s grounds.

BC’s UndocuAllies, Advocates For Immigrant Students

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief

Besides hailing from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, Brooklyn College students also come from different documentation statuses. For those living undocumented, or not having legal residency in the United States, their pursuit of higher education and opportunities are supported by the UndocuAllies of the Immigrant Student Success Office. Through their long-standing committee, professors and staff members from all scopes of the college work together to better support undocumented students.

“It’s great being because there’s an understanding among the UndocuAlly

people that we’re all here to serve and how can we understand each other to help them,” Elise Goldberg, Academic Program Specialist for BC’s Children and Youth Studies, told The Vanguard.

Before there was ISSO, a space for immigrant and first-generation students on campus, there were the UndocuAllies. Carolina Bank Muñoz, a professor of sociology at BC, has been a long-time advocate for immigrant students on campus and the immigrant community overall. Together with other faculty and staff including Jesús Pérez, ISSO’s director, she became one of the several mentors who aided undocumented students over the years. Since becoming a faculty advisor to a group of undocumented

students, Bank Muñoz saw the waves in their advocacy for a resource center and access to the state’s Tuition Assistance Program.

The demands and voices of undocumented students, however, were catalyzed in 2016 with the election of former President Donald Trump. After a town hall, where students vocalized their fears of xenophobic attacks and deportation, Bank Muñoz, Pérez, and others worked to expand the UndocuAllies initiative.

“That was like the next moment where we were like, ‘Wow, we really need to do something, to make sure our students feel like they have a safe space on campus,’” Bank Muñoz told The Vanguard. “And to make sure that the faculty and the

staff on campus are aware of how to work with immigrant students.”

Over the years, in pushing for the creation of ISSO, the group found that BC’s immigrant students “come from everywhere in the world,” according to Bank Muñoz. Once the college was able to receive a donation from BC alum Irwin Federman and his wife Concepcion in 2019, BC’s ISSO launched and became one of two immigrant resource offices across CUNY’s 25 campuses.

Shortly after ISSO opened in Roosevelt 117, COVID-19 hit. In transitioning their mentoring and services online, the UndocuAllies looked for their students, some of who would disappear without a trace.

“It’s scary when that happens because they may have just decided, ‘Okay, that’s it,’” said Goldberg, noting that those students may have un-enrolled. “And they’re doing fine, but you don’t know. You don’t hear from them.”

Despite the challenges that came with remote learning and a global pandemic that impacted undocumented students significantly, the UndocuAllies are looking to continue their work at ISSO for the long run. In their latest collaborative effort, they managed to secure a full-time program coordinator.

“I’m so excited to be teaching in person, and it’s been so nice to be meeting students in ISSO,” said Bank Muñoz.

Budding Dream Team Embraces Immigrant Students On Campus



The BC Dream Team’s club logo./Edited by Gabriela Flores

By Serin Sarsour
Features Editor

In a country where it is difficult for immigrant and undocumented students to attend college and achieve their dreams, Brooklyn College’s Dream Team aims to supply these students with a safe space on campus. “One of our main initiatives for the Dream Team is honestly just to be an open space for undocumented youth and their supporters who just naturally fight for immigrant rights to create a better school, to create a greater campus for immigrant students who are incoming or are present there,” said Sergio Leon Hidalgo, a freshman at BC and a member of the Dream Team. Although the Dream Team is just now making its mark on campus, the idea for this club has been around for a while. Before the original team could really blossom, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the team fell apart. Luckily, the Director of

BC’s Immigrant Student Success Office (ISSO) Jesús Pérez helped bring it back to life and was on a mission to get students to join, including Hidalgo. With additional support from ISSO’s new Program Coordinator Leslie Ramirez Carbajal, the club has received guidance with their social media and how to navigate it. “I think it’s also important because sometimes you do not trust anyone regarding your status or regarding your dreams. So knowing someone whose life or status is similar to yours and share your dreams, like I wanna be a doctor but I don’t know how, but you don’t wanna share that type of stuff with your professor. It’s easier to share that with a fellow student or a fellow club member,” said junior and Dream Team member Emily Villavicencio, noting that the Dream Team is available to listen to and guide immigrant students through college. Both Hidalgo and Villavicencio joined the

Dream Team in hopes of making the transition from high school to college for incoming freshmen less stressful and helping them find a sense of community as soon as they reach campus. “Also, the idea of being able to allow students to feel not ‘othered’ by their campus, being pushed aside and being considered just another group of students. It actually makes students feel like, ‘Hey, we’re actually part of this campus. We are collectively making up this community,’” Hidalgo said, highlighting the importance of having a safe space on campus where immigrant and undocumented students can relate to and identify with one another. A large factor that played into Hidalgo’s decision to attend Brooklyn College was the Immigrant Student Success Office, so he’s excited to be a part of something that goes the extra mile in providing guidance to immigrant students and advocating for

them. “When you’re undocumented, it’s very difficult to open up about your status and what you wanna do with your career because it’s so limited,” said Villavicencio. “It’s just like a sensitive topic that you don’t want to overshare with someone that you might not know, but if we have a safe space within multiple people in different majors and different careers with the same situation that you are in, it will be easier for them to open up.” Hidalgo and Villavicencio also noted that they hope to have a president, vice president, and other representative roles of the club filled soon, who will be at the forefront of leading, speaking out, and advocating for immigrant and undocumented BC students. At the moment, the current members of the Dream Team are trying to promote the club, in search of more members to get involved and be active. Villavicencio and some others are set to graduate

soon, with Hidalgo having more years to come on campus. The Dream Team currently doesn’t have an official space, but they are working with ISSO, so their meetings are usually held in Roosevelt 117. Although the status of the Dream Team is currently unofficial, Hidalgo and Villavicencio are looking forward to what’s to come in the fall after anticipating getting the club officially instated by the end of this semester. With hundreds of freshmen expected to roll in on campus next semester, the Dream Team wants to make it clear to new immigrant students that they are an available and accessible resource for them. “There’s like not a lot of students and the semester is almost over. So definitely during the fall you’ll hear about us a lot and as soon as more students keep coming, I hope we have way more members,” said Hidalgo.

MSA & MWEI Collab On Mental Wellness Event



Participants who joined the discussion on mental health./Jason Lin

By Jason Lin
Staff Writer

Brooklyn College’s Muslim Student Association and the Muslim Women Educational Initiative collaborated to host a panel about relationships and mental health on Apr. 27. Both clubs invited Esra Aslan, a clinical mental health therapist who pursued her undergraduate degree in general psychology at Bridgewater University, and master’s degree in clinical mental health counseling at Eastern Illinois University.

“The main motivation behind this event was to tackle the topic of mental health. As college students, I think we tend to worry about so many things like school work, internships, and work that we push off taking care of ourselves,” said Salma Bari, a BC sophomore and MWEI president.

MSA and MWEI acknowledge the misunderstanding and little recognition of how mental health is crucial

as it can significantly impact a person’s overall well-being and future. Misunderstanding mental health can lead to stigmatization and lacking support for those who need it. Taking care of one’s mental health can improve relationships, increase productivity, and enhance overall life satisfaction. Not tending to mental health needs could lead to depression, anxiety, and other issues.

MSA is a student-led organization that helps Muslim students through education. The members organize events and activities that promote Islamic values and culture, engaging in outreach initiatives to help bridge the gap between different communities in BC.

MWEI offers programs and events that promote education and empowerment. The club’s members also challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslim women, aiming to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for Muslim women at Brooklyn College and beyond.

Aslan came in with patience and calmness to gain everyone’s attention, making small talk with students, who were mostly majoring in psychology, before the event started. When the presentation began, Aslan tried getting participants to engage in activities like answering questions. Those who answered correctly were awarded bracelets.

“Science and religion are taught as two different fields of study. However, Esra Aslan was able to show that we don’t have to disregard one to understand another,”

said Uswai Husna, a junior at BC who is the vice president of MWEI. “Muslim students’ lives revolve around their religion, and asking them to overlook their Islamic values when in a psychology class or any other class is having an adverse effect on the student’s perception of each field.”

“**Science and religion are taught as two different fields of study. However, Esra Aslan was able to show that we don’t have to disregard one to understand another**

Towards the end of the presentation, Aslan suggested self-care tips, with the first being never judging yourself and expanding your perspectives about the

world to build healthy relationships. She noted that one should appreciate themselves for who they are instead of degrading their life because of others’ unappreciation.

Aslan highlighted the importance of always having a sense of awareness towards choices in both words and actions to showcase respect, giving a list containing the “Four Horsemen,” which are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. These four categories are to help self-identify if any conflicts are supported by these definitions. If so, it is a necessary first step to eliminate them and replace them with healthy, productive communication patterns.

“As a young Muslim woman, it was wonderful seeing Esra Aslan come and talk about mental health and marriage. It’s rare to see Muslim representation in psychology, and a woman is even more scarce,” Husna said.



Participants who joined the discussion on mental health./Jason Lin

Journey Through The Underworld: Classics Dept Hosts Gaming Event



Students and Professor Sowers (far right) attended the gaming event. / *Paulina Gajewski*

By Paulina Gajewski
Staff Writer

The Classics Department held a gaming event in the Costas Classics Library, where students traversed to the mythical realm of the underworld, battling over the video game “Hades,” accompanied with food and great company. The gathering on Tuesday, Apr. 25, allowed attendees and professors to provide great insights into the department and its goals.

The game of “Hades” utilizes narrative storytelling as the player takes on the role of Zagreus, son of Hades, who attempts to escape to the mortal realm. The game used classical mythology to inform its plots and characters, and the event was a great way of tying entertainment to the topics and conversations often present in lectures.

The students who attended represented a variety of departments across campus, who either enjoyed their classics classes or decided to pursue a minor in the topic.

Jesse Irizarry, who is

pursuing a B.F.A. in Art, remarked that he enjoyed the “chance to wind down and meet new people.”

Classics can be enjoyed by anyone regardless of their pursuits. Felix Filozov, who double majors in math along with classics, said, “I enjoy learning about classics because of the history of mathematical and scientific innovations.”

The amount of majors and minors in the department is constantly shifting, having periods of stagnation, punctuated by periods of growth. Historically, there has been an ebb and flow in the numbers of majors and minors.

“When I arrived in 2010, we had as many majors and minors as we currently do,” said Classics Professor Brian Sowers. “The college currently is encouraging more students to declare minors. We’re currently in a leaner season.”

The Classics Department is not alone in this recruiting issue, as Sowers noted that students’ decision to pursue humanities could be a reflection of cultural values.

“My impression is that

the way that students have been choosing their field of study has changed over the years, and I think probably within the last five years, the humanities has had a difficult time recruiting students. It’s not unique to classics, it’s a national trend,” Sowers said. “We’re at a point in time where education is severely undervalued.”

“Classics has the ability to create students who are able to think critically about the world they live in.”

Brooklyn College is known to many as a commuter school, as are most CUNY institutions. From a variety of working class households, the campus is often viewed solely as a place to attend classes. Events like these hosted across departments aim to foster a community that

breaks the stigma around commuter schools and helps to build strong relationships between students.

“My main objective is to spend time together because the pandemic really prevented us from doing that,” said Sowers. “There should be spaces that allow students to be present on campus, where you’re actually doing something rather than just buying time. This is all connected to what a university experience should be about.”

The faculty in the Classics Department aim to host similar events and expand their reach to new students. Classics Professor Philip Thibodeau stated that the department has reached out to Brooklyn Latin High School in an attempt to garner interest. Students from the school, who already learn Latin and are exposed to the classical world, will visit Brooklyn College on field trips, and Brooklyn College faculty will, in return, visit them and give presentations. The hope is to channel dozens of students into the classics programs.

Changes in the personnel of the department have also provided extra challenges. “We used to have around nine faculty members. Now we have about five,” Thibodeau said. “The real change in the department, across the different schools in the humanities, is that the college hasn’t hired replacements for people who have left or retired.”

Thibodeau emphasized the efforts in the Classics Department to engage new students. A decent number of pathways

classes available to students are classics classes, which the professors utilize to funnel students into further pursuing the classes. The department also collaborates with studies in premodern history and philosophy to provide Late-Antique-Medieval-Early-Modern (LAMEM) lectures.

“We don’t necessarily have more resources, but we do have resources here that we are not arranging in the most efficient way possible,” Thibodeau told The Vanguard.

Perhaps the issue may also lie in the way classics are presented to students. The professors attested to the importance of classics in our modern world.

“The world we live in is informed by the ancient world,” said Sowers. “Classics has the ability to create students who are able to think critically about the world they live in. It is unique because it is interdisciplinary.”

Professors are constantly asserting connections to contemporary ideologies in order to provide relevance to topics. “I’ve turned a lot of the syllabus and content of my mythology classes in order to explore very sensitive contemporary issues, such as those of sexuality, representations of non-Greeks and Romans in Greco-Roman culture, to the emergence of the ideology of masculinity,” said Thibodeau.

The event hosted by the Classics Department was just a glimpse at the types of events the faculty hopes to hold in future semesters to create a welcoming community for students.

Hanan Yafai, An Advocate For Healing The World

By Kate Dempsey
Staff Writer

Surviving and fleeing a war-torn home country, where millions are starving and struggling to survive, would be paralyzing for many. But not for Hanan Yafai, the president of Brooklyn College's Bridges for Yemen club. Although she has experienced what has been called the "world's worst humanitarian crisis" by the United Nations, existing through Yemen's devastating civil war plagued by famine and civilian deaths, she has not let this trauma rule her. Instead, she uses it as fuel to help advocate for others going through the same.

"There's this quote that inspires my healing journey is that, 'You are not the darkness you endured. You are the light that refused to surrender.' It's by John Green," she said. "I believe that I am not what happened to me. I am what I choose to become. I choose that my emotional struggle has taught me not to yield and not to fold, rather to strive and lead."

Yafai and her family lived in the capital city of Sana'a, Yemen until 2017 when they fled to the country of Djibouti via boat through the Gulf of Aden, as no planes went directly to the United States. Compounding the difficulty of reaching the U.S. was the "Muslim ban" imposed by former President Donald Trump on those coming from Muslim-majority countries, which included Yemen.

"It was difficult on that long trip. I still remember



Hanan Yafai speaking at Bridges For Yemen's film screening of "Hunger Ward" and Q&A with director Skye Fitzgerald./Courtesy of Hanan Yafai

it and it made me hate boats and everything. I still remember the smell of that day, the weather," she said. "[Trump] listed Yemen as one of the countries to be banned from entering. And my dad was here making sure like all the paperwork is ready for us so we can come to the U.S. So we were kind of stuck, what's gonna happen to us, like our destiny [...] but ultimately, we were able to find safety and refuge in the U.S. and specifically New York."

Her family faced many additional obstacles once in the U.S. There was a language barrier between Arabic and English, and most of her family was left behind in Yemen. Not only did they have to navigate New York City's hustle culture and bustling streets, they had to also navigate their traumatic experience with the war at the same time.

Now a senior at Brooklyn College, Yafai has made strides in helping others who have

also been impacted by the war. Founded by Yafai in January 2022, Bridges for Yemen has now become a tool for Yemeni-Americans at BC to find support and solidarity on campus.

"I believe that I am not what happened to me. I am what I choose to become."

"As someone who experienced this devastating effects of the conflict firsthand, I felt a strong sense of responsibility to do something to help my fellow Yemeni people. Our purpose is to cultivate sense of belonging with our Brooklyn College community," said Yafai.

Bridges for Yemen has held multiple events,

including a screening of "Hunger Ward" and a Q&A with director Skye Fitzgerald, and a mental health awareness discussion inspired by Yafai's own personal experience as well as through being a neuropsychology major.

"I started to also discover a lot of things regarding psychology, mental health and then I realized that this is something if I feel the need as an individual, as a Yemeni American individual, I thought everyone in the community probably could relate in some sort, perhaps not saying it outloud. So I thought like, 'Okay, I'm gonna take this opportunity and bring it into the Yemeni community,'" she said.

In addition to advocating for the destigmatization of mental health, Yafai has conducted neuroscience research in many realms of her field, such as bilingualism cognitive advantage under the CUNY Research Scholar Program, facial nerve

regeneration with Dr. Mark Stewart Laboratory at SUNY Downstate, and studying depressive disorders at the Liston Lab at Weill Cornell University.

Graduating this spring, Yafai will continue her neuropsychology research after BC, using it to help make a positive change in others and the world. She hopes with her advocate role that she can inspire others to believe that they can make a positive difference as well, no matter what challenges they have faced.

"I thought like with research I can benefit millions and billions of people and make a little difference. I believe in the power of education and advocacy to make change," she said. "This is very important, to remember that never underestimate anything you do. I think every small action counts, and it's going to make a difference in the lives of others."

Bass-Baritone Joe Chappel Shines In Ode To His Father



Joe Chappel performing./Samia Afsar

By Samia Afsar
Arts Editor

Despite the dreary weather outside, much love and affection beamed from the Don Buchwald Theater as bass-baritone Joe Chappel showcased his master’s recital this past Saturday afternoon.

The recital, which was given in partial fulfillment of Chappel’s degree requirements, was an emotionally and beautifully curated ode to his father who passed away in February 2021.

“My father’s death was the moment I really began to meditate seriously on my own mortality,” wrote Chappel in his program note. “[...] I wanted this program to be a meditation on life’s journey, as all artists have mused over the

ages. It is THE subject matter that connects all artists of all times – our mortality and all the way our oeuvre can outlast our physical mortality.”

The event was set in motion when Chappel, dressed in a dark gray suit, took the stage with his piano accompaniment Saffron Chung, who was decked in an elegant, black floor-length gown adorned with jewels that charmingly reflected the stage’s light.

During the first half of the recital, Chappel performed “Michelangelo-lieder” composed by Hugo Wolf, Henri Duparc’s “Le manoir de Rosemonde,” and “Chanson Triste,” Mozart’s “Per Questa Bella Mano,” as well as J.S. Bach’s “Betrachte meine Seel” and “Höllische Schlange.”

Being a bass-baritone, Chappel’s earthy voice reverberated through the air with a weighty presence that commanded attention. However, as robust as his sound was, the emotions Chappel’s recital evoked were serene and supple, reminiscent of a summer night’s air.

Following a short intermission, Chappel and Chung reemerged on stage. This time, Chappel was dressed in a traditional yellow robe with Chung also being color coordinated with yellow flared pants and a white top.

The second half of the recital consisted of orchestral performances of T. Weston’s “Seed of Peace,” and a piece from Vaughan William.

Like a fine aged whiskey, Chappel’s smooth and warm voice

indulged the patrons as it echoed throughout the theater, radiating much devotion and tenderness.

“I wanted this program to be a meditation on life’s journey, as all artists have mused over the ages.

As the event started to come to a close, Chappel showcased his last performance of the afternoon - a musical setting of Robert Hayden’s poem under the same name, “These Winter Sundays,”

composed by T.Cipulo.

In the poem, the narrator reflects on his childhood, recognizing that all the mundane things his father did for him were actually acts of love.

“While my story is not this story, I wanted to end with this song, because it is in my own father’s absence that I too recognize how so many things he did for me - so many ordinary mundane things were profound acts of love,” Chappel explained in his program note.

The next student recital will be held on Sunday, May 7, in the Don Buchwald Theater where soprano Zuzanna Chauvin will showcase her undergraduate student recital.

A Band With No Instruments: Paolo Lembo And His Beatboxing



BC student Paolo Lembo beatboxing./Paolo Lembo

By Paulina Gajewski
Staff Writer

The answer to the age-old riddle, “What musical instrument can you hear but not see or touch?” is, of course, the voice. This question takes on a new dimension with beatboxing. Using solely one’s voice, beatboxers are capable of creating a variety of sound effects and rhythms.

Brooklyn College beatboxer Paolo Lembo has displayed his skills in several shows with the college’s Music Conservatory. Beatboxing exists as a part of a longer history of hip-hop.

“The culture surrounding it is very beautiful in my opinion,” Lembo expressed to The Vanguard. “It extends from hip-hop culture, which is very human. Since it’s small, everyone is closely knitted together. It’s like a family.”

In the heart of New York City in the 1970s, the rising hip-hop culture gave platforms to not only new musicians but new forms of music

as well. Beatboxing is considered formally as vocal percussion, the art of creating sounds with just the voice with the goal of imitating instruments.

It has roots in many music genres prior to the modern era, including influences from early rural, blues, ragtime, and forms of African traditional music. Well-renowned artists such as Paul McCartney, Pink Floyd, and Michael Jackson had great impacts on beatboxing methods today.

Beatboxing has changed since its emergence in the ‘70s, as Lembo described. “I think people still think of that ‘70s sound, which is something to be appreciated. Some of these things are so mind-boggling, and I’m so proud of people being able to go from doing two layers to four layers at once,” he said.

Cultural and economic diversity in New York allowed for beatboxing to flourish. Bands would usually use drum machines, then known as “beatboxes,” to provide

rhythm. When drum machines were out of budget, musicians would often mimic the sounds to assist the MC in a performance. Among its first pioneers was Doug E. Fresh, one of the first “human beatboxers.”

Lembo’s contemporary inspirations include beatboxers NaPom, Colaps, Chris Celiz, D-Koy, and Footbox G. “I kind of grab from everyone,” he stated. “It’s not so much about its percussive elements, there is also very musical-sounding stuff.”

Three main pillars of perfecting one’s sound are breath control, finding balance, and developing mouth muscles.

“Usually people are up there for about five minutes doing wild stuff, and you have to remember to breathe and fit those breaths in the beat that you’re doing, or else you’ll have awkward spaces,” Lembo said, emphasizing the importance of breath control.

It is integral to find a balance between outward and inward sounds, or the

periods of exhalation and inhalation, respectively. All of this is tied to having profound muscle memory.

Lembo, a student at Edward R. Murrow High School prior to coming to Brooklyn College, found his passion for beatboxing at the school’s annual student-run musical competition, coined SING!.

Lembo attested to wanting to employ the unique factor of beatboxing into his team’s performance during the competition, saying, “I wanted my team to stand out, so I thought beatboxing might be something cool.”

Though his team didn’t end up beatboxing, his passion has allowed him to perform in various shows with the Brooklyn College Conservatory, as well as shows outside of the college. He performed at the Composers Concert on Feb. 22, the Electroacoustic Festival on Mar. 16, and with the Jazz Band on Apr. 21.

Lembo has also worked on events outside of the campus. He used to attend the Beatbox House, a residence that started in Brooklyn as a location for beatboxers to socialize and work on their craft. A competition used to be held monthly, and people would come in from all around the country to compete.

“It was a really friendly competition,” he recounted. “Even if you weren’t the best, they would still cheer you on and give helpful advice.”

He recently did a collaboration with a dancer and rapper in a

performance called “En Utero,” and has worked with the Mark Morris Dance Group. Lembo urges people to check out beatboxing shows. Each show is a display of people pushing the boundaries of the capabilities of our bodies.

Beatboxing, though fascinating, does not come without its challenges. It is a relatively quiet art form and often requires amplification. Beatboxers often find themselves amongst street performers. The city, however, has laws and mandatory permits that are a limiting factor for amplification.

Lembo also emphasized that though it is often well-received, the audience’s reception ebbs and flows, and not many may appreciate it fully. To combat this, Lembo suggests, “Beatboxing should be featured alongside more shows and music genres people are already familiar with.”

Regardless of the challenges, beatboxing still has many positive aspects.

“Since beatboxing is something that’s not very well-known in contemporary culture, there’s a shock factor to it that I really enjoy,” Lembo said. Not only is it a fun party trick, but it’s also a portable form of art. We’re built with all the equipment, always carrying it. For many, it has served as a great form of expression; and its ever-changing technicalities prove beatboxing is an art form to be followed and enjoyed.

Farewell From Gabriela Flores, Vanguard's Editor-in-Chief

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief

Reader, full disclosure, I can't believe that I made it here.

It's unbelievable to recollect how this paper's inception in the 21st century aligned perfectly with my own rebirth (I'm dramatic, lol). I arrived at The Vanguard at 17, eventually becoming the paper's features editor at 18, and then editor-in-chief at 19. After nervously walking through the door of Roosevelt 118, I didn't realize I'd be entering what would eventually become the pinnacle of my student journalism run. Today, at 21, it's fun to see just how much I've grown and reflect on the amazing people who got me here.

First and foremost, thank you to the people who trusted me to co-lead this paper: Ryan Schwach, Moises Taveras, and Quiara Vasquez. Your faith in me and John pushed me to put my nose on the grindstone when it came to journalism. For that and much more, I am eternally grateful to have learned from each of you as my mentors.

To the Baccalaureate School for Global Education's rare gems: Peter Wilson, Steve Rabinowitz, Connie You, Juanita Kumar, and Christopher Potter. Your red-linked notes, encouragement, and no-nonsense critiques of my writing were always rewarding. Your knowledge and feedback became the wind beneath my fingertips as I type today and in my days ahead as a writer. Thank you for sharpening my literary tools and wits.

To this college's most underappreciated gems: the TREM and Philosophy professors, who've encouraged me to unravel my thoughts through audio, video, discussions, or essays. A warm thanks to Professors Fletcher Maumus, Frederick Wasser, Mobina Hashmi, George Rodman, Robert Lurz, Angelica Nuzzo, Michelle Lipkin, Annie Byrnes, Irina Patkanian, Sebastian Tuinder, Mark McSherry, Matthew Moore, and Christine Vitrano.

This long list of talented professors are a few of the many reasons why accessible, public education is worth

backing fully – no matter if certain elected officials and their silly budgets suggest otherwise.

Another round of the warmest thanks to Professor Carolina Bank Muñoz, who never declined to speak with me about issues relevant to our university's needs, and Professor Jessica Siegel, who was there to lend a helping hand when I encountered a journalistic dilemma.

I wouldn't even dare to forget thanking my dear friend and fellow Tulcingo del Valle paisano, Jesús Pérez, who uplifted me when I sometimes couldn't do so myself. Thank you and Leslie from the bottom of my Mexican heart for all you have done for me. Thank you for making me feel welcome and at home. Love you both always.

Without each of them, and this paper's mentor Dr. MJ Robinson, and the legendary Professor Anthony Mancini, I wouldn't be the journalist and thinker I am today. Without Central Depository's Mia Vialva and Jessica Bradley, who ensured we ran smoothly on the backend, this physical paper you're reading right now wouldn't exist. Mia and Jessica, you are the most hard-working superwomen I've met at the college. Thank you for all you do.

Not to mention, without our printer Linco and the kind delivery people who drop off the copies, Vanguard's ability to run as a newspaper wouldn't be possible. Words cannot express my immense gratitude for each of you individually.

My best friends Moris and Paola, two rockstar women, also deserve their flowers. Thank you for helping me stay afloat and inspiring me each day.

To Gabriela Centeno, the better half of Gabby-squared. You are one of the sweetest, smartest gals to roam this earth. Thank you for pushing me to see my future.

To Donald Wenz, my very first interviewee. I was scared to the bone of your no-nonsense demeanor. Looking back, I'll always appreciate that 11-minute interview and you for jumpstarting my journalism career.

To my sarcastic and dearest first Managing Editor: John

Schilling. You're valedictorian and so much more in my eyes. Thank you for all you've done, and for being tall enough to reach places I couldn't. Your presence kept me grounded, happy, and occasionally stressed. Love you always.

To my friend and former News Editor: Matt Hirsch. Your kindness and intelligence empower those around you. You helped me, and undoubtedly others, to be their best selves. I'm excited for your new chapter and the kids who'll get to learn from the coolest. Love you.

Thanks to my second Managing Editor and Italian sister, Dr. Michela Arlia. Girl, you're the reason why my quirky side recently ran loose. Your mind, wits, and charisma, are a few of the many reasons why you're a force to be reckoned with. Love you, gal. Excited to see you keep winning.

To Owen Russell, the multi-talented and godsent editor who's responsible for this paper's "Best Sports Coverage 2021" award. You and your work breathe new life and strike inspiration everywhere. Don't forget us when you're an EGOT legend. And please don't ever, ever stop writing.

To Samia Afsar, another godsent person who tackles everything set before her without missing a beat. Your comedic timing, sarcasm, and perseverance despite the odds are astonishing. Thank you for existing. No matter where you go, keep kicking ass and being the baddest journo, Vangirly.

To Radwan Farraj, one of the greatest writers and thinkers out there. You are going to accomplish so much in the years ahead. No matter what obstacles may come, you'll thrive as you always do. Rooting for you, Rad.

To Kaylin Guzman, our photo editor and my fellow Latina. You are incredibly strong. You are destined to make strides left and right whether it be through your photography or journalistic drive. This is just the beginning for you. The world isn't ready, girl.

To Brie Underwood, the man of the century whose drive, passion, and work ethic make them the invincible leader they were born to be. Brie, you are a one-of-a-kind soul that truly



Courtesy of Kaylin Guzman

makes the world a better place. Thank you for being you.

To Shea Stevenson, one of the most creative folks I've ever had the pleasure of reading and speaking with. Thanks for all you've done, and for being the voice of reason in the midst of the world's chaos (usually). Please don't ever stop writing!

To Emm Kashmiri, the future Casey Neistat. Thank you for our conversations that always left me inspired to get up and travel. You've got an incredible spirit.

Had it not been for The Vanguard, I wouldn't have the knowledge I carry today about public institutions and the importance of academia.

Nor would I have the honor of meeting some of our generation's greatest leaders whose thoughts and commitment to their communities enlightened me. You are each so special with your incredible minds and souls. My warmest and sincerest thanks to Luis Flecha, JD Duncan, Gidong Kim, Dr. Christopher Arias, Amara Minott, Jessica Vaivao, Iqura Naheed, Carrie Ebbin, Louis Di Meglio, and Aharon Grama. The latter of who made these past few weeks fun with his presence and unfiltered rambles. Despite your Google Calendar obsession and diva moments, I appreciate you.

And shoutout to Moh, who made some of 2021 lovely for me.

If it weren't for The Vanguard, I wouldn't be the person I am

today and will continue to be. The kind who knows her worth and won't tolerate anything short of the respect she deserves and worked hard for. For those still reading, thank you, and please continue supporting your student journalists. Each of them brings you the best they can offer, holding a drive that will hopefully better our media in the long run.

Serin Sarsour is set to take over as editor-in-chief. Vangirly, you are a boundless writer and human being that I had the utmost honor of working with. Your compassion and keen instincts will bring you much success in this new role and beyond.

To the paper's next second-in-command, Kate Dempsey. Your fighting spirit and pursuit of the truth are some of the innumerable reasons why you're amazing. I'm honored to have worked with you both. You will undoubtedly continue leading this paper to its fullest potential as the unstoppable duo you are.

The Vanguard's future is bright. To the current editors and writers, including Allison Dubrow and Paulina Gajewski, I'll always be reading and appreciating your work. I'll always be rooting for you.

Brooklyn College, though you were not on the top of my list for undergrad, I'm completely indebted to you. I wouldn't be the woman, thinker, and journalist I am today if it weren't for the nurture and lessons I've received here.

With eternal bounties of love and appreciation, Gabriela.

Farewell From Michela Arlia, Managing Editor



Courtesy of Kaylin Guzman

By Michela Arlia
Managing Editor

I found The Vanguard because of a spur of the moment email. I stumbled into 118 Roosevelt and was met with the most interesting (and dare I say intimidating) group of people I've ever met. I was placed in the arts beat by accident, where when late to a staff meeting my freshman year, that was the last slot. From that point, the rest was history.

The last three and a half years have not been easy for a lot of us. As a double major trying to beat the BC odds of being on the five-year graduation plan, and amidst a pandemic that made the itch to be back on campus burn ten times hotter, I want to begin by highlighting two people that best represent the departments I have called home, and made me academically blossom into the well-rounded graduate I am soon to become.

Laura Tesman, thank you for hearing me out every semester as I recounted my credits, and listening to all my nervous Nelly speeches about classes, as well as answering the many late night emails. If it wasn't for you, I don't think I would be able to complete two degrees. And a huge thank you to Professor Yana Kuchirko. Growing up, I always wished to be a big-girl scientist, and you have helped me make those dreams come true. By pushing me into projects headfirst and supplying me the toolkit to take on big ticket items like completing a thesis in just one semester, you have taught me to think even more critically and cautiously and I am very grateful to have you as a mentor.

Thank you to our advisor, Dr. MJ Robinson for allowing us full jurisdiction to tackle the good, the bad, and the ugly in our pieces. As I like to say, you treat The Vanguard as the eldest

child, where amongst all other entities you watch over, you never had to worry about. You are the reason The Vanguard has been able to express journalism in its truest form, so thank you for believing in us.

To all The Vanguard's section editors, staff writers, and everyone in between that I have had the absolute pleasure of working with, including Ryan Schwach, Quiara Vasquez, Jack Coleman, Owen Russell, Shea Stevenson, Anakin Jackson, Brie Underwood, Hifza Hameed, Emmad Kashmiri, Kaylin Guzman, Nidhi Mahadevan, Nitu Farhin, and core members of the Vangirlies, Serin Sarsour and Samia Afsar. Thanks for all the fruitful discussions in the office, and the many laughs in budget meetings. You are a huge puzzle piece in the success of The Vanguard, and I am so grateful to have worked with you all.

To Managing Editors past and future – John Schilling, I thank you for leaving all your jobs to me, first as Arts Editor, and now here. They were big shoes to fill, and I hope I fulfilled them well. And to Kate Dempsey, who will succeed me as Managing Editor in the fall. I am so happy to be leaving this position and paper in such good hands. You will do great things as you take the reigns, and I can't wait to read everything you and Serin are up to in the fall.

To my Editor-in-Chief Gaby. As I write this, I am currently sending you “let it go” GIFs of Elsa while you obsess over

your typos. Thank you for constantly having this amateur journalist's back. I apologize for never remembering to stop capitalizing seasons, and for leaving the entire budget rows highlighted. Girl, you definitely got the journalism chops and you're going to do great things. Break through that shyness as I've seen you do when our office door is closed, you deserve everything coming your way. Big thanks for also manifesting all those Dr. Arlia vibes, they really paid off. And always remember, can't cry on a deadline.

To Ryan - I cannot thank you enough for always being there to lend an ear and shoulder on everything, including all the behind the scenes scoop, and for being so patient while looking over my shoulder virtually every Sunday night as I worked to get each issue out. Thanks for being my first editor in the beginning years at The Vanguard, supporting me in everything, and for always pushing me to keep going when I am too tired to myself. I'm so grateful to have you in my corner.

And last but not least, to my original support system. My parents, sister, Nonni, Zio, and Zia. I don't know where I would be without any of you. Thank you for always asking for extra copies of the issues, and spending nights catching up on the seemingly never ending pieces I crank out every

week. To my parents especially, I am so thankful for the lessons you've taught and for giving me all the tools to handle the many curveballs life has thrown my way thus far. You make it all look easy, and without you, I would never have the work ethic, spitfire, sarcasm, and drive I do today.

As I write to you now, in what will most likely be my last journalistic-centered piece I publish, I can't help but sit in awe on how an initial drive to write has led me to meet some of the most amazing people in and out of the newsroom. If we've ever conversed in the last few months, you know I make it a point to interject my excitement to turn that tassel, but deep down, I've been dreading this for a while. The memories I've made, people I have connected with, and bones I've acquired while here at Brooklyn College will be dearly missed, but always cherished.

And to The BC Vanguard itself – thanks for coming back to life four years ago and treating me so well. From a rather inexperienced high school journalist to now, I thank you for the opportunities you've offered me, including one to serve as a leader that made an impact on many more people than I ever imagined. I have reached my personal goal of writing in every section for this paper, and I am proud to be an original member of the revamped Vanguard. From the bottom of my heart, thank you all. The next adventure now awaits.

Farewell From Samia Afsar, Vanguard's Arts Editor

By Samia Afsar
Arts Editor

Growing up as a third-culture kid and having to relocate every few years to a new country, new house, and new school, goodbyes have become somewhat of a second nature to me. Looking back at my childhood, my memories are flooded with white polo shirts marked with sharpie signatures saying “goodbye Samia, I hope you have fun wherever it is you’re going now.”

So, I guess I’m finally graduating and have to pull out another white polo tee to say ta-ta again.

I’ve opened and closed this document several times throughout this week. Writing sweet words, deleting sweet words. I truly felt as if whatever I wrote couldn’t come close to encapsulating all the support, laughter, and love I experienced working at The Vanguard. But Gaby just texted asking me when my farewell would be in the Drive, so I’m opening this document again, attempting to bid adieu; writing sweet words, deleting sweet words, and finally coming to the realization that for once in my life, I’m not ready to say goodbye.

I have always been quite fond of writing. I decided to major in Journalism and Media Studies solely because of my love for words. I never really understood what it was that I wanted to do with my life, all I knew was that I had to write.

But somewhere along the way, I grew severely depressed. I’d lay in bed for days, staring at the delicate network of

veins that ran across my ceiling, listening to the symphony of clattering wheels and rushing air of the train passing by that would shake the four walls of my room, urging me to get up. There was so much I wanted to do, so much I dreamed of accomplishing, but I just simply couldn’t find the courage to get up and write.

My time at The Vanguard started around two years ago with a text from the Managing Editor, Michela, who learned I was a journalism major and reached out asking whether I would be interested in writing for the paper. In all honesty, I was immensely intimidated, but I agreed thinking it would be a great addition to an empty resume. I wrote for The Vanguard for a year as a staff writer before being promoted to the Arts Editor, a position I’m still not sure how the team thought I was capable of.

Every Saturday I’d bombard Gaby with texts — “I’m so sorry Gaby, my story will be in soon I promise, *otter emoji, hug emoji.*” To which, every single week, Gaby would reply “No worries, Vangirly. Let me know when it’s in *otter emoji, hug emoji.*”

The Vanguard quickly became my motivation to write again. Gaby and Michela were counting on me, and I couldn’t let them down.

Dearest Gaby, thank you for believing in me. Thank you for all your patience, all the laughs, and all the meaningful conversations we had in Roosevelt 118. But most importantly, thank you so, so much for giving me



(L to R) Serin Sarsour and Samia Afsar./Samia Afsar

a purpose. Without you, and all my Vangirlies, my time at Brooklyn College would’ve passed laying on my bed staring at the ceiling, listening to the train pass by. Thank you for reconnecting me with my love for writing, and thank you for being the angel that you are.

To Michela, in many ways, I owe it all to you. Without your text two years ago, I probably never would’ve joined The Vanguard. Thank you for trusting me and for welcoming me to The Vanguard family with open arms. I’m sorry for ghosting you when you were Arts Editor. I’ve learned my lesson, I swear.

To my little sister Serin and The Vanguard’s incoming Editor-in-Chief, I am so, so proud of

you. You are constantly amazing me with all that it is you do. I am so very fortunate to have met you and only wish we had gotten acquainted sooner. Thank you for listening to all my boy-drama and for always making sure I’m alright, for reaching out with a helping hand, even at times when you were overwhelmed yourself. I will never forget your unconditional, selfless love, and all of our little giggles in Capstone. I am so excited to watch you blossom into the awe-inspiring journalist you prove yourself to be every single day. I love you and will miss you wholeheartedly.

And finally, thank you to Michael Mannino, whom I probably annoyed for

two years straight with my utter stupidity and lack of social cues. Michael, thank you for being so patient with me. I grew quite fond of our back-and-forth banter and will truly miss irritating you. I still think you should put in a good word for me to get a job.

So I’ll end with this — spread love and take risks. As cliché as it may sound, life is simply too short to lay in bed, staring at the ceiling, listening to the train pass by. So, thank you so very much to every single one that encouraged me to get up, making my last two years at Brooklyn College so beautiful. I will miss you all, truly.

With much love and gratitude, Samia Afsar
otter emoji, hug emoji.

Farewell From Owen Russell, Vanguard's Sports Editor



Courtesy of Kaylin Guzman

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

I have never been good with goodbyes. That might actually be an understatement. Goodbyes, they have always been horrible for me, sometimes beyond my control. The year I graduated high school, my tooth fell out, my grandma died, my grandpa died, I got mono, in that order. At my commencement ceremony I caught a 101 fever and sweated through my cap and gown so furiously that you'd swear I just came from the water park. Now, as I prepare to graduate from Brooklyn College I find myself faced with yet another goodbye.

Despite occasionally checking over my shoulder for a second bout of mono, this

graduation is shaping up to be a much better experience. Like anyone who began college post-2019, my college tenure has been anything but easy. Through all the nonsense, there are countless people who have helped me along my way. Rather than spend this farewell reminiscing about my time at Brooklyn College, I'd like to thank everyone who helped me on this collegiate odyssey because truly I could not have done this on my own.

Thank you, first and foremost to my parents for supporting me and helping me through this whole process. It would have been easy for both of you to attempt to dissuade me from studying film or pursuing journalism in favor of a more stable career path. You have always supported my

dreams, whether that be by allowing me to take over the house for a four-day film shoot, or by schlepping all the way to Pottstown, PA, to watch "Bronko" premiere in a rundown roller rink. I love you both, thank you so much.

Thank you to both of my siblings, my brother Aidan and my sister Grace. I have forced both of you to act in my films, and you did so with minimal complaints... but seriously thank you both for being the funniest, most supportive siblings anyone could ask for. I promise I'll return the favor someday.

Thank you Julia, my girlfriend and best friend. We met freshman year at a soccer game neither of us wanted to attend and look at us now! You have been my biggest fan for the past three and half

years, and I cannot do justice to how much your support means. Also a big shout out to Julia, Yale's newest public health superstar!

Thank you to everyone who wrote for me on The Vanguard. I understand that writing for the school newspaper is not the coolest flex in the world, but I appreciate all the hard work from each and every person who made the sports section as successful as it was.

Thank you to my editors: Gabi, John, and Michela. I have not always been the most predictable writer. Watching me turn in a 3,000 word baseball Hall of Fame ballot has to be a colossal headache. I apologize for all the stress I may have caused, and I thank the three of you for continuously making my articles better. (Also, thank you to all the section editors I have worked with. The budget meetings would not be as fun without all of you).

Thank you to everyone I have ever made a film with, but specifically Rich, Derek, Trey, and Victor. While I would never dare tell any of you four to your faces, I appreciate your friendship and I don't know how I would have made it through the film department without you.

Thank you to my professors. I have learned how hard your job really is, and you all put up with so much. You deserve to be paid more. Special

thank you to Mustapha Khan, Christopher Lilien, Frank Rinaldi, Carey Harrison, Dijana Jelaca, Lauren Belski, and Jasper Lauderdale. You all went above and beyond with your classes, and taught me the most.

Thank you Judith Kenny, the best professor anyone could have at Brooklyn College. Seriously, ask any film major and they will gush about how incredible Judith is. Thank you for genuinely caring about your students, and prioritizing them as a people above all else. I don't think I would have made it through these past semesters intact without your advice.

Thank you to everyone I have ever interviewed. You did not need to share your time or story with me, and I appreciate your vulnerability. Thank you Dr. Saadi Ghatan, Myron Kandel, Ethan Page, Curtis Sliwa, the Brooklyn College Football Team, and the 1982 basketball team, as well as everyone else!

And finally, thank you to anyone who has ever read a copy of The Vanguard, or watched one of my short films. What else do people do this for? Having people enjoy your work is the highest rush money can't buy, so thank you very very much.

I guess that is it. I am sure there are dozens of people I am forgetting to thank, so I apologize in advance. This has been a wild ride, and I'm sure it'll only get wilder once I've graduated and get catapulted into the world beyond education. Thank you again. Sincerely, Owen Russell.

Before The Presses: Thank You, Vanguard

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief
&
Michela Arlia
Managing Editor

Before The Presses, an informal column shared between us, Gabriela Flores and Michela Arlia, now comes to an end. We are the last two writers who entered The Vanguard as freshmen back in 2019, when the paper was re-established. Previously there were two competing student-led publications at Brooklyn College: Excelsior and Kingsmen. After battling it out for years, they decided to join forces and merge, borrowing “The Vanguard” name from the legendary paper that was shut down in 1950 by the college’s former president, Dr. Harry D. Gideonse.

The reporters back then did what any reporter should do: tell the truth. After sharing with their fellow students how Gideonse – who was later discovered to be a FBI informant while at the college – vetoed a history professor from becoming department chair, The Vanguard staff was retaliated against.

Gideonse shut down the paper by changing the office’s locks, revoking the paper’s charter, suspending its top five editors and business manager, and placing another 50 students on probation, according to the Columbia Journalism Review. Do you know what the student journalists did next? Make their own newspaper called Draugnav, or “Vanguard” spelled backwards.

Talk about sticking it to the man, huh?

Today, remembering the legacy and importance of The Vanguard, we’re now here to thank student journalism for giving us the space to bond and grow stronger.

Before taking the reins as editor-in-chief, I, Gabriela, was like many of you who mentioned they’re intimidated about the idea of writing for a publication. Words in print have more weight and pressure, for both the writer and those they hold accountable. It is, however, empowering to see how much you can do as a budding reporter and thinker in a space that’s meant to help you learn. The Vanguard is open to Brooklyn College students who have an interest in student reporting.

It is meant to give curious people a chance to learn, pick up tips from their peers, and become the published writers, photographers, and reporters they perhaps did not initially envision themselves being. Admittedly, it took a long time for me to see this.

In my first two years reporting, I had to work past my intense worries, anxiety jitters, and doubts about being able to make it in the journalism scene. I was occasionally bogged down by the paper’s weekly deadlines and the hard truth that in the “real world,” deadlines will be even tighter. Despite it all, I kept at it.

What I learned while reporting is that you have to have confidence in yourself in every sense of the word. Life is incredibly short for you not to take on that internship, or make that cross-country move, or ask out the cutie you’ve been eyeing in between classes or over Zoom. Mute the internal worries that keep you from pursuing what you truly hope for, whether it be journalism or otherwise.

Through editing, I learned that you have to be straightforward yet understanding of people who may not get it right on a couple of tries. We’ve



Edited by Gabriela Flores

all struggled before. At a student-led paper, you can be sure to find people who were or are in similar circumstances as you.

What I learned by writing thoughts and research that would go into print is that the truth will prevail. Don’t blame Fox News, CNN, and the TikTokers for ruining how our information about worldly, significant topics disseminates. Assume the responsibility of being a thinker who is curious and attentive enough to realize when they are given the facts versus a warped picture.

No matter where your passion lies, prioritize what will make you grow into the person you want to be and face head-on the hurdles it may entail.

Now, I pass the mic to Michela...

By being a student journalist in college, I have learned one important lesson – how to be a journalist. I know this may sound very odd, considering my writing to you now as the managing editor of a campus-wide paper, but I am the most far removed from journalism studies possible.

I double majored in psychology and theater, and used my strengths as an essay writer and word painter to make my way to where I am now. I

started out with novice writing skills and a simple passion for journalism. I think I have worked my way up that ladder to be considered proficient by now at the very least. I have learned you don’t need to be in journalism to be a journalist, and that is something I will continuously advocate for.

As I learned the ropes by being thrown in head first, I came to understand that what I have to say may not always be important, but making sure that the words I write on behalf of others reflect what they want to say is the key to doing this job right.

Please don’t be shy. Get yourself out there and don’t be afraid to ask questions, because I learned that the best thing you can do is ask. The worst you’ll get in response is a no.

Know that your voice matters, even if you are just a student reporting. You are the messenger between an important event or topic and the people that need to know about it. Not to mention, print journalism isn’t dead, give it a second chance! You can develop your best skills just by putting in a short piece every week.

Just this past two weeks, we were able to see new

faces at The Vanguard, the potential next generation of writers, reporters, and editors. I have never been happier in knowing that there will be more after we graduate, for the fears of the campus paper lingering away have gotten the best of me at times. Please get more involved, even if it’s to take a photo, or just stop by, say hi, and ask what it is you can do.

One takeaway I would offer you as budding student journos is this – know that your writing is your superpower. Should there be an issue worth addressing, an event that needs coverage, or even a professor worth calling out, you have the power and the tools to shed light.

And lastly, don’t be afraid to take risks, and maybe even get into a bit of trouble (but not too much trouble) with those risks.

In closing, thank you to The Vanguard and student journalism for helping us to become who we are today. To those who are reading and have an interest in joining – do it. Develop your chops now that you have the chance and take the risk of trying something new that will ultimately help you evolve.

USG’s Current Treasurer On Clubs And Funding



Edited by Gabriela Flores

By Noam Abrahams

This statement is in response to last week’s report about Brooklyn College’s student-led clubs and their funding. The Vanguard’s article is titled “Club Leaders Hope For Higher Budgets From USG.”

My name is Noam Abrahams, and I transitioned into the role of treasurer for the Undergraduate Student Government over a month ago. I first joined USG’s Senate last October, where I found an amazing space to get involved in advocating for student life on campus.

An article was written in the last issue of The Vanguard reporting the concerns about the process for funds being allocated to clubs, whether by their initial budget or by grants. Firstly, I would like to genuinely thank both The Vanguard for reporting on such an important topic as well as the student leaders who voiced their concerns.

One of our main goals in student government is to enhance the quality of student life on campus and feedback is important for us to continuously improve the system. My email (noam.abrahams@bcstudentgov.org) is always open for anyone with questions about club funding or any of the other processes that impact clubs. That being said, I want to directly address the comments made in the article.

The first thing I want to address is the budgets given to clubs at the beginning of the year. To give some context, our student government gets its funds from the student activity fee each semester. This past year, USG was given \$7.55 per undergraduate student at Brooklyn College, or just under \$125,000 total, to exclusively give grants to clubs.

In the beginning of the fiscal year (which starts July 1), each club was given \$200 as a budget, with the exception of 35 clubs that had events scheduled in the first

week of the semester to ensure they had enough money to make those events happen. The total amount allocated to clubs (budgets and grants) this year was just under \$220,000 to date. That means that even with the smaller budget allocations, we still had to withdraw around \$95,000 out of our reserves to our allocating budget to meet clubs’ needs.

Budgets are tricky every year, but they were especially tricky this year. Since it’s our first year post-COVID, it was hard to predict how active clubs were going to be during the semester. This is one of the reasons why we decided to give smaller budgets to clubs. Once money is granted to a club, it remains in that club’s account until the end of the fiscal year. If a club does not use the money in their account, we can’t give it to another club that may need it.

The budget given to clubs at the beginning of the fiscal year are simply meant to carry clubs over so that they can host

events during the first two to three weeks of the semester while the grant system is being set-up for the year. The lower budgets may seem like we’re limiting funding, but we’re just making sure that everyone gets enough to start so that we can approve grants to clubs based on their requests.

The second thing I want to address is the process itself. A lot of the systems we use are put in place by CUNY Central itself. We’ve made tremendous strides in the past year to streamline parts of the process. For example, the max cost before a vendor had to go into CUNY’s system (delaying it another week or two) was \$250 when COVID-19 started. Earlier this year, we got the threshold raised to \$500 – something that no other CUNY school has done. We’ve finally got an Amazon account that clubs could use so that students don’t have to spend out of pocket.

It took me a long time to understand the process

while I was a club leader, and even now, I learn something new every day. Thankfully, USG has provided multiple club training sessions at the beginning and throughout every semester, together with Central Depository and SAIL. We’ve already started scheduling dates for workshops in August and September so clubs can kick off next year with a bang.

Additionally, USG hosts all the information on our website for reference, and Central Depository has a QR code outside their office linking to every piece of paperwork you’d need. We’re available through email, and whenever anyone is in the USG office, our door stays open for people to drop in. I would also like to emphasize that all our meetings are open to the public and listed on our website.

There have been hiccups with the system, but the team and I have worked together to fix these issues so that they wouldn’t happen again. USG has been an incredible experience so far. The team has worked tirelessly to bring fun events to campus and revitalize student life after years online. This upcoming year, as the new team comes in, I hope you’ll look forward to even more exciting events and brand new chances to engage with campus, administration, and the students all around you.

For more information related to club resources, please visit: <https://brooklyn.cuny.club/smartpage>

Opinion: There Are Easy Fixes



Courtesy of Shea Stevenson

By Shea Stevenson
Opinions Editor

When I first got to Brooklyn College I figured a lot of the weird, small problems I was noticing were apparitions to a non-native who didn't yet understand how these small inconveniences added up to some broader stroke of necessary design.

The first obvious example of this is the stoplight on Bedford Ave between the separate campus quads. When I first got here I thought "Man, this feels like a long light, but you know what? I'm probably pre-annoyed because I have to show my ID again and it seems like cars are coming through so I bet it's not that bad." But after a year here, I can say with certainty that it is worse than I imagined it was then.

That Bedford Ave stoplight is ridiculous. It's like it was programmed by a bitter man who

once hit a pedestrian with his car and thought the best solution going forward would be if people never set foot on a road again. The worst thing is that even the cars don't get what they want from the stoplight either if they're constantly blaring horns are any measure of happiness (or lack thereof). People are always stopping in the middle of the road, clogging the buses trying to pass through, blocking the pedestrians crossing, sometimes just chilling out in their vehicles because they need a parking space. The only person who has any sort of positive interaction with the Bedford Ave stoplight is the halal food truck guy, who I bet makes a lot of money from students stuck waiting at the edge of the sidewalk who, upon time to reflect, could go for a gyro.

The obvious actual solution to this stoplight is to get rid of it along

with access to the road it services. It's already too narrow for earnest public traffic and it's in constant use by pedestrians of all sorts. I know that's an impossible ask and beyond the school's control, but again, it's the real solution, and from here on out I'm suggesting the stupid easy fixes.

Make the cars' green light shorter. The cars aren't going to notice, they think they're waiting forever anyways. Maybe just make the lights shorter for the ten minutes surrounding common class starting and ending times, if you're stingy about it. Students are so anxious to cross this street that they stand halfway to the center of it every time you see them waiting in a group of more than five.

I jaywalk across this street all the time. Making the light into some reasonable time to wait would make it far safer by simply disincentivizing these speed-focused tactics.

While we're on the topic of entering campus: why is our best campus gate locked? Chained, like some haunted house theme park's employees-only parking lot? I speak now of the Campus Road and East 27th Street entrance and the accompanying bike racks. The bike racks are numerous and even sit next to a functioning bike pump, but they're tucked away into a corner of the campus that no one ever touches because it's right next to the chained-up iron gate entrance and nothing else. This is an entrance with pizzazz, a styled canopy, a mix of the old *je ne sais quoi* of the brick buildings, and the modern functionality of the new ones. The only reason I can think to keep this gate closed is that they figure hiring a security guard to sit there while not many people use it is a bad return on investment. I

say you already made the investment when you built the nicest entrance, and now it's just good manners to keep it open.

I know at least one person who doesn't use it, but wishes they could. Not necessarily because it's the closest to them, but because it's the most convenient for anyone who bikes to school if they want to lock it up inside the campus walls.

To close off, I'd say something about the disused bathrooms like that of the first floor of Ingersoll, but I hear the school has just hired two more plumbers, making it three total. There's no telling what sort of great work these people will do, and at what pace. They have my sincere faith.

First the plumbers, then whoever lost the key to the chain around the Campus Road gate, then the civil engineers who lay the roads, then we'll be all up to snuff.

Alex Lang Steps Down As Coach With Historic Career

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief

Garnering 340 wins throughout his 20-season run as head coach of Brooklyn College's women's basketball team is one of the many accomplishments Alex Lang has accomplished. Turning a winless team into a nationally-recognized one was no easy feat. At the heart of his success is his dedication to his players, assistant coaches, family, and the game. Through it all, he's learned valuable lessons that have shaped him beyond his role on the court.

"There have been countless memories, amazing wins, and of course tremendous players that I have coached over the years," Lang wrote in a statement to The Vanguard. "It is difficult for me to pinpoint one lesson that coaching has taught me, however, I know that it has made me a better person, made me a better father and taught me patience."

Lang, alongside long-time assistant coaches, is responsible for re-inventing the college's CUNYAC powerhouse basketball team. Since arriving at BC in 2002, he's coached three CUNYAC Player of the Year winners, WBCA All-Americans, and several collegiate basketball stars, according to Brooklyn College's Sports Information. Beyond the court, the players Lang has coached regularly earn one of the highest team GPAs in the college's department. From the get-go, Lang has put in



Coach Alex Lang./BC News

the work and then some, leading him to become the coach with the most career wins in CUNY, and gaining honors on a regional and national level.

Recruitment of players was the key to it all, not to mention on-court practice, scouting, scheduling, equipment ordering, handling of media, and most importantly, building relationships with players, coaches, officials, and parents. Establishing this foundation allowed the team to thrive, giving student-athletes the space they needed to grow and ultimately succeed.

"The most rewarding thing about working with our women's basketball team has been seeing all of the great friendships and bonds, and knowing I had a part in bringing people together," said Lang.

Knowing that improvements could be made each year, Lang

remained consistent in his leadership. Not only did he persist in securing success on the court, but also on the backend. Lang will continue as the associate director for the college's athletics, one of many roles he's covered over the decades. On the administrative side, he's been the sports information director and compliance coordinator. At one point, Lang also coached the women's cross country team from 2007 to 2012, leading the 2008 cohort to a CUNYAC title and Coach of the Year conference award.

When it comes to women's basketball especially, his coaching style will remain etched into Brooklyn College and CUNYAC history.

"On the court, the style of basketball my teams will be remembered for was a fast-paced, up and down the court tempo on offense, while giving tremendous effort on the

defensive side of the ball," Lang said.

Though he's hanging up his coaching whistle, Lang will not be leaving BC. He's continuing his administrative work for the Athletics Department, where he'll see through ideas he has for the program as it undergoes a transitional period with its new director, Erik Smiles. Looking back at his 21-year stint as a Brooklyn College head coach, he thinks it's time to switch gears and give it all he's got to the program overall.

"We have accomplished a tremendous amount of success and have had great people graduate our program and represent us well. I have no regrets in coaching," said Lang. "I am looking forward to having a slightly different lifestyle and some new challenges. I think it is time for a new coach to have a chance to take

this program to even greater heights."

A day after his resignation from coaching was announced on Apr. 18, a new head coach for the women's basketball team was announced. Megan Campbell is set to climb the ranks from assistant to head coach and is credited with the success the team has garnered over the past two seasons. Campbell is no stranger to BC, having graduated from the college with a bachelor's and master's degree after being an accolade-studded athlete herself.

"Brooklyn College has had a major impact on my life, it is an honor to be named head coach of a program that means so much to me," Campbell said in a BC Athletics press release. "Alex [Lang] has had a tremendous amount of success over his 20-year career. He has laid a strong foundation that I look forward to building upon."

The Bulldogs Who Make History: BC Women's Basketball Team



The 2022-2023 women's basketball team./BC Athletics

By Gabriela Flores
Editor-in-Chief

Shooting hoops, moving quickly on the court, and creating a strong defense have become second nature for the talented student-athletes who build the women's basketball team at Brooklyn College. The team, which won its third consecutive CUNY Athletics Conference Championships in February, has garnered numerous accolades on the university, regional, and national levels. For many of them, the love of the sport came from an early age, with collegiate athletics giving them the space to hone their craft and build bonds.

"What I value most about my team is how they never hung their heads low. With sports comes lows and bumps in the road and they never backed down for a challenge," said Gianna Gotti, one of the team's captains who garnered innumerable accolades while playing as a guard during her student athletic career.

Each team member

shined in their latest regular season, playing hard to earn double-digit wins and beating the competition. Among the headlines of their successes, Gotti's force in collegiate athletics was frequently recognized. One of her most recent honors is being named First Team All-Met for Division III by the Metropolitan Basketball Writers Association. Before becoming a Bulldog two years ago, Gotti played for the University of Bridgeport, where she started her collegiate sports career in 2018. Once she transferred to BC in the 2019/2020 season, she and her skills contributed to the team's dominance on the court. She and Dasha Goodman, a fellow guard, helped lead the team to two CUNYAC Championship wins. As Gotti graduates in June with a major in communications, she leaves with the title of CUNYAC Player of the Year, among many others. Her powerhouse talent was first piqued at just four years old.

"I used to play with my grandpa everyday and I fell in love with it

ever since, it's definitely a passion of mine. Growing up I also played baseball, lacrosse, figure skating, and soccer," she wrote to The Vanguard.

Similarly for Goodman, the introduction to basketball came early on.

"I started playing basketball when I was five years old. I fell in love with the sport at a very young age, and as I got older, my love for the sport grew, as well as my desire to win and compete at a higher level. I also play softball, which I love very much too," Goodman wrote to The Vanguard.

Goodman and Gotti are two of the several players who led the women's basketball team to a first-ever, historic win in 2022. They ousted Emmanuel College from Massachusetts in a National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament game, beating them 70-57. The big win established the Bulldogs and their program on the national map. Though they dropped the NCAA matchup this year against Christopher Newport University, the athletes of the women's basketball team have established

themselves as one of the best teams in the collegiate games.

The road to gathering their wins, however, did not come served on a platter. They worked hard, handling personal struggles and adversity with the goal of persevering. For Goodman, who fractured her foot two weeks into the season during her junior year, which then became a stress fracture, it was especially difficult to get back into the swing of things.

"This was a very frustrating challenge, and I was very upset not being able to play, but my teammates were there for me the whole time lifting my spirits. Once I healed I was able to work toward my next season and have a very successful season with my team," said Goodman.

At the crux of their accomplishments are good time management and consistency, as the student-athletes juggle personal, academic, and work responsibilities off the court. Most importantly, what keeps them intact and driven is each other.

"Awards come from the team's success. Staying together as a team improves performance on the court and builds trust. These benefits can lead to greater success and satisfaction for all members of the team," said Gotti.

Together, the team has stuck through it all. Even when facing tough opponents like New York University and Christopher Newport, they took challenges as opportunities to grow and better not only their playing skills, but their own characters as people. They took adversity as a means of development.

"I think a major key to success on the basketball court is to always try to have fun and find the joy in the sport. There needs to be a balance between having that fire and passion to win, and smiling and enjoying yourself out there," said Goodman, who's set to graduate in 2024 and work towards another championship win in the upcoming season. "I personally play much better when I'm relaxed and enjoying myself."

As some players continue their momentum and others like Gotti bid farewell to their career as a Bulldog student-athlete, the team will continue to grow stronger. Looking ahead with their new head coach Megan Campbell, they will work to continue thriving and striving as they have always done.

"I can't wait to come back in the future to see my teammates compete next year. Words can't express how proud I am of them and what they will accomplish in the future," said Gotti. "I still will always be a part of their lives and support."

The Top New York Sports Moments Of My Lifetime

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

There are times where I am jealous of what New York Sports used to be. I was born too late to experience the Yankees as a dynasty, the Knicks as NBA title contenders, or even the defensive juggernaut Giants of the 1980s. But the more I think about it, the more I realize I've been lucky to experience some of the greatest moments sports has to offer, especially in New York. As I leave The Vanguard, I'd like to reflect on four of those moments, and share what makes them so special.

RVD defeats John Cena for the WWE Championship at One Night Stand 2006.

For those who are unfamiliar with their wrestling history allow me to set the scene.

Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW) rose to prominence in the mid '90s as a hardcore alternative to the WWE mainstream professional wrestling, which began to grow stale. ECW was defined by a mix of ultra-violence and supreme athleticism, all consumed by a ravenous fan base thirsty for a new brand of pro-wrestling. In 2001, the company filed for bankruptcy and WWE owner Vince McMahon bought the IP. ECW died, and with it the brand of anti-establishment wrestling young people in the late



Owen's father (far right) performing at the Barclays Center./Owen Russell

90s came to love.

In 2006, WWE shocked the wrestling world by announcing the relaunch of ECW, kicking off with One Night Stand 2006 from the Hammerstein Ballroom in Midtown Manhattan. Hammerstein served as a home for the original ECW whenever they visited the Big Apple.

In the main event, ECW original Rob Van Dam (RVD) squared off against WWE's version of Superman, John Cena, for the company's top title, the WWE Championship. Cena had a reputation of obliterating all challengers in 2006, and ECW fans feared that Cena would steamroll RVD in ECW's NYC holy ground. The match proved to be more momentous than any diehard fan could've presumed.

Cena got booed out of the building by a crowd of hardcore New

Yorkers. Van Dam got a rousing round of applause, and the crowd stayed hot throughout the match. Despite some screwiness, RVD beat Cena after catapulting himself from the top rope, connecting with the "five star frog splash." ECW's former chairman Paul Heyman ran to the ring, and counted the pin fall, awarding RVD the championship.

RVD's win over Cena is one of my first memories as a wrestling fan. Even though I didn't witness it live, it played on all the YouTube highlight reels. The fact that the moment is forever linked to New York makes it that much more special. Me and my brother would act out RVD's five star frog splash much to the detriment of our parent's basement couch. You might not consider wrestling a sport, but to that I say... loosen up.

Watching my dad sing the National Anthem

at the Barclays Center.

Another moment that readers may criticize as "not technically a sports moment." Cry me a river. This is my last issue, let me have fun.

My father is classically trained as an opera singer. He studied at Juilliard and later went on tour with the New York City Opera Company. To this day, his stories from his tours can be the funniest part of any family get together. Take the time he and his friends got into a screaming match with the band Smash Mouth in the lobby of a Michigan hotel. But as a kid, I never truly understood the scope of my dad's talent (he likes to point out the time I referred to him as a "stupid church singer" when I was in preschool).

In early high school, I dabbled as a huge Nets fan. When the team

moved to Brooklyn, I was growing tired of the Knicks, and Brooklyn's black and white color scheme partnered with their association to Jay-Z gave the team a specific appeal to pre-teen Owen. I particularly liked Joe Johnson, the team's All-Star shooting guard who earned the reputation as a lethal scorer and the nickname "ISO-Joe." Imagine my shock when my dad, "the stupid church singer," told me and my brother he would be singing the National Anthem at the Nets game, and that we would get to go along.

We were stunned. My brother and I were led past the locker rooms, through hallways lined with autographed sports memorabilia. As we walked forward, the sounds of around 17,000 people echoed. I couldn't believe it as we stepped out of the tunnel. My jaw dropped. There I was standing on the

The Top New York Sports Moments Of My Lifetime Cont'd

court mere feet from the players I pretended to be in gym class. The game was Nets vs Nuggets, but it didn't matter who was playing.

The main event came when the court cleared, the lights went down, and out came my dad. He stood there with three other musicians. It was Christmas time and my dad was part of a caroling barber-shop quartet. He and his group sang, filling the arena, and the place applauded. It was a surreal moment. There I was at my first basketball game, but all I could focus on was how cool my dad was. The anthem ended, and then me, my dad, and my brother watched the rest of the game from excellent floor level seats. The Nets won. Joe Johnson scored 27 points. And my dad became a rockstar. To this day, any time somebody mentions the Barclays Center the first thing out of my mouth is "Did I ever tell you my dad sang the National Anthem there?" It's usually met with groans.

It's certainly not the first time my friends have heard it. But for me, my dad warrants a mention on my all time New York sports moments list.

Linsanity topples Kobe Bryant.

The New York Knicks have never been good in my lifetime. There have been glimmers, but for the most part, rooting

for the Knicks is about as healthy as smashing one's face into a brick wall. Perhaps the most promising moment in recent Knick history (barring the current playoff run) came when Jeremy Lin went head-to-head with the "Black Mamba" Kobe Bryant.

In 2012, 11-year-old Owen was, like the rest of New York, swept up by the sensation that was Jeremy Lin. An undrafted free agent out of Harvard, Lin exploded onto the scene after scoring 25 points against the New Jersey Nets and All-Star Deron Williams. At that point, the Knicks were underperforming big time, and they added Lin to the starting lineup as a desperate way to shake things up. Lin continued to surge, scoring 20-plus points against some of the NBA's brightest stars. Then came the ultimate test. Feb. 10, 2012, Lin and the Knicks against Kobe and the Lakers.

By this point I was hooked big time. Lin became the face of New York. An underdog kid, who appeared out of nowhere to light the world on fire. But if there was one player who still reigned superior to Lin during this time, it had to be Kobe Bryant. Kobe was ubiquitous with basketball. Anytime I launched a napkin at the trash can in my middle school's lunch room, I'd shout "KOBE" like the millions of other kids around the country. For me, this was a battle for basketball supremacy.

Who would become my favorite player? Lin or Bryant.

I begged my parents to let me stay up for the game. Lin and the Knicks marched into Madison Square Garden with a point to prove. Kobe had downplayed Lin's success in the media, even scoffing at the idea of guarding him. But with lights the brightest they've ever been, Lin exploded. He went on an absolute tear, scoring 38 points and dishing seven assists. Kobe dropped 34 points himself, but he couldn't keep up. The Knicks smashed the Lakers, winning 92-85. Lin conquered Kobe on national television, and I was jumping around my basement like an idiot. After that I pleaded with my parents to buy all the Jeremy Lin merch possible. I had a shirt, a hat, even a towel, and I think at least a sticker or two.

As an adult, or something resembling an adult, Lin's success takes on a whole new meaning. I wasn't aware at the time, but Lin offered hope for millions of Asian-Americans who had been limited by racist stereotypes. He became a symbol for not only New Yorkers, but for people across the country.

The Giants end the Patriots' perfect season in the Super Bowl.

Tom Brady and the New England Patriots terrorized the NFL my

entire childhood. By 2007, Brady and the Patriots had already won three Super Bowls and were threatening to win their fourth. On top of that, the Patriots had bulldozed their way through the 2007 season, winning each and every game. By the Super Bowl, New England boasted an 18-0 record, and on the doorstep of history they had one more challenger in their way... The New York Giants.

The Giants weren't supposed to be here. New York squeaked into the playoffs as a wildcard team after losing the division to Dallas. The team sent one player to the pro bowl, and each of their playoff wins came by hook or by crook. Earlier in the season, the Giants had lost to New England in the final game of the regular season, where Brady threw his 50th touchdown. Even as a kid, I knew the Giants stood no chance against Brady and the mighty Patriots.

The Game was surprisingly close. New York's stellar defense locked down the Patriots' potent offense. But as the final quarter ticked away, the Giants found themselves trailing 14-10 with less than three minutes remaining. What happened next made me fall in love with football. On a crucial third down, Eli Manning bobbed and weaved through a swarm of New England defenders.

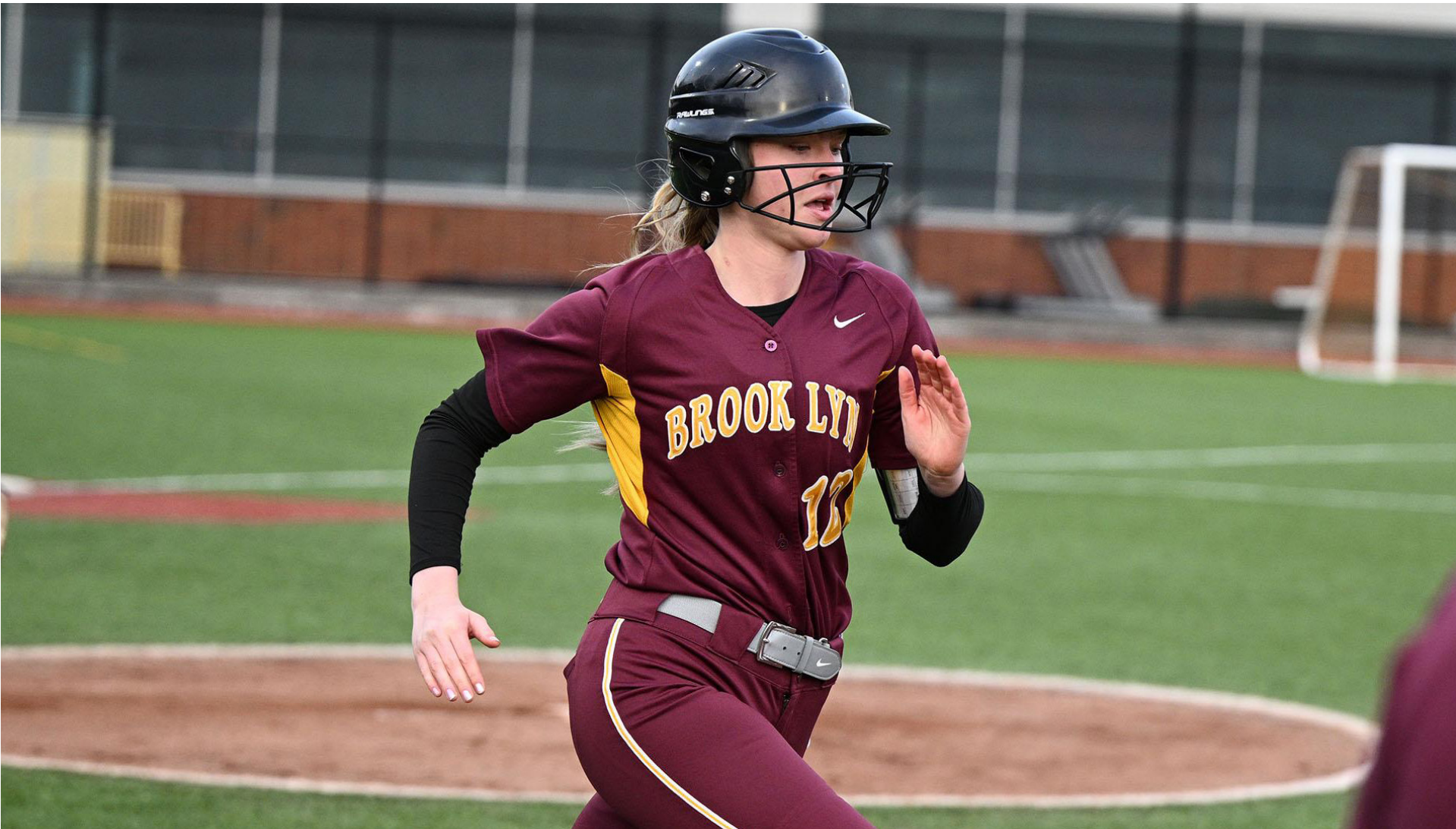
With nothing left but hope, Manning rocketed the ball into the air. I sat on my living room rug, wide-eyed as the ball sailed towards David Tyree. I barely remember it in real time, possibly because I blacked out from sheer excitement, but Tyree grabbed the ball, pinned it against his helmet, and came down with possession. I had never seen anything like it in my whole life. From there Eli Manning found Plaxico Burress in the back of the endzone for the game sealing touchdown. I was delirious. It was the greatest moment in my young sports fandom.

Through the years, I became less and less of a Giants fan. In the early 2000s, my older brother became a Buffalo Bills fan, and I hopped on the bandwagon to impress him. Since then my allegiance lay up north, but I will never forget the Tyree catch, and the Giants' upset over the Patriots. It laid the foundation for my love of sports. A moment that beautiful will always have a place as top moment in New York sports history.

So there it is. Four moments which rank atop my New York sports Mount Rushmore. They range in scale from championship winning plays, to sweet family moments between me and my dad, but regardless, they helped turn me into the fan I am today.

BC Sports Recap (Apr. 22 – Apr. 29)

WOMEN’S SOFTBALL DROPS DOUBLE-HEADER



BC ends win-streak with loss at recent doubleheader./Lamar Carter for BC Athletics

By Owen Russell
Sports Editor

The women’s softball team suffered two brutal losses in its only double-header of the week on Thursday, Apr. 27, against Baruch College.

The Bulldogs hosted the Bearcats on Brooklyn’s Senior Day. While hoping to celebrate their seniors with at least one victory, that proved not to be the case.

Brooklyn faltered from the start, allowing four runs in the first inning of Game One. Baruch scored on two singles and one double, capitalizing on an error by the Bulldogs. Brooklyn struggled to get bat

on ball, managing just four hits for the game. In the sixth inning, Baruch tacked on two more runs to make it 6-0. With a mountain to climb in just two innings,

Brooklyn needed to find offense fast, but could not produce. Shortstop Melanie Millan grounded out to second base, scoring Brooklyn’s lone run of the game. Baruch held on to win Game One 6-1.

Having dropped Game One, the Bulldogs hoped to bounce back in Game Two. The Bearcats had other plans. In six innings, Brooklyn allowed eight runs,

scoring none of their own. Despite what you may think, the Bulldogs were within striking distance for much of the game. Heading into the sixth and final inning, Brooklyn trailed by two. All the Bulldogs

needed to do was to hold Baruch scoreless, and they might have had a chance. The Bearcats went on to score six runs in the sixth, chipping away

singles, a wild pitch, and a lot of crafty base-running later, Baruch led 8-0.

Brooklyn could not recover. Senior night ended with two stinging losses, closing out the Bulldogs’ home schedule.

Brooklyn’s regular season wraps up on Thursday, May 4, against Hunter College on Randall’s Island.

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