SNAP Open To More CUNY Students

Eligibility Requirements For SNAP Have Changed

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Cover by Kate Dempsey
BOT Passes USG Referendum

By Serin Sarsour
Editor-in-Chief

A referendum proposed by Brooklyn College’s Undergraduate Student Government (USG) calling for a $5.15 increase in the student activity fee was passed by the Board of Trustees (BOT) on Jun. 26. The fee, which is charged every semester, used to stand at $114.85, but will now be $120 for all BC undergraduate students.

“We are all very excited about the referendum passing, it means more events for every Brooklyn College student to enjoy, as well as a more efficient allocation of funds,” said Dylan Karlowski, a junior at BC and USG’s new press director.

About 8% of the BC undergraduate student body voted on the referendum ballot. 456 students were in favor of the referendum, while 139 voted against it. The referendum was then certified and signed by BC President Michelle Anderson on Apr. 22, and was sent to CUNY’s Central Office to be prepared for the Board committee meeting in May. After the referendum’s approval at the committee meeting and the recommendation for approval by the BOT Student Life Committee on Jun. 5, it was officially passed by the BOT weeks later. Karlowski noted that the referendum was necessary to remove reserved funds for clubs that were no longer operating, as well as raise funding for student life at BC. “Previously, these funds would only return to the budget at the end of the year, after the referendum, we will now be able to put them towards the benefit of the student body immediately,” he said.

USG oversees around 150 clubs, including the Esports Club, which was established in the passing of the referendum and will now receive funding from the college. The team hopes to receive necessary equipment in the form of a new computer lab, where they can keep their momentum going after reaching a division final in their debut season in the spring.

“With a bigger budget for student life, Brooklyn College students can look forward to more great events, more funding available for their clubs, and a more competitive esports team,” said Karlowski.
**More CUNY Students May Be Eligible For SNAP**

By Allison Dubrow  
**News Editor**

Due to a change in federal policy, eligibility requirements for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) have changed, allowing thousands of more CUNY students the ability to apply. SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps, is a program that helps recipients buy food at many stores through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card.

In regards to who receives SNAP, “it’s a mix of people who are struggling financially or trying to live on a small income or are currently unemployed,” said the Secretary Tom Vilsack of the United States Department of Agriculture, which oversees the SNAP program.

Congress worked together to pass a new bill that deals with food support, and they have changed the work requirement necessary to qualify for SNAP for people aged 50-54. However, people who experience homelessness regardless of their age, veterans, and people who are 18-24 years old that have aged out of foster care would be exempt from having to meet the new work requirements, according to NPR. These changes are designated to terminate in 2030.

This comes after Congress decided to end the pandemic emergency allotments that gave "SNAP households an additional $95 in benefits or an additional benefit valued up to the maximum benefit for their household size, whichever value is greater,” according to the USDA. The emergency allotments were used to help individuals and families who were struggling financially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now that the allotments are no longer being handed out, Congress has shifted its focus to changing the necessary work requirements in order to qualify for SNAP. The changes in these requirements within the debt ceiling package are going to increase federal spending by $2.1 billion for the 2023-2033 period, as stated by the Congressional Budget Office.

SNAP has helped many CUNY students, but there are many more who are eligible and do not even know it. The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute stated that "Based on just the income and legal status requirements, 41% of all surveyed students would be eligible for SNAP but slightly less than half of these students – 20% - are enrolled.”

CUNY students are eligible for SNAP if they have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $0, or if they partake in federal work study. This expansion of SNAP eligibility allows students who are between the ages of 18-49 and are enrolled part-time or full-time in a Career and Technical Education program of study to meet the requirements for SNAP.

For more information to see if you qualify for SNAP, please visit: [https://www.cuny.edu/current-students/student-affairs/student-services/snap/](https://www.cuny.edu/current-students/student-affairs/student-services/snap/).

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**Congestion Pricing Expected To Take Effect In NYC Next Year**

By Allison Dubrow  
**News Editor**

New York City received federal approval for congestion pricing on Jun. 27, enabling tolls that drivers must pay to enter the city, south of 96th street.

Congestion pricing serves as an attempt to ease traffic and pollution in the city, as well as raise money for the MTA.

NY Governor Kathy Hochul stated in a press conference, "We are going to be the very first state in the nation, the very first city in America, to have a congestion pricing plan." The program could go into effect as soon as spring 2024. Some cities in Europe, such as London, Stockholm, Rome, Malta, and Milan, have already implemented congestion pricing. The exact price of the toll in NYC has not been decided yet.

U.S. Representative Ritchie Torres supports the congestion pricing program and thinks it will be beneficial for NY. "From the moment I entered public office a decade ago, I have championed congestion pricing in the hopes of curbing congestion, improving air quality, reducing asthma rates, and stabilizing the MTA – the lifeblood of America’s largest city," Torres said in a statement he released on May 6.

Many supporters of congestion pricing see this as a way to help in the fight against climate change. The new tolls are expected to produce another $1 billion for the city yearly, which would be used to enhance the MTA system. "The overall goal of the increase in tolls is to try and steer people away from driving into the city and instead rely on public transportation. However, some people do not have this option, such as New Jersey residents.

"We are outraged at the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) decision to move forward with the Finding of No Significant Impact for New York’s and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s (MTA) Congestion Tax proposal without conducting a full and comprehensive review of the environmental impacts in New Jersey or the financial impact on low-income communities and commuters,” said U.S. Congressman Josh Gottheimer, Senator Bob Menendez, and Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr. in a joint statement. "This is nothing more than a cash grab to fund the MTA.”

Some experts have said that congestion pricing will not affect low-income communities, as they are the ones already using public transportation. Taxi and other car service drivers, on the other hand, are opposed to the plan as they believe some fares will be too costly. However, the MTA stated that for-hire vehicles (FHVs) and taxis will not be tolled more than once per day.
By Paulina Gajewski
Arts Editor

Reporting Assistance By
Serin Sarsour
Editor-in-Chief

In a world in which an online presence is becoming increasingly significant, CUNY is taking steps towards becoming a part of this modern world. An interview with Brian Ramos, a recent Brooklyn College graduate, shed light onto how CUNY students have tried to increase their presence on social media and engage with one another in an online manner.

Through a student-led Instagram account profile called CUNY By Students, social media interns are able to provide content that appeals to other students. The account was created in October 2020, and allows for a unique form of representation of students and media.

Beginning in October last year, Ramos embarked on an internship with CUNY. He had been chosen as a model for CUNY advertisements, many of which were plastered inside trains and around the city. “From there, I asked if they had a spot for me and explained to them how eager I was to find an internship for social media,” Ramos told the Vanguard. “My internship officially ended in June, and I would say it’s one of the most valuable opportunities I’ve experienced so far in my career.”

Outside of a formal classroom environment, CBS is able to provide a space for the student community to express themselves. The page provides a casual format, allowing interns to use their personal humor and talents in order to showcase life both in and out of school. Ramos used his interest in fashion to launch the production of the series “What CUNY Wears,” which exhibits diverse fashion across campuses.

“Being able to share the stories of students, as well as give them the opportunity to be seen and heard, were our biggest goals,” said Ramos. “We wanted to provide a space of creativity and overall community within CUNY.” Ramos’ internship also entailed working for CUNYEDU, which is the institution’s main Instagram account.

As a former business management major and marketing minor, Ramos’ internship gave him the opportunity to work with the CUNY Office of Communications and Marketing, acknowledging that this would help him progress in his career and blossom his interest in social media management and content creation.

“I knew that this internship would be a place where I could develop transferable skills for my future in social media marketing,” Ramos said. “My job included going to different campuses and networking with students to create these reels for CUNY, directing multiple photo shoots, and editing videos that would be seen all over CUNY’s websites.”

Ramos, whose personal social media experience dabbles in his hobbies, such as fashion and physical recreation, is also part of a leadership group that promotes public speaking and event planning for the youth.

Since graduating from BC this spring and completing his internship with CUNY, Ramos hopes to continue down this creative avenue, go to graduate school for digital media or media management, and share content that positively affects society. Accommodating to a modernizing world means that we have the ability to create spaces for communities at a scale we have never had before, and Ramos is doing just that.
Edward Yoo Pokropski, Life and Exploration Through Comedy

By Paulina Gajewski
Arts Editor

On a stage illuminated by torches, the ancient Greeks adorned themselves with disguises to perform comedies written by the greatest playwrights of their time. Throughout ancient Egypt, jokes were scattered across papyrus scrolls. Comedy, an art form dating back to our ancient predecessors across time and space, morphed and grew into what it is today.

Utilizing art forms to create connections and relatability across humans is always rewarding, especially when coupled with topics underscored with emotion. Edward Yoo Pokropski, a Korean-American adoptee, expresses his thoughts and feelings in his show titled, "Case 84: Adopted in the USA." Pokropski, who has experience in screenwriting, always wanted to get into stand-up comedy. "When I was growing up, it was something that I always thought about, and thought maybe there wouldn't be an opportunity to," he told The Vanguard. "When I moved to New York, there was more access to classes and open mics, and that community at large. I got infused into other spaces where people were doing more storytelling shows." Pokropski traveled to Seoul, Korea in 2015 to find some answers regarding his past and adoption. His show uses narrative and storytelling to portray his past, paired with personal pictures that take the audience on a trip from his childhood to the present day.

"Media is made by people," Pokropski noted. "We have our biases and past experiences, which colors our perceptions. Common themes continue to be seen again and again. It isn't just with adoption, it can be with any topic." One common misconception of adoption portrayed in the media is that every adoption is a happy one. Not every adoption, as Pokropski noted, ends with the adoptee being in a better situation than their previous one. Media literacy is an increasingly important skill, especially for students. Adoption stories generally take one archetype in media, and critical analysis aids in understanding the depth and difference to every adoption story. The nuance to adoption, along with almost every aspect of life, can be misconstrued through media, and media literacy lends a helping hand in understanding different narratives.

Speaking in front of an audience is not always an easy feat, but Pokropski explained that throughout his life, he had already gained the confidence an individual must possess to do so. "Nowadays, more and more jobs expect you to be able to talk in front of people," he explained. "Especially in the corporate world, they want you to be able to present your ideas to people. Through work, that's something I've had to do a lot."

Public speaking, however, provides an extra challenge in the comedy industry, especially when attempting to garner the crowd's attention. Much of Pokropski's abilities were aided by, "[...] the combination of getting the practice of introducing myself so many times through standup and tackling complex topics," he told the Vanguard. "It still is scary and nerve-racking, but I try to pull from those past experiences. Slowing things down is also helpful, some silences and pauses not as long as you might think they are when you watch them back." When Pokropski began his career in comedy, there were not many Asian American comedians in the community. Though, at the time, Pokropski had opened for Ronny Chieng, a senior correspondent on Comedy Central's The Daily Show, who uses storytelling to tackle sensitive topics.

Pokropski is also one of the executive producers of the largest and longest-running comedy fest dedicated to AAPI comedians in NYC called Asian Comedy Fest. "At the very beginning of 2020, right before everything shut down, it was something comics had been planning with one of the theaters in New York called 'The Pit.' The producer there had reached out to myself and other AAPI producers working on comedy shows," said Pokropski. These types of community shows had already been present in New York, but not in the form of a festival where Asian American shows and performers have the opportunity to merge. Pokropski noted that the Asian Comedy Fest hopes to grow and continue giving exposure to more artists.

Comedy is often perceived as a lighthearted attempt at hilarity, but recent applications of the art form prove that it is able to portray a plethora of topics. Edward Yoo Pokropski's show, which took place on Jun. 6 and Jun. 23 at the Caveat Theater in the Lower East Side, represents just that. Perhaps the two extremes of the human psyche, comedy and tragedy, can combine into a performance that manages to capture the core of human connection.
The Governors Ball Music Festival returned to New York City to kick off summer fun and festivities on Friday, Jun. 9, through Sunday, Jun. 11, at its new location at Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Queens. CUNY students, and New Yorkers alike, got to see some of their favorite artists perform while enjoying the festival’s new setting full of pop-up experiences and delicious food trucks. Artists ranging from Ice Spice to Lil Nas X to Kim Petras, and headliners Odesza, and Kendrick Lamar, exceeded all expectations with their outstanding performances, which we were lucky enough to experience as a part of the festival’s media crew. The artists’ performances were spread out on three stages that represented different Gov Ball partners: the Verizon stage, the Gopuff stage, and the Bacardi stage.

What guests were not expecting to see, however, were alerts declaring hazardous air and potential festival cancelation earlier in the week. New York experienced a historic amount of polluted air beginning on Jun. 6 due to wildfires in Canada that billowed smoke toward the United States, blanketing the northeast in a noxious orange haze. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the average Air Quality Index (AQI) on Wednesday, Jun. 7, and Thursday, Jun. 8, was 200-300 and was deemed “Very Unhealthy,” with a peak of an AQI of over 400, which is “Hazardous.”

Singing, screaming, dancing, and doing any physical activity outside in such conditions is extremely harmful, so continuing a music festival in such conditions seemed to be absurd at first. Deciding the show must go on with the prospect of the haze clearing up, the Governors Ball team released a statement about the possibility of cancelation due to the harmful conditions.

“We are closely monitoring the air quality with weather experts and are in close contact with city officials. As always, the health and safety of New Yorkers is our top priority," stated the Gov Ball team on their Instagram page on Jun. 7. "At this time, the festival is continuing as planned. We are hopeful that conditions will improve in the coming days and are looking forward to a great weekend!"

Despite the potentially harmful conditions, festival-goers flocked to Flushing Meadows Corona Park, created an environment that included kosher, halal, vegetarian, gluten-free, and vegan meals, with popular vendors like Van Leeuwen Ice Cream, Mao’s Bao, The Halal Guys, and more. Something that delightfully surprised us at the festival was the presence of booths of advocacy organizations, such as HeadCount, a nonprofit organization that works on music festivals to increase voter registration. Other booths offered free Narcan in case of drug overdoses, as well as a sensory deprivation room for guests who needed to rest.

Through The Haze: Gov Ball 2023

100,000 people in total attended the festival over the weekend, according to The New York Times. As festival-goers ourselves, we were hesitant to join the thousands screaming for their favorite artists while potentially inhaling toxic air the entire time. But as the festival began on its first day, the AQI lowered to an amount sufficient to healthily enjoy what the festival had to offer.

Gov Ball was definitely a unique and fun experience for us. Some of our favorite performances came from Kendrick Lamar, Lil Nas X, Ice Spice, and Giveon. One of Serin’s highlights was getting the chance to hear “Heartbreak Anniversary” by Giveon live. As for Kate, her favorite moment was fireworks being set off to the tune of Kendrick Lamar’s incredible performance. Unsurprisingly, the crowds were as lively as ever; everyone knows New Yorkers know how to have a good time.

Besides offering an extensive list of diverse artists, the festival also had interactive pop-ups with various photo ops that made the festival even more special. For instance, there was a pop-up shop that was sponsored by Red Bull where Red Bull drinks were being served alongside a DJ that was hidden in a space that was made to look like a subway station on the outside and a miniature version of NYC on the inside with a fake deli, flower shop, and construction site. Guests even received a special Red Bull MetroCard and wristband to go inside. Here, guests were able to take cool photos, including some in front of distorted funhouse mirrors. At other pop-ups, attendees had the opportunity to get funky face paint designs and free snacks like M&M’s. Additionally, there was a wide variety of food options that included kosher, halal,
Has Spider-Man Always Been A Cop?

By Shea Stevenson
Opinions Editor

Spider-Man: Across the Spiderverse, the most recent Spider-Man movie, is as much about cops as it is about anything else. All the main Spider-People have cop dads, the cop dads are the people in danger, the main Spider-People are likened to good cops, and the bad Spider-People act like bad cops.

In a memorable moment, Gwen Stacy (a Spider-Person) said to her cop dad, "The mask is my badge," a phrase so loaded I won't be unpacking even half of it here. All of this surprised my partner and I as we watched it. I thought that Spider-Man was predicated on a "friendly neighborhood" everyman quality and that the character was usually at odds with law enforcement. But the more I thought about it, the more I started to wonder if that was ever the case. In other words, has Spider-Man always been a cop?

The matter of Spider-Man – and superheroes at large – being stand-ins for police in their narratives is anything but trivial. Movies are innately political; they say things about their world and about the assumptions baked into it, but more importantly here, they are the most powerful propaganda engines ever devised by humans.

The current language of film editing is steeped in techniques pioneered for propagandistic and advertising (is there a distinction?) purposes. The point of these editing techniques is to elicit a specific predetermined reaction from an audience member and/or convey a static idea to them with each image and sound. When the music swells and the camera shows the hero at a low angle, we cheer, for we understand they are powerful or victorious.

In the past, the dominant form of film – and thus the dominant type of propaganda – in the United States was the Western. Though surely neither the rise of the Western nor the superhero movie is orchestrated by some governmental entity, intentionality isn't necessary for something to be propaganda. From that perspective, the Western arises not out of a paved path, but from emergent market forces (people went to see Westerns so they made more of them). It shows the mutant exaggeration of what Americans seem to want. The Western is a form of colonialist mythmaking; it is predicated on a fantasy-hero version of manifest destiny America.

Today, we have the superhero. Emerging from the same market forces as the Western, they are reflections of what Americans want to see. The superhero genre is perhaps most easily read as a form of law-and-order mythmaking; when citizens are in danger, a hero will come along and fight the villain. Although there are many self-conscious twists on this basic formula, as with any genre, it sticks regardless. Notice that this is the same assumption that practically all police media operates under, as well.

Spider-Man is worth singling out because he is the only superhero popular enough to fill out his own entire supporting cast with copies of himself, and he's done that three times now. He's also the only hero with particular proven fiscal stability. Even Batman, the nearest contender for a superhero with enough movies that his movies comprise a sub-genre in and of themselves, is not a proven box office smash (think Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice and Justice League) in the way that Spider-Man always has been. Other characters like Iron Man are tied to a particular actor, without which audiences cease caring about the character. Spider-Man is literally ten different actors in the same movie and people don't seem to mind.

He is useful as a propagandistic tool for the same reason he's so beloved: he doesn't seem like a cop. The basic conception of the Spider-Man character is that of a down-on-his-luck working-class poindexter living a double life. In one, he's a high school student/reporter, in the other, a famous crime fighter – but importantly, he is shunned for both. Bullied at school, hounded by cops, and lambasted in the news. His defining quality, the one that permeates all of his identities, is that he's an underdog. The most defining quality of a cop, on the other hand, is their "monopoly" on violence.

As a result, when Spider-Man acts like a cop, beating up shoplifters and handing them to the NYPD to be locked up, there's an innate tension. Most Spider-Man stories divert this tension to some other element of the dual life, but recently (starting in earnest on film with the Tom Holland Spider-Man), the solution to this tension is to relieve it. Spider-Man works for the government, the Avengers, or otherwise is not self-motivated but directed. Literally, they make him an officer of the law.

In the dichotomy between his poverty and his policing power, the policing power tips the scales and kicks the poverty out of the character completely. The last Spider-Man to have meaningful money trouble was Andrew Garfield's rendition. It's little wonder, as well, that many of the MCU's outings get checks from the Pentagon (as do most movies with military tech in them since the original Top Gun).

Spider-Man has always been a cop, but he started off as a meta-narratively conflicted one. In the ironing out of that character to make him the star child of the superhero industry, all that happened was the mask came off.
NY Knicks Look For A Deep Playoff Run

By Avi Wizwer
Sports Editor

As the 2022-2023 season for the New York Knicks came to a close after winning their first playoff series in over two years against the Cleveland Cavaliers, the playoffs looked very promising for the team. Star point guards Jalen Brunson, Julius Randle, and newly acquired Josh Hart played extraordinarily. Knicks fans believed they could make a deep playoff run, winning three series 4-0.

As they faced off against a very dangerous Miami Heat team led by Jimmy Butler in the second round, the Knicks had their hands full with a great team that had a lot of depth to their lineup. As the series went on, you could see the playoff experience really becoming a factor for the Heat with veterans like Jimmy Butler, who had prior championship experience in his last NBA finals appearance in 2020, and Kyle Lowry, who won an NBA championship in 2019. The composure and poise of Kyle Lowry, Jimmy Butler, and the hero of the series, Gabe Vincent, were evident down to the stretch when the games mattered the most as they controlled the pace and tempo of the game, hit big shots, and did not let the pressure affect them.

The Knicks, on the other hand, struggled to score the ball, and failure to knock down open shots became the downfall of their season. Despite the efforts of the Knicks, they fell short of the Heat, losing the series 4-2 — a very disappointing ending to such a great season. Going into the off-season, the Knicks needed to find someone who could really compliment their lineup, space the floor, play defense, and keep most, if not all, of their current players. With the signing of Donte DiVincenzo, which is a four-year, $50 million contract, the team is getting a great wing that can do just that. Spacing the floor, knocking down perimeter shots, and playing tenacious defense is what meets the Knicks’ needs. DiVincenzo averaged 9.4 points, 4.5 rebounds, and 3.5 assists while shooting 39.7% from three-point range last season with the Golden State Warriors.

The Knicks also let go of Obi Toppin to the Indiana Pacers for two future second-round picks. Toppin averaged 7.0 points and 3.0 rebounds while shooting 49% from the field and 32% from the three-point line over three seasons with the Knicks. As this is a key loss to the lineup, it remains to be seen if the team can adjust to his absence.

With the Knicks adding a piece in DiVincenzo, having Josh Hart opt into his player option as they give him another year with the team, and key players returning, the season is looking promising heading into the 2023-2024 season. Jalen Brunson and Julius Randle should have another great year as it’ll be their second full season playing together. RJ Barrett will also contribute in a number of ways as many foresee him having a great season this upcoming year. It will be interesting to see how this team can adjust, and how much better they have become individually and as a team this upcoming season.