



Commons

The Newsletter of Borough of Manhattan Community College *winter/spring* **2012**

Star Student

A bold move to combine astrophysics and computer science results in success for student Chaele Nicholson.

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Borough of Manhattan
Community College
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DID LINCOLN REALLY FREE THE SLAVES?

Professor Graig Klein's students apply history lessons to daily life.

THE DIRECTOR GOES PRO

Alum Theresa Clark Messer, the NBPA's first woman Director of Finance, inspires today's aspiring business leaders

WORK IT OUT

Fitness entrepreneur and alum Jacques Laventure exercises his business savvy.

Commons Knowledge

Items of interest to the BMCC Community



\$2 Million Awarded for Workforce Training

BMCC's Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development—as part of a CUNY consortium of six community colleges and two 4-year colleges—received \$2 million to provide workforce training through CUNY's Career Path program.

The total funding of \$20 million—provided through the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Community College and Career Training Grant Program of the U.S. Department of Labor, and in coordination with the U.S. Department of Education—aims to raise the employability

of individuals whose work histories are within industries hardest hit by competition from foreign trade.

Participants will build skills to work in health care, social assistance, food services, education services, manufacturing and business.

“For TAA-qualifying students, this translates to much-needed support in passing their CUNY entrance exams, ample career advisement, and the opportunity to gain credits toward an associate degree, while completing industry-recognized certification training,” said Sunil Gupta, Dean of the Center for Continuing Education & Workforce Development at BMCC.

Two BMCC Students Win Laurel Award

The annual Peter Jennings Scholarship Laurel Award Ceremony, held in CUNY's television studio at the CUNY Graduate Center, honored 10 students who earned their General Equivalency

Diploma (GED) through CUNY, then enrolled in a CUNY college.

Two of the winners attended BMCC's GED program: Carolina Muñoz, accepted into NYC College of Technology, and Frank Quiñones, who will attend BMCC. Quiñones thanked GED instructor Jane Tarica: “She engaged you,” he



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said, and Carolina Muñoz credited CUNY Start. “Not only did I get academic skills,” she said, “I learned how to register for classes and apply for financial aid.”

NYSIM Opens

BMCC Nursing and Allied Health students will soon be training with state-of-the-art mannequins that can breathe, bleed, have a seizure, give birth and even sweat. An unprecedented partnership between The City University of New York and NYU Langone Medical Center has created the New York Simulation Center for Health Sciences (NYSIM), a 25,000-square-foot facility located in Manhattan’s Bellevue Hospital Center.

NYSIM came to fruition

under the leadership of NY State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and with \$20.8 million in funding from the City and State of New York, received through BMCC. “I’m proud of this simulation center, which is the largest and the best urban facility of its kind in the nation,” said Speaker Silver.

“Going forward, we plan to develop a multidisciplinary team approach to patient care,” said Jacqueline Nichols, Chair of BMCC’s Nursing department. BMCC students will work closely with NYU medical students and others, learning protocol in realistic, patient-centered simulations.

 www.bmcc.cuny.edu/news/news.jsp?id=5720



FOUNDATION NEWS

NY State Supreme Court Judge Receives Alumni Award

Justice Pam B. Jackman Brown, originally from Guyana, earned an Associate in Business Administration at BMCC in 1979, balancing classes with a job in fast food. Next, she graduated Magna Cum Laude from John Jay College, attended CUNY Law School, and started her career as a Criminal Defense Attorney. She served as a Civil Court Judge, a Supervising Judge of NY County Housing Court, and taught business law at BMCC, the school that “gave me my legs and my voice,” she says. Just appointed to her highest honor, the NY State Supreme Court, Jackman Brown received BMCC’s Third Annual Distinguished Alumni Award. “Listen to advice,” she told the audience, crediting a co-worker with giving her a legal dictionary, and suggesting law school.

Justice Pam B. Jackman Brown



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Leadership: Why It Matters More than Ever

Leadership is hardly a new concept. But it has taken on new relevance in our nation’s colleges. “Helping students develop the integrity and strength of character that prepare them for leadership may be one of the most challenging and important goals of higher education,” writes psychologist Patricia King.

It stands to reason. Our world faces harsh challenges on many fronts—economic, political, social and environmental. Our ability to meet those challenges will depend on the next generation’s leaders in business, government, the arts and sciences, the not-for-profit world and, of course, academia.


These are challenges that we take seriously at BMCC. In recent years, we’ve initiated leadership programs across all segments of the college community. Our Kaplan Leadership Program helps high-potential students with financial need acquire the skills to become leaders in their professions and communities. We just launched the BMCC Leadership Fellows Program, a year-long project for faculty and staff aspiring to senior leadership positions. Our Office of Student Activities directs the BMCC Academy of Leadership and Service, engaging student leaders in special projects, and through Continuing Education, we offer a certificate in Leadership Development for supervisors and team leaders already in the workforce.



“There is a crisis in leadership in many sectors of society today,” writes Harvard Business School Professor Linda Hill, author of *Becoming a Manager: How New Managers Master the Challenges of Leadership*. “Only those organizations that are quite deliberate in identifying and investing in the next generation of leadership talent will be able to achieve and sustain success.”

At BMCC, we have acknowledged the need for an expanded approach to leadership development. The challenges haven’t gone away. But judging by the quality of leaders already emerging from our programs—and from similar programs across the nation—I’m convinced the future will be in good hands.

ANTONIO PÉREZ, PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

A man in a dark pinstripe suit, black shirt, and patterned tie is smiling and pointing his right index finger towards a large model of Jupiter hanging in a museum. The background shows other planet models and a glass display case.

“It was **exceptional work**,
and Chaele beat out
some 75 other recipients,
including many from
prestigious senior
colleges.”

~ Professor Barry McKernan

“It’s hard to put into
words **my appreciation**
for what Professors
Ford and McKernan
did for me.”

~ Chaele Nicholson

Star Student

*A bold decision to change majors pays off in academic success for **Chaele Nicholson**.*

“Astrophysics has become **incredibly interesting** to me, and now I’m able to combine it with another passion—computer science.”

~ **Chaele Nicholson**

CHAELE NICHOLSON started out as a Computer Information Systems major at BMCC, “largely on the advice of my parents,” he says. “But in my first semester, I took Professor Saavik Ford’s astronomy course and everything changed.”

Ford picks up the story: “This was an introductory course mainly for non-science majors,” she says. “But after a few weeks, I noticed that Chaele was asking extremely insightful questions. So I asked him if he’d like to work with me and Professor Barry McKernan on an astrophysics research project.”

The work, which would take place at the American Museum of Natural History, involved looking into the heart of distant galaxies. Nicholson jumped at the offer—and took the challenge—though financial pressures were bearing down on him.

“My parents were helping me with my tuition, but I needed to work at McDonalds to make ends meet,” he says. “I knew that I had to find some sort of financial aid if I was to continue my coursework.”

The needed funding came in the form of a BMCC Foundation scholarship and stipends from the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation program, and meanwhile, he averaged 10 to 15 hours a week working at the Museum with Ford and McKernan, who proposed a bold idea: Would he consider changing his major from computer information to computer science?

If he changed majors, Nicholson would have to make up a number of credits in math and the sciences, delaying his graduation. “But astrophysics has become incredibly interesting to me,” he says. “And now I’m able to combine it with another passion—computer science.”

Nicholson has already made his mark in his chosen field: In April, he was named “Most Outstanding Presenter” in the Environmental Science and Ecology category at the 2011 Urban University Series’ “Einstein in the City” conference. His presentation was based on his investigation of x-ray and infrared radiation in black holes and active galactic nuclei.

“It was exceptional work, and Chaele beat out some 75 other recipients, including many from prestigious senior colleges,” says McKernan. “We are very proud of him.”

Once he graduates, Nicholson is looking ahead to senior college, a doctorate, and a career in aerospace engineering.

“It’s hard to put into words my appreciation for what Professors Ford and McKernan did for me,” he says. “I’ve been blessed with incredible mentors. They not only taught me about astronomy and astrophysics, they provided a sympathetic ear and pushed me to achieve my dream.”

Faculty & Staff

Items about the faculty and staff of BMCC



Did Lincoln Really Free the Slaves?

Sitting casually on the edge of his desk, adjunct lecturer Graig Klein asks his students in “Modern Black Political Thought” a deceptively simple question: What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?

Issued by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, the proclamation is commonly believed to have outlawed slavery. “It did free the slaves—but not all of them,” one student

volunteers. “The Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves only in those states under Confederate control. It didn’t affect slavery in the North.”

The reason, Klein explains, is that Lincoln’s primary motivation wasn’t to free the slaves, but to win the Civil War and reunite the Republic. For many of Klein’s students, these are fresh revelations, building new insights on Black political

thought, and its impact on their daily lives.

“I’m African-American and never knew any of this,” says Nikia Macklin. “All I knew was that my family was from Memphis, Tennessee, and my great-uncle was a slave... Learning the facts has been both enlightening and empowering.”

<http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/newsletters/view.jsp?id=5694>

OPEN SOURCE- “RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED, REDISTRIBUTED OR REWRITTEN FREE OF CHARGE. OFTEN SOFTWARE OR HARDWARE.”

ELECTRONICS- “TECHNOLOGY WHICH MAKES USE OF THE CONTROLLED MOTION OF ELECTRONS THROUGH DIFFERENT MEDIA.”

FACULTY PROFILE

Culkin's Comics

I think comics are a fascinating way to get technical information across to students,” says Media Arts and Technology professor Jody Culkin, whose 15-page, online comic strip, *Arduino*—which explains a popular, open-source microcontroller of the same name—just went viral. Before creating *Arduino*, Culkin worked on comics with a colleague, Chris Stein. One explains binary numbers, and another is about digitizing “analogue information perceived with our senses.” For visual learners, says Culkins, “comics can be a really useful resource.”

Alumni News

Items for and about BMCC Alumni



The Director Goes Pro

Theresa Clark Messer's career has been one long drive to the basket. While earning her Associate in Accounting at BMCC, she worked at an investment firm, and continued there while completing her Bachelor's in Business Administration at Pace University. No goal out of bounds, she next joined the prestigious accounting firm KPMG, moved to MetLife as a financial consultant, and

held management positions at NYNEX. Along the way, she scored an MBA at Long Island University. And her slam dunk? Being the first woman Director of Finance for the National Basketball Players Association, and Women's National Basketball Players Association—even helping negotiate the first collective bargaining agreement for professional women athletes. Today, as BMCC Foundation Board Member, Messer advises BMCC's recent alums and other rookies, "Always maintain an entrepreneurial spirit. Rather than be tied to one company, focus on being the best you can be—develop skills that are needed by many, but possessed by few."

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

The Look of Success

BMCC Alum Mariela Zapata earned a bachelor's degree at Fashion Institute of Technology, and in 2010 launched Mariela Designs, a line of high-end handbags. "It was time," she says. "I knew how to work with buyers, how to tell if something is factory quality. I love going to different parts of the world to acquire materials." Her advice to aspiring fashion professionals? "Keep sketching; believe in yourself...Find your calling and get busy living it."



Request for Success

BMCC Alumni – send us your success stories! Write Barry Rosen, Executive Director of Public Affairs, at brosen@bmcc.cuny.edu

Keep in Touch

with the BMCC alumni office at www.bmcc.cuny.edu/



BMCC PROFILE

Work it Out Fitness Entrepreneur

Armed with an Associate in Accounting degree, BMCC alum Jacques Laventure launched Fitness Joq, promoting his workout clothing line, “Joq Gear,” and offering fitness classes, including those for the BMCC Health and Wellness Club. Gloria McNamara, Health Education Chair, encourages students to join the sessions, as many are at risk for heart disease and stroke. “We attack every angle of your abdominals in this one-hour class,” says Joq, “and sometimes bring in guest speakers.”

 www.bmcc.cuny.edu/news/news.jsp?id=5681

Commons Calendar

Upcoming events and performances

Tribeca Spotlight

KJ Denhert. One-of-a-kind songwriter, guitarist and performer KJ Denhert has earned four independent Music Award nominations, was Jazz.com’s Top Female Vocalist in 2009, and is known for her innovative blend of urban folk and jazz. Mar.16 @8 p.m. \$15.

Jazz at BMCC TPAC

Randy Weston African Rhythms Orchestra. Acclaimed jazz legend Randy Weston celebrates jazz composer James Reese Europe, first African American to lead troops into battle during World War One—the 369th Infantry Regiment, or “Harlem Hell-fighters”—spreading “the jazz germ” throughout Europe. Feb. 25@8 p.m. Upper Mezzanine: \$35-\$28. Side Orchestra and Lower Mezzanine: \$45-\$36. Center Orchestra: \$55-\$44. Students and Seniors, \$10 off Mezzanine, only.



Randy Weston African Rhythms Orchestra

Mr. B. & Sassy, A Passionate Affair:

The Music of Billy Eckstein and Sarah Vaughan. *Lost Jazz Shrines, Part 1.* Critically praised vocalist Allan Harris and the evocative Nicole Henry celebrate in song, the legendary Eckstein and Vaughan, who bridged the swing and modern jazz eras. May 11 @8:30 p.m. \$25. Main Stage members, \$20. Students and Seniors, \$15.

Nat “King” Cole—Long Live the King.

Lost Jazz Shrines, Part 2. The world-renowned Allan Harris Band with Jesse Jones, Jr. on saxophone, pays tribute to the legend of Nat “King” Cole. May 25@8:30 p.m. \$25. Main Stage members, \$20. Students and Seniors, \$15.

Blues in my Soul, Bessie Smith & Jackie Paris.

Lost Jazz Shrines, Part 3. Soaring, soulful vocalist Maya Azucena and gifted pop-jazz singer, composer and guitarist Allan Harris celebrate Bessie Smith,



DOUGLAS ROBERTSON

“Empress of the Blues,” and Jackie Paris, one of jazz’s most underrated legends. June 1 @8:30 p.m. \$25. Main Stage members, \$20. Students and Seniors, \$15.

Family Series

The Magic School Bus® Live!

The Climate Challenge. Celebrating its 25th-Year Anniversary, the Magic School Bus® takes Ms. Frizzle’s students on a whirlwind musical adventure, from the Arctic to the equator. Ages 5-8. Mar. 10@1:30 p.m., \$25; 10 Club Members \$14.

Zorro. Flurry of a cape, glint of a sword—who is that masked man? He ricochets from one sticky situation to another, in this Visible Fictions and Traverse Theatre Co. Production. Ages 8-13. Apr. 15@3 p.m., \$25; 10 Club Members \$14.

Skippyjon Jones. In this enchanting musical, Skippyjon Jones, the kitten, pretends to be a bird, llama, whale—anything but a Siamese cat! When he pretends to be a Chihuahua, the local pack, terrorized by a bully, enlists his help, and imagination saves the day. Ages 4-8. May 13 @3 p.m., \$25; 10 Club Members \$14.

The Magic School® Bus Live!

