

Fall 2023

# BHCC

Bunker Hill Community College Magazine

## A Bold Leap

MassReconnect brings free community college to Massachusetts





## Dia de los Muertos/Day of the Dead

Resident artist and founder of Boston-based La Pinata Rosalba Solis brought the rich cultural history of Dia de los Muertos/Day of the Dead to the BHCC community in the form of a display capturing the essence of this vibrant and heartfelt Mesoamerican tradition and showcasing the significance of traditional altars in paying tribute to loved ones. Read more about "Origins Rematriated," a collective artist residency celebrating the evolving history of women and art on page 22.





## A Message from the President



Dear Bunker Hill Community College Friends and Partners,

As I write to you from our Charlestown Campus, there are incredible scenes unfolding outside my office window.

Every few minutes, an Orange Line train delivers learners from everywhere: Somerville, Everett, and Malden to the north, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, and Hyde Park to the south. They join faculty and staff, streaming down the ramp, onto the plaza, and into our Charlestown Campus. New and returning, they all strive to meet their goals at BHCC.

The fall of 2023 saw a return of the campus community that we have not seen since before the pandemic. The full attendance at formal and social celebrations reflects the enrollment increases in degrees and certificates; non-degree workforce development is likewise flourishing. We are up around ten percent in attendance, matching the post-pandemic rebound we see in community colleges across the country. Workforce training has tripled in two years. There is a buzz on our two campuses in Charlestown and Chelsea, a welcome and joyful sound.

The buzz started over the summer when Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey signed her first budget and launched MassReconnect, a free community college program for those 25 and over without a previous college degree. She introduced the concept at BHCC in March, with deep support across the State House and across all sectors. In this issue, you'll read about MassReconnect and hear from one of the thousands of students who will benefit from the program this year.

The other joyful noise you hear is the celebration of the College's 50th anniversary. We opened our doors in September 1973, and while we have changed greatly in 50 years, our mission of providing social and economic mobility through education has never wavered. We will take several opportunities this year to honor our history. The community college movement has never been stronger as Bunker Hill looks to the future.

As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of BHCC, I invite you to explore this special issue of the *BHCC Magazine*. Your support has been invaluable over the years, and I am excited to welcome you to our College for this milestone celebration.

Sincerely,

Pam Y. Eddinger, Ph.D.  
President

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BHCC Magazine Online

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## Campus Police Achieve Accreditation Milestone

Earning highest certification from Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission and setting new standard for community college law enforcement.



The Department of Public Safety and Campus Police was awarded Full Accreditation by the Massachusetts

Police Accreditation Commission (MPAC), making the Department one of two community college police and public safety departments statewide to receive the highest level of professional certification in the Commonwealth.

"I am incredibly proud of our Department of Public Safety and Campus Police, and congratulate our Public Safety leaders, officers, and staff on achieving accreditation," said John K. Pitcher, Vice President, Administration and Finance. "Industry-wide standards, transparency, and trust are critical to build the optimal teaching and learning environment for our College community. Participating in accreditation is our promise of improvement. I know our



Executive Director and Chief of Police Robert A. Barrows addresses fellow law enforcement at MPAC Meeting.

Department will lead with innovation and full community engagement as we uphold the MPAC standards."

The Department also piloted a new standard for the accreditation process that calls for participating agencies to





*“Our Department is always striving for new and better ways to serve students, staff and faculty at the College. We hope this accreditation will continue to strengthen the partnership and trust of the community we serve.”*

—Executive Director and Chief of Police Robert A. Barrows



Chief Barrows and Deputy Chief Shedden accept accreditation with VP of Finance & Administration John Pitcher, Public Safety Staff Associate Monica Anand, MPAC Board President Stevens and Vice President Delmonte.

they, along with other department members were instrumental.”

MPAC is responsible for certifying and accrediting all police departments in the Commonwealth. To be accredited, departments must conform to established standards on best practices for police agencies. The accreditation process provides a professional-related norm to evaluate performance, promotes accountability among personnel, enhances the agency’s reputation, ensures all policies and procedures are in line with the comprehensive and uniform set of directives, and most importantly, promotes staff and public confidence in the agency while improving the delivery of law enforcement services to the community.

“As executive director at the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission, I commend the efforts of the BHCC Police Department in achieving its initial accreditation award,” added Rathbun. “The agency has been part of MPAC’s Program since 2019 and has worked diligently to meet all of the program’s requirements for achieving accreditation. They adhere to the law enforcement profession’s best practices and comply with our program’s standards as a professional 21st-century police department.” ■

accreditation. The process we conducted will serve as an example and open the door for other law enforcement agencies to achieve this professional milestone in a new way,” said Executive Director and Chief of Police Robert A. Barrows. “Our Department is always striving for new and better ways to serve students, staff and faculty at the College. We hope this accreditation will continue to strengthen the partnership and trust of the community we serve.”

At a ceremony celebrating the Department’s accreditation, Barrows thanked his team and the leadership of the College for their work and support, “I especially would like to thank BHCC Deputy Chief Matthew Shedden and Staff Associate Monica Anand for their work throughout the accreditation process—

document, modify or update more than 70 policies, and conform to some 300 professional standards, ranging from officer uniform requirements and vehicle maintenance to Use of Force and Bias-Free Policing.

“The BHCC Police Department was the first agency to take advantage of a program change for an agency completing its first assessment,” said MPAC Executive Director Rick Rathbun. “After completing the self-assessment phase of our program, the agency demonstrated its readiness for a review by completing a full accreditation on-site assessment. The agency was able to skip our first tier of certification and successfully proved compliance with 298 of our standards at the accreditation level.”

“It was an honor to spearhead these program improvements and earn full

## Testifying for Hunger Free Campus Legislation

Joint Committee on Higher Education holds hearing at Massachusetts State House

President Pam Eddinger testified at a hearing of the legislature’s Joint Committee on Higher Education in September on behalf of legislation that would combat food insecurity on college campuses across the state.

“I am here today because my students are too often hungry, too often compromising on nutrition, and too often forced to make choices between food and other necessities like rent, transportation, or books,” President Eddinger said. “Food insecurity goes beyond any one college and any one food pantry—with an estimated seventy thousand food insecure community college students in our Commonwealth according to the most recent data, we need comprehensive, statewide solutions.”

The legislation, the Hunger Free Campus Initiative (S. 835/H. 1293), is currently being considered by the Massachusetts Legislature. The bill would establish an office within the Department of Higher Education responsible for helping colleges end campus food insecurity. It would help students who qualify apply for and obtain SNAP or WIC benefits and



*“We cannot food pantry our way out of this problem.”* —President Pam Eddinger

establish SNAP EBT vendors on campus and meal sharing programs.

Food insecurity is a growing problem in higher education. According to the Greater Boston Food Bank, 37% of public college students in Massachusetts are food insecure, defined as the consistent lack of access to sufficient food or quality of food needed to meet one’s basic needs.

BHCC has been a leader in combating food insecurity on campus, establishing the DISH Food Pantry, which now serves hundreds of students, distributing more than 55,000 pounds of food last year and averaging 41 daily visits. However, as President Eddinger stated in her testimony, “We cannot food pantry our way out of this problem.”

“Massachusetts has been a leader in addressing food insecurity in education. We are now one of a small number of states that provide universal free meals to primary and secondary school students. But the impact of food insecurity does not end when a student goes to college—in fact, the demands placed on community college students make ending food insecurity even more important.”

For the bill to advance, the Joint Committee on Higher Education must report on it favorably, at which time the full House and Senate will consider it. You can find your state legislators’ contact information and ask whether they support the Hunger Free Campus Initiative at [malegislature.gov](http://malegislature.gov) ■



Source: DISH Food Pantry 2022 Yearly Report [bhcc.edu/dishfoodpantry](http://bhcc.edu/dishfoodpantry)





Chief Barrows (center) awards Officers Azam Khan (left) and Keith Letourneau (right) with Lifesaving Medal

## BHCC Police Officers Awarded Lifesaving Medal for Heroic Actions

Officers Letourneau and Khan’s courageous response to Orange Line incident highlights the department’s commitment to public safety

Visitors to the BHCC Campuses in Chelsea and Charlestown have likely encountered members of the BHCC Police Department—whether walking through the halls of the Chelsea Campus, or across the main entry plaza in Charlestown where the department’s headquarters sits, the BHCC Police Department’s presence is an unmistakable reflection of their mission: to protect and serve the college community and all those who come to our campuses.

But at any open urban campus, the line between city and college can blur, and at Bunker Hill’s Charlestown Campus, located adjacent to a busy train station and neighborhood, the department’s officers are sometimes needed beyond the walls of the College.

Earlier this year, two BHCC Police Officers found themselves in just that situation: reports of a man who had fallen

onto the Orange Line tracks at Community College Station. Officers Keith Letourneau and Azam Khan responded to the station and found a man face down on the tracks, unconscious and bleeding from the head.

While trains approaching the Orange Line station had stopped, the third rail, which carries more than 600 volts of electricity, was still active. Nevertheless, Officers Letourneau and Khan lowered themselves onto the tracks to assess the man and render assistance. Officer Letourneau quickly diagnosed a possible opiate overdose and administered Narcan, a medicine that can inhibit the effects of an overdose, while Officer Khan administered first aid to the man’s head wound.

Executive Director and Chief of Police Robert A. Barrows wrote in his commendation of the officers: “Over the long minutes that they waited for other

assisting agencies to arrive, Officers Khan and Letourneau administered sternum rubs, shouts and a second dose of Narcan while constantly monitoring their vitals and relaying that to approaching agencies. Their actions were what has come to be expected by those in this department and they handled themselves with poise and professionalism while placing their own safety in danger to aid another.”

In August Officers Letourneau and Khan were awarded the Lifesaving Medal, an award presented to any person or persons saving a person’s life or making a valiant effort to do so. The medal—which is signified by a gold bar worn on the chest of the uniform—may be worn by the officers in recognition of their exemplary service. Letourneau has served four years with the College, and Khan joined the department just over a year ago.

“I am proud to award Officers Letourneau and Khan the Lifesaving Medal in recognition of their exemplary actions in saving a person’s life at the risk of their own,” said Chief Barrows. “And beyond the life they saved, their actions affirm our department’s commitment to serving the community both on and beyond the BHCC campus.”

“This is our job,” said Barrows. “We’d do it again tomorrow and the next day and the day after that. Our oath is to protect and serve.” ■



## Enterprise Center for Entrepreneurship and Training Opens on Chelsea Campus

ECET will help small businesses and those who want to start one in Chelsea, Everett, and surrounding communities



BHCC opened its Enterprise Center for Entrepreneurship and Training (ECET) on its Chelsea Campus in October with a ribbon cutting ceremony. Dozens of community leaders, small business owners, and college leadership gathered for the event, including State Representative Judith Garcia, Chelsea City Councilor Calvin Brown, and Regional Director for Senator Edward Markey Faarooq Sahabdeen.

Located on the fifth floor of the Chelsea Campus, the ECET will provide much-needed small business guidance and assistance in multiple languages through online consultation and workshops to address talent recruitment, career readiness, business planning, and innovation. The Center evolved from a small business needs assessment by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, a comprehensive study of small

business activity and opportunities in those communities and was created in partnership with the City of Chelsea and funded by a \$377,000 federal grant secured with the help of Senator Edward Markey. “This center will serve as a catalyst for economic vitality and empowerment to support residents and small businesses in Chelsea and Everett and the surrounding communities,” said Faarooq Sahabdeen, Regional Director for Senator Edward Markey. “This is especially true for our black and brown small businesses who have historically faced financial barriers. Senator Markey knows this, which is why he was intentional in his advocacy to fund this center because he knew the work of the center would seek to rectify those barriers and provide the tools they need to succeed and flourish.”

State Representative Judith Garcia spoke at the ceremony reflecting on the eight years she served as Chelsea, District 5 City Counselor. “It was then that I heard and

saw the needs of small businesses,” she said. “This is exactly what they were asking for...this building stands as a beacon of hope and a guiding light and has the potential power to grow our economy at the local level.”

Chelsea City Councilor and BHCC alum Calvin Brown expressed gratitude in his remarks, saying “BHCC gave me vision and inspiration, just as they are with this next generation of entrepreneurs and businesses people... Thank you for bringing our community into another era of leadership, entrepreneurship and business.”

The Center plans to launch programming in multiple languages, including Spanish, and currently offers two workshops: an overview of entrepreneurship aimed at individuals who hope to launch their own businesses; and a boot camp for existing businesses in marketing, human resources and planning across industries. A full listing of programs can be found on the center’s website, [bhcc.edu/ecet](http://bhcc.edu/ecet) ■



Kristen P. McKenna, Dean, Workforce & Economic Development, opens the doors of the College’s new Enterprise Center for Entrepreneurship and Training alongside College leadership and representatives from local, state, and federal partners.



## Creating an Economy that Works for All

President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston brings insights to BHCC faculty, staff and administrators at Convocation 2023



Dr. Susan M. Collins, President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, addressed BHCC faculty and staff during a virtual convocation program at the start of the 2023-24 academic year. An international macroeconomist with a lifelong interest in policy and its impact on living standards, Dr. Collins is the first African American woman and first woman of color to lead any of the 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks. In this role, she oversees all of the bank's activities—including economic research and analysis; banking supervision and financial stability efforts; community economic development activities; and a wide range of payments, technology, and finance initiatives.

During her remarks, Dr. Collins emphasized the necessity of harnessing the best ideas, energy, and participation from every segment of society to build a vibrant, inclusive economy underscoring the pivotal role that community colleges play in achieving this goal. These institutions, she argued, provide affordable, accessible higher education and essential skill development, ultimately strengthening both our economy and society.

“There is no doubt that your students have built capability, resilience, grit, and the ability to manage many challenges,” said Dr. Collins. “This gives them the ability to be some of the economy’s greatest contributors.”

Dr. Collins reflected on her tenure and the individuals she has encountered since taking office in July 2022, expressing admiration for the diverse leaders and residents she has met who are committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances, has

the opportunity to participate and thrive in the economy. She noted that the Boston Fed firmly believes in collaborative leadership’s power to fortify local economies and make them more inclusive, drawing from its rich experience in supporting practical, community-based initiatives.

Quoting Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt, who said, “There are better starters than me, but I am a strong finisher,” she said, “A challenging start to a journey, whether it’s a sprint or career, does not determine the outcome. What matters is staying the course and finishing.”

Dr. Collins reminded the BHCC community of the importance of recognizing and nurturing the potential within individuals from all walks of life and the significance of providing opportunities for those who may be the first in their families to attend college or who may not fit the traditional mold of certain roles. She expressed her deep appreciation for the faculty and staff who support these students.

“People like to talk about trailblazers opening doors, but the image that resonates more with me,” she said, “involves the responsibility once through that door to hold it open for excellent, high-potential people.” ■

Visit [bhcc.edu/magazine](https://bhcc.edu/magazine) for more on campus news and events.

The convocation ceremony came as legislation to fund retroactive pay increases and pandemic service bonuses to Massachusetts Community College Council faculty and staff has stalled on Beacon Hill. The increases were negotiated by the Executive Office for Administration and Finance and the union representing some Massachusetts Community College employees. Several BHCC faculty used the platform of convocation to advocate for the passage of the increases and for better pay for Massachusetts community college employees, with which President Eddinger expressed her support, saying that faculty and professional staff “deserve better pay.”

# THE INTERVIEW

BHCC President Pam Eddinger Interviews Higher Education Commissioner Dr. Noe Ortega

*Part of an occasional series of conversations with local and national leaders about issues and trends in community college education.*

*This interview was conducted prior to the November 15, 2023 announcement on MASSGrant Plus Expansion, a new financial aid program for students attending Massachusetts’ public colleges, universities, and the University of Massachusetts.*



President Eddinger welcomed Commissioner Ortega who delivered remarks at the College’s Strategic Planning Community Convening at the Row Hotel in Somerville in March 2023.

## Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Dr. Noe Ortega

arrived in Massachusetts earlier this year with a long and unique higher education story. From his early career as a teacher in Japan to working in higher education administration at research universities to his most recent post as Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania, Dr. Ortega brings both breadth and depth of experience to the job of Commissioner, along with an unshakable commitment to making college accessible to all.

Before accepting his appointment as Secretary of the Pennsylvania system, Dr. Ortega was Deputy Secretary

and Commissioner for the Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education (OPHE) at the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). As Commissioner, he led the work of the agency aimed at closing the postsecondary attainment gaps that have persisted among historically underrepresented populations and communities of color in Pennsylvania.

Prior to joining PDE, Dr. Ortega spent eight years at the University of Michigan, where he held several academic and administrative roles. He worked as the Assistant Director and Senior Research Associate at the National Center for Institutional Diversity and the Managing Director for the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good.

Dr. Ortega received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from St. Edwards University, a Master of Science in School Counseling from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, and his Ph.D. in Higher Education Policy from the University of Michigan.

President Eddinger talked with Commissioner Ortega in the fall of 2023. What follows is an edited version of their conversation.

**Eddinger:** You’ve had an incredible diversity of experience in education, from teaching in Japan to serving as Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania. How have those experiences shaped your thinking and approach as Commissioner?





**Ortega:** Of all the experiences I've had, Japan stands out as a unique opportunity. I had planned to go for a couple of years and spend some time there before transitioning to work in education here [in the U.S.]. When I got there, I was working primarily with Japanese business professionals who were taking almost a language crash course—learning how to order at a restaurant or navigate a grocery store.

But then I started teaching at the kindergarten level, children as young as two and up to five or six years old, teaching language acquisition. I got to watch the way that young people absorb language, and it got me to really understand the role of an educator and the value of learning things in the early years. And I stayed long enough to see some of those toddlers enter junior high and middle school.

That experience is still relevant for me today. I see it as part of the pipeline of experiences that students have when they enter postsecondary education. Important things happen for children at an early age, and if we are going to have success in the postsecondary space, if we want students to go to college and excel, we need to think about what they do in the early years.

**Eddinger:** Your research and public policy work has focused on postsecondary attainment gaps in historically underrepresented populations and communities of color—why do you think those gaps persist and what is the role of public higher education and community colleges in addressing them?

**Ortega:** There are so many factors that go into educational attainment gaps. If you

follow the history of higher education, they have been there for a long time. Many institutions were built at a time when they were not meant to be accessible to all. They were institutions developed for the wealthy, where completion was not important—they were just enhancing existing social capital or preparing folks for going into the clergy. Socioeconomic status, race, and gender were not factors. So, a lot of what we see as norms in higher education is that history continuing to persist in the way institutions operate.

When I think about the postsecondary experience, I don't stop to think about whether or not a student today is having the same experience that I lived, inside or outside the classroom. We can't continue to replicate the experiences of past generations—that's the cycle that so many institutions are caught in. It could be in terms of the types of people who serve on a board of trustees, who serve as presidents, as deans, or others. One of the most important things I feel we are trying to do here at the Department of Higher Education is to raise questions about whether or not we are perpetuating these practices or if we are meeting the needs of the current context.

**Eddinger:** Massachusetts recently took its first big step toward free community college with MassReconnect. Is this a viable tool in helping to address postsecondary attainment gaps? And, more how do you see MassReconnect in the context of the Free Community College movement?

**Ortega:** This is an exciting moment not just for Massachusetts Community Colleges but for everyone in the Commonwealth who cares about higher

education. MassReconnect, along with free community college programs in other states and municipal free community college programs like the one that has existed for a number of years in Boston, are transforming higher education into something more akin to an entitlement than a privilege. That is a real game-changer.

MassReconnect also creates a scaffolding for policies that result in better access and outcomes for students. The free community college conversation is really operationalized in terms of tuition, fees, and books or supplies. But there is another set of conversations in terms of costs of living that are supplemental costs to learning as well. Helping students meet those costs can also be a wise investment, especially if it costs a student more to stop out because they need to work to pay rent or cover the cost of childcare in the short term rather than to focus on their education full-time, if we can bring supplemental resources to bear.

**Eddinger:** You've touched on a fundamental part of our work at BHCC on meeting basic needs to ensure student success. Your approach aligns well with what we and other community colleges have done in expanding the delivery of wraparound resources in addition to academics.

**Ortega:** Absolutely. For me, one of the lessons of the pandemic was an illustration of that idea—that the barriers to access and success are not just for institutions of higher education to overcome by themselves. For example, when we became reliant on online learning during the pandemic, we very quickly ran into the problem of broadband access—broadband

is expensive, and it is not available everywhere. We had people turning to departments of higher education across the country to solve the problem of bringing broadband to all. There is a lot we can do to equip students with resources like laptops or tablets or different learning platforms, but there's also a question of infrastructure that has to be tapped into. These are really monumental problems, where it would be unrealistic for an education agency to solve them. The same goes for issues like food insecurity. I think at our best, institutions and departments of higher education can make progress, shed light, and work coherently on these issues when we are working in concert with our communities, with state and federal government, to help focus and shape the resources that can resolve them.

**Eddinger:** Last spring, we were delighted to have you deliver a welcome at BHCC's strategic planning convening. You said it was critical to include historically underrepresented voices to find creative approaches to planning challenges. I wonder if you can step back into that event and elaborate on how community colleges and public higher education should approach strategic planning.

**Ortega:** It was great to be with the BHCC community that day—I remember the balloons, the breakfast, and the enthusiasm in that room very well. I think the key to any strategic planning is to be forward-looking, to communicate not so much where the institution is now but where it will be in the future. It's a unique opportunity to start communicating to the public how they will interact with the institution over the coming years. In the case of BHCC, based on the conversations

that day last March, I heard folks saying that there will be more interactions in areas like biotechnology, information technology, and the blue and green energy sources of the future. That's exciting.

One of the things that stood out to me that day was the recognition of people in the audience, who were both current and new partners of the College, the recognition of the different ways each of them might best be able to interact with Bunker Hill, and that there are opportunities for the College and its partners to help one another in every one of those interactions.

**Eddinger:** Like you, I came to Massachusetts from elsewhere. On a lighter note, what have you enjoyed here, or have you learned or experienced anything unexpected in the time you've been here?

**Ortega:** It has been eleven months, and my partner and I love it here. I am so impressed, and I think anyone who comes here and loves higher education the way I do is amazed by the commitment that communities have to education. It is undeniably seen as a resource, and I see that here in Boston and when I visit campuses around the state.

My partner and I are avid sports fans and being here has taught me that if you're going to be a sports fan in Massachusetts, you are going to fall in love with the Red Sox, so I wear my Red Sox hat proudly. We're looking forward to watching the Celtics this year as well. Sports are a great way to engage with the city, and everywhere I go, it's a reminder of the multitude of things our state has to offer. ■





# A Bold Leap

MassReconnect brings free community college to Massachusetts

When Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey took to the podium in March just outside of the Mary L. Fifiield Art Gallery on BHCC's Charlestown Campus to announce MassReconnect, the Commonwealth's free community college program for residents aged 25 and over, it was akin to an education moon landing: one small step for community colleges, one giant leap for the many students, faculty, leaders and advocates who had been working towards this day for years. It is an accomplishment, to be sure, but a beginning, not a conclusion.





The free community college movement has been a growing force across the country for much of the last decade, as organizations like College Promise and the Campaign for Free College Tuition have pushed for local, state, and national programs like MassReconnect, with the goal of making community colleges—and even all public colleges and universities—accessible to all.

That movement has caught fire in recent years with statewide free community college programs developing across the country. Many advocates had hoped President Biden would include free community college nationwide in his Inflation Reduction Act last year. However, that part of the bill was dropped during the legislative process. Additional free community college bills, including Senator Bernie Sanders’s College

for All Act, have been introduced in Congress since.

Healey voiced her support for a free community college program in Massachusetts in her inaugural address in January 2023, framing the program as a path to a more skilled and inclusive workforce: “Tens of thousands of jobs in healthcare, transportation, and technology are going unfilled because the skills of our workers don’t match the demands of our economy. Let’s work with our community colleges and vocational schools, and make sure the training we offer meets the needs of our companies in every region.”

The worker shortage is felt acutely in Boston. The region’s economy, heavily dependent on tech, life sciences, and medical sectors, has struggled to attract

enough skilled workers to grow and thrive in Massachusetts. And while Massachusetts has one of the nation’s highest college-going rates, approximately a quarter of high school graduates do not go on to college and have far fewer opportunities for better-paying jobs and economic mobility.

“Workforce shortages have impacted nearly all sectors of our economy, but we have an incredible opportunity before us to train the next generation of workers and increase opportunities for all,” Healey said at the March announcement. “More students than ever before will be able to advance or complete their education and set themselves up for a successful career in in-demand industries like healthcare, engineering, advanced

manufacturing, and tech.”

“The MassReconnect Program will be a game changer for community colleges and hundreds of thousands of Massachusetts residents,” said BHCC President Pam Eddinger. “Community colleges are the best tool we have to help people in every corner of the Commonwealth to rise and to build a skilled workforce that will ensure our state’s growth and prosperity for all.”

MassReconnect was just one part of a historic set of investments in higher education included in Healey’s fiscal year 2024 budget, including an expansion of financial aid and wraparound services to students, campus investments, tuition equity for undocumented students who can now pay in-state tuition rates, and free tuition for community college nursing students—a broad package of education investments that acknowledge tuition, fees and educational expenses are only one part of the challenge.

“MassReconnect is going to be transformational,” said Eddinger, “but our philosophy is and will continue to be that there is No Wrong Door at BHCC. That means no matter how a student comes to us, and once they are here, no matter where they find themselves, they will get the guidance, the financial assistance, and services they need to be successful.”

No matter the source, funding for community colleges is widely viewed as one of the best educational investments. Locally, that has been borne out in a study conducted by public policy think tank MassINC, which confirmed significant return on investment to both individual students who attained a community college degree or certificate in Massachusetts and to taxpayers who fund the community college system, notably finding that for every dollar spent on a student who earns an associate degree, state taxpayers receive between \$1.89 and \$2.75 in benefits—a number that could be even higher with better rates of completion.

 Read the “Investing in Success: Findings From a Cost-Benefit Analysis of Massachusetts Community Colleges” report at [bhcc.edu/magazine](https://bhcc.edu/magazine)

# Empowering Dreams: Tuition Equity in Massachusetts

## Leveling the playing field for every student's future

Adding to the excitement and celebration of free community college in Massachusetts was the inclusion of tuition equity for undocumented students at all public colleges and universities. The measure was included in the same state budget package as MassReconnect, signed into law in August.

It allows students with undocumented immigration status to qualify for in-state tuition and financial aid. The Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, a non-partisan public policy think tank, estimates that the measure will help approximately 350 students yearly.

“This is a big step forward for students who have been growing up here, learning here, living here, working hard here, following their dreams right here in Massachusetts,” Governor Maura Healey said in a press conference after the budget was signed into law. “It’s nothing more than what is fair and what is right. They’re going to be able to continue their journey on the same terms as their peers in a place that is their home.”

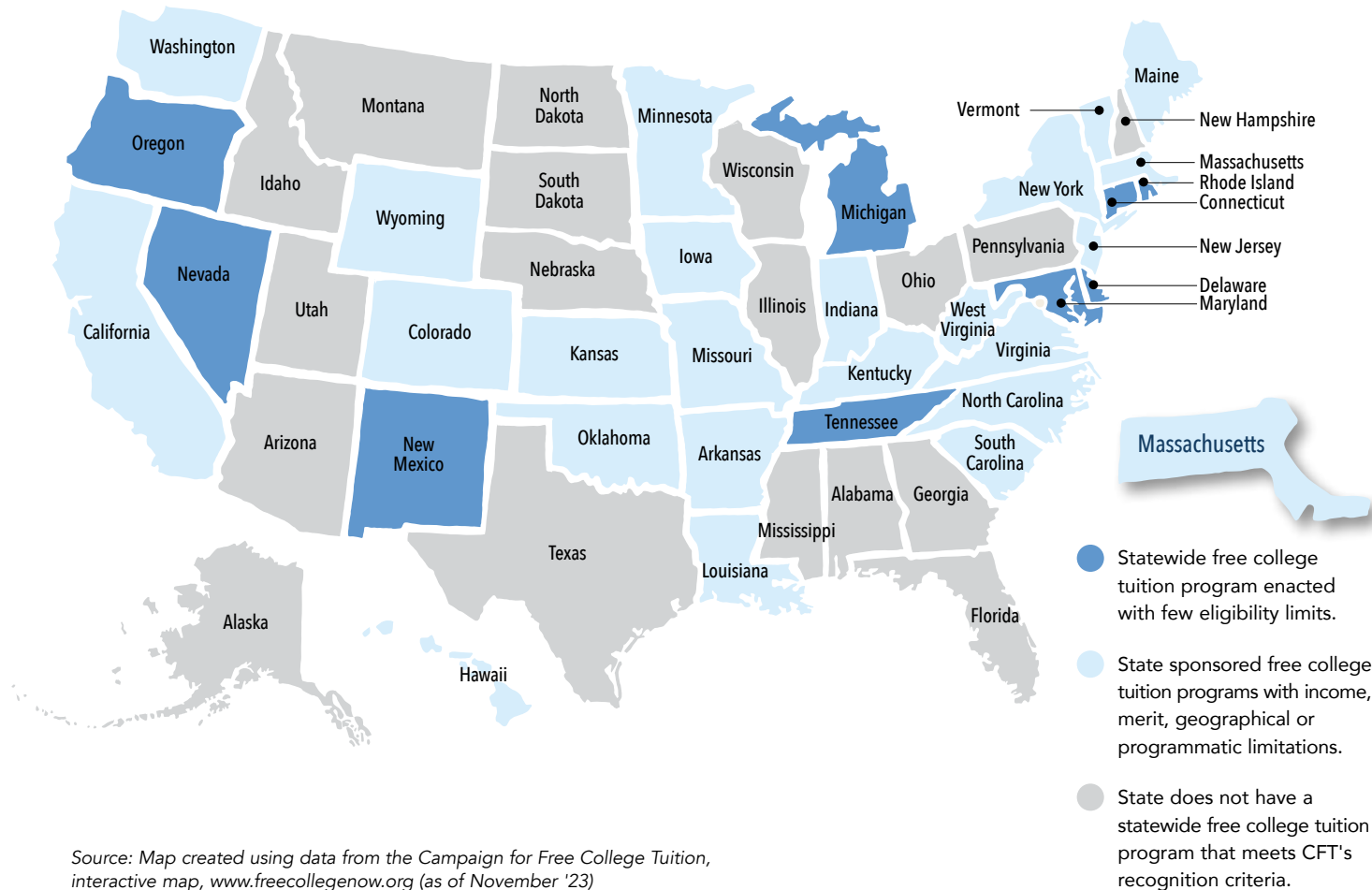
Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education Dr. Noe Ortega affirmed the vital role the program will play in both the higher education system and in the development of an inclusive and skilled workforce: “By supporting our students, we are investing in the future of the Commonwealth. With this new policy, we are strengthening our state’s economy, workforce, and communities.”

BHCC student Caio Rodrigues offered written testimony at a joint legislative hearing on the measure earlier this summer: “I graduated from high school in Somerville, MA, and now attend Bunker Hill Community College in Boston. I take a few classes at a time because it’s all I can afford. I have a GPA of 3.95 on a 4.0 scale and joined the honors society...I missed the opportunity to apply for DACA; this was out of my control because a federal judge in Texas halted new applications...My educational goal is to earn a doctorate in Astronautical Engineering and to follow that with a career in rocket science. I can’t wait for in-state tuition and aid to become a reality so I can be a full-time student.”

To qualify, students must have completed three years of high school or a degree-equivalent requirement (diploma or GED) and apply for citizenship when they become eligible to do so. The new law covers both new and continuing students at all Massachusetts public colleges and universities. ■



## Free Community College Movement



Source: Map created using data from the Campaign for Free College Tuition, interactive map, [www.freecollegenow.org](http://www.freecollegenow.org) (as of November '23)





“MassReconnect would be all for naught if it brought students to the college only to have their paths blocked by the obstacles of trying to live, work and provide for their families while they go to school.”

—President Pam Eddinger

For students, MassReconnect is straightforward. It is a “last dollar” program that kicks in after all other federal or state financial aid dollars have been applied. Students do not have to apply for MassReconnect—they simply fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and MassReconnect funds are applied by the college so that after receiving all other sources of aid, the student does not have any Expected Family Contribution (EFC) toward their community college tuition and fees. It also offers a stipend for books and supplies.

To qualify for MassReconnect funding, a student must be a Massachusetts resident and high school graduate or GED holder who will be aged 25 or older when they start the semester and have yet to earn any previous degree. MassReconnect students must also enroll in at least six credits per semester (typically two three-credit classes) in a program leading to an associate degree or certificate.

An estimated 700,000 Massachusetts residents have some college credit but no degree. They, along with approximately 1.8 million residents with a high school diploma or equivalency but no college degree, would qualify for MassReconnect. The Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges estimates that as many as eight

thousand residents will enroll in community college thanks to MassReconnect this year, with closer to 10,000 students in the 2024-25 academic year.

While MassReconnect and similar last-dollar programs cover the direct costs of community college, some are worried that the programs do not go far enough to cover significant expenses such as housing costs, transportation, or food. The complicated application process is also a concern.

“There’s a risk that MassReconnect could become quite convoluted where [students] don’t know their eligibility or don’t know how to navigate that process,” New America policy analyst Chris Geary told the Boston Globe at the time of the program’s launch earlier this year.

Geary and other policy analysts have noted that states such as Maine and New Mexico have waived tuition and fees for all residents without requiring the FAFSA or additional sources of aid.

Indeed, Massachusetts Senate President Karen Spilka saw MassReconnect as an important step towards a “shared goal of expanding access to community college, and proposed making community college free to all.”

Opening a pathway to higher education for historically underserved populations has been a hallmark of free community college programs across the country

since the first of its kind debuted in 2015. The Tennessee Promise immediately kicked off double-digit annual enrollment increases and a climbing college-going rate. Similar programs in Michigan, California, and Texas have also boosted enrollments. Maine’s promise program grew enrollment by some 18% this year.

The growing momentum at the state level has outstripped the stalled federal initiatives to bring free community college to the nation, and propelled the free community college movement into orbit.

With MassReconnect still brand new, it’s too early to gauge the program’s long-term impact on BHCC enrollment and persistence. Initial signs are hopeful. Fortuitously, the program seems to coincide with a national resurgence in community college enrollment following a steady decline during the pandemic. This fall, BHCC enrollment has rebounded with an increase of close to 10%. Higher enrollment is anticipated in the spring when MassReconnect benefits become better known in the community.

BHCC has embraced MassReconnect not only as an expansion of access, but a promise of better student persistence and degree completion. “MassReconnect would be all for naught if it brought students to the college only to have their paths blocked by the obstacles of trying to live,

work and provide for their families while they go to school,” said Eddinger. “We will continue to assist students with basic needs and wraparound services. These strategies combined with the benefits of MassReconnect will give our students a running start at academic and career success.”

MassReconnect is indeed like a moon

landing. But the thing about the moon landing is that it wasn’t a miracle. Rather, it was the product of a decade or more of work, of building, of experimentation, and discovery. The moment it was realized—the giant leap—was not the end of the journey but a beginning, a journey that brought innovation and that turned our eyes to new frontiers long after it ceased

to appear miraculous. So, it may be with the free community college journey, too: a small step that opens a new world and the possibility of a better present and future for all who want it. ■

[Learn more about MassReconnect at bhcc.edu/magazine.](https://bhcc.edu/magazine)

## Powering the Future

Kevin Brito is one of the first BHCC students to receive MassReconnect funding, and it has given him a new opportunity and a fresh start.



**Kevin Brito** was one of the first BHCC students to receive MassReconnect funding to cover

his college tuition, and at first, he didn’t even realize it.

“I had already taken out loans,” Brito said. “It was a relief to get to return that money...and know that I wouldn’t be going into debt to go to school.”

If Brito, who lives in Brockton and works in security, wasn’t aware of MassReconnect before, it has become the keystone of his nascent college career. Brito is enrolled in BHCC’s Electric Power Utility Training (EPUT) program, a unique program that offers students a paid internship with Eversource along with an associate in science degree and a certificate in natural gas technology. Graduates of the program can then interview with Eversource for a position in their field. Affordability and a high return on investment drew him to community college in the first place, and with MassReconnect, that equation has moved in his favor.

“A couple of years back, when I was thinking about trying to go to school, I knew that community college would be more affordable,” Brito said. “At work, I ran into older folks who had gone to [a four-year or private college] and had student debt they were still paying off. I always wanted to be financially sound. I never wanted to put myself in a position where I would have to make more difficult choices than needed, and at Bunker Hill, I get the same quality [as a four-year college] but at a fraction of the price.”

At 27, Brito is now a first-time college student, and like many BHCC students, the journey to college involved trying different learning settings and getting to know himself better. Brito graduated from TechBoston Academy but thought he needed more time to be ready to continue his education.

“I knew I wasn’t mature enough to go to college yet,” Brito said. “At the time, I wasn’t aware that I had [attention-



deficit/hyperactivity disorder] ADHD. I had always had this issue where, at the beginning of the semester I’d do great, then I would fall off. I always had to be occupied with something else.”

Brito later joined Year Up, an educational nonprofit that promotes economic opportunity and pathways to upward mobility through job training and mentorship. Placed at State Street Bank as an intern, he felt that a traditional office job was not the right path for him. “I couldn’t stay at my desk all day long,” he said. “I needed to be actively doing something, to physically move around.”

Working in security gave Brito a steady job and opportunities to advance. In the meantime, he got married and was learning how to manage his ADHD, but he still felt something was missing. When his now-wife went to college, he helped her with homework. “I always wanted to go back to school, not even for the degree, but for the atmosphere,” he said. “It’s one of those things I’ve missed.”

Now that the semester is off to a flying start, Brito is grateful for the unanticipated support offered by MassReconnect, which means not only is he not in debt, but his tuition, fees, and books are paid for. “When I walk into the building, I know my school is paid for, so my job is just to show up,” he said. “MassReconnect takes off that edge. I feel very comfortable walking into the building, knowing it is paid for.” ■



# 50 YEARS OF INSPIRING DREAMS

This year, we proudly celebrate half a century of academic excellence, community engagement, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge at BHCC. As we embark on *A Year of Celebration*, a series of monthly events commemorating the milestone, we aim to capture the spirit and resilience that has empowered BHCC students to imagine their possibilities and turn their dreams into reality.

## A Legacy Beyond Good Will Hunting

BHCC holds a unique place in cinematic history as the backdrop of the iconic film *Good Will Hunting*. This narrative introduced us to the inspirational figure of Professor Sean Maguire, portrayed by the legendary Robin Williams. Professor Maguire's choice to work at Bunker Hill was driven by a deep commitment to making a profound difference in the lives of his students.

Behind the scenes, Professor Sean Maguire's character found inspiration in the real-life heroes of BHCC, including the dedicated Professor John Reeves. Robin Williams sought insights from Professor Reeves, gaining a deeper understanding of the impactful work done by educators at the College. This collaboration strengthened the bond between BHCC and the film.

## Beyond Hollywood: The True Story

While *Good Will Hunting* will forever be a part of BHCC's legacy, the actual narrative lies in the students who have walked its halls, the faculty who have guided them, and the institution's unwavering dedication to transforming lives.

## The Unsung Heroes

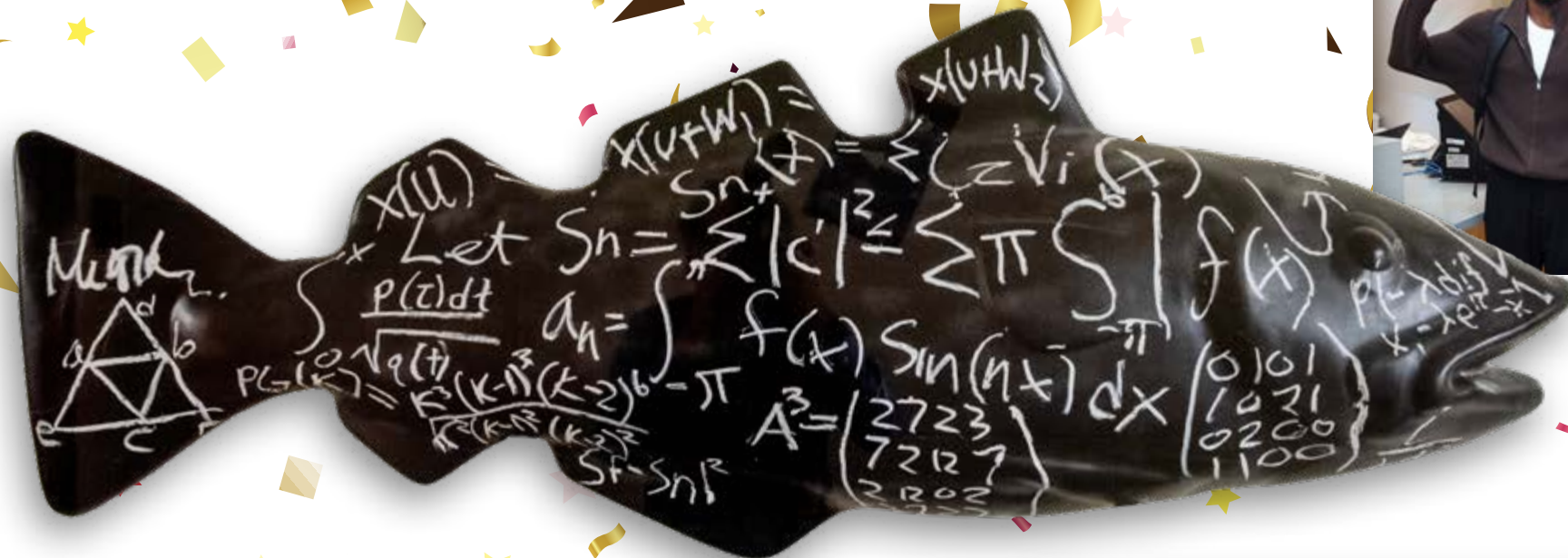
The dedication of our faculty and staff underpins every success story at BHCC. These educators are the unsung heroes of BHCC's journey, in their commitment to delivering quality education and providing unwavering support. The achievements of BHCC alumni stand as a testament to this dedication. Graduates have gone on to excel in diverse fields, from healthcare to entrepreneurship, carrying the College's legacy with pride.

## A Legacy of Transformation and Inclusion

In 1973, BHCC primarily served a predominantly white student population within a five-mile radius of the College. Today, BHCC is one of Massachusetts' most diverse higher education institutions. With 65% of students identifying as people of color and more than half being women, BHCC is a beacon of inclusivity. The College is also home to 600 international students from nearly 100 countries, collectively speaking more than 75 languages.

BHCC's growth has been nothing short of remarkable. From its modest beginnings with a dozen programs, it now boasts over 100 programs in associate degrees and certificates across a wide range of fields. The College has expanded to multiple locations, ensuring education is within reach both in-person and online and meeting students where they are.

Michael Costello of Student Central poses for photo with student employee Ranu Khatri at 50th Anniversary Celebration.



Student Jonathan Lubin and HOPE Initiative Access Navigator Ahnastasia Kielar celebrate the College's Birthday Week in September.

## Investing in Success: Grants and Programs

Grants have been instrumental in shaping BHCC's remarkable journey, serving as catalysts for innovative programs, services, and initiatives that have not only elevated the educational experience for students but also enriched the broader community.

These grants, highlighted by three multi-million-dollar federal allocations in the past decade, have enhanced digital infrastructures across our campuses. They have solidified the College's standing as an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI)

and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The infusion of a \$3 million grant from the Smith Family Foundation in 2018 spearheaded the expansion of Early College, significantly broadening BHCC's impact and enhancing the overall quality of education.

From driving workforce development initiatives to spearheading projects championing diversity and inclusion, BHCC has adeptly harnessed the transformative power of grants to create a meaningful and lasting impact. These investments have positioned BHCC at the forefront of educational innovation, showcasing a commitment to excellence that defines the College's 50-year legacy.

## A Bright Future Beckons

As BHCC celebrates its 50th anniversary, we invite everyone to join us in cherishing the memories and anticipating a promising future. BHCC's golden jubilee is not just a look back at our accomplishments but a declaration of our unwavering commitment to shaping tomorrow's leaders, thinkers, and visionaries. ■



## GOOD COD HUNTING

As part of a millennium event celebrating Y2K, Boston sponsored an art exhibit called the "Cavalcade of Cod." This exhibit paid tribute to the Commonwealth's fishing industry and the state fish by featuring larger-than-life codfish sculptures adorned by various artists. Subsequently, these sculptures were auctioned off, with the proceeds directed toward charitable causes.

Among the entries in this remarkable exhibit was *Good Cod Hunting*, a sculpture that prominently featured the mathematical equation from the renowned film *Good Will Hunting*. Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, the screenwriters and actors of the movie, designed this artwork.

During the auction, the Oskowitz family acquired this sculpture, and in a generous gesture, they chose to donate it to the College. The presentation of *Good Cod Hunting* took place at BHCC's 2002 Honors and Awards Ceremony. This choice of home for the sculpture was highly appropriate, given the College's role in the film as the institution where a caring faculty member profoundly impacted the main character's life.

The arrival of *Good Cod Hunting* at Bunker Hill Community College symbolizes the enduring connection between the institution and the iconic film. You can find this sculpture at the Charlestown Campus, on the second floor of the E-Building Hallway at BHCC.

Visit [bhcc.edu/magazine](http://bhcc.edu/magazine) for more on the College's 50 year celebration and events.





# Authenticity, Diversity, and Change Take Center Stage



## Compelling Conversations Speaker Series set to inspire, educate, and empower the BHCC community

In a world that often values conformity over individuality, the Compelling Conversations Speaker Series at BHCC has emerged as a beacon of authenticity, encouraging people to use their unique voices to drive meaningful change. This year's theme, centered around harnessing one's true self to create a positive impact, has set the tone for a series of thought-provoking events to inspire, educate, and empower BHCC students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

"In our 50th year of excellence, we celebrate our legacy while forging a path towards an equitable and inclusive future," said Nahomi Carlisle, Esq., Associate Vice President and Chief Equity and Compliance Officer. "It's a moment to embrace our authenticity, to curate and refine the beautiful tapestry of our identities. Through our Compelling Conversations Speaker Series, let us discover reflections of ourselves and illuminate the boundless potential residing within us all."



Chef Sherry Pocknett

### Activism and Advocacy Serve Up a Powerful Narrative

The series kicked off in November with a thought-provoking presentation in recognition of Native American Heritage Month by **Chef Sherry Pocknett** (Mashpee Wampanoag), a James Beard Award-winning chef and owner of Sly Fox

Den. Rather than merely showcasing culinary delights, Chef Sherry used the platform as a compelling exploration of heritage, resilience, and the imperative to honor the contributions of Indigenous Peoples. Her insightful

discourse expanded beyond the kitchen, delving into the challenges faced by women of color (WOC) and the broader Native American community and shifting the focus towards activism, cultural preservation, and the ongoing struggle for recognition and justice.

Producer, daytime television host, and founder of the faith-based jewelry brand,



Adrienne Bailon-Houghton

XIXI, **Adrienne Bailon-Houghton** joined the BHCC community in a resounding celebration that embraced the College's designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Bailon-Houghton inspired the audience with her lived experiences, personal and professional, sharing with the BHCC community what being a Latina represents to her, and how she embodies it in everything she does.

She encouraged students to bring their authentic selves and the right doors will open, attributing her success to her ability to build connection with her community, and sharing how bringing her authenticity and Latinidad has created opportunities throughout her career.

### A Tapestry of Voices

The Compelling Conversations Speaker Series will continue to unfold this spring with a rich tapestry of voices that promise to spark introspection and encourage action. February heralds the arrival of **Nontombi Naomi Tutu**, a force in race

*"It's a moment to embrace our authenticity, to curate and refine the beautiful tapestry of our identities."*

—Nahomi Carlisle, Esq., Associate Vice President and Chief Equity and Compliance Officer



Nontombi Naomi Tutu

and gender justice activism. As the daughter of Desmond Tutu, she carries a legacy of advocating for equality and human rights. This presentation, slated for February 1, marks the beginning of Black History Month and is expected to inspire profound dialogues.

On March 28, **Justin "Mr. Fascinate" Shaifer**, will bring fresh perspectives and intriguing discussions designed to inspire the next generation of STEM enthusiasts. Recognized as a LinkedIn Top Voice in Technology and acclaimed STEM educator, Mr. Fascinate is a dynamic force reshaping science and tech education, known for pioneering immersive educational experiences,

leveraging cutting-edge technologies like 3D VFX, Virtual Production, and Generative AI.

### Closing on a Resonant Note

The final installment of the series, set for May 2, features **Kevin Kreider**, a fervent advocate for mental health and recovery. Known for his role in the Netflix series *Bling Empire*, Kreider will address mental wellness, a subject that has gained paramount importance in the aftermath of the global pandemic. This event is a testament to the College's commitment to



Justin "Mr. Fascinate" Shaifer

nurturing holistic well-being and fostering a supportive community.

As the Compelling Conversations Speaker Series continues its journey, it invites participants to embrace their



Kevin Kreider

authentic selves, learn from diverse voices, and channel their energies into meaningful change. With events spanning across cultural, social, and personal landscapes, this series encapsulates the spirit of transformation and unity, profoundly impacting all who partake in its discussions.

Compelling Conversations are free and open to the public. For more information, visit [bhcc.edu/cc](https://bhcc.edu/cc) ■

Follow the Compelling Conversations series at [bhcc.edu/magazine](https://bhcc.edu/magazine)



Robin Chandler, Pamela Ellis, Rhina Espailat, Cheryl Hamilton, Lenora Lee, Deborah Spears Moorehead, Nnenna Ogwo, and Rosalba Solis

# Origins Rematriated

**Artist residency celebrates the evolving history of women and art throughout the College's history**

In a bold and innovative move to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of BHCC, the College has formed an immersive two-year artist residency and transformative gender collective featuring eight artists: Robin Chandler, Pamela Ellis, Rhina Espailat, Cheryl Hamilton, Lenora Lee, Deborah Spears Moorehead, Nnenna Ogwo, and Rosalba Solis.

Built on principles of excellence, ethical practice, cultural stewardship, and motherhood, "Origins Rematriated" pays homage to the pivotal role women have played in empowering the nation and the College's disciplines in the sciences, humanities, and the arts. The Collective will serve as a catalyst for dialogue and critical reflection on shaping its future toward transformative change.

Guided by the wisdom of the two-eyed/seven generations vision—an

Indigenous perspective on spirituality that underscores the importance of considering multiple generations in decision-making, the Collective will be a space for critical discourse and reflection to provide a platform for asking profound questions about the institution's origins, and its path forward. This approach acknowledges not only the birth of children but also the birth of gender-balanced societies through the lens of regenerative womanhood. By merging interdisciplinary and intergenerational insights, BHCC seeks to honor the legacy of the four generations of women who have been educated within its walls.

One component of this initiative is the announcement of a documentary film project spanning 2023 to 2025. This film will delve into the intellectual productivity of BHCC, spotlighting its



pioneering artistic programming since 1973. Through a rich visual narrative, the documentary aims to unveil the stories of resilience, innovation, and empowerment that have marked BHCC's journey over the years.

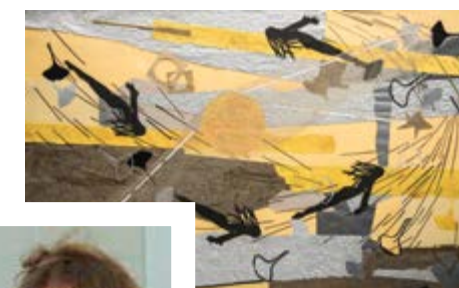
The artist residency, set to unfold concurrently, creatively explores the gender-focused themes underpinning "Origins Rematriated." A select group of artists will have the opportunity to engage with BHCC's community, its history, and the broader societal context to produce artworks that celebrate and interrogate the multifaceted aspects of women's narratives.

From societal uncertainty to shifts in policy, the BHCC community's engagement with "Origins Rematriated" couldn't be more timely. The initiative provides a guiding light towards creating a transformative impact on the College, its curriculum, and its administrative practices, all while celebrating the vibrant narratives that have shaped its past.

As BHCC strides confidently into its next chapter, it does so with a renewed commitment to embracing diversity, empowering women, and fostering a gender-balanced society. The Gender Collective and the artist residency stand as symbols of progress, representing not only the evolution of the College but also a beacon of inspiration for institutions across the nation. ■



Cheryl Hamilton (left) and 2019-2021 Distinguished Artist and Scholar in Residence Rhina P. Espailat (right) take part in the 2019 Learning Communities Institute "Integrating Arts, Equity, and Community through Teaching and Learning."



Left: Inaugural Distinguished Artist and Scholar in Residence Robin Chandler. Top: Capoeira (1988) Robin Chandler. Bottom: Slingshot Around the Sun (2000) Robin Chandler.

## Inspiration

"If American society judiciously modeled the traditions of the various Native Nations, the place of women in society would become central, the distribution of goods and power would be egalitarian, the elderly would be respected, honored, and protected as a primary social and cultural resource, the ideals of physical beauty would be considerably enlarged—to include "fat" strong-featured women, gray-haired, and wrinkled individuals, and others who in contemporary American culture are viewed as "ugly." Additionally, the destruction of the biota, the life sphere, and the natural resources of the planet would be curtailed, and the spiritual nature of human and nonhuman life would become a primary organizing principle of human society. And if the traditional tribal systems that are emulated included pacifist ones, war would cease to be a major method of human problem solving."

—Paula Gunn Allen, *Who Is Your Mother: Red Roots of White Feminism* (1986)



Granny Squant Strawberry Thanksgiving by Deborah Spears Moorehead, featured left at the College's 2019 Indigenous People's Day Celebration.



Rosalba Solis blows a conch shell during Artist Talk & Presentation beside Dia de los Muertos / Day of the Dead altar installation this fall.





## Some Kind of Girl: An African Girl Looking for America

English professor's compelling journey from Malawi to Boston challenges stereotypes and ignites conversations on diversity and ambition



BHCC launched its annual One

Book Program with a compelling reading and book signing by English Professor Caroline Kautsire. Her latest work, *Some Kind of Girl: An African Girl Looking for America*, delves into her journey as an immigrant from Malawi to Boston, challenging preconceived notions of the American dream.

Kautsire's memoir navigates the complexities of identity, race, gender, class, and sexuality against the backdrop

of immigration, work, and education in the U.S. The narrative sheds light on her realization that the America portrayed on television does not mirror the nuanced reality she encounters.

"As a BHCC faculty member, I know what a catalyst for conversation and learning the One Book Program has become," said Professor Kautsire. "I am looking forward to participating in those conversations over the course of the year."

Originally from Malawi, Africa, Kautsire currently resides in Boston, where she is a professor of English literature and

writing at BHCC. With a background in stage acting and directing, Kautsire's diverse experiences contribute to her ability to engage audiences through literature and the performing arts.

"I hear a lot of students say, 'This is me. I see myself here,' with excitement," said Naoko

Akai-Dennis, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Composition and Literature, and One Book Program Coordinator. "It is empowering for them to read the book in which their experiences and feelings are rendered and validated."

BHCC's One Book Program, initiated in 2007 by English Department Chair Jennifer Cohn, fosters a community-wide conversation by selecting a text that addresses contemporary issues. This shared reading experience encourages dialogue among students, faculty, and staff, exploring the text's impact on the community. Throughout the academic year, programming sustains discussions across disciplines, culminating in an annual event where the chosen author interacts with the student body.

"I have faith in the power of literature especially in this day and age when everything is compartmentalized like a nutshell," added Professor Naoko. "Sharing reading experiences and discussing what we found in a book not only fosters traditional literacy but also enriches our social and cultural literacies."

Caroline Kautsire's *Some Kind of Girl* now joins the esteemed list of past One Book selections, including *White Space: Essays on Culture, Race, and Writing* by Jennifer De Leon, *The Other Wes Moore* by Maryland Governor Wes Moore, and *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot. As BHCC embarks on a year of engaging discussions, Kautsire's narrative promises to inspire critical thinking and promote positive change within the college community. ■



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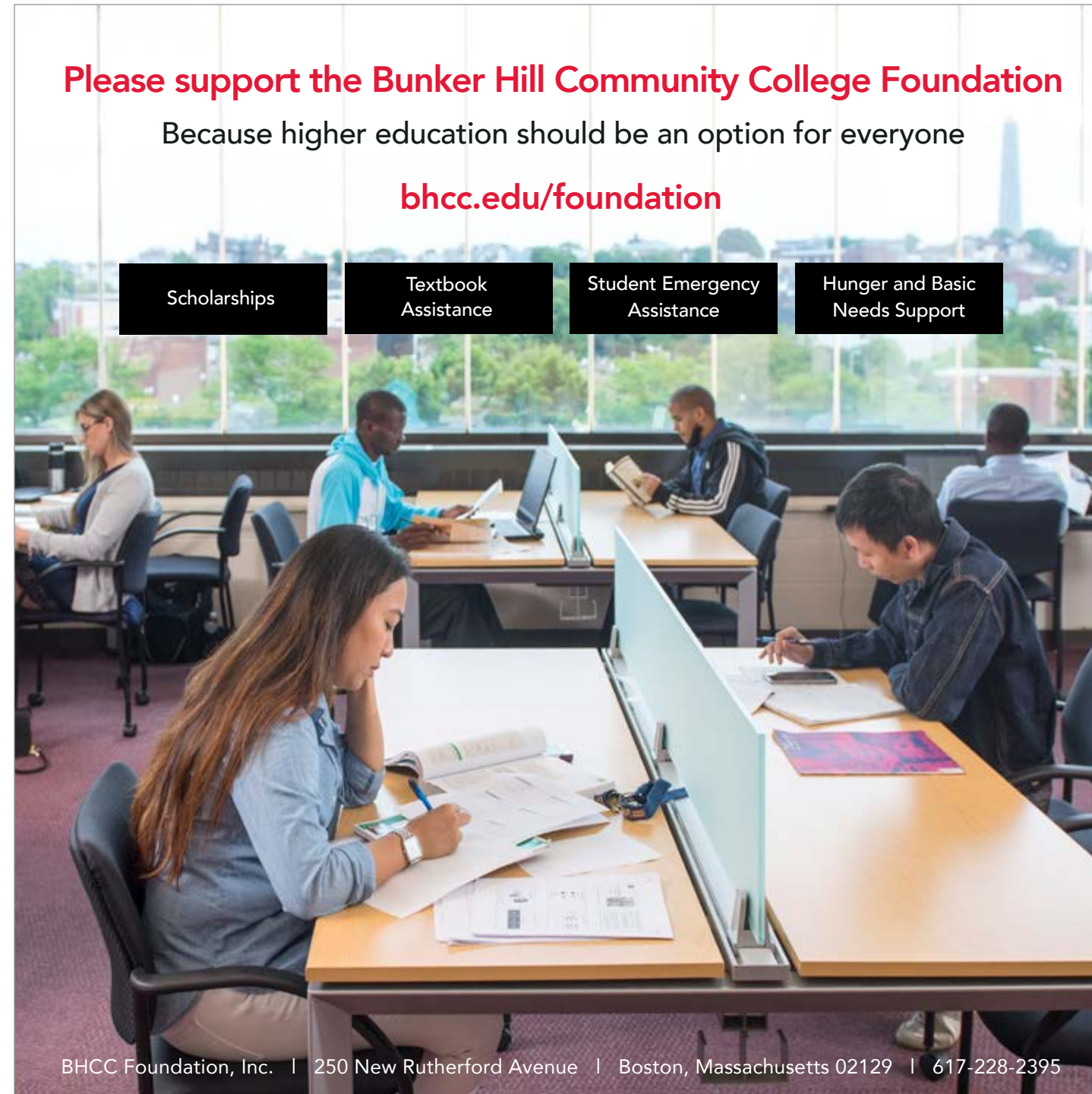
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