

# BMCC Commons

Fall 2020

THE NEWSLETTER OF BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## BMCC Welcomes President Anthony E. Munroe in Time of Change

A mission to advance equity guides virtual delivery of instruction and services.

“BMCC has established itself as a leader among community colleges providing an exceptional academic and workforce training experience for all,” says the 11<sup>th</sup> president of Borough of Manhattan Community College,



**Anthony E. Munroe**, who begins his term this fall. “I look forward to joining the students, faculty and staff of BMCC as we work together to navigate the profound changes in higher education caused by the global coronavirus pandemic. Grounded by our

mission of equity and belief in the power of education to change lives, we will explore and deliver virtual strategies to educate and train the global leaders of today and tomorrow, for New York City and the world.”

President Munroe brings more than 30 years of experience in healthcare and higher education to BMCC, having served as president of both Essex County College in New Jersey and Malcolm X College, part of the City Colleges of Chicago system. He was executive director of Family Health Services in the New York City Department of Health and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the Commission on Student Success

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BMCC strongly encourages students, faculty and staff to wear masks at all times when they are on campus.

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# BMCC Welcomes President Anthony E. Munroe in Time of Change

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with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

A first-generation U.S. citizen who grew up in the Bronx, “Anthony Munroe knows from personal experience how challenging it can be to pursue educational objectives while juggling family and job obligations,” said CUNY Chancellor **Félix V. Matos Rodríguez**. “He brings the depth and breadth of knowledge to support CUNY students who are following that course.”

“Then came COVID-19 ... Amidst great sadness, fear and uncertainty, BMCC remained strong.”

**KARRIN E. WILKS,**  
INTERIM PRESIDENT, BMCC

President Munroe joins BMCC at a challenging moment in the history of the college. A statewide stay-at-home directive and the switch to distance learning interrupted the studies of more than 24,000 BMCC students in March 2020. As the coronavirus pandemic ravaged the economic and social fiber of New York City, BMCC faculty delivered courses online and staff created strategies for the virtual delivery of services,

including those related to their earliest engagement with the college—registration and enrollment.

BMCC Interim President **Karrin E. Wilks** puts that crisis in context. “For the previous five years, BMCC’s highest priority had been to improve student success, not incrementally but dramatically. Our college-wide strategic planning process, *Designing for Success*, strengthened this unrelenting emphasis. Additional resources were allocated and raised to expand proven practice. While acknowledging much work still to be done, we were celebrating that BMCC’s three-year graduation rate had improved for six years in a row, equity gaps had been reduced—and in some cases eliminated—and for the first time BMCC became eligible for the prestigious Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.”

Then came COVID 19, Wilks says, “along with associated economic devastation and the eruption of protests against systemic racism in this country. Amidst great sadness, fear and uncertainty, BMCC remained strong. I am proud of and humbled by our outstanding leadership team and the ongoing commitment, compassion and creativity of the entire BMCC community.”

During that traumatic Spring 2020 semester and into the summer, the college shifted from emergency response to



“strategic reimagining of what it means to work and learn and engage from a distance,” Wilks says. “We maintained constant communications to inform and provide solace, to calm and to connect. We learned new ways to teach and learn, new ways to celebrate, and new ways to care. As we transition to a new president, united by our mission, vision and values, I am confident that BMCC will continue its journey to be a leading community college, nationally recognized for improving student learning and success, and advancing equity.”

As BMCC faculty met the challenge of that time by delivering courses online, Buildings and Grounds staff worked extended hours to sanitize and monitor safety protocols in common areas, ensuring that students in need would still have access to free food through the college’s Single Stop office, or could pick up laptops to enable their distance learning. Staff in other divisions created strategies for the virtual delivery of services including those related to students’ earliest engagement with the college—registration and enrollment.

“COVID-19 brought many challenges but the enrollment management team did not compromise their service commitment to their students,” says Vice President for Enrollment Management (EM) **Diane Walleser**. (right) “They transformed Admissions—as well as the Panther Station, a one-stop center where students handle

admissions, registrar and financial aid matters—to a virtual place where they are now connecting with over 10,000 students each week.”

The EM team is also set to roll out an onboarding tool, “Navigate,” to guide students through the admissions process. Along the way, Walleser says, “Faculty, advisors and staff will be able to follow the student’s progress and proactively guide them through the college process.”

“In this unsettled time, addressing student career readiness and building employer engagement prepares students for what’s next.”

**CHRISTOPHER THUNBERG,**  
DIRECTOR,  
CENTER FOR CAREER  
DEVELOPMENT

Once students begin their semester at BMCC, they have access to the full range of academic, support and career services that were delivered face-to-face before the pandemic.

“In this unsettled time, addressing student career readiness and building employer engagement is one of the important ways we can prepare students for what’s next,” said **Christopher Thunberg**, director of the BMCC Center for Career Development. “Doubling down on the importance of technology

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A BMCC Buildings and Grounds employee sanitizes turnstiles at college entrance.



**BMCC Commons**

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literacy for all students, regardless of academic major, is vital. We are embedding career awareness and planning into as many facets of the student experience as possible, and enhancing mentoring opportunities, internships and alumni engagement.”

“We do all of this virtually. We even have virtual walk-ins,” says **Thierry Thesatus**, (below) associate director of Career Services and



E m p l o y e r  
R e l a t i o n s .  
“Students are still able to connect with our online job board, Career Express, and we are connecting with

employers to understand their needs and help prepare students to enter those industries. Microsoft has provided free workshops, and we’ve hosted Zoom hiring events where students meet employers for interviews in breakout rooms. We’re coaching students on how to present themselves in the digital job market. Communication, critical thinking, teamwork and global fluency have been, and remain very important skills.”

Those skills also build student success in distance learning, he says. In the semester that will forever imprint their generation of college students, BMCC students rose to the occasion. Respiratory therapy students graduated early to join COVID-response efforts in hospitals throughout New York City. Students held down jobs as essential workers and kept up their studies, exhibiting class artwork on digital platforms and sharing their findings from faculty-led research projects.

In May, **Ebube David Michael** (Science, ’20) presented his research led by Professor **Adolfina Koroch** on the potential antioxidant capacity

of plants, in BMCC’s first online Annual Research Symposium. Heading to Brooklyn College this fall through the Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) program, he will major in biology and minor in chemistry.

“My plan is to eventually get a master’s in public health then apply to medical school and work in the field of vaccine development,” he says. “During quarantine, I’ve done literature reviews on aspects of the plant I’m researching. Eventually, we will return to the lab, probably limiting the number of people. I think we’re going to learn from all this and be better prepared for pandemics. I am hopeful about the future.”

Theatre major **Alexandra Toro**, (right) who played the lead role in the BMCC original production, *The Life of Mary Rogers: An Incredible, Plausible, Entirely Made Up, Imagined True Story from 1841*, shares that forward-looking perspective.



“We are all living a new way of life in a new world,” she says. “Part of this adaptation keeps us apart, yet the evolution of equality is serving to keep us together. While rehearsing, stage work, performance and other activities are normally done face-to-face, there are virtual ways to keep theater alive. I believe the future of the performing arts will persevere through platforms such as online podcasts, recorded performances and open video sessions. Faculty and students will communicate through video conference calls, group chats, Blackboard and emailing. We must remain focused on staying safe so we can eventually get back in the classroom again.”



BMCC students practice social distancing as they study in the BMCC Library.

## MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM PRESIDENT

Dear BMCC Community,

It has been a great honor to serve the students, faculty and staff of BMCC starting in 2014, when I joined as Provost, and since 2018 when I began my term as your Interim President. Together, we have made significant progress in our work to improve student success and advance equity, as recognized most recently by being named a top ten finalist in the nation for the prestigious Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. We continue to realize our commitment to advancing socioeconomic mobility, as BMCC is again ranked third in the nation among two-year colleges for lifting low-income students into the middle class.



Our *Designing for Success* strategic planning process and Equity and Inclusion Task Force involved over 1000 faculty, staff, and students, an usually high level of participation. Our 2020–2025 strategic plan, *Taking What Works to Scale*, focuses resources on evidence-based actions to continue to improve student learning and success, to narrow and eliminate equity gaps, and to strengthen our culture of care in a community in which all members can thrive.

We have much to be proud of, united by a revised mission, and new vision and values statements. Even as we continue to face the ravages of a public health crisis, economic devastation, and the unrelenting structural racism in this country, BMCC has remained strong. The collective compassion, creativity, and commitment of the entire community has been inspiring. For that and for your support, I am deeply grateful.

There is still much work to, but I have great optimism for the future, that BMCC will continue on its positive trajectory to be a leading community college nationally and to strengthen the College’s role in creating a better, more equitable NYC. It has been a joy being part of the rich diversity of experience, knowledge and talent that define BMCC, a special place with a very special spirit, affirming daily the transformative power of education.

I wish you all the very best,

Sincerely,

Karrin E. Wilks, Interim President  
Borough of Manhattan Community College  
The City University of New York



## Milestones



Open Knowledge Librarian **Jean Amaral** won the Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO)

Community College Learning Resources Leadership Award and a \$750 grant for her work with OER.



Academic Literacy and Linguistics Professor **Sharon Avni** received a Mellon/ACLS Community College Faculty Fellowship and stipend of up to \$40,000 for her project, “Hebraists by Choice: American Jews and the Mobilization of Modern Hebrew.”



The 2020 *ADFL (Association of Departments of Foreign Languages) Bulletin* featured an interview with Modern Languages Professors **Maria Enrico** (Chair), **Ángeles Donoso Macaya** (above left), **Sophie Maríñez** (above right) and **Kristina Varade**, as well as Dean of Faculty **Jim Berg**.



**Albina Khasidova**, interim director of the Office of Financial Aid was appointed director of financial aid.

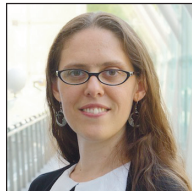


**Neda Hajizadeh** joined BMCC as director of counseling at the BMCC Counseling Center, a unit of the Office of Student Affairs.



Sociology Professor **Schneur Zalman Newfield** was featured on March 25 in a series, *Book Talk*, sponsored by the CUNY Academy for the Humanities at the CUNY Graduate Center to discuss his book, *Degrees of Separation: Identity Formation While Leaving Ultra-Orthodox Judaism* (Temple University Press, April 2020).

## Professors Share in Groundbreaking Discovery of Light in Black Hole Mergers



Science Professors **Barry McKernan** (left) and **K.E. Saavik Ford** (right) are part of a research team reporting evidence of the first light detected from a black hole merger. The event

was observed on May 21, 2019 at the National Science Foundation’s Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) and the European Virgo detector. Ford and McKernan—who also serve as faculty at the CUNY Graduate Center and research associates at the American Museum of Natural History’s Department of Astrophysics—co-authored a study on the groundbreaking findings in *Physical Review Letters*, the

American Physical Society’s flagship publication.

“If this was in fact the first light ever observed from a black hole merger, it is a tremendous advance for astronomy and physics,” McKernan says. “It tells us where many of the black hole mergers are actually happening, so we can zoom in on and track them, for the first time ever ... we also can use the gravitational wave signature as a really cool new way of testing the expansion of the universe.”

## Respiratory Program Receives Prestigious CoARC Award

BMCC’s Respiratory Therapy program has received the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) Distinguished Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) Credentialing Success Award in June 2020. The national pass rate for the RRT exam is 55 percent—but at BMCC, the pass rate has reached 96 percent, according to Allied Health Sciences Chair **Everett Flannery**. “We are the only accredited Respiratory Therapy program in the CUNY system,” Flannery adds. “We are one of just two programs in the United States classified as ‘Open Enrollment’ and whose students are overwhelmingly minority.”



## Bioremediation Project Seeks to Remove Pollutants from NYC Ponds



Science Professor **Abel E. Navarro** (right) is the lead Principal Investigator (PI) on an Interdisciplinary Climate Crisis Research Grant of just under \$40,000 from the CUNY Office of Research. Additional PIs are BMCC

Professor **Yuliya Shneyderman** and Medgar Evers Professor **Oluwaseun Salako**. The project, “Harmful Algal Blooms in NYC Ponds: Bioremediation, Climate and Public Health Concerns,” combines public health education,

environmental engineering and bioremediation treatments that introduce microorganisms to water sources and break down their pollutants.

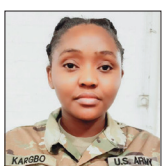
“Our idea is to clean up the ponds of New York City,” says Navarro. “We also hope that through public surveys and raising awareness, people will better understand their role in keeping the ponds free of heavy metals and nutrients that exist in run-off water from barbecues.” Those nutrients, he says, encourage algae to bloom, producing a toxin harmful to birds, fish, turtles and other living things.

“Even a dog allowed to wade in or drink the water could be at risk, not to mention migratory birds that depend on our urban ponds and lakes,” Navarro says. “There are important ecological and public health concerns that our project intends to address.”



# Students and Alumni Put Others First, as Pandemic Peaks in NYC

When COVID-19 ravaged the New York City area in Spring 2020, **Brenda Lagares** (Nursing, '19) rose at 4 A.M. to commute to a drive-through testing facility in Bear Mountain State Park, Rockland county—a designated “hot zone” warranting special equipment to mitigate the high risk of infection. Working 14-hour days as lead quality nurse, “I was responsible for seeing that all the nurses adhered to protocol and performed their duties with safety at the forefront,” Lagares says.



Meanwhile in Albany, Liberal Arts major and Private First Class **Fenellah Kargbo** (left) had been activated by the New York Army National Guard to operate a forklift at a regional distribution center for medical supplies and personal protective equipment. “One truck could have 25 pallets that had to be unloaded, accounted for and re-loaded

into other trucks for distribution,” Kargbo says.

Joining the relief effort another way, 18 Respiratory Therapy majors—**Aniah S. Augustin, Fatima Donzo, Imrat Jahan, Siji John, Zakaria A. Sr. Kader, Jean R. Leroy, Marian M. Maqar, Medhat F. Matta, Maily Mesina, Marquise J. Mion, Anthony R. Parker, Joenel Pemberton, Jason Raybe, Shante V. Sarauw, Akram Shahzaman, Phyo P. Thu, Freddy A. Vicioso** and **Asomiddin Yuldashev**—accelerated their studies to graduate early and start shifts in city hospitals handling three to five times the normal patient ventilator workload.

BMCC students also gave back at the height of the pandemic by serving as volunteers. Working alongside his sister and brother-in-law, Art Foundations major **Fernanda Carvalho** sorted more than 2,000 3-D-printed face shields—frames, transparency sheets and bags—for Weill Cornell Medicine in Manhattan.



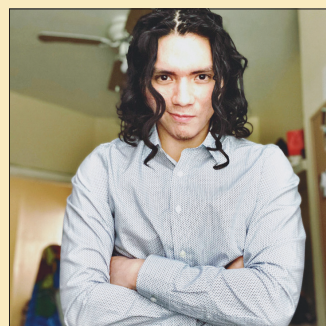
Finally, while most New Yorkers were instructed to stay home, Liberal Arts major **Monique Henry** (above) was deemed an “essential worker,” starting her day at 4:30 A.M. and commuting from Brooklyn to a Trader Joe's on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Her shift entailed product breakdown, restocking shelves and assisting customers. At the same time, she was adjusting to distance learning, finishing assignments while eating dinner so she could go to bed early and do it all again, the next day.

## Creativity and Ingenuity Highlighted in 2020 Digital Student Art Show



Keko Ediale

On April 22, the 2020 Digital Art Show featuring student artists from BMCC's Art History, Studio Art and other degree programs was presented with a Zoom opening by the Shirley Fiterman Art Center. The exhibition featured work in color and design, digital design, drawing, painting, photography and sculpture. “Art is more important now than ever,” said Interim President Karrin E. Wilks. “We are so proud of our students. Thank you also to our faculty, for keeping students engaged in meaningful work during this time.”



Engineering Science major **Jose Cevallos** is one of 50 community college students nationwide to receive the Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship.

## Class of 2020 Shines in Virtual Celebration



On May 29, just under 5,000 graduates of the Summer 2019, Fall 2019, Winter 2020 and Spring 2020 semesters were conferred associate degrees in over 50 academic programs. To honor their accomplishment, BMCC hosted a virtual celebration featuring videos and speakers including Vice President **Marva Craig** and Interim President Karrin E. Wilks as well as CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, New York Senator **Chuck Schumer** and Lt. Governor **Kathy Hochul**. As 2020 Valedictorian **Ana Maldonado** told her fellow graduates, “The world needs you. Go out and make your mark on it!”

## Milestones

Literacy and Linguistics major **Susan Guerrero**, Business Administration major **Isa Mendez**, Liberal Arts major **Diya Qazeili Moushahwar**, and Writing and Literature majors **Wesley Sanders** and **Chandani Smith** won Gallatin Undergraduate Initiative for Discovery in Education (GUIDE) scholarships to attend NYU.



**Lamarana Diablos**, CUNY Athletic Conference Community College Men's

Scholar-Athlete of the Year, was also named to the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) All-Academic Team, 2019–2020.

Theatre major **Jalene Then** won the March 2020 CUNY Photo Contest for her photo, “Beauty is Everywhere.”



**Genesis Gil**, a Photography major working with Red Hook Labs, shot the Emily Blunt cover photo for the March 2020 *Marie Claire*.

Biotechnology major **Adebayo Efunuga**, Science majors **Latanya Moncrieffe** and **Sergio Gomez Navarro** and Computer Science majors **Anfernee Jervis** and **Mohamed Jalloh** have received the Pipeline Opportunities for Inter-Collegiate Stem Education (POISE) transfer scholarship to attend NYU.

Science for Forensics major and Phi Theta Kappa member **Giulia Assanti**, named a 2020 Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholar, will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.



Liberal Arts major **Lilah Beldner**, one of 20 community college students nationwide

selected for the 2020 All-USA Academic Team, received a \$5,000 scholarship.



## BMCC Named National Finalist for \$1 Million Aspen Prize



In June 2020, the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program named BMCC one of 10 finalists among 1,000 nominees for the 2021 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's signature recognition among community colleges. "We continue to deeply examine the factors affecting student

learning and success, and we strive to take what works to scale," said Interim President Karrin E. Wilks. "We can be proud that student success rates have improved for all groups, and equity gaps have been reduced or eliminated. This outstanding achievement is due to the hard work, deep commitment and generous compassion of our faculty and staff, together with our supporters and partners making BMCC one of the best community colleges in the country."

## New Programs Open Doors for Business Majors

The Business Management Department will offer in Spring 2021 an Associate in Science degree program in Public and Non-profit Administration. In addition, two programs—Business Management and Small Business Entrepreneurship—are available now in fully online versions. "Students that will benefit the most from this program include workers with staggered schedules, stay-at-home-parents, veterans and individuals who may not have considered BMCC due to accessibility," says Business Management Professor and General

Management Program Coordinator **Francisca C. Campos**.

Another benefit to students is that the Small Business Entrepreneurship program has been accepted into the Financial Entrepreneurs Curriculum Initiative Phase 2 pilot program.

BMCC is one of 11 community colleges nationwide to be part of this pilot program a partnership between the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) and Intuit, the software company that makes TurboTax, QuickBooks and Mint.

## BMCC Ranks Third Nationwide for Helping Students Ascend the Socio-Economic Ladder

The Brookings Institution ranked BMCC third among two-year colleges nationwide in lifting low-income students to the middle class. "BMCC is honored to add the Brookings ranking as attestation

to our critical mission to advance equity and vision to be a national leader in advancing socioeconomic mobility through education," said Interim President Karrin E. Wilks.

## Commitment to First-generation Student Success Earns National Honor for BMCC

BMCC is one of just 11 institutions nationwide designated as a First-gen Forward Advisory Institution by the Center for First-generation Student Success—an initiative of Student Affairs Administrators in

Higher Education, NASPA and The Suder Foundation. BMCC earned the designation by advancing outcomes of first-generation students through initiatives such as the Panther Partners program.

## MEOC Celebrates More Than 600 Graduates



More than 600 Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 graduates from the SUNY Manhattan Educational Opportunity (MEOC) were celebrated at a virtual graduation on July 15.

Featured speakers included SUNY University Center for Academic and Workforce Development Provost **Lisa McKay**, BMCC Interim President Karrin E. Wilks, MEOC Executive Director **Anthony Watson**, MEOC Lecturer **Leroy Jemison**, Valedictorian **Marie Esteve** and Salutatorian **Paul Gregory Pulensky**. Located in Harlem, MEOC delivers academic and workforce development programs for adult learners in the New York City area. BMCC administers the program.

"By 2019, I finished my High School Equivalency and after that, enrolled in college prep courses at MEOC," said Estevez. "I'll be starting college in August of this year. I am truly thankful to MEOC."

## \$1.25 Million Grant Links Adult Learners to Opportunity

The BMCC Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development received \$1.25 million from the New York State Education Department's Adult Literacy Education (ALE) program.

The funding will support the Center's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), High School Equivalency (HSE) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) bridge programs for another five years. Students who complete these programs go on to earn

associate degrees, often at BMCC, or enter the workforce with higher skills and chances for advancement.

"Adult students come to us to start the most fundamental education in reading, writing and math," says Director of Adult Basic Education Programs **Denise Deagan**. "Against daunting odds, so many of them persist to make the most of a second chance to build the lives they want for themselves and their families."

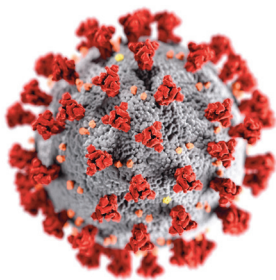


Live Streamed Fundraiser Gains Over \$630K for Scholarships and Emergency Fund



A live-streamed fundraiser on June 11 brought in over \$630,000 to support the COVID-19 Student Emergency Fund and Student Scholarships Fund at BMCC. The event featured student success videos, a song compilation from the BMCC original musical, *The Life of Mary Rogers*, and a musical tribute by the CUNY Virtual Choir at BMCC. Generous donors included **G. Carl Adkins** and **Dianne Balfour**, BNY Mellon, Broadridge, **Elizabeth Margaritis Butson**, Cboe Global Markets (**Laura V. Morrison**), CBRE (**Bruce Surry**), Course Hero, DTCC, **John Dunleavy**, **Bill Fisse**, The Herbert and Audrey Rosenfield Fund, Jack Resnick & Sons, Laughing Man Coffee (**David Steingard**), **Loretta Lee**, **Robert J. Mueller**, Protiviti (**Ron Lefferts**), **John Sutter** and **Tim Tynan**.

Course Hero and Excelencia in Education Donate \$10K for Emergency Aid



Course Hero, an online learning platform, and Excelencia in Education, an organization supporting Latino student success in higher education, have partnered to provide emergency financial assistance for students at institutions that are part of the Presidents for Latino Student Success initiative. The Course Hero/Excelencia Emergency Fund at BMCC will provide targeted financial assistance to help students stay in college despite hardships related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

BMCC Welcomes Lorna A. Malcolm as VP for Institutional Advancement



**Lorna A. Malcolm** began her role as BMCC’s vice president for advancement on April 13. “I will use

Having served as assistant dean of development and alumni relations in the Temple University College of Engineering,

my platform to shed light on the vital role community colleges play in both academic and societal successes,” she says. “I look forward to working closely with CUNY Central as well as with the BMCC president, senior cabinet, staff, faculty and my team to put in place a solid development and alumni relations program that will strengthen the College for years to come.”

The Naming of a Fiterman Terrace and State-of-the-Art Math Lab Honor Departed Colleagues



In recent years, BMCC lost two beloved colleagues—**Scott Anderson** (above left), retired Vice President for Administration and Finance, and **Sadie Bragg** (above right), retired Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs. To honor their memories and build on the fundraising efforts of their families and college community, a state-of-the-art math lab will be named after Sadie Bragg, and a 13<sup>th</sup>-floor terrace with sweeping views at Fiterman Hall will be named after G. Scott Anderson. To support the naming of these locations, visit <https://bmcc.thankyou4caring.org/>. Click “Designation,” then the memorial fund of your choice. Your donation is greatly appreciated.

Trinity Church Wall Street Donates \$100K to Project Impact

Trinity Church Wall Street has donated \$100,000 in support of BMCC Project Impact, a program supporting justice-impacted students with educational programs and other services. “Project Impact is a critical component of BMCC’s commitment to advancing equity and socioeconomic mobility through education,” said Interim President Karrin E. Wilks. “We are grateful

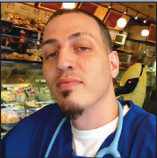
for our partnership with Trinity and their generous support.” Having opened its doors in January 2019 with one student, Project Impact now serves more than 100 students who have been formerly incarcerated, have a sibling or parent who has been incarcerated or arrested, or who have been impacted in any way by the justice system, says Project Impact Director **Julie Appel**.

BMCC Receives \$150K Grant From Robin Hood Foundation

The Robin Hood Foundation has provided a \$150,000 grant for BMCC’s COVID-19 Student Emergency Fund. The relief grant will help the college’s support services address

the emergency financial needs of students impacted by the pandemic’s economic fallout, and facing an inability to pay rent, utilities or address other life-sustaining needs.

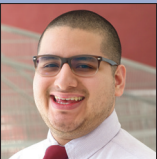
Milestones



**Dustin “Dee” Tomeo** (Nursing, ’13) was named a Daisy Award winner for his service in

the emergency department at Montefiore Medical Center’s Moses Division in the Bronx.

**Brian Romero** (Human Services, ’08) made the Power 100 list of top LGBT leaders in New York State. He was also elected President of the Stonewall Democratic Club of NYC and serves as the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President at the National Association of Social Workers, NYC chapter.



**Abraham Albarracin** (Liberal Arts ’15), BMCC Alumni Council Member, participated in

an Alumni Spotlight Panel and discussion on entryways into careers in underwriting, and diversifying and equity in the insurance industry.



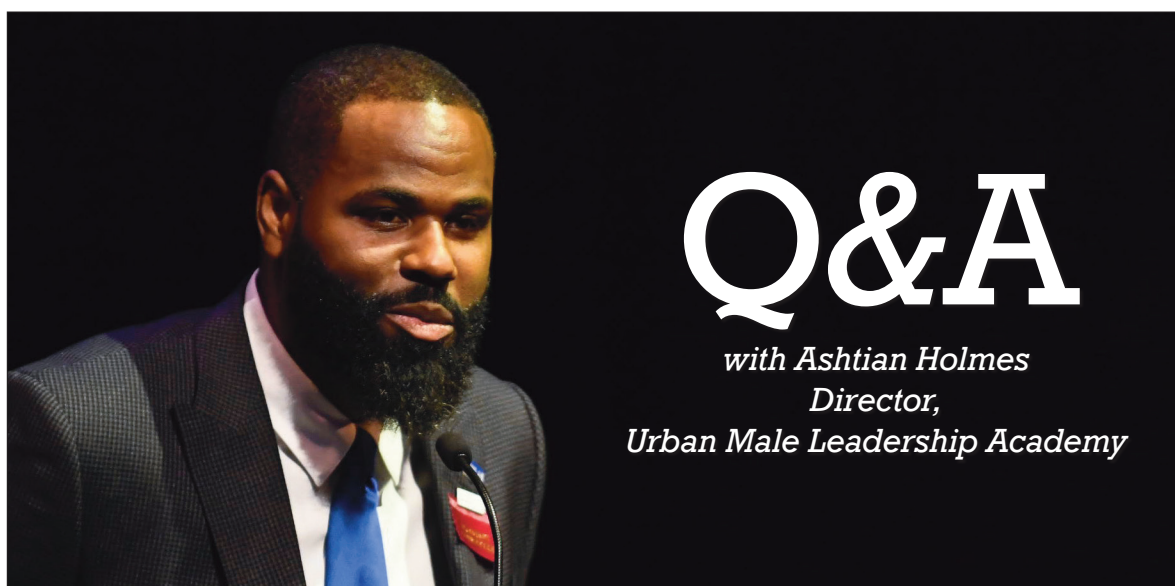
**Robert Hill** (Business, ’67) wrote an opinion piece for *USA Today* about his early career as

a young Black man enamored of the Ivy League look created by Brooks Brothers, where he was employed, before moving on to a more supportive environment at United Airlines.



**Want to participate in an Alumni Spotlight Panel?** If you are one of the alumni of BMCC and would like to share your career journey with students, please contact us. Students benefit from hearing from your “Start here. Go Anywhere” journey. Reach out to Alumni Relations and Annual Fund Manager **Yaritza Gonzalez** at [ygonzalez@bmcc.cuny.edu](mailto:ygonzalez@bmcc.cuny.edu).





#### What is your role at BMCC?

I serve as the Director of the BMCC Urban Male Leadership Academy (UMLA). My work is focused on providing academic support, resources and opportunity to underrepresented students, in particular Black and Latino men.

#### What do you really do at BMCC?

I spend much of my time mentoring, coaching and motivating students. I also design and facilitate academic, cultural, social justice and leadership workshops and manage peer mentoring and academic support

initiatives. As director of UMLA, I challenge students to step outside their comfort zones, and I do my best to foster an environment in which students feel connected to the college, engaged and appreciated.

#### What are some of your proudest accomplishments in your current role?

I am proud of the way UMLA has grown in size and scope, and our strong alumni network. The moments I feel most proud are when UMLA alumni show up at my office unexpectedly or call to share good news or just say 'thank you.' I appreciate that they stay connected to the program even after moving on from BMCC. Watching

our students develop into extraordinary professionals and leaders provides me with a profound sense of purpose and fulfillment.

#### What is one thing you've noticed about the BMCC community, as you have worked with faculty and staff in your current role?

I am continually impressed by BMCC's commitment to supporting the needs of students. BMCC is a big and complex place, but the faculty and staff make it a tight-knit community. I am continuously learning from and building with extraordinary colleagues, and use their insights to refine my approach to working with students.

#### Tell us something about yourself we might not know, but has an impact on the good work you do, at BMCC.

I grew up playing every sport under the sun, so I appreciate working within a team environment. A good teammate supports their peers and challenges the team to perform better. I make a conscious effort to bring those attributes to work every day. BMCC is a beacon for students seeking to obtain a quality education and climb the socioeconomic ladder. I am grateful for the opportunity to help students along their journeys.

## Then and Now



1970



Michelle Ronda

2020

In Summer 1970, BMCC community members joined protests against the Vietnam War following the killing of four unarmed Kent State University students by the Ohio National Guard. In Summer 2020, BMCC community members joined Black Lives Matter protests across the New York City area, following the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, shot while jogging by white residents in his neighborhood, and of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, killed by the police.