

ALUMNUS

THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

SUMMER 2026

LIEUTENANT GENERAL
RUSSEL L. HONORÉ (RET.)



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THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

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From the Executive Director



Dear Members of the CCNY Alumni Community,

Each issue of ALUMNUS offers a reminder of what makes City College so extraordinary. It also brings to life the mission of the Alumni Association: to honor our history, celebrate achievement, and continue building community and opportunity for generations of students and alumni.

In this issue, we celebrate the Class of 2026 and CCNY's 173rd Commencement, including the inspiring leadership of Lieutenant General Russel L. Honoré, the remarkable legacy of alumnus Daniel Berg '50, and the contributions of Elizabeth Alexander to the arts, humanities, and educational access. We also meet two outstanding new alumni—valedictorian Shabnam Pahrand and salutatorian Sayyid Yobhel Vasquez Rodriguez—whose stories reflect the ambition, service, and excellence that define the City College experience.

You will also find stories that speak to the life of the campus today: CCNY's Lavender Fest and Homecoming celebration (p.10), the planting of a red maple on Earth Day to mark a new partnership with the New York Restoration Project (p.11), the College's first AI Summit (p.12), and the Colin Powell School's celebration of Wynton Marsalis as the first artist to receive its Distinguished Leadership Award (p.14).

This issue also looks back in a particularly meaningful way. The feature on the House Plan (p.18) reminds us that belonging has always been central to the City College story. Long before "student engagement" became a common phrase, CCNY students, faculty, and alumni were building communities of friendship, leadership, and mutual support. That spirit continues today through our affiliate groups, reunions, mentoring, scholarships, and volunteer-led programming.

I am especially grateful for the stories in this issue that show alumni giving back in direct and personal ways. The Joel Perelmuth '68 Fellowship Fund is already creating meaningful work-study and mentoring opportunities through the Alumni Association (p.21), and the profile of The City Tutors (p.22) highlights the power of alumni mentorship to open doors for New Yorkers across the city.

As many of you know, the Alumni Association is also engaged in ongoing conversations with the College administration about the future relationship between the Association and City College. We have described our goal as one of interdependence: a stronger, more coordinated partnership that supports the College while preserving the alumni-led voice, history, and mission that have defined this Association since 1853. These discussions are important and only just beginning, and we will continue to keep our members informed as they progress.

Through every season of change, our purpose remains clear: to connect alumni to one another, to support students, to celebrate CCNY alumni achievements, and to ensure that the legacy of City College remains vibrant for generations to come.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable community.

David Covington
Executive Director
Alumni Association of The City College of New York

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Honoring Our Past. **STRENGTHENING OUR FUTURE.**



In 1853, the first graduating class of The City College of New York—then known as the Free Academy—made a choice that has shaped generations of alumni ever since. They created an organization that would serve as the voice of graduates and as the home of the City College alumni community beyond commencement.

For more than 173 years, the Alumni Association of The City College of New York has connected alumni across generations, celebrated our achievements, preserved our traditions, advocated for our community, and strengthened the bond between graduates and their alma mater. The Association has endured because alumni have understood something fundamental: our relationship with City College does not end at commencement. It becomes a lifelong commitment to one another and to the institution that helped shape our lives.

Today, we are called upon to make another important choice.

As David Covington noted in his Executive Director's message in this issue of ALUMNUS, the Association is engaged in important discussions with the College administration about the relationship between the Alumni Association and City College. I want to speak directly to our members about those discussions, how they came about, the work your Board is undertaking, and why alumni perspective will matter as this process moves forward.

The decisions made in the months ahead may influence how alumni are represented, how alumni remain connected to one another, and how future generations experience lifelong membership in the City College alumni community. For that reason, the Board is approaching this work with great care and a deep sense of responsibility to you, the alumni we serve.

When I was elected President in June 2025, I committed our Association to three priorities: **stabilize**, **sustain**, and **grow**. Those priorities continue to guide every decision we make.

We recognized that change is a natural part of any institution with nearly two centuries of history and welcomed the opportunity to explore new ideas. The question was never whether change was necessary; the question was how that change should be developed.

With the support of our Board of Directors, we launched a comprehensive strategic planning process to assess where we are today, identify opportunities for growth, and develop a long-term vision and direction for the Association.

That process is expected to include a strategic planning summit as well as thoughtful opportunities

for alumni and campus partners to provide input through surveys, listening sessions, and other conversations as appropriate.

The Association believes that the future of a 173-year partnership should be shaped through collaboration, shared planning, and mutual respect.

However, during this initial planning period, the College informed the Association that it had decided to fundamentally restructure its relationship with the Alumni Association. CCNY President Vincent Boudreau outlined two long-term approaches for consideration: one that would bring all alumni engagement directly under College management through a new structure, with the Alumni Association's current self-governing role significantly changed; and another in which the Alumni Association would continue as a separate organization without the current formal institutional relationship with the College.

Your Board appreciates the President's willingness to discuss these matters and shares his desire to strengthen alumni engagement. We also believe there is another path.

Across higher education, colleges and alumni associations are confronting many of these same questions. Many institutions are developing partnership models that improve coordination, strengthen operations, and deepen alumni engagement while preserving meaningful alumni leadership and self-governance.

The Alumni Association is more than an events organization or fundraising partner. It is a self-governing, alumni-led nonprofit organization established by alumni, governed by alumni, and dedicated to serving the alumni community. Self-governance means alumni elect alumni, help establish priorities, shape the Association's future, and preserve the traditions entrusted to us by those who came before. A strong alumni association does not compete with its college; it creates lifelong engagement, cultivates volunteers and mentors, and builds communities across generations. Rather than choosing between a College-managed alumni structure and separation, we have proposed a stronger partnership built on interdependence: a relationship defined by collaboration rather than control, shared goals rather than competing interests, and mutual accountability.

That is the vision we have shared with the College.

The question is not **whether** the College and the Alumni Association should work together, but **how** we work together while preserving meaningful alumni leadership and an authentic, distinct voice for alumni.

Our goal has never been separation from City College. Quite the opposite. We believe the strongest future is one in which the College and the Alumni Association work as trusted partners, advancing a shared mission.

That tradition began with the Class of 1853. Every generation since has inherited the responsibility not simply to preserve the Association, but to strengthen it for those who follow. That responsibility now belongs to us.

Together with the Board of Directors, I remain committed to working constructively with President Boudreau and his leadership team throughout this process. We have invited College leadership to

participate in our strategic planning discussions and work with us to evaluate partnership models from across the country that could strengthen both the College and the Alumni Association in serving the alumni community.

Throughout these conversations, your Board has remained guided by **five priorities**:

- Support the long-term success of City College.
- Preserve meaningful alumni leadership and governance.
- Strengthen alumni engagement across generations.
- Expand opportunities for collaboration with the College.
- Build an Alumni Association prepared to serve alumni, students, and City College for generations to come.

These priorities continue to guide every interaction we have with the College. Through continued dialogue and transparent exchange, I remain hopeful that we can find a model that reflects our shared commitment to alumni, students, and the enduring mission of City College.

Like the graduating class of 1853, we are again being asked to think beyond the moment before us. This is not simply about organizational structure, but about how future generations of City College graduates will remain connected to one another and to the institution that helped shape their lives.

As opportunities for input arise, I encourage you to share your perspective, stay engaged, and encourage fellow alumni to follow this process closely. This Association has always belonged to its members, and its next chapter should be informed by the voices, experiences, and commitment of our alumni community.

The stories throughout this issue remind us why this work matters. In celebrating the Class of 2026, honoring the legacy of the House Plan, supporting student fellowships, mentoring future graduates, and reflecting on the extraordinary life of Benjamin Ferencz '40, we are reminded that City College alumni have never been passive observers of our institution's history. We have helped build it, strengthen it, and carry it forward.

Over the coming months, we will continue to keep you informed and offer opportunities for alumni input. Your ideas, experience, and perspective will help inform the future of the Alumni Association. For now, I encourage you to contact us at membership@ccnyalumni.org or by mail at Alumni Association of The City College of New York, PO Box 177, New York, NY 10027.

When the graduates of 1853 formed this Association, they could not have imagined the challenges or opportunities future generations would face. They understood, however, that alumni should remain connected to one another and invested in the future of City College. More than 170 years later, that responsibility has been passed to us.

I look forward to continuing to serve this remarkable organization and the CCNY alumni community with gratitude and resolve.

Shawn Chin-Chance '05
President
Alumni Association of The City College of New York

Put Your Skills to Work for CCNY Alumni

The Alumni Association of The City College of New York thrives because of dedicated alumni like you. Beyond financial support, your professional talents can make a real difference. We're looking for alumni who can volunteer their expertise to help strengthen our programs and expand our impact.

AREAS WHERE YOUR SKILLS ARE MOST NEEDED

ACCOUNTING

Support our financial oversight and reporting.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Help us tell our story and engage alumni worldwide.

FUNDRAISING

Advance our mission by supporting donor outreach and campaigns.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Elevate our events and communications with creative visuals.

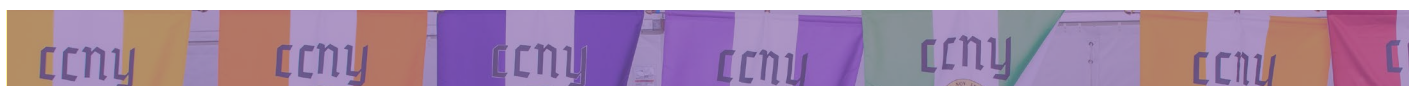
COPY EDITING

Ensure our publications and outreach shine with clarity and professionalism.

Your knowledge and experience can empower the next generation of alumni leadership while keeping our community vibrant and strong.

JOIN US IN GIVING BACK—THROUGH YOUR EXPERTISE.

Contact David Covington, Executive Director, today at dcovington@ccnyalumni.org or 212-234-3000 to learn how you can get involved.



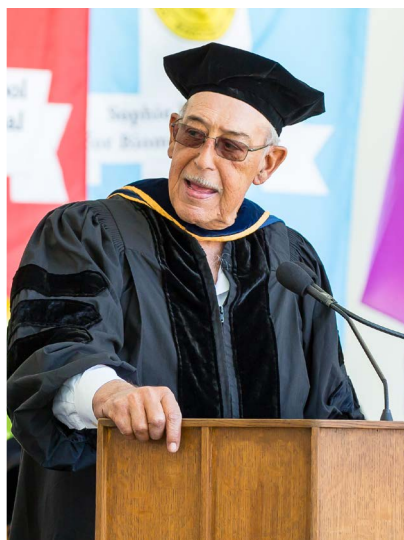
CCNY CELEBRATES CLASS OF 2026 AT 173RD COMMENCEMENT



The City College of New York celebrated the achievements of the Class of 2026 during its 173rd Commencement Exercises on May 29 on the South Campus Great Lawn. The ceremony honored 3,542 graduating students, including 2,163 candidates for bachelor's degrees, while recognizing three distinguished leaders whose contributions have left a lasting mark on public service, higher education, science, and the arts.

Retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General **Russel L. Honoré** and physicist and CCNY alumnus **Daniel Berg '50** received honorary doctoral degrees from the College. Honoré also delivered the keynote address. In addition, **Elizabeth Alexander**, president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, received an honorary degree from the City University of New York in recognition of her leadership in advancing the arts, humanities, and educational access.

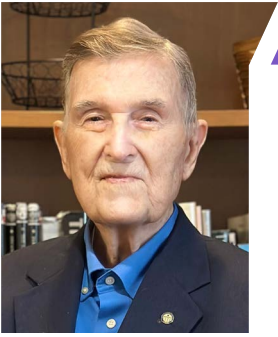
CCNY President Vincent G. Boudreau addressed graduates, families, faculty, and guests, marking a significant milestone in the lives of the College's newest alumni.



HONORING LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Honoré received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in recognition of a distinguished 37-year military career characterized by exceptional leadership and service to the nation. Best known for leading Joint Task Force-Katrina in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Honoré earned national recognition for coordinating military relief efforts during one of the most challenging natural disasters in U.S. history.

Nicknamed "The Category 5 General" for his direct and decisive leadership style, Honoré held numerous command and staff positions focused on homeland defense and disaster response, including support during hurricanes and floods. Since retiring from the military in 2008, he has continued to advocate for disaster preparedness and resilience, speaking nationally about the importance of building a culture of readiness and addressing global challenges related to food and water security.



CELEBRATING INNOVATION AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Berg received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science in recognition of a remarkable career that bridged industry and academia while advancing understanding of technology's role in society.

Over a career spanning more than five decades, Berg established himself as one of the world's leading authorities on technology management, innovation, robotics, manufacturing strategy, and research policy. Following a successful tenure at Westinghouse Corporation, he transitioned to higher education, serving as dean of Carnegie Mellon University's College of Science, where he helped found the institution's renowned Robotics Institute.

He later served as provost and vice president of academic affairs at Carnegie Mellon and went on to become president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

A prolific scholar, Berg authored nearly 50 publications across engineering, business, management, accounting, and computer science. His commitment to education and innovation has also had a lasting impact on his alma mater. Through gifts totaling \$2.1 million, Berg established the Daniel Berg '50 and Frances Berg Professorship at CCNY's Grove School of Engineering, supporting distinguished faculty in fields including chemical engineering, materials science, and related technologies.



RECOGNIZING A CHAMPION OF THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Alexander received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from the City University of New York in recognition of her contributions as a poet, scholar, educator, and cultural leader.

As president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the nation's largest funder of the arts and humanities, Alexander has overseen initiatives that promote cultural engagement, educational opportunity, and social justice. Under her leadership, the Foundation expanded support for institutions and communities across the country, helping to ensure broader access to the arts and humanities.

CUNY has benefited significantly from the Mellon Foundation's support, receiving more than \$20 million over the past decade. This included a landmark \$10 million investment to strengthen programs in Black, Race, and Ethnic Studies and the humanities, expand pathways to arts-based careers for students from underrepresented communities, and foster greater educational opportunity. The Foundation also contributed \$2.5 million to the Chancellor's Emergency Relief Fund, which provided assistance to students facing financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A celebrated public intellectual and advocate for equity, Alexander has become a leading voice on race, justice, culture, and the role of the arts in American society.

A CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT

The 173rd Commencement celebrated not only the accomplishments of the Class of 2026, but also the values of leadership, innovation, public service, and educational opportunity embodied by this year's honorees. As graduates joined the ranks of CCNY alumni, they did so inspired by individuals whose careers demonstrated the power of knowledge, service, and perseverance to create meaningful change.

Together, the graduates and honorees reflected the enduring mission of The City College of New York: expanding access to excellence and preparing future generations to make a positive impact on society.

CCNY'S BRIGHTEST AND BEST ARE THIS YEAR'S VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN

SHABNAM PAHRAND, the daughter of Afghan Immigrants, is the 2026 Valedictorian. Pahrand graduated summa cum laude from the [Macaulay Honors College](#) at CCNY with double majors in [philosophy](#) and [political science](#). Born in New York, where her parents settled after emigrating from Afghanistan, CCNY's valedictorian was inspired from childhood by her philomath father, who prioritized education in the family, and her mother, who was an educator herself. Motivated by Afghan women at home who were denied access to education, Pahrand was admitted to the Macaulay Honors College at CCNY, where she pursued a double major in philosophy in the [Division of Humanities and the Arts](#) and in political science in the [Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership](#).

Pahrand is a Colin Powell School International Human Rights Fellow and was also a Stanford Summer Research Fellow. As a student who prioritizes research-based learning, she completed a year-long capstone project for the Macaulay Honors College examining the impact of poetry, and themes such as legacy and collective memory, within activist movements. She also conducted a second, semester-long project focused on enhancing civic engagement and participation at CUNY, which included proposing a grant to the Teagle Foundation and the Macaulay board. Renowned philosophy professor and author [Nickolas Pappas](#) ranks Pahrand among the top five students he has taught in more than 30 years at CCNY.

Pahrand is interning at the Afghan Support Network, where she mentors newly arrived Afghan refugee students through the U.S. college application process and serves as an editor for their quarterly newsletter. She has also interned in the legal department at Food Bank for NYC. She is a dedicated volunteer with Riverside Immigration Services, where she mentors newly arrived immigrants in reading and speaking English. All of this work is driven by her mission to advance basic human rights for all, both internationally and domestically.

After graduation, her plans include applying for a Global Peace Fellowship in Washington, D.C., and a Fulbright to conduct research abroad. Following this gap year, she will begin the law school application process to obtain her JD, with the goal of pursuing a career in human rights law and nonprofit organizational work.



SAYYID YOBHEL VASQUEZ RODRIGUEZ, a Hospital Corpsman in the U.S. Navy Reserve who completed his B.S. in [biology](#), also with summa cum laude honors, is the Salutatorian.

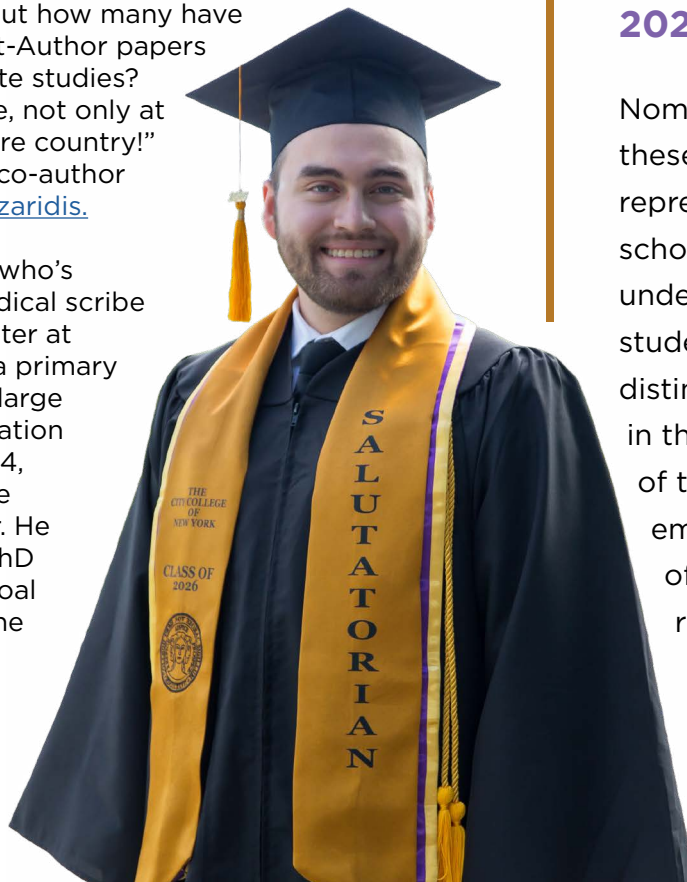
New York-born Vasquez Rodriguez moved to Mexico City as an infant when his father, a Peruvian-born surgeon, and his mother, an orthodontist from Venezuela, relocated for work. This would later instill in him an early appreciation for service and medicine. He lived in the Mexican capital until he graduated from high school.

Admitted to CCNY, he deferred enrollment for a year while doing Navy basic training in Great Lakes, Illinois. He later specialized as a Corpsman [medic] at Fort Sam Houston in Texas, and qualified to work as a field medic alongside Marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Throughout his service, he graduated with honors and earned accelerated advancement for outstanding performance.

At CCNY, Vasquez Rodriguez embarked on a path to medical school by pursuing a BS in biology, graduating summa cum laude, in the [Division of Science](#). He's worked as a research assistant in the Computational Biophysics Laboratory, among other things conducting research on computational models of protein-membrane interactions and contributing to peer-reviewed publications. Remarkably for an undergraduate, he has co-authored three articles on his research findings, two of which have so far been published in the Biophysical Journal and the Journal of Physical Chemistry.

"I am sure that the College has many brilliant graduates. But how many have produced Three First-Author papers in their undergraduate studies? This is extremely rare, not only at CCNY but in the entire country!" said his mentor and co-author Professor [Themis Lazaridis](#).

Vasquez Rodriguez, who's volunteered as a medical scribe and Spanish interpreter at Sure Medical Clinic, a primary care clinic serving a large Latino patient population in Queens, since 2024, completed his course work last September. He is applying for MD-PhD programs with the goal of practicing medicine as an oncologist and conducting cancer research.



INTRODUCING THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK'S 2026 GREAT GRADS

Nominated by campus mentors, these [17 outstanding graduates](#) represent each of the College's schools and divisions. As undergraduate and graduate students, the [Great Grads](#) distinguished themselves not only in the classroom but as exemplars of the CCNY experience. They now embark upon the next chapter of their lives as educators, researchers, public servants, aspiring physicians, advocates for change and more.

CCNY CELEBRATES RECORD-BREAKING LAVENDER FEST AND HOMECOMING 2026



The City College of New York welcomed students, alumni, faculty, and community members to its largest-ever Lavender Fest and Homecoming celebration, held from April 27 through May 2, 2026.

The week-long festival featured a wide variety of activities designed to promote school spirit, relaxation, entertainment, and community engagement. Lavender Fest officially kicked off on May 1 on the South Lawn, where attendees enjoyed free food, carnival games, rock climbing, live performances, giveaways, and special relaxation activities.

One of the week's highlights was the Relaxation Station, a pre-finals stress-relief event held in the NAC and Hoffman Lounge. Students participated in yoga sessions, received massages, spent time with therapy dogs, and enjoyed sip-and-paint activities, with refreshments available throughout the event. Competitive events also drew crowds, including tournaments of video games, ping pong, and basketball. The 3-on-3 basketball competition in the Nat Holman Gym offered food, trophies, and prizes for participating teams.

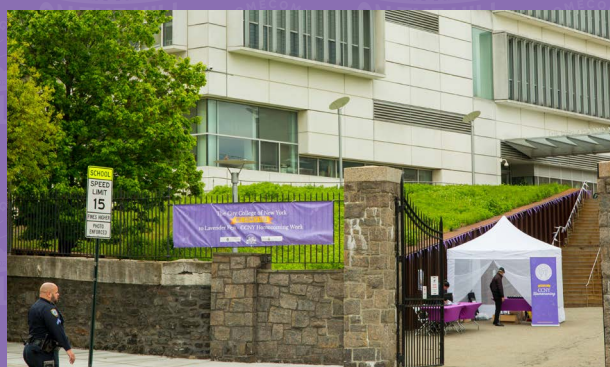
Additional events included a Talent Show and the Lavender Luau: Lavender for a Purpose, which raised awareness for lupus while bringing the campus community together.

The celebration culminated with Homecoming Day on May 2 on the Great Lawn. Alumni and friends returned to campus to reconnect, revisit cherished memories, and enjoy live jazz music, food, games, performances, campus tours, and the art photography exhibition Great Women in Jazz.

A major attraction of the day was a special visit from the New York Giants, featuring meet-and-greet opportunities and on-site interviews with former players Ahmad Bradshaw and David Tyree.

With record attendance, diverse programming, and strong community participation, Lavender Fest and Homecoming 2026 marked a historic celebration of CCNY pride, tradition, and connection. Official CCNY merchandise remains available through [Benny's Campus Store](#).





EARTH DAY MARKS THE START OF A WONDERFUL FRIENDSHIP



Earth Day 2026 was commemorated with the ceremonial planting of a red maple tree by President Vince Boudreau on the campus quad. The tree had more than ceremonial meaning. The planting marked the start of CCNY's partnership with the New York Restoration Project (NYRP), an organization dedicated to enhancing urban resilience, education, environmental justice, and providing access to nature.

The red maple is one of many other new additions to CCNY campus grounds since Boudreau became president in 2016.

President Boudreau was joined at the event by NYRP Executive Director Lynn Kelly, Board Chair Josh Sirefman, Trustee Sangita Sharma; and Shana Marks, the governmental and community relations director for U.S. Rep. Adriano Espaillat (D-N.Y.).

CCNY AI SUMMIT SPARKS DEBATE OVER ETHICS, LEARNING AND AUTHENTICITY



Students, faculty and administrators gathered at The City College of New York's first AI Summit to examine the ethical implications of artificial intelligence and its growing role in higher education.

Organized in response to a CUNY initiative supporting AI-related teaching and research projects, the summit focused on concerns that AI may undermine critical thinking, creativity and authentic student work.

The keynote address by Ruha Benjamin, the Alexander Stewart 1886 Professor of African American studies at Princeton University, explored the broader social implications of AI and challenged attendees to consider how emerging technologies can reinforce or correct existing biases. She specializes in the interdisciplinary study of science, medicine, and technology with a focus on the relationship between innovation and social inequity. She is author of four books, including her most recent book *Imagination: A Manifesto*.

Student speaker Megan Mullenix, an English major who

advises high school students on their college essays, warned that relying on AI before mastering core skills can deprive students of valuable learning experiences. She also argued that using AI for college admissions essays risks inauthentic results and possible misrepresenting applicants to admissions officers.

Faculty panelists echoed those concerns. Business and Economics Lecturer [Hugh Fox](#) of the [Colin Powell School](#), said some students are using AI in ways that surrender independent thinking rather than strengthen it, while [Journalism](#) Program Director Barbara Nevins-Taylor cautioned against using AI for writing, citing concerns about originality and accuracy.

The conference was organized by Gareth Williams, the special projects coordinator in the office of CCNY Senior Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Assessment [Doris Cintron](#); Educational Theatre Lecturer [Sobha Kavanakudiyil](#); Adjunct Assistant Professor of English [Pamela Stenberg](#); and English Adjunct Lecturer [Debra Williams](#); in response to a request by the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs to fund AI projects that support teaching, learning, research, and student success.



CELEBRATING INNOVATION AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The six students were supported by CUNY's Coordinated Undergraduate Education (CUE) and all participated in the ORCA—Opportunities in Research and Creative Arts—program at CCNY. Held in the summers of 2024 and 2025, students developed their research projects under the guidance of faculty mentors, including Professors Larry Au, William Hartcourt-Smith, Matthew Riley, Emmanuel Lachaud, Lyn Di Iorio, and Clifford Rosenberg. Their achievements highlight the academic excellence, leadership, and commitment to scholarship that define our college.

- **Queen Carrasco (Social Data Science, 2026)** will pursue an MS in Sociology and Data Science at University College London, UK. Her research explores the connections and mobilization impacts that digital activism has on student- and youth-led movements, and their use of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to disseminate their messaging.
- **Shyim Chastanet (CUNY BA, 2024)** is currently enrolled in the PhD program in Physical and Biological Anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center. Shyim focuses on the field of human evolutionary systematics.
- **Amir Granderson (History, 2026)** will pursue an MA in Religions in Antiquity at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, fully funded. Amir also received the History Department's Allen F. Isaacman & Barbara S. Isaacman Prize in African Studies, the Fergus M. Bordewich Scholarship, Sandi E. Cooper Prize, and the Louis Neugeborn Memorial Scholarship.
- **Alvaro Martins (Black Studies, 2026)** will pursue a PhD in American Studies at Rutgers University-Newark with a five-year funded package. Alvaro was honored with the Black Studies Department's Award for Academic Excellence in Literary and Creative Excellence and the Award for Highest GPA for Black Studies Major.
- **Kaitlyn Murphy (English, 2026)** will enroll in the PhD Program in English at The Graduate Center this fall. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Jacques Lacan, Kaitlyn hopes to advance theoretical scholarship on colonial being in contemporary Latinx literature, with particular attention to the Latinx short story and novel. Kaitlyn received the English Department's The Edward C. and Ruth P. Mack Graduate Fellowship.
- **Arsen E. Simkhayev (History, 2025)** will enroll in Stanford University's PhD program in 20th-century Russian and Central Asian history. His research explores how the 1917 Russian Revolution was interpreted across the empire, recovering perspectives from non-Russian communities often overlooked in historical narratives.



This performance is part of the lead-up to Wynton Marsalis's final season as Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center and Music Director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

Acclaimed musician, composer, educator, and band leader Wynton Marsalis received the 2026 Colin L. Powell Distinguished Leadership Award from the [Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership](#). The award honors leaders whose achievements and values reflect those of [Gen. Colin L. Powell](#), including integrity, humility, responsibility, pragmatism, and optimism.

The award was presented at a ceremony in New York City. In opening remarks, Marco Antonio Achón, co-chair of the Colin Powell School's [Board of Visitors](#) and global head of Corporate Banking at Santander Corporate & Investment Banking, praised Marsalis as a leader whose discipline, clarity, and vision reflect Powell's legacy.

[CCNY President Vince Boudreau](#) spoke about Powell's ability to recognize untapped potential and highlighted the college's commitment to developing future leaders. Colin Powell School Dean Marc Ostfield noted that Marsalis was the first artist to receive the award, emphasizing that jazz embodies democratic values such as freedom of expression, listening, trust, and collective responsibility.

This marked the first time this award has been presented to a leader in the arts. Colin Powell School Dean [Marc Ostfield](#) described the selection of Marsalis as a natural extension of the school's mission.

A New Orleans native, Marsalis is one of the most influential musicians of his generation. He has won nine Grammy Awards and became the first jazz musician to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his work *Blood on the Fields*. As managing and artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, he has expanded jazz education through programs including Jazz for Young People, Jazz in the Schools, and Essentially Ellington.



Presenting the award, Colin Powell School Board Co-Chair Linda Powell highlighted Marsalis's use of music to advance civic engagement and social justice, citing projects such as Freedom, Justice, and Hope and JazzCall for Freedom.

The evening also featured an onstage conversation between Marsalis and actor Wendell Pierce, who discussed art, community, and cultural responsibility. Marsalis reflected on the influence of his teachers and the role of artists in bringing ideas and values to life.

The Colin L. Powell Distinguished Leadership Award was conceived by Achón and is supported by Santander. The annual award reflects the Colin Powell School's mission to prepare future leaders to strengthen communities and expand opportunity.

ATHLETICS ALUMNI GROUP



The Athletics Alumni Group held its 57th Annual Alumni Hall of Fame Dinner on June 9. This special evening celebrated the outstanding achievements and lasting legacies of **Jemaal Alexander '15** (Track & Field), **Peter Dehazy '15** (Track & Field), **Ernand "Andy" Pellumbi '09** (Men's Soccer), **Stephen Peters '20** (Baseball), **Hugh E. Reid, Esq.** (Coach, Cross Country/Track & Field, and **Ron Rizzi '68** (Baseball), who were honored with induction into the Alumni Varsity Hall of Fame. **William H. Jeter '78** (Track & Field) received his recognition posthumously.

COMMUNICATIONS ALUMNI GROUP



Jay Mwamba, '92, '97, was presented with the Communications Alumni Hall of Fame Award from CAG President Terrell F. Merritt '20 and Board Member Katie Herchenroeder '19 at the Group's 48th Annual Hall of Fame Dinner in May. Mwamba, who has been at CCNY for almost 30 years, is currently the College's publications editorial manager.



Student award recipients with CAG President Terrell F. Merritt '20 (fourth from left). From left to right: **Pedro Villa**, **Lynn Appelbaum Ad/PR All Star Scholar**; **Shefa Galiba Giash**, TASC Group's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Scholar; **Roxanna Cardenas Colmenares**, Irving

Rosenthal Awardee for Excellence in Journalism; **Merritt**; **Yahmani Price**, Ernest Boynton Jr. Memorial Awardee for Journalism; and **Martheney Paulemon**, Art Stevens PRSA-NY/CCNY Ad/PR Scholar.



CAG President Terrell F. Merritt '20, and CAG Treasurer Javier Garcia '09, M.P.S. '15, presented **Domonique Chaplin '16** (center) with the 2026 Emblem of Excellence Award.

WASHINGTON, D.C. CHAPTER



Washington-area alumni, family and friends attended the South Atlantic League baseball game between the Frederick Keys (a Baltimore Orioles affiliate) and the Hudson Valley Renegades (a New York Yankees affiliate) on Star Wars Night, June 6 at Nymeo Field at Harry Grove Stadium in Frederick, Md. Children ran the bases after the game, accompanied by post-game fireworks!

CENTER FOR WORKER EDUCATION ALUMNI



The CWE Alumni Group gathered at Baylander Steel Beach restaurant in West Harlem on June 12 for our final alumni meeting of the academic year, at which we celebrated the strength, diversity, and enduring spirit of the CWE community. The evening provided a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with fellow alumni, celebrate our accomplishments, and reflect on the many ways our community continues to grow and thrive. "Thank you to the executive team, the active board members and everyone who joined us, supported us, and helped make this year a meaningful one," said CWE Alumni Group President Michele Sweeting-DeCaro, Ph.D. (center, wearing CCNY lavender). "We look forward to continuing to build connections, celebrate achievements, and strengthen the CWE alumni family in the year to come."

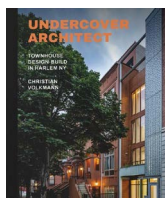
ARCHITECTURE ALUMNI GROUP



Graduates, alumni, faculty, students and friends of the Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Sustainability programs of the CCNY Spitzer School of Architecture celebrated at the Alumni Awards ceremony and reception on May 28.

This year's honorees were: **Carlos J. Cardoso**, AIA, CPHD (Partner, Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners), Alumni Career Achievement Award; **Nandini Bagchee**, RA (Associate Professor, Spitzer School of Architecture), Faculty Achievement Award; and **Nilda A. Sanchez-Rodriguez**, M.L.S., M.A. (Chief Architecture Librarian and Associate Professor, Spitzer School of Architecture) Staff Leadership Award.

BERNARD AND ANNE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE



Christian Volkmann's book, *Undercover Architect: Townhouse Design-Build in Harlem*,

was published in March by Oscar Riera Ojeda Publishers Limited.



The Spitzer School became a hub of innovation and collaboration on March 16 as it hosted the Concrete Masonry Forum. The event brought together a diverse group of over 80 attendees, including Spitzer faculty, staff, and students, alongside visiting students from the High School for Math, Science and Engineering (HSMSE) located on the CCNY campus. The core mission of the forum was to facilitate a meaningful exchange of perspectives between craft and design. By bringing together seasoned industry professionals and the next generation of designers, the event highlighted the vital relationship between the physical mastery of materials and the creative vision of architectural design.

Associate Professor **Nandini Bagchee** and Distinguished Lecturer **Ifeoma Ebo** were featured in the article, "Designing Mamdani's New York," in *Urban Omnibus*, a publication of the Architectural League of New York.



COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

At its 2nd Annual Summit in April, the Social Mobility Lab provided updates on its initiatives, heard from six grantees sharing their research on social mobility, and introduced its 2026-27 cohort of 12 grantees. Since its launch in 2024, the Lab has supported almost 40 scholars from 19 American colleges and universities who are dedicated to advancing social mobility through innovative research. This year's cohort includes a European university for the first time.

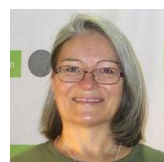
The Moynihan Center welcomed its fourth cohort of Public Service Fellows. The 25 exceptional undergraduate students were chosen through a competitive process for their academic excellence, commitment to public service, and capacity for constructive engagement across lines of difference. They join an intellectual community spanning undergraduates, graduate students, and distinguished practitioners and scholars.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



Teaching Award, and to Multimedia

Congratulations to Assistant Professor of Arts Education **Sohee Koo**, who received the Faculty Excellence in



Center Director **Doris Grasserbauer**, who received the Staff Excellence in Service Award.



Assistant Professor of Special Education **Laura Rader**, a faculty member at CCNY for 20 years, has retired. During her 20 years on the

CCNY faculty, she served in many roles, such as program director and department chair.



The CUNY-Initiative on Immigration and Education (CUNY-IIE) hosted "Stronger Together: Fortifying School & Community Partnerships for Immigrant Families" on March 14. With more than 200 participants, this annual conference highlighted the critical role of partnerships between community organizations and PK-12 schools in supporting immigrant communities.

GROVE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING



Samah M. Saeed, associate professor of electrical engineering is the winner of a 2026 National Science Foundation

(NSF) CAREER Award. A computer engineer, Saeed's award is for her project titled "CAREER: Towards

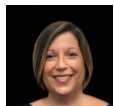
Secure and Reliable Cloud-Based Quantum Computers.” It aims to bridge the gap between the theoretical foundations of secure quantum computing and the practical limitations of near-term quantum systems. It focuses on enhancing both the integrity and confidentiality of quantum applications executed on cloud-based platforms, considering different trust models that capture different threat scenarios in this setting.

DIVISION OF HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS



Black Studies student **Ja'Quan Brown**, earned second place in the Margaret Walker Memorial Prize in Creative Writing at the 84th College Language Association Awards for his piece,

“Brownstone Flocks Made It.”

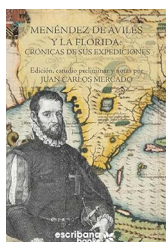


Professor of Iberian and Latin American Cultures **Isabel Estrada** received the 2026 Provost's Award for Outstanding Teaching.



The CCNY chapter of Phi Beta Kappa celebrated its 2026 Induction Ceremony on April 21, honoring a new class of graduating students for their outstanding academic achievement in the liberal arts and sciences. The ceremony featured keynote speaker Dr. **R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy** and brought together students, faculty, and guests to recognize this distinguished milestone.

DIVISION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AT THE CENTER FOR WORKER EDUCATION



The new English language edition of Menéndez de Avilés and La Florida: Chronicles of His Expeditions, edited, introduced and annotated by **Dean Juan Carlos Mercado**, has been recently published. These chronicles not only document pivotal historical events, but

also offer a nuanced and intimate portrait of Menéndez de Avilés' personality, leadership and vision.

DIVISION OF SCIENCE

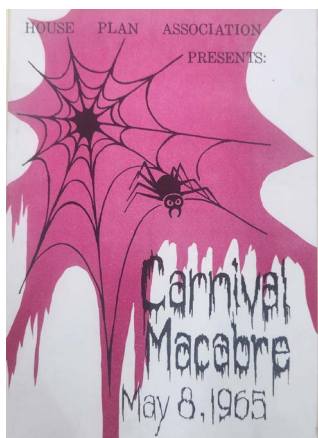


Professor of Earth and Atmospheric Science **Maria Tzortziou** is leading the “Arctic Coastlines-FORTE” mission, a \$15 million NASA-funded initiative to study the changing Coastal Arctic and impacts on coastal resources, ecosystems, food security, and coastal communities. The mission earned UNESCO designation as a UN Ocean Decade Project.

THE HOUSE PLAN: BUILDING COMMUNITY AT CITY COLLEGE

How a student-led movement transformed a large commuter college into a community—and left a legacy that endured for generations.

A College Searching for Connection



By the mid-1930s, City College was bursting at the seams. More than 8,000 day-session students streamed daily through the Gothic arches at Convent Avenue. Many commuted long distances, balanced jobs with coursework, and rarely found a moment to connect with classmates outside the classroom.

The College's physical space and social life simply were not built for this new era of mass public higher education. Students felt anonymous in crowded lecture halls. Clubs struggled to find meeting rooms. Advisors heard the same refrain again and again: college felt fragmented, impersonal, and overwhelming.

Into this atmosphere came an idea both simple and bold: what if a large commuter college could create the sense of belonging found in residential universities—without dormitories?

That question sparked one of the most ambitious and human-centered experiments in CCNY history: the House Plan.

The Birth of the Houses

Developed by student leaders working closely with administrators—including Freshman Adviser Mortimer Karpp and Dean Morton Gottschall—the House Plan launched in 1935 as an answer to the College's most urgent need: a way for students to form lasting friendships and meaningful communities on a campus far too big to feel personal.

Houses were small, intentionally diverse groups of approximately 20 to 25 students where members could gather, debate, organize, relax, and grow. Each House had its own identity, traditions, and elected officers. Faculty and alumni served as supporters and mentors, but students drove the program themselves.

The model was inspired in spirit—but not in structure—by the residential college systems at Yale and Harvard. CCNY's innovation was entirely its own: a non-residential, student-run network of communities designed to make a vast public college feel human-scaled.

Membership was voluntary, but enthusiasm spread rapidly across campus. Within a year, hundreds of students joined. Soon, more than a dozen Houses flourished—Compton, Remsen, Bowker, Gottschall, and others—each giving its members something they hadn't felt on campus before: a sense of belonging.

292 Convent Avenue: Headquarters

The success of the early Houses soon led to an extraordinary step: the need for a physical headquarters.

In 1936, after spirited fundraising by students, alumni, faculty, and friends, the House Plan purchased 292 Convent Avenue, a dignified brownstone just steps from Shepard Hall. Students scrubbed floors, hauled debris, painted walls, and turned the building into a vibrant center of campus life.

Inside were lounges, meeting rooms, a coffee shop, darkrooms, a hobby workshop, and even spaces for student-faculty dinners. It became a hub for creativity, conversation, leadership training, and quiet study.

The acquisition represented a remarkable accomplishment for a student-led organization and demonstrated the depth of support the

House Plan had earned among alumni, faculty, and friends of the College. A 1936 *Alumnus* article described the effort as a remarkable demonstration of shared purpose by students, alumni, and the College community. It was, quite literally, a home students built for themselves.

The Educational Vision Behind the Experiment

As the program matured through the late 1930s and 1940s, the Houses evolved far beyond social clubs. House Plan leaders believed that education extended well beyond the classroom and that some of the most important lessons of college life were learned through participation, responsibility, and human relationships. The program was designed to create smaller communities within a large urban institution, allowing students to develop friendships, assume leadership roles, and engage meaningfully with peers, faculty, and alumni.

Underlying the House Plan was the belief that democratic values are best learned through practice. Students elected officers, organized programs, managed budgets, and worked collectively to solve problems. Organizers intentionally grouped together students from different neighborhoods, backgrounds, and interests, believing that personal growth occurred when individuals expanded their social circles and encountered new perspectives. Faculty advisors and trained upperclass leaders helped guide these communities, creating environments where students could develop confidence, strengthen their sense of identity, and build a deeper connection to the College.

Long before “student engagement” became a common phrase in higher education, the House Plan recognized that belonging, participation, and shared responsibility were essential ingredients of a successful college experience.

A Campus Transformed

By the early 1940s, the House Plan had become an essential component of student life at City College. Houses organized an impressive range of activities, including student-faculty dinners, intramural athletics, theatre outings, service projects, dances, study groups, leadership workshops, and the beloved annual House Plan

Carnival. Through these programs, the Houses helped first-year students find community, strengthened relationships between students and faculty, and provided countless opportunities for leadership and personal development.

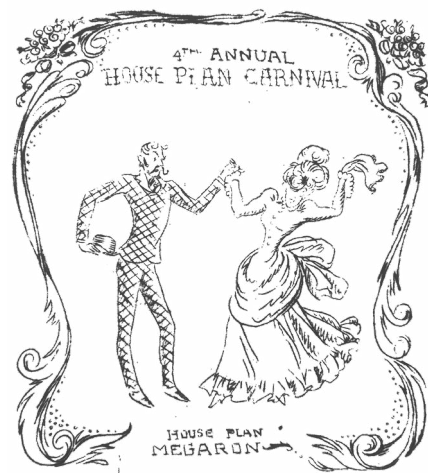
The House Plan’s influence was visible throughout campus life. Clubs flourished within House structures. Faculty connected informally with students. Alumni deepened ties to the College through mentorship. Large numbers of students gained leadership experience and developed friendships that often lasted a lifetime.

Dean Gottschall later observed that the House Plan had restored something of the intimacy of the old City College while meeting the needs of the modern one. Even during the war years—when enrollment dipped and the campus was reshaped by national demands—the Houses remained a stabilizing social and educational force.

The House Plan Carnival

Few events captured the spirit of the House Plan more vividly than the annual House Plan Carnival. Organized entirely by students, the Carnival became one of the most anticipated social events on campus, bringing together students, faculty, alumni, and friends of the College for an evening of entertainment, competition, and celebration.

Houses designed booths, staged attractions, and showcased their creativity in friendly rivalry. More than a fundraiser or social gathering, the Carnival demonstrated the House Plan at its best: student-led, collaborative, energetic, and deeply rooted in community. For many participants, it became one of the defining memories of their years at City College.



Challenges, Change, and the Program's Final Years

The House Plan faced mounting challenges by the 1970s and early 1980s. The campus had expanded. Student demographics shifted. New professional staff structures emerged. Space grew more limited. Funding became uncertain. And the alumni and student officers who sustained the program struggled to maintain its infrastructure.

Correspondence from 1980–81 reveals the pressures clearly: missed opportunities to integrate new freshmen, the strain of financial mismanagement by student treasurers, and the difficulty of operating a once-robust program without dedicated facilities or consistent College support.

Despite the best efforts of students, advisors, and alumni volunteers, the House Plan entered a period of decline. By the mid-1980s, the formal House Plan program had largely faded from campus life, though many House Plan alumni continued to meet—some well into the 21st century—sustaining friendships born in a formative era of College history.

A Legacy That Still Matters

The House Plan succeeded because it understood something profound: that even in a large public institution, belonging is not a luxury—it is essential to learning, growth, and human connection.

The Houses built community without dormitories. They bridged students and faculty without formal structures. They gave thousands of young people leadership experiences that shaped their lives. They turned strangers into friends, and friends into alumni who stayed connected for decades.

The House Plan represents a remarkable moment in our College's history—a time when students, faculty, and alumni built something innovative and deeply caring together. Its spirit reminds us that community should be at the heart of the CCNY experience. As we reflect on its legacy, may we continue to find new ways to help current students feel that they, too, have a place to belong.

*Sources: This article draws upon contemporaneous House Plan publications, articles by Mortimer Karpp in *The City College Alumnus* (1935–1936), the *House Plan Association Articles of Incorporation* (1936), *The Experiment at 292 Convent Avenue* (1936), Dean Morton Gottschall's 1942 review of the *House Plan Association*, *House Plan administrative records*, and materials preserved by House Plan alumni.*

House Plans That Still Gather Today

While the formal House Plan program may have faded from campus life, its legacy lives on through the enduring friendships it helped create. Several House Plan groups continue to meet regularly decades after their student days, a testament to the power of the House Plan experience and the lifelong bonds it fostered.

Among the most active groups are **Harris '62**, **Holzer '67**, and **Wittes '66**, whose members continue to gather for reunions, lunches, and special events. Their ongoing connections reflect one of the House Plan's greatest successes: transforming classmates into lifelong friends.

In fact, **Wittes '66 is planning a reunion for Fall 2026**. Alumni interested in participating or learning more are encouraged to contact

Michael Colucci '66 at mac6744@aol.com.

Help Launch the House Plan Alumni Affiliate

A group of alumni is also working to establish an official **House Plan Alumni Affiliate Group** within the Alumni Association of The City College of New York.

The proposed affiliate will bring together former House Plan members and friends of the program to celebrate and preserve the rich history of the Houses through reunions, storytelling, oral histories, and archival projects. Equally important, the group hopes to carry the House Plan spirit forward by supporting student life at CCNY through mentoring, sponsorships, networking opportunities, and engagement with current students and young alumni.

Affiliate Groups are officially recognized special-interest communities within the Alumni Association.

Guided by volunteer leadership, they organize programs, events, and initiatives centered around shared experiences and interests.

Are you still connected to a House Plan that meets occasionally or regularly?

We'd love to hear from you.

Whether your House gathers annually, meets for lunch a few times a year, or simply stays in touch through phone calls and emails, please let us know. We are interested in documenting the continuing legacy of the House Plans—and your group may even be featured in a future issue of *The Alumnus*.

Interested in learning more about the proposed House Plan Alumni Affiliate or sharing your House Plan story? Visit: <https://forms.gle/mT83hWcnsMHRpnU96>

THE JOEL PERELMUTH '68 FELLOWSHIP FUND

When Joel Perelmuth '68 was looking for a way to give back to his alma mater, he hit on an idea that had to have what he called a “mentoring hook.”

Already a generous donor, Perelmuth saw an example in Baruch College, which he called “very well organized in getting people who are either graduates of Baruch or interested in mentoring into a mentoring program. So, I got interested in it and kind of signed up and I found it compelling and interesting. And I hope the people who I was mentoring found it compelling and interesting as well.”

Perelmuth added: “I wanted to continue all of that and I figured, well, what better place than City College, my alma mater?”

Thus was born the Joel Perelmuth '68 Fellowship Fund, which provides \$14,000 to fund two 20-hours-per-week work-study positions at the Alumni Association of CCNY, with placement determined by the selected students' skillsets and the Association's areas of greatest need.

“We wanted to identify an area in which the students can learn and that would help their careers,” said AACCNy Executive Director David Covington.

The Fellowship “helps the Alumni Association and helps the students,” said Covington.

Two Fellows started working in the AACCNy's offices in April: Rafid Mahbur and Emmanuel Afriyie.

Mahbur moved with his family to Ozone Park, Queens from Bangladesh when he was 15. He first came to CCNY to study engineering at the behest of his parents, but soon switched to economics and administration management in the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership.

His appetite for financial analysis whetted by an internship at the New York City Division of Small Business Services, he applied for the Fellowship, and now works on financial modeling and analysis. When he graduates in December 2026, he ultimately hopes to work in financial services and, ultimately, at the Federal Reserve.

“I bring ideas for investment as well,” he said. “And I do the coding, like the algorithm for that, as well.”

A native of Accra, Ghana, Afriyie graduated from the Colin Powell School in December 2025 with a B.A. in sociology. Attending a career fair in Shepard Hall months after graduation reminded him to go into the AACCNy office to get his alumni card.

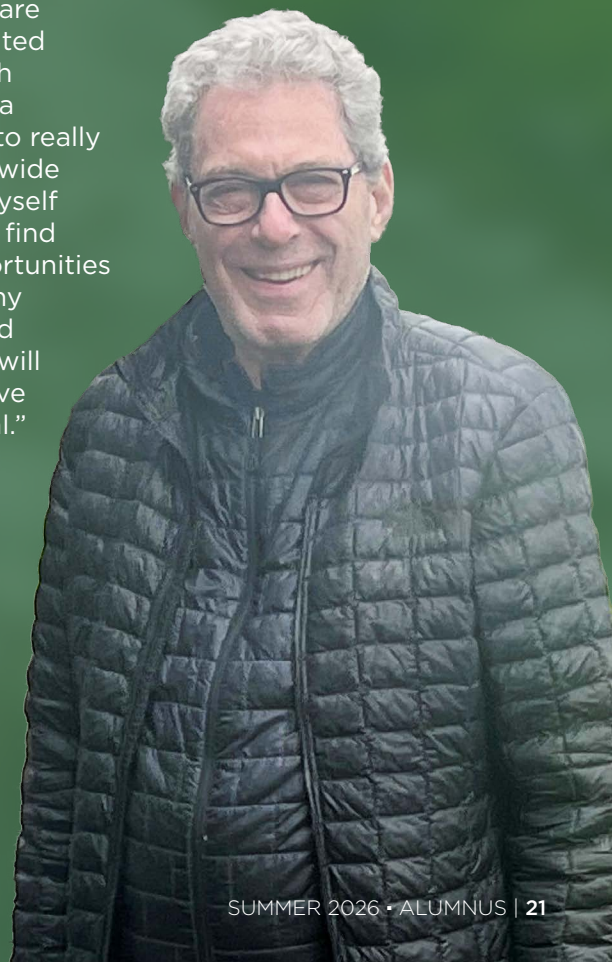
A chance conversation with Covington led to an invitation to apply for the Fellowship. He now works in a communications and events capacity.

“I was just excited because it was too good to be true,” he said of the chance to work for his alma mater. “The opportunity to be part of the Alumni Association and to make it be successful is just my contribution to a bigger cause.”

The Fellowship also includes a mentorship component, in which Perelmuth meets with the Fellows on a regular basis.

“He's a proper mentor,” said Mahbur. “He would actually bring out ideas from you and actually put you through a path where you actually want to be” by helping with resume and interview preparation, and suggesting possible job leads.

Afriyie agreed. The aspiring software engineer credited Perelmuth with showing him “a different way to really throw my net wide and expose myself out there, and find different opportunities and jobs, or any internships and anything that will help me achieve my career goal.”



A NEW YORKER'S KIND OF GENEROSITY

BY GARRI RIVKIN '70



Garri Rivkin '70, executive director and founder of The City Tutors, recently related a story about a fellow alum who had volunteered his time.

"A few years ago, Joel Hirschtritt '67 found out about us through the Alumni Association newsletter. He's now mentoring Salvador Lujan, a Baruch graduate student in the master's program in real estate, and the impact has been striking," said Rivkin.

The City Tutors is NYC's educational subway: offering free, flexible tutoring and career mentoring built for historically underserved communities and open to all. Available year-round across all five boroughs, The City Tutors helps people build skills, grow their networks, and chart their own paths—ensuring that no one is limited by where they start and that all can fully experience the opportunities New York has to offer.

Before coming to New York, Lujan had already reinvented himself more than once in Mexico. He went from civil engineering to construction and structural work, and then into residential real estate and property management. When he started chasing projects of his own, he discovered a gap he could not close from: financing, underwriting, and the modeling that greenlights a project.

That gap is what brought Lujan to New York where he enrolled in the master's program in real estate at Baruch College. He found an apartment in Bedford Stuyvesant and began building a life from scratch.

At Baruch, he looked for structure beyond the classroom. He wanted guidance, a context for his experience, and needed a new network in a city that runs on relationships. He engaged in mentorship programs, looking for anything that could orient him.

Then he found the one that transformed his journey. The City Tutors City Mentors program arrived as an email with a roster of mentors that read like a map of rooms he might want to enter. He scanned for real estate. The first time, nothing fit. Still, it put the idea in his head that the right door might show up. Lujan received another email. This time Hirschtritt appeared. A real estate attorney with an office in Midtown Manhattan. Lujan took a chance and their relationship changed what he thought was possible. Lujan prepared carefully for their first conversation. He read about Hirschtritt's work and looked up the firm. He thought through his own story, where it began in Mexico and where he wanted it to go in New York, and he identified his goals.

Hirschtritt responded by opening the door. A second meeting followed in his Midtown office, and the mentorship took on a different level of seriousness.



Support NYC's Learners with The City Tutors

Hirschtritt coached Lujan on the small, decisive moves, the ones nobody teaches you in class, and everyone quietly expects, such as how to answer an email professionally, what to research before you meet someone, how to follow up, how to enter a room with senior people and leave with next steps.

Then came the part Lujan describes with real gratitude: access. Hirschtritt introduced him to people. Coffee chats appeared on Lujan's calendar with senior professionals across different companies, meetings he never expected to have so soon. Before each one, Hirschtritt coached him on how to show up, what to ask, what to listen for, and how to close.

Hirschtritt made room for everything Lujan was trying to learn. They talked about how to prepare for the winter, where to eat, and how to manage the city's pace. Lujan could name what was throwing him off, and Hirschtritt could translate it into something workable.

Hirschtritt kept enlarging the world around Lujan. And then, unexpectedly, dinner in a nice restaurant with Joel's wife and a conversation about family. For Lujan, new to the country and still learning what New York allows, it was the same lesson in a different form: the city can be generous, and someone was choosing to be generous with him.

Hirschtritt continues to split his time between New York and Florida. Lujan said the connection has held despite the distance. The text messages keep coming. They talk every week.

Lujan is aiming for a summer internship, then a career in New York. He hopes to return to Mexico one day with more tools than he arrived with. For now, his plan runs on two things: a Midtown mentor who keeps widening the circle, and his own insistence on being ready when the next door appears.

At The City Tutors, we're building an inclusive subway system of tutoring and professional mentoring to empower New Yorkers on their learning journeys. Focused specifically on NYC, we provide a program that's always accessible—7 days a week, 365 days a year—so learners can start quickly when they need, set their own pace, and reach their unique destinations. Since our founding in 2020, we've proudly served over 8,500 unique learners, from new Americans to lifelong New Yorkers.

With program partners across NYC, including schools and nonprofits as “subway stops,” we're able to reach first-generation students, immigrants, and historically underserved communities.

Your presence reaffirms our mission. Join us by donating or volunteering as a mentor or tutor. Together, we can ensure that every New Yorker has a line to growth and success, no matter where they're headed or how quickly they want to get there.

TO VOLUNTEER, GO HERE
thecitytutors.org/volunteer

TO DONATE, GO HERE
thecitytutors.org/donate

CLASS NOTES

'50s

Sten Gould, B.A. '50, Arts and Sciences, turned 100 in January. He served in the Army Signal Corps in World War II, tracking Nazi transmissions. After his honorable discharge, he attended CCNY on the GI Bill, then taught high school physics for more than two decades. His advice for living to 100: "Just have fun in life."

Paul Schwartz, B.S. '69, Chemistry, Division of Science, received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Accessible Medicines. He was recognized for his many contributions during his 35-year Federal Drug Administration career, during which he worked to approve and maintain the quality of generic drugs.

'60s

Kathleen Gilje, B.A. '66, Art and Literature, showcased her work and its relationship to the major art historical legacies of Leonardo da Vinci, Francisco Zurbaran, Gustave Courbet, and others in an exhibition, "Iconic: Kathleen Gilje Repaints Art History," at the Morris Museum in Morristown, N.J.



Walter Saukin, B.C.E. '66, Grove School of Engineering, an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Manhattan University for 48 years, was profiled by the University's news service.



Robert A. Michaels, B.S. '67, Biology, Division of Science, is a consulting toxicologist specializing in assessment and management of risks to public health potentially posed by environmental chemicals, such as so-called forever chemicals.

He is founder and president of RAM TRAC Corporation, a Schenectady, N.Y.-based consulting firm, and co-editor-in-chief of the Environmental Claims Journal. His digital photography book, *My Nisky Environs*, depicts his scenic and historic home town of Niskayuna, N.Y., headquarters of the General Electric Company's Global Research Center and the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory.

'70s

Longtime Cedarhurst, N.Y. resident **Helen Pollack '72**, celebrated her 100th birthday, surrounded by friends and family, in January.



Sana Musasama, B.A. '74, Arts and Sciences, is one of five artists collaborating in a group show, "Re-Union," at Philadelphia's Frances M. Maguire Art Museum.

David Hughes, M.U.P. '75, Spitzer School of Architecture, a professor in the College of Architecture & Environmental Design at Kent State University in Ohio, received a 2026 Architectural Education Award from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.



Amy Mittleman, B.A. '75, uncovers the overlooked role that faculty wives played in building American academic life in her latest book, *Dames, Dishes, and Degrees* (Cynren Press, June 2026).

'80s



Doreen Thomann-Howe, B.A. '89, Psychology, Colin Powell School of Civic and Global Leadership, CEO of the Greater New York Region of the American Red Cross, is one of City & State's 2026 Nonprofit Trailblazers.

'90s

Adam Aponte, B.S. '90, Biology, Division of Science, CEO of East Harlem Council for Human Services, is one of City & State's 2026 Nonprofit Trailblazers.



Walter Mosley, B.A. '91, Creative Writing, Division of Humanities and the Arts, gave a talk on "The Only True Race Is the Human Race" at the 2026 Boca Festival of the Arts'

Artists & Authors section. He published his latest novel, "Ghalen: A Romance in Black" (Amistad), in May.



Jay Mwamba, B.A. '92, English, and M.A. '97, Comparative History, Division of Humanities and the Arts, was inducted into the Alumni Association of the City College of New York's Communications Alumni

Hall of Fame at the group's 48th Annual Hall of Fame Dinner in May. Mwamba, who has been at CCNY for almost 30 years, is currently the College's publications editorial manager. He is the author of *Crash of the Buffalo* (Pitch Publishing, 2025), which details the 1993 plane crash that killed Zambia's national soccer team and the nation's subsequent football comeback, and a contributor to the *Irish Echo*, the *New York Daily News* and *First Touch* magazine. He recently invented and patented "The Jerminator," a boxing and martial arts training tool that is the first of its kind.

'00s

Jimmy Jung, B.A. '02, Liberal Arts and Sciences, was appointed to the New Jersey Lottery Commission.

Michele Sweeting-DeCaro, B.A. '04, Interdisciplinary Studies, M.A. '09, Language and Literacy, Division of Interdisciplinary Studies at the Center for Worker Education, published an op-ed, "Professor who loudly revealed her racism must be fired to protect Black children," in the *Amsterdam News*.



Emma Garman, B.A. '05, Creative Writing, M.F.A., published her first novel, *The Kindness of Strangers*.



Kenny Minaya, B.A. '07, Division of Humanities and the Arts, was appointed commissioner of the New York City Department of Small Business Services by Mayor Zohran Mamdani. Minaya was born and raised in New York City, the son of Dominican immigrants

who owned and operated a small bakery in Inwood for 42 years.

Gracie-Ann Roberts, B.S. '07, Physician's Assistant, Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, chief quality officer of Community Health Center of Richmond, is one of City & State's 2026 Nonprofit Trailblazers.

'10s

Felipe Garcia B.A. '12, Psychology, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, is a candidate in the Democratic Party's primary election in New York's 14th congressional district.

Lionel Cruett, M.F.A. '14, mounted his installation, #seen, at the Bryant Park subway station. The installation is meant to "turn your daily commute into a transformative visual experience."



Denise Francis, B.A. '15, Psychology, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, received a grant from TikTok to launch Heal Sis, a mental wellness app focused on helping Black women heal,

grow and break generational cycles by making mental health care and wellness accessible, affordable and community-centered.

Scott Taylor, M.I.A. '15, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, became senior vice president of enrollment services and student success at LIM College.



Mike Mense, M.U.D. '16, Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture, published "Monument to Instrument, Straight Talk About the Future of Architects," a book that proposes that architects must become more important players in North America if we are to solve our problems of climate and immigration.

Aeriell Armas, B.A. '18, Psychology, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, is a speaker, academic, and grad school application coach who supports first-generation students from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Anika Nabila, M.S. '17, Biology, CCFELL, received her Ph.D. in neuroscience from Weill Cornell Medicine in 2024. Her doctoral research describing the molecular mechanisms underlying anxiety was recently published in *Cell Reports*. She is currently in a business intelligence role covering multiple therapeutic areas across global biopharma companies.

Fatimah Barrie, B.A. '18, Political Science, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, was profiled in Chalkbeat. A sixth grade teacher at Uncommon Canarsie Middle School in Brooklyn, Barrie received a Charter Big Apple Award from the New York City Department of Education in 2025.

Jazmia Young, B.A. '18, English, Creative Writing, Division of Humanities and the Arts, is an associate agent at Curtis Brown Ltd. She is also the administrative assistant of the Association of American Literary Agents.

'20s

Paul Byrne, M.S.Ed. '20, School of Education, was a candidate for the Red Hook (N.J.) Central School District Board of Education.



Nicholas R. Gonzalez, B.A. '22, Political Science, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, is a second-year doctoral student in the Department of Political Science at Northwestern University. His subfield is American politics, with research

interests spanning political behavior, urban politics, and the intersections of race, class, and political economy.

Hazel Vaquero, B.E. '22, Earth System Science and Engineering, Grove School of Engineering, is data director at Moore Institute for Plastic Pollution Research. Her work focuses on trash and waste management, with experience working with data related to compost, construction and demolition debris, wastewater, and plastic pollution.

Julio Colon, B.A. '23, Political Science, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, became an account manager at Paramount in March. He was previously an ad sales associate.

Shah Faisal Mazhar, M.S. '24, Physics, Division of Science, leads and contributes to advanced spectroradiometric research and calibration method development as a federal optical physicist in the Sensor Science Division of the Physical Measurement Laboratory at the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Gaithersburg, Md.



Four-time national table tennis champion **Yasiris Ortiz, B.S. '23, Computer Science, Grove School of Engineering**, was profiled by The New York Times for her efforts to bring free table tennis programming to children across the city.



"Donkey Skin," the M.F.A. thesis film from **Taha Aziz, M.F.A. '25, Film, Division of Humanities and the Arts**, was an official selection of Cannes International Film Week.

Ramela Xhaho, B.S. '25, Biology, Division of Science, received a Jonas E. Salk Scholarship award from CUNY. Salk Scholarships recognize exceptional students who plan careers in medicine and the biological sciences.

Ryan Bernal Franco, B.A. '26, Media and Communication Studies (advertising and public relations concentration), minor in business administration and management, will join Accenture this fall as a management consulting analyst in its west Manhattan office.

CCNY ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF SOFTBALL PROGRAM AS ATHLETICS GROWTH CONTINUES



Program to begin as a club sport in 2026-27 before transitioning to NCAA varsity competition in 2027-28

The Department of Athletics and Recreation announced the addition of softball as its newest program, marking another significant step in the continued growth and expansion of intercollegiate athletics at CCNY. The program will begin competition as a club sport during the 2026-27 academic year before officially transitioning to NCAA varsity status for the 2027-28 season.

The addition of softball reflects CCNY's commitment to expanding opportunities for women student-athletes while continuing to strengthen and elevate the department's athletic offerings. As the institution continues investing in the student-athlete experience, the launch of softball represents an important milestone in broadening participation and creating new pathways for success both on and off the field.

"Adding softball is an exciting and meaningful step for our athletics department and institution," said Director of Intercollegiate Athletics and Recreation, [Duane Bailey](#). "This program expands opportunities for women student-athletes and reinforces our commitment to the continued growth of intercollegiate athletics at CCNY. We are excited to build a program that reflects the pride, tradition, and excellence of the CCNY Athletics."

CCNY softball will join a new conference among Division III institutions, eight of whom are current members of the CUNY Athletic Conference, along with Saint Elizabeth University and Pratt Institute, establishing a newly expanded NCAA Division III conference set to begin competition in the 2027-28 academic year. The conference, currently in the final stages of naming, branding, and incorporation, will focus on institutions located in and around the New York City metropolitan area.

For more information about CCNY Athletics: ccnyathletics.com/index.aspx

Posthumous Congressional Medal Awarded to Ben Ferencz '40



A Congressional Gold Medal was posthumously awarded to Benjamin Berrell Ferencz '40 and accepted on behalf of his family at the national Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony on April 14 at the U.S. Capitol. The highest civilian honor available, the medal commemorated Ferencz for his service as the youngest prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials in Germany after WWII.

Ferencz was a lifelong advocate for international criminal justice and the rule of law. He was an inexperienced trial lawyer at the age of 27 when he faced Nazi criminals in Nuremberg and brought them to justice. The Harvard Law School graduate was a sergeant in General George Patton's Third Army during WWII.

House Speaker [Mike Johnson](#) (R-La.) delivered remarks. "We've seen what happens when good people stay silent in the face of evil and this generation of leaders will not make that mistake again. No one understood this more than the man who we honor today, Benjamin Ferencz. As a war crimes investigator during World War II, Ben was among the first outsiders to witness and record the horrors of Nazi labor and concentration camps," said Johnson.

Digging through countless folders of evidence of Nazi atrocities, Ferencz was able to confirm over one million deaths.

Holocaust survivors attended the ceremony and spoke alongside other dignitaries. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), who championed the post-humous award along with Senators Chuck Shumer and Ben Gardin, spoke at the ceremony. "Mr. Ferencz was a tremendous force for good, a fierce New Yorker with a heart of gold and a backbone of steel, a man who saw the worst of humanity and spent the better part of a century fighting for the best of it," said Gillibrand.

The 3d US Infantry Regiment ("The Old Guard") presented the colors and the flags of World War II liberating divisions, and the US Army Band performed.

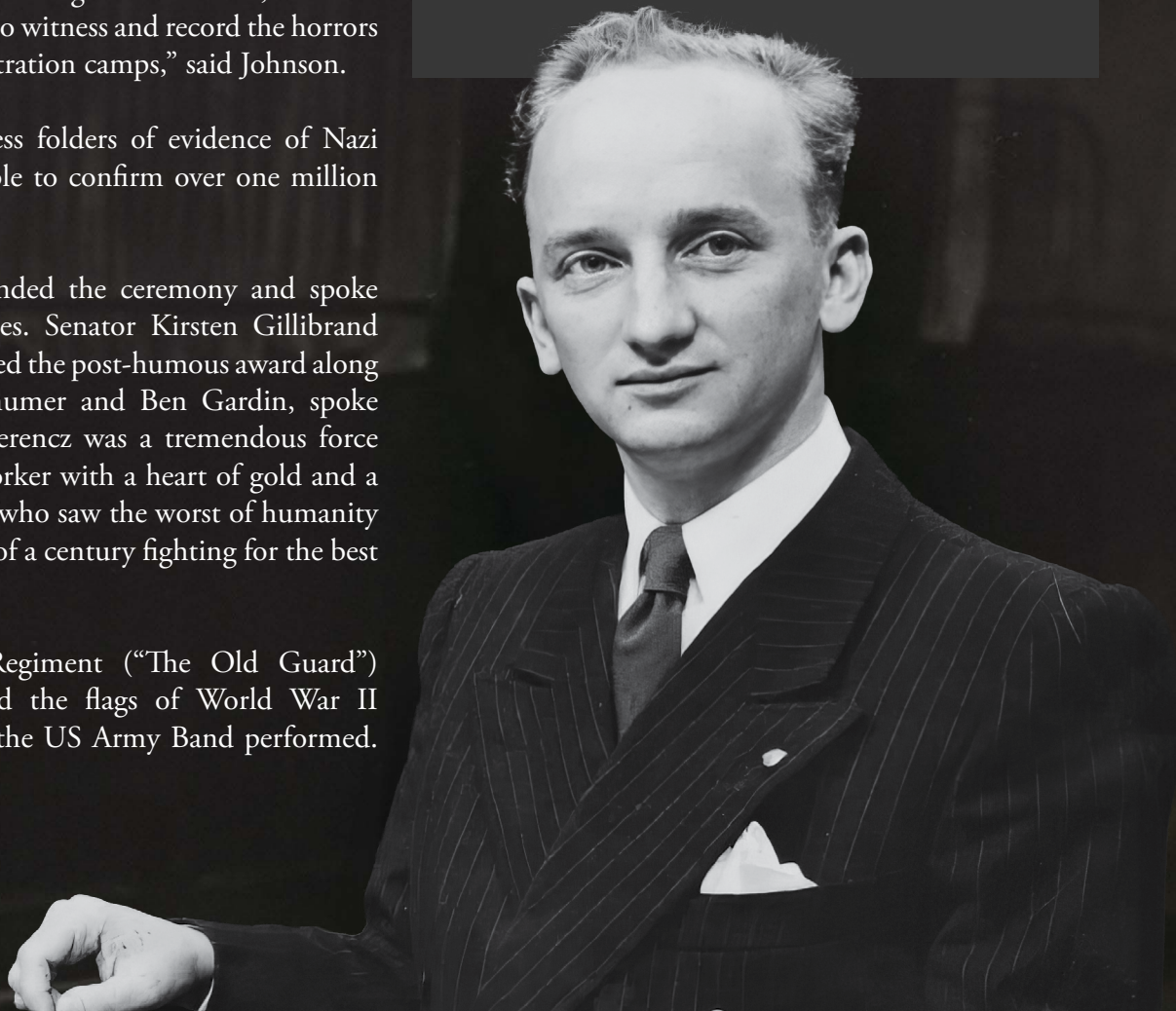
In addition to a memorial candle-lighting, attendees paid tribute to the victims.

[Congress](#) voted to award Ferencz the gold medal in 2022. Representative Lois Frankel (D-FL) authored the act. He died in 2023 at the age of 103. The year he turned 100, Ferencz delivered the keynote speech at The City College's first ever "Virtual Salute" in celebration of its Class of 2020.



A COPY OF THE GOLD MEDAL IS AVAILABLE FOR SALE ON THE U.S. MINT AT THE LINK BELOW:

[USMINT.GOV/BENJAMIN-FERENCZ-BRONZE-MEDAL-MASTER_MDBF.HTML](https://usmint.gov/benjamin-ferencz-bronze-medal-master_mdbf.html)



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Warm regards,
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Executive Director, Alumni Association of CCNY



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