

A MESSAGE FROM THE PROVOST



As of May 24, CUNY Chancellor Rodriguez is urging us once more to wear masks in indoor public spaces. The light at the end of the tunnel flashes at times, until there is notice from our medical experts that COVID is once again on the rise, and that even the fully vaccinated and boosted are experiencing breakthrough infections. Over the past few months, we have heard and seen New York coming back to pre-COVID life; at times, the claustrophobic feeling that gripped the city for two years has felt diminished, and a liberating sensation, buoyed by the light and warmth of Spring, has convinced even the most cautious that they might undo the elastic bands behind their ears and breathe deeply. Perhaps the summer months will put an end to the City's COVID challenges, or perhaps new strains of the virus will continue to emerge. This type of pandemic has not been seen in America for 100 years; we are learning as we live through the stages of the virus.

Additionally, the world is collectively shocked, appalled, enraged, disgusted (choose whatever word you will) at the horror and atrocities we hear and see nightly in the once peaceful country of Ukraine. As the world's leading democratic nation, one that Ukrainians have sought to emulate, America is witnessing our own principles battered by misinformation, voter suppression, attacks on constitutional rights, nationalism, escalating gun violence, homophobia, xenophobic rhetoric on prime-time TV, and the shrieking voices of domestic terrorism. America is struggling, and the political/sociological divisions in our country often serve as roadblocks to the establishment on the peaceful road we all seek.

At Bronx Community College, we continue to thrive and to engage in the crucial enterprise of educating underserved students who need our knowledge, skills and guidance. Our students are the next generation to inherit the promises of America, and we need to do all we can to deliver those promises to our students who seek our help.

This issue contains many awards, grants, publications, presentations that demonstrate our commitment to the planet, to our democracy and to student success. Our actions and aspirations are emblematic of our ideal: *That higher education transforms lives on the personal, social and economic realms, that critical thinking is essential to the life of the citizen, and that democratic ideals continue to shape our beliefs in ourselves, our communities, and our relationships to our brothers and sisters, locally and internationally.* The combined knowledge of the world inevitably demonstrates our oneness across artificial boundaries of race, religion, gender, sexuality, and, most importantly, safeguarding our connection to one another. James Baldwin wrote, "Words like *freedom, justice, democracy* are not common concepts; on the contrary, they are rare. People are not born knowing what they are." They must be taught and upheld. Our calling, which we do so well, is to teach these concepts, so that those we teach will one day teach others.

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

INTERVIEW

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr Lester Sandres Rápalo

As the 2021-22 college year comes to a close, the Provost's Report staff caught up with Dr. Lester Sandres Rápalo and asked his perspectives on "how things are, how things are looking for the future, and how might we prepare for our "new normal," especially in Fall 2022.

The current college year, 2021-22, has been another year of COVID-19. How do you think BCC fared in terms of meeting the health challenges of the pandemic?

I think we have been enormously successful—but that's only because everyone took the health threat seriously and stepped up to the plate. We had the necessary buy-in from our faculty, our peace officers, and our custodial staff to follow the CUNY guidelines as mandated. We faced some challenges with respect to verification of authenticity of vaccination cards and waiting for health documentation, but these were ultimately resolved. In the end we all pulled together and survived the storm.



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What are we doing to prepare for Summer 2022?

For the Summer, we will increase our in-person course offerings, while still maintaining a robust on-line presence. We believe that the on-line modalities provide the flexibility needed for many of our students, but for many others, they don't work as well as in-person classes. We have yet to do a comprehensive assessment of our online courses, and I look forward to seeing the results of that assessment next year.

What changes might we expect in campus teaching & learning in Fall 2022?

I don't know that we will see that much change—again there will be a strong on-campus presence along with a solid array of courses offered as hybrid, hyflex, asynchronous and synchronous. One of the major differences in Fall 2022 from the previous two pandemic years, will be that many of the co-and extra-curricular activities will return to campus - which is a good thing.

As we go forward, do you think we will return to pre-COVID normal or is there a "new normal" on the horizon?

I hope that an outgrowth of these pandemic times will be the move toward the maximum amount of flexibility for students' schedules. I would like to see students be able to take courses in person, on line, for 15 weeks, for 5-week sessions, for weekends only. To be most attractive to students—both new and returning—we have to meet them where they are.

What should faculty, staff and students keep in mind at this point?

I think everyone should keep in mind that although we “appear” to be out of the woods, we need to proceed with caution. And even if we aren’t confronted with a new variation of COVID, that doesn’t mean that everyone can flick a switch and be able to erase the last two years. I think that many people will take some time to deal with emotional and mental health problems that may have been created by these stress-filled times, and BCC is there to facilitate anyone’s request for help. Barack Obama said, “*It is that fundamental belief, I am my brother’s keeper, I am my sister’s keeper that makes this country work.*” And I think the same can be said for BCC—we need to look out for each other—not become frustrated when people don’t seem to bounce back after these times. And we need to help each other. Because together, with empathy, we can move forward and conquer the next set of challenges that come our way.

FACULTY & STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Note: In the April issue of the Provost’s Report, the title of Deborah Lewittes’ recent book was accidentally merged with another title. Below are the cover and correct title:



Deborah Lewittes (Art & Music): *Shaping the City to Come: Rethinking Modern Architecture and Town Planning in England, c. 1934-51* (Liverpool University Press, 2022).

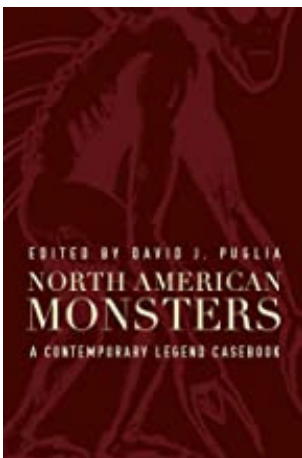
George Patchoros (Deputy Chair, Department of Engineering, Physics & Technology) and **Grace A Tursi** (Director, Nuclear Medicine Technology) received the Editor’s Choice Award for Best Educators’ Forum article, “Satisfying Program-Level Outcomes by Integrating Primary Literature into the Online Classroom,” published in the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology*. The award will be presented at the SNMMI-TS Awards Recognition on Monday, June 13, in the Vancouver Convention Center.

David Puglia (Department of English) has published *North American Monsters: A Contemporary Legend Casebook* (Ohio State University Press 2022).

Nelson Santana (Library/Collection Development) has been awarded a 2022 Dominican Studies Institute Research Fellowship for \$10,000, to begin May 1, 2022.

Cynthia Tobar (Library/Head of Archives) was awarded a 2022 Brooklyn Arts Fund Grant for American Icons, a collaborative project centering on music and stories by Americans who live in the shadows cast by our national myths and monuments. Composers and musicians from Julliard have been entrusted with their stories and will be choosing excerpts of these narratives to set to music for voice and piano.

<https://grantees.brooklynartscouncil.org/2022-grantees/cynthia-tobar-nathaniel-ianasa/>



Music composed by Jorrel Williams and Shawn Chang
Oral histories/Storytelling by Cynthia Tobar
Performed by Nathaniel LaNasa and Gregory Feldmann
American Icons is made possible by a Social Practice CUNY Grant,

Cynthia Tobar exhibited her oral history work from American Icons at OCCUPY #3 - Networks!, where 100 artists and curators were invited to occupy the Greek General Consulate and French General Consulate in New York, Feb 9, 2022. The exhibit showcases the extraordinary efforts of creative practitioners who gather facts from historical registries, archives, government systems, public sites, and bodies of knowledge to critique how history is codified and disseminated; to call attention to the historical elision of oppressed subjectivities; and to excavate marginalized stories and identities. April 10 – May 8, 2022, Kunstraum gallery, Brooklyn NY.

Cynthia Tobar's *¿Donde Puedo Ir? Searching for Home* was held online on Feb 19, 2022 thanks to sponsorship by the Brooklyn Arts Council. *¿Dónde puedo ir? Searching for Home* is a collaborative musical project created around recorded oral histories that capture the immediacy of displacement facing Latinx residents in Bushwick due to housing insecurity, political turmoil, and socio-economic instability.

<https://www.cynthiatobar.net/projects/donde-puedo-ir>

Congratulations to All!

THE BCC DESIGN STUDIO: WELCOME TO A NEW ERA OF EXCELLENCE IN GRAPHIC DESIGN



The **BCC Design Studio** is the first fully functioning creative agency on any CUNY-campus, providing professional design services to community start-ups and on-campus partners at no charge. Their mission is to connect up-and-coming design students with paid meaningful work, helping them to jump start their careers while they build more accessible brands for real-world clients.

Recently the Studio was awarded a \$189K Workforce Development grant from Governor Kathy Hochul. This funding will kick in next semester and will enable the Studio to double its current size and hire more interns, increasing its capacity to provide supportive and experiential learning for recent Digital Design grads and expand the breadth of services it will be able to provide to clients. Special thanks to BCC President Thomas A. Isekenegbe and Dean for Academic Affairs Luis Montenegro for their continued support.



Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Lester Sandres Rápalo and Ambassador Dr. Paul Beresford-Hill.



Dr. Paul Beresford-Hill, British Ambassador to the Sovereign Order of Malta at the United Nations and international educator, recently invited (from left) BCC President Dr. Thomas A. Isekenegbe, Dr. Neal Phillip, Chair of Department of Chemistry, Earth Sciences and Environmental Sciences, Dr. Lester Sandres Rápalo, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and (the lady far right) Professor Paramita Sen, Department of Chemistry, Earth Sciences and Environmental Sciences, to a buffet dinner at the UN to discuss the gender gap in education, the value of education in different parts of the world, and the "great work" that Professor Sen and Dr. Phillip are doing in the sustainability effort.



Wendy F. Hensel, Esquire, CUNY Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost (upper left), recently met with BCC Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Lester Sandres Rápalo and other provosts. The discussion centered on various topics. "As CUNY's chief academic officer, she has oversight of the Office of Academic Affairs and its ongoing initiatives to improve student transfer outcomes, reimagine both Black, Race and Ethnic Studies and Graduate Education, foster innovation in pedagogy and instruction, and promote convergent research and innovation across CUNY." Bronx Community College is committed to these initiatives.

<https://www.cuny.edu/coronavirus/university-updates/introducing-cunys-new-provost-and-vice-chancellor-of-advancement/>

MAJOR GRANT FROM NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION FOR BCC STUDENTS TO STUDY AND WORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN INDIA



Provost **Dr. Lester Sandres Rápalo** accepting a \$300,000 award grant from **Dr. Jinal Joshi, Director of International Relations and Director of Schools**, Kadi Sarva Vishwavidyalaya (University), Gujarat, India. The National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded **Professor Neal Phillip**, Chair of the Department of Chemistry, Earth Science and Environment Science, and **Professor Paramita Sen**, the grant to cover the cost of 33 BCC students to research air pollution and climate change in Mumbai and New Delhi for four weeks every January between 2023 and 2025. In addition, the grant funds a conference in the U.S. on climate change, all related travel costs for students and PIs, as well as the cost of research tools to measure air pollution. The prestigious Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and Delhi campuses are collaborators on the grant.

https://www.facebook.com/manatvusa/videos/455919049667560/?extid=NS-UNK-UNK-UNK-IOUS_GKOT-GK1C.

Interviews featuring BCC principals discussing grants, climate change, and BCC's commitment to sustainability. *"Launching of INDO-AMERICAN Green University Network at BCC // MANA TV INTERNATIONAL HD."*

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WORKSHOP FORMACION "Liderazgo Humano y Sostenible"

Workshop AYUDA niños y niñas de UCRANIA

a favor de
unicef



"Miércoles 27 Abril 16:00 Horas España"

ORGANIZAN

M
Mujeres Líderes
de las Américas

HUMANIZANDO LÍDERES
H4H
HUMANIZANDO EMPRESAS

Huella Humana

Dr. Barbara Flores-Caballero, Assistant Professor in the Department of Education and Academic Literacy, represented Bronx Community College and served as a guest speaker at a national UNICEF workshop titled Leadership with Emotional Intelligence. Her workshop was part of a national fundraising event to support the children and adolescents of Ukraine who continue to suffer in the Russian invasion.

The four-hour workshop, presented in Spanish, took place April 27. The session focused on several key leadership topics:

- Human leadership
- Human values
- Leadership with emotional intelligence
- Business human rights
- Corporate social responsibility
- Business sustainability
- Inclusive leadership
- Neuroscience and humanization
- Round table of international business leaders

To Donate to UNICEF for Ukrainian Children:

<http://documentalistas.org/fundacion/unicef>