

# ALLIANCE STUDENT SUCCESS NEWSLETTER

Your connection to all things student success at Cambridge College.

Hello Cambridge College Community. Welcome to our May 2021 edition of Alliance, our Student Success Newsletter. Much has happened since the publication of our last issue. George Floyd's death has been ruled a murder, and his killer has been convicted. The U.S. has also turned the tide on COVID-19 with over 100 million people fully vaccinated. Vaccination rates are growing quickly and COVID-19 positive cases are on the decline. At this rate, we are hopeful for more reopening soon. This also will likely have an impact on the College's plans for the fall. Read our later piece on the summer pilot and fall reopening plans for more details.

We are very excited about this issue. In it, you will learn more about our Early College program with Somerville Public Schools. You will also read about the CC Global Business to Business model and its potential for changing how CC connects with students. Finally, you will hear from panelists about our conversations on race panel discussions with Dr. FeLisa Albert, Ed Stone, and Courtenay Griffin and about the CELT plans to pilot new learning modalities for the summer and fall. Finally, we will round out the issue with a congratulatory note to all of our new CC spring 2021 graduates.

We hope you enjoy the issue!

THIS PUBLICATION IS  
BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE TITLE III TASK FORCE AND THE  
OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Designed by Leili Ansari

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# ACADEMIC SUCCESS

## WHAT IS THE EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAM?

The Somerville Public Schools - Cambridge College Early College Program is part of the Somerville High School Beyond the Classroom Learning initiative. It is a free program offered to Somerville high school students who are more likely to be underrepresented in higher education, especially English learners, students with disabilities, low-income students, and students who are from racial/ethnic groups historically underrepresented in higher education.

The Early College Program recruits students during the fall of 10th grade with student and classroom outreach efforts from both Somerville H.S. teachers and staff and Cambridge College staff and faculty. Students who are interested apply and are interviewed and accepted during the late fall. All students who meet the entrance eligibility are entered into a lottery and selected for participation in the program at random, with priority given to English Learners and Students with Disabilities. Students are selected for additional space that becomes available by lottery as well.

### NUMBER OF EARLY COLLEGE STUDENTS ENROLLED BY TERM



### COLLEGE CREDITS EARNED/ ATTEMPTED BY TERM



Early college students saved up to **\$86,208** on college tuition

Students selected for the program commit to participating for the second half of 10th grade, as well as in 11th and 12th grades. During each year, they participate in increasingly more college coursework on campus at Cambridge College during the school day in the program's Liberal Arts Pathway. In total, they can earn up to 13 highly-transferable college credits for free. In addition to taking college courses,

students practice college readiness skills that prepare them for their college coursework, and they are supported throughout their college experience. They also participate in a career-readiness curriculum that informs them of pathways in the Liberal Arts and teaches them career-readiness and employability skills, and they receive support for college searches, visits, and applications.

Students selected during the fall of 10th grade begin the program in the spring of 10th grade and take college and career readiness workshops at Somerville H.S. These workshops support students with career searches and provide direct instruction and hands-on practice in many key college readiness areas, such as self-advocacy, reading and writing preparation, time management, organization, and other college success skills.

In 11th grade, students take two college classes at Cambridge College: World History and Engineering, Technology, and Art. They also attend an Academic Support Class three days per week at Somerville H.S. for two blocks per day. They receive study time, direct support, and push-in career and college skills supports.

In the 12th grade, students take two college-level classes, Introduction to Social Justice and Digital Storytelling. They also attend an Academic Support Class during the fall. The 12th grade Academic Support Class follows the same curriculum and design as the Somerville H.S. Academic Support class, but with more emphasis on independent study time and college search support.

In total, students who complete the program earn 13 credits, but they also get to see what it is like to be a college student and what it takes to be successful in college. In designing this program, administrators at both Somerville H.S. and Cambridge College learned much about the differences in expectations between high school and college course work. This program makes those differences explicit in a supportive environment where students are supported toward success but can also fail in a supportive environment. In the end, they all learn what it means to be a college student and how to navigate college classes and systems. This ultimately encourages more students to attend college and helps to close the achievement gap.

## grammarly DID YOU KNOW?

Cambridge College and Cambridge College Global offer FREE Grammarly Premium access to all staff and faculty, and students actively participating in a course!

Grammarly is accessed through a simple email invitation to your Cambridge College student email. Once activated, Grammarly can be used as a web-based service (for document scanning for grammar and plagiarism), a standalone app (for your computer or mobile device) or as a browser plug-in! There is even a plug-in for Microsoft Office, allowing for more accuracy in Word, PowerPoint and Outlook.

Currently, we have a total of 732 active users. If you have yet to activate your account and make use of this resource, what are you waiting for? Connect with your advisor today to discuss how to get active with Grammarly Premium!

### IN THE LAST 30 DAYS:

Communications have improved by **71%**

2042 sessions with errors  
1073 improvements

Students have logged **183 hours** and checked over **513,000 words**

CC users saved **450-900 hours** of editing with Grammarly (that's a 10-20% efficiency impact!)

Easily the best metric, though, is that the predominant tones found in the writing of CC's students and staff have been:

**CONFIDENT**  
14%

**FRIENDLY**  
22%

**OPTIMISTIC**  
10%

These are certainly tones we all need more of in the world right now!



*Caitrin Brisson is the Senior Director of Academic and Corporate Partnerships for NEIB at Cambridge College. Caitrin and her 3-member team work tirelessly to develop relationships with both academic and employment agencies to highlight what NEIB can offer. Balancing an extensive work-load during an unprecedented pandemic, although challenging, has allowed the B2B team to get creative, support current partners, and gain new ones!*

# 10 QUESTIONS WITH CAITRIN BRISSON

Responses recorded by Kathleen Adler

## Can you give us a glimpse into your role as Senior Director of Academic and Corporate Partnerships?

My role as Senior Director of Academic and Corporate Partnerships is to build and nurture our partner relationships for New England Institute of Business (NEIB) at Cambridge College. I am fortunate to work alongside a very hard-working and dedicated team of directors: Amy Amaru, Diane Higgins, and Stephanie Riccardi.



AMY  
AMARU



DIANE  
HIGGINS



STEPHANIE  
RICCARDI

Through our partnership model, we provide partner employees with an affordable pathway to further their education through our degree and certificate programs and stay ahead of the curve by developing and learning new skills through our robust professional development training programs.

## Could you explain a bit about the Academic and Corporate Partnership Programs and what they entail?

We have 200+ corporate and academic partners nationwide across a wide spectrum of industry verticals. Through these partnerships, the assigned director conducts on-site and online student recruitment events and facilitates other marketing activities to promote NEIB programs to their employees and students. In addition to an affordable tuition rate, we provide our partner organizations with a variety of professional development opportunities to help them attract, train, and retain a highly engaged and productive workforce.

## In a nutshell, how does your team navigate creating new partners?

Partner prospecting is a key function of the team's dedicated efforts to continue to grow our partner affiliations. We look to partner with companies and organizations that value and invest in their employees by encouraging professional development

and providing pathways for career growth. Beyond a generous tuition assistance program, we also look at company size, industry, program alignment, and their commitment to provide professional development training to help foster upskilling among their employees.

## You've been with NEIB for quite a while. How does that experience strengthen your leadership?

Through my 11-year tenure, I have had the opportunity to serve in a variety of positions within Student Services. Having a strong background in this area has allowed me to understand the student experience from the start of the application to graduation. In January 2020, I transitioned into this new role serving as the Senior Director of Academic and Corporate Partners for NEIB. I am so fortunate to work alongside a team of staff and faculty dedicated to the success of students and am grateful to be a part of growing the online division for CC.

## What most excites you about the possibilities of the Corporate Partnership model?

As we evolve into Cambridge College Global (CCG), I am most excited about our ability to expand our program offerings to attract new partners within a variety of different industries and verticals. The fully online student can learn from anywhere and, as we expand our footprint both nationally and internationally, this widens our market and provides ample opportunity for recruitment.

## How would the team approach an academic partnership differently than a corporate partnership?

An academic partnership is an agreement with another academic institution, which involves mapping out credits from another institution to determine what is possible for a seamless transfer. When prospecting an academic institution, the focus is on program alignment, and identifying institutions that have a similar mission and student demographic. Our academic partnership focus is on upward matriculation and recruiting students from another institution to enroll in our NEIB online programs. For our corporate partnerships, we work directly with company leaders and HR directors to promote affordable higher education and professional development training opportunities to their employees. Both academic and corporate partnership efforts require building strong relationships, working closely together to achieve goals, and being responsive to needs as they arise.

## How has your team's approach been impacted by the global pandemic?

Prior to the pandemic, the team was accustomed to going on-site to partner organizations and institutions to conduct information sessions, attend benefit fairs, set up and staff information tables, or facilitate "lunch and learn" events. Fortunately, our partners have been responsive to the transition to virtual recruitment efforts by allowing us to conduct webinars with their employees and attend virtual education fairs. Through rigorous prospecting efforts, the team has brought in many new academic and corporate partnerships. Despite this, the lockdown of the economy, full-time remote work, and the health and job security concerns of many employees resulting from the pandemic over the last 15 months have had a negative effect on NEIB's (and many other higher education institutions') inquiries and enrollment. We collectively feel we are able to better reach our audience in person vs. behind a computer screen and are eager to get back to our on-site recruitment efforts.

## In your opinion, what makes NEIB and Cambridge College the right place to partner with?

NEIB at Cambridge College has been educating working professionals for over 110 years and is a pioneer in online learning. We have a proven track record of success with our graduates: we know 92% indicated they are able to perform their job more effectively as a result of their education from NEIB and 46% have received a job promotion or expanded responsibilities upon completing their degree. We are committed to providing high-quality and affordable education that can be completed anytime, anywhere...why would anyone not want to partner with us?!

## What are you most looking forward to in 2021?

Succeeding! As we evolve into Cambridge College Global (CCG), I look forward to growing the online division and carrying out our mission to provide academically excellent, time-efficient, and cost-effective higher education for a diverse population of working adults for whom those opportunities may have been limited or denied.

## Now for a serious question: favorite Boston restaurant and why?

You can't beat the North End on a cold winter night. Nothing is cozier than going upstairs to eat at La Famiglia Giorgio's with the fireplace roaring! I can assure you that you will leave with a full belly and a smile on your face!

# THE EARLY COLLEGE JUSTFLIX PROJECT

BY DR. DIVYA ANAND, SENIOR FACULTY & EARLY COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR

In spring 2021, the Early College Program collaborated with the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at the Harvard Law School to offer the course “Storytelling through Film and Video” centered around *JustFlix*, a community justice storytelling project for youth.

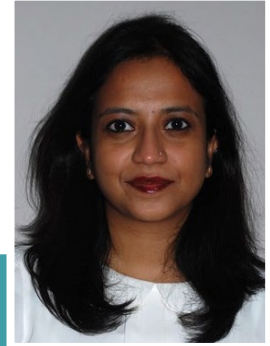
*JustFlix* was created by Dr. David Harris at the Houston Institute as part of its Houston/Marshall Plan for Community Justice where the “Just” stands for justice. In the U.S., citizenship, which translates to membership and participation, has systematically excluded many communities and individuals. This exclusion is further heightened for youth and for youth in communities otherwise underserved by mainstream institutions.

Taking this into consideration, *JustFlix* is designed to provide high school students with an opportunity to assert their agency, membership, and participation within their communities. Drawing inspiration from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s notion of “beloved community,” it offers young people the opportunity to identify, appreciate, and celebrate the assets in their communities, thereby becoming participants in community-driven rebuilding.

Co-taught by Emmy-award-winning producer Bob Glover, Cambridge College Learning Specialist Kathleen Hartnett, and myself, the “Storytelling Through Video and Film” course via the *JustFlix* project incorporated storytelling, social justice, and film-making components to introduce youth to the power of storytelling using their cell phones. The first five weeks of the course covered topics of social justice, followed by *JustFlix* documentation training anchored in techniques of building community solidarity and awareness in pursuit of justice through storytelling.

In the words of one student, a useful skill he learned from the course is that “speaking up is very useful”, as was learning to “take advantage of time and other valuable resources”. Another senior from Somerville high school echoes that learning to ask open-ended questions and having the freedom to choose the topics for the *JustFlix* story were very different from their high school experience. Freedom to pursue your choice of topic with no limitations and the versatility of the project resonated the most with yet another student, along with learning video editing skills that he hopes to use in college and beyond.

As instructors from Cambridge College, both Ms. Hartnett and I also recorded our own *JustFlix* stories, co-learning from and with our students sharing their expertise. The support and guidance of Bob Glover in simultaneously learning and teaching this project have been invaluable. The range and depth of the story topics, use of music, visuals, and editing techniques was truly inspiring and moving to witness. Our hope is with *JustFlix* and the “Storytelling through Film and Video” course that the Early College Program builds a strong foundation to set students up for success beyond the program.



## ABOUT DR. ANAND

Divya Anand, PhD, is a senior instructor at the School of Undergraduate Studies. She is the founding director of Gaia Connections, an educational consultancy and a founding member of the Color Coalition, a grassroots advocacy group based in Medford, MA. Her monograph, *Reimagining Nations and Rethinking Nature: Contemporary Eco-Political Controversies in India and Australia*, was published by Primus Books in 2019. Her current research focuses on the intersections of education and racism to propose a transformative justice approach towards systemic change.  
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## EARLY COLLEGE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Selected survey responses from early college student participants in the “Storytelling Through Video and Film” course

### What was your overall experience with the course and *JustFlix* in particular?

“I liked doing it, it was kinda difficult since it was my first time doing something like this, but I found it good in the end.”

“It was great, I love learning about telling a story by video.”

“Excellent.”

### How was this class different from your high school experience?

“Having to remind myself what to do, and think ahead or prepare ahead to finish the project was harder than I thought, while in high school, teachers try to help you understand things better or help you with the work.”

### What were some of the biggest challenges and how did you overcome them?

“I think getting the creative juices working was the most difficult part, it was really difficult to know exactly what I wanted to put on the video, or what I should, how I should put it, etc.”

“My biggest challenge was finding a good setting to film my interviews, yet I came to realize that as long as people are focused on the responses from the people, that’s all that matters.”

### What skills or tools have you learned in this course that may be useful to you in the future?

“I think time management and commitment to something may be things that can help me.”

### What aspects of this course were most useful or valuable?

“I would say even though the material was rather hard, the teachers and professors helped a lot to understand the concepts and ideas better.”

### How would you improve this course?

“Make things more accessible and something that everyone will be able to apply in their lives. I mention this a lot, but my vision is that this generation is able to implement great ideas to simplify the school system and even change the world in a good way.”

“For me, this course was great.”

# MEET THE “BACKBONE OF A NATION” PANELISTS

IN CONVERSATION WITH DR. FELISA ALBERT, ED STONE, AND COURTENAY GRIFFIN



## What is your role at Cambridge College and what classes do you teach?

Academic Success Coach and Senior Faculty in the Wellness and Health Promotion program in the School of Undergraduate Studies.

## Who is your top she-ro and why?

My first heroes were the Black women in my family who embodied Black beauty, intellect, confidence, strength, love, pride, and resilience. Because their voices were powerful, I was empowered to use my voice the same way. My village made sure I learned not only how to love my brown skin but more importantly, that I was beautifully imperfect.

## Why was it important for you to create and lead the “Honoring Women’s History Month: Backbone of a Nation” panel?

In the midst of dealing with the aftereffects of two pandemics, historical racism and COVID-19, this country also saw history being made by electing our first Black female Vice President, Kamala Harris. Based on historical record numbers, Black women galvanized voters to support not only Vice President Harris but they were also the force behind the election of President Joe Biden. These contributions are just a few of the ways in which Black women have recently impacted American society and more importantly, their accomplishments come off the heels of a strong legacy of Black women’s contributions to American society and culture. Black women have risen above centuries of oppression so that, today, after years of dealing with society’s racist and sexist misconceptions, with brutal hostilities and unthinkable mistreatment, not only are they supporting their families, but Black women are also leading research in the health care fields, corporations, organizations, the military, and our state and federal governments, to name a few. Although Black history continues to be left out or altered from American history, there is no American history without Black History. That said, I will continue to acknowledge and honor Black history, especially for Black women who continue to be the backbone of this nation.

## There is no American history without Black History.

## What is your role at Cambridge College and what classes do you teach?

PT Student Services Coordinator, DSO, and Adjunct Faculty in the School of Undergraduate Studies, School of Management, and School of Education.

## Who is your top she-ro and why?

My top she-ro is my late mother Shirley J. McClure-Thomas. My mom was a proud single mother of 5 children who displayed strong work ethic and dedication. I witnessed her catching 3 buses in the snow to put me and my sibling through private school. She was committed to education and community involvement.

## Why was it important for you to join the “Honoring Women’s History Month: Backbone of a Nation” panel?

It was important to me to participate in the “Honoring Women’s History Month because I am dedicated to paying it forward, to social justice and access for all.



## What is your role at Cambridge College and what classes do you teach?

I serve as a Senior Instructor in the Graduate School of Psychology and Counseling at the Charlestown, MA campus. I have taught a variety of classes in this program ranging from treatment specific classes, like Counseling Techniques with Multiproblem Families in Changing Communities - which I teach as a solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) class - to social theory and cultural responsiveness courses, such as The Life of the Family in Context and Perspectives in Cross-Cultural Counseling. I also have taught two classes within the Alcohol and Drug Counseling Certificate Program. Those classes are Alcohol and Drugs in Society, and Family Treatment of Substance Abuse. I approach each of these classes through a



race-conscious lens and particularly value the opportunity to explore issues of race, culture, privilege, and difference with future generations of mental health counselors.

## Who is your top she-ro and why?

I’m going to take the easy way out and give 3 heroes. The first two are my mother and my grandmother. My grandmother is the matriarch of the family and the glue that holds everyone together. She raised 11 children and she instilled in all of them the importance of family, community, and empowerment. I have to include her on this list because she played such an instrumental role in who my mother is today. My mother is the one person who I would say has had the greatest impact on the way I see and understand the world because she has never been someone to let others write her story for her. She’s one of those people who told me I could do or be anything and she meant it when she said it. The third she-ro is Madam C.J. Walker, who was born to parents who had previously been enslaved, and grew to become the first self-made female millionaire in the country...and she did it by selling a homemade line of hair products for Black women. This feels especially relevant in our current times as I view economic empowerment as one of the primary means of uplifting Black people. Closing the wage gap is an essential step, but in this country, ownership is how you build and distribute wealth and Madam C.J. Walker epitomized that by building an empire and using it as a mechanism for uplifting her community.

## Why was it important for you to join the “Honoring Women’s History Month: Backbone of a Nation” panel?

This one’s easy. I get to see the strength, power, and resiliency of Black women every day. But what isn’t an everyday occurrence is the opportunity to use a platform like this one to celebrate the strength, power, and resilience of just a few of the Black women who make this college what it is. Dr. Felisa Albert gave me a chance to do that by inviting me to join that panel, and I am exceedingly grateful to her, Che Madyun, Courtenay Griffin, and Dr. Thulani DeMarsay for welcoming me into this space and sharing their gifts with me and with the Cambridge College community.

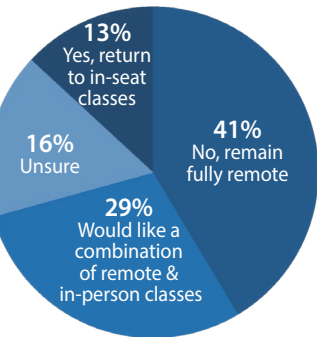
# REOPENING SUMMER & FALL 2021

BY BROOKS WINCHELL, CELT DIRECTOR

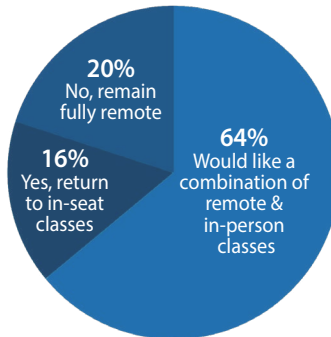
In the middle of the spring term, Cambridge College launched both a student and a faculty survey. The point of these surveys was to understand student and faculty feelings about returning to campus in the summer and fall, as well as their preferences for learning modalities. Below are some key findings from these surveys.

## SHOULD CC RETURN TO IN-SEAT INSTRUCTION THIS FALL?

### Student survey



### Faculty survey



As the results clearly show, students and faculty have an interest in returning to in-person for some classes and activities, but they also like the flexibility of remote learning and have become accustomed to ZOOM classes. Many students actually prefer these classes to in-person classes and would rather sign up for ZOOM classes.

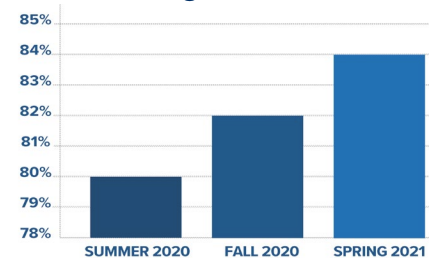
In line with our students' and faculty's expressed desires, but wanting to test out a campus experience, this summer 2021, Cambridge College will be running approximately 10 pilot courses. These courses will be taught at our Charlestown campus this summer and will be held over ZOOM, but there is also an option for some students to attend in-person if they want.

This pilot will help Cambridge College to understand the technology and pedagogy (teaching approach) required to effectively deliver classes in-person & via ZOOM. The purpose is to optimize this modality—we will be able to learn what works and what doesn't, and then make it more widely available for the fall term. As has been widely acknowledged by teachers who have taught in this modality in the past, it is a challenging teaching medium. We are hopeful that we can develop some best-practice strategies that will allow Cambridge College to be a leader in this modality moving forward.

This fall, Cambridge College is not planning a full return to campus like other, more traditional, schools. However, we are planning some partial returns with some staff and classes on campus (with distancing requirements, as of the time of this publication). The College is also optimistic and is planning on offering some in-person classes as

well as some in-person & ZOOM classes to help get students who prefer learning in-person back in the classroom. That said, approximately half of our classes will continue to be taught via ZOOM or ZOOM & in-person, in line with student and faculty feedback.

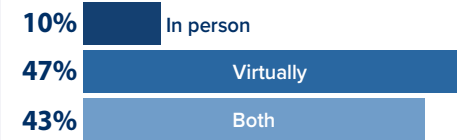
### Percentage of student respondents who rated quality of remote instruction as good or excellent



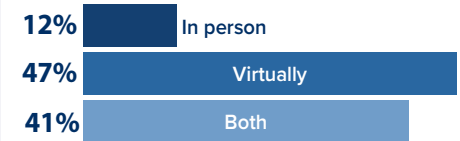
Overall the College will be back in the fall, but not completely, and not in the sense of pre-COVID classes. There will be a new normal, which will require flexibility. Students may come to campus for their business (financial services, classes, support services, etc.), but they will not be required to come to campus since we are converting all or most of our College services to provide both in-person and remote access. Students who want to come to campus will likely be able to do so, but those who prefer to interact virtually, both with offices and classes, will also be able to do so.

## HOW STUDENTS WOULD PREFER TO INTERACT WITH STUDENT SUPPORT

### Student Financial Services



### Academic Advising



At Cambridge College, we recognize the need to return to normal, but we also recognize that times and people have changed, and we owe it to our students and faculty to honor their expressed wishes and adapt accordingly. As such, this fall, we will offer as much flexibility as possible. We hope you will help us to understand what is working and what is not as we move forward!

Questions, comments, or feedback about this newsletter?

Email [studentsuccess@cambridgecollege.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@cambridgecollege.edu)

## SUMMER FAFSA DEADLINE: JUNE 15

Students taking classes this summer: submit your FAFSA now. Need help? Talk to your [Financial Aid Counselor](#) today.

Learn more at [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov)

## CONGRATS CLASS OF 2021!

On behalf of everyone in the Office of Academic Affairs, warmest congratulations on your well-deserved success! We hope that the education you have received, in combination with your passion and grit, will serve you well as you embark on your life post-graduation. Remember to never lose that passion. Be bold and persistent, and live a beautiful life. Most importantly, remember to keep an open mind and take a chance occasionally on a new idea, a new path, or a new friendship.

In the words of author Neil Gaiman "... go, and make interesting mistakes, make amazing mistakes, make glorious and fantastic mistakes. Break rules. Leave the world more interesting for your being here."