

ASK Around

Virtual Program Taps the Expertise of Alumni

“The industry that our club focuses on is very new,” says Faheem Hoosain, president of the Blockchain Club at Queens College. “It is difficult to find current practitioners in the field or mentors to help guide and advise students. But the ASK (Alumni Sharing Knowledge) program helped us out tremendously and put us in touch with some amazing alumni, Yuling Ma (Polygon.Technology) and Brian Fung (Brave.com), who shared their stories and experiences with us. Inspired by their words, some of the members of our club have gained employment at web3 companies like Polygon. These connections and opportunities would not have been possible without the ASK program.”

Launched by the Office of Alumni Relations in September 2020, ASK connects professionally accomplished alumni with students who are eager to learn from them. Many QC students come from immigrant families or are the first in their families to attend college; sometimes, this background limits their access to adults familiar with different career paths. By linking students to alumni who can help them understand their options and make good decisions, ASK levels the field.

In its first year, through sessions conducted over Zoom, the program arranged for alumni to participate in career panels and serve as guest speakers for remote classes. During Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, ASK extended outreach to student clubs, too. In addition to Blockchain, eight clubs put in requests for alumni speakers: the QC Dietetics Club, the QC Arts Club, Future Healers of America, the Body Improvement Club, the Queens College Chapter of the Institute of Management Accountants, the ISACA Cyber Security Club, Alpha, and the Women in Science Club.

Speakers highlighted their professional journeys and their current careers. They also fielded questions on topics such as important transferrable skills to acquire in college and after, and how students can make the most of their college experience to set themselves up for career success.

“The ASK program has benefited the Body Improvement Club significantly by connecting us to amazing QC alumni who went on to become dietitians and kinesiologists and returned to their alma mater to make their knowledge available to the next generation of QC students,” says the club’s president, Antonio Tan. Those alumni include Joanne Hynes-Hunter ’90/’92, adds Tan, reporting that “she shared her expertise on kinesiology and exercise science, providing information on how to train like a body builder and detailing workout plans she created helping our members learn the ins and outs of proper weight training and other modes of exercises. Furthermore, by offering to return for future events to speak more on different topics of exercise, she provided a valuable resource to the club to guide future and current members to reach their goals.”

As alumni attest, participating in ASK is a rewarding experience. Jennifer Marie Sanchez ’15, an experienced designer, enjoyed talking to students about her work developing visual designs, technology, products, strategies, and processes with a human-centered approach. “Queens College, and the entire CUNY system, is unique in that it supports students from low-income and disadvantaged families by offering low-cost, high-quality education that is accessible, helping them have a chance at having the future of their choice,” comments Sanchez. “I am a product of that; I identified as a low-income/disadvantaged student who is now a successful professional in the field of my choice. Having the opportunity to give back and contribute to helping students like me achieve the same thing is very important to me.”

Don’t hesitate to ASK! Laura Abrams, senior director of Alumni Relations, encourages interested alumni to reach out to alumni@qc.cuny.edu for a participation form. ASK volunteers need to provide a LinkedIn profile and specify career preparation/industry topics they can speak about.

