



COMMONS

FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER



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BMCC Theatre alumni (L-R) Kenny Nuñez, Mariiko Takizawa and Sebastien Jean Louis have begun theatre management careers in NYC.



President's Message

Career ambitions guide the dialogue across every academic discipline.

A top priority at BMCC, and one of our 2020–2025 Strategic Goals, is to integrate career development throughout the student experience. What this looks like, across disciplines and many programs, is illustrated throughout this issue of the “BMCC Commons.”

One example is our partnership with the Aspen Transfer Scholars Network (TSN), a national collective of colleges and universities led by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program with support from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. The TSN facilitates the transfer of community college graduates into bachelor's degree programs at Ivy League and other elite institutions.

Another example of BMCC's response to student ambitions and industry trends is reflected in the Mathematics Department's new Associate of Science in Data Science degree program. Data Science graduates will wield much-needed programming and analytic skills as they fill a workforce gap created by the dramatic growth of data used in science, business, government and other fields.

In the Teacher Education Department, career awareness informed the curricular inclusion of Computational Thinking, which provides BMCC graduates with a competitive edge as they apply for teaching fellowships, graduate programs and employment opportunities.

Across campus, in the Music and Art Department, support for students' career goals takes many forms. Here's one. Three members of the BMCC student Guitar Ensemble, along with three members of the student Jazz Ensemble joined their professors at the WBGO recording studio in Newark, New Jersey to perform in an annual college focus—and gained an insider's look at the music industry.

One last example of career path building—among many—is found in the BMCC Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development, where students complete training that prepares them to attain high-demand CISCO CCNA and Amazon Web Services Cloud Practitioner certifications—first steps for aspiring professionals in the field, and among the 10 highest-paying IT certifications for 2023.

Education has the power to lift families and entire communities out of poverty. The essential bridges we build to advanced degrees create entry to careers in STEM and other growing fields. As our graduates achieve next steps in their higher education and career paths, they raise the quality of research, products and services in every industry they join. Our alumni enter their respective fields equipped with confidence, knowledge and the right skills to make their mark.

Anthony E. Munroe



From Theatre to Engineering, Alumni Make Their Mark

At Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC/CUNY), academic and career services are woven together, providing a unique learning experience for students. For some, deciding on a major can be a difficult choice. The college's Academic & Career Communities website is the perfect starting point for students who want to explore the different career paths available to them and hone in on their academic pursuits.

BMCC also offers an abundance of workforce initiatives and internships, as well as career counseling and other services. Whether majoring in Engineering, Theatre or one of the other 50-plus associate degree programs offered at BMCC—and whether a student is at the admissions, course engagement or graduation phase of their time at the College—career options are always part of the conversation.

Opportunities for career entry also arise informally, such as when faculty share their industry networks with students, and validate their passion for a given field.

“Most BMCC students do not have family members or connections in the theatre industry,” says Theatre Professor **Katherine Kavanagh**. “Since many of us in the Theatre program actively work in the field, we can help fill that role.”

Through Professor Kavanagh's support and that of other faculty, three alumni of the Theatre program in the Department of Speech, Communications and Theatre Arts have made solid



Mathematics Professor **Aradhana Kumari** presented a talk on the importance of teaching the “why” behind math rules and formulas, at the Mathematics Education for the Future Project symposium, “Innovative Teaching Practices,” August 14–18 at Oxford University, Oxford, England.

Early Childhood Center Executive Director **Cecilia Scott-Croff** was elected the first African-American Governing Board President of the New York Association for the Education of Young Children (NYAEYC).

Business Management Professor **Joel Franks** published a book, “Creating Wealth Starts with Financial Health.”

President **Anthony E. Munroe** joined colleagues at the White House for the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration and TheDream.USA for Higher Ed Dream Action Week, to urge Congress to pass bipartisan legislation protecting DACA recipients and other Dreamers.

Speech, Communications and Theatre Arts Professor **Angela Polite** spoke at the University of Minnesota Duluth’s summit, “Equity, Race and Ethnicity, Decolonizing Our Institutions and Communities,” and presented her one-woman play.

Ethnic and Racial Studies Lecturer **Michael Liu** and Associate Professor of Health Education **Michael McGee** have been named Black, Race and Ethnic Studies (BRES) Fellows and will receive stipends of \$2,000 to support their research and curriculum development projects.

Modern Languages Professor **Alister Ramírez** was named Secretary of The North American Academy of the Spanish Language.

Francois Payen with friend (upper left); with BMCC VP Marva Craig (lower left) and family (right).

entries into the profession of theatre management.

Sebastian Jean Louis (Theatre, '21) is a Production Stage Manager at the immersive-theatre-focused McKittrick Hotel. **Mariko Takizawa** (Theatre, '17) is a General Manager with Emersive Productions and a freelance stage manager through the Actors’ Equity Association (AEA). **Kenny Nuñez** (Theatre, '13), is a Broadway Theatre Manager at the Shubert Theatre. All three alumni credit the leads on job openings, moral support and the professional example provided by their professors at BMCC, as helping to kick off their careers.

Faculty also support students’ continued higher education and advanced degrees, by their own example.

Kicking off a career in chemical engineering

“One faculty member who impacted me was **Brahmadeo Dewprashad**,” says 2009 Engineering alumnus **Francois Payen**. “He went to MIT for a Ph.D. in organic chemistry which opened my eyes to the directions you can go with advanced degrees in chemistry. I joined several

research projects led by Professor Dewprashad. We looked at the chemical properties of indigenous plants of the Caribbean, their pharmacological applications, and how they can be used in alternative medicine.”

While earning an associate degree in chemical engineering at BMCC, Mr. Payen, a Phi Theta Kappa Honor student, earned the Abner B. Rosenfield Scholarship, the Black Male Initiative Award, the Salzburg Seminar award and others. He also participated in Study Abroad trips to France, Austria and Spain. His next step was to earn a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering at the New York University School of Engineering. “When I entered NYU, it gave me an advantage, having had lab experience at BMCC,” he says. “Once I got my bachelor’s degree, I went to the University of Wisconsin-Madison for a master’s in Materials Science and Engineering.”

Mr. Payen now works as a site Capital Portfolio and Engineering Manager, overseeing multi-million-dollar projects at Livent Corporation, which according to its website, harnesses lithium technology to power a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable world.

From Theatre to Engineering, Alumni Make Their Mark

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Mr. Payen manages over 100 capital projects for operations, and research and development, among other responsibilities. He works from Livent's North Carolina manufacturing site in the greater Charlotte area, where he lives with his wife and three daughters.

"Professor Dewprashad opened my eyes to the directions you can go with advanced degrees in chemistry."

**—Francois Payen
(Engineering Science, '09)**

The international aspects of the lithium industry are a good fit for Mr. Payen, who grew up in Haiti and moved to New York City after he graduated from high school. "My sister came to New York before me," he says. "She started at Queensborough Community College, then went to Queens College for her bachelor's degree, and obtained a Ph.D. in Neuroscience from Boston University. I wanted to be in Manhattan, and I learned that BMCC had science programs linked to bachelor's degree programs in Ivy Leagues and CUNY schools I was interested in. I spoke French and Haitian Creole back then, so first, I had to take some time to focus on my English."

Today, Mr. Payen says, he is fluent in four languages: Spanish, French, Haitian Creole and English. He has worked at Livent for five years, having worked previously as a senior engineer at Collins Aerospace and Alcoa Inc. and having started as a research scientist at the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery. In the summer of 2023, his current employer, Livent, sent Mr. Payen to The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious General Management Program. "That experience has been tremendously useful as I prepare for the next steps of my career," he says.

Mr. Payen also serves as president of the non-profit Association Haitienne de Developpement Humain (AHDH).

He leads a team of about 50 medical doctors, nurses and engineers, and heads up innovative programs promoting healthcare, education and cultural enlightenment with the goal of empowering Haitians to be self-sufficient and achieve their goals. Mr. Payen is also a board member of Dogwood Classical Academy, a non-profit, tuition-free public charter school in the Charlotte, North Carolina area.

"Francois has come a long way, but I'm not surprised," says Professor Dewprashad. "We've stayed in touch, and I see in him today what I saw back then when he was my student—the curiosity and personal interest but also an impressive aptitude for the technology of engineering science, ethical aspects and understanding the wide range of STEM applications and how they can improve our quality of life worldwide."

Faculty share a love of theatre, and guide students to job leads in the industry

"My students and I share a love of theatre, and in my class 'Theatre Management: Exploring Theatres of New York City and Beyond,' we attend performances together thanks to my partners on and off Broadway, especially at Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage Theatre and SoHo Rep," says Professor Kavanagh.

The theatre management class provides a deeper understanding of roles that fall under the wide umbrella of theatre management, she explains. In one assignment, students interview people working in several theatre company departments such as marketing, fundraising and company management.

"On any given production, dozens of people are behind the scenes working collectively to create a successful show and a healthy environment for everyone on stage and off, including the audience," she says. "I often connect students with professional contacts to help them build a professional network."

Sebastien Jean Louis graduated from BMCC in 2021 with an Associate in Science (A.S.) degree in Theatre and now works as a Production Stage Manager at McKittrick Hotel, a pre-World War II structure reinvented as an immersive theatre setting.

"I started as an intern and was promoted several times," says Mr. Louis. "Now I'm completing my Bachelor of Arts in Theatre at Brooklyn College, CUNY, with plans to graduate this December 2023."

That initial internship happened because of an email from Professor Kavanagh to her students, alerting them to a just-announced wave of open apprenticeships in New York City theatres.

"The faculty and staff in the Theatre Program all care a lot about theatre and what they do at BMCC," says Mr. Louis. "They offer assistance and support long after graduation, which helps make BMCC a fantastic place to prepare for a career in theatre. I was always determined to work in the entertainment industry in some way or form. When I saw the email from Professor Kavanagh, I felt it was a wonderful way to get a foot in the door. So, I took the chance and here we are!"

BMCC alumna Mariko Takizawa (Theatre, '17) worked in the fashion industry in Japan, before moving to New York City and switching her focus to a career in theatre. She now works as General Manager, a permanent,

"I learned stage management from faculty who were and still are working on Broadway ... and now I am working in the same industry and in the same Union that I dreamed of."

**—Mariko Takizawa
(Theatre, '17)**

senior staff position with Emersive Productions, as well as holding the position of a freelance stage manager, a union position through the Actors' Equity Association (AEA).

Ms. Takizawa says she has loved theatre since she was a child. "I started playing the trumpet at the age of nine and learned a lot of music from musicals and operas," she says. "So, it was very natural for me to be attracted to theatre."

At BMCC, she says, "All the Theatre professors including Professor Kavanagh, were very supportive. They gave me a lot of chances, advice and knowledge, and some professors helped me to find internships in the industry. I learned stage management from faculty who were and still are working on Broadway, in addition to their roles at BMCC, and now I am working in the same industry and in the same union that I dreamed of. I am still talking to some of my professors although I graduated in 2017, and asking for advice as my career grows."

Those opportunities, she says, helped her to develop an industry network and find a job after graduation—which also enabled her to apply for a Temporary Worker Visa. "I should add that the staff in the International Students Office at BMCC were very supportive, as well," she says.

Kenny Nuñez, who grew up in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Upper Manhattan, earned his Associate of Science (A.S.) in Theatre in 2013 and then a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Theatre from Lehman College, CUNY in 2020. Today, he works as a Broadway Theatre Manager at the Shubert Theatre—"a permanent, unionized position," he adds with pride.

"Ever since I was young, theatre has been my escape," he says. "It always brought me joy. I wanted to learn more and share my craft with the world. The professors at BMCC pushed us and challenged us to be better artists. They connected us with Theatre companies and artists who helped shape my career."

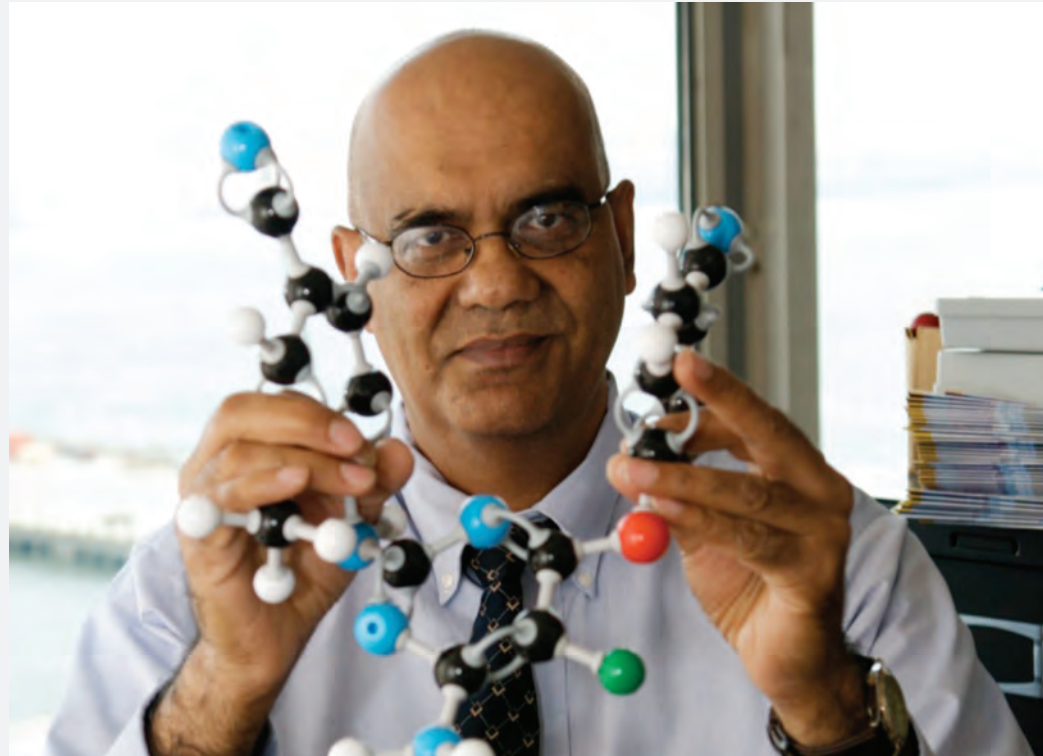
He landed his first job in theatre through a friend working as an usher Off-Broadway. "He introduced me to the manager," Mr. Nuñez says. "I made connections with a company manager who introduced me to The Shubert Organization. I joined their two-year apprenticeship program, but a year into the program, I was promoted to Theatre

Manager." He says he has always wanted to work in entertainment. "Becoming a Theatre Manager took a lot of hard work and dedication. I never thought that I would be doing what I am doing. I am an Afro-Latino managing the Shubert Organization's flagship theatre. How awesome is that! Anything is possible!"

Regarding the varied paths her former students have taken, Professor Kavanagh says, "There is not a singular blueprint for creating a successful

career in the theatre," adding that some students continue their education with bachelor's degree programs, others go right to work.

"Whatever the student's goal, we prepare them to apply for opportunities that put them at the center of the industry," she says. "It has always been my goal to create a network of current BMCC Theatre majors and alumni to support each other. In such a competitive field, it's important to lift one another up."



Top: Brahmadeo Dewprashad

Bottom (L-R): Kenny Nuñez, Mariko Takizawa, Katherine Kavanagh, Sebastien Jean Louis



2023 Commencement Is Upbeat and Inspiring

On June 8, a spectacular commencement ceremony at Barclays Center in downtown Brooklyn honored more than 3,600 graduates who completed their associate degree programs at BMCC in Summer 2022, Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. Almost half the graduates earned the distinction of Honors on their diploma, for achieving grade point averages of 3.3 and higher.

First-time graduates of BMCC's new degree programs included those who majored in Public Administration and Political Science, as well as the Jazz and Popular Music specialization in Music, and Risk Management and Insurance specialization in Business Management.

The commencement's Cultural Celebration, which recognized BMCC's 60th anniversary, featured the BMCC Brass Band led by **David Levy**, and dance groups from across New York City directed by Professor **Quentin Angus**. BMCC President Anthony E. Munroe greeted the cheering rows of graduates in their distinctive blue robes and yellow sashes.

The Presidential Medal was accepted on behalf of Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies by **Lorelei Vargas**, Chief Community Impact Officer, and recognized Trinity's support of programs at BMCC to address student homelessness and more. Speakers included CUNY Chancellor **Félix V. Matos Rodríguez**, Valedictorian **Alex Brown**, Student Government Association President **Carlene Nelson**, CUNY Board of Trustees member **Brian D. Obergfell** and BMCC Vice Presidents **Marva Craig** and **Erwin J. Wong**. As the graduates streamed out of the Barclays arena, giant blasts of confetti hit the air and the BMCC Graduation Ensemble led by Professor **Can Olgun** played "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang, and other hits.



BMCC President Anthony E. Munroe celebrates with graduates at the June 2023 commencement.

BMCC Students Seize STEM Opportunities in Hudson River Park

Being a next-door neighbor to the unique ecosystem of Hudson River Park provides STEM-related experiences for BMCC faculty and students. Science major **Brandon Campos** received the Tibor Polgar Fellowship from the Hudson River Foundation and is conducting research at BMCC on the elimination of heavy metals

from the Hudson River using agricultural wastes. Mentored by Science Professor **Abel Navarro**, Mr. Campos is the only community college student among awardees from Cornell, UCLA, Rutgers, Queens College and others. Science major Vivian Chavez was accepted to the Hudson River Park Internship seasonal position as a field science assistant. Science major **Jessie Lee**, a BMCC Foundation Fund student, was accepted to the Summer Engineering Research for Community College Students program through Cornell High Energy Synchrotron Source (CHESS) at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

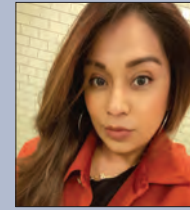


(L-R) Science major Brandon Campos and Science Professor Abel Navarro.

Data Science Program Prepares Students for High-Demand Careers

The BMCC Mathematics Department now offers an Associate of Science (A.S.) in Data Science degree program that links to the B.S. in Applied Mathematics program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. Efforts to develop the new program were led by Math Professor

Annie Yi Han and started with an NSF-funded curriculum development project led by Mathematics Professor **Glenn Miller**. Graduates of the Data Science program will be able to transfer seamlessly to the Data Science track in the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) program in Applied Mathematics at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. They will be prepared for careers that meet the workforce demand for graduates with programming as well as analytic skills—a gap created by the dramatic growth of data used in science, business, government and other fields.

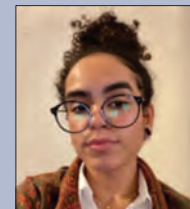


Teacher Education alumna **Jessica Jimenez** received the 2023 Champions of Children award from the New

York Association for the Education of Young Children (NYAEYC).

Music majors **Jaime Andres Diaz Granados Almanza**, **Helena Rosasco**, **Ashley Turcan** and **Ashley Wagner**, as well as Music alumnus **Theodore Mankiewicz** ('21), have been accepted into The Choir of Trinity Church Scholars Program.

Computer Information Systems major **Diona Peddie** and Animation and Motion Graphics major **Yailenis Rodriguez Diaz** are among eight winners statewide of the 2023 Vanguard Award, which recognizes college students enrolled in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that are nontraditional for their gender.



Ethnic and Race Studies major **Joely Castillo** was selected for the nationally competitive Hostelling

International Explore America Travel Scholarship program and received a \$1,500 stipend and free nights at participating hostels.

BMCC was one of four CUNY colleges to receive the National Institute Student Success (NISS) Award to implement strategies to improve rates of student degree completion.

Writing and Literature major **Ime Ekpo**, as well as BMCC alumnus **Johnny Anderson** (Liberal Arts, '19) were selected to attend the 2023 Conference on Diversity in International Affairs at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington D.C.



Pinning Ceremony Celebrates 2023 Nursing Program Graduates

BMCC celebrated 64 graduates from the class of 2023 Nursing program on January 4 and 88 graduates on June 2. Both pinning ceremonies were held in Theatre 1 at 199 Chambers Street. The January ceremony marked the first time since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, that family, friends and significant others were invited into the theatre to share the joy of the in-person celebration. President Anthony E. Munroe spoke at both ceremonies, shared that his mother was a Registered Nurse and spoke of the compassion and hard work of BMCC Nursing students who learn both practice and theory in areas including pediatric care, psychiatric nursing and more.



BMCC UMLA Honored

At a ceremony in July, the CUNY Black Male Initiative honored BMCC's Urban Male Leadership Academy (UMLA) with an award for Exceptional Institutional Commitment. "This award speaks to the strength of BMCC's leadership, and the brilliance and resilience of UMLA students, mentors and alumni," said **Ashtian Holmes**, Director of UMLA at BMCC. He thanked the UMLA Team, BMCC President Anthony Munroe, Dean **Janice Zummo** "and the rest of the BMCC leadership for their extraordinary commitment to the success of our men of color."

BMCC Joins Transfer Scholars Network BMCC and Trinity Washington University Sign Create Transfer Pathway



Trinity

On July 25, BMCC President Anthony E. Munroe and Trinity Washington University (Trinity) President **Pat McGuire** signed an articulation agreement that will enable BMCC graduates with associate degrees to enter a seamless pathway to baccalaureate programs at Trinity. "Today is historic for both BMCC and Trinity Washington University—two venerable institutions with long-standing commitments to transforming people and communities. BMCC and Trinity prepare leaders, many of whom are Black and Hispanic—and women—to make significant contributions in society," said President Munroe at the signing ceremony.

BMCC Joins Transfer Scholars Network

transfer
scholars
network

BMCC has joined the Transfer Scholars Network (TSN), a national collective of colleges and universities led by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program with support from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. Through TSN, nominated BMCC graduates will receive support to transfer to bachelor's degree programs in Ivy League and small liberal arts colleges, as well as major research universities. They will also benefit from financial aid packages that meet 100 percent of demonstrated need.

Certification Training Provides the Tools for a Career in the Cloud

Eight BMCC students completed a free, six-month Introduction to Cloud Computing Certificate Program provided through the Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) division of the BMCC Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development. The program focused on trainings that lead to national industry certifications in CISCO CCNA and the Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud Practitioner. “The AWS

Certified Cloud Practitioner is the first step aspiring professionals take in pursuit of the Solutions Architect credential,” says **Daniel Lebo**, BMCC Technology Instructor. “AWS Certified Solutions Architect is among the 10 Highest-Paying IT Certifications for 2023.” The students are **Jawaanza Davis, Joel Fernandez, Gerardo Gutierrez, Omesh Hiranman, Sojourner Hughes, Purcell Nurse, Brandon Sifontes** and **Lincoln Speer**.



Annual Heritage Celebrations Enlighten and Empower

Heritage months raise awareness across the diverse communities at BMCC. In February, Afrikan Heritage Month, “Black Futurity, Mining the Past, Cultivating the Present, and Shaping Tomorrow,” explored the arts, science, politics and justice through the lens of people of Black descent. It kicked off with an art opening in the 199 Chambers Street Breezeway Gallery that showcased the legacy of Academic Literacy and Linguistics Professor and renowned quilter **Edward M. Bostick**, who passed away in 2022. Professor Bostick’s artistic quilts honor icons of Black History and reflect his collaboration with BMCC Media Center Director and artist **Vinton Melbourne** (shown above left).

April marked the opening of Asian Heritage Month, which celebrated cultural identities and presented events ranging from a film about Arab-American football players in Michigan, to live

games of table tennis and a book talk with BMCC Professor **Alvin Eng** who wrote “Our Laundry, Our Town: My Chinese American Life from Flushing to the Downtown Stage and Beyond.”

Women’s HerStory Month, “Resiliency on Her Terms,” launched in March and opened minds with events focused on reproductive justice, women’s resistance in colonial Latin America, Black women in corporate settings and more.

Music Ensembles Stand Out in WBGO College Focus



Three members of the BMCC student Guitar Ensemble; **Mike O’Donnell, Jacqui Miranda** and **Amaree Bowen**, along with three members of the student Jazz Ensemble; **Andrew Tuzhilin, Joel Perez** and **Jaime Diaz**—the only CUNY students in the program—joined Music professors **Quentin Angus** and **Can Olgun** in March at the WBGO recording studio in Newark, New Jersey to take part in an annual college focus.



Top Commencement Scholars Driven by Helping Others

The 2023 Commencement valedictorian Alex Brown (*above*), a science major and first-generation college student from Jamaica, served as a tutor for both the BMCC Urban Male Leadership Academy (UMLA) and Impact Peer Mentoring program. This aspiring M.D.

wants to specialize in fetal medicine and conducted research at BMCC with Science Professor **Alexander Gossiau**. She was President of the Honor Society of Black Student Scholar Club and a member of the CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP).

The Dean's Award recipient was **Elizabeth Alfieri**, a Criminal Justice major with a 4.0 grade point average. An Out in Two scholar and member of the National Society of Leadership and Success, Ms. Alfieri completed her degree as a single mother raising a daughter and two sons diagnosed with autism.

The Liberal Arts Award winner **Camila Fernandez** earned a 4.0 grade point average. Having experienced trauma that displaced her as an adolescent from her home in Mexico, she is determined to build a career supporting children and young adults who have been victimized.

Shirley Fiterman Art Center Exhibitions Flourish

The sunny North and South Galleries of the Shirley Fiterman Art Center (SFAC) featured an exhibition in June with the artists **Abby Donovan**, "The Colors are Like Words That Are Not Words" and **Midori Harima**, "This is Not a

Mirror." In May, an exhibition of top work by BMCC students opened, and from February through March, the exhibition "Working on It" showcased work by faculty artists from the BMCC Music and Art and Media Arts and Technology departments.



Photo by Cary Whittier

L-R: Abigail Donovan, Crystalline Humour (for Malebranche) IV, sheet glass, lead solder. Abigail Donovan, Crystalline Humour (for Malebranche) V, 2022, sheet glass, lead solder.

Executive Staff Bring Vast Higher Ed Experience to BMCC

Acting Dean of Health Sciences and Nursing **Pete Gutierrez** joined BMCC from Florida International University, where he served as Associate Dean.

Acting Assistant Vice President of Workforce Development and Continuing Education **Terry Kidd** joined BMCC after having served as Vice President for Strategic Planning, Research, Technology and Innovation at St. Augustine's University in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Associate Dean of Faculty **Gail Fernandez** came to BMCC from New Jersey City University, where she was Associate Provost.

Dr. S. Raschaad Hoggard, BMCC's first Executive Chief of Staff, Office of the President, served as an administrator at Medgar Evers College, CUNY.



Upper L-R: Pete Gutierrez, Terry Kidd.
Lower L-R: Gail Fernandez, S. Raschaad Hoggard.

Student Films Light Up BMCC Festivals

Each semester, BMCC celebrates student filmmakers and others preparing for careers in film. The Fall 2022 celebration was the first in-person event since 2019. "All the films were produced by BMCC students, most of them majoring in either Video Arts and Technology, Animation, or Multimedia Programming and Design," said documentary filmmaker and Video Arts and Technology Professor **Anastassios (Tassos) Rigopoulos**. The Spring 2023 Student Film Festival, organized by the college's Cinema Arts Club, was held Friday, May 5 in BMCC's Theatre 2. Genres represented in the festival included documentary, fiction, experimental, found-footage, 2D and 3D animation, commercial, PSA and multi-camera studio TV production.



Scene from
"Très Chic" by Renzo Esposito

Teacher Education Majors Delve Into Computational Thinking

BMCC's Teacher Education Department has joined the CUNY CITE (Computing-Integrated Teacher Education) project, which supports the inclusion of computational thinking into preparing the next generation of teachers. The BMCC project, "I Do, We Do, You Do: Introducing Computational Thinking (CT) to Teacher Education Faculty and Students," is led by Teacher Education professors **Rebecca Garte, Jennifer Gilken** and **Cara Kronen**. As Professor Gilken explains, CT includes data visualization, hands-on exploration of materials and more.

James Tolan Student Writing Awards Celebrate Emerging Writers

Faculty of the Writing and Literature program of the English Department, and staff at BMCC presented the 2023 James Tolan Student Writing Awards on May 3 in Richard Harris Terrace at 199 Chambers Street. The event, which is funded by staff and faculty donations, featured special guest writer **Megan Fernandes**, author of the poetry collection "I Do Everything I'm Told." The student awards recognized outstanding fiction, creative non-fiction, scholarly writing and poetry.



Professor Holly Messitt at event recognizing awardees Dan Hoffancia, Sophie Atkenhead, Bjarni Erlendsson, Rebecca Richey, Roxanna Andrea, Cardenas Colmenares, Justin Demmitt, Javana Dhakal and Gerald Jeter.

Human Services Program Builds Innovative Collaboration



Each Thursday evening throughout the Spring 2023 semester, Human Services Professor **Debra Greenwood** traveled to the Varick Street, West

Village offices of the social services organization Project Renewal, where she taught Human Services 101 to a group of 11 students. The students are clients of Project Renewal, a citywide agency that helps connect individuals impacted by homelessness, substance use, mental illness and the justice system, with housing, healthcare and jobs. The BMCC-Project Renewal collaboration aims to support those goals while putting clients on the path to a degree in social work.

Global Fellowships and Conferences Open Doors

The 2023 graduates Academic Linguistics and Literacy major **Vanique Davis** and Computer Network Technology major **Eduardo Lebron** were selected to participate in the Community College Global Affairs Fellowship in Summer 2023, in Washington D.C.

Lebron and Davis took part in a paid summer enrichment and mentorship program intended to expand access to international affairs careers for community college and non-traditional students. The fellowship is funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



L-R: Vanique Davis, Eduardo Lebron

Student Math Leader Shines at National Conference

The April 2023 Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) conference in Atlanta featured a session, “Students as Leaders in a Multi-level Math Classroom,”



led by CUNY Adult Literacy Math Staff Developer **Eric Appleton** with students including **Ayantu Abera** (left) of the BMCC Adult

and Continuing Education (ACE) division. Ms. Abera, who grew up in Ethiopia, was an ESOL student and is now taking HSE classes, where she has emerged as a math leader among her peers. “Ayantu started up a study group with other students,” says Appleton. “She has led conversations in Zoom breakout rooms; screen sharing, taking notes, then meeting with her instructor to talk about math strategies and how to engage other students in learning math.”

Honor Societies Thrive at BMCC

In December 2022, the BMCC Teacher Education Department (TED) launched the college’s Alpha Kappa Sigma chapter of the national Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society. Kappa Delta Pi recognizes educators in early childhood, childhood and secondary education. Members benefit from career search assistance, scholarships and more. The BMCC Kappa Delta Pi committee includes TED Professors **Mindi Reich-Shapiro**, Chair; **Virginia Lee**, Chapter Counselor; **Janice Szarko** and **Newton S. Silva**.

In March, the BMCC Alpha Kappa Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa garnered five awards at the 2023 New York Regional Conference in Rochester, New York. Faculty advisors History Professor **Alex d’Erizans** and Criminal Justice Professor **Diana Rickard** joined the winning chapter officers—Writing and Literature/Journalism major **Ime Ekpo**, History major **Dante Clemente** and Liberal Arts major **Nathan Mandel**.

Looking Back, as BMCC Celebrates Its 60-Year Anniversary

Professor Sandra Poster Founds the Sandra Sollod Poster Scholarship for Communication Studies Majors and Looks Back on 50 Years at BMCC.

Retired BMCC Professor **Sandra Poster**'s tenure at BMCC was from 1967 to 2017. Over time she taught classes including Speech 100, Interpersonal Communication and Mass Media. Professor Poster also served in the Office of Academic Affairs as Assistant to the Dean, Assistant Dean and Associate Dean. Her accomplishments including having created two academic degree programs, having chaired the gala community and helped organize commencements in many venues. Most of all, in her 50 years at the college, Professor Poster was witness to BMCC's meteoric rise as an institution, from its inception in 1963.

"In 1967, BMCC was housed in rented office space in the mid-fifties off Seventh Avenue," she says. "This was in the Times Square area before it got 'cleaned up,' and most of us knew the names of individuals frequenting particular street corners as we went to teach our classes in the Tango Palace Dance Hall. As the college grew, we needed more facilities and offered classes in the Knights of Pythias building in the Lincoln Center area."

Abraham Beame was the mayor of New York City at that time. "There are photographs of the Chambers Street campus groundbreaking in the mid-seventies," says Professor Poster. "They had broken ground for 199 about five years before we moved there, then the City ran out of money. Steelwork had been put up and it just sat there on the side of the West Side Highway for years, rusting in the salt air."

As Professor Poster recalls, "The 'new campus' was mostly finished by the 1982-83 winter break, and we packed

the whole college in boxes, moved to 199 Chambers Street and opened for classes that spring of 1983."

"We felt like we had died and gone to heaven," she says of the move. "When we were in the rented office space, we barely had a library, we had no cafeteria, and we had no conference rooms or theatre space—it was just classrooms and offices. When we moved to 199, suddenly we had all these magnificent facilities."

In those early years, she says, "There was no such thing as Tribeca, or Battery Park City. We had an unobstructed view of the Statue of Liberty. It was mostly just dirt and sand. You sort of crunched your way up Chambers Street. The wholesale food district was still there—this was before it moved to Hunts Point. Today, if you look at the sides of buildings you still see references to butter and eggs."

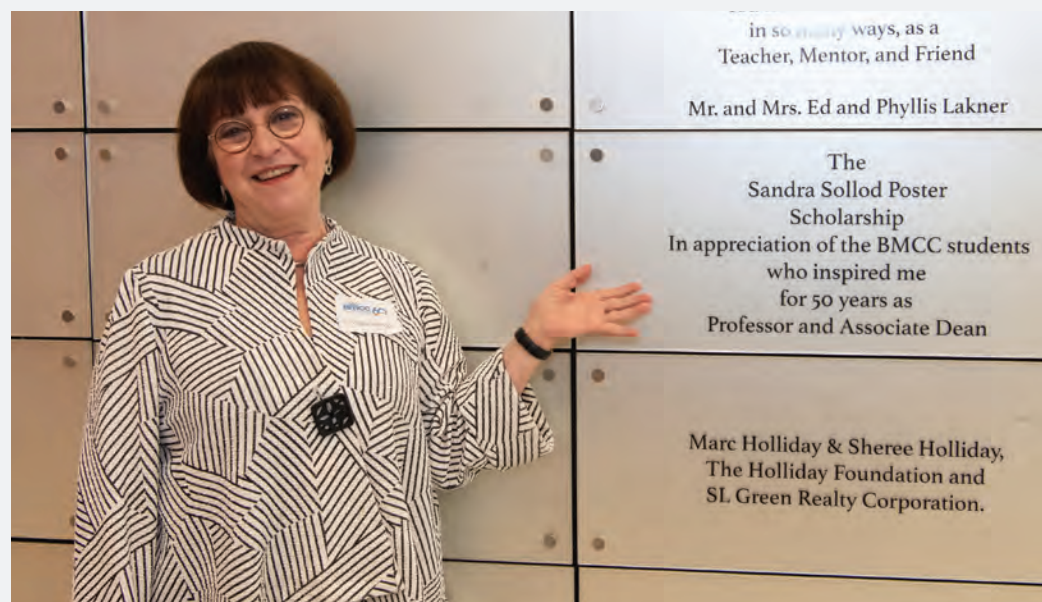
The college grew dramatically from that point forward. "The Chambers Street campus had about 9,000 students and within about a year that number jumped

to 14,000 maybe 17,000," she says. "There was one restaurant for the whole area. When we first moved in, there was no telephone service in the building. We used to kid that we should wear roller skates to get to our classes and go to meetings."

As the campus grew physically, BMCC's offerings of academic programs expanded. "When we moved to 199, **Joshua Smith** was president," says Professor Poster. "One day he called me into his office, unrolled some blueprints and pointed to something. 'It's a television studio,' he said. 'What are we going to do with it?' I looked at him and just like that I said, 'We're going to start a degree program for students'—and that's what we did."

Professor Poster explains that at that time, "cable television was first getting started and corporations were building television studios in their own facilities. Most of our students didn't have connections and parents who could open corporate doors for them, but once they had a two-year degree, we could help them move right into jobs."

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Retired Professor Sandra Poster at the BMCC Donor's Wall in Fiterman Hall, standing next to the plaque recognizing the scholarship fund she created.

Looking back as BMCC Hits 60-Year Anniversary

Continued from previous page

She says the competition to get into the big three networks was intense. “You had to know somebody, but our graduates could get jobs in corporate media centers and in the fledgling cable industry, so we called the program, ‘Corporate and Cable Communications,’ or ‘CCC.’ Then we changed it to ‘Media Arts,’ and today of course it’s a whole department, ‘Media Arts and Technology,’ with programs including Animation and Motion Graphics, Multimedia Programming and Design, and Video Arts and Technology.”

Also around that time, Professor Poster led BMCC’s participation in an early form of distance learning.

“In the 1980s, I heard about a new technology that used interactive television to connect various educational sites in New York,” she says. “This was long before Zoom. I jumped on this and BMCC became the first college in New York City to be part of an interactive distance learning network. We taught Critical Thinking classes via the distance network to students at three area high schools, along with our BMCC students.”

Later, Professor Poster was instrumental in creating the college’s first Communication Studies program, which started in 2012 and is housed in the Speech, Communications and Theatre Arts department.

“We used to tell our students, it prepares you for everything, and it prepares you for nothing. You don’t see wants ads saying, ‘Communicator Wanted.’ But with more and more companies and organizations looking for communication experts, our students are finding this a very popular and very flexible major.”

In addition to her academic leadership, Professor Poster says she was also responsible for commencement at BMCC for 14 years.

“Our first commencement was in the ballroom at the Americana Hotel

on Seventh Avenue. As the college expanded, we moved commencement to Riverside Church—then Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall and the Theater at Madison Square Garden. We kept outgrowing our spaces and eventually went to the Javits Center.”

She gives the origin of a BMCC commencement tradition: faculty seated on stage. “One year, they gave out 600 more tickets than we had seats. We only found this out the night before commencement and before they could shut us down for violation of the fire code, we came up with the solution of putting the faculty on the stage, freeing up seats in the house. The faculty has been there ever since.”

Another highlight for Professor Poster was chairing the BMCC fundraising gala. “We held it on campus at first,” she says. “We wanted donors to come to our new facilities, so we had the event in the main lobby at Chambers Street. We had twinkling lights in boxed trees, a bar and elegant tables that seated twelve each. We

put the dance band on the little balcony over the front lobby, and we would have hundreds of guests. Most of our donors had never been to the college, so Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society students with BMCC jackets greeted people at the base of the ramp at 199 and would walk them up the ramp with umbrellas if it was raining. We wanted people to know who we were and where we were.”

A relentless fundraiser, Sandra says she was “shameless” about going after support for the college. “I wanted our students to have the best.” Ultimately, she says, she was responsible for over \$14 million in grants and donations.

Recently, Professor Poster funded the Sandra Sollod Poster Scholarship for Communication Studies majors. “I keep in touch with quite a few former students,” says Professor Poster of the students she worked closely with for over 50 years at BMCC. “These young people are spectacular.”

Calling All BMCC Alumni— Especially Those Going Back Decades!

Share your memories and your “Start Here, Go Anywhere” story with the BMCC community. Contact Interim VP for Institutional Advancement Karen Wilson-Stevenson at alumni@bmcc.cuny.edu

BMCC Foundation Board member **John Dunleavy** was tapped by McCann Worldgroup to serve as president, North America.

Gylanni Carrington (Theatre, '17), was commissioned to present the performance “Unsettling” for the interdisciplinary forum “Making Space at the Armory, Symposium: Sound & Color, The Future of Race in Design,” at Park Avenue Armory, January 14 and 15. The performance also featured **Dania Miguel** (Theatre, '18).

Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies Awards \$450K to BMCC’s Project Impact

As part of its latest wave of philanthropic giving, Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies has named BMCC as a grantee in the category “Racial Justice,” awarding \$450,000 to the Research Foundation of the City University of New York, and earmarked for Project Impact at BMCC.

Project Impact connects BMCC students who have been impacted by the legal system, with a mentor, a supportive community and access to resources that enable them to thrive in college.

“The Project Impact community has at the heart of its mission, a determination to provide BIPOC, first-generation and system-impacted students with the personalized support they need to overcome barriers and achieve their academic goals,” said **Karen Wilson-Stevenson**, Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Chief Operating Officer of the BMCC Foundation. “This is a time of great and increasing need in our neighborhood, and across the world,” said the Rev. **Phillip A. Jackson**, Rector of Trinity Church Wall Street. “Our faith calls on us to use our gifts to help all people, advancing equity and justice in the here and now—and hopefully for generations to come.”

Donors and Scholars Connect at Scholarship Reception



On May 11, BMCC President Anthony E. Munroe and the BMCC Foundation Board hosted the college's 2023 Scholarship Reception and Luncheon at Fiterman Hall. The event brought together BMCC Cabinet members, Foundation Board members, faculty and donors—as well as scholars who have received support from the BMCC Foundation.

Karen Wilson-Stevenson, Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Chief Operating Officer of the BMCC Foundation, welcomed the guests. President Munroe talked about BMCC's vital mission of equity that the Foundation supports, as did BMCC Executive Chief of Staff in the Office of the President, S. Raschaad Hoggard.

"'Giving back' is a concept we build into many of the scholarship programs at BMCC," explains Vice President Wilson-Stevenson. "Our scholarship recipients volunteer in their communities and provide service at the College. The Scholarship Reception provided role models for giving that can inspire our students as they build their professional values and think about how they, themselves can give back, someday."

BMCC Foundation Board Members in attendance included **Elizabeth Butson**, a long-time and generous donor to the College, as well as **John Sutter**, who serves as the BMCC Foundation Board Secretary/Treasurer, and Dr. **Sandra Lindsay**, a BMCC nursing alumna who received the 2022 Presidential Medal of Freedom from U.S. President **Joe Biden** for her advocacy of public health, especially in neighborhoods hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other BMCC Foundation donors at the reception included Dr. **Fred Peskoff**, Chair of the BMCC Mathematics department and who created the Leila and Simon Peskoff Family Endowment in honor of his parents in 2001.

Also in attendance was Mr. **Lior Rachmany**, CEO and Founder of Dumbo Moving and Storage, and who created the Dumbo Moving and Storage Scholarship at BMCC. Other guests included Ms. **Phyllis Lakner** and Mr. **Ed Lakner**, who created the Dr. Gail L. Mansouri Scholarship Fund in honor of the late Social Sciences, Human Services and Criminal Justice professor **Gail L. Mansouri**, and Ms. **Carina Liebeknecht**, representing the Dietderich Family Scholarship.

Several retired BMCC faculty who continue to support the students they inspired for decades joined the reception. These included Dr. **Susan Horowitz**, who established the Dr. Sue Scholarship and retired Music and Art Department Professor **Rochelle Weinstein**, who created the Rochelle Weinstein Scholarship.



BMCC Foundation Board Member Elizabeth Butson (second from right), with BMCC scholars.



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In Memoriam

BMCC remembers faculty and staff who through their dedication and commitment to excellence left lasting impressions on their students and colleagues. Among those who passed away are Business Administration Professor **Michelle Wang** (October 2022), College Now staff member **Gary Smith** (November 2022), Business Administration Professor **Kenneth Anderson** (January 2023), Facility Maintenance Operation staff member **Jeanette Reyes** (January 2023), Theatre Professor **Keith Winsted** (January 2023) and Mathematics Professor **Frederick Reese** (April 2023). Human Resources also shared news that retired Psychology Professor **William Roane** passed away in January.

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