

The Viking News

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LIVE OR REMOTE?

Learning Options Will Continue in Spring But Campus Population Will Nearly Double

By Liam Murphy

Returning students in the coming semester will continue to be able to choose between live classes on campus or remote learning via synchronous or asynchronous modalities. In other words, "It will not be much different from the present semester," says Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost of the College Vanessa Morest, in an interview with The Viking News. One significant difference: Many more students are choosing to travel to school for their coursework than in the Fall semester, based on current enrollment figures released by Dr. Morest. "We expect approximately two thirds of returning students to be in live classes," she said. That figure is about one third presently.

This could mean a substantial change from the current Valhalla campus atmosphere, which appears to many as isolated and vacant. The phrase "ghost town" has been heard at meetings and in conversations numerous times to describe the feeling of being on campus during the present semester.

Dr. Morest was quick to note that all of the COVID safety precautions currently in place will continue into Spring. In this she was supported by Scott Sullivan, director of security, and Robert Cirillo, director of the physical plant, also present at the Viking News interview. For all students taking live classes, "Vaccinations will continue to be

required," said Sullivan, referring to the current policy in which exceptions to the full vaccination rule are allowed only for approved health or religious reasons, with mandated weekly COVID testing to follow. In addition, all personnel will continue to wear masks inside classrooms and campus buildings and maintain practicable social distancing.

The extra COVID precautions taken by the Physical Plant throughout the pandemic were noted by Cirillo. These include increased air circulation in the buildings, electronic touchless entry at the main doorways, twice a day cleaning, extra attention to high-touch surfaces, and other measures. At the time of the interview, the

new COVID variant labeled Omicron had not reached the U.S. Several cases have since been reported, but symptoms have been mild for vaccinated patients.

"The campus is safe," said the Provost. "No returning student need fear that it is not." WCC's virus rates have consistently been superior to those of both the county and the state, even recently when all rates have seen a rise. However for that very reason, she continued, students should begin the Spring registration process as soon as possible. "The required vaccinations that are keeping us safe take time," she said. "Leaving it till January is not a good idea."

NACA Conference: A Win/Win for Student Leaders and Campus Life

By Francky Charles

Student leaders, accompanied by the directors of the Department of Student Involvement (DSI) attended the National Association of College Activities (NACA) Conference, held in Hartford, CT Oct 28-30. Officers from the Westchester Events Board (WEB), Mount Vernon Extension Center, Yonkers Activity Council, and the Student Government Association (SGA) were chosen to travel to Hartford, together with DSI Director Tiago Machado and Associate Director Dr. Rachele Hall.

According to its stated mission, NACA "empowers members to amplify the campus experience through inclusive learning, meaningful connections, and engaging entertainment that transforms college communities." At a typical NACA conference, performers and exhibitors show off their talents or wares for possible selection by those college student leaders who are responsible for booking speakers or entertainers for their respective schools. Since 1960,

years, according to DSI Director Tiago Machado. "It helps the attendees themselves to grow," he says, "while the ideas for activities and student participation that they bring back to the campus help the entire college community."

This reporter was among those who attended NACA this fall. I found that NACA provides the tools and resources students need to thrive in campus activities. I can attest to the richness of the experience for both me and my student colleagues. "I went to the NACA two years ago and this year there were more vendors and new people that were showcasing their talents," says Gabriela Quartey, SGA President. "We were tired at the end of every day, but it was worth it to meet all those who acted and bonded as student team leaders." "NACA was a really great experience and I had fun with my besties," says Kiana Domenech, WEB



President. "Being a student leader has been an eye-opening experience for me because I got to learn about leadership qualities that I did not know I had. It helps me to grow, blossom into an even better person than I thought I was and basically expand my knowledge."

"I have grown up so much, changed and become involved as a person," says Maiara Rodriguez Pereira Da Costa, who serves as WEB Weekend & Community Co-Chair. "I'm no longer shy, scared of taking up space, asking questions in and out of the classroom. I learned that I have valuable things to say."

This is music to the ears of Dr. Rachele Hall, Associate Director of Student Involvement, who also attended the conference. "The thing I love the most about dealing with student leaders is watching the light bulb show up in their eyes," she says. "Their eyes light up when they realize 'I'm capable of doing this when I did not think I was. I'm capable of answering questions, managing the logistics, getting projects done and ideas accomplished.' That is probably my favorite part of it, watching the students win and realize they won."



WCC Staff Administrator Wins Award As A Top Business Leader for 2021

By Liam Murphy



Photo credit: 914INC

Gabrielle Fox, Founder & Artistic Director, Theatre Revolution

Gabrielle Fox, a longtime WCC program administrator has been named by 914Inc. magazine as one of this year's top female business leaders in Westchester County. The award was presented at a luncheon on November 18th at the magazine's 11th Annual Women in Business Awards ceremony.

Fox is the founder and artistic director of Theatre Revolution, a production company that connects local theaters and artists to each other by assisting in promoting their productions on social media platforms. Theatre Revolution was founded by Fox in 2016 and was an outgrowth of her career as a playwright. Prior to the pandemic, Theatre Revolution began producing their own shows, and even founded Glass Ceiling Breakers, the first and only women's playwright festival in the Hudson Valley. Theatre Revolution's stated mission is "to promote artists and produce work that is inclusive, and reflects the diversity of our world."

At the college, Fox works as the liaison between the school and the Collegium for Lifelong Learning. The Collegium is a member organization supported by WCC that offers classes to retirees and other senior citizens. Courses are taught on a volunteer basis by WCC faculty as well as by other experts. Collegium is located in the Knollwood Center, a small building in the southern part of the campus opposite the Virginia Marx Children's Center.

Fox's mother had been an actress and singer. Nevertheless, she is modest about her start in theater, explaining that it was almost accidental. "I walked into a free workshop for playwrights and that was it. I was hooked." The founding of Theatre Revolution came later when she and a group of theater friends conceived the idea behind it: to do live performances at a different location each time in order to help that location promote themselves as well as the writer, actor, director, and whoever else was involved. "The idea

would be this community of artists that meet on social media or learn about each other on social media," she says.

Prior to the pandemic, Theatre Revolution began producing their own shows, and even founded the first women's playwright festival in the Hudson Valley. Fox says,

I feel really grateful and lucky to be representing the arts in our community, and I am hoping it draws more attention to what a vibrant community of artists we have in this area.

Gabrielle Fox on winning the award

"It was the first of its kind. That was the first step to promote diversity within this community that we developed, starting to promote underrepresented voices whether it is women artists or artists of color. My focus is to show diversity in this region. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is part of our mission now.

Of the award, Fox says, "I feel really grateful and lucky to be



representing the arts in our community, and I am hoping it draws more attention to what a vibrant community of artists we have in this area. I am also grateful to be able to promote lifelong learning in my role [at Collegium] at WCC. The wealth of arts and adult learning opportunities help Westchester County provide an enriching lifestyle for all of its residents."



Photo Credit: Theatre Revolution

Left to right: Jennifer Fox Webb, Jess Erick, and Gabrielle Fox work on Theater Revolution web site design.

News Briefs

Community Colleges Seeking New Ways to Support Single Moms

A group of four community colleges is working together in a study designed to raise the number of single mothers earning degrees and credentials by 30%, as reported in the Nov 29 issue of Inside Higher Ed (IHE). Collectively, the study has a goal of offering new supports and resources to at least 6,000 single mothers by the summer of 2024. Ten percent of all undergraduate college students are single mothers, according to the study. Of these, 89% are low-income and only 28% earn a degree or credential within six years. The study further says that "with every level of education a single mother completes, her likelihood of living in poverty declines 32 percent." The colleges in the study include Central New Mexico Community College, Delgado Community College in New Orleans, Ivy Tech Community College in Indianapolis, and Monroe Community College in Rochester, New York. Each of these colleges received \$50,000 in funding from Education Design Lab, described by the IHE report as "a nonprofit that designs and tests college program models to help underserved students." The aim of the study is to develop programs to raise the completion level of single mothers in community colleges. Childcare centers are a necessity. Many community colleges, including WCC, have a childcare center, but the colleges in the study are striving to move beyond this. Some of the ways include granting special scholarships for single moms, offering more scheduling flexibility through virtual classes, establishing support groups, as well as allocating funds for emergency grants specifically for single mothers.

Mt. Vernon Celebrates Thanksgiving

The Mount Vernon Activities Club (MVAC) had its Thanksgiving feast on Thursday November 18, 2021 at the Mount Vernon Extension Center. Gabriella Quartey, president of the club, said, "Thanksgiving with MVAC was a success. Quite a number of students showed up to eat with us and were very engaging. Our advisors were also in attendance. Everyone had fun and had a good time with us."

COVID Rates Worsening, Vaccination Rates Rising

As announced by WCC's Pandemic Response Team (PRT) on Dec 1, COVID infection percentages have been reversing their previous favorable numbers. For New York State, the rate of infection has increased from 2.9% to 4.0%; for Westchester County, from 1.7% to 2.6%; and for WCC, from 0% to 0.9%. On the bright side, double vaccinations are up to 81% in the state and 84% in the college. When just single-dose vaccinations are measured for WCC, the rate is 96%.

Free Turkey Giveaway

President Belinda S. Miles joined Department of Student Involvement leaders and students on Monday afternoon Nov 22 in giving away turkeys to WCC students. An unidentified film student who was one of those on the receiving end of the college giveaway, described the scene to The Viking News: "They set up a long table behind the Tech Center so cars could drive by and they could hand the turkeys to them. I told my classmates about it and many of them went to the table to get their turkeys. They were also giving away a gift card so you could buy the side dishes for a Thanksgiving dinner. It was good."

Philosophia Honors Society Announces

Winners of Creative Competition

By Dalesky Joseph and Marygrace Orfanella

The winners of the 3rd Creative Skills Contest sponsored by the Philosophia Honors Society were announced at a virtual awards ceremony held on Nov 12. The Philosophia Creative Contest is an event in which students, staff, and faculty are invited to share their creative side in their choice of medium: prose, poetry, mixed media, and art & photography.

For the 3rd Creative Skills Contest, submissions in different formats such as personal narratives, reflective essays, photographs, artwork, songs, videos, and more were invited on the topic of "My Personal Paradise." The competition was open to the entire Westchester Community College community. Although it was sponsored by the Philosophia Honor Society, the submissions were not only received from Honor students but also from regular students and faculty. All submissions were welcomed, and all winners got the chance to showcase their skills to the general public and were rewarded for their efforts with a gift card.

All of the recitations and submissions were well received, judging from the spoken comments and the remarks submitted in the Zoom Chats. The attendees were allowed to see a little piece of the artists' personal lives as they shared their visions of personal paradise. Attendees congratulated the contestants for their efforts.

Dr. Mira Sakrajda, the Director of the Honors Programs and Honors College, said "What really struck me was when we were reviewing the submissions. Each of us found some sort of connection to the pieces. It's a different level of connecting to other people... on a more emotional level." Philosophia President Zeff Carriero said that he "personally enjoyed looking at all the submissions and hearing from the students [about] their inspirations for the submissions because they did come in such varying formats."



Surroundings by Elizabeth Grey

Winner, Art & Photography Category, Philosophia 3rd Creative Skills Contest

WINNERS

of the Philosophia 3rd Creative Skills Contest

Winners

Prose: Lena Ryzy

Poetry: Niomi Shah

Mixed Media: Melanie Fisher

Art & Photography: Elizabeth Grey

Runners Up

Prose: Anthony Scordino

Poetry: Mailyne Maduro

Mixed Media: Sofia LoMedico

Art & Photography: Anna Szegedi

Honorable Mentions

Quanisha Hemmings

Rayna Goddard

Toni Grady

Chih Yi Lee

Nise

By Niomi Shah

A paradise
My paradise
It's a place,
It's a feeling in the space
It's a song, it's a painting
It's creation of an artist
Which could be the best moments of my life.

It's in the snow, in the clouds,
in the space
With all the interstellar objects
With the people I love and care
With all that matters and with all that needs

A successful and a happening life
With a family that is proud
Friends who understand
And Love who is everything perfect for Ni

Everyone perfect with their own imperfections
Accepting each other with their whole heart and soul

This would be my paradise
Which has nothing too high
My paradise with problems and strength
With anger and feuds but
Always ending up together

Like a climax of a movie I
ts Ni'z paradise and it would be the perfect for me.
Coz its mine.

Paradise

Every moment is special in my paradise
And that can never be forgotten
All those snow with angels
And the stars with the dangers
All the known with the unknown
All the magic and the dreams
All the mysteries and ice creams
Coz I like it in my paradise.

It's an imagination
Unique creation
By my mind, by my heart
By my instincts and the scars
I would create my Paradise
And it's nice
welcoming all those who
hides in the blanket of the dark nights.
That's how my Nise would Shine
would shine
would shine
in the darkest of the nights. --- Ni

FEATURES

Musicology



Satisfies Students' Passion to Perform

Photo Credits: Musicology

By Melissa Brown

Many WCC students may be surprised to learn that the College not only has a music department with credit classes in piano, percussion, voice, ear training, introduction to audio, live sound engineering, and guitar, but also has a music group that any student can join. Musicology is an SGA-sponsored group that provides opportunities for students who love to sing or play an instrument. In Musicology, students choose the music and are directed by a member of the WCC music faculty.

Under the direction of Prof. Rosemarie Serrano of WCC's music department, Musicology currently has a Show Choir that meets on Tuesdays from 2-3:30pm in HAAB 104. The choir is looking for new performers, both singers and instrumentalists. The group is open to students, faculty, and staff. This is separate from the WCC Instrumental and Vocal Ensemble, a music class that also welcomes new members. In Spring 2022, Musicology will also re-introduce a Jazz Ensemble that will meet on Wednesdays at noon. All WCC students with a GPA of 2.0 or higher are eligible to join Musicology.

This semester, the Musicology Show Choir members include WCC students Melissa Brown, Kayla Hidalgo, Tayler Kennedy, Zulema Rodriguez and Sophie Vaughn-Johnson, and faculty member Ellen Kreger.

When asked about her experience with Musicology, student Sophie Vaughn-Johnson said, "This group has been so much fun to work with and I am so grateful to have gotten the opportunity to be a part of it. After COVID shutting down my last year and a half of high school and there not being many musical opportunities, it's really nice to be able to go into college and have a group to sing with. Everyone is so great, and I have had such an amazing time so far working with every member. We all work together so nicely, and our pieces have been coming together so well. I am very excited to be able to perform it for an audience and show off all the amazing work everyone in the group has done."



The Show Choir will be presenting a concert on Tuesday, December 16 at 2pm in HAAB 104. The concert will also include participants from the WCC Instrumental and Vocal Ensemble music class. Anyone who is allowed to be on campus is invited to attend the performance. For more information, contact Prof. Rosemarie Serrano at Rosemarie.Serrano@sunywcc.edu

OPINION

Review

DRAG Returns to WCC

By: Marygrace Orfanella

For the 9th year in a row WCC has hosted its GLOW-sponsored drag show. Featuring four boisterous drag performers doing their acts online, the show was a fun-filled success.

The show was emceed by none other than Tina Burner, Miss National Comedy Queen 2019 and competitor from season 13 of the Emmy Award winning show, RuPaul's Drag Race. The performers were ShowPonii, the "Premier Drag King of the Hudson Valley," Andramada the "Latina Bearded Mistress", and Venus, whose name is a title within itself. The audience, though small, was not lacking in enthusiasm, with hooting and hollering after each number.

After the performance the performers cheerfully answered questions from the audience. One of the first questions to the performers was "How did you get into drag"? While all of the performers had interesting and, in the case of Tina Burner, humorous answers, perhaps the most heartfelt one came from ShowPonii, who explained that he started going to drag shows with fellow performer Venus, and while he enjoyed the shows, he noticed there was an alarming lack of inclusivity in one component: drag kings. So ShowPonii decided to take up the mantle himself.

Andramada gave another heartfelt answer to which many can relate. Andramada was not sure that they were suited for drag based on their physical appearance. Throughout their life they were told that they look like a man due to their broad shoulders and facial hair. However, with their love of makeup and desire to express their femininity (in their words, "to let that monster out"), they pushed their way into the drag performing lifestyle, embracing their facial hair in their look and their Latinx heritage in their music choices.

Another question posed to the performers was "How do you pick your songs"? Tina Burner prefers to use anything that speaks to her, while Venus leans towards the "divas" of music for their ballads. They also love to perform anything "stupid and fun." Let the pictures of these artists speak for themselves!



Tina Burner



ShowPonii



Andramada



Venus

FEATURES

Viking Visionary

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To celebrate National Day on Writing, the Academic Support Center Writing Tutorial collected one-word responses to the question, "What does WCC mean to you?" The ASC used your answers to create this word cloud, which commemorates the college's 75th anniversary.

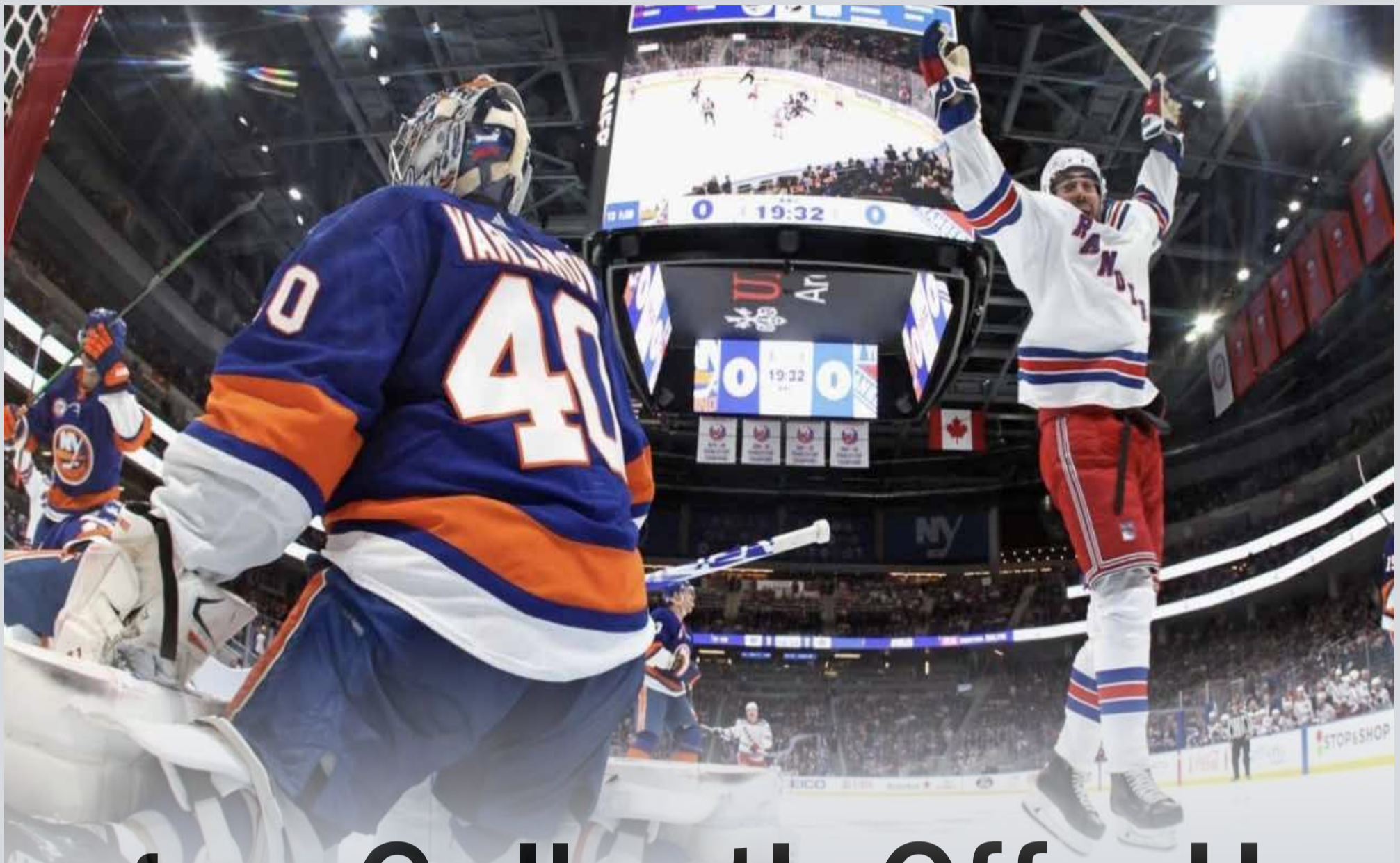
What does WCC mean to you?



National Day on Writing 2021

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and submissions, contact
lmurp56138@my.sunywcc.edu

Weekly meetings are open to all
Students on Mondays at 4pm.
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Rangers Gallantly Offer Hope to New York Fans

Photo credit: NHL.com

By: Liam Murphy

While most New York teams disappoint, the New York Rangers have given hope to sports fans of the city. The team has been victorious in six of their last seven games. At 13-4-3, the Rangers have 29 points, not that far off from the Capitals, who currently (Nov 28) lead the Metro Division with 33 points.

This places the Rangers above the beloved New York Islanders who for so many years have been New York's dominant hockey team. In their most recent battle, the Rangers stomped on their neighbors in Long Island, with a score of 4-1. The Islanders had

their debut game in their new venue, the UBS Arena, and were deprived of their first win in their new home.

As might be expected, the Rangers are moving up in the Power Rankings of ESPN and others. In early Stanley Cup talk, they are at least part of the conversation. They are also drawing more attention from sports writers. An incident from the Rangers-Bruins game, in which the Bruins Brad Marchand made derogatory comments to Rangers left wing Artemi Panarin, causing him to throw his glove at him and resulting in a fine for Panarin, received

wide coverage in the press. The Rangers took the game in a 5-2 victory, aided by a strong performance by goaltender Igor Shesterkin, who recently signed a 4-year contract with the Rangers. Hopes for a reversal of bad fortune for the Rangers at the hands of new coach Gerard Gallant seem to be well founded at this point. As reported by ForeverBlueshirts.com after the win over the Bruins, Gallant said, "I don't set expectations, but I am real happy with where we are at."

Knicks Score a Much Needed Win Against the Hawks

By Thomas Kavanagh

The Knicks are at a crucial point in the season, with a record of 11-9. On Nov 27 they bounced back as they beat the Atlanta Hawks. It was a much needed win for the team following a tough 21 point loss to the Phoenix Suns the day before. This win also gave the

Knicks some momentum since the Hawks were the team to knock them out of the playoffs last season.

The Knicks are still struggling to find their identity. They do not have a big man who can rebound and spread the floor.

Julius Randle is leading the team in rebounding with an average of just over ten rebounds per game, but that is not enough to finish the season strong. Additionally, the Knicks are having problems at the point guard position. Kemba Walker and Alec Burks are the two guys competing for the starting spot. It doesn't seem like anybody,

including Tom Thibodeau, the head coach, knows who the best guy for the job is. Alec Burks is far from a household name, but he is the man a coach can count on to handle the ball and hit a clutch three when the team needs it most. Kemba Walker is the hometown kid who has been making noise in Madison Square Garden since as early as his junior year of high school. Not to mention he has over a dozen impressive accolades. Burks had a huge impact in the Hawks game as he scored 23 points, had 7 rebounds, and three assists. Not too shabby for a player's first start of the season. Only time will tell if he will be able to continue to put up those impressive numbers or if that game was a fluke.

Kemba Walker did not play in the game.

Julius Randle stepped up although the stat sheet didn't completely show it. He had 11 rebounds, 4 assists, and 8 points. If the Knicks can stay healthy, gel together, and do the little things they will be successful. It's extremely unlikely they will go deep in the playoffs. However, they should be in a position to make the playoffs come April.

In a city that features the Empire State Building, the Met, Central Park, and so much more, many New Yorkers will still tell you that MSG is the best place to be on any given night when the Knicks are winning.





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