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FROM THE FOUNDING DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

It is with enormous pride that I present to you the Futures Initiative Annual Report for 2019-2020. Even a brief glance through this collection of news, photos, and accomplishments in this beautiful report (designed by FI Fellow Christina Katopodis) will inspire you. We offer it as a token of our appreciation for all you contribute to the Futures Initiative and to higher education and beyond.

I won’t repeat what Co-Director Katina Rogers summarizes in her Executive Summary but I want to draw your attention to something remarkable about this report for AY 2019-2020: It’s almost impossible to tell the moment where everything changed.

275,000 CUNY students went online overnight in March, as the city shut down amid death and disease and financial disaster. Every New Yorker suffered—but we did not suffer equally. COVID-19 made the life-and-death stakes of racism and income inequality more glaringly obvious than ever. The horrific police murders of Black citizens—George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others—rocked a world already careening from too much suffering.

Yet—and this is crucial—most of the Futures Initiative and HASTAC events in response to these horrors had already been planned before them and are of a piece with what we have been doing every year since our founding in 2014. Like the brave youth and others who filled the streets and demanded change, the FI faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduates all worked not only to address problems but to offer ideas, solutions, and hope at a time when we needed them most. This terrible year has further exposed the inequality and discrimination we have pledged to fight from the beginning. However, the battle did not begin this year; it won’t end next. We are committed to redoubling our efforts to find better ways forward, now and in the future.

Through this challenging year, there could be no better leaders and colleagues than Katina Rogers and Lauren Melendez. I thank you two for all you do, day in and day out. Rogers’ crucial new book, Putting the Humanities PhD to Work: Thriving in and beyond the Classroom (Duke University Press, July 2020) is the transformative lesson plan higher education needs now. For graduate students, the book is a lifeline.

Thank you, too, to all of our incredible Futures Initiative Graduate Fellows, including those who defended their dissertations this summer: Dr. Siqi Tu and Dr. Michael Epstein, who go on now to wonderful postdoctoral fellowships, and Dr. Jessica Murray, a former FI Fellow.
We thank the programs and the administrators at the Graduate Center (Interim President Jim Muyskens, Interim Provost Julia Wrigley, and Associate Provost David Olan), and we thank CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost José Luis Cruz, and so many others at CUNY Central who have supported our work.

Finally, we thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York for their generous support. We are honored that the Mellon Foundation has extended its support of our community college partnership with a $3.1 million grant (co-directed by Katina Rogers and Luke Waltzer). We are equally proud to be a part of the Mellon Foundation’s historic $10 million grant to CUNY for an array of urgent social justice purposes. With Professors Shelly Eversley (Baruch) and Annemarie Nicols-Grinenko (University Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs), I will co-direct “Transformative Learning in the Humanities,” a CUNY-wide peer-to-peer faculty development program focusing on transformative pedagogy. We are deeply grateful for these indispensable, life-changing grants.

In this year like no other, we thank all of you, dear friends, for your care, community, compassion, and courage.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Cathy N. Davidson  
Founding Director, The Futures Initiative  
Distinguished Professor of English and the MA in Digital Humanities and MS in Data Analysis and Visualization  
The Graduate Center, CUNY  
Co-Founder and Co-Director, HASTAC
The Futures Initiative is a unique program at the Graduate Center (GC) that advances equity and innovation in research, teaching, and public service in higher education and makes overt the profound connections between the Graduate Center and the CUNY campuses—and beyond. As I reflect on the 2019-2020 year, I am most proud of our program’s ability to support one another and our communities in a moment of profound turbulence. The year brought a disorienting array of challenges: COVID-19, protests against police brutality and racism, economic crisis, political unrest, and more. It is against this backdrop that the Futures Initiative continued our work, with a stronger sense of urgency than ever before, particularly given that CUNY students, faculty, and staff were disproportionately affected by all of these issues.

In the midst of this upheaval, our programming continued, as robust as ever—albeit in a different format and with a modified focus. We supported faculty and grad students in the transition to online learning, built community across our networks, advocated for the importance of public higher education, and shared resources for those most deeply affected by the unfolding situations. We were pleased to be able to do this work, and while the upcoming year remains unsettled, we enter it with renewed determination of the importance of CUNY’s work.

In its sixth year, the Futures Initiative once again sponsored an array of programs, beginning with several team-taught, interdisciplinary courses. Taught by Graduate Center faculty in partnership with CUNY faculty, these courses were designed to foster goals of diversity, active pedagogy, and public engagement. A series of public programs, “The University Worth Fighting For,” addressed urgent issues in higher education—both the need for public support of higher education and, within higher education, the need to redesign a more relevant, student- and public-serving, sustaining, and engaged form of higher education.

Futures Initiative graduate fellows designed and implemented the events and used a variety of open-source and low-cost tools to extend their reach beyond those able to participate in person. Fellows, for example, webcast and live-tweeted most of our events, made their slides publicly available, and also published event recaps so that others can continue to learn from the discussions. A leadership and peer mentoring program, in a new partnership with The Promise and Perils of Democracy Project supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, trained advanced undergraduates to serve as mentors guiding others through the challenges of life and work.
The CUNY Humanities Alliance reached a major turning point this year, with the program's first iteration coming to an end and an exciting second iteration receiving funding. A second $3.15 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation will enable us to extend and recalibrate the program, working with four CUNY community colleges and supporting graduate students in a wide array of preparation for possible career paths in and around the academy. The second four-year grant is co-directed by myself and Luke Waltzer, with David Olan as PI and Kaysi Holman continuing as the Director of Programming and Administration.

Finally, the Futures Initiative continues to co-direct the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory (hastac.org), the world’s first and oldest academic social network with our partners at Dartmouth College. HASTAC Scholars continues to be a particularly robust and vibrant part of the program, with highlights including an array of online skillshares and collaborative book discussions.

Together, all of these Futures Initiative programs, course offerings, projects, technologies, and networks advance the twin goals of “equity and innovation” in higher education, enabling us to design more equitable futures for all. Now, more than ever, we feel the weight and privilege of this mission.

Katina Rogers, PhD
Co-Director, The Futures Initiative and CUNY Humanities Alliance
Director of Programs and Administration, HASTAC
Faculty Member, MA Program in Digital Humanities
The Graduate Center, CUNY
Administrators

**Cathy N. Davidson**, PhD, is Founding Director of the Futures Initiative and Distinguished Professor in the English PhD Program, the MA in Digital Humanities and MS in Data Analysis and Visualization at the Graduate Center, CUNY. She teaches interdisciplinary, team-taught FI courses each year. She is also co-founder and co-director of HASTAC. Davidson was appointed by President Obama, and confirmed by the Senate, to the National Council on the Humanities (2011-2017) and served on the Board of Directors of Mozilla (2012-2018). She recently served as keynote speaker and panelist at the Nobel Prize Committee’s Forum on the Future of Learning in Santiago, Chile. In 2017, Davidson published *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux* (Basic Books), which won the AAC&U Frederic W. Ness Book Award for 2019.

Davidson publishes widely in scholarly and popular forums, lectures extensively, and serves as a consultant for institutions around the world on the future of higher education and the role of technology in society. Her current project, co-authored with Christina Katopodis, is the third volume in her “How We Know” trilogy, tentatively titled, “Transform Every Classroom: A Practical Guide to Revolutionary Teaching and Learning” (Harvard University Press, anticipated 2022).

**Katina Rogers**, PhD, is Co-Director of the Futures Initiative and the CUNY Humanities Alliance, Director of Programs and Administration for HASTAC, and affiliate faculty member for the Master’s Program in Digital Humanities. In these roles, Rogers coordinates the overall strategy for outreach, communications, programming, mentorship, and operations for each program. Rogers is the author of *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work: Thriving in and beyond the Classroom* (Duke University Press, 2019).
July 2020). Intended for graduate students in the humanities and for the faculty members who guide them, the book grounds practical career advice in a nuanced consideration of the current landscape of the academic workforce and an emphasis on reaffirming humanities education as a public good. It explores how rhetoric and practices related to career preparation are evolving, and how those changes intersect with admissions practices, scholarly reward structures, and academic labor practices—especially the increasing reliance on contingent labor. The book also examines the ways that current practices perpetuate systems of inequality that result in the continued underrepresentation of women and minorities in the academy. Rogers advocates for public higher education and the humanities by speaking and writing on matters related to higher education reform, graduate training, career preparation, and new modes of scholarly publishing.

Lauren Melendez, MSEd, Director of the CUNY Peer Leaders Program and Administrative Specialist, directs and oversees a program that brings together 40+ undergraduate students annually from across 15 CUNY campuses as Leadership Fellows. As the program’s director, she creates and implements activities, blog prompts, skill shares, tracks resources and coordinates meetings and enrichment outings. Melendez provides social emotional support to the fellows as well as consults with co-directors of the program on best practices on how to develop the fellow’s leadership and mentoring skills and helping fellows learn to navigate spaces inside and outside their college campuses. In her role as administrative specialist, Melendez provides academic and administrative support to the Futures Initiative. She oversees department operations, manages workshop planning and scheduling, conducts research, and organizes and processes materials for all administrative documentation. Melendez manages the program’s budget and coordinates purchasing, accounting, and payroll for the department. She also stewards confidential communication on behalf of FI Founding Director Cathy Davidson in which she acts as liaison with government representatives maintaining and adhering to legal and privacy regulations.

Celi Lebron, Budget Analyst, received a BE in Computer Engineering and a minor in Creative Writing from City College of New York’s Computer Engineering Program and is now working toward a second degree in Finance and Accounting from Baruch College, in hopes of later pursuing a Master’s degree in Finance. She is integral to the Futures Initiative’s operations, and does everything from working with the Accounts Payable and Procurement Departments to processing reimbursements and travel authorizations to provide monthly financial reports for the program. In the year ahead, Lebron will increasingly take on a more deeply programmatic role, including the mentorship of our undergraduate science and engineering students.
Kaysi L. Holman, JD, is the Director of Programs and Administration of the CUNY Humanities Alliance, which just received a new $3.15 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to expand our work to provide graduate students with experience in educational support roles at four CUNY community colleges. For the past four years with the CUNY Humanities Alliance, Holman has supervised three cohorts of graduate fellows teaching humanities courses at LaGuardia Community College, and co-directed the LaGuardia Mellon Humanities Scholars program for LaGuardia students interested in pursuing Humanities scholarship and careers. She is currently co-editing a book project to encapsulate pedagogical lessons learned during this first phase of the CUNY Humanities Alliance. Before coming to the CUNY Humanities Alliance, Holman directed programming and administration for HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory) and the PhD Lab in Digital Knowledge in the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University. She has spent nearly 20 years working with nonprofits and educational organizations dedicated to equity and social justice, both within higher education and achieved through access to higher education.

Sujung Kim, PhD, is the Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow for the CUNY Humanities Alliance, and is based in the Futures Initiative at the Graduate Center. In this role, she designs and conducts qualitative research to understand the communities served by the Humanities Alliance and contributes these insights and strategic thinking to program development. Kim is an interdisciplinary scholar whose research addresses the critical pedagogy of higher education and community colleges for the public good and educating students as critical public intellectuals. Her research and teaching interests are located at the intersection of class, race, citizenship, power, and subjectivity, and how these intersecting conditions affect vulnerable college students’ sense of institutional and social belonging.

Luis Henao Uribe, PhD, is the Mellon Humanities Scholar for the CUNY Humanities Alliance. In this role, he provides support for the fellows and helps pivot the lessons of the Humanities Alliance to broader audiences through a variety of programs and projects at the Teaching and Learning Center. He is a graduate of the PhD program in Latin American, Iberian, and Latino Cultures at The Graduate Center, CUNY. His recent research explores the role of novels in the establishment of national imaginaries and the legitimization of the State in Mexico and Colombia. He also writes about how Latin American cultural objects circulate in the United States. He has been teaching both language and literature courses at CUNY since 2009, most recently at LaGuardia Community College as a Humanities Alliance Fellow.

Visit the online community: cunyhumanitiesalliance.org
Futures Initiative Graduate Fellows

**Michael Epstein**, PhD, is a recent graduate from the Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience program in Psychology at The Graduate Center, CUNY. He has accepted a Postdoctoral Associate position at Boston University beginning in September 2020. His doctoral work explores attention and perception in vision using psychophysical and neuroimaging methodologies. His dissertation focuses specifically on the temporal dynamics of ensemble perception—the timing by which one can perceive the overall statistical summary of groups of objects. A chapter from his dissertation titled, “The Outlier Paradox: The Role of Iterative Ensemble Coding in Discounting Outliers,” was recently accepted for publication in *The Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*. Outside of research, Epstein has taught introductory neuroscience and experimental methods courses at City College and Baruch College, and has acted as a Writing Across the Curriculum fellow at the School of Professional Studies. He is additionally involved in public science education programs throughout NYC, particularly with BioBus and the Greater NYC Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience’s Brain Awareness Week.

**Kashema Hutchinson** is a doctoral candidate in the Urban Education program at the Graduate Center, CUNY, and the Co-Director of the Undergraduate Peer Leaders Program. She has facilitated discussion groups with incarcerated populations in New York City. Hutchinson creates and uses Hip Hop infographics to facilitate discussions on the role of women and history, philosophy, behavioral economics, class and crime. She is also a Co-Director of the Education Committee of the Universal Hip Hop Museum. Her research interests include the socialization of Black girls and women, zero-tolerance policies, mattering and marginalization and hip-hop pedagogy.

**Gustavo Jiménez** is a doctoral candidate in Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures at The Graduate Center, CUNY. His doctoral work is on the significance of Latin America in the formation of modern Basque literary identity in the context of contemporary debates in World Literature. He is interested in postcolonial discourses, both from a theoretical perspective, and as a way to create decolonized learning environments for undergraduate students. He has taught courses and workshops in Spanish and Cinema at CUNY campuses, Fordham University, and The Instituto Cervantes. As an undergraduate, he studied Advertising & Public Relations and throughout has remained interested in the field including holding various positions as Communications Manager, Editor, and contributing author. In 2015, he received the Basque Literary Prize Finalist award for his short novel “Moradero.”
Christina Katopodis is a doctoral candidate in English at the Graduate Center, CUNY. She is the winner of the 2019 Diana Colbert Innovative Teaching Prize and the 2018 Dewey Digital Teaching Award. Katopodis has authored articles published or forthcoming in ESQ, ISLE, and Profession, as well as op-eds for Inside Higher Ed and Times Higher Ed. Together with Cathy N. Davidson, Katopodis is co-author of “Transform Every Classroom: A Practical Guide to Revolutionary Teaching and Learning” (Harvard UP, anticipated 2022). Her dissertation, “Sound Ecologies: Music and Vibration in 19th-Century American Literature,” examines the influence that human and nonhuman sounds and sonic vibrations had on American thought and literature in the nineteenth century. Katopodis records sounds at Walden Pond for her digital humanities project, The Walden Soundscape, an award-winning website that makes the soundscape at Walden Pond accessible to a wide audience. Katopodis presented at numerous conferences in the last academic year, including: Modern Language Association (MLA) in Seattle; Arizona State University’s REMOTE Summit; and the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering. She is this year’s winner of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society’s Graduate Student Paper Award.

Adashima Oyo is a doctoral candidate in the Social Welfare program at The Graduate Center, CUNY. She earned both a Master of Public Health (MPH) and a Bachelor of Arts in English from Brooklyn College, CUNY. Her research interests explore the impact of the “minority-majority” demographic shift on health disparities. Adashima is also interested in examining the impact of the glaring lack of racial diversity among doctoral students, faculty and executive-level leadership in higher education. In addition to working as the Director of HASTAC Scholars, she is part of the adjunct faculty at New York University (NYU) and Brooklyn College, CUNY, where she teaches courses about healthcare and developing research papers. Adashima is also a Silberman Doctoral Fellow. #BlackScholarsMatter
Cihan Tekay is a doctoral candidate in Anthropology at The Graduate Center, CUNY, where she received her MA and MPhil in Anthropology. Previously, she earned her BA from Hampshire College. She is a graduate fellow at the Futures Initiative since Fall 2019, where she has served as Assistant Director since June 2020. She has been teaching undergraduate courses across the CUNY system since 2012. Her scholarship explores the global emergence of novel forms of citizenship, and how people's engagement with science, technology, and popular political ideologies shape visions of the future. An interdisciplinary scholar trained in history, sociology and anthropology, her research reevaluates the relationship of people and politics to technology and value systems by employing archival and ethnographic methods. She is currently writing her dissertation on the political economy of electrification between Turkey and Europe during the early 20th century. Her project has been supported by the Social Science Research Council’s International Dissertation Research Fellowship and awards from the Graduate Center. Tekay is committed to public scholarship, academic freedom, and imagining fair and equitable futures for the public university. She has been a co-editor of the Turkey section on Jadaliyya since 2013.

Siqi Tu, PhD, is a recent graduate of the Sociology program at the Graduate Center, CUNY, and a postdoctoral fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. Her dissertation, “Destination Diploma: How Chinese Upper-Middle Class Families ‘Outsource’ Secondary Education to the United States,” investigates why and how Chinese upper-middle-class families made educational decisions to send their children as young as fourteen to the United States for private high schools. It also documents and analyzes the actual lived experiences of the students who come alone to the United States. It is part of her broader research agenda on how individuals’ identity form and shift and its relevance to global citizenship. She will work on a follow-up project titled “Shifting Ethno-racial Identities Across Borders: A Case of Chinese ‘Parachute Students’” to further examine the shifting ethno-racial identity through the case of Chinese “parachute students” under the increasing tension between China and the United States, and the surge of populist anti-immigrant and anti-globalization sentiments. She was a graduate fellow at the Futures Initiative from 2018 to 2020 and used to teach at Brooklyn College as a graduate teaching fellow.
The Futures Initiative considers doctoral education to be the hub of our work from which many spokes radiate and believes that understanding how institutions work helps graduate students succeed in academe and beyond. We empower FI Fellows as the program’s leaders, inviting their contributions as we determine each year’s programmatic plans and encouraging them to connect their work within the program to the research and training that are core to their doctoral programs. Graduate Fellows lead the Futures Initiative’s weekly meetings, literally setting the agenda for our program. They serve as “network fellows” in the team-taught courses, forging connections among faculty members and other graduate students. With scaffolding from the leadership team, the graduate fellows plan and execute our public events, such as the University Worth Fighting For series, and develop online records of these events (video, webcasts, social media, photographs, and blogs) for the larger public.
We Teach

We center students' voices in the classroom and beyond.

Following a competitive, CUNY-wide application process, five to seven courses are selected annually for support from the Futures Initiative, with faculty teaching these courses designated as Faculty Fellows. These courses are designed to exemplify equity and innovation. They promote the Futures Initiative goals of increasing faculty diversity. They emphasize innovative, student-centered pedagogy in their methods and interdisciplinarity as a form of knowledge. The co-teaching structure creates collaborations across the CUNY campuses and works toward a larger goal of public engagement. Futures Initiative courses are structured to support the connections between the three pillars of higher education: research, teaching, and service to society.

The 2019-2020 faculty and graduate students opened their courses to host public sessions that showcased the methods and content of each course. Details from these compelling open sessions are shared later in the report as they occurred, month to month. Read the full course descriptions by visiting the Futures Initiative website or clicking on the course titles below.

Team-Taught Courses

Fall 2019

**Climate Change and Discursive Frames: From Scientific Discourse to the Public Sphere**
Co-Taught by Professors *José del Valle* (The Graduate Center, LAILAC) and *David Lindo Atichati* (College of Staten Island and The Graduate Center; Engineering and EES)

**Interdisciplinary Topics in Law: Mothers in Law**
Co-Taught by Professors *Julie Suk* (The Graduate Center, Dean of Master’s Programs, Professor of Sociology, Political Science, MALS) and *Sara McDougall* (John Jay College, Global History; The Graduate Center, French and History)

**Transformations of Modernity, 1914-Present**
Co-Taught by Professors *Karen Miller* (The Graduate Center and LaGuardia CC, MALs and History) and *Andrea Morrell* (Guttman Community College)

Spring 2020

**Introduction to Engaged Teaching for Transformative Learning in the Humanities and Social Sciences**
Co-Taught by Professors *Cathy N. Davidson* (The Graduate Center, English and the Futures Initiative) and *Eduardo Vianna* (LaGuardia CC, Social Sciences, and The Graduate Center, Psychology)

**Psychological Dis-ease Swelling in Contentious Times: Contributors, Sustainers, and Resisters**
Co-Taught by Professors *Michelle Fine* (The Graduate Center, Psychology, Urban Education, MALs, Women’s and Gender Studies) and *Desiree Byrd* (Queens College, Psychology)
We Connect

We use networking and communications tools to build community and foster greater access.

The Futures Initiative uses websites, newsletters, online collaborative tools, webcasts, video, live tweeting, and other forms of media to make our teaching, research, and programming accessible to a wide range of publics and to connect students and faculty across the diverse and vast CUNY system. The Futures Initiative builds on technologies developed at CUNY whenever possible, since they are built with the needs of the community in mind. For instance, the Futures Initiative has established an open-source online learning community built on the CUNY-developed, open-source platform of Commons in a Box. This community invites students at CUNY’s community colleges, senior colleges, and graduate programs to become active contributors to their own teaching and learning. The site includes documentation, such as video and text instructions, that help faculty and students enhance the technologies they use for learning and teaching.

The Futures Initiative Newsletter, edited by Gustavo Jiménez, reaches nearly 2,000 inboxes every month of the academic year. Jiménez redesigned the newsletter to feature undergraduate leadership fellows more prominently and to create the “HASTAC Corner,” to highlight important events and collaborations across our programs.

We Empower

We develop the leaders of tomorrow through our CUNY undergraduate leadership fellows program.

The Leadership and Peer Mentoring Program, funded by the CUNY Graduate Center and CUNY Central, supports CUNY undergraduate students learning to be leaders within their colleges and communities. The program, directed by Lauren Melendez, Director of the Undergraduate Leadership Program, and Co-Director Kashema Hutchinson, believes that great leadership means representing and responding to one’s peers in a way that supports everyone’s success. This year the program welcomed 32 Undergraduate Leadership Fellows, who were nominated by graduate students and faculty across 12 different CUNY campuses, to learn mentoring, leadership, and professional skills and to participate in FI programs, such as the University Worth Fighting For series. Participants build meaningful relationships with graduate students and faculty members at the Graduate Center, and participate in high-level programming on key issues in higher education. Many of these students were nominated by their instructors who are themselves students at the Graduate Center.
We Research

We conduct and support institutional and higher education research.

Research is a key component of the Futures Initiative’s work, whether conducted by members of our team or supported through our initiatives. FI especially values innovative, interdisciplinary research that not only advances knowledge but also promotes institutional change and public reinvestment in higher education.

This year, Futures Initiative Co-Director Katina Rogers released her first book, *Putting the PhD to Work: Thriving in and beyond the Classroom* (Duke University Press, July 2020). Building on her years of experience at the Futures Initiative, as well as independent research and analysis, this book connects conversations about career preparation with the importance of structural change in the academy.

In addition, the Futures Initiative was pleased to support the fourth annual Dr. Louise Lennihan Arts and Sciences Grants for research or travel related to scholarship at the intersections of humanities, arts, science, and technology. This year’s grants were awarded to eight doctoral students at the Graduate Center. Read the grant winners’ full bios and project descriptions. Thanks to a generous gift from Curtis Wong, recipient of an honorary degree from the Graduate Center in 2016, the competition honors Dr. Lennihan for her extraordinary service on behalf of students and faculty at the Graduate Center.

2019-2020 Dr. Louise Lennihan Arts and Sciences Grant Recipients

*Brenna McCaffrey*, Anthropology
“Abortion Pills and Social Change in the Republic of Ireland”

*Sarah Molinari*, Anthropology
“Digital Learning and Social Scholarship: The #PRSyllabus and Listening to Puerto Rico”

*Maegan Miller*, Earth and Environmental Sciences
“The Library of the Sea: Maritime Labor and Radical Internationalism, 1760-1930”

*Brad Fox*, English
“The Dives: on the Bathysphere Logbooks”

*Portia Quiroz Seddon*, Music
“Mapping Musical Gentrification: Oral histories of a Mexican music community in New York”

*Anh Luong*, Information Systems and Statistics
“The Interplay of People, Technology, and Organizational Practices in Algorithmic Decision-Making: An Experimental Study Using Loan Application Evaluation”

*Justo Planas*, Latin American, Iberian, and Latino Cultures
“The New Cuban Republic and the Born Criminal. Medical and Literary Conception of Minor Offenders in the Early Twentieth Century”

*Heidi Rhodes*, Political Science
“Corpus Nullius and the Traffick in Blood: Biocolonialism, Reproductive Futurity, and the Afterlives of Human Property”
We Advocate

We promote institutional change, social justice, and the reinvestment in higher education as a public good.

This year we hosted four in-person public workshops and nine in-person or virtual open class sessions in our University Worth Fighting For series. In addition, we transitioned several workshops into Digital Friday webinars.

The University Worth Fighting For series brings the Futures Initiative’s mission for inclusion, equity, and social justice in higher education to life within the Graduate Center and for a broader public. The title is based on the conviction that, as a society, we should be supporting higher education as a public good but that goal comes with a responsibility to make higher education responsive and relevant to the demands of a changing society. All of our events are student-led, with Futures Initiative graduate fellows designing topics, inviting speakers, live tweeting and webcasting events, and then providing a full online recap for the larger public at futuresinitiative.org.

We Amplify

We connect with scholars and students around the world through HASTAC, a scholarly social network dedicated to changing the way we teach and learn.

Together with Dartmouth College, The Graduate Center directs the 17,000+ member HASTAC network. While most of the content on HASTAC (“HAYSTACK”) is created by members, the Futures Initiative’s programming is a prominent element of the network’s content and a major contributor to its monthly newsletters. HASTAC is dedicated to “Changing the Way We Teach and Learn” with “Diversity as Our Operating System.” In 2019, Arizona State University concluded its partnership, and Dartmouth College became CUNY’s joint partner in directing the network. HASTAC is now co-administered by the Futures Initiative under Cathy N. Davidson, and by the Digital Humanities and Social Engagement cluster at Dartmouth College, under Prof. Jacqueline Wernimont. FI Fellow Adashima Oyo directs the HASTAC Scholars program.
In summary, the Futures Initiative values: innovative and inclusive teaching; using open source tools to connect with a broader public; empowering CUNY undergraduate and graduate students to be leaders in their communities; supporting institutional and higher education research; social justice; the reinvestment of higher education for the public good; and connecting scholars and students at CUNY and around the world to change the way we teach and learn.

On April 30, 2020, during a Futures Initiative business meeting, meeting leader Gustavo Jiménez asked everyone to write down an elevator pitch summarizing what they do for the Futures Initiative, what they value, what they have achieved in their time at the Futures Initiative thus far, and what they are most passionate about.

The responses covered a wide variety of the things we do at the Futures Initiative, from working at the intersection of “order/organization and human caring/harmony” to “collaboration” to making public institutions “excellent.” The word cloud (above) of the responses to Jiménez’s activity says a lot about our priorities and values, namely prioritizing students as we work to imagine and shape a more equitable future for higher education in service of the public good. This activity, devised independently by Jiménez, is just one example of the brilliance that happens when we rotate who leads our business meetings each week, which is our own way of making team meetings more supportive, inclusive, and impactful for all students.
The Futures Initiative serves as a partner in the CUNY Humanities Alliance, a program supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The program has a dual goal: to prepare graduate students to teach student-centered humanities courses in community colleges and to broaden and strengthen interest in the humanities among community college students. Through the program, the Futures Initiative works with Teaching and Learning Centers, faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students at The Graduate Center and LaGuardia Community College.

The 2019-2020 academic year was the fourth and final year of this four-year program. This year we have been cowriting a book tentatively titled, “New Pedagogies for the New Majority,” which aims to offer both experienced and new faculty practical strategies and methods that have been tested in some of the most diverse classrooms in the U.S. These teaching techniques are grounded in deep analysis of critical pedagogy and speak to much of the division in our country today based on race, gender, citizenship status, class, sexual orientation, ability, and mental and emotional wellbeing. Additionally, to share the CUNY Humanities Alliance program experiences with a larger audience, this year we including LaGuardia Community College students, doctoral fellows, faculty mentors, and the program administrators in collaborative presentations delivered at the Mellon Scholars Conference and the Association for the Study of Higher Education.

This has been an exciting year. The Graduate Center, CUNY, has been awarded a second $3.15 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to expand the CUNY Humanities Alliance. The program will expand to include three additional CUNY community colleges: Borough of Manhattan Community College, Guttman Community College, and Hostos Community College. The aim of this larger alliance is to create additional professional and academic opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. It is also designed to address the critical question of how to best prepare graduate students for careers as faculty members and leaders in community colleges and in higher education as a whole.

As a postdoctoral fellow of the Futures Initiative and CUNY Humanities Alliance, in this academic year, I have been undertaking an additional literature review related to my qualitative research at the CUNY Humanities Alliance and data coding of the qualitative data I have collected. I am currently developing diverse forms of reports to share my findings with the former and the future partners of the first and second round of the CUNY Humanities Alliance Programs as well as a larger audience.

Key findings from my fieldwork can be categorized into two arenas: firstly in terms of building learning communities of teaching and secondly in redefining critical pedagogy, especially in
the neoliberal era. Overall, the CUNY Humanities Alliance doctoral fellows pursued more flexible and collaborative teaching in their collaborations with community activists and/or artists who are engaged in the critical class topics. These open and more comprehensive teaching communities serve not only students but also adjunct doctoral fellows, who are commonly isolated and alienated in the departments and colleges where they teach.

Based on the findings, I can describe the students and the doctoral-adjunct instructors as ‘empower agents’ to (1) challenge the fossilized and colonized knowledge that alienate students and instructors in terms of class, culture, gender, ethnicity and nationality, (2) recognize the significance of updating and advancing critical knowledge, which is built on especially the vulnerable communities’ historical experiences, and the importance of constructing systematic understanding of the macro- and micro mechanisms and their interrelationships and their impact on students’ everyday lives, and (3) build learning communities where they establish solidarity based on intellectual, emotional and spiritual support toward humanity, democratization, and social justice. This is especially significant for diverse community college students, who are often subject to capitalist discourse that views them only as future laborers to support economic development.

Sujung Kim, PhD, Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow for the CUNY Humanities Alliance
For the Futures Initiative’s Undergraduate Leadership Program 2019-2020 cohort, we were pleased to announce a new partnership with The Promise and Perils of Democracy Project supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. In addition to our focus on leadership and peer mentoring, we addressed democracy and informed public engagement.

We began the program with our annual summer Leadership Institute, where our fellows build trust and rapport with one another, engage in content led by FI staff, faculty and graduate fellows who offer students advice on best practices for a meaningful and productive year. After the Institute, we started the fall semester off with a session led by guest speaker Dr. Bianca Williams, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Faculty Lead of the PublicsLab, who is on the planning committee of the Promise and Perils of Democracy Project.

Another core component we feature each year is social justice. A highlight from the fall semester is a meet-up session that featured alum leadership fellow Steven Pacheco who is an undergraduate student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY. Pacheco led a session on the “Effects of Mass Incarceration on Communities of Color” which included his personal background and experience with the prison system, policy touch points as it relates to higher education, voting, housing, and employment.

On November 14, 2019, students, faculty and staff from the Undergraduate Leadership program, the Futures Initiative and the CUNY Humanities Alliance presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education conference. Our session, “Higher Education for the New Majority: Community Colleges, Graduate Education, and the Humanities,” was an interactive symposium. Focal points included the value of the humanities in community colleges and the importance of pedagogical training for graduate students.

Our fall semester concluded with an enrichment outing to The Bronx Museum of Arts where leadership fellows visited the Henry Chalfant: Art vs. Transit, 1977-1987 exhibit. We had the coincidental pleasure of meeting Henry Chalfant, a sculptor in New York in the 1970s, who turned to photography and film to study hip-hop culture and graffiti art.

For our first meet-up in the spring 2020 semester, we teamed up with the Humanities Alliance. We worked through various topics of professional development and career readiness, including but not limited to resumes, cover letters, job interviews, informational interviews and questions to ask interviewers. This was followed by our last face-to-face meet-up in March for Women’s History Month.
Then the pandemic hit and the world as we knew it changed before our eyes. We
switched to Zoom meet-ups. As a collective, we all were trying to get used to social
distancing and experiencing the pandemic. Due to the community we created since
our Summer Leadership Institute in August, our transition was easy. Melendez hosted
an amazing impromptu wellness check-in in the beginning of April aside from our
regular meet-up. This was important as we addressed the impact COVID-19 was having
on our lives. In this session, we held space to breathe and process a lot of what we
were feeling and experiencing. Part of our conversation was assessing our support
and knowing who to turn to in a time of need. It helped us to recalibrate to our new
routine. For our original April meet-up, we were supposed to see the new play “Help”
by Claudia Rankine. However we read “Radical Honesty: Truth Telling as Pedagogy for
Working Through Shame in Academic Spaces” by Dr. Bianca Williams, and had an ex-
tremely candid conversation about challenging patriarchal and racist institutions by
showing up as our multiplicative selves.

Little did we know, the world we lived in was on the cusp of unrest. It started with
videos of police across the nation assaulting Black and Latinx people for “social dis-
tancing” while disregarding whites. Then the heart-wrenching video of
Ahmaud Arbery being murdered was released. After Dreajson Reed
was murdered, which was caught on his Facebook Live, one of the India-
napolis Metropolitan Police officers,
was caught saying, “Looks like it’s going to be a closed casket, homie.”
Breonna Taylor, an EMT worker who
was murdered while she was asleep in March, went viral. There was a lot
on our minds and hearts. As critical race scholars Derrick Bell and Alan
Freemans argued, racism permeates every aspect of our lives. As Black
women and the director and the co-director of this program, we are dedicated to
bringing awareness about the social injustices that impinge on the lives of not only
Black and Latinx people, but other marginalized communities in this nation to every
cohort of Leaders throughout the year. For a more detailed recap of the year, read our
blog post on the FI website.

With gratitude for each and every person who attend-
ed, participated and or helped contribute to making this
year and the past years of this program a success,

Lauren Melendez, MSEd, Director of the CUNY Peer Leaders Program, and
Kashema Hutchinson, Co-Director of the Undergraduate Peer Leaders Program
As an online network with a longstanding focus on innovative and engaged teaching and learning, HASTAC provided essential resources, support, and community as the COVID-19 pandemic shifted universities to online learning. HASTAC activated its distributed networks quickly to gather resources for moving to remote education, and HASTAC co-directors Cathy N. Davidson and Jacque Wernimont wrote about teaching in this moment. Resources and reflections were compiled in this collection.

The effects of this health crisis are not evenly distributed. Structural inequality in health care, housing, wealth/income, education, and many other areas mean that people who are already vulnerable are likely to be hit harder by this pandemic. Racism plays a role in how the epidemic has been seen and how our community members are being treated. This is a moment when educators have a collective opportunity and responsibility to care for one another in any ways that we can. HASTAC urged its community to take stock of where we might be able to offer support, and where we need to ask for help. Sharing resources, looking in on a neighbor, staying in touch with distant family and friends—these are small acts individually, but they are vitally important in moments of crisis. In these times, we especially appreciate HASTAC’s commitment to equity and social justice.

HASTAC Scholars

The HASTAC Scholars fellowship program is an innovative student-driven community of graduate and undergraduate students. Directed by myself, Adashima Oyo, Futures Initiative Fellow and PhD candidate in Social Welfare, the program accepts some 200+ graduate and undergraduate students each year. More than 1,400 HASTAC Scholars in dozens of disciplines have been sponsored by 220 colleges and universities—including community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and large research-intensive public and private institutions.

Digital Fridays

This year, we continued our successful Digital Fridays series with a number of digital workshops and discussions that HASTAC Scholars created for their peers. Each Digital Fridays session is conceptualized and hosted by HASTAC Scholars who have an opportunity to present on their research topics, pedagogy approaches or professional development strategies. Each hour-long Digital Friday session serves as great practice for conference presentations, and HASTAC Scholars may add Digital Fridays presentations to their CV. Most of the presentations are recorded and HASTAC Scholars write a recap blog post on hastac.org, which allows HASTAC Scholars who were unavailable to participate in the live streaming to view content at their convenience. This series
became especially important in light of the shift to online learning due to COVID-19; we increased the frequency and adjusted topics to address the needs of students and educators in this challenging moment.

**Collaborative Book Discussions**

In Spring 2020, a select group of HASTAC Scholars read and discussed *Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America* by HASTAC Steering Committee member Dr. Marcia Chatelain. Eight HASTAC Scholars have participated in the collaborative book discussion and three HASTAC Scholars completed a joint interview with Dr. Chatelain. The following HASTAC Scholars have participated in this project: Amy Patterson, Azalia Muchransyah, Mai Ibrahim, Kendra Cowley, Jesslyn Parrish, Ali Soken, Lisa Covington, Danielle Wilfong and Alex Hanson. Visit the book discussion [here](#).

**Upcoming HASTAC Conferences**

There are two upcoming HASTAC conferences; however, we ask for your patience as plans have shifted due to COVID-19.

**HASTAC 2020: Hindsight, Foresight, Insight**

School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication at the University of Texas at Dallas, Originally scheduled for Oct 15-18, 2020; postponed due to COVID-19

Led by Dean Anne Bolsamo, one of HASTAC’s original founders, HASTAC 2020 will play on the idea of hindsight as twenty-twenty vision. The goal of the conference will be to think about where HASTAC began in 2002, and where technology in general was at that time. We will think forward while also meditating on the path we have taken. The conference will include final workshops where, together, we plan new projects, new actions, new forms of collective engagement.

**HASTAC 2022: Design Thinking and Social Justice**

School Pratt Institute, NYC, Originally scheduled for May 26-28, 2022; may shift due to COVID-19 postponement of HASTAC 2020 conference

Led by Chris Alen Sula, this conference will draw on the Pratt Institute’s specializations in art, architecture, and design education to make vital and creative use of technology in solving contemporary problems. The conference will bring together artists, designers, humanists, and technologists to address current issues in education and social justice.

In solidarity,

*Adashima Oyo*, Director of HASTAC Scholars and doctoral candidate in Social Welfare at The Graduate Center, CUNY
The best way to get to know the Futures Initiative is to see the work we do from day to day. In the pages that follow, we share highlights from each month.

**FI Leadership and Democracy Institute**
Organized by Director Lauren Melendez, MSEd, and Co-Director Kashema Hutchinson on August 14, 2019

We kicked off the leadership and democracy program at the Graduate Center on Wednesday, August 14, where students learned leadership and mentoring skills at our annual summer institute. Kashema Hutchinson, Co-Director of the program, writes about the Institute: “In a world where we are fighting against marginalization, visibility and voice are our weapons of choice. But what is the purpose? It’s not only to be seen and heard, but also to matter. This seems intuitive, however, if you think about it, mattering is hard to achieve in society when you are on the outskirts. A significant part of why the program works is because of mattering. For example, Mike Rifino, former co-director and Futures Initiative graduate fellow, talked about his journey through CUNY while highlighting the programs that impacted his professional and academic outlook, endeavors and successes. Christina Katopodis, a Futures Initiative fellow, discussed professional identity on the internet. In both sessions, stories of trials and triumphs mirrored the aspirations, experiences, fears and hope with the new cohort.”

“...this Institute made me realize how much we humanize the experience, whether consciously or subconsciously. This time, I heard a new Leader say she wants to be ‘somebody,’ as if she wasn’t before. I get it though, because when we are incessantly bombarded with messages that say we are less than we really are, sometimes we internalize it and further marginalize ourselves. Another Leader shared her struggles about her academic pursuits. Her words poured out as if it was her first time sharing her story. She was conscious that she had our attention and she appreciated it by acknowledging how long she had been speaking. This time I heard Katopodis and Rifino connect with students about imposter syndrome. Katopodis told a story about her friend leaving her a note, saying: ‘You are deserving.’ For one of the Leaders, it clicked that she, too, is deserving. The fellow shared her feelings about Katopodis’s presentation. At the end of the day, Cathy N. Davidson wrote, ‘You are deserving’ on a note card and slid it over to the Leader. She gasped and stood there. The weight of the gesture was setting in, Davidson and I looked at her and smiled. I gave her a hug and welcomed her, again. Some things don’t need to be said to be understood. She matters...along with the other Leaders in the cohort, past, present and future.” Read Hutchinson’s full recap here.
What does it take to structure collaboration so that each contribution is made with equal care and consideration? Many scholars, especially in the humanities, are trained to teach and write in isolation. Others may learn to write multiple-author articles within a particular field, but may not be adept at working across disciplines. How do we unlearn these habits to co-teach or co-write effectively? Doing so can enable scholars to build bridges between STEM and the humanities, and to bring our siloes into conversation. Participants left this workshop with ideas for collaborative writing and team-teaching as well as resources and models for collegial, equitable collaboration. After lightning talks by panelists Kaysi Holman, Sujung Kim, Jessica Murray, and Christina Katopodis, participants broke out into groups to collaboratively write three blog posts on HASTAC.org to share strategies for co-teaching and co-writing online: “Strategies for Co-Writing,” “Strategies for Co-Teaching,” and “10 Questions to Ask Your Professor About Co-Authorship in Your First Meeting.” Together, these posts have received over 800 unique views and likes. This event was part of The University Worth Fighting For, a series of workshops that tie student-centered, engaged pedagogical practices to institutional change, race, equality, gender, and social justice. Read a full event recap here.

In this webinar, Gorman discussed the graduate school application process, giving particular attention to PhD applications. Topics included how to refine research interests, how to construct a target list of schools, and how to write a compelling personal statement. This was the seventh of a series of HASTAC Webinars that ran throughout the summer and the 2019-2020 academic year. In this series, HASTAC Scholars facilitate 45-minute webinars on topics ranging from Interview Prep or Blog Posting to Networking, Personal Statements, and Pedagogy Strategies for Adjuncts. Watch the recorded video here.

In the News

Cathy N. Davidson, Founding Director of the Futures Initiative, presented “Look Ahead! CUNY and the Future of Higher Education,” at the Council of Presidents convened by Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez at CUNY Central on September 4. (Photo credit: Marcus Beasley, CUNY) Kashema Hutchinson, PhD candidate in Urban Education and Futures Initiative Fellow, gave a talk at ThinkOlio in New York City on September 26, titled, “‘Dirty Computers,’ Voice & Visibility.” Christina Katopodis, PhD candidate in English and Futures Initiative Fellow, gave a talk at the Strand Bookstore in New York City on August 22, titled, “Margaret Fuller, Beethoven, and Revolution in the Minds of Women.” Siqi Tu, PhD candidate in Sociology and Futures Initiative Fellow, joined a conversation regarding “How Should the US Government Treat Chinese Students in America,” on China File, a media platform of the Center on US-China Relations at Asia Society.
The University Worth Fighting For Series

Citizen, Immigrant, Visitor: (Un)certainties of the Non-resident PhD Student

Organized by Gustavo Jiménez on October 17, 2019

We typically don’t center problems in higher ed on international students. With few tenure-track jobs that would allow international students move from “visitor” to “immigrant” and thus, somehow, secure their legal status, how can international students be part of the structural changes of an educational system that it is never their own? How can the university rethink the role of these graduate students, so they do not merely serve as “cheap labor”? How can we better support this population? The first part of this event involved a guided discussion on many of the issues international students face from student and work visas to the job market. In the second part, audience members engaged in brainstorming resources and forms of support for international students in graduate school. Check out these resources for international students.

Open Class Sessions

FI Faculty Fellows make some class sessions open to the public as part of our University Worth Fighting For series. To read more about our team-taught courses, visit our website. Below is a list of public events hosted by our Faculty Fellows in October.

- “We Are Left Without a Father Here”: Author’s Circle with Eileen Findlay (Oct 10)
- Motherhood and the #MeToo Moment (Oct 16)
- Founding Mothers, Mothers as Lawmakers, Lawmakers as Mothers: Women Writing Women’s Lives (Oct 21)
- Sunset Park (Oct 3) and Flushing (Oct 17) Teaching Tours with Tarry Hum

On October 17, FI Faculty Fellow Tarry Hum led a teaching tour of Downtown Flushing’s luxury developments with community activists Bobby Nathan and Seonae Byeon of the MinKwon Center for Community Action, an immigrant and tenant rights group. The group led a presentation that examined how the transnational investment in luxury retail and apartment complexes has threatened the affordable housing stock in the neighborhood, and contributed to a form of gentrification that stands in stark contrast from the rest of the city. Where gentrification normally means an increase in the white middle class population as immigrants and people of color are displaced, the tour’s speakers said that in Flushing, the largest demographic influx consists of wealthier immigrants from mainland China. This tour was featured in the Queens Courier. (Photo credit: QNS)
Digital Friday

The Changing Landscape of Consent Education: How Do We Make It More Inclusive?

Led by Leelan Farhan, doctoral student in Education at Concordia University on October 18, 2019

From the #MeToo movement, to Ontario’s ever-changing sex ed curriculum, to Québec’s new law on mandatory sexual violence prevention policy in higher education, Canada—and North America at large—seem to be grappling with how to teach consent more than ever before. How do we ensure that we provide room for the nuanced conversations and dynamics around how identity intersects with, and complicates relationships and sexuality? In this webinar, Farhan drew from her experience as both a sex educator and academic working with grassroots organizations to provide possible solutions to this question. Watch the recorded video here.

Leadership & Democracy Fellows

On October 24, our Leaders attended “Racism and Democracy,” moderated by Johnnetta Betsch Cole, president of the National Council of Negro Women. The panel featured Jelani Cobb, Professor of Journalism at Columbia University; Jessie Daniels, author of Cyber Racism and Professor at Hunter College and The Graduate Center in Sociology, Critical Social Psychology, and Africana Studies; Mary Hooks, co-director of Southerners on New Ground (SONG), a home for LGBTQ liberation in the South; and Bitta Mostofi, commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs. Leaders wrote reflections, including: “Democracy Reimagined: How to Fight for a Better Democracy” by Calvin Herman; “Call for Action for Racism and Democracy” by Shao Ru Zhang; and “Racism and Democracy in the Nadir of the 21st Century” by Lucien Baskin.

In the News

Katina Rogers discussed her book, Putting the Humanities PhD to Work, with Graduate Center faculty and students during a workshop on graduate curriculum reform hosted by the PublicsLab. The workshop addressed the question, “How can we support graduate students in doing public scholarship and preparing for careers both inside and outside the academy?” Participants developed grant proposals based on the day’s discussion.

FI Fellow Cihan Tekay interviewed Yasemin Özer, PhD candidate in Anthropology at The Graduate Center, CUNY, who is currently doing fieldwork in Istanbul about the recent crackdown on Syrian refugees in Turkey. The interview covers the recent waves of deportations, detentions and relocations of migrants and refugees in Turkey, the majority of whom are Syrians. Tekay and Özer talked about solidarity initiatives and the legal, social, and political challenges facing the refugee community in the Turkey. You can listen to the interview in the Left-east and Status audio-magazine.

Awards

FI Faculty Fellow David Lindo-Atichati (left) and Jane Alexander received $491,395 for their work to enhance the number, diversity, and professional development of undergraduates in earth sciences. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the project will implement a transformative program of classes and research at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, a study-abroad at Instituto Español de Oceanografía in Málaga (Spain), and an intense peer-to-peer mentoring program in geosciences at College of Staten Island.

FI Fellow Cihan Tekay (left) was awarded the Graduate Peer Mentoring Scholarship ($1000) for the Academic Year 2019-2020, granted by the USS Scholarship Committee. She was recognized, on October 17, at the Annual USS Scholarship Awards Reception.
The November FI Newsletter

In this month’s FI Newsletter editorial, Gustavo Jiménez writes: “We often think of movements as starting with a call to action. But movement research suggests that they actually start with emotion—a diffuse dissatisfaction with the status quo and a broad sense that the current institutions and power structures of the society will not address the problem. This brewing discontent turns into a movement when a voice arises that provides a positive vision and a path forward that is within the power of the crowd.

Reflecting on her experience after participating in the walking tour organized by FI Faculty Fellows Tarry Hum and Prithi Kanakamedala in Downtown Flushing, Ashleigh Williams wrote: “the amount of energy and passion presented through Tarry’s curation rooted me firmly in the space, and conveyed the urgency of Flushing’s situation more effectively than an article ever could.” Greater flexibility in what is understood by the academy to constitute valuable research would help cultivate stronger public understanding of, and support for, systems of higher education. We are working hard this year to make this possible.” Read the full editorial here.

Open Class Sessions

Walking the Red Line: A Journey Through the Geography of Race with Walis Johnson (Nov 14)

FI Faculty Fellows Prithi Kanakamedala and Tarry Hum, who this Fall semester co-taught the “Voices of the City” class, held an open classroom session with artist Walis Johnson. The value of walking as an artist practice and the transformational nature of aesthetics informs analysis of the geography of race. As Black spatial practices are erased from cities that are rapidly being gentrified, the Red Line Archive project documents the aesthetics of those erasures.

Why were Black people displaced from neighborhoods as soon as they became desirable? What evidence of past redlining is still visible today? In search of clues of a past hidden in present-day Black geographies, Johnson examines homes, streets, gardens, churches—places where everyday practices of Black life are detectable in the afterlife of slavery.

Climate Change and Discursive Frames (Nov 21)

FI Faculty Fellows David Lindo-Atichati and José del Valle, who this Fall semester co-taught the “Climate Change and Discursive Frames” class, held an open classroom session joined by Pedro Montoro, Meteorologist of Telemundo 47, and Erica Grow, American Meteorologist Society Councilor and former evening meteorologist of WNBC in NYC. FI Fellow Christina Katopodis wrote a reflection about the event here.
CUNY Humanities Alliance

Several members of the Humanities Alliance and the Futures Initiative traveled to the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) conference in Portland, Oregon to present an interactive symposium titled, “Higher Education for the New Majority: Community Colleges, Graduate Education, and Humanities.” Postdoctoral Fellow Sujung Kim reflected on her experience: “In our symposium, we discussed the following three important issues: (1) the significance of humanities and humanities-grounded democratic undergraduate leadership in the higher education landscape, (2) professional development for doctoral students in the humanities and humanistic social sciences to prepare them to teach in community colleges, and (3) the partnership between the Graduate Center and the LaGuardia Community College in advancing the critical pedagogy of humanities for community college students. We also highlighted the crucial roles of undergraduate students as active members in constructing both the Humanities Alliance program and the Futures Initiative undergraduate leadership program.” Read her full post here.

Leadership & Democracy Fellows

For our November meet-up, former FI fellow, Jessica Murray gave an eye-opening presentation about the policies, history and perception about visible and invisible disabilities. The blog prompt associated with the meet-up asked “What is one thing you will do differently pertaining to how you interact with people with disabilities (visible or invisible) after this session?”

Leader Kevin Torres wrote, “The Broader Perspective of Disability,” about the perception of (invisible) disabilities and the ways in which we can counter negative perceptions of disabilities.

Publications

In the latest issue of MLA’s Profession, Cathy N. Davidson and Christina Katopodis argue in “Changing Our Classrooms to Prepare Students for a Challenging World” that students lose too much when they don’t take humanities courses and that now is the time for those of us teaching in the humanities to do more than take a defensive posture in what amounts to a global assault on the humanities. Read the full article here.

Cathy N. Davidson’s essay “Why We Need a New Higher Education: We Have a Responsibility to the Next Generation of Students,” appeared this month in Liberal Education (vol. 105, no. 2, Spring 2019), the journal of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The plenary talk was given on the occasion of the 2019 Frederic W. Ness Book Prize being awarded to Davidson’s The New Education (Basic Books).

In the News

On November 14, PhD candidate in Urban Education and FI Fellow Kashema Hutchinson gave a talk for ThinkOlio at Work Heights - Electric on “Hip-Hop and Critical Race Theory.” In this Olio, participants examined lyrics from Meek Mill and other hip-hop artists in the light of systematic oppression and discussed how experiential knowledge of these systems make some of these artists the best equipped to speak on the subject of inequality.
The University Worth Fighting For Series

Inclusive or Exclusive: Reimagining Classrooms as Transnational Spaces

Organized by Sujung Kim on December 5, 2019

At this workshop, we worked collaboratively on concretely reimagining college and university classrooms as radical public spaces where US citizens and noncitizen (undocumented/documented migrant/immigrant) students and instructors engaged in critical conversations about the identities of US colleges and universities. We also brainstormed how we can create open, inclusive and safe everyday classrooms by exploring the politics and practices through which students and instructors can revisit white supremacy and imperial and exclusive US nationalism in major higher education as well as in dominant discourses and (cultural) politics. Such exploration helps prepare students and instructors to become radical cosmopolitans who are concerned about human dignity, universal rights, hospitality, inclusion, justice and democracy at the institutional, community, national and international levels. In the photo on the right, workshop participants demonstrate in a group performance. Read Kim’s full event recap here.

Open Class Sessions

Policing the Womb (Dec 9)

On December 9, Dean Julie Suk and Professor Sara McDougall, who co-teach this semester’s “Mothers in Law” graduate seminar, hosted a powerful conversation on pregnancy, surveillance, constitutional law, and more. “Policing the Womb” featured Michele Goodwin, Professor of Law at UC-Irvine School of Law and author of Policing the Womb (Cambridge University Press, 2020), in conversation with Michelle Anderson, President of Brooklyn College, CUNY, and legal expert on violence against women. (Photo credit: Patryk Tomaszewski)

Katherine Spillar, Executive Director of Feminist Majority Foundation, writes about the book: “Michele Goodwin’s Policing the Womb is a prerequisite to understanding the very real dangers posed by punitive state laws enacted under the guise of protecting women’s health, but which have instead criminalized women’s conduct during pregnancy, harmed women’s and girls’ health, and allowed unimaginable state interventions into women’s reproductive lives. Goodwin brings into sharp focus the compelling stories of the first targets and victims of these laws - primarily poor women and women of color - as she puts into context the risks to all women given the current political climate and Supreme Court’s jurisprudence.”
Digital Friday

Access Pedagogy

Led by Jesse Rice-Evans, doctoral student in English at The Graduate Center, CUNY; Digital Pedagogy Fellow, OpenLab at City Tech; and Web Development and Documentation Fellow, CUNY Humanities Alliance

On December 13, Graduate Center doctoral student Rice-Evans discussed strategies for using open digital pedagogy to center access and accessibility in higher education, working towards equity for sick and disabled students while practicing a pedagogy of compassion, trust, and empowerment. Watch the recorded video here.

Leadership & Democracy Fellows

We went on an enrichment outing to The Bronx Museum of Arts where our leadership fellows were able to visit the Henry Chalfant: Art vs. Transit, 1977-1987 exhibit. We had the coincidental pleasure of meeting Henry Chalfant in the flesh while there. He is best known for being a sculptor in New York in the 1970s, who turned to photography and film to do an in-depth study of hip-hop culture and graffiti art. This exhibit chronicles the start of the graffiti era and features works by legendary subway artists, including Dondi, Futura, Lady Pink, Lee Quiñones, Zephyr, and including Bronx legends Blade, Crash, DAZE, Dez, Kel, Mare, SEEN, Skeme, and T-Kid.

In the News

FI Fellow Cihan Tekay spoke about her reflections on editing the Turkey section of Jadaliyya at a panel on critical online knowledge production focusing on the Middle East, which took place in Sorbonne in July. Her revised comments were published recently, providing a synopsis of how the political and intellectual climate have shifted in Turkey since 2013, as well as insights on how to grapple with the official crackdowns on public scholarship and the uncertainty generated by the regional and global political climate.

We would like to congratulate Stephanie Lovett, one of our Futures Initiative Undergraduate Leadership and Democracy Fellows and students who attend New York City College of Technology, on being chosen as one of six CUNY wide finalists for the Paul A. Volcker Careers in Government Essay contest.

On December 13, Inside Higher Ed featured the work of FI Founding Director Cathy N. Davidson and FI Fellow Christina Katopodis on their HASTAC group, Progressive Pedagogy. To learn more, read “Required Pedagogy” by Coleen Flaherty.

Publications

Congratulations to FI Fellow and HASTAC Scholars Director Adashima Oyo on the publication of her research article “Religiosity and Outcomes Among Child Welfare-Involved Youth” in the Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal. Adashima’s study examined the effects of religiosity on seven outcomes [substance use disorder (SUD), positive future expectations, delinquency, depression, loneliness, school disengagement, and early sexual activity] in order to understand and support child welfare-involved youth and minimize the effects of trauma.
Leadership & Democracy Fellows Alumni Meetup

Over the years, we have created lasting relationships with our Leaders. In January, we had our first alumni meet-up! It was great to see the alums from previous cohorts. Regardless of which cohort the former Leaders were in, the meet-up was spent (re)connecting and having conversations about navigating social and professional spaces. They exchanged the knowledge and skills that they acquired, which help them to move forward. As big as CUNY is, someone will know someone. Lucien Baskin, who was in the 2019-2020 cohort, is friends with Kia Thomas, a rising senior studying Black Digital Studies at The City College of New York, CUNY, who was in the previous cohort. Thomas invited him to the alumni event and he fit right in. It was a cohort of its own.

In the News

Former FI Fellow (2016-2019) Jessica Murray, PhD, in “Pick Up Byford’s Accessibility Baton” shows her dismay upon hearing Andy Byford’s resignation as chief of the NYC Subway. Byford’s pledge to get “as close to 100% accessible as possible” in 15 years had already made some noticeable improvements. Now, Murray wonders, which way will MTA’s plans go in terms of accessibility?

Murray writes: “Getting Byford to ride the subway with us was one of the early victories of the Rise and Resist Elevator Action Group, of which I am a part. After decades of the MTA’s doing the bare minimum to improve the sorry state of accessibility, we were downright suspicious of this charming Brit who fully agreed with our point of view and made accessibility one of the four “pillars” of his ambitious plans...”
But his engagement was sincere and meaningful. He cleared his schedule so we could have an un rushed conversation. He invited advocates to help envision the accessibility portion of the Fast Forward plan and listened, as we laid out a multitude of problems beyond elevators and ramps.

He pledged to get ‘as close to 100% accessible as possible’ in 15 years. We knew that would never happen, but we appreciated his bold vision. He changed the conversation about accessibility as a benefit for all NYCT passengers.”

Read her full article in the NY Daily News.

Futures Initiative Founder and Co-Director Cathy N. Davidson kicked off a year of institutional reimaging at Temple University on January 28, delivering the first lecture of the year in the Provost’s Lecture Series at the Temple Performing Arts Center.

According to the event website, Davidson began by talking about the future of higher education and Temple’s place in it, and she helped attendees identify the questions that they should be asking themselves as a community of learners. Read more about the event here.

Research

Futures Initiative Co-Director Katina Rogers was interviewed by Tanya Domi for the 77th episode of “The Thought Project.” Rogers, at the time, was about to publish her first book, Putting the Humanities Ph.D. to Work: Thriving in and beyond the Classroom (Duke University Press, 2020; now available in bookstores), and in this wide-ranging conversation, she touched on the hot topics of current discourse about universities in the United States. Listen to the podcast here.

Announcements

$3.15 Million Mellon Grant to Support and Extend the Humanities Alliance

In January, we were excited (and we still are!) to announce that The Graduate Center, CUNY has been awarded a second $3.15 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to expand the CUNY Humanities Alliance, a program designed to engage doctoral students in supporting humanities education at community colleges. This grant will allow the CUNY Humanities Alliance, which began as a partnership with LaGuardia Community College, to expand and include three additional CUNY community colleges: Borough of Manhattan Community College, Guttman Community College and Hostos Community College. Read more about this great news in Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow for the CUNY Humanities Alliance Sujung Kim’s letter on pages 18-19 of this report.
We discussed the following questions: What is the public—or publics? What does being a scholar in public mean to you? And more importantly, how can we develop a public voice as early-career scholars? Attendees came to the event with ideas on how to engage with the public in connection with their scholarship. The discussion was followed by a workshop, from 1pm to 2pm, where attendees developed their academic work into op-ed articles.

**FI Blog Series: Imagining “What If?”**

Constrained by the prevailing scarcity culture, more often than not we are afraid to take risks and try new things. The Futures Initiative’s bold enthusiasm and its innovative optimism together model new approaches to the way we teach, learn and work, with the conviction that these changes can and will be institutionalized in the formal power structures and rules of CUNY, of higher education, and ultimately of society at large. So, what if we do things a different way? *What if* higher education is different? What if we center our classrooms on students? What if that higher education many of us want is now? In this series of monthly blog posts, curated by FI Newsletter Editor Gustavo Jiménez, FI Fellows show us how a new higher education is possible:

In “*What if ‘Elite Education’ is a Public Good*,” Siqi Tu invites her readers to think with her about an ideal form of education made available to a much more diverse student body rather than limited to a small number of well-resourced students. Kashema Hutchinson in “*What if oppressed voices matter as much as hegemonic voices in higher education*?” discusses her dissertation and her experiences as a Black scholar. Adashima Oyo in her timely and useful post prioritizing student health and wellness, “*The Last Page*,” guides us all to see, “What if ‘Innovative Syllabus Design’ is a Public Good.” These are just a few of the blog posts authored by FI Fellows this year, and there are more to come. Check out next month’s post by Cihan Tekay here.
Digital Fridays

Building Trust for Contentious Classroom Discussions

Led by Ari Weinberg, doctoral candidate in American Studies at William & Mary on February 7, 2020

In this webinar, Weinberg discussed trust-building strategies and teaching pedagogies which aid in creating fruitful classroom dynamics and discussions, especially when dealing with difficult topics. Watch the recorded video here.

Introduction to Participatory Design

Led by Catalina Alzate, MFA student of Arts, Technology and Emerging Communication (ATEC) at the University of Texas at Dallas on February 21, 2020

In this webinar, Alzate discussed Participatory Design as a way of conducting research and action projects. Alzate provided an overview of the general basis of this philosophy and method, and an overview of participatory tools, with emphasis on participatory enactment. Watch the recorded video here.

Leadership & Democracy Fellows

The Undergraduate Leadership and Democracy fellows met up in February to discuss professional development and career planning. Read more about their engaging pre-workshop activities and the meet-up here.

Announcements

HASTAC and the CUNY Humanities Alliance were pleased to announce the publication of a new open educational resource, Promoting Student Transformation at a Community College by Steven L. Berg. The book, published on the CUNY Manifold platform, offers a narrative guide to teaching, featuring practical pedagogical advice for engaging students and addressing a variety of student needs. Dr. Jay Polish, former CUNY Humanities Alliance graduate fellow and Graduate Center English PhD, contributed to developmental editing and production.

In the News

In February, we continued celebrating the $3.15 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to expand the CUNY Humanities Alliance, featured in an IHE article by Doug Lederman, “Prepping for a Community College Career.”

FI Fellow Cihan Tekay (left) recently interviewed anthropologist Alize Arican about a delayed urban transformation project in Istanbul and what it reveals about the power dynamics between construction businesses, politicians and communities. In this podcast, Tekay and Arican discuss a range of issues tied to urban transformation in Turkey, including: historical land-marking and property expropriation, displacement of marginalized communities who depend on informal economies, long-term relationships between companies and the government, the pervasive practice of subcontracting, and the effects of the current economic downturn.
In March, New York City shut down and CUNY announced we would be working remotely for the remainder of the semester. At the Futures Initiative (and with our partners at HASTAC and the CUNY Humanities Alliance) it was a time that we really saw and felt our strength, vibrancy, bravery, and persistence in our mission to #fight4edu. We continued our regular business meetings as video conferences; we pooled resources on digital pedagogy to help instructors move their courses online in a world-wide teaching emergency; and we rapidly prepared webinars in the HASTAC Scholars Digital Fridays series to meet demand and share ideas and strategies for remote learning. This month was incredibly challenging but we made the right decision to prioritize health and wellness and postpone (for one year) the conference that we had all been looking forward to, “Graduate Education at Work and in the World” (originally scheduled April 30 & May 1). We worked diligently—in many ways, harder than we ever had before—to serve our communities and to help one another overcome new obstacles.

Leadership & Democracy Fellows

The Undergraduate Leadership & Democracy Fellows celebrated Women’s History Month at their March meet-up by honoring women who have brought joy to our lives from their artistic expression through music. How can the lyrics sung by Beyoncé or Mariah the Scientist help to bring people’s attention to world problems and inspire people to find solutions to those problems? Read the full recap here.

In the News

FI Fellow Christina Katopodis and FI Founding Director Cathy N. Davidson co-authored two articles published in Inside Higher Education this month that dealt with how to adjust our teaching practices in times of crisis.

On March 11, in “Transforming Your Online Teaching from Crisis to Community” they offered an easy activity to engage students in any classroom, even at a distance.

On March 23, their second op-ed, “In a Pandemic, Everyone Gets an Asterisk,” invited us to rethink the way we assess, test and grade our students to give students and instructors “needed flexibility during an impossible time.”
Critical Digital Pedagogy: Humanities Approaches

Led by Grace Afsari-Mamagani, doctoral candidate in English at New York University on March 13, 2020

Grace addressed these questions: What might it look like to bring methodologies fostered by humanities training to tech and data praxes? How might we resist the narrative that graduate students and faculty are ill-equipped to facilitate learning in technology and computing? Watch the recorded video here.

Remote Instruction and Online Class Engagement

Led by Grant Glass, doctoral candidate in English and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on March 17, 2020

Glass offered strategies to assist in creating a virtual and engaging learning environment for our students. We discussed communication, adjusting class policies, planning for course continuity, and use of minimal computing resources. Watch the recorded video here.

Online Teaching and Collaborative Reading

Led by Christina Katopodis, doctoral candidate in English at The Graduate Center, CUNY, on March 20, 2020

Katopodis talked about publicly annotating a text using Manifold, with Manifold Digital Fellow Jojo Karlin, and maintaining an open dialogue between class meetings using Twitter. As more classes go online, these two platforms can help to build and maintain a sense of community in a class, easing feelings of isolation in an asynchronous distance learning model. Watch the recorded video here.

Announcements and Awards

Two of our FI Faculty Fellows, Professors Karen Miller (right), who co-taught “Transformations of Modernity, 1914-present” in Fall 2019, and Robin Kietlinski (left), who will be co-teaching “Cities and Disaster: Past, Present, and Future” in Spring 2021, have been selected as 2019-2020 Fulbright U.S. Scholars. Many congratulations to both of them!

FI Fellow Christina Katopodis won the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society’s Graduate Student Paper Award ($750) for her paper “Emerson’s Transcendental Sonic Self and the Tuning of the World,” which she will present at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering in July. Congratulations!

FI Postdoctoral Fellow Sujung Kim’s article “Voluntarily exiled? Korean state’s cultural politics of young adults’ social belonging and Korean students’ exile to a US community college” has been selected as the 2nd place winner in the Best Article Award category of the CIES Study Abroad & International Students 2020. Congratulations!
Edgar writes: “This crisis will change us forever; we just do not know yet how. Committed as we are to equity and innovation in higher education, the Futures Initiative is worriedly monitoring how the pandemic can impact the most vulnerable communities in the university. In times of a global crisis of unknown consequences, ‘the emotionally and spiritually sane response,’ Aisha Ahmad explains, ‘is to prepare to be forever changed.’”

In this FI Newsletter, team members shared how they were coping. Jiménez explains, “We wanted you to know that we do feel things are upside down lately. And that we are finding it hard to focus. And that home has turned into our permanent workspace. And that we are trying to juggle childcare with work. And that we worry about the wellbeing of all frontline workers. Because we feel that same amalgam of loss, pain, anxiety and uncertainty that you are probably feeling. ‘That discomfort you’re feeling is grief,’ and we are all in this together.”

Leadership & Democracy Fellows

After the pandemic hit and the city shut down, we switched to virtual meet-ups. For our original April meet-up, we had planned to see the new play “Help” by Claudia Rankine. Instead, we read “Radical Honesty: Truth Telling as Pedagogy for Working Through Shame in Academic Spaces” by Associate Professor of Anthropology, Dr. Bianca Williams.

Professor Williams (left) is a Black feminist cultural anthropologist at The Graduate Center, CUNY, and author of The Pursuit of Happiness: Black Women, Diasporic Dreams, and the Politics of Emotional Transnationalism (Duke University Press, 2018). We had an extremely candid conversation about challenging patriarchal and racist institutions by showing up as our multiplicative selves.

Speaking of multiplicative, one of our Leaders, Evalaurene R. Jean-Charles (right), wears many hats and one of them is being the founder of Black on Black Education, a social media platform started to bring black educators, experts and thinkers together to increase learning in the black community. She invited us to join her amazing podcast on May 16 to discuss our roles and impact in education.
Digital Fridays

Cardi B to Stranger Things: Using Popular Culture in the Writing Classroom

Led by Noah Wilson, doctoral candidate in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric at Syracuse University on April 3, 2020

The university explicitly and implicitly marks stark divides between what happens inside the classroom and outside in everyday life: unnecessary distinctions between the intellectual and the mundane. And yet, everyday students readily engage in complicated communication practices when they tailor their social media messages for specific audiences, when they switch contexts and language practices while texting, and as they develop habits for navigating our over-saturated information environment.

Wilson discussed bringing popular culture into the writing classroom as a way to help students bring what they know into the college classroom and to help them to make meaning from course content. He provided five popular culture infused activities designed for undergraduates. Watch the recorded video here.

Enriching STEM: Creating Equity in and Beyond the Lab

Led by Michael Epstein, PhD, FI Fellow and recent graduate from the Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience program in Psychology at The Graduate Center, CUNY, on April 24, 2020

In this webinar, organized by the Futures Initiative and IRADAC, Michael Epstein, Elizabeth Waters and Jessica Desamero discussed the ways that public science initiatives throughout New York City are working to improve equity in STEM. This workshop brought together people and groups building public education and mentorship programs, particularly for minority or low-income students in diverse initiatives, including K-12 STEM Outreach, Brain Awareness Week, the World Science Festival and BioBus. This session fostered connections across people and projects, discussing the ways that public-focused work can have a deep impact on professional growth and research, and reflecting on the role of public science in times of crisis.

Read Epstein’s recap of the webinar here and watch the full video here.

HASTAC Scholars

Last month, the Scholar Spotlight was on Jazmine Qamar Jones, an MFA Student in Creative Practice and Teaching Assistant at The School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communications (ATEC) at the University of Texas at Dallas, and Martin Perez Comisso, a Chilean technologist and PhD student at Arizona State University. This month we’re putting the spotlight on Monique Kampherm, a PhD candidate in English Language and Literature at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, researching the rhetorical intersection of politics and social media. Find out more about them reading the conversation we had with them and many other HASTAC Scholars in our HASTAC Scholar Spotlight Group.

Announcements

Olin College of Engineering has named FI Faculty Fellow (2017) Dr. Gilda Barabino as its next President. Congratulations! Dr. Barabino is currently the dean of The Grove School of Engineering and the Daniel and Frances Berg Professor at The City College of New York, CUNY. Read the news here.
Leadership & Democracy Fellows

Our final meet-up was on May 22, 2020. For this meet-up, the Leaders had a final project about leadership and democracy. They presented in various formats such as poetry, video, podcast, infographic and PowerPoint or Prezi. Some of the Leaders presented the impact of the program since the Summer Institute. We held spaces for learning and unfiltered conversations that some of them do not normally have in academia. Some Leaders had to grapple with their old truths and acquire new truths about leadership, democracy, and their perspectives.

A bittersweet part of the meet-up was saying farewell, especially to two of our Leaders. Tahamina Hossain, who majored in Sociology at The City College of New York, CUNY, and Calvin Herman, a Biology major at Hunter College, CUNY, will be graduating this year, but have been with us for three iterations of the program. We are so proud to witness not only their growth, but the obstacles they have overcome to make it this far. Their contributions to the program have been priceless and they will be truly missed, but now it is time for them to be Leaders in new spaces and we wish them all the very best. Watch this video clip of the conclusion to the final meet-up.

HASTAC Scholars

Our wonderful HASTAC Scholars have done it again! Over the last four months, a select group of HASTAC Scholars have read and discussed Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America by HASTAC Steering Committee member Dr. Marcia Chatelain. Eight HASTAC Scholars have participated in the collaborative book discussion and three HASTAC Scholars completed a joint interview with Dr. Chatelain. The following HASTAC Scholars have participated in this project: Amy Patterson, Azalia Muchransyah, Mai Ibrahim, Kendra Cowley, Jesslyn Parrish, Ali Soken, Lisa Covington, Danielle Wilfong and Alex Hanson. Read more about their discussion in the HASTAC Group, “Collaborative Book Discussion of Franchise by Marcia Chatelain.” After you have read the discussion posts, FI Fellow and HASTAC Scholars Director, Adashima Oyo, welcomes you to leave comments and questions for the Group.

This month the spotlight is on Jesslyn Parrish, a Texts and Technology doctoral student at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida, in the Digital Media track, and Norah Elmagraby, MS, a doctoral candidate in the Islamic Civilizations Studies at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Parrish’s research interests are in computer programming and augmented reality. Elmagraby’s research examines the perception of climate change and natural disasters in the Middle East and North Africa.
Digital Fridays

Graduate Education for the Public Good

Speakers: Katina Rogers (CoDirector, Futures Initiative), Stacy Hartman (Director, Publics Lab), Cihan Tekay (doctoral candidate in Anthropology, The Graduate Center; Graduate Fellow, Futures Initiative), and Justin Beauchamp (doctoral student in Sociology, The Graduate Center; College Assistant, Publics Lab), May 1, 2020

What a joy to gather, in the midst of a time of separation and loss, to talk about what we imagine for higher education. On Friday, May 1—Labor Day across much of the world—Rogers and her colleagues hosted a digital forum on graduate education for the public good. That more than fifty people would come together from their homes on a Friday afternoon to talk about education, equity, and the public good was a delight, and it brought us all hope. Read the full event recap here and watch the recorded video here.

Is Meek Mill a Critical Race Theorist?

Led by Kashema Hutchinson, doctoral candidate in Urban Education at The Graduate Center, CUNY, and Co-Director of the Undergraduate Leadership Program, on May 8, 2020

In our last webinar of the Spring, Hutchinson questioned whether or not rapper Meek Mill is a critical race theorist. She laid out the history of CRT, explain her research, and engaged with activities the more than 50 viewers who zoomed in. Read more and watch the recorded video here.

Awards

PSC-CUNY Research Award

Congratulations to Lauren Melendez, recipient of a PSC-CUNY Research Award that is slated to begin July 1, 2020. The award was granted to Melendez to aid her in publishing “Exploring Leadership Programs in Academia: A Case Study of Inclusion and Equity and Social Justice Counseling Framework,” an Open Educational Resource (OER) book to be published on MANIfold—an open-source platform for scholarly publishing promoted by HASTAC. The book will be based on her Master’s thesis, a work that dealt with the concept of student success, equity and inclusion for all students in higher education.

Announcements

Thank you, FI Fellows Siqi Tu and Michael Epstein! Both Tu (2018-2020) and Epstein (2019-2020) have been integral members of the team and will be greatly missed. As our Web Developer and Digital Strategist, Epstein has been in charge of our website maintenance, and he worked on a mapping project to help us visualize the impact the work we do has throughout CUNY. Tu, our Web Developer for the last two years, brought us good ideas and technological skills that helped us redesign and improve our website. We will deeply miss working with both of them, and we wish them the very best in all that lies ahead for them. This fall, Tu will begin a post-doctoral research fellowship at the Ethics, Law and Politics department at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany. Epstein will begin work as a Postdoctoral Associate in the department of Psychological & Brain Sciences at Boston University.

FI Fellow Cihan Tekay received both her MA and MPhil in Anthropology from the GC and the new title of Assistant Director at FI. She presented her work on energy and finance at the biennial conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists as part of the panel “The political power of energy futures within and beyond Europe.”
Dear Friends,

As an FI Fellow and the editor and designer of this Annual Report, I would like to say a few words about what an inspiring experience this has been reviewing a year of our collective work. Reflecting upon this extraordinary time of loss, shock, trauma, and violence against Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color (BIPOC), I couldn’t end this report without including a recap of what our team accomplished over the summer. We continued advocating greater equity and innovation in higher education at every level of the university in the pandemic. We joined #BlackLivesMatter protests, we joined trainings in antiracism organized by Academics for Black Survival and Wellness (#Academics4BlackLives), we found ways to support essential workers as well as protesters, and we continued meeting outdoors and remotely to work, and write, and celebrate some tremendous accomplishments.

Celebrating the release of Katina Rogers’ *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work*

This summer, Katina Rogers engaged in a Q&A with Scott Jaschik at *Inside Higher Ed* and her book was featured in “Why the World Needs Humanities PhDs Right Now” on the Graduate Center, CUNY, website. If you’d like to hear more, Rogers spoke with Sasha Goldman (Program Manager for PhD Professional Development) on the Vitamin PhD podcast and with Roopika Risam and Mary Churchill on Rocking the Academy. Rogers’ book, *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work*, came out just in time for a series of reading group discussions led by FI Fellow Siqi Tu, Andrew Viñales (PhD student, Cultural Anthropology, and PublicsLab Fellow), and myself. The discussions, structured as a series of three videochats, helped us all prepare for the 2020-2021 academic year. We discussed career preparation, mentorship, inclusivity, broadening the scope of scholarly products to serve students both in and outside of the academy, and what faculty, advisors, and students can do to make a graduate degree in the humanities translatable to the world outside of the academy.

Cathy N. Davidson and I wrote an op-ed for *Times Higher Ed* titled, “Trust your students to be active participants in their learning,” on June 26, just ahead of our session, “Trust Your Students” on July 13, at the REMOTE Summit, hosted by Arizona State University. The talk was about co-learning and using active learning tools to support peer-to-peer learning in a community, whether onsite or online. There were over 2,000 attendees from all over the world.

Cathy N. Davidson coauthored “Making Remote Learning Relevant” for *Inside Higher Ed* with Senior Program Officer at the Andrew Mellon Foundation Dianne Harris, former dean of the College of Humanities at the University of Utah. My post to the Progressive Pedagogy HASTAC Group, “Every Fall Syllabus Needs an ‘Or’ Option,” was picked up by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and featured in their *Teaching* newsletter on June 11.
Transformative Learning in the Humanities

We have recently been awarded a $2 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, part of the historic $10 million grant to CUNY. Transformative Learning in the Humanities will be codirected by Cathy N. Davidson, Shelly Eversley (Baruch College), and Annemarie Nicols-Grinenko (Hunter College and University Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs), with Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost José Luis Cruz as PI. Soon, we will be announcing more details of this three-year cross-CUNY program focusing on peer-to-peer faculty development and transformative pedagogy, with opportunities for adjunct, junior, and senior faculty from all CUNY’s two- and four-year campuses. Read the full announcement here.

Congratulations to Our Graduates!

Former FI Fellow (2016-2019) Jessica Murray (left), PhD in Developmental Psychology, successfully defended her dissertation, “Self-Determination in Transportation: The Route to Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities,” on August 19, 2020. Her digital project, Our Mobility, is a research study designed to learn more about individual differences in mobility in NYC.

FI Fellow (2018-2020) Siqi Tu (right), PhD in Sociology successfully defended “Destination Diploma: How Chinese Upper-Middle Class Families ‘Outsource’ Secondary Education to the United States,” which investigates why and how Chinese upper-middle-class families make decisions to send their children to the United States to attend private high schools. In his dissertation, “The Temporal Dynamics of Ensemble Perception,” FI Fellow (2019-2020) Michael Epstein (left), PhD in Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience, explores the temporal dynamics of ensemble perception, the ability for the visual system to extract the statistical information from groups of objects. Using behavioral and neuroimaging measures Epstein provides evidence that ensemble perception is an early and continuously updating process within vision. Congratulations to Drs. Murray, Tu, and Epstein!

It has been an honor to work alongside such inspiring and ambitious colleagues at the Futures Initiative. If I could describe them in one word, it would be “fierce.” They are fierce collaborators, mentors, and social justice warriors. Their volunteerism, flexibility and generosity are unmatched. Reviewing past newsletters to curate this report was like opening an archive of joyful collaboration. Seeing our smiling faces, unmasked and glowing with optimism for the events we were planning was both difficult (now knowing what was ahead of us) and, at the same time, reassuring (now knowing what we are capable of overcoming). What astonishes me is how we found the strength to continue fighting for positive changes in higher education despite having to reimagine, in short order, how best to do that in a global health crisis. I know we will bring that same joy and ferocity to our work in the 2020-2021 academic year.

With gratitude and admiration,

Christina Katopodis, FI Fellow and PhD Candidate in English at The Graduate Center, CUNY
Editor and Designer, FI Annual Report
We would like to thank the City University of New York, The Graduate Center, The Andrew Mellon Foundation, the whole team at the Futures Initiative, the FI Faculty Fellows, and our partners at HASTAC and the CUNY Humanities Alliance for helping us further our mission to advocate greater equity and innovation in higher education at every level of the university, and extend our collaborative peer-to-peer practices across institutions, disciplines, national boundaries, and economic and social disparities, promoting reinvestment in higher education as a public good. Thank you.