

# PROVOST'S MONTHLY REPORT

January - February 2021

Volume 1 Issue 4

## - A NOTE FROM THE PROVOST -

### WELCOME TO SPRING 2021!

At midnight, the dropping of the ball in Times Square signified the end of a tumultuous 2020. Yet the year's events still affect us, our students, our country, and likely will for some time. We have experienced a deadly pandemic, a contested election fueled by false rhetoric, racial killings and continued acts of inequality, a shredded economy, historic unemployment, and the slow distribution of a desperately needed vaccine. In the midst of all this turmoil, Bronx Community College remains steadfast in its Vision to "effectively invest in each student's success by engaging with them in an integrative and supportive environment that facilitates the development and achievement of their educational and career goals."



BCC's commitment to the welfare and success of our students was again confirmed at the 8th Annual Winter Conference, Surviving To Thriving: Taking Care While Teaching and Learning Online, which took place remotely on January 19th and 20th. An outstanding keynote address, a memorable plenary panel session on racism, and a record twenty presentations demonstrated our wide range of professional interests and dedication to our students.

I wish you an enlightening and productive semester as we transcend our challenges and continue our work for the success of our BCC students.

**As always, my appreciation for your commitment to our students is unwavering.**

**"Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace".**

**- Confucius**

## BCC STUDENT HERO RECEIVES POSTHUMOUS DEGREE

On January 20, 2021, Bronx Community College honored 19-year-old Lucas Silverio, a former BCC student who aspired to be a physical therapist. Mr. Silverio died in June 2019 while attempting to save a 3-year-old girl from a raging fire in their high-rise apartment in the Belmont section of the Bronx. After helping to carry his grandmother down to safety, Mr. Silverio reentered the burning building and climbed 14 flights of steps to rescue Yasleen McDonald. Neither survived.

President Isekenegbe awarded a posthumous Associate of Science degree to the young hero's family. "We honor your son," the President told Mr. Silverio's parents while presenting them with the diploma, "the hero that we all need." Later in an interview, President Isekenegbe said, "How many would do what he did that day? That goes to show the type of individual he was, and we miss him on our campus." (Compiled from New York Times and Channel 7 Eyewitness News)





## **PARTHA FOUNDATION AND BCC, GRAND OPENING CEREMONY**

“The Partha Foundation in Bhubaneswar, India, aims to inspire and to bring about a transformative change in society. The foundation strives to bring forth new modes of thinking, acting, living, and being in the world. PARTHA focuses on the realization of higher values to empower communities, students, and society and help to bring about a revitalization of our value systems . . . to create harmony with nature & self by providing . . . efficient life skills education, ecological studies, cultural immersion programs, and spiritual & social activities.”

The ceremony was attended by Dr. Lester Sandres Rápalo, Vice President and Provost for Academic Affairs, Dr. Neal Phillip, Professor and Chairperson of Chemistry, Earth Sciences, and Environmental Sciences, and Paramita Sen, Lecturer in the Department.

VP Rápalo said, “We are excited at this great opportunity for our BCC students and look forward to the partnership with PARTHA Foundation.”



## **“FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING: TAKING CARE WHILE TEACHING & LEARNING ONLINE”**

### **BCC’S 8TH WINTER CONFERENCE (JANUARY 19TH, 2021, DAY ONE)**

In 2020, the COVID pandemic declared itself in the lives and aspirations of BCC’s faculty, staff and students. What had been taken for granted for over 60 years of the College’s existence—a classroom, chalkboard or smartboard, students settling into their desks, their faces and expressions visible to the instructor, the raised hands, the assumption the semester would progress as the previous hundred plus semesters had—came to an abrupt end in March 2020, and the teaching/learning modality, indeed the entire College, underwent a radical shift.

In response to the COVID crisis, faculty, staff, students and administration were forced to revise their operating procedures; what had heretofore been taken for granted necessitated swift action with new modalities, new approaches, and even new pedagogies to address the challenges to BCC’s commitments. In the middle of January 2021, BCC, undeterred, hosted its 8th Annual Winter Conference. The conference assessed professional and personal responses to the completed COVID semesters (Spring 2020, Fall 2020 and Winter 2021) in the appropriately titled From Surviving to Thriving: Taking Care while Teaching & Learning Online.

Opening remarks by Dean Luis Montenegro placed the 8th Annual Winter Conference in the context of the disruptive events of 2020 and its profound effects on personal and professional lives. He thanked the Committee on Instruction and Professional Development (CIPD), Dean Nancy Ritze, Director Mark Lennerton and CTLT staff, and the Leadership Council for their “many hours” work on the conference. Dean Montenegro noted the extraordinary circumstances of the past year.

Provost Lester Sandres Rápalo echoed the thanks to many involved in organizing and marketing the conference, noting the resilience and commitment of the many committee members for their work. He referenced Dr. Martin Luther King’s statement, “Intelligence plus character is the goal of true education” to characterize the ethos of the conference. President Thomas Isekenegbe noted that the sessions offered a “buffet” of offerings. “Something for everyone.” He read aloud the conference’s thematic tracks—“Effective Teaching & Learning Environments,” “Ensuring Student Success,” “Restorative Practices,” and “Building a Culture of Empowerment & Support,” noting how the last track especially characterized Bronx Community College.

## **BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE/CUNY WINS FIRST-EVER USDA GRANT WILL SHOWCASE INNOVATIVE RESEARCH TO IMPROVE NUTRITION ACCESS IN THE BRONX**

The USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) awarded a \$40,000 grant to Bronx Community College to host a conference to share and to advance innovative research that has the potential to improve food access, eating patterns and health in low-income communities. The conference was held February 1, 2021.

The effort was led by Dr. Charmaine Aleong, Coordinator for Dietetics and Nutrition Science in the Department of Health, Physical Education & Recreation. Geological Agriculture (GeoAg) is a new science

focused on growing plants for food in inner-city environments using inexpensive materials such as rocks rather than soil. “This research has the potential to empower those living in food deserts to grow their own nutrition, in their homes, at very little cost,” Dr. Aleong said.

The conference was coordinated with the founder and patent-holder of GeoAg technology, Mr. Richard Campbell of the company To Soil Less. “This conference puts BCC at the center of GeoAg research and scaling in the New York City area, with a potential impact on millions of New Yorkers who struggle with food insecurity,” says Campbell.

BCC President Thomas A. Isekenegbe noted, “This was BCC’s first grant award from the USDA and with these funds we are highlighting the important research our faculty conduct. We are particularly excited to support 10 BCC student-researchers who participated in the project.” Faculty from Bronx Community College, Tennessee State University, Morgan State University, and Fort Valley State University presented the innovative and sustainability-related research.

## **GRANT FOR COVID-19 ORAL HISTORIES AWARDED TO BCC ARCHIVES**

The Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO) has awarded an “Equity Grant in Action” to Bronx Community College Archives and Mutual Aid NYC (MANYC) to collaborate on an Organizing Resource Library (ORL). This collection will include oral histories so as to preserve and make openly available materials from marginalized communities across NYC that were devastated during the COVID-19 crisis, and whose stories risk being lost.

“The METRO Equity in Action Grant program aims to support member institutions by providing funding that assists with new and ongoing efforts to preserve our cultural history. We endeavor to fund digital projects that focus on anti-racist practices and marginalized communities. Rooted in community and collaboration, this program encourages partnerships between organizations in order to cultivate a mutual knowledge exchange that empowers both parties and creates a pipeline for access.” (Website)

For information about the program contact BCC Head of Archives : [Cynthia.Tobar@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Cynthia.Tobar@bcc.cuny.edu)

## **FACULTY & STAFF: SCHOLARSHIP, CREATIVE WORKS, PRESENTATIONS**

**Neil Hwang.** Received a Community College Mentored Undergraduate Research Grant for “Technology Skills that Really Matter for Accounting Graduates in the Job Market.”

(Note: The CCRG Mentored Undergraduate Research program is designed to support faculty basic research endeavors and to increase the number of associate degree students engaged in faculty mentored research projects. Proposals from all disciplines will be considered. Faculty in the social and behavioral sciences and the humanities are especially encouraged to apply.)

**Nelson Santana.** “The COVID-19 Dominican Oral History Project.” DSA2020 Virtually@Hostos: IX Biennial Dominican Studies Association Conference. *Crisis of Truth, State of Emergency, and Social Responses: The Urgency of Dominican and Ethnic Studies in the Present Hour*. December 4, 2020. Hostos Community College, Bronx, NY. Panelist.





## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

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## PROVOST'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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**Congratulations to the Office of Transfer Services!**  
2021 marks the seventh year of publication for  
their student newsletter, *Transfer Talk*.

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BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE OFFICE OF TRANSFER SERVICES

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### EXPLORING ONLINE DEGREES

By Edwin Roman, Academic and Transfer Resources Coordinator

One of the primary reasons that students pursue online degrees is because of the incredible flexibility; you can learn on your own schedule while balancing employment, life, and class work. Perhaps one of the most notable conveniences of online learning is that you can easily revisit past material or stop and rewind a pre-recorded lecture to organize your notes. Furthermore, tools like Blackboard allow you to see all of your grades and easily gauge progress. And while many online courses are asynchronous, some require students to collaborate with one another at set times or meet with a professor during virtual office hours. Students should research these requirements.

**Earning an online degree shows employers that you can prioritize, address multiple tasks, and adjust to fluctuating work conditions.**

**What To Look For**  
When searching for an online degree be sure that the school holds regional accreditation. Accreditation ensures that higher education institutions fulfill certain standards. The United States has six accreditation regions, each with a different organization that has a charter from the U.S. Department of Education (BCC and all CUNY schools are accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education). These organizations review colleges and universities in their respective regions to ensure that the academic programs provide the educational outcomes that a school advertises to prospective students. Some institutions do not possess regional accreditation; therefore, employers may not regard degrees from those schools as valid. You can determine whether a school has regional accreditation by performing a simple search on the ED website (<https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/h/home>).

Media is saturated with advertisements for proprietary (for-profit colleges), but these schools must be closely scrutinized because of their extensive history of dubious business practices. Accreditation doesn't always mean that a proprietary college is trustworthy. Many attract students by becoming accredited, but some accrediting bodies may not have rigorous standards (<https://nyti.ms/2H3dt58>).

**The Benefits of an Online Degree**  
Online learning could be a challenge at first, but once you adapt, there are indeed benefits. A good part of the workforce is moving online. According to the GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics.com March 2020 Telecommuting Trend Data Report, regular work-at-home has grown 173% since 2005 with more than 47 million employees working remotely at least half the time. Learning online helps prepare professionals for online work.

Online degrees can help demonstrate key skills to potential employers.

Earning an online degree shows employers that you can prioritize, address multiple tasks, and adjust to fluctuating work conditions. You're also demonstrating that you are self-motivated and understand the significance of time management, skills that employers want to see in new hires.

A significant part of online learning requires you to work with new tools and software as well as troubleshoot common issues. Embracing technology is imperative. Your online degree demonstrates strong technical skills, which is a plus for any job seeker.

**CUNY Online Bachelor's Degrees**

- Bachelor of Science in Business, CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Media, CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Disability Studies, CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Science in Financial Economics, Medgar Evers College
- Bachelor of Science in Health Information Management, CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Science in Health Services Administration, CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Science in Information Systems, CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies, CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BS), Lehman College
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BS), CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, CUNY School of Professional Studies
- Bachelor of Science in Security Management, John Jay College
- Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, CUNY School of Professional Studies

Students should note that the CUNY School of Professional Studies admissions applications requires an essay, and all programs have specific GPA requirements.

(Continued on the next page.)

The entire archive may be found at <https://cutt.ly/vkfximp>.

**Correction:** In the December issue, Carmen Meyers (Communication Arts & Sciences) was unfortunately omitted from the following announcement:

"It is with great pleasure that the Communication Arts and Science's Theatre Workshop presents the film *The Essential Bronx: COVID Stories, Part 1*. We have preserved in this short film a selection of our Theatre Workshop students' authentic experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and we want to share these stories with you, the BCC Community." YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/cdBU5ICPLRE>. If you wish to contribute to this growing historical archive, contact: [Carmen.Meyers@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Carmen.Meyers@bcc.cuny.edu) or [John.Socas@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:John.Socas@bcc.cuny.edu)

**Note: Please send notices of faculty & staff publications, presentations and creative work to**  
**Richard.LaManna@bcc.cuny.edu**

**Work must have been published or presented in the last 3 months. Next issue deadline: March 15, 2021.**