QC To Honor Adriano Espaillat and Miriam Rafailovich at Commencement

Congressman Adriano Espaillat ’79 will deliver the keynote and receive the President’s Medal, the college’s highest administrative honor, when Queens College holds its 97th commencement exercises virtually on Thursday, June 3, 2021. Espaillat was a political science major and Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK student, and is the first Dominican-American to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Former QC faculty member Miriam Rafailovich, a distinguished professor at Stony Brook University in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering and director of the Garcia Center for
Polymers at Engineered Interfaces, will receive an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

The ceremony—the first Commencement led by President Frank H. Wu since his July 2020 appointment—will recognize more than 5,000 degree candidates, some of whom earned dual degrees; overall, the college will award just over 6,650 undergraduate and graduate degrees this year.

Anna Savva, who completed her BA in fall 2020, dual majoring in Comparative Literature and Political Science with a 3.92 GPA, will be the student speaker. Savva was president of the Model United Nations and an Ibrahim Leadership and Dialogue Fellow, among other distinctions. She will begin an MA in Human Rights at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University in fall 2021.

Prominent speakers on June 3 will include the Honorable Charles Schumer, US Senate Majority Leader; Congresswoman Grace Meng; Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul; Senator Toby Stavisky; Assemblywoman Nily Rozic; Queens Borough President Donovan Richards; City Councilmember James Gennaro; CUNY Board of Trustees member Kevin Kim and CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez. Newly re-elected Student Association President Zaire Couloute will offer greetings on behalf of the student body.

President Frank H. Wu (top, left) gave opening remarks on Wednesday, May 12, at the first event presented by a new campus organization—the QC Student Chapter of the Institute of Management Accountants. With the support of two FBI experts, attendees learned about the role of forensic accounting in fraud detection. Jian Xiao, accounting adjunct lecturer, serves as faculty advisor to the student chapter.
In an act that embodied our school motto—We Learn So That We May Serve—QC alumna and NYPD Officer **Alyssa McCormick Vogel** helped save the life of a 4-year-old shooting victim in Times Square, as seen in this bodycam footage. “I just wanted to get her to the hospital,” said Vogel, a new mom herself.

**Evelyn Puccini Rolleri ’41** commemorated the 80th anniversary of her graduation—the college’s first—with the help of a new cap and gown provided by her alma mater.

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**More Reasons To Get Vaccinated**

Vaccination protects people against COVID-19 and significantly reduces spread of the virus. But eats and other treats provide additional incentives for rolling up your sleeve.

New York City’s **Shake Shack** locations are offering ShackBurger vouchers to individuals inoculated at the city’s mobile vaccination buses. Already been inoculated? Through Saturday, June 12, 2021, Shack patrons who show their vaccination card or Excelsior pass will qualify for free frees with a burger or chicken sandwich ordered in-store at designated locations, including some in Queens. Click here for details.

Since March, **Krispy Kreme** has been promising one free donut a day—no purchase required—to anyone who produces a vaccination card. The chain doesn’t have shops in Queens, so you’ll have to venture to other boroughs or even New Jersey for your donut; here’s the site guide.

Through Memorial Day, the **Junior’s** in Brooklyn, a local institution, will give a free mini-cheesecake to anyone who presents a vaccination record. Visit the original **Nathan’s Famous on Coney Island** on the day you get a shot, with your record, and you’ll receive a hotdog on the house. Through May 31, the **White Castle** chain will serve people with proof of vaccination one of four dessert-on-a-stick options, gratis.

If your tastes run to more healthful fare, stop by the **Vitamin Shoppe** with your vaccination record before the end of the month for a free drink or snack.
Baseball fans will have the opportunity to score tickets to a future game by getting vaccinated. Starting Wednesday, May 19, Citi Field and Yankee Stadium will have sections where people can get the Johnson and Johnson shot and one ticket voucher apiece.

The American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) houses a walk-in vaccination site for ages 12 and up. Everyone vaccinated here will receive a voucher for complimentary general admission for up to a group of four. Vouchers can be redeemed online to reserve timed-entry general admission at a later date.

Additional walk-in vaccination sites are listed by New York City; information is regularly updated.

Last week, the city offered 7-day MetroCards and tickets to popular attractions to travelers who received the Johnson and Johnson shot at pop-up vaccination sites at subway stations. Other New York City initiatives for the vaccinated, including raffles for seats at the music festivals Global Citizen Live and the Governor's Ball, are in the works.

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Anti-Hate Discussion and Training Session

QC will team up with Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, Yeshiva University, and the New York City Commission on Human Rights to present Anti-Asian Hate and Anti-Semitism Community Conversation and Bystander Training on Zoom on Wednesday, May 19, from 6 to 7:30 pm.

Linda Lee, CEO of Korean Community Services, will moderate a panel comprising Assemblywoman Rozic, QC President Frank H. Wu, and Yeshiva University Director of Holocaust and Genocide Studies Shay Pilnik, who will answer prescreened questions about bias and hate. The panel discussion will be followed by a bystander training session led by Sam Yang of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights.

To attend the event, RSVP at https://bit.ly/3fjiyLe. For more information, email rozicn@nysassembly.gov or call 718-820-0241.

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Nurturing Students and Their Families

As the founder of South Bronx Mutual Aid, Ariadna Phillips MSEd ’20 has helped provide more than 105,240 meals and 48,300 grocery packages, and over 100 tons of essential items (such as clothing, masks, diapers, formula, and wipes) to people in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan since April 2020. Phillips sees this complicated volunteer project as the logical outgrowth of her responsibilities as a faculty member at the South Bronx’s Laboratory School of Finance and Technology: MSHS 223, where she is director of World Language/Dual Language.
“People working collectively has helped make for better solutions,” she observes. “Mutual aid has corollaries in health care, immigration, food access, justice, and real estate.”

Her commitment to struggling individuals and families, and her understanding of the ways they are failed by the social safety net, are grounded in her upbringing in Clearwater, Florida. Phillips was 14 years old when she lost her father, a U.S. Air Force veteran who taught social studies in public school. Her mother nearly completed a master’s degree in foreign language education in the United States, but because her undergraduate credentials had been awarded by institutions in her native Mexico and France, those credentials weren’t initially recognized by the evaluating body for credentialing purposes. Facing overwhelming family and full-time work responsibilities, her mother left the program right before completing her master’s degree. Leading up to and following the death of Phillips’ father, she instead worked at a call center for $8 an hour.

“My family’s economic collapse changed the outcome of my life,” says Phillips. “I became the caretaker for my sister, who is four years younger. She had to do whatever I did. I had my sights set on an Ivy League school, so I’d take her with me to the library.”

**Pursuing Path to Princeton**

The independent enrichment strategy paid off; Phillips was accepted to Princeton, where she majored in anthropology and started a breakdancing crew. Several times a month, the crew entered contests in the South Bronx. She grew so fond of the area that she asked to be assigned there when, upon her graduation in 2003, she joined Teach for America and enrolled in the Master of Science in Teaching program at Fordham University. Because she had no place to stay before the program started, she spent six weeks crashing with friends or sleeping in her car. “You can end up homeless for no reasons of your own,” Phillips reports.

Bicultural and bilingual—her mother had spoken to her only in Spanish, her father in English—Phillips was disturbed to learn that the bilingual educational model then in effect sought to subtract students’ home language, rather than add English to it. Another problem: Her classroom was poorly equipped. “There were 36 students in my class, but I had only ten books (primary readers), and even fewer for bilingual education,” she recalls. “I went home to Florida, brought my childhood books back to the Bronx and outfitted my classroom.” Her efforts extended to students’ parents, whom she referred to resources and helped navigate paperwork. “Parents would take care of me, too,” Phillips is quick to add. “They’d bring me prepared food, cups or plates for my home, a scarf, a coat.”

After two years, Phillips, armed with her MST, left the public school system to explore different avenues. She opened an educational consultancy, tutored...
students from lower-income families, and even relocated to the Salt Lake City area in Utah, where she eventually established a bilingual early education program, HipKids Holistic Preschool and Daycare. “I had a son,” she says. “I opened up my own school to have him with me full-time.”

Return to New York

Nonetheless, given the opportunity to move back east, she grabbed it. “I missed everything about what it meant to be a New Yorker,” she comments. By 2012, she was again working for the New York City Department of Education; within a few years would go back to school herself. At St. John’s University as a fellow in the Clinically Rich Intensive Teacher Institute (CR-ITI), she earned a TESOL certificate (PreK-12) in bilingual and multilingual education; she also completed two computer science fellowships. Then Phillips came to QC for a Master’s in Educational Leadership, “because Soribel Genao’s program offers a culturally responsive and multilingual framework to thinking about educational leadership as liberation work,” she says.

“From the very beginning, Ariadna was a great representation of her cohort—inspiring, motivating, and always curious,” says Genao. “As I witnessed their interactions with one another, it was not lost on me that Ariadna’s specific role among the cohort was unique. Her love for families and communities was a reminder of authentic leadership, engagement, and collaboration. These attributes led to guiding conversations that taught me so much more about the importance of intersectional learning. I was always the teacher and learner and Ariadna was certainly a key player in our dual roles in the classroom. She is, without a doubt, an innate leader in our communities.”

Affiliated since 2015 with MSHS 223, where Phillips integrates bilingual education into much of the curriculum—including sciences, computer science, and social studies—she has a demanding schedule. Nonetheless, in February 2020, she found time to collaborate with activists trying to help people recover from the previous year’s earthquake in Puerto Rico. “I was sourcing and transporting supplies, handling logistics,” explains Phillips.

Building Back in the Bronx

That experience enabled her to perform similar functions in the Bronx after the pandemic struck. She built a network of volunteers willing to run out at all hours to pick up and distribute donations, and made connections with businesses that might have excess food or personal supplies to contribute. By fall 2020, South Bronx Mutual Aid was linked to a network of community refrigerators, creating storage for perishables. “The community refrigerators were game-changers,” says Phillips. She knows of 110 community refrigerators throughout New York City, 28 currently operating between Upper Manhattan and the Bronx; each has one or two primary organizers and varying numbers of drivers. Her organizing partner, David Arvelo, is working with her to build a mutual aid app to map the refrigerators and provide resource information and directions—on foot, by mass transit, or by car—to them in multiple languages.

An innate multitasker, Phillips credits her apparently endless energy to strong self-care practices. “I’m a curandera,” she says, citing her knowledge of indigenous remedies that encompass centering, meditation, and nutrition. She admits that caffeine helps, and here, too, her choices have sociopolitical ramifications. “There are really delicious fair-trade alkaline coffees made in the mountains in Puerto Rico and Nicaragua.”
Summer of Language, Literature, and the Arts

Summer is a great time to begin studying a new language or immerse yourself in foreign literature. Introductory courses in American Sign Language (ASL 111) and German (GERM 111) are among the options. Interested in 19th century Russian fiction, but don’t want to tackle it in the original? Consider enrolling in RUSS 155: Keys to Russian Literature. Summer session also provides opportunities for students to explore the arts, from painting (ARTS 161: Painting I) to theater (DRAM 100: Introduction to Acting).

For additional ideas about what to study this summer, click here.

Heard Around the Virtual Campus

Rolanda Coleman, a QC alumna and graduate student interning with the New York State Assembly, was given its Chairperson’s Award last week. The honor recognizes interns who distinguish themselves with outstanding engagement and service to the Session Internship Program community.
Coleman was cited for demonstrating tremendous generosity and leadership . . . Andrea Khalil (Comparative Literature) will be in residence as a guest researcher and hold the Germaine Tillion Chair during Spring 2022 at IMERA (Mediterranean Institute for Advanced Research) in Marseille, France, to develop the project “French Studies, Maghrebi Studies” . . . . Judith Schwartz ‘64, a ceramicist and professor emerita in the Department of Art and Art Professions at New York University, announced the launch of interactive website Ceramic World Destinations http://cwd.aic-iac.org/. The website, hosted by the International Academy of Ceramics, was conceived by Schwartz, the organization’s vice president, as a way of providing remote access to museums, galleries, stores, manufactures, local events, institutions, cultural sites, and other ceramic-oriented venues. Schwartz’s husband, speech scientist Martin Schwartz, and sister, child development expert Stevanne Auerbach, aka Dr. Toy, are also QC alumni . . . . Angela Sepulveda was cited in a Daily News op-ed—published on Wednesday, May 12—about the benefits of paid college internships. Sepulveda, who studies education, was a member of the first cohort of interns at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in a program funded by the op-ed’s author, Adrienne Arsht . . . . Tonight—Tuesday, May 18 at 8 PM—President Frank H. Wu will be a panelist for a webinar, Vincent Chin: Start of the Asian American Movement. (In honor of Asian-American Pacific Islander Month, the Office of Communications and Marketing and the Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library have collaborated to offer the QC community free access to the documentary, Who Killed Vincent Chin? View the film here using your CUNYfirst login credentials.) On May 20, the president will participate in a discussion, Safeguarding Asian American Inclusion and Belonging, presented by the Brookings Institution. Two days later, he will give a Chinese Historical Society of America talk, “How Do Chinese Americans Fit In: The Outlook for Civil Rights,” . . . . Daniel Zender (Art) recently had work published in the New York Times.

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.