

Bronx Community College
PRESIDENT’S COMMUNITY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2020
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Welcome back again to each and every one of you! This upcoming academic year will not be an easy one; but as we return ready to teach and learn, despite our less than perfect circumstances, let us each focus on joining together to effect real and enduring change for the lives of our students. “Real change, enduring change happens one step at a time. Fight for the things that you believe in but do it in a way that will get others to join you.” As we begin the Fall 2020 semester, I am struck by these words from the late iconic Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Now that the semester is underway and we face unprecedented challenges, I ask you to join me in the fight for our students. Fight to keep them connected and engaged during our new distance modality. Fight with me to encourage them and support them to continue their education even as we face the extraordinary obstacles of this pandemic. We are constantly reminded of how much we love Bronx Community College and how much we can achieve when we work together.

- **PLANNING FOR 2020-21:** We begin this semester with looming uncertainty. Fall 2020 Convocation took place virtually and highlighted the challenges facing CUNY and higher education overall. Our Faculty and Staff Town Hall scheduled for October 14th is another opportunity to continue our discussion. More information on how to register will be shared via BCC Broadcast. One of our major challenges as we begin this semester is the lack of a budget. As you know, New York State faces an over thirteen (13) billion-dollar deficit and the New York City is also grappling with a projected nine (9) billion-dollar deficit. Currently, BCC is operating on a monthly budget basis and we will continue to do so until the Board of Trustees approves a budget. We did receive funding approval to engage College Assistants for July, August and September. All staffing requests are being submitted to and require approval by the University-wide Vacancy Review Board. Further updates on our budget will follow as we receive more information and guidance from CUNY Central.

The College constituted a Re-occupancy Committee for input on the Re-occupancy plan and its implementation. Currently, only a small cohort of students and faculty returning to campus for those courses requiring an in-person component along with essential staff report to campus on a regular basis. The Committee’s Re-occupancy Plan was approved by CUNY Central Office. The Plan is available on the BCC homepage. Staff not regularly reporting to campus may request access to offices on Monday through Thursday 9:00 am to 11:00 am. Please keep in mind that we are following CUNY’s mandate to minimize the total number of people reporting to campus.

We have received approval to restart several capital projects that were on pause including the Colston Bridge Exteriors, GML roof and egress stairs, Roscoe Brown exterior, fire alarm upgrades, Patterson Automotive Technology Project and the Meister Lab. If you have been on campus, you will see a new service building has been installed on Osborne and the exterior netting has been removed from Roscoe Brown. Five buildings have been approved to participate in a lighting upgrade designed to transition from the current lighting to LED lighting with variable controls. Surveys will be distributed during October and November to all units to begin the process for compiling information for development of the next Capital Master Plan.

- **TRANSITIONING TO ONLINE LEARNING:** As the campus transitioned to a distance modality and the majority of our classes moved online, our faculty and staff overwhelmingly responded to the challenge. To date, since the time of the campus closure, the Office of Academic Affairs, through The Center for Teaching and Learning, has successfully trained 321 faculty members. Coordination of a faculty development program for Fall 2020 continues, with the assistance of a Mellon grant and collaboration with CUNY and ACUE. Two courses will be offered: *Promoting Active Learning Online* and *Designing Learner-Centered Courses*. It is anticipated that 30 faculty members will be recruited and enrolled in the eight-week course. I am proud to report that thanks to the efforts and contributions of BCC, CUNY, BCC Foundation and our local representatives, funding and support was galvanized for the issuance of nearly two-thousand (2000) devices to our students. I was so rejuvenated to personally deliver some tablets with Lester Sandres Rapalo, our Provost, directly to a few students right before classes started.
- **STUDENT SUCCESS:** The first student Town Hall was held on Thursday, September 10th via Zoom. Students actively engaged in discussion about their challenges and had their concerns directly addressed by Administrators. Break out rooms were available to pair students with experienced staff to address more individual and specific concerns. The next student Town Hall will be held in November; details will be shared via BCC Broadcast.

PRESIDENT'S COMMUNITY REPORT – OCTOBER 2019

BCC's first virtual Freshman Convocation, featuring keynote speaker BCC alumnus and surgeon, Dr. Kojo Wallace, is available for viewing at <http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/the-great-bcc-kickoff/>. The Student Government Association (SGA) welcomed 14 new Senators with elections for additional officers scheduled for October. Eighteen Welcome Sessions were held during the first week of classes to assist students in navigating the online environment. During these sessions, students were connected with their professors, advisors and support service offices.

A Social Justice Network has been created with over twenty (20) faculty, staff and administrators participating in discussions for social justice initiatives geared for the student body and campus community at large. In celebration of Latinx History Month, we will be hosting a number of events to honor the rich cultures and traditions of the Latinx community. Many of these events are on our website and will be shared via BCC Broadcast.

- **GOOD NEWS & CAMPUS ACTIVITIES:** Since July 1st BCC has been awarded over \$6 million in public and private grants (includes new funding and continuations). Some of the highlights of the recent allocations by grant awards include:
 - \$3 million (\$600,000/year) U.S. Department of Education Title V grant in support of ¡Avanzando! First Year Success program. The funds, which will be allocated over five years, will support BCC's efforts to increase the retention rates of first-time, full-time students and the College's three-year graduation rate. Over the next five years, BCC will help more than 5,000 students with high-tech academic advisement, work-based learning experiences, financial literacy training, peer mentoring and focused tutoring support;
 - \$598,602 three AmeriCorps grants (\$199,534/year) from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to launch the Early Care Educators Program. With this funding, BCC will enroll 28 individuals as AmeriCorps volunteers to staff South Bronx Head Start classrooms;
 - \$30,000 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Chairman's grant to digitize historical photographs and documents from the Hall of Fame for Great Americans' archives to develop a digital curriculum. These digitized materials will support faculty in continuing to use the landmarked Hall of Fame for Great Americans as a tool for teaching and learning.
 - BCC was awarded a 2-year \$167,400 grant from JPMorgan to work with Ascend NYC for the creation of a database of 5,000+ Bronx certified and non-certified MBEs.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & CONTINUING EDUCATION: The Office of Career Development launched a COVID Job Board with active jobs, internships, and volunteer opportunities offered to BCC students and members of the surrounding community. This area also developed social media accounts across all platforms to promote job readiness trainings and to communicate internship opportunities, job postings, and virtual career fairs.

Community Outreach and Recruitment significantly increased community outreach efforts, primarily as a means recruiting local residents to take advantage of the BCC's WD&CE programs. Activities included participation in community fairs sponsored by elected officials, increased production and distribution of marketing materials, and increased involvement in committee and work groups related to Jerome Avenue rezoning by the NYC Department of City Planning (with Jobs First NYC and Community Board 3).

Thanks to the staff of Workforce Development and Continuing Education for managing the P.O.I.N.T. Call Center to assist over 3000 matriculating students with the transition to online distance learning and ensured that BCC students were prepared to complete their courses in the Spring semester and beyond.

This is a challenging year; there is a significant amount of stress and anxiety surrounding COVID-19 and we do not know what the future holds. We also have to contend with the decline in student enrollment, retention and our fiscal challenges; however, we must work together to support our students and each other, only then can we overcome these obstacles.