What’s News

Vaccine recipients at QC . . . included President Frank H. Wu.

State Calls the Shots
Queens Senator Toby Stavisky and Queens City Councilmember James Gennaro flank President Wu as he exits the pop-up vaccination site last weekend.

Queens College hosted a state-sponsored pop-up vaccination site on Saturday and Sunday, publicized with the help of Assemblymember Nily Rozic. President Frank H. Wu was among the over 1,200 people who received the one-shot Johnson and Johnson vaccine. President Wu encourages all students, faculty, staff, and alumni to support the CUNY campaign described below and obtain their COVID-19 vaccination. Elected officials who attended last weekend’s public health event were Queens Senator Toby Stavisky and Queens City Councilmember James Gennaro.

Members of the QC and D’Youville (from Buffalo) baseball teams, seen here with President Wu, fielded shots at the pop-up site.

**CUNY Campaign Inoculates Community with Hope**
Through the #VaxUpCUNY Campaign, a system-wide initiative is under way to promote vaccination.

“It is incumbent upon each of us to do all we can to help our city, state, and nation finally overcome this horrific pandemic,” said Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. “As a public university deeply embedded in New York’s DNA, it is our responsibility to educate and inform about the critical importance of these vaccines to the health and well-being of our CUNY community, and also our loved ones, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and the city as a whole.”

A central element of the #VaxUpCUNY Campaign is a special video message from two-time CUNY nursing alumna Sandra Lindsay (BMCC ’94, Lehman ’98), the first person in the United States to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. In her video, Lindsay stresses the importance of being vaccinated, and emphasizes the reasons that people of color—who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic—should schedule vaccination appointments as soon as possible.

As part of the #VaxUpCUNY Campaign, a new CUNY webpage provides the latest vaccine information, including eligibility updates and links to federal, state, and city resources on how and where to receive vaccinations. Members of the CUNY community are invited to submit photos of themselves getting their shots, accompanied by optional comments on what they plan to enjoy once they are fully vaccinated.

The #VaxUpCUNY Campaign is CUNY’s latest effort to help New York recover from the pandemic. In February, the New York State-Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) converted Medgar Evers College and York College into mass vaccination sites to address vaccine distribution inequities in traditionally underserved communities of color.

Some 2,500 CUNY nursing students are assisting at state-run facilities. Under the supervision of faculty, nearly 1,000 students are volunteering throughout the NYC Health + Hospitals system’s 11 hospitals and Gotham Health community-based clinics throughout the five boroughs. Among the CUNY students serving in the National Guard and Reserves who have been activated in support of COVID-19 vaccination and other supportive duties are QC’s Wilyin Gao, Reduan Hossain, Alexandra Johnson, and Larisa Yegorova.

To check your eligibility for vaccination, visit New York’s ‘Am I Eligible’ Website, call 1-833-NYS-4-VAX (1-833-697-4829), or visit New York City’s COVID-19 Vaccine Finder.
Assistant Vice Chancellor of the CUNY Office of Student Inclusion Initiatives Christopher Rosa ’89 spoke about the history of disability rights at Nothing About Us Without Us, a conference held by the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities on Thursday, April 8. The conference was part of CUNY Disability Awareness Month; click here for the remaining events.

Making the Scene on Campus

If you miss working on campus, you can bring some of it to a screen near you. The Office of Communications and Marketing has added spring vistas to the QC Zoom background page; click here to preview and download.

QC Takes Initiative in Virtual Exchange

Queens College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Guttman Community College, and Hostos Community College are partnering with LaGuardia Community College in Global Scholars Achieving Career Success (GSACS), a virtual exchange program supported by the nonprofit Stevens Initiative. Through GSACS, students at the CUNY schools will collaborate with their peers at Abdelmalek Essaâdi University in Tétouan, Morocco; The American University in Cairo, Egypt; Jordan University of Science and Technology in Ar Ramtha; and Palestine Ahliya University in the Palestinian Territories.
Participants will work together on experiential learning projects that explore United Nations sustainable development goals in relation to their local and international communities. They will also make presentations at a student-led conference and engage in career development workshops. The Office of the Provost will be sharing detailed information with faculty and staff regarding the implementation of this initiative.

“People-to-people exchanges are critical to advancing global peace and understanding,” says Matthew Lussenhop, acting assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, within the U.S. Department of State. “Through early adoption of virtual exchanges, the Stevens Initiative has elevated technology to foster collaboration between students in the United States and counterparts in the Middle East and North Africa.”

“We thank the Stevens Initiative for giving our students a valuable opportunity to develop the professional skills and cultural understanding that will prepare them for the global marketplace,” says Queens College President Frank H. Wu. “At a time when traditional exchange programs aren’t operating, GSACS enables our students to collaborate virtually with their peers in the Middle East and North Africa, and connects young people in those countries with Queens College’s talented and diverse student body.”

The Stevens Initiative, founded in 2015, honors the life and vision of J. Christopher Stevens, a career diplomat killed in Benghazi while serving as U.S. ambassador to Libya. The initiative is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and administered by the Aspen Institute, with additional support from the Bezos Family Foundation and the governments of Morocco—where Stevens taught English as a Peace Corps volunteer—and the United Arab Emirates.

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Chapbook Festival Comes to Conclusion

The third and final day of the CUNY Chapbook Festival, a virtual celebration of good poetry in small packaging, will take place Thursday, April 15, from 4 to 5:30 pm. New York State Poet Laureate Alicia Ostriker—whose chapbook Ideas of Order & Disorder, a collection of poetry and photographs, was published expressly for the festival—will deliver the keynote. The lineup also includes Peter Vanderberg, founder of Ghostbird Press, and last year’s recipients of the company’s Birdhouse Chapbook Award for emerging writers, Ashley Somwaru and Julia Tolo.

Seats at this online event are free, but registration is required.

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Observing Poetry Month
Every year, _QView_ marks April—National Poetry Month—by publishing works by QC faculty. This week, we’re sharing poems by Roger Sedarat and Nicole Cooley.

**I too See Tehran**

“I See Teheran!”
--Walt Whitman

Far from the shores of Paumanok my Persian son runs for the geese like Whitman once charged seagulls his verse already electric through his body child as the father of the big bearded man.

Through “Sea-Drift” clusters and “As I Ebbed with the Ocean of Life” I lose myself in their great surrender to the eternal forces of nature abandoned in a trail of debris.

And to see my childhood in lapping water at daybreak mystic mirror of the reflected _fana_ self-annihilation of the Sufis before him the poet captures in lyric time.

And to collapse now, once and for all, our distant shores covered and uncovered with the self-same water like the veiling and unveiling of verse written beyond the 99 names of God.

And yet the inevitable crashing back of Chalus to Pamunuk Whitman to Rumi, English to Persian, Father to son as waves here turn darker, folding into themselves as birds I thought could speak flap toward the setting sun.

--Roger Sedarat

**Last Shots (or, The Revolution Will Be Televised)**

Forced to hide from Khomeini’s men in his sister’s closet, junk sick Uncle Savaki jonesed for his last fix. How pathetic to think I too suffered back in the States, sent to my room so my parents could watch the serious news. As his veins cried out like Hedayat’s blind owl in the hysterical darkness frantic calls from Iran kept me from sleeping. I watched SNL on a black and white TV my cheap-ass father set up in my room afraid my Atari might break the color Magnavox he needed to watch his country burn.

A strung-out Rickie Lee Jones singing “Chuck E’s in Love”
behind oil barrels
on the decadent set
compelled my hand
to her bereted blonde head,
a precursor for Poltergeist
sensing something forbidden
in her electric cool
had come for me too early
like the bearded men coming
to drag my uncle
through the streets of Tehran
burning on another channel
just beyond my door.
--Roger Sedarat

Trash

On my last day of teaching in Queens in March, when the university shuts
down, I walk Kissena Boulevard as fast as I can, nowhere to go, as if in
motion I can find a plan for the rest of the ruined semester. Past the bodega
and Dunkin Donuts on the side of the highway past the liquor store past the
dumpling shop.

That afternoon, I wrote on the board: Lucille Clifton said she wanted to write a
poetry that would comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

My class sat in chairs built by the incarcerated in upstate New York. The
prisoners who make our hand sanitizer now.

I wrote on the board: the tenor and the vehicle comprise a metaphor. The
more distance between them the better.

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Bodies at Elmhurst hospital are shoveled into a refrigerated truck, trundled
into a mass grave on an island.

My student emails, At the funeral mourners were told to bring their own
shovels to the grave to dig,

My student emails, The sirens outside my apartment never stop.

*

At home, my daughter covers a wall with blackboard paint I ordered from
curbside pickup
and the owner of the paint store in a mask waves, then heads inside.
Blackboard paint: its smoky grey is solace, I give my daughters all the chalk I
once used in teaching.

*

Meanwhile the death toll in Queens rises.

The tenor and the vehicle. The epicenter of the virus is _____.

I email my students: We will still gather in community. Poetry is still
important.

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In the middle of the night, on my phone I read, the virus opens a seam in the
world.
Lovely metaphor, but I don’t believe it.

--Nicole Cooley

**Summer Session Heats Up**

The number of Summer Session options continues to climb, with more than 550 undergraduate and graduate courses now available. Most are entirely online; a few hybrid programs combine in-person and remote components.

The Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education will offer two courses in Summer Session I (June 7-30) for early childhood and childhood educators. EECE 800.3 World Music and Movement for Educators will explore music and movement traditions from around the world and how to incorporate songs, dances, and rhythmic games into the early childhood and elementary curriculum. EECE 800.3 Building a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy will provide an introduction to what it means to use a culturally sustaining framework in early childhood and childhood classrooms. This course will focus on how pedagogies can directly support students through self-reflection, discussion, and the creation of culturally relevant materials for classroom use. This course will have an emphasis on how to best support linguistically diverse students. For more information on how to apply as a non-matriculated student for summer courses, email eece@qc.cuny.edu.

**Study Abroad from Home**

With overseas travel limited by the pandemic, virtual study abroad is the next best thing to being there. Students have until May 7 to apply for summer programs in Germany and Korea; for more information, click here.

**Another Week, Another Big Idea**

This week, “Big Ideas,” QC’s online video series about exciting faculty research, visits Sebastian Alvarado (Biology) for a discussion of how behavior and environment affect genetic function. To explore this topic, Alvarado studies African cichlids, part of an especially diverse group of fish. The video debuts on Thursday, April 15. “Big Ideas” is an original series produced by the Office of Communications and Marketing.
**Garcia Open House Extends Hours Online**

More than 150 people attended QC’s 24th Annual Garcia Open House and Chemistry Show, presented virtually on Tuesday, April 6. The event was hosted by Miriam Rafailovich, director of the Garcia Center at Stony Brook, and included a talk by Stony Brook faculty member Brooke Ellison. If you missed the event, you can watch most of it here. Be prepared for loud and colorful explosions when the Hayden Chemistry Show starts at 24:30.

**Building Students’ Networks and Confidence**

Many people study to help themselves, but Hetal Jani, MA ’14 has set her sights on helping others succeed academically. The daughter of Indian immigrants, she has won international recognition for her effective work with young women, first-generation Americans, and others facing disadvantages in existing school systems. That success follows on her own extensive education and experience creating organizations responsive to students’ needs. A Flushing native who graduated from Stuyvesant High School and Lehigh University, Jani completed three master’s degrees—at Harvard University, Queens College, and the Instituto de Empresa in Madrid—while serving as president of Studor, the Queens-based company she founded in 2007.

**Supporting Student Success**

Studor references the symbiotic relationship between Student and Tutor. Committed to the whole-child development of children and youth who often falter in under-resourced classrooms and schools, Jani feels strongly about the need to advocate for students who have learning and physical impairments, come from bilingual and multicultural backgrounds, or are misdiagnosed as having special needs. “We provide wraparound support, which makes learning simpler for students and reaches optimal results,” says Jani. Her records show
that Studor has aided hundreds of students in improving their grades and their scores on New York State exams and SATs.

Studor represents a UDL (Universal Design for Learning) philosophy of providing a flexible learning environment adapted to individual students’ needs. Rather than focusing narrowly on test preparation, it seeks to help students become better learners by filling gaps—in areas from academic content to self-management skills (such as study and organization)—while building on their existing knowledge and strengths. Collaborating with both parents and schools, such as M.S. 172 and Francis Lewis High School in Queens, Studor evaluates students, sets goals, and works either with individuals or in small groups. Jani has helped students from grade school through college, and has offered professional development to teachers in China, especially those whose students aim to qualify for U.S. college admission.

Studor also has been an education for Jani, who learned that poor school performance could completely derail students’ lives. One teenaged girl was threatened with being sent to her home country to marry if she could not soon improve her grades. When the girl’s mother appealed to Studor for help, Jani realized she would need to learn a lot more to truly address every student’s needs.

With a BA in behavioral neuroscience, she went on to earn her MSEd at Harvard, where she specialized in ethnicity and context, policy, child and community development, and was honored with a faculty tribute award. At Queens College, she completed her MA in applied behavior analysis, hoping to improve her skills “on the ground,” as she says; she studied closely with Mark Marroquin (Psychology) and had guidance and mentorship from Alicia Alvero (Psychology). Then, realizing that she needed management skills to sustain an organization, Jani completed an MBA at the Instituto de Empresa. How did she finish three graduate degrees so quickly? “I knew that it needed to be done in order to support the families that I wanted to support,” she explains.

In 2015, to address problems students face beyond the classroom, Jani founded SPEAKMENTORSHIP—now known as SPEAKHIRE—an innovative nonprofit that builds students’ social and cultural capital. With a special focus on immigrants and women and a global outlook, it has spread from two New York City locations to serve schools and community organizations in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas, India, and Ghana. “The mission is to develop the social capital of young people and immigrant youth to be sure that they have the networks through which they can build their skills—and also gain the opportunities that they’re going to need to be future workplace leaders,” says Jani.

Though it’s a high bar, she is reaching many of her goals even as she handles disparate responsibilities. “I’m the chief program officer, chief technology officer, chief of operations—all rolled into the executive director or CEO role right now,” she reports. “We’re growing quickly, and it looks like we’ll have more of these roles filled soon.”

Creating Pathways to College

The students—who are immigrants or the children of immigrants and range in age from 12 to 23—need help getting oriented in pathways to college, internships, good jobs, and careers. Among younger students, SPEAKHIRE is especially active in such schools as Flushing International High School, Cyprus Hills Collegiate in Brooklyn, ELLIS Preparatory in the Bronx, and Emma Lazarus High School in Manhattan. It offers workshops and courses, and arranges the very important personal connections to one, two, or even three professionals who can be mentors. To build out students’ networks and confidence in navigating U.S. education and work, students are deliberately matched with a variety of mentors; some share their mentorees’ language, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and some do not.
Jani’s passion for helping immigrants has been shaped by her own experience. Her multicultural childhood made her aware of all the ways, large and small, that people could be made to feel othered. Fluent in three Indian languages, she was lucky enough to visit India regularly while growing up. She has many interests—like Bollywood film—that aren’t considered quintessentially “American,” and she doesn’t share all the cultural references assumed to be commonplace. “I want to make sure that other young people don’t feel it’s something to be ashamed of if you haven’t yet done something that’s seen as American, and it doesn’t mean that your experiences aren’t American,” she observes.

Jani has been attracting substantial recognition for her work. To date, she has been a Points of Light Honoree, a National Mentoring Summit Fellow, and a L’Oréal Paris Women of Worth Honoree. A sought-after speaker, she is a member of the executive board of the New Leaders Council. Last month she was a panelist for QC’s Palmer Women’s History Month Symposium on women, advocacy, and activism in a global pandemic.

Her dream remains to help immigrant children. “We’re hoping at SPEAKHIRE to be wherever there is a need to make sure that students are properly supported throughout their education,” she concludes.

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**In Memoriam: Morris Dickstein**

CUNY Distinguished Professor Emeritus of English and Theatre Morris Dickstein, who spent much of his career teaching at QC and in 1993 founded the Center for the Humanities, passed away on March 24 from complications of Parkinson’s disease.

The son of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, Dickstein attended a Lower East Side yeshiva through 12th grade. Then, on a General Motors scholarship, he went to Columbia University, majoring in English; he also took classes at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He continued his education at Yale, where he would earn master’s and doctoral degrees, interrupting his studies in New Haven with two years at Cambridge. (He would recount his transition from religious student to secular intellectual in his last book, his memoir *Why Not Say What Happened*.)

A scholar whose interests encompassed literature, film, and cultural history, Dickstein addressed these topics inside and outside the classroom. He published widely and often, contributing to the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Times Literary Supplement, American Film*, and numerous other titles,
notably the *Partisan Review*, where he was a member of the editorial board from 1972 until the magazine folded in 2003. His books included *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties*, nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award, and *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression*, a finalist for that award more than 30 years later.

Dickstein is survived by his wife of 56 years, Lore Willner Dickstein; his daughter, Rachel (Blake Eskin), and son, Jeremy; his grandchildren Evan, Adam, Simon, and Anya; and his sister, Doris Fineberg. At a later date they will hold a memorial service for the man they recall as a loving husband, parent and grandparent, a brilliant and elegant writer, a lover of puns, and a mensch.

**Heard Around the Virtual Campus**

*Elissa Bemporad* (History) was part of the team that drafted the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, as reported in the *Forward*. . . . The *Graduate School of Library and Information Studies* was ranked first in the United States in terms of debt burden and initial year salaries by *Grad Reports*. Rankings are based on the December 2020 release and update of the College Scorecard data from the U.S. Department of Education. . . . *Pyong Gap Min* (Sociology) has published *Korean “Comfort Women”: Military Brothels, Brutality, and the Redress Movement* (Rutgers University Press). . . . *Núria Rodríguez-Planas* and *Rafael De Balanzó Joue* of the Economics faculty were awarded a two-year,
$169,756 grant from the Russell Sage Foundation to evaluate the causal impact of emergency grant aid during the COVID-19 pandemic on undocumented and low-income students on persistence, performance, and degree completion. Rodríguez-Planas’ recent paper, “Too Family Friendly? The Consequences of Parent Part-Time Working Rights,” is available at the Journal of Public Economics for free through May 27 at . . . . Harold Schechter (English) is collaborating with comic book writer/artist Eric Powell on a true-crime graphic novel, Did You Hear What Eddie Gein Done, as related by Hollywood Reporter . . . . President Frank H. Wu will be participating in a discussion presented on Thursday, April 15, 6-7 pm, by the Sorensen Center, Critical Voices: Addressing Anti-Asian Racism in the U.S. and the Rapid Decline of Human Rights in Hong Kong and China. The next day at 10 am he will be delivering the keynote at a virtual mini-symposium presented by Virginia Tech . . . . Aliza Ross Zasky, an alumna, published her first novel, Asymmetrical Woman. Zasky is a lawyer.

The Q View is produced by the Office of Communications and Marketing.

Comments and suggestions for future news items are welcome. Send them to jay.hershenson@qc.cuny.edu.