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Breaking News & Video

Journalism in the Interest of the Queens College Community

“DON’T LET CUNY DIE!”

Students, faculty, staff and CUNY allies protest against Governor Andrew Cuomo’s proposed state cuts to CUNY.



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Photo by Brandon Jordan

A benefit concert
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and sexism in science
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EDITORIALS

A victory for now

For the past three months, CUNY was in a state of crisis. Governor Andrew Cuomo proposed in his Executive Budget to cut \$485 million and make the city pay for it instead. This is equal to nearly one-third of funding for all senior colleges.

Officials at CUNY scrambled to mobilize students and urge state lawmakers to reconsider this cut or, as the Cuomo administration prefers, shift. The Professional Staff Congress, which represents 25,000 professors and staff, organized rallies and even held a die-in in front of Cuomo's New York City office. Forty-one people were arrested at this protest, but their message was understood—don't let CUNY die.

Cuomo, under pressure, reversed his stance. The catch is a management efficiency expert will review administrative costs of CUNY and SUNY to save money.

"The governor is committed to fully funding CUNY's \$1.6 billion budget while identifying ways to ensure the maximum amount of money goes to students and teachers instead of toward bloated administrative costs," Dani Lever, a spokesperson for Cuomo, said to the Daily News.

This is good news for all CUNY colleges. For example, Queens College halted all decisions relating to the budget until April 1. Officials were unsure what might happen if the cut actually went through. For now, they are wiping the sweat off their forehead.

But this returns us to square one. CUNY still requires more funding to help students. QC is suffering from a \$1 million

shortfall, and there's no doubt other colleges are suffering deficits too.

Moreover, professors and staff are working with a contract. It's been six years since the last one expired, and they need one now. The lack of a contract is contributing to an exodus of teachers and a decline in the education at CUNY.

Despite the success of those who fought this shift, there's still more to do. State Senate officials, primarily Republicans, pressured CUNY to investigate anti-Semitism. If not, it would face a \$485 million shortfall.

CUNY administration officials quickly created a task force to investigate this. Chancellor James Milliken and board of trustees chairperson Benno Schmidt pledged to look into the matter.

It's hard to understand why cutting funding for CUNY, which impacts Jewish students, would pressure CUNY to protect them. A better alternative is creating alliances on campus between faiths like the Center for Ethnic, Racial and Religious Understanding at QC.

Besides, it is obvious suspending SJP would violate their First Amendment rights. Lawmakers are playing politics and jeopardizing the education of thousands of students.

With Cuomo no longer favoring cuts to CUNY, it is hard to see the state Senate push for cuts. But the decision by lawmakers to cut funding for such a peculiar reason highlights the potential fights ahead for CUNY.

CUNY can celebrate for now, but the battle is not over.

Recognizing Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month, a time that we remember the strong women who have overcome prejudice and sexism throughout the years.

We praise the contributions women have made and continue to make that have given them the opportunities they have today.

In 1981, Congress passed Public Law 97-28 that declared the first week of March as Women's History Week. Six years later, after being petitioned by the National Women's History Project, Congress declared the month of March as Women's History Month.

During Women's History Month, we recognize compelling women such as Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross; Amelia Earhart, the first woman to fly by herself across the Atlantic Ocean nonstop; Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman physician in the United States, and the first women to earn a medical degree; and Susan B. Anthony, a central figure in securing women the right to vote.

Not only do women have the right to vote today, but also former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton hopes to become the first woman president in November.

Clinton led the U.S. delegation to

Beijing to attend the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. She gave a speech where she said "human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights once and for all."

The fact that there may be a woman serving as President of the United States says a lot about how far women have come. For the first time in history, a woman may have the highest power, with the ability to make executive decisions that affect the entire nation.

During a time when women were not allowed to own the land they had with their husband and men controlled of a woman's real estate and wages, women were nothing without men.

It was a man's world, but it's not anymore thanks to the groundbreaking achievements women have accomplished throughout history.

Women's History Month is mainly about recognizing what women did to achieve equality. It's only up from here for women in this country.

MISSION STATEMENT:

"We aim to serve the Queens College community through a tireless pursuit for truths that may be hidden, obstructed or otherwise unknown, to empower our readers with the information they need to inspire change."

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Arrests made at rally to defend CUNY

BRANDON JORDAN

News Reporter

Forty-one people were arrested March 24 in front of Governor Andrew Cuomo's New York City office during a protest over proposed cuts to CUNY.

Those arrested included students, faculty, staff and Council members Inez Barron and I. Daneek Miller. They participated in a die-in, a tactic used by protesters in which they lie down on the ground and act dead. New York Police Department officers warned the protesters to not block the sidewalk before arresting them.

The protest, organized by the Professional Staff Congress, the union representing more than 25,000 professors and staff, happened just before the April 1 deadline for a new budget from lawmakers in Albany. Governor Cuomo, in his Executive Budget, shifted the \$485 million in CUNY expenses from the state to the city.

However, after a backlash against Cuomo's proposal, the Democratic governor pledged to reduce CUNY's budget.

"We applaud [Cuomo] for that. We understand, at this point, that we're taking him at his word," Michael Fabricant, first vice president of the PSC, said.

Despite this, Fabricant highlighted other problems affecting CUNY such as a lack of a contract for workers and the state's decrease in funding for CUNY.

"Over the last six years, tuition has replaced state investment. That means our



PHOTO BY BRANDON JORDAN

As 41 people were being arrested by officers, many rallied in solidarity with them on the opposite side of the street.

students are having more difficulties gaining access [to CUNY]," Fabricant said.

Scott Stringer, the city's comptroller, testified January 26 to the State Legislative Fiscal Committees on the State Budget for Local Government on proposed cuts to CUNY. He said if funding for the university system grew at the same rate as the budget, CUNY would have an extra \$637 million.

"We need to put CUNY on a solid, sustainable path forward. Because when we invest in higher education, we all win—students, teachers, government and business," he said.

On the opposite side of

Cuomo's New York City office, students, faculty, staff and CUNY allies showed solidarity with those arrested.

Chika Onyejiukwa is the president of Hunter College's student government and vice chairperson of the University Student Senate. She said the arrests highlighted an important demand—restore funding for CUNY.

"That sends Governor Cuomo [a message] that he's starving CUNY. He's already killing us and we're dying," Onyejiukwa, a junior studying community health at Hunter College, said.

Franklin Rodriguez, a senior

majoring in psychology and sociology at Queens College, felt proud of the protesters who were arrested. He said the lack of proper funding for CUNY is affecting major issues in the university.

"In particular, teachers need a fair contract. They haven't had a new contract since 2010, and the one they were offered was a smack in the face," Rodriguez said.

Professors and staff are working without a contract despite negotiations between the PSC and CUNY. The only contract offered by CUNY would increase total wages by six percent from 2010 to 2016, an offer the union rejected as they deemed it insufficient.

Rodriguez further elaborated on

the effects on students. He noted how CUNY was a free university before the 1970s. Today, with tuition increasing every year, education for students is being affected.

Still, he felt glad students attended the protest so they could learn what's happening to CUNY.

"That's how you get students to understand what's going on and tell their friends," he said.

Keith Fuller, a junior studying biotechnology at York College, was one student who attended the rally. He felt empowered by the rally, but said it could have been avoided if the state had pledged investment in CUNY.

"It shouldn't have escalated to this point where we have to come out and fight for representation," he said.

Fuller felt concern regarding the impending April 1 budgetary deadline.

"[State lawmakers] already have their minds set going in, and it's going to take a lot like this for change to happen," he said.

Fabricant said the university was at a tipping point, something both Cuomo and the state Senate needed to know.

"If you starve this university, which is what is happening, then you starve the possibility of narrowing inequality and being able to fund the dreams of many New Yorkers," he said.

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A union-led and union-read event

ERICA MARIE FINOCCHIO

News Reporter

Fifty people, including professors from different CUNY colleges, came together March 20 to read poetry and fiction at CUNY Writers Against Austerity at Cooper Union.

The event, organized by Kimiko Hahn and Barbara Bowen, two Queens College professors, was made in response to proposed budget cuts by the state over the past few decades.

Moreover, Governor Andrew Cuomo proposed cutting state's contributions to CUNY by \$485 million. This led many in CUNY to pressure the state government to reverse its decision, which it did in late March.

"One important aspect of this event is that it includes art and politics, which I think are inseparable in my mind," Hahn said. "It's great to see all the

professors, who are writers, bend together to lend their voices to this incredibly important cause."

Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress, which represents over 25,000 professors and staff, explained how the event showed the value of professors at CUNY.

"This event showed me the richness of writing talent we have at CUNY and how incredible of an institution it is," Bowen said. "It made me even more determined to fight, and it won't be deflected by politicians that don't want us to strive."

Some of the topics covered by professors included language, literacy, politics and adjuncts.

Adjuncts make up 59 percent of the faculty at CUNY, according to the CUNY Adjunct Project. But their salaries are

less than the salaries of full-time professors. Adjuncts earn nearly \$3,000 per course, but are limited to teach a few courses.

Elena Chavez is an adjunct professor who teaches Spanish and English at City College. She explained the difficulties of being an adjunct, especially with falling financial support from the state.

"It is difficult for adjuncts to teach. The budget cuts are not only affecting teaching but the students as well," Chavez said.

David Unger, a professor at Queens College, wrote a poem titled "Labor Is On." In it, he talks about the labor at CUNY and the problems they face like a lack of a contract.

"Dear authors of the world: unite for labor" Unger said. "Your work is important when you write for labor. Lack of a contract and

no living wage are two of the wrongs they need to right for labor. The perks of power seized by management have been denied for labor."

Since 2010, professors and staff at CUNY are working without a contract. The PSC negotiated with CUNY at more than 20 meetings. CUNY provided one offer on Nov. 4, which the union rejected as not enough. Now, the Public Employment Relations Board, a state agency, is reviewing the talks after they reached an impasse or stalemate.

Behind the readers were pictures shown on a screen of people holding signs like "Invest in CUNY" and "CUNY Needs a Raise." There were even signs on chairs at the hall like "Invest in CUNY, Invest in New York."

Allison Amend, an English

professor at Lehman College, read from "Enchanted Island," her novel, at the event. She said the readings were not just about professors, but also students.

"We want equal opportunity for CUNY students," Amend said.

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QC's budget shortfall reflect larger funding issues

PHIL VALLONE

News Reporter

Queens College President Felix Matos Rodriguez, in his March Saludos address over email, said the college faced a budget shortfall of nearly \$1 million.

"As we did at the start of the Fall 2015 semester, we have made cuts in operating budgets, slowed the pace of hiring, left some vacancies open, stepped up our efforts to increase other revenue and used soft funds to cover budget gaps," Rodriguez wrote in the email.

The shortfall was because the college did not meet its revenue goals for spring and retroactive pay for skilled trade employees at CUNY after 2008. At the same time, enrollment is increasing at QC.

Moreover, Governor Andrew Cuomo proposed earlier this year to cut \$485 million from the state's budget to CUNY. New York City would cover this "shift," as Cuomo said on NY1. CUNY would face no cuts.

"I want to see more money at CUNY at the end of the day, and more money in the classroom," Cuomo said.

After months of pressure from activists and CUNY, Cuomo's office said CUNY would still receive a full budget.

But the university system still faces budgetary shortfalls after decades of falling state support.

Between 1987 and 2012, the share of revenue coming from the state fell from 69 percent to 41 percent for Queens College, according to data from the



PHOTO BY DAVID GUTENMACHER

Queens College faces a shortfall of a million dollars. Other CUNY schools have suffered as well.

Chronicle of Higher Education. Only Baruch College suffered a bigger cut as revenue by the state fell from nearly 66 percent in 1987 to 36 percent.

Last October, Chancellor James Milliken addressed the consequences of a fall in state funding for CUNY.

"The failure to fund mandatory costs led to a required budget reduction at the senior colleges and more significant cuts at CUNY's central office,"

Milliken said.

There are public officials who support more funding for CUNY. Diana Richardson, a Working Family Party lawmaker in the state Assembly, is one person who likes this idea.

"The state legislature should restore full funding of CUNY to ensure continued access and affordability for all students in the State of New York. Moving forward, we must protect this vital educational system and

help facilitate the rapid growth of CUNY and its programs," Richardson said.

Jim Malatras, director of state operations for Gov. Cuomo, recently announced the state would appoint a management organization expert to restructure CUNY administration.

"This will not only bring great savings to CUNY, but also [it] will look for shared services with SUNY," Malatras said in a statement.

Regardless of Cuomo's decision to not cut \$485 million, tuition is still providing a bigger share of revenue for CUNY schools. Moreover, the SUNY2020 plan, enacted in 2011, raises tuition by \$300 each year. In 2012, tuition was \$5,130 per year for a full-time student. If tuition still increased by the same amount, students would pay \$7,830 for a year in 2021.

Monika Brzostowska, a senior majoring environmental studies, said it was wrong and that tuition needed to "maintain the status quo at QC."

"The state should step up and give the necessary funding promised in the Maintenance of Effort provision in SUNY2020. Tuition dollars should be going to hiring more full-time faculty, academic advisement and not to keeping the lights," she said.

Ashley Phillips, a junior majoring in psychology, explained that the state government needs to invest more into not only CUNY, but also SUNY.

"Since this country equates success with higher education, New York State needs to step up and provide affordable education they set out to do in the beginning of CUNY and SUNY," Phillips said. "The only way to do this is make sure the campus and administration have the proper resources in the advancement of their students."

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Voting for a strike isn't easy

BRANDON JORDAN

News Reporter

Since late last year, thousands of professors and staff at CUNY needed to make a major decision that affects their jobs.

The decision? Saying yes to a strike authorization vote.

"The PSC has used every legal means at its disposal to achieve a fair contract, and we will do everything we can to reach a contract settlement without the need to strike. But six years without a raise, six years of erosion of competitiveness and conditions at CUNY, is intolerable—especially in one of the richest cities in the world," Barbara Bowen, president of Professional Staff Congress, said.

Union members in the PSC, which represents more than 25,000 faculty and staff, will vote on authorizing the use of a strike. This is in response to six years of being unable to reach a contract

agreement with CUNY.

Since 2010, professors and staff have been working without a contract. Both CUNY and the PSC held over 20 meetings, resulting in only one offer from CUNY. The PSC rejected it.

One major problem for professors and staff is the lack of pay raises. Others include workload, time for research and adjunct status.

Sheehan Moore is the Labor Relations Coordinator at the CUNY Adjunct Project. Moore explained the vote escalates tactics of the union, and rallies and protests can bolster support for it.

"A strong 'yes' vote means that the PSC's team has the support of the membership if they decide to call a strike, which gives them significantly more leverage in negotiations," Moore said. "But getting to the point where an authorization vote can even be called for means a lot of

mobilization first, especially with a membership as large and spread out as the PSC's [base]."

The CUNY Adjunct Project supports a strike authorization vote. Moore said the organization decided on this after internal and external discussion.

"Our conclusion is that a strike is the only way to ensure that we can win a decent contract. A strike also gives us the opportunity to mobilize as graduate workers and adjuncts in a way that foregrounds our needs and student needs broadly speaking," Moore said.

David Gerwin, acting chair of the PSC at Queens College, stressed that members were not voting to strike.

"This is not a vote that we are striking. This is a vote that authorizes the union executive committee that we should go on strike," Gerwin said.

But there are repercussions

to a strike in New York State. There is the Taylor Law, passed in 1967, that forbids strikes. Failure to follow this law could result in daily fines for the union.

Gerwin explained the union does not want to strike, as it is open to negotiating with CUNY. Moreover, if CUNY received proper funding from the state and it led to a better proposal, then union leaders would negotiate a contract.

"We would like nothing better than settle tomorrow," he said.

Gerwin elaborated the larger issue involved with the vote is recent cuts by the state. When Governor Andrew Cuomo announced his Executive Budget earlier this year, he shifted \$485 million from the state to the city. Gerwin said this was nearly one-third of funding for senior colleges. This, along with diminishing investment in CUNY, made it

difficult to talk about issues like protesting or voting to authorize a strike.

"I think often that works to the advantage of the people who are choosing not to spend the money for CUNY. It's been a long, long time and conditions have grown dire," Gerwin said.

Talks are now at an impasse, or stalemate, at CUNY's request. New York State's Public Employment Relations Board assigned a mediator to resolve the contract dispute.

But this does not stop the strike authorization vote for members.

"Do we want to strike? No," Gerwin said. "Do we feel like our backs are against the wall? Yes."

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App provides budget-friendly dating

CHRISTINA CARDONA

News Reporter

Michael Rubin, a senior majoring in computer science, came up with an idea after his brother, Jonathan, spent a large amount of money on a few dates he went on.

“My brother came home one day and he went on, maybe, four dates in one day,” Rubin said. “My mom was ready to kill him because he used her credit card to pay for the dates. She thought he was crazy for spending all of this money,” Rubin said.

Rubin’s idea was a dating app for people like his brother. This way they can plan dates and how much they want to spend.

The app’s name? Hitched!

Michael Rubin received help from his former boss at a software company in Israel, who provided connections. He talked to people that knew how to create apps.

Rubin works with two other people on Hitched!—his brother and David Schwartzman, a junior majoring in marketing and psychology.

Schwartzman, director of marketing and sales, said Hitched! is free for everyone to download. “It caters to any age, whether in college or 60 years old,” Schwartzman said.

Users can select a date setting, which include places like a cafe or restaurant. Once a location is selected, they choose the price level that even includes “let’s see what’s free” and “I don’t mind”



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA CARDONA

David Schwartzman (left) and Michael Rubin (right) are two-thirds of the Hitched! team, an app for dating on a budget.

options.

Afterward, users can choose any recommended place. They can get directions and make a reservation, if necessary, through a phone number on the app.

Rubin noted how the app is not just for people in the United States, but also for those

throughout the world.

“There are four people who downloaded it in Angola. That’s pretty random,” Rubin said.

The app also includes “ice breakers” that help users on a date. Sections like “Great Conversation” give facts and “Would You Rather?” questions to keep

conversations going.

Rubin explained this idea came from reading articles about what to say during first dates.

“I thought the section would be a fun add-on to the app. It’s not really what the main purpose is [about], but it’s a fun thing to have,” Rubin said.

Rubin said Hitched! helped users like his sister’s friend, who is divorced and went on her first date in years.

Mariana McAlpine, a junior majoring in media studies, found the app easy to use after downloading it.

“I would use it because of that and because the variety of options it gives you within a specific price range which are totally reasonable and interesting,” McAlpine said.

McAlpine used other dating apps like Tinder, but liked the budget feature on Hitched! She said it’s important for college students to control what they spend.

“Most of us are on a budget. Even working two jobs, it’s hard for myself to have spending money and save money. So being aware of how expensive dates are is important,” she said.

Rubin explained first dates are sometimes awkward. But he believed Hitched! offers a chance to avoid that.

“One thing that I like about Hitched! is that it makes things less stressful. You can plan the date right there and make the reservation through the app. Hitched! makes dating easier and affordable,” Rubin said.

For more information about the Hitched! app, visit their website gohitched.com.

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Spreading awareness for the children of Honduras through music

CHRISTOPHER PEREZ

News Reporter

The Queens College Students Helping Honduras chapter held a benefit concert at the Agora Café on March 14 to raise money for Honduran youth education.

Students Helping Honduras is a non-governmental organization, whose goals are to reduce gang violence and poverty in Honduras through youth empowerment and education. The organization raises money for the cause through fundraising and volunteering.

This semester Students Helping Honduras is trying to raise \$3,000 to help offset the costs of construction materials, employing workers and taxes to build an educational institution for children in Honduras.

“Our goal is to spread awareness about the conditions in Honduras,” Kevon Manners,

a senior nutrition and exercise science major and vice president of Students Helping Honduras, said. “The whole point of the club is to fundraise, but what we really want is for people to know, understand and care about the issues that are going on in Honduras. And why it’s so important to support this cause.”

The Students Helping Honduras benefit concert attempted to achieve its financial goal by selling tickets to a showcase of music and other performances on Monday night.

“We have a lot of friends who sang and we sang,” Meera Desai, a junior majoring in linguistics and president of Students Helping Honduras, said. “We thought it would be really fun to bring together a bunch of groups from our school and use their talents for a good cause.”

The event featured students

dancing, a beatbox performance and singing performances. The Queens College acapella group, the iTones, made a special appearance at the event.

Desai not only co-hosted the event along with Manners, but also performed her own emotional song.

“I had written that song right after I had come back from Honduras. And I was like ‘wow, such a humbling experience.’ And I just really wanted to convey that in a nice way to people, or to myself. I was trying to understand and wrap up everything into something. Into feelings you could use to feel passionate about,” Desai said.

Reinard Bukalan, a senior, performed his beatbox vocals and participated in a beatbox battle, which was a popular performance among the audience.

“I really enjoyed the beatbox

battle,” Desai said.

Secretary of Student Helping Honduras Susana Gomez, an elementary education and Spanish major, presented a slideshow and video that displayed the club’s trip to Honduras.

“I gathered [video] clips and photos from different people to create a collage, a montage to raise more awareness and share our experience,” Gomez said.

Included in her presentation were the organization’s ambitions to build 1,000 schools in Honduras and the importance of spreading awareness and volunteering.

Danielle D’andre, a sophomore communication science and disorders major, expressed her enjoyment of the benefit concert, its advocacy, and its success.

“I thought it was a lot of fun and it had a good turn out. I thought the performances had a lot

of personality to them,” D’andre said. “I think it’s a wonderful program and something I would definitely consider joining.”

In total, the Students Helping Honduras benefit concert raised \$160 that will go toward the cause. The organization has two more fundraising events planned for this semester, a Thrift SHHop (selling donated clothes) and bake sale. The club is planning another trip to Honduras this summer to continue their endeavors.

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Veteran seeks to ease transition for fellow vets

JORDI SEVILLA

News Reporter

Dennis Torres served with the Marine Corps Reserves in Fallujah, Iraq, during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Today, he is the Veteran Outreach Specialist at Queens College.

Born in Jamaica, NY in 1985, Torres is the youngest of three siblings. His parents were from Ecuador and his father was part of U.S. special forces near the end of the Vietnam War to gain citizenship.

"I grew up hearing stories of camaraderie. [My father] went to Cambodia for a little bit, and, hearing his stories, [it] made me want to experience it," Torres said. Inspired by his father's tales, Torres enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserves after graduating from St. Mary's High School in Manhasset, NY.

"When I was in boot camp and was faced with a difficult situation, I just thought, 'my dad did this at 17, and English was his second language,'" Torres said.

Torres worked as field radio operator, a job that ensured effective communication between units in the field and high command. He needed to operate and establish radio contact in a proficient manner, while being resourceful with radio technology under tight deadlines.

He stressed proper



PHOTO BY DAVID GUTENMACHER

Former Marine and Iraq War veteran Dennis Torres is the Veteran Outreach Specialist at Queens College.

communication is important during combat operation.

"In my first deployment to Iraq, I was responsible for communications for a company of around 100 to 200 Marines," Torres said. "I had to make them realize that this radio can save your life."

In Fallujah, his company conducted daily security patrols at a time when many soldiers were returning to Iraq.

Moreover, there was the threat of the Sunni Triangle, a

region of northwestern Iraq with Sunni militants.

"I got my first gray hair from that deployment. It was a stressful time for me," Torres said.

Torres remained in the reserves until 2014. He attributed his work ethic, drive and focus on values instilled while in the Marines.

In 2010, Torres earned a bachelor's degree in labor studies from Hofstra University. Thanks to the federal government's GI

Bill, which funds the education of veterans, he later earned his master's degree in industrial organization psychology from Adelphi University.

Torres worked as a consultant at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan. But, because Hurricane Sandy shut down the place for months, he looked for employment elsewhere.

"I was on Craigslist, of all places, looking for jobs. There was an opportunity at a public career

center looking for a veterans' specialist to help veterans find jobs. That's how I transitioned," Torres said.

Eight months ago, Torres joined the Veterans Support Services at QC. His job sets up veterans and their families for success before and after graduation. Torres worked with Workforce1, a New York City job agency, and found employment for 350 veterans and their family members.

Lorraine Rosenfeld, the Veterans' Affairs school certifying official at QC, spoke highly of Torres and highlighted his accomplishments.

Since Dennis started as our Veterans Outreach Specialist, he really made things happen. We have orientation each semester, the Veterans Club [gained] new members and he arranged a number of events here at the college for veterans and service members and plans even more in the near future," Rosenfeld said.

For Torres, he enjoys his time and job at QC.

"It's been an awesome opportunity. I'm happy and grateful to be here every single day," Torres says.

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Unveiling OASIS and improving success for underprivileged students

DARIA KACZOROWSKA

News Reporter

Coming to Queens College is a new initiative aimed at increasing minority graduation rates.

Optimizing Academic Success and Institutional Strategy is Education Trust's innovative initiative to improve higher education success for underprivileged students. The organization, which is a non-profit advocacy, promotes programs aimed at helping students of low-income and minorities in order to close achievement gaps completely.

The initiative will be implemented in 11 schools, including Florida A&M University and University of Houston. Among these colleges are six Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI), four Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and one urban research institution.

Bonita Brown, Director of Higher Education Practice at EdTrust, said that the initiative will be composed of HBCUs and HSIs working together to implement the most effective strategies for student graduation and overall

success in college.

"OASIS is unlike most other conferences where higher education professionals are present because OASIS brings together presidents, provosts, student affairs VPs, enrollment managers, and researchers from each institution as teams to address student success on their campuses," Brown said. "One of the goals of OASIS is to assist institutions in collecting and analyzing data and utilizing that data to address student needs."

The OASIS conferences will also allow institutions to carefully and effectively share data among each other.

"We see OASIS having a positive impact on institutions' graduation rates because through it, leaders will be able to assess their policies, processes and procedures with the outlook of removing barriers that cause challenges for low income and minority students," she said. "We hope to extract best practices from this effort and leverage them on a larger scale so that all institutions can implement these practices

to ensure that low income and minority students succeed."

Marines Gonzalez, a QC sophomore, thinks that any initiative aimed at helping minority students is a positive one.

"There are a lot of factors that play into the graduation rates of African American and Latino students, but I think the biggest disadvantage is simply in the fact that many of these students are first-generation college undergraduates. Many students have to undergo the process of applying or looking for resources alone, so it becomes difficult to balance school with social life, responsibilities and jobs," Gonzalez said.

Junior Bidisha Bagchee believes that although the responsibility of graduation and college success is on the students themselves, she sees how an initiative such as OASIS will be helpful to the community.

"Whether you graduate or not, it's on you. Your personal effort, dedication and so on. But as the saying goes, 'it takes a village to raise a child,' professors and

administration should always be on the lookout for new ways to help students," Bagchee said.

As for the concrete plans for utilizing this initiative, Provost Elizabeth Hendrey and Acting Assistant Provost Eva Fernandez at Queens, stated that the integration of OASIS into the college's policies has just begun.

"We will have the opportunity to learn from [OASIS] about initiatives that have worked. Cal State Fullerton, whose president is spearheading the establishment of the network, has put in place some innovative 'student success teams,' for example, and has had some excellent success in increasing graduation rates overall and in closing achievement gaps for minority students. The second component is the opportunity to network with schools like ourselves, as well as to be exposed to experts who can help us best invest our resources," Hendrey said.

Hendrey said that this will be a two-year project. Their first steps

will be to analyze the situation and determine where to focus their efforts.

In addition to data-driven decision making and providing a platform for college administrators to network among each other and share strategies that have worked, OASIS opens doors to improving the use of data and seeking funding for areas of need.

"At the core of both of these components (data-driven decision-making and networking) is our administration's firm commitment to improving access to higher education, which is central to our mission and at the forefront of our 2015-2020 strategic plan. We envision the initiative informing some of our internal practices regarding the use of data, and triggering programs for which we will seek external funding," Fernandez said.

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The next big music craze at QC

SARA SCHEIDLINGER

News Reporter

Trebel, a music app, is being introduced to Queens College. It allows the user to listen, download and play music offline, with no data charges, for free.

According to the Nielsen Company, a global information company, 66 million millennials listen to 44 hours of music per month each and 73 percent of listening happens outside.

QC was picked to access the app before the general population because the campus is a hub for activity. Trebel is currently at 3,000 colleges and universities and 25,000 high schools across the country.

"Trebel has changed the way I listen to music. Free music doesn't hurt either," freshman Lauren Pianko said.

Trebel's musical database has thousands of songs, from current Top 40's such as "Sugar" by Maroon 5 to The Fray's 2005 hit "How to Save a Life."

The download and play service allows the user to choose exactly what song they want and listen to it for free, as opposed to streaming services where you pay for music.

Users earn virtual currency by consuming ads, which are used to "pay" for playing music uninterrupted by advertising. This delivers fair compensation to the artist community, making the service absolutely legal.

"The more music you download, the more virtual currency you make," Gary Mekikian, founder and CEO of M&M Media, Trebel Music's parent company, said. "This makes

it easy to continuously listen to songs."

Listening to Trebel music doesn't use cellular data, a feat no musical app has yet to feature. Once the songs are downloaded, you can play them offline.

"After my daily commute to QC, my phone battery is always dead due to my excessive use of Waze and Pandora," senior Malkie Hagler said. "Since I made the switch to Trebel, my phone battery life has never been better. I have enough battery to last me through the day and even the drive home." Trebel's goal is to make music sharing sites and torrent sites obsolete.

When using music sharing sites, the artist isn't compensated; quality is poor and the risk of viruses on your computer increases.

"Trebel spells trouble for these illegal sites," Mekikian said.

The app has exciting features, including displaying the users top songs downloaded or played on their campus, playing music videos, creating and sharing downloadable playlists with friends, reading the lyrics of the song playing at the same time and sending and receiving virtual currency to help their friends own songs.

"Music is valuable art. People that can afford to pay for a premium service should, but many young people can't. Trebel fills a need for these listeners at a point in their lives when they can least afford to spend," Mekikian said.

One of Trebel's missions is to create musical communities around campus, where students

can create their own playlists and share them with friends and classmates.

To download Trebel, search for Trebel Music in the app store.

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Circus performed Chinese acrobatics with strength and balance

BIANCA HE

News Reporter

The New Shanghai Circus, a touring Chinese troupe, showcased traditional Chinese dance and performance art at Colden Auditorium on March 20.

Ninell Silberberg, associate director of Marketing and Communications at the Kupferberg Center for the Arts, said it was the New Shanghai Circus' first time performing in Queens.

Founded in 1991, the New Shanghai Circus tours around the United States, committed to bringing dynamic Chinese acrobatics culture to an international audience.

As the circus made its debut, the audience screamed with excitement and applauded with amazement for the Chinese acrobats' feats of strength and balance.

The first performance lit up the stage. Young female acrobats wearing clothes and head accessories from traditional Chinese opera made a human pyramid, in which one acrobat performed a handstand on a base formed by two other acrobats holding their hands up as a support.

The audience was also amazed by the acrobats' hula hooping skills. A female acrobat twirled multiple circular plastic hoops around her hands, waist and feet at the same time. In the next minute, she twirled over 30 hoops at once at high speed. There were so many hula hoops that they blocked the acrobat's face from the audience.



The New Shanghai Circus, a touring Chinese troupe, impressed the audience with acts performed by flexible acrobats..

After many exciting performances with fast-paced music and moves, the circus switched to a different tempo with a jaw-dropping body contortion show. A female acrobat, dressed in a unitard, bent her body into various positions that highlighted her hyper-flexibility.

The audience members openly marveled at her skill, exclaiming with wonder. Other acrobats joined her, flexing their bodies and balancing themselves on different parts of the other acrobats' bodies.

The New Shanghai Circus incorporated drums into one of

their performances. Dressed in bright red, the acrobats laid on drums and spun smaller drums with both legs up in the air.

However, drums were not the only items they juggled with—they also raised other acrobats with their feet. The circus members passed their fellow performers to other acrobats lying beside them while those being passed continued to spin drums.

The biggest round of applause burst out from the audience when the acrobats formed a three-person high human pyramid while spinning drums and handkerchiefs with

PHOTO BY BIANCA HE

their hands and feet.

Sharon Skinner, a retired New York City Metro operator, said her favorite part was when the acrobats juggled with their feet and expressed her willingness to see more Chinese acrobatics performances after the show.

"These girls are so talented and adorable," Skinner said. "It feels like Christmas."

After hat juggling, which featured seven male acrobats continuously throwing and catching their hats precisely, and tube climbing, in which two female acrobats squeezed themselves into a narrow tube and

nimbly climbed out, came the last, breathtaking performance: hoop diving.

Male acrobats dressed in traditional Chinese martial art costumes dived and somersaulted precisely and swiftly through hoops stacked vertically on a platform. They then added more hoops to the stack. Finally, the last acrobat skillfully dived through the highest hoop, which stood on top of three other hoops at more than twice the height of the performers. The audience cheered, many exclaiming "Oh my god!" as they applauded.

Melody Zelin, a retired teacher and alum of Queens College, said the skill that these performers were able to demonstrate was thanks to years of practice.

"The girls are very impressive," Zelin said. "They must be very hard working."

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Economist talks labor and capitalism at QC

BRANDON JORDAN

News Reporter

In the 1950s, Jose Maria Arizmendiarieta, a Catholic priest living in Mondragon, Spain, felt frustrated traditional businesses did not come to provide jobs for workers.

In response, he recruited five workers to create a worker cooperative, or a business run only by workers.

Sixty years later, the business, now called the Mondragon Corporation, employs over 70,000 employees and includes over 250 companies. It makes millions of dollars each year—and is still led by workers.

This story was shared by Richard Wolff, an economist, who spoke about capitalism and alternatives to it at Kiely Hall 264 on March 21.

“The problem in this society is that we don’t have an economic system that works anymore,” Wolff said.

Wolff explained that the rise of capitalism helped the U.S. grow for its first 200 years. Cities like Detroit were shown as the success of the system.

But Wolff said capitalists did not increase wages for workers starting in the 1970s. This led to

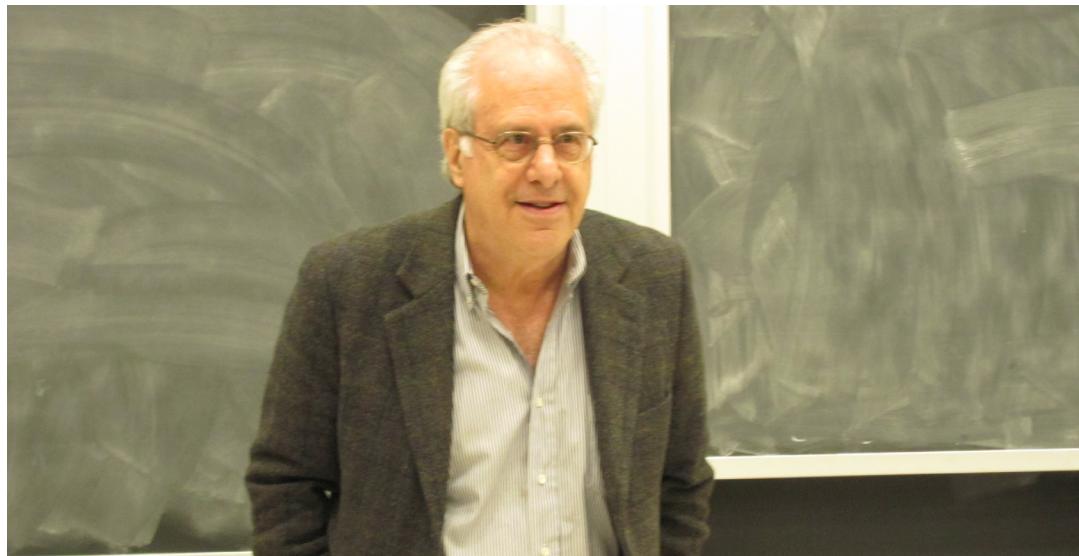


PHOTO BY BRANDON JORDAN

Economist Richard Wolff explained the failures of American capitalism in helping the working class in Kiely Hall 264.

major problems, like more working hours and debt for citizens.

“American capitalists have abandoned the United States. They’ve been doing it for 40 years. They’re moving, [and] they’re gone,” Wolff said.

However, Wolff noted wealth still grew during those four decades. The problem was that workers never received it and were told there was “no money.”

“There’s no shortage of money in the United States, we’re as rich as we’ve ever been,” he said.

“But the money is in hands of the people who run the economy. They don’t want to spend it on your education, the fire department or social work.”

Wolff highlighted how capitalism developed with the support of government, from the rise of slavery to the use of tax breaks among large corporations.

“Government has helped capitalism every step of the way,” he said.

Wolff recommended worker cooperatives as a way to bring

democracy back to workers and as a solution to the problems of capitalism.

“The workers together can decide what to produce, how and where to produce it and what to do with the profit,” Wolff said.

Wolff then took questions from the audience of many students. He highlighted the only way to make sure worker cooperatives would come from the workers.

“You have to have a social movement behind [worker

cooperatives],” he said.

Student Organization for Democratic Alternatives organized the event. Michael Devan, a member of SODA, felt satisfied with the event’s message for students.

“I think part of what I liked most about it was that he placed the solution in the hands of students. It really spoke to the core of SODA’s mission in that way,” Devan said. “Too often, these discussions about our sociopolitical and economic institutions will omit any mention of a tangible alternative in the end.”

Devan, a senior majoring in philosophy and political science, said Wolff explained the way to make worker cooperatives in society.

“I always tell people that the cooperative model—where workers collectively share the ownership of a business in accordance with the principle of one person, one vote—is not some far off, abstract idea,” he said. “The cooperative model, as Wolff helped illustrate, is already a very real, global movement.”

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THE KNIGHT NEWS

X

SARAH JAFFE

April 20th / Q-Side Lounge
Free Hour / 12:15-1:40



The Knight News is excited to host independent journalist and Nation Institute fellow, Sarah Jaffe.

Join us as former waitress and bicycle mechanic turned journalist covers a wide variety of subjects ranging from superhero comics to the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Sarah is the co-host of Dissent Magazine's Belabored podcast and appeared on MSNBC, Huffington Post and RT and is the author of an upcoming book on social movements following the 2008 financial crisis.

Co-sponsored by the QC Dream Team
+ Student Organization for Democratic Alternatives

**FREE
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Iraqi Jew reads from memoir about struggles in 1960s

JORDI SEVILLA

News Reporter

Dr. Cynthia Kaplan Shamash, who was one of the last remaining Jews in Iraq, read a section of her memoir that explained how her people were brutally treated during the 1960s.

She read from "The Strangers We Became: Lessons in Exile From One of Iraq's Last Jews" on March 3 in the Benjamin Rosenthal Library, with support from the Center for Jewish Studies.

Most of the Jews in Iraq left after World War II. Before that, Baghdad had a flourishing Jewish population. Back in the 1920s, 20 percent of the population was Jewish. In ancient times, Babylonia was home to many Jews, including Biblical prophets. But in modern times there are only 5 left, according to Shamash.

Shamash was born in Baghdad in 1963. As a child, she grew up in a community where a Jewish person was not able to practice their religion openly,

including wearing kippahs or the Star of David.

"To me, I grew up worrying about the doorbell ringing, and that would mean my father was taken for some questioning, which means he would never come back," Shamash said.

Shamash grew up hearing stories about her people's oppression, and even tried to cover her accent. One of the great massacres of Jews in Baghdad occurred during Pentecost in 1941, after the new Iraq was established and anti-British sentiment was rising.

"Jews were slaughtered on buses and sidewalks, homes were looted, girls and women were violated," Shamash said. "The British just stood by and allowed them to vent their frustration."

By the time she was five, the assets of Iraqi Jews were frozen, Jewish men were beginning to lose their jobs and Iraqi universities

would not accept Jewish students.

"We were not allowed to travel a few miles from our home, Jews were not allowed to have phones and Jews had to carry a yellow ID card, Nazi inspired," she said.

There was constant surveillance by secret police and a fear of Zionist attacks. Many Jews were suspected of being spies, including her father.

In 1969, there was a public hanging of 9 Jews in "the Freedom Square," an event celebrated with belly dancers and candies. Many of the hanged were friends of Shamash's father who had accused of being spies.

In 1972, when Shamash was almost 10, her family decided to escape over the Iranian border. They were caught and jailed for five weeks. During their captivity, many of her family's belongings were looted.

"At one point, an officer took

me alone into the interrogation room and, looking for a recording device, dismembered a doll I was carrying," Shamash said.

Shamash's family moved to Amsterdam and she went to school for a year in England. She later immigrated to America in 1991. Shamash went through five different countries as a child, including Turkey.

Shamash was elected to the Board of the World Organization of Jews from Iraq. She was featured in the New York Times in 2013, where she discussed the fate of the Iraqi Jewish Archives and the survival of her heritage.

The archives are still housed in Washington D.C., but there is no telling what may happen to them as the Iraqi government is demanding them back for their own museum. Some scholars have criticized the idea because of the history of archives in the area being looted.

"Memories make us grateful," Shamash said. "They also remind us of our human vulnerabilities, and recognizing those vulnerabilities is the first step into becoming human."

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LEADERSHIP IS FOR EVERYONE

JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS

Director of "Documented," a documentary about being undocumented in America and MTV's "White People"

THE HARSH REALITY OF BEING

UNDOCUMENTED

IN AMERICA

"Illegals are an economic calamity for low-wage Americans." - Ted Cruz

"Half of the undocumented residents in America are criminals." - Donald Trump

"Do I look illegal?" - Jose Antonio Vargas

DETAILS

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REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED BY



Queens College Student Elections - 2016

Starting on April 3, 2016 at 12:01am and ending on April 7, 2016 at 11:59pm, Queens College students will be able to get elections information and cast their ballots from any web-based Internet connected computer to vote online at

<https://sl.qc.cuny.edu/qcelection/StudentAppIns.php>

The candidates are listed here:

Student Association

President: Chief Executive Officer and the official spokesperson on behalf of S.A.

SFC Japneet Singh

(vote for as many as 1)

Vice President: Executive Officer and spokesperson in the absence of the president.

SFC- Matthew Shamash

(vote for as many as 1)

Academic Senate Twenty Positions

The Academic Senate is responsible, subject to the CUNY Board of Trustees, for the formulation of policy relating to the admission and retention of students, curriculum, granting of degrees, campus life, the nomination of academic deans, and the establishment of rules governing the use of the College's name by organizations and clubs. It also makes its own bylaws consistent with the CUNY Bylaws and conducts the educational affairs customarily cared for by a college faculty.

Undergraduate: 9 Representatives

3 - Senior & Upper Junior classes

(vote for as many as 3)

- SFC- Adam Klein
- SFC- Limor Brady
- SFC- Sahara Tokhi

3 - Lower Junior & Upper Sophomore classes (vote for as many as 3)

- SFC- David Billet
- SFC-Yanev Hakim
- SFC- Jennifer Soleimani

3 - Lower Sophomore & Freshman classes (vote for as many as 3)

- SFC- Emerald Cazeau
- SFC- Yael Harooni
- SFC- Ramneet Singh

At-Large: 8 Representatives

(vote for as many as 8)

- SFC- Zainab Bhatti
- SFC- Jabeen Chema

- SFC- Gina Chen
- SFC- Jennifer Fernandez
- SFC- Rachel Gohari
- SFC- Arman Niknamfard
- SFC- Raveen Kanagaratnam
- SFC- Beena Kanhailall

SEEK: **1 Representative** (vote for as many as 1)

SFC- Shian Denton

Adult Collegiate Education (ACE):1 Representative (vote for as many as 1)

No candidates

Graduate: **1 Representative** (vote for as many as 1)

- SFC- Jennifer Wynns

New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) Four Positions

NYPIRG has a Board of Directors that governs the organization. NYPIRG's Board is comprised entirely of elected students. The Board has a number of important organizational duties:

- Serve as directors for the corporation and as delegates of the members (students and school) by whom they are chosen
- Set program priorities (issues) for NYPIRG
- Adopt an annual budget
- Create and adopt new programs (issues) and areas of concern for research
- Approve all local projects of each chapter
- Consider lawsuits and direct legal actions
- Appoint and dismiss the Executive Director

Anika Chowdhury

(vote for as many as 4)

Ki Lee

Ahsanul Mojumder

Jennifer Serpico

Faculty-Student Disciplinary Committee (FSDC) Six Positions

In the event of a student disciplinary hearing, the role of the Faculty-Student Disciplinary Committee is to listen to the testimony, ask questions of the witnesses, review the testimony and evidence presented at the hearing and the papers filed by the parties and render a determination as to guilt or innocence.

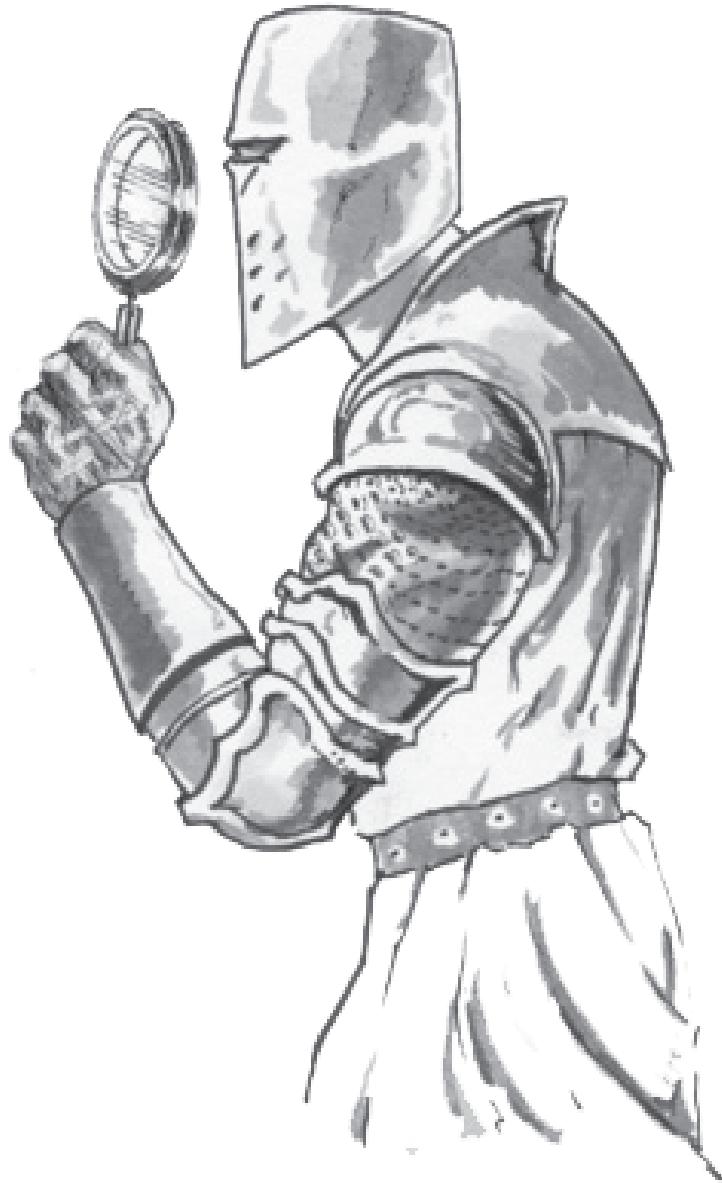
- SFC- Sophia Sasson
- SFC- Sumeera Kamil
- SFC- Marco Sin
- SFC- Gurjot Singh
- SFC- Joshua Yaminian

(vote for as many as 6)



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Discussion of politics and gender at conference

CHEYNA MULLIGAN

News Reporter

Students and professors of Queens College gathered March 21 for the Virginia Frese Palmer Women and Gender Studies conference on the fourth floor of the Student Union.

The event was held in honor of Women's History Month. Seven panelists—officials, professors, activists and authors—shared their experiences, beliefs and aspirations about different topics. Some of the topics covered included race, independent, equality and feminism.

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, a Democrat, began the conference with a speech about her personal opinions and experiences in office as a woman.

"The next generation needs to be helped. The next generation needs to understand where we've come from in order to get ahead even further. So when a woman runs for president, it's no big deal. So when an African American runs for president, it's no big deal," Katz said.

Political Science Professor and Senior Scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics Kira Sanbonmatsu discussed the statistics, stereotypes and demographics of women in office.

"It takes a lot more initiative to get women into office as opposed to men. Men make up 88 percent of governors in the United



PHOTO BY AISHA HASSAN

From left to right: Queens College President Felix V. Matos Rodriguez, Joyce Warren, and Queens Borough President Melinda Katz

States. However, more women of color are holding state legislative office today [and they are] breaking the barriers," Sanbonmatsu said.

Councilmember Inez Barron, a Democrat, worked against civil and human injustices and promoted issues from public health to affordable rent. These topics were important for electing women to office, explained Barron.

"We've got to remember that it's not just about the race or the gender, but it's about the character of the person that you're putting in

office," Barron said. "Is it someone who really understands that this is a position of service to help elevate all people?"

Barron encouraged individuals to speak up and fight for what they believe. "Your voice is very important. Speak out even if you're in the minority of one or two people," Barron said.

Inspirations, like Shirley Chisholm, were brought up by several panelists. Nichola Gutgold, author and Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences

at Penn State, discussed her other inspirations and topics mentioned in her books.

"We still have difficulty in our country when it comes to women and power. When more women run, it will become less remarkable for them to go against each other. Appearance and qualifications are always in the spotlight when it comes to women. Women have to confront lookism," Gutgold said.

Differences among genders, along with equality, was a frequent topic among the panelists.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney, a Democrat, became the first woman to represent New York's 12th congressional district, which covers parts of Queens, Brooklyn and Manhattan. She helped pass legislation that targeted the demand side of sex trafficking, created annual mammograms for women on Medicare and provided funding to process DNA rape kits.

Maloney spoke about gender equality, feminization, discrimination in paychecks and discrimination against women.

"The equal rights amendment that men and women should have equal opportunity under the laws of our great country hasn't been able to move. I think that shows you something that is deep and strong that there is discrimination against women. From where I come from, I never thought that I would see a woman taken seriously for president [and], much less, have a real degree of probability of becoming president," Maloney said.

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Challenging sexism in the scientific field

SHOSHANA WODINSKY

News Reporter

A survey released last month found just 13 percent of women are members at the National Academy of Sciences, a private, non-profit founded in 1863.

Throughout the world, less than one-eighth of women are members of scientific academies. Dorothy Ngila, a researcher who worked on the study, said scientific bodies should reflect the diverse amount of people in the world.

"They should make sure their panels and reports are reflective of the diversity of our world," Ngila said. "You cannot provide advice to government using only half the team."

At Queens College, women interested in the hard sciences face a field where the lack of diversity may cause problems, such as gender discrimination.

Jennifer Serpico, a freshman majoring in Environmental Science, experienced discrimination while working.

"On the field, I've been

told to let men handle the heavy equipment, and had my objections ignored by my supervisor," Serpico said.

One doctoral student, who wished to remain anonymous, said older male superiors do not think highly of her as a scientist. She explained these "small things" lead women to leave the field in frustration.

An adjunct professor in the biology department, who also wished to remain anonymous, felt frustrated about harassment and being "hit on" when presenting her work at professional conferences.

"Someone will try to strike a conversation with me, but I just brush it off and discuss my work," she said. "Thanks, but I don't need your approval or gratification."

She also lamented the struggles students face after they graduate with a bachelor's degree. She explained that she never noticed so much overt sexism in her field until she became a

graduate student.

"Your relationships with the superiors and your department are much more personal," which may bring overt sexism to light," she said.

Corinna Singleman, a Ph.D candidate and teaching assistant in the biology department, said the lack of women in STEM, which refer to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, is not talked about much.

"There are barely any media coverage of women in STEM," Singleman said. "There's this huge myth about people like us being fidgety lab rats with no social lives or social skills like Amy, portrayed by actress Mayim Bialik, on the Big Bang Theory, [a popular sitcom]."

Another adjunct, also preferring to stay anonymous, said there were misconceptions about women in STEM.

"I wish that the media portrayed all kinds of women in science. We're not all frumpy

and socially awkward. We're not nervous around men. We can be girly if we want to be," she said.

Each interviewee had their own ideas and strategies to fight this discrimination. Mya Chikaukumi, a junior majoring in anthropology, pointed out that there should be more information made available about historic female scientists.

"These fields look more closed off if we lead to believe it truly is a 'boys club,'" she said.

Those interviewed noted the importance of early interventions to avoid sexism. By separating boys and girls at an early age, said Singleman, children never get an opportunity to imagine as scientists working together when they grow up.

"By the time they have the opportunities, they have already decided it's not for them," she said.

But Singleman felt hopeful about the future. With programs advocating student involvement

in science both during college and high school, institutions can slowly change.

"The faculties of many upper-level institutions are still predominantly white and male, and this balance will not change very soon," Singleman said. "[Here in Queens], there are many women faculty in my field here. It's a comfort, because, if they can do it, so can I."

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REVIEW

British spy thriller less than thrilling

DAVID RAFAILOVICH

News Reporter

Whether it be Ali G, Borat or Bruno, Sacha Baron Cohen's movies are defined by their characters.

The main character of "The Brothers Grimsby," a 2016 film directed by Louis Leterrier, is Nobby, played by Cohen, a potbellied, working-class buffoon who lives the poor Englishman's dream with his nine rowdy kids, with names such as Skeletor, Django Unchained and Stella Artois, and his lovely wife.

Nobby is disgusting, rowdy and irresponsible yet loving and good intentioned. He might be "low class," but he is very human. The idea of this character had the potential to be great, but the film does not take sufficient satirical risks as Cohen's other films did.

The story of "The Brothers Grimsby" is based off the premise "what if James Bond had a sloppy idiot for a brother?" Nobby and his brother Sebastian, played by Mark Strong, were separated during childhood and adopted by different families. Sebastian went on to become a spy for MI6 while Nobby went on to start a family in the rundown town of Grimsby, a real place in England.

Ever since their separation 28 years ago, Nobby has been searching for his younger brother. So when he gets a tip that Sebastian is going to be at a posh gala, he is ecstatic, and heads there straight away. Unbeknownst to



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA PICTURES

"The Brother's Grimsby" is a spy movie about two long lost brothers, but lacks usual Sacha Baron Cohen humor.

Nobby, Sebastian is at this gala on a mission.

Nobby, upon spotting his brother, ruins the mission by causing Sebastian to miss his target and instead shoot an AIDS-infected Israeli-Palestinian child in a wheelchair. Now Sebastian is on the run from the authorities and needs the help of his long-lost brother.

One reason the film falters is that it doesn't give enough screen time to its hilarious female characters, all of whom could have

easily improved the film with their own comedic talents instead of being used as props. Actresses like Rebel Wilson, who played the part of Nobby's loving wife perfectly, and Gabourey Sidibe, who is part of a decently funny mix-up scene, were both given shamefully small amounts of screen time and character development.

The storyline relies too heavily on the corny action/thriller scenes rather than showing the high-low culture clash between the brothers. We are briefly shown

a quasi-touching moment when Sebastian meets Nobby's family, but we are quickly whisked away to a garbage spy movie. The overly sentimental background story of the brothers' separation did not do the film justice. This part of the film is shown through sappy flashbacks that are much more off-putting than the lengthy elephant ejaculation scene.

It's obvious that this film is not up to par with Cohen's other films, such as "Borat" and "Bruno." In these other films,

Cohen has had to put his life on the line. Watching him duck and dodge white supremacists, homophobes and racists while, in the process, exposing their bigotry, made for a far more entertaining insight into human nature.

This film doesn't play with those kinds of stakes or have the satirical bite that made his earlier films so amazing. Here, Cohen's imagination is given the creative means to run free, but the result is formless and soft.

"The Brothers Grimsby" remains mediocre. The humor in this film is off and on, but if you love gross-out, edgy humor then you will like this one. What "The Brothers Grimsby" lacks is a decent storyline and satirical angle.

The plot is a sloppy mash up of a predictable spy thriller and a raunchy comedy. If you are willing to wade through the lesser parts, you might be able to get a couple hearty laughs.

Hopefully Cohen will reclaim his place as the king of satirical comedy in his next film. Until then, when going to see "The Brothers Grimsby" audiences will most likely laugh, wince and roll their eyes

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OP-ED

Student groups demand lawmakers make college affordable

BY TIFFANY BROWN

Last week the New York Public Interest Group (NYPIRG) unveiled a coalition of over three hundred and fifty student groups and organizations calling on the New York State Legislature and the Governor to increase state aid to the City University of New York (CUNY) and the State University of New York (SUNY), reject an extension of the "rational tuition" hikes, and freeze tuition at the current 2015-2016 academic year rates. Nearly forty clubs signed onto the letter at Queens College, including the QC Dream Team, the Hakuna Matata Club and the Caribbean Association to name a few.

Since the SUNY 2020 legislation was signed into law in

2011, the state's so-called "rational tuition" policy has caused tuition at public colleges to skyrocket – increasing by over 30% in just five years. At the same time, State funding for SUNY and CUNY has remained largely flat over the last several years, even while the cost to maintain SUNY and CUNY's existing services has increased by nearly \$200 million. The State has made up the difference using tuition dollars. So-called "rational tuition" has merely shifted the burden of operating New York's public college from the State to college students and their families.

Nationwide, student loan debt is currently over \$1 trillion and it is estimated to be \$2 trillion by 2025. Studies show that

students burdened with student loan debt are less likely to start a business or own a home. This can create a ripple effect where current debt hamstrings future wealth growth—the effect is even greater for low-income students and students of color.

But with tuition increases outpacing income growth, and the state's stagnant support for public higher education, college affordability is eroding quickly.

As students are facing more years of tuition hikes, thousands are speaking out. In December, student groups from across the state delivered 28,000 petitions to Albany urging the Governor and Legislature to freeze tuition. In February, over

450 college students, faculty and staff converged on our Capitol for meetings with close to one hundred legislators.

The State is not facing the deficits they were in 2011, and according to State Comptroller DiNapoli, New York has a \$1 billion surplus this year. And now, over 350 student groups are calling on the state legislature and Governor Cuomo to reverse its policy of shifting the cost of public college from the State to students and their families and instead keep public college tuition at current levels and increase state support to public higher education.

After five years of consecutive tuition hikes, students are paying more than their fair share for

higher education, while the State has not. With the State's April 1st budget deadline looming, will Governor Cuomo, listen to the thousands of voices across the state represented by those student groups and organizations calling for a tuition freeze and more investment in public higher education or will he continue the trend of state divestment from public higher education?

Tiffany Brown is a project coordinator with NYPIRG.

SPORTS

Men's baseball ready for successful season

ALBERT ROMAN

Sports Reporter

Queens College men's baseball team began their season Feb. 25 with an 11-10 defeat against Dominican College at Myrtle Beach, S.C.

The Knights entered the season looking to improve from last season, when they finished with a record 13-22.

Head coach Chris Reardon, in his third season as coach, is impressed with the team's performance so far.

"We've had pretty good starting pitching and the bullpen has been really solid. Our hitting has been pretty consistent, and we've faced some pretty good competition to this point. Even though we've had a below .500 record, we've been in most of the games. Our opponents to this point have been regionally ranked so it's been challenging," Reardon said.

One of the team's weaknesses is winning close games. Five out of the team's 10 losses have been by two home runs or less.

"When you face really good pitching you have to find ways to score runs. You have to be better at doing the little things and I think if we had some better execution earlier in the season we could have won a few of those games that we lost. It just comes down to being able to get hits with guys in scoring position and two



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN HIGGINS

Junior John Dondero made his first start since Tommy John Surgery on Feb. 25

outs. We've struggled to execute situational hitting," Reardon said.

But, in games tied in late innings, the Knights have shown mental toughness. They beat Stonehill College on Feb. 26 and Southern Connecticut State University on March 12 with walk-off wins.

"One thing about this team is they've shown tremendous heart and toughness in terms of being able to stay in games. We've been down, came back and won," Reardon said.

Against Southern Connecticut, in another game March 13, sophomore Thomas Parish began a rally with a single.

Junior Jorge Ruiz hit a double and scored a run, tying the game. An error led Ruiz to score, giving the team a victory. Ruiz pitched in the last inning, striking out two batters to give the Knights the victory.

"We won on a suicide squeeze. We've been very resilient. Everyone has shown an ability to contribute in some way," Reardon said.

Kevin Kolesar, a junior who plays shortstop, continues put up impressive numbers this season. He ranks second in the East Coast Conference with a batting average of .397 through 15 games.

Kolesar leads the team with

58 at-bats, 23 hits, 12 runs batted in, 11 stolen bases and .470 on-base percentage so far.

"In baseball, you don't want to do too much you just want to try and stay within yourself and Kolesar does a great job of that," Reardon said. "He doesn't allow the pitcher to get him out. He's aggressive; he's balanced and stays composed. He has a lot of good characteristics that a baseball player is going to have."

John Dondero, a junior, is the pitcher for the team. The last time he played for the team was March 7, 2014 against Franklin Pierce.

Dondero felt a sharp discomfort in his elbow during

warm-ups. He continued to play for a month until it became unbearable. He required Tommy John Surgery, where a ligament in the arm is replaced with a tendon.

After a year of rehabilitation, he returned in a game against Dominican, he pitched for six innings, allowing one earned run and striking out five batters.

"I feel pretty good. I can feel the difference from how I felt pre-surgery. I guess its part of the recovery process. Some days my arm feels normal and some days it doesn't," Dondero said.

The team looks to finish their season strong since 21 out of 31 games left are against conference opponents.

"Baseball is a game of failure; you're going to fail more often than you're going to be successful especially from a hitting standpoint. You have to know what you're capable of doing. [Our] goals right now are just win as many games as we can, be competitive and hopefully we can continue to do the good things," Reardon said.

Their next game is against Bridgeport on March 30.

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Inside Queens College athletics

ALBERT ROMAN

Sports Reporter

One-on-one with Queens College Head Athletic Trainer Daniel Hernandez. He joined QC as an Assistant Athletic Trainer in 2013.

Why did you decide to become a physical trainer?

When I first got into physical therapy, I was in high school. In my junior year, I saw how beneficial it was to be an athletic trainer, and, at the time, I was looking into careers and I knew I liked sciences and math.

I really hate an office, formal setting. I don't like sitting at a desk; I find it is unsettling. When I realized this setting was very active, I went into my undergraduate [to] declare [a physical therapy major] and I never switched.

What made you so passionate about the career?

It's the fact that everyday is different. There's always a new challenge [and] there's always something new. Everyday in itself is unique. The challenges you face everyday are unique, [and] it's the variety that I really enjoy.

What is the toughest aspect of your job?

You always have to work with a lot of things at once. You have to be really good at multitasking. It can be very taxing if you're not used to it.

Normally, I'm doing five things at once. You have to have the right mindset for it. The job is not just about having fun and being able to watch games.

What's your favorite aspect of it?

There's nothing better than doing game coverage. I was paid to travel with the woman's basketball

team and go to the NCAA tournament. It's awesome. I got to experience that from the sidelines.

The Yankees' trainer gets to watch every Yankee game from the dugout, [and] that's insane. If you love sports and that experience, there's nothing better.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I like to do a lot of outdoor activities. I'm a camper and love to go to a large amount of sporting events even when I'm not working. But I only really get time during the summer. During the school year [I'm] busy the entire time; there isn't a lot of down time.

The bonus of that is you never have any free time to spend money. When the summer comes, I have all this money to spend because I did nothing for the last 10 months.

What's your favorite sport?

I will always love football. It's annoying to work because you don't get to watch the games. In football, you're frequently working on things because they are constantly getting bruises and being tapped.

What's your Favorite movie?

That's easy: Princess Bride. There are so many great jokes in that I can't get enough.

What is something people don't know about you?

Most people are surprised that I'm an adrenaline junkie in my spare time. If I'm not at work, I'm on my motorcycle, and if I have free time, I'm going to try and go skydiving, surfing and snowboarding.

I love being outdoors and

going fast. Looking back, that's probably why I got into this major because it's very fast paced. I'm really into any kind of extreme sports. I've been doing it for so long that it's almost second nature.

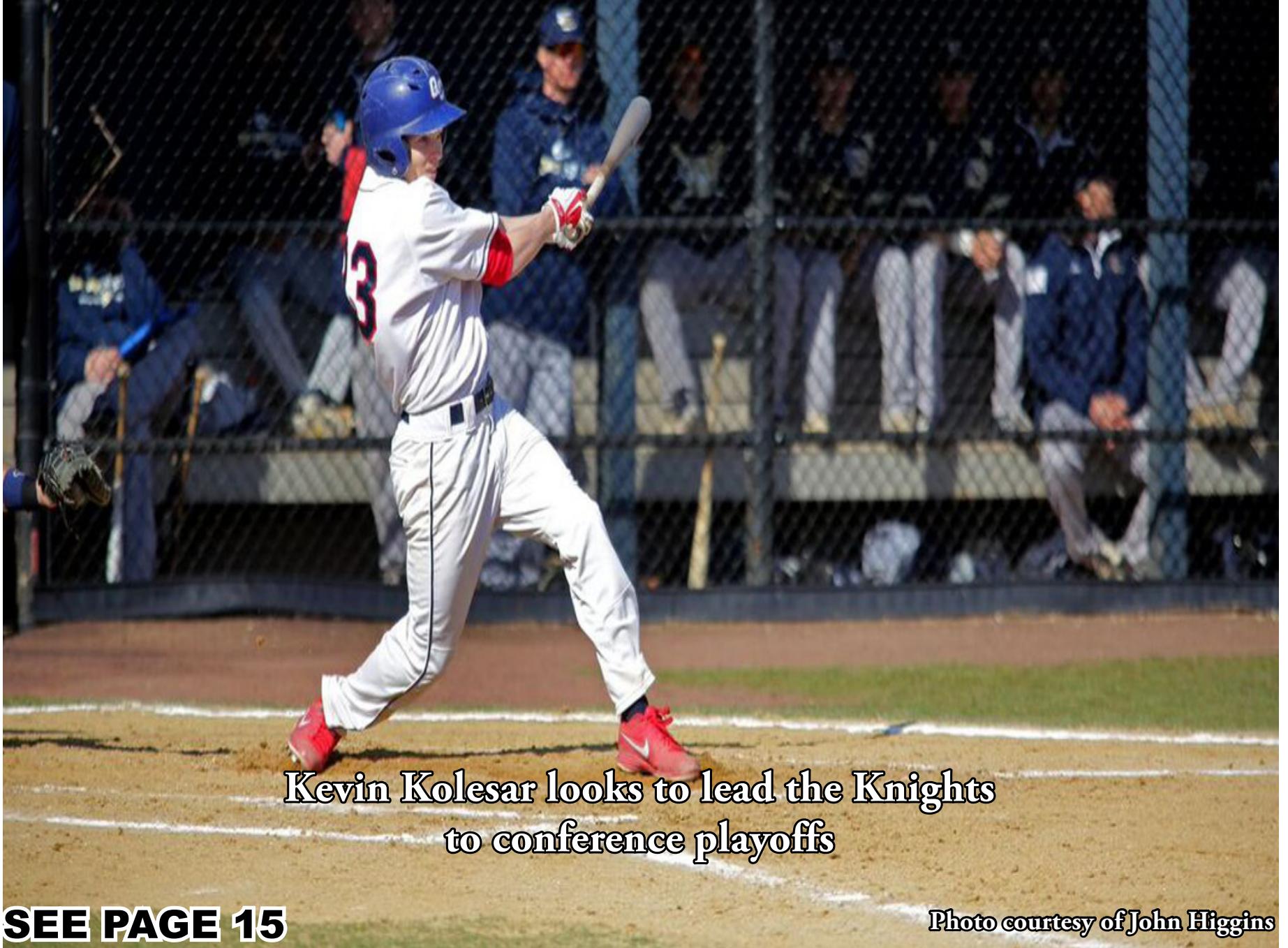
If I have free time, I'm likely going camping and mountain biking for a while. After [I'll] do some kayaking down some rapids and finish on the beach.

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KNIGHT NEWS SPORTS

KNIGHTS SEARCH FOR DAWN OF PLAYOFFS



Kevin Kolesar looks to lead the Knights
to conference playoffs

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Photo courtesy of John Higgins

**Head athletic trainer Daniel Hernandez
searches for adrenaline rush**

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