

**Remaining Grounded during Transitions**  
**The 2021 -2022 Annual Report**  
**of the Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities at Brooklyn College**

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## Introduction

The 2021-2022 year was one of transitions, including the gradual resuming of public life amidst the still-present challenges of managing the COVID-19 pandemic and the looming unknown of the monkeypox virus. The Wolfe Institute staff and board continue to dedicate ourselves to the Wolfe's mission of supporting academic excellence and facilitating intellectual discourse in the BC community. The Wolfe Institute had a staff transition this year, and we are also transitioning directors. The outgoing and incoming director, staff, and board are excited to continue the Wolfe Institute's purpose of facilitating academic excellence by supporting numerous events, both online and in person.

## Mission Statement

The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities supports excellence in research, publication, teaching, and all forms of academic discourse on the campus of Brooklyn College. The Institute sponsors a varied series of lectures, seminars, colloquia, conferences, and study groups, often in collaboration with other academic programs and organizations, with the aim of keeping public conversation at Brooklyn College in touch with advances in the humanities and social sciences.

## 2021-2022 Highlights

- Presented the second online Hess residency with [Lisa Lowe, Ph.D.](#) - also the first Asian American Hess Scholar in Residence - which attracted hundreds of viewer-participants from BC and across the USA.
- Presented our second campus-wide reading group, under Prof. Lawrence Johnson's leadership, which focused on the novel by Pulitzer Prize-nominated alum Robert Jones, and which was engaged by more than 100 people, with dozens showing up to each meeting. It culminated in an in-person panel and book signing with the author on May 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Hired a new Wolfe Administrator, BC alum Keanna Benjamin, who in addition to supporting all of the activities of the Wolfe, has greatly contributed to the efficiency and functionality of our work.
- Continued and refined the Rapid Response and Black Lives: Research and Action Engagement Series, which enriched BC classes during the entire year.

- Implemented better methods of tracking attendance, enabling a more accurate record of the number of students and people served.
- Supported the College's first Brooklyn Public Humanities grants, administered by the Center for the Study of Brooklyn.
- Supported the first Wolfe Institute Digital Humanities Fellow grant, organized by the Brooklyn College Library [\[Full Report\]](#).
- Supported 2022 Humanities and Social Sciences Student Expo Faculty Awards to acknowledge faculty who taught and mentored student awardees.
- Completed an audit of Wolfe content on [The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities YouTube page](#), successfully linking all relevant content to a new [Wolfe Institute YouTube landing page](#).
- In conjunction with the staff of The Office of Communications and Marketing, completed a website audit and revision to remain in concert with the full BC website redesign.
- Hosted a Summer 2022 research assistant and created a plan to host a BC Communication major intern in Fall 2022 to develop our social media strategy and posts.

### 2021-2022 by the numbers

*Notwithstanding the slow pivot back to in-person work and events, the switching of many classes between online and in-person, and some professors' lack of clarity regarding what kind of events and speakers were permitted, the quality of our events was high, and most were integrated into existing classes by faculty members. The Wolfe Institute continues to be one of the primary presenters of intellectual events on Brooklyn College's campus, including a broad range of topics, sponsors and cosponsors.*

#### 54 Events Serving the BC Community:

- 54 events, both in-person and virtual events documented between July 2021 and June 2022. These included:
  - 14 Rapid Response events.
  - 11 Black Lives Research and Action Engagements.

#### 47 Separate Cosponsors across Brooklyn College:

- 16 Academic Departments: Africana Studies; Political Science, Anthropology; Art; Business Management; Childhood, Bilingual, & Special Education; Classics; English; History; Judaic Studies; Modern Languages and Literatures; Philosophy; Puerto Rican & Latino Studies; School of Psychology, Counseling, & Leadership; Sociology

- 5 Academic Programs: American Studies, Caribbean Studies, the English MFA programs, Studies in Religion, Women's & Gender Studies
- Departments from all 5 Schools are included in the list of sponsors and cosponsors
- 10 Centers & Institutes: Anti-Racist Pedagogy Working Group, Center for the Study of Brooklyn, Center for Teaching and Learning, H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for American Music, LGBTQ+ Center, The Shirley Chisholm project, Women's Center, Black Faculty and Staff, & Asian American Faculty and staff Association, Muslim Women's Leadership Development Project.
- 4 Student Organizations: Black Student Union; Brooklyn College Anthropology Club; Brooklyn College International Business Association; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Alliance
- 12 Other BC Entities: Black and Latino Male Initiative, Black Faculty & Staff Organization, Brooklyn College Immigrant Student Success Office, Brooklyn College Library, The Common Reader 1619 Project, Division of Student Affairs, Late Antique-Medieval-Early Modern Faculty Working Group, Office of Diversity & Equity, Office of the Humanities & Social Sciences Dean, Office of the President, Student Activities Involvement and Leadership Center (S.A.I.L.), The Student-Faculty Working Group on Indigenous & Native American Studies
- 1 CUNY-wide entity: the Asian-American/Asian Research Institute
- 1 Community Organization: The Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition

## The Wolfe Institute & the Brooklyn College Strategic Plan

### BC Strategic Plan Benchmarks

In previous years, the Wolfe Institute successfully fulfilled every goal outlined for it in The Brooklyn College Strategic Plan; this was no different in FY21. The BC Strategic Plan outlined the following benchmark for year 4 of the current strategic plan, 2021- 2022: "Carry out the plan from Year 3. Implement changes recommended from the program review and evaluation."

As described in last year's FY20 Annual Report, we convened the first The Wolfe Institute Review Committee, which provided useful feedback.

The Committee's suggestion to have BC undergraduates serve on the Wolfe Institute Board has now become part of our standard procedure. Sociology major Princess Kablan, our student representative for the most recent year, was invaluable during our planning meetings. She brought insight into how BC students might react to upcoming programs and events. For example, in our Hess Planning committee meetings, Princess suggested numerous ways in which student activists can interact with the incoming Hess Scholar Barabara Smith during the student luncheon.

We expect our incoming undergraduate board members, Rhema Mills and Gabrielle White, to continue to give us their valuable perspective into what programs will appeal to BC students.

### The Wolfe Institute & the Full Strategic plan, 2021-2022:

The Wolfe Institute's current activities and 2021-2022 goals are aligned with BC's Strategic Plan 2.0:

As a core contributor to the intellectual community of the campus, all Wolfe Institute programs *enhance academic excellence*. In particular, the Rapid Response and Black Lives: Research and Engagement programs directly support classroom guest speakers, ensuring that BC students can meet and learn from the broad networks of our faculty. Similarly, increasing undergraduate, masters', and doctoral students' success is a thread through all of our work. Alongside the entire Brooklyn College community, the Wolfe Institute has continued to develop a nimble, responsive, and efficient structure to serve our students and carry out our mission. This is evident in the series we developed during remote learning that have continued to respond to student and faculty needs. Our ongoing outreach to community collaborators and our new efforts to link internship and networking opportunities to events leverage Brooklyn College's reputation for academic excellence and upward mobility.

### Progress on FY 2021 Goals

- Continue to fulfill the Wolfe Institute mission through a wide variety of intellectually-rich programming.

Achieved: The Wolfe Institute has continued to provide funds for intellectually-rich programming across the different schools and offices of Brooklyn College. These events span a broad spectrum of topics such as feminist activism, sustainability within theatres, and mental health during the pandemic.

- In accordance with the original Brooklyn College Strategic Plan, continue to implement recommendations from the Wolfe Review Committee.

Achieved: *See above in BC Strategic Plan Benchmarks section.*

- Continue to have at least one student as a member of the Wolfe Institute Board.

Achieved: *See above in BC Strategic Plan Benchmarks section.*

- Work towards plans for hybrid and, eventually, in-person events.

Achieved: Several of the events we cosponsored were in-person events. One of our larger events was the final meeting of the Campus-wide Reading Group, a panel in SUBO featuring BC alumni and former staff-person Robert Jones discussing his novel *The Prophets*. While the hybrid event was also live-streamed, many faculty, staff, and students attended – each receiving a free copy of *The Prophets* donated by the publisher and generously signed by Jones.

- Continue to work with the Library and the Writing Across the Curriculum program, as well as other BC offices and departments, to provide easy pathways for faculty to incorporate the Wolfe Institute theme and events into their teaching.

Achieved: The majority of events cosponsored by the Wolfe Institute in FY21 took place during and in conjunction with undergraduate classes. Thus, most speakers and other events were embedded into the fabric of BC classes and curricula. The incoming Interim Wolfe Director is hard at work planning exciting fall events connected to classes in Women's and Gender Studies, Political Science, and other classes. We continue to work closely with the Library, particularly on the creation of LibGuides that provide a single digital location for students and staff to learn more about key Wolfe projects.

- Work with the Magner Career Center to parlay one-time speakers into supporters of BC student and alumnae careers.

Achieved: The uncertainties of the ongoing pandemic and its effect on our local and global economies made achieving this ambitious goal difficult but not impossible. Several of the recent graduates of the School of Business were able to receive weekly or biweekly mentoring sessions regarding careers with several speakers whose presence was co-sponsored by the Wolfe Institute. From these sessions, participating students found jobs in top companies. For example, one student obtained a position in a financial firm in Manhattan; another is now working in an HR firm; and still another became a professional "booker" for fashion shows as a result of the Joseph, Zaq, and Edwin events. Following this success, we have amended The Wolfe Institute guidelines to encourage faculty event hosts to ask speakers about intern and job possibilities for our students at their places of work.

- With support from the BC Administration, increase the number of departments participating in the Black Lives: Research and Action Engagement Series (BLRA).

Deferred: While faculty and departments who had previously participated in the BLRA series continued to do so, departments in the School of Natural and Behavioral Sciences, in particular, did not take advantage of the program. Given that the focus of the Wolfe Institute is *the humanities*, that it is housed in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), and that other BC schools have different needs and sources of support, we have refocused our attention on serving classes in HSS for both the BLRA and Rapid Response programs.

## Wolfe Venture Projects Report

### About BC Venture Project Funding

Recognizing that the Wolfe Institute incurred unintended savings during the 2020 and 2021 semesters because the overwhelming majority of our events were remote, we discussed how to utilize some of these funds in ways that are consistent with our mission and benefit Brooklyn College students and faculty. The result was "BC Venture Projects." Usually, venture capital refers to financing provided to companies that have long-term growth potential. Amid ongoing

austerity, during the 2021-2022 academic year, the Wolfe Institute supported two projects on campus led by other BC entities with separate staff.

This funding has resulted in the first-ever Wolfe Institute/Center for the Study of Brooklyn Public Humanities Grants and the first-ever Wolfe Institute Digital Humanities Fellow.

### The Brooklyn Public Humanities Grant

The Center for the Study of Brooklyn (CSB), under the direction of Professor Emily Tumpson-Molina, used BC Venture Project funds to create The Brooklyn Public Humanities Grant. This grant provided \$5,000.00 to two Grantees, Professors Helen Georgas (Library) and Joseph Entin (English). The grantees had to submit proposals that included information about the potential impact and student involvement the projects could generate, and were chosen by a committee convened by the CSB.

The first grant funded the Spring 2022 issue of [Underwater New York: Three Artists on Brooklyn's Black Waterfront](#) on Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup>. This issue was titled *Three Artists on Brooklyn's Black Waterfront* and featured three artists commissioned to critically engage the histories and futures of the Black diaspora along Brooklyn's waterfront. Those artists are: poet Bernard Ferguson, fiction writer Mateo Askaripour, and visual artist Whit Harris; they reveal Brooklyn's overlapping histories of leisure, labor, forced movement, and a Black middle-class.

In this special issue of the digital platform, these artists' work is accompanied by oral history interviews conducted by founding editor Nicki Pombier. With Pombier, the artists reflect on their early lives, their memories of water, the transmission of family stories, and other wells of creativity. The oral histories presented document Brooklyn's material history through the lived knowledge of its people, joining the objects cataloged on the site as an important locus of memory.

The second Brooklyn Public Humanities Grant was given to support the Brooklyn College Listening Project. Prof. Entin plans to leverage this grant as seed money to obtain additional funds to organize the *"Opening Doors" Black and Indigenous Voices from the Brooklyn College Listening Project*. It will be a public and online exhibition of Black and Indigenous voices drawn from interviews conducted by students through the [Brooklyn College Listening Project](#) (BCLP). The exhibition will feature approximately 10-15 interviews, available both as long-form recordings (BCLP recordings are often at least 30 minutes) and as short podcasts (4-6 minutes).

Related to this project, in spring 2022 Joseph, Phil Napoli, and Jocelyn Wills ran an independent study for several students to learn about documentary techniques and collect some oral histories related to the Covid-19 pandemic that will be included in two archives at Brooklyn College - the Covid-19 archive, administered by the library, and the Brooklyn College Listening Project, a collective project among 10 BC faculty.

### The Wolfe Institute Digital Humanities Fellow

The second BC Venture Project was administered by the Library. Under the leadership of Head Librarian Mary Mallery, Librarian Professor Miriam Deutch leveraged the funds broadly. One-third was used to create the first Wolfe Institute Digital Humanities Fellow for 2022-23. Emily Fairey was the appointed Fellow, and her work and achievements included presenting the Omeka and StoryMaps tools at [NYCDH Week](#) Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> –11<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Of the remaining funds, one-third will be used to create a website focused on the digital humanities (DH). This resource will include digital humanities tools, will list how the Wolfe Institute DH Fellow and the Library can assist faculty and students, and will display examples of student DH projects. The Library has reserved the final third of the money to provide support for DH projects proposed during the 2022-23 academic year.

### HSS Student Expo Faculty Awards

To honor our faculty's work with students, this year, the Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities has partnered with the Humanities and Social Sciences Dean's Office to present a \$500 award to nine Instructors whose students won awards for outstanding research during the 2022 Humanities and Social Sciences Student Expo.

## 2021-2022 Finance Report

### Endowments:

The primary Wolfe Institute account, The Wolfe Endowment, continued to support both the majority of our programs and the majority of our staff. Due to the slow return to having more in-person events, we largely did not need to spend funds on items such as space and catering in FY21. That will change in the coming year, which will stretch Wolfe funds and may result in less money being available for events. *The College previously funded 100% of the Administrator position; in order for the Wolfe to continue to be one of the major sources of support for intellectual programming on campus, the College will need to return to funding this vital part-time position, the Wolfe Institute's only staff person.* The current Director projects that the Wolfe Institute may not be able to fund its Administrator position beyond 2025.

The Hess Endowment funded another vibrant and well-attended week of events, as well as Director and Administrator time spent planning and orchestrating these events. Because the event was 100% virtual, there was a savings of money that will in the future need to be spent on travel and lodging for the Scholar in Residence, as well as room rental, hospitality, and local transportation.

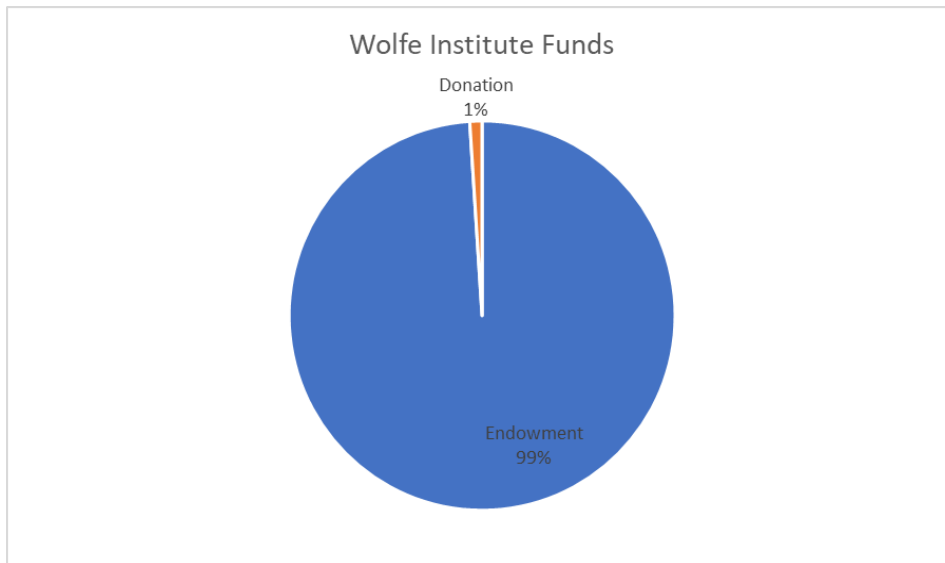
In order to preserve funds for when more events are held in person, the Director chose not to access the Ewen and other endowments held in the Wolfe portfolio.

## FY 21 Finance Report

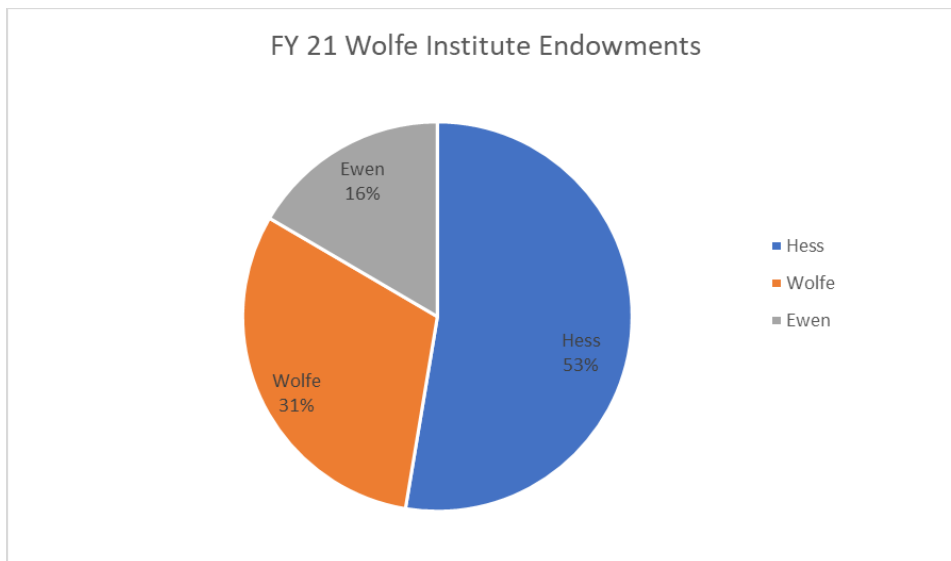


Funding Sources: Endowments & Donations

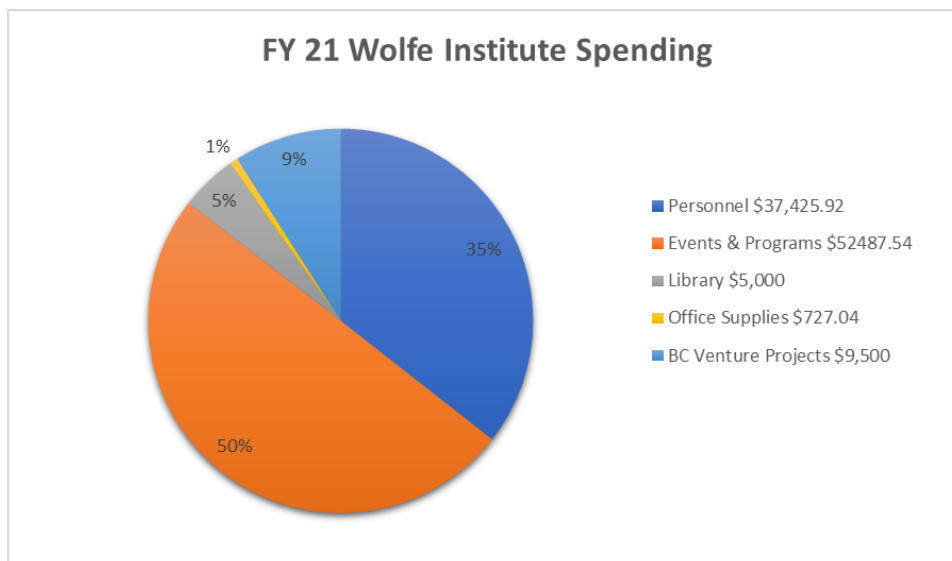
A \$50 donation received in FY 2021 (12/02/21)



FY21 Primary Wolfe Institute Endowments



FY21 Spending



## FY 21 Spending Statement

Our spending reflects our mission and values: support for events that promote academic discourses. To that end, “Events & Programs” and “BC Venture Projects” comprised more than half of all FY21 costs.

The next major expenditure in this fiscal year was seen with “Personnel.” This refers to costs associated with the Wolfe Institute Administrator (formerly funded by the College), the Director, and the Faculty Associate.

This year also saw a decrease in the spending for Office Supplies as a result of our slow return to more in-person work.

Financial reports of the major endowment accounts from BC’s Budget Office are included as an appendix to this report.

## 2021-2022 Staff and Board

### 2021-2022 Wolfe Institute Board

- Prof. Rosamond S. King, Director
- Prof. Lauren Mancina, 2021-2022 Faculty Associate
- Ms. Keanna Benjamin, Administrator (preceded by Anthony Bianco, Administrator)
- Ms. Princess Kablan, a graduating Brooklyn College student, and Sociology Major

### 2021-2022 Wolfe Institute Staff

The Wolfe Institute has a tiny staff, consisting of:

- A Faculty Director, Professor Rosamond S. King (English) with partial reassigned time, who manages staff, provides vision and leadership, oversees all fiscal, logistic, and programming components of the Wolfe Institute, manages communication with faculty and administration, represents the Wolfe Institute at BC, CUNY, and external meetings and events, etc.
- A part-time Administrator, Ms. Keanna Benjamin, who is responsible for budget management, logistics and organizing for both the office and the programs, and other support, such as taking minutes at meetings, answering general phone and email inquiries, managing the website and social media, communicating with speakers, routine correspondence, etc.
- A rotating Faculty Associate who contributes to the programming of the Institute via regular meetings, but provides no logistical or office support. The 2021-2022 Faculty Associate was Professor Lauren Mancia (History.)

The Hess endowment funds supporting Wolfe Institute staff will continue to be vital to the stability of the Institute. However, in the future, the Wolfe Institute endowments will not be able to absorb staff costs without diminishing the funds available for events. Increased support from the College, which currently contributes *no* funds towards the Administrator position, will be necessary for the Wolfe to continue its current level of programming and increased costs related to in-person events.

## The Wolfe Institute in 2022-2023

### Theme

Faculty from across multiple schools, alongside student members of the Wolfe Institute Board convened to choose the 2022-2023 Wolfe Institute theme from numerous submissions. The consensus for the theme was *Constructing Belonging*, the connecting of two theme submissions. The idea of belonging was suggested by faculty while the theme of constructing was submitted by a student. The reasoning behind this combination is the anxiety many people are experiencing as we have been forced to construct new ways of simply existing in-person and online. This theme also provides a call to action, to think about our communities and our roles within them: *What communities and metaphorical structures are we building around us? Who are we building for? How can we make others know that they belong?*

These are all questions we want our theme to inspire within the Brooklyn college community.

### Leadership

The current Wolfe Director is leaving the position to become Interim Dean of HSS. Gaston Alonso, Associate Professor of Political Science, has agreed to be the Interim Wolfe Director. In the midst of this transition, Prof. Alonso will articulate his vision for the Wolfe Institute early in the Fall 2022 semester.

While his professorship is in Political Science, Prof. Alonso's work is deeply interdisciplinary, connecting the humanities, education, and the social sciences. His current research explores the history of education in the USA and how philosophies of education have affected Indigenous, African American, Pacific Islander, and Caribbean/Latine communities. We anticipate that programming related to this research will bring together colleagues and students from throughout HSS as well as other schools at BC.

He is looking forward to continuing to fulfill the Wolfe Institute mission through a wide variety of intellectually-rich programming, and to completing our goals outlined in the BC Strategic Plan. As one of the original nominators of Barbara Smith, our 2022-23 Hess Scholar in Residence, and a member of the Hess Planning Committee, Alonso is well-informed and enthusiastic about her work. He will be able to oversee her residency from March 13<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and the associated events, logistics, and documentation in the spirit of Smith's important activism and scholarship.

Finally, Prof. Alonso is prepared to complete the CUNY Recertification process and to convene a Wolfe Review Committee in Spring 2023. He has chosen a dynamic Assistant Professor, Carla Santamaria from the Puerto Rican and Latino Studies Department, whom herself has experience serving on Wolfe committees, to be the 2022-23 Wolfe Faculty Associate.

### Special Thanks

The Wolfe Institute has had the pleasure of working with dozens of Brooklyn College departments, programs, centers, and offices during this year.

The Wolfe Institute Staff and Board particularly appreciate the support of:

- ✓ The Office of the President
- ✓ The Office of the Provost
- ✓ The Office of the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, including Ms. Jennifer Matisi
- ✓ The Office of Communications & Marketing
- ✓ The Library, especially Professor Helen Georgas
- ✓ The Center for the Study of Brooklyn
- ✓ The Office of Fiscal and Business Services
- ✓ Information Technology Services
- ✓ The Brooklyn College Foundation