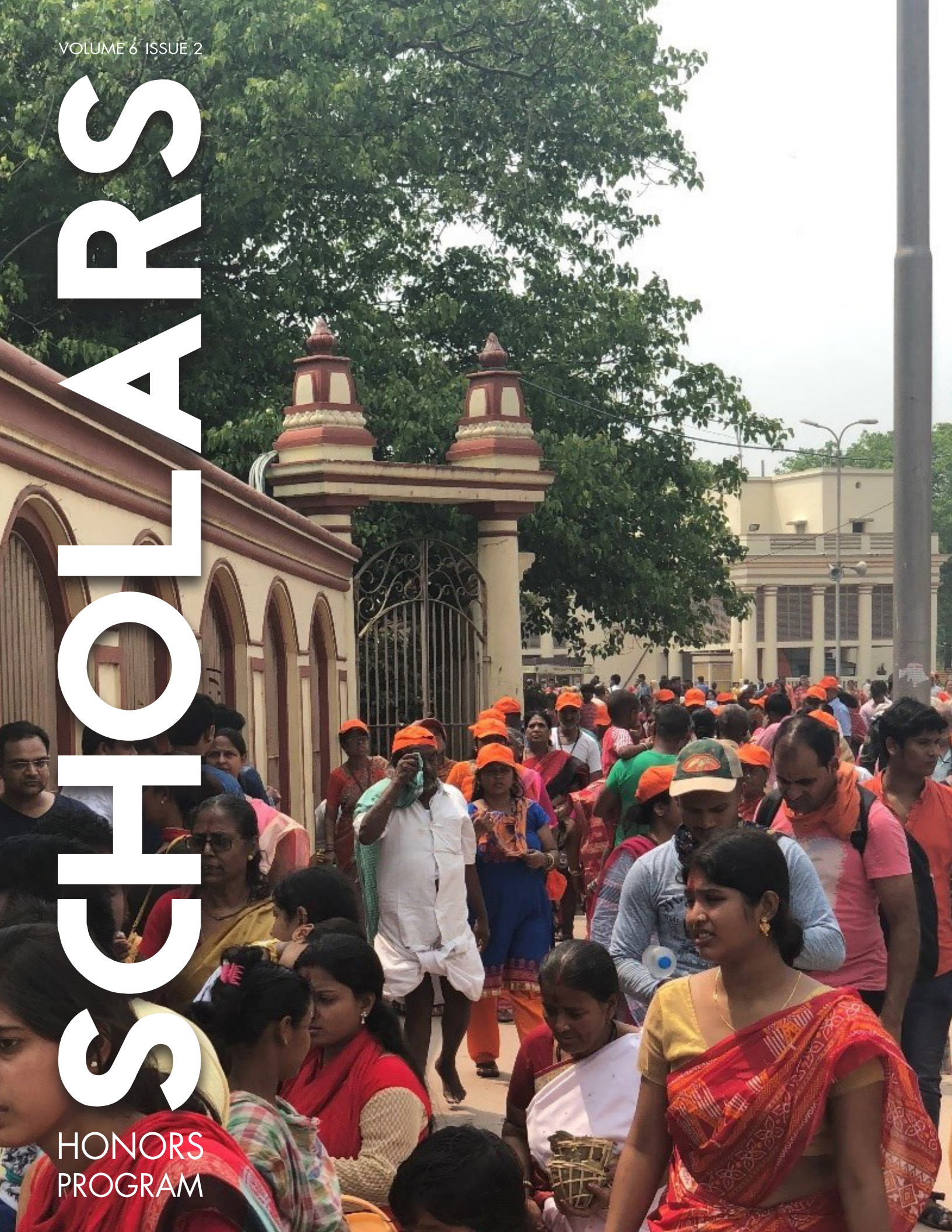


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STORIES

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A Trip Abroad to Discover the Vibrancy of India

By Nadia Rodriguez

My name is Nadia Rodriguez, I graduated in the fall of 2018 from City Tech with a major in Applied Mathematics. Currently, I work in a health economics and outcomes research consulting firm as a data analyst. My passion for gathering information and insights on data to make important business decisions has led me to the field of data science. During my last semester at City Tech, I was given the amazing opportunity and honor to visit the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur (IIT KGP), an institute of national importance, to conduct research.

IIT KGP is located in the city of Kharagpur, the Paschim Midnapur district of West Bengal. Founded in 1950, IIT KGP was the first Higher Technical Institute of the country. It houses over 9000 students and offers both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The institute contains 19 academic departments with state-of-the-art research centers and programs. The Department of Chemical Engineering is where I spent 6 days conducting my research project.

On March 30th, 2018, I boarded a United Airlines flight at Newark International Airport to New Delhi, India. After 21 hours of travel, I arrived at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Airport and was greeted by Santoshi Mohanta, a research scholar at IIT KGP, and Sangeeta Sankhla, a Master of Technology student. They both gave me a warm welcome to India and accompanied

me to the IIT KGP campus by car. Although I was very tired, I could not help but look through the car window the entire ride. I was amazed by what I saw; precisely as I have read many times before, the sarees worn by Indian women filled the scenery with color and brightness! Additionally, traffic was so chaotic that I felt anxious several times! After 2 hours of watching the streets of India, we arrived at the campus. I was accommodated at the Guesthouse and was able to rest for the day.

The next morning, I was taken to the Department of Chemical Engineering, where I finally met with Dr. Swati Neogi and her students. I was presented with an orientation and a tentative plan for the rest of the week. Santoshi and Sangeeta then guided me to the Composite Applications Laboratory, where I would be working on the assigned research project. Here, I had the chance to speak with the students and laboratory staff of IIT KGP.

After the morning heat had settled, Dr. Neogi's students offered to show me around the chemistry department and invited me for some afternoon tea and delicious samosas. This opportunity allowed me to get to know the students and hear about their day to day life at the institute. For some here, it was their first time meeting someone from the United States. Filled with curiosity from both sides, we all connected with pleasant conversations. I learned that most of these students were from out of state and

lived far from their families; I could not help but wonder if this is what helped them establish strong friendships with each other.

Following our afternoon tea and samosas, I visited the Hijli Detention Camp. Located in the IIT KGP campus, the Hijli Detention Camp was constructed almost a century ago. It was originally used to house political prisoners and freedom fighters during the British rule in India. As I looked around the detention camp, I could not help but notice the beautifully carved figures that hung on the walls and statues throughout the building. These carved figures depict stories of the freedom fighters' efforts toward a free and democratic India. The Hijil Detention Camp also contains the Nehru Museum of Science and Technology, a museum founded in 1990 that displays exhibitions of scientific and technological models in all the fields of science, hands-on experiments, and photographs that illustrate the history of IIT KGP and the evolution of technical education in India.

Throughout the rest of the week, I spent my days at the chemistry department conducting the assigned research project and collecting data to bring back for analysis at City Tech. During the afternoons, I would use Santoshi's bicycle to ride across the campus with the students. This was very exciting because I got to see the immensity of the institute and its beautiful vegetation. In addition, on some days Sangeeta would take me to a pastry shop, where I would try many Indian delicacies.

On Friday, my last day at IIT KGP, Dr. Neogi organized a small reunion with her students and staff to bid me farewell. It was a very beautiful moment, as students gifted me with a carved wooden frame that contained pictures of us having fun throughout the week. This was a wonderful gesture that made my stay in India even more special. With two days remaining before I left India, I prepared to leave for Kolkata the following day.

On the following morning, I joined five students to tour Kolkata for the day. Our first stop was the Belur Math, an over 40-acre site filled with vegetation and gardens, breathtaking temples, shrines, and museums. It is located on the banks of the Hooghly River, which enhances the beauty of the area and provides a cool breeze on hot days. The Belur Math is the headquarter of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, a non-political movement focusing on spirituality and social services. Like most temples, taking pictures and recording videos is prohibited. Many come for daily prayers, worship, and meditation, so it is a quiet and peaceful place. Here, regardless of one's



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religion and beliefs, one will find a sense of peace and serenity.

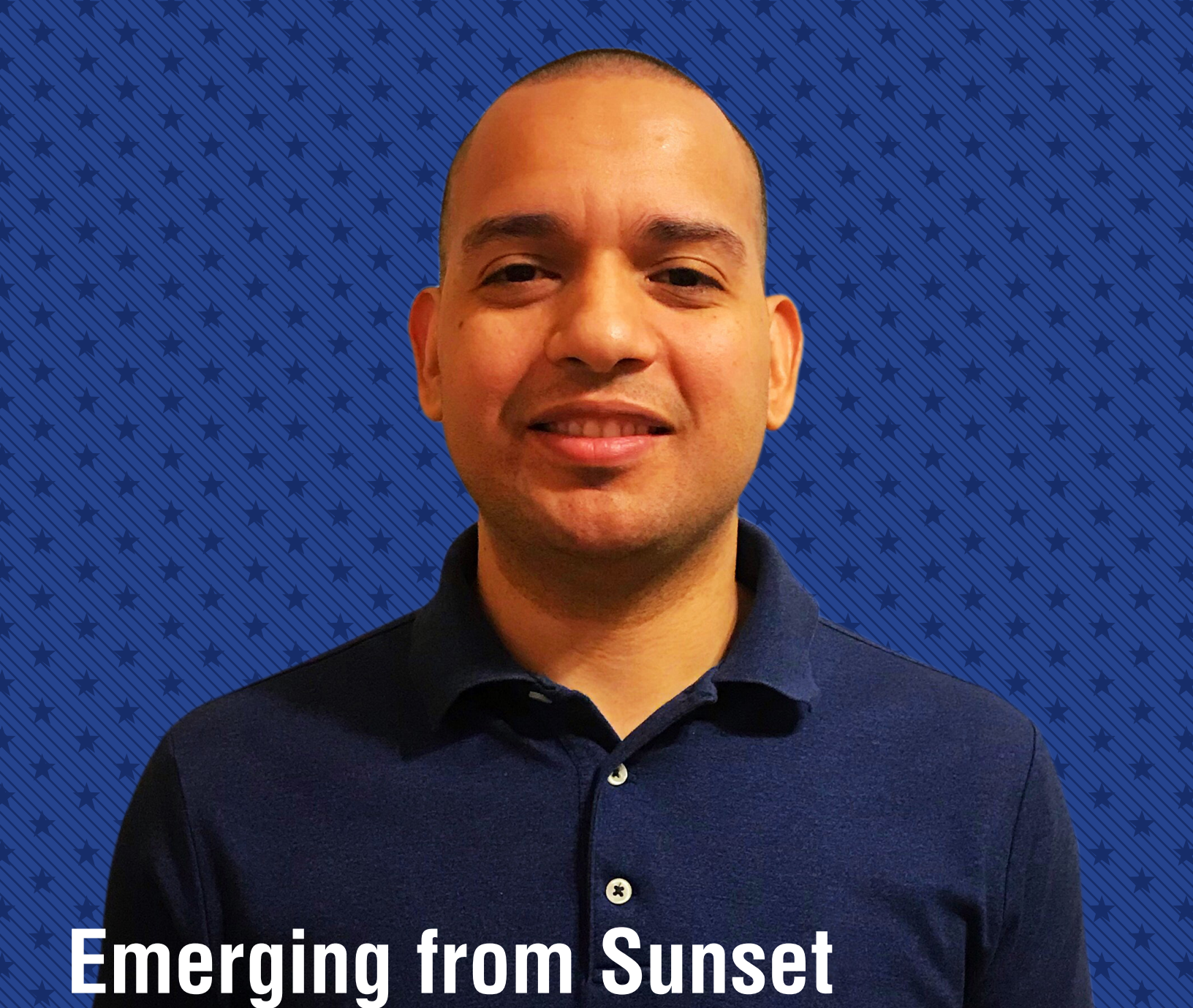
At the Belur Math, we visited the Ramakrishna Museum, a museum dedicated to the spiritual guru Sri Ramakrishna. It contains murals carved in marble that depict India's cultural history from the Vedic period to the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. Through the exhibits, one can relive and experience the great work done by the many Indians who inspired the Ramakrishna Movement, a movement that began in the 19th century that focused on spirituality and humanitarianism. As I explored the museum, I was able to immerse myself in the great works by the founders of the Ramakrishna Movement and understand the influence it had on India and many other parts of the world.

After the Belur Math, we took a short 15-minute boat ride across the Hooghly River to May Dibas Pally. There, we visited the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, a beautiful site with 12 identical Shiva temples nearby. It is a very restricted place, so no cameras or backpacks are allowed inside the premises. However, this rule is exactly what allows one to appreciate the architectural beauty and sereneness of the area. The temples are "Aat Chala" designed, typical Bengal architecture constructed with white and black stones each housing Shiva lingam crafted in black stone. Inside the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, there were hundreds of people praying, meditating, and occasionally bringing offerings like flowers and traditional Indian sweets.

After hours of sightseeing and visiting the temples, we set out for our last stop, the New Market Area. Here, we ate lunch and had the opportunity to do some shopping. I was told that this market is one of the most visited in Kolkata and that one can find everything they want and need here! Once we concluded our shopping, it was time for me to go to my hotel and say farewell to the students who accompanied me on this amazing trip.

On the next and final day in India, Victor Avisek Chatterjee, a research scholar at IIT KGP, and his wife picked me up at the hotel to take me on my last sightseeing journey. We visited the Victoria Memorial Hall, a white marble building dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria. This museum showcases Western paintings and manuscripts, Indian paintings, royal artifacts, and exhibitions of Indian art and history. Unfortunately, we did not stay long because time was short, as I had to travel back to the United States that afternoon. After a well-deserved and delicious lunch, it was time to say good-bye to India, for now. There is no doubt that India is a unique country rich in culture, bursting in energy and tradition, and infused with vivid colors!





Emerging from Sunset

By Estarlin Jimenez

My story in the United States begins at the age of 12 when I emigrated from the Dominican Republic in 1993. I grew up in a one-bedroom apartment in Sunset Park, Brooklyn with my two siblings and mother, a single parent who worked long hours to provide us with the necessities. Unfortunately, we were exposed to violence in Sunset Park. My life changed drastically after my two close friends were murdered. Following these traumatic events, I immediately vowed to improve myself academically and professionally to find a way out of this urban underclass environment.

With this new mindset, my first step was to search for a job. I worked in various jobs as a teenager, but the most significant position I held was at Concord Limousines, where I was surrounded by people who influenced and mentored me to

become the better person I wanted to be. I learned from my boss, who was also an immigrant, that the American dream is possible if you direct your life toward it. I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to work at Concord Limousines because it was a very valuable and motivating experience.

Inspired by my boss's view of the American dream, I looked for a way I could better serve my city and country. As a result, I decided to become a paramedic for the Marines because I wanted to help others. I took the required Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test, but I struggled and failed it twice. "Who was I kidding," I thought. "I barely made it through high school, so how could I pass this?" However, I stayed positive and applied for a position as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for the Fire Department of the City



I have worked in the FDNY as an EMT for 11 years. I prioritized perfecting the skills I was taught in the academy and by my mentors. I knew that people's lives depended on my performance, so I always kept a strong work ethic and integrity. My dedication did not go unnoticed as I:

- was offered a mentorship unit by my commanding officer;
- received awards including Unit of the Month citywide, a gratitude certificate from the Department of Environmental Protection for a successful rescue of one of their employees, and a total of seven prehospital saves; and
- traveled to England and represented the FDNY in the Braves Boxing Club, an organization that boxes for charities around the world. Although I had never boxed before, I fought for the Building Homes for Heroes charity, and I won the first-place medal. Being able to fight for our veterans who came back from deployment with horrible injuries has been my biggest honor.

of New York (FDNY). I studied harder than before and was accepted into the FDNY Academy for training in 2007.

During my training at the Academy, I encountered several challenges that tested my ability to perform under pressure. These challenges included the "scenarios" and the Emergency Vehicle Operator Courses (EVOC). The "scenarios" is a skills test, while the EVOC is an ambulance driving test. I had the most difficulty with the EVOC because I had never driven a vehicle the size of an ambulance before. I was determined to pass, so I studied with a group of my classmates; we built a replica of the driving course and drove it back and forth with a rented U-Haul truck. Additionally, we created scenes to practice possible scenarios. This is a story that we now laugh about whenever we see each other. In the end, we all passed the scenarios and EVOC without difficulty, and I graduated from the FDNY Academy as an EMT in May of 2007. I was about to begin my service to my home and country, and I was one step closer to the American dream.

Shortly after graduating from the Academy, I was assigned to a hazardous material tactical unit with two highly experienced mentors. In this unit, I received a call for a pediatric patient who drowned. When we arrived at the location, the baby was blue and not breathing; however, with the efforts of my partner's driving and the uninterrupted CPR performed by a firefighter and myself, we were able to establish a heart rate by the time we arrived at the hospital. A few months after this call, I received

a notification letter about the baby, my first prehospital save. The baby survived the incident! The baby was doing great and had been discharged from the hospital. It was a wonderful feeling to know I made a difference in a family's life. After this successful call, I knew that helping others is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

After I assisted my wife, a vascular nurse, to arrange a procedure, my interest shifted toward helping others through nursing. She graduated from City Tech in 2012 and spoke highly of the college. My wife suggested I apply, but I did not believe I would be accepted because when I was a teenager my mother did not encourage us to go to college. I also felt that I was too old for college (at 37 years old) and could not possibly attain passing grades. However, my desire to obtain the advanced medical skills necessary to help others motivated me to enroll. Once I entered the classroom, my fear and perception of college diminished, and I realized I was able to exceed my academic expectations for myself.

Currently, I am doing well in college and have been accepted to City Tech's nursing program for the fall of 2019. Now that I have achieved my vision of the American dream, my goals are to graduate and to eventually receive my nursing license to specialize in vascular nursing. However, I recently became a father, so my most important goal is to be an example for my daughter; I would like to show her that if you aspire to it, anything is possible with hard work and dedication.

万事开头难

The beginning of anything is difficult and will always get better

New Beginnings

Discovering Purpose in Caring for Others

By Ting Xu

My name is Ting Xu. I was born on a small island in China called Hainan. In my hometown, it was difficult to maintain a stable life because freedom and job opportunities were limited. As a result, my family and I came to America in 2010 in the hope of bettering our lives. Education was always their number one priority, so I started middle school a few days after we arrived. Being a new immigrant from China, students noticed how different I was compared to them. I had to constantly deal with bullies who made fun of the way I dressed and the way I spoke. During such difficult times, however, I would always remember my mother's encouraging words to stay on track: “万事开头难,” which means the beginning of anything is difficult and will always get better.

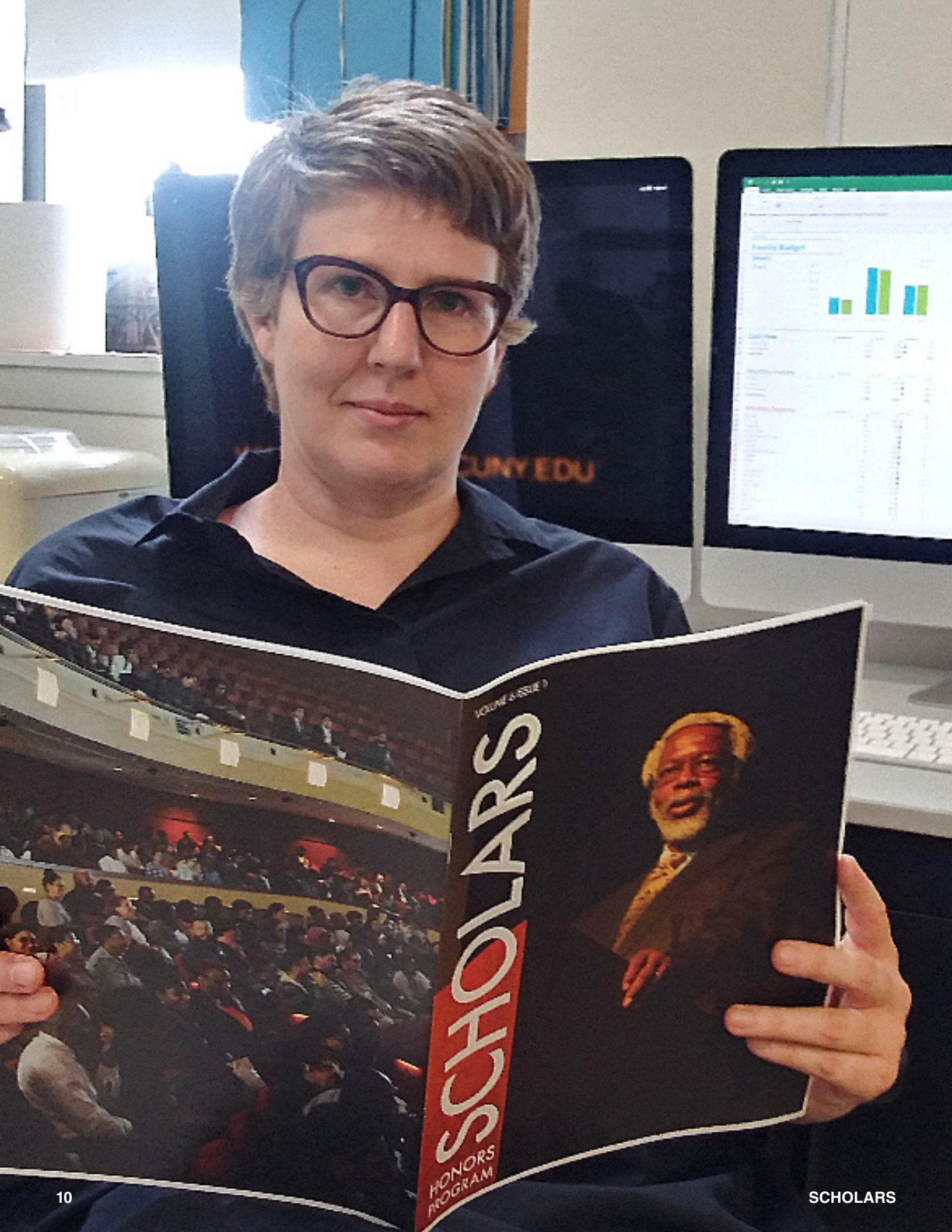
I knew adapting to a new environment, language, and culture would be challenging, but I was determined to learn from scratch. To improve my English and academics, I surrounded myself with friends who spoke English and attended summer school while everyone else was out having fun. In addition, my mother sent me to Saturday and Sunday school every week. Although this was a difficult routine to follow, I remained dedicated and made great progress.

One of my main life goals is to become a nurse. I discovered my passion for wanting to help others in their time of need after witnessing numerous family members suffer from strokes. My father's stroke, in particular, affected me greatly. Before, he was a kindhearted man with a great sense of humor; he always laughed and joked around with others. However, after the stroke, the entire right side of his body became paralyzed and his personality

changed completely. My father no longer joked around, nor did he laugh. His temper became short and every little thing frustrated him. He was not the father I once knew. My family and I took turns taking care of him during his recovery in the hospital. Although it was a challenge for me to take care of him, I visited him almost every day after school and gave him my full attention and support. After caring for my father, I looked after my newborn nephew. I was nervous because I never babysat before. Nonetheless, I made the most out of this experience and ended up having a great time with my nephew. Being exposed to the environment of taking care of both young and old family members slowly made me realize that this is what I loved and wanted to do in the future.

With my love for taking care of people in mind, I decided to pursue a degree in nursing at City Tech in 2017. The first semester of college was extremely stressful because I was in an unfamiliar setting and was forced to be independent. Failure was constantly on my mind, so my plan of becoming a nurse seemed out of reach. However, I remembered my mother's words once again and did not let my doubts hinder my goals. Like all teenagers, I was easily distracted, but it was through self-discipline that I was able to focus and get my work done. In the end, I did well in my first year of college thanks to the help I received at City Tech. For example, I visited professors during office hours and attended tutoring.

Currently, I am in my sophomore year. My goal is to pass the Test of Essential Academic Skills to further my career in nursing. Looking back at my journey, I finally understand what my mother's words meant. No matter what, it is important to remember that the beginning of anything is difficult and will always get better.



Moving from the Periphery

Studying Applied Mathematics as a Woman

By Stephanie Lovett

Although the standard academic designation for me would be non-traditional student, that title somehow misses the mark. I do not merely see myself as non-traditional. As a woman in her 40s who has returned to school full-time to pursue an undergraduate degree in a STEM discipline with the intent of pursuing a career transition to Data Science, the term “outlier” better defines me.

This sense of being an outsider is not wholly unfamiliar. As a child, I was precocious. I was an eternally curious and persistent asker of questions; my favorite question was why, which was typically accompanied by how, often looped in rapid succession. Even at a young age, I was preoccupied with endless analysis of the world around me. I strongly believed that beneath every phenomenon there was a logic and an order and that could be deciphered. Owing to this temperament, I skipped a grade in elementary school. It would have been two grades, would that not have jeopardized my nascent social skills. The concern was about my fitting in, but in the 1980s, being a girl with a certain inquisitive boldness, a talent for math and reasoning, and an unrelenting inclination to explain sealed my fate. I simply did not fit in, and I was acutely aware of being an outlier among a class of 24 at my small, rural school.

As a teen, I leaned into my gifts and sought out others so inclined. I took part in the few extracurricular opportunities in math available; I was a member of the math club and competed in math bowls from grades 10 through 12. I was the sole nominee from my school selected among statewide rising seniors to attend the Georgia Governor's Honors Program in summer of 1992. There I was, one of a handful of girls specializing in mathematics, but this handful was more bountiful than I had previously known. When applying to undergraduate programs that fall, I wrote of my renewed hope for finding a community of people like myself in college and beyond.

As a freshman and sophomore at Williams College, a liberal arts college of 2000 students in Massachusetts, I had full intentions of majoring in mathematics. The department was one of the smaller ones, and at the time, its focus was pure mathematics. As I moved through the course sequence for the major, though, I observed incrementally fewer women. Multivariable Calculus: 15%. Linear Algebra: 10%. A similar dearth of women existed among the department's faculty, and women were not teaching the lower-level courses with prospective majors. Simply put, I did not see others like me enrolled in my classes, nor leading them. Female math majors, at any given moment, comprised approximately one-half of one percent of the entire student body. I could not envision this gender imbalance improving, and I foresaw my professional future in the field as a lone woman in a sea of men. If I were to choose this path, I would perennially be an outlier. I chose

another path, however. I sidestepped to the most analytical and quantitative of the social sciences, economics, which was one of the largest majors with greater gender parity.

The early- to mid-1990s, although not that long ago, was a different era. My college years were nearly untouched by the internet. When I graduated in 1998, it was still a curiosity, one inaccessible to many. In the 20 intervening years, the tech juggernaut has disrupted and reshaped nearly every aspect of our being in the world. In a modern existence so destabilized, so upended, it was inevitable that the professional and academic arenas would quake, shatter, and reconfigure. Vocational ecosystems, career paths, technical skill sets, and academic programs of study that were nonexistent upon my graduation have since sprouted and flourished. Data Science is one such field.

In recent years, I have reflected on what I have enjoyed most in my previous professional endeavors. The recurring theme was data analysis, particularly those occasions when I developed and implemented exploratory projects. Such work was never a core focus of my responsibilities, but rather a series of side projects that I lovingly cultivated. It was in these moments that I recognized my younger self—the precocious girl questioning and scrutinizing—and I now see the possibility of her finding her place at last. There exists a thriving profession, moreover a vibrant community, of questioners and scrutinizers. In it, there are women—not many, but soon more. I look forward to becoming one of them.

In 2016, I took my first step along this new path. I was selected to participate in Mayor de Blasio's NYC Tech Talent Pipeline initiative as a Fellow in Data Analytics. I completed a part-time boot camp at General Assembly, where for three months I refined my skills in Excel to clean large data sets, coded for the first time in my life to manipulate databases with SQL, and built data visualizations and dashboards using Tableau. At the end of each module, I drafted and delivered a presentation of my findings. I relished the chance to dive into something new, yet something that felt like coming home.

Now, I am taking another step at City Tech; I am an applied mathematics major, through which I am developing advanced math and programming skills and learning the science of Data Science. I am also pursuing opportunities to grow as a researcher and recently engaged in a Statistics project through the Honors and Emerging Scholars Programs. Perhaps most importantly, I have joined a community of women in STEM, a concept that had not yet cohered during my first undergraduate years. At last, we have the opportunity to see and be seen by women like ourselves—as students, as faculty, as mentors, and as change-makers. We, the former outliers, are moving from the periphery.



Finding Voice

The Art of Video Game Design

By Faiza Hussain

I am Faiza Hussain, a Pakistani-American woman with a love for creative writing and design. This includes illustration, concept art, and storyboarding for video games. I discovered that I had a passion for creative writing in elementary school when I was bullied because of my religion. To cope with the abuse, I wrote stories that took place outside of our reality. I usually created horror, superhero, and fantasy stories. I specifically loved creating fantasy stories, so I ended up writing my first full fantasy novel with a small laptop my dad gave me. I am now creating another fantasy novel series that I hope one day becomes a best-seller. With my writing, I aim to bring more awareness to the culture I am from to stop others from stereotyping it. I also want to bring more south Asian characters to the fantasy genre because I believe there are not enough south Asian characters in those types of stories.

I first delved into the writing field during my second semester at LaGuardia Community College. There, I gained more of a desire to write thanks to my creative fictional writing workshop course. This was a very difficult course because I had to write stories with several limitations, such as a word count and an

object being the main point of the story. It was a rewarding experience though because it taught me how to condense stories and how to constantly keep up with my writing. What stood out to me the most, however, was the professor of the course, Sonia Alejandra Rodriguez. She not only gave me advice on the publication and writing process, but also encouraged me to write what I feel strongly about and to be proud of my writing. With her help, I realized that I could write my novel by imagining it as a video game.

After taking the creative fictional writing workshop course, I decided to work as an intern for LaGuardia's literary magazine called the Lit. The Lit highlights the creative works of students including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and photography. My first task was to promote the magazine to other students to encourage them to join our yearly best creative works contest. I was successful as we received about 200 submissions, more than previous years. The other interns and I then had to pick out the best submissions for different genres. I fought to review the fiction section because I felt the Lit lacked it the most; I believed that there should be an equal amount of each genre

in the magazine. Unfortunately, we were under a deadline, so most of the other interns did not want to review all 200 works, but I managed to persuade them to look over every single one. During this time, I read many great stories that inspired me, learned the publication process, and figured out how to manage my time effectively.

After graduating from LaGuardia with an associate's degree in creative writing, I went to City Tech to pursue a bachelor's of fine arts degree in communication design because I wanted to create art for video games. I discovered City Tech through the transfer fair, where I spoke to the representatives about what programs I could join to be a video game art designer. I first took one year of programming classes, but since the beginning of this year, I have been taking courses such as storyboarding, illustration, and character design.

Using the writing and design skills I have learned at City Tech and LaGuardia, I am now working at a video game startup called Transcendent Games, a company that my college classmate Zachary Colon established. When I started at Transcendent Games, my coworkers and I all pitched out ideas on what games we wanted to see. I then designed the logo for the company along with the title designs for their games. I have also used what I learned from my type and media course to decide what fonts to use for our website and then wrote the text for the website.

Along with working at Transcendent Games, I am also writing a novel series called Numan. Numan is a fantasy story that

uses elements from other genres. It follows the timeline of two worlds, so the story is split into several parts. It focuses on the lives of different characters and shows how the struggles of war affect them while they try to uncover the history that has been erased by the divine gods they worshipped. I wanted to be as diverse as possible with Numan, so I based all the main characters on different races. I also wanted to make sure the characters were realistic and that the story had a strong theme of family. My story is not a tale of good or evil, but tones of gray; it highlights an antagonist that believes that what they are doing is right. Once I finish writing Numan, I hope I can inspire others with my work and one day create a video game out of it.

My dream, in the end, is something that I knew I wanted to do for as long as I can remember. I want to be a published author and video game designer. I worked so hard on my novels and always looked to the future. While I know that most people often want to focus on just one career, I cannot let the dream of being both go away. I believe you should not limit yourself because everyone needs to experience what they love to do. In addition, just as those mediums helped me when I was bullied at elementary school, I want to create something that can help others. To achieve my dream, I plan to write every day and create more stories because it is a big part of who I am. I will learn as much about video game design as I can during my own time as well. After I graduate from City Tech, I plan to pursue a master's degree in game design. With the knowledge I will gain, I hope to be a great game designer that will create the art and story of video games.

From Playing Games to Designing Them

By Giancarlo Macias

A few years ago, I would have never imagined that I would be invited to an honors program because I was not the most diligent of students. Although my high school teachers agreed that I was a “bright” student, I always did the minimal amount of work required to pass. Instead of working diligently on my academics and thinking about what subject to major in, I played video games, skateboarded, went to buffets, and explored the city. Once I was accepted to Kingsborough Community College (KBCC), I thought I could continue to pass my classes with the same work ethic, but I quickly realized that this would not be the case. My poor habits earned me equally poor grades, and I knew something had to change.

My low grades motivated me to dedicate 100% of my time and effort to my studies. I completed all my assignments, did all the readings before class, and for the first time, attended tutoring sessions. After adapting to this new studious lifestyle, I felt myself becoming more immersed in my classes; I began to look forward to having fun in the classroom. It was during this time I discovered my passion for game design, my current major. Looking back, I am ashamed of my former self and wonder why I ever slacked off in the first place. Nonetheless, with this

new mindset, I graduated from KBCC with honors and transferred to City Tech.

Now, as I attend City Tech, I continue to do well in my academics. I see myself becoming enriched with real skills that I can put on my resume. I do not believe many other schools/majors offer classes as effective in immediately boosting a student's resume. Being able to build a portfolio and resume while in school has definitely helped me to begin applying for jobs that are in my game design major. So far, I have been successful in securing a job for myself through the CUNY Service Corps, where I will begin interning for a position that will exercise my newly learned skills.

Although I know obtaining straight “A”s while taking 15+ credits at once and keeping up with all the assignments is no easy task, I will not stop trying. I intend to challenge myself by graduating from City Tech with a 4.0 GPA. I also plan to be more involved in college by joining clubs. I remember back at high school I had fun being a part of the robotics club and competing in numerous robotics competition at the Jacob Javits Center. Since I will be working at my internship through CUNY Service Corps soon, I will be challenged to juggle six classes, clubs, and a job. Although this will be a very challenging year for me, it will also be rewarding academically.

