A New Nexus for Art and Culture

The Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts
Cultivates Brooklyn’s Most Talented
Dear Friends:

Brooklyn College celebrated the opening of the magnificent Leonard and Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts last semester. As you can see on the cover of this magazine, the building is a beautiful new face of the college, welcoming the community through our new east gate at Hillel Plaza. The Center has dramatically transformed the campus entrance with a gorgeous edifice of open glass, space, and light.

The Tow Center is the first LEED-certified, sustainable building at the college, made with recycled materials, low water-use facilities, and highly efficient HVAC and lighting systems. It houses the Don Buchwald Theater, a glorious, double-height, acoustically sophisticated auditorium and new home stage for our exceptional theater and music departments. The Tow Center is fully ADA-accessible, and includes many state-of-the-art rehearsal and performance spaces, a set design and construction workshop, classrooms, faculty offices, and meeting spaces.

Leonard met his late wife Claire in the Boylan Hall basement lunchroom when they were students in 1949. Their experiences together on campus sparked a lifelong connection to Brooklyn College. Over the years, the Tows’ incredible generosity to their alma mater through their family foundation has supported more than 700 students and faculty through internship programs, scholarships, travel fellowships, research stipends, and awards.

Today, Leonard and his daughter Emily Tow Jackson are fully invested in the academic and strategic goals of Brooklyn College. They want to provide the means for our faculty and students to become exceptional in their fields. The Leonard and Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts is one of those means.

I remember walking through the Tow Center for the first time with Len. Rooms were filled with classes and music spilled into the halls. We got lucky and walked into a rehearsal space where the Brooklyn College Choir was practicing. The professor and students were so thrilled to meet Len in person that they broke into applause and cheered, and then treated us to an impromptu rendition of the Brooklyn College Alma Mater. Sound vibrated throughout the grand, wood paneled room. The meeting ended with students saying one after another, “Thank you, Mr. Tow.”

It is that sense of gratitude that I feel about so much that is wonderful here at Brooklyn College. I hope this edition of the magazine shares some of that wonder and appreciation with you. On a daily basis, our alumni enhance the college, providing our students and faculty with transformational learning and teaching opportunities.

Thank you all for being part of the Brooklyn College family.

Warm regards,

Michelle J. Anderson
Brooklyn College Students Help Rebuild Puerto Rico

Senior Jonathan Cabral was among the nearly 200 who traveled to the island with CUNY Service Corps to help repair homes damaged by Hurricane Maria.

BY JAMILAH SIMMONS

For two weeks last June, senior Jonathan Cabral rode in a van down a San Juan, Puerto Rico, highway five mornings a week. Viewed from the expressway, “you’d barely know anything happened,” he says, describing how parts of the island looked nearly a year after being ravaged by Hurricane Maria, the Category 4 storm that left an estimated $100 billion in damages in its wake in September 2017. “I was expecting to see disaster, but a lot of central San Juan had been cleaned up.”

But then his van made a right turn into the Playita barrio. “It was another world when you entered Playita,” says the television and radio major. “Some houses were completely destroyed. Most of them didn’t have roofs. It was just a mess.”

Conditions like those are exactly what attracted Cabral and 39 fellow students to sign up to help the island—where hundreds of residents remained without power—through CUNY Service Corps, a five-year-old program that places CUNY students in paid work experiences, usually in local community-based organizations and government agencies, with the goal of improving the civic, economic, and environmental sustainability of New York City.

This year, however, Service Corps administrators decided to heed the call of Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s “NY Stands with Puerto Rico” initiative and sent 195 CUNY students—15 of them from Brooklyn College—to the island in trips staggered throughout the summer, where they spent two weeks mostly building and repairing roofs.

Under the supervision of a professional construction crew, the students learned to work with drills and hammers in the service of ripping up and repairing badly damaged corrugated-steel roofs.

Cabral says he’ll never forget the sprightly and funny older Dominican woman who had immigrated to the island and told stories of her life adventures, or the local veteran who cooked rice and peas, turkey, and fried pork for the group—“the best I ate while I was there,” says Cabral.

As a Spanish-speaking student, Cabral often served as an interpreter and enjoyed many opportunities to simply sit and chat with residents. “It felt good getting to know the people we were helping,” he says. “It started to feel personal.”
Have You Heard?

Notable news about Brooklyn College alumni, faculty, and students

Dr. Armin Tehrany ’91, founder of Manhattan Orthopedic Care, was sworn in as an Honorary NYPD Surgeon.

Dr. Bernard Tandler ’35 was selected as Top Science Educator of the Year by the International Association of Top Professionals.

Chemistry Professor Brian Gibney was named a fellow of the American Chemistry Society for his outstanding achievements in and contributions to science.

Graduate student Avi Cummings and Ellen Adams ’13 were both named 2018 Emerging Writers Retreat fellows by the Lambda Literary Foundation.

Mushfica Masud, a graduate of Brooklyn College’s Film Production B.A. program and a third-year M.F.A. Cinema Arts student at Feirstein, is one of 10 students to be awarded $10,000, as part of Nikon’s first annual Storytellers scholarship program.

English Professor Rosamond King, author and poet, has been tapped to become the next director of the Ethylle R. Wolfe Institute for Humanities.

What Alumni Mentorship Means for Student Success

Renée Blumenfrucht ’15 was prepared to give up on securing a dream job—until Leonardo Rizzi ’93 and the Brooklyn College Magner Career Center intervened.

By Robert Jones Jr.

During her senior year at Brooklyn College, Renée Blumenfrucht ’15 went on an interview at Goldman Sachs to apply for an internship. Imagine her surprise when she was instead offered a full-time position set to begin right after she graduated. She believes she was able to impress the employer because of advice she received from one person in particular: Leonardo Rizzi ’93.

“I was incredibly instrumental and encouraged me to apply to Goldman, and I got the position I applied for,” says Blumenfrucht, who received her bachelor of science in actuarial science and financial mathematics and is currently a senior analyst at Goldman. “I often tell Brooklyn College students that while it’s helpful to know someone in order to get your foot in the door, once your foot is in the door, it’s up to you to keep it there.”

Blumenfrucht says that she had initially given up on Goldman after she twice applied for internships at the company but the opportunity never materialized. “Then, Natalia Gustao-Klein, director of the Brooklyn College Magner Career Center, sent out an e-mail to students informing them of a chance to meet with alumni who worked at Goldman.”

“Natalia is amazing and one of Brooklyn College’s most valuable resources,” says Blumenfrucht. “She helped me to secure many interviews across various firms, as well as mentorship opportunities, and connected me with Marge Magner ’59, who helped me determine which firms I should seek positions with.”

“From the minute I met her, I knew she had what it takes to succeed. She only had to focus on being more confident,” Rizzi says of Blumenfrucht, adding that Brooklyn College students are among the smartest and most determined he has ever come across.

A former vice president at Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, and now a vice president at The Clearing House, Rizzi sees his own success as a blessing and believes it is part of his responsibility to pass that blessing on. He does so through mentoring and also by participating on panels and in workshops organized by the Magner Career Center. And his connection to Brooklyn College students and other alumni is not fleeting, as exemplified by the fact that he still mentors and advises Blumenfrucht to this day.

“I grew up in a blue-collar, immigrant neighborhood, where most young people didn’t have access to the people who worked at the Goldman Sachses and Morgan Stanleys of the world,” says Rizzi, the first person in his family to receive a college degree—a bachelor of science in business management and finance. “For me, there was no grand plan like, ‘I’m going to go to college: this is what I’m going to do and this is my dream.’ It was more like, you can go to college after high school or you go to work—just don’t go to jail.”

For Rizzi, success means improving processes at the organizations he works for and having a positive impact on the lives and careers of the people he comes in contact with. He says he focuses on standing out in two specific ways.

“First, in any situation, I won’t be outworked. And when it comes to dealing with difficult circumstances, being direct while being smart is one of the keys to success. It’s also about being direct while being smart,” says Rizzi.

“I hope other Brooklyn College students are not intimidated by things that may seem insurmountable, but seek opportunities to achieve their goals in life.”

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New Field School Transforms Manhattan’s Lower East Side into a Classroom
For one month last summer, students crossed the East River to study the effects of climate change, gentrification, and a shifting population in the storied lower Manhattan neighborhood.

BY AUDREY PETERSON

It’s mid-June and a lively discussion is in progress among Brooklyn College undergraduate students at CUNY’s Center for Worker Education at 25 Broadway. The subject is gated communities and their effects on an increasingly polarized American public. But instead of focusing on suburban enclaves far outside New York City limits, the students are talking about recently gated co-ops on Manhattan’s Lower East Side.

After dissecting the concepts of urban fear, security, class division, and gentrification, Anthropology Professors Naomi Schiller and Kelly Britt walk the class more than two miles to the Masaryk Towers. A subsidized middle-income housing complex, the towers have just had new gates installed, cutting off a shortcut through the complex that was particularly helpful to the residents of the Bernard M. Baruch and Masaryk Towers.

The classroom discussion is now playing out in living color, as a guard asks the students for proof that they have legal access to the property. “It’s OK, I live here,” says one of the students, flashing her ID. “These people are my guests.”

For Schiller and Britt, the summer course, called The Urban Anthropology Project, was a bit of an experiment. This type of cultural anthropology and archaeology field school had never before been taught at Brooklyn College. “The neighborhood is in the midst of a major new wave of gentrification and waterfront development,” said Schiller in June. “We’re asking the students to explore how class, race, gender, and migration status intersect to shape the ways that residents approach the contemporary threat of extreme weather and rising sea levels.”

Walking tours were just one of the ways Schiller and Britt helped their students explore the history and the ongoing struggle for space and survival on the Lower East Side. The professors also scheduled films, museum visits, trips to observe community board meetings, visits from experts, interviews with local residents, and archaeological artifact analysis.

“What’s different is that we’re teaching archaeologists and ethnographers in the same course. That’s not been done here before,” said Britt during the project.

“We are aiming to give future anthropologists the tools to approach the field in a more ethical, holistic manner than is traditionally taught in many anthropology departments,” Schiller added.

Angela Lavali ’18 Overcomes the Odds to Become a National Institutes of Health Fellow
A civil war in her native Sierra Leone all but derailed Angela Lavali’s career in medicine, Brooklyn College’s Pre-health Professions program helped her stay the course.

BY ERNESTO MORA

Angela Musu Lavali ’18 thought about giving up her study of medicine after the death of her father, James K. Lavali, a schoolteacher. That was in 2013, less than a year after she had emigrated from her native Sierra Leone to reunite with her parents in Queens. She later had a change of heart and now plans to pursue medicine after she completes a yearlong fellowship at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Lavali was one of 25 students chosen to become a fellow at a February 2018 conference organized by the NIH.

Lavali’s uncertainties about her education were heightened by events unfolding in her homeland. An 11-year civil war left 50,000 dead and thousands more uprooted. Her father immigrated to Queens and her mother stayed behind until 2004. The couple were finally able to bring their only child to the United States in 2012.

Until then, Lavali lived in the midst of the civil war and its aftermath. Militias marauded throughout the tiny West African nation, forcing schools to close mid-year and displacing families from their homes. In the process, Lavali’s family lost what little property they owned; food scarcity and lack of jobs were among the many problems they and other Sierra Leoneans had to confront.

Despite the social and emotional turmoil, Lavali finished high school at 16 and decided to attend college to prepare for medical school in Sierra Leone. After five years, a lucky legal break allowed her to join her parents in the United States.

“I knew that after five years at the College of Medicine and Applied Health Services, University of Sierra Leone, I had a good foundation,” she says.

Starting anew at Brooklyn College as part of the Pre-health Professions program under Director Steven Silbering was a blessing.

“Professor Silbering encouraged me to participate in internships and apply for scholarships, and his staff helped me with my résumé and mock interviews. They keep track of each student’s development,” Lavali says.

In 2015, she joined Biology Professor Peter Lipke’s laboratory to work on a project to understand the role of adhesion proteins used by Candida albicans, a common pathogenic yeast, during which time she learned to prepare solid media to grow microorganisms and learned sterilization techniques to handle infectious materials.

“It was my first exposure to research using a particular model to analyze the function and structure of how the fungus invades different organisms.”

Lavali was one of several students, including her, whose academic potential was recognized by Silbering. "If you’re a top student, you’re a top student," he said.

In 2017, thanks to the Pre-health Professions program, she obtained a fellowship at Weill Cornell Medical College, where, under Dr. Simon Durham, she learned to design and fabricate coronary artery bypass grafts from a CT scan. She also shadowed three physicians in the emergency room and the cardiac care unit. Lavali continues her work at the NIH’s National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases.

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Melissa R. Sande ‘09 M.A. became the new Dean of Humanities for Union County College.

PBS NewsHour spotlighted Flossie Lewis ’45, who continues to teach professionally at the age of 94.

Theater Professor Rose Burnett Bonczek received the Oscar Brockett Award for Excellence in Teaching Theater at the Association for Theater in Higher Education’s national conference.

Brooklyn College student Wirdah Khan has been awarded the Joseph E. Mohbat Prize for Writing for a moving #MeToo essay.

Fencing legend Nikki Franke ’72 earned her 800th career win in February.

Kenneth A. Gould, dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, was awarded the 2018 Fred Buitel Distinguished Contribution Award by the American Sociological Association Section on Environment and Technology.
Early in the fall semester, at about midday, the Don Buchwald Theater in the Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts is dim, but in a corner of the stage’s back wall it looks like morning sunlight is peeking through partially opened blinds. There’s a lot of booming, clacking, and the jingling of keys as fewer than a half-dozen stagehands undertake preparations for Porto, the first student-directed production to grace this new playhouse. Matthew Deinhart, an M.F.A. student in lighting design, is on the stage hanging out by a bar that is part of the set, alternately checking a laptop and a massive blueprint. He’s plotting the lighting plan and shouting directions, such as “Right about here” and “Can I get that a little sharper?” while beams cast from the luminaires above bounce across the stage. The production manager shouts back from the catwalk, and Caitie Miller, another M.F.A. theater student, focuses lights from a cubby just off stage left.

The Buchwald Theater is intimate and state-of-the-art. There are some 150 LED lights that the students can operate within the new 225-seat, double-height concert hall, which is also fitted with eight-channel sound and acoustic wall paneling.

“For me, as a lighting designer, there are a lot of opportunities that come with the new space,” says Deinhart of the theater. “It’s a great new building and we’re still figuring out what we can do, which is exciting.”

The brand-new Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College is an ambient presence at the college’s Hillel Gate entrance, with its open plaza, glass-enclosed grand lobby, and balconies with views of the Flatbush Junction’s new pedestrian promenade, and beyond.

“It’s a very transparent building,” says Maria Ann Consoli, dean of the School of Visual, Media and Performing Arts. “Being able to see in and out of the center really connects us back to the campus and the surrounding community in an active way.”

The center is home to the Conservatory of Music and the Department of Theater. In addition to the Buchwald Theater, there is a second performance space plus numerous practice and rehearsal rooms, set design and construction workshops, a post-production studio, and class, meeting, and reception rooms. There’s a new recording studio with its own live room overlooking the concert hall with direct audio ties to all the other performance spaces in the building.

The Tow Foundation, founded by the center’s namesakes, Leonard ’50 and Claire ’52 Tow, donated $10 million to the college to create it.

“Brooklyn College is a place that surrounds its students with the tools and confidence needed to succeed. The new Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts ensures that Brooklyn College students are fully supported in their artistic endeavors, and that there is a dedicated place in which they can learn, create, and perfect their skills,” says Emily Tow Jackson, executive director and president of The Tow Foundation.

The building, which is fully ADA accessible, includes technology in the performance hall for audio and visual impairments, and is the first LEED-certified, sustainable building on the campus, incorporating low-water-use toilets, recycled materials, and highly efficient HVAC and lighting systems.
Brooklyn College President Michelle J. Anderson, Leonard Tow ’50, and Emily Tow Jackson (top left) at the ribbon cutting for the Tow Center. Students will build sets and rehearse their productions amid some of the best views on campus.
A Lifetime of Giving

It’s been almost 70 years since Claire ’52 and Leonard ’50 Tow met in the Boylan Hall basement lunchroom. Leonard was a member of the Longfellows Club, a group of six-foot or taller male Brooklyn College students. Claire hung out with the Hi Hites, an organization of women of similar tall stature. Their courtship began with a date at the highly popular (but long-since closed) Park Circle Roller Skating Rink in Midwood. They were married a few weeks after Claire’s graduation.

Leonard earned a doctorate in economics and found success in the nascent cable television industry. Claire worked as an elementary school teacher and emergency medical technician; she also co-founded Century Communications Corp. with her husband. In 1998, Brooklyn College presented the couple with the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. Claire passed away in 2014 after a 14-year battle with Lou Gehrig’s disease.

The couple were among the earliest and most active supporters of the Brooklyn College Foundation, a commitment to their alma mater that only increased after they created The Tow Foundation in 1988.

“We felt ourselves to be stewards of what it was we accomplished and accumulated, and to redistribute it, and to focus that redistribution on the venues from which it was generated,” Leonard Tow said at the Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts dedication in November. “Brooklyn College is one of those places. We are ever grateful, forever grateful.”

The Tow Foundation has supported many endeavors at Brooklyn College, including signature programs like the Tow Student and Faculty Research Travel Fellowships, Tow Professorships, and the Claire Tow Distinguished Teacher Award. Each spring, the college hosts a Tow Award luncheon in the Christoph M. Kimmich Reading Room of the Brooklyn College Library.

Their biggest gift to the college to date—and the largest the college has ever received—is the $10 million challenge grant from The Tow Foundation in 2003, which established the Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts. The gift was given on the condition that the Brooklyn College Foundation would raise an additional $15 million in private funds. The college raised more than $50 million in public and private funds, and broke ground on the new building in 2011.

In August, Leonard Tow visited the newly opened performing arts center and received a warm welcome from the students as he toured the facilities as part of an open house and celebration of a partnership between the Public Theater, Brooklyn College, and The Tow Foundation that was announced last year.

Through their foundation, the Tows have given close to $16 million to Brooklyn College, funding nearly 700 fellowships, scholarships, internships, professorships, and teaching awards. The Tow Foundation celebrates its 30th anniversary this year.

—Jamilah Simmons

The Tow Center is Brooklyn College’s first LEED-certified, sustainable building on campus.

AT BROOKLYN COLLEGE, THE TOWS HAVE FUNDED:

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Leonard and Claire Tow, 2003
Our Campus through the years

Funded with money from President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Work’s Progress Administration, and built on the former site of a Dutch farm that was also later the fairgrounds for Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, the Brooklyn College campus opened on October 18, 1937, to a crowd of some 7,000. Many of the attendees were students, eager to take classes in one of two academic buildings (today’s Boylan and Ingersoll Halls), enjoy sports and recreation in the brand-new Roosevelt Hall gymnasium—complete with swimming pool—and study at the LaGuardia Hall Library, its clock tower a focal point of the entire campus. In the days following the inauguration of the neo-Georgian style buildings, a downpour turned parts of the campus that had not been landscaped into a muddy swamp. Urgent requests from students via the school newspaper The Vanguard yielded temporary wooden sidewalks connecting the main buildings.

The school’s grounds would be transformed in the next few years with a lily pond, grace elms among a variety of trees, and a well-manicured landscape that would garner the college recognition as one of the most beautiful urban campuses in the nation.
An athletic field, student center, and two more academic buildings—Whitehead and James halls—would be added in the 1960s and 1970s, and in 1973, the Bedford Avenue Overpass was built, providing a pedestrian walkway to the Plaza Building on the West Quadrangle. A wide concrete stairway provided a favorite place for students to sit, chat, and study. The overpass and Plaza Building were torn down to make way for the West Quad Center, opened in 2009.

Brooklyn College continues to be transformed. The Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts, located at the intersection of Campus Road and Hillel Place, opened its doors in fall 2018, providing a westernmost anchor and grand entrance to the school’s 35-acre campus.

The Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts stands at the intersection of Campus Road and Hillel Place, the former location of Whitman Hall and Gershwin Theater (inset), which opened their doors in 1955.  

Tell Us Your Story

Brooklyn College alumni have some of the most interesting news to share, and we’ve made it even easier for you to share your stories with us. Please visit our new online form at brooklyn.cuny.edu/magazine/classnotes.
Professor Michael Mandel Awarded $500,000 NSF Grant

Mandel's research aims to help computers better understand sound.

BY JAMILAH SIMMONS

Professor Michael Mandel, an associate professor in the Computer Information Science Department, has just secured a five-year grant worth more than $500,000 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to analyze audio recordings from the Alaskan wilderness. This analysis will allow researchers to study the migration patterns of animals like songbirds, waterfowl, and caribou, and assess how they are affected by climate change and noises generated by human activity.

“This project is an interesting scientific application of audio processing algorithms,” says Mandel. “As part of the bigger project, it’s important to know how climate change is affecting these environments. We’re developing new tools to make that easier.”

Mandel is working with researchers at Columbia and Colorado State Universities, as well as the University of Alaska Fairbanks, in a $3.1 million collaborative project. He is developing techniques for the sound analysis, while the other scholars focus on the fieldwork, data analysis, and high-resolution modeling of environmental variables like weather.

Mandel is an expert in machine listening, which combines the fields of machine learning, signal processing, and psychoacoustics to create systems that can understand sound. He is interested in making noise less disruptive to automatic speech recognition, hearing aids, voice communication systems, and virtual assistants like Apple’s Siri. He recently received another grant from the NSF to support this work.

“Most of the time when I talk about my work, I am talking about making noise less disruptive to other technologies,” Mandel said. “But it’s important to also think about the impact of noise on wildlife.”

“Climate change will have a huge impact on the animals that live in the Arctic,” Mandel said. “This grant will allow us to study how they are affected by changes in their environment.”

The Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery Acquires Professor Patricia Cronin’s Sculpture

Memorial to a Marriage was one of 25 pieces of art selected for an annual show highlighting the gallery’s new acquisitions.

BY AUDREY PETERSON

Last spring, Brooklyn College Art Professor Patricia Cronin’s sculpture Memorial to a Marriage (2002) was chosen to be part of the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery’s 50th anniversary “Recent Acquisitions” exhibition.

Called an “icon of the marriage equality movement” by the Smithsonian, the larger-than-life-size bronze shows Cronin and her partner, artist Deborah Kass, in a loving embrace. The work was created in the style of 19th-century mortuary sculpture.

Modeled at a time when Cronin and Kass could not legally wed (they have since married, in 2011), the sculpture was intended as a commemoration of their relationship, as well as a critique of the lack of real (as opposed to allegorical) women portrayed in public sculpture, and the near total absence of public art by women in American cities.

“I used a ‘nationalist’ form—American neoclassical sculpture—to address what I saw as a federal failure,” Cronin told the Smithsonian. “I made a double-portrait funerary sculpture because the only legal protections gay people could have [at the time] were wills, healthcare proxies, and power-of-attorney documents, and those didn’t celebrate our life together but the end of it.”

“I purchased our burial plot in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx and installed it there,” said Cronin in a 2017 lecture at the Villa La Pietra/NYU in Florence, Italy. “I’m ensuring our final resting place . . . and I also ensured a permanent place for my public art. If you’re a woman and you want to make public art and have it be permanent, you should buy the land.”

A two-time recipient of the Brooklyn College Tow Professorship, which provides $25,000 to the awardee in support of exceptional new and ongoing projects, Cronin gained notoriety in 1993 for “Girls” and “Boys,” two mixed-media series of Polaroids and watercolors that showed sexual intimacy from the vantage point of the participants. Since then, she has continued to explore such themes as gay and lesbian representation, the recovery and writing of women’s history, the relationships between feminism and contemporary art, and social justice and the human condition.

Said Cronin at her Villa La Pietra lecture, “The main questions I’m interested in asking with my work are: Whose body has value? Who gets to decide? And what are the consequences to the individual and the community?”

Memorial to a Marriage is now on view until August 18, 2019 at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., in an exhibition titled “Eye to I: Self-Portraits from 1900 to Today.”
Aaron Frank Heads Molecular Research Team Seeking to Treat and Eliminate Cancer and Other Diseases

Computers are helping Frank and his collaborators study the links between the structure and function of RNAs associated with human diseases.

BY ROBERT JONES JR.

Aaron Frank ’06 and his research team, together with collaborators, are using what they know about the tiniest parts of human biology to one day develop treatments and cures for some of the most devastating illnesses known to humankind.

“My research team uses computer tools to study the link between biological function and the structural dynamics of a class of biomolecules called ribonucleic acids, or RNAs,” Frank says. “Many diseases are associated with the abnormal expression of RNAs. We hope to use insights about the link between function and RNAs’ structural dynamics to design and discover small molecules that may one day be turned into drugs to fight against neurological diseases, like Alzheimer’s disease, various forms of cancer, and infectious diseases.”

Born and raised in Grenada, Frank—who is an assistant professor of biophysics and chemistry at the University of Michigan—came to the United States in 2001 with his parents and siblings, settling in Brooklyn. He was the first person in his family to attend college in the United States and the first to earn a Ph.D.

Frank attended Brooklyn College for pragmatic reasons. “It was really close to home and it seemed like an obvious place to be,” he says. “But it was also a safe space. When you come to a new country, things are quite different. But because Brooklyn College is so diverse, you don’t really feel like an outsider. It’s interesting when you come from someplace else and you still feel at home.”

He notes that even the low tuition at the college was a financial hardship for his working-class family. Unable to afford college, Frank began working to save money. He entered Brooklyn College full-time in 2002 while continuing to work full time, taking courses around his work schedule. Wanting to find a way to focus entirely on his academics without any distractions, Frank discovered the Maximizing Access (MARC) Program at the college.

MARC is an honors program that offers mentoring, research experience, and financial support for academically gifted undergraduate students who are interested in entering graduate programs leading to research careers in the biomedical sciences. Its goal is to increase the number of minority professionals in biomedical research.

Frank says that receiving the opportunities afforded him through the program was a real privilege. “When I look back on it, I tell my wife that I feel as though I was given the chance to attend college in the way a person with greater financial means would have because of MARC. That was huge for me.”

Frank’s original plan was to attend medical school after completing his undergraduate studies, but the MARC Program—which provided him with the time to engage in research and the access to support from his mentor, Chemistry Professor Alexander Greer—was essential in spurring Frank to choose research. He notes that even the low tuition at the college was a financial hardship for his working-class family. Unable to afford college, Frank began working to save money. He entered Brooklyn College full-time in 2002 while continuing to work full time, taking courses around his work schedule. Wanting to find a way to focus entirely on his academics without any distractions, Frank discovered the Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) Program at the college.

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Repairing Cell Membrane Damage Could Go a Long Way, Estimates NIH Grant Winner Professor Amy Ikui

BY ERNESTO MORA

From July 2017 to June 2018, Brooklyn College faculty garnered more than $9 million in grants and awards for new and ongoing research, including that of Biology Professor Amy Ikui, whose new study using yeast as a model system could help determine the mechanics of the process of cell division in order to arrest the endless growth of cancer cells.

For a complete list of faculty awards, visit brooklyn.cuny.edu/mag18/facultyawards

For the last nine years in a row, Biology Professor Amy Ikui has received three grants from the National Institutes of Health totaling $2.4 million. The most recent one, a four-year grant for slightly more than $1.4 million, came after her paper on the effects of cell membrane damage during the cell cycle was released by the prestigious journal PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America). Ikui is the first Brooklyn College faculty member to publish in that journal as a corresponding author.

“Scientists have been using yeast as a model system because they can easily manipulate its genome using genetic tools in order to study a function of genes and proteins. Eukaryotes are organisms whose cells—unlike those of bacteria and archaea—have a nucleus enclosed by a membrane that protects the organelles governing its reproductive cycle. A graduate of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Ikui completed a five-year postdoctoral training program at Rockefeller University before joining Brooklyn College in 2007. Because cancer cells have lost the ability to control cell division, they cannot stop dividing, explains Ikui, whose doctoral dissertation focused on cancer biology and on how Taxol, a derivative of the Pacific yew tree first isolated in 1971, assists in healing. Her new study could help determine the mechanics of the process of cell division in order to arrest the endless growth of cancer cells.

According to her, most scientists have focused on how DNA damage to the cells arrests the normal cell cycle—the process of cell division known as mitosis where multicellular species grow their cells by first duplicating a cell’s DNA before dividing into two daughter cells.

Inspired by Harvard University researchers who are studying how damage to the cell membrane caused by a laser might stop cancerous cell division, Ikui decided to try a new approach. “No one has studied whether damage to the cell membrane can also arrest the cell cycle,” which is important, Ikui says, given that the membrane is the layer protecting all cells and has many receptors and ports to get signals from the outside world and communicate with other cells.

“The grant is to study how cell membrane damage can send a signal for cells to take notice, stop reproducing until they heal in order to survive,” she says, adding that the Harvard team is now collaborating with her. “If we can determine what factors, which proteins are at work to assist in stopping the cell division, it will be a big step.”

A biology/philosophy major in the Coordinated B.A.-M.D. Program and Honors Academy, an Arthur Ashe scholar-athlete and captain of the men’s cross-country track team, a highly awarded member of the Speech and Debate team, and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Dr. Arvind Badhey ’11 credits the example of his parents who came to the United States to practice medicine. They both best men, at Brooklyn College. What brought you to Brooklyn College?

By AUDREY PETERSON

Dr. Arvind Badhey (center) on his wedding day in 2017 with best men and fellow Brooklyn College alumni Fa’iz Bayo-Awayemi ’11 (left) and Bryan Flores ’11.

Do you have any words of wisdom for B.A.-M.D. majors, particularly those who would like to go into your field? Make connections in your field early on. This is so important. At first believed as a college student and medical student that networking and making connections would be an impossible task—I’m still not great at it. But I will say that being motivated and willing to reach out to people for advice and guidance is a great skill to develop.

That said, do what you love. If that means athletics, or acting, or traveling the world, do it. It is so important to understand that while medicine may be your future career, it will be your life experience that allows you to relate to your patients.
Diversity and Inclusion Celebrated at Brooklyn College’s 93rd Commencement Ceremony

The event, which drew politicians from across the city, highlighted student success with hopeful messages from alumni and friends of the college.

BY ROBERT JONES JR.

“We know that our diversity is our strength and enhances the academic experience for all,” said Brooklyn College President Michelle J. Anderson at the 2018 Commencement Ceremony, held at Barclays Center in Downtown Brooklyn. “Studying at Brooklyn College provides our students with the opportunity to engage with difference and complexity, which makes them more interculturally competent and willing to assume challenging positions of leadership in the service of others.”

Disability rights activist Judith Heumann gave the keynote address and accepted an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. Known as the “mother of the independent living disability rights movement,” Heumann’s work has had a significant impact on the implementation of legislation and policies that benefit and protect people with disabilities.

“Without ever planning to, my parents, who had come from Germany and had lost so many family members in the Holocaust, taught me the value of advocacy,” Heumann said. “They taught me that if a situation feels wrong, it probably is wrong. They taught me about the need to join with allies to speak up and, especially, to speak up for equality and rights in the face of discrimination and injustice. Eventually, the time came when I needed to become my own advocate. Some of you would say, ‘Stand up on your own.’ I would say, ‘Sit up in my own wheelchair.’”

The valedictorian of the Class of 2018, William E. Macaulay Honors College Scholar and English education major Margaret Iuni, inspired the audience by sharing a hopeful philosophy and challenging the audience to reach for the highest of common goals.

“We are more likely to believe that our individual success is determined by our own hard work than citizens of nearly any other country in the world,” she said. “The narrative of individual achievement without the assistance of others is a fiction that persists in American culture. We cannot and will not succeed without one another.”

CLASS OF 2018 STATS

85
Number of languages spoken

3,035
Number of baccalaureate degrees

1,029
Number of master’s degrees

37
Number of veterans

88
Number of students who identify as disabled

4,131
Total number of graduates

Ethel Lagareen Hagquist ’32

One-hundred-and-six-year-old Ethel Lagareen Hagquist ’32, the sole surviving member of Brooklyn College’s inaugural graduating class, filmed an inspirational message for the Class of 2018, offering good wishes for the future.

“I graduated in 1932, at the height of the Great Depression. I graduated cum laude. When I entered the workforce, I received as my first salary—$1 per week! You heard correctly—per week! I just want to say as a member of the very first graduating class of Brooklyn College, I wish all of you the very best. I know things will be much easier for you than they were for us in those days. And I thank you for letting me talk to you.”

“This institution has always provided a quality education and the opportunity to a diverse group of students to excel...”

Evan Silverstein ’76
Chair, Brooklyn College Foundation Board of Trustees
For Bulldogs’ Freshman Star Ezri Shor, Brooklyn College Is a Family Affair and a Destiny Fulfilled
BY ALEX LANG

The Brooklyn College women’s volleyball team’s 2018 season has come and gone, and for the third time, the CUNY Athletic Conference has awarded the Bulldogs’ freshman setter, Ezri Shor, the league’s Rookie of the Week award.

That’s impressive, and if you take a look at her statistics, and the squad’s 9–3 record to begin the season, it is obvious that her early-season achievements are well deserved.

One might even comment that the team is lucky to add such a talented freshman to their roster.

When you get to talking to Ezri Shor and her family, you realize that luck has nothing to do with her talent as a volleyball player—or her being at Brooklyn College.

“The joke with all my friends is that I was born as a volleyball player—or her being at Brooklyn College,” says Shor, who, as it happens, didn’t really have much to do with the family’s decision to send Ezri to Brooklyn College.

“Brooklyn College has been everything to me, and therefore it seems only natural for my children to go to school there as well,” she says.

Irina Shor, Ezri’s mom, not only earned her degree from Brooklyn, but got a work-study job, and has been employed at the college ever since, making her way up to her current position with the Office of Information Technology Services as a business systems coordinator/ITAS support manager, client services/analytics, and developer.

She speaks of the college with great affection. “Brooklyn College has been everything to me, and therefore it seems only natural for my children to go to school there as well,” she says.

Ezri’s older brother, Dayton, is a senior Honors College student at Brooklyn College, double majoring in computer science and math.

Ezri Shor’s days as a scholar athlete date back to middle school, when she began her volleyball career, earning Bay Academy’s Athlete of the Year award at the school’s graduation. She was the first female award winner in the school’s history.

As a junior at Midwood High School, Shor was part of a volleyball team that would take the Public School Athletic League city championship, the first for longtime coach Tomasina Lenzi, who retired from coaching the squad after the team’s achievement. Shor’s high school coach during her senior year was Tommy Ma, a former star volleyball player for Brooklyn College on the men’s side.

During the summer of 2017, between her junior and senior years of high school, Shor tried out for the U.S. team in the Maccabiah Games, an all-Jewish athletics competition of teams from around the world, which is held every four years in Israel. She initially was put on the team as an alternate, but after a player picked ahead of her couldn’t go on the trip, Shor was named to the team and then ended up earning a starting spot, and helped her team to a gold medal.

“Ezri is a great athlete and competitor, who tries her hardest every time she steps on the court,” says women’s volleyball head coach Matt Gotowicki. “She has limitless potential, so long as she continues with the same mindset.”

Shor is the early favorite to win the conference Rookie of the Year award this year, which has become a goal of hers. “The thought of winning the award never crossed my mind coming into the season,” she says, “but now that I’ve been named Rookie of the Week twice, I’ve made it a goal of mine to be CUNY Rookie of the Year.”

The women’s volleyball team had their most successful season in team history in 2017, winning 17 matches and earning Gotowicki the conference Coach of the Year award. While the CUNYAC Player of the Year, Sarina Roizk, departed after her senior season, the team is on target to quite possibly surpass that win total and have an even better 2018, with Shor being a big reason for the team’s continued success.

BY ALEX LANG

The 2017–2018 women’s basketball team capped off a tremendous campaign by winning the 2018 CUNYAC Championship, their first since 1980, defeating Staten Island in a rematch of the 2017 Championship Game, 59–50.

Freshman forward Chanel Jemmott was named the tournament’s Most Valuable Player, finishing the contest with 18 points, 14 rebounds, and 2 blocked shots. Senior all-conference point guard Karen Mak and freshman shooting guard Taylor George were also named to the all-tournament team. George was the CUNYAC’s regular-season Rookie of the Year award winner as well, while Mak and forward Alexandra Moogan were named to the All-Star Team. Head Coach Alex Lang was awarded with both the CUNYAC and Metropolitan Sports Writers Coach of the Year awards. The Bulldogs earned an NCAA Tournament berth as well, but lost in the first round to Cabrini, 65–52.

Coach Lang and the Bulldogs have much of their nucleus together and expect to make another run in the 2018–2019 season.

In October, the Brooklyn College women’s tennis team captured the CUNYAC Championship for the first time in the program’s history, defeating Hunter College, 5–1, in the conference tournament final at the USTA Billie Jean King U.S. National Tennis Center. With the victory, the Bulldogs receive an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament in May 2019. The Bulldogs improved to 15–2 with the victory, while Hunter ended the season with a 9–4 mark as the conference runners-up.
Moved recently or changed addresses?
Please be sure to update your current mailing list information with the Office of Alumni Engagement so you can continue to receive information from Brooklyn College.

Visit brooklyn.cuny.edu/mag/contact, e-mail alumni@brooklyn.cuny.edu, or call 718.951.5065

Dear Alumni,
It is always a pleasure to connect with members of the Brooklyn College family. As I attended our Commencement Ceremony last May, where more than 4,100 members of the Class of 2018 celebrated this incredibly significant milestone, I thought about the numerous ways our graduates have made a meaningful impact in the wider world, in virtually every industry.

Watching the sea of gold gowns donned by the 50th-anniversary class as they entered Barclays Center, giving high fives to the graduating students and warmly welcoming them to our community, I was reminded of the camaraderie and fellowship that typifies the spirit at Brooklyn College.

Last summer, we hosted a 10-year-reunion bowling night in Times Square, organized by the Brooklyn College Alumni Association (BCAA) with the support of the Brooklyn College Office of Alumni Affairs. Our alumni not only work hard, they also play hard, and moments like these remind me that the Brooklyn College family is just that—a family.

As alumni, you have used your achievements and experiences to make a measurable difference. We want to support you as we also tout your accomplishments. The BCAA is here to help you maintain a lifelong connection to our alma mater. So stay connected, whether it’s through attending alumni get-togethers, following us on social media, or joining a local chapter. You can also visit the Office of Alumni Engagement at 1239 Ingersoll Hall or check out our website to learn about the benefits available to you as alumni. As well, keep up to date on the latest college news, or read a story about an old classmate.

The generosity of the college’s alumni plays a crucial role in providing the awards, internships, scholarships, and mentorship that enhance and enrich the opportunities for today’s students. I invite you to continue the tradition of giving time, talent, and resources, and participate by becoming active members of the college’s alumni community. I thank you for the many ways in which you already contribute to the vibrancy of our alma mater.

Warmest,

Ella Friedman Weiss ’62, ’65 M.S.Ed.
President, Brooklyn College Alumni Association
LUBIN HUNTER was part of a delegation of Shoshone Indians who were engaged during the preliminary ceremonies before the U.S. Open golf tournament. This recognition brought to light Hunter’s achievements, which included service in World War II as a pilot in the Pacific and pioneering work on behalf of Native American rights.

1947
Reva Frumkin Biers
Class Correspondent
4831 Ellativa Avenue
Tarzana, CA 91356-4931
reverbiers90@gmail.com

DR. MURIEL GERHARD released Teach Them All to Think (Page Publishing, 2017), a book aimed at educators. In the introduction, she writes, “We can teach for thinking! We can improve our pupils’ cognitive skills, be it decision-making, creativity, analysis, problem solving, inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as concept development.”

1948
Eneas Newman Sloan
Class Correspondent
720-30 Grand Central Parkway
Apt. 8G
Floral Park, NY 11005-1209

1949
William D. Isaacson
Class Correspondent
269-10 Grand Central Parkway
Apt. ’BY’
Floral Park, NY 11005-1018
wsvydv@yahoo.com

1950
HELENE NATHAN GUTMANN is the donor of the Priscilla Frew Pullister Award for a biology major. The award supports a summer stipend for the student to do research under the mentorship of a Biology Department faculty member. Several prior awardees have gone on to continue in graduate school.

1951
SYDLER GASSICK ROSENBERG’s book H is for Hakus: A Treasury of Hakus from A to Z (Penney Candy Books, 2018) was published posthumously by her daughter, Amy Losak.

1952
FRANCINE LIFTON KLAGSBRUN is the author of the biography Lioness: Golda Meir and the Nation of Israel (Scholastic, 2017).

1953
Ben Suntag
Class Correspondent
1311 Franklin Lane
Rockaway, NJ 07866-5814
gatuniz@gmail.com

1954
Marlene (Morris) Jacoby Hillsman
Class Correspondent
255 West 94th St., Apt. 6QQ
New York, NY 10025-6856

1955
DANIEL GINSBERG currently serves on six boards of directors of social service agencies, among them Jewish Family Services of Northwestern Pennsylvania, United Cerebral Palsy of Northwestern Pennsylvania, and United Neighborhood Centers.

1956

1957
Eva Weiss Hubschman
Class Correspondent
12-10 Grand Central Parkway
Apt. 1101
1650 West Glendale Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85021-5757

1958
PHILIP ZIMBARDO travels the world giving lectures that focus on the transformation of research on the psychology of evil into the psychology of everyday heroism. He is now the president of the Heroic Imagination Project.

1959
Geraldine Miller Markowitz
Class Correspondent
1500 Palisade Avenue, #26C
Fort Lee, NJ 07024
geraldinejm11rr@gmail.com

1960
Saul Kravitz
Class Correspondent
38 Troy Hills Road
Whippenny, NJ 08733-1305

1961
David S. Herskovitz
Class Correspondent
175 Kildeer Court
Encinitas, CA 92024-1278
davidsh@ibcglobal.com

1962
Paul Ginsberg Silver
Class Correspondent
217 E. Maple Avenue
Moorpark, CA 93021-2011
mginsberg10@gmail.com

1963
Elienor (Ellie) Klagsbrun
Class Correspondent
1175 Kildeer Court
Encinitas, CA 92024-1278
davidsh@ibcglobal.com

1964
“[My son says I should write a memoir],” says Leo Kossosky ’59. His tone is warm but ambivalent about the idea. He sounds like a man who prefers to look ahead to new achievements rather than back at previous ones.

Supporting this is the knowledge that he has been involved in baseball for his entire life and is an inductee of the American Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. He was an assistant coach for both the Brooklyn College and the Italian National teams.

1965
CAROL ZIMMERMAN BRODY was recently honored with an award for her painting Party Pappers, Ribbons and Red Confetti, which was exhibited in the Missouri Watercolor Society’s 2018 International Exhibition in Qingdao, China.

1966
JOEL KLEIN has retired after 52 years in the field of education. He has since been involved in various humanitarian efforts. One highlight was a trip to Vietnam in April 2014 to the Spring Valley Rotary, donating funds, time, and materials (school supplies, bicycles, wheelchairs, etc.) to several orphanages and schools.

1967
ELSIE KRAUSS
Class Correspondent
Stony Brook, NY 11790-2507

1968
ELLIS KRAUSS was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun Gold Rays and Neck Ribbons by the Japanese government for his decades of devoted study and education on Japanese society and government.

1969
He has promoted academic exchange between Japan and the United States for more than 45 years.

1970
BARBARA Berman Leveenate
Class Correspondent
24 Jubilee Circle
Aberdeen, NJ 07747-1807

SANDY GOLD will be traveling to St. George, Utah, in October to participate in the Huntsman World Senior Games cycling events.

1971
DON LANDOLPHI was named interim chairman of the New York City Housing Authority. He has been involved in baseball for his entire life and is an inductee of the American Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. He was an assistant coach for both the Brooklyn College and the Italian National teams.

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1973
Micki Goldberg Ginsberg
Class Correspondent
Moorestown, NJ 08057-2011
mginsberg10@gmail.com

1974
HEINZ KLEIN
Class Correspondent
16 32nd Street
Fort Lee, NJ 07024-6856

1975
HANS KLEIN
Class Correspondent
16 32nd Street
Fort Lee, NJ 07024-6856

1976
MAXINE SILVER KATZ ’64, DON LANDOLPHI is spearheading the development and popularization of blind baseball, a sport involving no pitchers and catchers, but rather a ball and bases containing audio signals. The sport was developed in Italy, where Landolphi learned of it, and it has taken hold in Columbia County, New York. Landolphi has since been involved in various humanitarian efforts. One highlight was a trip to Vietnam in April 2014 to the Spring Valley Rotary, donating funds, time, and materials (school supplies, bicycles, wheelchairs, etc.) to several orphanages and schools.

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Ellie Klagsbrun
Class Correspondent
1175 Kildeer Court
Encinitas, CA 92024-1278
davidsh@ibcglobal.com

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BARBARA Berman Leveenate
Class Correspondent
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Aberdeen, NJ 07747-1807

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HANS KLEIN
Class Correspondent
16 32nd Street
Fort Lee, NJ 07024-6856

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MAXINE SILVER KATZ ’64, DON LANDOLPHI is spearheading the development and popularization of blind baseball, a sport involving no pitchers and catchers, but rather a ball and bases containing audio signals. The sport was developed in Italy, where Landolphi learned of it, and it has taken hold in Columbia County, New York. Landolphi has since been involved in various humanitarian efforts. One highlight was a trip to Vietnam in April 2014 to the Spring Valley Rotary, donating funds, time, and materials (school supplies, bicycles, wheelchairs, etc.) to several orphanages and schools.

1984
ELLIS KRAUSS was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun Gold Rays and Neck Ribbons by the Japanese government for his decades of devoted study and education on Japanese society and government.

1985
He has promoted academic exchange between Japan and the United States for more than 45 years.

1986
BARBARA Berman Leveenate
Class Correspondent
24 Jubilee Circle
Aberdeen, NJ 07747-1807

SANDY GOLD will be traveling to St. George, Utah, in October to participate in the Huntsman World Senior Games cycling events.

1987
DON LANDOLPHI was named interim chairman of the New York City Housing Authority. He has been involved in baseball for his entire life and is an inductee of the American Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. He was an assistant coach for both the Brooklyn College and the Italian National teams.

1988
CAROL ZIMMERMAN BRODY was recently honored with an award for her painting Party Pappers, Ribbons and Red Confetti, which was exhibited in the Missouri Watercolor Society’s 2018 International Exhibition in Qingdao, China.

1989
He has promoted academic exchange between Japan and the United States for more than 45 years.
George Plafker '49

Anyone who considers geology and seismology to be dry and purely academic subjects is not familiar with the work of George Plafker. His research on what is literally a groundbreaking topic has won him honors and accolades throughout his storied career. He was awarded the 2017 Harry Fielding Reid Medal by the Seismological Society of America. It’s the highest distinction for scientists in this discipline.

Plafker’s study of the 1964 Alaskan earthquake has reshaped the field. His research on the causes of the quake, plate slips at convergent boundaries, established the concept of plate tectonics. After applying those concepts to the Chilean earthquake of 1960—the largest in history, at 9.5 on the Richter scale—he worked became the gold standard. His research and writings on massive earthquakes and tsunamis have altered the way in which researchers understand the potential of these devastating events today.

After Plafker received a bachelor of science degree at Brooklyn College in 1949, he went on to earn a master’s degree in geology at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1956 and a doctorate at Stanford University in 1972. He has worked hard to enable students at Brooklyn College to follow in his large footsteps by endowing the Plafker Family Scholarship. Created in 2010, the scholarship goes to a Brooklyn College student majoring in earth and environmental sciences with a minimum GPA of 3.5, and may be renewable provided the recipient continues to meet the criteria.—Martin Johnson
published articles in the Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research and The Journal of Teacher Action Research.

GINO DINNOVER: a real name? I'm not sure.

JPA I was the stage at the Great Plains Theatre Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. Another new play by Dilorio, Cris, was given its world premiere at Playhouse in the Square in Memphis, Tennessee. Post-CAK CYPHERS WRIGHT published Blue Lyre (Dos Madres Press, 2018).

1989

LAUREN KORN POPKOFF Class Correspondent 951 Woodlawn Drive

Baldwin Harbor, NY 11510-5023

1990

BETH DEBRA KALLMAN WERNER Class Correspondent 105 Sussex Road

Middletown, CT 06457-7156

1991

TAMI SHEHERI Class Correspondent 140 Caldwell Plaza West, #4E

Brooklyn, NY 11201

tsheher@yahoo.com

1992

CONNIE TANG published Feared Living: 8 Life-Changing Values for Breakthrough Success (Clavercoft, 2017), a book about her experiences as an immigrant in New York City and the keys to her professional success.

1993

SARAH BATTAGLIA Class Correspondent P.O. Box 882

Miller Place, NY 11764

millerplace@yahoo.com


1994

ILENE BERKOWITZ Class Correspondent 577-46th Street

Brooklyn, NY 11219-2726

TIMOTHY GERKEN is an associate professor of humanities at SUNY Morrisville, and is the first recipient of the SUNY Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) Award for Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice.

TIMOTHY LYNCH has been named senior vice president of Queensborough Community College. Previously, Lynch served as provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at both QCC and SUNY Maritime College.

1995

NATHAN SOFAF Class Correspondent 2793 Lee Place

Belmar, NJ 07719-5003

1996

DIANA ABRAMOWITZ ROSENBERG Class Correspondent Rosenberg & Rosenberg LLP

5 Penn Plaza, 19th Floor

New York, NY 10001

dr@rosenbergrosenberg.com

OMAR LIZARDO is the LeRoy Newman Tern Chair Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. This appointment follows a 12-year stint in the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame.

1997

STEVEN JUSKOWICZ Class Correspondent 1485 East 33rd Street

Brooklyn, NY 11343-4304

sluskowitz@gmail.com

1998

ANGELA KALLMAN WERNER

Class Correspondent

951 Woodlawn Drive

Baldwin Harbor, NY 11510-5023

CLASS CORRESPONDENT

TIMOTHY LYNCH

951 Woodlawn Drive

Baldwin Harbor, NY 11510-5023

TIMOTHY GERKEN

951 Woodlawn Drive

Baldwin Harbor, NY 11510-5023

Have some news to share? Contact your class correspondent, or visit brooklyn.cuny.edu/mag/classnotes and tell us what’s new with you.

2015

MEGHAN RICHARDS Class Correspondent

richards.meghan@gmail.com

MOLLY DEKTAR will release her novel (The Ash Family (Simon and Schuster)) in early 2019.

JOSE SONERA is making off-Broadway debut with his one-man show Prinze, a new play based on the life of the late comedian Freddie Prinze Sr., the pioneering Latino actor. It will be featured on PBS’s new network ALL ARTS in 2019.

2016

WILLIAM HOLLEY, assistant men’s basketball coach at Brooklyn College, is pursuing a doctorate of education from East Tennessee State University in Global Sport Leadership.

SHIRL GANTT JEAN is coordinator of the Pathways for Expecting and Parenting Students (PEPS) program at Borough of Manhattan Community College.

SARAH VALENTINI works as the interactive assistant at Broadway Across America, where she manages social strategy and execution for the national tour of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Cinderella and Irving Berlin’s White Christmas.

2017

R.O. KWON is the LeRoy Newman Tern Chair Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. This appointment follows a 12-year stint in the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame.

2018

GLOTTONI, a writer for The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, was recently nominated for her third Emmy award for writing. She also performs regularly at UCB Theatre with Alfredo: Late Show Writers Improv and is co-host of the monthly sketch open mic Liquid Courage.

2019

JENNIFER LYNN BELL is an associate professor of theater at California State University, Sacramento. She just understudied the role of Margaret d’Anjou in The War of the Roses (the Henry VI Parts 1,2,3 and Richard III tetralogy), and directed the critically acclaimed production of The Crucible for Pacific Spindrift Players’ 2019 season.

2020

JOANNA CANTOR published the novel Alternative Remedies for Loss (Bloomsbury, 2018), a Best Books of the Month selection at Amazon. KATE SIDLEY, a writer for The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, was recently nominated for her third Emmy award for writing. She also performs regularly at UCB Theatre with Alfredo: Late Show Writers Improv and is co-host of the monthly sketch open mic Liquid Courage.
1. Brooklyn College alumnus and presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders (I-VT) speaks at a rally on campus on March 2.
2. Director of Choruses, Coordinator of Voice Studies, and Assistant Professor Malcolm J. Merriweather conducts a concert in May.
4. Politicians, students, administrators, and Brooklyn College neighbors celebrate at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Hillel Place Pedestrian Plaza.
5. Cannibals, written by M.F.A. students Heather Dundas and directed by Chris McCrory, was part of the college’s One Act Festival, showcasing the works of graduate students in the Department of Theater.
6. At the 2018 Diversity Awareness Fair and Culture Fest, students from the Mexican Heritage Student Association demonstrate classic Mexican dances.
7. At the Puerto Rican Day Parade, the Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies supported Virginia Sánchez Korrol—professor emerita, prominent historian, and former Chair of Puerto Rican and Latino studies—who was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by parade officials.
9. Award-winning poet Sonia Sanchez and Director of the Shirley Chisholm Project for Brooklyn Women’s Activism Zinga Fraser pose with members of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority on Shirley Chisholm Day after a keynote dialogue between Sanchez and Fraser about Chisholm’s legacy.
10. President Michelle J. Anderson meets with some of the new faculty joining Brooklyn College in fall 2018, at a reception in the Student Center on August 22.
11. The Department of Theater pays tribute to its partnership with the Public Theater and The Tow Foundation with an open house at the new Leonard & Claire Tow Center for the Performing Arts.
12. President Andersson, Vice President for Student Affairs Ron Jackson, and Buster the Bulldog share the big chair with students at the Involvement Fair.
The Lancet.

Another major contribution of Al to the Merck scientific community was his mentoring of young biochemists who became important scientists under his guidance," Vagello told the British medical journal The Lancet. "He loved science and he brought optimism and excitement to his colleagues for many—" M J

Fred Bass '49

Fred Bass passed away in January 2018 at his home in Manhattan; he was 89. As owner of the iconic Strand bookstores in New York City, Bass was one of the most influential figures on the New York City literary scene. Bass was born in Manhattan in 1928, the year his father, Benjamin, a Lithuanian immigrant, opened the Strand on Fourth Avenue between 106th and 107th Streets in what was a bookshop's rim of small shops. Fred Bass was an important figure in the history of the Strand Bookstore in New York City, and he was recognized with several honors. He passed away from complications from kidney disease at his home in southwest Portland. Vera Katz '55

Vera Katz, a legendary figure in Oregon politics, passed away from cancer on November 12, 2017, at her home in southwest Portland. She was 84. She began her political career staffing a volunteer office for Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign. Four years later, she won her first election to the Oregon Legislature. She was ahead of the curve in advocating for gun control and equal rights for women, the LGBTQ+ community, and migrants. Katz also spearheaded an overhaul of Oregon's education system. She ascended to the role of speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, one of only two women in America at the time to hold such a post. She served as mayor of Portland from 1993 to 2005 and led the city to become one of the most environment-friendly and livable cities in the United States.

Katz was born Vera Portrat to Russian parents in Düsseldorf, Germany. Her parents had emigrated to America just after the Bolsheviks, and Germany during the rise of Hitler. She attended Julia Richman High School in Manhattan and Brooklyn College, where she earned a bachelor's degree in political science in 1953 and did graduate work in sociology. She also studied dance with renowned modern dancer and choreographer Martha Graham. Katz is survived by her son, journalist Jesse Katz; grandson, Max Katz; sister, Zena Linden; and former husband, artist Mildred. Katz; grandson, Max Katz; sister, Zena Linden; and former husband, artist Mildred.

Randy Weston

Randy Weston, who received an Honorary Doctorate in Music in 2006, passed away on September 1 in his home at Brooklyn. He was 92. Weston was a profoundly influential jazz musician, composer, and educator. "Randy Weston was a profoundly influential figure in the history of jazz," said Susan Slotnick, a jazz historian. She also spearheaded an overhaul of Oregon's education system. She ascended to the role of speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, one of only two women in America at the time to hold such a post. She served as mayor of Portland from 1993 to 2005 and led the city to become one of the most environment-friendly and livable cities in the United States.

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On November 27, 2018, Brooklyn College and the nation celebrated Shirley Chisholm Day, marking the 50th anniversary of Chisholm's historic election to the U.S. Congress. The Shirley Chisholm Project on Brooklyn Women’s Activism and its director, Zinga A. Fraser, held a daylong symposium on campus featuring a dialogue with activist and the Academy of American Poets’ Wallace Stevens Lifetime Achievement Award–winning poet Sonia Sanchez, as well as other prominent black, female political scholars.

Chisholm—who graduated from Brooklyn College in 1946 with a bachelor’s degree in sociology and anthropology—united women, the working class, and racial minorities in a diverse coalition of voters with her “Catalyst for Change” and “Unbought and Unbossed” campaigns in 1968. As a national figure, she fought against the massive war spending in Vietnam in the face of significant poverty in the United States; supported the Equal Rights Amendment, enlisting more women into positions of political power; publicly funded daycare, parental leave, and civil rights and political autonomy for black people; and petitioned for voting rights for all and women’s reproductive freedom. Further, she was deeply concerned with issues of hunger, lending her influence to the expansion of food stamps and acting as a principal architect of the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program.

In 2015, Chisholm was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor, by President Barack Obama. In 2018, it was announced that a 407-acre park along Jamaica Bay would be dedicated to Chisholm, with the park’s amphitheater to be named after her. The first phase of the space is set to open in the summer of 2019. In 2020, a monument will be erected in Brooklyn’s Prospect Park to commemorate Chisholm’s legacy. To learn how to support the Shirley Chisholm Project on Brooklyn Women’s Activism, visit its website: brooklyn.cuny.edu/mag18/shirleychisholm.

—Robert Jones Jr.

Did you attend the college when Shirley Chisholm was a student? Were you politically active as a student, taking part in student government or other civic activities? We’d love to hear about your experiences! E-mail us at magazine@brooklyn.cuny.edu or write to us at the Office of Communications and Marketing, Brooklyn College, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11210.