



BLACK
LIVES
MATTER

ALLIANCE STUDENT SUCCESS NEWSLETTER

Photo by Gayatri Palit

Your connection to all things student success at Cambridge College.

Welcome to our new Student Success Newsletter!

Cambridge College's student success initiatives continue to grow, and much of this change is the result of our Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant. Each issue of *Alliance* will include messages from students, faculty, and staff across the College to highlight these initiatives' ongoing efforts and far-reaching effects.

This month, we feel it's important to emphasize our strength as a community. 2020 has brought some of the most challenging and uncertain times in America's history. The COVID-19 pandemic alone has destabilized the country, damaged the economy, impacted jobs, and interrupted education at all levels. All of this has disproportionately affected our most vulnerable citizens. At the same time, racial tensions are high, and we just had one of the most contentious elections in history, with the country divided between Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

On Saturday, November 7th, 2020, the country learned that Joe Biden is the President-elect. He is now calling for the country's stabilization, the end to a rhetoric of division, a return to science, and control of the pandemic. Despite our personal political affiliations, these are goals that we should all aspire to if we are to return to a sense of normalcy. We need to follow truth and reason; these are among the fundamental aims of higher education.

We are united by these values and a shared vision for an inclusive, more just world. It is through this lens that we have compiled our November 2020 issue of *Alliance*.

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

Designed by Leili Ansari

IN THIS ISSUE:

Academic Success Resources

- Tutoring
- ZOOM Tips

Meet Ali Stroczyński, NEIB
eLearning Manager

About our Virtual Coffee Hours

Student Spotlight
What does the election mean to
you?

Meet Santia Lindor & Charlie
DiSilva, English Conversation
Group Facilitators

A Letter to our Students

Scholarship Deadline

ACADEMIC SUCCESS RESOURCES

TUTORING FOR STUDENTS

When the pandemic hit, all of our Cambridge College Professional Tutors reacted quickly and moved their tutoring platforms online. Luckily, we already had our Starfish platform in place, and students were already accustomed to online scheduling. Our tutors were able to add fully-online options; when students register for tutoring appointments, they are now automatically sent ZOOM links.

Along with moving all of the writing, statistics, math, accounting, ABA, and MTEL tutors online, the CELT hired two new “Technology facilitators”: students who are available to help faculty and students with any of their technology needs. This has helped many faculty members and students get ready for remote summer and fall teaching and learning.



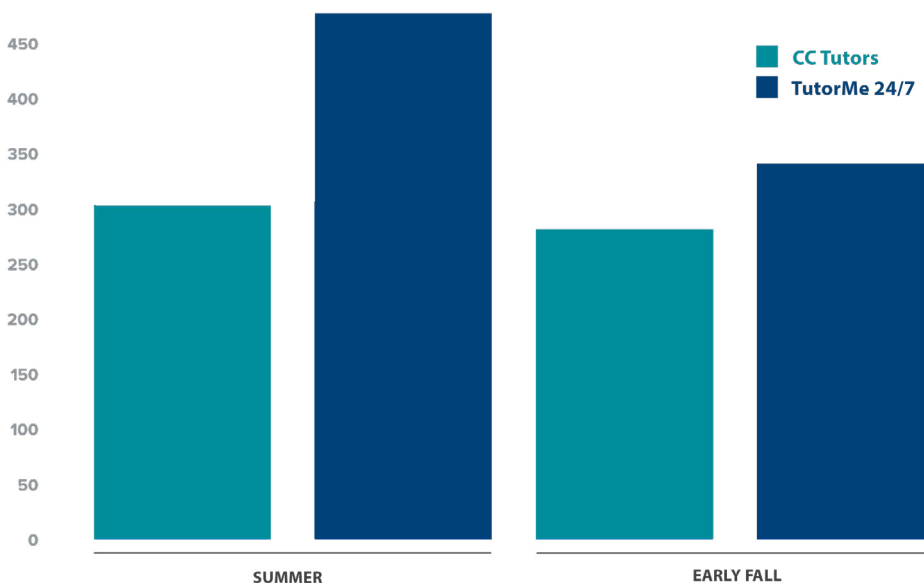
Supplementing our CC professional tutors, we also offer students access to TutorMe 24/7 online tutoring in just about any subject area. Many students appreciate the convenience of this service and utilize it weekly for feedback on their work before submitting it to faculty.

7 TIPS TO MAKE THE MOST OF ZOOM

Most of us are on ZOOM a lot, and now most students are taking one or more classes via ZOOM. Check out these 7 suggestions for maximizing your ZOOM experience.

- 1 Let others know when you plan to share your screen and be sure to stop sharing during discussions.
- 2 Use non-verbal feedback while on ZOOM such as virtual 👍, 🙌, or 😂. Celebrate your peers with a well-timed 🎉.
- 3 Zoom from a location that is private and free of distractions, if possible.
- 4 Use the chat to talk with students or faculty, but know that instructors may not be able to respond to chat posts while teaching.
- 5 Make sure your name is accurate; if it's not, edit your name in your Profile settings.
- 6 Mute your microphone when you're not talking.
- 7 Although not required, video is strongly encouraged, especially during discussions. Feeling adventurous? Use your own virtual background!

SUMMER & EARLY FALL TUTORING SESSIONS ACROSS ALL CC SCHOOLS





**New England
Institute of Business**
at Cambridge College



MEET ALI STROCZYNSKI

Responses recorded by Bill Lynch

Alison (Ali) Stroczyński is the Manager of the Award-winning eLearning team at NEIB. Coming from a background in Digital/ Fine Art, Education and Instructional Design from Penn State University, Ali started as an Instructional Designer with NEIB in 2014, and now leads the team building NEIB's catalog of online courses. Here, Ali provides some great insight into the work she and her team do for our students.

Could you give us a glimpse into what an Instructional Designer does?

We work alongside Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and Program Chairs (PCs), to develop online courses. My expertise lies in building courses in Canvas, our Learning Management System (or LMS). We use outcomes-based learning models which help to make the course flow and function, then incorporate online learning technology, and we also do video and audio editing for any lectures or in-house multimedia content. We have a lot of freedom to explore new technology and challenge the traditional online course structure to make an engaging course.

We have a lot of freedom to explore new technology and challenge the traditional online course structure

What, in your opinion, makes eLearning/instructional design at NEIB different?

We work collaboratively with many other areas of the College in creating our courses. Our opinions are welcomed and taken seriously when creating a course, and there is a level of respect we are shown that makes our contributions feel appreciated. This is typically a challenge for other institutions who may not value the input that can come from an Instructional Designer.

Do you have a favorite course feature or proudest accomplishment so far?

With the implementation of MindEdge in some of our courses, I think we have opened the door to the best way to give alternatives to an expensive textbook. Our team worked hard to get this integration working and, I think, it has been a great success. Additionally, the scheduling method we have recently implemented to assign Instructional Designers to projects, has drastically improved team morale and work ethic, and is a method which I helped to design.

What is the biggest challenge for you and your team?

We do incredible work at NEIB but each year we fall short of the amount and quality of work we could accomplish due to having a small team, and tight timelines for much of our work. We hope, someday, to have a larger team so there is more capacity to implement new technologies and methods.

What excites you most about continuing to become part of the Cambridge College network?

The sense of community that Cambridge College has. I enjoy seeing that be extended to include NEIB students and teams as we bring our ideas together!

I am ever thankful for my team at NEIB; we have a mighty personality

Do you have a favorite holiday? If so, which one and why?

Halloween, because there is nothing better than getting creative with a costume!

Given the season, what is something you are thankful for?

I am ever thankful for my team at NEIB; we have a mighty personality as a group. I have stayed with this team despite many frustrations and setbacks, which goes to show how special my coworkers are, and the capacity they have to keep me motivated and growing.

What are you most looking forward to in 2021?

Summer! Working from home full time certainly has its perks, but warm weather is what I will always look forward to each year!

Now for a serious question: favorite style/type of pizza and why?

As a Jersey girl, I grew up very "pizza spoiled"...My all-time favorite is chicken, bacon, ranch on thick crust with a ranch and cheese white sauce!

STUDENT VIRTUAL COFFEE HOURS

Undergraduate Academic Advising initially created Virtual Coffee Hours to provide students with a place to gather and experience community in the midst of a pandemic shutdown. In the beginning, some virtual coffee hours were theme based (e.g., Parenting during COVID), and others were informal with the opportunity to simply check-in.

In the aftermath of the tragic murder of George Floyd, undergraduate success coaches felt it was important to focus Coffee Hour discussions on race and racial injustices so that students could come together, listen, and share their reactions to what was happening in our country, communities, classrooms, and homes. We are very fortunate to have Dr. FeLisa Albert as one of our academic success coaches, as she is an expert in racial and health disparities and in facilitating race discussions. (See the feature on Dr. Albert in our October Newsletter.)

With Dr. Albert as a facilitator, Undergraduate Advising created a place where Black and brown students are surrounded by allies while they voice their thoughts, concerns, honest emotions, and reactions. It was important to provide a place where others could listen, especially our white students

and staff, so that those who share feel that they are heard. This year's events have highlighted the need to bring people together to discuss race inequities and injustices that are not being addressed. As noted by Dr. Albert, "we must figure out how to get to a shared vision of racial equity. Action must then follow."

Moving into the fall term, Undergraduate Advising continues to host Virtual Coffee Hours with a series entitled, "If Race Matters then Conversations Are a Must". What started with only the Boston campus has expanded to include representatives from our locations in Springfield, Lawrence, and California. A few faculty and staff have been invited to join, but conversations are geared towards our students.

If we want to address systematic racism and injustices, we must begin by talking and hearing each other. Virtual Coffee Hours provide a place to talk and listen with support. With each conversation, people walk away with renewed understanding and valuable insights. The next Virtual Coffee Hour conversation is Tuesday, December 8th. All students are encouraged to attend "If Race Matters then Conversations Are a Must."

SIGN UP HERE:
<https://tinyurl.com/vchregister>



SHAQUILLE JONES

How do you feel about attending the Virtual Coffee Hour discussions to talk about race during a time when racism and racial tensions are front and center?

I feel that the Virtual Coffee Hour discussions are critical and are needed, especially now. We need to create more spaces where students and faculty members can come together and say, "it's just been very hard being myself today." Sometimes, the people we interact with, like our teachers or coworkers, overlook the Black community's burden during 2020. Ever since the murder

of George Floyd and the rampant support of the Black Lives Matter movement, Black people have taken the forefront in media, office discussions, and even corporate policies. Black and brown people carry the burden to participate in conversations in which

What I appreciate most is I get to show up as my most authentic self

innocent Black people who have lost their lives due to police violence are sometimes supported, but also sometimes demonized. As a community, we must continue to have these conversations, led by Dr. Albert through the Virtual Coffee Hours, where people feel heard, safe, and welcomed.

What are the benefits of having a space created for students to discuss race and other topics that affect their educational journeys?

The benefits of having the Virtual Coffee Hour space are plentiful as far as building community and support, but what I appreciate most is I get to show up as my most authentic self. I feel that society keeps trying to distinguish between being Black and being a student, as if being one means you can't be the other. The fact that people try to separate our identities is part of the problem because if you overlook one aspect, you're not getting the full picture of who we are. Besides our race and ethnicity, this space allows people to showcase all aspects of who they are, such as mothers, educators, advocates, and first-generation college students. In the future, I envision this being a space where future students and faculty can come together, network, make connections, and have a safe space to feel heard and understood. I plan to continue my journey within this space, and I encourage and welcome others to join me.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

What does this election mean to our students?

On Friday November 6th, we sent a message to students in our Office of Academic Affairs Weekly Update asking, "what does this election mean to you?" We received several responses, both before and after learning of Joe Biden's win.



MEET SANTIA LINDOR & CHARLIE DISILVA

ENGLISH CONVERSATION GROUP FACILITATORS



Why do you think the English Conversation Group (ECG) is beneficial to Cambridge College students?

Cambridge College is a diverse and friendly environment. With about eight percent of its student body being international students, English may not be the first language for some. In most classes,

it is mandatory for students to participate in class discussions. If English is not their first language, students can be shy or uncomfortable speaking. This can affect students' grades. Being part of an English Conversation Group is definitely beneficial for students because it helps to build more confidence and they learn to speak more fluently. I wish I could've had a program like this at my old school.

Why do you think the ECG is beneficial to Cambridge College students?

The ECG is a safe, low-pressure environment to practice and develop English language skills. We have fun every week and we keep things light. That said, our group members are passionate about improving their language skills, so every week we have open discussions to help develop fluency. We work on vocabulary, especially idioms, phrasal verbs, and collocations to improve range of expression, and practice grammar skills to develop accuracy. Students can bring any questions they have to the group, and we will find the answers together. All of our group members are taking classes at CC in which they must read, write, speak, and listen in English. The ECG is a great supplement to help our students gain confidence with these skills.



What inspired you to become a Facilitator for the ECG?

As an immigrant who speaks two foreign languages, English is not my first language. However, I managed to learn it as quickly as possible in order for me to climb the ladder professionally and socially. I understand the feeling and struggle students experience when they are trying to communicate with others in a language they don't quite understand. As I started to grow professionally, I had to hire a personal coach to work with me on my English pronunciation. As I improved, I became interested in helping other students. I believe that helping others and service are the keys to building a strong and connected community.

What inspired you to become a Facilitator for the ECG?

I taught ESL and trained ESL teachers for 10 years prior to enrolling at Cambridge College to study Elementary Education. In my CC classes, I befriended a number of classmates who were non-native speakers of English. In talking to these students, and then to administrators at the College, we saw an opportunity to offer this resource to CC's many international students. It was very exciting to launch this group and contribute to student success here at CC.

What do you find most rewarding in this experience?

This could be a very long answer! I have learned as much from my international students and friends over the years as they have learned from me. The exposure to different cultures and perspectives is a reward in itself. I have so much respect for

What message would you share with students who are considering joining the ECG?

I understand the feeling and struggle students experience when they are trying to communicate with others in a language they don't quite understand

The ECG can help you expand your vocabulary and speak more fluently. The most important benefit of this program is building your confidence, especially when you have to do a presentation in front of the class. When English is not your first language, it can be very uncomfortable. You

may worry that people will not understand you, or that the class will ask, "What?" or, "Can you say that again?" Every immigrant who didn't speak English fluently before they came to the U.S. has heard these words. I know sometimes that can frustrate you, but don't let that stop you. Practice is the key and you should never stop practicing. We are so fortunate that this program exists at CC, and I would advise you to take advantage of it.

anyone who can take college-level courses in a foreign language. If I can play any small part in helping these students along their journeys, that is hugely rewarding. One of our regular attendees recently told us that spending time talking with us has greatly improved his confidence in his English ability. This is the most rewarding thing that a teacher can hear.

I have so much respect for anyone who can take college-level courses in a foreign language

What message would you share with students who are considering joining the ECG?

My message to these students would be "Give us a try!". It is an available, free, and fun resource with no commitment. Improving our

own language skills will help us in so many different areas of our lives, from professional to personal interactions. Fluency can only be built by time spent practicing the skill. I know from experience that for some of our students, it can be difficult to find opportunities to practice speaking. This group provides that opportunity in a safe, supportive environment.

Interested in joining an English Conversation Group? We now offer two sessions per week. Contact Vera Dimoplou at vera.dimoplou@cambridgecollege.edu for more information.

A LETTER TO OUR STUDENTS

Dear Cambridge College Students,

Since the start of the pandemic, Cambridge College has worked hard to be responsive to the many challenges our students are facing. We quickly moved all advising, success coaching, and tutoring online, offered virtual open office and coffee hours, in addition to scheduling one-on-one meetings with students who needed support. The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and Office of Online Programming began offering regular student and faculty workshops via ZOOM, and we created a laptop loan program to help students who did not have access to a reliable computer to complete their coursework. Our instructors worked hard to teach effectively via ZOOM and to ensure that students are learning and feeling supported.

To find out how students are faring in this remote teaching environment, we administered several surveys and collected important information that helped us improve our teaching and student support services. Finally, to improve communication, we began sending regular student and faculty communications, such

as the Weekly Updates from the Office of Academic Affairs, with information about all the resources the College is offering.

Despite the wonderful way in which our community has come together to face this challenging time, it is important to recognize that we are all feeling the continuing impact of the pandemic and the associated concerns about the safety of our loved ones, our own health, and our jobs. The stress, anxiety, and sense of uncertainty caused by continuing social distancing requirements and the divisive political climate in our nation is causing many of us to feel mentally and physically exhausted, long before the end of the term.

In recognition of the challenges you are facing and overcoming every day, we encourage you to be in touch with your own needs, take care of yourselves, and think creatively about ways to preserve some mental energy for the end of the semester. Remember that social support is one of the most important things we can offer each other during this stressful time. Don't hesitate to reach out to your classmates, instructors, advisors, and coaches for support. They will respond to

you with compassion and understanding. Also, consider taking part in our Virtual Coffee Hours. As described above, as part of our Coffee Hour series, we have created a safe place for students to discuss how racism is impacting their lives. We encourage you to attend the next Virtual Coffee Hour conversation on Tuesday, December 8th, "If Race Matters, Conversations Are a Must" with Dr. FeLisa Albert.

Your Student Success Team

Questions,
comments,
or feedback?

Please email
tracy.mclaughlin@
cambridgecollege.edu

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS APPLICATION DEADLINE

The deadline to apply for Cambridge College scholarships is here! All spring 2021 scholarship application must be submitted by

Tuesday, December 1st

To be eligible for scholarships, students must:

- Be accepted into a certificate or degree program at Cambridge College
- Be currently enrolled in classes
- Have a Social Security number on file at the College

Learn more and apply for available scholarships at: <https://www.cambridgecollege.edu/financial-aid-resources/scholarships>

COMMUNITY HEALING TIME TO GIVE THANKS

In November 2020, our country sent a clear referendum on the President. We need a more stable government to help lead us through these challenging times, to lessen the impact of COVID and help the U.S. safely bring the economy back. In addition, we need a future-forward vision to help re-secure the United States' place in the world. Some of us are democrats and others are republicans, but we are all Americans, and at Cambridge College, we are all one community.

Especially as we move into the holidays, let's all work on putting aside our political views and do our best to be civil to everyone we see. It is challenging enough with the pandemic and racial tensions in America now; we don't also need to be deeply divided over politics. With Thanksgiving coming, let's take a moment to breathe, celebrate, and be grateful for the people in our lives.

Pro-tip: If you're really itching to discuss politics with someone, first ask if they are open to having that conversation before diving right in. Your consideration will be appreciated!