Ten Topics for a FEARLESS Future
(or “How to NOT Feel like a Communications Dinosaur”)

The BIC
Curriculum Summit
SUMMARY
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September 2013

Dear Industry Pros, Deep Thinkers, and Brand Evangelists,

Back in January, you travelled up to the City College campus and gathered in a room across from the Great Hall to answer a seemingly straightforward question:

What will define the communications leaders of the future?

It’s hard to image now, but it was a stunningly cold day. Perhaps that helped energize the room because the subsequent brainstorming session was invigorating, informative, and productive. And somehow cathartic. Wasn’t it great to be asked such a direct question in a forum that allowed you to try on your thoughts for size?

What you all experienced on that icy cold day is at the heart of BIC – our new master’s program in Branding + Integrated Communications. Here on the hill, we’re creating an environment that allows great thinkers to contemplate the communications questions of our time: The type of questions that challenge and provoke. That stimulate dynamic conversation. And encourage us to probe all sorts of sources – including our gut and each other – in search of answers. Questions that stoke our curiosity and move the world forward.

So did we come to any conclusions last January? Were there any true epiphanies?

Well, before I get to all that, let me first say that this BIC Summit Summary comes to you months too late. Apologies for that. However, your musings and visionary thinking have been chewed on, digested, and come back to life in various forms since then, most importantly as syllabi for the foundation courses that will launch our first semester of BIC this fall.

The delay in this Summit Summary also allows me to bear news of our incoming class: we had nearly 90 applicants for just 30 spots!! Amazing for a first year – especially with only modest resources for recruitment. Of those we accepted, we had a 95% yield. I’m excited to be able to introduce you to the Class of 2015 at the end of this Summary.

Now onto the epiphanies – the most major of which was that this amazing (and amazingly cold) day in January was just the beginning...

Stay curious,

Nancy R. Tag
Professor of Advertising
Program Director, MPS in Branding + Integrated Communications (BIC)
The City College of New York
On January 23, 2013, industry and academic leaders from various communications disciplines gathered at The City College of New York and were asked to brainstorm when asked the following two questions:

**What are the Big Challenges our industry is facing? What are the skills/knowledge/personality traits that would define the best person to tackle such challenges?**

The output on that day clustered around ten content areas – as summarized below – with corresponding skill sets, talents, and personality traits that would be best suited for addressing those challenges. Whenever possible, the language is taken verbatim from notes and comments collected from the Summit.

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**LIVING IN “THE AGE OF THE UNTHINKABLE”**

As professionals on the front lines of communications, many of you described an environment that author Joshua Cooper Ramo writes about in his book *The Age of the Unthinkable*. Relentless change and ubiquitous newness requires us to constantly adjust in big ways and small with little time to master or even adapt to anything. OR to simply appreciate what’s worth the trouble. There are too many competing priorities. And it’s exhausting.

When managing brands, companies, and people in this new “unimaginable world,” we often rely on old styles and paradigms, sometimes achieving the opposite of our intended effect.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Being able to learn what you don’t know, being resourceful, a good listener.

You all agreed that it’s difficult to be a leader in an environment that’s difficult to comprehend. It’s difficult to even define the very concept of leadership.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Ability to empower others with permission to be innovative, sharing in an era of individual authority, not being risk-averse, fearlessness, “T-Shaped” skills and passion.

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**ASIDE:** The concept of T-Shaped individuals was a leitmotif at the Summit. Tim Brown, CEO of the design firm IDEO, indentified such employees as the backbone of a collaborative culture: “T-shaped people have two kinds of characteristics, hence the use of the letter ‘T’ to describe them. The vertical stroke of the ‘T’ is a depth of skill that allows them to contribute to the creative process. That can be from any number of different fields: an industrial designer, an architect, a social scientist, a business specialist or a mechanical engineer. The horizontal stroke of the ‘T’ is the disposition for collaboration across disciplines...It’s important because it allows people to imagine the problem from another perspective -- to stand in somebody else’s shoes....they tend to get very enthusiastic about other people’s disciplines, to the point that they may actually start to practice them. T-Shaped people have both depth and breadth in their skills.”

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Finally and generally speaking: it’s scary out there. But also very, VERY exciting.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Innovation, robustness, resilience, genuine enthusiasm for diversity in all forms...curiosity. Continuously surprise and delight. Agility.

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**SERVING THE COMMUNITY WHILE SPEAKING TO THE INDIVIDUAL**

Our economy puts the consumer front and center, right? But many of you commented on the need for brands to lift up society and add value to the greater community. Some felt this should even be a brand’s raison d’etre. Can we stay on the Self-Actualization rung of Maslow’s Ladder AND create intimate, personal experiences?

We all want to be honest and authentic, but fear we’ve created expectations that won’t match reality. How does behavioral economics come into play? Are we setting people up to fail? We can’t keep neglecting the nuts and bolts of customer service. How do we delight consumers, exercise best practices, and make society a better place -- all at the same time?
The increased speed of communications requires constant engagement. Campaigns can no longer be tended to like corn fields -- which are seeded, harvested, then left fallow until the next season, but like rice paddies -- which are season-less and must be painstakingly nurtured. Interactivity and immediate engagement with the consumer keeps us on our toes, requiring around-the-clock maintenance and adjustments, all while remaining true to core values and assets.

With the democratization of channels, we feel as though we’re losing control of the message. Not only have consumers “hijacked” our messaging, but so have “socialbots.” According to an August 2013 article in The NYTimes, “within two years, about 10 percent of the activity occurring on social online networks will be masquerading bots.” Some researchers believe that only a third of “the average Twitter user’s followers are real people.” In this environment, how will the communicators communicate?

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Truth seeking, integrity, ability to act upon the needs underlying a challenge, happy/optimistic, can internalize another person’s POV, knowledge of how to maintain and build customer trust, community management >> internal, external, customer service, influencers, and B-2B.

**DIGITAL? YOU’RE SOAKING IN IT.**

If this header reminds you of that line from the old Palmolive dishwashing liquid commercials, then this “post digital” conversation might be particularly painful for you. The most special thing about digital today? It’s no longer special. It’s like air. That era is in our rear view mirror. Just talking about traditional versus new media reveals anachronistic thinking. After all, how new is new? Integrated communication shouldn’t be about what’s NEW; it should be about what’s effective. But what’s effective? And in an era of limitless possibilities, how do you make them play well with each other?

One thing is for sure: social media is changing everything. Centralized media has been replaced by shared media that empowers consumer voices and creates new demographics who are harder to reach, yet seem to be in plain sight.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Digital natives who can appreciate and teach non-natives, ability to create “new” value, sociability, skills in gamification and mobile app creation, cultural flexibility. Nimbleness. Collaboration. Insatiable curiosity. Stamina. Transparency and credibility.

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There is an acceleration in audience fragmentation. Breaking through the clutter has become more difficult than ever. Consumers are over-stimulated and distracted. We’re concerned that with all these channels, we’re diluting the brand.

The velocity of digital production does not always align with the speed of thinking, contemplation, and creativity. While assembly line technology and outsourcing might make production faster and cheaper, not everything works better faster or more cheaply. Like a Mozart symphony or pregnancy, there’s sometimes no value to rushing. In fact, it can be detrimental to the outcome. Economist William Baumol identified this as a “cost disease” that impacts labor-intensive service enterprises, like education, car repair, and, to some extent, communications.

Even as the world speeds onto the information superhighway, everyone complains about the lack of horse and buggy communication skills. At its core, this is a profession about clarity, impact, and precision. Yet as college graduates gear up for the swanky skills they think will get them ahead, they neglect to cultivate the foundational skills that organizations are craving. The biggest complaint? Entry level people lack WRITING skills!!! They simply need to know more grammar and be able to communicate.

Folks at the Summit spent the single most amount of time bemoaning this sad state of affairs and ongoing challenge.

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**SKILLS NEEDED:** Transmedia skills, expertise in consumption habits, visual storytelling, consumer engagement specialists (let’s tap Google, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest for training), appreciation of how social media interacts with old-school media. Stamina. Problem solving. Trendspotting.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Maintaining and building customer trust, continuity of message and development of storyline, knowing how to build creative value for what’s next, being in tune with consumer behavior >> how to deliver on brand promise, appreciate when consumers are receptive, how to be invited in: be welcome and not an intrusion.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Diplomacy, persuasion, patience.

The Harvard Business Review calls data science the “sexiest job in the 21st century.” According to a New York Times article in April, “The field has been spawned by the enormous amounts of data that modern technologies create — be it the online behavior of Facebook users, tissue samples of cancer patients, purchasing habits of grocery shoppers or crime statistics of cities. Data scientists are the magicians of the Big Data era.”

BIC Professor Frank Walton points to an August Ad Age post suggesting that Publicis and Omnicom Group merged, in part, because “ninety percent of the world’s data have been generated in the past two years . . . And increasingly those data are generated by digital interactions tracked for the primary, if not sole, purpose of selling goods or services. This data-intensive world has ushered in competitors that aren’t ad agencies but giant technology and consulting firms, like IBM, Oracle and Accenture.” Belle Frank, exec VP-Global Director of strategy and research for Y&R (and BIC professor), has stressed the urgent need for data analysts in the advertising industry, but doesn’t feel that our business attracts enough of those types of thinkers. As a result, communication leaps forward as the talent pool lags behind.

However, many folks at the Summit also said that there’s too much talk about data! It’s overwhelming and sometimes unnecessary. Main concerns: Who controls most of it? Do we really use it to our advantage? Also, the PR industry is mostly verbal and needs to translate much of it. The bottom line is: are we doing what we need to do to translate data into actionable insight?

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Talent for stats/numbers/metrics, appreciation of programming. Analytic skills to predict trends, cultural nuance, consumption. Understanding what drives sales/reputation through messaging effectiveness, distribution, and engagement. Data fluency >> what to collect, when to collect, how to use, how to make useable tie together, finding value. (Course idea: “coding for non-coders”)

**... BUT WILL FAIL UNLESS THEY CAN TELL A GOOD STORY**

A March 18, 2013 Ad Age article (thanks, Ann Marie!) featuring BIC’s curriculum noted that a “McKinsey Global Institute report on big data predicts that by 2018 the US alone could face a shortage of 140,00 to 190,000 people with deep analytical skills.” Lately, universities are addressing this need by adding a range of courses and initiatives to increase the number of data scientists and statisticians. However, the bigger problem is finding the people who know how to turn that type of analysis into big ideas and stories that resonate with people.
As communicators, we need to appreciate our power. We need to re-establish our seat at the table in the age of big data. We must do a better job of learning new technologies (rather than yielding that task to others), stop feeling inadequate, and take charge.

Here’s the pep talk: We have long been a profession that made sense of the numbers, connected the dots, transformed facts into insights, and turned science into art. Just because the numbers are now big data, let’s not lose our heads. Let’s not be intimidated. Let’s remember: a story well told is a story that lives in peoples’ hearts.

Data don’t do that.


**AS COMMUNICATORS, WE CREATE VALUE FOR OUR CLIENTS.**

**THERE’S NOTHING BETTER THAN THAT - SO LET’S DO THAT BETTER.**

This is a dynamic age and we are a dynamic industry. Even in chaos, we’re able to balance creativity and clarity, impact and nuance, foundational knowledge and innovation. In the end, these are the things that make the industry thrive. We are a pushy, clever, driven bunch. If we operate with integrity and keep innovating, we will not only ride the wave, we can become the wave.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** True understanding of making products >> programming, listening to users, recognizing new needs. Focus on creating value through meaningful experiences. Understanding niche audiences. True appreciation of consumer hospitality and service. Flexibility. Making sure technology noise keeps up with creativity. Become: Integration architects, consumption specialists, weavers of the economic tapestry. “Master of Arts” is the new MBA.
COMMUNICATIONS MAY BE MORE INTEGRATED. BUT ARE THE DISCIPLINES?

Because of our more integrated media landscape (paid, earned, owned), all communications professionals are now held accountable for ROI and management matters. But because PR and advertising cultures aren’t exposed to each other enough, they act from their own defaults. People remain so darn specialized that they can not RELATE to their communication colleagues. In addition, there’s a bit of a “land grab” in terms of new media, which creates a more competitive environment. The idea of being “discipline agnostic” (much less cross-disciplinary) sometimes seems quixotic. At the BIC Summit, there was this a sense, especially among PR professionals, that we need to be more invested in the world: technology, economic impact, know who’s the best in any discipline, etc.

SKILLS NEEDED: Greater exposure to various disciplines, fluency in both shared and non-shared vocabulary, T-shaped skill set, pro-activity, greater investment in current events.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS

On the one hand, everyone at the BIC Summit shared a palpable sense of excitement about the new possibilities in communications. On the other hand, most folks were pretty glum about current agency models. Organizationally, we’re having difficulty breaking away from traditional behaviors, structures, and networks. We need to have a better understanding of business goals, financial statements, and how things affect the agency and client bottom line.

In what ways should we measure success (both personal and business): Through metrics? Client reviews? Profitability? Creative output and awards? Impact on society?

Many identified a culture that was afraid of taking risks. Here are some doodles we found at your tables: “stuck in the same,” “fearful of change,” and “only moving forward incrementally with small changes.”

Key questions on everyone’s mind: How do we make money? What are the best compensation models? How do we serve our clients as well as ourselves? What’s the most efficient organizational structure – and how does that align with innovation and creativity? How do we do great things if we aren’t profitable? Who owns the marketing funnel? How does the industry evolve in an integrated media model?

TALENT: RECRUITING, CULTIVATING, AND RETAINING.

The industry struggles to attract the best and brightest – and if we do, we can’t hold onto them. Once hired, juniors feel that they’re on an undefined career path (in other words, people don’t have a strong sense of what’s next). This points to a lack of management training and professional development. Recent college grads and entry level workers don’t have realistic expectations, “soft skills” or know the basic requirements of working in an agency. The disconnect between perception and reality undermines success. However, coming to the agency with richer life and hands-on experiences seem to help.

There was also a concern that the industry doesn’t pay enough: communications is a demanding and all consuming career yet the $$ isn’t there. Agencies that are willing to invest in initial training sometimes throw it out the door when employees ultimately quit from exhaustion or lack of compensation.

On the other side of the organizational chart, there’s senior level ennui in managers who don’t feel connected to a changing industry and feel disconnected from junior executives. Many of you sensed a strong generational clash between younger and older workers.

**SKILLS NEEDED:** Recruiters who know how to recruit. An environment that rewards talent and creates happiness at work. Mentoring. Staying active at conferences, etc. Understanding diversity from all POVs – not just ethnic or social-economic diversity, but diversity of perspectives, experiences, skills. (Consider talent from unexpected places such as a division I athlete or from debate team). Willingness to make “former employees” satisfied alumni rather than disgruntled anti-ambassadors. Develop “internal universities” to encourage growth.
THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

S/He is...
Innovative
A problem solver
In love with what s/he does
A strategic thinker
Invested in the work
Open to change
Looking for/loves a challenge
Creative
Able to think on her/his feet
Able to WRITE
In touch with culture
A self-starter (doesn’t need hand-holding)
Willing to go above and beyond
Ambitious
Accountable
Knows when to color outside the lines and when to fall in line
Communicates effective and clearly
Tech & web savvy >> social media maven
A great listener
Good at research
Able to use different paths and tools to come up with a solution
Open minded
An expert in one thing
A global citizen
A generalist: knows about different departments and info (not silo-ed)
A team player (works well with others)
Enthusiastic!!
Agile
Detail-oriented, multi-tasked, and highly organized
Not afraid to ask questions or try something new

S/He has...
Innate curiosity
Desire to keep learning
Perfect mixture of passion, knowledge, and inquisitiveness
Strong work ethic
Realistic expectations of the work
No sense of entitlement
Diverse background and experience
Data fluency
Community management skills
Good follow-through
Analytical skills
Talent for stats/numbers/metrics
Business and finance acumen
A fine aesthetic sense

S/He...
Understands C-Suite goals
Knows the appropriate programs
Can ACTUALLY program
Fits into agency culture
Follows through on projects (owns it)
Can maintain and build customer trust
Appreciates quality
Knows how to “build” products
“Gets” operations
Recognizes others’ needs
Can predict trends
Relates to different types of people
Figures shit out
“Looking for:” A creative, ambitious person who is eternally curious, relentless, hardworking, and fearlessly passionate. Someone who is willing to go above and beyond – knows when to color outside of the lines and when to fall in lines. Is able to explore several paths to get results. Can affect change and has a voice. Must have amazing problem solving skills, be a self-starter, and jump at challenges with open arms. Writing, knowledge of the appropriate programs, social media, and business structure/goals as well as ability to think strategically and work as a team are required. Has a talent for numbers, stats, and can transform data into engaging stories. Should know how to maintain and build trust through customer service and community management. Thinks spreadsheets “are cool.” Has business literacy: knows payroll, governance, P&L, legal compliance, and has an appreciation of the global economic landscape. Has an eye on C-Suite priorities, but also knows how the mailroom works. Outside interests and involvement in other social, cultural, digital, and non-work endeavors encouraged. Ability to predict the future (trendspotting) a plus.”
The BIC SUMMIT Guest List

It was so great to see you (and for those who tried to get to campus, but couldn’t – we’ll see you next time)!! Here’s who accepted our invitation to the 2013 BIC Curriculum Summit.

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<td>Paula Alex</td>
<td>Advertising Educational Foundation</td>
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<td>Lynn Appelbaum</td>
<td>City College of New York</td>
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<td>Gina Asaro-Colura</td>
<td>Freelance</td>
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<td>Liz Beck</td>
<td>Cohn &amp; Wolfe</td>
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<td>Susan Bidel</td>
<td>Pubmatic</td>
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<td>Maria Binz Scharf</td>
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<td>Adib Birkland</td>
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<td>Hillary Black</td>
<td>Kay and Black Talent Management</td>
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<td>Gerardo Blumenkrantz</td>
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<td>Dave Bourla</td>
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<td>Kate Farber Gold</td>
<td>Scripps Networks</td>
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<td>Sandra Fathi</td>
<td>Affect PR and Social Media</td>
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<td>Belle Frank</td>
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<td>DDB Worldwide Inc.</td>
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<td>Felicia Geiger</td>
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<td>Sandra Sims Williams</td>
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<td>Elena Sturman</td>
<td>City College of New York</td>
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<td>Nancy Tag</td>
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<td>Shadana Texidor</td>
<td>Grey</td>
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<td>Jeff Thaler</td>
<td>Mindshare</td>
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<td>Andrew Tider</td>
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<td>Neisha Tweed</td>
<td>Freelance</td>
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<td>Carin VanVuuren</td>
<td>Usablenet</td>
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<td>Frank Walton</td>
<td>City College of New York</td>
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<td>Marcia Wasser</td>
<td>Source Communications</td>
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<td>Eric Weitz</td>
<td>City College of New York</td>
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Thank You!
INTRODUCING THE (first) INCOMING BIC CLASS of 2015
Public Relations Specialists:

Carol Burns, Southern Illinois Univ - Carbondale, BA in TV/Radio, 2011
Fang Guo, Academy of Art - San Francisco, BFA in Fashion Merchandising, 2012
Desmond Maxwell, CCNY BA in English, 2013
Andre Ory, Sciences Po/Aix en Provence, MBA, 2013
Kiera Walker, University of South Carolina, BA in Advertising, 2013
Nehal Mahmoud, Grant MacEwan Univ, PR Diploma, Univ of Alberta, BS in Physical Sciences, 2012
Alphan Oz Baltaci, University Erlangen-Nuremberg, BBA, 2013
Qian Yuan, Shanghai University of Electrical Power, BS in Automation, 2007
Luz Corona, SUNY Albany, BA in Political Science, 2010
Noha Ahmed Fouad, Cairo University, BS in Accounting, 2005
Dawn Danker-Rosen, Syracuse University, BS in Public Relations, 1983
Diane Friedman, Boston College, English, 2003

Management/Planning Specialists

Batikan Aslan, TC Yeditepe University, Istanbul, BBA, 2012
Edmund Balogun, American University of Nigeria, BS in Information Systems, 2012
Frederick Garcia, CCNY, BA in Communications, 2007
Alexandra Suazo, CCNY, BA in Communications, 2010
Jacque Epangue, University of Douala (Cameroon), BBA, 2011
Javier Garcia, CCNY, BA in Communications, 2011
Amber Jackson, University of Kansas, Journalism-Strategic Comm, BA, 2012
Maxime Menant, Winthrop University, ISCOM, IMC PR 2012
Jin Wei, Univ of Kansas, BA in Journalism, 2012, Massachusetts College of Art, Dynamic Media, 2013
Jaruwijit Jaruthphayakhantha, Thammasat University, BA in Journalism, 2013
Ruth Ogbeab, Rochester Institute of Technology, Mgmt Information Systems, BS, 2005
Alexander Dean, Hunter College, BA in Film, 2010

Creative Specialists

Chris Villanueva, CCNY, BA in Communications, 2011
Vera Golikova, Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences, BBA, 2012
Anthony Washington, CCNY, BA in Studio Art, 2013
Yanin DeJesus, CCNY, BFA, 2013
Raj Andrew Gomes, CCNY, BA in Communications, 2013
New Student ORIENTATION LUNCHEON
August 26, 2013
BIC’s success relies on its cross-pollination of industry expertise, energy, and support. How can you GET INVOLVED?

Be a Thesis Judge, Adjunct Teacher, Tutor, Mentor, Guest Lecturer
Participate in Symposiums, Conferences, and Panels
Finance Student Scholarships, Grants, Enrichment Opportunities
Endow Professorships, Visiting Scholars and Professionals
Underwrite a Capstone Workshop
Sponsor a Lecture Series
Offer Internships and Office Tours
Donate Student Fees for Conferences, Contests, Etc.
Fund Facilities: Equipment, Software, Subscriptions, Databases, etc.
Fund SPACE: Computer Labs, Student Lounge, Screening Rooms, Presentation Theatre, Media Library

If you’d be willing to contribute in any of these ways or have ideas of your own, please contact BIC Program Director, Nancy Tag at ntag@ccny.cuny.edu
City College was just ranked Number Two Public University in New York by Forbes Magazine (behind the US Military Academy).

In the Spring, students from the Ad/PR Program received scholarships from The LaGrant Foundation and PromaxBDA. Twelve of our students were finalists in the competitive 4A’s Multi-Cultural Advertising Internship Program this year.

This summer, City College hosted the very first AAF AdCamp NYC from July 22nd to 26th. We welcomed 15 campers who were supported with professional assistance from DRAFTfcb, Deutsch, Y&R, Horizon Media, Saatchi & Saatchi, Ketchum, PHD Media, and CHA Consulting.

And finally...

We’re please to announce a $10,000 scholarship from the AAAA Foundation to be used for tuition assistance and pre-professional development. With extreme gratitude and appreciation to the 4A’s Diversity and Talent Team: THANK YOU!!

The Advertising Club of New York has selected CCNY to be a part of its i’mPART initiative to raise awareness of the benefits of diversity. The Ad Club has pledged $10,000 in scholarships for students committed to studying advertising. THANK YOU!!

President Lisa Coico
Maurizio Trevisan, Provost, CCNY
Jerry Posman, VP Finance, CCNY
Eric Weitz, Dean of Humanities and the Arts
Ira Krawitz, VP Marketing, CCNY
Jerry Carlson, Chair of MCA, CCNY
Lynn Appelbaum, Ad/PR Program Director, CCNY
Wayne Grofik, MCA Technical Director, CCNY
Belle Frank, EVP, Y&R
Anne Manning, Drum Circle
Hayes Roth, CMO, Landor
Dee Solomon, SVP MediaLink
Sallie Mars, SVP, McCann
Singleton Beato, 4A’s
Tiffany Edwards, The Advertising Club
Gerardo Blumenkrantz, BIC Professor
Frank Walton, BIC Professor
Ann Rossetti, Lab Technician
Lakeisha Mathis, MCA Administrative Assistant

BIC BLOG: www.bic-info.com BIC WEB: www.ccny.cuny.edu/bic