

ASK: What You Can Do for Your Alma Mater

Virtual Program Facilitates Connections between Alumni and Students Who Can Learn from Them

How can Queens College students benefit from the broad range of knowledge possessed by QC's alumni community? Just ASK (Alumni Sharing Knowledge). Launched by the Office of Alumni Relations in September 2020, ASK enables one alumnus or a group of alumni to connect with students in different career preparation programs, all taking place over Zoom.

Taruna Sadhoo, who directs the QC chapter of CUNY Service Corps, works with Laura Abrams (Alumni Relations) to procure alumni speakers for her World of Work classes and Lunch and Learn series. "We address various career readiness topics: branding for social media, communication and professionalism in the workplace, networking, global intercultural fluency, interviewing skills," Sadhoo said. "We also address civic engagement and community service and how you can use those skills to advance your career readiness."

ASK speakers generally talk about their professional journeys. Many QC students, some the first in their families to attend college and/or from immigrant families, don't have a support system to rely on when making career decisions. Consequently, the alumni network is a valuable asset for all phases of their lives.

Amy Mack '94 appreciated the opportunity to talk to peer counselors as one of Sadhoo's guests in fall 2020. "It was great to connect with current QC students. I hope they enjoyed hearing my stories, my advice, and felt inspired," said Mack, a former peer counselor herself. She made a second appearance, alongside Linda Maney Quaglio MSEd '17 and Robinson Cajamarca '16, in

Conversations with Psychology Alumni, an ASK program presented in April in collaboration with Elizabeth O'Connell from the Center for Career Engagement.

Other spring 2021 career panels focused on Media Studies, with Jason Figueira '08 and Stephanie Dunbar Schmitt '15; Political Science, with Jacob Hochberg '16 and Susan Stamler '81; and English majors and *Knight News* staffers, with Cesar Bustamante Jr. '09 and Gauthier Giacomoni '09.

During a Lunch and Learn session open to all students, business consultant Ronald Frank '68 spoke about best practices in interviewing. Students prepared mock interviews and received feedback from Frank. He serves the ASK program in another way: He's a member of a committee that several alumni joined in January 2021 to promote awareness of ASK among their own QC networks. Three other members, Ricardo Cortez '72, Gerard Passaro '79, and Barry Katz '75, spoke with students in World of Work sessions in the spring.

Diane Shults, co-chair of the ASK Committee, taught a World of Work class during summer 2021. In July, financial advisor Lee Korn '96 discussed his QC journey. BFA candidate Cindi Li, a design major who anticipates graduating at the end of Fall 2021, valued the opportunity to meet Korn virtually. "Conversations led by Lee Korn have reinforced my outlook on what it takes to be successful in the workplace," she said.

Korn was equally impressed by Li and her fellow students. "As an alumnus of Queens College, I am never surprised at the tenacity and grit that the students exude," he wrote Shults. "QC is certainly preparing students for success in the 'world of work.' As an entrepreneur in the market to hire, I can think of no better place to start than Queens College. Please keep me in mind for future opportunities!!"

Abrams routinely updates the ASK roster and shares it with Sadhoo, Shults, and O'Connell. The general campus community, Abrams says, can also request alumni guests for remote classes. She encourages interested alumni to reach out to alumni@qc.cuny.edu.

Alumni Sharing Knowledge Participants through July 2021

Peter Archer '85, MSEd '87 (Retired Instrumental Music Director, Middle School 74, Bayside, NY)

Cody Bachu '14 (Product Integration Analyst, Church Pension Group)

Andres Baena '13 (Principal, Baena Law Group, and Manager, Blue Rock Real Estate)

Zoy Balaskas '95 (Senior Vice President and Chief Underwriting Counsel, Commonwealth Land Title Insurance Company)

Cesar Bustamante Jr. '09 (Media Monitoring Manager, 72Point Inc.)

Robinson Cajamarca '16 (MS Candidate, Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Baruch College, CUNY)

Anika Chowdhury '18 (Production Coordinator, DreamWorks Animation)

Ricardo Cortez '72 (Co-Chief Executive Officer, Broadmark Asset Management)

Stacey Dackson-Weir '93 (Vice President and Director, Special Projects Department, Structure Tone)

Jason Figueira '08 (Assistant Media Services Technician, Borough of Manhattan Community College)

Ronald Frank '68 (Business Consultant and Executive Coach)

Gauthier Giacomoni '09 (Assignment Editor, CBS News)

Patricia Greenberg '85 (Owner, The Fitness Gourmet)

Jacob Hochberg '16 (Chief of Staff, Office of Congressman Henry Cuellar, U.S. House of Representatives)

Barry Katz '75 (Senior Vice President and General Manager, NEP Group, Inc.)

Lee Korn '96 (Financial Advisor and Principal, Opal Wealth Advisors)

Amy Mack '94 (Special Assistant, Youth Services Division, DC Department of Human Services)

Charusmita Maden '19 (Business Analyst and Product Manager, Bank of America)

Linda Maney Quaglio, MSEd '17 (School Psychologist and Adjunct Professor)

Gerard Passaro '79 (Senior Vice President, Network and Technical Operations, MSG Networks)

Stephanie Dunbar Schmitt '15 (Regional Representative, Disney ABC Television Group)

Isaac Sobel '14 (Director of Finance, SeniorCare Emergency Medical Services)

Karla Padawer Solomon '14 (Training and Education Coordinator, Achieve Behavioral Health)

Susan Stamler '81 (Executive Director, United Neighborhood Houses)

Monika Szegda '14 (Associate, Multinational Corporate Banking, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Hong Kong)

Stephanie Ubiergo '17 (Senior Analyst, Legal Compliance Risk Management, MasterCard)

Maria Ubiergo-Davis '10, MS '12 (Senior Data and Insurance Specialist, BASF; MBA Candidate, Business Analytics)

Margarita Zias '19 (Information Security Risk Management Associate, Discover Financial Services)



Incubating In-House Talent

Alumni and students teamed up to help startups through a program administered by Schiro Withanachchi (Economics) and Ying Zhou (Tech Incubator at Queens College).

Last summer, 17 economics and business majors held paid virtual internships at the incubator, offering support to resident companies. The students were mentored by David Auslander '85 (chief architect and technology innovation leader at Microsoft), Stacey Dackson-Weir '93 (VP and director at Structure Tone), Ronald Frank '68 (managing partner at Ronald S. Frank, LLC; former managing partner at IBM), and Jonathan Vazcones '11 (VP of Community Reinvestment at M&T Bank). "The students gained practical experience and the firms benefited from their knowledge in such fields as finance and statistics," says Withanachchi.

Evelyn Rodriguez, a senior majoring in quantitative economics, strengthened her understanding of different technologies while assisting Walkspan, which creates customized pedestrian routes. "During our weekly meetings, my mentor would give us a detailed introduction to the technology we would work with on our next task and also discuss in-demand tech skills and different career paths in tech," Rodriguez reports. "The tasks that followed allowed me to implement what I had learned."

Vazcones was thrilled to help bridge the gap between education and employment. "As a person of color, I take pride in speaking to students who look like me, have an upbringing similar to mine, and have many of the same doubts and questions I once had . . . I truly appreciate the space that the TIQC/Economics summer student mentorship program created to address the issues beyond the surface."

Because of its success, this internship program will be continued.