

THE KNIGHT NEWS

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VOLUME 27, ISSUE 1

BLACK LIVES MATTER, THE FIGHT TO END INEQUALITY



[SEE PAGE 4](#)

Protests launch across NYC to combat systemic racism, police brutality

Illustration by Sacrée Frangine

CUNY FACES BUDGET CUTS



QC Faculty & University Student Senate lobby against cuts

FLOYD, UNJUSTLY MURDERED



George Floyd's tragic death sparks the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement

STUDENT AWARD WINNERS



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Letter to the Editor: QC department chairs united against budget cuts



Dear Editor,

We are a group of Queens College department chairs who are deeply concerned about the impending budget cuts facing our college and CUNY as a whole. Even though Governor Cuomo has not yet announced budget cuts for CUNY, the CUNY administration has told each campus to start cutting its budget. At Queens this means cutting large numbers of part-time faculty members, many of whom have very little job security. If these cuts go through, the number of classes offered next year will plummet dramatically. We're looking at hundreds of fewer seats in both general education courses and courses needed for completion of majors.

Worse, Cuomo has announced that if the federal government does not pass another stimulus bill by mid-summer he will cut CUNY's budget by 20%. Such a cut will be devastating to Queens College, and we will see even deeper cuts that will transform our campus in

negative ways, including degrading the quality of education students receive—such as reduced research and experiential learning and fewer elective courses—and making it more difficult to graduate in four years.

Students have a voice and can help. Please visit <http://FundQC.org> for more information about what you can do to stop these cuts. Follow our twitter account, Facebook page, and Instagram by searching for @FundQC for live updates. If you want to learn more or become more involved please email fundQC@gmail.com.

Please organize your fellow students to pitch in. Call and write our governor, your state representatives, the CUNY Chancellor, and the CUNY Board of Trustees! If we're in this together and show NYC how much a fully funded Queens College and CUNY means to us, then we believe we can win this fight.

Sincerely,

Karen Weingarten, Acting Chair, English

Christopher Winks, Chair, Comparative Literature

Jeff Beeler, Chair, Psychology

Alan Sultan, Chair, Mathematics

Steven Schwarz, Chair, Physics

Kristin Celello, Chair, History

Stephen Grover, Chair, Philosophy

Ashima Kant, Chair, Family, Nutrition, and Exercise Sciences

PoKay Ma, Chair, Biology

Michael Lipsey, Chair, Aaron Copeland School of Music

Meghan Healey, Chair, Drama, Theater, and Dance

Emilia Lopez, Chair, Educational and Community Programs

Tarry Hum, Chair, Urban Studies

Michael Nelson, Chair, Art Department

Yunzhong Shu, Chair, Classical, Middle Eastern and Asian Languages

Zhigang Xiang, Chair of Computer Science

Patricia Rachal, Chair of Political Science

Jeffrey Bird, Chair, School of Earth & Environmental Sciences

Juan Caamaño, Chair, Hispanic Languages and Literatures

Seogjoo Jang, Chair, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Kate Pechenkina, Chair, Anthropology

Kristin Hart, Chair, QC Library

Mara Einstein, Chair, Media Studies



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CUNY adjuncts face massive layoffs from budget cuts



Sidd Malviya

Tough times are ahead. As a society, we are currently in the midst of two crises: combating systemic racism in our country and COVID-19, with both having subsequent consequences on our lives.

Even in the midst of all this, CUNY is still facing potential budget cuts as the state continues to constantly reduce its funding. The state will have an approximate budget deficit of \$13 billion. As a result, it's anticipated that CUNY Queens College will face a cut nearing 10%. This translates into potentially major layoffs & tuition hikes. Additionally, this means that class sizes will increase, the amount of sections for a course will be reduced, and the upper level electives for various majors may not be offered.

Faculty within Queens College have been organizing under the group name "QC Adjuncts Unite." The organization has been fighting for adjunct rights since 2018 and is currently working on mobilizing adjuncts and other members of the college community to fight against

the recent budget cuts and tuition hike.

Professor Jane Guskin, an adjunct professor for the Urban Studies department at Queens College, voiced her concerns over the situation. Guskin explained, "when courses are cancelled and adjuncts are laid off—non-reappointed" in CUNY's bureaucratic term—adjuncts lose income and health insurance in the middle of a pandemic, and students won't be able to get the courses they need to make progress toward their degrees."

Guskin also made note to mention the consequences of course sections being reduced, stating, "QC is trying to save money by making class sizes bigger and that means students will get less attention from faculty, and adjuncts will be more stressed out and overworked."

The CUNY-wide student governance body, known as University Student Senate (USS), has been working amidst the pandemic to combat the budget cuts. Legislative Director for the University Student Senate, Smitha Varghese, explained, "The impact of these budget cuts are that thousands of adjuncts will inevitably be laid

off, therefore reducing classes and limiting course offerings, but also increasing the size of classes to the point that they're overcrowded. In addition, if the state and city cut back on funds, yet enrollment continues to increase, it will be the students who continue footing the bill (as they are this June 29th when the Board of Trustees vote to raise our tuition and fees by \$320)."

Varghese also expressed concerns about academic programs being cut, stating, "Vital programs like CUNY ASAP are on the chopping block. The Mayor is proposing to cut the program by \$20 million, which means that CUNY may not be able to take in a new cohort of students to the ASAP program for the Academic Year of 2020-21."

When asked about how she would encourage CUNY students to lobby, Varghese responded, "Get a Twitter! Politicians HATE Twitter." She also wanted to remind students that the University Student Senate is organizing their first CUNY-wide in-person action since the pandemic hit NYC. The event is scheduled for June 27 at 12-2 PM. Varghese adds, "We'll be marching from Brooklyn Borough Hall to City Hall

Photo: Professional Staff Congress/CUNY
Faculty take to the streets to protest budget cuts

demanding NYC to fund CUNY, not cops! Make a sign, grab a mask, and show up!"

It should be noted that the USS and its engagement with the CUNY campuses has been minimal, even prior to the pandemic. Corrinne Greene, a recent graduate of Brooklyn College contends that, "University Student Senate is right in the regard that if more students were involved we would stand a fighting chance." Greene then adds, "There's nothing that I have been able to do [as a student leader] without collaboration," while emphasizing the need for a group effort to protect the quality of higher education.

One can only hope that access to higher education doesn't waiver during this unprecedented time. It is also hopeful that the quality of education doesn't suffer as a result of the course changes being mandated. These two issues could have serious consequences in the long run, completely putting students' academic careers at stake.

Black Lives Matter: The movement sweeping the nation

Samantha Galvez-Montiel

New York City is one of the many states protesting “Black Lives Matter” throughout the streets of the five boroughs as well as in front of our very own Queens College.

The protests began shortly after George Floyd’s death on May 25, he was arrested in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Officer Derek Chauvin kneeled on his neck for almost nine minutes which led to Floyd’s death. The people of Minneapolis rioted the day of Floyd’s death and it has led the Black Lives Matter movement to spread to the 50 states as well as other countries around the world.

According to the Black Lives Matter Foundation, “[the movement] began as a call to action in response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism.” The foundation was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer.

Savannah-Reese Denusta, a senior media studies major commented on the movement, stating that, “the movement is trying to tackle police brutality towards people of color, especially black people. The country was built by the literal blood, sweat, and tears of black Africans as well as other people of color that were enslaved.” Like many, Denusta has been using her social media platforms to spread awareness on “Black Lives Matter” as well as sharing petitions regarding injustices in the black community for others to sign.

Denusta emphasized, “The bigger picture of the movement is to demand justice

for all the lives before George Floyd and to make sure it doesn’t happen again. Racism isn’t just exclusive to the police force, but in all aspects of society and culture in America.”

Before Floyd’s death, people were protesting the new rules of using face-coverings in public as well as staying home to avoid the spread of COVID-19 but there was no change to those rules. After Floyd’s death, protests began all over the United States and the rest of the world.

In response, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo proposed the “Say Their Name Agenda” for police reform on June 5. Campaign Zero proposed the “8 Can’t Wait” project that pushes for eight police reforms that can reduce police violence by 72 percent, study shows.

Jarrett Newman, a senior English major, attended a protest in Massapequa Park, Long Island on June 4. Newman spoke on the subject of peaceful protests, noting that, “A peaceful protest in Merrick, New York proved quite impactful in that it occurred after citizens of the town initially met protests that happened before it with resistance telling protesters to, “Go West,” from the town to protest. It implied that they did not wish to allow protests to stretch further into Long Island and would rather keep it isolated to New York City.”

Newman voiced his concerns on individuals exploiting the momentum of the protests and movement, stating, “The protests are controversial because of the looting and damage done to places. The



Photo: <https://www.newyorker.com/>

A mural of George Floyd on the Berlin Wall

individuals that are committing these acts are also chanting “Black Lives Matter,” shifting the narrative of the movement to an aggressive, violent approach. The peaceful protesters are now combating this narrative as they attempt to rescue their cause from the arms of crime and violence.”

Maggie Maguire, a junior majoring in photography agrees with Newman, adding that, “...It’s a sad reality that third parties, who have no regard for the movement, are using it as a front to snag the opportunity to commit these acts. The media did not hesitate to paint all Black Lives Matter protesters as rowdy and violent.”

At the end of all this, we should all be asking ourselves what we can do to help the cause. Police reform seems to be an issue that the majority of people share a consensus on.

According to Newman, the larger questions that loom over the protests is whether or not the police should be defunded and if there should be a potential change in the requirements for becoming a police officer.

Maguire optimistically notes, “The energy of this movement will never stop until there is justice and reform.”

Organizations that are accepting donations: George Floyd Memorial Fund, Minnesota Freedom Fund, Reclaim the Block, National Bail Out, Black Lives Matter, Campaign Zero, and many more.

George Floyd: Public execution in the modern age

Victoria Young

“I can’t breathe,” were the last words George Floyd, 46, spoke before falling unconscious and eventually dying two minutes and 53 seconds later on May 25 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Moments before this, Floyd was accused of trying to use a ‘fake’ twenty dollar bill to pay for a pack of cigarettes, resulting in the store owner calling the police. Sadly, Floyd was unaware that these next few minutes, his last moments, would be spent facedown on the ground, handcuffed, and pleading for air.

Thomas Lane and J. Alexander Kueng, the two responding officers, approached Floyd’s vehicle while Officer Lane already had his weapon drawn. He did not holster his gun until Floyd placed his hands on the steering wheel, as he was pulled out of his vehicle. According to the probable cause statement, Floyd “actively resisted being handcuffed” although there is no video evidence supporting this claim. Two

more officers arrived at the scene, and one assisted Kueng in lifting Floyd off the ground and walking him to the squad car where “Mr. Floyd stiffened up, fell to the ground and told the officers he was claustrophobic,” according to the statement.

Video footage courtesy of the Cup Foods security camera shows Officer Kueng with his foot pressed against the curb, his entire upper body not visible. It is unknown what may have occurred at this point in the footage, but it is clear that Officer Kueng is bracing himself against the curb as his upper body extends into the vehicle where they placed George Floyd. Officer Tou Thao simply stood by and watched his fellow officer, which indicates that he was in no danger nor was he being fought by Floyd. The officers reported in their statements that Floyd “intentionally fell down,” was “refusing to stand still,” and told officers he wasn’t getting into the vehicle moments before he began verbalizing that he could not breathe. Coinciden-

tally, “he went to the ground face down and still handcuffed” moments later, according to the probable cause statement.

The last video captures Floyd’s final moments with Officer Derek Chauvin’s knee on his neck as he lay face-down while Officer Kueng held his back and Officer Lane held down his legs. The probable cause statement states that “[Chauvin] placed his left knee in the area of Mr. Floyd’s head and neck. Mr. Floyd said, ‘I can’t breathe’ multiple times and repeatedly said, ‘Mama’ and ‘please,’ as well. [Chauvin] and the other two officers stayed in their positions.” For more than eight minutes, Derek Chauvin applied the pressure of his body weight on the back of Floyd’s neck using his knee as George called out: “My stomach hurts. My neck hurts. Everything hurts. I need some water or something, please.” Floyd resorted to telling the witnesses that they, the officers, were going to kill him and then said, “Don’t kill me” to the officers holding him down. Then, he stopped moving. When Officer Kueng checks for a pulse, he reports that he “couldn’t find one.” Witnesses watched as Floyd lay there on the ground, unconscious for two minutes and 53 seconds. Floyd was pronounced dead at a hospital.

Hennepin County’s medical examiner report states a series of information that is

later contradicted by Dr. Michael Baden who was hired by Floyd’s family to perform an independent autopsy. Hennepin County ruled Floyd’s death was caused by being restrained by police, underlying health conditions, and “potential intoxicants in his system.” Baden reported that he couldn’t find any underlying health conditions and the interference with his blood flow and breathing was what caused George Floyd to die on the scene, not at a hospital.

George Floyd’s death was a tragic incident that occurs far too often. The conversation regarding law enforcement and black lives is a conversation that must be had in present-day America. The names of lost black lives trend on social media platforms, symbolized by the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, only to never be discussed again as their killers roam free, untouched by the law. Fortunately, Derek Chauvin has been charged with second-degree murder while Thomas Lane, J. Alexander Kueng, and Tou Thao have all been charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder. There are still many cases in which justice is still due and we must march on demanding that other victims become more than a hashtag. As we move forward, it is important that we continue fighting for those who no longer have a voice while simultaneously raising the bar within our communities.

A one-day trip back to the age before technology #Blackout

Lea Passione

On Tuesday, June 2, Blackout Tuesday was an initiative to go silent on social media and stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement which has grown larger after the recent killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and many others before them from racial prejudice and police brutality. When it first started, these posts had the hashtag #BLM or #BlackLivesMatter. Later in the day, the hashtag was #BlackoutTuesday or #TheShowMustBePaused.

The initiative started from music executives Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang who created theshowmustbep-

aused.com. This was done "in observance of the long-standing racism and inequality that exists from the boardroom to the boulevard." It was shown as "a day to disconnect from work and reconnect with the community." After record labels and music icons like Mick Jagger and Rihanna joined the initiative, the movement spread to social media with many pages posting black squares to show signs of solidarity. No new content was to be released and most companies like Spotify, Apple and Tik Tok would suspend much of their work on Tuesday amid demonstrations.

After the movement picked up significant steam, people began correcting others that they should not use the hashtags #BLM

and #BlackLivesMatter with their posts of black squares as it blocks vital information for protesters and other sources of information. If you clicked on either hashtag, it would be a sea of black squares and people would have to scroll for a long time to find information. People then reposted the black squares with the hashtag #BlackoutTuesday. Many are using social media to share sources of support, donations (if one can afford it despite the current pandemic), calls to get the participating officers arrested, petitions to have justice for the victims, websites owned by black individuals, businesses to support, and so much more.

According to a Forbes article titled "Blackout Tuesday On Social Media Was A

Great Idea, But Experts Say It's Not Working," John Brandon said it could cause a communication breakdown. "It's not a bad idea to use social media to speak out about these injustices, but the method for how we do that can cause confusion." One thing that stood out as stated by Brandon in his piece was the way the shoe company Reebok changed their homepage which was used on their Instagram and their social media: A black screen at the top of their page which has "Without the Black community, Reebok would not exist. America would not exist. We are asking you not to buy our shoes. We are asking you to walk in someone else's. To stand in solidarity. To find our common ground in humanity."



Photo: Maggie Maguire

Protesters in Bayside, NY on June 2nd.

Student Affairs: All about student awards spotlight

Nika Nuñez

The Student Affairs division of Queens College has recently announced winners for their seven awards, which encompass dedication and commitment to servicing the QC community, as well as demonstrating commitment to humanitarian causes in other areas. On behalf of the Knight News Staff, I would like to congratulate all the recipients for their commendable contributions and achievements. I recently caught up with a few students to talk about their experiences and impact on our community.



Photo: Sidd Malviya

The first award, the Burton L. Backner Student Affairs Award, granted five hundred dollars to a full-time undergraduate student that consistently participated in student affairs and student services on campus. Burt Backner was the Dean of Students. Dr. Barbara Moore, a psychologist at the QC Counseling Center, said Bakner was “passionate about counseling and sat in on our group meetings every week. He was a kind and dear man.” The recipient of this award is our very own Editor in Chief, Sidd Malviya! He has demonstrated serious commitment to serving QC by partaking in prominent roles in the Academic Senate, advocating for student leaders’ rights, and serving on two search committees. Sidd was elected as a Student Delegate after a vacancy in the Academic Senate in December 2019. In February, Sidd took on a new role to serve as Deputy Chair of the Academic Senate. He said, “I noted that engagement was down in the Senate, particularly in the standing committees”. With the help of Chair Simone Yearwood, they were able to nominate an unprecedented number of 27 students to the standing committees in only a month. Sidd has also provided crucial support during key student-led events such as Club Day in his role as Student Association (SA) Vice President. His hard work, dedication, and commitment will prevail as Sidd enters his senior year, as he continues his service as Deputy Chair and the newly elected Chair of the Student Senate.



Photo: Cayla Kempf

The Gender, Race, and Culture Award presented three hundred dollars to Cayla Kempf, a lower junior with a major in Psychology and a dual minor in Media Studies and Drama & Theater. This award is presented to Cayla for her outstanding commitment to promote comprehension, appreciation, and awareness to issues of gender, race, and culture pertinent to student life at QC. Cayla demonstrated immediate interest in the Gender, Love, and Sexuality Alliance or GLASA during freshman year. Upon meeting and interacting with existing members, Cayla cites, “falling in love with the sweet and amazing members and learning more about [prevalent] issues regarding race, gender, and culture issues,” prompted her to become GLASA’s Secretary during sophomore year. As a secretary, Cayla executed important achievements such as contributing to events such as Coming Out Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and Break the Silence in order to spread awareness and raise a voice of concern for their physical and mental safety. Additionally, she did not allow COVID-19 to hinder further planning. Cayla successfully organized GLASA’s Virtual House Party on Zoom which rendered a large turnout of CUNY students. In her future endeavors, Cayla hopes to continue her work with the Academic Senate as a way to further an agenda of awareness and support for all genders, races, and cultures.

The Student Life Award granted three hundred dollars to two individuals- Reaa Ali and Andréa Buzon- both of whom devoted substantial time and energy to serve the QC community. Reaa Ali, a recent QC graduate who double majored in Nutrition Dietetics and Exercise Science, demonstrated commitment to QC beginning in her freshman year, in which she expressed affinity towards the Student



Photo: Reaa Ali

Association. Reaa cites having had “an instant connection to their missions” which prompted her to run for student government. She felt triumphant because Reaa was able to give a voice to students who felt unheard and silenced. After observing the positive rewards of serving the students’ needs on campus, Reaa pursued prominent roles, eventually holding the positions of Programming Committee Chairperson of SA, a general member of the Athletics and Career Development Committees, and the student representative on the AEC Board, and the College Association Board. To enact even more positive change, she became President of the Dietetics Club, Secretary of Nuts for Plants, and Secretary for the Honors Society NSLS. In these roles, she hosted a welcome back party and a food competition as a way to “bring joy and relieve students’ stress encompassing heavy course loads.” While Reaa knew that being a leader in these roles would be time-consuming, she prevailed by striving to serve as a role model for others. With all of her hard work, diligence, perseverance and discipline, Reaa accomplished to create a sense of unity, excitement, and inclusion amongst students. In her future endeavors, Reaa looks forward to continuing enacting positive change to create a better tomorrow. Her insatiable desire for knowledge and dedication for public service propel her towards a new chapter in her life.



Photo: Andréa Buzon

Andréa Buzon, a recent QC graduate who majored in Psychology and minored in Business and Liberal Arts (BALA) provided significant contributions to the student life on campus through being an “active Hermana of Lambda Pi Upsilon Sorority, Latinas Poderosas Unidas, Inc.” Through sisterhood, she learned to value the virtue of public service and philanthropy. As Vice Chair of Public Relations for the Student Association, she employed social media platforms to directly address students’ questions and concerns. Andréa cites that during her role as a CREAR FUTUROS pioneer and mentor on campus, she had the opportunity to meet many students and help them thrive in college by sharing her own experiences with them. She is thankful for the Queens College community that has made her realize and enact her passion for helping students succeed both socially and academically. In her future endeavors, Andréa will continue to serve her community.

Generation Zoom: The at-home learners

Victoria Young

Amid an international pandemic caused by COVID-19, students all across the globe were hastily pulled from their campuses and forced into the ever-so frustrating cyber world of online schooling. Students of all ages, from kindergarteners to graduate students, were given no choice but to adjust to the awkwardness of learning from our bedrooms and deal with learning circumstances that have never previously come into play. Although this experience has been beneficial for some and frustrating for others, students everywhere have found ways to cope with both the stresses of an ongoing pandemic, which includes self-quarantining, intense feelings of isolation, and newfound responsibilities, as well as completing their semesters from home.

Students on social media have resorted to referring to their online education as attending “Zoom University” regardless of which college they go to or where their

campus is located. Zoom University is a trend of sorts that began on Facebook. It was created to assist college students who are feeling the heaviness of their college experiences being halted. Or if you’re a college senior, simply coming to a premature end. Coping with this sadness, feeling isolated due to quarantine, not being able to go about your day to day life, and being thrown off of your schedule can be incredibly hard things to cope with. Especially because it swept across many locations so suddenly. Fortunately, the Zoom University group aimed to help students going through these situations and discuss any negative feelings that they may be experiencing. This group has helped shape a sense of community amongst students who live in all parts of the world by becoming a safe space where people can talk about how they’re feeling, share news, post memes to make each other laugh, and even create friendships. This amazing outlet has allowed students, who no longer are able to attend on-campus classes,



Started School at Zoom Video Communications

2020
College

see their friends, and are having a difficult time adjusting to this new way of learning, to find a sense of comfort and belonging in these crazy, unprecedented times.

Students across the world have taken to Zoom University quite well. Being that many schools are unsure of whether they will be returning to campus this fall, Zoom University may be here to stay. Many students and teachers have found that this social media trend is beneficial to this new education alternative. As we enter yet another stage of the digital age, the impacts of technology continue to exceed our expectations and constantly improve our experiences to make this unfortunate situation more personal. It is because of

this group-like structure that students feel they are not alone during such a challenging time and are not going through these experiences all by themselves, but rather as a community. Students are given the push and motivation to get through the semester thanks to the support of other students and professors who also can’t wait to meet in person once again. Moving forward, this will play a prominent role in the continuation of online education and in the ways it will impact students.

OP-ED: Are students willing to return to campus this fall?

Serene Klapper

As protesters took to the streets outside Queens College on Sat. June 6, one of the prominent questions of the summer once again flashed through the minds of hundreds of protestors, most of whom were Queens College students; if people are marching shoulder-to-shoulder on Kissena Boulevard, will in-person classes resume this fall?

Although this topic has been discussed thoroughly among students and faculty, opinions remain uncertain and diverse: “It seems that every day we hear new things” said Josh Simanowitz, a Senior majoring in Political Science. “Only time will tell. I can’t know if I would feel safe returning to classes in the fall.”

Since the Coronavirus pandemic has swept across New York City, over 200,000 cases have been confirmed. 17,000 of these cases have unfortunately proved fatal. Although the pandemic has long passed its peak in New York City, recently there have been small spikes of

infection. There is growing concern that these new spots of activity could indicate a looming second wave as stay at home orders are gradually violated or relaxed.

Despite the fear that resuming in-person classes will cause a second wave of the virus, continuing to stay at home presents a great deal of risk. Many practicing physicians have found that while staying at home has decreased the spread of the virus, other unforeseen public health issues have emerged. Serious illnesses have been overlooked due to canceled appointments or overcrowded hospitals, and mental health has become a larger struggle than previously for the average citizen. While the pandemic itself has presented a harsh reality to the country, the risk of death posed to those under the age of 44 has been a relatively low 3.96% of citywide fatalities, according to Worldometer. According to CDC data, approximately 116 out of over 95,000 deaths from COVID-19 in the United States were young adults between the ages of 15 and 24, the age range encom-

passing most of Queens College’s students. In 2018, the number of suicides was over 6,000 in that very same age group, significantly greater than the current risk of a fatal case of Coronavirus. Since the lockdown, feelings of isolation and hopelessness have only increased, leading to greater rates of depression and self harm, which have only expanded this threat. According to Stanford News, only 52.4% of citizens between the ages of 18 to 31 are likely to actually adhere to social distancing rules. Many feel they have been wasteful with their time and that their academics have subsequently suffered.

“I do feel comfortable returning to college in the fall,” says Leon Alper, a Junior majoring in Physics. “I definitely had a harder time focusing on classes this Spring and I’ve felt a lack of real structure in my learning. Given certain security measures, I would feel safe at my age.”

The concerns of many students who are living with older relatives or currently dealing with health issues of their own must also be taken into account.

“With my health issues I have a higher risk of suffering from the virus and I don’t want to be forced to go back,” says Jessica Dalonzo, a rising Junior studying Elementary and Early Childhood Education. “But I want to go back. I’m over it.”

Online classes have always been an option for students at Queens College and

hopefully that will remain so. However, in light of watching hundreds of protestors march in a packed formation through the streets of the city, college students have grown restless. Many feel that their productivity has drastically decreased due to the current situation. Although safety is a priority and will certainly remain so, the past few weeks have brought the effectiveness of social distancing into harsher scrutiny. Returning to normal will certainly be no easy feat. But due to the constant option for online courses, the large outdoor sections of campus, and the relatively youthful student body, Queens College is certainly one of the best equipped institutions to begin the shift.

Photo: <https://www.troymessenger.com/>



Fighting Academic Dishonesty During a Pandemic: How We Fared/

Arwa Ali

It is safe to say that COVID-19 gave 2020 a tumultuous start. It disposed of the hopeful nature that follows the beginning of any new year and left the entire world uncertain about what awaited in the future. When the virus first started picking up in the U.S., it felt as though every day brought a new surprise. Arguably the most shocking development was the reaction of academic institutions across the country. In a blink of an eye, all public schooling and higher education went completely virtual, including Queens College. As necessary as this decision was for the wellbeing of its students and faculty, remote learning incited issues that inevitably came with the territory. The most blatant one being: academic dishonesty.

The struggle to minimize cheating and maintain academic integrity in an online class is tough. One such way is the administering of exams, which depended on the professor's perspective of what felt appropriate, leaving every student to perceive those decisions differently. Before online exams were posted, there was a general fear amongst many students of what they would entail and whether or not it would negatively affect their final grade.

Professor Feliciano of the Economics department at QC knew that exams would be open-book, therefore she had to strategically transform the content in a way that was feasible. This meant randomizing the questions, ensuring the exam was timed, and that there was no option to go back on questions. Professor Feliciano believed that "those three

things minimized cheating." As a student who took her course this past semester, I do not think these actions hindered my ability to do well, as the number of questions and the time limit was reasonable.

The choices that this professor made was not an anomaly, as others in departments across the school did the same. That being said, the power given in administering exams could also be weaponized.

Shazna Olid, a senior studying Psychology, found the structure of online exams to be gruesome for her science classes. "One of my professors made the test extremely short: 60 mins for 60 questions, which essentially hurt people who rely on the scantron system of skipping the hard questions to come back to later." Even though Shazna had studied hard for those exams, the system designed to prevent cheating was simply preventing her from passing regardless of the effort she put in.

There were also professors who opted out of providing multiple-choice exams and replaced them with writing assignments that would force students to learn the material and apply it as necessary. Shazna had a professor who turned a final, which was worth a significant portion of her grade, into short responses. This was particularly tricky because "the professor would normally provide past examples to prepare for

an exam, but this time students were given no prior material to study from as it was a new venture." Although feeling the need to switch up testing is understandable, it can take a toll on students who were not expecting such a major change spontaneously.

Although many professors made it a priority to minimize cheating, others did not. Juhura Akhi, a junior studying Speech-Language Pathology, found that none of her classes were any more difficult than usual. She is aware though that not all students can say the same. Juhura hopes that "if remote learning does carry into the Fall semester, professors are mindful of students who may have difficulties with a method of schooling they did not sign up for."

Professors have an obligation to not let students off scot-free from truly absorbing the material in the manner they are meant to, but it's also crucial they understand the struggles that come with online learning. Not all students are afforded a safe and peaceful environment to work from, and not all students are able to immediately adjust to a new format of exams, especially if it is objectively harder. It's all about a delicate balance of being both realistic and disciplinary. If professors can find a middle ground, then future semesters (that may potentially be online) will hopefully run far more smoothly.

OP-ED: Are QC students taking advantage of the CR/No CR policy?

Raveena Nabi

In the wake of COVID-19 which led CUNY Queens College to close its campus, students began to ask for a change within the grading policy. The main argument being that many students will face food and housing insecurity as a result of campus closure. As well as the fact that many students don't have unlimited access to technological resources when off campus, which suddenly were deemed necessary to complete coursework. This, of course, would prove to have a huge impact on the grades that students would receive this spring semester.

Eventually, The CUNY Board of Trustees approved a policy that allows students to enter in a grade of CR (credit), for passing and above grades, or No Credit, for failing grades. Both designations will substitute themselves for a letter grade on your transcript, and will not have any impact on your GPA. However, as with any policy, there are caveats. The CUNY website advises that students who are graduating shouldn't choose the Credit(CR)/No Credit option, because if the letter grade helps to raise the student's GPA to a 2.0 or 3.0, this option will prevent them from graduating.

Also this isn't an actual letter grade. So, even if other institutions are made aware of the effects of COVID-19, they won't accept anything that isn't a letter grade, thus putting the student in jeopardy of not being accepted into their school of choice because they choose the option to save their GPA.

Another issue is that this policy has the potential to negatively impact a student's financial aid. Kyaw Htet, an Interacting Design and Psychology major, also voiced concern that "It may affect receiving a private scholarship as some of them may not accept a grade of CR." He also stated that he hasn't used the policy as of yet. There is a degree of consolation that, according to the website HESC (Higher Education Services Corporation), which is the state financial aid agency, has determined that students certified by the college as impacted by COVID-19 and receiving state financial aid won't suffer a negative impact on current or future awards. An anonymous QC student majoring in Computer Science mentioned that "It doesn't affect financial aid but it'll affect the outlook of the transcript." This is true and as mentioned could eventually cause problems on the path to graduation. Furthermore, this



Photo: <https://www.insidehighered.com/>

means that while some students can use the policy, others are not, which defeats its purpose as put in place to help everyone affected by COVID-19. The HESC also mentioned the possibility that "... people can abuse it and CR all of their classes." Or the possibility that there will be people that won't pass a single class this semester. However, there is a rule that does help to keep

the use of this policy in check. According to the CUNY website, "You may only opt for NC in course(s) with an earned F grade. In all other courses you have passed, you may only opt for a CR grade".

Overall, the policy as a whole is a decent one made with good intentions, however, as with any policy, some flaws must be addressed, especially because we are bracing for a second wave of COVID-19.

“Miss Virginia”: Film review

Nika Nuñez

In light of recent events regarding the Black Lives Matter movement, video streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime have created a film and television series collection to honor and promote Black actors and actresses in Black-centered films. This issue's review features R.J. Daniel Hanna's film, *Miss Virginia*, which is an extremely relevant film detailing the horrors of systemic racism in public schools in Washington.

Miss Virginia is a 2019 film based on real events. It tells the story of Miss Virginia Walden Ford, a woman living in the inner-city neighborhoods of Washington, who is desperate to provide her teenage son with quality education. The film provides meaningful, accurate, and poignant insight into the daily life of inner-city poverty, politics, and education. EMMY award recipient Uzo Aduba stars as Virginia Walden

Ford, the single mother of James Walden Ford, a susceptible and easily manipulated fifteen-year old kid mixed in with the street life. Uzo Aduba, in her uniquely eccentric expression, plays the role of an eager and persevering mother who is at the front line of a pioneering battle to reform Washington's oppressive and segregated public school system. The film explores the themes of anger, frustration and disillusionment regarding the socioeconomic disparity between Caucasians and people of color.

The cinematography and portrayal of characters is impeccable. Each scene is shot with precision and accuracy, acclimating to the constantly changing settings, going from Miss Virginia's living room, to Congress, to dark side street corners and densely packed apartments. The opening scene provides the audience with an image of Miss Ford going through metal detectors to enter what the audience may perceive as an entrance to a jail and/or a criminal detention center. Shortly there-

after, Miss Ford is seen in a principal's office, implicitly unveiling the veracity of the school-to-prison pipeline, a term coined to explain that the American public school system is designed to facilitate the mass incarceration of young African American and Latino individuals. This scene provides juxtaposition to the environment of Harriet Jacobs Academy, a wealthy elite private school. This is the ideal institution that captures Miss Ford's attention. Ford is stunned by the commodities and the quality education that this school offers. This drives her to carry out an unrelenting mission that begins by enrolling her son at the private school after working long hours as a janitor for local government representative Lorraine Townsend. Ford looks up to Townsend, for she promised reform for underprivileged students.

The movie begins to see an upward escalation after Ford picks up a book from Townsend's trash basket written by a White American retired politician that exposes

the severe lack of funding children of color receive. This propels the plot forward, for Miss Virginia educates herself and rallies a group of parents that storm Capitol Hill, constantly contacting senators and representatives and attending town hall meetings. Like all great inspiring stories, there are setbacks to be overcome. Many times, Miss Virginia has been targeted and threatened by drug dealers who sought to thwart her efforts to send young children of color to better and safer schools. Nevertheless, after hard work, sleepless nights, and days of near-defeat, Miss Virginia and several members of the neighborhood soldiered on to pass a federal scholarship fund for children of color as well as legislation that allocates more funds to the public sector.

When watching this film, viewers will watch real people with real issues provide an inside, up close, and personal scope of the lingering shackles of systemic racism. Don't forget to sit up front, and bring a family member with you to watch this riveting film.

Photo: <http://www.missvirginiamovie.com/>





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