



# THE QView



Discimus ut serviamus: **We learn so that we may serve.**

#72

## What's News

### **Spring Break Starts This Week; Commencement Ceremonies Postponed**

In accordance with the CUNY-wide calendar, Queens College is holding a three-day spring break this week, from Wednesday, April 8, through Friday, April 10. Students are urged to talk to faculty regarding any scheduling issues arising during the following week due to religious observance.

Commencement ceremonies at QC and across the entire university system will be postponed, as Interim President William Tramontano explained in his [message](#) to the college community. (The announcement from Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez is posted [here](#).) Nonetheless, degrees will be conferred as scheduled at the end of the spring semester. Undergraduate and graduate students who have successfully completed the requirements of their programs will receive their degrees.

Across CUNY, summer course offerings will be provided via distance education format. At QC, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Elizabeth Hendrey will oversee the transition of in-person summer session courses to distance learning. The college continues to encourage all students to utilize all or part of the summer to earn credits needed and advance towards graduation.

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While most QC personnel are working from their homes, the essential employees of Public Safety are on campus, accompanying people to their offices and maintaining security. The entire college community extends heartfelt thanks to (left to right) Campus Security Assistant (CSA) Ryan Barth, Sergeant Laura Ballesty, Lieutenant Jose Sanchez, Director Beth LaManna, Lieutenant Hemawatie Seusarran, Corporal Michael Wray, and CSA Annette Beckford.

## VIRTUAL TOWN HALL



Queens College inaugurated its virtual Town Hall with "Going the Distance" on the evening of April 1 with an all-star administrative lineup, moderated by Interim Chief of Staff Meghan Moore-Wilk, of Interim President William Tramontano, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Elizabeth Hendrey, Vice President for Student Affairs Adam Rockman, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Retention Richard Alvarez, Associate Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs Alicia Alvero, and Associate Provost for Innovation and Student Success Eva Fernandez. Patched in from remote locations, panelists fielded student questions submitted in advance--including from Student Association President Joseph Cobourne--on an array of topics (see sample Q&A, immediately below). "We will come together as a Queens College family in the future," said Interim President Tramontano at the end of the 45-minute session, wishing good health to all students and their families. Additional events will be held as the semester continues, in partnership with the Student Association.



## **Samples of Questions from Going the Distance**

### **How will the grades be given at the end of the semester? Will it be possible to convert letter grades to credit/no-credit? What impact might this have?**

The CUNY Board of Trustees passed a special COVID19 flexible grading policy for the spring 2020 semester. Students may change any or all of their grades to CR/No CR up to 20 business days after the grade submission deadline. This policy applies to undergraduates and graduate students and overrides all normal rules about how many PNCs you can have in a program, majors that don't allow PNCs, etc.

The decision to select CR/No CR is final. Please consult with financial aid and your academic advisors first. This decision may affect financial aid; you should also factor in any plans to apply for graduate or professional school, or whether there are any licensing or certification concerns in your major.

Counselors are available via Live Chat every day; visit the [QC Hub website](#) for details.

### **What should I do if I'm having trouble with a class, or can't contact a professor or a department?**

All faculty should have online office hours posted on the department website. Departments should also post instructions about how to reach department staff, advisors, etc. If you continue to have difficulty reaching your professor, contacting a department, or accessing your class online, please email [keeplearning@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:keeplearning@qc.cuny.edu) with your problem. We will work with you to solve it.

### **Has the final exam schedule been affected by the changes to the academic calendar? Are there any further changes to the calendar?**

Aside from the instructional recess, recalibration period, and the change to spring break, the calendar remains the same. The last day of classes is still May 14 and the final exam period is the same as originally scheduled. The final exam schedule is posted online.

Professors should inform students about the details of online final exams. Some faculty may use the scheduled exam period for an online exam; others may use different final evaluations, papers or projects. Faculty may not schedule an exam during a time when another final is scheduled. Please email [keeplearning@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:keeplearning@qc.cuny.edu) if you have any conflicts or concerns about finals.

### **What is Queens College doing with regard to students who will have to make up work because classes are in session during religious holidays?**

This decision was taken at the CUNY system level, after balancing the needs of all students. The university and Queens College remain committed to making accommodations for religious observances. If assignments or exams are due during a religious holiday, students have the option of requesting an extension or completing assignments and exams at a different time; if classes are held, recordings must be available for review until well after the religious holiday ends. Students should notify professors about their situation. If there is any problem with getting the flexibility you need, please reach out to [keeplearning@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:keeplearning@qc.cuny.edu).

### **What is being done for students who do not have a computer or Internet access at home?**

Students in that situation can sign up to borrow a Chromebook or an iPad. Send an email—from your Queens College email address, if possible—to [keeplearning@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:keeplearning@qc.cuny.edu) with your student ID. Once the distribution schedule is available, we will contact you to make arrangements to get the device safely in your hands. If you don't have Internet access at home, many Internet- and mobile service providers have pledged to support people affected by the COVID-19 crisis. A list of these companies is posted on the provost's emergency website, [provost.qc.cuny.edu](http://provost.qc.cuny.edu).

### **How can students make use of the library?**

The college's physical library facilities are closed, but librarians are online and ready to help students with coursework. Your library barcode enables you to access electronic resources. If you don't have a working barcode, you can get one: Check the library website, [library.qc.cuny.edu](http://library.qc.cuny.edu), for instructions. If you have a research or an access question, you can talk to a librarian via chat or email.

Students can use their QC email account to register for remote access to the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*. You can get free access to e-books and e-textbooks, too.

### **Are tutoring services still available?**

Queens College is maintaining a broad range of tutoring. The Writing Center is helping students write personal statements; the center's tutors also offer pre-writing, brainstorming and outlining advice. Make appointments through the new QC Navigate system: Download the Navigate app in the Apple Store or Google Play, or visit [navigate.qc.cuny.edu](http://navigate.qc.cuny.edu) for more information. STEM tutors aren't in Navigate just yet, but they will be soon. In the meantime, find them at [hsistem.qc.cuny.edu](http://hsistem.qc.cuny.edu).

### **What personal services are available for students?**

The Knights Table Food Pantry is fully operational. Students can visit <https://knightstablefoodpantry.org/> to complete a two-question application and schedule an appointment to pick up food.

The QC Counseling Center, 718-997-5420, is conducting appointments by telephone and videoconference. Referrals are available to low-cost, sliding scale, and pro bono mental health practitioners.

Any student who has questions, concerns, issues, or simply wants advice about their QC experience, can contact the office of the vice president for Student Affairs directly at [VPSA@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:VPSA@qc.cuny.edu), 718-997-5500 or 5501. Leave a voicemail and staff will get back to you as quickly as possible, usually within 24 hours (Monday through Friday).

### **What resources are available for students with disabilities? What should a student who needs special support or accommodations do right now?**

Students who are currently registered with the Office of Special Services should contact their counselor in that office should they need enhanced or different services from what they were getting prior to the move to distance learning. Students who were not previously registered can get expedited access to reasonable accommodations by calling the Office of Special Services at 718-997-5870 and leaving a message, or emailing [QC\\_SPSV@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:QC_SPSV@qc.cuny.edu).

### **What can be done for students with emergency financial needs?**

In an emergency situation when financial assistance will help students remain in school, finish the semester, and persist to graduation, students can apply

for a grant from QC's Petrie Foundation Student Emergency Fund. To learn more about this fund or apply for a grant, [click here](#).

### **What steps are being taken to alleviate the financial pressures experienced by students?**

For students participating in the Nelnet Payment plan, the last payment has been postponed to May 5. All late payment fees are being waived. Bursar Holds for nonpayment will not be placed until May 27.

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About 25 participants attended the Opera Studio's online session on March 25. "There was no singing that day," reports Adjunct Assistant Professor Elizabeth Hastings of the Aaron Copland School of Music. "I really wanted to check in on everyone and 'take the temperature' of each person to see how they were faring with remote learning and Skyped voice lessons. We made plans for the coming week; people will read their written character study assignments for the group, and I will lead some sessions on topics of interest to the class. This past week we started one-on-one FaceTime coachings."

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### **Faculty Collaborate on Remote Solutions**

Most teachers feel that their work is not just a job but a vocation. That sense of a higher calling was brought to the fore during the coronavirus emergency as students and faculty were sent home to prepare for distance learning. The collective response to this big adjustment has offered a lesson in caring, collegiality, and can-do energy.

Although most classes at Queens College meet in person, in this crisis faculty

experienced with online teaching have stepped forward not only to redesign their own courses, but also to help others do so, across all departments. Many of these faculty acquired some portion of their digital skills through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), headed by director Michelle Fraboni.

For instance, **Saima Cheema** (Biology) draws on a “plethora of resources” that she first learned about from CTL, which initially helped her to teach web-enhanced traditional classes but more recently helped her prepare two lab courses to go fully online on short notice. Among those tools, she uses Blackboard to collect and grade assignments, and Google Meet and Screencast-O-Matic for video lectures. The labs themselves, however, posed a very practical challenge—she could not expect students to perform dissections at home—so she has developed a rigorous combination of virtual demonstrations, simulated lab results, and analytical exercises for them to work through instead.



“This replaces some hands-on activity, but it’s really walking students through every step from prep to the end,” Cheema explains. “We will provide them with plenty of data to analyze, and they will have live lab sessions. If questions come up, my instructors are there to help answer them.”

To get through the marathon course redesign, she also trained her lab instructors for online teaching and recruited them to help her quickly track down the best available digital lab resources. “Ideally, I would have liked to prepare my own videos using my own lab setup, but of course in the given situation that’s just not possible. Delegating some of that responsibility has been really what has kept me afloat. I’m lucky to have such motivated lab instructors who’ve been really helpful.” Finally, she has polled her students on their skills and needs, and offered explicit instruction in use of online tools.

Other faculty have long used digital resources in their classrooms. For instance, **Lenwood Gibson** (ECP) teaches in-person graduate courses in which he incorporates a combination of technologies in flexible ways—Blackboard, Google Meet, Zoom, even an interactive app called Nearpod. To adapt his existing courses, he has been building on what he already did.

Gibson believes his program has several advantages in this crisis. ECP had been working already toward increased online instruction; all the full-time faculty have taken classes with CTL, and they have planned for the past couple of years to move progressively toward digital skillsets. His students, too, are well prepared and have good access to technology; indeed, he finds they often know technology better than the faculty. “I’ve learned from them over the years about things that might work better than what I’m trying,” Gibson observes.



Even with this running start, however, ECP faced challenges in attaining fully

online courses in just a week. They have been meeting remotely to address these, and he is confident “we will still be able to deliver the type of material that we need to meet our course objectives.”

“There are levels of implementation when it comes down to using technology for distance learning,” he says, discussing the range of skills among the faculty. “The basics are access to email and being able to communicate directly with the students on a regular, consistent basis, and pairing that with maybe just using phone conferencing. The second level would be using things like cloud-based software, Google Classroom or Google Drive, and Blackboard, which I think is underestimated. If you’re used to bringing your materials to class and you can’t do that anymore physically, there can be a virtual common space where all your material can be, and Blackboard is really good for that. Level 3 is using synchronous videoconferencing and those kinds of things to really give a sense of community.”

This pragmatic approach is shared by **Vanessa Perez** (Political Science), who has redesigned a hybrid and a traditional undergraduate course of her own this semester. She also responded to a call for help by CTL, which has been overwhelmed with requests for assistance and asked more skilled faculty to step in and help other instructors.



Perez has consulted over the phone and also created video tutorials and written guides in response to people’s questions. “I offer options,” she says. “If you’ve never taught a course online, here’s what you can do now.”

Her efforts include a “crash course” (“How to Transition Your In-Person Class to Online during a Pandemic in 24 Hours or Less”) that was attended by faculty from Queens College and across CUNY. “The goal was to give the basics of what you can do online and how can you adapt your class.” She suggests “baby steps” from email to more advanced technologies. In her own classes, she makes sure the students themselves know both how to use all the tools and that they have choices available to them.

For Perez, connectivity remains key. Usually she can direct any students without access to computers or the Internet to make use of the college’s computer labs, but that is not an option now. She has polled her students about their access to technology, but remains aware that they confront a constantly changing landscape. “*Can* they get online, but also *how* do they do that in an emergency during a lockdown? We just have to pay attention to the fact that some students might be more vulnerable than others because they have less accessibility.” Even when they have computers, access to the Internet might prove difficult; thus, she has created assignments that students can complete on their phones, using the Blackboard app. “I have email as a backup plan,” she says. “We can email the lecture and the assignment, and worst-case scenario, use the mail.”

Much about the coronavirus emergency has been frightening and difficult, yet members of the faculty have stepped forward warmly and generously to help their colleagues and students.

“The encouragement we’re getting at this point from the department, from the provost’s office, from the president’s office, the constant communication has been really helpful,” says Cheema. “I think it’s been really inspiring. I am actually the coordinator for all the microbiology labs, not just for the course that I teach. After I felt comfortable with my courses, I was compelled to reach

out to the other course managers and instructors in our department and politely offer my assistance, and just knowing that everybody is undergoing this difficulty and having trouble, I wanted to help with whatever I could. A lot of people graciously accepted the help. There's a steep learning curve ahead, but with all the support that we have available and all the encouragement we're constantly receiving, we'll be OK."

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## Wu-ing the Local Press

QC President-designate Frank Wu won't officially start until July, but he is already garnering attention in borough publications. To date, he has been profiled by the *Queens Courier* [Son of Chinese immigrants appointed president at Queens College](#) and *Queens Daily Eagle* [Queens College's new leader Frank Wu had sights set on CUNY](#). He is also the subject of a [CUNY video](#).



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## Academic Advising Always Within Reach

While the Academic Advising Center is physically closed until further notice, the virtual center is open for business.

From March 14 to April 3, the AAC remotely advised 1,652 students! Saturday, April 4, marked three full weeks of remote advising. Including 38 appointments scheduled for that day, the three-week total reached 1,690. The center is also diligently working on the details and processes to welcome this fall's incoming freshmen and transfers through a virtual orientation experience—no small task, given the over 4000 students who matriculate each fall.

To ensure assistance and accessibility to all students, the center is maintaining its regular semester's schedule, which includes evening and Saturday availability.

The center's website, social media, and outgoing phone line messages inform students of its virtual services and how to schedule an appointment via the downloading of the college's new Navigate app. (To connect to Navigate, students should go to <https://navigate.qc.cuny.edu/>.)

Advisors are using CUNYfirst, DegreeWorks, and Navigate to provide virtual advising services via technologies and platforms that include phone and email, Zoom, Skype, Google Hang Out, and Face Time. The center's support team is retrieving voicemail messages and email and is responding multiple times a day, even on Saturdays.

"Words cannot describe my level of gratitude and appreciation to the AAC team as we navigate (no pun intended—really!) these uncertain times that are affecting all aspects of our lives," says Academic Advising Director Laura Silverman. "It is commendable that this team adjusted so quickly to this new mode of working concurrent to rolling out a brand-new technology, Navigate."

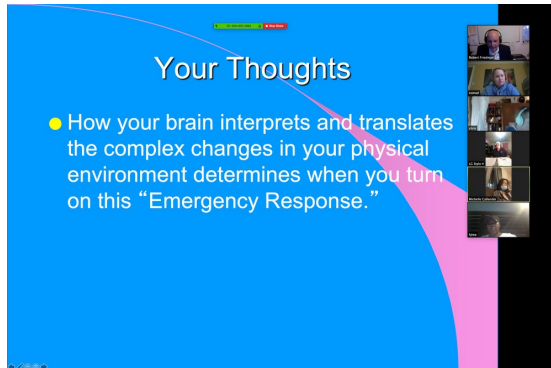
"We couldn't have done all this without our



undergraduate technology assistant, Stelios Phanartzis, a graduating senior majoring in computer science," adds Christopher Mollura, senior academic advisor and assistant director for advising communications. "Stelios made sure all advisors had the proper equipment and had remote desktop access to do their job from home. He has a bright future ahead of him."



## Tennis Management Program Serves Up Classes on Zoom



An attribute common to the best professional tennis players is the ability to quickly adapt their game when confronting an opponent they've never faced before.

With Governor Andrew Cuomo's decree in response to the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus that all SUNY and CUNY instruction move off campus and online, Robert Lawrence Friedman, an instructor in QC's Professional and Continuing Studies, and Diane Gahagan, the college's Continuing Education director, saw a need to quickly adapt the mode of instruction for his Professional Tennis Management certification class.

Friedman offered a proposition to his ten students: delay their studies for weeks while the college worked out the complexities of online instruction or attempt to continue classes on-schedule employing a method he had used before, "infrequently." They unanimously agreed to the latter option and, five or six sessions into the semester, began taking their Monday night classes using Zoom, the online conferencing platform that allows all participants to appear from different remote locations and converse and share information together on screen.

As Friedman acknowledges, "It was basically jumping right into the trenches. I took a day or two to look through some of the nuances of it, and then I dove right in. It's one thing to do a half-hour or an hour program. It's a whole other thing to do a three-hour session--in terms of concentration, in terms of keeping everyone present and engaged."

"It's working well, so far, and every day I'm learning new capabilities with it," he reports. "It's a very different medium, of course, than being in front of the students, but, due to the coronavirus, it is a necessity."

Noting that some organizations are trying to get by with telephonic conferences, Friedman observes, "With Zoom, it provides a different level of connection: You're dealing with nuances of facial expression. It's a means to create some normalcy amidst this strange world we're now living in."

“What makes my programs different is that I really strive for as much interactiveness as possible,” he explains. “So, I’ve had to work within the environment of Zoom to try to create as much interactivity as possible. And it is possible. In fact, I’ve learned of a new option that I’m really excited about using.”

The new option is the ability to have breakout rooms in which a few participants can split off from the main group to interact separately. It also allows Friedman to divide the group so that they can partner up and discuss relevant topics in pairs.

“The students are very engaged and very appreciative, actually,” he says, noting that they enjoy some unexpected benefits: “They appreciate being able to be in their homes and not having to travel, as in the case of a couple of folks who have to travel an hour in traffic to get to the school. They’re grateful to not have to have those expenses and the stress of trying to get to class on time [during rush hour].”

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## CUNY Makes the Census Count

Extending a mobilization effort that began last fall, the City University of New York is implementing a remote campaign to make sure that every New Yorker is counted in the upcoming 2020 U.S. Census.



“The current public health emergency intensifies New York City’s need for federal funding and representation, and it hammers home the importance of doing our part to ensure that all New Yorkers stand up to be counted in Census 2020,” said CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. “CUNY is proud to help ensure that New York succeeds in this process, even in the face of new challenges presented by the coronavirus. We simply cannot forget the importance of getting all New Yorkers to respond to the census.”

Interim President William Tramontano supported CUNY’s campaign with a [message to the QC community about the census](#).

How important is the decennial population survey? The results determine the apportionment of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, along with the federal government’s allocation of more than \$675 billion in funding for education, public health, disaster planning and response, and transportation. In 2010, the city’s initial self-response rate was just 61.9 percent, considerably lower than the national average of approximately 76 percent.

Enter the CUNY Census Project—a partnership of CUNY, the New York City Council, and NYC Census 2020. Through the project, 270 CUNY students were trained to staff the Census Corps, which educates, engages, and mobilizes city residents to complete the census form. In January, corps members gave presentations, staffed information tables, distributed flyers, translated materials, organized events, and attended community meetings. With the spread of COVID-19, students took their outreach virtual, [producing videos](#) and a host of other tools, and using telephone and text messaging.

The Census Corps is just part of CUNY’s census campaign. The university has been working with New York State on related efforts. Professors have introduced the 2020 census in CUNY online classrooms. Last but not least, the CUNY Mapping Service at the Graduate Center’s Center for Urban Research created an online [hard-to-count map](#), highlighting areas that are difficult to survey. Census self-response data are updated daily, enabling organizations

and state and local governments to compare response rates down to the census tract level and adjust outreach strategies as needed.

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## Giving Thought for Food

The Knights Table Food Pantry will be offering pre-plated dinners at least once per week for the foreseeable future during the COVID-19 crisis. The offer is available to QC students as well as any student registered at a CUNY school. This initiative was launched last week, when more than 100 meals were distributed to students in need.



Students interested in taking advantage of this opportunity should register with the [Knights Table Food Pantry](#) if they haven't already. All students will receive an email notice the evening before the dinners are available. Students must also book an appointment in advance in order to comply with current social distancing guidelines. Please note that on days the pre-plated dinners are distributed, non-perishable items will not be distributed. For further information, please email [Knightstable@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:Knightstable@qc.cuny.edu).

The [New York City Food Policy Center](#) is compiling a list of food resources throughout the city, including options for students, seniors, and people with disabilities. New entries will be added over time. In addition, the New York City Department of Education is offering three free meals a day, Monday through Friday, to children and adults throughout the city. No identification is required; food must be picked up to be eaten onsite. For details, including the location of a food hub in your neighborhood, [click here](#).

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## Coronavirus Updates

Distilling data from the [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#), Steven Markowitz (Commoner Center) reports that the Borough of Queens has the sad distinction of recording the highest incidence of COVID in New York City.

As of April 2, Queens, with 28 percent of the city's population, had 32 percent of the city's hospitalizations: 16,819. Worse yet, Queens had 33 percent of the city's COVID deaths.

In at least half of Queens, more than 60 percent of COVID tests are positive. The incidence of infection is especially high in Elmhurst-Corona-Jackson Heights, mid-Queens, and southeastern Queens.

The New York State Comptrollers Office has compiled a [list of government agencies](#) that can help residents, businesses, nonprofits, and organizations facing financial hardship as a result of this pandemic. Information will be updated frequently, so keep checking the page.

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## In Memoriam: William Helmreich

Distinguished CUNY  
Professor of Sociology  
William Helmreich, former  
director of the Center for  
Jewish Studies at Queens  
College, wrote 18 books on  
subjects ranging from a

black militant organization—the topic of his dissertation—to Holocaust survivors. But he may have been best known for *The New York Nobody Knows: Walking 6,000 Miles in the City*, and borough-specific editions devoted to the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. He was working on the Staten Island volume when he died on Saturday, March 28, of coronavirus at the age of 74.



Born in Switzerland to Jews who fled the Nazis, Helmreich grew up on the Upper West Side and attended modern Orthodox schools, followed by Yeshiva University. After earning his doctorate at Washington University in St. Louis, he returned to New York. Affiliated for his entire career with the City College of New York, where he was celebrated for his commanding memory and engaging lectures, he also taught at The Graduate Center. In a note announcing the professor's death to the college community, CCNY President Vincent Boudreau called Helmreich a foundational member of the CCNY Sociology Department, observing, "It is hard to imagine the campus without him."

*The New York Nobody Knows* took its inspiration from the future scholar's childhood excursions with his dad. The two would pick a subway line, ride to its last stop, disembark, and wander around the neighborhood where they had arrived. Decades later, Helmreich described and demonstrated his book research methods in this [video](#).

Helmreich is survived by his wife, speech therapist and novelist Helaine Helmreich; their sons Jeffrey and Joseph, and their daughter, Deborah Halpern; and four grandchildren. They stood six feet apart at the small private funeral and were not able to sit shiva. Jeffrey Helmreich has promised to see *The Staten Island Nobody Knows* to completion.

## Heard Around Campus

The late **Joseph Brostek '55** was memorialized with obituaries in the *Queens Chronicle* and the *Queens Ledger* . . . **Dr. Joseph Sciorra**, director for academic and cultural programs at the Calandra Institute, spearheaded a successful campaign to have a recording by immigrant Italian performers selected as one of the 25 new additions to the Library of Congress's National Recording Registry for 2019—a feat reported by the *Italian edition of ANSA*. Issued by the Columbia Photograph Company in 1927, the recording features "Protesta per Sacco e Vanzetti," a spoken piece enacted by members of Compagnia Columbia (Side A), and "Sacco e Vanzetti," sung by tenor Raoul Romito (Side B); both works protest the impending execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. For more detailed information, see [Dr. Sciorra's blog](#) at . . . **Roger Sederat** (English) officiated, from a safe distance, at a front-porch wedding in Montclair, New Jersey, as reported in the *New York Times* . . . Queens College was mentioned by Robert Walsh during "[The Bottom Line for Small Business](#)" aired on radio station WINS on March 23. That broadcast discussed connected CUNY to surrounding



Brostek

communities . . . QC students **Deepak Khemraj** and **Jairo Molina** were part of a team that won community empowerment and best use of cloud awards at the recent Brooklyn hackathon. **The team's project, Leaf**, enables users to donate food, clothing, books, and other supplies.

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**The *Q View* is produced by the  
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**Comments and suggestions for future news items are welcome.  
Send them to [jay.hershenson@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:jay.hershenson@qc.cuny.edu).**