

## “Our Stories”

### First Year Learning Communities digital writing project.

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A shared belief in the potential for writing to transform the student experience led to the development of the “Our Stories” First Year Learning Communities digital writing project. Through “[Our Stories](#)”, students shared stories of their first semester at City Tech and revealed an institution with a large immigrant population, evoking questions of vulnerability, cultural adjustment, and unspoken uncertainties about college life. We share this project with you to offer a means to better understand our students and how they gain a sense of belonging during their challenging first semester. Their writing makes us more aware of the need for continued advocacy and innovative programs to support diverse students emotionally, economically, socially, and academically. As a member of the Student Ready College Committee (formerly known as First-year Experience Committee) we invite you to read excerpts from “Our Stories” and learn, through our very own student’s words, what their experience entails.

#### [Travis Carabello – Becoming a College Student: study group](#)

*On my first day of class at City Tech, I did not know what to expect. People always told me different things about college. Either the professor was going to be strict and assign ten page papers due the following week, or they were going to be really kind and not even have a lecture on the first day. My first class was Anatomy and Physiology I. Judging from that first class I just assumed that college would be easy. In fact, I thought that it would be easier than high-school. I stayed quiet during the first few weeks and did not bother to get to know any of my classmates. While they were all grouping up and studying together after class I went straight home. I just assumed that I did not need anyone to help me pass the class that I was taking. I learned very quickly after the first exam just how wrong I was. I did not just simply fail the exam, but my grade was so low that was much better off just dropping the class. However, I did not give up there. I swallowed my pride and asked one of my classmates for any tips on studying. She was kind enough to give me some help as well as invite me to her next study group session. During the session I realized that I wasn’t the only one struggling with the material. Almost everyone else there barely knew what they were talking about. However, since we all knew different things, we were able to walk out with more knowledge than we walked in with. Ever since then I always try to set up a study group at least once a week with my classmates. Even though they are not all able to make it at least one or two other friends really helped me understand the course material more fully.*

#### **Jaycee Fernandez** [My City Tech Experience](#) First post, her second submission is the next except

*Nothing really prepares you for the difficult transition from high school to college. As much as my teachers reinforced the “college is hard” and “we are preparing you for college” advice,*

*nothing truly prepares you until you experience it. Think about it this way, high school spoon feeds you everything. College, on the other hand, you're on your own: no late homework, no lenient teachers, midterms and finals are important, and with the amount of freedom you have comes even more responsibility. Thankfully, my first few weeks at city tech has been great. Registering for classes was a mess, but it ended up being convenient for me. As a working student with numerous obligations, my biggest fear is not being able to balance my studies and priorities. I had all the help I could get in high school and thankfully even in college, I'm fortunate enough that all my professors are still there to help me.*

*Lets talk about getting around and settling in. I swear I looked like Dora without her map on the first day. I came in late too, looking for G-603, not realizing I had to pass through the computer lab to get there. Fortunately, I knew about the different buildings due to the fact that I was in City Tech all summer trying to fix all my paperwork. The first week of class went by like a breeze, and I seemed to settle in fast. In terms of making new friends, I made four, great friends in my HMGT 1101 class and my friends from high school in the program as well.*

*I prepared myself to settle in and make as little mistakes as possible. So far, it's going great. In all honesty, I think my only struggle this semester is keeping focused in class. I don't have great attention span and I think my attention gets diverted easily. Right now I'm gonna try to join clubs and make more friends to help me grow as a person but overall I think my ultimate goal is to make the most out of my college experience. In that way, I can be prepared for anything.*

#### **Jaycee Fernandez - Our Stories-Assignment Two: student club (Second post)**

*As the year ends, I can say that I have learned many things throughout the semester. I've made new friends that have helped me get throughout the semester and achieved a few of my goals. This also taught me the value of helping each other and learning with teamwork. One of my achievements/goals that I was able to achieve was that I joined and participated in a club. I did my first Ambassador's club event and was able to be more involved in the school's hospitality program. I had my first lunch at the dining room and was able to see how the dining room classes operate and I was given the privilege to speak with a senior who gave me great advice on how to spend the next four years at NYCCT. I think that I have a lot to work on for the new semester but my first semester here has been an eye opening experience on how hard, but rewarding college can be. I will definitely take into considering all the advice that my professors have been telling me because I know it will be helpful in the future.*

#### **Danny Huang – faculty support/clear expectations**

*On my first week in City Tech, I wasn't as scared as I thought I would be. It wasn't about the strangers I will be going to meet. I've already expected to meet new people and professors which reduce my fear of going to college. What I do fear was the amount of work and exams I will be taking on in my courses. I went to my first class which is English and things turn out excellent than expected. My English professor told us more about our course and what we will be accomplishing in the future of the course. She had everyone introduce themselves to each other in groups ,so we can adjust in this learning environment. It was this class, that I made couple of friends and we assist each other on our first week of college. We weren't too confused about the rooms we were suppose to go to. That was me in high school as a freshman getting lost. However, we were confused about all the online task and how to submit work. While on my first*

*week, I stump-led upon my high school friends. We talked about our majors and that made me question on whether or not I should continue pursuing computer systems. I never took Java classes or anything that had to do with coding. I fear of being behind in computer systems because people chose their major knowing their majors background information. That wasn't the case when I came into two of my CST classes on the first week. The professors went over the syllabus and the history of computers. Surprisingly, I didn't feel like I was too behind than I expect I would. I am taking college algebra/trig which was my comfortable zone as I knew most of the things that were reviewed and taught. The first week went through quick and people were very quiet in most of my classes. Overall, I enjoyed my first week experience because it was sort of a new experience to me, even though many of my high school friends and acquaintances were spotted. Hopefully, I will learn and experience new things on my first year.*

### **Sallik First Week of School: Long Classes**

*Although my time in NY City Tech hasn't been very long, I have somewhat adjusted to this change. Very early I felt anxiety about college due to anticipation before my acclimation. So far it has not been too difficult then the long classes. I still haven't gotten used to sitting in the same classroom with the same teacher along with the same students for more than forty five minutes. To transition from less than an hour to three of them with an extra thirty minutes is taking a big step. That's like changing a videogame's difficulty setting from easy to extra hard while skipping every setting that is in between. After one week of having two to three hour classes everyday I started to already get tired of it . Either that or maybe its just that I just need to get used to going to school again after enjoying summer vacation. So far I am just trying to get situated in college. Thus far I have been introduced to new interesting classes. My foundation drawing class made me think more about drawing structure. Everything has to be drawn precisely and accurately. In addition to that class I also learned how to use photoshop from one of my other classes.*

### **HADJI Becoming a College Student: 2**

*Well here, I'm almost at the end of my first semester at City Tech. The transition from high school to college wasn't easy for me. I was stressful and lost at the same time. Coming to a new environment, I used to get lost sometimes because I have to go into classes from a building to another which I've never experienced before. At first, I didn't really feel comfortable and wasn't sure If I was in the right place. At the beginning of the semester, I was feeling lonely and try to make friends was a bit challenging to me. Also, I have to know my classmates one by one and find ways to communicate with them during group works or discussions. The elevator line is always long in the morning and sometimes the elevator takes long to come. Many time I preferred taking the stairs rather than waiting for the elevator. I want really to show up on time in class also be there when the professor gives out instructions. I promise myself to come to school every day and change the time back in high school when I used to come late almost every single day at school. Also, time management and procrastination was an issue to solve since in high school. In college, time management is really important to know how to manage because some certain professor doesn't accept late papers. I truly want to be more engaged in college as I never did in my life. I learned a lot this semester, on my strength and weakness also different things that I need to improve more. My first experience as a college student wasn't really easy for to deal with but the fact that, I have people which who have more experience than me in*

*college helps me and also the projects that I have done in college helps me understand better many aspects and requirements for college. My first experience in college helps to understand a lot about being a college student. And I've learned significant things in my semester that I believed is important and can help me in achieving my goals*

### **ELLIOT VIDALON My first semester Experience**

*My experience in City Tech has been quite a busy and yet great experience. At first, I wasn't very sure if I would get a habit of getting to school, so far away that I always have to take the F or E-A or C train from Queens to Manhattan to Brooklyn, but as time past, I really didn't mind about it and I knew one day I would get used to it. Well, unfortunately I had to pay my own transportation out of my pocket to get to college and it was quite a struggle, not just for me but as well for my parents and I needed to ask them for transportation money. But this time, I am hoping that ASAP will help me cover that problem for my next semester, I strongly recommend for all freshman or first time students or students who are planning to go to college to check out ASAP and they have the best benefits such as covering your supplies spendings, free semester Metro card, etc. Well, aside from that, back then I used to get myself in trouble when it comes to directions and I would easily get lost if I stay for too long. This one time, I was trying to find the environment building of City Tech, I knew it was around Voorhess then I would walk around to try to find it but I couldn't find it. It turns out that the environment building is a small building surrounded by a parking lot, a building and the Voorhees building and its on the shortest hallway that it was complicated for me to notice. But, so far I'm have good times with my studies and my friends. My major is communication design by the way... And my name is Elliot Vidalon. I remember that time in graphic design, there was this project that we had to make a 10 second video in photoshop and I really didn't know anything about video making or photoshop. But time to time, I had the chance to discover more about my task and I did have something in mind that could work out. As so as I started and getting the hang of it, I was expecting it would take some time and effort in my work. Then for my result, it was a complete success, all my effort and time was worth it and the best part is feeling the satisfaction of being successful. I learn that most all my classes, you need to work hard and consider time, it all happens to us and not just the major or the college itself, it's just how college is and with all that hard work, you get to learn something new and gain skills and experience. For right now, I feeling alright with this college, well getting up early to get to 8:00 or 8:30 is tough but since I'm a morning person, I'm fine with that and for some, they prefer starting class on the afternoon and it's their way of studying, everyone's story is different. So far, I like the major that I'm currently at, I know for each semester it gets tough but I am looking forward to reach for the excitement.*

### **RICARDO CRUZADO III Our Stories "My Story"**

*Stress, anger, exhaustion, and the potential of giving up. The past two and a half months have been extremely challenging for me. Working five to six days a week six to ten hours a day and going to school five days a week was very exhausting. Waking up at 7:30 am to go to class by 8:30 am to then go to work either at 1 or 2 pm. After work, the time will be around 10-10:30 pm to then go home, shower and get a start on my homework that is due the following day. I will be ready for bed and under the covers no later than 2:30 am to start the process all over again. Since this semester started I've become more tired each day, but my body is weird. I may be tired*

*and exhausted but I'm a morning person but I also have insomnia which keeps me up at night. The homework, papers, and lectures have gotten longer and tiring. 85% of the time I don't want to wake up and go to class. This is where the potential of giving up came from. I was so interested in going to class every day in the begin until I got the hint that school was not for me. I didn't want to be here anymore, I wanted to give up and be free, be able to sleep in the mornings and not have to worry about class starting or a test or homework being backed up on me. I made amazing friends who aren't fake nor childish, I was able to rely on most of them and be able to talk to them about something I needed help on. I'm here today writing this story because I don't give up that easy. In the hospitality world, Culinary world chefs don't give up. They keep trying and trying until they get it either their way or get it right. I've been that way since I was small. I never give up easy unless I cannot do something anymore. The class is just a place I go to do my work. I don't really care about grades because passing is all I care about. It bothers me when someone tells me that "You should care about your grade, that how you're going to get a better job and be successful in life." Honestly, grades do not matter because that GPA that you have goes away after you obtain your degree. A job is not going to ask you for your GPA rather than asking you for what degrees' do you contain. As long as I'm passing the class with a decent grade to move forward then its okay for me. I cannot wait till next semester because then I will be able to finally cook and learn how to cook better and bake better than the knowledge I already know. I'm happy that I stood stronger than most people because the outcome weighs heavier at the end of my first-semester journey.*

### **NAYALYNN First week at City Tech**

*When I was in 11th grade, I had made a tough decision in joining a program called "College-Now" in city tech which was probably the best decision I have ever made. I took an English 1101 course which is 3 credits. While in high school, I would go after school from around 3:30-5:00 to take my English course. I had completed the course from September – December and I earned my 3 credits. Not even in college yet and I had just boosted myself up a notch before the students who enter as a freshman start with no credits. Those three credits may sound so little but it helped me so much in taking classes ahead of what usual freshman would be expected to take. When I entered City tech for the first day of classes in August 2016. It felt normal because I had already accustomed to the environment and how college works. In my opinion college is way better experience for me than high school because I enjoy the peace around me and the friendliness someone can be when you ask for help. Although It is hard to make friends in college little bit more than high school I feel like the hospitality management environment feels at home and someone is always there when you need a hand. I was in the Liberal Arts for about a year a 1 semester, I felt as if i did not have as much support within my year being in this school. Now the flip has switched and i have declared my major. This semester I am looking forward to a whole different switch within the friends I make and the knowledge I will gain from, The Department of Hospitality.*

### **Daija Navedo Prompt 1**

*My name is Daija Navedo. I graduated from sunset park high school in June 2018. My first day at City Tech was super easy. I only had one class and it was a 1pm class. That was my sociology class and let me tell you it was a full house in there. Luckily because I got there early I had no*

problems finding a seat. My second day was a little more challenging. The classes I had were located in different buildings so my human services class was in a building I've never been in. Of course I asked for directions from a couple of staff members and nobody could tell me where this building was. I whipped out my google maps and it took me to the correct building but I ended up ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE BUILDING in a gated community. I had to walk all the way back around just to get into the building. I got into the classroom which was extremely hot and I was sweating like a pig. I never even sweat! At this point I'm thinking it's just not my day. My professor turned out super nice & I like the course so it didn't end up all that bad. The next two classes I had for the day were located in another building but I knew where it was! Lucky me. This was my English class which is actually so far my favorite course. My professor is super goofy and laughs at everything so it makes class less awkward and more fun to participate. For the rest of the week I had those classes again & I had my psychology class. That class is three hours long and all my professor does is talk. I don't mind because the conversation is pretty interesting but I get super tired and restless and just want to leave. Three hours ?? It feels like forever when someone just sits and talks the whole time. I'm just glad my psychology professor has a sense of humor because three hours would be way too long I don't think I'd survive. My second week didn't go as well. I actually missed an hour and a half of one of my three hour classes but that's another story. Basically my first week experience was pretty well. Everyone seems much more mature in college. I like the setting and environment and I like that I don't have to stay in school from 8am to 3pm every single day. I also haven't gotten a crazy workload and I've understood all the material I've gotten. So far so good...