



# PROVOST'S MONTHLY REPORT

April - May 2021

Volume 1 Issue 6

## - A NOTE FROM THE PROVOST -

### THE YEAR OF THRIVING

Summer is approaching, and with it comes a significant drop in COVID cases, hospitalizations, and America's reopening. Come Fall 2021 semester, BCC will be operating with over 50% of classes returning to campus, along with dedicated faculty, administration and staff to continue to serve our students and to lead them to success. This is the start of our new normal. The nightly news is filled with conspiracy theories, calculated misinformation, racist acts, gun violence, assaults on voting and democracy, and deep divisions across our nation not seen since the 1960's. At Bronx Community College, our vision for our students, however, remains intact: 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."



This is the time of the academic year when we post final grades, complete annual reports, and, at least this year, seek the vacation or leisure time that the pandemic, with all its fears, demands and heartbreak, has denied us for the past 15 months. The old adage that warns us against assuming

too much, too soon—*We're not out of the woods, yet*—remains true. Not one of us knows exactly what the future will bring, which changes will occur naturally and which changes will be required of us going forward, but our commitment to our students, who continue to succeed in spite of numerous challenges, remains true. Now is the perfect moment to restate and recommit the values upon which BCC is built: *Respect, Integrity, Engagement, Excellence, Empowerment.*

Best Wishes for a peaceful and rewarding summer wherever you may be. We look forward to a larger return to our campus in the Fall, when we can greet each other in person, trade stories, share insights, and confer on all that we have learned.

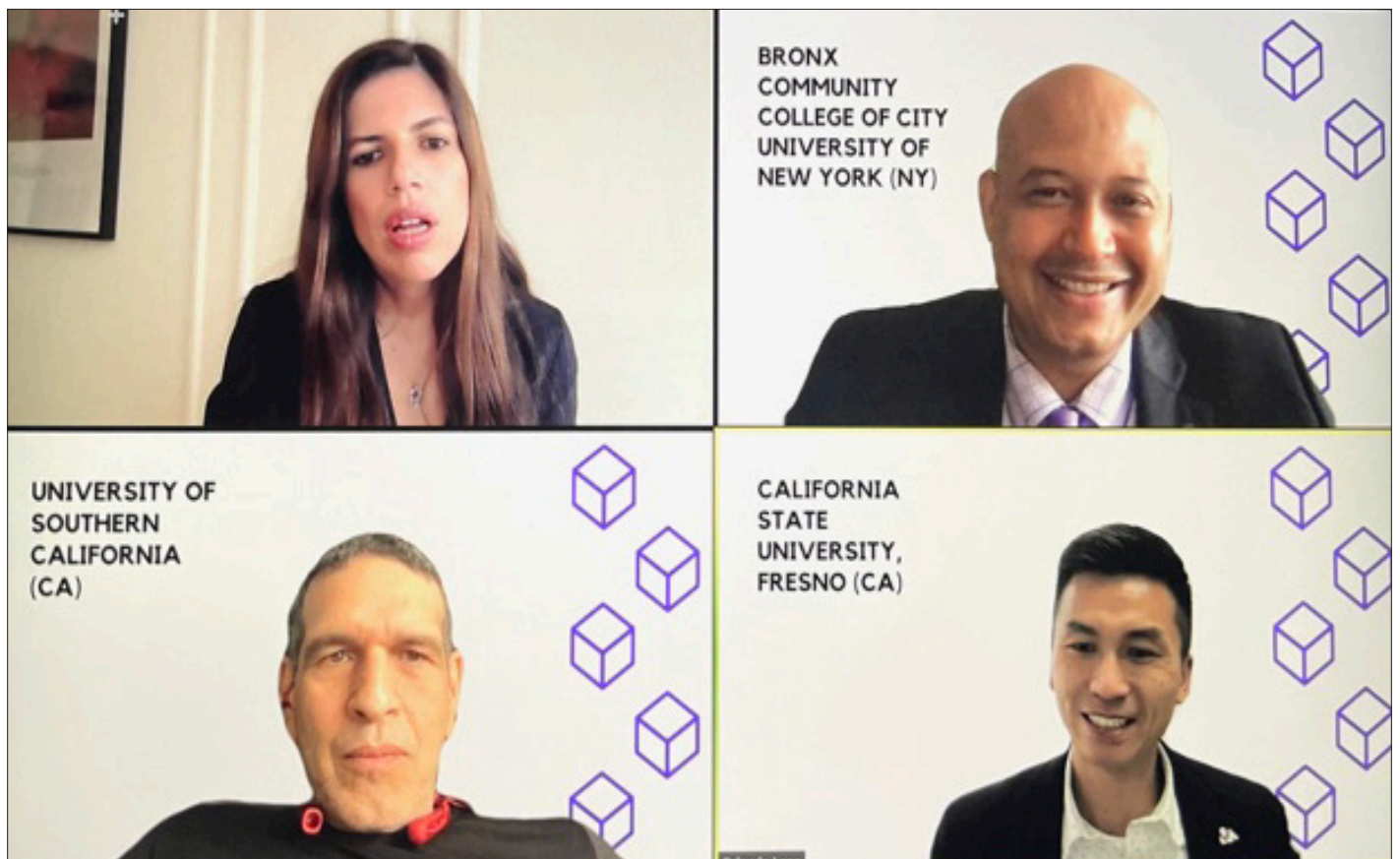
**As always, my appreciation for your commitment to our students is unwavering.**

**"And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer."**

- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

**DR. LESTER SANDRES RÁPALO,  
PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS,  
CO-MODERATED A PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE CHALLENGES  
THAT HINGE ON EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
PROVOSTS AT THE 2021 VIRTUAL SPRING HIGHER  
EDUCATION CONGRESS.**

**EXECUTIVE EDUCATORS ZOOMED IN FROM AROUND  
THE COUNTRY TO ADDRESS THE MANY NEW CHALLENGES  
BROUGHT ON BY A ONCE-IN-A-CENTURY PANDEMIC.**



## SPOTLIGHT: ASSOCIATION OF LATINO FACULTY & STAFF



**Leidy Pichardo**



**Dr. Crystal C. Rodriguez**



**Luisa Martich**

The Association of Latino Faculty and Staff serves as an advocacy and support organization for the Latino faculty, staff and students at Bronx Community College. The Association reviews and acts upon issues of concern to Latino faculty, staff, and students. The Provost's Monthly Staff caught up with three executive members of the association's Cabinet: Chairperson, **Leidy Pichardo** (College Discovery); Vice-Chairperson, **Luisa Martich** (Information Technology); Chairperson for Faculty & Staff Professional Development, **Dr. Crystal C. Rodriguez**, to interview some of the members and learn more about the Association:

### **How and when did the idea of the Association of Latino Faculty and Staff first arise?**

**Leidy:** In 2003, Dr. Nelson Reynoso and Orlando Lopez saw a need to establish a support space for Latino faculty and staff at BCC. It was the initial purpose to first and foremost establish a scholarship fund for our Latino student graduates. As the Association expanded, so did its vision and mission. ALFS serves as an advocacy and support organization for the Latino faculty, staff and students at Bronx Community College. You can find our Mission Statement at: <http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/campus-life/student-life/campus-diversity/association-of-latino-faculty-and-staff/>

### **Why the emphasis on mentor/mentee relationship for Latino faculty & staff?**

**Leidy:** Through the years, Latino faculty have raised concerns about limited information or processes pertaining to tenure and promotion. Research shows that retention of faculty and staff is obtained through systematic mentoring programs. After seeing the benefits of our Adelante Estudiantes! Ambassador Program, established through the BCC Presidential Grant in 2020, our committee members were encouraged to pilot a mentoring program for faculty. Our vision is to expand the work of the Association next semester to include staff mentors and mentees. The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey noted a lack of campus support expressed by faculty of color, especially women in terms of tenure and promotion. This mentoring program is just the start of an answer to a bigger concern among all faculty of color.

**Crystal:** As Chair for the Faculty & Staff Professional Development committee, I wanted to create a program that would help faculty and staff advance professionally. We need to invest in our faculty and staff to successfully support students. We started with a conversation in Fall 2019 and put together some guidelines for this pilot program in Spring 2020. We sent out a call for interested faculty to participate as either a mentor or mentee in Spring 2020. We received 12 responses and paired faculty together based on interest and goals.

The purpose of the Latino Association Faculty Mentoring Program is to provide guidance to faculty

in multiple domains of career development. This mentoring program helped participants during their virtual experiences in Fall 2020- Spring 2021, accomplishing one of the goals of the BCC 2020-25 Strategic Plan: Objective 2.2: Support Excellent Teaching, Scholarship of Teaching/Learning, and Faculty Diversity to (a) Develop roadmaps of professional development and mentorship for all faculty built around student learning-centered pedagogies and assessment and (b) Increase faculty diversity and mentorship/retention of underrepresented faculty and staff.

This summer I will be creating a staff professional mentoring program set to begin Fall 2021. Emails for participation will be sent in August.

**Discuss some of feedback you've received from mentors and mentees involved in the professional development initiative.**

**Leidy:** Some mentees have expressed how this has been an invaluable experience. Not only do they feel they have a mentor, but they now also have a friend. There are six mentor-mentee partnerships this year, and I believe all have expressed desire to continue their collaboration next year. Others have shared how this experience has helped them better understand scholarly writing, building a stronger resume, becoming stronger advocates for their areas, and the personal and professional growth developed while working together.

**Crystal:** We have received so much positive feedback. I asked mentors and mentees to complete a survey in Fall 2020 and we met with participants during Spring 2021. Based on the survey, most mentors and mentees meet once to twice a month via Zoom or telephone. They have developed stronger relationships, even become friends reaching out to one another more often than expected. When mentees have questions, mentors have been quick to respond and provide guidance. Mentees have received support in developing new teaching methods, conducting research, balancing teaching, service, and scholarship, improving their resume/CV, and submitting promotional packages to the College P&B. Most have stated that they want to continue participating in this program.

**What are some other activities or areas of interest of the Association?**

**Leidy:** This past year, we were involved in several activities, including SaveaBronco Fundraiser – to help pay students bursar bills to allow them to register for classes in the spring semester.

**Luchy:** Also, we expanded this effort by establishing outside funding resources involving relationships with Hispanic companies and other organizations, including the Earthquake Relief for Puerto Rico, when over 5,000 items were collected campus-wide; and the Virtual Honor Award Student Ceremony, for which we raised \$5,000 for student scholarships. Additionally, we have expanded to 8 scholarship awards with three new ones this semester, including the Dr. Lester Eduardo Sandres Rapalo DACA Student Award—for Dreamers with DACA status; Renacimiento en Fortaleza Award—for students battling mental health challenges; and the Future Now Award—for students who graduated from Future Now and have successfully transitioned to BCC. We will be looking into various funding strategies to increase donation funds for our existing awards, as well explore other award opportunities to help our students.

**What are some of the Association's current goals?**

**Leidy:** We are interested in pursuing Latino faculty appreciation and showcases of research studies

and work outside of the classroom within the next coming year. We are also interested in the sustainability and expansion of our scholarship funds by securing external partners so that we can expand our award offerings every year. And to increase our paying membership to over 65 active participants.

**Crystal:** Our committee would like to create a Staff Professional Development program and continue the Faculty Professional Development program. It would be great to have at least 12 faculty pairs and 6-8 staff pairs to participate in Fall 2021-Spring 2022 academic year.

**Luchy:** Looking to build relationships with other CUNY colleges' Hispanic groups in an effort to collaborate and assist them in forming their own association.

### **How have you approached the ongoing remote teaching/working?**

**Leidy:** We have collaborated and partnered with other departments and organizations on campus, including Student Life, Womxn Up! Center, and the Social Justice Network to offer activities and online events. The Cabinet meets every other month for planning. Organizationally, we have an active web page, a Facebook account, and a Microsoft Teams Channel. The Cabinet has truly worked very well under these challenging circumstances.

**Crystal:** As an executive cabinet, we have a Whatwapp group chat to check in on one another and celebrate each other's successes. We communicate frequently, which has definitely helped us grow closer even though we are miles apart. We have been actively involved in campus events and the mentoring programs. Members of the Association also serve as participants in the professional mentoring program. And as Leidy mentioned earlier, we also had a student mentoring program that allowed for one-on-one support. We hosted a virtual award ceremony in December 2020 to celebrate students and give out Student of the Year awards. It was well attended by administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Recently we hosted a Spring 2021 virtual award ceremony on May 14th, awarding about \$5,000 in monies collected by membership fees and donations. Our students have overcome so much adversity and we are thrilled to support and honor them.

### **Plans for the future?**

**Leidy:** (1) To secure stable funding for the Association scholarship funds and to encourage other constituents to establish their own scholarships under the umbrella of the Association; (2) To partner with other CUNY colleges and ultimately formalize a CUNY Latino Association Coalition.

**Luchy:** To Increase awareness of the BCC Association among the college community and CUNY. Continue to grow membership numbers and increase event participation.

### **ASSOCIATION OF LATINO FACULTY AND STAFF COMMENTS**

*The ALFS faculty/staff mentoring program came at just the right time, given the unprecedented circumstances we all faced during the pandemic. I gained a better sense of myself in my current role, career path and simply as a person. For me it was not only having a mentor to guide, support and teach me, but a friend that I will have for the rest of my life. There are not enough words to say thank you to my mentor and friend, Dean Alex Ott.*  
- **Cynthia S. Espinal**, Director of College Discovery Program



The BCC Association of Latino Faculty and Staff Mentoring Program allowed me to connect with an excellent mentor who made it clear that I had already met my promotion goals. If I had not met with Dr. Alexander Lamazares, I might not have known that I was already promotion-ready, thus delaying my potential promotion. This saved me valuable time and gave me the confidence to own my accomplishments and move on to the next phase of my career. It is a wonderful, welcoming program.

- Dr. Grisel Y. Acosta (Department of English)



## BCC NAMED MILITARY SPOUSE FRIENDLY SCHOOL



“The Military Spouse Friendly Schools designation helps military spouses select schools that will support them in their education journey by meeting their unique needs as a part of a military family,” says Brian Hucik, National Program Manager, Military Friendly. “Schools that are selected for the list are at the forefront of supporting the goals of military spouses.” (<https://www.militaryfriendly.com/spouse>)

Congratulations to the Office of Veteran & Military Resources: John Rosa, Dolorennys “Dolly” Rosario, James Taylor.

## MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO RECOGNIZES BCC PANDEMIC INTERNS

Students from Bronx Community College’s Medical Laboratory Technician program who interned during the pandemic were honored on April 29 at “Mayoral Service Recognition 2020: Resilience Rising,” a virtual event honoring volunteer and civic engagement efforts. “In a year of unprecedented circumstances, New Yorkers across the city stepped up to serve their neighbors,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio. “Your commitment to the betterment of our city makes us stronger and your compassion is what will get us through the COVID-19 pandemic.” The ceremony can be seen in its entirety [here](#). The names of the BCC MLT students are scrolled at 56:07.



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

**Prithi Kanakamedala** (Department of History) is BCC's College's first faculty member to be awarded an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies Community College Faculty Fellowship. The prestigious award offers faculty teaching at two-year colleges support for research, pedagogy and community engagement projects in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. Dr. Kanakamedala's work, *Black Abolitionists*, a book that looks at the events in Brooklyn between the American Revolution and the Civil War, is the product of over a decade's research and writing. Though scholarly in its research methods, the book is written for people who love NYC history. Dr. Kanakamedala added, "Brooklyn's small but growing free Black community—ordinary people from all walks of life including educators, laborers, homeowners, writers, church leaders, journalists, and businesswomen — sought to shape their streets and neighborhoods in a radical anti-slavery vision. They agitated for social justice in areas such as housing, employment, voting and education and pursued a radical vision of democracy in the United States."

**Carlos Manuel Rivera** (Department of World Languages and Cultures): *2020 Frenzy Short Film Festival Award Ceremony*. Barrio Independent Productions, January 28, 2021. (Performer) Virtual.

**Carlos Manuel Rivera**: *Miguelabration. Celebrating the Work and Life of Miguel Algarin, Founder of Nuyorican Poet Café*. December 19, 2020. (Poet-Performer). Virtual

**Cynthia Tobar** (BCC Library/Head of Archives) was awarded a 2021 Brooklyn Arts Fund Grant for *¿Dónde puedo ir? Searching for Home*, a collaborative project to consist of a series of musical works created around recorded oral histories that capture the sense of displacement facing local Latinx residents in Bushwick. <https://grantees.brooklynartscouncil.org/2021/cynthia-tobar/> **Cynthia** was also awarded an Equity in Action grant by the Metropolitan NY Library Council for a collaborative project with Mutual Aid NYC to develop a digital library and archive of mutual aid organizing tools and oral histories-created for, by, and in collaboration with mutual aid organizers in NYC. She will be training several Bronx Community College students to collect interviews from Bronx-based mutual aid organizers as part of the project.

**Cynthia Tobar** and CUNY Professors James Lowry and Nerve Macaspac led a workshop on "Autoethnographic Pedagogy: Student Expertise and Learning in Community," March 17, 2021. The collaboration culminated in a crowdsourced handbook of autoethnographic teaching exercises: <https://transform.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2021/04/16/autoethnographic-pedagogy-zine/> Through funding from the City University of New York PSC-CUNY Research Award Program, **Cynthia** has developed *Black Lives Matter in Education*, an oral history project that is housed within Teachers College Higher and Postsecondary Education Program (HPSE). The project documents the formation and impact of the student-led movement of Black Lives Matter in Higher Education. The group consists of HPSE students and faculty who have come together to analyze the effects of systemic societal forces. See <http://blmhe.org/>.



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**PROVOST'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

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**THE CELLULOID CLOSET**  
June 21, 2021 | 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.

*The Celluloid Closet* is a 1995 American documentary film based on Vito Russo's 1981 book *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. The film explores how Hollywood films, had portrayed LGBTQ characters in film up to 1995. A conversation on the importance of representation in media.

**PRAYERS FOR BOBBY**  
June 23, 2021 | 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Starring Sigourney Weaver, *Prayers for Bobby* tells the true story of devout Christian Mary Griffith who fights to "cure" her gay son, Bobby. Although he tries to please his mother, Bobby cannot change and his depression leads to suicide. Mary questions her faith and searches for comfort, but after the church is unable to help her cope with Bobby's death, she seeks to understand her opinions on homosexuality for herself. Eventually, Mary becomes an advocate for gay rights. Discussion to follow with Reverend James Sheehan, Chaplain of Bronx Community College.

**ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER**  
June 25, 2021 | 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.

*All About My Mother* is a 1999 drama written and directed by Pedro Almodóvar and tells the story of a nurse named Manuela who loses the teenage son she raised on her own. Grieving, she sets out to search for her son's long-lost father in Barcelona, where she reawakens into a new maternal role, at the head of a surrogate family that includes a pregnant, HIV-positive nun, an illustrious star of the stage, and a transgender sex worker. Discussion to follow with Professor Alicia Bralove of the Bronx Community College Department of World Languages and Cultures.

**This event is only open to CUNY students, faculty and staff. When signing up you MUST use your CUNY e-mail address. Sign up at <https://forms.gle/V2usr53bujKRGfSLA>**

**BOLETÍN**  
BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE ASSOCIATION OF LATINO FACULTY AND STAFF

SPRING 2021 | VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 2  
**CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH 2021**  
**NOTABLE ACTIVISTS OF THE LAST CENTURY**  
By Edwin Roman, Department of Transfer Services

What is activism? Activism involves actions to effect positive social, political, economic, or environmental change. It is about raising an inner voice in support of your views and can take the form of volunteer work, a protest, or problem solving. Women have always been at the center of activism and this year for Women's History Month, *Boletín* celebrates the fact by highlighting three extraordinary women.

**Djal Brown-Capeda ( 21st Century )**  
While gentrification increases property values in areas that have suffered from persistent disinvestment, it also results in rising rents and a reduction in the supply of affordable housing. Existing residents, who are often Black or Latino, are displaced. Extreme and unnecessary cultural displacement is a prevailing characteristic of gentrification.

*Nuevayorkinos* (www.nuevayorkinos.com) is a digital archive established in 2009 dedicated to documenting and preserving New York City Latino culture and history through family photographs and stories. The archive notes that, "...Black and Brown peoples find ourselves increasingly affected by rampant gentrification. Nuevayorkinos reminds the city of its extensive Latino history, one that cannot be erased by rising rent or forced displacement."

The archive was founded by Djal Brown-Capeda, a second-generation Dominican-American film producer from Inwood, who is committed to organizing and mobilizing communities of color in September 2020. Brown-Capeda and her partner organized a Back-to-School Drive, raising funds to provide 500 backpacks filled with school supplies for children in Barreches. She also started Djal's Book Club, which is dedicated to sharing books on BIPOC liberation, race, politics, and social justice. Brown-Capeda was also a Volubé Latino Electoral Partner in the 2020 presidential election cycle.

**Dolores Huerta ( Mid 20th Century )**  
Dolores Huerta, one of the most influential labor activists of the 20th century, is the co-founder of the United Farm Workers Association, and a leader of the Chicano civil rights movement.

Born on April 30, 1930 in New Mexico, Huerta was the second child of Alicia and Juan Fernandez, a farm worker who became a state legislator. When her parents divorced, her mother moved the family to Stockton, California. Here, her mother's activism was a great influence. Discrimination also shaped Huerta's a teacher, once accused her of cheating because her papers were too well-written. Huerta received an associate degree in teaching from the University of the Pacific's Delta College and briefly taught in the 1950s, but seeing so many hungry farm children in her classroom motivated her to do more to help them by organizing farm workers.

Huerta, in 1955, co-founded the Stockton chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO), which notably led voter registration drives and fought for economic improvements. Through CSO, Huerta met fellow activist César Chávez. In 1962, Huerta and Chávez founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), the predecessor of the United Farm Workers' Union (UFW), which formed three years later. Huerta organized workers, negotiated contracts, and advocated for safer working conditions that included the elimination of harmful pesticides. She also fought for unemployment and healthcare benefits for agricultural workers. Huerta served as UFW vice president until 1999.

Huerta, the recipient of many honors, received the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award in 1998 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012.

**Isabel González ( Early 20th Century )**  
The failure of Puerto Rico by the United States after the Spanish-American War (April 25, 1898 - August 13, 1898) raised an assortment of questions regarding status, many of which are still being explored today. The most notable was whether Puerto Rico would be a state, and its residents U.S. citizens. The Treaty of Paris of 1898 took away the Spanish citizenship of Puerto Ricans but did not guarantee U.S. cit-

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

**Be sure to check out the Spring 2021 issue of the Association of Faculty and Staff newsletter, *Boletín*, online at <https://bit.ly/3cjJ6IG>**

**Note: Please send notices of faculty & staff publications, presentations and creative work to [Richard.LaManna@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Richard.LaManna@bcc.cuny.edu) Work must have been published or presented in the last 3 months. Next issue deadline: August 31, 2021.**