

## Celebrating Kingsborough's 8th President: Dr. Suri Duitch

2026 promises to be a riveting new chapter in Kingsborough Community College's storied history.

On May 7, 2026, this new chapter will officially begin with the Investiture Ceremony of Dr. Suri Duitch, Kingsborough's eighth president. A proud CUNY Alumna and an accomplished leader, President Duitch has built her career working in college access, adult education, workforce development, and other opportunity programs in New York City and New Orleans. In City University of New York (CUNY) tradition, Dr. Duitch will receive her presidential medallion bearing the official seal of the College—a symbol of commitment to academic excellence, the pursuit of truth, and enduring respect to the Brooklyn community.

## KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION

### KCC Foundation Updates:



#### Dr. Kweesi W. Blackman '07 New Elected Chair of KCC Foundation Board

Currently an attending physician in the Department of Internal Medicine at NewYork-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital/Weill Cornell Medicine, Blackman said his vision as chair is to build stronger bridges between students, trustees, alumni, and the broader community to ensure that every Kingsborough student has the support, access, and opportunities needed to reach their fullest potential.

"Dr. Blackman's role as chair of the foundation board affirms that the Kingsborough experience doesn't end at graduation—it fuels a lifetime of giving back," noted Dr. Nancy Lee Sánchez-Badillo, Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the Kingsborough Community College Foundation.

[Learn more about Dr. Kweesi Blackman](#)

Kingsborough Community College is thrilled to announce that as of December 2025, the following four outstanding individuals have joined the KCC Foundation Board of Trustees:



Tiffany Bachus, FNP-BC, MSN, NEA-BC

Mary Dawson, PhD

Kelyne Edmond-Oriest, RN-BC, GNP, APRN-BC, DDN, C.P.T., D.Min.

Vanessa Vales-Lewis, PhD

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR KCC FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS](#)

Kingsborough is grateful for the expertise, leadership and dedication each new member will bring to our Foundation, which continues in its mission to support the College in providing accessible, high-quality education and building a stronger endowment for future generations.

## KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION 2025 - 2030

ADVANCE THE DREAM

The Annual Fund Campaign will focus on building awareness and support for the six strategic initiatives that are guiding our vision and impact across campus and throughout Brooklyn.

Each of these initiatives represents more than just a goal on paper — they represent the lives of students who dream of earning a degree, building a career, and giving back to their families and communities.

Your gift to the Annual Fund Campaign directly impacts these initiatives in countless ways. Together, we can make sure that Kingsborough continues to be a place where dreams take root and futures are built.

Give today and join us in our mission to ADVANCE THE DREAM. We are grateful for your support.

SUPPORT THE ANNUAL FUND CAMPAIGN! [DONATE NOW](#)

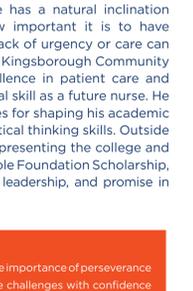


## Alumni Spotlight: Nelson Algaze '70

If Nelson Algaze ever saw fit to write a memoir, it would read like the classic American success story. A first-generation immigrant and first-generation college student, Nelson's journey took him from Sheepshead Bay to Los Angeles, where he would establish an architectural design firm and construction management business. He credits his success to a willingness to try and fail, again and again, until he finally found his niche.

*"I would tell Kingsborough students today: be patient in your life's journey. What you decide to do today may not be what you do in 10 days or in 10 years. Don't be afraid to have an open mind, to try new things."*

Nelson was far from an ideal student in high school, earning a C-minus average and barely getting into college. Looking back, Nelson laughs at how others saw him: "Everyone thought I was a Brooklyn juvenile delinquent," he recalls. "No guidance, no aspirations. Nothing." But he didn't let his challenges define him — at Kingsborough, Nelson found belonging and the spark that would set him on a different path. He discovered community among his fellow students, many of whom had similar immigrant, blue-collar backgrounds. He earned his Associate's Degree, becoming the first member of his family to graduate college.



But even with a fresh diploma in hand, Nelson's future wasn't guaranteed.

Two of his brothers followed him to Los Angeles and started families of their own. Nelson decided to follow suit, packing his life into a bag and driving across the country. Once there, he enrolled at California State University. On paper, this could seem like great progress—going from an Associate's Degree to a Bachelor's. Zoom in, however, Nelson was still looking for his True North, his true direction.

"I started out pursuing Business," he recalls, "but I wasn't cut out for accounting. I considered law, but I couldn't read well enough. I simply wasn't wired for 'Corporate America.'" Even when times were tough — facing an uncertain economy and searching for the right fit — Nelson leaned on the resilience he had built at KCC, finding work in construction and putting his skills there to use ("I come from a long line of tradesmen").

Not only was Nelson proficient at this line of work, he also realized the potential in architectural design and his innate creativity in the field. He returned to Cal State, earning a Bachelor's in Environmental Design. In the years that followed, he would put in the hard but fruitful work of building his own company.

*"It doesn't matter who you are. Break out of the mold you're in. Don't be held back by your community, family pressure, or peer pressure."*

Today, Nelson serves as CEO & Principal of SAA Interiors + architecture, one of the nation's top architectural design firms with offices across the country. He remains deeply appreciative for the staff experience at KCC, and though much has changed since his time there, he sees himself in the KCC students of today — many of whom, like he once was, are first-generation immigrants and the first in their families to pursue higher education.

**RACE TO 100** We invite you to nominate, or self-nominate, a distinguished Kingsborough alum to be featured in our upcoming **Race to 100** campaign celebrating the impact, achievements, and leadership of our graduates.



**Our Annual Report is Now Live!**  
[CLICK TO VIEW](#)

KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
**BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE**  
Annual Report 2023-2024 & 2024-2025

## Student Spotlight: Tyrese Harvey



**MAJOR: NURSING**  
Southpole Foundation Scholarship



Like many students interested in healthcare, Tyrese has a natural inclination toward helping others. Over time, he has seen how urgent it is to have passionate individuals in the medical field and how a lack of urgency or care can make difficult situations worse. As a nursing student at Kingsborough Community College, Tyrese is driven by a commitment to excellence in patient care and strives to embody empathy, professionalism, and clinical skill as a future nurse. He credits inspiring faculty in Nursing and Physical Sciences for shaping his academic journey and strengthening his clinical judgment and critical thinking skills. Outside the classroom, he serves as a **Student Ambassador**, representing the college and supporting fellow students. As a recipient of the Southpole Foundation Scholarship, Tyrese is recognized for his academic achievement, leadership, and promise in the nursing profession.

**"Being a Student Ambassador has been an invaluable lesson in the importance of perseverance and teamwork. It has taught me to lean into my strengths, face challenges with confidence and always be open to learning from others. I'm thankful for the opportunities to connect with so many individuals and to contribute to a cause I truly believe in. This experience has left me with a deep sense of appreciation for our shared community."**

## Donor Spotlight: Joan De Freitas

July 20, 1937 - November 4, 2024



Joan De Freitas had a rich life defined by a restless adventure, a commitment to the causes she cared about, and a refusal to limit her horizons. A passionate educator, fearless explorer, brilliant artist and generous donor, Joan is remembered fondly by those fortunate to have known her.

Long before she set foot on KCC's campus, Joan taught physical education in NYC public schools. "She taught during times of great social upheaval and injustice," says Carol Patti, who would later meet Joan at KCC and become a dear friend. "She cherished the value of education, and cared deeply about her students."

After she retired, Joan enrolled in KCC's My Turn Program—a tuition-free college education program for adults age 60 and older. This was where she first crossed paths with Carol, a nutritionist who taught My Turn classes at the time. "The Joan I met was shy and skeptical but eager to learn and grow," Carol recalls. "Over time, she made tremendous improvements to her health and began to shine with new energy to continue what she loved - travel, time with friends, photography, Liberty Games, the beach and Kingsborough Community College."

One way Joan shined was in her photography classes. "Her talent was undeniable," Joan's nephew Mehlman recalls. "She created magical images that captured the ethereal beauty of the landscape, animals and people. Many of her pieces are 'National Geographic-worthy' in their quality!" Joan's passion for photography would also compliment her love of travel, as she would capture startling and poignant images of people and places around the world. In many ways, the same empathy, sensitivity and curiosity Joan embodied as a teacher informed her artistry.

Joan never lost sight of the transformational role KCC had played in her life, which is why in 2014, she created the **Joan De Freitas Endowed Scholarship**. For every year since, her scholarship has provided generous financial support to KCC students with outstanding records of service and who have made substantial contributions to student publications. "I was going through significant personal and financial hardships," says Sable Spellman '24, a previous recipient of Joan's award. "Receiving this scholarship alleviated so much of that burden. I felt such encouragement and warmth for being acknowledged for the work I was doing in Student Publications, especially during such a challenging time."

Looking over Joan's life—a teacher and a student, an artist and a donor—an unmistakable pattern emerges: every time she received something, she gave something back in return. Professor Mehlman taught her photography, so Joan in turn became her professor's unofficial assistant, helping fellow students find their way. KCC gave her a riveting new chapter, so Joan gave back through a scholarship that will exist *in perpetuity*. It was only fitting, then, KCC inducted her as an inaugural member of its Donor Wall of Fame in 2024.

**What Will Your KCC Legacy Be?** Like Joan De Freitas, you can make a lasting impact on KCC students through establishing a named scholarship or special award. [To learn more about the process and available options — contact:](#)

**Daniel La Noue — KCC's Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving at (718) 368-6540 or [Daniel.Lanoue@kbcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Daniel.Lanoue@kbcc.cuny.edu)**



## A Spirit of Giving KCC shines bright on #GIVINGTUESDAY

December 2, 2025 – For the ninth consecutive year, Kingsborough Community College celebrated Giving Tuesday, a global generosity movement in which nonprofit organizations raise critical funds to support their missions. The KCC community gathered for a lively and fun-filled day of games, activities, contests and fundraising, all in service of a common goal: to help our talented, hardworking students overcome Food Insecurity and continue pursuing their dreams.

In total, KCC donors—including alumni, faculty, leadership, retirees, staff and students—raised **\$79,528.91** to help students who are experiencing food insecurity.



Doreen in Action poses with their winning poster.

A spirit of friendly competition pervaded the afternoon, as 18 teams of KCC Faculty and Staff vied for supremacy in both fundraising and creativity—while also enjoying a variety of games coordinated by Professor Juan Franquiz, student volunteers from the Recreation Program, and KCC Student Ambassadors. For fundraising, "Cluster Busters," a team comprised of faculty from a wide range of departments, took home the Golden Shoe Trophy. For creativity, Continuing Education and Workforce Development shined the brightest, as their team "Dreams in Action" earned the Creative Spirit Award for their eye-catching poster. [Click here to see all of the Creative Spirit poster submissions and more event photos!](#)

Other highlights of #KCCSPRITDAY included the ever-popular prize drawings, which featured items donated by members of the College community. The highest-valued prizes included a Smart TV, Gift cards, Home Appliances, tickets to the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and much more. Proceeds from the ticket sales contributed to the overall fundraising totals.

KCC is immensely grateful for the generosity and ingenuity of its supporters. Thanks to their efforts, the College continues to shine as Brooklyn's Beacon of Access, Excellence and Opportunity.



The winning poster, up close!

## Grant Spotlight: TRIO Student Support Services (SSS)

TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) is a grant funded opportunity program, on a five-year cycle, under United States Department of Education (USDE). In Fall 2025, the program was re-awarded to Kingsborough Community College (KCC) at the amount of \$287,361 per year. KCC is deeply grateful for this renewed support, as this marks over 35 years of funding for this program!

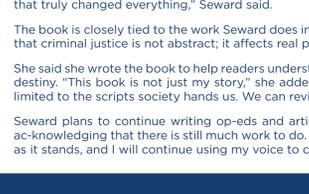
### What is TRIO?

The mission of TRIO SSS is to connect students with disabilities, first-generation, and low-income students to the resources they need to achieve their goals. TRIO is both a process and an outcome-based program, geared towards helping students attain associate degrees and/or encourage transfers to 4-year colleges. Each student has an individualized educational plan and an integrated continuum of support services to facilitate academic progress.

### Background

As part of President Johnson's 1964 War on Poverty, two pre-collegiate opportunity programs were created in 1964 and 1965. **Upward Bound and Talent Search**, respectively, and one undergraduate program (**SSS**) in 1968. Three programs — TRIO! Currently, there are over 10 TRIO programs on all post-secondary levels, including graduate and doctoral, and some target specific student subsets including veterans and STEM majors.

**According to Faith Fogelman, TRIO Director:**  
*"TRIO applies a case management approach, giving students the time to tell their story and we can address all obstacles to progression. The professional/personal touch is what community college students need to move forward."*



## KCC Launches AwardSpring

Beginning in Spring 2026, Kingsborough Community College will adopt AwardSpring, an innovative scholarship management system for students, faculty and staff. Once launched, all KCC Foundation Scholarships — be they needs-based scholarships, major-specific grants or merit-based graduation awards — will exist on a common online platform.

For students, this will mean instant access to applications for the scholarships they qualify for — based on GPA, major, and number of credits. For faculty and staff serving on selection committees, this will mean streamlined access to students' applications and a more efficient means of communicating with candidates.

For financial aid and scholarship managers, AwardSpring allows automated matching, streamlined reviews, and awarding more scholarships with less administrative burden. Last but not least, Kingsborough will be able to provide donors who have established scholarships with personalized impact reports.



**The most important value AwardSpring brings will be how it will increase students' access to, and awareness of, scholarship opportunities.** To learn about scholarships, students will no longer need to rely on seeing a promotional flier, viewing an email blast, or hearing a classroom announcement. They can simply log on to AwardSpring, input their academic information, and apply accordingly.

From AwardSpring's website:

*"One of the reasons we love two-year schools is because we really understand and value what they do for their communities. Community colleges, technical colleges, and trade schools all create paths to brighter futures for people in their region by providing high-value education at an affordable cost. Serving the community in this way is an important yet often overlooked service. Just like you, the AwardSpring team is passionate about making education more accessible. That's why we're motivated to support two-year schools in every way we can."*



## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

### Dr. Vanda Seward

a tenured assistant professor of criminal justice at Kingsborough Community College and director of its criminal justice program, has spent decades working inside the criminal legal system — as a criminologist, journalist, and advocate. Now, she has put those experiences into a memoir, "This Wasn't Supposed to Be My Story — Defying Expectations, Living My Truth: A Memoir of Resilience & Courage."

The memoir, published by NY Publishers in Feb. 2026, traces Seward's path from teenage motherhood in the Bronx to her career as a professor, where she teaches courses on crime and punishment, corrections and sentencing, and minorities in criminal justice. "It explores resilience, identity, justice, and the transformative power of education. The narrative is both personal and political, not in a partisan sense, but in its examination of systems, structures, policy, and power."

The idea for the book came from a graduate school assignment. While studying at CUNY's Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, Seward enrolled in a features writing class taught by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and former Essence magazine executive editor Linda Villarosa.

Hearing Villarosa tell her, "You need to write a book," after reading a personal essay Seward had written for class was the encouragement she needed to return to a manuscript she had set aside a few years before about her personal and professional experiences. "Her presence alone was inspiring, but it was her feedback on my personal essay that truly changed everything," Seward said.

The book is closely tied to the work Seward does in the classroom. "It helps students see that criminal justice is not abstract; it affects real people and real families."

She said she wrote the book to help readers understand that circumstances do not define destiny. "This book is not just my story," she added. "It is a reminder that none of us is limited to the scripts society hands us. We can revise, reclaim, and rewrite our lives."

Seward plans to continue writing op-eds and articles about the criminal legal system, acknowledging that there is still much work to do. "There is no true justice in our system as it stands, and I will continue using my voice to challenge that reality."

### How Her Work Impacts KCC Students & Faculty

Seward's memoir serves as a guiding inspiration for KCC students, many of whom may have experienced similar predicaments and see themselves in her story. "Many of our students balance work, family, and school, and some have experienced poverty, teen parenthood, or involvement with the justice system. My story shows that setbacks do not define the future. It reminds them that education opens doors and that resilience matters."

"My work offers deeper insight into the lived experiences many students carry. It helps educators better understand trauma, systemic barriers, and the importance of second chances. The book can strengthen empathy, support more responsive teaching, and reinforce why our work in higher education matters."

**The KCC Foundation congratulates Dr. Seward on the publication of her memoir, and is deeply grateful for her brilliant contributions. Kingsborough is a richer institution thanks to her work.**

