

Student Affairs Committee
BMCC-CUNY Academic Senate
End of Year Report for 2018-2019

May 23, 2019

Chair: Maureen T. Matarese

Representative to the Executive Committee: Maureen T. Matarese

Secretary: Sharon Brickman

Members: VP Marva Craig, Margaret Carson, Laurie Lomask

Committee members Sharon Brickman, Margaret Carson, Laurie Lomask, and VP Marva Craig are greatly thanked for their valuable contributions to the work of the committee this year.

This report will summarize

- 1) Existing initiatives
- 2) New initiatives
- 3) Recommendations for future initiatives and attention

1. Existing initiatives carried over from AY 2017-2018:

A. Starfish-Early Alert

The Student Affairs committee continued to facilitate feedback on the Starfish Early Alert system. In the fall, we contacted Assistant Dean for Academic Support Services Janice Zummo regarding the roll-out of the Starfish Early Alert system. Dean Zummo, John Huie, and Marcos Medina attended our October 3, 2018 meeting, and they reported that after last year, there were changes made to the system based on faculty feedback. The number of courses included in the program increased from 700 last year to 1,400 for the Fall 2018 semester. We invited Dean Zummo and her team back for the February 6, 2019 meeting. There was a wider roll out of the program in the Spring semester. While the number of participating faculty stayed the same, both the number of participating sections of courses and participating students increased. Over the course of the semester, we invited faculty to participate in the Starfish meetings to provide feedback, particularly as Starfish will be available (although not required) for all classes beginning Fall 2019.

B. First Generation/Panther Partner program

At the November 2018 meeting, Rahana Belle-Jerome and Joseph Ginese from New Student Programs spoke to committee members about the First Generation/Panther Partner program that pairs first-semester students with professional staff mentors. The program intends to increase support to first-generation students, and they sought Student Affairs for help in recruitment. Professor Lomask wrote an email to BMCC faculty and staff inviting them to participate in December, and Interim Provost Wong sent the email out to the college.

C. Islamophobia in at BMCC.

December 5, 2018 members of the Equity Task Force, Professors Soniya Munshi and Patricia Mathews were present and gave an overview of what the Equity Task Force does. As there is overlap between their goals and ours, with regard to issues of discrimination, we discussed working together to combat Islamophobia on campus. There was extensive debate in the committee regarding the kind of event we should have, and at our March 6, 2019 meeting, we welcomed members of the BMCC Muslim Student Association to discuss what kind of event they would find supportive. The MSA president, Talibah Khwaja suggested workshops to help educate and break down misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, and the student group discussed events to create spaces for Muslim students to vent and discuss Islamophobia. The committee decided there was a need to create an event that would both draw in and educate non-Muslim students while also supporting the Muslim student body.

In our meeting April 3, 2019, we agreed on an event featuring Ms. Marvel—the first female Muslim superhero. After the May 8, 2019 meeting, Professors Lomask and Matarese drew up a proposal for this event, including lectures by Sana Amanat—famed editor at Marvel comics who was brought on specifically to edit Ms. Marvel—and A. David Lewis the leading scholar on Muslim superheroes. The library has already ordered copies of Ms. Marvel in preparation for the event. Professor Matarese sent the proposal to Interim Provost Wong on May 23, 2019, and we are awaiting approval and funding. Pending approval, the event is scheduled for October 30, 2019 from 2-4 in N452; the working title is *Kismet, Ms. Marvel, and the Evolution of the Muslim Superhero*. The committee would like to also thank Professor James Blake for his time and for helpful conversations on these issues.

We also addressed an issue regarding the scheduling of an Arabic language course during traditional prayer time. This course has been moved to a time more convenient for heritage Arabic learners.

Per the request of the MSA, we also worked with Scott Anderson to ensure that paper towel dispensers were replaced in the bathroom closest to the reflection room for ablutions prior to prayer.

2. New Initiatives

A. ICE on BMCC Campus: Prior to the November 7, 2018 meeting, we were made aware that ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) was on BMCC campus for a job fair. We confirmed with career services that they were not invited to the November job fair. In the November 28, 2018 meeting of Academic Senate, we made the following motion: “Recommendation to be made to Student Affairs office and Career services that ICE personnel should not be allowed to come on campus for recruitment.” The vote passed with one abstention. After pursuing a formal response from administration, on February 28, 2019, Interim President Wilks provided the following:

RESPONSE TO ACADEMIC SENATE RESOLUTION ON ICE AND CAREER FAIRS

The privacy and well-being of our students are of paramount concern to the college.

We recognize that the mere presence of Immigration and Customs Agents (ICE), particularly those in ICE attire, is threatening to some of our students. For this reason, we feel it is appropriate to place the College's response to the presence of ICE agents on campus in a broader context.

While the college must obey the law, it will not voluntarily assist the federal government with immigration enforcement, will not voluntarily comply with ICE administrative warrants unless accompanied by a judicial warrant, and will not invite ICE to attend campus career fairs.

If an ICE agent appears on campus for any purpose, they will be detained in the Office of Public Safety and the College's Legal Counsel will meet with them there to discuss the purpose of their visit and determine whether they must be permitted on campus.

We would like to thank Interim President Wilks for her time and attention on this important matter. We reviewed and approved this language in our meeting on March 4, 2019.

B. Free menstrual supplies for all menstruating individuals on BMCC Campus

In our August 29, 2018 meeting we discussed providing free menstrual supplies to all menstruating individuals. VP Craig and Scott Anderson worked with the Student Affairs committee to ensure that supplies extended beyond the Women's Center. They are now freely available in multiple places across the main campus, including the Women's Center, the Health Center, Single Stop, and the BMCC Food Pantry. Moreover, low or no cost machines are being installed in both Murray and Fiterman, in connection with renovations in both buildings. We anticipate being able to roll out these free products along with a destigmatization campaign around menstruation in Fall 2019.

D. All gender access bathrooms

Across the course of the semester, we pursued a response to gender-based violence and discrimination on campus in campus bathrooms. The bathroom renovation project has nearly concluded, and there are bathrooms in several locations across campus that are single-stall, lockable bathrooms that help protect the safety of students, staff, and faculty in need of safe spaces. Single-stall, lockable bathrooms are still under development in Fiterman and Murray. However, the legal information posted outside each bathroom has been repeatedly defaced and/or taken down. In the final academic senate meeting, Scott Anderson stated that plastic shields would be used to ensure that the signage could not be removed.

E. Student feedback

It came to the attention of the committee that while Starfish exists, some faculty still use the paper Academic Warning Form. Moreover, the BART form also exists but provides feedback on more disruptive behavior. The Student Affairs Committee recommends that a BMCC webpage be dedicated to explaining the different forms of feedback available for faculty/staff. We also recommend a single email in the beginning of each semester explaining the three modalities to all instructional staff and faculty.

F. Student Printing

In our final meeting, May 8, 2019, Kathleen Dreyer from the Library spoke to us about the challenges students face in printing on campus. For example, students who are not enrolled in summer or winter intersession classes cannot print in certain areas of the college (e.g. LRC, the library, etc.), despite being enrolled in Fall and Spring semesters. VP Craig offered to discuss with Dean Zummo what the budget is for student printing. It is worth noting that a loophole exists that allows students to print more than the daily allotted amount. VP Craig is also looking into this.

3. Recommendations for next year's Committee:

1. Brainstorm at first meeting as to new projects/specific steps that will enhance student college experience.
2. Continue to assist in the recruitment of faculty mentors for the First Generation/Panther Partner program.
3. Continue to track roll-out of Starfish Early Alert system.
4. Seek closure on the roll out of menstrual products and safe, all-gender access bathrooms.
5. Follow up on the student printing issue
6. Our event to draw attention to and deflate Islamophobia on campus is scheduled for October 30, 2019 from 2-4 in N452. Working title: *Kismet, Ms. Marvel, and the Evolution of the Muslim Superhero*. The committee will need to finish planning the event including:
 - a. Securing co-sponsorship and funding (including collaborating with student clubs, ethnic studies, etc.)
 - b. Program creation and printing
 - c. Advertising
 - d. Coordinating with the speakers
 - e. Coordinating with MBJ
 - f. Coordinating with the Library
7. Request more faculty members on the Student Affairs Committee and continued diversity in members.
8. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of having a dedicated student from SGA attending our meetings. We hope for a speedier process of assigning students to committees and more dedicated student attendance to the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen T. Matarese
Associate Professor, Academic Literacy and Linguistics