

Scepter

The Students' Voice

Kingsborough Community College

Spring Edition 2026

The City University of New York

Welcome To The Spring 2026 Semester!



KCC Gets Hit by Arctic Snowstorm





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An Open Thank You Letter to Buildings & Grounds at KCC

January 25, 2026 brought a major snowfall to New York City, and soon after, Kingsborough Community College announced that classes and operations would be remote on Monday, January 26. By Tuesday, January 27, the campus had reopened and everyone returned to work in person.

As I entered through the front gate that morning, I saw that all the essential walkways, driveways, and parking areas had been cleared of snow. What could have been a slippery, stressful return to campus was instead safe, accessible, and well managed.

I would like to sincerely thank the entire Buildings & Grounds team for the hard work that made this possible.

Snow removal is demanding work, often done in freezing temperatures and early morning hours, and your efforts truly made a difference for everyone coming back to campus. Your work may happen behind the scenes, but it does not go unnoticed.

I only wish the bus stop area had been as clear. I understand that this space probably falls under the responsibility of the MTA, Sanitation, and/or Parks Department, but it remains an important access point for many members of the campus community.

Thank you again for everything you do to keep KCC safe, accessible, and running smoothly.

With appreciation,
Anonymous



JOIN SCEPTER

Scepter is always recruiting new team members to contribute to monthly editions of the paper. If you are a Kingsborough student and are interested in writing, photography, layout design, or copy editing, talk to us in M230. You can email us at scepter@kbcc.cuny.edu.

How to Protect Yourself in Extreme Cold Weather

BY: ANNIE HE

A general guideline for those unsure of what to do as the weather turns perilously cold:

The Northeastern U.S is being blanketed under a storm of sleet, ice, and snow as a massive winter storm surges from the Southern regions, delivering Arctic temperatures and dangerous ice, with temperatures dropping as low as 15 below zero within New York City.

Hazards associated with the storm can include but are not limited to hypothermia, frostbite, slip and falls, and even carbon monoxide poisoning. Being prepared to face the cold can prevent many of these accidents from occurring.

Dress Properly to Avoid Frostbite: With the Weather Channel predicting wind chill temperatures in the single digits for New York, avoiding frostbite should be a top priority for everyone. Frostbite can develop in as little as 5 to 30 minutes on exposed skin depending on wind chill and temperature.

Symptoms of frostbite can include pain, numbness, swelling, and skin discoloration. It is most

common on the fingers, toes, nose, and ears. If frostbite spreads into the tissues, it can cause permanent, irreversible damage, also called necrosis, which could require amputation.

Children and older adults are more susceptible to frostbite. Obviously the easiest way to prevent frostbite is to avoid going outside altogether. But if going outside is necessary, it is important to cover all exposed skin—particularly low circulation areas like the fingertips, nose, and ears.

Wearing layers can help prevent frostbite. The best fabrics to layer are wool, fleece, or a synthetic polyester blend. Throwing on a wool sweater with an insulated puffer jacket is one of the ways I like to stay warm during cold weather. It is recommended to avoid wearing jeans as they are made of cotton which rapidly absorbs moisture and can lead to faster freezing. Dressing warmly can also help to prevent hypothermia, a dangerous medical emergency that happens when the body loses more heat than it can produce.

Slip and Falls: Slip and falls are quite common during winter, with

over 40 thousand deaths related to falls either at work or home. Not only can a fall cause fractures and head injuries, but it can also lead to hypothermia if the person is lying outside for a prolonged period of time.

To avoid tumbling around, it is wise to invest in footwear designed for winter weather. Shoes that are waterproof or water resistant, are slip-resistant with a rubber sole, and have a deep tread, would be ideal. Taking the time to use handholds, and watching each step, can also help to decrease the risks of falling.

If you do feel yourself falling, do not try to catch yourself with your arms. That can lead to more injuries. Instead, try to take the hit on your buttocks or back and wait for someone to help you up in case you are injured.

Carbon Monoxide Risks: Losing power during a winter storm is not uncommon. What most people are unaware of is the hidden dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning which come with certain methods of keeping warm. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, carbon monoxide exposures and

poisoning occur most often when people use furnaces and heaters.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a dangerous, colorless, and odorless gas that comes from burning common sources of carbon such as natural gas, paper, coal, or cloth. Sources in our homes can include the fireplace, oven, furnace and car exhaust. CO builds up primarily from the incomplete combustion of fuels in poorly ventilated or enclosed spaces. Major causes include malfunctioning furnaces, blocked chimneys, portable generators used indoors, and unvented space heaters.

Do not use gas stoves indoors if the power goes out and always keep generators outdoors.

Most importantly install Smoke/Carbon Monoxide Detectors and make sure the batteries are current.

The tips given here are some general ideas to serve as a guide for those who are confused about where to start your preparations. You can search the internet to find more tips on how to survive all weather conditions.

Stay safe and warm during this brutal winter season!

Discovering the Heart of American Traditions Through ESL 70

BY: ANASTASIIA HARAIEVA

Let's explore the academic activities and events that bring our students together.

What do most of us really know about Thanksgiving or Christmas? For many Americans, these holidays are important traditions that bring families together and celebrate unity and peace. But for many international students, these celebrations may look like simple symbols of American culture - a turkey on the table, a decorated Christmas tree, or lights on the streets.

For a long time, this was my understanding too. As an international student, I only saw the surface of these holidays. But everything changed when I joined ESL 70 at Kingsborough Community College, where I discovered the real meaning

and beauty behind American traditions.

In the T2 Building, Professors Antonia Lieggi and Dena Friedman welcome students with kindness, professionalism, and a unique approach to teaching. They do more than explain grammar and vocabulary. They open the door to understanding American culture, history, and the spirit of community. I was one of their students, and this experience truly changed the way I see American life.

Every semester, Professor Antonia organizes beautiful celebrations connected to the holidays we study in class. This Fall 2025, I had the honor of being a guest at their Thanksgiving celebration. When I entered the room, I saw a long, beautifully decorated table filled with

traditional foods - but also dishes brought by students from many different countries. The room was full of colors, music, and warm smiles.

What impressed me the most was the atmosphere. Students laughed together, shared stories, and proudly introduced food from their home countries. I felt the true meaning of Thanksgiving - gratitude, unity, and respect for each other's culture.

Because of these activities, something very special happens: students become closer. We communicate more, support each other, and build real friendships. Thanks to the efforts of Professors Antonia and Dena, I personally met many wonderful people, and some of them became my close friends even now. Their events help international students not only

learn English, but also interact, make new acquaintances, and experience American traditions in a real and meaningful way.

These celebrations show how much our professors care. They give energy, creativity, and their hearts to help us adapt to a new environment. Through activities, conversations, and events, they help us feel confident not only in the classroom but also in a new culture.

For many of us, ESL 70 is more than a class - it is a community. It is a place where learning becomes exciting, where traditions come alive, and where international students find support, friendship, and a new sense of belonging.

Now you know that our college community and faculty offer so much more than many students have discovered!

KCC Students Developing E-Coli Stock for Environmental Research

BY: JAREN TASNIM, NAOMI GELLMAN and PROF. SARWAR JAHANGIR

According to the UN, more than 400 million tons of plastics are currently produced and consumed across the globe annually and less than 10% of them are currently recycled (1 and 2). The commonly used plastics are made of several types of polymers. They are: 1, Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET), found in bottles, food containers, and polyester clothing; 2, High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE), used as milk jugs, detergent bottles, and plastic bags; 3, Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC), used in plumbing pipes, window frames, and in some packaging; 4, Polypropylene (PP), used as bottle caps, food containers, and parts of automotive; 5, Polystyrene (PS), common in disposable cups, food trays, and packaging materials; 6, Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE), used in plastic bags, food wraps, and some container lids; 7, Others, are various other plastics like Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS), polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA), and polycarbonate (PC) used in various applications (3). The life cycle of plastics on our planet is staggering. In America

alone, about 13.6% of all plastic packaging is recycled (3 and 11). Plastic pollution is a great concern for human, animal, and ecological health across the globe. Today, broken down plastic particles of sizes ranging from 1 nanometer (nm) to 5 millimeters also called nanoplastics and microplastics, respectively, are present in our food, drinks and in the air (4, 5, 6 and 7), Fig 1. Bioaccumulation of the nano- and micro- plastics in the human body occurs through gastric, pulmonary, and dermal cells and intercellular spaces (8). These nano- and micro- plastics enter our cells through phagocytosis, micropinocytosis, clathrin-mediated as well as caveolae-mediated endocytosis and through intracellular absorption accumulating in our brain, gonads, kidneys, and liver, in addition to other organs and tissues (8). This causes inflammation, oxidative stress, apoptosis, disrupted metabolic homeostasis, obesity, cardio-vascular diseases, hormone disruption, damage to fetal development and birth-defects, abnormal sexual development and carcinogenesis or cancer (8 and 9). In most cases they are

unavoidable and cause irreversible damages (8, 9, and 10). Microplastic pollution leads to a global reduction in photosynthesis ranging from 7.05% to 12.12% in terrestrial plants, marine and freshwater algae (7 and 12), Recently in 2016, a group of Japanese professors discovered that a bacteria called Ideonella sakaiensis degrades PET in nature but at a very slower rate (13 and 14). This process takes place in two steps: First: by the enzyme PETase into mono (2-hydroxyethyl) terephthalate; followed Secondly: by MHETase into ethylene glycol and terephthalic acid (13). This is presented in Fig 2. Recently in May 2024, Professor Jahangir presented a proposal for biodegradation and recycling of PET plastic using transformed Escherichia coli at a faster rate for commercial application at the NAMS seminar at Coppin State University (CSU), Baltimore, MD, by invitation. This led to a collaborative project on biodegradation and recycling of PET plastic supported by CSU and partially by KCC. The research work jointly started by Maria Norako and Professor

Jahangir followed by us joining the project later (Fig 3). We are progressing significantly in achieving the goals of the project. The goals of this project are to develop two stocks of E. coli strain DE3, one transformed with PETase gene and another with MHETase gene, originating from Ideonella sakaiensis. A sample of PET plastic will be degraded by PETase transformed E. coli DE3 followed by MHETase transformed E. coli DE3 into ethylene glycol and terephthalic acid. This project will be extended further to repolymerize ethylene glycol and terephthalic acid into polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic via hydrolysis (15). Once established, this has the potential for recycling PET plastic at a commercial rate using genetically engineered E. coli, a biological process. The project was collaborated by Professors Sarwar Jahangir (KCC-CUNY) and Mintesinot Jiru and supported by Professor Jamal Uddin and funded by CSU and KCC-CUNY. The initial lab work was completed by Maria Noriko, College Laboratory Technician, Department of Biological Sciences, KCC, CUNY.



Fig. 1. Picture published by the UN and publicly available, Ref 2

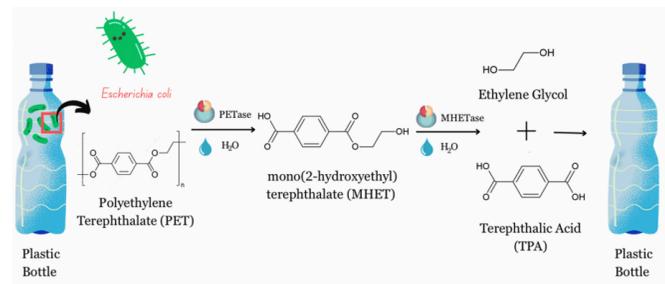


Fig. 2. Steps in biodegradation of PET in two steps into terephthalic acid and ethylene glycol. Figure construction: Jaren Tasnim based on free access published resources.



Fig. 3. Maria Norako, Jarron Chen, Jaren Tasnim, Naomi Gellman and Prof. Sarwar Jahangir working in the KCC Research Laboratory M158

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

BY: GAIL SMOLLON



After a fulfilling career in graphic design, the Senior Auditor Program at Kingsborough afforded me the opportunity to pursue new interests and ideas. I have studied languages and computer software, but I found my home in the Art Department.

My corporate work in design was entirely computer based, and intense. At Kingsborough I have been able to take a deep breath and return to my creative roots, studying Drawing, Watercolor and Acrylic painting. I've learned with and from my fellow students and feel part of a creative community.

Every Art Professor has been unfailingly kind and supportive, overlooking stumbling steps, and encouraging independence and experimentation.

I would encourage everyone to explore their creative side. Perfection isn't the goal, expanding your horizon is. You'll be amazed at what you can do and how your skills will improve. You never know what you'll learn about yourself in the process.

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

Spring Recess
Wed.-Thurs. Apr. 1-9 NO CLASSES
SCHEDULED - SPRING RECESS

Breathe and Bead (Bracelet Making Event)
Tuesday, April 14th | 1pm – 2:30pm
Hall of Flags
Pause, breathe, and create your own meaningful bracelet in this relaxing, hands-on event.

SGA Earth Day
Wednesday, April 22nd | 11am - 1pm
Quad (Hall of Flags: Rain Location)
Join the SGA to celebrate Earth Day and plant your own pot.

Spring 2026 Involvement Fair
Tuesday, April 28th | 1pm - 3pm
Quad (Rain Location: Library Breezeway)
Connect with student clubs, explore ways to get involved, and learn the steps to start or reactivate an organization at the Involvement Fair.

MAY

Spring Fest – Cinco De Mayo Edition
Tuesday, May 5th | 12pm – 2pm
Quad (Rain Location: U219/U220)
Join us for festive eats, lively music, and fun games as we celebrate culture, community, and springtime vibes.

Festival of Colors: A Celebration of Spring
Monday, May 11th | 2pm – 4pm
Beach Patio (Rain Location: U219)
The Festival of Colors is a vibrant, cross-cultural celebration that honors the universal joy of renewal, transformation, and new beginnings. Inspired by traditions such as Holi, Indigenous Spring ceremonies, summer solstice gatherings, and other seasonal festivals from around the world, this event brings communities together to celebrate the changing of seasons through color, light, music, and shared experience. It is a moment to reflect on growth, embrace hope, and welcome the warmth and possibility that spring represents across cultures and generations.

Mental Health Awareness Month: Annual Staff vs Student Basketball Game
Tuesday, May 12th | 3pm – 4:30pm
Main GYM
Don't miss the excitement as staff and students go head-to-head in an epic showdown! Come cheer during the game and see who will claim victory!

SGA Karaoke Night
Thursday, May 14th | 8pm – 10pm | U220
Join the SGA and sing your favorite songs for a fun time filled with music and laughter.

Paws for Wellness (Puppy Therapy)
Monday, May 18th | 1pm – 3pm | COVE
In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, we invite you to take a break and de-stress with friendly therapy puppies! A calming, joy-filled experience to help you recharge. **Puppies must be handled with care**

SGA Presents: Taste Around the World
Wednesday, May 20th | 3pm-6pm | U219/U220
Join the SGA to learn about different cultures and taste new food from various parts of the world.

USS/SGA: CUNY Diversity Day
Thursday, May 21st | 2pm-5pm | U219/U220

2026 Graduation Ball
Thursday, May 28th | 6pm-10pm | MAC Lighthouse
\$10 for KCC Students, \$25 for Non-KCC Students
CASH ONLY
Tickets Available in C-123
Formal Attire Required: No Jeans or Sneakers

February is Black History Month

In 1976, President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month, urging Americans to honor the vital contributions and achievements of Black citizens throughout U.S. history.

The origins of this observance trace back to historian Carter G. Woodson (1875–1950), often called the “Father of Black History.” Born in Virginia to formerly enslaved parents, Woodson worked in coal mines as a youth before pursuing an education. He earned a PhD from Harvard University, becoming one of the first African Americans to do so and the only historian with formerly enslaved parents to achieve that distinction.

Frustrated by the exclusion of Black history from academic scholarship, Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in 1915 (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, ASALH). He also established The Journal of Negro History in 1916 to promote scholarly research on Black life and history.

In 1926, Woodson launched Negro History Week, held in February to coincide with the

birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. He believed history should recognize Black Americans as active participants in shaping the nation and the world.

The observance grew in popularity, and in 1970, Black educators and students expanded it to a full month. Since 1976, every U.S. President has designated February as Black History Month, continuing Woodson’s mission to ensure Black history is studied, recognized, and celebrated as an essential part of American history.

A short history of Shirley Anita Chisholm (November 30, 1924 – January 1, 2005):

Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm was an American politician, educator, and trailblazing civil rights leader.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, to Caribbean immigrant parents,

she spent part of her childhood in Barbados before returning to Brooklyn, where she earned a B.A. from Brooklyn College and a Master’s degree in elementary education from Columbia University. She began her career as a teacher and early-childhood education specialist and became active in community and political groups. In 1964 she was elected to the New York State Legislature, becoming one of the first Black women in that body.

In 1968 Chisholm made history by becoming the first African American woman elected to the United States Congress, representing New York’s 12th Congressional District from 1969 to 1983.

Known for her campaign slogan “Unbought and Unbossed,” she championed racial and gender equality, anti-poverty programs, and education reform, and was a founding member of both the Congressional Black Caucus and

the National Women’s Political Caucus.

In 1970 she served as the commencement speaker at Kingsborough Community College, delivering the address at the college’s fifth graduation ceremony.

In 1972 she became the first Black candidate, and the first woman, to seek the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination, breaking barriers even though her campaign was under-funded and faced significant discrimination.

After retiring from Congress in 1983, Chisholm taught at colleges, co-founded the National Political Congress of Black Women, and remained active in public life. She moved to Florida in 1991 and died on January 1, 2005, at age 80.

Chisholm’s legacy continues to inspire generations, and she was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015, the United States’ highest civilian honor.



Carter G. Woodson



Shirley Anita Chisholm

Women’s History: Unsung Women In History

“From the first settlers who came to our shores, from the first American Indian families who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength and love of the women who built America were as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well.”

~ President Jimmy Carter, designating March 2-8, 1980 as National Women’s History Week

March is Women’s History Month. Women have always played a major role in every aspect of life, but how many celebrated women can you actually name? Joan of Arc, Betsy Ross, Marie Curie, Clara Barton? -- only a handful; and only those with a colorful story. Here are a few exemplary women who we should all know about.

Jeannette Pickering Rankin was an American politician, suffragist, and lifelong pacifist. In 1916, she became the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress and remains the only woman ever elected to Congress from Montana. She famously said, “I may be the first woman member of Congress, but I won’t be the last.”

A leading advocate for women’s voting rights, Rankin helped organize suffrage campaigns across several states and introduced legislation that later became the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote nationwide. She also co-founded the American Civil Liberties Union in 1920.

Rankin’s two terms in

Congress coincided with the start of both World Wars. A committed pacifist, she voted against U.S. entry into World War I in 1917, one of only 50 House members to do so. In 1941, she was the only member of Congress to vote against declaring war on Japan after Pearl Harbor, making her the last person in Congress to vote against a formal declaration of war.

After losing reelection bids, Rankin spent decades advocating for peace, labor protections, and civil rights. During the Vietnam War, she led a 1968 march of 5,000 women in Washington, D.C., known as the Jeannette Rankin Brigade. Rankin remained devoted to her principles throughout her life. When asked at age 91 if she would change anything, she replied she would live it the same way — “but this time I’d be nastier.”

“When you are one of the first to get an opportunity like I was given, you are a trailblazer... You must prove that you not

only could carry out your responsibilities satisfactorily but go beyond what is expected and perform at a high level.”

Gladys Brown West was an American mathematician whose work in satellite geodesy and mathematical modeling of the Earth’s shape became foundational to the development of GPS technology.

Born October 27, 1930, in rural Sutherland, Virginia, West grew up in a farming family and saw education as her path forward. She graduated as valedictorian of her high school class in 1948, earning a full scholarship to Virginia State College (now Virginia State University), where she earned a B.A. in Mathematics in 1952 and a Master’s in 1955.

In 1956, West began working at the Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren, Virginia, becoming only the second Black woman hired there. Over a 42-year career, she programmed early supercomputers, analyzed

satellite altimeter data, and developed highly accurate geoid models of Earth — critical to modern satellite navigation. Her 1986 technical report on Geosat radar altimeter data significantly improved geodetic accuracy.

Much of her work went unrecognized at the time. Decades later, her contributions to GPS were widely acknowledged. She was inducted into the U.S. Air Force Hall of Fame in 2018 and named one of the BBC’s 100 Women the same year. In 2021, she received the Royal Academy of Engineering’s Prince Philip Medal. In 2024, a Virginia elementary school was named in her honor.

West also earned a Master’s in public administration from the University of Oklahoma during her career and completed a PhD at Virginia Tech in 2000.

She married fellow mathematician Ira West in 1957; they had three children. Gladys West died on January 17, 2026, at age 95.



Jeannette Pickering Rankin



Gladys Brown West



KCC's FALL 2025 FASHION SHOW

