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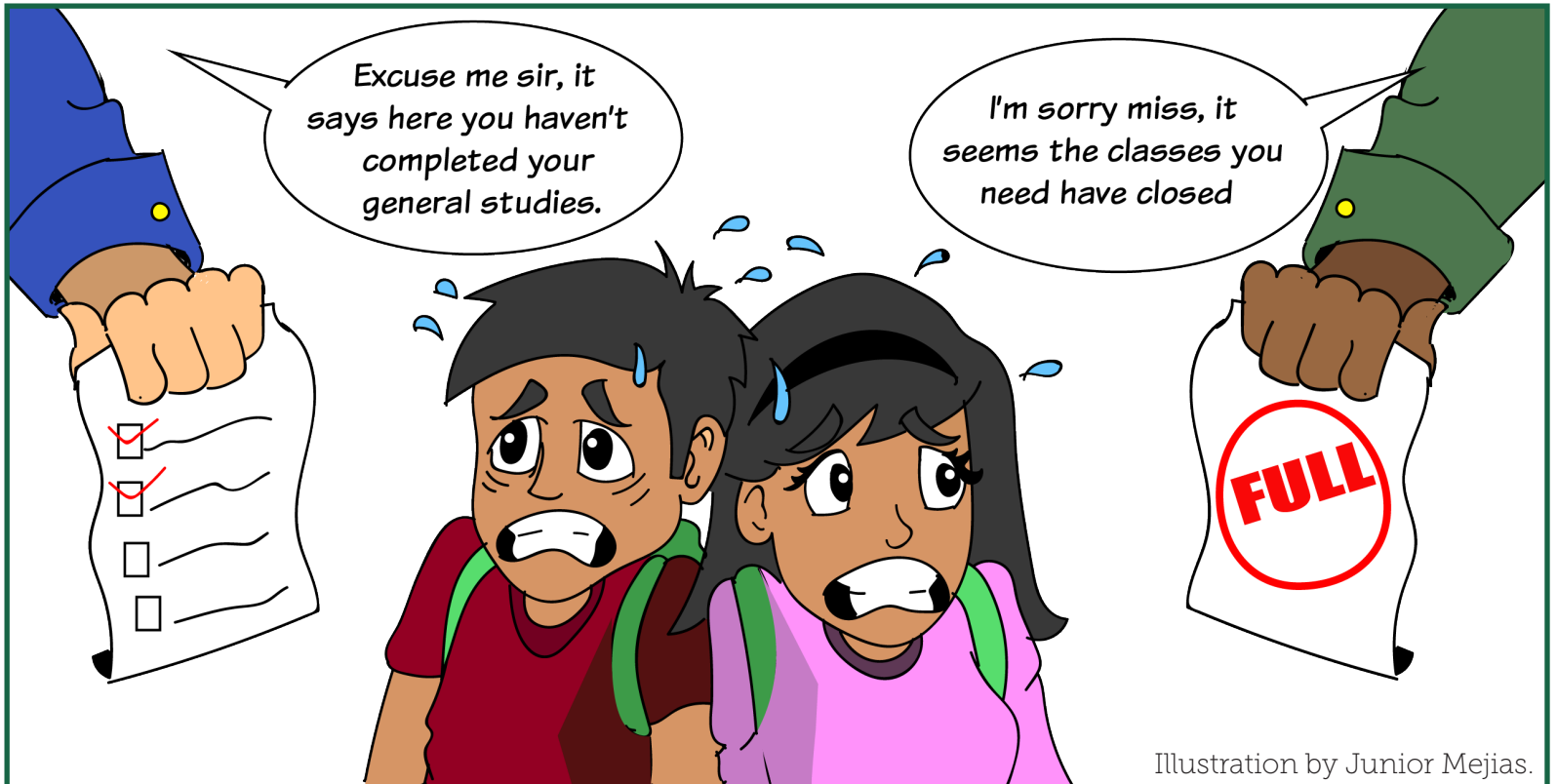


Illustration by Junior Mejias.

Can I get some help over here?

How NJCU lets students down with poor advisement

by **Monica Sarmiento** | Editor-in-Chief

"I graduate next semester... hopefully," is something that I started saying last fall when people asked how much I had left of school. It's a phrase I've heard a lot of my editors and classmates say over the years, some with better luck than others. Why do so many NJCU students approach graduation with the same fear and worry they'd have regarding health test results?

The four-year overall graduation rate for first-time, full-time freshmen students at NJCU was 11 percent in 2018. For five-year graduates, it was

32 percent; for six-years, it was 39 percent. This means that less than half of the freshmen that enroll at NJCU actually graduate within six years, and only about one-ninth of the first-time, full-time freshman population actually graduate on time.

According to the National Center of Education Statistics, the national six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students getting a bachelor's degree was 60 percent. The National Student Clearinghouse 2019 report found that the national completion rate for students that started

in four-year public institutions in fall 2012 was 65.7 percent.

NJCU has also been struggling to attract transfer students in recent years, chalking it up to other universities like Rutgers-Newark, Kean, Montclair, and St. Peter's being able to recruit transfers "aggressively through admissions presence on the two-year campus, tour buses for prospective students, and memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreements," according to a November 2018 University Update from President Sue Henderson. Our new enrollment of

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transfer students dropped from 816 students in 2017 to 753 in 2018.

The 39 percent graduation rate—the highest it's been at NJCU—is just one factor to worry about, as both undergraduate and graduate retention and enrollment rates have fallen. In 2018, we had 6,237 undergraduates enrolled, a drop from 6,508 in 2017. As a result, the university has lost \$4 million in revenue. The university budgeted for any possible issues with enrollment, but still had to make up for around \$2 million as of November.

Many NJCU students are first-generation college students, coming from underrepresented, lower-income immigrant families. The university touts itself as an institution that recognizes the struggles and hardships their students have faced to get where they are today, yet makes it difficult for these same students to finish college with a degree in four to six years.

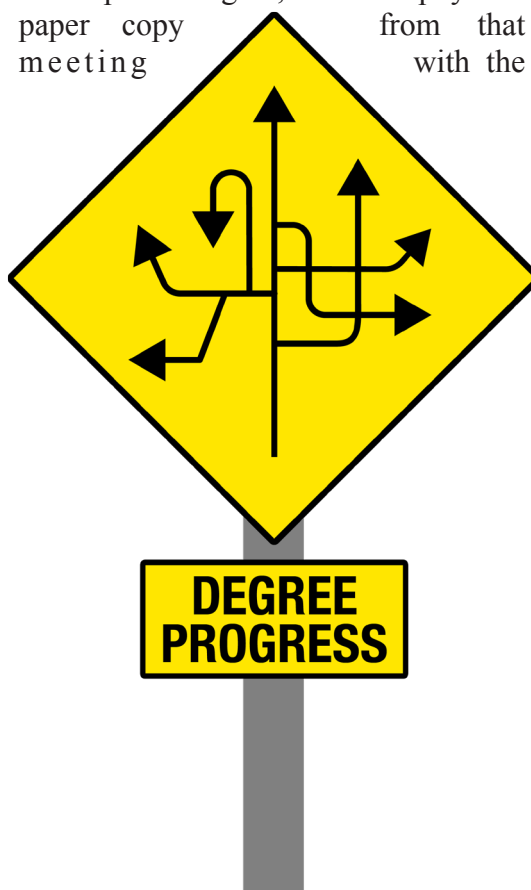
How advisement (or lack thereof) has affected me

My experience with advisement at NJCU has been exhausting, to put it politely. Without the incredibly helpful professors and faculty that I've become close to during my time here, I would've been navigating through college following dead-end advice over and over again.

Advisement issues stem from when I first transferred to NJCU in July 2016. I was told repeatedly by an advisor making my schedule for the upcoming fall that because all of the foundation courses I needed were at capacity, I would only be able to get a B.A. in Graphic Design if I wanted to stay on course to graduate on time. They convinced me to do a Media Arts minor since I expressed interest in the department, and I don't regret that at all. But my naivety and not thinking to seek more advice or solutions during my sophomore year is something I've just had to deal with and, sometimes, regret.

That wasn't the last time I was given bad or even outright wrong

information regarding my degree. During my second semester here, I was told by a department chair that all of my transfer credits were put to use after we sat and went through each one to make sure they transferred over to my degree. It wasn't until last fall, my fifth semester at NJCU, that I found out that they didn't actually put all of those credits on my digital file and that my degree progress was still showing that I had classes unfulfilled. I had to meet with a department advisor to go through the whole process again, and if the physical paper copy from that meeting with the



department chair wasn't in my folder in their office, I wouldn't have had any proof that those credits were supposedly transferred two years before. That department chair is no longer here.

I began preparing to go over my credits one more time last fall to make sure I was set to apply for graduation in January and enroll in classes for my final semester. I was told by one faculty member not to rely on the degree navigator in GothicNet because it wasn't entirely accurate. They also told me that I was missing general education courses and credits for my minor, but I was actually on track with

gen eds and I was finishing up my minor that semester. Then, the department advisor canceled my scheduled meeting with them because they saw that I discussed my degree progress with that faculty member and assumed all of my questions were answered. Another department chair and advisor didn't even answer my emails when I reached out to them for assistance.

It wasn't until I reached out to Sarah Vandermark, the assistant provost for Student Success that oversees advisement, with a detailed account of my run-around with advisors, department chairs and faculty that I finally started getting replies, meetings rescheduled and even personal requests for appointments to make sure that I was on track. Vandermark reached out to me to tell me that she'd look into my problems but never followed up to see if I was helped. I finally managed to get my situation sorted out after so many semesters of confusion, despite the fact that I did my best to stay on top of my own degree progress over the years. I finally received my graduation clearance earlier this month, meaning I'll be able to finish college in four years as I'd originally planned. But then I remember how this is not and has not been the case for so many NJCU students.

One professor, who asked to remain anonymous, sympathized with my and other students' experience. They pointed out the lack of a comprehensive database that lists a student's transfer courses and credits that correlate with NJCU required courses. "I think there is a lot of room for bad advice at NJCU. And sometimes faculty do not think very ambitiously for their students... they will give students career advice and advisement for quick goals that do not amount to much as a college experience."

More twists for transfer students

Crystal Simon, a Business major and events editor for The Gothic Times, received her Associates Degree from

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Raritan Valley Community College before transferring to NJCU. During the process of transferring, Simon had to show that she got her degree in order to receive a scholarship at NJCU.

Earlier this month Simon met with advisement to create her schedule for this upcoming fall. They were going to sign her up for gen ed courses but because she transferred in, the gen ed requirements are supposed to be waived. She found out that her credits were transferred on paper, but no one implemented them onto her degree progress on GothicNet. "Then, they told me they needed me to send them my degree even though they should've seen it in order to give me my scholarship," Simon said.

If she hadn't gone to advisement to begin planning for what is supposed to be her final year, Simon wouldn't have caught this discrepancy. Now, she has to bring in proof that she has her

Associates already to get her gen eds properly waived this time.

Michi Suazo, the Gothic Times features editor, is an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing hoping to graduate next Fall. "It's disgraceful to so many students who spend so much time giving back to NJCU," said Suazo.

"I've been a student here since 2015 and not a single professor or adviser has told me on the first day not to trust GothicNet for checking your degree progress. I relied on GothicNet to register for required classes that I needed, but what I didn't know was that most of the classes I needed as a creative writing concentration were only available in the fall semesters." Suazo has also had to take more literature courses because of a lack of creative writing courses offered at NJCU.

When looking for advice to make his schedule for the fall he was given conflicting information about gen eds and his English degree. "Students

can only do so much. We can't do the job of advisers and ours simultaneously. I work on campus, staying in the office as late as 9 p.m. to edit articles and work on papers and I'm juggling classes. It's just unnecessary stress. I feel like a customer who has to go to the storage room to check if the thing I need is in stock because there's no sales associate to talk to or the sales associates don't know. It is exhausting for me as a first-generation college student," Suazo said.

"It's like they just want to keep us here longer to keep paying as they raise prices for tuition and who knows what else. This simply cannot continue. A reformation needs to happen." Suazo added that, to his knowledge, he was never formally assigned an adviser in his department and just this month was told that a gen ed class he assumed would count towards his major won't; in addition he was told two different things about how many classes he needs

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Counseling Center update

by **Kenise Brown | News Editor**

NJCU has reduced its wait list to 18 students. In March, The Gothic Times reported that there were 37 students on the list.

Abisola Gallagher-Hobson, the director of Counseling and Wellness Services, said the part-time temporary counselors that were hired have been a lot of help at the Center. "Due to the new part-time counselors, who each provide 20 hours of service per week, we have significantly reduced the wait list." Veronica Cruz-Martinez started as a part-time counselor on February 25; Katiana Morisset began on March 11.

Martinez and Morisset will complete their term before this summer, leading to a possible wait list increase, according to Gallagher-Hobson. "The part-time counselors will end their

service [on] May 31 and it is likely as last summer, that we will continue to have a high demand for services throughout the summer."

Dean of Students, Dr. Lyn Hamlin said that the temporary therapists are awaiting a settlement. "The ending time for the 2 part-time therapists is pending and we have not begun a search for a full-time therapist as of this point in time."

Vice President of Student Affairs, Jimmy Jung, stated in February that a wait list is a "national problem."

"It's also a New Jersey problem. Currently, you have Rutgers-Newark and Camden, Rowan, Stockton, and Kean University all expressing that they have seen overwhelming amounts on the waitlist," Jung told The Gothic

Times. A spokesperson from Kean University counseling center who declined to give a name said that this was not true, however, "Not a fact. We don't have a waiting list."

NJCU was also expected to have a benchmark survey and a social worker to help out in the Dean's Office, but Dr. Hamlin said both are still in progress. "The benchmark survey is also pending. The search for the full-time social worker in my office is also nearing its end, so that may alleviate (as it is appropriate) the waitlist for the Counseling Center."

Have you had an experience with the Counseling Center wait list? The Gothic Times wants to hear from you. Email Kenise Brown, News Editor, at kbrown8@njcu.edu.

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to finish his degree. "I don't even know what to tell my parents anymore when they ask me about when I graduate," Suazo said.

Credit where credit is due

Last fall, our Podcast Producer Darren Greene spent 133 hours at a co-op internship with WBAI 99.5 FM Radio. Twice a week, every week, from September to December he went into the city for his internship, coming into the newsroom on the days in between to tell us about his experience. It was his first time working at a co-op internship through NJCU's Academic Career Planning and Placement Center.

This semester, Greene found out that he was given an F for his internship which brought his GPA down. He also didn't receive any of the credits he was supposed to get for the semester. When he reached out to the co-op office, they told him that he had failed to report to a faculty supervisor and turn in a final assignment at the end of the semester. The only issue is that Greene was never told that he was to get a faculty supervisor and no one from NJCU reached out to him to check on his progress at the internship. "I was only given an envelope from the Academic Career Planning and Placement Center to give to the manager at WBAI. I did that, however, I was not given further instructions on my part," Green said in

an email addressed to his department chair in which he explained his situation.

Greene didn't find out until March that he was supposed to have kept a timesheet and an academic assignment to hand in to an NJCU supervisor. Apparently a faculty member was assigned, but the email sent to Greene about his co-op assignment wasn't addressed to his preferred setting in Gothic Net (his NJCU email) and he never received it. Greene said he hasn't found the email in his spam folder. The faculty member assigned to him retired in December.

Finally, after weeks of emails, phone calls and meetings Greene will actually get the credits for his co-op.

What the administrators have to say

I reached out to Professor Joshua Fausty, the director of General Education, about the issues students have had with the gen ed program and finding courses that fulfill their requirements. "I often hear from students who are not sure about what courses they need to take, or who have been told they have not satisfied all of their graduation requirements. It doesn't usually take long to clarify the situation and find a solution. If it is close to graduation, though, it can be quite stressful for students," Fausty said over email. He also recommends that students see an academic advisor regularly, "Nobody should wait until it's time to apply for graduation to

check in with an advisor, get clear on all remaining degree requirements, and make a detailed plan to finish."

Some students, myself included, have gone to advisors over time. The recurring problem seems to be students getting information from advisors, faculty, and the online degree navigator that conflict with each other.

Ben Rhodin, associate vice president for Enrollment Management, said that the Degree Audit and Degree Progress Report found on GothicNet, "was developed to provide a tool to guide students to select courses that meet their degree requirements as well as to help prepare them for discussions with their academic advisors."

"We are aware that students in a handful of majors and minors will see incomplete information in the Degree Audit, but all information that is displayed should be accurate. There are also some cases we have become aware of where students have been granted exceptions to their degree requirements, typically when they get approval to substitute one required course for another. There is sometimes a lag in the system from the time those substitutions are approved and when they are displayed in the Degree Audit. We are working to tighten up that timeframe so the Degree Audit is a real-time reflection of all exceptions."

Changes to commencement reversed after student protests

by **Monica Sarmiento | Editor-in-Chief**

Following days of student protest, an open forum and a change.org petition that amassed over 4,000 signatures, the sudden decision to host multiple small graduation ceremonies and a shortened commencement at Prudential Center was reversed by President Sue Henderson last month.

In an email sent out a week after the original decision was first announced, President Henderson wrote that the reaction from the community and students factored into her decision to have one large Commencement ceremony, in which students will have their individual names called at the

Prudential Center on May 16, 2019.

"We will begin the discussions about the Spring 2020 Commencement this June in a manner that promotes comprehensive community involvement from the very start and ensures that any and all changes are communicated in a timely manner," Henderson said.



NJ Transit stalls our commute... what else is new?

by **Sandra Mendez | Contributing Writer**

Last month, NJ Transit held a public hearing to address their plans to shut down the West Side Branch of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail for nine months from June 2019 to March 2020. Students, faculty and Jersey City citizens gathered in GSUB last month to discuss the decision to close the West Side Avenue, Garfield Ave and Martin Luther King Drive Light Rail stations.

NJ Transit officials gave a presentation about the plans, explaining that there is a sewer leak directly beneath the three stations that is in need of repair. It must be dealt with immediately due to the damage sustained by an eroding drain.

The proposed alternative is shuttle buses that would transport commuters between West Side Ave, Garfield Ave, Martin Luther King Drive and Liberty State Park where regular light rail service would continue. As a result, NJ Transit says that travel time would be extended by 15 minutes. People sat in disappointment as they learned that this will affect them negatively and nothing was being done to expedite this process.

The floor was then open to anyone who wanted to voice their comments or concerns.

One of the first to speak was Alexandra Mack, an NJCU business major that commutes to the campus on the Light Rail. She commented that it

takes her approximately 30 minutes to travel to school on a “good day.” Mack stated that it is highly problematic to add an additional 15 minutes to the commutes given the fact that service is often inconsistent as is.

The Student Government (SGA) took a survey of NJCU students that are having trouble transporting themselves to and from school. SGA President, Rania Noubani, gathered the data and, “according to the survey, we have roughly around 80 students that have complained of transportation needs. About 460 students out of that 800 have trouble going to [or] from the business school.” In order to alleviate this issue, gas and Uber card vouchers were given out in a first come first serve basis.

Mack asked the panel to reconsider the shuttle buses and to find a quicker and more efficient manner to solve the issue, as she is not the only student that will be affected by this.

There are thousands of students at NJCU and not all have the option to drive or be driven to school and depend on this transit system. Another NJCU student, Engie Equevedes, was previously a commuter student just a semester ago, and she has also showed her concern about the reliability of the shuttle buses. “For a lot of commuter students, that light rail stop is very accurate, and the train comes when it says it will.” Engie also questions, “what will happen for commuter students that

buy monthly student passes? Will they be reimbursed? What buses will other students have to take that are traveling from far?” There were more questions asked than answers given. One thing was clear, the students must be informed about what is about to happen

Moses Williams, a Jersey City resident, spoke on behalf of himself and other elderly commuters. He expressed his outrage at the lack of consideration that was given to hard working tax payers. Williams also included the many disabled citizens that will be burdened by this situation and he could only describe it as a complete disservice to the community. “The light rail is going to Newport and nothing is going to The Square, now Bayonne wants to scoop up all the benefits of NY. The light rail does well for them but not for us. When you live in Jersey City the bus system has gotten worse and now the light rail fails and we are still looking for help.”

Many others had questions and comments, but the NJ Transit officials would not give any answers at the hearing. People were told to write out their questions and contact information and put them in a small inbox in the back of the room. They would be contacted privately with answers.

NJ Transit has yet to make a final decision on whether or not they will go through with the station closures.

Student by day, model by night

by **Michi Suazo** | Features Editor

Dressed in two-inch Lamoda boots, blue jeans by The Fifth Label, plum ribbed turtleneck sweater, and a gold necklace, Erika Perez is a 20-year old Dominican model and a junior at NJCU. She is an English major with a concentration in creative writing. Perez does not know anyone else on campus who is a signed model and full-time student.

“I first wanted to do modeling in my senior year of high school. My brother was into photography and set up a little studio in my room... He had a tripod and a backdrop and he took my own pictures,” said Perez. “I started taking my own pictures. I would get ready with my makeup on and just take pictures all day long. I would then edit the pictures and post them online. I posted three pictures a day.” Eventually, people started to follow her on Instagram.

“At the time, I just liked doing it but people kept telling me that I should be a model professionally and I was thinking, ‘you know what? Okay,’ but I lived in South Jersey and in South Jersey there’s nothing. I lived in a forest pretty much,” Perez laughed. “I’m from Pleasantville. It’s... three minutes away from Atlantic City.”

People on social media thought she was already a model and would reach out to her about doing photo shoots, but Perez didn’t respond, “At the time, I didn’t know anything about modeling [professionally] so I wouldn’t really reply.”

Perez began doing shows in Jersey City. “So from those local fashion shows, people waited for me after to see if they could work with me. So I would start to do the same thing: I would wait for at least 45 minutes [after fashion shows]; I would talk to the photographers and designers to ask them for their business card and information



Courtesy of Tmax Photography.

because I needed to build content.” So far, Perez has worked with online fashion brands such as Missguided and EGO. She is an influencer on Instagram and has done shoots with designers.

“After a year of doing this I was like, ‘I want more. I feel like I know what I can bring to the table, and I know that I can become the girls that I see on all these magazines, editorials, and even

Victoria’s Secret fashion shows and all these big models and I want to do that,” Perez said. “.... It’s hard for me because I’m only 5’6”. I’m considered a petite model because I’m short.” Perez would go to open calls at modeling agencies at least once a week and get rejected all the time. At the time Perez did not have a portfolio.

Perez decided to shoot every week during her sophomore year at NJCU to make her own portfolio while juggling classwork and going back and forth from campus to New York. “It was crazy. I went crazy. I would go to the city in the morning then run back to class. I would do my homework, go to sleep at 4 or 5 or 6 in the morning and do the same thing all over again. And it was a lot but I didn’t care because I knew that what I was doing was going to bring me a step closer.”

“I talked to an agent and asked what type of pictures the industry was looking for. He liked what I had [from the photoshoots] and he felt like I was ready. I started going to the open calls again to get signed and I still got rejected over and over again. But there was this one day that I got an email from EMG Models. They said they wanted to meet with me and I was like, ‘is this—is this real?’ and so I was like, ‘Yes! Of course, let’s meet!’”

Perez went in to meet with EMG Models, an agency based in New York and Los Angeles, and was signed that day. “They were like, ‘Here’s the contract. We want to sign with you.’ and I was just thinking to myself if this was real?” Perez said with misty-eyes. “I told them I’d love to sign with them. When I got out and left, I was pretty much crying [in] the rain.... I called my mom and told her. Ever since then it has been a roller coaster. I’ve worked with Stuart Weitzman. I never thought that I could be living the life I’m living right now.”

It has been one year since Perez got signed with EMG Models and started working with them.

Reading, Writing, Runways

“What I want to do is journalism, so I want to work with a magazine and write about fashion and my experiences--what I see and how I get treated.” Perez is currently writing about the history of the shirtwaist blouse for her Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire course (a devastating fire that took

place in NY in 1911.) “You can’t talk about the fashion industry without talking about the Triangle Fire. What I’m writing about is how the fashion industry has changed throughout the years. I’m combining what I do right now with the Triangle Fire. It’s perfect because when talking about the fashion industry, we have people in Bangladesh that work for Walmart and these ‘fast-fashion’ brands who are being paid \$10 out of a \$200 worth of work.” Perez has stopped shopping at fast-fashion brand stores such as Sears, Forever 21 and H&M.

“We have people dying. Have you heard of the Rana Plaza? The owners [of a factory in Bangladesh]

didn’t care about how safe the building was, they didn’t care about the workers. It’s very important to appreciate the people behind our clothes but the industry only cares about the money and we don’t think of the people that are dying. No one should die for fashion.”

Perez really started getting into writing because of her Triangle Fire course and her English professor, Edvige Giunta. “Her memoir class was really challenging because I felt like I didn’t have a story but she really changed my life when I took the class. She has really, really inspired me to write more.” In the future, Perez plans to write poetry books and short stories.



Courtesy of Tmax Photography.



We recieved over 40 submissions to our 2019 Poetry Contest, held in honor of National Poetry Month. Congratulations to our three winners and to everyone who entered!

Judges:

Rashad Wright NJCU alum & Jersey City Poet Laureate

Monica Sarmiento Editor-in-Chief, The Gothic Times

Michi Suazo Features Editor, The Gothic Times

McPherson

by Scion Rae Wellington

First Place

at your funeral,
auntie used your army picture

i left with a pamphlet, a button,
and stories about her baby boy

she camouflaged you in camouflage
and now I don't remember what you looked like

in the city, you were crippled
in the box, a preservative

now
you're a button
pinned on the side of my yankee hat
where i assume you got shot because
I lost the pamphlet

you could've been a huge headstone
but auntie couldn't afford to plant you

you're a button because you looked like an
idea the last time I saw you,
like one of those little green army men
even though you didn't die in the army

you made it back home
and the city shot you but
since you're a button now
i don't have to tell anyone that

i think auntie was right
to hand army you out in pieces

because now we can all spend time
with you and make up stories

Pulse

by Daiela Gomez
Second Place

June 12th, 2016.

2:00AM.

The night is warm, festive. Typical summer
Orlando weather.

Air sticky, sweat trickling down the bodies of sinful
homosexuals.

Gays don't know that Omar Mateen will bring
an early departure from their sinful night
club experience.

One almost forgets about the hate in the world for
a moment; staring at the active bodies
drinking, flirting, dancing.

Mateen's cold, calculating fingers grip his hate
sticks. Hate sticks he purchased through
government loopholes.

Choices for Weapons of Mass Hatred: SIG Sauer
MCX [6] semi-automatic rifle and a 9mm
Glock 17 semi-automatic pistol.

Bullets carrying the heavy weight of hatred,
connecting with gay body #1, gay body
#2.... gay body. Number 49.

Bang, bang. The Hispanic gays are dead.

Bang, Omar Mateen is dead.

To be an out gay body has a price.

To exist and know Omar Mateens exist wanting
other active gay bodies dead

Leaves homosexuals ducking down from the spray
of bullets,

Forever hiding in the shadows of straight life,

Extinguishing the barely lit candle us homos use to
traverse the world.

The River

by Marissa A. Miller
Third Place

The river from brain to mouth is a long one.

Full of twists, turns, dead ends,

It's hard not to drown.

What words don't get dragged under, come out choppy,
waterlogged.

My words don't flow,

They s-s-stutter and l o s e their footing.

If only there was a bridge my words could walk across.

To be safe from the current,

To not crumble and come out half disintegrated.

If only my vernacular could swim.

The river from brain to mouth is a harsh one.

It takes hold of my letters,

Only letting the weak slip away.

The river demands a hefty sacrifice.

The idioms bled dry,

Never to be uttered.

My words don't make sense,

They stumble over one another in an attempt to escape.

Weak words don't survive in the real world.

If only my jargon was strong.

The river from brain to mouth is a ruthless one.

It's full of hopelessness,

Long abandoned and wrecked.

A ship filled with sunken pros.

Scattered along the bottom,

Are piles of lost thoughts and bro ken slang.

Worn away by rough waves and currents.

Who knew symbols could choke,

That they could take in too much water.

If only my words weren't made of paper.

Echoes of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in the twenty-first century

by **Emily Sierra** | Contributing Writer

The suffering of the working class is often neglected and depersonalized. We may read articles on the horrible working conditions in places like Amazon warehouses, but we don't attach these abuses to faces or names; there are no real victims. Outside the U.S., the suffering and deaths of workers in factories like the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh get hugely underreported and ignored by mainstream media, even if over 1,000 people died due to the factory collapsing. Before the recent labor tragedies, one took place right in downtown Manhattan over a century ago.

On March 25th, 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, causing the death of 146 workers, mostly Jewish and Italian immigrants. 123 of these workers were women. For years, the story of the Triangle Fire has been lost between the chapters of the United States' history, not receiving the attention it is due. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was the model for other corporations and how they could exploit and abuse their workers for maximum profit.

Due to the pioneering work by Dr. Annelise Orleck, it is possible for many to engage with the echoes of the Fire on a different, more nuanced level. Dr. Orleck is a professor of history, Jewish Studies, and women's, gender, and sexuality studies at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Her most recent book, "We Are All Fast Food Workers Now": The Global Uprising against Poverty Wages" is a collaboration with photographer Liz Cooke, and is a collection of and reflection on interviews with worker-activists from places like Mexico, the Philippines, Bangladesh and many U.S.

cities. In a lecture at NJCU in March, Orleck retold the many stories of those suffering at the hands of money-hungry corporations. These included not only on-the-job injuries, but also being beaten with rocks for trying to set up unions. However, she also showed the numerous labor movements taking place worldwide, many of which being led by groups as young as we are.

It is the pioneering work done by historians like Dr. Orleck that has inspired the students in the Triangle Fire General Education Capstone course at NJCU to start sparking their own change. We can see the Fire's imprint in our world, in our time. For my capstone project, as a creative

writing major, I am writing a play based on the Triangle fire, exploring and illustrating how the abuses of the Triangle victims are reflected in the abuses of Latina immigrants, how the abuse of immigrant women has cycled throughout American history. My fellow students have also undertaken projects such as creating lesson plans to teach the Triangle Fire to children, creating collages and embroidery that depict the story of the Fire, and writing hybrid essays tying the events of the Fire with their own lives. We are listening to the echoes of the Triangle Fire and connecting it to our contemporary and personal histories.



Wikimedia Commons.

Your hair is showing

by **Markeilia Cassis** | Contributing Writer

I could feel my weave bouncing against my neck and cheeks as I hurried to class. In one swing, I opened the door only to see a class filled with Caucasian students whose hair was naturally straight or loosely curled. I stepped back when I realized I was brown. I had brown skin, dark brown hair and dark brown eyes. “Chica, take a seat!” My teacher exclaimed. I did not realize I froze in front of the class. I quickly found an empty seat in the back of the room and sat down. I pulled my weave over my shoulders and hunched forward. This was not East New York, Brooklyn.

When my mother described the town we were moving to, Clifton, I had a feeling it would not be a predominantly African American community. I was born in Montego Bay, Jamaica and migrated to Brooklyn, New York when I was two years old. I had grown accustomed to seeing people who looked like me. There was a comfort seeing other women go through the same process as I did week in and week out. But it wasn’t because I felt some sort of pride; It was just normal. I grew up yearning to have naturally long straight hair without having to saturate my head with relaxers. I religiously watched Disney and Nickelodeon T.V. shows that mainly had Caucasian girls with long straight hair playing inspiring roles. Everyone loved them, they were funny, smart, and beautiful. What 10-year-old girl would not want to be that? Admittedly, Keke Palmer from Nickelodeon’s “True Jackson VP” was African American, but she had long straight hair too. As a result, I carried the idea that beauty is only in the characteristics that Caucasian women had.

At the height of the natural hair movement in 2016, everyone desired type three hair (hair categorization has

grown popularity in society; type one is straight hair, type two is wavy hair, type three is curly hair, and type four is kinky/coily hair). Nobody perceived kinky, tightly coiled as beautiful—at least not anyone around me. Before people on Instagram epitomized curly as the most beautiful hair type, many Jamaican people already felt that way. In fact, it is so instilled in the people living there that they call type three hair, “pretty hair.” Now do not get me wrong, all hair is beautiful, but it leaves the people with tighter coils wondering what adjective could possibly describe their locks? “Bad head,” was typically the term used for those with tightly coiled hair. This is truly an example of the long-term effects that oppression has, even decades after Jamaica won its independence from England. The people, my people, internalized the self-hate; I internalized the self-hate.

After years of having six inches or more of hair, I started to unconsciously hide behind it and obsess over it. Within my first month at Clifton High School, I did the next best thing, I hid behind my weave. Socially, school was rough. Not many people spoke to me; I thought I would be accepted if they believed my hair was like theirs. People would tell me that they wished they had hair like “mine” and for the moment I’d be happy until I realized it wasn’t really my hair. The truth lay beneath it all. My hair was split in two: what it was and what it was striving to be. I contemplated cutting my hair for months while battling my mother. She supported length over the health of hair. I did not. I was ready to see the true me that many women on Instagram saw, “my type three hair.”

The night arrived when I randomly asked my mom to cut my hair. I could not take seeing so many dead ends every time I combed it. So, my



mother sat me down and took out my weave. The last mental picture I had of myself was a girl with unhealthy, black, bob-length hair. I heard the snips of the scissors closing on my hair strands. “Well, there ain’t no turning back now,” my mother said as I watched my hair fall. I knew that I had been displeased with seeing my hair damaged by hair relaxers for over a decade but watching my hair fall lifelessly was shocking. It was the start of my transformation.

“I thought you said you had curls?!” My mother exclaimed. I got up to look in the mirror just to be disappointed. I was 16 years old when I saw my natural hair for the first time. I barely had two inches of hair. I was expecting the big curls to flop beside my temples, instead, I got stumpy-looking hair that defied gravity. I tried to convince my mother (and myself) that I just needed to put curling creams in my hair for my curls to pop, right? Wrong. No matter how many products I raked through my hair, the curls could not, would not, and did not form. I felt lied to and exposed. Where was the beauty I so deeply craved to see? Why couldn’t I have pretty hair? I had completely exposed myself. I was just brown. I was ugly.

Fortunately, my big chop day was over a school break, so I didn’t

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hat's in a name

Why is WWE changing their wrestlers' names?

by **Sean Quinn | Op/Ed Editor**

Being a fan of pro wrestling isn't always easy. Many times people will ask, "you do know it's fake, right?" as if you haven't been asked that dozens of times in your life. Then there's the pain of wrestling being seen as entertainment for the lowest common denominators of society, and pro wrestling deciding to prove those people right every so often.

The WWE has had a recent spree of shortening the names of various wrestlers and it has left fans scratching their heads as to why this is happening. Sometimes, a name shortening can do wonders. Rocky Maivia was a hated good guy in the mid 90s, but changed his name and persona to "The Rock" and not only became one of the most popular wrestlers ever but also the highest paid actor in Hollywood. Hunter Hearst Helmsley went from a wrestler few cared about to "Triple H," a highly decorated wrestler, the heir apparent to the WWE and one of the most celebrated bookers (wrestling's version of a screenwriter) today. But it doesn't seem like anyone who's getting their name changed will become a megastar from it.

The most recent victim of these name shortenings is Mustafa Ali, who I was prepared to write a piece about

how he's changing the way people perceive Muslim wrestlers. His whole message is to be a hero who doesn't want to be judged by his name, but now it's been shortened to just "Ali." In one fell swoop my story was derailed and while Mustafa Ali deserves recognition for what he's done, it sucks to see his employers undermine his message in such a short sighted decision. But he hasn't let the decision get to him, vowing to continue his goal no matter his name in the ring. As wrestling has often portrayed foreigners as villains, many find it refreshing that Ali isn't depicting himself as a stereotype and is proving to be one of the best good guys in WWE.

But, he isn't alone. Otis Dozovic and Tucker Knight of the tag team Heavy Machinery are now just Otis and Tucker. Mexico's Andrade Cien Almas goes from having one of the best names in wrestling to just being Andrade. What's next, is Rey Mysterio just going to be Rey? Samoa Joe to Joe? A name can tell you a lot about a character, and to take away the most interesting aspects leaves little to define them. Imagine if Marvel suddenly decided to change Spiderman to just Man?

Most likely this is a decision from Vince McMahon, CEO of

WWE, who despite being in his 70s still exudes control over most of the product. McMahon is one of the most complex and fascinating people in the world, who could be described as both a visionary genius and a ruthless tycoon who's been out of touch with the times for years. He's been known to make random changes to the product on a whim, and it seems this latest kick is to shorten names even if they're as simple as Tucker Knight. Maybe it's to increase marketability, but having a long name isn't always a bad thing. "The Macho Man" Randy Savage was three words yet he remains one of the most recognizable names in wrestling history. To chop down his name would remove what made him memorable to fans.

In the grand scheme of things, the name changes are a small nuisance and there's bigger issues over the WWE's head (working with Saudi Arabia, not giving wrestlers health insurance, etc.) but this spree of name altering is not doing them any favors. It's giving unique personalities generic names and fans might be less inclined to care about them, which always bad for business.

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have to face the reality of the situation immediately. My mother bought me headbands and other hair accessories to make me feel more confident about my appearance. I had to find some way to mask my insecurities. Consequently, I started wearing more makeup to make up for the lack of femininity that my hairstyle gave me. The first day back at school was horrible. Everyone called

out my absence of hair, but no one complimented it. I felt isolated from my peers.

But within the first months of my big chop, I religiously watched YouTube videos that explained how to style and maintain type four hair. The more knowledge I gained about my hair and the more love I gave to myself. The only thing "wrong" with my hair is the difference of texture. Different does not imply that something or someone

is "bad." It's common for people to shame others for not fitting societal beauty standards. Thankfully, Clifton high school taught me it is necessary to be comfortable being uncomfortable. At last, I saw the beauty in standing out against my peers in the hallways. At last, I saw the beauty and potential in myself. I wasn't just brown, I was beautiful.

Students visit India

by **Dr. William Westerman, Assistant Professor**

Sociology and Anthropology Department and Coordinator of Ethnic and Immigration Studies

This fall I was honored to be able to teach Sociology 256, Indian Society in Transition, that hadn't been offered at NJCU in many years. The best part was, thanks to the generosity of the University and the President, I was able to travel with 14 students and Professor Steve Haber to India in January. After three days of orientation and sightseeing in Delhi

and Agra, including the Taj Mahal, we flew to Ahmedabad in Gujarat for a week. There we stayed in student and faculty homes and shared their lives for that week - a week none of us will ever forget. Several of the students are Patel Scholars at NJCU who were home to visit their families for the holidays. Even more exciting is that the course will be offered again this

fall, and in January we will make a similar trip. Interested students should contact me for more information at wwesterman@njcu.edu.

You can read more about students' experiences in India on GothicTimes.net



Captain Marvel

by **Darren Greene | Podcast Producer**

The fantasy/science fiction film "Captain Marvel" is a story of a young woman named Carol Danvers (Brie Larson) and her hubris in saving the world. Danvers learns about her past, discovers who she is, ends up caught in a battle between two alien races and realizes she's more powerful than she ever imagined.

The film had great visual effects which is expected from a Marvel Studios and Disney film. The CGI was groundbreaking, the studio had a de-aging effect of Samuel L. Jackson's character Nick Fury. I couldn't tell it

was a CGI the longer I watched the movie. The fighting scenes were also entertaining and kept me at the edge of my seat.

The film made over \$1 billion worldwide, making it the highest-grossing film of 2019 so far. It is Marvel's eighth most successful movie in North America, and Marvel's seventh-biggest box office of all time overall. The film has also got a 'whopping' 79% on Rotten Tomatoes and I know why.

This film had a lot of hype behind it. It pushed a feminist message

however, is this a superhero movie or a PSA? The reason why Wonder Woman was such a success was, yes feminism, but also it told an amazing story. Despite the amazing visual effects, I thought that Captain Marvel had a bland origin story in this movie it was all over the place. I can't explain too much or it will spoil the movie, but I will say that if you're going for the action you will not be disappointed but if you're looking for an amazing origin story it's probably not for you.

Hungry during Spring Break

by **Nevin Perkins** | Contributing Writer

On the Sunday evening just before term resumed from Spring Recess, I along with the rest of NJCU's Orientation Leadership returned from an inspiring conference at Virginia Tech. Some of the students and myself needed to use the bathroom but upon walking up to GSUB, we realized it was locked. Many of us thought nothing of it and proceeded to Vodra Hall but as a commuter, I traveled home extremely curious.

Why was GSUB closed? Had it been closed all week? Were the students impacted? These were the questions which filled my head right into the beginning of a new week.

It was not long before I uncovered the truth I feared: no cafeteria was open during Spring Break. The only

available source of food for students on campus was the Dunkin Donuts.

It is unclear exactly how many students were present during the recess. According to the Assistant Dean of Residence Life Jennifer Luciano, "The residence halls do not close during spring break, therefore students do not need to inform us if they are staying. We did have students that stayed on campus but we do not have an exact number since students were able to come and go at their leisure."

Although we cannot be certain of the number of students who were impacted by the University's decision to close all campus dining halls, we can be sure of one thing: the students who stayed on campus were truly inconvenienced. It can practically be considered innate knowledge that most

college kids are struggling financially, and it is also no secret that food is a vital expense.

Junior year student Nasir McDaniels said, "I had to spend a lot of my own money just to eat during the week. There was nothing open on campus besides Dunkin, and who is expecting us to eat that all day?"

It is understandably a difficult task for the school to attempt to account for all the remaining students on campus during the break. What is not acceptable is for all dining halls to be closed when there are students on campus who are hungry and deserving of the food they pay for a meal plan for. Let us hope that as we move forward, each student will be thought of when a critical decision that prevents accessibility are made.



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**Congratulations to the
The Gothic Times 2018-2019
staff for another incredible
year. Have a great summer!**

The tale of a high-functioning athlete

by **Kristen Hazzard | Sports Editor**

At eight years old, Miranda Mendoza joined the New Jersey Special Olympics program. She competed in field events like the Mini Javelin and Long Jump but rarely competed in track events unless it was the 4×100 M Relay which happens to be her favorite. Over the course of 13 years, she has received about 40 gold and silver medals.

Now 21 years old, she had the opportunity to represent New Jersey and the U.S.A. in the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, Dubai in March 2019. She said, “I know myself, I know what I can and can’t do, and I know how to execute whatever I do perfectly... I will get you gold if you put me into the mini javelin and I will get you silver if I do the long jumps.” Referring to herself as a “high functioning athlete,” she kept her word and won silver and gold. Mendoza won Gold in Mini Javelin and scored two 4th place finishes in Long Jump and 4×100 M Relay.

Mendoza said “The program is a family and I couldn’t imagine my life without it [Special Olympics].” The program has motivated her to become a better student. With the help of her coach Pedro Lopez who has been a father figure to her since she started. She said, “... he’s raised me to be the athlete that I am today with morals, values and respect for others.”

As a Jersey City native, she grew up in a loving home with her mom, dad, older sister Natasha and older brother Miguel. Mendoza said, “My mom always told me I was special but I always knew there was something not right in my brain.” Mendoza was diagnosed

with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD). She also has a learning disability which means she has trouble comprehending, retaining and distributing information. Because of that, Mendoza believed that she had to work a little harder than most.

was accepted into New Jersey City University in 2016, she was eligible for the Opportunity Scholarship (OSP) or Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF). The program helps qualified students meet their academic and financial goals by providing access to education and assisting them in achieving their goals toward a successful future.

OSP allows only 200 students into their program. Mendoza became the 201st after Alex Delgado, one of her OSP advisors gave her a shot. Mendoza said, “If you have the ability to look beyond my testing grades and see me as a person, you’ll know how much I put into and how much I will succeed.” She loves the commitment that the advisors put in because they are there to help you, push you and give you the tools to succeed. Thanks to her patient and helpful advisors, she made the decision to become a psychologist so that she could not only help people but also understand why her brain is the way it is.

Mendoza is currently a junior and majoring in psychology at NJCU. She said, “I’m amazed by myself every day because I’m a junior, I’m a special needs student and I struggled so much to

comprehend and maintain... I’m happy and grateful that I made it this far.”

When she is not studying or training, she is also an assistant coach at Christa McAuliffe School (PS 28) in Jersey City where every Saturday she helps train special needs children athletes. She has the opportunity to interact with different types of students and hopes to work with special needs adults once she graduates NJCU.



Courtesy of Miranda Mendoza.

Before receiving any college acceptance letters, Mendoza had no idea what her career path would be, but did know that she wanted to help people. She started to believe that she was not cut out for college after her high school guidance counselor told her that she would not succeed. Once her brother dropped out of high school, she made sure that she would not do the same. When Mendoza



The Gothic Times recognized in statewide contest

The Gothic Times won second place for Enterprise/Investigative Reporting in the New Jersey Press Association's "Better Newspaper Contest." News Editor Kenise Brown and Editor-in-Chief Monica Sarmiento were invited to a special ceremony on April 13 at the Forsgate Country Club in Monroe Township, NJ.

SPEND YOUR SUMMER WITH THE GOTHIC TIMES

NJCU's school newspaper, website and podcast will be working this summer!

Join us for workshops, community and more. Over the summer, student writers work on articles for a paper that comes out in September. We are also looking for photographers, copy editors, writers and more.

Contact the adviser Theta Pavis at tpavisweil@njcu.edu for more information! Stay connected and make student voices part of the campus conversation.



The Gothic Times 2018-2019

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