

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

The Rocking It Edition

October 21, 2025

Dear Academic Affairs Colleagues,

Looking up the definition of “rocking it,” I ended up going down the rabbit hole. The phrase does not appear in the *Oxford English Dictionary* which sent this English professor a reelin’ and a rockin’. But I found its fascinating history through linguist Ben Zimmer, who shares:

Before the hip-hop era, as the OED entry lays out, rock had a number of related meanings falling under the general rubric, "to perform or dance to music." Blues singers relied on rock to provide not-so-veiled double entendres, as in Trixie Smith's 1922 song, "My Man Rocks Me With One Steady Roll." This meaning got transformed to indicate the capacity of musical performances to thrill or inspire, as in the expressions "rock the crowd" or "rock the joint." As an intransitive verb, music with a driving beat could be said to "rock" — especially, of course, the emerging genre of rock 'n' roll.

But it was the pioneers of rap music who exploited the verb rock to its fullest potential, starting with the set phrase "rock the mic" and extending in a stunning variety of directions. Consider this line from the [2008 memoir](#) of the legendary DJ Grandmaster Flash, describing the special skills of each of the MC's in his crew (known as the Furious Five), along with his own:

Cowboy rocked the crowd, Creole rocked the flow, Mel rocked the entire English language, Ness rocked the style, Rahiem rocked the ladies, and I rocked the turntables harder than ever.

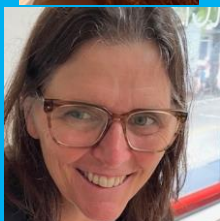
In this “rocking it” update we celebrate those in Academic Affairs who are doing things exceptionally well.

Allison



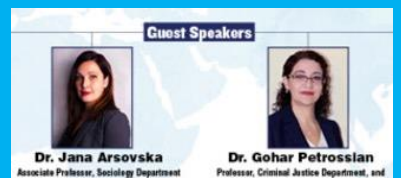
Rulisa Galloway-Perry, Deputy for Administrative Affairs, Africana Studies

Says Regina Bernard, “I am a new chair at John Jay. Rulisa has been an incredible value to me as I transition into the role, and has been the golden key to the Department of Africana Studies. At any given time, Rulisa's cheerful disposition, and her get-down-to-business attitude helps to get many of our tasks down in a timely and efficient manner.” Rulisa – you rock!



Amie Macdonald, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Chair of Philosophy Michael Brownstein enthuses, “Amie is a master program coordinator. She's incredibly helpful to our majors and minors, and goes above and beyond for all the work we do in the department.” Amie – you shred!



Gohar Petrossian, Professor of Criminal Justice and Jana Arsovska, Associate Professor of Sociology

Fellow International Criminal Justice faculty member Rosemary Barberet is proud of hard rockers Gohar and Jana who joined the ICJ faculty in hosting a successful United Nations General Assembly event for 90 at John Jay in



which Dr. Petrossian presented on “The Digital Transformation of Wildlife Trafficking: A New Frontier in Wildlife Trafficking” and Dr. Arsovska presented on “The Transformation of Organized Crime in the Digital Age.”

Alicia Kelly, Administrative Coordinator, English Department

We have another appreciative new Chair who says, “In the peaceful yet bumpy transition of power from one Chair (Jean Mills) to another (Mark McBeth), Alicia Kelly has gone above and beyond with her departmental memory, understanding of policies, and admirable patience with a new Chair's steep learning curve. She is indispensable to the English Department.” Yup, ask any English Professor out there: we all agree Alicia rocks it.

Jill Grose-Fifer, Professor and Director of Undergraduate Psychology

You know who is a real rock star? Jill, who “helps run a huge undergraduate major and always wants what is best for students, pedagogically and emotionally.” Chitra Raghavan, interim Chair of PSY can't help but add what I've seen time and again too: Jill “goes above and beyond the call of duty, never looks for more credit, money, or fame – it's a true commitment.”

Cat Alves, Director of Operations for Academic Programs

Recognized by Andrew Sidman, he says, “Since joining Academic Affairs last spring, Cat has been amazing help with revising our budget procedures and helping us coordinate our activities across different offices. Can has been quick to learn about the work we do and participate wherever she can.” Thanks for rocking it Cat!

Yolanda Ortiz Rodriguez, Doctoral Lecturer in Sociology

Buckle up for the hard rocking love fest Yolanda inspires in her colleague Marisa Tramontano who says, “Inspired by a FDD panel on connecting with students, Yolanda meets with all of her SOC 101 students - usually 72-108 - one on one in her office. Not only is this a scheduling miracle, but she also makes time to meet all her upper division students in groups, and routinely has students seeking support beyond the one-time meeting. She teaches 4 classes, starting at 8am M-Th, advises both student initiatives - Criminology Club and Criminology And Sociology Activated (CASA) - as well as sit on our department's P&B. Worthy of notice, above and beyond, and excellence are all understatements compared to the value our bloodhound from undergrad to grad to adjunct to full timer!” Yes Yolanda – Rock On!!

Rosemary Barberet, Professor of Sociology and Lauren Moton, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice

More International Criminal Justice faculty rocking it: Barberet and Moton co-lead a student delegation from John Jay College's International Criminal Justice Master's Program at the UNODC Constructive Dialogue on Trafficking in Persons in Vienna, Austria. Our delegation presented a statement virtually before the United Nations, addressing evidentiary challenges in trafficking investigations, particularly the need to strengthen digital and non-testimonial evidence in cases linked to online scam centers and child labor trafficking. Now that rocks!

**Tamari Tevdoradze, Academic Operations Associate**

How do you know someone is a rock star? Everything seems just a little brighter when they are around. This is the consistent feedback that Associate Provost Kim Chandler receives about Tamari. Tamari on-boards all part time staff in Academic Affairs and shepherds through these employees and their hiring managers with grace and care. Despite the intense volume of transactions, employees are never just a number to Tamari. Her calm demeanor and follow-through keep the hiring process moving. Don't let the soft smile and voice fool you- she is a powerhouse and a blazing star!

**LaDawn Haglund, Associate Professor of Climate Justice**

Says Dean Anthony Carpi, LaDawn has pulled together a fantastic team of environmental advocates who are trailblazing in the climate justice field, and engaging teams around the university. In November, she's leading a team of students in attending the United Nation Climate Change Conference in Belem, Brazil.

**Purnima Taylor, Director of the Career Learning Lab**

Big kudos to Purnima for her outstanding leadership and vision! Thanks to her and the CLL team's dedication, our career learning lab now boasts an **industry-aligned, skills-driven, and market-ready** approach. The results from the Finance and Consulting Industry Immersion Education pilot are proof positive: an incredible **77% program completion** rate, leading directly to **35% job placement**—with **13%** of students receiving multiple offers! Assistant Provost Sumaya Villanueva says That's a massive value-add for our students! I say, Purnima is rocking and rolling.

**Gina Foster, Director of the Teaching and Learning Center**

Gina continues to build our teaching and pedagogical capacity through her efforts to empower faculty in variety of ways. Most recently, she built a team to participate in AAC&U's Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum, she launched John Jay's Distinguished Teaching Academy to recognize teaching excellence over many years, and actively contributes to College grant-writing efforts to support pedagogy development. Dean Angela Crossman says Rock on Gina!

**Kim Liao, Lecturer in English**

You know who else rocks it? Tim McCormack sees that for the past year, Kim has been co-directing an NEH/CUNY/John Jay grant analyzing transfer-student writing abilities at John Jay, teaching a new anti-racist curriculum course she designed for the English Major called Whose Stories Get Told, worked with department and General Education Program faculty to improve writing instruction as WAC co-director, and has been on a book tour promoting her family history memoir of Taiwanese independence: "Where Every Ghost Has a Name."