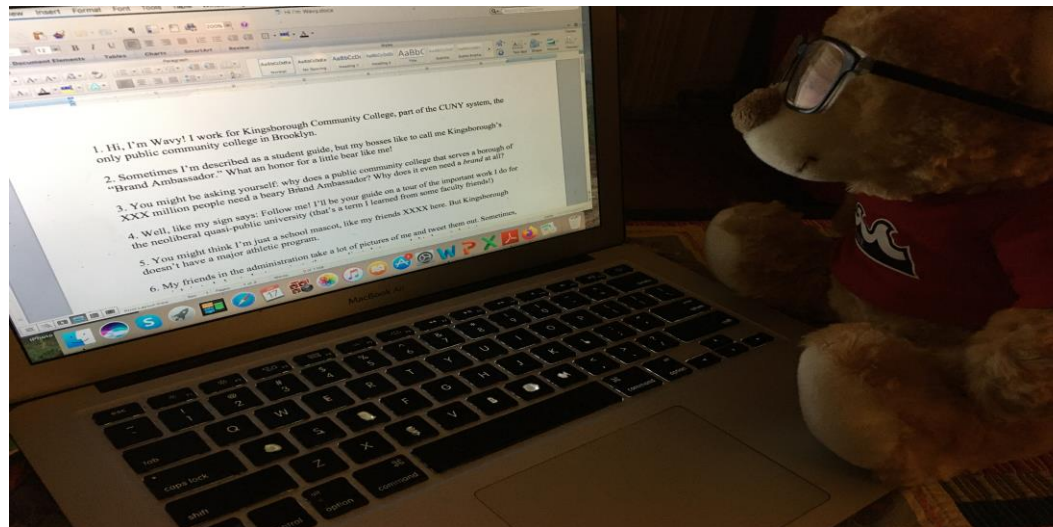



[Back to Volume Eleven Contents](#)

Can the Managerial Technique Speak?



By Wavy the Bear, Senior Stuffed Brand Ambassador*
Kingsborough Community College, City University of New York
 @Kingsbear1

* Wavy the Bear is a pseudonym for faculty members who maintain the satirical @kingsbear1 Twitter account featuring an alter ego of the Wavy the Bear who appears in the @CUNYkcc Twitter account.



Hi, I'm Wavy! I work for Kingsborough Community College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system. We're the only public community college in Brooklyn!

Sometimes I'm described as a student guide, but my bosses like to call me Kingsborough's "Brand Ambassador." What an honor for a little bear like me! Here I am attending my first student orientation last fall. I could feel the love!



?

I bet you're asking yourself, "Hmmm, why does a public community college that serves a borough of 2.6 million people need a Brand Ambassabear? Why does it even need a *brand* at all?" Well, like my pic on our home page says: **Follow me and learn more!** I'll be your guide on a tour of the important work I do for Kingsborough, or, as I heard a professor say the other day, for the neoliberal quasi-public university (I like how fancy and official that sounds, don't you?).

?

You might think I'm just a relatable school mascot, like my friends here, Peter from UC Irvine, Zippy from the U. of Akron, and Goldy from MN. Hi, guys! But . . . nope. Kingsborough doesn't have a major athletic program.



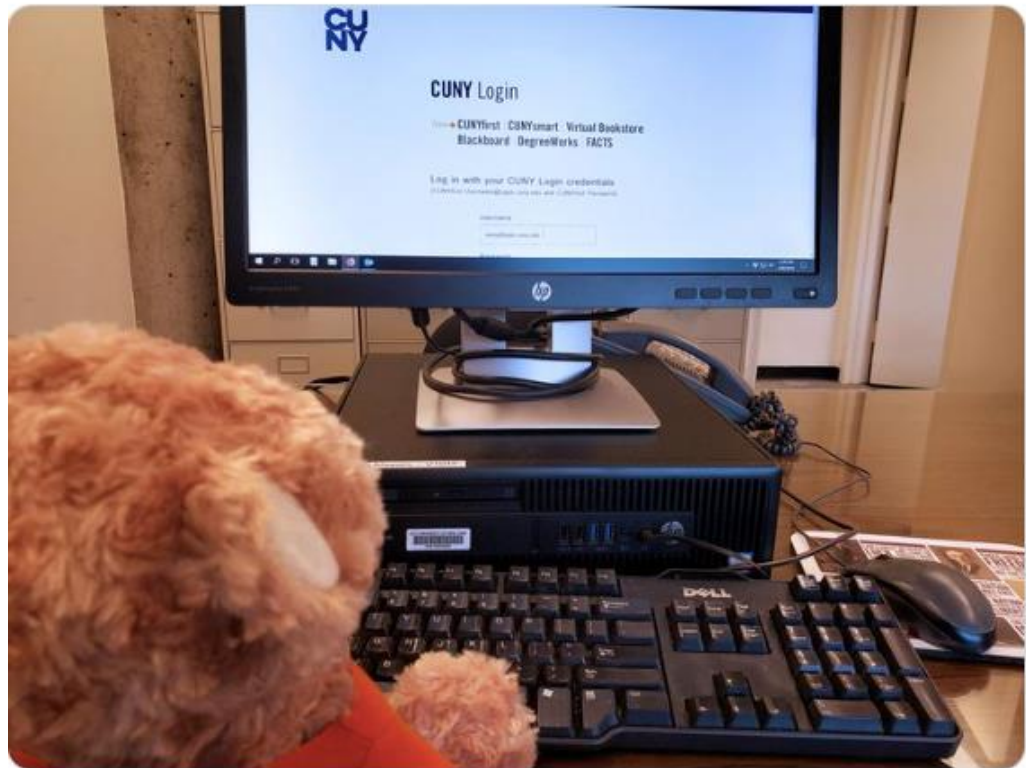
My friends in the administration tweet a lot of photos of me. Here I am reminding students they need to use our online system, CUNYFirst, to check on their classes.

CUNYFirst is pretty quirky, much like the other parts of the system students need to navigate at Kingsborough. So I'm here to help by cheering everyone up on Twitter.



CUNY Kingsborough
@CUNYkcc

It's the day before @ CUNYkcc classes start! #Wavy is checking #CUNYfirst to see if there are any schedule changes. #KCCwavy #KCCclassof2021



5:10 PM · Sep 9, 2019 · Hootsuite Inc.

Fun fact: the "First" in CUNYFirst stands for Fully Integrated Resources and Services Tool! And it only cost us about \$250 million!¹ Unfortunately, no one really knows how to use it, and lots of times it doesn't work. But it's important to keep an up-bear attitude at all times.



Kingsbear @Kingsbear1 · 1m

I love CUNYfirst because it's fun and adorable just like me! But sometimes even a bear who loves a super expensive Centralized Management Information System Tool can feel a little saddened when that CMIST doesn't want to play.




CUNY Kingsborough @CUNYkcc · Sep 9



It's the day before @CUNYkcc classes start! #Wavy checking #CUNYfirst to see if there are any schedule changes. #KCCwavy #KCCclassof2021

Look, here I am with some peppers! KCC has a very cool urban farm. We also have lots of food drives and even a food pantry—nearly half of CUNY students report food insecurity.² Some folks say that's partly because tuition and fees keep increasing. Don't know about that, but I can sure say that it will take a lot of veggies to feed all those students!

 CUNY Kingsborough
@CUNYkcc

Wavy's eyeing the sweet peppers at today's
[@kccurbanfarm](#) distribution. Get here before they're all
gone! From 11:30 to 1 (or until we run out) between T2
and T8



11:17 AM · Sep 19, 2019 · [Twitter for Android](#)

And it'll also take a lot of cupcakes! I love cupcakes.



My bosses tell me I'm also useful in giving the administration a human face (even though I'm a bear!). Take these cute holiday appearances. They're actually paying somebody to PhotoShop-ically dress me as a pumpkin and then post a photo of it—how cool is that!



I'm also good for non-controversial corporate social causes, like raising private money to solve public health issues. Sometimes it takes a few tries to get it right tho! LOL!



I overheard
some
students
talking
about
"virtue
signaling,"
and I guess
that's what
I'm really
good at!



CUNY Kingsborough
@CUNYkcc

Wavy's wearing pink today in support of breast cancer awareness month at [@CUNYkcc](#). If you are too, post a selfie and tag us. [#KCCPinkFridays](#)





CUNY Kingsborough
@CUNYkcc



This November @CUNYkcc is Movember! For more information, click this link: ow.ly/V6UG50x5935



(I personally love this photo, which makes me feel kind of old-timey and dashing. But someone told me I look like Joseph Stalin in it and I didn't think they meant it very nicely. Hmm.)

I'm also good at signaling that the administration really cares about *diversity*. Here I am participating in our college Diversity Symposium! It's organized by faculty and students, and administrators don't really come (except for fun photo-ops!). But if diversity is on the menu, Wavy's in the house!



Because I wasn't really sure why I was there, I started reading a book that was sort of about this part of my job—it kinda felt like the writer was reading my mind!

“If you are a mascot you are silent, everything you amount to is nothing, you are stuffing, if that, a skeleton with stuffing. I was kept out of the frame and the management structure; I had no control over how the money was spent, who was being employed, who was being invited to the advisory board. I was effectively silenced.’ You are stuffing; a skeleton with stuffing. You are supposed to be silent; you are supposed to symbolize diversity, or perhaps you provide the raw materials that white academia converts into theory. What happens when the stuffing speaks? What happens when those who embody diversity theorize for ourselves?”³

But what I'm REALLY good at is helping my bosses do what they love best: FUNDRAISING! Here I am doing my best to raise money. #HELPKCCSTUDENTS!



CUNY Kingsborough
@CUNYkcc

I made my donation to @CUNYkcc...have you? We're counting on you! No amount too small.
#HELPKCCSTUDENTS #24HRSOFGIVING #KCCSPIRIT
#CUNYTUESDAY Make your gift here:
kcc.cunytuesday.org



12:30 PM · Dec 3, 2019 · Hootsuite Inc.



CUNY Kingsborough
@CUNYkcc

Only 3 more hours until #KCCSPIRIT Day ends. I've made my donation to @CUNYkcc...have you? We're counting on you! Make your gift here:
kcc.cunytuesday.org No amount too small. Thanks!
#WAVY #HELPKCCSTUDENTS



Actually the money goes to something called the Kingsborough Foundation. It doesn't really have a budget so I'm not sure where the money goes after that.⁴ I'm a bear of little brain, but that makes me wonder.



And sometimes I think: aren't we a public school? Why do we have to ask for private money for scholarships so students can go to a college that used to be free? All that thinking makes my head hurt.





And then I remember the golden rule:
you can't spell fundraising without FUN!

Believe it or not,
I'm even a job
creator! (I
learned that
word from one of
our lovable
corporate
partners.) Here's
an ad for SIX
students to be
Wavy Handlers!
That makes me
feel very special.



CUNY Kingsborough
@CUNYkcc

Calling all @CUNYkcc Federal Work-Study (FWS) eligible students: Wavy, our student guide, is looking for up to SIX qualified students to accompany him to student events around campus. Log on to your account and check out the job description for a chance to become a Wavy handler.



2:17 PM · Sep 19, 2019 · Hootsuite Inc.

So mostly I'm a pretty happy ambassabear! But there are days when I start to wonder, and after I've been wondering a while, I start to worry.



Sometimes the bosses look a little sad, or a little mad. They say enrollment at Kingsborough is down way more than at other CUNY campuses.⁵

CUNY enrollment surges

By NICK NIEDZWIADK and MADINA TOURÉ | 10/15/2019 10:01 AM EDT

— **CUNY has bucked the national trend** and increased its enrollment by about 17 percent since 2010.

CUNY Freshman Enrollment Increasing

Bucking the national trend, CUNY freshman enrollment continues to increase. Experts say it reflects a larger trend of urban versus rural colleges.

By Madeline St. Amour // October 14, 2019

Freshman enrollment at the City University of New York is up, even as enrollment nationwide continues to decline.

Since 2010, freshman enrollment at the college system in New York City has increased by 17 percent. This fall, both the senior colleges and community colleges saw continued growth in the freshman class by 763 and 345 enrollments, respectively.

3 COMMENTS



December 2018

Stopping enrollment decline at KCC

Affecting the faculty and the budget

By ARI PAUL

Student enrollment has declined at Kingsborough Community College. PSC members have pushed the new administration to address the problem.

One of the first jobs for Claudia Schrader, the newly appointed president of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), will be to address the student enrollment crisis at the South Brooklyn campus.

Since 2013, student enrollment has plummeted a whopping 19.3 percent, according to CUNY figures, a stark contrast to the 11.4 percent increase at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), the 2.9 percent increase at Hostos Community College, or even small dips at places like LaGuardia Community College, which saw a 2 percent loss in enrollment over the same time period. Brooklyn's flagship four-year campus, Brooklyn College, has seen increased enrollment for that time period, and CUNY recently reported a 4 percent overall increase in freshman enrollment this Fall. CUNY records show that the number of full-time undergraduate students CUNY-wide has gone up by 0.7 percent since 2013.



Opinion

The Right to a Free and Quality Public Higher Education in New York

November 26, 2019 | by [Andrew Gounardes](#) & [Timothy Hunter](#)

CUNY has long been the pride of New York City and its cradle of opportunity. But at a recent legislative hearing on higher education in Brooklyn, we heard from teachers, administrators, and students about a harsh reality: After years of state underinvestment in public college, our CUNY system is teetering on the edge of crisis.

Both of us have been blessed with a CUNY education. Yet both of us see firsthand the heartbreak and struggle that many students face when they seek to advance themselves through higher education. In the end, some graduate. Some don't. And some never get to try because it's just not affordable.

Students desperately need relief. CUNY's six-year degree completion rate is only 55%, and financial strain is one of the main reasons students drop out. In a 2017 report on college success, the Center for an Urban Future shared that 75% of dropouts at Kingsborough Community College had a financial "red flag" in their accounts such as owing money or loss of scholarship. To make matters worse, a staggering half of all CUNY students experience food insecurity, and many struggle with housing insecurity or even homelessness.

There's a reason for this dire situation: Tuitions have risen steadily year after year, as the share of the budget that comes from tuition has grown from 20% to almost 50% over the past 30 years.

And the really big bosses, like the governor, won't fund us, so we need tuition money from students more than ever.⁶ Fewer students, less money. Sure, that means more chances for me to FUNdraise! But it doesn't seem to help.

I'm a Brand Ambassador! Like my friend Teddy from Borough of Manhattan Community College: their enrollment is way up! Shouldn't I be good at attracting new student customers? But that doesn't seem to be what I was made for.



Then sometimes I walk around the campus and start to feel a little funny. Why is the college spending money on me instead of fixing elevators or bathrooms?⁷



Or air conditioners that don't work in classrooms when it's really hot! (It's hard being a furry bear those days.)



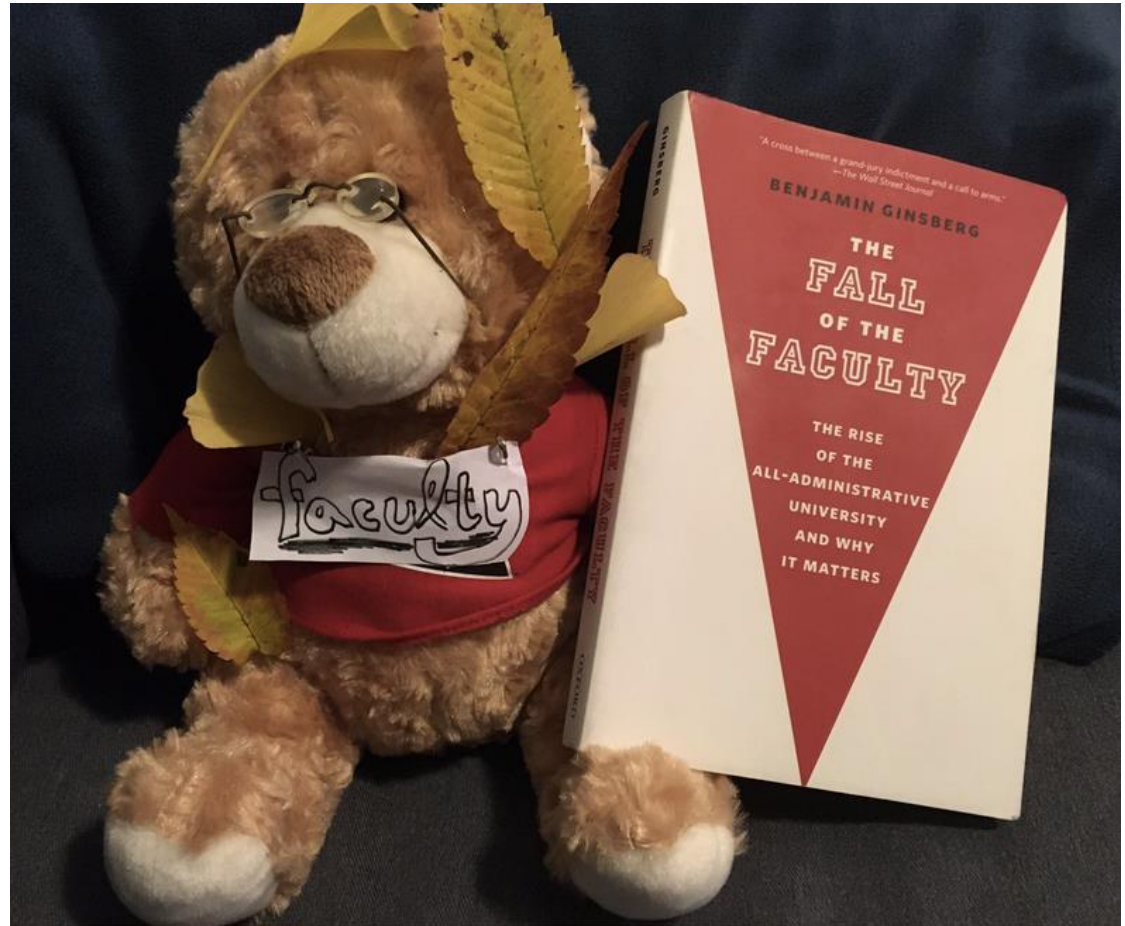
Kingsbear
@Kingsbear1

It's 90 degrees out but that's okay because my classroom has this state-of-the-art cooling system that all but ensures an environment conducive to Student Success.



3:39 PM · Sep 23, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

And now here I am being asked to write about academic freedom! What even IS that? I tried asking the bosses, but they don't ever want to discuss it! (They just start yelling about how we need more online platforms to provide customer content—I think that has something to do with teaching the students.)⁸



I tried talking to some profs at my college about the academic freedom thing and they got really worked up! They argued a bunch. I took a lot of notes (and even did a little extra reading they recommended—with a selfie to prove it!). Here's how one prof explained some of the key ideas I was reading about:



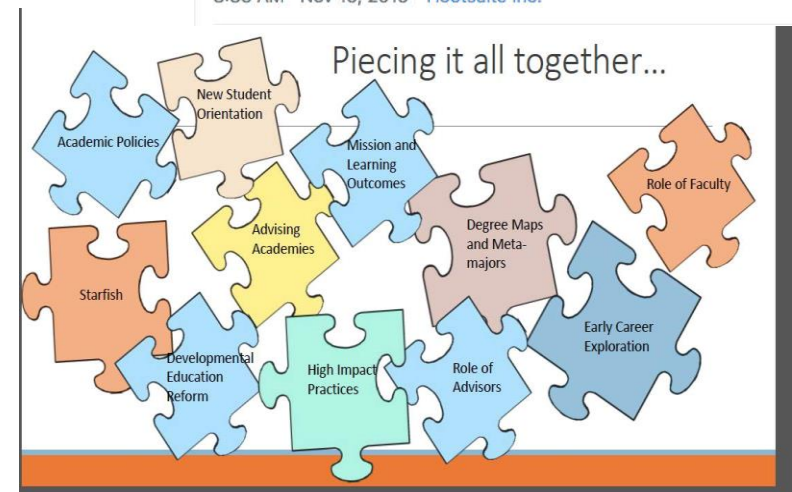
“Managerial approaches to the university and academic freedom are the opposite of each other. Academic freedom is based on the idea that protecting an autonomous space where scholars can work out their ideas within their areas of expertise, take their thinking as far as they need to, question everything that’s gone before, is crucial to a democratic society, since it is in everyone’s interest. Managers, meanwhile, are supposed to manage expectations and make sure nothing new or threatening ever happens.”⁹



And it seems like I'm a sort of managerial technique myself! I started feeling a little funny when they said it like that.



For others, it was simpler: I was part of an administrative strategy to disempower students and faculty by relentlessly infantilizing them, creating an atmosphere where real intellectual work can't exist.



I started to wonder if I was part of a larger trend, like when I read what one professor wrote about what happened at the University of Tulsa:

“Our story is worth telling, because we have been hit by a perfect storm of trends currently tearing through the American academy: the confident ignorance of administrators, the infantilization of students, the policing of faculty, the replacement of thinking with ideological jargon, and the corporatization of education.”¹⁰

You can see how my brother bear in Tulsa feels after all that's happened there! (The poor guy is now available for cheap on eBay.)



I needed to know more. Could we resist? Maybe I was really part of a history that went back to before I was born or even thought of.¹¹



“If the student movements demanded that the university commit itself to economically, politically, and institutionally impoverished communities . . . then administrators, politicians, and business-people issued their own set of demands: that the university refortify its commitment to systems of power that would keep these communities out and keep students, faculty, and staff regulated from within....The university—as an institution of power—adapted to the challenges of student activists with the discourse of diversity and the expansion of police powers on campus.”¹²

“Regulated,”
“power,”
“police”?
That all
sounds kind
of violent.



Were the bosses violent? I never thought so. But when I started to look around, I felt a little confused again.





I thought I was here to help! Isn't that what managers are supposed to do? I was learning so many new things, but it was also starting to get scary. There's so much at stake.

“Schools can be seen as the most powerful alternative to jails and prisons. Unless the current structures of violence are eliminated from schools in impoverished communities of color—including the presence of armed security guards and police—and unless schools become places that encourage the joy of learning, these schools will remain the major conduits to prison.”¹³



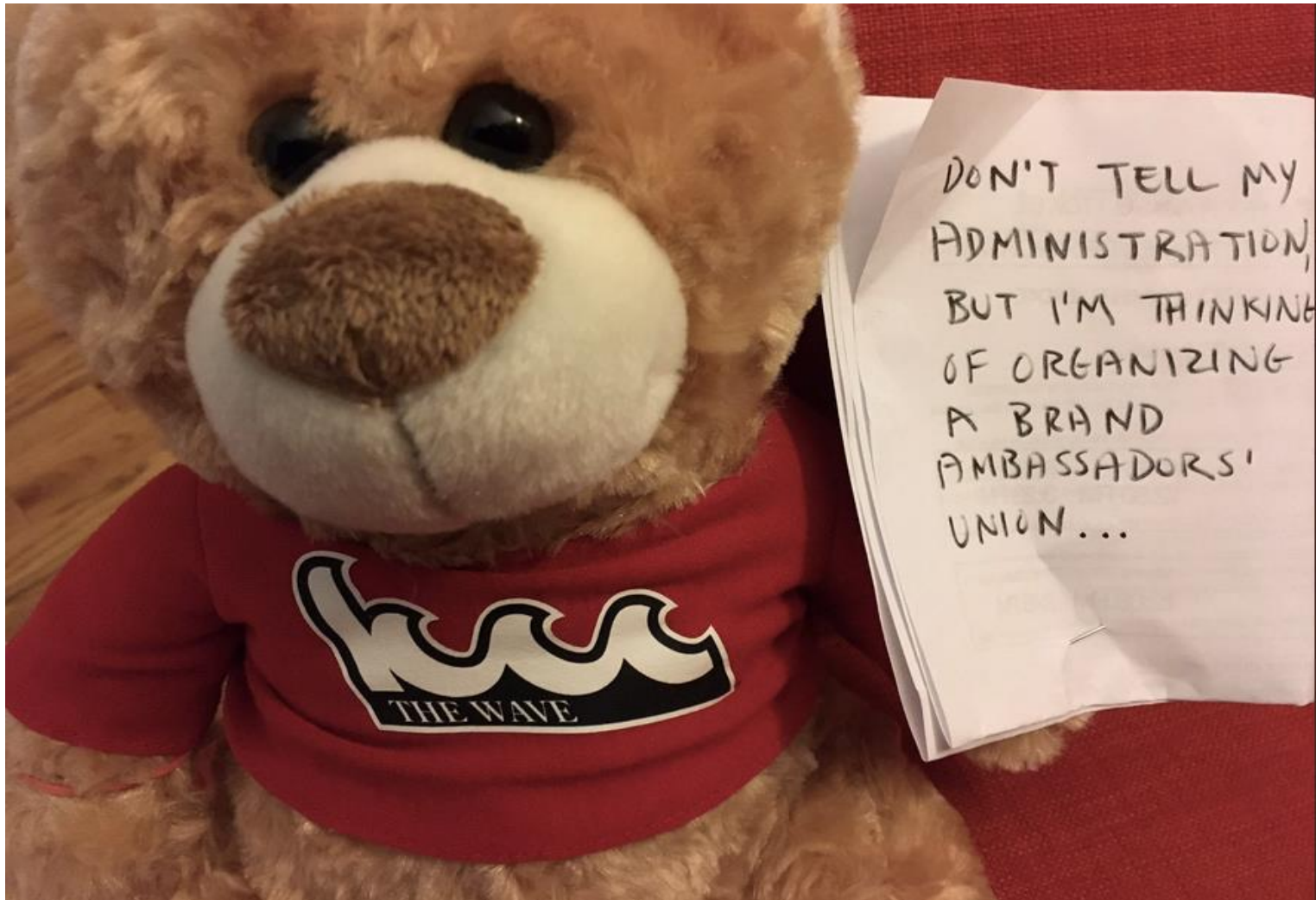
Kingsbear @Kingsbear1 · Jan 14

Every now and then, I lose my faith that [#innovation](#) and [#leadershipexcellence](#) will reinvigorate [#highered](#) and then I can't get out of bed. Being an optimistic Brand Ambassabear is harder than you might think.

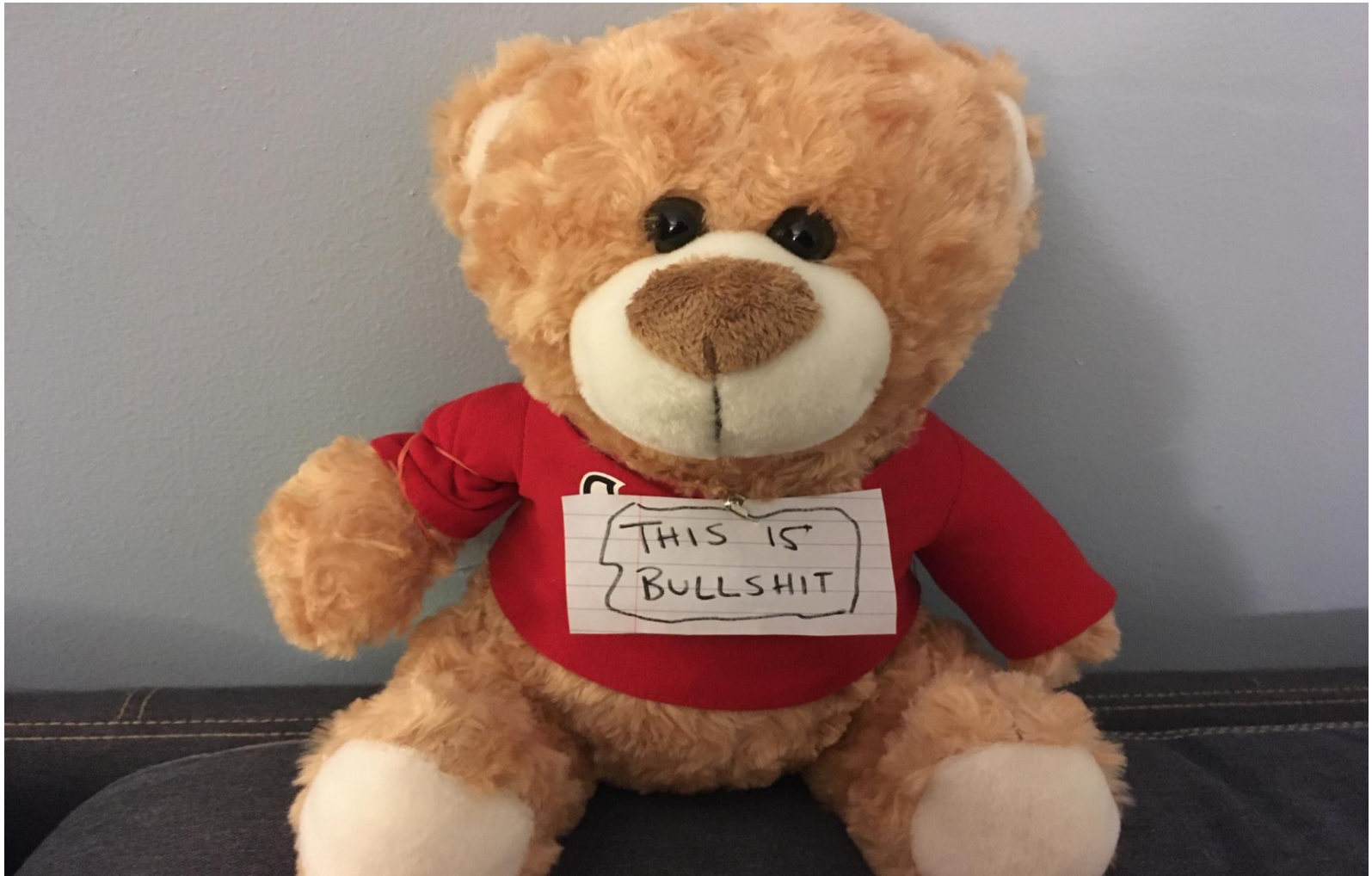


Some days, it all feels like too much for one little bear to try to deal with.

But then I think: it's time to organize!



Or should a disillusioned ambassabear become a fugitive in the university's undercommons?



“Maroon communities of composition teachers, mentorless graduate students, adjunct Marxist historians, out or queer management professors, state college ethnic studies departments, closed-down film programs, visa-expired Yemeni student newspaper editors, historically black college sociologists, and feminist engineers. And what will the university say of them? It will say they are unprofessional. This is not an arbitrary charge. It is the charge against the more than professional. How do those who exceed the profession, who exceed and by exceeding escape, how do those maroons problematize themselves, problematize the university, force the university to consider them a problem, a danger? The undercommons, its maroons, are always at war, always in hiding.”¹⁴



scot Factory Fred Bear with Bulldog T-shirt



Previous



Am I a cog in a
dehumanizing
(debearizing!)
machine?



Copyright American Association of University
Professors, 2020



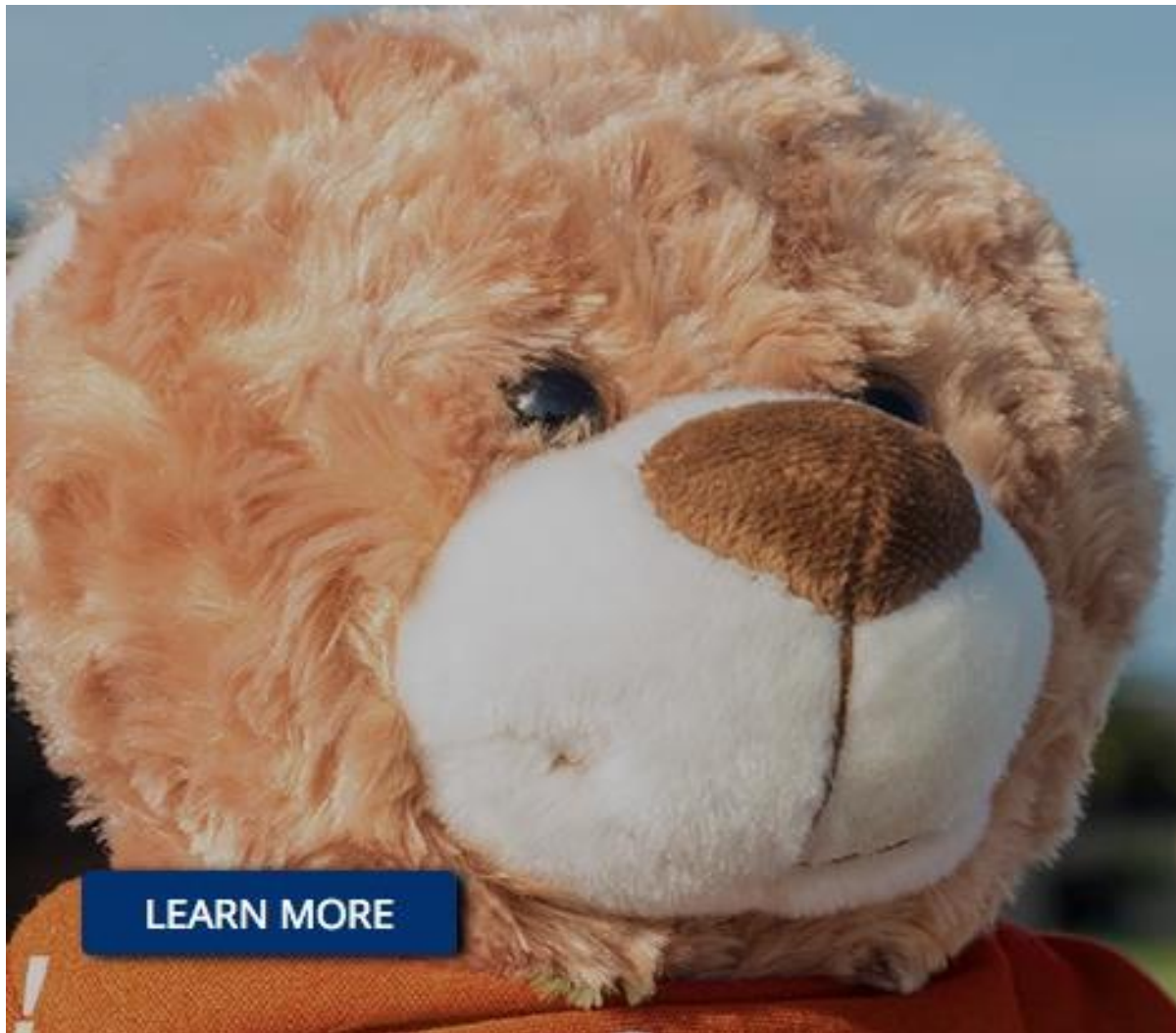
I'm not a person.
I thought I was a
bear—a talking
bear who wears a
sweater and
sometimes a
Halloween
costume—but I'm
not really that
either. I guess
I'm just a
management
technique after
all.¹⁵ But I kept
reading, and now I
think that I might
be: a scyborg!



“If we think of the university as a machine that is the composite of many other machines, these machines are never perfect loyalists to colonialism—in fact, they are quite disloyal. They break down and produce and travel in unexpected lines of flight—flights that are at once enabled by the university yet irreverent of that mothership of a machine. . . . And thus there’s some hope, the hope of the scyborg. Organisms in the machinery are scyborgian: as students, staff, faculty, alumni, and college escapees, technologies of the university have been grafted onto you. Your witch’s flight pulls bits of the assemblage with you and sprays technology throughout its path.”¹⁶

I'm in the university (you can buy me in the college bookstore!) but not of it. Maybe that's you too. Maybe we're both scyborgs?

“The agency of the scyborg is precisely that it is a reorganizer of institutional machinery; it subverts machinery against the master code of its makers; it rewires machinery to its own intentions. It's that elliptical gear that makes the machine work (for freedom sometimes) by helping the machine (of unfreedom) break down. The lopsided bot, the scyborg, the queer gear with a g-limp—if there is anything to fear and to hope for in the university, it could be you, and it could be me.”¹⁷



Hope and fear. I like the sound of that.

COMING SOON: WAVY'S COVID CHRONICLES!

OK everybody, the bosses had a Zoom meeting and said it was safe to go back into the classroom. Management technique animals like me are considered essential workers. It's time to be a hero bear!



Notes: Wavy's Reading List

These are sources I read, referred to, quoted from, and held in my furry hands along the way:

1. New York State Office of the State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, Division of State Government Accountability, "Controls over CUNY Fully Integrated Resources and Services Tool," Report 2015-S-34 (September 2016), 1. [Frame 7]
2. Ben Chapman, "Thousands of CUNY Students Experience Homelessness and Food Insecurity, Report Says," *New York Daily News*, March 27, 2019. [Frame 8]
3. Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 189. [Frame 16]
4. "The Kingsborough Community College Foundation is the tax exempt 501(c)(3) philanthropic organization through which individuals, foundations and corporations can make tax exempt gifts to benefit our students, faculty and college. It is governed by an independent Board of Trustees elected on a rotating basis. The KCC Foundation Board of Trustees represents the commercial, financial, publishing, philanthropic, utilities, legal, real estate, health care, community development, and public relations industries of New York City. Alumni and college faculty and administration also serve on the Board." See Kingsborough Community College, Office of College Advancement, "KCC COVID-19 Student Emergency Relief Fund," <https://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/colladvancement/index.html>. [Frame 18]
5. Nick Niedzwiadek and Madina Touré, "CUNY Enrollment Surges," *Politico*, October 15, 2019; Madeline St. Amour, "CUNY Freshman Enrollment Increasing," *Inside Higher Ed*, October 14, 2019; Ari Paul, "Stopping Enrollment Decline at KCC," *Clarion*, December 2018. [Frame 23]
6. Andrew Gounardes and Timothy Hunter, "The Right to a Free and Quality Public Higher Education in New York," *Gotham Gazette*, November 26, 2019. [Frame 24]

Wavy's Reading List (continued)

7. See Kingsborough New Caucus, "Classroom Conditions Survey Report," <https://kbccnewcaucus.com/our-work/>. [Frame 26]
8. Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). [Frame 28]
9. Christopher Newfield, *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018). [Frame 30]
10. Jacob Howland, "Storm Clouds over Tulsa," *City Journal*, April 17, 2019. [Frame 33]
11. See New Sanctuary Coalition, home page, <https://www.newsanctuarynyc.org/>. [Frame 35]
12. Roderick A. Ferguson, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 6, 10. [Frame 36]
13. Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories, 2003), 108. [Frame 40]
14. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 30. [Frame 44]
15. Deborah Garrison, *A Working Girl Can't Win and Other Poems* (New York: Random House, 1998). [Frame 46]
16. la paperson (K. Wayne Yang), *A Third University Is Possible* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 55. [Frame 47]
17. la paperson, 55. [Frame 48]