

Spring/Summer 2024

# BHCC

Bunker Hill Community College Magazine

50  
BHCC  
Celebrates  
50 Years



## New Student Success Center

This spring, a ribbon cutting marked the grand opening of the Student Success Center, the College's first new building in more than a decade and the latest of several projects renovating and renewing our 50-year-old campus. As we come together to honor the legacy of Bunker Hill Community College, take a journey through time with us as we look at the College's expanding physical footprint in the Greater Boston community in Faces, Places & Spaces on page 6.



## A Message from the President



Dear Bunker Hill Community College Friends and Partners,

Welcome to the 50th Anniversary commemorative issue of *BHCC Magazine*. I am honored that you are celebrating this milestone with us. Thank you for your enthusiastic support and engagement throughout this historic year.

Although the community college movement is just over 100 years old, over the last several years, it has felt like a movement reborn.

The free community college initiative, of which the MassReconnect

program is an example, has swept the nation, providing pathways to higher education as well as career and economic advancement for millions of students. The Community College Movement that began more than a century ago as “junior colleges” has grown into a system of colleges that serve more than half of the undergraduates in Massachusetts and trains tens of thousands of workers looking to acquire new skills and better jobs, and that partners with established and emerging industries to grow the workforce of the future.

Bunker Hill’s bright future and dynamic present are a product of its rich and diverse history and of the students, faculty, and staff who imagined the possibilities and made them real. Although our College is younger than many of our peer colleges and universities, our history is filled with visionaries and changemakers, too numerous to name in a single magazine or even in an entire year of celebration.

The magazine in front of you is a glimpse into a year-long tribute to our beloved institution. It features just a few of our impressive alums and highlights some of our amazing current students. We hope their amazing journeys will touch you and entice you to learn about the many events and celebrations that have happened on our campuses throughout this anniversary year.

We hope this short journey through our College history will remind us that, like all communities, a college is indeed as great as its people. As we look back over the last half-century, we face the future with hope and curiosity. Amid this great flowering of the Community College Movement, please join me in recommitting ourselves to the values at our core for the next 50 years: Education and the knowledge and pathways it unlocks will always be here at Bunker Hill Community College, to serve everyone.

With deep gratitude,

Pam Y. Eddinger, Ph.D.  
President

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BHCC Magazine Online

Visit [bhcc.edu/magazine](http://bhcc.edu/magazine) for exclusive web extras and a more in-depth look into our featured articles.

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50 BHCC Alums celebrate 50 years of changemaking at Bunker Hill Community College.

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Determined to Succeed

Three BHCC students on the transformational impact of the MassReconnect free community college program in their own words.

# A Year of Celebration!

Welcome to the golden jubilee of Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC)! This year, we proudly marked half a century of academic excellence, community engagement, and cultivating of workforce and industry partnerships. Over the last several months, we celebrated more than just the bricks and mortar that formed our College, but more importantly, the spirit and ambition that has empowered BHCC students to achieve their dreams.

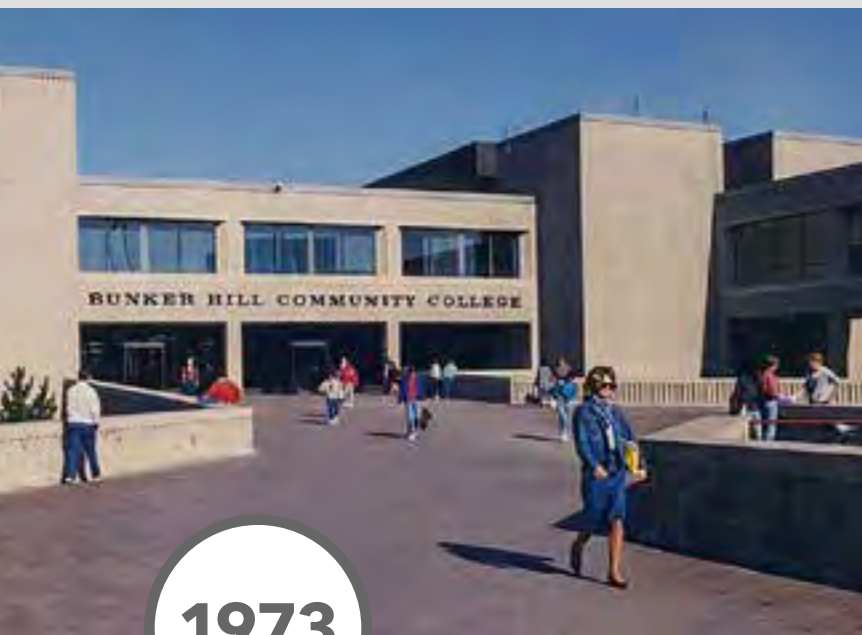
Together, let’s honor the legacy of Bunker Hill Community College, cherish the memories, and anticipate a future filled with promise. Here’s to the next 50 years!

# *What we are Celebrating*

For the past 50 years, BHCC has been more than an educational institution. It has been an inclusive foundation of knowledge, a diverse community of thinkers, and a platform for experiences and advancement. We have seen countless students transition into successful alumni and dedicated faculty who support students every step of the way.



# Faces, Places & Spaces



Harold Shively,  
Founding President  
1973-1988

Charlestown Campus  
Main Campus, 1973



Community Education launched, 1974



VITA program first offered at BHCC, 1975



BHCC achieves initial  
accreditation, 1976

1973

1983



Professor Bob Steeper, the only current faculty member who was teaching at BHCC when it opened, with snake, Pumpkin



The 1970s was a period of rapid social change. BHCC sought an experimental approach to education, offering "special topics" instruction to small groups



Original program offerings included Business, Criminal Justice, Executive Secretary, Fire Protection, Human Services, and Liberal Arts

First Commencement Exercises held in the Walter Brown Arena - the ice rink at Boston University, 1975



E-Building Groundbreaking, 1979



Chelsea Campus opens, 1987



Athletic fields open on the Charlestown Campus, 1989



Piedad F. Robertson, President 1988-1991



Kathleen E. Assar, President 1991-1992



Charles E. Stikes, President 1993-1995

1984

1993



By 1988, offerings had expanded to 24 associate degree and certificate programs ranging from Computer Programming and Culinary Arts to Liberal Arts and Nuclear Medicine



BHCC receives first Title III grant focusing on computer-assisted instruction, 1988



Now called the Mary L. Fifield Art Gallery, BHCC's art gallery opened on the Charlestown Campus in 1988



Students participate in Spring Day, 1991

Maurice F. O'Shea,  
Interim President  
1995-1997



The College was featured in the 1997 movie Good Will Hunting as the location where Sean Maguire (Robin Williams) teaches



Adult Basic Education program launches to offer classes for adults to develop English language proficiency along with training in the skills needed for a successful transition to college, 1995



Mary Fifield,  
President 1997-2013



Chelsea Campus moves to its new home in the historic renovated former Chelsea Post Office in Bellingham Square, 1998

1994

2003



College's first faculty and staff journal "Teaching for Our Times" is published, 1999



International Center opens, 1999



BHCC conducts "Future Search Conference" with the theme of "A New College for a New Century" to establish goals and institutional objectives for the College, 1999



BHCC achieves Commonwealth Honors Program status, 2001



BHCC receives Title III Building the Engaged Campus grant, 2006



Compelling Conversations launches with Felipe Luciano, 2004



Health & Wellness Center opens in 2009



Men's Baseball Team wins MCCAC State Championship, 2009



Veterans Center opens, 2011



Loki the Robot joins classes at BHCC, 2013



Pam Y. Eddinger, President, 2013-Present

2004

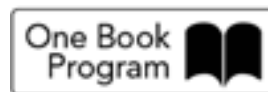
2013



Boston Welcome Back Center opened in 2005 to support foreign-trained nurses seeking licensure in Massachusetts



Men's Soccer Team wins State Championship, 2006



Launch of BHCC One Book Program, 2007



BHCC earns designation as Achieving the Dream Institution for its commitment to student success, equity, and excellence, 2007



BHCC achieves Leader College recognition by Achieving the Dream, 2011



Awarded the National Gates Foundation Achieving the Dream Catalyst Grant, 2012



Learn and Earn Internship program established, 2012



BHCC Title III Grant a five-year grant from Dreams to Reality, 2013





In 2014, President Eddinger attends White House Summit on Education at which President Obama praises the College's Summer Bridge program for its work preparing low-income students for college-level work



BHCC \$1.2 million TRIO Talent Search Grant provides college access services to prospective low-income, first-generation college students, 2016



BHCC receives a \$1.7 million grant from the United States Department of Education's Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) program, 2016



BHCC receives a \$100,000 grant from Achieving the Dream to support the launch of the OER initiative, 2016



Pao Arts Center opens in partnership with the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, 2017



Department of Higher Education awards \$100,000 grant to develop the Center for Cultural Wealth and Equity, 2017



Student Central opens on the Charlestown Campus, 2017



College bulldog mascot "Charlie," 2019



Distinguished Artist Scholar in Residence program launched with Robin Chandler, 2018



2021-2022 Distinguished Artist Scholar in Residence Larry Spotted Crow Mann authors original Land Acknowledgement statement for BHCC

# 2014

# 2024

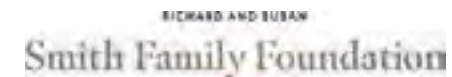
BHCC receives the Leah Meyer Austin Award from Achieving the Dream, 2014



U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, 2015 Commencement speaker with college president



BHCC soccer team brings home the National Junior College Athletic Association Region 21 Championship, 2015



In 2018, The Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation award \$2.4 million to establish the Early College program at BHCC, marking the largest private grant awarded in the College's history



Grand opening of the Student Success Center, the College's first new building in more than a decade, 2024. Left to right: Massachusetts Secretary of Education Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, BHCC President Pam Eddinger, DCAMM Commissioner Adam Baacke, DHE Commissioner Dr. Noe Ortega, State Rep. Dan Ryan, State Senator Sal DiDomenico

Then MACP Chair and Raytheon CEO Bill Swanson with President Pam Eddinger. Learn and Earn Internship Program receives a national Award of Excellence in the Outstanding College Corporate Partnership category from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 2015



BHCC organizes Voices of Hunger Summit, 2017



Halting Oppressive Pathways through Education (HOPE) Initiative launches to support men of color on campus, 2017



DISH Food Pantry opens on the Charlestown Campus to Deliver Information, Sustenance, and Health (DISH) to the BHCC Campus Community, 2019



BHCC receives Hispanic Serving Institution designation from the U.S. Department of Education, 2021



Commencement takes place at the MGM Music Hall in 2023

# Speakers & Visitors

Over the last 50 years speakers and visitors have engaged and inspired BHCC students, faculty, staff, and our community. From Difficult Dialogues and Compelling Conversations to Commencement keynotes, the College's speaker series and special events invite today's diverse voices, eminent thought leaders, and visionaries from both domestic and international platforms to share local, national, and global perspectives on contemporary and culturally relevant issues of human interest, social justice, and change.



Compelling Conversations: Tipper Gore, Hillary Clinton and Edward Kennedy



Compelling Conversations: Ken Burns



Compelling Conversations: Gloria Steinem



Compelling Conversations: Ice-T



Difficult Dialogues: Angela Davis



Compelling Conversations: Michael Moore



Veterans Center: Shoshana Johnson



Compelling Conversations: Tawakkol Karman



Difficult Dialogues: Sybrina Fulton



Compelling Conversations: Gish Jen



Compelling Conversations: Sanjay Gupta



Compelling Conversations: Cleve Jones



Compelling Conversations: Bob Woodard



Compelling Conversations: America Ferrera



One Book Program: Seng Ty



Distinguished Artist Scholar in Residence: Larry Spotted Crow Mann (second from the left)



Compelling Conversations: Bernice A. King



Compelling Conversations: Marlee Matlin



Distinguished Artist: Wenti-Tsen



2022 Commencement Speaker: City of Boston Mayor, Michelle Wu



Compelling Conversations: Ndaba Mandela



Compelling Conversations: Ilyasah Shabazz



Distinguished Artist: Rosalba Solis



Hispanic Heritage Month: Maria Hinojosa



Compelling Conversations: Juju Chang



2015 Commencement Speaker: U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren



2023 Commencement Speaker: Massachusetts Attorney General, Andrea Joy Campbell



Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth Institute: Ibram X. Kendi



Distinguished Artist Scholar in Residence: Rhina P. Espaillet



Compelling Conversations: Philonise Floyd



Compelling Conversations: Adrienne Bailon-Houghton



Compelling Conversations: Rev. Nontombi Naomi Tutu

# 50 for 50

50 BHCC Alums celebrate 50 years of changemaking at Bunker Hill Community College.

Anniversaries are a testament to endurance, commitment, and vision. This milestone serves as a reflection point to recognize how far we have come and to express our gratitude to everyone who has been a part of this journey. As we mark our 50th anniversary, we proudly recognize 50 BHCC Alumni who stand out for their resilience, talent, and dedication to making a difference in society. From various fields and backgrounds, they embody the essence of our institution and inspire a new generation with renewed energy.





## Cathy Guild '02

Sr. Assistant, Performance Management and Improvement, Blue Cross Blue Shield MA; BHCC Trustee

Cathy Guild was born in Alabama and raised in the “educational state” of Boston. She earned an associate degree in executive office business administration at Bunker Hill and launched her professional career working as an assistant to the Dean of Academic Support and College Pathway Programs. After BHCC, Cathy transitioned to the TJX Companies, Inc., as the Executive Assistant in the office of Community Relations. She currently works as Sr. Assistant in Performance Measurement and Improvement at Blue Cross Blue Shield MA and for the last several years has served as a trustee of BHCC. A Boston resident, Cathy is a mother, grandmother, daughter and caretaker, and she enjoys reading, gardening, and cooking.

“They say, all you need is one person to believe in you. At Bunker Hill, you’ll find a team of believers.”

## Michelle Botus '04

Director of Training and Staff Development, Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance.

Michelle Botus’s career as a human resources and staff development leader has spanned government, nonprofit, and education sectors over two decades. Michelle is the founder and CEO of Perennial Village, a nonprofit that champions change through access to post-secondary education to first-time college students, providing scholarships to cover expenses over and above the typical costs of higher education. Michelle also serves as Director of Training and Staff Development at the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’s Department of Transitional Assistance, leading the training and development unit in implementing a comprehensive training curriculum that supports mission, strategic goals, and diversity, equity and inclusion objectives. After earning her associate degree in psychology from BHCC, Michelle received a bachelor’s in sociology from Tufts, a master’s degree in nonprofit management from Northeastern, and is a Ph.D. candidate in the leadership and change program at Antioch University.

“BHCC provided me with a safe space for me to rebuild my life. I entered the campus as a survivor, I left as a leader.”



## Henry Nelson '09

Vice President, Brown & Brown Insurance Services, Inc.

Originally from Haiti, Henry Nelson came to BHCC as an international student. After attending BHCC, Nelson transferred to Northeastern University, where he enrolled in the Health Management program. Today, he works in benefits consulting for Brown & Brown, a large insurance brokerage.

“So many good things happened while attending BHCC that it makes it hard to pinpoint which one was the best. Attending BHCC was an amazing, life-changing opportunity. I am who I am today and do what I do today because of the wonderful leadership opportunities BHCC allowed me to experience.”



## Yamileth Lopez '15

Accountant, OneMonroe Engineering; BHCC Trustee

For Yamileth Lopez, community and connection have defined her BHCC experience, both as a student and today. At Bunker Hill, Yamileth was a student trustee and a Start Smart Mentor. She participated in many clubs at the college, including the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and the Entrepreneur Club. She earned an associate degree in accounting in 2015. She earned a bachelor’s degree at UMass Boston in 2018. She worked as an accountant in the nonprofit sector, including Sociedad Latina and Walker Therapeutic & Educational Programs. Now, she works at OneMonroe Engineering. Yamileth returned to BHCC as a trustee in 2021 and continues to serve the BHCC community.

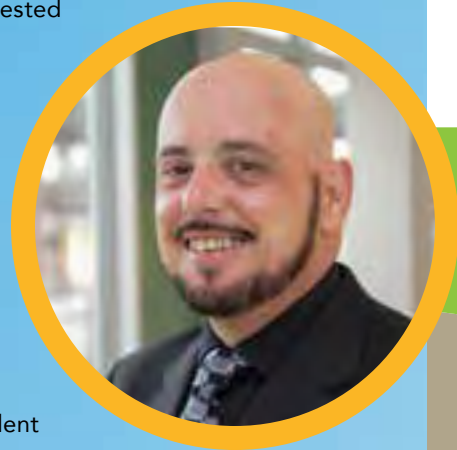
“When I started at BHCC, I had been out of school for fifteen years. I was nervous to start again, but I am glad that I took that step, as I couldn’t imagine all the opportunities that were waiting for me!”

## John Gonsalves '19

Security Professional, North East Security

When John Gonsalves arrived at BHCC’s orientation as a new student, he said he was at a low point in his life. By the time the U.S. Army and Gulf War veteran graduated in 2019 with an associate degree in medical radiography, John had posted a 3.9 grade point average and had received two awards for academic achievement. Along the way, John had confronted something that had held him back in the classroom and his mental health for years: an undiagnosed learning disability, which was first noticed by a faculty member who suggested he visit the Office of Disability Support Services to learn more. Armed with the right documentation, tutoring help, and a strategy, John excelled at BHCC and continues his education today at Boston University, where he is taking classes in criminal justice and forensics. At BHCC, John also served as an ACE Mentor and in the Student Government Association.

“BHCC changed my life for the better.”



## Yong Chen '93

Visual Media Arts Professor, Bunker Hill Community College

After graduating from BHCC with his associate degree in graphic design, Yong Chen earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in illustration from Massachusetts College of Art and Design and his Master of Fine Arts degree in illustration from the University of Hartford. After working for 14 years as a digital illustrator, children’s book author and illustrator, advertising designer, corporate creative director, and art professor, Yong returned to BHCC to teach full-time, to share his knowledge with his students just like his professors helped him to find his direction and gain his confidence. Yong’s passion for painting, storytelling, and teaching started early in childhood. He hopes to continue growing a community at BHCC that is filled with care and support for anyone who likes drawing and painting.

“BHCC gave me the strength and direction for the rest of my life.”

## Veronika Kivenson '11

Post-Doctoral Researcher,  
Innovative Genetics Institute

Veronika Kivenson earned an associate degree in biology at BHCC, a bachelor's in biochemistry at Mount Holyoke College, and a Ph.D. in marine sciences from the University of California Santa Barbara. Her research has focused on nanoparticle toxicity and the effects of toxic waste in the ocean environment. Today, Veronika is a post-doctoral researcher at the Innovative Genomics Institute in Berkeley, California. Veronika's advice to BHCC students is "to talk to people who are working in the profession you might be interested in pursuing and get to know what the profession is really like. Most people in the field will be happy to take the time to tell you their story and offer advice on how you can also be successful in your chosen career path."

"The foundation laid at Bunker Hill Community College played a crucial role in shaping my academic and professional trajectory."



## Willie Jones, Jr. '13

Choral Teacher, Cambridge Public Schools

After dropping out, Willie Jones restarted his education journey at BHCC. According to Willie, BHCC made it an easy transition for him to get back into school in his 30s. Willie found much-needed support from the tutoring center in helping him with his math requirements. Upon receiving his associate degree, Willie was pleasantly surprised by how many good-paying jobs were now available. BHCC will always hold a special place for Willie because it gave him the belief that he can achieve great things!

"BHCC opened doors that were closed."



## Reinier Moquete '02, '03

Founder and CEO,  
CyberWarrior.com

Reinier Moquete has the rare designation of a Double Bulldog, holding two BHCC degrees. He earned an associate degree in business administration in 2002 and then added an associate in finance in 2003. From there, Reinier earned a bachelor's in telecommunications from Pace University, as well as programs in entrepreneurship at Dartmouth's Tusk School of Business and Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. Reinier founded CyberWarrior.com in 2012, training people in cybersecurity and putting them to work. CyberWarrior offers eLearning and live-online programs delivering real-world experiences, hands-on labs, mentorship, and career guidance, taking people from zero computer science education and building them up to be Security Analysts (Level 1 & 2) in as little as six months, including 27 college credits and four industry certifications.

"BHCC gave me the opportunity and support to change the trajectory of my life from an at-risk youth then to a successful technology executive today."



## Ruth L. Deras '04

General Counsel, Massachusetts Executive  
Office of Veterans Services

Ruth L. Deras was born in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, and immigrated to the United States at the age of seven. She was raised in the city of Chelsea. Following college and law school, Ruth was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar in June of 2010. Ruth's passion, commitment and devotion to social change and social justice are cornerstones of her professional career. Her legal trajectory includes time in private practice, working on family and immigration law matters, at the MA Trial Court and in academia.

Ruth is a member of many legal and civic associations: the Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys, of which she served as President in 2016, the Boston Bar Association, the Immigration Advocates Network, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, Suffolk University Alumni Association, and the Women's Bar Association. She currently serves as a member of the Judicial Nominating Commission, a non-partisan, non-political, and non-compensated Commission composed of 27 distinguished volunteers appointed by the Governor to assist with vetting judicial and clerk-magistrate candidates to all courts of the commonwealth. In May 2023, Ruth joined the Executive Office of Veterans Services where she serves as General Counsel, Veterans Home Chelsea.

"I never fully appreciated the impact and value behind BHCC's mantra, 'Imagine the possibilities,' until a degree gave me access to opportunities that have been instrumental in my ability to succeed. Thank you, BHCC!"

## Misael Carrasquillo '15

Assistant Director of the HOPE Initiative,  
Bunker Hill Community College

Born in Syracuse, NY, and raised most of his life in Boston, Misael Carrasquillo was the first in his family to join the United States Marine Corps, serving a tour in Afghanistan. After the military, he was also the first in his family to pursue post-secondary education. Misael studied business administration at BHCC. While at BHCC, Misael was involved with the Veterans Center and the Student Veterans Association. As a BHCC student, he mentored many other veterans throughout their educational experience. After graduating from BHCC and receiving the Business Department and President's Leadership Awards, Misael acquired his bachelor's and double master's at Northeastern University. Misael is currently the Assistant Director of the HOPE Initiative, empowering Black, Latino, and Indigenous male students at BHCC to navigate barriers to successfully acquiring their degrees.

"Before BHCC, I had no sense of direction and was not as social as I am today. BHCC taught me the value of planning for my future and the power of building my network. Thanks to BHCC, I attack discomfort until I lack discomfort in all aspects of my life. While I was a student, the institution helped me imagine the possibilities. They helped me awaken the leader that was dormant deep inside of me. I still cannot believe I received the Business Department and President's Leadership Awards. Fast forward to today, and the possibilities are now within reach."





## Vladyslav Riabov '20

EMT/Field Training Officer, Action Ambulance, Inc.

Vladyslav Riabov embarked on his journey from Kharkiv, Ukraine, to the United States at the age of 21 amid the tumult of the ongoing conflict in his homeland. In 2020, he completed his associate degree in biology at BHCC, where he actively engaged in the prestigious Merck Internship program. After graduating from BHCC, Vladyslav earned a bachelor's degree in biology from UMass Amherst. He recently undertook the MCAT and participated in the AAMC preview, poised to embark on the next phase of his academic journey by applying to medical school in the upcoming cycle.

"When I was accepted to BHCC, I read a quote by Caecus: 'Every man is the architect of his own fortune.' BHCC helped me fully understand what it means to design your own future."

## Georgina Gemayel '17

Ph.D. candidate, University of North Carolina

Georgina Lily Gemayel is a first-generation Lebanese American and first-generation collegegoer who graduated from BHCC in 2017 with an associate degree in environmental science before transferring to the University of Southern California on a full scholarship. While at BHCC, Georgina traveled with Drs. Steeper and Benjamin to Costa Rica for Tropical Field Studies, an experience that shaped her future work. She is now a Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography and Environment at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she studies climate change and women's health in the Middle East and North Africa.

"My experience at BHCC was life changing. It was the first time that I truly saw my potential as an academic surrounded by a community that supported me."



## Mari Black '02

Professional Violinist/Fiddler, Mari Black Music

Mari Black grew up in Cambridge and earned associate degrees in General Concentration and English from BHCC. She was a Phi Theta Kappa and Commonwealth Honors Program member and worked as a writing tutor. In 2010, while completing her Doctorate in Education from Columbia University, Mari returned to BHCC to teach English and music, where she loved helping to carry on BHCC's legacy of supporting students in achieving their dreams, one small step of learning at a time. Mari is now a full-time professional touring violinist/fiddler. You can find out more about her music at her website: [www.MariBlack.com](http://www.MariBlack.com)

"BHCC nurtured my curiosity, creativity, and drive to learn more about the world. Whenever I had a question, a professor was ready to discuss it. Every time I had an idea, there was an honors project waiting to help me explore it. Whenever I wanted a good debate or a fresh perspective, there was a keen and interesting fellow student happy to delve into the issue. I had friends from all over the world, speaking all sorts of languages, with fascinating backgrounds and life stories. It truly was an amazing place to grow and learn!"

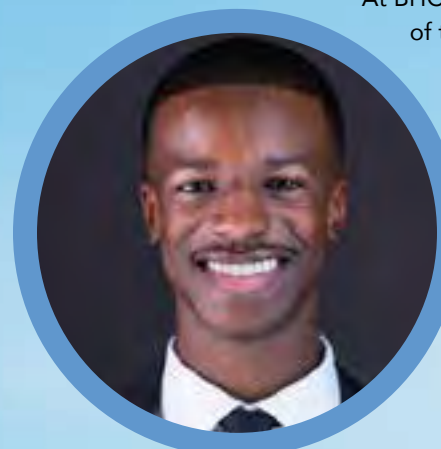


## Aly Toure '16

MD/MPH Candidate, Emory University School of Medicine

As a dedicated third-year medical student applying to orthopedics and former biomedical engineer, Aly Toure is passionate about leveraging innovation and advocacy to drive positive change in healthcare. With a strong commitment to health equity and inclusivity, he has founded and led initiatives like Emory Wellness, Exercise, and Lifelong Learning (EmWELL) and Black Men in White Coats (BMWC), fostering mentorship and community engagement. Aly earned an associate degree in biomedical engineering from BHCC in 2016 and a bachelor's degree from Boston University in 2019.

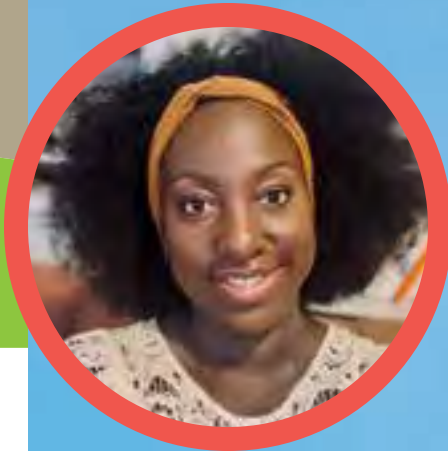
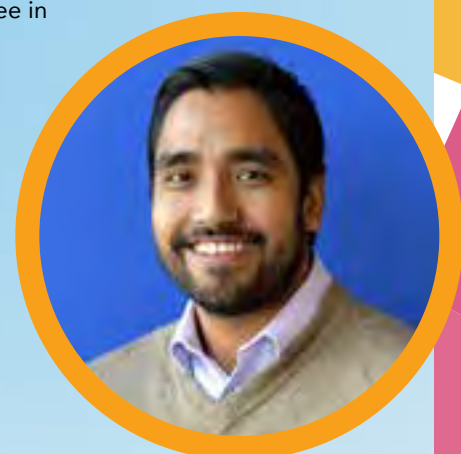
At BHCC, he was a member of the TRIO Student Success Program; Students Helping Our Community with Active Volunteering Experience and Services (SHOCWAVES); a member of the Inspiration Choir; and a Commonwealth Honors Scholar.



## Mahesh Thapa '11

Process Scientist and Engineer, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals

For many, the first time they had heard of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals was during the pandemic, when the company developed badly needed COVID-19 treatments. But Mahesh Thapa's career as a process scientist and engineer at the pharma firm began almost a decade ago when he was hired fresh out of MIT, earning a bachelor's degree in biological engineering. At BHCC, Mahesh earned an associate degree in biomedical engineering and served as a Student Government Association officer, an Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society President, a tutor and a new student mentor.



## Uju Makhene '10

Associate Director of Academic Innovation and Technology, Bunker Hill Community College

Originally from Nigeria, Uju Makhene completed her A.S. in Computer Science at BHCC and participated in the Honors Program. After graduating from BHCC, Uju earned her B.S. in Computer Science from Tufts University and later completed her master's in engineering management at Johns Hopkins University. She is currently the Associate Director of Academic Innovation and Technology (AIDE).

"Studying at BHCC as an immigrant profoundly impacted my life by providing an affordable, high-quality education with personalized support. The diverse and inclusive community helped me build cherished friendships and grounded me in the way I relate to people, enabling me to balance work, family, and studies while equipping me with the skills and confidence to pursue my goals successfully."



## Valter Gomes '13

Senior Account Executive, Carta

In Valter Gomes's capacity as a Senior Account Executive at Carta, a global firm specializing in equity and liquidity management for startups, he sees his work as just the beginning. While at BHCC, Valter distinguished himself as a Commonwealth Honors Scholar and earned membership in Phi Theta Kappa. Additionally, he served as co-president of the College's Sustainability Club, leading initiatives for campus resource conservation. Valter's commitment to academic excellence and community service earned him a full scholarship to Boston University, where he proudly earned a degree in economics in 2016. Over the past few years, Valter has dedicated time to volunteering with local nonprofits and sharing his sales career journey to inspire students to consider this career path.

"BHCC offered me a clean slate, a fresh start without any boundaries."



## Gerardo Alvarado Rivas '20

Music Teacher, Cambridge Public School

Originally from El Salvador, Gerardo Alvarado Rivas earned an associate degree in music from BHCC, where he performed with the jazz ensemble at events around campus. He had great academic success from the start. After graduating from BHCC, he graduated from UMass Boston with a bachelor's in music. Currently, he leads the BHCC Alumni & Student Jazz Band. He works full-time as a music/band teacher for middle school students in Cambridge Public Schools and lives in Boston with his wife and daughter.

"From my music classes to the science lab, I felt the support of the BHCC community. It was a heartfelt welcome as a newcomer to the U.S."



## Quan Nguyen '14

Business Owner and Financial Consultant, QL Enterprise, Inc.

Quan Nguyen was the first in his family to attend college, earning an associate degree in biomedical engineering and a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from MIT. As a BHCC student, Quan was named to the 2015 All-USA Community College Academic Team, a Coca-Cola New Century Pathway Scholar, and an Oberndorf Lifeline to Completion Scholar. In addition, Quan was a member of the Commonwealth Honors Program and Phi Theta Kappa and served as vice president of the Student Government Association. Meeting his future wife at BHCC even though they are from the same city in Vietnam, he is now married to fellow 50 for 50 honoree and BHCC alum Linh Mai.

"At BHCC, I learned the profound truth that 'Where there is a will, there is a way.' The college instilled in me a belief that there are no limits to what a student can achieve as long as they set goals and work diligently towards them. The support system at BHCC is unparalleled; it feels as though the entire college community is behind me, cheering me on towards my aspirations. Above all, BHCC taught me that success is not necessarily that I have to do great things, just small things with great love."



## Linh Mai '15

Chemical Researcher, Aramco

Linh Mai earned an associate degree in engineering from BHCC in 2015. She then transferred to Brandeis University with a full scholarship and attained a bachelor's degree in chemistry. As a student, Linh interned at Harvard University during the summer of 2015. Linh was a member of the Commonwealth Honors Program and Phi Theta Kappa, and she served as president of the Asian Student Association and vice president of the Student Government Association. Along the way, she completed the immersive data science program at Flatiron School. Linh has worked as a chemist at ExxonMobil and Kraton, and as a data engineer at iland Cloud. Currently, she is a chemical researcher at Aramco in Houston, Texas. She met her husband, Quan Nguyen, at BHCC, who is also a fellow 50 over 50 honoree and BHCC alum.

"Through challenging coursework and engaging extracurricular activities, I developed critical thinking abilities, effective communication skills, and a strong work ethic. Moreover, BHCC's diverse community exposed me to different perspectives and cultures, fostering a deeper understanding of the world around me. The support and encouragement I received from mentors and peers alike fueled my determination to pursue my goals relentlessly. I emerged from BHCC with not only a degree but also a sense of confidence and resilience that continues to propel me forward in my endeavors today."



## Val Hoyle '88

U.S. Representative, 4th Oregon District

Val Hoyle was elected to represent Oregon's Fourth District in Congress in 2022. After her time at BHCC, where she was an officer in the Student Government Association, she earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Emmanuel College in Boston. Val left Boston for the Midwest and later Oregon, where she worked in international sales for bicycle manufacturing companies Trek and Burley Design. She was elected to the Oregon legislature in 2010, becoming majority leader in 2012. In 2018, Val was elected Oregon's Labor Commissioner. Val sits on the House Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Natural Resources and is a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the House Equality Caucus, and the Democratic Women's Caucus.

## Jacqueline McMillion-Williams '02

Director of Advising & LifeMap, Bunker Hill Community College

Jacqueline McMillion-Williams, a Roxbury native, is a proud Black, queer woman and scholar-practitioner in higher education. Her journey from being a single mother and first-generation student to becoming a community college advocate highlights the transformative power of education. As Director of Advising & LifeMap at BHCC, she leverages her diverse experiences to support marginalized students and promote equity. After graduating from BHCC, Jacqueline earned a bachelor's in social psychology from UMass Boston and a master's of social work from Simmons University. She is committed to personal and professional growth and is pursuing a Ph.D. in Higher Education at UMass Boston.







## Joe Malaika '13

Founder and Fashion Designer, Joe Malaika Associates

Ugandan-born Joe Malaika was named "Best Clothing Designer" in *Boston Magazine's* "2022 Best of Boston" awards. After attending BHCC, Joe attended Bentley University, where he studied fashion marketing. *Boston Magazine* highlighted Joe's "bold prints, sequins, and cool asymmetrical cuts [that are] some of the most vibrant (and sassy) ensembles you'll find in the city."



## George LoCascio '15

Assistant Professor of Environmental Conservation and Regenerative Agriculture, Mount Wachusett Community College

Originally from Boston, George LoCascio attended BHCC as a Biology Transfer Option A.S. student. While at BHCC, George participated in designing a study abroad trip to Puerto Rico centered around sustainability and was the co-president of the Sustainability Club, where he worked with leadership to improve on-campus recycling, reduce plastic bottle usage, and develop meatless Mondays in the café to provide better vegetarian and healthier food options. After graduating from BHCC, George studied Plant and Soil Sciences at UMass Amherst and continued to complete a master's degree in the Conservation Biology program. George is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Conservation and Regenerative Agriculture at Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner, MA.

"The faculty at BHCC were so compassionate and worked with us along our academic path so we could achieve our goals. I have taken that same teaching style and use this with my own students at Mount Wachusett CC."



## Hailin Kong '08

Principal Regulatory Compliance Specialist, Oracle Corporation

Hailin Kong earned an associate degree in accounting from BHCC, where she served as a student mentor, cultural ambassador, and president of the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society. After Bunker Hill, Hailin earned a bachelor's in accounting with a minor in mathematics and a master's degree in information technology from Bentley University. After starting her career as a risk and financial advisory manager at Deloitte, Hailin is a New York-based regulatory compliance specialist at technology firm Oracle.

"BHCC took a chance in me 18 years ago when I was new to the U.S. and helped me achieve so much that I could never imagine before."

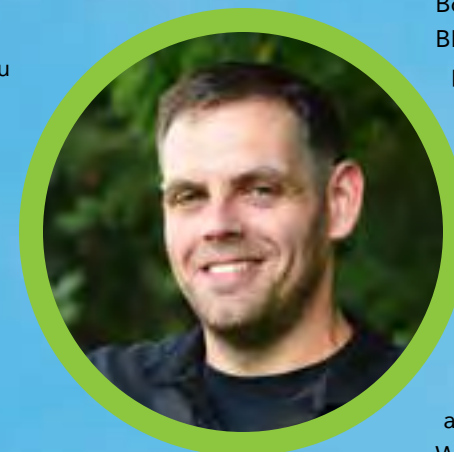
## John Narcus '14

Production Planner, Teradyne

During John Narcus's first semester at BHCC in 2011, he and his wife Sarah founded the Boston River Run 5K fundraiser and the Andrew Graham Semper Fi Fund, a 501(c)3 charity in memory of his brother. John participated in the volunteer program and served as President of the Entrepreneurship Club. In 2013, John received the Trustees' Service Award Scholarship. Since 2014, more than \$150,000 in funds have been raised for the Andrew Narcus Semper Fi Scholarship. John currently serves on the BHCC Foundation Board of Directors. He lives in Reading with his wife Sarah and daughters Andrea and Rae.

"Its not about getting the degree, its about what you do with it to help the community."

"If it wasn't hard, it wouldn't be worth doing." CPL Andrew Graham Narcus (USMC) 1981-2002



## Wissal Nourchif '05

Professor and Forum Chair, Bunker Hill Community College

Originally from Morocco, Wissal Nourchif started attending BHCC months after she immigrated to the U.S. to complete an associate degree in business. While at BHCC, Wissal learned about online classes, which provided her the flexibility to graduate while working full-time in the banking industry and raising her two sons. After BHCC, Wissal transferred to UMass Amherst, where she completed a bachelor's degree in management and an M.B.A. Wissal then completed her doctorate in education at Northeastern University. After ten years of working in the financial industry, Wissal joined BHCC as a faculty member in the Business Department.

"BHCC offered me the opportunity to learn and grow both personally and professionally and to develop long-lasting connections."



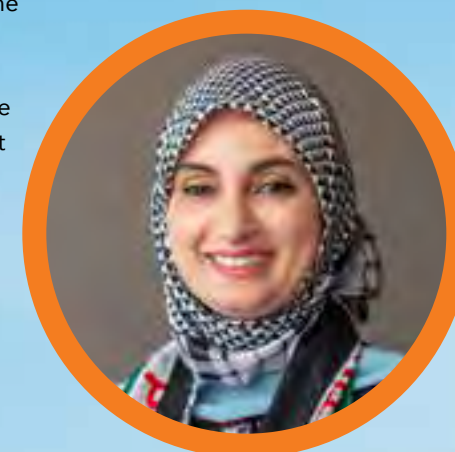
## Gabriela Coletta Zapata '14

Boston City Councilor, District 1

Representing District 1, which includes her native East Boston and BHCC's neighborhood of Charlestown, Boston City Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata attended BHCC from 2012-14, and earned a bachelor's degree in political science and public policy from UMass Boston.

The child of community advocates, Gabriela has spent her career working for the neighborhoods she represents. Before she was elected Boston City Councilor, Gabriela worked as Chief of Staff to City Councilor Lydia Edwards, whose successful campaign she also managed. Gabriela has also worked in external affairs for the New England Aquarium as that institution sought to promote inclusion and accessibility along Boston's waterfront and as Associate Director of the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus.

"BHCC provided stability and reassurance when I was questioning my life purpose and wondering if I was on the right career path. I'm so grateful that my journey led me to BHCC as it solidified my passion to utilize public policy to better society and serve those who need it the most. I credit my State and Local Government class as the catalyst that set me on the path to becoming a Boston City Councilor."





## Mussie Demisse '18

Software Engineer, Tulip Interfaces

Another member of the BHCC-MIT club, Mussie Demisse, has worked as a software engineer, most recently at Somerville-based Tulip Interfaces and, before that, at technology giant Oracle. A 2021 graduate of MIT with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and computer science, Mussie earned his associate degree in computer science from BHCC, where he was an ACE Mentor, a Student Government Association officer, and a new student mentor.

"Beyond providing an excellent and affordable education that prepared me for the future, BHCC facilitated my personal growth, provided a supportive lifelong community, and broadened my perspectives in numerous ways. I never fully appreciated the impact and value behind BHCC's mantra, 'Imagine the possibilities,' until a degree gave me access to opportunities that have been instrumental in my ability to succeed. Thank you, BHCC!"

## Dan Ryan '96

Massachusetts Representative, 2nd Suffolk District

As a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives for the 2nd Suffolk District, Rep. Dan Ryan is a lifelong Charlestown resident and a stalwart friend to BHCC and the communities that it serves. Dan attended the College from 1992-96 but often joked that he grew up in "off campus" housing—that is, in Charlestown, not far from the campus's main entrance off Austin Street. Dan has spent much of his life in public service, first as Teen Center Director for the Charlestown Boys & Girls Club, then as a coordinator for the Healthy Charlestown Coalition and later for more than a decade as district representative for Congressman Michael Capuano. Dan was elected to the Massachusetts House in 2014 and serves as Chair of the Joint Committee on Election Laws.



## Angelica Cabrera '20

Entrepreneur

Born in New York and raised in Boston, Angelica Cabrera grew up in the foster care system as an orphan after losing her parents at the age of 3. Angelica studied psychology at BHCC, was President of the Behavioral Sciences Club, volunteered for Boston Cares, worked as a lead mentor for BHCC's learning community classes, and won a study abroad scholarship to China. Angelica is currently studying biopsychology at Tufts University and is on track to become a doctor. Angelica is also an entrepreneur, starting several businesses to help the community and the world. One such endeavor Angelica began while studying at BHCC is an AI mobile application designed to help people living with HIV. Angelica hopes that her application will open the way for collaboration with others working to end this disease.

"The moment you decide to remove the shackles, your mind becomes a weapon and a beacon of light."

## Babafemi Adegbite '09

Energy Portfolio Lead, U.S. African Development Foundation

People, planet, prosperity—Babafemi Adegbite lives at the intersection of physics, entrepreneurship, and public policy. After graduating from BHCC with an associate degree in physics, Babafemi earned a bachelor's degree in engineering physics and economics at Juniata College and an M.B.A from the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland. While at Maryland, he launched ReEmpower, a global social enterprise startup with a mission to help alleviate global energy poverty through renewables while empowering the communities it serves by creating local solar power microgrids in Nigeria, Babafemi's country of birth. For the last four years, Babafemi has worked as an energy officer at the U.S. African Development Foundation.

"BHCC provided a solid foundation for my academic and professional career; my story so far would be incomplete without the academic, non-academic, and social experiences at BHCC."

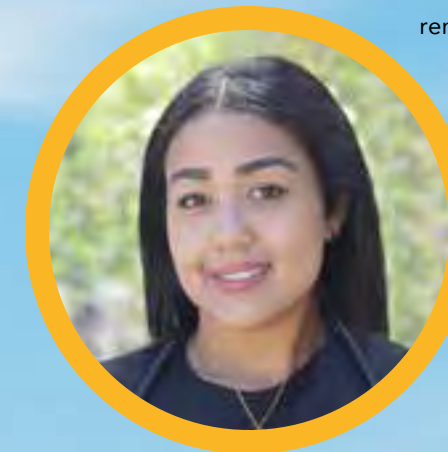


## Asmae Lichir '21

Student, Smith College

Asmae Lichir is a distinguished Ada Comstock Scholar at Smith College, majoring in Biological Sciences with a concentration in community engagement and social change. She is actively involved in research as an AEMES McKinley Honors fellow. As a Jandon Center Healing and Justice Fellow, she works alongside Kaira Jewel Lingo, a spiritual leader, to integrate mindfulness practices into social justice. In her honors thesis in microbiology, Asmae examines the gene expression of pathogens that cause serious infections. Mentors such as Loretta Ross inspired her to concentrate on women's health, which fueled her academic journey. She is the author of "The Importance of Mentorship in Fostering Change Among Young Parents Utilizing Co-Creation Principles," published under the guidance of advisor Denys Candy. Asmae is excited to continue her academic and professional journey at Yale University, where she has been accepted into a graduate program with a full scholarship to become a women's health provider/Ph.D. This next step aligns perfectly with her passion for advancing women's health and her commitment to effecting positive social change.

"At Bunker Hill Community College, every professor, advisor, and staff member, from the supportive Single Stop team to President Dr. Pam, played a crucial role in turning my aspirations into achievements. The nurturing environment and tailored opportunities provided by the BHCC Foundation equipped me with the tools for success. It was here that I was empowered to build a foundation strong enough to support not just my dreams, but the well-being of the communities I serve. Believe in your potential. Embrace the opportunities. Know that with determination and support, you can achieve remarkable things. Remember that alumni are always here to help."



## Susan Dole '76

Retired Counseling Staff and MCCC Chapter President, Bunker Hill Community College

Community activist and single mother of three, Susan (Werman) Dole, from Charlestown, attended BHCC with numerous responsibilities. She served as president of the Head Start Parents Committee and as a Board Member of the John F. Kennedy Family Service Center, in addition to subcommittees of Action for Boston Community Development. After graduating from BHCC in 1976, Susan transferred to Jackson College, Tufts University, where she completed a B.A. in Sociology. While working full-time at BHCC as an Outreach Counselor, Susan completed her master's in counseling psychology from Tufts. She served as an officer of the MCCC at the chapter and state-wide level and served for three years on a committee at the National Education Association. After leaving the state and national positions, Susan returned to school and completed her Ed.D. at UMass Boston. Throughout, Susan stayed in the role of Chapter President at BHCC, where she worked full-time as a member of the counseling staff and taught as an adjunct Behavioral Sciences faculty member. For Susan, BHCC was the best place to study and work. There was no greater privilege than playing a role in assisting someone to define and reach their goal. It was her pleasure to work with colleagues who understood and were dedicated to the mission of BHCC and the community colleges.

"BHCC provided me with a strong academic foundation in the liberal arts that served me well throughout my academic career."



## Alberto Pina '03

System Administrator, Boston Public Schools

Alberto Pina, originally from Cape Verde, is the Founder, Executive Editor, and IT & Advertising manager of forcv.com, the leading Cape Verdean community news site in the U.S. from 2005 to 2015. FORCV is currently run and widely popular in social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) in the Cape Verdean diaspora in the U.S., Europe and Alberto's native country. He is also a System Administrator at Boston Public Schools where he manages the Aspen Student Information System for the entire district. Alberto holds a B.A. in Management Information Systems from the UMass Boston, an A.A. in Computer Science from BHCC, and successfully completed his Teaching English as a Foreign Language degree from the Higher Institute of Education in Praia, Cape Verde. He has extensive experience in IT and social media advertising. He is also an entrepreneur with expertise in systems administration, website management, graphic design, web analytics, news and media publishing, advertising, social media and internet advertising, communications, and education.

"BHCC prepared and provided me with a solid foundation to thrive ahead in college, career and life."



## Rajae Bouganza '02

Director of Legal Education, Kaplan Bar Review

Rajae Bouganza is a strategic leader with a Juris Doctor from the Massachusetts School of Law. Her academic journey began at BHCC, where she earned an associate degree in 2002 before obtaining a bachelor's from Emerson College. As the Director of Legal Education at Kaplan North America, Rajae drives program innovation and academic excellence, developing cutting-edge methods that enhance learning for aspiring legal professionals. She combines legal expertise with business acumen, excelling in strategic planning, project management, and corporate law. Rajae's passion for professional development and her dynamic communication skills make her an influential advocate for legal education. She frequently delivers presentations at law schools and community events, promoting awareness and engagement in the legal field.

"Being a student at BHCC was a transformative experience that laid the foundation for my personal and professional growth. The diverse community and opportunities for self-discovery and leadership shaped my future and instilled in me a lifelong passion for learning and development."

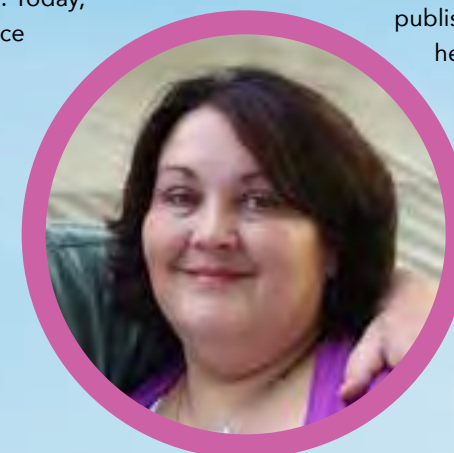


## Justice Kumahia '06

Dean of Students, Bunker Hill Community College

Originally from Ghana, Justice Kumahia enrolled at BHCC as an international student, but he was unsure of his place. However, Justice soon felt embraced and transformed by BHCC. He served as a student mentor and also on the Student Government Association. Justice played on the soccer team that won its first state championship, earning All-American honors. Justice's journey has been filled with gratitude, and every challenge gave him an opportunity. He enjoyed every class in his Business Concentration program, especially a course on world religions that helped shape his views on culture, religion, and inclusion. Today, as the Dean of Students at BHCC, Justice is deeply grateful to the faculty, staff, and administrators who profoundly impacted his journey.

"BHCC transformed my life. As an international student from Ghana, I found faculty, staff, and administrators who genuinely cared about my success."



## Ruth Goodwin '94

Graphic Arts Technician II, Integrated Marketing & Communications, Bunker Hill Community College

Originally from Malden, Ruth Goodwin studied liberal arts at BHCC and was highly active in the play production and concert choir classes. Ruth found an unexpected love of computer design in her desktop publishing course, which has continued into her current role as a graphic designer at BHCC, where she contributes to the design of brochures, catalogs, and other marketing collateral.

"BHCC gave me the tools to once again believe in myself and impact my life and my children's lives."

## Galem Girmay '14

Enabler, Podcaster, Entrepreneur

Revenue enablement leader, podcaster, entrepreneur: Galem Girmay wears many hats. Born and raised in Sweden, Galem earned an associate degree in communication from BHCC, and a bachelor's degree in business administration and management from Babson College. The London-based Galem is a Global Revenue Enablement Manager who loves to coach and work with sales professionals. Galem co-founded RevGenius, a global community where revenue generating professionals come together to educate, empower, and inspire each other. In her free time, she's hosting the "What Is Your Legacy" podcast.

"Opportunities at BHCC changed the trajectory of my life by equipping me to explore all possibilities for higher education!"



## Lateia Johnson '15

Assistant Director of Rapid, Recovery, and Reemployment, Workforce and Economic Development, Bunker Hill Community College

Lateia, a first-generation Caribbean American, brings a diverse perspective to education and student support. In addition to her A.S. in Liberal Arts and a master's degree from Northeastern University, Lateia brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her multiple roles at Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC). At BHCC, Lateia oversees operations for many workforce readiness programs through 'R3' and teaches credit and non-credit Health Sciences courses as an adjunct professor. Her dedication to student success extends beyond the classroom, as she was actively involved in the Student Government Association as a student, serving as President. Lateia's commitment to bridging communities is evident in her work with JumpStart, where she served as a liaison between Bunker Hill and Roxbury community colleges. She also participated in one of the first cohorts of the Learn and Earn program, gaining valuable experience at Raytheon, and is a proud TRIO Alumni.

"My advocacy, involvement with students, and appreciation of the higher education process were all developed at BHCC."



## Jae Williams '06

Executive in Residence & Assistant Program Director of the Business of Creative Enterprise Program, Emerson College

Dr. Jae Williams lives at the intersection of culture, education, and communication. After graduating from BHCC, he earned a bachelor's degree in media production and a master's in integrated marketing and communication from Emerson College, as well as an Ed.D. in organizational leadership from Northeastern University. With deep experience in storytelling, video production, and entrepreneurship, Jae has lectured at Harvard Business School and Berklee College of Music and is now an Executive in Residence at Emerson.

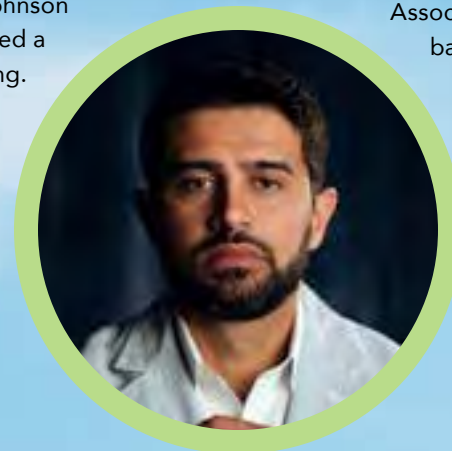
"My time at BHCC was one of incredible growth for me. I was a new father figuring out my career goals, knowing that I wanted to be in school but not knowing what direction to take. The guidance, compassion, and experience I gained at BHCC were invaluable."



## Tiago Prado '10

United Nations Representative, All Together in Dignity Fourth World Movement

Tiago Prado is the Co-founder and CEO of BRZ Insurance. He is dedicated to building the next generation of financial services for bilingual Spanish and Portuguese speakers in the United States. Tiago has extensive experience in financial services, with a focus on insurance. Before founding BRZ in 2017, he worked on healthcare reform for all Massachusetts public colleges and universities with Governor Patrick. In addition, Tiago is a member of the Board of Advisors to Avidia Bank, a Board Director of Commonwealth Auto Reinsurers, and worked as a Senior BDM for LATAM at Ned Davis Research. Tiago holds an associate degree in business administration and management from BHCC, where he was a student trustee, founder of the first Math Club and president of the Brazilian Cultural Club and the Student Government Association. He also earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Tufts University.



## Mohamed Sidime '19

Auditor, Deloitte

The path to becoming an auditor at global accounting firm Deloitte, where Mohamed Sidime has worked since 2022, took him from the country of Guinea to BHCC, then Eastern Nazarene College, then Cornell's Johnson Graduate School of Management, where he earned a master's degree with a specialization in accounting. Along the way, Mohamed served as a student mentor and completed an internship as a tax preparer at the Boston Tax Help Coalition.

"BHCC's motto 'imagine the possibilities' shaped my life!"

## Ninette White-Marzouki '07

Interim Director of TRIO Student Success Program, Bunker Hill Community College

Originally from Boston, Ninette Marzouki studied the Human Services A.S. program as a nontraditional first-generation student at BHCC. While at BHCC, she participated in the TRIO Student Success Program. After graduating from BHCC, she went to UMass Boston to continue her studies in the Human Services B.S. program and Northeastern University for a master's in higher education. She is currently employed at Bunker Hill Community College.

"It's never too late!"



## Tahmina Munmun '14

Disability Support Services, Bunker Hill Community College

Tahmina earned her associate degree in human services and a substance abuse/addiction counseling certificate from BHCC before continuing her education at Lesley University through a dual admissions program, where she obtained a bachelor's degree in psychology. While a BHCC student, she was actively involved in various departments such as the Tutoring Academic Support Center, New Student Orientation, Student Navigator-LifeMap, and BHCCOnline. She remained connected with the BHCC community and committed to giving back to those who influenced her professional and personal growth. After graduating from Lesley University, Tahmina joined BHCC's Disability Support Services team as a full-time staff member, contributing her knowledge and experiences to foster a sense of belonging and positively impacting students, staff, and faculty. Additionally, she served on the design team and was a member of the BHCC AANAPISI Proud Team, further showcasing her dedication to the community.

"Being a part of the BHCC community has empowered me to feel more confident in myself as a professional and in my cultural identity. I am proud to represent the South Asian community and support through my work in AANAPISI advocacy."



## Charlton Becker '05

Entrepreneur, Charlton Becker Catering and Flavorful

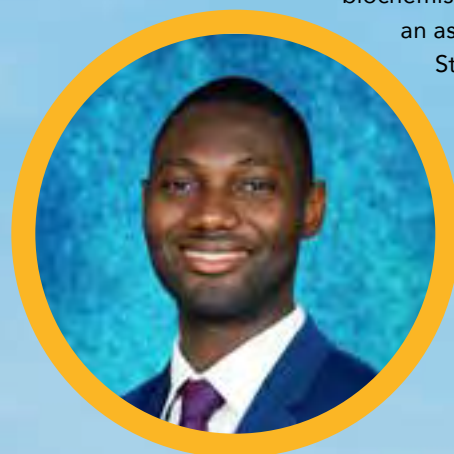
Originally from Newton, Charlton Becker studied Culinary Arts at BHCC. While at BHCC, he immersed himself in learning the basics to be successful in any professional kitchen. After graduating from BHCC, Charlton continued a successful career in the culinary industry, starting his own catering business, Charlton Becker Catering. He is now in his ninth year as an entrepreneur. In addition to a thriving catering business, Charlton owns Flavorful, a producer of edible spoons now sold worldwide to caterers, hotels, and restaurants.

"BHCC gave me the foundation to broaden my career in the culinary industry."

## Aaron Amardey-Wellington '11

Resident Physician, UMass Memorial Medical Center

A resident physician in emergency medicine at UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester, Dr. Aaron Amardey-Wellington is already a seasoned medical professional, with almost a decade as a medical officer in the Army National Guard under his belt and co-founding Wellington Home Health Care, a home health service provider based in Randolph, MA. Aaron earned his medical degree from Tufts University School of Medicine and his bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Tufts University. At BHCC he earned an associate degree in biology and served in the Student Government Association, the African Students Union, and worked in the tutoring center, the Center for Self-Directed Learning and was a student academic advisor.



## R. Arlene Vallie '02

Dean, Academic Affairs, Research, Assessment and Planning, Bunker Hill Community College

R. Arlene Vallie left Trinidad and Tobago in 2000 to begin her studies in foreign languages at BHCC. While attending BHCC, Arlene joined Phi Theta Kappa, participated in the Drama Club, and worked in the Bookstore, Library and the Assessment Center. After graduating from BHCC, Arlene transferred to Howard University and earned a B.A. in Spanish, minoring in economics. She has since completed a master's in social work at Boston College, and is currently finishing her doctoral studies in higher education administration at UMass Boston.

Arlene is the biggest fan of community colleges and is committed to making them stronger and even more essential institutions of learning.

"I came to America to study, but have truly encountered the world at BHCC. I realized years later, that though I graduated in 2002 with an A.A., I also got unofficial minors in intercultural communication and diversity. I have studied at other institutions, and worked at other institutions. Bunker Hill is by far a microcosm of the globe. I love it here."



## Michael Costello '15

Academic Coordinator in Student Central, Bunker Hill Community College

Originally from Foxborough, Michael Costello entered the workforce directly after high school but always felt that his opportunity to grow was limited without a college degree. Michael then began studying psychology at BHCC in 2011. While at BHCC, he discovered his passion for student service while working in the financial aid office as a federal work-study student. After graduating from BHCC, Michael went to Lesley University to earn his bachelor's degree in psychology. Now, as an Academic Coordinator in Student Central, Michael feels truly blessed to be able to give back to the community that he knows has helped shape him into the person he is today.

"BHCC was instrumental in my search for purpose, passion, commitment, and community. I will be forever grateful for the guidance and support that I received from BHCC's staff and faculty, and for the incredible students I have met along the way."

# 50th Anniversary Celebration

BHCC marked its 50th Anniversary with a celebratory event on April 30, 2024, highlighting the institution's commitment to equity, diversity, and academic excellence. The event opened with remarks by Nahomi Carlisle, Associate Vice President and Chief Equity and Compliance Officer, setting a tone of celebration and reflection.

This was followed by a Land Acknowledgement presented by Kim Frashure, Professor and Chairperson of the Environmental Science Department, and Larry Spotted Crow Mann, BHCC's 2021-2022 Distinguished Artist Scholar in Residence, honoring the Indigenous peoples of the land.

A video presentation titled "What's Your BHCC Moment?" showcased personal stories from the college community and a reflection from BHCC President Pam Eddinger. "I have many different stories, but they all come together in a common theme. Our students do this in spite of the struggles, in spite of the lack of resources, and the fact

that this may be their second or third try. That was my moment to understand that for our students to continue to succeed and the good stories continue to get told, what is needed at the College is a sense of stability and shared values."

Following the video, President Eddinger gave a poignant overview of the College's history, emphasizing BHCC's evolution into an engaged campus.

James Canniff, Provost and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs highlighted the legacy of teaching and learning, which included STEM students and staff giving special recognition to founding faculty member Robert Steeper, Professor and Chairperson of the Biology & Chemistry Department.

"It's been my honor to be here for 50 years and to see the College grow," said Professor Steeper. "I'm an evolutionary biologist, so I love seeing things evolve, and it amazes me what this community college has turned into."

The event concluded with an alumni panel, introduced by R. Arlene Vallie,

Dean of Academic Affairs (Research and Assessment), and moderated by BHCC Alumna and Trustee Cathy Guild. The panel featured alumni Michele Botus, Yong Chen, John Gonsalves, Yamileth Lopez, and Henry Nelson, who shared their inspiring journeys post-BHCC.

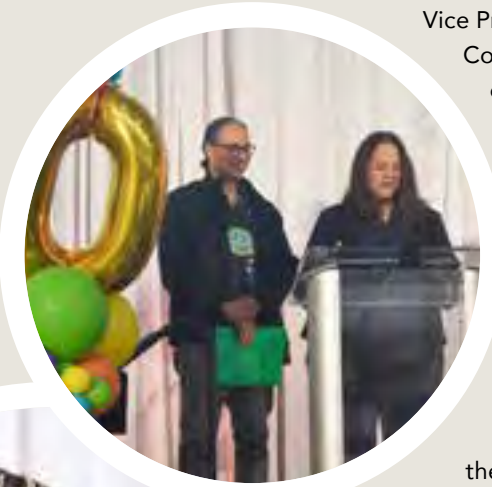
In honor of its 50th Anniversary, BHCC is launching a campaign to celebrate the unforgettable moments that have transformed people's lives throughout the College's history. To share your story, email [mymoment@bhcc.edu](mailto:mymoment@bhcc.edu).

*"That was my moment to understand that for our students to continue to succeed... what is needed at the College is a sense of stability and shared values."*

- BHCC President Pam Eddinger

*"I'm an evolutionary biologist, so I love seeing things evolve, and it amazes me what this community college has turned into."*

- Professor Bob Steeper



For highlights and video of BHCC's 50th Celebration, visit [bhcc.edu/50years](https://bhcc.edu/50years)

# Determined to Succeed

## Three BHCC students on the transformational impact of the MassReconnect free community college program in their own words

MassReconnect, the free community college program introduced by Governor Maura Healey and enacted in 2023, covers tuition, fees, and books for Massachusetts residents aged 25 and older who do not already have a college degree.

The state estimates that around three quarters of a million Massachusetts residents over 25 have some college credit but no degree, with nearly 2 million residents eligible for the program overall.

At BHCC, hundreds of new and continuing students have benefitted from MassReconnect. It has enabled some to pay for basic needs like food, transportation, or childcare, while others have been able to take on more credits and focus more on their academic studies and less on working hourly wage jobs.

BHCC spoke with three students who benefitted from MassReconnect this year. What follows is an account in their own words of the transformational impact the program has had on their lives and educational journeys.

### Tyrie Daniel

Cybersecurity Major,  
Cambridge, MA

I came to Bunker Hill two years after high school. I wanted to further my career and earn credits to transfer to a four-year school.

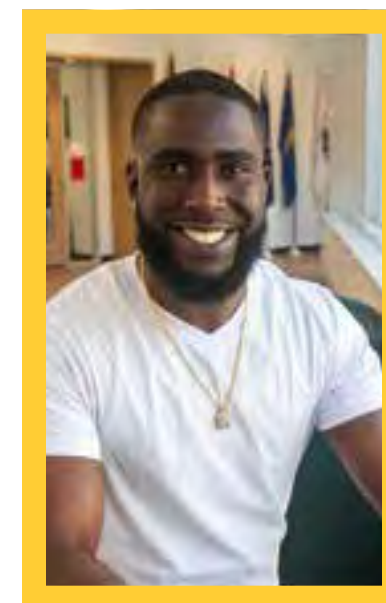
I was passionate about entrepreneurship and business. When I got into my business classes and then into the real world of work, I saw that there were many more layers and complexity to it. I transitioned into cybersecurity—something more lucrative and where there's a demand. My plan is to make money in cybersecurity before I go into entrepreneurship.

I have three businesses: a commercial cleaning service, a family spice business started by my mother, and a real estate marketing company where I also hold a real estate license. My father had three or four businesses when I was younger, and my grandfather had two or three businesses. That's where the journey first started. From there, I went on to try to start my own business.

I see myself going to the top with cybersecurity. My family got scammed, stolen Social Security numbers, taking out loans in their name. I was wondering what could be done about it, and they said they had to hire cybersecurity specialists—I said, "What's that?" That's how I found out about it. I researched schools with cybersecurity programs because they are fairly new.

I started my associate degree at Bunker Hill but didn't finish. I just needed about 16 more credits. Life just came hard. I was trying to focus on school, but bills were much heavier, and I had to help my family. MassReconnect helped me get back into school because bills come first, and you have to pay for food, and inflation has greatly impacted my life.

Bunker Hill was one of the few schools with a cybersecurity program that also had partnerships with four-year schools for cybersecurity. Those partnerships are what drove me to come to Bunker Hill. I'd like to go somewhere with a cybersecurity program that offers internships and advanced degrees in cybersecurity, such as Northeastern, Boston College, or even MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). A master's degree from MIT—that would be great.



### Meagan Fisher

Human Services Major,  
Boston, MA

I've been sober for a little over five years now. I've always wanted to go back to school, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do.

I worked as a recovery coach for Mass General, and my supervisor had a master's in social work. They made the work interesting, and I wanted to pursue that degree. An associate degree in human services would be the first step. I researched the area and ended up at BHCC.

As soon as I walked into Student Central, I felt welcomed. I told them I wanted to go to school but didn't know where to begin. The staff were incredibly helpful.

I've had amazing professors, especially Professor Pamela Schmidt. I can't think of anyone better to run the Human Services program. What I've learned in my classes has allowed me to move on to a counseling position.

My goal is to earn a master's degree in public health. I want to work with the homeless population, people living

with HIV or AIDS, and people suffering from substance use disorder.

I work as a counselor at Victory Programs' Victory House in Boston. We have low-threshold housing, residential rehab programs, and we just opened a facility for people who are immigrants who have just arrived in the country. There is a huge need, and that's, like, my heart because I've dealt with homelessness, I've dealt with opioid addiction.

I have three children and I started at Bunker Hill before the MassReconnect program. I had to rely on student loans and pay out of pocket. With MassReconnect, so far I have not had to pay for school, which I'm so grateful for because being a single parent, and my dad recently passed away. It just makes everything better. I have a good job and make a decent living, but it's hard to afford daycare, food, and other services. I was really stressed out about being able to go to school, so it is such a relief to know that my education is being taken care of and I'm going to be able to do it.



## Choi Skeete

Psychology Major,  
Hyde Park, MA

Once I graduated high school, I enrolled in a four-year university but never felt connected to the school or its students. Even in the classroom, the school was smaller but much bigger than I was used to. I have a disability, and so sometimes I might need accommodations and extra time for things. It was even more difficult to get those accommodations and extra help when your teacher didn't even remember who you were.

It was also very expensive. After my first year, I decided, "Okay, this, this is not for me; I will try to figure something else out." I took a gap year or two. I didn't know what I wanted to major in. I felt this sense of drifting like, "Okay, I'm here, but I don't really know why." College is the thing that I should be doing, but I did not have a real sense of purpose. In the time that I left, I just threw myself into different experiences, volunteering and working a couple of jobs here and there.

And then I decided I'm ready to head back to school. I have a better sense of who I am as a person. I looked for affordable schools with a decent number of programs. At BHCC, I've had the chance to explore different classes, dig deeper into my major, psychology, and build good relationships with my professors who I still keep in touch with. It just allowed me a place to fit in, where I felt like I was a part of the school and the

community, and it has also allowed me to gain more experience and broaden my horizons.

Bunker Hill also provided me with incredible opportunities, like studying abroad in London, that I wouldn't have had at my other school. Bunker Hill opened the door to many possibilities for me, and I am forever grateful.

Coming from my first university, I'm still paying back loans from that first year in school. At Bunker Hill, thanks in part to MassReconnect, I haven't had to take out any loans. I graduated in May with my associate degree. Two years down, and I'm leaving with no debt holding me back. Because it's more affordable, I had the option to try a couple of different things, versus at an expensive university, you're pushed to a very focused, very specific lane. Being a part-time student for several years because as an older student, I did need to work. I do have a whole adult life, having that balance was super important.



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