

# PROVOST'S MONTHLY REPORT

March 2021

Volume 1 Issue 5

## - A NOTE FROM THE PROVOST -

### SEASONS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Winter recedes; Spring emerges. Warmer days and evenings, longer hours of sunshine. Our common ancestors gave thanks for the sun's return, for the time of planting and growth, and later, the harvest. At Bronx Community College we continue to grow, to thrive through the seasons, to accomplish new goals that serve the dreams and aspirations of our students.

Consider these recent events: the New York State Department of Education approved BCC's first online education program; the prestigious liberal-arts college, Sarah Lawrence, has created a transfer pipeline with BCC; the Department of Labor has awarded a 4-year grant to BCC's Division of Work Force Development and Continuing Education; *Excelencia in Education* named BCC as one of the five Hispanic Serving Institutions in New York State; Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society named Bronx Community College a "2021 REACH Chapter"; BCC and the Department of Chemistry, Earth Sciences and Environmental Sciences summited with Govardhan Ecovillage (GEV) in India to address climate change issues; *Academicinfluence.com* has ranked BCC in the top "50 Best Community Colleges of 2021." Additionally, BCC is preparing for its



8th Annual Faculty Day in April, and BCC will once more partner with Lehman College and Hostos CC to present innovative models for integrating technology and pedagogy in May 2021's BRONX EdTech Showcase.

During thirteen months of remote teaching and learning, we have emerged stronger for having met the hundred challenges that COVID-19 laid on the doorsteps of the nation's colleges.

Midterm allows us to see where we have been and what lies before us. Our achievements and the products of our efforts reveal not only our ability to adapt, but to enhance our mission while pursuing excellence for ourselves and our students.

In the coming seasons, let us continue to reap the harvest of our dedication as we slowly, systemically return to the (new) normal that awaits us.

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

**"Spring is the time of plans and projects."**

**- Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina***

## **NEW YORK STATE DOE APPROVES BCC'S FIRST DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Provost's Monthly Report Staff caught up with Dr. Debra Gonsher (Communication Arts & Sciences) and Dr. Jordi Getman-Eraso (History), two faculty who were instrumental in overseeing the successful application process for BCC's Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts & Sciences and asked them to share their work and insights.

**Can you tell us why the AA in Liberal Arts & Sciences is the first program for which BCC sought online approval?**

**Debra Gonsher:** It was the first program as it has the highest enrollment of any curriculum and we knew we would be reaching the most prospective students. Also, the program has the most choice. For example, as the program requires students to take two terms of a language, if a student wanted to take a language but it was not offered on-line, the student could choose another language that was offered on-line or come to campus to take the preferred language. There are very few required courses in the program—and all of them are offered on-line. In more specialized programs, perhaps some of the courses may not be on-line, but that shouldn't be an issue, as there is no mandate that all courses be taken on-line for this program—only that 50% of the courses be taken on-line.

**Jordi Getman:** LAS AA degree is the degree that serves most students of all the ones we offer at BCC. This will allow us to offer the online degree version to a wider range of students. In addition, it's a cross disciplinary degree, involving most academic departments, which will allow us to establish broad programmatic structures that will lay the foundation for further online degrees.

**Did COVID and the change in modality play into the timing of going for NYSED approval?**

**DG:** Certainly, as it was long overdue. BCC has been offering on-line classes for 15 years and students may very well have graduated having taken 50% of their classes on-line. But now we can begin to address some of the elements to make the program truly outstanding, such as a strong preparatory course, well-trained, committed advisors, and interventions when needed.

**JG:** At BCC, we've been talking about offering online degrees for over a decade, since the times of the ODAC (Online Degree Advisory Committee). However, there was never enough consensus to formalize the creation of online degrees. The pandemic has forced almost all of our instruction online for over a year, making it easy to envision how an online degree can operate, both with courses and with student support. With our operations moved online, it was easy for all the interested parties to accept and support the creation of online degrees that would continue to offer the benefits of online education after the end of the pandemic and our return to a more "normal" face-to-face modality of instruction.

**Is the entire program online? If not, was this a decision on BCC's part or a ruling by NY State?**

**DG:** No. Students may well take all of their classes on-line, but they are only required to take 50% of them on-line. I imagine that there will be a number of courses that, after the pandemic, students will prefer to take on campus. Maybe due to the fact that a particular faculty member is not teaching a particular course on-line, or the students prefer taking, for example, a dance class in person.



**“BCC has been offering on-line classes for 15 years and students may very well have graduated having taken 50% of their classes on-line.”**

**JG:** The program will not be entirely online. NY State requires a minimum of 50% of courses of an online degree be offered online. We are working to offer online as many of the courses that count toward the completion of the LAS AA degree. That said, not all courses will necessarily be offered online. Depending on departmental preferences, it is possible that some courses that can be taken to complete the LAS AA degree will not be offered online. However, that does not mean that students won't be able to complete all of their degree online. Working with online degree advisors, students who want to take online courses only will be able to find a path to completing their degree. All student services will be available online, from admissions to financial aid to advising to tutoring.

**The CAS revisited the mandatory 2.0 GPA for students taking online courses and decided to eliminate the requirement. A good idea?**

**DG:** I am aware of the vote at CAS and personally do not think the elimination of the 2.0 GPA is a good idea. And if the school wishes to proceed in this manner, there should be some specific plan to address the issue that the GPA requirement was trying to address: the readiness of first-term students to handle online courses. I don't believe that all students who wish to go into an on-line program may be ready for one. I understand that there is a concern that by keeping the 2.0 GPA requirement, students may have to wait until their third term to take online classes, but there are better ways of dealing with this issue than doing away with the requirement. For example, using the GPA of the mid-grades as an indicator to enable enrollment in online courses in the second term. Ultimately, students' use of their financial aid to enroll in a college level online course may result in a less than satisfactory result and have long-term negative implications for the student. If nothing else, advisement should ensure that asynchronous courses not be taken in at least the first term.

**JG:** The CAS recently voted to eliminate the 2.0 GPA minimum requirement for taking online courses. It is an issue of student equity. On a practical level, the GPA requirement impeded students, no matter their GPA, from taking online courses until they reached their third semester. This is a major obstacle for students wanting to enroll in the online degree as they would not be able to take online courses in their first two semesters. It defeats the purpose of enrolling in the online degree. That said, the requirement was also largely obsolete. It was a restriction implemented eleven years ago at a time when online courses had lower student success numbers compared to their in-person counterparts. At that time, the college did not offer online student support enrolled in those online courses. However, over the last few years we have increased our offerings of online support, culminating over the past year, where all support is now available online. With broad online support structure now in place, we are much better prepared to help struggling students to succeed. As such, the GPA requirement is no longer a benefit, but rather an impediment to students completing an online degree.

### **Have BCC students warmed up to online learning?**

**DG:** I think many students have. The students I have seen and advised this year, seem to like certain aspects—but that's with some portion of the course being taught synchronously. I am hesitant to say that what we are seeing during this period of a pandemic will necessarily be the case after health concerns are finally behind us.

**JG:** Student surveys from the Fall 2020 semester have revealed that while some students can't wait to get back into in-person courses, well over half of our students consider online learning acceptable or similar to traditional in-person courses. In fact, about one third of our students actually prefer to take courses online over in-person. This is the segment of the student population that we look to serve with the new online degree.

### **When and how will the online program open up for students? Any expectations of how students will respond to marketing? To the actual experience?**

**DG:** At this point, I am uncertain. That seems to be a question to be considered by many parties, including VP Rápalo, VP Delgado, Marketing and Communications, as well as Jordi and myself. As of this moment, there has been no marketing plan discussed—but I certainly hope, as I am sure Jordi does, that there will be a marketing plan developed in the very near future.

**JG:** The LAS AA Online Degree will be enrolling students for the Fall 2021 semester. Students presently in the traditional in-person LAS AA degree will be able to switch over to the online degree and apply all of their already completed courses. We are excited at the prospect of having online degree students start this new venture with us, and we look forward to supporting them in completing their degree and graduating the first online degree cohort from BCC!

**“...well over half of our students consider online learning acceptable or similar to traditional in-person courses. In fact, about one third of our students actually prefer to take courses online over in-person. ”**

## BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESTABLISHES PARTNERSHIP WITH SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE



A wonderful, life-changing opportunity has opened for BCC transfer students to transfer to Sarah Lawrence College, the “prestigious, residential, coeducational liberal arts” college in Bronxville, New York. “Founded in 1926 and consistently ranked among the leading liberal arts colleges in the country, Sarah Lawrence is known for its pioneering approach to education, rich history of impassioned intellectual and civic engagement, and vibrant, successful alumni. In close proximity to the unparalleled offerings of New York City, [Sarah Lawrence’s] historic campus is home to an inclusive, intellectually curious, and diverse community” (SLC website).

The program starts “immediately” and will begin to identify high-achieving students from BCC and Westchester Community College. Students admitted to Sarah Lawrence “will matriculate with junior standing, their full demonstrated financial need for tuition and fees will be met and they will be on track to complete

their Sarah Lawrence Bachelor of Arts two years after enrolling, among other benefits” (*Patch.com* 3/10/21).

“This transfer partnership is a major achievement for both Sarah Lawrence and Bronx Community Colleges,” said President Thomas A. Isekenegbe. “Sarah Lawrence will add the talent and commitment of our outstanding and diverse graduates to its student body. BCC will benefit from a new and important pathway from our campus to one of the great four-year colleges in the country” (*Patch*).



## BCC AWARDED \$700,000 TO TRAIN CHILD EDUCATORS



Bronx Community College has been awarded a \$699,972 “Strengthening Community College Training Grant” from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). With this four-year grant, BCC’s Division of Workforce Development & Continuing Education, in partnership with its Department of Education & Academic Literacy, will provide Child Development Association (CDA) credential training. The CDA is the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education.

The award is part of a nearly \$5 million DOL grant being given to The City University of New York and its community colleges that will provide training to people in underemployed industries and communities across the City, especially those affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

“CUNY’s community colleges are uniquely positioned to help lead our city and region’s economic recovery from the pandemic,” says CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. “This grant will bolster the University’s efforts to revitalize and rebuild our communities.”

“COVID has highlighted the importance of having skilled and nimble educators for all of our children,” notes Karla Renee Williams, Interim Dean of Workforce Development at Bronx Community College. “With this grant, we continue to be a leader in training new generations of educators and leaders in early child care.”

## BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A LEADER IN EDUCATION FOR LATINOS

In federal law a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) is defined as an accredited, degree-granting, public or private nonprofit institution of higher education with 25% or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment. In the 2018–19 academic year, 539 institutions met the federal enrollment criterion.

Bronx Community College is among the top five colleges across New York State for enrolling and awarding associate degrees to Latino students, according to a new report issued by *Excelencia in Education* and SUNY Albany.

“We are beyond proud that *Excelencia* has identified many of our colleges and programs in its report for promoting Latino retention, college access and degree completion,” said Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. “With CUNY colleges leading most of the *Excelencia*’s rankings in the state for most degrees and certificates awarded to Latinos and for the highest enrollment figures, CUNY is the undisputed leader in New York for serving Latinos in higher education.”



## BCC'S PHI THETA KAPPA HONORED

"For more than 100 years, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society has helped millions of high-achieving college students reach their full potential. We don't just recognize their academic success; we give them opportunities to develop professional and leadership skills, earn scholarships, explore career paths – and make their worlds a lot bigger" (PTK.org).



The Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society of Bronx Community College of has been named a "2021 REACH Chapter" by the national Phi Theta Kappa organization. The "Recognizing Excellence in Acceptance and Completion with Honors" program acknowledges and rewards Phi Theta Kappa chapters that excel in membership development.

**"The Theta Kappa students at BCC exemplify our values of excellence, commitment and community leadership," says BCC President Thomas A. Isekenegbe. "For their work to be honored like this is an honor for the entire campus."**

The recognition by REACH comes with three Phi Theta Kappa graduation stoles that can be worn by chapter officers or members during graduation ceremonies. In a letter to Dr. Isekenegbe announcing the distinction, Phi Theta Kappa President and CEO Lynn Tincher-Ladner noted: ***The dedication of both you and your chapter advisers to enhancing the college experience and the lives of students amid the numerous challenges 2020 presented is truly appreciated and more important than ever before.***

## BCC INCLUDED IN TOP 50 US COMMUNITY COLLEGES

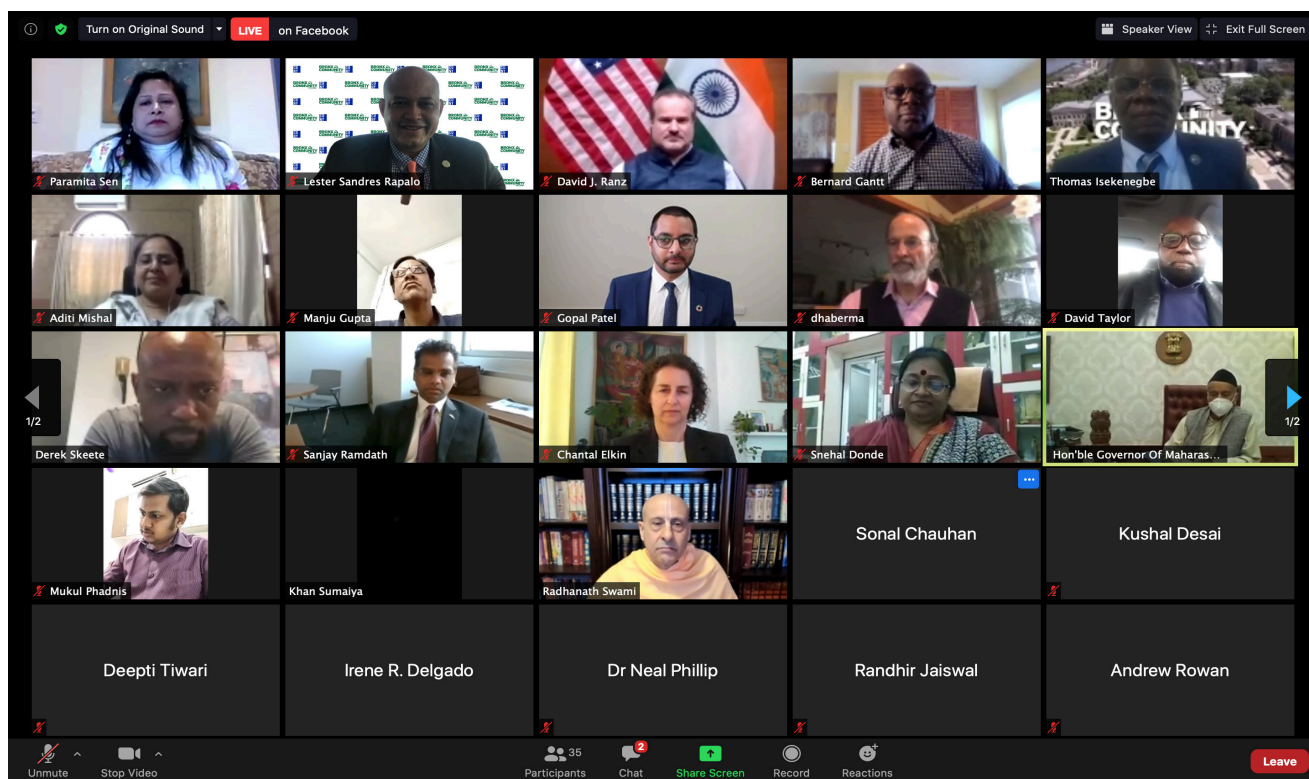
"AcademicInfluence.com is a team of academics and data scientists working to provide an objective, non-gameable influence-based ranking for the people, schools, and disciplinary programs that make up higher education. To that end, [AcademicInfluence.com] has engineered an innovative and unbiased ranking technology that employs machine learning to measure the impact of work produced by the world's top academic influencers. The "InfluenceRanking"™ engine brings to light the achievements of top institutions and top academics across the world" (<https://academicinfluence.com/about>).

The criteria used for the ranking include at least 1,000 enrolled students, full accreditation, and exclusively two-year (or associate) degree programs. For detailed information about the "AcademicInfluence.com" ranking, see the above URL.



## BCC & INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT

Bronx Community College played a major role in an online Indo-US Sustainability Summit on March 22, which was World Water Day. The sustainability summit was jointly organized by the Govardhan Ecovillage (GEV) and BCC.



Who is the Global Ecovillage Network? The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is composed of five regional networks—Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa, and Oceania & Asia. NextGEN, the youth arm, spans the globe. “The network is made up of approximately 10,000 communities and related projects where people are living together in greater ecological harmony” (<https://ecovillage.org/about/about-gen/>). GEN is a growing network of regenerative communities and initiatives that bridge cultures, countries, and continents. GEN builds bridges between policy-makers, governments, NGOs, academics, entrepreneurs, activists, community networks and ecologically-minded individuals across the globe in order to develop strategies for a global transition to resilient communities and cultures. An ecovillage is an intentional, traditional or urban community that is consciously designing its pathway through locally owned, participatory processes, and aiming to address in the 4 Areas of Regeneration (social, culture, ecology, economy into a whole systems design). Govardhan Ecovillage hosted BCC and CUNY students during their 2019 India Study Abroad Program.

President Dr. Thomas A. Isekenegebe and Provost Dr. Lester Sandres Rápalo were among the keynote speakers. Co-coordinators of the event, Department Chair Dr. Neal Phillip and Dr. Paramita Sen of the BCC Department of Chemistry, Earth Sciences and Environmental Sciences, gave a presentation on BCC's work in India as part of an ongoing collaboration focusing on climate change. Professors Sen and Phillip showed how they are tracking the intensity of the 2019 and 2020 Indian Monsoon weather with the weather station installed by BCC and CUNY students in the 2019 CUNY India Study Abroad that was led by BCC. To see the complete program:

<https://www.facebook.com/neal.phillip.14/videos/10217670138219787>

# **EIGHT ANNUAL BCC FACULTY DAY . . . FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 2021**

## **“ROADS TO RESILIENCE AT BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE: DEVELOPING RESILIENCE IN CLASS, ON CAMPUS AND BEYOND”**



Faculty Day is an opportunity for faculty, staff, and students of all departments to come together to share research, creative works, and pedagogical best practices to build cooperation at BCC. Faculty Day is organized by the Committee on Instruction and Professional Development (CIPD) with the support of the Office of Academic Affairs and the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (CTLT).

The crises and upheavals of 2020-2021—including but not limited to the COVID 19 pandemic, the murders of people of color and the nation-wide protests against police brutality, as well as the threats to our democracy—brought into focus long-standing challenges that members of the BCC community face in their professional and personal lives. For Faculty Day 2021, we will reflect on how we—faculty, staff, and students—respond to these challenges. Sharing our experiences in teaching, learning, research, creative works, and service, we will examine practices that foster resilience.

### **Faculty Day Topics**

- Developing self-awareness/self-confidence and feelings of competence
- Community-building and developing support networks in distance learning
- Collaborating between communities on and off
- Interdisciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration
- Experiential learning

Contact CIPD Chair, Rebeca Araya (Biological Sciences) [rebeca.araya@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:rebeca.araya@bcc.cuny.edu) or your department's CIPD representative with any questions.

## **BRONX EDTECH SHOWCASE**

Join us for a very special opportunity to gather together and explore some of the most effective and engaging classroom practices. Innovators from the three Bronx CUNY colleges, Lehman College, Hostos and Bronx Community College, demonstrate their exemplary models for integrating and infusing technology into their fully online, hybrid and in-person teaching methods.

This year's #BronxEdTech Showcase will be held virtually on Friday, May 7, 2021.

The theme of this year is “Building Tomorrow Together: Adapting to a New Normal”

Proposals & Conference Registration: <https://commons.hostos.cuny.edu/bronxedtech/>





## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

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## PROVOST'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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## MORE BCC STUDENT SUCCESS!

The Bronx Community College Upward Bound TRiO Program is a federal grant program funded by the United States Department of Education, designed to generate the skills and motivation necessary for success in education beyond high school. Upward Bound administers an array of services which: assist low-income, first-generation high school students to overcome obstacles in their path that impede their educational growth; build self-esteem; increase educational aptitude; and motivate participants to successfully graduate from secondary school.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STUDENTS!

#### BCC Scholarship Recipients for the TRiO Pre-collegiate Programs Graduating Class of 2021

##### Macaulay Honors:

- Akilah Campbell Macaulay Honors-Baruch College (BCC TRiO Talent Search)
- Nicaury Arnoat - Macaulay Honors -City College (BCC TRiO Upward Bound Math & Science)

##### Posse Scholars:

- Jayola Reid (BCC TRiO Upward Bound Math and Science).
- Janelle Bigio-Molina (BCC TRiO Talent Search)

##### Hunter College Yalow Honors Scholarship Program:

- Hailey Jaquez (BCC TRiO Upward Bound Program)

##### Bronx Chamber of Commerce – Women on Distinction Scholarship:

- Stephanie Kusi (BCC TRiO Upward Bound Math and Science)
- Abigail Afriyie (BCC TRiO Upward Bound Math and Science)

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

**Jordi Getman-Eraso** (History, Director of Online Teaching): Interviewed on Bronx Net TV by Host Daren Jaime; discussed ePortfolio, BCC's online response to COVID, and assisting faculty and students in online teaching/learning. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4EFeiUQXi0> March 17, 2021.

Daniel Walter Lencinas and **Lester Sandres Rápalo**: *Cuentos entre amigos* (Coleccion Dorada) (Spanish Edition) Independently published, March 2021.

**Carlos Rivera** (World Languages & Culture): "Our Community Remembers Miguel Algarín." Edited by Nancy Mercado. *Tribes*. December 2020. <https://www.tribes.org/remembering-miguel>. Poem

##### Carlos Rivera – Performance:

"La Regla." *Emancipation*. Biennial of Performance. (Role La Regla). 1/3 (2020) to 3/8 (2021) Bogotá, Columbia, 2021. Virtual

**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: April 20, 2021.**