

# Scepter

The Students' Voice

Kingsborough Community College

MAY 2020

The City University of New York



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FINANCE  
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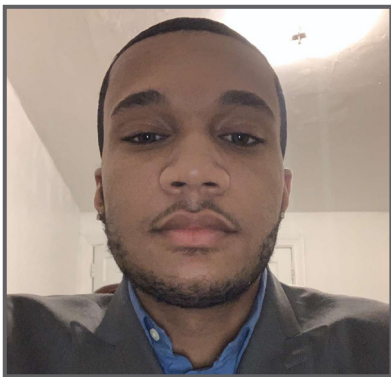
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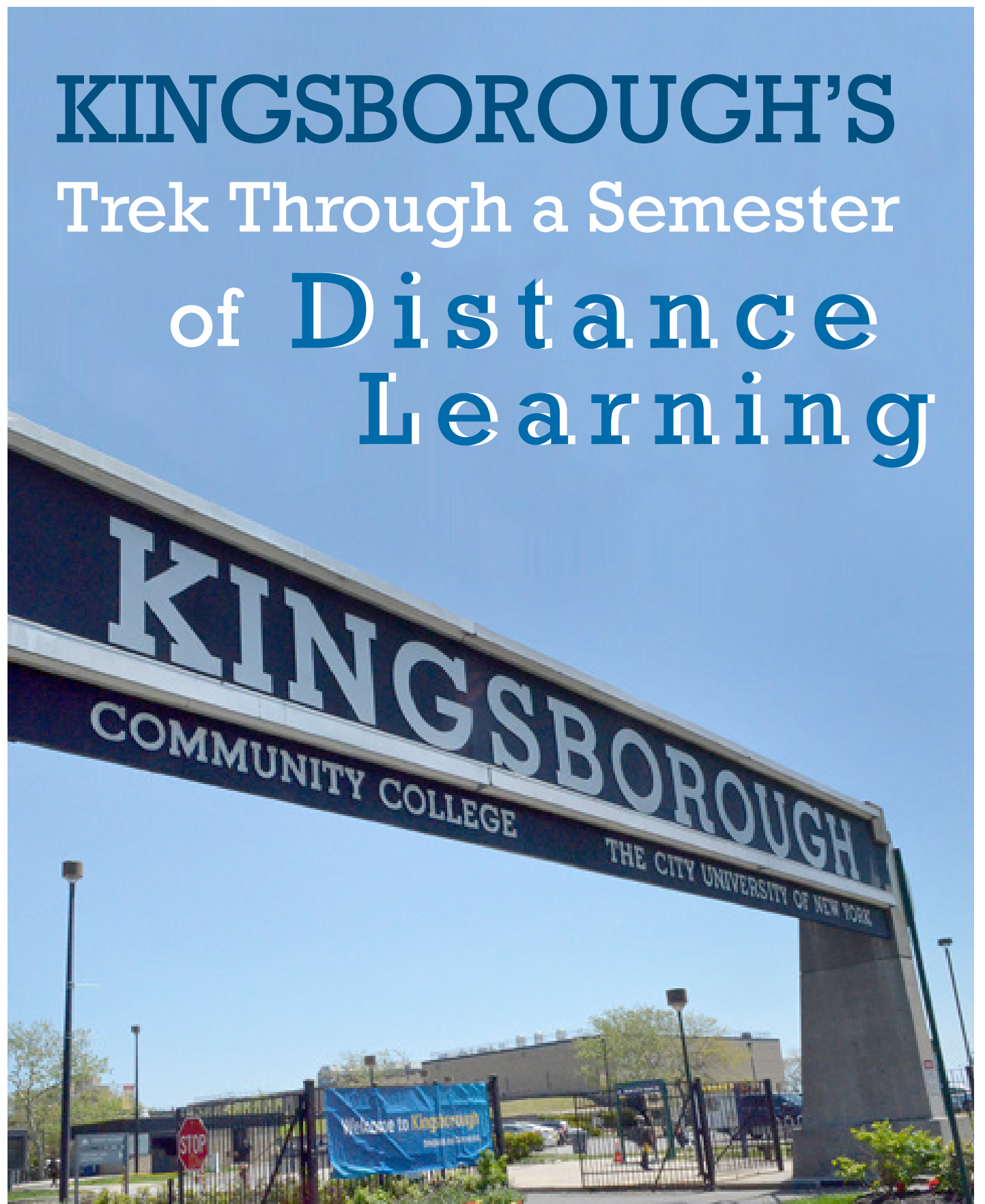
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2001 Oriental Boulevard,  
Room M-230  
Brooklyn, NY 11235  
Telephone: 718.368.5603  
Fax: 718.368.4833  
Email: [scepterpublications@gmail.com](mailto:scepterpublications@gmail.com)

# Letter From The Editor

By Saul De Leon



Photo by Saul De Leon

As we draw close to the end of an abysmal semester filled with ups and downs brimming with uncertainty, we reflect and pray for those who have been deeply affected by this pandemic. Whether it be the loss of a loved one or loss of employment, we are all feeling the effect of this tragic moment in history. Though statistics have shown that new cases and deaths have been declining we are still not out of the woods yet. The pain that has been brought to households across the world has served as a reminder for all to appreciate the people we have around us. We

should appreciate the fact that as students, we are still able to access our education remotely.

We should be proud of the hard work we put into getting where we are and this pandemic should not overshadow our achievements. To all my fellow current and soon-to-be graduates, as the Japanese writer Haruki Murakami once said, "And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about." Once this is all over, I hope that this test of strength and perseverance will lead into a brighter future.

In this new issue, Scepter has touched upon the negative effects this virus has had on all of us but also touching on the positive. As a team it has been hard to manage day-to-day class work along with being an active member of this paper. Like many of you we have families to tend to, bills to pay and food to put on the table. I would like to thank our team along with our advisor Patrick Hickey Jr. for helping Scepter successfully release our third consecutive issue amidst this pandemic. I also would like to welcome back and thank Director of Student Publications and co advisor, Helen-Margaret Nasser, from maternity leave. I hope you all enjoy this and I look forward to working on our upcoming and final issue for the spring semester. Good luck to you all and stay safe.



Photo by Ellis Santoro

We're about two and a half months in since the temporary closing of CUNY. Everyone has hopefully had time to adapt to this drastic change in our education and lives. Although this pandemic has been awful to some, I hope there

are still positives to come out of this. Some of the articles in this paper will be discussing the bad of this situation, however there are a number of articles with distractions, such as the game reviews or the student interest pieces.

Balancing the workload of the paper and classes has been tough since Scepter is only a small team, but we think that this will be a quality issue. I want to thank the team for the work they put into ensuring that this will be the third straight month of a Scepter release—March, April and now May. I want to also thank Helen-Margaret Nasser, who is back at Scepter as the Director alongside Patrick Hickey Jr. after taking a maternity leave.

We plan to release a new issue in June as well. That will be my final paper at Kingsborough, as I graduate in June, but I'm gonna continue to do my job at the paper in writing and editing. The Scepter team hopes you enjoy this issue, and even though there was no face-to-face in terms of meetings and actual interviews, we enjoyed putting it together. I hope the KCC community stays safe and can get through this final stretch of the semester.

## JOIN ODYSSEY

Odyssey, Kingsborough's yearbook, is looking for graphic designers and photographers. If you are a Kingsborough student and are interested in photography and/or graphic design, please talk to us in M230.

# Kingsborough's Transition to Distance Learning

## Kingsborough Students Share Their Experience with Online Learning

By Ellis Santoro

With over two months gone since the closing of CUNY schools, students and faculty have had time to adjust to the new and (hopefully) temporary way of education. At the time of writing this, there has been no word on whether or not it will remain this way for the Fall 2020 semester.

Distance learning has replaced in-person classes for the time being. As expected with such a drastic shift in everyone's daily lives, there have been struggles for professors. One of the biggest victims in the shift to distance learning has been the science department. Hands-on learning is necessary for the education of a science major, so the lack of that opportunity has caused difficulties in the curriculum. Paul Errico, an Earth Science professor at Kingsborough, gave his first-hand experience about the difficulties of the distance learning transition.

"All my classes have either a lab section or lab activities as part of curriculum," Errico said. "I've been able to find some decent web-based replacements for many of these activities. But, especially when it comes to mineral and rock samples or microscope work, there's really no way to adequately replace those kinds of hands-on observations."

Watching videos to learn science can have its benefits, but there is no real way to replace being able to do it yourself. Nothing beats in-person learning. That is a common statement from both students and professors.

There are plenty of concerns from professors, beyond just losing the face-to-face aspect. There is the actual reason why schools are shut down: the Coronavirus itself.

"Many of my students have had loved ones die or are sick themselves or have lost jobs," said Kingsborough English professor, Deborah Anderson. "That's an added stress to keep them on track, especially when I can't see them."

There are things more important than school right now. Families are being shattered. Professors can only control so much, so when tragedy strikes a student, there's not much they can do beyond offering emotional support. Both students and professors have faced their own challenges in this difficult period of transition. One challenge that is shared between the two however is, in many cases, learning the unfamiliar technology.

"The biggest difficulty was getting used to using Blackboard," said Frances Koren, a student at Kingsborough. "I have used Blackboard before for written assignments, however it was more of a challenge with a video portion."

Professor Anderson has noticed the same type of problems for her students in the distance learning transition.

"Many of the students have never worked online and several of my students didn't have computers at home or good internet service, so they've struggled getting on," Anderson said. "I deal with them through email and texting me. It's a challenge to keep up with the emails."

Although some students know how to easily work

Blackboard and other online school sources, others have struggled in the transition. Kingsborough ASAP advisor, Marina Kamenetskiy, has heard firsthand from students, detailing their problems with online learning.

"I find that during these initial months, we have traditional on-campus students suddenly overdependent on technology, sharing space and resources with family members under the same roof. That can be daunting to say the least. I wish all of my students were able to hear each others' testimonies because they are so similar," said Kamenetskiy. She offered a bit of optimism though: "It can be intimidating for non-tech savvy students (and staff and faculty--myself included!) to feel insecure at first, but we all start somewhere. This is a time of grit and there's no wrong place to start. As an aside, if my students are reading this, I'm available to walk you through Blackboard!"

As time has passed, students and professors have adjusted to the new 2020 way of education. There are still issues for most, but just like most things, the more familiar you get with it, the easier it becomes. It seems that way because in one class this journalist attends, every student except for maybe two still regularly attends the weekly Blackboard Collaborate meetings. In fact, a few students have been popping up despite not attending the first couple of weeks. Although most students and faculty would rather be in person, this experience of distance learning has made professors consider changes to the structure of their class. Professor Errico described some of those changes.

"I've ended up re-evaluating some of my assignments, lectures and my overall approach to course structure. Out of my necessity, I'm experimenting with an emphasis on smaller assignments rather than a few big exams," Errico said. He also added: "I've become a lot more familiar with Blackboard, as I'm sure students have as well."

One challenge that is shared between the two, however, is learning the unfamiliar technology.

"There are some web-based lab activities that I might bring back into the classroom, or at least reserve as extra credit or make-up assignments. I've been using Discord for virtual office hours. I wouldn't mind if, in the future, faculty were allowed to count being on call via email and other electronic means towards office hours," Errico said. "Of course, there's no replacement for in-person interaction when possible."

At such an unprecedented time for CUNY students, faculty and staff, there has been time for reflection. Kamenetskiy spoke on her biggest takeaways from this experience.

"We cannot separate our experience of distance learning and our experience of surviving this pandemic; we will unfortunately always remember them in partnership with one another," said Kamenetskiy. "It's brought out the best in my colleagues and in my students. Whether virtually or on campus, there is no place like NYC and no place I would rather be advising students now than with CUNY."

2020 will be known in the history books as the year of the coronavirus pandemic. Whenever we hear the words "online learning," we're going to think of this year. Though the distance learning transition has been a struggle, Professor Errico reflects on what we have learned from this experience.

"Technology is awesome, when applied correctly," Errico said. "If this emergency happened 10 years ago, I don't think a transition to remote learning would have been a viable option. But, every tool and technology has its limits. Losing the element of human interaction from my teaching has been frustrating. I'm looking forward to getting back into the classroom."

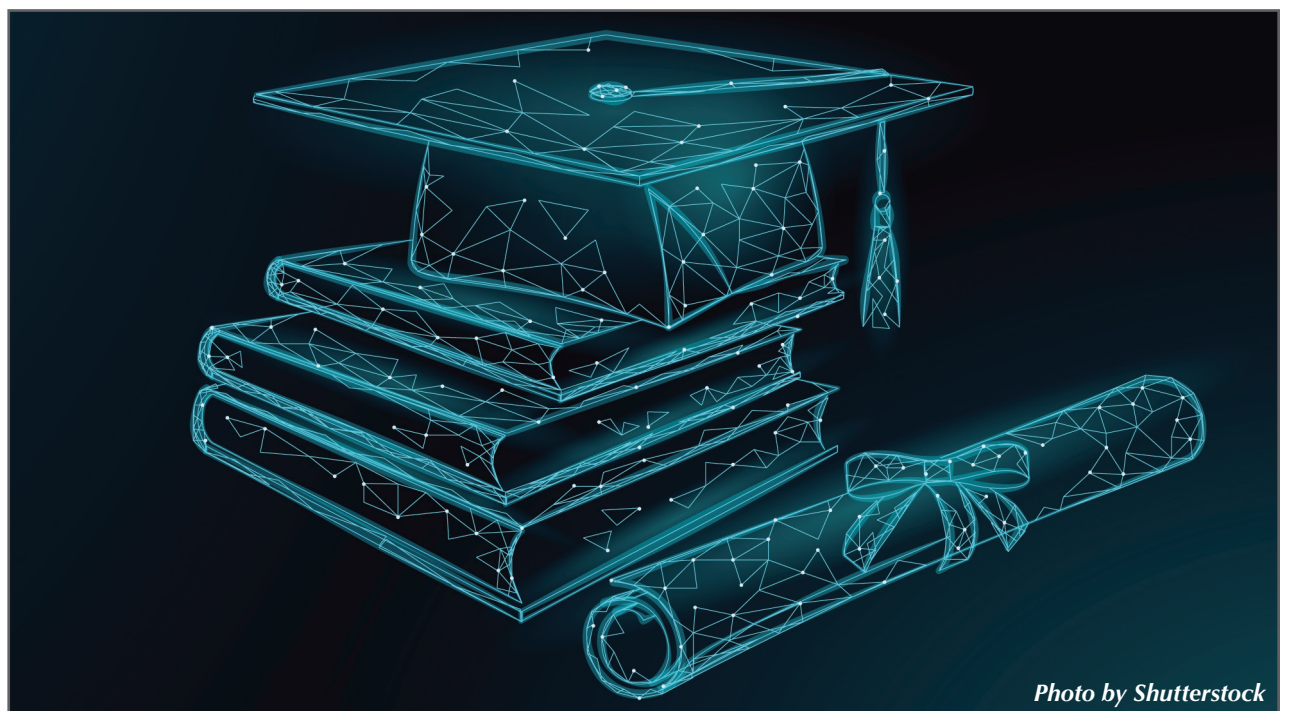


Photo by Shutterstock

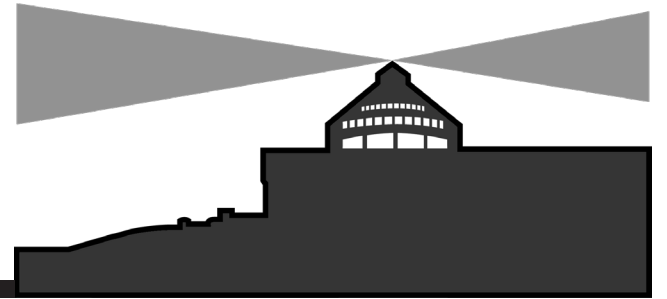
*Students and Faculty have adapted to distance learning.*

## JOIN SCEPTER, BE PART OF OUR TEAM!

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 also email your opinion or letter to the editor to: [scepterpublications@gmail.com](mailto:scepterpublications@gmail.com)

# CAMPUS NEWS



## Coronavirus: The Battle Between Finance and Well-Being

Workers Around the Country Share Their Stories Surrounding Layoffs

By Kelsey Santos

COVID-19 has caused a record of 22 million unemployed Americans across the United States according to The Washington Post and it keeps rising. After many stores and public places have shut down to prevent the spread of the deadly virus, millions of employees have stopped getting paid which has led to financial problems.

There are many employees who have families to take care of, they are responsible for paying bills, need to bring food to the table, or are even living check by check. Many lucky employees are still getting paid from their jobs, however millions of others are not. The loss of the ability to work has hindered them from taking care of the household.

"I'm looking for work in other kitchens; I also had to down-size my staff a lot," said Jason Makura, a self-employee. "I felt bad laying them off. I just couldn't afford to keep them and my doors open."

Makura had to let go of a numerous amount of his staff from his soul food catering business in Michigan. It was successful through the help of family members, friends and others that were hired. Ever since the pandemic, there has been a decrease in catering requests which meant no income coming in.

The 30-year-old chef is also a father of three and under the pressure of keeping his house stocked up with food for his kids and taking care of the house.

"It's mostly just me and my three kids which is very hard when you got all the house bills and businesses," Makura said. "I have some money saved

up just in case but after this, I'm going to really have to make all this money back to get out of this mess."

Many employees that are still working, such as taxi drivers, are exposed to the highest risk. Some drivers continue taking the chance of being exposed to COVID-19 on account that driving riders to their destination is their only way to get money. Others like Rolando Tobal Polanco would rather not take that risk.

"He decidido mantenerme fuera de la ciudad para evitar contaminación y no traer el contaminación a la familia," ("I decided to stay away from the city to avoid being contaminated and so I don't contaminate my family,") said Polanco, an employee for the transportation company, Via.

Polanco is a 43-year-old driver, father of three and is responsible for bringing home the bacon. He gets paid \$15-27/hour from Via, but the deadly virus has held him up and delayed his bill payments in order to use the rest of his money to buy food and essential needs for his family.

"Los ahorros que teníamos se fueron agotando al estar en la casa y no trabajando," ("The savings we had were running out while being at home and not working,") said Polanco. "Entonces tome la iniciativa de entrar a trabajar para 'Taxi and Limousine commission'." ("I Then took the initiative to start working for 'Taxi and Limousine commission'.")

The NYC government agency, "Taxi and Limousine Commission," is offering a part-time job for taxi drivers on the NYC food delivery driver

portal. The role is to help deliver a box of free four-day meals to residents in need during the crisis.

"Ellos me están pagando quince dólares a la hora, mas millaje y la gasolina la están pagando," ("They are paying me fifteen dollars an hour, plus they are paying for my milage and gasoline,") said Polanco.

Polanco has no choice but to work for the food delivery driver portal because there's no other way to earn money for his household. He says it's going well so far since he's alone in his vehicle, which he finds better than having numerous different people going in and out.

Some parents live with their children and are relied on to take care of the household, there are younger employees who don't have a weight of responsibilities on their shoulders since they still live with their parents. Carlos Rodriguez is one of those employees. He does have one responsibility though: co-parenting.

"It's from whatever I have saved to be honest," Rodriguez said. "We also stocked up in a lot of stuff in the beginning."

Rodriguez is a 23-year-old lifeguard at the YMCA gymnasium in Chinatown. The youth organization has stopped paying Rodriguez, whose earnings would be used to support his one-year-old daughter.

Rodriguez is aware that the baby essentials will not last if the self-isolation lasts longer. The new father is also not able to see his daughter at the moment to prevent the spread of bacteria.

"It's best for everyone but I can't see her," Rodriguez said.



Photo by Kelsey Santos

Makura owns a food business in Michigan.



Photo by Kelsey Santos

Polanco is a 43-year-old taxi driver.



Photo by Kelsey Santos

Rodriguez is a 23-year-old lifeguard and parent.

# Alex Okner's Path to Kingsborough

Kingsborough Student Shares His Journey to KCC, as Well as His Future Goals

By Jose Tirado

In an optimal life, you would graduate from high school, graduate from college and then start working the job that relates to your degree. However, life has peaks and valleys. Milestones in your life can get delayed with the potential of a career being delayed for a few years. For 24-year-old Alex Okner, this hypothetical is his reality and he has the engine started for his life.

Kingsborough is home to 10, 915 students, according to the United States Department of Education, with each student having a unique path and story to where they are today. However, the most interesting stories are the ones from students who have not gone through life in a conventional way. Okner fits this description of a student who has had a gap in between the end of their high school days to the beginning of their college days. Okner has a witty personality that meshes well with his compassionate intuition to keep friends and family alike close. But what did Okner do before coming to Kingsborough? "I used to work mostly in construction," Okner said. "I was mostly going from job to job while working for my dad and then working other jobs at different times."

Everyone has a different path to college. Some people go to college right after high school. Others take a year or two off. Some people might not be able to afford college. Okner wanted to refine a pre-existing skill in order to get a better paying job in the future.

"I wanted to get a degree in my major so I could be able to get my dream job more easily," Okner said. "I want to become a graphic designer for video games." When you go to a new school you usually never know what to expect, but Okner already had an idea about

what to expect from Kingsborough. "Since I have a girlfriend who went to Kingsborough, I went to the school often as a visitor, so I had a good idea of how the school worked," Okner said. "Other than that I didn't really have many expectations for it." People hope to accomplish different things whenever they go to college, whether it is academically, socially, or for the achievement of it. Okner wants to see continued improvement for himself in his major. "I want to acquire as much skill in my major and to learn things needed for life," Okner said. "I have not seen any improvement in my skills relating to my major so far." The college experience is usually defined by what you do other than your academics, whether that is a club, a sports team, or volunteering within the school. For Okner, he already created a group of friends within a club.

"I have joined the anime club and cosplay club.... I have made friends with some of the theatre kids since my girlfriend is in that department," Okner said. "With my club, I have already gone to ComicCon. I did not think that was going to happen." Even though Okner has experienced some good moments while making new friends and finding a group, his time at Kingsborough has not been the easiest.

"Unlike when I was in high school, I now have to worry about being able to afford the costs of food and travel," Okner said. "Also, the financial aid the school provides is very limited and has a lot of faults." Even with the problems that he is facing, Okner has his eyes on short term and long term goals that will guide him to the success of his life.

"[After I graduate from Kingsborough] I'm planning on going to a school that is more focused on

my major so I can use the skills I learned here and develop them even further," Okner said. "[Ten years from now] I will be working in a company as a graphic designer or concept artist."

Okner has big aspirations for what he wants to do in life. He has a mindset or an optimal manner to the way in which he gets things done. Okner has a basic yet effective way to get the work that he has to finish.

"If I have to get something done, it will be done no matter what" Okner said.



Photo by Jose Tirado

Alex Okner has taken an unconventional path to KCC

## Education's Change In Scenery

Kingsborough Students Share Their Experience with Online Learning

By Zion Farrow

After several weeks of online courses due to the precautions set in place to limit the spread of COVID-19, many students of Kingsborough Community College have had difficulties adapting to the new work environment.

The experiences of Kingsborough students have differed in adjusting to their new lifestyle due to the coronavirus closing down the school. The access to resources for each student has varied when it comes to acquiring their diplomas and knowledge through unconventional means. There appears to be a struggle as the transition from physical to online work really starts to become the new normal.

One Kingsborough Student, Danny Ye, says, "Since moving to an online course due to the current events, my work has been a lot more compact than it was before. It feels a little bit more daunting for the most part, you're on your own to find out what to do next."

The workload is shifting and tasks that may have been easy to do before are becoming more of a challenge. Students like Danny are feeling that the course has gotten even harder. Not everyone feels the same when it comes to online classes though. Some students have quickly adapted to the new style of learning, and have even proclaimed it as better.

"Moving to online classes is not what you were expecting. It was difficult to transition to online classes face-to-face. It's easier now than before and I can turn in my assignments more

easily than in person," said Jentel Finch who majors in Tourism.

Attending classes is easier now because it comes with the touch of a button if you have access to a computer. However, having the information all in one place doesn't necessarily help with organization skills or time management. Those who have a natural talent or adapt quickly to their environment have a leg up this semester. One student described that just because Kingsborough isn't the easiest place to get to via public transportation doesn't mean its classrooms and environment were not missed.

"At first I was fine with it but within a couple of weeks prior to now, it was difficult for me to get online due to my work schedule and the fact that blackboard was being [difficult] so it affected all of my classes, especially Design since we kept having to move to different Facetime variations that were still being [annoying]," said graphic design major, Dominique Cadogan-Jarvis. "Then I realized how much I missed being outside and missed eating the privileged Kingsborough food."

All majors seem to have been affected by the switch as new challenges pop up for students. But it also shows how much just attending a class in person is fairly missed. Being comfy and having easy access to your fridge doesn't make being at home 24/7 an effective work environment. Through the years, as technology makes accomplishing tasks from a long-distance

easier, it may still not be the most effective method when it comes to learning. The safety of students and staff has always come first at Kingsborough Community College but that protection may come at a risk for a decline in our education.



Photo by KCC Communications

Distance learning has students debating on whether they prefer in person or online learning.

# Brandon Paige: Optimistic Computer Scientist and Currency Trader

Kingsborough Student Talks About His Past, Present and Future

By Kelsey Santos

Some people are unstoppable when it comes to their goals. They always have a positive attitude and plans for their road to success. When they're on the way, they sometimes even find a new liking and add it on to their goals.

Their stories need to be heard. There are times where people may feel unmotivated, but that's normal. They just need to be pushed back up again by hearing or reading stories such as that of Brandon Paige. Paige has an energy that is contagious. He's very encouraging, uplifting, positive and bright among many other traits that can spread to others and inspire them.

Brandon Paige is an upper sophomore student at Kingsborough Community College, a Corpsman for the U.S. Navy, as well as an up-and-coming currency trader. He is looking forward to graduating in June and receiving his Associate's Degree in Computer Science. He has a passion for computers and wants to make a career out of it. Paige's goals in the future are to carry his computing skills with him to get a job position at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and become a currency trading expert.

When Paige answered the Skype video for this interview, the view was a muscular 20-year-old with a tanned skin tone, short brown hair and small forest green eyes. He greeted politely with his raspy but calm voice and a big white smile that felt welcoming. Paige demonstrated what he was doing before answering the Skype call by flipping the camera. His computer screen popped up, showing a line graph with a lot of numbers which was a sneak peek of what is discussed later about currency trading.

His passion for computer science started from being interested in computers when he was young. When Paige was asked about his childhood, he looked out the window. Paige thought back and said his first computer was a Dell and ever since his mom gave it to him, he was interested in learning how to fix them.

"I was always into fixing computers, building computers and just you know, like hardware-related," Paige said. "If I had a broken computer, I always used to do my research like 'okay how do I fix this?'"

Paige is aware that technology is the future. People argue that years from now, computers and robots will take over humans. In that case, his computing skills will come in handy. He plans on learning more by doing internships.

"In the computer science field it's really a lot of competition. I've been coding since I was a little kid but, like what would really help me is doing internships," Paige said, "Signing for an internship is really good because they offer you a lot and I really want to you know, learn more as a computer scientist because there's more to learn."

From 2018 to 2019, Paige had to travel to

Connecticut every weekend for his job from 1-7 pm as a corpsman for the U.S Navy.

"My MOS was a corpsman so we used to help with a lot of stitching and medical stuff, so I took classes when I was 18 years old," Paige said. "I took medical stitching procedure classes so I had to stitch certain cuts and stuff like that, you know, little things like nurses do or like surgeons, but little things like that to help soldiers and wounded people."

He has stopped working there at the moment because the U.S service is aware that he is busy with his education. Paige will return as a corpsman after he graduates from Kingsborough.

Paige is now taking his last class at Kingsborough—a physical education class. The future computer scientist plans on earning his bachelor's degree in a year or two from now, but in the meantime, he will be focusing on

his side passion which is the Foreign Exchange Market, also known as Forex. Paige got into the currency trading world through a friend informing him about it. He was skeptical about it at first but decided to give it a shot and now has no regrets about joining.

"We create our own trade in the Foreign Exchange Market. We are partnered with IML Academy," Paige said. "They offer products for us solely—we are retail traders to make our own trade and to make money from trading, so not only that, essentially you're learning the skill."

Paige says it's a blessing that he is making money from trading. However, it's not just about making money. According to Paige, one purpose to this work is, "helping impact people's lives and just trying to get people out of financial debt."



Photo by Brandon Paige

Brandon Paige has a clear plan for his future.

# A Small Business in a Big City of COVID-19

As The World Remains in Lockdown, Cafe Abbondanza Attempts to Stay Afloat

By Catherine Vladimirov

Everyone is familiar with Frank Sinatra's words, "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere," but how do you make it in New York at a challenging time like this? Businesses in countries near and far are closing, the stock market is taking a field trip to 1929 and consumers are saving the world by staying at home watching Netflix. With even large businesses on the verge of bankruptcy, few small businesses have been able to stand their ground amidst the massive COVID-19 outbreak in New York City.

"I'm from South Korea, I've been in the U.S. for 25 years," said Yong Song, owner of Cafe Abbondanza, located at 146 W 46 St., right off of Times Square. "When I was in school I got a job like this and then after I graduated, I kept coming and going. Then I was a manager in this type of business and I learned a lot of things, so this is a good small business."

Song is usually either working or greeting people at the door. Now things have changed, he explains. "Before corona, everything was normal. All the customers were regular customers and we had a steady business, but not now. 15 people were working, we made hot food, sandwiches, snacks. Now it's only me and [one other worker]," Song said. "We sell take-out too so we can stay open, but we are usually open 24 hours. Now we are open less

than half the time. Sometimes nurses and doctors come, they look like they've got a lot of stress. They're human beings too, they're wondering too."

Operating a Cafe in such an area can be difficult even when business is running smoothly. Song recollects, "I've been on Times Square for four years and it's difficult in the night time, because in the night time we're open, and in this area, there's especially a lot of street bums and drug dealers, they bother us and give us a hard time. Also drunken people, sometimes they make trouble here. But the thing is that the New York police, they're busy. They cannot concentrate here when we have a problem. Do you see the window? Broken. Do you see the pictures, a lot of pictures of people stealing. I used to watch the cameras and once a week maybe, someone is stealing."

People can become hostile in a time of crisis. Yet, when a man came in to buy a soda and said he would bring in 50 cents tomorrow, Song said, "It's okay, have a nice day."

"Some people say 12 more weeks, some say two more weeks. I applied already for the relief program, but of course, we don't know when they're going to give us and how much they're going to give us. It's really hard with small businesses," said Song.

Although the future is unclear, Song has seen a great number of people throughout his time at

this location and hopes to see more.

"I like to work. I mean nothing has happened like this since 30 years. I'm 50 years old and I'm the owner, but since I start to work I've never felt something of this kind," Song says. "Maybe 5%, 10% is corona infected, but 90% is mentally infected from something. We are getting lazy, we are losing the future. I mean the hope and a wish, so I don't know what's gonna happen for the future."

Song has a love for what he does. He describes it as his happiness.

"For my family and for myself, working is my hobby. I never thought about other things," Song Says. "I just work hard, wake up in the morning, work, take care of my employees, my work and my family. That was my happiness. That's why I love working for the neighborhood. But now is something weird and I've had my employees a long time. Good employees are very hard to find. Many just give up, but now they're scared to come to work too. We have no choice."

Michael Youn, landlord of Cafe Abbondanza, explains the name of the cafe.

Youn said, "Abbondanza. It's an Italian word and a very good word. Abbondanza means love story, but not for me, for him! It's a memory of love!"



Photo by Catherine Vladimirov

Song works hard for his happiness.



Photo by Catherine Vladimirov

Cafe Abbondanza's seating area has closed.



Photo by Catherine Vladimirov

A broken window at Cafe Abbondanza.

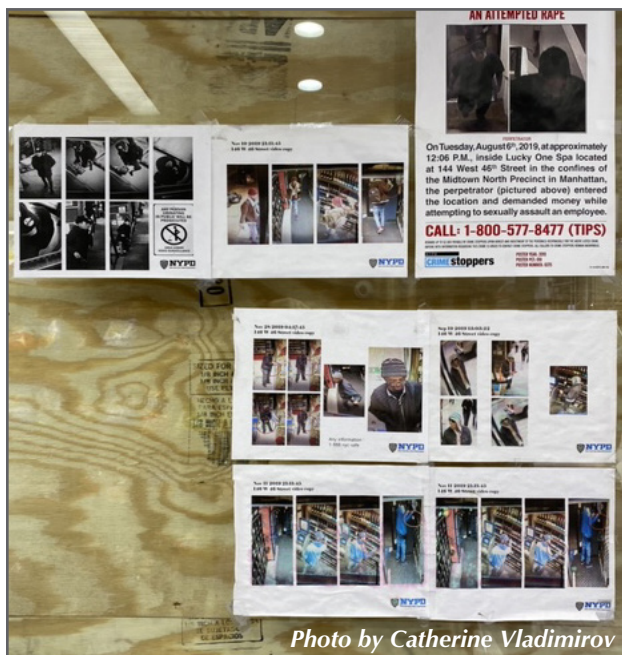


Photo by Catherine Vladimirov

A display of wanted thieves who stole from Abbondanza.



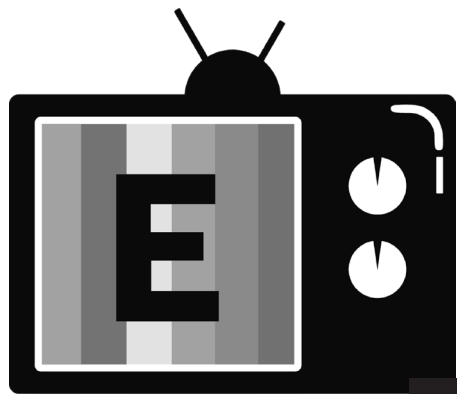
Photo by Catherine Vladimirov

Display of the inside of Abbondanza.



Photo by Catherine Vladimirov

Working is both Song's hobby and job.



# ENTERTAINMENT

## Super Mega Space Blaster Special Turbo: Review

Reminiscent of the Classics, SMSBST Was Made With a Lot of Love Put Into It

By Matt Hirsch

Gone are the days of the arcade space shooter. Games like “Asteroids” and “Sinistar” blew the minds of the children during the 80’s. They seemed so revolutionary for the time, which they were. Before the days of e-sports, the best way to compete at video games was to head to the local arcade and go for the high score on the cabinet. It wasn’t for cash, it was for bragging rights and the love of the game. As time went by and the genre evolved, piloting a little ship around a two-dimensional plane became a lost art. The simple-yet-effective concept became overshadowed by the addition of a z-axis and the invention of the First Person Shooter. Super Mega Space Blaster Special Turbo pays homage to those days and adds a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor to boot.

With a long-winded name like Super Mega Space Blaster Special Turbo, the game clearly doesn’t take itself too seriously, but that’s why it pays homage perfectly to the games it’s inspired by. It was the 80’s and if it wasn’t campy, it wasn’t working. With the medium still finding its footing in the world, what seems goofy and ridiculous now was mind-blowing back in the day. The line “I am Sinistar, beware, I live!” struck fear into the hearts of players everywhere in 1982. While there’s no spaceship face monster in Super Mega Space Blaster to fear, there is that same sense of campy goodness.

The game is steeped in that sense of nostalgia, almost a bit too much at times, because just like “Asteroids” and

other games of the same genre, the controls are hard to get used to. They’re not necessarily bad, it was just a clear design choice that the developer went with. Similar to “Asteroids” you could only move directly forward, with the ability to boost or break and tank-control style turning. The hard part is when you overshoot your target and the momentum carries you into an incoming rocket. It’s the type of control scheme that takes time to master, but once figured out it allows for some slick moves that are satisfying to pull off. But that doesn’t change the fact that it feels clunky and counterintuitive at first. It’s a matter of learning to work with the controls, instead of the controls working for you.

There’s a nice amount of variety in the game as well. Along with the standard game mode and co-op, there’s the self-explanatory Survival and One Shot modes which are plenty of fun in their own right. There’s also a dogfighting mode called “To the Death” and a little hidden gem called, “Save the Colony” that puts a fun twist on the standard “defend the mothership” gameplay that is typical for these types of games. The diversity isn’t only with the game modes though. There are several ships to unlock, each with their own strengths and weaknesses that let you change up your playstyle to what you enjoy the most. The different ships also play off well with the difficult control scheme. The slower, tankier ships are better for beginners, but of course, it wouldn’t be a true homage

to the days of the arcade without a catchy chiptune soundtrack. There’s no doubt that you’ll be humming the menu theme for a while after you stop playing. It’s nothing groundbreaking, but it is definitely a solid OST that does this game and the classics justice.

Games like Super Mega Space Blaster Special Turbo are unique. With a one-man development team, it exists solely because of the passion that the dev has for the medium. The game is loaded with personality and just the right amount of eccentricity. From top to bottom it’s clear that a ton of love was put into this project. If nothing else, it’s worth playing for the giggle of getting achievements like “Enemies Smenemies.”

### The Good:

Pays homage, but with tongue in cheek: SMSBST takes all the quiriness of its developer and the classics it’s inspired by and turns it into a game with a whole lot of personality.

### The Bad:

Clunky controls: Intentional or not, it takes a while to get used to piloting your spacecraft.

### Final Thoughts:

Whether you got to experience the arcade days first hand and want a nostalgic throw-back, or just need a fun distraction that will make you smile, Super Mega Space Blaster Special Turbo is a solid game with a lot of love put into it.



Photo by Nintendo

Box art for Super Mega Space Blaster Special Turbo.

# Cannon's encouraging single: CONVERSATIONS

## Cannon Reflects On Mental Health in His New Track

By Kelsey Santos

Cannon's latest release, "CONVERSATIONS" features a simplistic, but polished instrumental with calm guitar chords and drums. The 21-year-old uses his raw and soft vocals to express the avoidance of personal conflicts and pretend everything is neat, even when it's not.

Cannon was born and raised in South Carolina. He performed at local open mic nights in his hometown to show his appreciation for R&B and Hip-Hop. While you listen to the songwriter's music, the lyrics will take you on an adventure of thoughts and reflections.

In the Indie pop single, the upcoming artist acknowledges the difference between talks and conversations. Cannon sings about the effort he puts in, having talks with himself and others as it helps the problems disappear. He also neglects the issues and convinces himself they'll vanish eventually, but deep down, those actions don't benefit. He encloses his emotions and lies to everybody, including himself. Cannon encourages the listeners to end the dishonesty and take responsibility by starting conversations that are more engaging. He says that's the real recipe for solutions.

Cannon's attitude in the single is brilliant. His intentions are not trying to sound phenomenal and tidy. During the whole three minutes, his voice perfectly matches the lyrics as he sounds natural and tranquil. His pure voice makes it conceivable that he's exhausted from battling his dilemmas.

On the bridge of the track, Cannon says, "Why you flake on everything that you tell yourself isn't worth it, that you tell yourself it isn't working and it's everything that I'm pushing down but it's bubbling the surface."

Those lyrics stood out the most because it points out the content of the track on avoiding problems and allowing them to build up. Cannon makes it sound legitimate as he changes his tone and speaks gently. It makes you hear the frustration, sadness and sensitivity as if he tried and wants to give up.

Overall, "CONVERSATIONS" is a smooth, chill and simple track with a catchy "talk" chorus. The song has a wonderful meaning behind it: to encourage people to sit down and converse about personal issues. The song tells us that it's okay to go through conflicts. We all go through them.



Cannon's new release tackles mental health.

# Animal Crossing: New Horizons: Review

## The Newest Installment in the Series Has Lived Up to the Hype

By Matt Hirsch

Video games as a medium have evolved into something so much more than what they were in the early years of gaming. It's different from the heydays of the arcade, where you would put up a quarter or try for the high score in games like Galaga and Pacman, to the revelation that was the MMORPG. The possibilities of genres are limitless. One thing is certain though: the medium has always provided a sense of escapism unlike any other. It gives you the opportunity to interact with a new world, unique from the mundane one you live in. When Nintendo released Animal Crossing in 2001 for the Gamecube, it took the concept of escapism and turned it on its head.

Instead of living in a mystical fantasy world as an unstoppable badass where magical beasts roam the land, you play as the villager, living day by day, paying bills and making ends meet. In the nearly two decades since the original release, the series has evolved into a pop-culture phenomenon. Its cute and friendly aesthetic has endeared fans to the point where criticizing it is almost taboo. With the newest entry, "New Horizons", the fanbase is awash with a tremendous amount of new customization available. It allows you to live your most picturesque life, while still having one foot solidly planted in reality. You don't fight monsters, you catch tarantulas and run from bees. Who knew that paying off a mortgage would be so entertaining?

Animal Crossing's greatest strength can also be considered its greatest weakness. This isn't a game you can grind for hours with gratifying gameplay that provides a sense of accomplishment when mastered. It's a living, evolving world that is meant to be checked in on regularly. You complete your daily tasks of chopping down trees, collecting various items and earning currency called "bells" to pay off your debt. In most Action RPGs, the core gameplay of Animal Crossing would be mundane sidequests. Those who need addicting gameplay that demands precision and skill, will find "New Horizons" exactly that; mundane.

The closest thing it has to an antagonist is the lovable tanooki, Tom Nook. Nook is the most laid back loan shark to ever exist and is every bill-paying human being's dream landlord. You pay off your debts at whatever pace you feel like and as a reward get access to a bigger home and more ways to customize it, eventually unlocking the ability to completely terraform your little island to

be exactly what you want. Want to live like Ric Flair in the biggest house on the biggest hill? No problem. Want beach front property surrounded by a forest? You can have it. The idea that you make your virtual life in "New Horizons" exactly what you want it to be is the ultimate fantasy for some. There is no middle ground. Either you "get" Animal Crossing, or you don't.

One of the things that hooks people the most, is the friendly neighbors you build relationships with as you play. No company is as good as Nintendo at turning the charm up and injecting as much personality into humanoid animals as possible. At this point, the cardigan-donning puppy, Isabelle, is one of the most beloved characters in all of video games. They are what makes the virtual town feel alive and worth living in.

At the end of the day though, whether or not you will enjoy your time in "Animal Crossing: New Horizons" comes down to what you want out of a game. If you want deep, rewarding mechanics and metagaming that requires time to understand and master, it won't be the game for you. What New Horizons offers is the chance to live your best life, in a world where your biggest worry is where to place your

new mansion. This game also gives you the opportunity to do it with your friends. Inviting people to come check out your island and visiting theirs creates a sense of virtual community, unlike any Animal Crossing game before it.

It almost feels like a social experiment by Nintendo. What do people really want when they can have anything? Some people want to slaughter legions of demons from hell, while others want tea with their friends.

### The Good:

What a wonderful world to live in: New Horizons does Animal Crossing better than any other game in the series. It creates the perfect town that feels alive and lets you make it exactly what you want. And now you can do it with friends.

### The Bad:

Don't expect a competitive scene: The actual gameplay itself is not what draws in fans and never will be. For some, that will be a major buzzkill.

### Final Thoughts:

To sum New Horizons up in one word, it would be "charming." No game is as light-hearted and easily approachable. For some however, that charm just won't be enough.



Box art for Animal Crossing: New Horizons.



# SPORTS

## The Future Impact of the Coronavirus the NBA Will Have to Deal With

The NBA World Will Be Shaken Up, Past Just This Season

By Ellis Santoro



Photo by Wikimedia Commons

*The NBA will have to deal with future problems stemming from the pause*

At a time of such chaos, there isn't much to talk about other than the coronavirus. Putting the politics and the obvious health concerns aside, the sports world has been shut down, save for a few events such as the NFL Draft, Wrestlemania 36 and Korean Baseball among a few others. In regards to the major American sports, the NBA, NHL and MLB have all lost time during their season, with the NBA and NHL losing their postseason with no real updates on if they will resume this season or cancel it altogether. The effects of the coronavirus have hit the sports world hard, but it will not just be felt for only the current seasons. The shutdowns will affect these leagues for years to come.

The NBA may not have a champion in 2020. That would be an extreme outcome from the suspension of the league, especially since the

NBA is reportedly looking at reopening in July at Disney World in Orlando, but nothing is set in stone. Things could change as fast as the league was shut down in the first place. However, whether there is a champion or not, fans will not be back in the seats this season. That fact will cause more problems than just the emotions of fans missing the atmosphere of being at the arena.

The salary cap is directly tied to how much revenue the NBA earns per season. Remember when Kevin Durant decided to go to the Warriors in July of 2016? That was only possible because of the massive new TV deal with ESPN and TNT that the NBA had announced to take effect starting in 2016. The \$24 billion dollar TV deal led to a \$24.1 million dollar cap increase that offseason. The 2020-2021 offseason could see another dramatic salary cap change, but in the opposite direction.

The loss of fans at games for the rest of the season will cost the NBA an estimated \$500 million, according to Tom Haberstroh of NBC Sports. That number is just in ticket sales alone, it doesn't include revenue lost from arena operations such as team stores or concessions. The cap was already projected to be lower than originally expected by 1-3 million, but now it is looking like it will go below this past season's number. According to an article on The Athletic by John Hollinger and Danny Leroux, the cap will drop massively.

The author wrote: "Playing the rest of the season in front of empty crowds could theoretically drop next year's cap by \$8M.... That's the regular season, mind you – doing the same for the playoffs, where the average gate is higher, would siphon away millions more."

If the cap drops from the current \$109.14 million to the new estimated number of around \$101 million, there will be massive fallout. One big example will be how teams sign players this offseason. There will be less money to go around due to teams losing the cap space they expected to have, so many free agents will get stuck having to take 1-year minimum or exception deals. That puts the competitiveness of the league at risk since players will be accepting minimum contracts, they may as well choose to sign with the Lakers or the Clippers. If they won't get paid more to go to a bad team like they normally would, why would they waste their time losing?

Alternatively, the 2021-2022 season could see the salary cap shoot up. Unless fans still

aren't allowed back in for next season, there is no reason the NBA should lose money in the future from this pandemic. The cap could go from the now estimated \$101 million back to the projection for that season of \$125 million. A \$24 million dollar increase is the same number from the previously mentioned 2016 off season.

Among the major ways the league suspension will affect the NBA, a potentially massive way is with the Milwaukee superstar, Giannis Antetokounmpo. Antetokounmpo will be a free agent in the summer of 2021, a summer that will now likely see a massive cap increase from the season before. Not only does the salary cap situation open up an even bigger opportunity than before for another team—such as the Golden State Warriors—to swoop in and sign Antetokounmpo, but this also will hurt the Milwaukee Bucks' chances of re-signing him in another way, past the salary cap situation.

The cap lowering this offseason will also affect contract extensions for players who are free agents the following offseason. Unless Antetokounmpo decides to re-sign this coming offseason for less money, the Bucks will only have one more year to convince him that they are a winning franchise. If anything goes wrong and the Bucks don't win the championship in either of the next two seasons, Antetokounmpo will likely head into free agency looking for a bigger market than Milwaukee has to offer.

If this season resumes in Orlando in July like what has been reported, teams will be rusty. These playoffs will be like none before because nobody will have played competitive basketball for four months leading up to it, save for a few possible exhibition games. These playoffs will likely not be an accurate representation of what we would have seen in an alternate universe where the coronavirus never started. The Bucks had the best record in the league, but if they don't pick up where they left off four months prior, they are in trouble.

There are a lot of question marks surrounding the NBA. Nobody knows what will happen with the rest of the season. The cap situation ultimately rests in the hands of commissioner Adam Silver, but nobody knows what will happen. There will be tons of fallout from the shutdowns, but we are close to having sports back. At the end of the day, all we need is sports back. The logistics of the salary cap will have its impact, but actually being able to watch sports is more important to everyone.

# Coaching Through a Pandemic

## KCC's Lambert Shell Shares His Thoughts On the Upcoming Basketball Season

By Ellis Santoro

With the status of the Fall 2020 semester being uncertain for CUNY colleges due to COVID-19, school athletics have taken a hit. Amidst a lack of opportunities to recruit players, the Kingsborough basketball team is left with many unanswered questions in regards to their upcoming season. With no word on how long the social distance guidelines will last, getting back to playing basketball may prove to be difficult. How are you supposed to stay six feet away from other players while playing a contact sport? KCC Wave's men's basketball head coach, Dr. Lambert Shell, shared his thoughts about how social distancing will impact the Wave's season.

"I mean you have to respect whatever the government and New York State is telling you to do. In the end, we're playing a contact sport. It's gonna be hard to just maintain [social distancing]," said Shell. "Basketball is physical in some ways, in terms of someone touching you, sweat, things of that nature. So hopefully the state and the federal government will have most of this resolved. It's a matter of just getting back to playing sports."

Assuming there is a season at all, the cancelations will still have an impact on other aspects of the Wave's season. For Kingsborough, the beauty of the waterfront campus is a selling point for coaches to student-athletes in terms of recruiting.

Coach Shell gave his thoughts on the impact the shutdown will have on the ability to recruit for the team.

"Kingsborough is one of the best campuses in the tri-state area, so the ability to not show off the campus and not show off the facility has been bad. Kids can't come up and see what we have to offer," said Shell. "That's the biggest disappointment. We can't show kids the human side of the campus, to show them the staff, the athletic director, or where you're going to school. That kind of stuff. Not being able to do that has hurt us a lot."

Although the ability to recruit has been difficult, there are still a number of returning players from the previous season. Shell has kept in contact with them via a team group chat.

"I check on them once or twice a week to make sure they're ok. Not just about basketball by itself. We had one player who struggled with COVID, so we try to check on him," said Shell. "This is life. This has become more than basketball. Basketball is secondary."

Most parks in the city are closed. There isn't really anywhere in the city to play basketball at the moment. The most you can do from home when it comes to basketball is practice dribbling, but that probably isn't an option if you have downstairs neighbors. The players are without anywhere to work on their game for the time being. Despite this, Coach Shell has offered them advice

on how to stay fit and ready for next season.

"As soon as they're able to go outside: go outside and get in shape. I've got text messages from guys asking what they need to improve. It's just what do you want to achieve out of this? Do you want to be a basketball player at the next level," said Shell. "Whatever level you want to achieve, you gotta get out and work for it. Get your body right, get your game right. If you can't go and work out in terms of basketball skills... maybe run, jog, get your body right physically and the basketball stuff comes secondary."

Although the status of the upcoming season is full of question marks, the Wave are still relying on new players to join the team. For those who are interested, you can inquire on the KCC Athletics website. Tryouts are expected to be in September. In order to join the team though, Coach Shell values one quality over others.

"Hard work. Hard work in the classroom and on the basketball court," said Shell.

When things get back to normal and it's safe for fans to attend games again, Coach Shell has a request for the school.

"In terms of Kingsborough, just come out and support. We play this game a certain way," said Shell. "The more school support we have in terms of coming out and watching us play makes a better feel for the team."



Photo by KCC Athletics

*The Wave will face unexpected challenges this upcoming season*

