



Fall 2022
Business & Liberal Arts

ALUMNI Newsletter

Dear BALA Alumni,

As we have settled into the fall semester, we are excited to announce some exciting additions to the BALA program.

First and foremost, we would like to congratulate **Lisa D'Angelo**, Assistant Director of BALA, for securing a \$5,000 Strategic Plan Implementation Grant (SPIG). BALA was one of six recipients of this grant which was awarded to fund initiatives that aim to advance Queens College's strategic plan in the coming year. With this funding, BALA will be implementing a **Leadership Essentials Certificate Program**. Students will complete four existing BALA courses, plus a new 300-level course, *Leading Across Cultures*. This new course, led by **Arda Nazerian**, promotes the importance of leadership, and the role leaders play in fostering a positive work environment. In addition to these five courses, students are required to attend two leadership workshops. We are very excited to be able to enhance BALA with this leadership certificate.

Our first BALA event of the year was our **"Welcome Back Social Hour"** on September 21st. Students had the opportunity to meet their BALA peers, faculty, and staff, and hear more about the program. They also learned about employment opportunities with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Perhaps the highlight of the hour was a speech by our senior student, **Alex Ordonez**, who shared the impact BALA has had on him:



"My journey is one with many twists and turns-- many times over my academic career, I asked myself "is this right for me?" "Am I on the right path?" After dropping out of a small private school at the age of 19, I felt my parents and support system had all but lost faith in me. But I enrolled in Queensborough Community College where I studied psychology, and in 2021, I graduated with an Associate's degree. Being accepted into Queens College was monumental but having the opportunity to join BALA proved life changing. I wasn't sure I was cut out for business, or even an honors program, but as soon as I was accepted, I knew that I had to take advantage of this opportunity. I began to realize the importance of every course as I learned real-life skills that would be applicable no matter what I planned to pursue. But, in the spring of 2022, I again faced some personal difficulties and thought about dropping out. However, after speaking with my professors, I was able to navigate through this very difficult period. Because of the small class sizes, and

intimate settings, the BALA program allows the professors to develop a relationship with their students. This is an experience I would not have had in any other program, and it is directly responsible for where I am now...

A big special thanks to **Professor and Director Schiro Withanachchi** for helping me take ownership of my future. After speaking with her, I secured an internship with CUNY Career Launch. Working with the Academic Advisement Center and collaborating on projects that would benefit incoming students, meant so much to me. Now, I am working as a Product Zone Specialist at APPLE - one of the most prestigious companies in modern history. It's a big deal to me and to many of those in my support system and it's only the beginning! I would not be where I am now without BALA and the people who encompass it. "

In another notable event, we were able to hold our first in-person BALA graduation since the pandemic. This graduation, bringing the spring 2022 semester to a close, was held on May 25th in the President's Lounge. The evening was particularly memorable to us all in that BALA's founder, **Barbara Sandler**, was in attendance. In her honor, we presented the very first **Barbara Sandler Award for Outstanding Achievement** to our valedictorian, **Rebecca Yaminian**. In honor of Barbara's vision, action and impact, this award will be presented to an outstanding student each year at graduation. We would also like to recognize **Namisha Singh**, who received the **BALA Academic Excellence Award**. It was wonderful to be able to bring together our faculty and staff to both honor Barbara, and to celebrate the achievements of our graduating students.

Congratulations to all our graduates! 😊



Pictured here with Barbara Sandler is Rebecca Yaminian, '22 (Queens). Rebecca graduated from the Macaulay Honors Program, triple majored in accounting, finance, and economics with a minor in Honors Business and Liberal Arts (BALA), all while maintaining a 4.0 GPA. She was awarded The Superior Scholars Award by The New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants and The A. Joseph Geist Law Fellowship. This fall, she started her legal education at The Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law where she hopes to pursue a career combining both her interests in the law and accounting. We will miss seeing Rebecca's smile and our lively conversations in the BALA office/lounge. Here is a recent quote from Rebecca about BALA: "Being a part of BALA is an opportunity to develop the best professional version of yourself, through learning about the practical aspects of business, mastering your weaknesses and transforming them into strengths, and engaging with motivated peers. I'm so happy to have been a part of the BALA program".



BALA faculty and staff in attendance for our BALA graduation reception. Pictured here from left to right: Schiro Withanachchi, Tim Rosen, Steven Leventhal, Arda Nazerian, Susan Kuhn, Lisa D'Angelo and David Leventhal.

**BALA CLASS OF 2022
GRADUATION RECEPTION**

May 25, 2022 5:30 pm | President's Lounge located in
The Dining Hall

Arrival & Sign-In
Refreshments
Welcome Message
Presentation of The BALA Academic Excellence Award
Presentation of Certificates for all Graduates
Honoring Barbara Sandler
Presentation of The Barbara Sandler Award for
Outstanding Academic Achievement
Valedictorian Address - Rebecca Yaminian
Video Montage
Closing Remarks

Honors Minor in Business and Liberal Arts
Queens College

In Faculty news...

We would like to welcome to our BALA faculty, **Sabir Semerkant**. Sabir is the Founder/President of *Growth by Sabir*, a revenue growth strategy consulting firm where he provides 2x-10x revenue scaling services to his clients, from startups to Fortune 50 brands. He also operates his own brands with joint venture partners. He has consulted for the “sharks” on *Shark Tank* to scale their investments, and hosts a live business show, *#ThisWeekWithSabir*, where he interviews top business experts such as Gary Vaynerchuk, Matt Higgins, and Neil Patel. He has recently published an article in the Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2022/09/should-your-company-sell-on-amazon>. Sabir has been teaching BALA 200, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, but is introducing a new class for the spring 2023 semester. This class, Digital Commerce Entrepreneurship, instructs students on how to plan and create a digital commerce presence. Viewed through the lens of entrepreneurship, the course will provide the tools and resources needed to develop a digital business model while sustaining the platform in today’s competitive climate. We are very lucky to be able to share Sabir’s expertise and expect a great many students eager to register for this very relevant course.

In other faculty news, we are proud to share that **Susan Kuhn** is a recipient of a grant funded by the Mellon Foundation for Transformative Learning Across the Humanities (TLH). Over the last three years, this grant has funded several faculty fellowships, of which Susan is one. Faculty from all CUNY campuses were invited to apply to learn more about and engage in “transforming the classroom” in ways that centered student learning in a just society. Through Susan’s *Critical Thinking in Business* course, students engaged in “transforming the classroom” and were invited to be “Mellon Student Scholars” by participating in surveys and engaging in a public project with their teachers. The success of this course is evidenced in the success of our students as we are thrilled to share that three of our BALA students have been selected as members of the Transformative Learning in the Humanities ([TLH](#)) [Student Advisory Board](#) for the fall 2022 semester. **Adina Black**, **Reyana Persaud**, and **Fabienne Renois**, were all students in Susan Kuhn’s BALA 103W class. This board allows select students to more directly engage in this CUNY-wide effort to improve higher education. They will be invited to several speaker engagements, will share their experiences with the TLH community, and are expected to assist in planning a virtual conference entitled *Student Summit on the Role of Humanities in a Just Society*. They will be compensated with a \$300.00 stipend and a laptop. Congratulations to these students!

Diane Shults will begin supervising our internship program in the spring. Her many years of experience in QC’s Career Center will prove valuable to our students. If you have internship opportunities to offer our BALA students for the spring 2023 semester, please reach out to us at BALA.department@qc.cuny.edu.

On October 20th, select QC students were honored at the Academic Excellence Award ceremony. Students who had a cumulative GPA over 3.9 (the prior academic year) were honored as Presidential Scholars; a GPA of 3.75-3.89 were honored as Provost Scholars; all others as Dean’s List Scholars. Students were asked if there was a particular professor who made a greater impact on them in their academic pursuits. Three BALA professors were singled out by the awardees: **David Leventhal**, **Tracy Dryer**, and **Diane Shults**.

Finally, our Director, now Associate Dean of the School of Business, **Schiro Withanachchi**, has invited all BALA students, alums, faculty, staff to attend the next **FREE BUSINESS BREAKFAST** on November 17th: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/qc-business-breakfast-tickets-442636245927>

Start your day by joining us and meeting alums from various fields. Light (Kosher) breakfast will be served.

As we continue to enhance our BALA Alumni Newsletter, we would love to hear from you about your own professional achievements, milestones, or other news you’d like to share.

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