

BHCC

Bunker Hill Community College Magazine

The Vision of the Community College Hub

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Workforce Development Programs Meet Industry Demands



A Message from the President



Dear Bunker Hill Community College Friends and Partners,

It has been a year like no other. Since last spring, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated our communities. We shuttered our physical campuses and went remote in mid-March of 2020. The needs of our students, from the basics to academic and social support, became more urgent as they strove to complete their education in isolation. The neglect of our communities over the last few decades has left social and economic infrastructure weakened, unable to withstand the onslaught of the pandemic.

The reignition of the Civil Rights Movement in late spring with the murder of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd pushed us to understand the intolerable historical and social context under which so many of our students live and learn. Economic disinvestment and systemic racism in our communities of color and communities of poverty have hollowed out support for our students, their families, and their communities over time. The pandemic and the anti-racism protests were the twin lightning in the night that revealed the fractured landscape.

As we emerge from COVID, and see our community's endurance and strength through new eyes, we must commit to a more just and equitable recovery—not just the restoration of jobs, but training for jobs that are sustainable and support the economic expansion of the local community; not just the restoration of social services, but the restoration of the cultural wealth and assets that would see that community thrive and be proud. The events of the past year and a half have left me more convinced than ever that community colleges, and Bunker Hill Community College, in particular, are part of the answers to this recovery, this new social contract with our people. BHCC has always valued the full complexity of our students and their communities, in addressing their social and economic needs, and in recognizing their cultural worth. As we prepare our students for a career pathway that ensures economic mobility, we will continue to nurture within them a deep sense of place and belonging in honoring their personal history and lived experiences.

This is a time of learning and critical reflection about our difficult past and our nation's history. This is also a time to envision the future and to see our path ahead with new eyes. Having come through the darkness of the last year, we know that Bunker Hill Community College is a beautiful crossroads, and a community Hub, where helpers, teachers, and learners gather to serve as one another's beacon of hope. As our campuses get ready for the fall semester, we will come together again, and light one another's way forward.

With optimism and gratitude,

Pam Y. Eddinger, Ph.D.
President

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Articles featured in the Spring/Summer 2021 edition of BHCC Magazine were adapted from the Boston on Track: Community Colleges Unlock Potential partnership between Bunker Hill Community College and Roxbury Community College with WCVB Channel 5.

 **BHCC Magazine Online**

Visit bhcc.edu/magazine for exclusive web extras and a more in-depth look into our featured articles.

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Arts & Culture



Photo: Oldren Romero and Luz Valdez

Espailat on Restoring Community

Distinguished Artist and Scholar in Residence prepares for future recovery in Dominican-American communities affected by COVID-19

Distinguished Artist and Scholar in Residence Rhina Espailat was a featured artist at the third annual Dominicans on the Hill event where she read "Seedlings," a new poem she wrote for the occasion. Hosted by Congressman Adriano Espailat (NY-13) as a way to increase engagement and collaboration in Dominican communities across the U.S., the event focused on restoring the community as we prepare for future economic, educational, political flourishing in a post-COVID-19 world.

Espailat, a former New York City public school teacher, has devoted her time in retirement to writing poetry, short stories, and essays in both English and Spanish,

translating between both languages, running workshops for students and adults, and serving as visiting poet at colleges and other cultural centers.

Earlier this year, award-winning international magazine of faith, culture, and society *Plough Quarterly* announced the first annual Rhina P. Espailat Poetry Award in honor of the achievements of the Dominican-American poet. The award will be given for an original poem that reflects Espailat's lyricism, empathy, and ability to find grace in everyday events.

A founding member of the Melopoeia trio and member of the quintet known as The Diminished Prophets, Espailat has served as the College's Distinguished Artist and Scholar in Residence since fall 2019,

leading workshops, readings, and melodic performances that examine the power of words and the ability of art to both enrich and transform lives.

Special guests and segments at Dominicans on the Hill included a fireside chat between Dr. Anthony Fauci and Karl Anthony-Towns about COVID-19, a tribute to loved ones lost in the pandemic by "La Reina del Merengue" Milly Quezada and "El Caballo Mayor" Johnny Ventura, and presentations from poet and author Elizabeth Acevedo, David Ortiz, Lin Manuel Miranda, and Oz Rodriguez. ■

 Watch the Dominicans on the Hill event at bhcc.edu/magazine

See Yourself in STEM

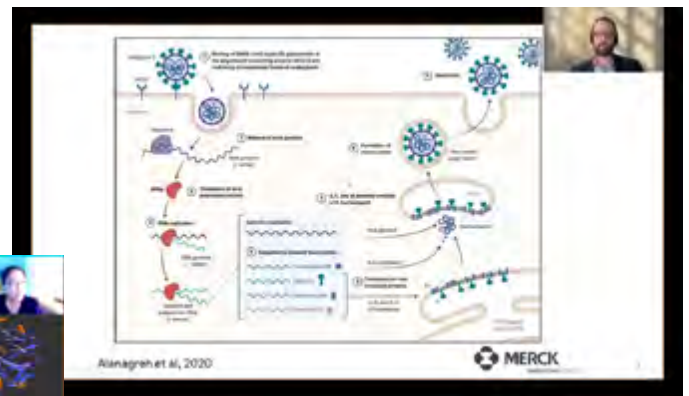
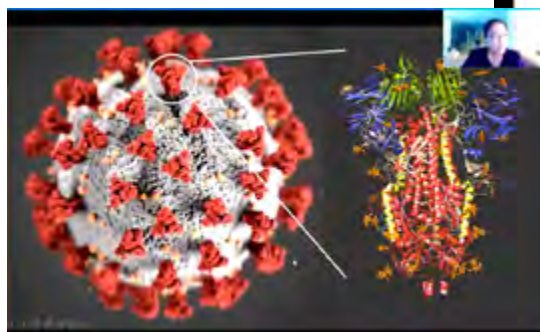
Alumni reflect on STEM Mentorship experiences

BHCC celebrated Massachusetts STEM Week in October with STEM alumni reflecting on their experiences with STEM Mentorship partners BioNTech US, Merck, and more. From building relationships to defining goals, mentorship partners prepare students for graduate school and beyond by providing students with fundamental skills and real-world laboratory experiences to launch their careers in science.

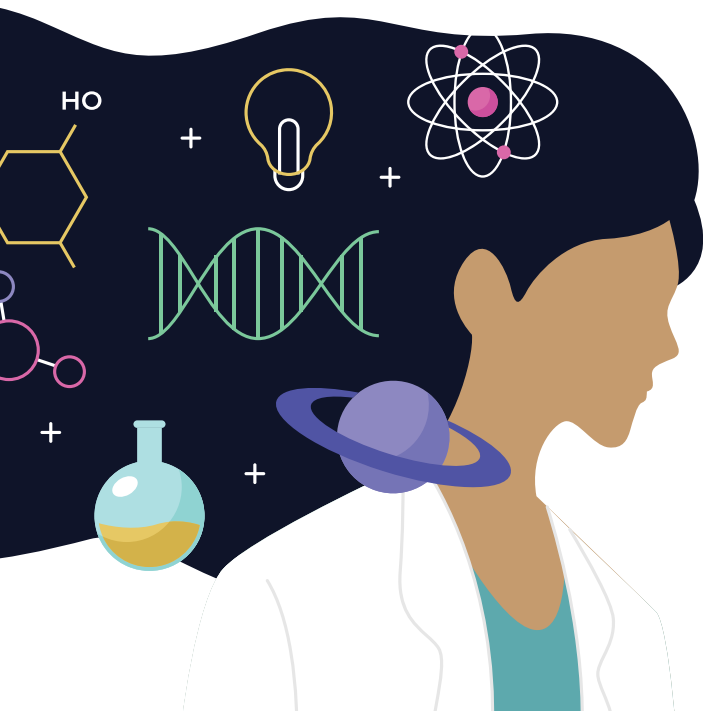
The week's programming featured a Pathways to Graduate School workshop with Biology graduate

students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a Civil Engineering Seminar with environmental and geotechnical engineering company Haley & Aldrich, a presentation on Biomarkers with Platelet Bio, and panel discussion on Virology, Vaccines and the Racial Inequality of COVID-19 sponsored by the College's Biology and Chemistry departments.

Read more about STEM students on Page 26.



BHCC alumni reflected on mentorship experience at Merck (2018) as part of Mass STEM Week; Panel discussion on Coronavirus: Virology, Vaccines, and the Racial Inequality of COVID-19 brings industry experts from BioNTech, Merck, and the Seaman Laboratory Center for Virology and Vaccine Research to BHCC community.



Women in Science

BHCC hosts second annual LSAMP Day; Partnership brings Covid-19 vaccine forum to College community



BHCC hosted the second annual Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Day promoting women in science as part of a grant-funded partnership with UMass Boston in October. New Mexico State University Professor Rebecca Creamer, Ph.D., delivered a keynote address sharing

her personal experience as the only woman on the Microbiology and Plant Pathology faculty at the University of California.

As part of the event, BHCC alumna and UMass Amherst doctoral candidate Bridget Benner joined panelists from the National Institutes of Health and Massachusetts General Hospital for a discussion on career pathways in STEM. LSAMP Day also featured presentations on career opportunities in biology and chemistry, STEM internship programs, scholarships, and summer research opportunities.

This spring, LSAMP hosted a panel discussion on COVID-19 vaccines and the importance of community outreach and awareness. Panelists included Sharon Terry, CEO, Genetic Alliance; Swati Mukherjee, Ph.D., Associate Director, Editas Medicine; Kristin Millin, M.D., Physician, Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin; and Elisabeth Farnum, M.D., Assistant Medical Director, Warren Alpert Medical School, Brown University.

Bunker Hill Community College Receives 10-Year Accreditation from NECHE

BHCC received a continuation in accreditation status from the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) in October. The accreditation establishes that the College has demonstrated it is educationally effective and a good steward of public resources, and allows BHCC to participate in Title V Pell grant funding, enabling student access to federal financial aid. Over 60 percent of BHCC students receive financial aid to complete their studies. The continuation in accreditation will dramatically increase access and degree completion.

The reaccreditation followed a rigorous self-study and peer-review process that involved faculty, staff, administration, students, and the Board of Trustees and a virtual visit from the Commission that found the College in compliance with the Standards of Accreditation.

“The Commission commends Bunker Hill Community College for its institutional achievements and its continued commitment to and focus on student success,” stated the Commission in a letter announcing its recommendation for the College’s continued accreditation. “The College’s use of local and national datasets, such as Achieving the Dream, AACCC’s Volunteer Framework of Accountability, and BHCC’s program reviews to inform planning and decision making is particularly noteworthy.”

The Commission went on to commend BHCC for its efforts to address the needs of its student community through initiatives such as the DISH Food Pantry and the Pao Arts Center partnership, and noted the success of the College’s LifeMap and Learning Communities initiatives.

“The roots of our success reach back a decade to those innovations and early efforts that prepared the path we are currently on,” said BHCC President Pam Eddinger in a letter to the College community. “I want to thank everyone who contributed to our current success through work in teaching and learning, student service, and support. We should be very proud and ready to see BHCC through another 10 years of service to our students and our community.”

NECHE is one of seven commissions in the United States that provide institutional accreditation on a regional basis. Accreditation is voluntary and applies to the institution as a whole. The Commission, which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, accredits approximately 220 institutions in the six-state New England region as well as several American-style institutions overseas.

Pinnacle Awards 2021

CONGRATULATIONS!



President Eddinger Receives 2021 Pinnacle Award

Award recognizes achievements in arts and education

The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce’s Women’s Network named BHCC President Pam Eddinger as a 2021 Pinnacle Award honoree for outstanding achievement in Arts and Education.

The recognition was announced at a virtual ceremony in January where President Eddinger shared her story of migrating to the United States with her parents who wanted a better education for their children. She went on to credit her parents for her leadership in the community college movement so the next generation of immigrants will have choices, have language, and see a broader horizon.

“I do my work so every immigrant and native child will have access to affordable, higher education and be touched by the grace and power of the arts,” said President Eddinger.

The Women’s Network was founded in 1994 to promote and expand economic opportunities throughout the Greater Boston region for all women in business through shared leadership and expertise. The Network offers programs that provide career enrichment and development opportunities for women at all professional levels, spotlight the achievements of women, and promote the positive influence women have on the region. Previous Pinnacle Award honorees include Anita Hill, Sandra Fenwick, Vicary Graham, Penni McLean Connor, Liz Cheng, and Courtney Scrubs.

“Thank you to the Chamber CEO Jim Rooney, and Chair Micho Spring, for providing a platform to lift up the contributions of women to the Boston economy, and to encourage our next generational leaders to reach up and speak up,” said President Eddinger.



DISH Food Pantry Delivers on Food Access

Pantry reflects on first year and how it's adapted to a virtual service model



DISH Food Pantry partners with SnapChef to deliver pantry orders to students.

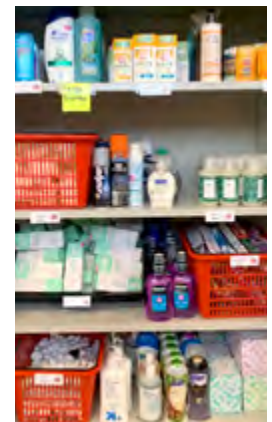
Since the DISH Food Pantry opened its doors on the BHCC Charlestown Campus in the fall of 2019, the pantry has become a staple for students and staff by adapting to remote operations and consistently reinforcing its mission to deliver information, sustenance and health to the community.

The following March, just months after the pantry opened, the DISH Food Pantry pivoted into action as the BHCC community was forced to adjust to physical separation from the campus and each other by offering remote pick-up and delivery services to students.

“We’ve been operating longer in a pandemic than we were open before that,” says Molly Hansen, DISH Food Pantry Coordinator. “We’ve had to find alternative ways to assist students.”

Last spring, the DISH pantry partnered with New England-based staffing agency SnapChef to deliver food orders and Chromebooks to BHCC students directly to their homes. The initiative was initially funded through the College’s Student Government Association, and later through MassHire and the Boston Resiliency Fund. As the College looks forward to welcoming more students back to campus, the DISH plans to extend delivery services to students as needed through the summer months.

“We’ve had to be innovative and creative in how we reduce the stigma associated with food insecurity while at the same time meeting the diverse needs of our students,” adds Hansen. While the pantry receives monthly deliveries from the Greater Boston Food Bank, community partners and donors such as long-time donor Stop & Shop, Food for Free, Food Link and Hope & Comfort allow the DISH to offer





38,419
TOTAL POUNDS DONATED

939
TOTAL NEW
INTAKE FORMS

2,519
TOTAL ORDERS
FILLED

641
TOTAL USERS

1,066
TOTAL DELIVERIES
(May–December 2020)

weekly specialty items such as cleaning supplies, coffee and tea, and pet food. The pantry also has been able to provide student parents with diapers and baby food, and offers toiletries and hygiene items including ethnic hair products designed for natural and textured hair.

The DISH aims to provide a safe and dignified response to food insecurity for the campus community. To reduce stigma, Hansen has started to offer Mexican-inspired, Asian-inspired, and Italian-inspired meal and recipe kits as part of the DISH offerings, as well as birthday celebration kits complete with frosting, cake mix and candles, monthly mystery snacks, and holiday items.

Learn more about the DISH Food Pantry and how to donate to the DISH at bhcc.edu/magazine



Molly Hansen

Outstanding New Professional at a Two-Year College

DISH Coordinator Molly Hansen was awarded the 2021 Outstanding New Professional at a Two-Year College Award from the American College Personnel Association (ACPA): College Student Educators International Commission for Two-Year Colleges. Hansen has shown dedication to BHCC students and works to promote the importance of college campuses in providing services and resources so students struggling to finance their education don't have to decide between skipping meals to make ends meet or losing focus on their studies. She was recognized at the ACPA National Convention in March.

NCMPR Presents Paragon Award and Three Medallions to BHCC

BHCC won a Paragon Award and three medallions from the National Council of Marketing and Public Relations (NCMPR) for publications created by the College's Integrated Marketing and Communications Division.

The annual awards recognize outstanding achievement in design and communication at community and technical colleges in the United States and Canada.



Gold Medallion
BHCC Magazine
Spring/Summer 2019

Silver Medallion
Academic Catalog
2019-2021



Bronze Medallion
BHCC Magazine
Spring 2020

Bronze Paragon
"Vital Signs"
Feature Article
BHCC Magazine
Spring 2020

Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions

Title V Grant Supports Pathways to Success through Culturally Responsive Programming



BHCC received a \$2.9M grant from the United States Department of Education's Title V: Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) program and is now designated as an HSI. The grant program was created by the Department to help institutions expand education opportunities for Hispanic students by increasing and enhancing academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability.

This is the second designation and grant awarded to the College by the Department. In 2017 BHCC received designation and a federal grant award as part of the Department's Title III: Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) program. Eligibility for Title III and Title V designation and funding is dependent on the percentage of the targeted population at an institution, and submission of a proposal to support improvements in educational quality, management and financial stability at qualifying post-secondary

institutions and strengthen an institution's ability to serve minority and low-income students.

The "Pathways to Success through Culturally Responsive Programming" grant will improve student achievement and engagement through Integrated Support Services and Enhanced Teaching and Learning.

The Integrated Support Services component will revitalize the continuum of support for Hispanic/Latinx students, including onboarding and enrollment with defined Guided Pathway on-ramps. Student support will continue through career exploration, goal setting, and financial-academic-career planning in a culturally responsive and equity-minded environment.

The Enhanced Teaching and Learning component will establish the Guided Pathways with contextualized introductory courses, bringing together similar majors and programs of study to share content and outcomes to create synchronicity within the first year of study, and enable students to explore career options and participate in internships, co-ops and shadowing experiences.

"Through this funding, BHCC will be able to implement a multipronged approach to improve service and support for our Hispanic and Latinx students."

—President Eddinger

BHCC Receives \$250,000 Grant from JPMorgan Chase Focusing on Career Pathways

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

With a generous \$250,000 investment from JPMorgan Chase, BHCC launched the Career Pathways Impact Project (CPIP) this past year.

CPIP seeks to equip traditionally underserved students with the tangible skills required to navigate the labor market, workplace culture, and develop a better understanding of career pathways.

The newly developed Ethnographies of Work (EoW) curriculum is being integrated into a pilot of courses at BHCC with a goal of offering an ethnographic and sociological approach to career development. From Sociology to Computer Science to Art to Economics and Learning Community courses, students use ethnographic and

sociological research methods to find clarity in their potential career path.

These skills will be even more important to prepare BHCC students to be competitive during the pandemic-induced downturn.

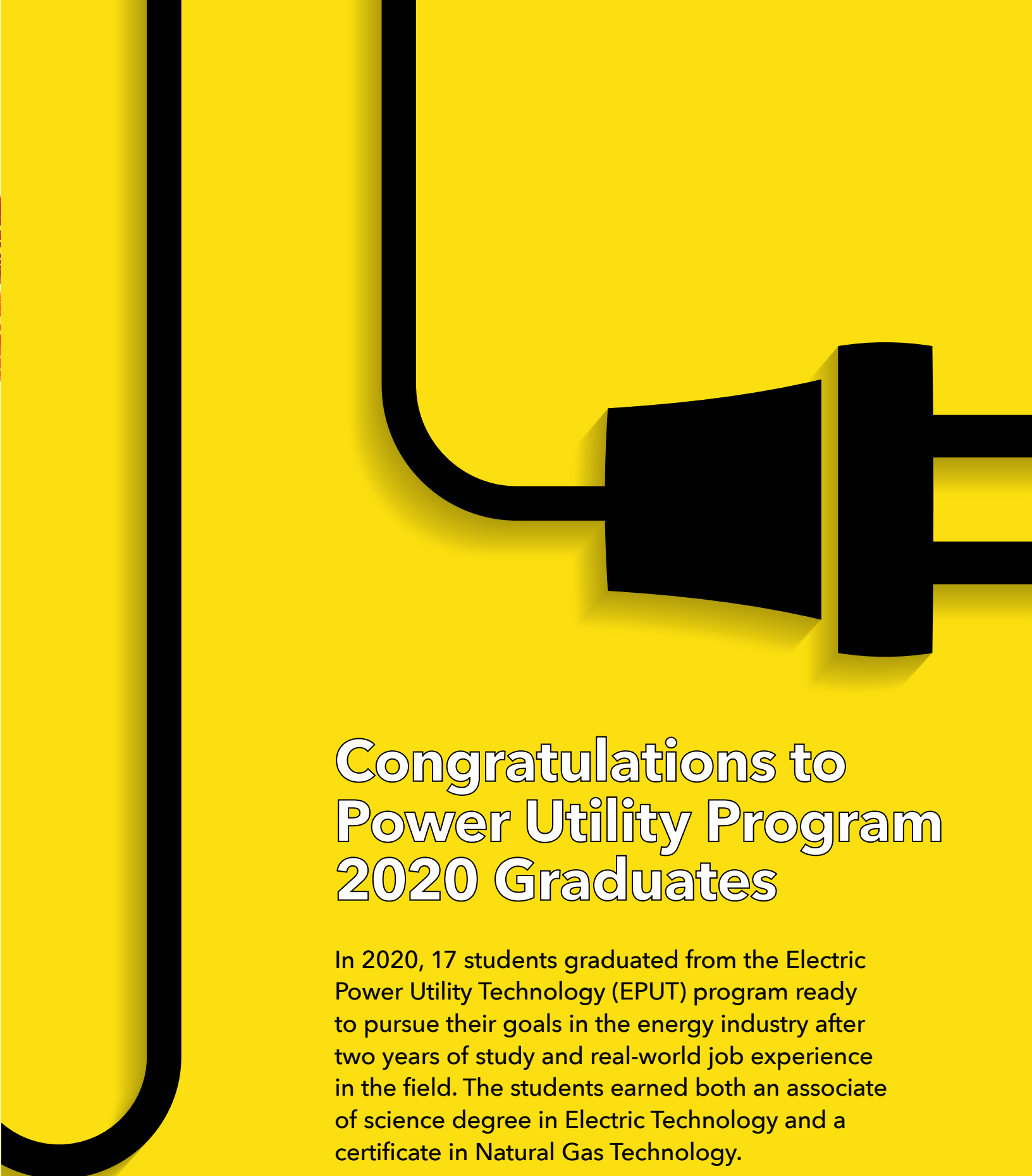
"We are so grateful to JPMorgan Chase for their support," said BHCC President Pam Eddinger. "The Ethnographies of Work framework advances the social mobility and equity for our students."

With support from the Harvard Project on Workforce, three graduate fellows from Harvard's business and policy programs worked at BHCC last summer to accelerate the career pathways agenda. The Harvard team focused on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' career planning and post-graduation job opportunities, and how this might shift the College's career preparedness strategies. This

work helped to guide the CPIP program to provide integrated career guidance to more BHCC students and additional BHCC programs.

"Without good career counseling, students are unable to progress into the workforce easily," said Kristen McKenna, Dean of Workforce and Economic Development at BHCC. "This work puts BHCC in the position of solving the supply and demand gap between workers and employers that exists in the greater Boston area workforce."

Ethnographies of Work originated at Guttman Community College (CUNY) as a year-long social science course and adapted for community colleges and high schools and BHCC has expanded it to 36 courses and 610 students over the past year.



Congratulations to Power Utility Program 2020 Graduates

In 2020, 17 students graduated from the Electric Power Utility Technology (EPUT) program ready to pursue their goals in the energy industry after two years of study and real-world job experience in the field. The students earned both an associate of science degree in Electric Technology and a certificate in Natural Gas Technology.

The EPUT program is a partnership of Bunker Hill Community College, Eversource, UWUA Local 369 and USW Local 12004 USW.

As their studies came to a close and they prepared for the real world—and a potential career at Eversource or other utility company—we spoke with three graduates from the Class of 2020 who shared their most memorable EPUT experiences and goals for the future.

.....

Marion Jones, technical training supervisor and head of the EPUT program, can be credited with helping to make the student experience a positive one. To maintain the program during the pandemic, Jones, with support from other members of the Technical Training team, transitioned to online classes with virtual labs, which challenged students and allowed them to grow in new ways.

“Overseeing the EPUT program affords me the opportunity to focus my efforts on helping others become the best version of themselves,” says Jones. “Through EPUT, we are developing the workforce of the future, challenging students to take pride in an unwavering work ethic while always striving for a standard of excellence both personally and professionally.”

The EPUT program is designed to prepare students for a variety of employment opportunities in electric and gas related positions. Most graduates go on to have successful careers at Eversource; the program boasts a 98% job placement success rate. “Students thrive in this program because of the strong connection between academics and career,” said Dean of Professional Studies at BHCC Austin Gilliland. “We’re proud to partner with Eversource to support students in a program that furthers their education and leads to a fulfilling career.” ■

🔗 To learn more, visit bhcc.edu/eput

98% 2020 Graduates hired at Eversource Energy

80% inducted into the Honor Society at BHCC

70% maintained a 3.0 GPA in the program

\$30/Hour average starting salary for Energy and Utility Laborers



Brad Cronin

Hometown: Belmont, New Hampshire

Dream job: Eversource Journeyman Lineworker

Memorable EPUT experience:

Participating in the 12-week co-op program alongside Eversource employees was an invaluable experience and gave me the opportunity to have hands-on training in the field. I now feel more prepared and excited for my career and am proud to do my part to help keep the lights on for our customers. The EPUT program gave me the confidence I needed and taught me to never give up on myself.



Mia Dottin

Hometown: Cambridge, Mass.

Dream job: Position in Eversource Gas Services

Memorable EPUT experience: I had a hard time finding my place in EPUT until we had our first natural gas lab. After learning how to mold and fit pipe with help from employees in Southborough, I finally saw something that I was truly interested in and motivated me to continue in the program. I'm extremely grateful for all the support I received during my time in the EPUT program. Having Eversource employees and other industry leaders believe in me helped me believe in myself.



Luis Martinez

Hometown: Boston, Mass.

Dream Job: Eversource Underground Lineworker

Memorable EPUT Experience: I'm fortunate to have had many unforgettable experiences during my time in the EPUT program. Outside of my studies and lab work, I had the opportunity to serve as a STEM tutor at the Boston Teachers Union Pilot School in Jamaica Plain. I am the first in my family to graduate college and giving back to others is extremely rewarding. I'm also grateful for the many unique experiences I had at Eversource, like participating in events with members of the Diversity and Inclusion Council and Business Resource Group. I look forward to starting my career at a company that values the differences and unique perspectives that we all have to offer.





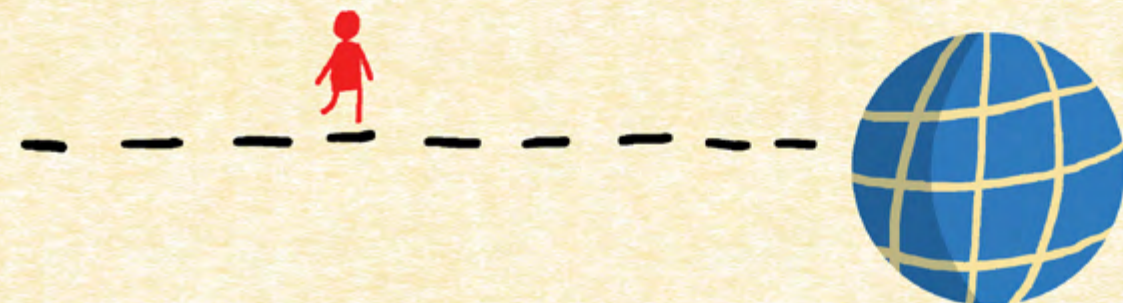
The community college hub serves as a champion for innovation in education, social justice, equity, and support networks for our students to succeed.

Unlocking Potential

The Vision of the Community College Hub

Insights from the Pandemic

In the past year, community colleges have witnessed the disintegration of systems and values that have strengthened institutions over the last quarter century. Through the darkness of the pandemic and the clouded history of racism and systemic deprivations, Bunker Hill Community College President Pam Eddinger witnessed not only the power of the student success movement, but the emergence of a transformation that promises a new vision of “community” in community college—a new social contract with the students and the community it serves.





President Eddinger delivered “Insights from the Pandemic” at the Annual Dallas Herring Lecture

BHCC President Pam Eddinger presented “Insights from the Pandemic: The Reckoning and the Hope at Our Nation’s Community Colleges,” at the William Dallas Herring Lecture in November 2020. In her discourse, she advanced a renewed vision of the community college as an educational, economic and social hub of the community.



The Herring Lecture is an annual event hosted by the North Carolina State University College of Education’s Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research in honor of the visionary, who was instrumental in the formation of the North Carolina Community College System. Herring was driven by his abiding belief in the potential of all beings to contribute to the progress of humankind. In advocating for community colleges, he asked politicians not to underestimate the poor and the underserved and to recognize they are human beings with immense capacity for creatively contributing to the progress of civilization. This feature captures highlights of President Eddinger’s lecture.

“Like a flash of lightning in the night, the pandemic...gave us a stark and unsparing look at the cavernous wealth and attainment gap before us...” – *President Eddinger*

Community Colleges Before the COVID Pandemic

Prior to the pandemic, the Community College Success Movement and its mission-driven research were a dominant force centered on improving persistence and degree completion, and closing achievement gaps in marginalized populations. The movement has grappled with these areas of inquiry for more than two decades, producing a number of different conceptual frameworks and analyses and an abundance of pedagogical and technical solutions, from assessment and accountability in the early 2000s, to the College Scorecard and Completion Agenda of the Obama Administration in the following decade, to the more recent introduction of the Guided Pathways concept.

These frameworks and solutions reflect

the long-standing mission and collective belief of community college educators that all students have the potential to learn and succeed, and sets the expectation that the attainment gap is bridgeable between white, economically advantaged students, and students at the margins; that students of color, first generation students, and students caught in generational poverty can achieve academic success. It also implies a promise—a social contract—that academic success will lead to social and economic mobility, and that social and economic equity is imaginable and reachable.

Community colleges have invested in everything from professional development for teaching and learning, to growing the next generation of leadership, more focused data analyses, targeted case management and advising, technology-

enhanced predictive analytics, technology-enhanced services and supports with only modest results.

A Stark Lesson

It was in the midst of this push for answers about student attainment, and in the progression of our understanding about the factors affecting student success that the COVID-19 pandemic came on the scene in March 2020. Like a flash of lightning in the night, the pandemic revealed all the cracks and fissures hidden in the landscape, and gave us a stark and unsparing look at the cavernous wealth and attainment gap before us, in our Black and brown urban communities, in the immigrant communities of our Gateway Cities, and in our poor white communities in the rural regions. While the struggles of these communities are not new to educators

in the field, the depth of the needs, as well as their systemic and entrenched nature, now shapes and informs a national conversation as never before.

The systemic deprivations predicated on race, on class, and on the persistent choice of private profit over public good has eroded our social contract. The optimism that fuels the mission of community colleges is obscured by the dismantling of social contracts in related sectors, in elementary and secondary education, in housing and transportation, in public health, in generational care. The hope of community colleges in lifting our students above the attainment gap, in restoring their social privilege and speeding their economic mobility, becomes fainter when the support network is frayed in so many other places. The lightning bore witness to its disintegration in the hometowns of our students.

Bunker Hill Community College serves students from Boston and the five Gateway Cities in the Greater Metropolitan Area. Like many large urban community colleges, 77% of students fall within the two lowest quintiles of income;

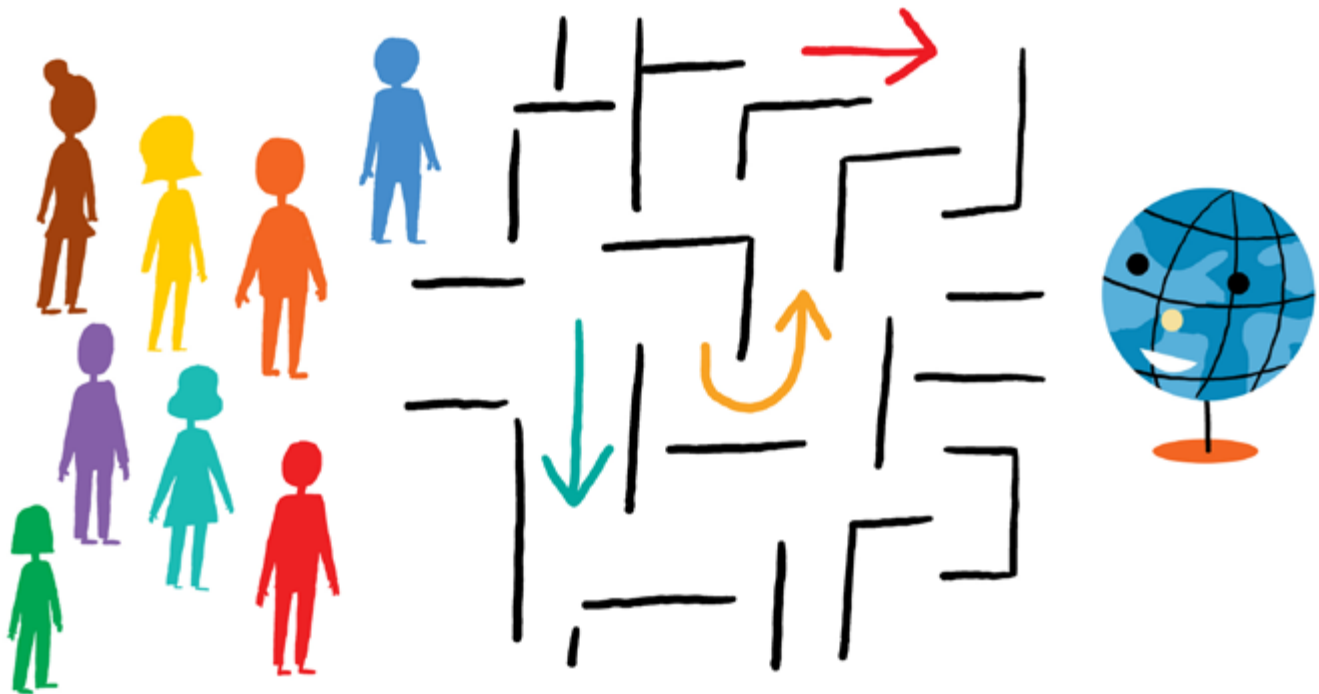
77% of students fall within the two lowest quintiles of income; generational poverty is common. Three quarters of students work, many full-time. Three out of five are **parents**, half of the parents are single mothers. Last surveyed three years ago, **54%** are food insecure; **14%** are homeless.

generational poverty is common. Three quarters of students work, many full-time. Three out of five are parents, half of the parents are single mothers. Last surveyed three years ago, 54% are food insecure; 14% are homeless.

While the students know higher education is their path to economic and social mobility, college is not at the center

of their lives. They are adults, with families to take care of. They are family strong and economically fragile; when money runs short, college gives way to family, jobs, and the urgency of survival.

When the pandemic hit, the needs were immediate, but the deprivations were long-standing. Community colleges have evolved over past decades to



compensate for systemic disinvestment in our communities, building infrastructure on campus to address the lack of support resources in individual families and communities. BHCC has built libraries and study commons, computer labs with WiFi, dining commons, clinics, food pantries, community gathering spaces, offices of emergency services, emergency housing, mental health counseling, and many other social services that kept students connected.

With a promise of open access, and the availability of physical, social, and cultural support infrastructure, community colleges are the social and education hub for the communities served. The importance of this physical and social support was validated when campuses closed due to the pandemic. Without a place to call home, many students went adrift, and our focus shifted to replicating as much of the Hub as possible in a virtual environment.

In March 2020, BHCC pivoted 1,700 classes from in-person to remote, providing students with WiFi, Chromebooks, and laptops. When the College's DISH Food Pantry closed its doors, the College

partnered with a local nonprofit to deliver groceries to student's homes, and mailed students grocery store gift cards.

Faculty worried about the physical and mental health of their students, and how they were caring for their school-aged children as they struggled with their own studies, and understood when students were unable to appear on video in class because they were embarrassed about their home environment.

Still, close to 800 students fell silent. Follow-up surveying showed that logistical challenges, a digital gap, and separation from social support were among the main reasons for their disengagement. Determined that a moment of academic disarray would not undermine a student's achievements long-term, BHCC revised academic and financial policies temporarily to provide students with time to acclimate and complete their courses.

It does not take much to disrupt a learner's journey—a sick child, a lost job, a bad WiFi connection. The pandemic revealed what educators attuned to their local communities have known for a long time; that equity or fairness are rare commodities in the

marginalized communities we serve; that our students are economically fragile despite their resilience.

The Vision of a Just Recovery and the Community College Hub

Community colleges are the social, economic, and educational hubs for our communities. They are no longer a stand-alone educational institution. As much as the COVID lightning has revealed the failure of our social and economic systems in serving our communities of poverty and communities of color, it has also shown us a radical transformation in the nature of community college as holistic equity-minded institutions promoting community engagement, economic mobility, and ultimately, social equity.

The crack of lightning that was COVID lit up the inhumane conditions in our communities, and brought to a crisis point the systemic failures long fed by racism and marginalization of the poor. Difficult as it is to witness the misery and urgent need, BHCC will seize this moment of clarity to think anew about the role of colleges in our community, and how we can be agents of change in

Chief Equity and Compliance Officer Nahomi Carlisle Joins BHCC



Bunker Hill Community College welcomed Nahomi

Carlisle, Esq., to the position of Associate Vice President, Chief Equity and Compliance Officer, Affirmative Action Office, and Section 504/ADA Coordinator at the College.

In this role Carlisle provides vision and leadership in the integration of equity and cultural wealth into all aspects of institutional life for students, faculty and staff, and will advocate on behalf of the College in forwarding the

values of equity and inclusion in the community-at-large, and within the community college movement regionally and nationally.

Prior to joining BHCC, Carlisle served as the Director of Diversity & Inclusion/ADA Compliance for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, where she oversaw internal compliance with the Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity programs

for the 3,000+ employee agency and acted as an integral part of the executive team on diversity and inclusion goals, program development and planning. She has practiced as an attorney for more than ten years with the legal background and experience to assist the College in its compliance work. She has a passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and has dedicated the last several years of her professional career to creating sustainable equity.



the coming decade. We will explore the changing future of the Hub—as a place of convergence, a place of revolution, and the home of a new social promise with our students, to honor their histories, to activate their potential, and claim their place in the world.

As we look forward toward a post-pandemic recovery, BHCC will remain committed to unlocking potential for our students by providing access and ensuring equity in post-secondary education across a full range of options—from non-credit workforce training to credit-bearing associate degrees and certificates. ■

“While the students know higher education is their path to economic and social mobility, college is not at the center of their lives. They are adults, with families to take care of. They are family strong and economically fragile; when money runs short, college gives way to family, jobs, and the urgency of survival.”

🔗 To learn more about the community college hub, visit bhcc.edu/magazine



Workforce Development Programs Meet Industry Demands

Short-term training programs connect employers with skilled workers



Community colleges play a unique role in filling local workforce needs—especially in Boston, with 90% of BHCC alumni remaining in Massachusetts after graduation. BHCC’s workforce development programs have long been crucial to providing employers with skilled graduates who are committed to improving their lives and their communities. Now, the COVID-19 pandemic has made such programs more important than ever.

The impacts of COVID-19 in communities of color and on those already living in poverty have proven greater than on other segments of the population, and their economic recovery has been slow. Meanwhile, Boston’s essential industries—information technology, healthcare, biotechnology and transportation—are working to rebuild and revamp their recruiting efforts. By aligning its workforce development programs with the needs of industry amidst the changes brought on by the pandemic, BHCC optimizes the economic potential for students, workers and employers.

“Our ultimate goal is to increase economic mobility on all fronts so that students do well and employers do well,” says Kristen McKenna, Dean of Workforce and Economic Development.

The College works closely with employer and workforce partner agencies to provide

Economic Impact of COVID-19: Communities of Color and Poor Hit Harder

- Unemployment rates in Massachusetts have lowered to 7.4% (as of March 2021), down from the June 2020 high of 17.7%, while unemployment rates in communities of color remain at least 7-8% higher than the statewide average.
- For those already living in poverty (defined as an annual household income of less than \$27k), unemployment rates hover around 22-23%.
- In certain neighborhoods, economic recovery is slow: In Chinatown, unemployment rates are 26.8% and Boston has witnessed a 41% decline in Black-owned business over the past year.

professional development programs, education opportunities, career counseling services and skilled labor training for pre-college and adult learners. These offerings connect skilled labor to careers in industries that desperately need them.

“Our mission is to provide career advancement opportunities and industry-leading training options to our communities,” says McKenna. “We focus on closing gaps in the current workforce, while furthering academic success and personal achievement for our students. And because we have the privilege of supporting diverse, passionate and innovative communities, our variety of program offerings are designed to be accessible, progressive and flexible.”

BHCC program offerings range from Google IT support to personal training to dental assistant to HR management. The College also partners with leading industry experts MassHire Career Centers and The Training Opportunity Program to help unemployed students develop the skills needed




for a new job while collecting unemployment benefits. Scholarships may be available through our Rapid Recovery and Reemployment program for these opportunities.

Short-Term Training Programs

Looking toward economic recovery from the pandemic, BHCC quickly developed and launched a series of short-term training programs designed to help people who are unemployed or underemployed and those that need economic mobility get

Rapid Recovery and Reemployment Program

BHCC’s Rapid Recovery and Reemployment Program is a unique grant-funded program that allows students or community members impacted by the COVID-19 economic downturn to get back in the game with financially supported training. Eligible participants will have access to full tuition and materials scholarships, as well as stipend for successful attendance and completion. These short-term trainings will allow a student to study over a shorter period of time, develop skills in a field, and earn an industry-recognized credential, which makes them employable quicker.

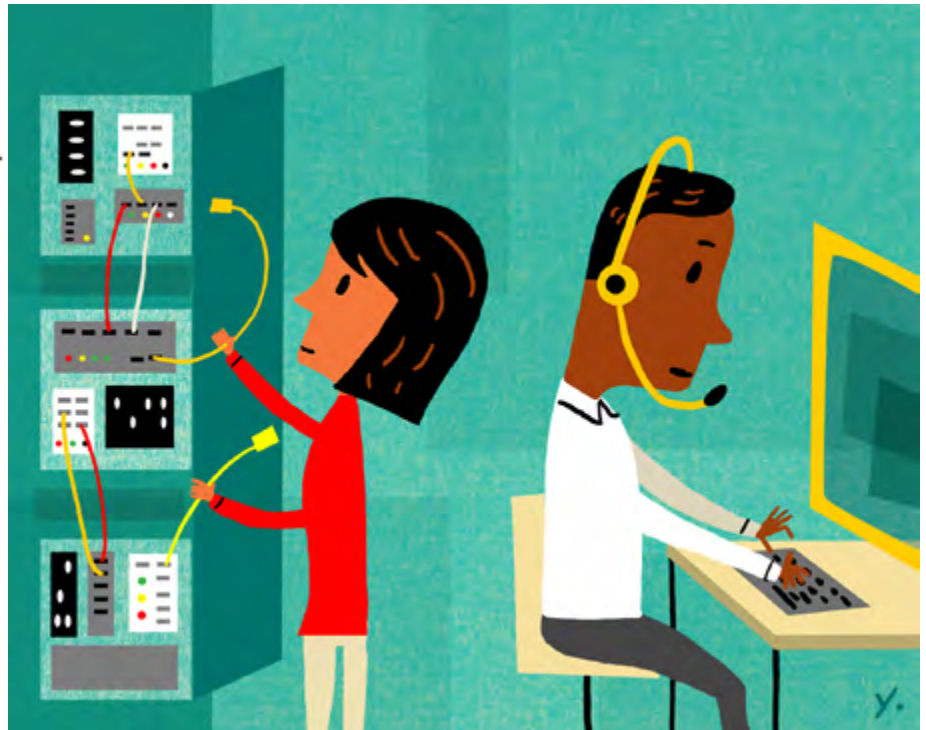
 Learn more at bhcc.edu/training

to work by learning the skills and earning an industry-recognized certification.

Part of the College's Rapid Recovery and Reemployment initiative, these short-term training programs include a Cisco Networking Technology Certification course that prepares students for a network administrator position in less than eight weeks, Information Technology (IT) Support Technician with A+ Certification, and various certifications in the health professions. These include training and certification as a Certified Nursing Assistant, Certified Professional in Healthcare Information and Management Systems, Dental Assisting, and Medical Interpreting.

"This initiative is BHCC's response to the growing need in our community for opportunities to fast-track learning with an accelerated program and industry-recognized credentials," McKenna says.

The short-term training programs will be offered Summer 2021 and Fall 2021 at no cost to students who are eligible.



Through special grant funding, BHCC will cover the cost of tuition, course materials and exam fees for those who are unemployed, Pell-grant eligible, or demonstrate financial need. Career counseling and job placement support will also be provided to students enrolled in the programs.

Certificates for Flourishing IT Jobs

In tune with the changing needs of the technology market, BHCC recently launched two new IT programs. Last fall the College began offering a five-course Google IT Professional Support Certificate as part of Google's Grow with Google initiative to prepare students for an entry-level job in the fast-growing field of IT support. It covers key topics from troubleshooting and customer service to networking, system administration, and security and operating systems. Students can complete coursework at their own pace, and earn their certificate in 2.5 months with 20 hours per week of work, or in eight months with six hours per week of work. Training vouchers may be available for Massachusetts residents who are unemployed through MassHire.

Participants in the certificate program also have the opportunity to learn



Workforce and Economic Development Program Offerings

- Adult education and college transition programs
- Test prep courses
- Online and hybrid certification programs in Technology and Healthcare
- Career advancement, customized training programs and employer counseling
- Language Institute with courses in English as a Second Language (ESL), Spanish and more
- Entrepreneurship and small business support

 Learn more at bhcc.edu/workforce

from Google employees with unique backgrounds and perspectives whose own foundation in IT support served as a jumping-off point for their careers. Upon completion, students are able to apply for entry-level IT positions with industry employers such as Cognizant, GE Digital, Hulu, Info Says, Intel and Sprint.

Also, through a collaboration with Socratic Arts, a leader in cybersecurity training education, BHCC's office of Workforce and Economic Development launched a Cybersecurity Training Certificate in 2021 to meet growing industry demand. Emsi, a national labor analytics firm, recently revealed the United States has less than half of the cybersecurity candidates it needs to keep up with the burgeoning demand.

The Cybersecurity program is a progression of three courses designed to impart a strong foundation of defensive cybersecurity skills in 18 weeks of study at 25 hours per week. In three 6-week courses, students learn to think like an attacker by exploiting a defense contractor's website and develop skills in advanced network traffic analysis, digital forensics and incident response.

Cybersecurity students work through 1-2 tasks per week in a cloud-based

Somerville English as a Second Language

To support English language learners, BHCC offers no-cost English as a Second Language classes to low-income Somerville residents through a \$250K grant from the City of Somerville's Job Creation and Retention Trust Board. The project, known as Somerville English Language Learners or SELL, is funded through collaboration with employer partners East Somerville Main Streets, the Community Action Coalition of Somerville and The Welcome Program. Designed for all levels of English language learners, the SELL project focuses on career readiness, providing students the opportunity to develop customer service and job-seeking skills while furthering their language skills.

environment with the support of a knowledge industry mentor and extensive online learning resources. Tasks are embedded in the realistic, but fictional, context of work as an entry-level employee of a government operations agency. Scholarships for this certificate program may be available through our Rapid Recovery and Reemployment program.

Affordable Paths to In-Demand Health Careers

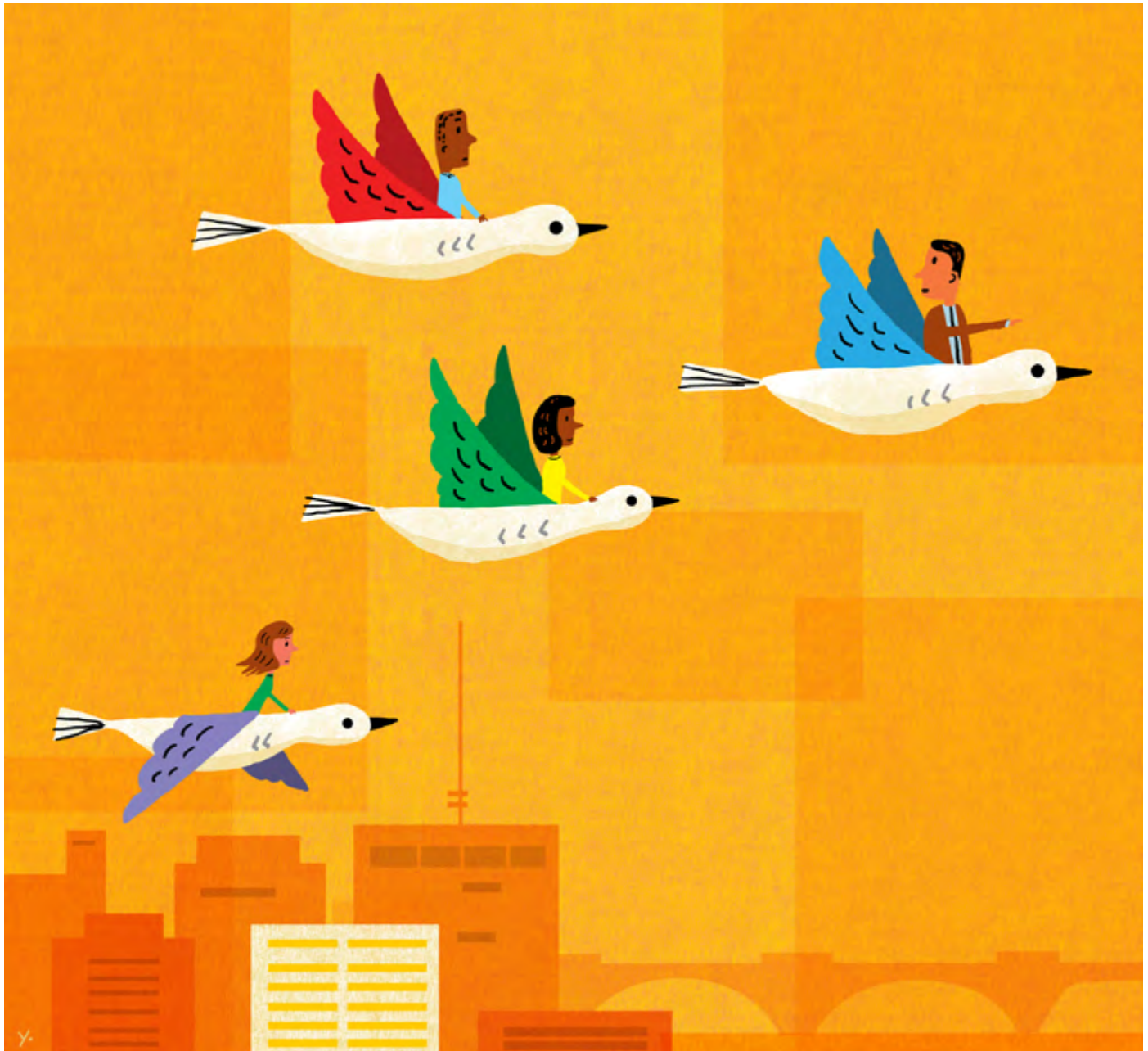
Boston's healthcare and social assistance industries account for over 18% of total employment, with five of the 10 largest employers being hospitals, and the demand for skilled and diverse healthcare professionals is higher than ever in this pandemic era. BHCC is prepared to meet the growing demand by providing affordable, quality education in the health sciences field.

BHCC offers a broad array of courses and programs geared to in-demand health careers including nursing, medical imaging, paramedics, pharmacy technician, surgical technology, medical assisting and interpreting. Certification programs are also available in Phlebotomy, Dental Assisting and EKG Technology. Graduates of these associate degree and certificate programs are equipped with the skills and knowledge to find immediate work in high-demand health fields or to transfer seamlessly into health degree programs to further their education, ensuring their success in competitive health careers now and in the future.

Among BHCC's health programs is our Cardiac Sonography program, the only one in Massachusetts public higher education. This accelerated program prioritizes both quality in-class instruction and hands-on laboratory training. Students have the opportunity to work with industry-grade, state-of-the-art medical apparatus—including ultrasound machines, radiological systems, x-ray imaging technology and remote simulation equipment—to familiarize themselves with the very technologies they will encounter in their careers. Many graduates of this program work at Boston's top hospitals. ■

"Our ultimate goal is to increase economic mobility on all fronts," says Kristen McKenna, Dean of Workforce and Economic Development, "so that students do well and employers do well."





Internship Pipeline Lessens Equity Gap

New Community College STEM Internship Initiative expands paid opportunities for BHCC students

As Massachusetts employers seek to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, labor market experts predict a shortage of skilled employees needed for these companies to grow and succeed. BHCC's Learn and Earn initiative connects students—many of whom are low-income and people of color—with paid internship opportunities at Greater Boston's top corporations, small businesses, and nonprofit and civic organizations. The initiative is designed to meet supply and demand needs by offering students hands-on experience and the opportunity to grow their careers while also supporting

companies' equity goals and diversifying the work force in growing industries.

According to the 2019 Uncovering Hidden Talent report from The Boston Foundation, many Massachusetts employers, especially those in STEM industries, report difficulty in hiring skilled workers to fill open positions. Community colleges can help by partnering with employers to offer work-based learning opportunities and internships to close the gap, and support its students in getting their foot in the door.

Community college students remain vastly underrepresented in STEM internships, often getting less than 10 percent of internships matched through the Massachusetts Life Science Center, Clean Energy Center and Mass Tech Collaborative. These programs provide resources and support to stimulate STEM internships and employment opportunities in Massachusetts. While state universities receive \$1M annually from the Massachusetts state legislature to support internships, no equivalent funding is earmarked for community colleges.

The Boston Foundation launched a new Community College STEM Internship Initiative in 2021 awarding grants to four local community colleges, including BHCC. The funding, which spans 18 months through the 2021-2022 academic year, will support expansion of existing STEM internship initiatives at the College and provide seed money for new STEM internship opportunities. Through this new initiative, The Boston Foundation aims to connect community college students with better internship opportunities and focuses on removing the barriers community college students find in pursuing internships in STEM.

Unlike traditional four-year college students, BHCC students, like many community college students, work in addition to taking their classes. Though many BHCC students bring prior work experience and cultural wealth to their internship hosts, students may not have reliable transportation options to pursue internship opportunities, have families to support, or lack the time or financial means to take on unpaid internships—even if the role could lead to employment after graduation.

Since 2012, BHCC's Learn and Earn program has provided paid internship opportunities to BHCC students across a variety of industries. The program has expanded to include more than 50 employer partners ranging from nonprofit,

civic and cultural organizations such as the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Strong Women in Action, and All In Energy, to corporate partners such as State Street, Vertex Pharmaceuticals and HubSpot.

Learn and Earn interns are paid at least \$18 an hour and provided a travel stipend ranging from \$200-\$650. While employer-paid compensation is the preferred option, many small businesses, nonprofits, and civic organizations are unable to pay their interns the minimum wage required for the program. BHCC employs a cost-sharing model to supplement wages by securing private funding. The model has allowed BHCC to expand Learn and Earn internship opportunities to these employers, and with The Boston Foundation grant funding, will

Strong Women in Action Spotlight Award

Learn and Earn Internship Coordinator Katie Colello accepted the Strong Women in Action (SWIA) Spotlight Award on behalf of the College's Learn and Earn program and the BHCC Foundation at the SWIA Annual Gala

SWIA is dedicated to building a strong and effective network of partners and aims to empower families and break the cycle of family poverty in Massachusetts by promoting pathways to economic independence.

"SWIA is a wonderful organization, and we are thrilled to have BHCC students intern there to gain hands-on experience," said Colello. "The organization values our students and provides incredible mentorship."

SWIA provides a wide range of programs to meet the needs of the families they serve. Their youth and teen programs are designed to empower, engage, and equip the next generation of leaders to realize their potential with amazing hands-on career exploration, mentorship programs, simulations, internship opportunities, workshops, and experiences.





allow BHCC to expand STEM internship opportunities for students regardless of the employer's ability to compensate interns.

In nearly 10 years of offering Learn and Earn internships, BHCC has learned first-hand the necessity of engaging employer partners in the mission of the program and building trusting relationships.

The program has expanded to include more than 50 employer partners ranging from nonprofit, civic and cultural organizations and interns are paid at least \$18 an hour.

on their areas of expertise, and student recruitment. Liaisons will also work with faculty in their academic division to introduce new and revised curricula for internship courses, and expand capstone and bridge course offerings.

The Boston Foundation initiative will enable all four colleges that received funding to bring an intentional focus to ensuring equity in internship opportunities. BHCC has already revised its employer orientation program to reflect the equity and cultural wealth framework. The program demonstrates to employers the many cultural assets BHCC student

interns bring to their organizations as well as guides them on how to offer effective and equitable support to student interns.

Over the 18 months of funding, BHCC will engage the College's Institutional Research to make equitable internship opportunities a high-impact institutional priority by collecting and analyzing data on STEM internship participation, disaggregated by race, gender and STEM field, and continually counteracting equity gaps. This work will inform future practice and ensure students typically underrepresented in STEM fields have access to internship opportunities.

Faculty play a critical role in developing meaningful internship experiences and curricula, and bring industry expertise and established relationships to the program. As part of The Boston Foundation's new initiative, BHCC will appoint three faculty liaisons representing the Science, Engineering, and Computer Science Departments to support onboarding of new partners, alignment of required skills to BHCC curriculum, review student resumes for technical content based



Preparing Employers for Community College Interns

Last fall, BHCC and The Boston Foundation co-hosted “Preparing Employers for Community College Interns: A Conversation about Equity and Cultural Wealth.”

Austin Gilliland, Dean, Professional Studies, and Lee Santos Silva, Director, Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth, opened the program with a presentation on equity and cultural wealth. They stressed the importance of taking an equity-minded lens to the College’s work connecting students with internship experiences that lead to full-time employment opportunities through BHCC’s Learn and Earn initiative, and recognizing the cultural wealth BHCC student interns bring to the workforce.

“The dual pandemics, COVID-19 and uprisings in relation to racial injustices, have really shone a very harsh light on inequities in our communities and magnified them,” said Santos Silva. “As a community college, our mission is to serve our community. That is why we are centered on equity and cultural wealth now. Without a direct, targeted and intense focus on equity, those hit hardest by this pandemic will be the last to recover.”

Gilliland advised employers, “If you are ready to host community college interns, make mentoring a part of your staff members’ job descriptions. Our students know how to work, but they may be new to your field and are going to need support. Mentorship should not be an afterthought when developing plans for intern support.”

A student panel discussion featuring current and past Learn and Earn

interns followed the presentation. Moderated by Juan Cantu, Program Officer, The Boston Foundation, the panelists included Victoria Luchi, Program Coordinator Intern, Strong Women in Action; Fabiola Mayen Vital, Event Sales and Management Intern, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Pedro Russell, Senior Strategies Analyst, Cengage; and Elidijon Tafa, Navigate Marketing Intern, New England Clean Energy Council.

Stephanie Bryszkowski, Director, Internships and Career Development, closed the presentation with an employer panel discussion highlighting the impact student interns can have for employers. Participants included Jamie Banks, Sustainability Consultant at Sustainerv, BHCC alum, and former Learn and Earn intern; Kerry Flentie, Lead Microbiologist, Selux Diagnostics, Inc.; Florette Louissaint, President and CEO, Strong Women in Action; and Molly Phelps, Academic Programs Manager, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

Phelps, who manages the Gardner Museum’s academic programs, spoke about the importance of diversity to

cultural institutions like hers. “The health and future of museums depend on having more diverse representation in our staff, in our visitors, and in the narratives we tell,” she said. “The museum just finished its second year of the Gardner Ambassador program, working exclusively with BHCC student interns. In prioritizing these paid internship opportunities and equity-minded programming, the Gardner Museum is helping to shape the future of these cultural institutions.”

Louissaint, who founded nonprofit Strong Women in Action to empower families with the resources, tools, and connections to overcome obstacles, expressed appreciation for BHCC’s impact on the organization. “The support we’ve received from BHCC’s Office of Internships and Career Development, the BHCC Foundation, and the student interns has driven our work forward,” she said. “I am so proud of this work and collaboration. Our student interns are making changes in families’ lives; they’re developing curriculum and education and taking leadership roles on these projects.”

A Learn and Earn internship partner, Strong Women in Action employed five BHCC interns this spring and last fall. The internship opportunities are made possible by the BHCC Foundation through a family foundation’s funding. ■

“Our students know how to work, but they may be new to your field and are going to need support. Mentorship should not be an afterthought when developing plans for intern support.”



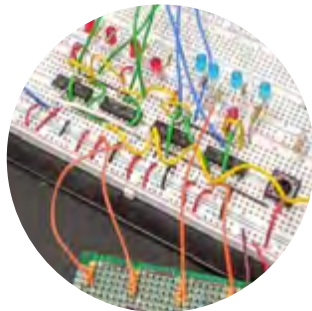
Dream Job

BHCC students and
alumni turn passions
into purpose



Whether it's a rewarding career in e-commerce or the food industry or making an impact in renewable energy and genetics, BHCC programs offer students specialized training and real-world experiences that allow students to pursue their interests and passions.

Meet four BHCC students and alumni who are bringing innovation to the business and STEM industries and how pathways to four-year institutions helped to make their dream jobs a reality.



Pathways in STEM

STEM transfer pathways at BHCC allow students explore their passions and propel their careers while gaining specialized training, hands-on lab experience and mentorship opportunities with leading industry professionals. Transfer pathways provide students with a strong foundation for academic and professional success and prepare students for a seamless transition to four-year schools—all at an affordable cost.



Sound Foundations

Bridget Benner, Engineering transfer alumna, Ph.D. candidate, UMass Amherst Fluid-Interactions Lab



After earning a business degree and working for several years in IT and client services, Engineering alumna Bridget Benner realized she wanted to pursue a more fulfilling and engaging career—one that allowed her to focus on the things she was excited about. Benner wanted to work in a role that promotes and protects the environment. She ultimately decided to go into renewable energy engineering—one of many STEM fields where there aren't many women.

Breaking the gender barrier in STEM and pursuing an environmental career meant Benner had to first return to school to earn a degree in mechanical engineering. She needed a program that was flexible, competitive and supportive of her goals. Benner found all of this and more in BHCC's Engineering Transfer Program, one of three carefully structured and purposefully designed transfer pathways that provide students fundamental knowledge and skillsets while allowing them to explore their individual interests and specialized fields of their choice.

Benner admits she was nervous to return to school years after completing her degree, but she immediately found a nurturing, engaging and inclusive community at BHCC. "Without exception, my instructors always made time for me during office hours and beyond," she says.

"As I coordinated my transfer, my professors made it a point to have intentional conversations with me about what I wanted, where I was going, and how they could help me succeed."

Benner is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Fluid-Structure Interactions Lab at UMass Amherst, where her research focuses on the fundamentals of flow-induced dynamic instabilities of wind-turbine blades.

Unparalleled Learning Experiences

Nadifa Abdi, Biotechnology major



Biotechnology major Nadifa Abdi credits the STEM professors at BHCC and industry mentors she's worked with for enhancing her enthusiasm for advancing agricultural solutions, genetics and food security. Through the STEM Mentorship program at BHCC, Abdi has had the opportunity to work and learn directly from mentors at Merck Research Laboratories, BioNTech and Ten Bridge Communication.

"The community college setting provides STEM students with the best of both worlds," says Abdi. "My professors balance intensive in-class discussions and collaborative lab work with career exploration opportunities that have allowed me to view my future career through the lenses of marketing, communication and networking."

Throughout her experience, Abdi has built confidence in her lab skills, critical thinking and theory knowledge. At the

same time, she has gained connections to a broad network of industry leaders in the Greater Boston community that have given her confidence in her ability to maneuver through the business side of the biotechnology industry. Abdi plans to continue to pursue her education in biotechnology with a focus on agricultural biotechnology following graduation.

Innovation in Business

BHCC's Business programs aim to ignite students' passion and purpose and enable them to create meaningful impact—whether technological, social, artistic or cultural—in their careers and communities.

Entrepreneurship alumni Ben Taylor and Charlene Pena showcased their innovative businesses earlier this spring at the 2021 IDEA Conference at Boston University, a virtual one-day event designed to inspire college students and recent graduates—locally and globally—to explore innovation and entrepreneurship.

"I am incredibly proud of both Charlene and Ben for their business accomplishments. To see them transform a vision and opportunity into thriving, sustainable businesses is what entrepreneurship is all about," said Tony Fontes, Professor and Chairperson, BHCC Business Administration Department.

Edible Ideas

Ben Taylor, Entrepreneurship alumni



The journey for BHCC Entrepreneurship alumni and founder of Uprise Foods Ben Taylor began when he realized the positive impact of plant-based foods on health and the environment and their role in preventing unnecessary suffering. Taylor is the founder of Uprise Foods, America's first certified fair trade plant cheese company and creators of NOOCH IT! Cashew Grated Cheeze. He and his wife Gwen Taylor launched the company as a solution that can lead to a healthy and sustainable future.

At Uprise Foods, the number one ingredient is transparency. From seed to mouth, the company uses ingredients consumers can trust to create healthy and delicious foods that are certified fair trade, vegan, organic, dairy-free, and non-GMO.

"Positive change begins with what's at the end of our forks," says Taylor. "Together we can create a more compassionate, healthy, and equitable world."

In a workshop on innovation in the food industry, Taylor discussed challenges and opportunities in the industry while highlighting insights and lessons relevant to all driven entrepreneurs.

Taylor's path—like many BHCC students'—wasn't traditional. Prior to enrolling in BHCC, Taylor worked for the Appalachian Mountain Club and blogged about organic food and plant-based diets from an animal welfare point of view. He also started a glass blowing business and a record label. "I just follow my passions," Taylor says. "I took a look at the plant-based market and realized I may have a bigger impact as a manufacturer. When you read something, you may remember it, but eating ties people together. It's an experience that can be lived over and over."

Taylor attended BHCC for two years before transferring to Northeastern University. "Business school tied together things that I already knew, and I learned from that. I took a reverse route to starting my own business. Whichever route you take, there will be learning curves."

Consumer Mindsets

Charlene Pena,
Entrepreneurship alumna



Entrepreneurship alumna Charlene Pena is the founder of Woven Royal and the inventor of the Afrona—the only hat of its kind made for curly and voluminous hair like Pena's. The satin-lined headwear keeps curls and volume intact by lifting hair up and preventing it from going flat. It also protects against damage caused by the cold, UV rays and humidity.

The youngest of six children, Pena's family migrated to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic. After severely damaging her hair, Pena traveled to the Dominican Republic in 2017 for three months and created the first-ever Afrona with the help of a seamstress named Fela.

Through the experience, Pena realized that for people to prosper and flourish, they must feel protected in who they truly are and supported in who they want to be. Pena vowed to help women in her native country like Fela. She returned home to the U.S. where she taught herself to sew and perfected the design of the Afrona.

"When we have the freedom to be ourselves and express who we truly are, we are able to connect with the inner part of us that is royal – the part of us that is

courageous, worthy, and dignified," says Pena.

Thinking like a consumer has been critical to Pena's business. "Since I identify as a consumer, I can communicate with my customers," she says. "I started small, did lots of testing. I had the idea, but I still sought out feedback."

Responding to customer needs, Pena brought Woven Royal from an e-commerce brand to brick and mortar in 2020, opening a small storefront to provide clients with a personalized shopping experience. Presenting on innovation in the retail industry at the IDEA Conference, Pena reminded entrepreneurs of the importance of adapting their businesses as consumer needs change. "Don't be afraid to fail. As an entrepreneur, you're a creator and an innovator. Keep pivoting. Keep going." ■

"The community college setting provides STEM students with the best of both worlds. My professors balance intensive in-class discussions and collaborative lab work with career exploration opportunities that have allowed me to view my future career through the lenses of marketing, communication and networking."

—Nadifa Abdi



Photo: Oldren Romero

Jimmy Valdez Osaku

Creative Exile exhibit responds to pandemic loss and loneliness

Creative Exile, at the Mary L. Fifield Art Gallery features the art and poetry of New York-based Jimmy Valdez Osaku in a powerful exploration of loss, loneliness and endurance. Organized just as COVID-19 was shutting down the United States, the

exhibition includes older works plus paintings and writings produced in response to the pandemic.

Valdez Osaku's art chronicles his journey, and struggles as an immigrant, and suggests that we have all become exiles in a virus-plagued world.



Shut Down, Man. The City Dies, Oil on canvas, 18" X 24"

WHAT REMAINS AT LAST

What remains at last is the last of that vile repentance: the ashes, the search, the imprecations (the marital come-and-go in the skylight). Everything in its forbidden place, everything on purpose. The city resisting the panting of the landscape (the mangle at sundown, the phosphorescence, and, as a broken man, the pessimism.

What remains as an anointing, an ungraspable metaphor, as a level field (tangle of injurious insults in the stillness, beside three coins tossed by someone usuriously). A light remains in the ruined hallway of the hospital. A light that illuminates the floor as well as the solitude. A light of silences leaning on broken panes of glass and crumpled paper. A light of plastic bags punctured by the specter of torture. Light of a stinking bulb, smiling like a beetle [martillo], almost a mutant.

Light of dampness and green stains. Intestinal light in a dark mouth (light in the word that uncorks the infested thing). Light of a network of artifices, concave, a bite on the neck. Light in my finger (amniotic drummer). Light while I walk with the broken wholeness of the broken. Light of work, silver mask over a face eaten by leprosy. There's nothing like this kingdom of scalded walls. Nothing like this aftertaste of ruminant, this shadow squatting in the annoying mirage of life.

—Jimmy Valdez Osaku

This poem appeared in Creative Exile, Poems by Jimmy Valdez Osaku (2020), as translated by BHCC Distinguished Artist in Residence Rhina P. Espallat.

For more on Jimmy Valdez Osaku, visit bhcc.edu/magazine

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Charlestown Campus
250 New Rutherford Avenue
Boston, MA 02129
617-228-2000
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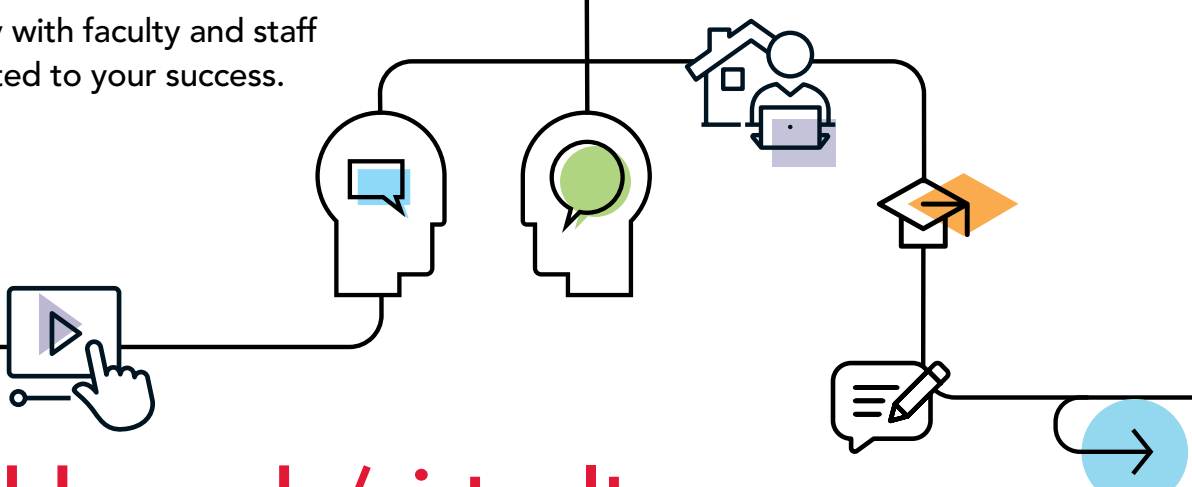
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