



CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies Commencement Exercises

The Graduate School and University Center
The City University of New York
June 4, 2026

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“American students need to learn to think across disciplines since that’s where most new breakthroughs are made.”

—Thomas Friedman, *New York Times* columnist and author

ABOUT CUNY BACCALAUREATE FOR UNIQUE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

In the late 1960s, a group of faculty and students asked CUNY to allow individual faculty and students to define programs of study, with access to courses across campuses. On February 22, 1971, the NYS Board of Higher Education authorized a university-wide B.A.; soon after, the B.S. was approved. First known as the CUNY Baccalaureate Program and renamed CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies in 2008, the degree is commonly called CUNY BA.

Faculty mentoring is the cornerstone. Over 400 professors have mentored CUNY BA students as they have built their individualized degrees, which have ranged from American Revolutionary History to Zoological Photography. Student-mentor opportunities have proven invaluable in the personal development of CUNY BA students, leading to independent research projects, internships, and study abroad opportunities.

CUNY BA has received grants from renowned foundations and organizations, and was recognized by the University Design Consortium, an international organization that challenges public universities to develop innovative strategies to address complex issues, and nationally as a top military-friendly institution. In addition, CUNY BA has its own academic fellowship established by the Thomas W. Smith Foundation and has received a multi-million-dollar bequest from the Barbara J. Price estate for scholarships and grants.

Five decades later, the goal of helping students and faculty pursue intellectual innovation continues. There are over 8,000 alumni; the majority report that they have received raises and promotions or have successfully changed careers, have gone on to graduate school, and are working in careers related to their self-designed areas of study.

cunyba.cuny.edu

ORDER OF EXERCISES

PROCESSIONAL

OPENING OF CEREMONY

Emily Sohmer Tai
Professor of History, Queensborough Community College
Grand Marshal

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

Haley Strayer
June 2026 Graduate

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jody Clark Vaisman
Academic Director, CUNY Baccalaureate

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Associate Professor, New York City College of Technology

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Victoria Farrell
June 2026 Graduate

ON BEHALF OF THE ALUMNI

Vasu Panicker
CUNY Baccalaureate, 2010; University of California-Berkeley, 2022
Turnaround & Systems Strategist

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&
Jody Clark Vaisman
Academic Director, CUNY Baccalaureate

REMARKS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS

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

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CUNY Baccalaureate, 2022; Brooklyn College, 2024
&
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Academic Director, CUNY Baccalaureate

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CLOSING REMARKS

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Border and Belonging

Amanda Lum
Game Character Art

Empress Peebles
Performing Arts
Context of Conflict

Brian Wade
Law and Psychological Anthropology

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Technology Management

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Business Entrepreneurship & Management

Kimberly Devaney
Fine Arts Studio and Cultural Management

Romanus George
Business Studies

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Business Studies

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Arabic Studies

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Legal Advocacy for Underserved Communities

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Journalism

Shea Stevenson
Anthropology Fiction

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Language & Metaphysics
Dance Technology and Composition

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Computational Neuroscience

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Dance
Business Media

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Jennifer Ludizaca Analytic Operations Management	
Byron Madera Narrative for Games	

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	Ella Hauck Alternative Approaches to Wellness Construction of Social Policy

Bella Hope Hubbard
Music
Community Organizing

Nelson Omogun Igunma
Critical Social Studies

Sumaya Jashim
Urban Economics

Samir Malik
Decolonization Studies

Daniel Jacobo Orejuela
Mathematical Methods
Modern Physics

Enrique Pagan
Character Design and Animation

Alexandria Thylane Rohn
Mind, Gender and Artificial Intelligence

Zara Ali Cimone Scott
Integrative Nutritional Psychology
Studio Art: Mixed Media

Kilhah St Fort
Technology, Data and Society

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Performing Arts

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Technical Art

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Film and Media

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Quantum Mechanics
Numerical Methods for Physical Sciences

Gavi Zahler
The Cognitive Canvas of Human Expression

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Computational Media
Japanese Language and Culture

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3D Game Character Art

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Human Behavioral Biology

Joanna Dammacco-Charles
Game Art and Animation

Adam Dong
Game Design

Victoria Farrell
Human Centered Design and Media

Eny'je Gill
Cybersecurity

Beth Simmons Graybill
Investigations into Music, Art and Technology

Jasmine Greenfield
Applied Mathematics: Data Science and Cryptography
Business Statistics & Quantitative Modeling

Adina Hoffman
Marine Biology

Alvi Khan
Biophysics

Wiktoria Kolakowski
Game Design and Development

Matthew Kotkin Character Art	Sandra Saeteros Character Design
Kai Lacerna Game Art Production	Nia Aisha Nicole Savory The Black Moving Image: Theory The Black Moving Image: Practice
Du S. Lam Game Narrative	Maliki Isra'el Searles Digital Communications and Multimedia
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*Subject to successful completion of degree requirements

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