CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies

ANNUAL REPORT 2025–2026

Esse sui generis

Building Engagement

CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies

Esse sui generis

Giving CUNY students access to excellence - Since 1971

POWERFUL NETWORK

With over 8,400 alumni for over 50 years, the CUNY Baccalaureate has opened doors to students from all CUNY campuses, welcoming students across CUNY, including returning adult students, and students with unique interests.

8,400+ ALUMNI

FUTURE-FORWARD LEARNING

CUNY BA seeks to:

- Make excellent, meaningful, flexible, and innovative, education, and intellectual exploration accessible.
- Empower students to build future forward, interdisciplinary programs of study, allowing learners to draw different disciplinary perspectives to explore topic that is too complex to address with a single discipline.
- Prepare students for fields of studying careers that don't even exist yet.

STUDENT SUPPORT

- CUNY BA unites a constellation of student support, including an academic advisor, faculty mentor, robust community of students and alumni, and CUNY home campus.
- Thanks to generous donors, the program gave over $315,000 of direct student scholarships in 2025-2026.

$315,000

ALUMNI SUCCESS

Employment

ALUMNI OFFERED JOBS AT

- CitiBank, KPMG, Bank of America
- Google, Microsoft
- Apple
- The Walt Disney Company
- US Department of State
- Columbia Presbyterian Hospital
- Oscar Health
- Spotify
- NYC Dept of Health
- Vera Institute of Justice
- YouTube
- Hetrick Martin Institute
- International Rescue Committee
- Accenture
- Buzzfeed

Graduate Schools

ALUMNI WERE ACCEPTED AT

- Harvard and Berkeley Law
- Yale, Brown, and Penn doctoral programs
- London School of Economics
- Harvard Divinity
- University of Cambridge
- CUNY Graduate Center

STUDENT SUCCESS & AWARDS

- Over 70% 4-year graduation rate
- Approximately 70% of students graduate with Latin Honors
- Awards include:
- 20 Fulbright Awards,
- 1 Marshall Scholar
- 2 Truman Scholars (plus 2 finalists)
- 2 Emmy Awards
- and many more!

THE POWER OF DESIGNING YOUR OWN DEGREE

www.CUNYBA.CUNY.edu

The CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies exemplifies CUNY's commitment to academic innovation, student-centered learning, and educational opportunity. Each year, our students demonstrate extraordinary creativity, determination, and intellectual curiosity as they design individualized programs of study that reflect their unique goals and aspirations. Their achievements remind us that some of the most meaningful learning occurs at the intersection of disciplines, ideas, and experiences.

These accomplishments are made possible by a dedicated community of faculty mentors, members of the University Committee, and academic leaders across CUNY. Their guidance ensures that every individualized program meets the highest standards of academic rigor while empowering students to pursue distinctive educational pathways.

This year marked several significant milestones for CUNY BA. In October, we celebrated more than 1,100 Thomas W. Smith Academic Fellows who have benefited from Foundation support since 1994—a testament to the transformative impact of this investment in student success. Our Giving Tuesday campaign received University-wide recognition, reflecting the strength of our community and the generosity of our supporters. We also hosted a record number of alumni events and expanded opportunities for alumni engagement, strengthening lifelong connections to CUNY BA.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the CUNY BA staff for their professionalism, dedication, and unwavering commitment to our students. I am especially grateful to Academic Director Jody Clark Vaisman for her exceptional leadership and steadfast dedication to advancing CUNY BA's mission.

We are also fortunate to benefit from the contributions of our CUNY Graduate Center Fellows, whose mentorship, scholarship, and enthusiasm enrich our community and strengthen the connection between undergraduate and graduate education.

As we celebrate this year's graduates, award recipients, and student leaders, we also recognize the broader community that makes these accomplishments possible. To our students, faculty, staff, Fellows, alumni, and supporters: thank you for your commitment to this extraordinary program. Together, we continue to advance a tradition of innovation, excellence, and opportunity that defines CUNY BA.

With best wishes,

Brian A. Peterson
Dean, CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies

Dear CUNY BA Community,

With the end of the 2025-2026 academic year, we celebrate and reflect on the meaning and highlights of this year. Our work this year focused on engagement: with students, faculty, fellows, donors, and ideas!

- This year, we were honored by CUNY BA alumnus Eric Santiago, class of 1999, who generously created a scholarship and special graduation awards honoring his parents, immigrants who advocated for education, Miguel and Magdalena Santiago.
- We held 50 virtual and in-person workshops and events, including our newest workshop on developing a personal statement and a lively discussion on the pros and cons of using GenAI. We discussed ethical ways to approach GenAI as a tool to explore designing a unique major in a way that safeguards critical thinking so important to student growth.
- This spring our Student Leadership Council worked with the Learning Partnership Program to host a movie night and discussion, bringing two Graduate Center communities together.
- We are proud to have supported 40 CUNY BA students in studying abroad over the past two years, through the Barbara Price Experiential Learning Scholarship. This scholarship supports Laureates participating in high-impact learning experiences.
- We concluded the year with our Student Showcase, a dynamic celebration of the creativity, intellect, and interdisciplinary vision that defines CUNY BA. Designed by our Doctoral Fellows, the Showcase format expanded to feature posters and exhibits, as well as presentations. The wide array of projects was an illustration of the wide array of areas of expertise among our unique students.
- We engaged in thought work, exploring ideas and literatures on how to best support interdisciplinary, individualized major students. The CUNY BA staff participated in record numbers of professional development activities, including the 2026 IMP Network national conference and the NYU Student Affairs Conference.

We are profoundly grateful to each of you for your continued support of CUNY BA. We look forward to continuing to build community engagement together. *Esse sui generis*!

Sincerely,

Jody Clark Vaisman

Jody Clark Vaisman, PhD
Academic Director
CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique & Interdisciplinary Studies

OUR MISSION

INTERDISCIPLINARY and INDIVIDUALZED STUDY

- Make excellent, meaningful, flexible, and innovative education accessible to CUNY students.

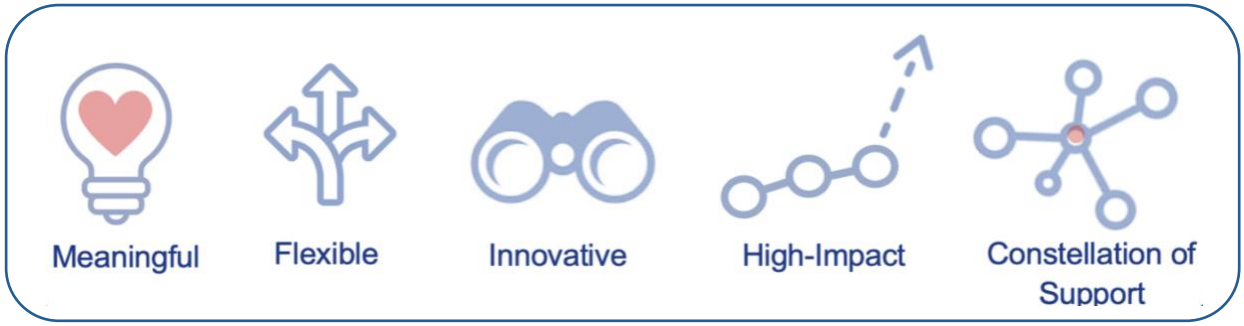
- Empower students to build future-forward, interdisciplinary programs of study, allowing learners to draw on different disciplinary perspectives to explore a topic that is too complex to address with a single discipline (Klein & Newell, 1996) and to prepare for fields of study and careers that don't yet exist.

- Unite a constellation of support around the student, including an academic advisor, faculty mentor, robust community of students and alumni, funding opportunities, and home campus.

CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies

A Future Forward Education

The CUNY BA is the interdisciplinary, individualized major across CUNY, an award-winning engine of social mobility. Created in 1971, the major allows students to create their own area of specialization outside of traditional majors. The interdisciplinary approach encourages students to draw on different disciplinary perspectives, integrate their learning, and to explore a topic that is too broad or complex to address with a single discipline (Klein & Newell, 1997). Interdisciplinary work represents the future of knowledge, allowing students to "think outside the box," and in some cases, to consider the world's great problems. See sample majors, called areas of concentration, on the program website.



Like a more accessible honors program, students receive additional support, such as an assigned academic advisor, exclusive access to scholarships, and the opportunity to build relationships while working directly with faculty mentors and the CUNY BA community, which includes staff, faculty, student leaders, campus coordinators, and allies. Students in the major have greater access to high-impact learning opportunities

Individualized majors are an important nexus of equity, giving students access to excellent, meaningful, personalized education. While requirements to apply to CUNY BA are minimal (12 college credits and a 2.8 GPA), CUNY BA students are highly successful, with an average 73% of students graduating with Latin honors.

Applied Interdisciplinarity: Breadth and Depth of Fields of Study across CUNY BA

Student Opportunities

Laureate Leaders:
5 Student Leadership Development Opportunities

CUNY BA offered five leadership opportunities this year, requiring partnership with various facets of the CUNY BA, including recruitment, event planning, and program governance. Two CUNY BA Doctoral Fellows oversaw three student leadership groups for CUNY BA, with guidance from staff: the CUNY BA Student Leadership Council, Peer Mentor program, and student Ambassador program.

For 2025-2026, fellows also oversaw a special grant-funded initiative of youth-led service projects. In these roles, Doctoral Fellows recruited, trained, supervised, and help facilitate activities. In addition, five student representatives served on the CUNY BA University Committee governance group, working with faculty and administrators.

2025-2026 Student Leadership Engagement

Ambassadors
- Fall 2025: 4
- Spring 2026: 4
- Total: 8

Peer Mentors & Mentees
- Fall 2025: 27
- Spring 2026: 23
- Total: 50

Service Project Leaders
- Fall 2025-Spring 2026: 5

Student Leadership Council
Executive Board
- 6 Members

Student Representatives to UC Governance
- 5 Representatives

Special Opportunities: Accelerated Graduate Degree Master's Programs

CUNY BA students have a remarkable opportunity to accelerate their academic and professional journeys through our "plus one year" Master's degree programs. Designed to help driven undergraduates get ahead on their graduate coursework, these accelerated pathways offer a specialized admission process that streamlines their transition into advanced studies. Accepted students can seamlessly complete between 9 and 18 credits of graduate-level work while still finishing their bachelor's degree, saving both valuable time and tuition costs as they build a strong foundation for their future careers.

Currently, the accelerated graduate degree initiative partners with four highly regarded Master's programs across the CUNY system. Students can pursue the Master's in Liberal Studies at the Graduate Center, School of Public Health, Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, and, most recently, the initiative expanded to include the Master's in Urban Sustainability at the City College of New York. As the newest program in the portfolio, this partnership offers a cutting-edge pathway for CUNY BA students dedicated to addressing the environmental and climate resilience challenges of the modern urban landscape by drawing on emerging approaches in the disciplines of architecture, engineering, science, and the social sciences.

Community Building

Laureate Community Building Activities

This year, with the goal of building community, CUNY BA staff and Doctoral Fellows hosted 50 events, including academic and professional workshops, alumni events, student leader trainings, and information sessions.

2025-2026 Highlights

- New Student Orientations (August 19; January 21, 2026)
- Doctoral Fellows Onboarding Orientation (August 20–22)
- 2 Study Abroad Workshops (September 5; February 6)
- 14 information sessions: 5 Fall 2025; 7 Spring 2026; 2 summer 2026
- 4 Advanced AoC Strategy Sessions (September 8; November 18; February 19; April 29)
- 2 Scholarships & Funding Opportunities Workshops (September 12; February 13)
- 2 Peer Mentor Leadership Training (September 18; February 27)
- 4 Finding a Faculty Mentor Workshops (September 25 & 29; February 25 & 26)
- 3 Peer Mentor Program Orientations (October 6; October 7; February 20)
- 4 Works in Progress sessions (October 10; October 27; November 13; February 3)
- Smith Fellowship Awards Ceremony (October 14)
- Student Ambassador Training (October 16)
- 2 Telling My CUNY BA Story Persuasively (October 31; March 3)
- Alumni Panel & Community Celebration (November 6)
- 3 Peer Advising Sessions (Nov. 19 Game Design; March 16 STEM, Health Sciences, and Pre-Med)
- AI Round Table (March 11)
- Community Trip to the Intrepid Museum (March 19)
- Is Grad School Right for Me? Panel (March 26)
- Personal Statement Writing Workshop (April 9)
- Student Leadership Council and LP2 Movie Night (April 14)
- Resume and CV Workshop (April 15)
- Student Showcase Virtual Rehearsals (April 24; April 29)
- Alumni Networking Social Event (April 28)
- Student Showcase (May 5)
- CUNY BA Commencement (June 4)

CUNY BA Student Highlights

2026 Student Showcase

The end of year **Student Showcase**, a dynamic celebration of the creativity, intellect, and interdisciplinary vision, defines CUNY BA. Each project illustrated the expertise students have developed during their unique paths of study. The Doctoral Fellows oversaw this important event recruiting students, dramatically increasing participation this year, again. Further, Doctoral Fellows coached presenters. The host of the ceremony was a CUNY BA student, Andrew Acevedo, held in the Graduate Center's William P. Kelly Skylight Room.

2026 CUNY BA Showcase Presenter Profiles

Raneem Abdelghafar

- Project: *InsightFlow AI: Transforming Fragmented Business Data into Decision-Ready Systems*
- Area of Concentration: Artificial Intelligence and Digital Marketing
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Myles Bassell, Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship, Brooklyn College

Raneem Abdelghafar is a student specializing in Artificial Intelligence and Digital Marketing, with a strong focus on leveraging data-driven systems to improve business performance and decision-making. Through hands-on experience across marketing, sales, and operations, she has worked with performance metrics, analytics, and cross-functional workflows to support growth and execution. Her featured project, InsightFlow AI, was developed to address a common challenge in organizations: fragmented and inconsistent data. The system is designed to clean, standardize, and structure raw Excel data into reliable, dashboard-ready outputs for tools such as Microsoft Power BI, enabling clearer insights and more effective decision-making. Raneem is particularly interested in the intersection of AI, data analytics, and digital strategy, and is focused on building systems that transform raw data into actionable business intelligence.

Andrew Acevedo

- Area of Concentration: Multimedia Storytelling
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Ashley Velez, English, John Jay College

Andrew Acevedo is a sexagenarian alum of Prison-to-College Pathways, a graduating CUNY BA student with Bachelor of Science degrees in Multimedia Storytelling and Journalism, a Thomas W. Smith Fellow and a member of Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society. He appeared in the John Jay College of Criminal Justice stage productions of *Antigone-in-Progress* and *The Lysistrata Project*. The Music, Multimedia, Theatre and Dance Department of Lehman College recently selected his short screenplay, *Time for Sage Advice?* as a film project, and his videography of a formerly incarcerated student, "Capers in Community Justice" can be found on the website of The John Jay Sentinel.

Leah Aguirre

- Project: *Break Bread*
- Areas of Concentration: Emerging Technology and Storytelling in Design; Music Production and Performance

Leah Aguirre is a multi-business founder who worked with companies including Rolls-Royce, the NYPD, and Jameson. She returned to school to learn the skills to start a socially impactful business and is currently studying Business & Behavioral Science and Virtual Reality Development. She was selected for a Change Makers student leadership grant of $3K to organize a cross-cultural event and elected as a CUNY BA University Committee Student Board Member. She's also the co-founder and President of KOL club. This summer, she'll be working as a Strategy Consultant at Monitor Deloitte.

Glenn De La Cruz

- Project: *Exquisite Humans*
- Area of Concentration: Art, Religion and Cultural Narratives
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Wendy Raver, Religion, Hunter College

Glenn De La Cruz is a CUNY BA student, studying art, religion, and cultural narratives. With a concentration in ceramics, their work explores how material practices reflect belief systems and storytelling.

Karina Fernandez-Saito

- Project: *Burdens of Latina Dementia Caregiving*
- Area of Concentration: Ethics in Health and Culture
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Patricia Antoniello, Anthropology, Brooklyn College

Karina Fernandez-Saito (she/her) is a student of the 2026 class in the CUNY BA program, with her home campus being Brooklyn College. Through the CUNY BA program Karina was able to create an interdisciplinary degree, combining the sciences and humanities to design her major, Ethics in Culture and Health. The field of cognitive science influenced the trajectory of her major. Then branched into analyzing how cultural values and societal structures contribute to a person's health and mind. Alongside building her major, Karina has conducted research examining the disproportionate responsibility of caregiving Latina women take on, and the burdens that result from assuming the role of dementia caregiving. Karina continues to broaden her knowledge about social injustices occurring throughout the world and hopes to devote her life to the well-being of marginalized groups.

Du Lam

- Project: *Helldivers 2 and the Unity of an Online Community*
- Area of Concentration: Game Narrative
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Nicholas Fortugno, Gaming Pathways, City College

Du Lam is a Brooklyn-based game designer. He's a soon-to-be Bachelor's in Game Narrative in Hunter College under the CUNY Baccalaureate Program. He is also currently a part time SEEK peer mentor for 3 mentees in the SEEK program. Du has worked as a level designer, art project manager, and game designer on several game projects alongside his academic work. His showcase focuses on a game he frequently plays called Helldivers 2. In this, he'll go over how Helldivers 2 impacts real world community and Unity.

Cherry Leung

- Project: *Shrike: Performance turned Exploitation turned Rebellion*
- Areas of Concentration: Asian American, LGBTQIA; Psychopathology and Neuro
- Faculty Mentors: Prof. Ramdass, English, Baruch College; Prof. Sitt, Psychology, Baruch College

Cherry Leung is a senior at Macaulay Honors College, Baruch, with areas of concentration in Psychopathology and Neurodiversity, and "Queering Asians: Texts and Textures of othered identities," the latter concerning intersections of Asian Studies, Gender Theory, and Literature. As a 2025 Critical Language Scholarship alumna for Japan and former environmental psychology researcher, she seeks not only to build connections through language and literature, but also to investigate how art is used to connect communities and rebuild post-environmental crises in East Asia. She hopes to explore how mental health strides have been made in East Asian countries and diaspora communities alike. Newly anointed as an opera enthusiast and student, her upcoming novel extracts from Breton folklore, the history of the Ballet and Opera, queer theory, psychoanalysis, theories of Orientalism, and the politics of performance. In the future, she plans to become a lyric soprano and attain a PhD in English Literature.

Ronique Prince-Adams

- Project: *Education as Ideological Outreach: Soviet Influence in Guyana*
- Areas of Concentration: Political Philosophy; Africana Studies

Ronique Prince-Adams is a junior at Brooklyn College in the CUNY BA program and the SEEK program studying Law & Government and Africana studies. Her interests include exploring African diasporic communities and their presence and involvement in international spaces. Currently, Ronique is conducting research on education as ideological outreach as a method to strengthen and spread communism in Guyana. After studying abroad in Ghana, she became increasingly interested in relearning the histories of exchanges among the African diaspora and the rest of the world.

Zara Ali Cimone Scott

- Project: *Black Art Is Enhancing Black Student Morale, Visibility and Community Through Student-Led Arts Initiatives*
- Areas of Concentration: Integrative Nutritional Planning; Studio Art: Mixed Media
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Nicole Kras, Human Services, Guttman Community College

Zara Cimone is a multifaceted painter and interdisciplinary based in Brooklyn, New York. Raised in Avondale, Arizona, Zara is a student leader and soon-to-be graduate from Hunter College where she will receive her CUNY BA degree in Studio Art: Mixed Media & Integrative Nutrition Psychology. Since moving to New York in late 2022, Zara has participated in over 60 gallery exhibitions, has sold several original and custom artworks, and has taught painting and crafting in a variety of professional environments. In addition, Zara has spent each February at Hunter College producing & curating student art showcases for Black History Month to amplify Black vitality, ingenuity and community. Zara approaches life with joy, curiosity and imagination, and she plans continue uplifting Black folk through her artistic practice and in future dynamic realms.

Madeline Scrace

- Project: *Just Jesting: Women Aren't Funny (But Their Doctors Are)*
- Area of Concentration: Being Bodied: Faith, Sex, and Narrative Agency
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Wendy Raver, Religion, Hunter College

Madeline Scrace (aka Madge) is an Australian born, Brooklyn based interdisciplinary writer, artist, and filmmaker, currently studying to become a sex therapist. Her work primarily centers chronic vulvovaginal and pelvic pain; an arena that is grossly under-researched, underfunded, and under-represented in medicine, art, politics and beyond. She is the writer, creator, and lead actor of MASHED: an award-winning limited television series based on her personal experiences with vaginismus. Outside of film, Madge works in ceramics to create artistic and totemic representations of vaginal dilators, sex toys, and gynecological tools and continues to research and write both academically and personally about all things gynecology, kink, pelvic health, intimacy, and vaginal iconography in religion. Her most recent collection of personal essays explores her relationship to kink and psychotherapy through the embodied lens of vaginal pain, excerpts of which have been performed at Joe's Pub in the Public Theater in New York City.

Kilhah St Fort

- Project: *"Better Safe than Sorry": Racialized and Queer Family Policing through Mandatory Reporting*
- Area of Concentration: Science, Technology, and Society
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Larry Au, Sociology, City College

Kilhah St Fort (they/she) studies Data, Technology & Society, which is focused on examining the sociopolitical implications of big data and other emerging technologies. In addition to technology policy, other areas of interest include Black feminism, the criminal legal system, Caribbean history, and LGBTQ issues. For her senior capstone, she has been working on an analysis of how mandatory reporting functions as a surveillance apparatus for Black queer families. When they're not working on their studies, Kilhah enjoys reading, crocheting, making jewelry, sketching, rewatching Bob's Burgers, and doomscrolling on Twitter.

Ken Pardo Torrijos

- Project: *Quantitative approach to martial arts: Combining pose estimation with behavioral annotations to analyze size mismatch effects in judo matches*
- Area of Concentration: Neuroscience
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. Jon Horvitz, Psychology, City College

Ken Pardo Torrijos is a junior neuroscience student at The City College of New York, also enrolled at Queens College through CUNYBA. A South Bronx native and lifelong wrestler, he brings a credible relationship with combat sports to his research. His work uses behavioral coding software (BORIS), R studio, and several other computational methods to quantify strategic patterns in elite judo competition, analyzing behavioral transitions and movement sequences across several years for the All Men Japan Judo Championships. Ken is affiliated with CCNY's URSIE, CCAPP program, supported by AMSNY, and serves as President of the CCNY Neuroscience Club.

Mati Wysocki

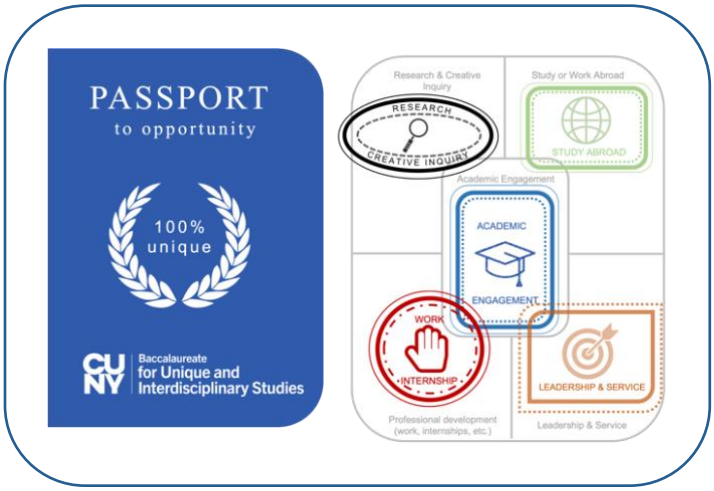
- Project: *Reticulum and the World of Mesh Networking*
- Area of Concentration: Liberation-Centered Cybersecurity
- Faculty Mentor: Prof. David Arnow, Computer and Information Science, Brooklyn College

Mati Wysocki is finishing her degree in liberation centric cybersecurity. She wants to address the massive inequality of resources in who gets to be safe in our physical and digital landscape and wants to challenge the militarization of the security field and collaborate with friends and neighbors on the margins to build a more private and equitable infrastructure while fighting for a world free of prisons, policing, and racial capitalism.

Student Support

Academic Advisement

- Advisors provided general academic advisement, meeting with students, conducting credit checks and graduation audits, and support as needed throughout the year. During the admissions process, advisors meet with each incoming student, helping them complete applications and register (e.g., navigating ePermits and registering for courses University-wide.)
- Three times a year, (October, April & July), the advisors, Academic Director, and Registrar conduct a holistic review of active students and twice a year (January & June), review sessions to track academic standing and student success, offering additional support and intervention if needed.
- The advisors facilitated workshops and events, including Finding a Faculty Mentor, New Student Orientations, and others. The advisors revised materials, including the Student Handbook, CUNY BA 101 Orientation online module, and other materials for the admissions onboarding process. New materials include a refreshed program website, and new materials supporting the Narrative roadmap assignment.



- The advisors facilitated workshops and events, including Finding a Faculty Mentor, Personal Statement Writing, New Student Orientations, Peer Advising Sessions and others. The advisors revised materials, including the Program Handbook. New materials include a refreshed program website, an Academic Advising Syllabus and new materials supporting the Narrative roadmap assignment.
- Kate McPherson serves on the CUNY-wide Advising and International Education Councils.
- In the 2025-2026 Senior Survey, CUNY BA students reported very high rates of satisfaction with academic advisement and advising materials, such as the CUNY BA website and Student Handbook (of students who used the Handbook).

Increasing Access to Study Abroad

- Advisors continued to partner with Scholarships and the CUNY BA team to promote study abroad and to help confirm eligibility for Barbara Price Experiential Learning Scholarships for Study Abroad.

This year, Laureates studied abroad in five continents:
Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Spain, Taiwan, and the UK

Scholarships

This year, CUNY Baccalaureate offered seven scholarships exclusively to CUNY BA students.

- **Barbara Price Scholarship** for first-semester CUNY BA students), is a one-time award of $2,500 for new students in the program.
- **Barbara Price Experiential Learning Scholarship,** for All CUNY BA students increases access to three types of high-impact experiential learning opportunities: study abroad, undergraduate research and creative inquiry, and unpaid internships.
- **B. Diane Gibson Memorial Fund** (for Nontraditional Students) honoring CUNY BA alumna B. Diane Gibson, this $1,000 scholarship is for nontraditional CUNY BA students who embody Diane's spirit.
- **The Anne Duncan Somsen Memorial Fund** (for First-Generation Students). CUNY Baccalaureate alumna Pennell Somsen established this fund, in memory of her mother, to support CUNY BA students who are the first in their families to pursue a college education.
- **The Barbara Sproul Scholarship** (for students in Religious Studies) Established in honor of Religious Studies Professor and CUNY BA Faculty Mentor, Barbara Sproul, supporting CUNY BA students who are pursuing religious studies or a related interdisciplinary field.
- **The Memorial Scholarship** for Students in Social Work, Human Services, Health or Education, from Mary Beth and Richard Ketchum in memory of their parents, for CUNY BA students studying, working in, or preparing for careers in health, human services, social welfare or education.
- **The Thomas W. Smith Academic Fellowship** (renewable award for academic excellence) are funded through a donation by Mr. Thomas W. Smith to recognize academic excellence. Awards are renewable and full-time students receive up to $4,000 per semester, more than the cost of attendance.

CUNY BA gave over
$1.5M
in scholarships in
the last five years, 2021-2026

Total 2025-2026
122 Scholarships
$315K

For 2025-2026, CUNY BA gave seven types of scholarships, totaling 122 awards and $315,000 in direct funding to students.

AWARD	FALL 2025	SPRING 2026	TOTAL
Price Scholarship	13	11	24
Price Experiential Learning	6	7	13
Gibson Award	6	0	6
Somsen Award	7	5	12
Sproul Scholarship	3	1	4
Memorial Scholarship	6	4	10
Smith Fellowship	26	27	53
TOTAL	**67**	**55**	**122**

Doctoral Fellows

CUNY BA – Graduate Center Doctoral Fellows

Each year, the CUNY BA provides seven doctoral students with the paid opportunity to gain substantive administrative experience, develop professional competencies, and build a distinguished portfolio of accomplishments, while playing a key role in supporting the program. The cohort of Fellows provides vital support to the program in recruitment, grant-writing, assessment, community-building, communication, event planning, student leadership development, peer mentoring, and academic- and professional-skill building workshops and events. Each year, a Senior Fellow is selected to lead the cohort of doctoral students to assist the program in five major areas:

- **Academic enrichment** helping offer regular academic and professional workshops, such as applying to graduate school. Workshops focus on increasing access to Kuh's (2008) high-impact opportunities, for example, the end of year Student Showcase.

- **Recruitment** coaching prospective student applicants; conducting outreach to prospective students on opportunities in the program; represent the program at admissions events; creating recruitment materials; responding to student inquiries, leading events and information sessions.

- **Communication strategies** to engage the CUNY BA community, including current and prospective students, faculty mentors, alumnx, and allies. Projects include writing press releases and student stories for social media, newsletter, and the program webpage. Student stories focus on their creation of majors, lessons learned, outcomes, and advice to other students.

- **Student leadership development** overseeing three paraprofessional opportunities for CUNY BA students: the Student Leadership Council (SLC); Peer Mentor program and student Ambassadors' programs, including recruitment; SLC elections, student leadership development and training, guidance and problem-solving.

- **Special projects** such as grant-writing, assessment, analyzing survey data, and other special opportunities. In 2025-2026, one Fellow oversaw an eportfolio pilot for CUNY BA students and two Fellows coordinated microgrants for self-designed service projects, including recruiting students, running the selection committee process, notifying students, and accountability review and reporting.

Two Special Initiatives: EPortfolio Pilot & Service Microgrants

In additions to assessment, project management, and redesign of the CUNY BA newsletter, two special projects this year led by Doctoral Fellows included the pilot of an eportfolio to curate student learning artifacts and $15,000 in microgrants funded by a grant for youth-led community service projects.

About the 2025-2026 CUNY BA Doctoral Fellows

- **Flora Brandl (Senior Fellow):** Academic specialization focuses on global art history and contemporary African art, with a dissertation tracing the connections between neoliberal reform and artistic production in Ghana during the 1980s and 1990s.
- **Chelsea Joliet:** Research centers on international relations and political violence, specifically exploring the internationalization of the far-right and the dissemination of tactics of disruption.
- **Justine Lyons:** Intellectual focus involves sociology and women's and gender studies, with dissertation research examining conflict-related violence against women in Cameroon's two regional crises.
- **Casey Berner:** Academic exploration covers theatre history and popular culture, specifically concentrating on musical theatre, commercial failure, and institutional practices as dramaturgy.
- **Stefanie Wess:** Scholarly focus encompasses English and composition pedagogy, with a particular research interest in historical and modern reading practices and literacies.
- **Joe Riccio:** Research in comparative literature examines carceral imaginaries, popular media, and utopian fictions within the context of the carceral state.
- **Hui Peng:** Research in theatre and performance program explores disability studies, audience spectatorship, and the intersections between access aesthetics and relaxed performance.

Learning Outcomes for CUNY BA Doctoral Fellows

By taking on important responsibilities in the various departments of CUNY BA, Doctoral Fellows gain real-world skills. This applied learning is grouped according to the NACE Career Readiness Competencies into four major skillset areas: communication, leadership development, project management, and professionalism. Sample learning outcomes include:

Communication

- Confidently and articulately communicate the mission, core values, benefits, and basic requirements of the CUNY BA program across diverse recruitment environments (e.g., information session or recruitment events).
- Deploy targeted advising and communication strategies during coaching sessions to effectively guide prospective applicants through the application submission process.

Student Leadership Development

- Design and deliver training programs for student ambassadors, empowering them to effectively represent the program.
- Direct and oversee collaborative student initiatives (such as the Peer Mentor and Student Ambassador programs), demonstrating effective delegation and accountability.

Project Management

- Manage complex, multi-layered workflows by establishing timelines and coordinating logistics for large-scale events like the Student Showcase.

Professionalism

- Demonstrate project accountability by driving fellows-led projects to completion within designated timelines through proactive follow-through.

Recruitment

Recruitment Overview

With a small staff, word-of-mouth from students, faculty, and staff is our best source of recruitment. We hold regular live online information sessions and have a video version available 24/7. Implemented in fall 2024, we began offering application coaching, one-on-one support prior to applying to answer questions and help student think through the areas of study and potential courses. The coaching is provided during the academic year and fields many general CUNY questions. This year, we invited a current student Ambassador to join each information session.

Recruitment Initiatives

Fall 2025

Live Online Information Sessions: 5

Other Recruitment Activities

- Transfer fairs: BMCC Transfer Fair; Kingsborough Community College Transfer Fair
- Major/open house/campus events: City College Open House; City College Majors Jamboree; Baruch Major & Minors Fair; Baruch Transfer Student Resource Fair
- Presentations to partner or pipeline programs: Friedman Transfer Scholars Program; CUNY EDGE NYCCT; BPI Micro-college at Brooklyn Public Library
- Virtual outreach: Kingsborough Community virtual session

Spring 2026

Live Online Information Sessions: 7

Other Recruitment Activities

- Transfer fairs: BMCC Transfer Fair (March 2026); Kingsborough Community College Transfer Fair
- Welcome/admitted student/yield events: Macaulay Honors College Welcome Back Fair; Baruch Admitted Transfer Student Event
- College-wide fair: Brooklyn College Fair
- Partner presentations: QCC ASAP staff
- Special population outreach: CUNY LGBTQI+ Conference at Medgar Evers College

Summer 2026 Information Sessions: 2

Admissions Philosophy

The application process is an open, low-stakes partnership, focusing on giving *access* to students. We review applicants from a holistic perspective; the primary purpose of the application is to confirm that the student can propose a feasible area of study. We offer:

- *Accessible Excellence*: We maintain a basic minimum GPA requirement of 2.8. Recognizing that traditional metrics don't always reflect a student's current capabilities, we offer provisional acceptance to promising students whose overall GPAs may be weighed down by older academic records or prior circumstances.
- *Low-Stakes, Supported Application*: Our free, online application is designed to dismantle barriers to entry. The primary purpose of the application proposal is to help ensure that a student's unique academic goals can be fully supported by available CUNY coursework.
- *A Collaborative Partnership*: We view admissions as a collaborative ongoing dialogue. When an application requires adjustment, we invite students to incorporate feedback from the CUNY BA team to revise and resubmit—transforming the admissions process itself into a supportive learning experience.

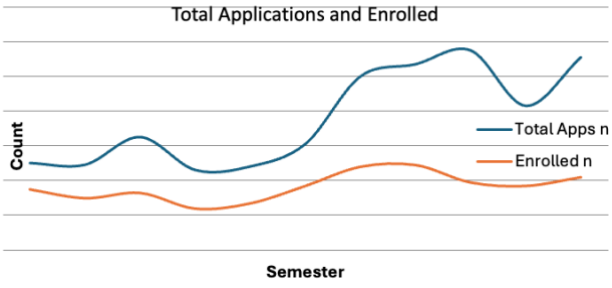
CUNY BA Admission and Enrollment Data Fall 2020-Spring 2026

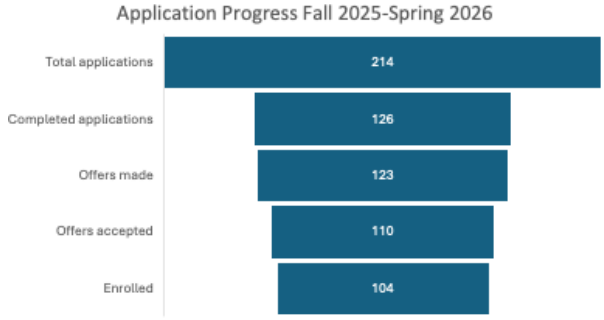
	Applications					Selection				Yield (Enrollment)							
Semester	Total	Complete		Incomplete		Offers Made*		Rejected**		Offers Accepted		Enrolled^ (Yield)		Discontinued For Not Enrolling^^		Declined Offer+++	
	n	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fall 2020	70	67	95.7	3	4.3	63	94.0	4	6.0	59	93.7	55	87.3	4	6.3	4	6.3
Spring 2021	69	53	76.8	16	23.2	51	96.2	2	3.8	51	100	50	98.0	1	2.0	0	0
Fall 2021	85	62	72.9	23	27.1	58	93.5	4	6.5	53	91.4	53	91.4	0	0	5	8.6
Spring 2022	66	52	78.8	14	21.2	51	98.1	1	1.9	45	88.2	44	86.3	1	2.2	6	11.8
Fall 2022	68	55	80.9	13	19.1	54	98.2	1	1.8	51	94.4	47	87.0	4	7.8	3	5.6
Spring 2023	81	63	77.8	18	22.2	62	98.4	1	1.6	59	95.2	57	91.9	2	3.4	3	4.8
Fall 2023	120	85	70.8	35	29.2	85	100	0	0	74	87.1	68	80	6	8.1	11	12.9
Spring 2024	127	85	66.9	42	33.1	84	98.8	1	1.2	74	88.1	69	81.2	5	6.8	10	11.9
Fall 2024	135	77	57.0	58	43.0	74	96.1	3	3.9	66	89.2	59	79.7	7	9.5	8	10.8
Spring 2025	103	69	67.0	34	33.0	66	95.7	3	4.3	60	91.0	57	86.4	3	5	6	9.1
Fall 2025	131	78	59.5	53	40.5	75	96.2	3	3.8	67	89.3	62	82.7	5	7.5	8	10.7
Spring 2026	83	48	57.8	35	42.2	48	100	0	0	43	89.6	42	87.5	1	2.3	5	10.4

*Offers Made (of completed applications)
**Rejected (of completed applications)
^Enrolled (i.e., accepted and registered)
^^Discontinued for Not Enrolling (i.e., accepted but didn't register-could potentially enroll next semester)
+++Declined Offer (i.e., application accepted but student declined offer of admission)

CUNY BA Admission and Enrollment Year 2025-2026

The largest drop off during the application journey occurs in the exploring/applying phase, with 60% of students completing applications after initially beginning the application process. Our acceptance rate for 2025-2026 continued to be high (98%). A large percentage of admitted students choose to enroll (85%) In some cases, applying to CUNY BA leads to finding an extant major.





Student Success

Enrollment

Fall 2025

Active*	Registered	LOA	In Review^	Enrollment
238	227	9	2	259

**Total active: registered + Leave of Absence + in review*
^ In review: Potential graduates but not registered

Spring 2026

Active*	Registered	LOA	In Review^	Enrollment
246	233	3	7	249

**Total active: registered + Leave of Absence + in review*
^ In review: Potential graduates but not registered

	Fall 2025		Spring 2026	
Home College	**Enrollment**	**MHC**	**Enrollment**	**MHC**
Baruch	24	3	23	3
BMCC	6	NA	6	NA
Bronx CC	0	NA	0	NA
Brooklyn	29	6	30	5
City	55	1	56	2
CSI	4	1	4	1
Guttmann CC	0	NA	0	NA
Hostos CC	0	NA	0	NA
Hunter	66	1	67	2
John Jay	19	0	15	0
KBCC	1	NA	1	NA
Lehman	6	1	7	1
LGCC	2	NA	1	NA
Medgar	5	0	10	0
NYCCT	5	0	8	0
QBCC	0	NA	0	NA
Queens	12	2	15	2
SPS	5	0	3	0
York	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	239	15	246	16

This year

2/3

of CUNY BA students earned Graduation Honors

Spring 2026 totals *as of April 23, 2026; MHC: Macaulay Honors College*

Thank You!

On behalf of the CUNY BA, a special thank you to the CUNY BA University Committee (governance group) and other supporters of the program.

CUNY BA University Committee

Students
Jack Cameron, Hunter College
Nitu Farhin, Macaulay Honors College at Brooklyn College
CeCe Hori, Baruch College
Kilhah St. Fort, Macaulay Honors College at Lehman College
Yariza Sencion, Lehman College

Faculty
Bettina Carbonell, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Margaret Carroll, Medgar Evers College
Alex Costley, York College
Tamrah Cunningham, New York City College of Technology (City Tech)
Sharona Levy, Brooklyn College
Joanne Spurza, Hunter College
Emily Sohmer Tai (Chairperson), Queensborough Community College

Administrators
Dean Brian A. Peterson, GC President's designee
Dr. Michael Guy, Executive Vice Chancellor designee
Dean Dara Byrne, Dean of Macaulay, representing the CUNY Council of Presidents

CUNY BA Campus Coordinators

Elaine Cataletto, Bernard Baruch College
Rolando Jorif, Borough of Manhattan Community College
Shirley Skelt, Bronx Community College
Robert Booras, Brooklyn College
Ana Vasovic, City College of New York
Dina Patelli, College of Staten Island
Charles Jordan, Guttmann Community College
Rafael Rosado, Herbert H. Lehman College
Edwin Diaz, Hostos Community College
Maureen O'Conor, Hunter College
Richard Haw, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Robert Schacter, Kingsborough Community College
Karen Miller, LaGuardia Community College
Georgette Brown, Medgar Evers College
Julian Williams, New York City College of Technology
Richard Adams, Queens College
Julia Rothenberg, Queensborough Community College
Peter Bales, Queensborough Community College
Chris Washington, School of Labor and Urban Studies
Jaye-Anne Sartoretto, School of Professional Studies
Cynthia Haller, York College

Thank You to the Staff of CUNY BA

Brian A. Peterson, Dean for CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies
Jody Clark Vaisman, Academic Director
Peter Altman, Coordinator of Admissions and Recruitment
Ann Marie Doering, Registrar
Kate McPherson, Senior Academic Advisor
Rafal Szczurowski, Academic Advisor
Tracy Mejia Urena, Scholarships and Events Specialist
Analie Cruz, Assistant Program Officer
Isabel Griffin, Office Assistant

Our Motto – *Esse Sui Generis*

The CUNY BA laurel wreath symbolizes achievement, intellectual growth, and the unique academic journey of every student in the CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies program. Traditionally associated with honor and scholarly accomplishment, the laurel wreath reflects the program's commitment to recognizing students who pursue individualized paths of inquiry rather than conventional academic routes. Encircling the motto *esse sui generis (*Latin for "to be of one's own kind") the wreath celebrates the courage, creativity, and independence required to design an education that is distinctly one's own. Together, the laurel and the motto express CUNY BA's core belief that academic excellence is not limited to a single model, but can flourish through originality, interdisciplinary exploration, and the pursuit of a personally meaningful course of study.

CUNY BA Laureates are scholars of their own design—students who embrace *esse sui generis* by forging unique interdisciplinary paths and transforming their individual vision into a meaningful academic achievement.

About the Graduate Center

The CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies makes its home at CUNY Graduate Center, the focal point for advanced teaching and research at The City University of New York (CUNY), the nation's largest urban public university. With over 40 doctoral and master's programs of the highest caliber, The Graduate Center fosters pioneering research and scholarship in the arts and sciences and prepares students for careers in universities and the private, nonprofit, and government sectors.

The Graduate Center's commitment to research and scholarship for the public good is exemplified by its more than 30 centers, institutes, and initiatives, including its Advanced Science Research Center, a 200,000-square-foot facility designed to promote collaboration among scientists in five areas of global research and innovation: environmental sciences, nanoscience, neuroscience, photonics, and structural biology. The Graduate Center benefits from highly ambitious and diverse students and alumni—who in turn teach hundreds of thousands of undergraduates every year. Through its public programs, The Graduate Center enhances New York City's intellectual and cultural life.

Joshua C. Brumberg, President, The Graduate School and University Center

Joel P. Christensen, Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, The Graduate School and University Center

CUNY GRADUATE CENTER

Esse sui generis

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CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies