BMCC Alumni Lead by Example
From public health to teaching to economics, graduates influence society’s direction.

Team Projects Earn BMCC President’s Fund Awards

The BMCC community has been eagerly waiting to find out which projects are receiving funding through the President’s Fund for Excellence and Innovation. The fund was established in December 2020 through the generous and ground-breaking donation from philanthropist and author MacKenzie Scott in recognition and support of the exceptional mission and success of BMCC.

The President’s Fund was established to support BMCC’s efforts to improve student learning and success, enhance research and knowledge creation, and advance socioeconomic mobility through the transformative power of education. In early 2021, the entire college community was invited to submit project proposals that adhere to the guiding principles of the fund and support the mission and vision of BMCC and meet one or more of the thematic areas of need, which include addressing food and housing insecurity, improving student learning and engagement, incorporating career development opportunities, and reducing social and economic equity gaps for students.

Continued on page 2

BMCC Alumni Lead by Example
From public health to teaching to economics, graduates influence society’s direction.

Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC/CUNY) alumni make a significant impact in their communities and fields. Sandra Lindsay (Nursing, ‘94), immigrated to New York from Jamaica at age 18 and became a naturalized citizen the same year she was named valedictorian of the BMCC Nursing class.

Fast forward to December 14, 2020, and Dr. Lindsay—she went on to earn a Doctor of Health Sciences from A. T. Still University—is seated front and center in a livestreamed press conference, the first person in the United States, outside of clinical trials, to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

“My message is still that of hope,” said Dr. Lindsay when she received her second shot on January 4, 2021 and reinforced her commitment to raise vaccination rates in communities hardest hit by the pandemic.

Dr. Lindsay knows first-hand the grave danger the coronavirus presents. Having led a team of nurses and support staff through the first wave of coronavirus hospitalizations in Spring 2020 as director of nursing at Northwell Health’s Long Island Jewish Medical Center, she is reported in Business Insider as saying, “It was dark. It was painful to see the suffering.” In an article in The New York Times she says, “I hope to inspire people who look like me, and who are skeptical in general about taking vaccines.”

Vaccination rates have been rising ever since Dr. Lindsay received the first

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8 Q & A with Penelope Jordan, Director of Health Services
York City Hometown Heroes ticker—Americans by Choice Recognition

When the New York state stay-at-home order was lifted in April 2020, DonorsChoose to raise funds for over 1,000 public schools in New York City. There are many people in the United States age 18 and older who have received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In July of this year at the White House, President Biden presented Dr. Linda with the Outstanding Amerasian Achievement by Choice Recognition from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Around the same time, her medical school were earmarked for display in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and she served as Grand Marshall of the New York City Halloween Parade.

At the June 2021 Nurses’ Pinning ceremony at BMCC, an in person event where BMCC President Anthony E. Munroe presented Dr. Linda with the President’s Medal, she encouraged the Class of 2021 to join her as advocates for public health.

“All BMCC graduates are role models,” she said. “Nurses going out into the field are role models for anyone who looks you up to, as you model the behavior you want them to see in the world.”

“I hope to inspire people who look me up to and are skeptical in general about taking vaccines.”

SANDRA LINDSAY (NURSING ’94)

Jamel Holmes (Earlham Childhood Education, ’12) is known for his work with young male business majors.

His teaching style builds connections with students beyond the classroom and in that spirit, he launched a mentoring group, “The Holmes Experience,” that features the entire child,” he says.

“Through mentorship, educational support, community engagement and partnering we are able to break barriers and build transformative students.”

He is also an educator who received a 2021 Changemaker Challenge Middle and High School Award from Students-Relaas- a program of the Bronx Family Foundation.

In April of 2021, he was featured in the podcast series You and Me Both, hosted by Hilary Clinton, who interviewed him for the episode “Raising Kids in a Pandemic.” “My students live in one of the poorest congressional districts in the country,” says Mr. Holmes, “but they are so motivated and eager to learn. When they know they have people in their lives that genuinely care for them, they will go off that extra mile.”

A CUNY graduate several times over, Mr. Holmes went from an associate degree at BMCC to a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies at The City College of New York. He earned two degrees at Lehman College; a Master of Science in Special Education and in May 2021, a Master of Education Administration as School Building Leader—still moving toward his goal of becoming a principal in the NYC public school system.

Mr. Holmes is a member of NYC Male Youth, a partnership between CUNY, the Office of the Mayor of the New York City Department of Education. His first mentors in the field included BMCC Early Childhood Center Director Cecilia Scott-Croft, who guided his engagement in curriculum-building for children, and BMCC Professor Jean-Vincent Plaisir, who made him realize how important it is to care for children who see more men of color loading their classes,” he says.

We are thrilled to announce that the BMCC Anti-Racist Pedagogy Project Team has been selected to receive a 2021 Changemaker Challenge Middle and High School Award, a $12,500 grant to create the Public Health Academy (PHA). It is designed to ensure that all health education and workforce programs that meet the needs of students are designed to address the gaps in the retention and graduation rates of Black and Latina-Hispanic male business majors.

The Virtual Campus: Using the BMCC OpenLab to Create Small, Close-knit Classrooms

Amount awarded: $63,612

Timeline: 2 years

Project Team: Leena Bajaj, Health Education; Jesse Crosby, Student Affairs; Leela Kasturi, Health Studies; and James Lipari, Health Education

Description: The Village College (Village College) is a college that offers a unique and innovative community and professional development curriculum. This semester, I am also proud to announce the seven teams who were awarded the President’s Fund to Promote Innovation and Excellence, which was established in December 2020, through the $330 million gift from philanthropist and author MacKenzie Scott. The fund was created to support and allow for strategic investment in innovative projects, initiatives, and programming that advance the College’s core mission and strategic initiatives. This includes improving students’ learning experiences, leveling the playing field for historically underrepresented groups, and prioritizing areas of critical need across campus.

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Was Prior Online Coursetaking Protective?

Katherine Hao Tang

Flood Mapping Activity in Uganda.

Network annual conference.

develop a virtual navigational principle investigator on a research paper award received a Social Sciences, Human Services and Criminal Justice Professor Mohammad Azhar

in Ethnic and Race Studies Degree Program

Arts degree in Ethnic Studies. Students will research the histories of racial and ethnic groups, and graduates will have the option to transfer into Lehman’s Bachelor of Arts degree program in Latin Studies or Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

More than 300 community members attended a virtual town hall hosted by CUNY in The Heights (CTHR) and BMCC on May 4. For the converted faculty were outlined by BMCC Associate Vice President of Campus Planning and Facilities Jorge E. Talas, and the event was held in collaboration with Congressman Adriano Espaillat, Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa, Senator Robert Jackson, City Councilmember Yolanda Rodríguez and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. BMCC President Anthony E. Munoz welcomed participants and a discussion was led by BMCC Director of Government and Community Relations Doug Israel and Media High SchoolAlumni Principal Sofia Rusan.

Faculty & Staff

Fiterman Art Center Features Work by Mildred Howard, Ned Smyth and Faculty Artists

In Spring 2021, the Shirley Fiterman Art Center presented “Notes from the Underground,” a digital exhibition that featured the recent work of faculty members. Alisa Tandene Biel, Bernardes Justin Campion, Susan Car, Elon Deck, Cathy Diamond, Leslie Epstein, Pat Greenville, Rico Greenwald, Sarah Kerwick, Joyce Lukens, Shoba McBride, Gustavo Mu ñoz Fernandez-Viejo and finally Rachel Pessone-Olson. Andrew Hachey, Jessica Ramirez, Kimberly Reinhold, Erik Xeux, Adele Shet, AC Tawney, Evelyn Twichell and Emily Bark.

A dual exhibition, “Interventions, Mildred Howard. In the Line of Fire and Ned Smyth: Moments of Motel and Life,” was made possible through a partnership between the Shirley Fiterman Art Center (SFAC) at BMCC and the Battery Park City Authority opened June 3 and was on display through September 25. The exhibition was featured with the sardonic outside Fiterman Hall through street-front kiosk, also was tours by Howard and Smyth were displayed outdoors at nearby Battery Park City.

The Center for Ethnic Studies has led the charge of developing new programs, courses and curricula in the field of Ethnic and Race Studies, offering an Associate in Arts degree in Ethnic Studies. Students will research the histories of racial and ethnic groups, and graduates will have the option to transfer into Lehman’s Bachelor of Arts degree program in Latin Studies or Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

College Presents 2020–2021 Employee Appreciation Awards

The BMCC Employee Appreciation Awards (EAAs) are presented on a full-and part-time academic and support staff employees. The BMCC president, faculty and staff were presented with their awards in recognition of the outstanding work and dedication to the college. The recipients of the 2020–2021 EAs included: Neda Rajehzadeh (Counseling Center) and Tamnie Tejada (Western Region Center earned Awards of Excellence in 201). Joseph Piranigian (Student Affairs) earned the Innovation Award, Joseph-Crasse Student Affairs and Mark Goodloe (The Bronx Performing Arts Center earned an Educational Achievement Award, Thelma James (Student Affairs) earned the Leadership Award, and the Office of Public Affairs earned the Team Award.

The CUNY Community Colleges Consortium— including the BMCC Center for Continuing Education and Workforce Development— has secured a nearly $5 million, four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Labor that will fund accelerated training for jobs in technology, healthcare, biotechnology and education. The BMCC will use the funds to expand a pilot program in the Allied Health Department that prepares high school students to become Emergency Medical Service workers while earning college credits toward an associate degree.

Innovative Faculty Earn 2021 Distinguished Teaching Awards

The intellectual and creative energy of BMCC’s faculty fuels innovative teaching, curriculum development and artistic and scholarly achievement. BMCC presented the 2021 Distinguished Teaching Awards to Elizabeth Albrecht (top left), Professor in English; Mohammad Ashar (second from left), Associate Professor in Computer Information Systems; Sophie Marable (third from left), Professor in Modern Language, and Nettie (Christ) Vlaschakos (right), Assistant Professor in English.

The awards recognize faculty whose sustained excellence in teaching inspires intellectual curiosity in students, inspires colleagues both within and outside their department, and demonstrates effective and innovative pedagogy. BMCC presented the faculty with awards to honor their commitment to exceptional teaching and research.

In June 2021, BMCC presented the faculty with the 2021 Distinguished Teaching Awards to Elizabeth Albrecht, Mohammad Ashar, Sophie Marable, Nettie Vlaschakos, and James Vinsonhaler.

More than 300 community members attended a virtual town hall hosted by CUNY in The Heights (CTHR) and BMCC on May 4. For the converted faculty were outlined by BMCC Associate Vice President of Campus Planning and Facilities Jorge E. Talas, and the event was held in collaboration with Congressman Adriano Espaillat, Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa, Senator Robert Jackson, City Councilmember Yolanda Rodríguez and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. BMCC President Anthony E. Munoz welcomed participants and a discussion was led by BMCC Director of Government and Community Relations Doug Israel and Media High SchoolAlumni Principal Sofia Rusan. The 20th anniversary of the devastating attacks of 9/11 had special significance for the Brookdale community. In the aftermath of the attacks: Fiterman Hall was destroyed, and BMCC’s campus transformed into a memorial courtyard in honor of the Brookdale community members lost on 9/11. The courtyard served as a place of reflection and healing for the Brookdale community.

NEH Awards $150k for Interdisciplinary Course, Mentoring Program Focused on Poverty

The U.S. Department of Labor Supports Pathway Program to Paramedic Careers

A $150,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities has been awarded to BMCC to support the development and implementation of a new pathway program to paramedic careers. The program will focus on addressing the shortage of paramedics in New York City by increasing the pipeline of qualified candidates to enter this critical health care profession.

The U.S. Department of Labor Supports Pathway Program to Paramedic Careers

BMCC Receives Funds from NYS Workforce Development Initiative

The funds will support strategic regional efforts that help New Yorkers find quality, good-paying jobs and further New York’s goal to reimagine, retrain, and renew from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

NEH Awards $150k for Interdisciplinary Course, Mentoring Program Focused on Poverty

The BMCC and the CUNY Research Foundation have been awarded $150,000 by the National Endowment for the Humanities for a three-year project, Vices and Experiences of Poverty: A New Interdisciplinary Humanities Curriculum. The project’s co-directors are Social Sciences, Human Services and Criminal Justice Professors Marietta Farias, Corey O’Connor and Jamie Warren, as well as Social Scientists, Human Services and Criminal Justice Chairperson Sangita Bap India; and Business Management Chairperson Magdalen PalDig.
Faculty Mentored Research Projects Yield Big Wins

On July 26, July 28 and August 2, 24 BMCC students and alumni delivered these, research exploring antiviral activity of Zhenchao Xia presented on assistive technology used to help the blind. Four other BMCC students were named Top Presentation Winners at that conference. Science major Christopher Clewes, monitored by Science Professor Miguel C. R. Frithslee, Computer science major Ahmad Familian, monitored by Computer Information Systems Professor Mohammad Asghari; Psychology major Jasone Jones, monitored by Sociology Professor Hazel Grant and science major Shanam Brown, monitored by Science Professor Jessica Gons.

On July 26, 2021, BMCC Foundation hosted its 26th annual Volunteer Recognition Event at BMCC, attended by approximately 200 individuals. The event featured the BMCC Foundation’s annual Volunteer Recognition Awards, which recognize BMCC community members who have made significant contributions to the community.

Students Win at Beach Conference

On June 4 at the virtual 2021 Beach Conference by Westchester Community College, four BMCC student researchers received panel awards. Zachary Cachiet, Joshua Laschle, William Roman and Maya Wang’s faculty mentors were Science Professor Abdel Hafiz, Joanna Giai and Academic Literacy and Linguistics Professor Jennifer Dollas.

Two BMCC Students Earn 2021 Jack Kent Cooke Scholarships

Computer Science major Abdulbari Khademani (left) and Biology major Alimu Mumin (right) are among those chosen BMCC students and 72 community college students nationwide to be awarded the Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. Each student winner will receive up to $60,000 a year for up to three years, to complete his bachelor’s degree. Khademani, from Tajikistan, and Mumin, from Albonia, gained important lessons from their home countries that inform their research and career goals.

Team Places Second in Innovation Challenge

A student team comprised of Computer Science major Ryan Brandt, Shana Lira and Ebanji DeWayne, mentored by Professor Bishnu Pradhan, was selected as a recipient of the 2021 Blackstone LaunchPad’s expansion to three historically Black colleges and universities Blackstone LaunchPad in Atlanta, the New York partnership is part of the Blackstone Charitable Foundation’s effort to ensure that the development of an entrepreneurial mindset and skills—including as a business owner and a creative approach to problem-solving—are available to a more diverse set of students.

BMCC Community College Foundation

BMCC is one of the 32 recipients of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation’s look ahead vision to support future entrepreneurs, innovators and business leaders at every stage of their personal and professional development,” said BMCC President Anthony E. Munroe.

In August 2021, Blackstone LaunchPad expanded access to its student venture and entrepreneurial skill-building program to students at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) along with eight other City University of New York (CUNY) colleges across all five New York City boroughs.

The Blackstone LaunchPad network will provide students at BMCC with the resources and opportunities to support their entrepreneurial journeys and career ambitions. The Blackstone Charitable Foundation has committed $6 million to the program, BMCC joins Borough Colleges, Bronx Community College, Brooklyn College, City College of New York, Lehman College, Queensborough Community College and Queens College as CUNY schools participating in the program.

In addition to providing the BMCC students with access to the BMCC and the Blackstone LaunchPad Program, the classroom also featured extensive resources and tools, including access to the Center for Biomedical Research at BMCC, BMCC Theatre Program, the BMCC Choir, BMCC Dance Program and other University resources.

In May 2021, the BMCC Foundation honored the “Innovator of the Future” virtual fundraiser to raise funds in support of student scholarships. The event honored 118 scholars, including recipients at BMCC and the BMCC Theatre Program.

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Then and Now

When the World Trade Center’s North Tower collapsed on the morning of September 11, 2001, heavy debris hit 7 World Trade Center. It burned the rest of the day and collapsed at 5:20 p.m. against BMCC’s Fiterman Hall (left). The debris heavily damaged the academic building—which had been donated to the College in 1993 by Miles and Shirley Fiterman—making BMCC the only college in the United States to have lost a building to a terrorist attack. The current Fiterman Hall (right), which opened in 2012, is an architecturally stunning symbol of the College’s resiliency and growth.

Q&A

Penelope Jordan
Director of Health Services,
Office of Student Affairs

What is your role at BMCC?
As BMCC’s Director of Health Services, my role has expanded from ensuring students have met all their state immunization requirements to raising health awareness on campus. I’ve partnered with academic departments on bone marrow drives and guided BMCC’s participation in CUNY health initiatives. I also represent BMCC on a CUNY-wide committee that has created guidelines for campus responses to outbreaks of infectious diseases like SARS, swine flu, chicken pox and others.

What do you really do at BMCC?
I look out for the health of our community. As a board member of the BMCC Early Childhood Center, I’ve opened up opportunities for student parents to get their children tested for hearing and vision. I follow up with health emergencies on campus, partner with Student Affairs and city agencies promoting health insurance access, and serve as BMCC’s liaison with CUNY regarding COVID.

What are some of your proudest accomplishments in your current role?
Helping to develop CUNY’s infectious disease protocols has been among my proudest moments. Another is contributing to BMCC’s reopening plans. It has also been rewarding to serve as a mentor. One former student went on to get his master’s degree and is a drug and alcohol counselor for incarcerated individuals at Rikers.

What is one thing you’ve noticed about the BMCC community, as you have worked with faculty and staff in your current role?
My interactions with faculty were limited before COVID, but during this past year that has changed. I’m impressed by the amount of caring and respect shown to me when I reach out to them.

Tell us something about yourself we might not know, but has an impact on the good work you do, at BMCC.
Before and since joining BMCC, I’ve worked weekends as an emergency room (ER) nurse in hospital trauma centers. Whatever I learn in the ER, I put into practice at BMCC. I’ll also share that my guilty pleasure is reading romance novels. They help me escape into an alternate reality and recharge. It’s a kind of self-care. I’ve discovered TikTok, too, and it makes me laugh hysterically—which everyone needs.

www.bmcc.cuny.edu