
HR Connect

November 2021 (20th Issue)

The Graduate Center Office of Human Resources

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As you know, the Graduate Center (GC), Macaulay Honors College (MHC) and Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism (SOJ) have reopened for limited on campus work/activities. Continuous adherence to the safety and health protocols remain paramount as we continue to progress through the academic year. Granted, the adjustment to the hybrid dynamic of on campus and remote work has not been easy due to a myriad of challenges. But we, as a community, continue to adapt and strive forward for our students, for each other, and for the GC, MHC, and SOJ.

As a reminder, the Office of Human Resources (OHR) has modified its staffing level for on campus services to comply with GC's COVID-19 protocols. HR staff are in the office on various days, Monday – Friday, 9am to 5pm, therefore you should confirm their availability and schedule an appointment if you wish to meet in person. In addition, OHR is providing the following remote services: consultation via Zoom, Teams, email, and phone; document submittal via Virtual Drop-Off System (VDS), currently only available to active GC employees.

I am sure a number of you will attest, it has been reinvigorating to be back on campus; seeing colleagues, engaging in in-person discussions, a break from Zoom, and being back in this special place that many of us deem a second home. Sentiments such as those are what makes us a community, and not merely co-workers in a place of work. As such, it is important we continue to exercise patience, understanding and support for each other

HR Connect – November 2021 Issue



Current & Upcoming Events

October 12 - November 19

Open enrollment period for Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

November 1 - November 30

Open enrollment period for medical and dental plans

November 25 - November 26

Thanksgiving holiday observed

December 21

Deadline for part-time employees to complete the Workplace Violence & Employee Sexual Interpersonal Violence Prevention trainings

December 24 - December 25

Christmas holiday observed

December 31

Deadline for annual leave carryover

December 31-January 1

New Year's holiday observed

July 29, 2022

Deadline for full-time employees to complete the Workplace Violence & Employee Sexual Interpersonal Violence Prevention trainings



as we continue our journey towards stability and normalcy – yet being ready to pivot should the need arise. We look forward to servicing your needs and partnering with you in support of your operations and goals.

We hope you will find this edition of HR Connect to be engaging and enriching.

OHR wishes you and your family a happy and safe Thanksgiving!

Best,
David Boxill
Executive Director of Human Resources

Benefits

Open Enrollment for Health and Dental Plans November 1, 2021 – November 30, 2021

This year's Open Enrollment period is from **November 1, 2021 – November 30, 2021**. The Open Enrollment period is an annual event which allows you to make changes to your medical and dental plans. Once the open enrollment period ends, you will not be able to make changes for a year (unless there is a qualifying event) so please take the time to review your current 2021 benefit coverage and consider whether new choices will better serve you and your family's needs in 2022. You can make the following changes:

- Change your health plan
- Add or drop coverage for your dependents
- Add or drop Optional coverage to the Health plan
- Elect to participate in the Buy-Out Waiver Program
- Switch Dental Plan coverage between Guardian and DeltaCare USA (Instructional and Classified Managerial Staff)

Changes made during the Open Enrollment period will be effective as of January 1, 2022, and the new payroll deduction, if applicable, will begin with your first full paycheck in January 2022. If you do not wish to make any change in coverage, your current medical and dental elections will continue for 2022.

Open Enrollment for Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) October 12, 2021 – November 19, 2021

The City of New York offers its employees a Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) Program, which is allowable under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 125. The Program allows employees to deposit a portion of their pre-tax income into accounts maintained for certain health and dependent care expenses. The open enrollment period for the FSA Program is from **October 12, 2021 – November 19, 2021** effective as of **January 1, 2022**.

If you wish to enroll in one or more of the New York City Flexible Spending Accounts Programs, you must complete and submit the enrollment form to the program no later than November 19, 2021.

Please note that Health Care Flexible Spending Accounts (HCFSA) and Dependent Care Assistance Program (DeCAP) elections do not roll over from year to year. Current participants must re-enroll to participate in 2022.

The NYC Flexible Spending Accounts Program includes the following:

- Health Care Flexible Spending Accounts (HCFSA) Program
- Dependent Care Assistance Program (DeCAP)
- Medical Spending Conversion (MSC) Health Benefits Buy-Out Waiver Program (MSC)
- Medical Spending Conversion (MSC) Premium Conversion Program

Each MSC Program continues from one Plan Year to the next. Therefore, participants do not need to re-enroll each Plan Year unless there is a change of status. If employees would like to withdraw from or elect to participate in the MSC Health Plan Buy-Out Waiver Program, they must complete both the 2022 MSC Enrollment/Change Form and the Health Benefits Application. The incentive payments for the Plan Year 2022 are \$500 for individual/domestic partner coverage and \$1,000 for family coverage. Employees should refer to the FSA website at www.nyc.gov/fsa for brochures, information, forms and details on how to submit their application. Completed HCFSA and DeCAP forms should be submitted electronically to the following secure site: <https://nyc-fsa.leapfile.net>. Please DO NOT mail any forms (including certified mail and/or UPS or FedEx packages) to the FSA Administrative Office since the office is closed. The Buy-Out Waiver form, along with supporting documents, is the only form that should be submitted to the Office of Human Resources.

Pre-tax Commuter Benefit – Edenred

If you would like to resume or make changes to your commuter benefit deductions, please complete the [form](#) and submit it to Jessica Mintzes, Benefits Coordinator, at jmintzes@gc.cuny.edu.

Announcements

Welcome Dr. Vanessa Valdes, Interim Dean of Macaulay Honors College



Interim Dean Dr. Vanessa Valdés is an accomplished scholar, historian, author, and mentor of students. She joins Macaulay after serving two and a half years as Director of City College’s Black Studies Program, overseeing 1,100 students per year, more than 20 faculty and staff members, and over 60 majors and minors.

A graduate of Yale and Vanderbilt Universities, Dr. Valdés’s research interests focus on the cultural production of Black peoples throughout the Americas: the U.S. and Latin America, including Brazil, and the Caribbean.

OHR Staff Updates

Ginette Aubry-Percy



Ginette Aubry-Percy is joining OHR as a CUNY Office Assistant to support the front desk operations and provide customer service to employees. Ginette has previously worked in the Human Resources Department at Hostos Community College where she provided administrative support to staff, faculty and students and assisted with onboarding new employees. Ginette is a graduate of Lehman College.

Ginette enjoys cooking and planning for events and parties. She is also a big fan of basketball and fitness.

Jessica Mintzes' New Role



Jessica Mintzes has been working in OHR since 2017, on a part-time basis, providing support to front desk operations and to the Time and Leave Unit. She is now the full-time Benefits Coordinator, working closely with the Benefits Officer to assist with the administration and tracking of employees' benefits and leaves.

Jessica is currently earning her PhD degree in English at St. John's University and received her Master's degree from Brooklyn College. She's an avid fan of all things Marvel, DC and the superhero genre, and enjoys listening to K-pop music.

Jessica can be contacted at jmintzes@gc.cuny.edu.

Retirements

We would like to acknowledge faculty and staff who have retired over the last year, and express our gratitude to them for their dedication and service to the GC and to SOJ.

- **Aldo Orlando** – Environmental Health & Safety Director, Advanced Science Research Center. 6 years of service.
- **Bo Olsson** – Senior College Laboratory Technician, Office of IT. 47 years of service.
- **Cheryl Neil** – CUNY Administrative Assistant, Office of Fellowships & Financial Aid. 33 years of service.
- **Dianne Bradley** – Professor, MA/PhD Program in Linguistics. 27 years of service.
- **Linda Prout** – Professor, Graduate School of Journalism. 15 years of service.
- **Lorraine Lawrence** – Mail Message Service Worker, Central Store/Property Management. 31 years of service.
- **Marvin Carlson** – Distinguished Professor, PhD Program in Theatre. 35 years of service.
- **Nancy Seda** – Library Coordinator, Library. 30 years of service.
- **Paul Croser** – Academic Advising Coordinator, Office of International Students. 24 years of service.
- **Richard Alba** – Distinguished Professor, PhD Program in Sociology. 13 years of service.
- **Stephen Brier** – Professor, PhD Program in Urban Education. 25 years of service.
- **Susan Saegert** – Professor, PhD Program in Environmental Psychology. 48 years of service.
- **Wayne Svoboda** – Associate Professor, Graduate School of Journalism. 14 years of service.

New Staff at the GC, Macaulay, and SOJ

The most recent Informational Session for new faculty and staff took place on October 27th via Zoom. The participants were introduced to the GC President and Provost, as well as to different departments, including OHR. Below are some intros from new faculty and staff and a fun fact about them.

Adashima Oyo (Interim Deputy Director, Futures Initiative & HASTAC) - I work with a wonderful team to increase diversity, equity, and innovation in higher education. Futures Initiative is housed at the GC, but our impact is all over CUNY, and beyond CUNY.

Fun fact: I'm a New Year's Baby. I made the newspapers being born at midnight, 12:00 a.m. exactly, in Brooklyn.

[Aisha Abdelmula](#) (Senior Honors Advisor, Macaulay Honors College) – I advise John Jay students in the Macaulay Honors Program.

Fun fact: I won a contest and was published in a book of child poets at ten years old.

[Amber Musser](#) (Professor, PhD Program in English) - My research focuses on the intersections of race, sexuality, and aesthetics. I also write art criticism.

Fun fact: I read science fiction for fun.

[Erec Koch](#) (Professor, PhD Program in French) - After serving in academic administrative roles at Hunter, Baruch, and CCNY over the past ten years, I am delighted to be joining the GC faculty full time.

Fun fact: I am a lifelong Boston Red Sox fan who has learned since arriving here 10 years ago that Yankees fans are good people too!

[Diane Riskedah](#) (Distinguished Lecturer, PhD Program in Anthropology) – I am a Linguistic Anthropologist who is currently teaching at the GC and Queens College Anthropology department. My current research interests are on the visual politics of protest rhetoric in Lebanon and the Arabic language in diaspora.

Fun fact: I relocated from Toronto where I was teaching at the University of Toronto Scarborough and has now moved near Scarborough, New York.

[Jean Park](#) (Postdoctoral Fellow, Teaching & Learning Collaboratory, Macaulay Honors College) - I lead a cohort of three TLC fellows in supporting faculty and Macaulay students at Baruch, City, and Lehman Colleges. I also help coordinate TLC events, such as BioBlitz and the STEAM Festival. As a TLC Postdoctoral Fellow, I leverage my research background in the humanities to implement best practices for online and in-person teaching and learning.

Fun fact: I've been to New Zealand twice – pre- and post- Lord of the Rings – and hope to be “there and back again” soon!

[Kelsey Woodford](#) (Associate Director of Master's Programs and Financial Literacy, Office of Fellowships & Financial Aid) - I coordinate with various Master's programs, specifically the Graduate School of Journalism, to provide financial aid services. Additionally, I will be implementing and overseeing the financial literacy curriculum.

Fun fact: I'm reading 30 books this year! I'm currently on book 21.

[Kendra Krueger](#) (Interim STEM Education and Outreach Manager, ASRC) - I have the pleasure of managing and developing programming focused on interdisciplinary STEM education and pedagogy, community science and science communication. We offer field trips, virtual programs, mentorship, research internships, classroom visits, community event pop-ups, and workshops for youth, scientists, educators and community members across NYC.

Fun fact: I was born and raised in the East Village in a family of artists and went to the well-known 'fame school' for theater before going rouge and attending college and graduate school for electrical engineering.

[Linda Villarosa](#) (Assistant Professor, SOJ) - I am a journalist in residence and an Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Journalism. In spring 2022, I will teach *Feature Writing*, a class I took while a student at the grad school in 2013.

Fun fact: I love fishing and have caught a 175-pound marlin and 42-inch striped bass.

[Miriam Ticktin](#) (Associate Professor, PhD Program in Anthropology) - I conduct research and teach on topics related to migration and mobility, humanitarianism, innocence and the anthropology of medicine (especially how gendered and racial inequalities are mapped onto the body). I am increasingly interested in political imagination, and in opening the way to new political formations.

Fun fact: I grew up in Montreal, to parents from India and South Africa; and I used to swim for the Canadian National team.

Patrick Smyth (Postdoctoral Researcher, Publics Lab) – I support the work of the Public Fellows, who use their background in the humanities and qualitative social sciences to serve communities. I am also working to create a business, Iota School, that offers technical training to humanists.

Fun fact: I like to cook and bake, and make a mean apple pie.

Paul Mastrodonato (Development Officer for the Sciences, Office of Institutional Advancement) – I develop, plan and coordinate private fund development efforts for the Advanced Science Research Center and Graduate Center science programs – including individual donors, foundations and corporations.

Fun fact: I foster and adopt French Bulldogs on behalf of the French Bulldog Rescue Network.

Teresa Curmi (Interim Academic Program, CUNY BA) – I oversee the CUNY BA academic program and its staff and uphold the program's mission. I review the areas of concentration submitted by the program's students, serve as a liaison with faculty mentors and administrators across CUNY, participate in affiliated committees, and serve as an advisor to the program's Student Leadership Council.

Fun fact: I spent six years of my childhood living on a small island in the middle of the Mediterranean (in Gozo).

COVID-19 Protocols

All faculty, staff, and visitors must be vaccinated or tested prior to entering a CUNY campus. A Cleared4 pass must be shown to enter the campus. Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 will have their Cleared4 pass suspended and will not be able to return to campus for 10 days and must present a negative PCR test prior to reentry to the campus. OHR will engage in contact tracing and notify anyone who has been in contact with the individual who tested positive. If you or a close contact tests positive for COVID-19, please notify us via hr@gc.cuny.edu or covid19-screening@gc.cuny.edu as soon as possible.

Workplace Violence (WPV) & Employee Sexual and Interpersonal Violence Prevention and Response Course (ESPARC) Mandatory Training

Every year, per New York State law and CUNY policy, all CUNY faculty and staff must participate in training on the prevention of sexual misconduct and workplace violence by completing both the Employee Sexual and Interpersonal Violence Prevention and Response Course (ESPARC) and the Workplace Violence Prevention Training (WVP).

All part-time employees are responsible for completing both trainings by the end of the current semester, **December 21, 2021**, to ensure their completion is logged by the University.

All full-time employees will have until **July 29, 2022**, to complete these trainings.

Both trainings are available online via [Blackboard](#). To access the trainings, go to the homepage of your Blackboard account and look for the “My Organizations” tab. Underneath you will see the available courses: Graduate Center or Graduate School of Journalism ESPARC 2021-2022 and Graduate Center or Graduate School of Journalism WVP 2021-2022. Click on either to complete them.

The Employee Sexual Prevention and Response Course (ESPARC) is also offered live via Zoom. If you prefer this training format, please [sign up online](#) for one of the upcoming sessions.

Please contact hrtraining@gc.cuny.edu with any questions you may have.

Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Program

The Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Program, under the Office of Academic Initiatives and Strategic Innovation, consists of non-credit and non-degree courses and revenue-generating projects. A few signature programs include the newly launched [GothamEd](#) which has enrolled over 100 students in 13 unique NYC-focused short-run seminars; the renowned [Writers’ Institute](#), which began its thirteenth year this Fall under the direction of André Aciman with 14 energetic, dedicated, and dynamic writers; and [LP²: Lifelong Peer Learning Program](#), a community of 325 retired and semi-retired members who teach and learn from each other in 36 unique study group offerings per term. LP² offers a wonderful opportunity for CUNY faculty and staff to continue their intellectual and CUNY life after retirement.

Please send an email to engagement@gc.cuny.edu with your ideas and questions about ACE.

OHR's and IT's Participation in the CUNY Professional Development Conference

David Boxill, Executive Director of HR, and Kaleema Caesar, HR Generalist, presented at the annual CUNY Professional Development Conference which took place November 9-November 10. They presented a workshop titled "Planning a Pathway to a CUNY Career". The presentation covered:

- Defining and clarifying a Career Path and Career Plan
- Exploring and building awareness of one's interests, aspirations, various career paths and opportunities in CUNY, resources for professional development.
- Edifying participants on the processes for identifying employment opportunities of interest, how to properly apply for consideration, and tactics for career progress.

Over sixty CUNY employees attended the session, and feedback and engagement were very positive. In particular, a colleague from another campus wishes to incorporate information from the presentation into a career counseling guide for students.

Elaine Montilla, Assistant Vice President for IT, presented a workshop on "Strategies to Strive in a Male-Dominated Workshop". The workshop included learning how to master male-dominated workplaces where the boys' club still somehow permeates.

OHR's Participation in *One Stop* for New Incoming Students

OHR processed approximately 1,350 Graduate Assistant students, who received graduate assistantships this year. This number includes over 125 international students and over 300 Graduate Assistant D students.

Graduate Assistants' Workloads

As of Fall 2021, the GC is no longer requiring submission of the Workload Reporting Form to OHR to track Graduate Assistants' workloads. Instead, OHR will utilize an automated system based on entries made by campus HR staff to monitor Graduate Assistants' assignments. We hope that this new system will reduce paper usage, streamline the workflow and

enhance turn-around time for payroll processing, further providing faster real time data to quickly address and resolve workload issues.

If you have any questions about this matter, please email hr-ga@gc.cuny.edu.

Employee Self-Identification Demographic Information

This is a reminder that CUNY collects identity information about its faculty and staff to comply with various employment-related regulations and for institutional planning purposes. Specifically, CUNY collects information via CUNYfirst on gender, ethnicity, ancestry, veteran status, and disability status from all CUNY tax-levy employee populations (full/part-time).

Results of past requests show that virtually all CUNY employees have identified their ethnicity and gender. However, fewer employees have provided information on ancestry, veteran status, and disability status. We hope you will consider providing this information which is useful to us as we fulfill our commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our extended community.

Providing self-identification information is voluntary. In most cases, you will need less than ten minutes to update and/or confirm your information. You are encouraged to review and, if needed, update your CUNYfirst personal records by **December 15th**.

Please follow the steps below for accessing the CUNYfirst Self Service portal:

1. Sign on to [CUNYfirst](#)
2. Select “Human Capital Management” from the Enterprise Menu section
3. Select “Self-Service” and then choose “Personal Information”
4. Visit the following pages for detailed information and instructions:
 - a. Ethnic Groups (Ethnicity and Ancestry)
 - b. Veteran Status
 - c. Disability

Be sure to “Update”, “Save”, and/or “Submit” as instructed on **each** screen.

If you wish to submit “Name and/or Gender Changes,” please submit the appropriate form available [here](#) and upload to the Graduate Center’s [HR Virtual Drop Off Service](#). If you require assistance accessing the screens and/or recording your responses, please contact OHR at: hr@gc.cuny.edu.

HR Assist Decommission

Unbeknownst to the GC, and several other CUNY colleges who use the *HR Assist* time and leave system, it was discovered that *HR Assist* does not have adequate IT protocols in place to safeguard data. Therefore, OHR had ceased and decommissioned *HR Assist* to ensure our employee data is protected and our IT infrastructure remains safe from the risk of security breaches.

In the interim, all employees will continue to complete and submit monthly fillable timesheets which are located on our [website](#). Please note that the timesheet templates contain the updated [2021-2022 CUNY holiday schedule](#). Completed monthly timesheets must be submitted by the 10th of each month to timeandleave@gc.cuny.edu. The current system is being revamped to reduce processing time of timesheets, enhance tracking and follow up of missing timesheets, and provide current leave balances. OHR and the Office of IT are collaborating to explore viable options for a time and leave system. We will keep you updated on our progress.

Annual Leave Carryover

In early June 2021, CUNY announced the extension of the annual leave carryover deadline from August 31st to December 31st, 2021 for all full-time employees. The deadline extension to use annual leave is outlined as follows:

- You may carry your annual leave balance above the cap as of August 31, 2021, into the new annual leave period. However, your excess annual leave balance above the cap should be used before December 31, 2021. Any unused annual leave days above the cap will expire after December 31, 2021.
- For PSC members, the provisions of Article 14.9(b) concerning compensation for an annual leave balance if the employee is separated from service will remain in effect, except that, for the annual leave year ending on 8/31/21 only, the annual

leave payment due to the employee upon separation, or to his/her estate, shall be the lesser of: (1) the leave balance to the employee's credit on the date of resignation, retirement or death; or (2) the contractual cap.

- Unscheduled holidays from the annual leave year ending 8/31/21 will not be carried over.

This is a reminder that applicable employees should consult with their supervisor to devise a plan to exhaust excess annual leave in advance of the 12/31/21 deadline. There will be no carryover of excess annual leave beyond 12/31/21.

Reminders

Employees with Addresses Outside of NYC Metro Area

Before CUNY became a primarily remote work environment in March 2020, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CUNY employees were required to have an address on file located within a "commutable distance" from New York City. Generally, this practice allowed for a geographic distance that encompasses those portions of New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and upstate New York that would be considered part of the New York City Metropolitan Area. So long as an employee maintained such an address on file, they effectively could be working remotely from anywhere.

Due to the remote work environment necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, many employees wanted to change their address of record either because they were remaining long term in another state or because they actually had moved out of New York State and no longer wanted NYS taxes withheld. This creates a substantive administrative issue for us because CUNY is not set up as an employer in states beyond the "commutable distance standard," and as such cannot withhold other states' income taxes, participate in those states' unemployment programs or monitor and apply effectively the myriad localized state and municipality laws outside of the New York City Metropolitan Area.

For these reasons, CUNY has enforced the commutable distance standard more stringently and does not allow employees to use residential addresses that are not in compliance with this requirement. Employees are expected to comply as soon as possible, but by no later than the close of the Fall 2021 semester. While we understand fully that the pandemic created a host of unusual circumstances that forced us to reshape our operations for the time being, the restrictions brought by the pandemic have been declining, and it is

anticipated that we will return to a mostly pre-pandemic work environment in the near future.

If you reside at a physical address outside of the New York City metropolitan area and this address does not match your pre-COVID permanent address on record in CUNYfirst, please notify OHR immediately so that your particular situation can be reviewed and addressed. **Please note that CUNY cannot accommodate physical addresses located outside of the United States or its territories.**

If you have any questions, please contact OHR at hr@gc.cuny.edu.

Address Change

If you have moved, please notify OHR of your new address. Should you change your address in CUNYfirst self-service, it is important that you inform OHR as soon as possible via hr@gc.cuny.edu, and note in the subject line “Address Change”. You may also request OHR to update your address by completing and submitting the [Address Change Form](#) to hr@gc.cuny.edu.

Please note that if you have moved outside of New York State/City, you must also complete and submit updated [W-4](#) and [IT-2104](#) tax forms to ensure that you are not being taxed as a NYS/NYC resident. The tax forms may be submitted securely via the [Graduate Center OHR Virtual Drop Off Service \(VDS\)](#). If you are appointed at the Graduate School of Journalism or Macaulay Honors College, it is recommended that these tax forms be emailed securely, password protected, to hr@gc.cuny.edu. For cybersecurity reasons, the password should be emailed separately.

2021-2022 Holiday Schedule

The 2021-2022 holiday schedule is available [here](#).

In Remembrance

Professor Alphonse Vasquez has passed away. Professor Vasquez began teaching at the GC in 1968 in the PhD Program in Mathematics. Distinguished Professor Charles Mills, in the PhD Program in Philosophy, has passed away. He has been with the GC since 2016. Our deepest condolences to their families.

“Back in the Office” Photos



Demetri Lales – Office of IT

I am happy to see my fellow coworkers in person again and to be using my standing desk at my office!



Isela Lopez – Comparative Medicine Unit (ASRC)

Happy to be back with my wonderful colleagues at the Advanced Science Research Center!

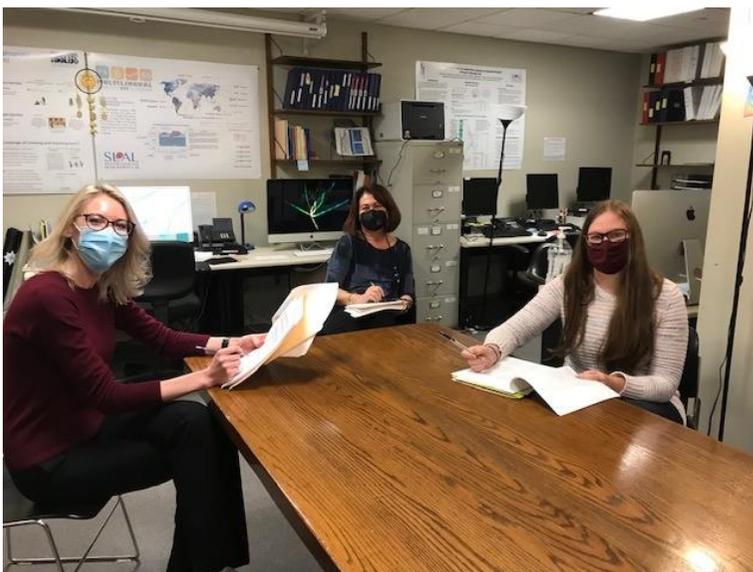


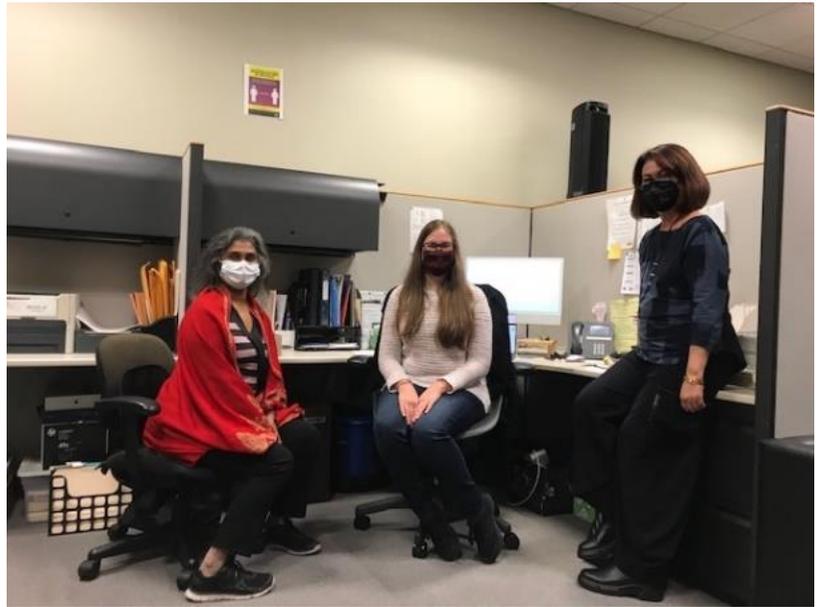
Kelvin Wallace – PhD Program in Educational Psychology

Now that I'm back on campus, it's nice to have my office to concentrate in. It's nice to see faces that I haven't seen in person for over a year.

PhD Program in Linguistics

It's been so humanizing to be able to see people in person. The few of us who've chosen to return relish hearing each other's voices, subtleties involved and body language. It's important to connect with people who believe in the positives that can come out of the negativity during the last year and a half. – Nishi Bissoondial, APO





Team Meeting – Office of Public Programs & Communications



Office of Human Resources



It's been wonderful to see our colleagues again and to make each other laugh.

If you have any questions/comments, please contact the OHR team at hr@gc.cuny.edu. For more specific inquiries, please contact the appropriate team member from our [HR Directory](#).