

CAMPUS NEWS

College  Paper

From a quiet kid to a Ph.D.

Jessica Desamero details her path from an undergraduate student – fighting self-doubt and impostor syndrome – to a STEM doctorate.

Read more on pages 30-31 – and other great stuff within!



**Win 2 NYC
Play Tix –
See Page 5**

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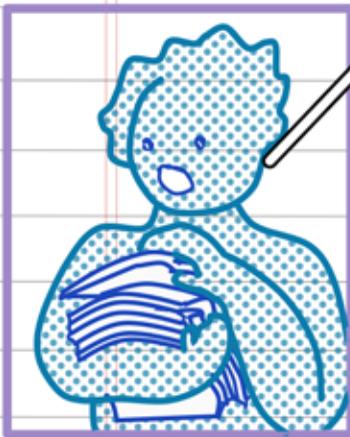
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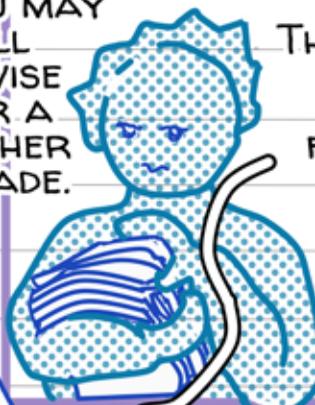
COLLEGE EDGE

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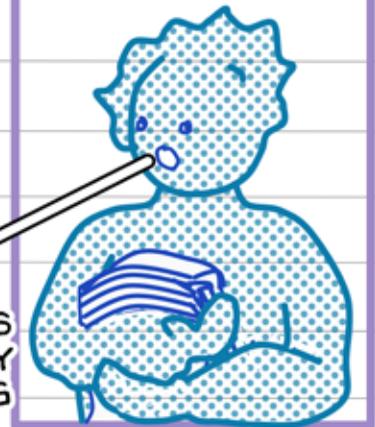
MOST OF THESE WERE CLEARLY NOT PROOFREAD.



YOU MAY STILL REVISE FOR A HIGHER GRADE.

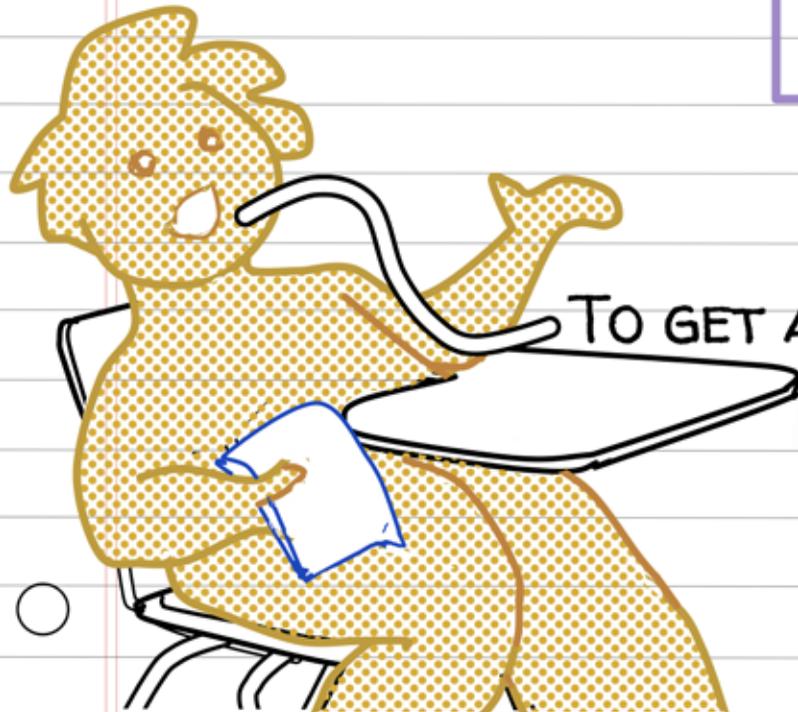
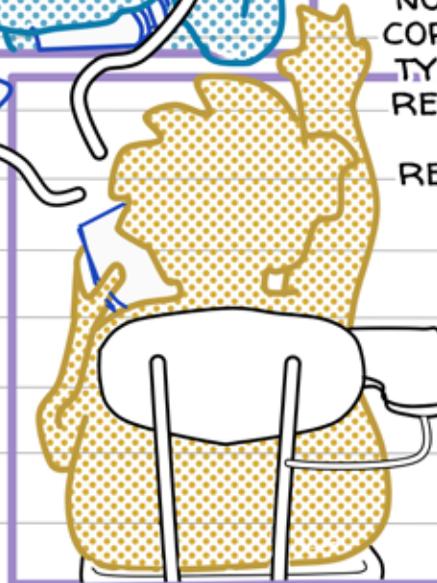


THE LAST TIME I REWROTE SOMETHING FOR YOU, YOU DIDN'T RAISE MY GRADE



REVISION IS NOT SIMPLY CORRECTING TYPOS. IT'S RETHINKING, AND REWRITING.

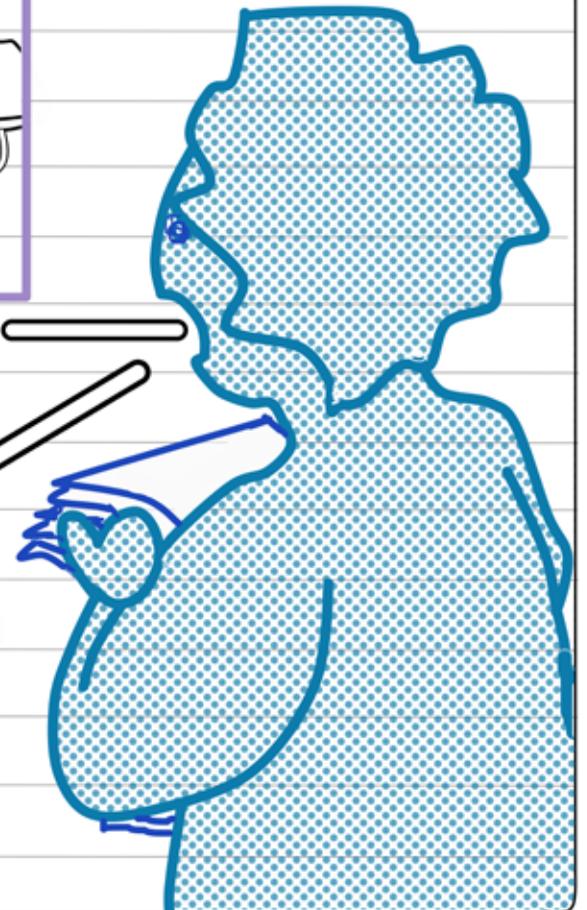
I THOUGHT AND WROTE ONCE. I DON'T HAVE TIME TO THINK ALL OVER AGAIN



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The job's pretty straightforward – read and understand this paper. Get excited about it. Believe in its mission. And then contact businesses that would benefit by being in front of our audience. You'd present them the rates, wheel and deal a little bit, help them get their creative juices flowing and come up with a design per our page specs, get us that ad and maybe gently needle them if they take too long to pay. A good amount of emailing and sometimes a phone call. That's about it. Think you can do this? Contact editor@cccnews.info to inquire. Please do!

Campus News brings back NYC ticket giveaways!

We at Campus News are proud to bring back our NYC/Broadway ticket giveaways to our college student/faculty/staff readers!

These giveaways were a popular staple of Campus News up to the pandemic.

Now they are back. See pages 5 and 6 for a photo and a poetry contest, respectively.

Contact editor@cccnews.info to participate in these contests or to learn more.

Have a giveaway you'd like us to offer? Also contact the email address above.

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This month’s prize sponsor is Broadway’s funniest smash hit and an international phenomenon.

The time is right to see “The Play That Goes Wrong,” Broadway’s funniest smash hit! This Olivier Award-winning comedy is a hilarious hybrid of Monty Python and Sherlock Holmes.

Welcome to opening night of “The Murder at Haversham Manor” where things are quickly going from bad to utterly disastrous. With an unconscious leading lady, a corpse that can’t play dead, and actors who trip over everything (including their lines), it’s “a riotous explosion of comedy!” (The Daily Beast) and “tons of fun for all ages!” (HuffPost). Ben Brantley of The New York Times calls “The Play That Goes Wrong” “a gut-busting hit,” and Cindy Adams of the New York Post has just one word for you: “Go!” Get tickets now – it would be

WRONG to wait!

Enter Our Photo Contest!

If you are a college student, faculty or staff member at a campus where we normally deliver papers (or you found this on the street via one of our boxes), you can enter our photo contest to try to win tickets (simply take a photo of yourself (or have someone else take it) reading Campus News with the name of the paper visible in the photo and email it to editor@ccnews.info) to enter.

Or you can simply buy tickets through Telecharge.com or by phone at 212-239-6200. Or you can visit the box office in person at New World Stages Box Office at 340 West 50th Street (between 8th & 9th Avenues), where the show is now running.



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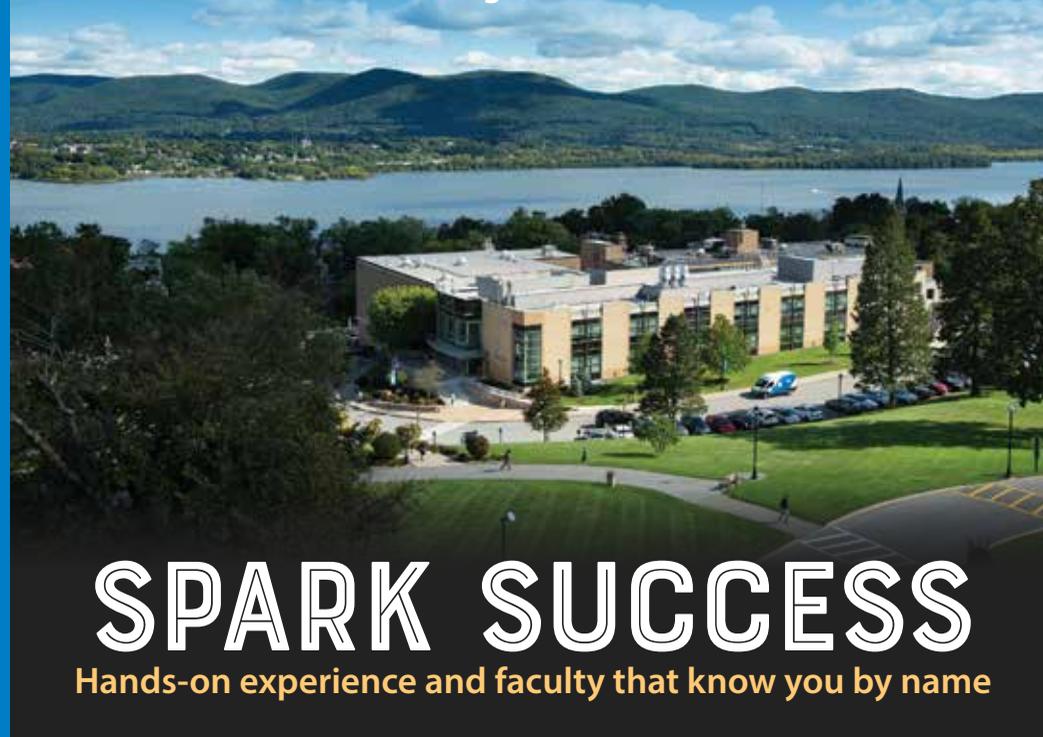


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Or ... Win tix to the Museum of Broadway!

You could try our photo contest to win two tickets to “The Play That Goes Wrong” (see previous page), or we also have tickets available for our readers to the Museum Of Broadway.

There’s so much to discover at The Museum of Broadway! Explore three floors full of Broadway history starting in 1732. It’s the only place you can see artifacts and costumes up-close worn by Cynthia Erivo, Hugh Jackman, Lin-Manuel Miranda and so many more! You’ll even learn how Broadway shows are made. It’s a front-row seat and backstage pass all in one. Visit the museum National Geographic says is

“unmissable.” It is perfect for Broadway fans of all ages! Get your tickets today at TheMuseumOfBroadway.com.

Poetry Contest

You can also try to win two passes to the Museum courtesy of Campus News. But instead of the photo contest we are requesting for “The Play That Goes Wrong” tickets, to potentially get Museum of Broadway passes, we’re asking you to send us a 5-10 line poem about campus life! Send it to editor@cccnews.info. If you win, we will publish it in these pages!



Rockland wins debate tournament

Rockland Community College (RCC) debaters highlighted their skills and determination at RCC’s debate tournament against Dominican University on February 23, securing top placements in multiple categories.

RCC’s Patricia Gibby and Julie Saadatmand claimed victory in the tournament, triumphing over four two-person teams from Dominican University after three rounds of debate. Gibby also claimed the Top Speaker Award. Teammate Kai Weiss secured fourth place in speaker rankings, while RCC’s Hassan Akua tied for fourth place along with Dominican University’s Shannon Kelly.

The RCC team of Christine Williams and Noel Nyamewya also competed in the

event, contributing to the college’s strong representation. RCC alum Rivka Mandel, currently a student at Columbia University Law School, returned to serve as a judge.

Impromptu Debate League tournaments are three-round events where teams debate scenarios. Participating colleges and universities send multiple two-person teams to compete. Awards are given for winning the most rounds (“place” awards) and for individual speaking performance (“speaker” awards). A school may win multiple team and individual awards.



“Patricia Gibby and Julie Saadatmand are brand new to college debate, and it was exciting to see them win their first tournament,” said Professor Andrew Jacobs, Director of Forensics (Speech & Debate) at RCC. “Once again, RCC has a deep talent pool, and I’m eager to see what the rest of the season holds.”

Queensborough’s transfer success

Queensborough Community College announced its selection to participate in the Cohort Four Transfer Student Success Intensive, a prestigious initiative led by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program (Aspen) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). Supported by the Ascendium Education

Group, this year-long program empowers colleges and universities to improve outcomes for transfer students through data-driven strategies, peer learning, and expert guidance.

“Seamless transfer from a community college to a four-year institution is crucial for the many students who depend on commu-

nity colleges as their entry to higher education,” said Queensborough Community College President Christine Mangino.

Cohort four includes ten teams of ten four-year institutions and thirteen community colleges representing 10 states. These partnerships will collaborate to create sustainable transfer reform strategies.

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Liz Mallett



Liz will share her journey of navigating fear and worry, while exploring the spiritual art of surrender and inner peace.

Steve Mallett



The journey only truly starts with recognition and acceptance of who and where we are in this very moment. Steve shares tips on practicing the art of loving life in any situation.



NY_ECK_SEMINAR_2025

Sample Seminar Topics:

Apprenticeship: Mastering the Small Steps. Working with God-Realized Beings

Raise Your Spiritual I.Q.—Intro to Eckankar

A Journey through Consciousness

Loving as God Loves: A Secret to Spiritual Living

Black History: Scenes from Queens

E. Marlay
Campus News

In between the dates of Saturday, February 1st and Friday, February 28th, Audrey Dove held an exhibition of her work at Queens Library in Flushing in honor of Black History Month.

Audrey Dove is a resident of Flushing and a painter. Her work is acrylic-based and often depicts nature and themes of the African Diaspora, a term that is used to describe the movement of people of African descent all around the world, as well as the communities that had formed because of that movement. She has had her work shown in the Queens County Fair in 2022, where she earned a Red Ribbon second place prize for her work, “Images in a Kaleidoscope.” Along with this honor, she has been exhibited at the Flushing Town Hall and Bayside Historical Society. The February exhibition at the Queens Library in Flushing is Dove’s second solo exhibition at this location, she previously held an exhibition at this facility in 2020. It was scheduled from March 6th until March 27th but ended early when on the 17th the library closed due to Covid.

The February exhibition was titled “Listen to the Drum: Homage to the Ancestors!” Mixed in with her work is a summation written by the artist in which she explains what this exhibition is about.

“Art is often considered as being subjective, yet it allows each of us a physical interpretation as well as an introspective visualization. It is also a connector. The poem, “Listen to the Drum” is my North Star. It was the foundation on which this project was conceived. The poem embodies the painful trip of my ancestors from Africa to the West. It connects the historical past to the present. The ancestors exhibited and offered us their strength, endurance, encouragement, and hope. These characteristics, that were deposited in the ‘Bank of Time’. It is from these characteristics and traits my paintings are crafted. “The Griot” speaks to me of these deposits.”



“The Griot” shows a woman wearing red and holding what appears to be a drum while she is surrounded by other women and children. In the background, you see trees with vibrant green leaves and a beautiful blue sky. This piece seems to speak to the hope that African Ancestors passed down. Looking at the painting I’m imagining joyful people gathering as a community. The colors used in this painting also feel significant. Some of the colors that were used included red and green. According to the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies Department at UMASS Amherst, the use of red in the Pan-African flag represents the blood that connects all people of African descent, as well as the blood shed for Black Liberation, and the use of green in the Pan-African flag represents the abundant and vibrant natural wealth of Africa. The Pan-African flag was created in 1920 by Marcus Garvey to represent people of the African diaspora as well as symbolize black liberation within the United States. This interpretation of the symbolic use of the colors in Audrey Dove’s work can be seen in many of her pieces in the exhibit, not just “The Griot.”

One of the few pieces that didn’t use the colors of the Pan-African flag was the painting “Shadowed Radiance,” which used the colors black and gold. Looking at it, one may interpret the image as a shadow surrounded by gold fabric. This reviewer saw a connection between the image of a shadow - what is left behind when an object or person comes into direct contact with light and the message of the exhibit. The entire collection demonstrates the traits (endurance, strength, hope) that are deposited and passed down to Black people today from their ancestors, connecting them to their past, similar to the way that a shadow is deposited on the ground, but it is always connected to the person it embodies. Gold is also often associated with wealth, potentially symbolizing the value that African ancestors deposited and passed down to their descendants.

I thought that Audrey Dove’s work in this exhibit was incredible. I sat in front of these paintings and felt many emotions come off the canvas and engulf me. It is extremely easy to lose track of time at this exhibit.

Kanopy and chill

Sarah Murphy
Special to Campus News

Are you getting the most out of your library card? You might be borrowing books, eBooks, DVDs, and audiobooks, but if you haven't added Kanopy to your streaming media diet, you are not taking advantage of one of our library's key features. Kanopy is an on-demand video streaming platform created and curated specifically for public and academic libraries and their patrons. While you won't necessarily catch the most viral content here, and you're unlikely to find any of the truly mindless slop that sometimes passes for entertainment at most of our homes (certainly my own from time to time), you can find world cinema, documentaries, classics, indie films, a good amount of BBC television, and tons of great children's content on Kanopy. And it's free with a library card.

Our monthly analytics on the Kanopy dashboard give me a peek into what films and shows are especially popular among our patrons. (It's essential to note that as with the analytics we use to see what books, DVDs, and other physical materials are popular, we can see the number of patrons accessing the content, but we do not see who is watching what.) So here are the quirky, cool, varied things your friends and neighbors have been watching this month on Kanopy. Go grab your library card, and join them!

"Triangle of Sadness" 2022

What feels at first like a White-Lotus-style critique of the rich on holiday turns into a deeply dark anti-capitalist revenge fantasy briefly featuring Woody Harrelson. Nominated for Academy Awards for best picture, director, and original screenplay, this is an offbeat film, not for the faint of heart and stomach, but not to be missed.

"Blackshore" 2024, 6 episodes

"Blackshore" is an Irish crime series featuring a Dublin detective who returns to her rural town in the west of Ireland to in-

vestigate a murder. There's just nothing quite like murder mysteries solved by sad attractive people with great accents. Outside of the UK and Ireland, it's tough to access this six-episode arc, but Kanopy's got it!

"Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" 1967

Interracial marriage was still illegal in 17 U.S. states when this movie, about a white woman bringing her Black fiancé home to meet her parents, was filmed. Starring Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy, and Sidney Poitier, it was an immediate popular and critical success, nominated for ten academy awards. It was also Tracy's final film role.

"Fleming: the Man Who Would Be Bond" 2014, 4 episodes

This 4-episode British miniseries is a fictionalized biographical account of Ian Fleming, who famously created the James Bond character and novels. The miniseries covers the years 1938 - 1952, complete with the fashion and scenic design you'd hope for.

The above titles are indicative of the genres and styles you'll find on Kanopy. I've just added the 1973 "Wickerman" to my watchlist along with "Force Majeure" (a 2014 Swedish film by the same director as Triangle of Sadness), "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" (1966), and "But I'm a Cheerleader," (1999). There are some terrific recent Oscar winners and nominees like "Parasite" (2019) and "Anatomy of a Fall" (2023). And the librarian police would cite me if I didn't mention the modern classic "Party Girl" (1995) starring the great Parker Posey as a alt-club kid who finds her true



"Look Who's Coming to Dinner"

calling at the New York Public Library circulation desk.

Kanopy also features a separate channel full of children's content. Viewers of all ages can catch animation featuring favorite characters like Arthur and Paddington and my new favorite "Shaun the Sheep." And there's a seemingly endless collection of picture books that have been adapted into simple animated read-alouds. "The Snowy Day" is a standout. Kids can also try "Vooks," or video books, featuring narration alongside with the books' text displayed karaoke-style on screen.

Patrons need a participating library card (our Greenwich Free Library participates) to connect to Kanopy, and you can do so on a laptop, tablet, phone, or by adding the Kanopy app to your TV. Each month, you'll get 24 tickets to use, and most films or series are 2-4 tickets each. Kanopy Kids content is unlimited. Our library's DVD collection isn't going anywhere, but we're proud to be able to offer this streaming option, too. As this winter drags on, we can all stand to be entertained from our couch.

Sarah Murphy is director of the Greenwich Free Library in Greenwich, NY.



Zone-based policing and removing guns

Eric Adams
Mayor of New York City
Special to Campus News

Since day one, public safety has been our administration's North Star. Our primary mission has been to create safer streets, safer subways, and a safer city for all New York families. Part of our strategy has been to zero in on removing illegal guns from our streets and out of the hands of criminals before they can cause more harm.

The numbers are in, and since the start of this year, the NYPD has already helped us take more than 1,000 illegal guns off the streets. That is 1,000 weapons that no longer threaten the safety of our neighborhoods, our families, or our children. And those 1,000 guns take the total number of illegal guns taken off city streets since we came into office to a staggering 20,700.

The removal of these illegal guns has

driven year-to-date shootings down by 14.5 percent compared to 2024 and to the lowest point in our city's history, saving countless lives. In fact, for three years in a row, the number of shootings and homicides across our city have both substantially declined. Getting illegal guns and reducing homicides off our streets and out of our cities is critical to protecting our kids, our communities, and our future.

Additionally, transit crime is down 27.9 percent year-to-date, following a significant deployment of officers to city subway platforms and trains, including on overnight shifts. And crime in New York City public housing developments is also down 12.7 percent since the start of the year.

These remarkable results have been driven by the use of zone-based policing, including deploying officers to hot-spot locations experiencing spikes in crime and additions to our Subway Safety Plan, first

implemented in February 2022.

We are going to continue NYPD foot patrols in high-crime areas, both above ground and throughout our transit system. But we know that ending gun violence requires more than enforcement. It requires attention and investment. We are going to ensure that young people have safe places away from gun violence to play by opening more playgrounds and community centers. And we are going to continue to invest in the safety of our schools, our streets, and our subways.

All of this work has led to the third consecutive month of double-digit decreases in overall crime, with the city experiencing reductions in six of the seven major crime categories. And since we came into office three years ago, shootings and homicides are substantially down — 42.2 percent and 22.7 percent, respectively.

Plus, thanks to our Neighborhood Safety Teams, Public Safety Teams, and Community Response Teams that have been deployed in targeted areas, New Yorkers don't just see the numbers going down — they can feel the difference, too.

It is clear: Our public safety strategy is working.

But we will not rest on these achievements. Our priority remains the same: keep New Yorkers safe and continue to address gun violence and illegal firearms. We will keep pressing for more — more officers, more safety, and more results.

Because of our steadfast focus on eradicating gun violence, and the hard work of the brave men and women of New York's Finest, New York City continues to be the safest big city in America, and we will keep working until we are the best place to raise a family as well.

Find more of Mayor Eric Adams' op-eds on cccnnews.com.



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STAC's new Exercise Science master's

St. Thomas Aquinas College announced the expansion of its in-demand STEM academic offerings with the launch of new graduate programs in Exercise Science in Fall 2025. These programs build upon the College's successful undergraduate Exercise Science program and are designed to prepare students to assess, evaluate, and develop exercise programs tailored to individual health needs and performance goals.

"The launch of our new graduate programs in Exercise Science reflects our unwavering commitment to academic excellence and innovation," said Ken Daly, President of St. Thomas Aquinas College. "As we launch our first-ever STEM Master's programs, we are equipping students with the knowledge and skills to tackle pressing challenges in health and wellness. These programs embody our mission to prepare students for impactful careers, while advancing the greater good."

The new offerings include a 33-credit Master of Science degree and a 12-credit Advanced Certificate in Exercise Science. Both are part of the College's "ADVANCE: Graduate and Certificate Programs for Lifelong Learners" initiative, which provides affordable educational paths to support lifelong learning and professional development. Courses will be offered in a hybrid format, with a combination of in-person evening and online classes.

"As the healthcare landscape continues to prioritize preventive and holistic approaches, the demand for exercise scientists with advanced degrees is expected to rise steadily," said Dr. Bianca Wentzell, Dean of the School of STEM at St. Thomas Aquinas College. "Our programs will provide students with the expertise needed to excel in this field."

The Master's degree program will equip future students with a versatile skill set, enabling them to pursue diverse careers such as Exercise Physiologist, Clinical



Exercise Physiologist, Wellness Coordinator, Strength and Conditioning Coach, and Sports Scientist. Graduates can apply their expertise in designing tailored exercise programs, managing wellness initiatives, enhancing athletic performance, and conducting research to optimize health and fitness outcomes.

As part of the new program rollout, students who apply to the MS in Exercise Science program by March 15, 2025, will be eligible for a special \$10,000 financial award toward their degree. Through the admissions process, applicants will also be considered for scholarships, tuition discounts, and financial aid opportunities. The 12-credit Advanced Certificate will be offered at a 50% tuition discount. This financial support demonstrates the College's commitment to affordability as students advance their education and prepare for impactful careers in a growing STEM field.

Interested applicants are encouraged to visit the MS in Exercise Science webpage

and complete our interest form. They are also invited to attend the College's upcoming panel discussion "Exercise Science & Health Innovation: Transforming Modern Wellness" on February 5. For more information, please contact Dana Caponong, M.A., Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions at dcaupon@stac.edu or 845-398-4220.

Since its inception on Earth Day 2021, the College's School of STEM has introduced new programs, launched the STEM Exploration Program series for high school students, established the College's STEM Advisory Board, and created innovative learning opportunities. Students gain hands-on experience through the Exercise Is Medicine On Campus initiative, which fosters education and awareness around exercise and physical activity to promote healthy habits within the campus community. The new SKAE Astronomy Center is slated to open Fall 2025, offering research and experiential learning with a state-of-the-art telescope.

Rise for Trans Youth Rally in NYC

On Feb. 8, Rise Up for Trans Youth held an event in Union Square in New York City. The event was billed as “a space to uplift and empower trans youth and their families” and thousands attended. Campus News photographer M. Marlay captured these scenes.



RIP CFPB

Jill Schlesinger

*Tribune Content Agency
Special to Campus News*

The Trump Administration has all but shuttered the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB).

In an email sent on Saturday February 8, the newly installed White House budget director, Russell Vought, who is also the acting director of the CFPB, instructed CFPB employees to stop investigating and processing consumer issues and to suspend any rules that were finalized, but not officially put into action. (To eliminate the agency would require a separate act of Congress, which is unlikely to occur.)

It's worth reflecting on how the CFPB came into existence and what its defanging means for consumers.

In the aftermath of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, the Obama administration enacted the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, with a goal of strengthening the oversight of financial institutions.

The reforms included the establishment of a new federal agency, the CFPB, which would be focused on creating rules for protecting consumers. The Obama Administration noted that “before CFPB was established, seven different Federal agencies were responsible

for various aspects of consumer financial protection. No single agency had effective tools to set the rules or oversee the whole market.”

The agency was the brainchild of now-Senator Elizabeth Warren, who was instrumental in the creation, building and launch of the agency.

In her 2011 testimony before Congress, Warren said “by law, the CFPB is obligated:

- 1) To ensure that consumers have timely and understandable information to make responsible decisions about financial transactions.
- 2) To protect consumers from unfair, deceptive, and abusive acts or practices, and from discrimination.
- 3) To reduce outdated, unnecessary, or overly burdensome regulations.
- 4) To promote fair competition by enforcing the federal consumer financial laws consistently.
- 5) To advance markets for consumer financial products and services that operate transparently and efficiently to facilitate access and innovation.”

The CFPB has enacted rules that have enhanced consumer protections with regard to credit cards, mortgages, student loans, auto loans, credit reports and scores, and payday loans.

True to its goal, the CFPB's work has provided a single point of accountability, when consumers interact with established large institutions and the smaller independent companies that often fell through the cracks.

The agency also has supervisory and enforcement power, which according to the website (the front door of the website was unavailable at the time of this writing, but other parts were still available), has resulted in ap-

proximately \$19.7 billion in consumer relief and \$5 billion in civil money penalties. The CFPB was also a central portal for financial education and for Americans to submit complaints about a financial product or service.

With the Trump Administration's desire to defang the agency through job eliminations and a stoppage of all work, Americans will lose a critical government agency, whose sole focus is to protect them.

There has already been a lawsuit filed to restore the CFPB, but that will take time to wind through the system.

In the interim, here are other federal and state agencies that may help, if you encounter bad actors in the financial world:

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

If you suspect a company or individual of perpetrating a scam or fraud, go to ftc.gov/complaint.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

If you have an investor-related issue, including “complaints against brokers, brokerage firms, investment advisers, transfer agents, mutual funds, and other market participants”, go to <https://help.sec.gov/s/investor-complaint>.

The Employee Benefits Security Administration

If there is an issue with your 401(k), profit sharing, defined benefit, or other retirement plan, you can go to <https://www.askebsa.dol.gov/WebIntake/>.

State regulators

Anticipating sweeping changes, the CFPB notified state regulators that they should be alert to consumer complaints arising. Each state has a securities, bank and insurance regulator.

Jill Schlesinger, CFP, is a CBS News business analyst. A former options trader and CIO of an investment advisory firm, she welcomes comments and questions at askjill@jillonmoney.com.



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Queens, LaGuardia colleges STEM pact

LaGuardia Community College/CUNY (LaGuardia) and Queens College/CUNY (QC) this past month celebrated an innovative partnership aimed at increasing the number of Hispanic and low-income students pursuing STEM majors.

LaGuardia President Kenneth Adams and Queens College President Frank H. Wu signed an agreement formalizing the partnership for the Queens STEM Academy (Q-STEM), which enhances STEM education, creates a seamless transfer pathway between the two institutions, and provides students with holistic support both in and out of the classroom. See photo caption, below.

“The innovative Q-Stem partnership addresses several key University priorities by preparing CUNY students for careers in high-demand fields, promoting a seamless transfer experience between colleges and reducing longstanding equity gaps for Latinos and members of other groups that are underrepresented in STEM,” said

CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. “Kudos to Presidents Adams and Wu, and to the faculty and staff members at LaGuardia Community College and Queens College, for their collaborative efforts to benefit CUNY, our students and New York.”

“We are thrilled to partner with Queens College on the Queens STEM Academy and are grateful for the U.S. Department of Education’s support that has made this possible. LaGuardia graduates more STEM majors than any other community college in the CUNY system, and many LaGuardia students aim to transfer to Queens College for its strong STEM programs,” said President Adams. “This program will help ease the transfer process and help make jobs in STEM, where there’s high demand and financial reward, more accessible for residents of Queens and



beyond.”

“We are delighted to partner with LaGuardia Community College in preparing Hispanic and low-income students to enter STEM-related fields,” said President Wu. “As a federally-designated Hispanic-Serving Institution—with a full-time undergraduate student enrollment that is at least 25 percent Hispanic—we are deeply committed to this effort for the scope of opportunities that it offers students while strengthening their skills in preparation for postgraduate research and employment.”



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It's official: The dogs have won

Greg Schwem

*Tribune Content Agency
Special to Campus News*

It was one of those days Chicagoans like to call “Fake Spring.” At 5:30 p.m. temperatures hovered in the high 60s. Scores of young couples, accompanied by their children, their bikes and their strollers descended on city parks for late afternoon fun, knowing snow could easily fall that same week. And it would.

After all, this is Chicago in March.

I joined my niece, her husband and their 5-month-old son at South Lakeview Park, a three-quarter-acre green space crammed into a neighborhood of renovated two-flat structures and populated by families desperate to hang on to city living a little while longer before the inevitable move to the suburbs and wide open play areas.

More than 50 children tumbled down slides or chased one another through the park's confines. Their parents, some sipping White Claws, High Noons and other Gen Z-favored beverages, watched to the best of their abilities. Happy shrieks filled the air.

“We'd better get in line for the swings,” my niece said as the four of us approached the chaos.

“There's a LINE?” I replied. “For the SWINGS?”

There was.

I've waited in line for Bruce Springsteen tickets, amusement park rides and, although I'm not proud to admit it, the chance to enter the world's largest Starbucks on Michigan Avenue. But not playground equipment. Also, I know that when it comes to waiting in lines, we have the patience of White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt listening to a question posed by CNN.

I expected a parent to stroll up, whip out a plastic card designating membership in the “Frequent Swing Club” and say her child was therefore entitled to the next available swing.

“This city needs more parks. And more swings,” I said to my niece. She didn't argue.

The following day, at approximately the same time and in similar weather conditions, I happened upon Noethling Park, a mere half mile from South Lakeview. Although slightly smaller, it appeared positively huge, due to its lack of population. No children were present because no playground equipment existed. The park's only occupants were two dogs, frolicking happily while their owners chatted on a nearby bench.

Since I'm certain dogs can talk, I could only imagine what they were saying to one another.

“We won. We are now loved more than children.”

It certainly appears that way.

Incidentally, Noethling Park is also known as “Wiggly Field,” and boasts, on the neighborhood association's website, to be “Chicago's first official dog exercise and play area.” The park's rules include a strict “no food” rule. For both dogs and humans.

Sorry, new moms who may just need a bench for nursing. Ditto to moms of toddlers who feel Wiggly Field would make an ideal location for a spring picnic. Move along. Unless you are a dog, there is no place for you here. Try South Lakeview Park. It's easy to spot. Just look for the swing line.

Later that week, I was relaying the “dogs over humans” story to a friend at an upscale Italian restaurant in the West Loop. This being a Friday night, the restaurant bustled with activity. Looking around, I only saw adults. No children were on the premises.

A table for eight sat empty next to us. But not for long.

A party of nine strolled in. Four couples and one dog. I don't excel at identifying dog breeds at first glance. This one was small, white, dressed in a sweater and cradled in its female owner's arms. Eventually she placed the canine under her seat. While talking to my friend and simultaneously eaves-



dropping, I could tell the first 10 minutes of conversation among the couples revolved around the dog.

Since I'm certain dogs can understand human language, I am convinced this dog was thinking, “I, too, have won. My human cannot live without me. Even for a 90-minute meal featuring fedellini arrabiata and sauteed broccolini.

I left before the party had completed its meal, so I'm not sure if they planned to continue their evening.

But the group looked as if they would easily be comfortable in a trendy nightclub with a strict dress code, a two-beverage minimum and a bouncer making sure nobody under 21 entered the establishment.

Unless the underaged guest was a dog. Come on in!

Greg Schwem is a corporate stand-up comedian and author of two books: “Text Me If You're Breathing: Observations, Frustrations and Life Lessons From a Low-Tech Dad” and the recently released “The Road To Success Goes Through the Salad Bar: A Pile of BS From a Corporate Comedian,” available at Amazon.





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DeNiro, Warner Bros. box office misfire

Rebecca Rubin

Variety

Special to Campus News

“The Alto Knights,” a crime thriller starring dueling Robert De Niro, made moviegoers an offer they easily refused.

The Warner Bros. film was D.O.A. over the weekend with \$3.2 million at the domestic box office, one of the worst-ever starts for a major studio release. “The Alto Knights” also cratered overseas, earning \$1.8 million for a bleak worldwide tally of \$5.1 million. With a price tag above \$45 million before marketing is taken into account, “The Alto Knights” is already one of the year’s biggest misfires.

Box office watchers, however, aren’t exactly scratching their heads to figure out what went wrong. They believe “The Alto Knights” hails from a genre -- mobster movies -- that’s been sleeping with the fishes for decades. Then critics rebuked the film, which landed a poor 37% on Rotten Tomatoes. Audiences, at least the few people who checked the film out, were kinder, giving it a “B” grade on CinemaScore exit polls. Still, those mixed scores don’t bode well for word-of-mouth.

“This kind of crime story has been out of style for years now,” says David A. Gross, who runs the FranchiseRe movie consulting firm. “Current soft theatrical market conditions are not going to help it.”

Directed by “Wag the Dog” and “Rain Man” filmmaker Barry Levinson and adapted by Nicholas Pileggi -- best known for his work as a writer or producer on “Goodfellas,” “Casino” and “The Irishman” -- the movie follows De Niro as Frank Costello and Vito Genovese, childhood friends who became two of New York’s most notorious organized crime bosses.

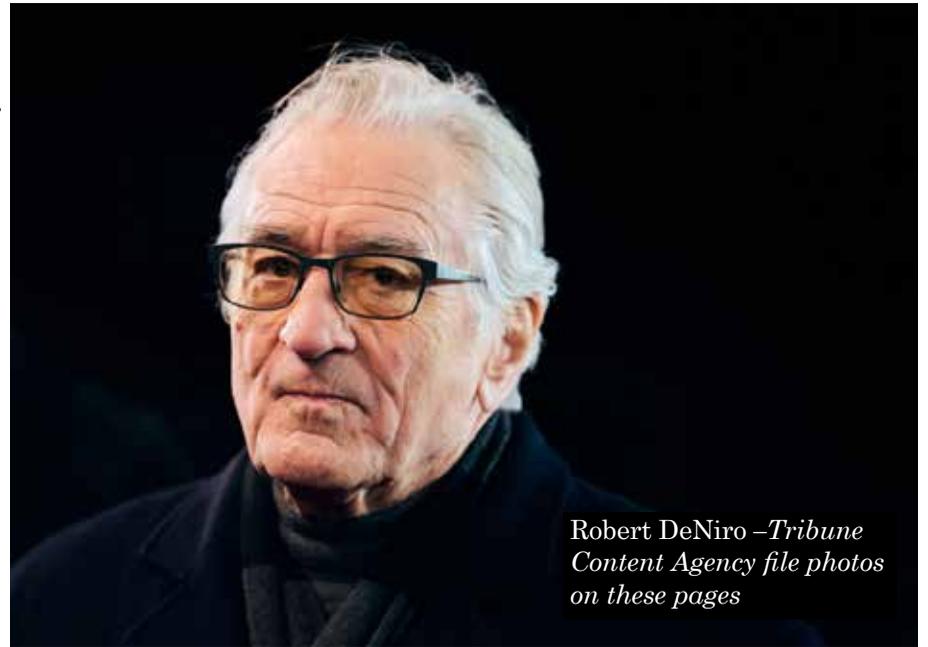
For a film like “The Alto Knights,” which already faces strong headwinds in this theatrical landscape, to have a shot at success, it needs rave reviews or potential awards chatter. Critics weren’t on board,

though, with several calling the choice to have De Niro star opposite himself was unnecessarily confusing. The Washington Post’s Michael O’Sullivan described the stunt as “not just unnecessary, it’s supremely distracting.” (“It invites the question: Why?” he wrote in his review) and The New Yorker’s Justin Chang simply referred to the double casting as an “odd gimmick.”

It’s not like gangster movies were all the rage when Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav greenlit the film in 2022. His decision to grant the film a \$45 million budget and theatrical release had prompted a few raised eyebrows on the studio lot at the time. Levinson, who began working on “The Alto Knights” (formerly titled “Wise Guys”) with Pileggi and producer Irwin Winkler before the pandemic, told Variety that Pileggi’s relationship with Zaslav had paved the way for the project to get made.

“Zaslav has known Nick, and somehow in a conversation [the film] came up, and Zaslav was intrigued by it,” Levinson said in an interview prior to the movie’s release. “That was sort of how it all came together.”

The studio also thought “The Alto Knights” could be another entry in De Niro’s pantheon of much-loved gangster films, several of which (like “Goodfellas” and “Mean Streets”) were produced by Warner Bros. For De Niro, “The Alto Knights” represented a return to the genre that made him a star. The 81-year-old became an enduring A-lister after classic Mafia movies like “The Godfather Part II,”



Robert DeNiro—Tribune Content Agency file photos on these pages

“The Untouchables,” “Casino” and “Goodfellas.” He’s even parodied his deep association with Cosa Nostra cinema in the “Analyze This” films.

Yet it’s a type of film that’s 30 years past its sell-by date. Even Martin Scorsese’s starry “Killers of the Flower Moon,” a Western crime drama about the 1920 Oklahoma murders in the Osage Nation, struggled at the box office against a \$200 million budget. And Leonardo DiCaprio starred in that film, which was nominated for several Oscars, alongside De Niro. Meanwhile Levinson’s filmography over the past quarter-century has included such commercial misfires as 2015’s comedy “Rock the Kasbah,” 2014’s drama “The Humbling,” 2012’s horror mockumentary “The Bay” and 2006’s political comedy “Man of the Year.” The Oscar winner’s last significant theatrical hit was 1997’s “Wag the Dog,” which grossed \$65 million against a \$15 million budget.

“Alto Knights’ is a film of a bygone Hollywood era. The director and star are no longer box office draws,” says Exhibitor Relations analyst Jeff Bock. “Warner Bros.

Please read more on next page

(cont.)

didn't do them any favors as they barely advertised the film. When a film doesn't have major studio support in this marketplace, it's bombs away at the box office."

"Seems like Canadians turned out for an adult drama, something that is unfortunately becoming more and more of a rarity in the North American marketplace," Bock said.

"The Alto Knights" is the second consecutive theatrical misfire for Warner Bros. after Bong Joon Ho's big budget sci-fi comedy "Mickey 17." Coincidentally, both films feature a lead actor named Robert who plays multiple parts in the same

movie. (In "Mickey 17," Robert Pattinson portrays disposable employee whose body is able to regenerate for science.) In three weeks of release, "Mickey 17" has earned \$40 million domestically and \$110 million worldwide. It's a respectable tally for the original swing, except that the film cost \$118 million to produce. Since "Mickey 17" needed to earn more like \$275 million to \$300 million to break even, it's now projected to lose \$75 million to \$80 million in its big screen run.

The studio's fortunes should rebound in April with "A Minecraft Movie," a Jack Black-led film adaptation of the popular video game that's tracking for a decent opening weekend. And later in the year, there's James Gunn's "Superman" as well as follow-ups to "Mortal Kombat," "Final Destination" and "The Conjuring." Yet Warner Bros. has several other big swings

on the calendar, including Paul Thomas Anderson's \$140 million "One Battle After Another" and Ryan Coogler's \$90 million vampire thriller "Sinners."

In the interview before the debut of "The Alto Knights," Levinson seemed sanguine about the volatility of the movie industry, which he's been involved with for decades.

"There are a lot of obstacles in this business, and you just have to navigate it as best you can," Levinson told Variety. "But there are the moments when you say, 'Look, I've been able to do a lot of stories that interested me, and I was able to work with a lot of actors that I had a great, great working relationship with.' The downside is the downside. But that comes with the territory."

Ian McKellen urges be out, be proud

Ian McKellen said in a recent interview with The Times of London that he feels sorry for fellow actors who feel like they can't come out as gay. The "X-Men" and "Lord of the Rings" icon has been one of the most prominent gay actors for decades. He publicly came out in 1988 at age 48 during a radio interview on BBC. He is now urging performers to not keep their sexual identity a secret.

"I have never met anybody who came out who regretted it," McKellen said. "I feel sorry for any famous person who feels they can't come out. Being in the closet is silly -- there's no need for it. Don't listen to your advisers, listen to your heart. Listen to your gay friends who know better. Come out. Get into the sunshine."

McKellen observed that there's never been an openly gay Oscar winner for best actor, nor has there been an openly gay U.K. prime minister or Premier League soccer player.

"In women's sport it's not an issue," he said. "I would imagine young footballers are probably, like actors, getting very bad advice from agents who are worried about their own incomes. But the first Premier League footballer to come out will become the most famous footballer in the world, with all the agencies begging for his name on their products."

While biases against gay actors in Hollywood persist, McKellen thinks the benefits of coming out far outweigh the risks. Kate Winslet told The Sunday Times in 2021 that it's "dated crap" for Hollywood to overlook gay actors, especially when it comes to casting straight parts. She added: "That should be almost illegal."

"I cannot tell you the number of young actors I know -- some well known, some starting out -- who are terrified their sexuality will be revealed and that it will stand in the way of their being cast in straight roles," the Oscar winner said. "Now that's fucked up... I can think of at least four actors absolutely hiding their sexuality. It's painful because they fear being found out. And that's what they say, 'I don't want to be found out.' --Zack Sharf



Correspondents without comedy, Trump

Brian Steinberg

Variety
Special to Campus News

The White House Correspondents' Association has canceled plans to have comedian Amber Ruffin perform at its annual dinner on April 26, a new sign of the pressures being brought to bear on news organizations during President Donald Trump's second term.

The journalism group, which has seen its control over interactions with Trump eroded in recent weeks, made the decision after Taylor Budowich, a White House deputy chief of staff, raised comments Ruffin has made in the past that are critical of Trump. Earlier this week, Ruffin told a podcast backed by The Daily Beast that she would not try to make sure her jokes targeted all sides of the political spectrum as the WHCA had requested, and likened the Trump administration to "kind of a bunch of murderers." Playing to both sides "makes them feel like human beings," she said, "cause they're not."

Ruffin, who first came to notice as a writer and contributor to Seth Meyers' "Late Night" on NBC, has in recent years hosted her own program on NBC's Peacock streaming service and, more recently, worked as a featured player on CNN's "Have I Got News For You," a topical comedy program that airs on Saturday nights

"The WHCA board has unanimously decided we are no longer featuring a comedic performance this year. At this consequential moment for journalism, I want to ensure the focus is not on the politics of division but entirely on awarding our colleagues for their outstanding work and providing scholarship and mentorship to the next generation of journalists," WHCA president Eugene Daniels wrote to members in a statement.

"For the past couple of weeks, I have been planning a re-envisioning of our dinner tradition for this year," he added. "As the date nears, I will share more details of the plans

in place to honor journalistic excellence and a robust, independent media covering the most powerful office in the world

President Donald Trump will not be attending the dinner.

Daniels, who is about to launch a career as an MSNBC anchor, seemed very supportive of Ruffin just a few weeks ago. "When I began to think about what entertainer would be a perfect fit for the dinner this year, Amber was immediately at the top of my list," he said in February, when the decision to have Ruffin host the dinner was announced.

The annual WHCA dinner often spurs lots of media attention and comedians ranging from Seth Meyers to Roy Wood Jr. have tilted at both the press corps and the presidents they cover. During Trump's tenure, however, the comedy has also generated controversy. In 2018, comedian Michele Wolf drew pushback after a series of jokes and remarks that poked more than an elbow in the ribs of her targets. "I think she's very resourceful, like she burns facts and then she uses that ash to create a perfect smokey eye," said Wolf of Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House Press Secretary. "Maybe she's born with it, maybe it's lies." And, Wolf on the media: "He has helped you sell your papers and your books and your TV. You helped create this monster and now you are profiting from him."

But the WHCA dinner has always been a minefield. In 2006, Stephen Colbert sparked a controversy by speaking about then-President George W. Bush, all in the manner of the bloviating talk-show host he portrayed on Comedy Central's "Colbert Report." "I stand by this man," Colbert told the audience. "I stand by this man because he stands for things. Not only for things, he stands on



Amber Ruffin

things. Things like aircraft carriers, and rubble, and recently flooded city squares. And that sends a strong message: that no matter what happens to America, she will always rebound -- with the most powerfully staged photo ops in the world."

Rich Little, the affable comedian and impressionist, was tapped for the event in 2007.

Things seem to have gotten worse with Trump. In 2019, after the Wolf appearance stirred rebuke, the WHCA hired biographer Ron Chernow to give remarks. He may best be known as the author of a history of Alexander Hamilton that was used as source material for Lin-Manuel Miranda's famous musical about the politician. The choice marked the first time since 2003 that a comedian was not utilized.

The WHCA has long managed seating arrangements at the White House during briefings and a "pool" feed that gives members details on the President's movements and remarks so that they are always covered. But the Trump administration has taken over many of those duties, deciding for itself which outlets get entry to the White House and Air Force One. In some cases, non-traditional media outlets with less credibility have been elevated to positions on par with those of NBC News and The New York Times, among others.

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Art exhibit at SCCC East End campus

Across the Pond, an exhibit of paintings and prints by Annemarie Waugh, will be on view at the Lyceum Gallery in the Montaukett Building on Suffolk County Community College's Eastern Campus from March 12 through April 17, 2025. A reception for the artist will take place on Thursday, April 3, from 4 – 6 p.m., with light refreshments provided. The event is free and open to the public.

Born in Birmingham, UK, Waugh explores British culture in her work, painting glimpses of tartans, animals, foliage, and iconic characters from British television. She also incorporates silkscreened expressions of British colloquialisms from her upbringing, layering them into abstract compositions on canvases that reach up to six feet in size. The exhibition also features original illustrations

from her upcoming book, *Across the Pond*, set to be published this spring.

Waugh's exploration of language began in 2015 as an art installation, where she chalked British expressions onto a 10 x 20 ft. wall, with their meanings decoded on an opposite wall. This project later evolved into a book examining the richness of British phraseology. In *Across the Pond*, she invites viewers to embrace the humor and nuances of language, incorporating English, Irish, Welsh, Gaelic, Scottish, Cornish, and Yiddish sayings.

She writes: "The England I grew up in was chockablock with clotted cream, loaded baked potatoes, pints of beer, jumble sales, Victorian seaside piers, Ribena, soggy vegetables, and drizzle that never quite



let up. My memories include moss, wit, tea shops, scrummy cakes and biscuits, fish and chips with mushy peas and curry sauce, dampness, nincompoops, and an aversion to taking life too seriously."



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If ICE comes to campus

E. Marlay
Campus News

On February 18th, the Queens College Urban Studies Department organized an event for students titled “Know your rights: Preparing and supporting Immigrant Students.” The purpose of this event was to give Immigrants at Queens College the information they may need to know in case they have a run in with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as well as current immigration policies. This was a public event meant to inform only and was not a replacement for legal advice regarding individual cases.

One of the main speakers at this event was Elinor Rahmani, who is an Attorney at Citizenship Now! This organization offers free, high-quality, and confidential immigration law services. They can help people become United States Citizens as well as help assess whether they qualify for legal benefits.

Under the Trump administration the Department of Homeland Security had expanded, expedited removal. Expedited removal is a process by which a person within the United States, not at the border, can be quickly removed from the country without a trial or a lawyer.

It was stated in the event, that in order to avoid facing expedited removal you need to be able to prove that you have been inside the United States for at least two years. To prove that you’ve been here for that amount of time, it might be recommended to carry physical photocopies of documentation and not just pictures on your phone.

It was also discussed if Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer approach your home to request to see the federal warrant with a judge’s signature that is required for them to enter your home. It is important to note that there is a difference between a judicial warrant and an administrative warrant. Administrative warrants can be issued by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement official but does not give them the right to enter a person’s house without permission.

A judicial warrant will give the specific address and time of search, will be signed by a Judge, and will have the words, “United States District Court” at the top. The door should remain shut until you see the warrant, which can be passed through a window or under the door.

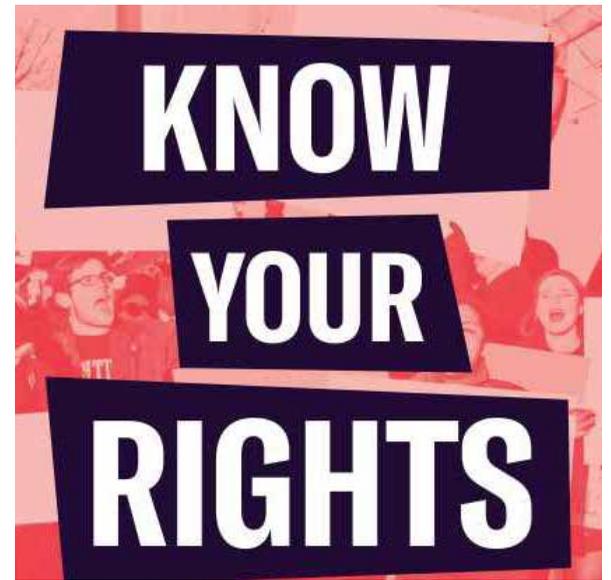
Immigration and Customs Enforcement is also allowed to misidentify themselves in order to gain permission into your house.

Another change that has come into effect under the current administration is that places which were previously safe for immigrants such as churches, schools, and courts. This means that Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers are now able to enter these places and arrest and/or detain immigrants in these places, as well as all public spaces.

It was stated that if you are in a public space and are approached by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, you should ask if you are free to go, and if you are not, you should express that you wish to exercise your right to remain silent. The only information that you might want to give them is whether you have any childcare or medical needs, and to request an attorney. It was also emphasized that you should not show them any foreign ID’s.

It was also mentioned that it is important to have money available for a bond if you can, ensure that family members know your alien number, and that you have a designated guardian in the event of separation from your children if you have any. Free non-judicial documents in which you name your children’s designated guardian is, in case of detention or deportation can be found at <https://planningwithparents.commons.gc.cuny.edu>.

According to the website, “This... came about from a project started in 2017 by CUNY Law School alums, professors, students, and other advocates and activists to help undocumented parents plan for their children and families in response to the threat of detention and deportation.”



As for the police, in the state of New York, they are technically only allowed to detain you if they have a reasonable suspicion of you committing a crime or are involved in a crime in some way. It is also not a requirement that you show your id to the police; however, it should be noted that if they cannot identify you can also be detained.

For those worried about whether Immigration and Customs Enforcement has been on any CUNY campus’s it should be noted that according to Bronx Community College, “It has long been and continues to be CUNY policy not to allow immigration enforcement officials to enter its campuses except to the extent required by law.” Meaning that they still will require a warrant signed by a federal judge for them to come onto campuses or to obtain any personal information regarding students. However, if you are made aware of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid taking place in New York City you can call the Immigrant Defense Project at (212) 725-6422 to report it. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention locator can be used to find adults in Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody or go through the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement office. For information regarding a detained minor, you can call (718) 688-8264 or (718) 688-8270. CUNY students should also keep an eye out for other events like this one on their individual campuses.

FUN & GAMES

More Word Play Answers Page 28

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DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. Finally, 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE® Players Dictionary, 5th Edition.

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Word Find By Frank J. D'Agostino

Find these words associated with geography (and find Frank's acoustic books on Amazon):

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Continent	Island	River
Country	Latitude	South
Earth	Longitude	Territory
East	Maps	Tropics
Africa	Meridian	West
Antarctica	Elevation	World
Asia	Nations	

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N V L R V P T U T I M V G O K
G A O I Z S N A N H N H I R H
I T B C U K L A R T T E O L E
T I E A V H I E C R R H N D A
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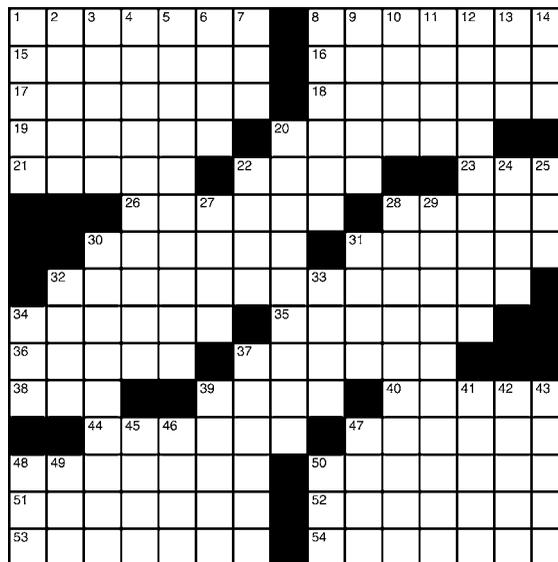
Sudoku

Each column/row must contain the numbers from 1 to 9, without repetitions. The digits can only occur once per block. The sum of every single row, column and block must equal 45.

2				3				
5	7		1	2				
			2	8				
			7	6				8
8	6						4	2
7			9	8				
			1	3				
9	2		6		4	5		
7							9	

Crossword

Across
1 File
8 Go as low as
15 Tightens, say
16 Observation when Porky leaves
17 Ready
18 "I'll do it"
19 Pass with a wave?
20 Up to one's eyeballs
21 "Street Scene" playwright
22 Water line?
23 D.C. United's first home
26 Obscure
28 Belinda Carlisle album with French songs and Irish musicians
30 Corkers
31 Pub freebie
32 Confection that reportedly improves heart health
34 Small tower
35 Lots
36 Companion of Dionysus
37 Fit
38 TY preceder, maybe
39 "Never ___ the com-



ments"
40 Scoring instructions
44 Saved for later, in a way
47 One of the Istars, in Middle-earth
48 Tinkerer
50 Disinfectant distilled from needles
51 Humdinger
52 Feature of an assured fit

11 Member of the Siouan family
12 Images on Clemson Tigers merchandise
13 Cook with a lot of Apples?
14 Shout of support
20 "My goose is cooked"
22 Lead-in to draw or hold

53 On point
54 Scottish dogs

Down
1 Stopped lying?

2 ___ artery
3 Maintain
4 "Bruised" director
5 Party exercise
6 Rather
7 Suffix for records
8 Defeats soundly, in sports slang
9 Piñata feature
10 Look that causes discomfort

24 Furnace part
25 Dennings of "2 Broke Girls"
27 Tear ___
28 Midwinter honoree
29 Grated ingredient in cranberry relish, often
30 MVP of the first two Super Bowls
31 Clown whose voice inspired Krusty of "The Simpsons"
32 Binary
33 Down ___
34 One of six in a fl. oz.
37 "Toss a can my way"
39 City on the Seine
41 Don DeLillo title inspired by an Andy Warhol print series
42 Hold dear
43 Runs without moving
45 Market unit
46 Singer-songwriter Suzanne
47 "Sideways" subject
48 S.A. country bordering five others
49 Novelist Rita ___ Brown
50 Sound of a sock

50 SUNY EOP students honored

The SUNY Board of Trustees and Chancellor John B. King Jr. recognized the achievements of 50 students in SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) who are honored with the Norman R. McConney Jr. Award for Student Excellence. The award, now celebrating its sixth class of honorees, recognizes outstanding EOP students for their academic merit and perseverance.

The honor is named in memory of Norman R. McConney Jr. (1946–2016), a graduate of the University at Albany and former assistant dean for special programs at SUNY. McConney, alongside former Assembly Deputy Speaker Arthur O. Eve, helped create the EOP as a statewide program.

The SUNY Board of Trustees said, "More than 8,000 SUNY students on 55 campuses are directly benefiting from the extraordinary services offered by the Educational Opportunity Program. Their paths towards a college education are immeasurably strengthened by the support offered by EOP, which is one of SUNY's most powerful strategies for student success and upward mobility."

"I am constantly reminded of the profound impact SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program has had on countless lives. The stories, triumphs, and unwavering determination of SUNY's EOP students serve as beacons of hope and inspiration for fu-

ture generations of students," said SUNY Chancellor King. "At SUNY, we are immensely grateful for the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the Legislature who continue to support this transformative program that ensures students not only start but have the support to complete their degrees."

Shannon R. Waite, Ed.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Howard University's School of Education and an Educational Opportunity Program alumna, was this year's keynote speaker. With over 20 years of experience as an educator, Dr. Waite's research focuses on diversity recruitment and pipeline programs, culturally responsive school leadership, fostering critical consciousness in educational leaders, and exploring the intersections of hyper-segregation and the school-to-prison pipeline.

This year's student speaker, Siniyah Sutton-Barton, a senior at Monroe Community College, has consistently earned Dean's List honors in the campus's Homeland Security program. She played a key role in founding the MCC Women of Excellence organization, focusing on mentorship, academic support, financial literacy, professional development, and community engagement. Sutton-Barton was also inducted into the



Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society. Active in her community, she has led clothing drives and collected hygiene items for domestic violence organizations. As an advocate for colon cancer awareness, inspired by her mother's early death from the disease, she promotes testing and awareness. Sutton-Barton, a mother of two, balances her studies, advocacy, and family life.

Since its inception in 1967, the EOP has provided access, academic support, and supplemental financial assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college. In its 58-year history, the EOP has served more than 85,000 students and evolved into one of the country's most successful college access programs.

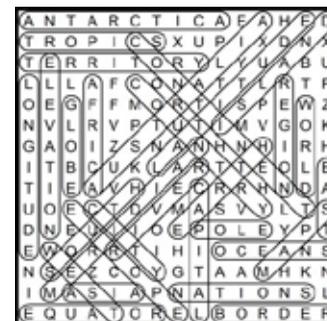
FUN & GAMES SOLUTIONS

Boggle: CHAD
LAOS SPAIN
JAPAN NEPAL
BRAZIL FINLAND
POLAND
Jumble: CHUNK
ONION BEHOLD
PARDON –
AN OPEN BOOK

SCRABBLE G R A M S SOLUTION

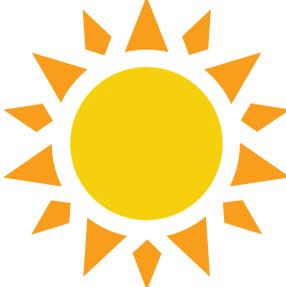
E ₁	A ₁	S ₁	I ₁	E ₁	S ₁	T ₁	RACK 1 =	57
A ₁	R ₁	G ₂	U ₁	E ₁	R ₁		RACK 2 =	7
D ₂	I ₁	M ₃	M ₃	I ₁	S ₁	H ₄	RACK 3 =	80
M ₃	E ₁	T ₁	H ₄	A ₁	N ₁	E ₁	RACK 4 =	64

PAR SCORE 140-150 TOTAL **208**
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9	2	8	7	4	5	1	3	6
3	5	7	6	1	9	2	8	4
4	1	6	2	3	8	5	7	9
2	3	5	4	7	6	9	1	8
8	6	9	3	5	1	7	4	2
7	4	1	9	8	2	3	6	5
5	8	4	1	9	3	6	2	7
1	9	2	8	6	7	4	5	3
6	7	3	5	2	4	8	9	1

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From a quiet kid to a Ph.D.

Jessica Desamero
Special to Campus News

“Why are you so quiet? Don’t you talk?” These were the comments I usually heard from my classmates during elementary school. I received straight As in my classes, but when it came to speaking and making friends, I had lots of trouble.

In high school and college, I managed to speak a little more and make a few friends, four of which I still speak with to this day. However, inside, I was still a shy girl with a lot of self-doubt. I knew I was passionate about science, but I didn’t know what I could do professionally, given my quiet nature.

This was when my dad recommended that I apply to Ph.D. programs. He received his Ph.D. in chemistry and was a college research professor, and he encouraged me to do the same. At first, I was a little hesitant. When I visited his lab and observed how he interacted with his student mentees, I would see how he has a loud voice, appears very confident in his expertise and has an overall commanding presence. “How could I ever be like that?” I would think to myself.

Still, I did love biochemistry and was particularly fascinated with the molecular origins of diseases. And I was excited by the thought of doing research to better understand diseases and develop more advanced treatments. I applied and got into the CUNY Graduate Center’s Biochemistry Ph.D. program in 2015.

The first year of the program consisted of taking classes and rotating at different research labs. We had several class presentations and groupwork exercises, but it wasn’t too bad. The real tests were after we chose our labs and started to conduct our doctoral research.

First, we had to teach one to two courses each semester. I hadn’t taught before, so my first class was especially nerve-wracking. Before the semester started, I shadowed a fellow professor to see how classes usually go. But nothing could prepare me for the anxiety of trying to be the main authority figure of the classroom, es-



pecially as someone who was an undergraduate student just a year and a half before.

The first semester was rough, but over time, I became used to teaching. Things became easier, and I eventually developed a louder, more authoritative (but still kind)

‘I was already doubting myself, as the imposter syndrome was always in the back of my mind.’

persona that I switch to whenever I teach. In 2019, I even received a collective card from some of my students, thanking me for all my help and guidance through their lab experiments. I was especially touched and

thought, “Wow, I really did it.” Challenge 1, complete.

The larger hurdle, however, was presenting my research. For an exam called the second level, we had to present a thesis proposal to see if we were qualified to progress as Ph.D. candidates. From the start, I was already doubting myself, as the imposter syndrome was always in the back of my mind. This lack of confidence really showed in my presentation. Because of my proposal-writing skills, I was able to pass the exam. However, in a year’s time, they wanted me to give them another presentation on my research progress, and if I didn’t improve by then, I would unfortu-

Please read more on the next page

(cont.)

nately have to leave the program.

Starting then, I was determined to do better. I wasn't going to let my introversion hold me back anymore, so I started doing things out of my comfort zone. I gave mini talks to our lab's undergraduates about various laboratory techniques and presented scientific posters at more research conferences. Then I started doing activities outside of research. What truly helped was volunteering in science outreach, where I practiced speaking and teaching science to children and parents. This boosted my confidence in my communication skills and in presenting myself as an expert. All these endeavors were especially hard at first but got easier over time as well. I still get nervous, but my nerves are more manageable now.

By the next presentation, I was much more confident, and it showed. My committee saw how much I improved from the last time that they even clapped. I proceeded to continue with my thesis research, knowing that I did have it in me.

Near the end, I even found myself pitching the idea to present at a general science communication event. I presented alternative DNA structures as anticancer superheroes, and I had fun doing so.

My thesis defense was the most anxiety-inducing experience of my graduate school years, but inside, I knew I could do it. And I did. I also didn't hesitate with any questions, even those asked in the middle of my presentation. The deliberation took a much shorter time than before, and 15 minutes later, I was Dr. Jessica Desamero. I turned

my biggest professional failure into one of my greatest achievements, and I couldn't be prouder of myself.

At first, I never thought I would be a good public speaker. Now I'm a Ph.D. and practicing science communicator. I still get shy and anxious, especially at social events. And I do occasionally still have imposter syndrome. But now I know that I am good enough, and I can do anything I put my mind to.

After graduating, I taught at a different CUNY campus. In one class, one of my best students was shy and soft-spoken. One time, she apologized for speaking low, but I reassured her that it was okay and that she didn't need to apologize. I also acknowledged that she was a good student. I didn't get to give her advice back then, but if I did, here's what I'd say to her and to others who are shy but want to pursue careers traditionally associated with extroverts:

1. Practice putting yourself out there and talking with others in different ways

It doesn't have to be directly related to your professional career goal. Sometimes taking on something adjacent can be a more manageable start. It will be hard at first, but over time, it will get easier. You can even start by going to an event related

to one of your personal interests.

2. Find your passion

When you're passionate about something, it makes it easier to work towards achieving your goals. When you have passion, you are more determined to succeed despite facing challenges.

3. A positive mindset works wonders

Failed at trying to speak at an event? Don't beat yourself up too much! You tried, which is still important! Also, when the imposter syndrome and self-doubt hit, make sure to remember that you are good enough and that you are enough.



Jessica Desamero received her Ph.D. in biochemistry from the CUNY Graduate Center and is a science writer and educator.

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